

IMPLEMENTATION OF THE MERDEKA CURRICULUM IN ENGLISH LEARNING PROCESSES AT SMPN 1 KARANGTANJUNG

(A Descriptive Qualitative at Seventh Grade of SMPN 1 Karangtanjung)

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Abstract

This research aims to determine and describe the implementation of the merdeka curriculum in seventh grade English learning processes at SMPN 1 Karangtanjung and the teacher's perspective on the implementation of the merdeka curriculum at SMPN 1 Karangtanjung. This research used qualitative descriptive method with data collection techniques through observation, interviews and documentation. The data was obtained from the results of class observations conducted in class VII D and from 2 sources consisting of 1 class VII D English teacher and the vice principal of SMPN 1 Karangtanjung as a curriculum teacher and seventh class English teacher. In analyzing the data, researcher used the data analysis model from Milles and Huberman, namely data collection, data reduction, data presentation, and drawing conclusions. The findings that researcher obtained from this research are divided into two descriptions, including: First, the learning process which consists of planning activities, implementation activities and evaluation or assessment activities in class VII D takes place according to the merdeka curriculum. Meanwhile, at the end of the final assessment and grade promotion for all classes, the concept of the merdeka curriculum has not been implemented because joint exams are still being implemented and it is only planned to be implemented in the following year. Second, teachers' readiness to implement the merdeka curriculum at SMPN 1 Karangtanjung was carried out in stages and was well received. Differentiated learning is one of the challenges experienced by teachers when carrying out learning activities based on the Implementation of the merdeka Curriculum and the solution that teachers take is to study a lot, exchange ideas with other teachers and form a teaching community. Lastly, the merdeka curriculum is the best curriculum based on the experience of English teachers teaching at SMPN 1 Karangtanjung

Keywords: merdeka curriculum, learning process, implementation.

INTRODUCTION

Recently, there have been a lot of papers explaining the curriculum which is basically a learning material for researcher to develop educational development. The curriculum becomes very important after the many phenomena that occur in the world that require education to adapt the best curriculum. As stated by Ojong and Enyimba it is necessary for education in the world to regulate the education system, guide school activities, learning processes and academic staff to achieve their goals and objectives efficiently (Enyimba, 2019). Budiyanto also stated that the curriculum

is one of the best and most appropriate standards for organizing and driving teaching and learning activities and processes. Therefore Budiyanto added that it is important for the government and education stakeholders to be creative, smart, innovative, critical in paying attention to the curriculum so that it fits the needs of students, teachers and schools (Budiyanto, 2020).

In Indonesia, after the COVID-19 pandemic occurred in recent years, the government has been intensively socializing the merdeka curriculum, especially at the lower education level to higher education, both of which are required to adapt the merdeka curriculum as the curriculum implemented in schools (Purwanti, 2021). This is based on policy considerations issued by the Minister of Culture, Research and Technology (Mendikbudristek) as one of the efforts made by the government during the learning crisis, especially after the COVID-19 pandemic in Indonesia (Riyan Rizaldi & Fatimah, 2022). The interests and needs of students are known as the Merdeka Curriculum which is still related and is part of the Program Merdeka Belajar (Mazid et al., 2021). As the name suggests, the Merdeka Curriculum is a curriculum that seeks to liberate students and teachers in learning process and activities (Antara, 2021). Learning processes and activities are related to each other as described by Baharun and Syafiqiyah learning activities or processes related to the development of curriculum goals as one of the main components of the curriculum (Baharun & Adhimiy, 2018). Besides that the activity or learning process is the result of curriculum implementation as stated by Tukiran and Rudi Wijaya (Tukiran & Wijaya, 2022).

Fakhrurrazi defines the learning process or it can also be said as a process that involves teachers and students with goals that can be achieved efficiently and effectively (Fakhrurrazi, 2018). Munna and Abul Kalam added that the teaching and learning process is defined as the process of transferring knowledge from teachers to students. It is also referred to as a combination of learning elements in the process in which an educator determines and analyzes learning objectives and implements teaching and learning strategies by developing teaching resources (Munna & Kalam, 2021). In the learning process activities, the curriculum is important because it serves as a guideline for achieving targets in learning and with a curriculum, learning activities and processes become effective and facilitate each teacher in teaching and learning activities (Wahyudi, 2017). The relationship between the two forms the basis of an interesting research, namely between learning processes and merdeka curriculum as research material.

The Implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum has been previously evaluated using descriptive qualitative. However, the focus and results of these studies are different. For Examples Prastowo found that the implementation of the merdeka curriculum received positive results, especially the focus on assessments (Prastowo, 2023). It was supported by Shadri et al., (Shadri et al., 2023) While, Rizki and Fahkrunisa received negative, especially about the readiness of the teacher (Rizki & Fahkrunisa,

2022). Tricahyati and Zaim also expressed their agreement based on the results of quantitative data showing that teachers experienced problems in formulating learning outcomes and applying differentiated learning during the teaching and learning process (Tricahyati & Zaim, 2023). In addition, in a different curriculum phenomena. Researcher also found that the learning process was not carried out optimally in the implementation of the 2013 curriculum studied by Nurkhamidah, this also had an impact on the assessment process which had not been implemented optimally (Nurkhamidah, 2017). Contrary to the results of research conducted by Bulan et.al., the results of this study indicate that the process of learning English using the 2013 curriculum is carried out very well (Bulan et al., 2020).

This research is in several ways similar to the research "The Implementation of *Merdeka* Curriculum in English Teaching Learning at The Seventh Grade of SMPIT Insan Mulia Surakarta in The Academic Year 2022/2023" by Sari, but differs in many ways. For example: the research conducted by Sari was conducted at SMPIT which used a separate school policy in implementing merdeka curriculum, especially in learning activities. This made the results of this study slightly different, especially in the application of merdeka curriculum in the learning process. In addition, the research conducted by Sari used 2 classes as the subject under study with class observations conducted 2 times in 2 classes without using the time allocation specified in the teaching module and also focused on the problems faced by teachers in implementing the merdeka curriculum in class (Apsari, 1970). While the research conducted by the researcher this time was carried out at SMPN 1 Karangtanjung as sekolah penggerak and focused on class VII D and was observed during 5 meetings according to the time allocation in the teacher's teaching module. In addition, the stages of the learning process at the planning, implementation, and evaluation stages in this study are explained in more detail based on the teacher's guidebook in implementing the merdeka curriculum. And also focuses on the teachers' perspective in implementing the *merdeka* curriculum at SMPN 1 Karangtanjung in terms of readiness, solutions, obstacles/challenges and advantages/advantages.

Researcher presents a new phenomenon, namely *merdeka* curriculum related to the learning process as the focus of research. In addition, researcher also examined teachers' perspective on the *merdeka* curriculum carried out at SMPN 1 Karangtanjung which was selected as sekolah penggerak and one of the schools implementing the merdeka curriculum in Pandeglang. The results of this study are expected to contribute as a reference for researcher and educators, especially in the implementation of the merdeka curriculum in the learning process in the classroom. Based on the statement above, it can be seen that the purpose of this research is to describe learning processes and activities based on the implementation of the *merdeka* curriculum and the perspectives of teachers in implementing merdeka curriculum using a qualitative descriptive research entitled "*Implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum in English Learning Processes at SMPN 1 Karangtanjung*"

METHOD

This study uses a qualitative descriptive method because its main objective is to describe the English learning process including the stages carried out by teachers and students in class VII D based on the implementation of the *merdeka* curriculum. The purpose of descriptive research as explained by Nassaji is research that describes a phenomenon, its characteristics and is more concerned with what than how or why something happens (Nassaji, 2015). Besides that Sugiyono also argues that the descriptive method is a research method that only looks intensely at the phenomena for a moment and then describes exactly what the author sees (Sugiyono, 2011). This made the researcher choose a qualitative descriptive method as a method that matched the title chosen by the researcher since the researcher studied the process of learning English carried out by teachers and students who would later be observed by researcher and then described.

In this case, the respondents chosen by the researcher were considered because: 1) the research subjects studied were English teachers and students of class VII D who were directly involved in the process of learning English and implementing the *merdeka* curriculum in class, 2) English teachers and teachers of the curriculum section who are considered to understand and master the *merdeka* curriculum and who are the source of information about the *merdeka* curriculum. After knowing this, the researcher clearly determined that the participants in this study were English teacher for class VII D, and the vice principle of SMPN 1 Karangtanjung as curriculum teacher and all students for class VII D as object of observation class. In addition, the data collection procedure used in this study were observation, interview and Documentatio. Then, the data were analyzed qualitatively. Finally, the researcher reduced, displayed, and verified the data use.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum in the English learning processes in class VII D of SMPN 1 Karangtanjung

From the results of interviews, direct observations and documentations obtained by researcher, it can be seen that the implementation of the *merdeka* curriculum in the learning process includes: planning, Implementation and assessment/Evaluation.

1. Planning

Learning Planning in this learning process which includes: (1) Understanding Capaian Pembelajaran (2) Formulating Tujuan Pembelajaran (3) Developing Alur Tujuan pembelajaran from Tujuan Pembelajaran (4) Designing learning (teaching modules).

2. Implementation

The Merdeka Curriculum has been implemented at SMPN 1 Karangtanjung for

2 years. Based on the findings above, the implementation of the merdeka curriculum at SMPN 1 Karangtanjung is very suitable for all subjects in schools, especially English subjects for several very beneficial reasons, such as from more essential material which makes it easier for students to learn before learning more difficult things without reducing the subject matter of the lesson.

