



Policy, Planning, and Practice: A Look at English Language Teaching in Indonesia

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ARTICLE INFO

Article History:

Received:	March	30,2024
Revised:	April	29,2024
Accepted:	May	29,2024
Available Online:	June	30,2024

Keywords:

Policy, Planning, Implementation, English Language Teaching, Curriculum

ABSTRACT

This research investigates the significant role of teachers as language policy planners and the integration of language policy and strategy planning in the school. The study recognizes the transformative potential of teachers who are well-equipped with the knowledge and skills to effectively teach language policies and strategies. The data were collected through interviews and observations. The data were analyzed qualitatively. The findings underscore that the school policy and planning, especially for the English teachers, is based on the curriculum that the Indonesian government is determined, namely "Kurikulum Merdeka." It is a guide and implementation for teachers to teach the material to students. It consists of teaching materials, teaching goals, learning style, learning achievement, etc. Besides, the strategy to teach English as a foreign language can be applied by practicing more either discussion or small conversation between their friends related to the daily activity.



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INTRODUCTION

English has become a vital language for communication worldwide due to its international status and technological importance. As the world becomes more interconnected and technology advances, English proficiency is essential for securing better job opportunities and achieving success. Recognizing this, Indonesia is focusing on improving English language skills to participate effectively in the global community. The recent research on language policy and bilingual education in Indonesia has investigated different aspects of English teaching, which have been shaped by historical and political events. The implementation of bilingual education in

universities has been affected by factors such as national identity and political considerations (Abduh & Rosmaladewi, 2019).

The Indonesian government recognizes the value of English language skills in a globalized economy and has implemented measures to promote English language teaching and learning. However, there are challenges in aligning vertical and horizontal policies to achieve the vision of national education. The decision to remove English lessons from elementary education is misguided. Proficiency in English is crucial for effective communication and interaction on a global scale.

The government's policies show a significant part in shaping the landscape of teaching English as an extraneous language in schools in Indonesia, influencing curriculum, teacher training, and support for English learners (Michelle, 2019). English is taught as a foreign language from the fourth grade of primary school through university (Paauw, 2009). The Indonesian government has successfully made Indonesian the national language. This has allowed for the integration of various English-language ethics. Indonesian has become an essential international language that Indonesians must learn and acquire, as outlined in the 2003 National Act (Rahmi, 2016).

There were challenges in implementing the language and bilingual instruction policy. In terms of practical challenges, the number of qualified teachers who can use English effectively is limited. Lie (2009) claimed that many of his teachers have low ability to teach English or use English as a medium of instruction, especially in private and rural educational institutions. In the context of higher education in particular, Welch (2007) argues that the quality of faculty, especially in the private higher education sector, is alarming, resulting in inadequate teaching and facilities supporting quality teaching and learning. Furthermore, Lie (2009) identified four constraints of her including policy politics, lack of budget, lack of qualified English teachers, and unfavorable environment.

The new education policy must ensure that all students, regardless of their location, have access to a high-quality education. This is especially important for historically marginalized, disadvantaged, and underrepresented groups. Education is a powerful tool for achieving economic and social progress, inclusivity, and equality. Targeted initiatives must be implemented to support students from these groups and provide them with opportunities to succeed in education, despite facing challenges. The education policy should consider both local and global needs while respecting the country's diverse culture and traditions. Promoting knowledge, including social, cultural, technological, artistic, language, and ethical aspects, is essential for fostering national pride, self-confidence, self-awareness, cooperation, and integration (Pokhriyal, 2020).

In an ever-evolving world, school plays a vital role in shaping the future generation. Students from this era will be our future generation. Education is a powerful tool for shaping future generations (Smith, 2019). A student spends part of their day in school. So school is the second home for them where they seek knowledge. Students spend a significant part of their day in school, making it a second home where knowledge is sought and cultivated (Jones et al, 2020). Policy, planning, and implementation ensure that students can learn effectively and enjoy the learning process as if they were in their homes. Policy planning and its implementation are also essential in teaching English because students in Indonesia learn English as a second language which is in seventh grade. The Indonesian government has policies about how English language should be taught in schools through planning curriculum.

