A Description of English Teaching Based on Curriculum Merdeka

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semua kegiatan tahapan kegiatan inti pembelajaran yang ada dalam observasi penelitian. Demikian halnya siswa menunjukkan partisipasi aktif dalam proses pembelajaran mulai berdoa, menjawab pertanyaan pemantik, mengidentifikasi ungkapan dari topik yang dibahas, bekerja dalam kelompok, menyelesaikan tugas, berdiskusi, mempresentasikan hasil hasil diskusi dan mengikuti evaluasi yang diberika guru.

Kesimpulan dan Implikasi: Penelitian ini menyimpulkan bahwa meskipun implementasi Kurikulum Merdeka telah dilakukan dengan berbagai persiapan dan pengetahuan yang ada, masih ada ruang untuk perbaikan dalam mendukung para guru agar lebih siap dan mampu mengimplementasikan kurikulum ini secara efektif dalam proses pembelajaran mereka. Implikasi penelitian ini adalah pengajaran bahasa Inggris berdasarkan kurikulum merdeka memberikan ruang kemandirian bagi guru dan siswa dalam menetapkan capaian dan metode pencapaiannya.

INTRODUCTION

English has become a global language that plays an important role in various aspects of modern life, including education, technology, business and international communication.[1], [2] In the context of education in Indonesia, English language teaching is an integral part of the school curriculum (Regulation of the Minister of Education and Culture of the Republic of Indonesia No. 37/2018). The curriculum, as a learning plan that includes objectives, content, methods, and assessment, becomes the foundation in directing the English learning process in schools.[3]

Along with the times and global demands, Indonesia has undergone several curriculum changes in an effort to improve the quality of education. One of the curricula that has been implemented is Curriculum 2013 (K13), which was developed to prepare students for the challenges of the 21st century (Regulation of the Minister of Education and Culture of the Republic of Indonesia Number 69 of 2013). In the context of English language teaching, K13 emphasises the development of language skills covering aspects of speaking, listening, reading and writing. However, with the advent of the Merdeka Curriculum, there has been a paradigm shift in English language teaching.[4]

The Merdeka Curriculum adopts a more flexible and adaptive approach,[5], [6], [7] with an emphasis on developing English competencies that are integrated with other competencies such as literacy, numeracy, and life skills (Regulation of the Minister of Education and Culture of the Republic of Indonesia Number 4 of 2020). This concept aims to equip students with English language skills that can be applied in various real-life contexts. However, the implementation of Merdeka Curriculum in English language teaching in schools still faces various challenges and difficulties.

Based on the initial observation conducted at SMK Negeri 1 Limboto, it was found that the school has implemented Merdeka Curriculum in teaching English. However, in its implementation, there are still some obstacles faced by teachers and students. Teachers still have difficulties in designing lessons that are in accordance with the principles of the Merdeka Curriculum, such as integrating English language skills with literacy, numeracy, and life skills. In addition, students also face challenges in participating in English learning that is more flexible and adaptive, especially in applying English skills in real contexts.[8]

Seeing this phenomenon, this research has a high urgency in an effort to improve the quality of English teaching based on the Merdeka Curriculum at SMK Negeri 1 Limboto. By describing

the implementation of English language teaching this research is expected to make a significant contribution to improving learning practices at the school.

The results of this study give a valuable input for English teachers at SMK Negeri 1 Limboto in improving their competence in teaching according to the principles of Merdeka Curriculum. The research findings can be the basis for developing learning strategies that are more effective, innovative, and in line with students' needs. Thus, teacher are be more prepared and confident in designing and implementing English language learning integrated with literacy, numeracy and life skills.[9]

In addition, this research will also benefit students at SMK Negeri 1 Limboto. With improvements in English learning practices based on Merdeka Curriculum, students will have better opportunities to develop their English skills holistically. They will be better prepared to face challenges in the world of work and daily life armed with English language skills integrated with literacy, numeracy, and life skills.

More broadly, this research can also make a significant academic contribution to the development of English language teaching based on the Merdeka Curriculum in Indonesia. The research findings can serve as a reference for other schools that will implement Merdeka Curriculum in English language teaching. By sharing experiences and good practices from SMK Negeri 1 Limboto, other schools can learn and adapt effective strategies in implementing the Merdeka Curriculum.[5]

This research is also supported by relevant theories, such as language learning theory, constructivism theory, and multiple intelligences theory. These theories provide a strong foundation in understanding how students learn language and how to create a conducive learning environment. In addition, previous research conducted. showed the importance of needs analysis in the implementation of English language teaching in primary schools that refers to the Merdeka Curriculum. The research serves as a reference in designing this study by considering a different context, namely at the vocational high school level.[6]