Based on the findings above, The implementation of the merdeka curriculum at SMPN 1 Karangtanjung is divided into 2 parts: namely implementation in the learning process, namely intra-curricular and outside the learning process, namely project activities outside of which are *Projek Penguatan Profil Pelajar Pancasila* or P5.

The implementation of the merdeka curriculum in the process and activities of learning English has been carried out by the teacher at each stage, this can be seen from the teaching modules that have been prepared by the teacher beforehand based on the results of the student's diagnostic test. The implementation of the merdeka Curriculum in the learning process has been carried out by the teacher in each learning activity. These stages include the initial stage, core stage, and closing stage. From the findings that have been described, in the initial activities the teacher always carries out guidance and treatment according to content differentiation learning, namely treating students differently according to the needs of students, for example asking students to write verses about the diversity of ethnic groups contained in the Qur'an for Muslim students and the Bible for non-Muslim students. Muslim. This is in accordance with the alternative theory of learning approaches according to the stages of student achievement that can be carried out by educators based on the merdeka curriculum guidebook. Besides that, carrying out social-emotional learning in accordance with the merdeka curriculum, such as checking student readiness and motivating students to be enthusiastic about learning and giving trigger questions related to the material to be studied and lasted for six meetings. *Tujuan pembelajaran* are only explained in the first meeting while the next meeting goes directly to the initial activities, core activities and closing activities. In the core activities the teacher carries out differentiated learning activities. both process differentiation learning is in the second meeting, content differentiation in the third meeting and product differentiation in the fifth and sixth meetings. Furthermore, in the closing activities the teacher focuses on reflecting activities and concluding activities based on social-emotional learning and self-awareness which is carried out in six meetings.

3. Evaluation/Assessment

At the evaluation stage, it contains the assessment process for class VII D of

SMPN 1 Karangtanjung and its suitability with the *Merdeka* Curriculum. Based on the findings above, evaluation in the *merdeka* curriculum is called judgment in everyday life and with the same goal of assessing attitudes, knowledge and skills without disclosing them. Based on the findings described above, it can be seen that in the *Merdeka* Curriculum a thorough evaluation is carried out on the assessment of attitudes, knowledge, and skills. This is consistent with the findings from Sari that attitudinal, social, and spiritual assessments are not separated directly described in one assessment. (Sari, 2023) This is a simpler assessment development than in the 2013 curriculum assessment. Based on the findings in the assessment section of the *merdeka* curriculum, it has a concept that is its own characteristic.

The *merdeka* curriculum has three types of assessment, namely: diagnostic, formative and summative. The three assessments were applied to learning English in class VII D at SMPN 1 Karangtanjung and are in accordance with the results found by Shadri et.al. (Shadri et al., 2023) The non-cognitive diagnostic assessment given at the beginning of the semester can be in the form of questions about students' interests, needs, and identities which can be done via digital sheets on Google forms or printed sheets. In this case the researcher obtained information regarding the results of the diagnostic test from the English teacher in class VII D by PCR and then from the module attachment. The results of the non-cognitive diagnostic assessment show (1) 95% of students are Muslim and 5% are Christian, (2) students have different interests, (3) students have different learning styles, namely auditory, visual, and kinesthetic, and (4) 90% of students have cellphones and 10% do not have cellphones. while cognitive diagnostics were given at the beginning of learning which showed that 20% of students had good learning readiness, and 80% of students had low learning readiness.

Based on the findings above the formative assessment applied in class VII D is divided into two, namely assessment as learning in this case in the form of alternative learning that is part of the learning activity is not the final assessment of learning in the form of an attached numerical assessment but only a part of learning or learning methods such as learning based on worksheets conducted at the first meeting. Meanwhile, Assessment for learning is aimed at improving assessments, for example formative assessments that are carried out at each meeting with the aim of improving learning at the next meeting. This was implemented in class VII D in meetings 1, 2 and 3.

Based on the findings above, the summative assessment was carried out in class VII D after the formative assessment series had been completed. In addition, the summative assessment applied in class VII D was in the form of

scientific work or products, not only in the form of questions, and the aim was to test and assess students' abilities after doing learning in 1 module for several meetings.

Based on found data. In the *merdeka* curriculum there is no Minimum Completeness Criteria (KKM) instead in the *merdeka* curriculum the Learning Objectives Completeness Criteria (KKTP) are used with notes not included in the report card or notified to students. So that students are not required to be forced to exceed the minimum value but are guided slowly to achieve the learning objectives completeness criteria and this is applied to learning English in class VII D SMPN 1 Karangtanjung. This is in accordance with the presentation of the first school directorate general in the planning, implementation and processing of formative and summative assessments.

