

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the research

Education is a valuable investment that is grown to achieve national dignity. This is in line with Abd Rahman statement that Education is a conscious and planned effort to create a learning atmosphere and the learning process so that students actively develop their potential to have religious spiritual strength, self-control, personality, intelligence, noble character, and skills needed by themselves and society (“Fransiska J,” n.d.) Through an educational institution, a person will gain various knowledge and skills that will be very useful for them to learn throughout their life experiences. An educated person will have the ability and skills so that quality resources will be produced through educational institutions. Thus, education has an important role in delivering a nation achieve national development goals.

To achieve the educational goals set by the Indonesian government, the curriculum must be strategically structured and formulated into certain programs because the curriculum is an important issue and the curriculum is part of the educational program. According to Rizki & Fahkrunisa Independent curriculum is project-based learning to develop students’ oft skills and characters in accordance with Profil Pelajar Pancasila (Pancasila profile students), more focused on essential material such as literacy and numeracy, and flexibility for teacher to execute their lesson based on students’ ability and it can be adjusted contextually (Rizki & Fahkrunisa, 2022)

The main goal of curriculum development is to improve the quality of education and not merely to produce teaching materials. The curriculum does not only pay attention to present developments but also directs attention to the future. The purpose of school education is broader and more complex because it is always in accordance with the changes needed. The curriculum must always be updated in line with changes so that it remains relevant to changes in society.

According to Prihantoro Curriculum comes from the Greek, 'carier' which means runner, and 'curare' which means race. So, the term curriculum comes from the world of sports at the time of Ancient Rome in Greek, which means the distance that must be travel by runners from the start line to the finish line (Prihantoro, 2014).

Furthermore, there are several definitions of the curriculum put forward by several experts. According to Aristiawan & Herman The curriculum is a guideline that has a very important role in the learning process. In the field of education, the curriculum plays an important role because it can be preparing the next generation in 2045 (Aristiawan & Herman, 2021)

Whereas in Indonesia, with reference to Law Number 20 of 2003 Article 19 paragraph 1, curriculum means a set of plans and arrangements regarding objectives, content, and teaching materials, as well as methods used as guidelines for organizing learning activities to achieve educational goals. Thus, the curriculum can be interpreted as a written document or plan regarding the quality of education that students must have through learning experiences. The document or written plan contains statements regarding the qualities that must be owned by a student listed in the curriculum.

The rapid development of the times has caused the world of education to face tough challenges, especially in efforts to prepare the next generation who are able to compete in the global era. These challenges are increasingly complex due to the rapid development of science, technology and information. All levels of education, from early childhood education to higher education, have a duty to prepare quality next generations. Along with these challenges, the curriculum also needs to be developed according to needs.

Curriculum in Indonesia has always changed since 1945, starting from the 1947 curriculum, 1952, 1964, 1968, 1975, 1984, 1994, 2004, 2006, and 2013. The development of the curriculum can be mapped into six periods, namely: (1) 1975 curriculum; (2) 1986 curriculum; (3) 1994 curriculum; (4) Curriculum 2004; (5) school-based curriculum (KTSP) which refers to the National Education Standards, and (6) 2013 Curriculum (Prihantoro, 2014). Nowadays the government has launched a new curriculum namely Independent Curriculum.

The independent Curriculum is one of the innovations made in an effort to respond to the conditions of the Covid-19 pandemic which has an impact on reducing the quality of education in Indonesia, so this curriculum is implemented in the framework of restoring learning in Indonesia (Irawati et al., 2022). This curriculum development began with the implementation of an emergency curriculum during a pandemic, namely through simplifying the curriculum that directs students to focus on essential competencies. The evaluation results show that the use of the emergency curriculum can significantly reduce indications of learning loss during the pandemic, both for literacy and numeracy achievements. In subsequent developments, the independent curriculum also focuses on achieving contextual learning that adapts to the needs and development of students (J, Fransiska J et al., 2023)

The Ministry of Education and Culture has developed a strategy for implementing the Independent Curriculum by taking into account the complexity of the systemic context. By realizing this complexity, coupled with the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic situation, and adhering to the principles of curriculum design, three main things underlie the strategy for implementing the Independent Curriculum, namely: (1) curriculum independence is a choice, (2) implementation of the curriculum is a learning process, and (3) support needs to be given to educational units and teaching staff according to needs both in terms of the existing situation and in terms of time. (Prihantoro, 2014)

Regarding the explanation above, it is necessary to simplify and improve the curriculum as a result of adjustments to learning during the co-19 pandemic. teaching system that will change as well as adjust to the development of the current situation according to their needs. The use of a more flexible curriculum adapts to previous learning which is arguably more flexible because it is through online learning. Curriculum improvements are useful for adapting to current conditions and needs so that they are more effective in achieving student learning goals. Of course, in its implementation, curriculum implementation must be accompanied by a support system to facilitate its achievement.