The curriculum is the guidelines on how the teacher should teach, how, or what to teach. The curriculum summarizes all reviews, which can be supplied in an educational group (Bharvad, 2010). A curriculum gives the government more control over a country's Education quality. The curriculum serves as a comprehensive guideline for teachers, influencing the quality of education and allowing governments to control the educational process (Bharvad, 2010). One of the recent plans is called *Kurikulum Merdeka* (Freedom Curriculum). It is a new important concept role in guiding English language education policies and practices (Doe, 2021). It is a breakthrough in the world of education in the country to meet the diverse learning needs of students. The teacher as a learning facilitator can design learning that is interesting, safe, and implements student-centered learning. With the presence of *Kurikulum Merdeka*, teachers have the freedom to design learning that is student-centered.

The presence of *Kurikulum Merdeka* makes the mapping of students' learning styles and learning readiness more focused. Namely by carrying out a non-cognitive initial test process. In this process, the teacher will know the student's learning styles, so that the teacher can make learning plans that suit the student's learning needs, namely by designing differentiated learning.

The implementation of *Kurikulum Merdeka* tends to be new, so many students are not ready for the change from the teacher being the only source of learning, to student-centered learning. The initial condition of students at this time is passive, both in conducting group discussions, expressing opinions, practicing speaking in front of the class, and even students' unpreparedness in presenting group presentations. This happens in almost all subjects including English lessons. To provide teachers the time to organize and assess the actual learning process, it is intended that educators will be able to create lesson plans quickly and effectively. Creating lesson plans is becoming a simpler and faster process. It can incorporate cooperative learning techniques and bring creativity to each class by modifying the resources used.

Kurikulum Merdeka is an autonomous learning system implemented by the Indonesian government as part of a learning policy program to restore the country's education system. This provides freedom for schools, teachers, students, and all school resources to innovate and learn creatively and independently. Teachers can act as main educators in this matter (Kemendikbudristek, 2019). The process of maximizing the potential of teachers and students to implement innovation and increase the level of independent learning is the essence of independent learning. In this case, innovation and systemic change can be carried out, not just following a series of educational bureaucracies. The ability to learn freely must be able to increase the enjoyment and meaning of learning

Through this study, we try to understand the policy, planning, and implementation of English in school. The research was conducted in a secondary school in Purwokerto City, Indonesia. Via interviews, we gained more insights into which curriculum the teachers have been following, how they prepare the lessons based on the curriculum, and how it has been implemented.

Research Questions

How is the school policy on English Language Teaching in the school where the study was conducted?

How is the teachers' planning on English Language Teaching in the school where the study was conducted?

How is the English teachers' policy and teaching planning implemented in the school where the study was conducted?

LITERATURE REVIEW

English Language Policy in School

Schools serve as a platform for young learners to develop their knowledge and skills. Schools are often referred to as the "home of knowledge" because they provide a structured environment for learning and acquiring knowledge. They also help students develop critical thinking, problem-solving, and teamwork skills, which are essential for success in today's world. To make learning effective, it is crucial to have a well-structured and systematic approach. This can be accomplished by devising policies and educational plans that can help to channelize learning towards specific objectives. A well-designed plan can aid teachers and educators in creating a more structured learning environment that can facilitate student success. Furthermore, policies and planning can guarantee that the distribution of resources is appropriate, and that all students have access to the necessary tools and support to learn and develop. As cited in Susanto (2017), Spolsky and Shohamy argue that language policy acts as a tool for governments to influence how people use and perceive certain languages. The policy set by the government is implemented by schools and is then planned by teachers who teach the subjects.

According to Alfariy (2021), the Indonesian government has allocated foreign language learning since the first curriculum in 1947 until the 2013 curriculum. As stated by Setyabudi (2017), a strong nation like Indonesia must be proficient in foreign languages to compete in the global stage. To achieve this, the government should actively support and enable its people to learn foreign languages, as outlined in relevant laws and regulations. In the national implementation of foreign language subjects, English is the primary foreign language taught in schools. As an extension of this policy, every school applies English as a mandatory subject that must be taught. The government has made English a compulsory subject in schools because it is a global language widely used by many countries. Other foreign languages are optional and not required to be taught. The English language curriculum outlines how the subject should be taught in schools. Alfariy (2021) points out that changes in English education in Indonesia involve not just the amount of time spent on the subject but also how it is taught.