Teachers' perspectives on the implementation of the *merdeka* curriculum in learning processes and activities at SMPN 1 Karangtanjung

1. Ther Readiness

At first, the readiness of teachers at SMPN 1 Karangtanjung did not immediately accept and then generally accepted because they attended the *Diklat Komite Pembelajaran* (DKP) training which initially recruited 11 teachers and after that the 11 teachers disseminated each to other teachers such as the Indonesian language teacher to Indonesian language teacher, math teacher to math teacher and so on. After conducting training, workshops and having many teachers driving SMPN 1 Karangtanjung to become a PSP school and the readiness of the teachers is getting better.

2. The Obstacles and Solutions

The obstacles experienced by teachers when carrying out learning activities based on *Implementasi Kurikulum Merdeka* (IKM) are learning that requires teachers to carry out differentiated learning because teachers must be more active, creative and innovative in designing learning tools according to student needs and the solution is that teachers have to learn a lot, exchange minds with other teachers and form a teaching community. Apart from that, for example, other obstacles in differentiated learning are if students do not have digital learning tools in class because the *merdeka* curriculum uses digitization such as cellphones which are not owned by every student. The teacher must think of other ways so that all students study well, for example by making printed teaching materials if students don't want to join with students who have Handphone.

3. Teachers' Experience

The *merdeka* curriculum is the best curriculum for several reasons, especially because the curriculum is in favor of students, students are not required to

achieve one competency or achieve a score of 100 and teachers are more flexible in making material because CP also has a wide enough scope to give freedom to teachers, For example, the teacher is free to make learning tools that do not have to be in accordance with the teaching materials provided by the school but can be developed by each teacher and the teacher also does not have to follow the curriculum targets as in the 2013 curriculum but in the *merdeka* curriculum the teacher is free to take 1 competency or 2 competencies with notes students are really able to learn the material.

4. Teacher's Perspective

The last one is related to the implementation of the curriculum implemented at SMPN 1 Karangtanjung based on the findings it was found that the *merdeka* curriculum at SMPN 1 Karangtanjung was not complete or pure before being replaced by the joint final exam which was usually questions made by the MGMP with formative assessments during learning and summative assessments at the end of each learning material made by the respective subject teacher which is then compiled in student report cards as the final value. This is in accordance with the learning planning process based on *merdeka* curriculum issued by Primayana and the Education Standards, Curriculum and Assessment Board of the Ministry of Education, Culture, Research and Technology of the Republic of Indonesia in the learning guidebook and assessment of Early Childhood Education, Basic Education and Secondary Education.

CONCLUSION

Based on the research results, researcher can conclude that the *Merdeka* Curriculum has been implemented in the process of learning English in class while the implementation of the *Merdeka* Curriculum in determining the final grade has not been implemented and is still in the planning stage to be implemented in the next year's assessment. At the planning stage starting with analyzing the *Capaian Pembelajaran*, then compiling the *tujuan pembelajaran* and *Alur tujuan pembelajaran*, then carrying out a diagnostic test for early learning, and after that designing the Teaching Module based on data from diagnostic test results. Meanwhile, the *merdeka* curriculum implementation stage at SMPN 1 Karangtanjung is very suitable in all subjects, especially for English subjects, and SMPN 1 Karangtanjung has implemented the implementation of the *merdeka* curriculum both in learning activities and outside learning activities such as in the P5 project activities. In the implementation of the *merdeka* curriculum in class VII D learning activities include initial activities, core activities and closing activities that

have been adapted to the teaching modules and in accordance with the principles of the merdeka curriculum. After that, the closing activity highlights reflection as material for evaluating teachers and students.

At the evaluation or assessment stage in class VII D, three types of assessment have been used in the merdeka curriculum, namely diagnostic assessment, formative assessment and summative assessment, while in relation to the final assessment, formative assessment and summative assessment have not been used as the final grade. The last and planned to be implemented in the next academic year. In the assessment reporting activities, the KKTP was used which was adapted to the merdeka curriculum concept instead of using the KKM.

In the implementation of the merdeka curriculum at SMPN 1 Karangtanjung there are several views of the teacher while implementing the merdeka curriculum in the learning environment, especially in the classroom. First, at the readiness stage of the 7th grade English teacher in implementing the merdeka curriculum at SMPN 1 Karangtanjung received it gradually with Diklat Komite Pembelajaran (DKP) guidance and training. The obstacles experienced by teachers when carrying out learning activities based on the Implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum (IKM) are learning that requires teachers to carry out differentiated learning because teachers must be more active, creative and innovative in designing learning tools according to student needs and the solution is that teachers have to learn a lot, exchange minds with other teachers and form a teaching community.

And according to the teachers' perspectives, the merdeka curriculum is the best curriculum for several reasons, especially because the curriculum is in favor of students and the teacher is free to make learning tools, the teacher also does not have to follow the curriculum targets as in 2013 and the teacher is free to take 1 competency or 2 competencies with notes students are really able to learn the material.

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