Some of the problems identified from the previous curriculum were inadequate time allocation, lack of teacher resources and teaching materials, lack of motivation from the environment and also learning loss which caused learning levels to decrease due to online learning during the Covid19 pandemic.

English is increasingly encouraged to start teaching since elementary school because it has started since the previous curriculum. This is driven by three things: (1) English as a need for all Indonesian children, (2) alignment of the English language curriculum, and (3) equal distribution of learning quality. To be able to communicate across cultures and between nations and play an active role as a world community, English language skills are a basic requirement that all Indonesian children need to have (Kodrat, 2021).

Independent curriculum is known as the current curriculum applied in Indonesia. Unlike the 2013 Curriculum which regulates the number of hours of study per week, the Independent Curriculum sets a target of accumulated study hours in one year. This is done for the flexibility of educational units to arrange a more flexible schedule of learning activities. For example, currently, several schools use a semester unit learning system, but some use a quarterly and block system with different timescales. This difference more or less affects the number of study days per year. Reductions or changes in the number of study hours also occur as a result of a disaster situation that forces learning to stop for some time (Prihantoro, 2014).

Several previous studies examine EFL teaching experience in implementing the curriculum in Indonesia. One of them (Artikel & Rifqi, 2020) researched the application of the integrated curriculum. An integrated curriculum is an educational approach that prepares students to face lifelong learning. In curriculum integration, schools must view education as a process of developing skills needed in life, especially in facing the challenge of 21st-century life, not separate subjects divided into different fields. Model, This integrated learning has advantages/weakness, namely making it easier for students to connect or connect various concepts, skills, and abilities, which exist in various fields of study. Matter this allows for understanding across fields of study or subjects. If this model is implemented correctly, then this model will also integrate the learning environment so that students' learning motivation increase. Meanwhile, the weakness is that this model is difficult to fully implement. Integrated learning models in elementary schools. This model requires special expertise, besides planning, it is necessary to change the learning schedule which is adjusted to the choice of theme/topic integrated by the teacher or a team of teachers.

Another research (Ramadhiyah & Lengkanawati, 2019) was conducted on implementing the 2013 curriculum. Based on the findings and there are several discussion matters highlighted in the research. First, the teacher feels positive learner autonomy, he knows that learner autonomy is very helpful for EFL learning. However, the teacher's positive perception of student autonomy is not enough to support the implementation of student autonomy in practice. On the other hand, teachers are not sure about his worthiness which means he lacks the confidence to provide opportunities for students to take control of their learning. Although teachers are happy to let students take decisions in their learning which includes the determination of learning objectives, materials, and activities learning, the teacher assumes that students tend to choose learning materials and learning activities that are it was fun for them alone, so he felt doubts. Besides that, found that teachers do not often give learning processes with the integration of technology such as that expected in the implementation of the 2013 Curriculum.

Another research by (Efriza et al., n.d.-a) this research about the implementation of the 2013 curriculum and independence using a scientific approach. Because the scientific approach plays a major role as a standard teaching and learning process in the K13 and independent curriculum, teachers tend to conduct classroom activities based on steps in a scientific approach. Found that The following steps in the scientific approach aim to provide opportunities for students to be active and creative. Through these steps, students will actively ask and answer questions. They will also show their interest and efforts, take part and be responsible, and maintain their motivation to learn. In addition, in an independent curriculum, teachers will work hard in preparing material. This will be difficult for a teacher in preparing because every student is different. The teacher must master the material and always enrich their knowledge of material and technology to assist and facilitate the delivery of learning objectives.

Implementation of curriculum implementation independently, the main challenge is the readiness of the teachers and school staff. Because each student has different abilities and interests. in the independent curriculum the teacher must be prepared with all the interests of the students, so the teacher must prepare various materials and master all the material according to the interests and talents of students.

The implementation of the Merdeka curriculum in each school is definitely different because each teacher has different challenges and strategies. Especially in vocational high schools that focus on vocational schools. The implementation of the Merdeka curriculum in vocational schools has more challenges because students have not been able to actively choose their interests and talents in class because they are used to being active in vocational material. In this case, the teacher must be a motivator who actively participates in creating a pleasant classroom environment. The teacher must prepare and master all the material, because every student has different interests and talents. The implementation of the Independent Curriculum in Vocational Schools is well underway, but it requires time and process to achieve the goals of the Independent Curriculum.