The goal of education is to promote a holistic approach that includes cognitive, emotional, and physical developments (Rezkiani et al, 2022). In achieving the objective, the implementation of the curriculum tends to reach the target of learning. The curriculum is a plan of study from the government used to achieve educational goals. The implementation of this policy is stated in a ministerial decree which is then forwarded by the educational institutions under it. The educational institution that is the most end and becomes the object of the implementation of the curriculum policy is the school educational institution. The curriculum becomes the basis for implementing learning in schools, which includes general learning implementation criteria. *Kurikulum Merdeka*, which has been implemented in schools since 2022, is the educational program from the government used to restore post-pandemic learning. It is a government policy that is detailed in official documents and publications issued by the Indonesian Ministry of Education. The Ministry has required all schools to implement this curriculum.

Kurikulum Merdeka sets ambitious goals for educational progress that are expected to have a major influence on the future (Ferdaus, 2023). The acceleration of the technological era has had a global impact on education in Indonesia. This situation must be addressed by the Ministry of

Education by implementing a curriculum that is able to answer the challenges of globalization today. The use of integrated technology in learning needs to be strengthened considering the increasingly widespread use of this technology to improve the competitiveness and quality of schools. The implementation of *Kurikulum Merdeka* is hindered by teachers' inability to integrate information and communication technology into their teaching materials, media, and online learning resources. This is a significant obstacle to the successful implementation of the curriculum (Restu et al, 2022). In action, mastery of technology is the main target of the learning media initiated by the current curriculum, *Kurikulum Merdeka*.

English Teachers' Planning in School

The current policy for implementing the curriculum in schools is to use the *Kurikulum Merdeka*, which aims to improve learning outcomes that were not optimal during the pandemic in 2021. The curriculum serves as a blueprint for learning, outlining the goals, context, and methods to be used in a school setting. This includes creating educational materials, fostering social interactions among students, and implementing organized teaching strategies (Kamila et al, 2023). The curriculum requires that English is taught in all schools. As part of the new *Kurikulum Merdeka*, English lessons are given four sessions per week at every grade level.

With the intention of implementing this policy, planning is needed to guide schools in achieving the goals of *Kurikulum Merdeka*. Teachers be a core actor as the main planners of learning after the school principal, to implement the curriculum being used. Curriculum planning is prepared in the form of a teaching document called a Lesson Plan, which is referred to as a Learning Module under *Kurikulum Merdeka*.

Likewise, the main focus of the independent curriculum implementation will be on the planning of classroom learning treatment. In planning learning, it is necessary to integrate learning that will arouse the spirit of student collaboration, creativity, critical thinking, and interpersonal communication skills which will be a challenge in education in today's era. This learning plan is important as a form of guidance document that contains learning strategies, learning steps and instruments and materials that will be provided in classroom activities. The preparation of this document needs special review from educational planners in schools so that the planned knowledge targets are in accordance with the expected objectives of the implementation of the current curriculum.

In preparing the lesson plan, teachers need to pay attention to the main components of learning that will serve as a bridge to transfer knowledge to students (Rezkiani et al, 2022). To effectively foster student growth, teachers should design a learning environment that encourages participation and comfort. This involves creating appropriate learning models, materials, media, and a supportive classroom atmosphere. When planning lessons, these elements should be essential considerations

Learning Model

Rezkiani et al (2022) described a learning model as a blueprint for structuring education. It is a framework that outlines how to organize teaching and learning experiences to reach specific goals. Think of it as a roadmap for the learning journey, guiding educational activities in the classroom. In essence, a learning model is a template or structure that directs the planning and execution of the learning process. It's the chosen method or approach for teaching and learning.

The expected learning model in learning planning is a reflection of the goals of the independent curriculum itself. The growth of student collaboration can be achieved by using learning that emphasizes student cooperation in groups. In addition, to foster critical thinking, it is necessary to design a learning model that allows students to understand and interpret problems in social phenomena in society. This will also foster students' communication skills. Project-based learning and problem-based learning models can be accurate recommendations for this problem

Teaching Material

The use of appropriate teaching material is crucial for achieving the objectives of teaching and learning in English for Specific Purposes (ESP). The teaching material should be relevant to the learners' workplace needs, such as automotive engineering, building engineering, electrical engineering, etc. (Ronaldo, 2016). If the material is not appropriate, it will hinder the learners' ability to achieve the objectives of teaching and learning. This has become a major problem faced by vocational high schools today. Therefore, it is important for English teachers to create interesting and enjoyable materials for their students to learn English effectively. However, some teachers may struggle with developing materials, resulting in monotonous and inflexible teaching. Additionally, teachers may rely solely on one textbook and fail to incorporate current sources as a reference for teaching materials.