By considering the urgency and relevance of this research, it is expected that the results of the study can make a significant contribution to improving the quality of English teaching based on the Merdeka Curriculum at SMK Negeri 1 Limboto. The research findings will serve as a foundation for the development of learning strategies that are more effective, innovative, and in line with students' needs. In addition, this research can also serve as a reference for other schools in implementing the Merdeka Curriculum in English language teaching, so as to improve the quality of education more broadly in Indonesia. [12]

Thus, this research has the potential to have a positive impact on various parties, both for teachers, students, schools, and the world of education in general. A comprehensive understanding of English language teaching based on the Merdeka Curriculum at SMK Negeri 1 Limboto will serve as a foundation for efforts to improve the quality of education and develop students' English competence in accordance with the demands of the times. Through this research, it is hoped that a more conducive, effective, and meaningful learning environment can be created for students in learning English as a provision for facing future challenges.[13]

LITERATURE REVIEW

1. Definition of Curriculum

Etymologically the term curriculum *(curruclum)* comes from Greek, namely *curir* which means "runner" and *curere* which means "place to race".[14] Initially, the term curriculum came from the world of sports, especially in the field of athletics in ancient Roman Greece. In Latin the curriculum comes from the word *currere* which means running *(running)* as a life experience. In French, the term curriculum comes from the word courier which means running *(to run)*. In terminology curriculum

can be interpreted (1) tardisional / narrow and; (2) modern / broad. Tardisional mentions that initially the curriculum is defined as a subject or subject or field of study that students must master cognitively to pass a diploma.

2. Definition Curriculum Merdeka Belajar

Merdeka curriculum is an externally applied concept that focuses on giving students sufficient time to explore concepts and develop their skills.[15] This curriculum focuses on essential content that allows students to have enough time to explore concepts and develop skills.

3. Description of teaching At SMK Level

Vocational high school is (SMK) one form of formal education unit that organizes vocational education at the secondary education level as a continuation of junior high school / MTs or other equivalent forms or continuation of learning outcomes that are recognized as equal / equivalent to junior high school / MTs. (Law No. 20/2003, article 18 paragraph 3), vocational education is secondary education that prepares students primarily to work in certain fields.

4. English Language Teaching Based on Curriculum Merdeka

The Merdeka Curriculum, introduced by the Ministry of Education and Culture of the Republic of In donesia, brought significant changes in the approach to English language teaching in Indonesia. The curriculum is based on the principles of student-centred learning, flexibility and 21st century skills development. In the context of English language teaching, Merdeka Curriculum aims to develop students' communicative abilities holistically, with an emphasis on four key language skills: listening, speaking, reading and writing.

METHOD

This type of research is descriptive qualitative research that provides insight into the setting and regular and orderly occurrence of factors, properties, and relationships between phenomena that only have basics. To reflect comprehensive and in-depth knowledge of the topic, researchers present descriptive data in the study which includes written or oral data, informants, and behavior to be observed.[16]

The purpose of descriptive research is to present systematic information about the properties and characteristics of objects and subjects to be studied carefully for various issues related to human behavior and the field of education.

Tools to present the views of the subject to be studied, provide a comprehensive picture and similar to what readers experience in their daily lives, provide an assessment or context that helps implement phenomena in their context can be found in qualitative methods, using more observation, interviews, documentation, and many other features.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

SMK Negeri 1 Limboto's vision and mission is to produce people who are noble, creative, innovative, skilled, environmentally friendly, and of high quality through education based on culture, religion, science, technology, skills, a comfortable environment, quality management, and 21st century learning.

Data from the results of this study were obtained through interviews conducted on March 14-29, 2024 at SMK Negeri 1 Limboto. The informants interviewed by the researcher were English teachers. The following is a description of the research results obtained from each research informant.[17]

This study shows that teachers at SMK Negeri 1 Limboto have a fairly good level of readiness in the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum, particularly in English language learning. They

demonstrated a good understanding of the characteristics and structure of the curriculum, as well as readiness in lesson planning, module development, and assessment planning. However, there are still challenges that need to be overcome, especially related to infrastructure limitations and adjustments to teaching methods. As stated by Ibu Ayu as the English teacher at SMK Negeri 1 limboto, "the main characteristics of this curriculum are student-centred learning, emphasis on developing basic competencies, and strengthening national character and values. Furthermore, the structure of the independent curriculum consists of several core components, including compulsory subjects determined by the government, elective subjects that can be chosen by students according to their interests and talents, and project activities that emphasise the practical and collaborative application of the knowledge learned. The curriculum also integrates technology and project-based learning approaches to encourage innovation and creativity in the teaching and learning process." [18]

Moreover, the interview with the English teacher, Mrs Ayu, revealed that the development of teaching modules requires a clear understanding of the importance of creating lesson plans and learning materials that align with the needs of students. This may entail selecting content that aligns with students' needs and interests, devising engaging learning activities to capture students' attention, and establishing clear and pertinent learning objectives for each subject. It also encompasses exploring diverse teaching approaches, such as project-based learning or group discussions, while leveraging technology to enrich the educational process. This approach facilitates the creation of engaging, comprehensive learning modules and materials that align with the requirements of the Merdeka Curriculum, ultimately enhancing student learning and performance. [19]