After seeing several studies related to curriculum implementation in Indonesia, the researcher is interested in examining research on independent curriculum for EFL teachers. The difference between the three previous studies above and the first research is identifying the advantages of using an integrated curriculum that makes it easier for students to relate various skill concepts in various fields of study. The weakness is that it is difficult to implement in full. The difference with the second research is regarding the implementation of the 2013 curriculum. Several things are in the spotlight, other teachers feel positively leaner, and they know that student autonomy is very helpful for EFL learning. However, the teacher's perception of not enough to support the implementation of autonomy in practice. That is, the teacher is not sure of the feasibility which means a lack of confidence to provide opportunities for students to take control of learning. The teacher assumes that students tend to choose a material that is only fun for themselves so the teacher feels doubtful. Then in the third research is about the implementation of the 2013 curriculum and an independent curriculum using a scientific approach. The scientific approach aims to provide opportunities for students to be active and creative. The teacher must master the material and always enrich it with material and technological knowledge to facilitate goals. Meanwhile, my research focuses on **EXPLORING EFL TEACHERS' CHALLENGES AND STRATEGIES ON APPLYING INDEPENDENT CURRICULUM IN BOJONEGORO.**

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1.2 Research question

1. What are the challenges found by EFL teachers in applying Independent Curriculum in Bojonegoro?
2. What are the strategies applied by EFL teachers in applying Independent Curriculum in Bojonegoro?

1.3 Purpose of the research

The purpose of this research is:

1. To find and analyze the strategies of EFL teachers in teaching by using Independent Curriculum at Vocational High School in Bojonegoro
2. To find and analyze the challenges of EFL teachers in implementing Independent Curriculum at Vocational High School in Bojonegoro

1.4 Significance of the Research

The result from this research is expected to be used theoretically and practically:

1. Theoretically

It is expected the findings of this study can support and complement previous theories related to the exploration of strategies and challenges of EFL Teachers and the researchers hope that this research can become an innovation for consideration when implementing an Independent Curriculum in school.

2. Practically

The research expects that the finding of the research can be useful for:

a. For the school

This research is used as material for consideration of improving teacher performance as an effort to improve the quality of teaching management. It is hoped that this research

will give information to the school in implementing Independent Curriculum.

b. For EFL teachers:

This research can be used to improve teaching strategies to be better to improve the quality of learning in the classroom by using an independent curriculum.

c. For the students:

This research can be used to improve learning outcomes and increase students' knowledge about the application of the independent curriculum.

d. For researchers:

Provide insight and information to students and also EFL teachers in implementing the new curriculum in schools so that learning can run smoothly.

1.5 Scope of the Research

To achieve the educational goals set by the Indonesian government, the curriculum must be strategically structured and formulated into certain programs because the curriculum is an important issue and the curriculum is part of the educational program.

The main challenge in the implementation of an Independent Curriculum is the readiness of the teachers. It can be observed through the research process to find out and analyze the difficulties and challenges experienced by EFL teachers in the classroom.

In this study, the researcher will be limited to the problem mainly analyzing the strategies and challenges by EFL teachers in implementing the independent curriculum. The subject of this study will be the Bojonegoro Vocational Schools.

1.6 Definition of key terms

1. Independent Curriculum

The Merdeka Curriculum is a refinement of the previous curriculum which is one of the innovations made to respond to the conditions of the Covid-19 pandemic which has an impact on lagging behind and a decline in the quality of education in Indonesia so this curriculum is applied to restore education in Indonesia.

Independent Curriculum is a curriculum that is designed to develop learning according to the interests and talents of students and also to create students who have Pancasila traits. The Independent Curriculum provides flexibility for educators to create quality learning that suits the needs and learning environment of students.

2. EFL

EFL means that English is only used and serves as learning material in an educational institution, formal and non-formal educational institutions. In other words, EFL is not used as a language in social life or daily life interactions and also does not become the main language of the country.

3. Challenge

Challenge is an action or situation that occurs as a result of something. Challenges usually occur when there is something new that happens and result in pros and cons.

4. Strategy

Strategy is a plan used to achieve a goal. Strategy is away to do to solve a problem. Strategy has an important role to achieve goals. Strategies are used to solve the problem that arises as a result of something happening so that the problem does not continue.