In *Kurikulum Merdeka*, learning materials are developed based on relevant topics in the surrounding environment. The theme of culture and tradition is the most important thing to be developed considering the element of nationality and returning to Pancasila is the main thing in the development of this material. Considering that technological and information development is expanding and the penetration of foreign culture is getting thicker, the growth and implementation of materials based on the culture and identity of the nation will become a shield of students' personalities in the era of globalization that affects students' personalities

Media of Learning

Media is a means of communication that can serve as a tool for learning. It is considered a learning medium if it effectively conveys messages that help achieve the learning objectives. Thus, it is essential for media to be connected to the messages and learning models. As per Hasan's (2021) perspective, teaching media is a helpful technique to enhance students' learning outcomes. It refers to any instrument that can assist educators in communicating with their pupils, promoting critical thinking and curiosity in order to facilitate learning.

Classroom Environment

The classroom environment is the physical and social setting where learning occurs. It encompasses the classroom arrangement, the student-teacher interactions, and the overall classroom atmosphere. A positive classroom environment has been shown to enhance student learning in various circumstances (Khatimah, 2021). The meaningful of the class environment lies in its impact on the quality of learning that takes place. A positive classroom environment is one where students feel secure, at ease, and encouraged. This helps foster a love for learning and encourages students to actively participate in class. It also helps build a sense of community among students and teachers, which can lead to stronger relationships and better communication. In general, a positive classroom environment can significantly influence students' academic and personal development, and it should be fostered in every classroom.

RESEARCH METHOD

This research is a single case study. It aimed to investigate policy-based plans and strategies for teaching English in a school. Participants of this study was the headmaster and English teachers of a secondary school in Purwokerto City, Indonesia. Data were collected through semi-structured interviews and non-participant observations.

First, we created a list of interview questions. We visited the secondary school, which is a vocational school, and met the school principal. We took detailed notes of everything that happened during the research. We then interviewed both the principal and English teachers, starting with general questions about the school curriculum and then focusing on specific topics such as English lesson planning and its implementation. The interviews were recorded.

The data was analyzed qualitatively. The analysis covered data collection, data reduction, and conclusion drawing/verification.

FINDINGS

The school principal and English teachers shared their opinions in an interview about the implementation of *Kurikulum Merdeka* in the school where the study was conducted. The questions given to the principal have the same meaning as the questions given to the English teacher, namely about the implementation of the *Kurikulum Merdeka* policy and how this curriculum affects the way teachers teach in the classroom. In addition, teachers' planning in creating learning in accordance with the principles of *Kurikulum Merdeka* is also included in the interview list which will be formulated into a statement about learning planning in this study. The following are the scope of questions and responses that have been given to the interviewees.

Menurut bapak, apakah yang dimaksud dengan kebijakan pendidikan yang diterapkan pemerintah untuk sekolah?(QP)

(In your opinion, what is meant by the education policy implemented by the government for schools?) (QP)

The policy implemented by the government is in order to move towards a golden Indonesia in 2045. One of the things that is implemented is independent learning which has several parts. One of them is *Kurikulum Merdeka*. Schools are given special authority to prepare the educational process in their respective schools. The government only targets that the ultimate goal of learning is in the form of the character of the *Pancasila* student profile, literacy skills, numeracy and 4Cs / abilities in the 21st century. The education policy from the current government is that education management in schools is managed by each school itself and the government only targets students' abilities in the fields of literacy, numeracy, 4c and *Pancasila* student profile. (AP)

Sejak berdirinya sekolah ini, kurikulum apa saja yang telah diterapkan dan bagaimana pendapat Anda mengenai kurikulum tersebut? (QP)

(Since the establishment of this school, what curriculum has been implemented and what do you think about the curriculum?) (QP)

