

# **CHAPTER I**

## **INTRODUCTION**

This chapter explains the research background, research questions, research objectives, research scope and limitations, research significance, and definition of key terms.

### **A. Background of the Study**

The curriculum is the foundation and primary basis for implementing education, including plans, materials and teaching methods that affect the quality standards of student graduates. As the core of the education system, the curriculum serves as the leading guide for learning in schools and is designed to provide learning opportunities to achieve educational goals Kusumaningrum (2017). The changing times and the development of science and technology affect the culture and, thus, the curriculum. The government periodically adjusts and improves the curriculum and procedures at each level of education so that the curriculum remains relevant to the demands of the times, can improve the quality of the learning system, and optimally develops human potential Asri (2017). Therefore, the curriculum must be adaptable to ensure that education remains of high quality and in line with the needs of the times.

The Minister of Education, Culture, Research and Technology introduced the Merdeka Curriculum as a new curriculum. Merdeka Belajar emphasizes self-reliance and creative thinking. Launching the model school program is one of the Ministry of Education and Culture's initiatives to introduce self-directed learning. This curriculum is designed to help every school develop a generation of

lifelong learners with the characteristics of Pancasila students. The Merdeka Curriculum emphasizes the primary materials as well as the character and abilities of the learners. The main features of this curriculum that support learning recovery are project-based learning for soft skills and character development based on the profile of Pancasila learners and a focus on essential materials to allow sufficient time for in-depth learning of crucial competencies such as literacy and numeracy Barlian (2022).

Curriculum standardization is achieved through curriculum development, which relates to the curriculum of developed countries and has an international curriculum. The Cambridge Curriculum is one of the foreign curriculum used in Indonesia. The curriculum has a student-centered approach to project teaching and contextual problem-based learning relevant to the learner's environment and everyday activities. This curriculum helps students to focus on learning based on their areas of interest. This Cambridge Curriculum supports schools in developing a curriculum appropriate to their context, culture and ethos and can be adapted to meet the needs of their students (Cambridge et al. Education, 2019).

Curriculum development for international schools should focus on ideas for curriculum innovation and how to integrate the curriculum that has been implemented with the curriculum adopted from outside. Curriculum development is a planning process to create a broad and specific curriculum plan (Hamalik, 2007). Many schools in Indonesia blend or integrate the two subjects into the current curriculum. Curriculum integration is regulated in Chapter III Article 29 paragraph (4) of Law No. 12 of 2024 on curriculum in early childhood education, primary education, and secondary education, which states: "The development of the

Education Unit curriculum as referred to in paragraph (3) involves the school/madrasah committee under the coordination and supervision of the education office or the office of the ministry that organizes government affairs in the field of religion in the district/city."

Curriculum integration is an attempt to develop a curriculum by combining different aspects. An integrated curriculum removes the boundaries between different subjects and presents materials in an integrated form as a unit or whole (Hamalik, 1993). This integrated approach to the curriculum sees subject matter as interrelated. Teaching materials are adapted to the environment and social situation of the community as well as to the student's interests, talents and potential. As a result, learning is tailored to students' interests, talents, and potential. Through this integrative approach, students are expected to learn about complex issues in their environment. Through curriculum integration, students are expected to be able to recognize, evaluate and apply relevant information from their environment appropriately.

International Islamic Elementary School of Pesantren Sabilil Muttaqien Kediri combines three curriculum at the same time: the Merdeka Curriculum, the Cambridge Curriculum and the Islamic Curriculum (application of Islamic values) and has implemented the Cambridge Curriculum, which is integrated with the Merdeka Curriculum in some subjects. In addition, International Islamic Elementary School of Pesantren Sabilil Muttaqien Kediri applies international standards and Islamic values, such as using English in teaching and applying religious values and the Sunnah of the Prophet in daily life. According to Hamalik (2007), curriculum development is the process of planning to produce a broad and specific curriculum

plan. Another definition of *curriculum development* is the process of planning and curriculum development by curriculum developers and the activities undertaken to use the resulting curriculum as teaching materials and references to achieve national education goals.

Curriculum integration is a curriculum model that can integrate skills according to the integrated curriculum, and a subject must be integrated as a whole. Curriculum integration must be done to strengthen the current curriculum. *Curriculum integration* is an attempt to create a curriculum by merging curricula. Educational ideals are infused into each subject during the teaching process. As one of the international curricula, the Cambridge Curriculum is considered capable of improving educational standards, especially for schools, because it is directly related to the quality of future graduates. (Widjanarko & Budiyo, 2018).

Some previous studies, such as the one conducted by Nafisah (2018), show that the Cambridge curriculum can create active and enjoyable learning and increase the complexity of students' thinking. According to Amalia and Sayekti (2016), the Cambridge Curriculum combined with the 2013 Curriculum shows that student graduates can compete in the future and face the Assean Economic Community (AEC).

Elementary School Pesantren Sabilil Muttaqien Kediri is a school in Kediri that has implemented the Cambridge Curriculum integrated with the Merdeka Curriculum. Elementary School Pesantren Sabilil Muttaqien Kediri is one of the model schools in Kediri city. Elementary School Pesantren Sabilil Muttaqien Kediri is the only Islamic school in Kediri City that has implemented the Cambridge

Curriculum as a supplementary curriculum. In addition, International Islamic Elementary School of Pesantren Sabilil Muttaqien Kediri is an Islamic school that applies international standards and Islamic values, such as using English in learning and applying the Sunnah of the Prophet in daily life.

Based on the initial research, International Islamic Elementary School of Pesantren Sabilil Muttaqien Kediri that applies the Merdeka Curriculum of the Education Department and the Cambridge Curriculum of Cambridge University. The teaching process in the Elementary School of Pesantren Sabilil Muttaqien Kediri also involves international standards from Cambridge, including the use of English in teaching. Both curriculum aim to produce quality graduates who can compete locally and internationally.

The researcher researched curriculum integration because applying the Merdeka Curriculum integration with the Cambridge Curriculum is one of the curriculum developments that are considered capable of improving the quality of education. Therefore, researcher want to find out more about the implementation of curriculum integration and the implementation of teaching in English. Therefore, based on the explanation above, the researcher conducted a study entitled **“INTEGRATION OF MERDEKA CURRICULUM AND CAMBRIDGE CURRICULUM IN ENGLISH LANGUAGE TEACHING (A Case Study at Elementary School of Pesantren Sabilil Muttaqien Kediri)”**

## **B. Research Question**

Based on the research background above, the research questions are formulated as follows:

1. What kind of integration model of Merdeka Curriculum and Cambridge Curriculum applied at the International Islamic Elementary School of Pesantren Sabilil Muttaqien Kediri?
2. How is the implementation of the Curriculum Integration Model applied to the EFL Class at the International Islamic Elementary School of Pesantren Sabilil Muttaqien Kediri?

## **C. The Objectives of the Study**

Based on the research questions above, the objectives of this study are;

1. To describe what the integration model of Merdeka Curriculum and Cambridge Curriculum is implemented applied at the International Islamic Elementary School of Pesantren Sabilil Muttaqien Kediri.
2. To find out how the implementation of the Curriculum Integration Model applied to the EFL Class at the International Islamic Elementary School of Pesantren Sabilil Muttaqien Kediri.

## **D. Scope and Limitations of the Study**

Limitations are necessary to avoid expanding the subject. Therefore, this research was conducted on the integration of Merdeka Curriculum and Cambridge Curriculum with emphasis on implementation and integration limitations. This research is only for the fifth grade students of the International Islamic Elementary School of Pesantren Sabilil Muttaqien Kediri in the school year 2023/20234.

## **E. Significance of the Study**

For teachers, this research can help teachers integrate the Cambridge Curriculum and the Merdeka curriculum in learning. It will improve the quality of education and the progress of learning.

For schools, this research can be used as an evaluation tool for schools to improve the quality of education by integrating the Merdeka curriculum and the Cambridge curriculum at the International Islamic Elementary School of Pesantren Sabilil Muttaqien Kediri

For future researchers, they can use this research as starting material for further studies on how the Cambridge curriculum is integrated into the Merdeka curriculum. In addition, to improve the quality of Islamic education by increasing scientific insight.

## **F. Definition of Key Terms**

### **1. Curriculum**

Curriculum refers to the plan or structure that organizes the learning process in an educational institution. It includes the learning objectives, the materials taught, the teaching methods, and the ways of evaluation to achieve the academic goals. In short, the Curriculum is the overarching guide that forms the foundation for students' learning experiences at school.

### **2. Curriculum Integration**

Curriculum Integration is an attempt to combine or bring together elements from different Curriculum into a coherent learning plan. This approach aims to integrate materials, objectives, methods, and assessments from other

Curriculum into a single unit to provide students with a more holistic learning experience.

### 3. Merdeka Curriculum

*Merdeka Curriculum* is an educational concept that allows schools to develop a curriculum that suits students' needs, potential, and local context. This approach encourages creativity, innovation, and adjustment of learning materials and methods to make them more relevant and effective for students. The Merdeka Curriculum emphasizes improving skills, knowledge, and values following the characteristics of students and the community where the school is located.

### 4. Cambridge Curriculum

*Cambridge Curriculum* is an international education program that offers global standards. It emphasizes critical thinking, communication, and collaboration skills and a deep understanding of subjects. The Curriculum is designed to prepare students for global challenges by emphasizing critical thinking and lifelong learning.

### 5. International Islamic Elementary School

International Islamic Elementary Schools are educational institutions that offer an international curriculum enriched with Islamic values and local wisdom. Their aim is to provide a high-quality education that integrates religious values with global education standards, equipping students with broad knowledge, skills, and international understanding.