MERDEKA CURRICULUM ENGLISH LANGUAGE TEACHING IMPLEMENTATION IN A RURAL SCHOOL (A CASE STUDY AT SMP NEGERI 8 NGABANG)

A THESIS

by

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ABSTRACT

Willy (2024): *Merdeka* Curriculum English Language Teaching Implementation in A Rural School (A Case Study at SMP Negeri 8 Ngabang)

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The implementation of the *Merdeka* Curriculum has been applied to a few schools in Indonesia, including both elementary and secondary education levels. This research aims to discover the implementation of *Merdeka* Curriculum in teaching English at SMP Negeri 8 Ngabang. This research was applied using case study as research design. There were the principal and english teacher who participate in this research. In order to collect the data, both interview and documentation were applied. The result of this research showed how the implementation of *merdeka* curriculum of English language teaching in a rural school is particularly from the view of the principal and English teacher at SMP Negeri 8 Ngabang.

Key words: *Merdeka* Curriculum, English Language Teaching, Rural School, Case Study.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Research Background

The implementation of the *Merdeka* Curriculum has been applied to the school of SMP Negeri 8 Ngabang since 2023, starting from grade seven. The *Merdeka* Curriculum aligns with the individual's level of readiness, and over time, they continuously enhance their ability in utilizing it. The *Merdeka* Curriculum is characterized by a wide range of intracurricular learning opportunities, allowing students plenty of chances to dig into subjects and enhance their competencies. Teachers have more choices in selecting teaching tools to customize learning according to the requirements and interests of learners. For improving the achievement of student profiles, Pancasila was formulated according to specific themes established by the government.

Changes to the curriculum are implemented in a systematic way for integrating with improvements in time and technology (Hadi et al., 2023). The school frequently modifies its rules in order to conform to the most recent government requirements and the current circumstances in the school environment. The *Merdeka* Curriculum experienced a transformation into an emergency curriculum, which was adopted based on present circumstances and incorporated several obtainable competencies. 4.0. Proficiency in this skill is essential as education in today's world involves not only conventional in-person approaches but also virtual and distant learning.

Implementing the *Merdeka* Curriculum in teaching English involves significant processes, time, and preparedness, resulting in improvements to the learning system. The *Merdeka* Curriculum is implemented effectively to enhance teacher-student engagement. This correlates with the *Merdeka* Curriculum, which requires achieving a minimum of six English language abilities based on the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages: Learning, Teaching Assessment (CEFR). The CEFR indicates the observable characteristics of a student's capacity to sustain communication and express intended messages.

Teachers need to understand the *Alur Tujuan Pembelajaran (ATP), Modul Ajar (MA),* and Project Modules in order to assess student progress when applying the *Merdeka* curriculum (Sunra & Sudirman, 2024). A teacher plays a strategic role in achieving national education objectives by focusing on developing the teacher's potential as a moral, rule-abiding, professional, and competent individual. Educational institutions, including school principals, are other influential stakeholders that can promote the adoption of the *Merdeka* Curriculum. Within the *Merdeka* Curriculum, students function as learning centers known as Student Centers. Students are the center of education and should be the primary focus when facilitating the learning process in developing their talents, interests, and potential in the English language. Facilitators consist of teachers, principals, and staff.

Several related studies have been carried out regarding the *Merdeka* curriculum (Ndari & Mahmudah, 2023) research focuses on the implementation of the *Merdeka* Learning Curriculum at a activator school. This study highlighted the need of infrastructure and facilities for the effective

implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum in activator school. Research by (Ndari & Mahmudah, 2023) examined the impact of the Merdeka Curriculum on student character development in Religious Education topics. The existing research does not specifically address the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum in English language acquisition, which is a unique aspect of this study.

SMP Negeri 8 Ngabang is one of the activator school in West Borneo, particularly in Landak Regency. The objective of the activator school program at SMP Negeri 8 Ngabang is to enhance the standard of student education. This program involves implementing five different interventions to advance the school by one to two stages over a span of three academic years (Annisa, 2023). First, simple, easy to understand, and implement. Second, focus on the competence and character of all students. Third, flexibility. Flexibility is also a principle in curriculum implementation. Fourth is harmony. Alignment is related to three things, namely 1) alignment between curriculum, learning process (pedagogy), and assessment; 2) alignment between the curriculum and governance systems and teacher competencies; and 3) alignment with policies related to individual learning from an early age up to university. Fifth, work together. The principle of mutual cooperation is mainly related to the curriculum design and development process.

In general, the outcomes of the school mobility program established a learning environment that is reliable, enjoyable, inclusive, and conducive to learning (Bulan & Nurhasanah, 2024).

The principal of SMP Negeri 8 Ngabang plays a crucial role in managing the school and taking the lead in establishing a conducive and engaging learning environment by implementing a supportive system that enhances the educational quality. The role of the principle in the planning process of activator schools involves the selection of a learning committee to assist in the design, implementation, and evaluation of customized learning for students (Rotty et al., 2022). The school principal engages in active collaboration with various stakeholders to enhance the quality of education (Adebowale, 2024).

The *Merdeka* Learning Curriculum implemented in a rural school offers the advantage of prioritizing crucial and fundamental content, facilitating more in-depth and unhurried learning activities. Teachers in SMP 8 Ngabang is capable of adjusting their teaching approach based on the student's level of accomplishment and development. Therefore, it can be inferred that the Merdeka Curriculum is an innovative approach designed to promote independence in the process of acquiring knowledge. In addition, teaching materials suited with students' skills and relevant educational background are also offered. The researcher is drawn to carry out a research named "The implementation of Merdeka Curriculum in a rural school (Study at SMP Negeri 8 Ngabang)" due to its interesting character. The implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum at SMP Negeri 8 Ngabang involves initially making adjustments to the educational unit's circumstances.