The first curriculum, the KTSP (Education Unit Level Curriculum), was implemented until 2012. In 2013, The 2013 Curriculum was adopted. After Covid-19, *Kurikulum Merdeka* was employed in the entire Archipelago. The perception of all of us is that when the minister of education is changed, the curriculum changes. However, that is only our assumption. The truth is that due to

the change of the times, the curriculum must change to follow the flow of the changing times. With the KTSP, schools are given the freedom to compile and develop their own curriculum. Meanwhile, the 2013 Curriculum is all controlled by the government again. Core Competencies, Basic Competencies from the government have been made so that schools just have to run. For *Kurikulum Merdeka*, it is now a refinement of the KTSP in its implementation is simplified. The difference is that the KTSP and the 2013 Curriculum require teachers to complete all the learning that is applied in one year of learning, while in the independent curriculum teachers are no longer obliged to teach all the material on the syllabus but can choose their own material that is a priority for the needs of students in their respective schools. Among the curricula implemented, the Free-to-Learn Curriculum has been the best and easiest to implement so far. (AP)

Menurut bapak, Kurikulum merdeka yang sedang diterapkan di sekolah ini apakah sudah sesuai dengan situasi di sekolah? Mengapa demikian ? (QP)

(In your opinion, is *Kurikulum Merdeka* that is being implemented in this school fits with the situation at school? Why is that?) (QP)

The majority of the implementation is appropriate even though it is not yet 100%. This is because many people are involved in the preparation of this curriculum, namely the Curriculum Team, Quality Assurance Team, Teachers, Students, parents, and Industrial Company. In the preparation of learning, we must pay attention to human resources, facilities and infrastructure and its implementation in each school is certainly different because it is adjusted to school condition. (AP)

Bagaimana mata pelajaran bahasa Inggris harus diterapkan di sekolah ini dengan konsep/dalam kurikulum merdeka?(QP/QT)

(Should English subject be applied in this school with the concept within *Kurikulum Merdeka*?) (QP/QT)

English Subject is indeed a mandatory material in school because English proficiency is a necessary ability in today's era. The implementation is adjusted to the curriculum structure from the government. For example, in the curriculum it is only 4 hours, then in schools it is also only implemented for 4 hours. Schools only apply the minimum standards required by the government. The learning target of the curriculum for English lessons is that students are able to communicate using English in daily conversations. The obstacle is that the readiness of students and the basic abilities of students brought from the previous level of school are too low so that learning at the vocational school level of the material level is lowered. (AP)

To implement *Kurikulum Merdeka* in the school, namely by applying applicative learning, students are accustomed to critical thinking, so it is not just a theory. For example, for applicable learning, we can invite students to hunt tourists at tourist attractions, talk to tourists so that they can apply some materials with direct communication. That way, indirectly students get different experiences and their speaking skills will improve slowly. (AT)

Apa saja yang perlu diperhatikan/dipersiapkan sebagai perencanaan penerapan Kurikulum Merdeka, khususnya mata pelajaran bahasa inggris ? (QP/QT)

(What needs to be considered/prepared as a plan for the implementation of *Kurikulum Merdeka*, especially English subjects?) (QP/QT)

What needs to be considered in the preparation is the initial ability of the students. Each teacher is expected to identify the students' ability first so that they can apply learning that is in accordance with their ability, including the courage and confidence of the students. Memorization of vocabulary in Grade 10 must also be considered so that moving up to Grade 11 already has the same level. The selection of material is adjusted to the students' initial ability so that students do not have trouble following English lessons. In addition, no less important is Human Resources or the quality of teachers who are able to utilize technology so that it can be applied in learning. In addition, we must also prepare the need for facilities and infrastructure that can support learning such as Internet Connection and LCD because this will be very necessary in learning later. (AP)

The first thing that must be done is a change of mindset towards teachers. Currently, with *Kurikulum Merdeka* teachers are not the main source of learning, rather they serve as facilitators. Furthermore, the teacher's learning plan must be applicable and improve students' critical thinking. In addition, the use of technology and teaching media is more variative. And more importantly, the existence of supporting facilities and infrastructure must be prepared. (AT)

Menurut bapak/Ibu, apakah perencanaan dan pembelajaran guru bahasa Inggris di sekolah ini sudah sesuai dengan harapan bapak ? Mengapa demikian? (QP/QT)

(In your opinion, does the planning and learning of English teachers in this school go well with your expectations? Why is that?) (QP/QT)

Learning planning is good as a teaching tool as a reference for teaching in the classroom. What needs to be noted is that the technical management of learning in the classroom requires more attention than the level of difference in students' initial ability in English. The need for English learning innovations such as contextual practice with an emphasis on vocabulary mastery is needed. More looking for references on Instagram, *tiktok* and shorts. The vocabulary taught is more to the skill program. (AP)

By looking for recently condition, teachers still use conventional styles and still do not use technology much. The basic abilities of students have not reached the level that should be at the current intermediate level. In addition, there is no policy from the school that English is a second language in schools, such as Language Day where in one full day all school residents speak using English. (AT)

Menurut bapak/Ibu, apa yang perlu ditingkatkan oleh guru-guru di sekolah ini dalam perencanaan maupun pembelajaran? (QP/QT)

In your opinion, what do the teachers in this school need to improve in planning and learning? (QP/QT)

Teacher is a second parent to a student and at other times also a friend to students, so as a teacher must improve communication by establishing good relationships with students. So, if students like the teacher, they will certainly like the lesson, at least enter the class. In addition, during learning, teachers should strive to make their classes enjoyable and engaging for students, which can contribute to better learning outcomes and student motivation. So, teachers must improve and enrich the treasury of techniques and teaching methods and focus on what the child wants. (AP)

The most important thing is to return to the change of mindset so that you will make learning active and enjoyable. So that in practice teachers do not only give assignments to students to write, summarize, explain, and work on problems. But learning that discusses, lots of action, critical thinking. And the most important thing is teachers should utilize technology to enhance their lessons and make them more engaging, interactive, and relevant to students in today's digital age. (AT)

Menurut bapak/Ibu apakah guru bahasa Inggris di sekolah ini sudah melaksanakan pembelajaran dikelas sesuai yang diharapkan? (QP/QT)

(In your opinion, have the English teachers in this school carried out classroom instructions as expected?) (AP)

The learning from the planning is good, but the implementation has not been maximized. This is a sign that children are not enthusiastic about English lessons. To be able to do better, technology skills are improved so that they can create more varied learning media such as fun learning through songs, news, simple and contextual practices. (AT)

The implementation in the classroom has not been fully successful. This is due to the fact that technology proficiency is not yet at the required level. Additionally, the challenge lies in the fact that sometimes teachers have already designed enjoyable learning activities, but students' basic English language skills are still lacking. Therefore, the learning process has to revert back to a lower level, focusing on a step-by-step mastery of vocabulary. (AP)

DISCUSSION

School Policy On English Language Teaching

Schools are responsible for ensuring that the students get a good education, which will help them to thrive and reach their full potential. To achieve this goal, policies are formulated to guide the implementation of education in schools. These policies consist of a collection of rules, regulations, and procedures that regulate the conduct and behavior of students, teachers, and administrators in the school. One of the key policies in schools is English Language Teaching policies. The primary objective of these policies is to improve students' proficiency in the English language by offering a structured and extensive approach to language learning. English Language Teaching policies also guide teachers and students to ensure that English is taught inclusively, respecting, and appreciating cultural and linguistic diversity.

The following discussion is centered around the English language teaching policy in schools, with a particular focus in the school. The information presented is based on an interview with the headmaster of the school, which covers topics such as the education policy implemented by the government for the school, the different types of curricula that have been put into action, and the impact of these curricula on student learning. Additionally, this discussion will explore the reflection of the curriculum currently being implemented in the school, in light of the school's unique circumstances.

The curriculum is the core of learning and should be regularly evaluated using innovative and dynamic methods to keep up with the advancements in technology, science, and the evolving needs of citizens and employers (Kamila et al, 2023). The implementation of Kurikulum Merdeka policy is a result of the growth of Era even if the implementation encountered several obstacles during its process. One of the main challenges is the need to shift the student learning

model towards a more personalized approach, which is commonly referred to as differentiation. Another difficulty is the integration of media and technology that is suitable for the younger generation, particularly the Alpha generation, who are heavily reliant on technology. The school principal highlights that the most challenging obstacle is changing the mindset of teachers who are accustomed to traditional teaching methods that solely rely on textbooks. The teachers must now be willing and able to be more innovative and creative in their teaching techniques.

