

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

This chapter focuses on the study's background, research questions, purpose, scope, and significance.

1.1. Background of the Study

The COVID-19 pandemic has had a significant impact on educational aspects in Indonesia. Schools closed, and all learning activities shifted to an online setting. There are 3 possible negative impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on Indonesia's education: (1) a decrease in learning achievement; (2) student dropout; and (3) violence in children and external risks (Direktorat SMP - Kementerian Pendidikan, Kebudayaan, Riset, dan Teknologi RI, 2021). According to World Bank projection, implementing online classes for only four months could have a 25-point impact on the Program for International Students Assessment or PISA's reading score (Yarrow, Masood, & Afkar, 2020) and if the online classes are extended, they will contribute an additional 11 points minus to PISA's score (Afkar & Yarrow, 2021).

To cope with that, the Ministry of Education, Culture, Research, and Education of Indonesia since 2021 conducted several studies for further education regulation to minimize the negative impact caused by COVID-19. The studies show that there is both short-term and long-term regulation. For the short-term regulation, it all focuses on the accessibility and simplification of the emergency curriculum, learning modules, and teaching materials (Pusat Penelitian Kebijakan, 2021). In line with that, the ministry set up a new

curriculum structure that focuses on essential competencies such as literacy, numeracy, and character building for long-term regulation. Thus, the curriculum should be flexible and adaptable for teachers and schools (Badan Standar, Kurikulum, dan Asesmen Pendidikan (BSKAP) Kementerian Pendidikan, Kebudayaan, Riset dan Teknologi Republik Indonesia, 2022). In February 2022, this curriculum, namely "*Kurikulum Merdeka*," was launched and applied to schools that were involved in the "*Sekolah Penggerak*" program. Late in March 2022, the Circular of the Minister of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology of the Republic of Indonesia, Number 3 of 2022, concerning Adjustments to the Implementation of Joint Decrees of Four (four) Ministers regarding Guidelines for Organizing Learning During the 2019 Coronavirus Disease (COVID-19) Pandemic, this was issued and marked as the starting point for limited face-to-face learning (Menteri Pendidikan, Kebudayaan, Riset, dan Teknologi Republik Indonesia, 2022).

In institutes of teacher education, pre-service teachers are supervised and guided by their lecturers during their studies. Not only receive pedagogical courses offered by the study program, but they must also acquire teaching experience in the classroom before getting their bachelor's degree (Wiggan, Pass, & Gadd, 2020). However, because of the COVID-19 pandemic, these pre-service teachers have only a limited opportunity to observe real-life teaching before beginning their teaching internship program in their third year. They have been spending a lot of time in pedagogical courses offered, but research shows that pre-service teachers still feel unready for actual teaching experience (Astutik, Setiawan, & Anam, 2022).

While there have been studies investigating the readiness of prospective teachers to teach online, there is a lack of research specifically exploring the readiness and challenges faced by students in the English Language Education Study Program at Universitas Negeri Jakarta (UNJ) when participating in internship programs. Existing literature primarily focuses on the general readiness of prospective teachers or addresses specific aspects of online teaching, disregarding the unique characteristics and needs of English language education students. Therefore, a research gap exists regarding student readiness and challenges specific to the English Language Education Study Program at UNJ in the context of the implementation of Kurikulum Merdeka during internship programs.

Addressing this research gap is crucial to gaining a comprehensive understanding of the factors that influence student readiness for internship programs and the challenges they encounter in the context of English language education. Identifying these factors and challenges will provide valuable insights for Universitas Negeri Jakarta (UNJ) and other similar institutions to design an effective internship program that caters to the specific needs of English language education students. Moreover, this research can contribute to the existing literature on internship programs by offering a unique perspective on the readiness and challenges factors that are specific to this study program.

1.2. Research Questions

Correspond to the problems above, this study focuses on finding out the student readiness and challenges for internship programs, particularly:

1. How ready are the students in the English Language Education Study Program at Universitas Negeri Jakarta to participate in internship programs?
2. What are the challenges faced by students in the English Language Education Study Program at Universitas Negeri Jakarta to participate in internship programs?

1.3. Purposes of the Study

Based on the research questions listed above, this study will look at students' readiness and challenges for teaching internship programs.

1.4. Scope of the Study

This study focuses on students of the English Language Education Study Program, Faculty of Languages and Arts, Universitas Negeri Jakarta batch 2020, and how prepared they are to teach and implement *Kurikulum Merdeka* during their internship program.

1.5. Significance of the Study

This study is expected to offer a substantial theoretical and practical contribution to the area of English language teaching, especially to pre-service teachers in the English Language Education Study Program, Faculty of Languages and Arts, Universitas Negeri Jakarta. From a theoretical standpoint, this work is likely to serve as a reference for researchers

interested in pre-service teacher education. The researchers were then able to untangle the issues as well as analyze pre-service teachers' preparation and capabilities in an actual classroom environment. This research also stands as an evaluative-empirical study for the curriculum used in the English Language Education Study Program, Faculty of Languages and Arts, Universitas Negeri Jakarta.

From a practical standpoint, this study will assist governments, stakeholders, teacher education institutions (LPTK), and the study program in developing more significant courses or programs to improve pre-service teachers' preparation.