Furthermore, Mrs. Ayu elucidated the assessment plan, which encompasses a multitude of evaluation techniques in accordance with the Merdeka Curriculum. This ensures her preparedness in the domain of learning assessment. She has participated in training and workshops on project-based evaluation methods, the utilisation of formative and summative assessments, and the construction of rubrics. Furthermore, she plays an active role in the development and refinement of assessment instruments, ensuring that each student can be evaluated holistically based on their progress in attaining the predetermined competencies. These strategies can be employed by teachers to develop fair, transparent and perceptive assessments, which can facilitate efficient learning processes and enhance student learning outcomes.

This research provides valuable insights into the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum at the vocational secondary school level and can serve as a reference for the development of future educational policies and practices. Continued support from the government and education stakeholders is needed to overcome the challenges and ensure the overall success of this curriculum implementation.

The implementation of Merdeka Curriculum at SMK Negeri 1 Limboto shows a good level of readiness among teachers, especially in English language learning. This finding reflects the school's commitment to its vision and mission to produce graduates who are noble, creative, innovative, skilled, and of high quality through education based on culture, religion, science, technology, skills, a comfortable environment, quality management, and 21st century learning. This readiness is reflected in the teacher's understanding of the characteristics and structure of the curriculum, as well as readiness in lesson planning, module development, and assessment planning.[20]

The main characteristics of Merdeka Curriculum, as revealed by Mrs Ayu as an English teacher, include student-centred learning, emphasis on developing basic competencies, and strengthening national character and values. This is in line with the contemporary education paradigm that emphasises the importance of placing students as active subjects in the learning process, not just passive recipients of information. This approach aims to develop students' critical

thinking, creativity, and independence, which are essential skills in facing the challenges of the 21st century.

The structure of the Merdeka Curriculum, which consists of compulsory subjects, elective subjects, and project activities, reflects efforts to balance mastery of core knowledge with the development of students' individual interests and talents. The integration of technology and project-based learning approaches in this curriculum demonstrates an awareness of the importance of preparing students to face the digital and industrial 4.0 era. This approach not only aims to improve students' technical skills, but also to develop soft skills such as collaboration, communication, and complex problem solving.

The development of teaching modules in the context of Merdeka Curriculum requires a deep understanding of student needs and learning objectives. This process involves selecting relevant content, designing engaging learning activities, and setting clear and relevant learning objectives for each subject. This approach reflects a shift from an education model that focuses on knowledge transfer alone to one that is more holistic and centred on developing students' overall competencies.[21]

The use of various teaching approaches, such as project-based learning and group discussions, as well as the utilisation of technology in the learning process, shows an attempt to create a dynamic and interactive learning environment. This is in line with social constructivism theory which emphasises the importance of social interaction and practical experience in the learning process. This approach not only aims to improve students' conceptual understanding, but also to develop collaboration, communication, and critical problem-solving skills in a real-world context.

Assessment planning in the Merdeka Curriculum includes a comprehensive range of evaluation techniques. The use of formative and summative assessments, as well as the development of assessment rubrics, reflects an understanding of the importance of assessment as a tool to support and improve learning, rather than simply measuring end results. This holistic assessment approach is in line with the concept of authentic assessment, which emphasises the importance of evaluating students' ability to apply knowledge and skills in realistic and meaningful contexts.[22]

Teachers' active participation in training and workshops on project-based evaluation methods and assessment instrument development demonstrates a commitment to continuous professional development. This is important given that the implementation of a new curriculum often requires significant changes in teaching paradigms and approaches. Continuous professional development not only helps teachers master new techniques and strategies but also encourages critical reflection on their own teaching practices.[23]

Despite the good level of readiness, this study also identified some challenges in implementing Merdeka Curriculum, mainly related to infrastructure limitations and adjustments to teaching methods. Infrastructure challenges may include the availability of technology, adequate classrooms for collaborative learning, or learning resources appropriate to the new curriculum approach. These limitations can affect the effectiveness of curriculum implementation and need serious attention from education policy makers.[24]

Adjusting teaching methods is another challenge faced by teachers. The shift from traditional teacher-centred teaching approaches to more student-centred and project-based approaches requires a change in mindset and the development of new skills. Teachers need to adopt a new role as a learning facilitator, which requires different skills compared to the traditional role as a conveyor of information. This transition process may cause anxiety and resistance among some teachers, which needs to be addressed through continuous support and professional development.[25]

The implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum at SMK Negeri 1 Limboto also reflects efforts to balance global demands and local needs in education. The integration of national values and character strengthening in the curriculum shows an awareness of the importance of maintaining cultural identity in the context of globalisation. This approach is in line with the concept of "glocal" in education, which emphasises the importance of preparing students to become global citizens while retaining their cultural roots.

The emphasis on developing 21st century skills in the Merdeka Curriculum reflects an awareness of the rapid changes in the global economic and social landscape. Skills such as critical thinking, creativity, collaboration and digital literacy are considered key competencies required for success in the information age and knowledge-based economy. However, it is important to ensure that the focus on these skills does not come at the expense of solid mastery of basic knowledge, which remains an important foundation for further learning and development.[26]

Project-based learning approaches and technology integration in Merdeka Curriculum have the potential to improve the relevance of education to the needs of the world of work. This is particularly relevant for the context of vocational education at SMK Negeri 1 Limboto, where the link between school learning and the demands of the world of work is crucial. However, effective implementation of this approach requires close collaboration between schools and industries, as well as a deep understanding of the changing trends and needs of the labour market.

The role of teachers in the implementation of Merdeka Curriculum is crucial. This research shows that teachers at SMK Negeri 1 Limboto have shown good readiness in various aspects of curriculum implementation. However, it is important to ensure that ongoing support and professional development is available to teachers. This can include regular training, mentoring and opportunities to collaborate and share best practices with peers. Effective professional development focuses not only on the technical aspects of the curriculum, but also on developing the mindset and pedagogical skills required for successful implementation.[27]

Assessment in Merdeka Curriculum, which emphasises holistic and authentic evaluation, requires significant changes in traditional assessment practices. The shift from outcome-focused assessment to one that emphasises the learning process and the application of knowledge in real contexts requires the development of new assessment instruments and teacher training in their use. It is also important to ensure that these assessment systems can provide meaningful feedback to students and parents, and can be used to inform and improve teaching practices.

Implementing Merdeka Curriculum also has important implications for school management and educational leadership. Curriculum changes often require changes in organisational structures, resource allocation and decision-making processes at the school level. Effective leadership is needed to manage these changes, build consensus among various stakeholders and create a school culture that supports innovation and continuous improvement.[28]

The involvement of parents and communities in the implementation of Merdeka Curriculum is also an important aspect that needs to be considered. Significant changes in learning and assessment approaches may cause concern or confusion among parents. Therefore, it is important for schools to develop effective communication strategies to explain the objectives and benefits of the new curriculum to parents and the wider community. Active involvement of parents in their child's learning process can also support the successful implementation of the curriculum.

In conclusion, the implementation of Merdeka Curriculum at SMK Negeri 1 Limboto shows promising potential to improve the quality and relevance of vocational education. Good teacher readiness in various aspects of curriculum implementation is an important asset for success. However, the challenges identified, especially related to infrastructure and adjustments to teaching methods, need to be addressed systematically. Continued support from the government and other

education stakeholders is needed to overcome these challenges and ensure the overall success of curriculum implementation. [29]

This research provides valuable insights into the implementation of Merdeka Curriculum at the vocational secondary school level and can serve as a reference for the development of future educational policies and practices. However, it should be noted that this research is limited to one school and focuses on teachers' perspectives. Further research that includes the perspectives of students, parents and other stakeholders, as well as longitudinal studies to assess the long-term impact of this curriculum implementation, would be valuable to provide a more comprehensive understanding of the effectiveness and implications of Merdeka Curriculum in the context of vocational education in Indonesia.[30]

CONCLUSION AND IMPLICATIONS

In conclusion, while the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum has been undertaken with considerable effort and knowledge, there is still room for improvement in supporting teachers to be better prepared and able to implement this curriculum effectively in their learning processes. while the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum has been carried out with various preparations and existing knowledge, there is still room for improvement in supporting teachers to be better prepared and able to effectively implement this curriculum in their learning process, especially in terms of in-depth understanding of its characteristics, module preparation, assessment, and adjustment of supporting infrastructure.

Based on these results, the implications that can be identified are: Strengthening Training and Professional Development: There is a need for improvement in training and professional development for teachers to ensure a deeper understanding of Merdeka Curriculum. This includes training on curriculum characteristics, module development, and assessment processes that are in line with the principles of the new curriculum. Improved Infrastructure and Facilities: It is important to improve e school infrastructure and facilities to support more effective implementation of Merdeka Curriculum. This includes access to technology, language labs, digital libraries and classrooms that support collaborative and interactive learning. Adaptive Curriculum Development: There is a need to continue developing a curriculum that is adaptive and responsive to the needs of students as well as technological and societal developments. This will enable education that is more relevant and in line with the demands of the times. Continuous Monitoring and Evaluation: The implementation of Merdeka Curriculum needs to be supported by continuous monitoring and evaluation to identify successes and challenges faced. This is important for making regular adjustments and improvements.

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