The headmaster of the school clarified that the policy and curriculum of a school are closely linked and work collaboratively to attain educational objectives. School policies can affect the curriculum by determining how teaching and learning are done in the classroom, as they are guided by the rules and regulations set by policymakers. If the policy mandates a specific number of hours for each subject, the curriculum must be adjusted accordingly. On the other hand, the curriculum can also influence school policies by determining the human resources needed to achieve educational goals. To keep up with changes in government structures, scientific and technological advancements, and the global landscape, the process of creating a curriculum is continually evolving. The availability of resources is essential for curriculum development, and the people involved in the process are key to its success (Kamila et al, 2023).

During an interview with the headmaster of the school, it was revealed that the school's policies are by the government's regulations for educational institutions and follow the current curriculum. The headmaster explained that the curriculum is mandatory and must be implemented in all schools, including theirs. He emphasized that there is no choice but to follow *Kurikulum Merdeka* as it is already mandated by the government. The headmaster put in line that the implementation of this curriculum is part of the government's efforts to prepare the golden generation by 2045. This statement is also supported by Suharjo (2023) stating that in 2045, Indonesia will have reached 100 years of independence which is assumed to mark the growth of Indonesia's golden generation. This generation is believed to be capable of building and upholding Indonesia as an even better country. The implementation of this curriculum is part of the government's efforts to prepare the golden generation by 2040. This generation is expected to possess the character of the Pancasila Student Profile, be proficient in numeracy and literacy, and possess the 4C intelligence of the 21st century, which includes critical thinking, creative thinking, collaboration, and communication.

Through the interview, the school principal was asked about the implementation and outcomes of *Kurikulum Merdeka* policy in schools. The principal expressed that the policy is still undergoing improvements to enhance its effectiveness. The implementation process is fitting as it considers the school's resources, including human resources, facilities, and infrastructure. Additionally, the learning process is tailored to the individual school's situation. Despite some challenges, such as infrastructure and student readiness, the principal believes that the policy is being implemented well in the school.

Teachers Planning on English Language Teaching

Proper planning in schools is crucial for successful language education. It provides teachers with a clear and organized approach to teaching, enabling them to plan lessons, set goals and assess student progress with ease. Moreover, school planning helps to align language teaching with the needs and expectations of students and ensures that language education is integrated seamlessly into the broader curriculum.

To elaborate on teacher preparation for teaching English in the school, an interview was conducted with the school principal. The focus of the interview was on teacher planning for instruction. The principal was questioned about the factors that should be considered when planning for the implementation of *Kurikulum Merdeka*, especially in English classes. Additionally, the principal was queried about his thoughts on whether the planning and teaching of English teachers in the school goes well with his expectations and the rationale behind his response.

The process of planning in teaching English in school is mostly conducted by English teachers. This process involves creating a well-structured and organized plan for lessons that effectively conveys the intended learning outcomes to the students. Moreover, the teacher planning process involves choosing appropriate resources and materials, identifying the language skills to be taught, devising activities and exercises, and assessing the results of the lesson.

A positive response was also conveyed by the headmaster regarding the application of English subjects and their implementation in *Kurikulum Merdeka*. English subjects are compulsory subjects in schools, have been taught in the previous curriculum, and even used to be the main subject to be taught. This statement is also stated by Alfariysi (2021) who states that the Indonesian government has so far allocated foreign language learning since the first curriculum, namely the 1947 curriculum to the 2013 curriculum. However, in *Kurikulum Merdeka*, the allocation of time for English subjects is reduced because of character learning that is included in all subject matter at school. The English curriculum in the school is adapted to meet the goals of English language education in *Kurikulum Merdeka*. It should be aligned with technological advancements and consider the needs, interests, and personalities of the students.

The headmaster expressed approval for the inclusion of English in their *Kurikulum Merdeka*. English is a mandatory subject in schools, following previous curricula where it was even the main subject. This aligns with Alfariysi (2021) stating that the Indonesian government has emphasized foreign language learning since the 1947 Curriculum up to the 2013 Curriculum. However, in *Kurikulum Merdeka*, English classes have been reduced to accommodate character education integrated into all subjects. In the school where the study was conducted, English language learning is designed to match the objectives of *Kurikulum Merdeka*, which should consider students' interests and character while keeping up with technological advancements. The challenge for English teachers is to create engaging and enjoyable classroom activities that students can easily understand.

