

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

This chapter presents a wide-ranging description of the study. It comprises the background, formulation of the problem, operational definition, aims of the study, and significance of the study.

1.1 Background

Indonesia is currently undergoing a transition in its curriculum. Almost all levels of education undergo this change. In 2022, the Ministry of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology (*Kemendikbudristek*) launched a new curriculum, namely *the Merdeka curriculum*, to replace the previous curriculum, the 2013 curriculum. Although the Ministry of Education and Culture (*Kemendikbudristek*) has launched the latest curriculum, many schools are still implementing the 2013 curriculum, and only a few schools have adopted the *Merdeka* curriculum. This is because it is not easy to make a comprehensive change, especially since teachers are already accustomed to the 2013 curriculum and have a limited understanding of the latest curriculum, the *Merdeka* curriculum. Furthermore, the differences between the two curricula can be one of the factors causing difficulties for teachers in understanding and implementing the latest curriculum. The 2013 curriculum aims to prepare the generation in Indonesia to become a generation that is faithful, productive, creative, innovative, and capable of contributing to community and national life. Not only that, K13 has the terms KI (*Kompetensi Inti*) and KD (*Kompetensi Dasar*) that focus on religious, social, knowledge, and skills attitudes implemented in classroom learning. Next, the approach used is scientific. The assessment in K13 consists of four aspects: knowledge, skills, attitudes, and behaviour.

Meanwhile, the *Merdeka* curriculum has several main characteristics. Several studies which discuss the characteristics of the *Merdeka* curriculum, such as Rizaldi and Fatimah (2023) and Akbar et al. (2023), state that the characteristics of the *Merdeka* curriculum include employing Project-based learning to develop various soft skills and the character of *Pancasila* students, focusing on the essence of the material, and providing flexibility which is the ability to adapt to the conditions and

characteristics of the school environment. This flexibility gives teachers one year to manage the learning materials in the classroom and make adjustments according to the students' abilities. Next, it has six phases in the learning stages that students go through, such as Phase A, Phase B, Phase C, Phase D, Phase E, and Phase F. The terms CP (*Capaian Pembelajaran*) and TP (*Tujuan Pembelajaran*). Additionally, the assessment in the *Merdeka* Curriculum uses formative, summative, and diagnostic assessments, which are expected to help teachers analyse the strengths and weaknesses of students.

Based on the regulations provided by *Kemendikbudristek*, schools in Indonesia are requested to immediately transition to the curriculum and start adapting the *Merdeka* curriculum. Transitioning between curricula is not an easy process for schools and teachers. Recognising this challenge, the Ministry of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology issued Regulation No. 12 of 2024, which mandates the full implementation of the Independent Curriculum at all levels of education in the 2026/2027 academic year. Until then, schools using K13 can continue implementing it until the 2025/2026 academic year. This policy underscores the urgency for schools and educators to prepare for curriculum adaptation.

In Tasikmalaya, junior high schools experienced this transition firsthand. Preliminary studies through informal interviews showed that English teachers faced various challenges in implementing the *Merdeka* Curriculum. These challenges included a lack of textbooks, inadequate technological resources, and teachers' lack of understanding of the new curriculum. As a result, students relied heavily on mobile phones and e-books, which, while helpful, were also distracting. In addition, limited access to computers and digital learning tools further hampered the effective implementation of the curriculum. Researching the challenges English teachers face during curriculum transitions in junior high schools is essential for developing practical solutions that can alleviate teacher burnout and enhance instructional practices due to its significant implications for student *Capaian Pembelajaran*, teacher development, and educational policy.

Numerous prior studies have examined how teachers perceive the shift in curriculum. Husnah and Rigianti (2023) analyse the difficulties teachers face during the learning process when transitioning from the 2013 curriculum to the *Merdeka* curriculum in elementary schools. In addition, Fajri and Andarwulan (2023) focus on implementing the *Merdeka* curriculum during the curriculum transition period in Indonesia and explore the challenges and opportunities related to educational reform. Furthermore, a study by Sene and Metom (2024) investigated teachers' perceptions of transitioning from the 2013 curriculum to the *Merdeka* curriculum in Sumba, Timor, and Flores. The studies mentioned previously and the study to be conducted are similar in that they all examine the challenges teachers face in transitioning from the 2013 curriculum to the *Merdeka* curriculum. Although the previous studies provide insights into the transition process, they primarily focus on identifying challenges. This study extends the previous research by identifying the challenges junior secondary English teachers face during curriculum transition and exploring the solutions they implement to overcome these difficulties. Understanding these solutions is essential for developing strategies to support teachers, improve teaching practices, and enhance student *Capaian Pembelajaran* during this period of educational reform.

1.2 Formulation of the Problems

This study explores the challenges and solutions English teachers face in dealing with the curriculum transition in junior high schools. The research questions that guide this study are:

- 1.2.1 What challenges do English teachers face during curriculum transitions in Junior High Schools?
- 1.2.2 What solutions do English teachers propose to address these challenges during curriculum transitions in Junior High Schools?

1.3 Operational Definitions

To avoid misunderstanding about the terms set out in this study, the researcher provides five definitions related to this study as follows:

1.3.1 Curriculum Transition

Curriculum transition is switching from one curriculum in the education system to another. In this study, the transition is from the 2013 curriculum to the *Merdeka* curriculum. The goal of this study's curriculum transition is to highlight specific changes implemented within the curriculum, such as changes to the curriculum's aims and objectives, content or material, teaching strategies, and assessment procedures.

1.3.2 Challenges

Challenges are those complicated matters which teachers have to face in dealing with transitions of curriculum and the implementation of a new curriculum, namely *Merdeka* curriculum. The examples for the challenges that researchers found are limited books for students, teachers' lack of ability and readiness to use varied learning methods and media, the teachers have difficulty determining the projects to be given to their students, and so on

1.3.3 Solutions

The solution involves the strategy and action adopted by the teachers in overcoming the challenges or obstacles in implementing the transition of curriculum implementation.

1.4 Aims of the Study

The aims of this study it's for:

- 1.4.1 To find the challenges faced by English teachers in dealing with curriculum transition in Junior High Schools.
- 1.4.2 To identify the solutions implemented by English teachers in dealing with curriculum transition in Junior High Schools.

1.5 Significance of the Study

This study will contribute to the existing theoretical framework by providing insights into the challenges faced and the solutions implemented by English teachers in addressing the curriculum transition in Junior High Schools.

1.5.1 Theoretical Significance

In the context of teaching English at the junior high school level, this study offers theoretical insights into the implementation of curriculum transition. By exploring the challenges and solutions that teachers faced when switching from the 2013 Curriculum to the Merdeka Curriculum, it strengthens the conceptual understanding of how the new curriculum affects teaching strategies, approaches to differentiated learning, and the use of media for learning. The data from this study provides a theoretical basis for more complex management research.

1.5.2 Practical Significance

Practically, this research provides a real picture of the challenges and solutions faced by English teachers in the field when dealing with curriculum transitions. The findings of this research can be used by teachers to identify common challenges and implement solutions that have proven effective. Furthermore, it can be used by school authorities as evaluation material and a reference in providing technical support or training to teachers during the transition period. Lastly, policymakers, who can help in considering the needs and readiness of teachers in the national implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum.

1.5.3 Empirical Significance

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transition period. Lastly, policymakers, who can help in considering the needs and readiness of teachers in the national implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum.