

## **CHAPTER I**

### **INTRODUCTION**

This chapter presents; Background of the study, research question, objectives of the study, significance of the study, scope and limitation and definition of key terms.

#### **1.1 Background of the study**

The level of civilization and character of a nation is largely determined by the success of the world of education. To give birth to a nation of character, the education carried out should teach the values of a character. Samani and Hariyanto, (2013) states, the character is a way of thinking and behaving that is unique to each individual to live and work together, both within the scope of family, community, nation, and state. Muslich (2011) states that there are principles in the framework of fostering national character, namely: (1) Education as an arena to re activate the noble character of the Indonesian nation, (2) Education as a means to awaken the nation's character to accelerate development and mobilization domestic potential to increase the nation's competitiveness; and (3) Education as a means to internalize both aspects above.

Education actually has a more important purpose than getting a grade on a piece of paper. This goal is none other than so that children are able to learn and respond to life's challenges, so an educator needs to teach students to better understand the meaning of everything they learn and to be more independent in

learning, namely creating students who are aware of the need for learning, committed to the goals they have set, independently looking for ways to achieve these goals and able to reflect on the process and achievements.

Minister of National Education and Culture, Nadiem Anwar Makarim, at the commemoration of National Teachers' Day on November 25 2019, in his speech he delivered a breakthrough for learning efforts by emphasizing that the success of Indonesian education in the future depends on freedom in learning. (Budi & Apud, 2019) Freedom to learn here means that independent teachers mean educational units or schools, teachers and their students who have the freedom to innovate, learn independently and be creative. It could also be said that this is educational autonomy. The government trying to revive educational autonomy in this era with the hope that all Indonesian students will have their own variety of ways of learning.

This independent learning program was born because there were many complaints from students who were pegged to certain grades. When talking about teacher independence and independence study, it will come into contact with many things. The process of independent learning must be attached to the subjects carrying out the learning process, whether children or adults. Including involving many parties. In relation to freedom of learning, the Ministry of Education and Culture (Mendikbud) has issued Circular Letter (SE) Number 1 of 2020 concerning the Freedom of Learning Policy in Determining Student Graduation and Admission of New Students for the 2020/2021 Academic Year. Not only that,

the Ministry of Education and Culture (Mendikbud) also issued Circular Letter (SE) Number 56 of 2022 concerning Guidelines for Implementing Curriculum in the Context of Learning Recovery (Merdeka Curriculum) as a guideline for Implementing the New Curriculum in Schools Not Participating in the Mobilization Program.

If someone says teachers are the key, that is the same as shifting responsibility and setting teachers up to fail. Of course teachers have an important role in education, but with the large demands on teachers and the high level of competence, this will not be achieved if teachers do not have independence. Teacher independence in the long term has a central role in fostering student learning independence. (Najeela, 2018)

The Minister of Education and Culture, Nadiem Makarim, delivered a slightly different speech. During the 2019 National Teachers' Day (HGN) flag ceremony in Jakarta, he delivered one short sentence from the bottom of his heart, namely "One thing is certain, I will fight for freedom to study in Indonesia". He invited Indonesian teachers to make small changes, including developing class discussions and student teaching.

'Merdeka' curriculum will only be implemented into the national curriculum in 2024. In other words, the change in curriculum will occur after the previous curriculum (*K-13*) has been implemented for 11 years. For now, the Merdeka curriculum is still an option, because there are two main goals from the government, first, the government, in this case the Ministry of Education and

Culture, wants to emphasize that schools have the authority and responsibility to develop a curriculum that suits the needs and context of each school. Second, it is hoped that the process of changing the national curriculum can occur smoothly and gradually. (Indonesian Ministry of Education and Culture, Merdeka Curriculum Question and Answer Pocket Book). This curriculum consists of intracurricular activities, projects to strengthen Pancasila student profiles, and extracurriculars.

Curriculum changes are not a necessity but must be accompanied by teacher readiness in implementing the 2013 curriculum. Teachers are the spearhead of the success of achieving a curriculum. Teacher readiness in teaching is very important before teaching, which includes making lesson plans, material to be studied, preparing teaching materials and learning media. During learning which includes the use of strategies, learning methods and after learning there is assessment and evaluation. Everything is regulated in the curriculum.

Based on previous research journals researched by Melin (2023) entitled Teacher Perceptions of the Implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum at SMP IT Fathona OKU Baturaja and SMP IT Tunas Cendikia Baturaja, the results showed that teachers at SMP IT Fathona OKU Baturaja and SMP IT Tunas Cendikia Baturaja had positive perceptions and good appreciation for the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum.

Another research revealed that the opinion of English teachers regarding the implementation of Merdeka curriculum is that the concepts and skills covered

in Merdeka curriculum are not all understood by English teachers. While some may be aware of the three roles teachers play in extracurricular, co-curricular, and intracurricular activities, others may not fully understand competencies such as moral character, independence, faith, and strong devotion to God, as well as teamwork, critical thinking, and creativity. The student-centered approach in Merdeka curriculum is highly valued among English teachers. They believe that this curriculum can guide and help students become more qualified individuals who can face problems in the future (Defriani,2024).

‘Merdeka’ curriculum has been implemented in Indonesia for all schools from elementary to high school. In this research, researchers will identify teachers' perceptions in implementing the ‘Merdeka’ Curriculum. Based on the background described above, the title of this research is "Teachers' Perceptions of the Implementation of the ‘Merdeka’ Curriculum".

## **1.2 Research Question**

The research focus is formulated by the following questions:

How do teachers perceive the implementation of the 'Merdeka' curriculum?

## **1.3 Objectives of the study**

Based on the research focus above, the research objectives can be formulated as follows:

Describing teacher perceptions of the implementation of the 'Merdeka' curriculum.

## **1.4 Significance of the study**

Practically, this research is expected to contribute:

### 1. Teachers

The results of this study can be used; to identify, understand, and to overcome students' problems in teaching.

### 2. School

The results of this study can be used as information for implementation by using the 'Merdeka' curriculum.

### 3. Next Researcher

The results of this study can be used as a reference for conducting further research.

## **1.5 Scope and Limitation**

This research focuses on teachers' perceptions by teachers in implementing the 'Merdeka' curriculum in Indonesia.

## **1.6 Definition of the Key Terms**

The terms used in this study may be confusing unless they are explained briefly and clearly. To avoid misunderstanding, ambiguity, and uncertainty of this concept, the researcher defines key terms as follows:

### **a. Teacher Perception refers to Experts**

In teaching, teachers' perception is something that cannot be ignored to achieve proper learning objectives. In other words, teachers as curriculum implementers must exercise the established curriculum principles, implementation approaches, objectives, evaluation and technical competencies. Conversely,

teachers' perceptions are very important to consider in order to achieve certain goals in the teaching and learning process.

**b. 'Merdeka' Curriculum**

Merdeka Curriculum is a form of improvement from the 2013 Curriculum, of course, it has received mixed responses from teachers, students and parents. Each agrees and some disagree with the curriculum change which is considered too fast to replace the 2013 curriculum. In addition, the readiness of teachers in dealing with curriculum changes is also very noteworthy. This is because there are still many teachers who are not ready to accept the implementation of the new curriculum. The implementation of Merdeka curriculum is clearly a new challenge for teachers to be able to face and implement it in teaching and learning activities.