Throughout the history of curriculum development, the main objective has been to enhance the communication skills of students. This is because, in vocational schools, the ability to communicate effectively is crucial for students to carry out their future job responsibilities. However, the fundamental communication skills of students who come from junior high schools are often inadequate. Consequently, it becomes challenging for them to perform well in their English classes as some students already possess the necessary skills. In reality, only a small fraction of students can fully comprehend the material taught at a high school level. Therefore, to successfully implement the curriculum, teachers must identify and cater to the unique abilities of each student. Despite this being the ideal scenario, the situation is further complicated by the fact that each student has different skill levels.

In teaching English in vocational schools, the topic given is English for specific purposes. The school policy in teaching English also helps ensure that English is taught inclusively and respects

cultural and linguistic diversity. This implies that teachers should use a variety of teaching methods and materials that cater to students' individual needs, despite their technological limitations. English teaching in vocational schools should be related to and support the specific skills needed by students based on the majors they take (Natsir et al, 2022). It can be taken in line that applying *Kurikulum Merdeka* in Vocational school needs deep planning and digging into more student' unique identities to enhance their ability in English in a specific way.

English Teacher's Policy and Teaching Planning

As has been regulated in *Kurikulum Merdeka*, English is set for four periods or session in a week. The headmaster said that what has been implemented in school is already in line with that has been regulated from the government. They have met the minimum standard for applying English as the compulsory subject in their school. This implies that teachers should use a variety of teaching methods and materials that cater to students' individual needs, despite their technological limitations. However, the headmaster assumes that the problem they encounter is the readiness of each student and the nature of their English skill. It was influenced by the preliminary level of English taught in their previous school. If the level was below standard, then the school should adjust the students' English skill level either way.

The readiness and nature of each students' ability then should be awareness for the teachers. By paying attention to the differences occupied by the students, it is hoped that the lesson will be implemented well so it could boost students' confidence in speaking English. Then the purpose of English subject could come true. However, not every teacher could apprehend the students' unique characteristics. Hence, teachers should also have good capability and good resource to tackle the problem. Furthermore, it could be great if the school is able to facilitate the learning progress by providing such advanced electronics like projector or good internet connection through wi-fi. Extra additional English subject session is also considered as a good point to students to foster their English-speaking skill.

On the other way around, the headmaster thinks the implementation of English in this school has already achieved the word 'good', but not 'satisfied'. He thinks that it has not been done to the most since the students still seem to not be really enthusiast to study English more. The headmaster suggests the teachers to gain more knowledge in utilizing technological based learning so that the teachers could assist and create various lesson media. It must be fun for the students to learn English through songs, news, or simply practical and contextual practice.

Another suggestion made by the headmaster is the teacher should have good rapport with the students. It would be a good start if the students feel strong bonding with the teachers, build good relationship and maintain communication well. The students will tend to enjoy the lesson and ready to receive the knowledge, instead of feeling afraid of being wrong or making mistake. Hence, creating fun and meaning classroom ambience is crucial for teacher to achieve the English subject's goals.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, schools are the first actor in developing education, and policies, particularly English Language Teaching policies. The *Kurikulum Merdeka* (Freedom Curriculum) is being implemented in the school where the study was conducted as part of the government's plan to create a skilled and morally strength of golden generation by 2045. The school is constantly striving to make this curriculum more effective and adaptable. Proper planning in schools is

essential for effective language education, providing teachers with organized approaches to instruction and aligning language teaching with student needs. The school principal insisted the crucial role of teacher preparation in successfully implementing the current curriculum. He emphasized the need to adapt the curriculum to incorporate character development and keep pace with technological advancements. The challenges lie in tailoring English language learning to students' unique abilities, aligning with the objectives of *Kurikulum Merdeka*, and fostering effective communication skills in vocational schools with diverse student backgrounds and skill levels. Furthermore, the implementation of English in the school is aligned with the current curriculum and meets government regulations with English being offered four sessions per week. The headmaster emphasizes the importance of addressing variations in students' readiness and English skill levels from their previous education. While the current implementation is deemed "good," there is a desire for more enthusiasm, suggesting the need for innovative teaching methods, technological integration, and strong teacher-student rapport to create a dynamic and enjoyable English learning environment.

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