Modern schooling requires the growing of ability, knowledge, and competencies, with the primary objective of enabling students to engage in critical thinking, creative problem-solving, and collaborative endeavours. Challenges in the

implementation of technology-based distance learning. (Digna & Widyasari, 2023) suggest that school institutions should adopt a minimum of six strategies. These strategies include providing internet access and ensuring that teachers acquire a comprehensive understanding of digital advancements. Moreover, the utilisation of social media for facilitating the exchange of assignments and aiding the development of skills by both teachers and students is currently constrained.

In addition, the utilisation of social media for facilitating the exchange of assignments and aiding the development of skills by both teachers and students is currently constrained. Also, the growth of internet connectivity remains constrained, particularly in geographically isolated regions. Furthermore, the implementation of local media as an opportunity to distribute assignments is being considered as an approach to update the learning resources for several schools. In addition, enhancing the equipment of communication for tasks that were previously dependent solely on oral transmission. Besides, alternative measures are proposed for various specialised educational institutions that are obligated to exclude students as a result of their learning disabilities. The curriculum is an essential element in every educational component as it serves as an indicator for the effectiveness of a school in implementing the learning process (Kellner & Share, 2019). Eventually, there have been significant changes in the utilisation of the curriculum. This is designed for the present educational circumstances and situations. The activator school programme is the most recent innovation to the Indonesian education system. This programme is the outcome of enhancements made to the school programme.

Previously, the activator school programme primarily emphasises the growing of comprehensive student learning outcomes, covering fundamental skills and student character, beginning with the involvement of the school principal and instructors. The activator school programme aims to establish a highly developed and self-reliant Indonesian education system, coinciding with the objectives stated in the introduction to the Indonesian Constitution of 1945. The activator school was founded with the purpose of enabling students to develop their cognitive abilities and character, in order to accomplish the objective of Pancasila by enhancing quality human resources (HR) in Indonesia (Adi et al., 2024). Activator schools are educational institutions that prioritise the development of student learning results. These goals are achieved through the implementation of highly skilled and irreplaceable human resources, including outstanding teachers and well-established schools.

Moreover, given its crucial role in modern times, it is imperative to provide secondary school students with education in the English language. The principles behind this are threefold: the imperative for all Indonesian students to acquire English as a necessity, the need for alignment in the English curriculum, and the equal distribution of learning quality. Acquiring English proficiency is essential for all students in Indonesia to effectively engage in cross-cultural interactions, international communication, and active participation in the global community. English proficiency may also impact the disparity in learning outcomes among students and educational institutions.

1.2 Research Question

Based on the background above, this research is designed to address three question which is listed below:

"How is the implementation of *Merdeka* Curriculum in teaching English at SMP Negeri 8 Ngabang?"

1.3 Research Purpose

In line with research question, research purpose is crucial parts of research. This purpose is formulated based on the research question above; therefore, the purpose of the research is as follow :

"To find out how is the implementation of *Merdeka* Curriculumin teaching English at SMP 8 Ngabang"

1.4 Research Significances

This research is formulated as an effort of finding some uses. The uses of this research are:

1. Theoretically, the result of the research can:
    a. Provide information on each Merdeka curriculum plan is the main target in achieving educational goals.
    b. Understand the teacher before and after implementing Merdeka Curriculum
    c. Present the information on the advantages of Merdeka Curriculumat the Activator school SMP Negeri 8 Ngabang.
    d. Know the achievements of SMP Negeri 8 Ngabang with Merdeka Curriculum

2. Practically, this research can also guide school supervisors, the principal, teachers,and students. In specifically:
   a. For school supervisor, as input in the preparation, planning, implementation and application of Merdeka Curriculumin a rural school.
   b. For the principal, as a reference that is used as input in implementing Merdeka Curriculumas a reference curriculum at SMP Negeri 8 Ngabang.
   c. For the teachers, as reference material or considerations that can provide input information to improve teacher performance in carrying out teaching responsibilities.
   d. Students, there is freedom to learn and appreciate abilities and ideas, creativity is not limited

1.5 Terminologies

The researcher presents the terms which are concerned to the topic to give the clarification generally and avoid misunderstanding among readers :

1. *Merdeka* Curriculum: The Merdeka Curriculum is an educational program that reflects modern technological advances (Zidan & Qamariah, 2023). It employs a creative and innovative learning approach by employing all available technologies in the fourth generation era. The curriculum promotes independent learning, allowing students to be independent, creative, and innovative. The Merdeka Curriculum emphasizes independent learning, which

focuses on students' interests and talents (Azmi et al., 2023). Consequently, students are expected to demonstrate greater creativity in their learning activities.

2. English Language Teaching : sometimes known as ELT, is the act of teaching those who do not have English as their first language in the English language. The primary objective of this educational process is to enhance students' competence in the four language skills of hearing, speaking, reading, and writing in the English language.
3. Rural School: A rural school is an educational institution situated in a rural or countryside environment, usually distant from urban or metropolitan regions. These schools provide to children living in rural villages, which are typically defined by lower populations, agricultural surroundings, and a more spread-out geographical structure (Biddle & Azano, 2016).
4. SMP Negeri 8 Ngabang : One of activator schools which located in rural area of Landak District, West Borneo.