CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

A. Background of the Study

In today's educational landscape, there is a growing emphasis on implementing student-centered learning model to develop critical thinking, problem-solving, and collaboration skills. These competencies are essential for success in a rapidly evolving world. Darling-Hammond et al. (2008) described a student-centered learning environment as supporting academic growth and equipping students with skills for lifelong learning. Such models inspire active engagement, encouraging students to become independent thinkers and adaptable learners in complex, real-world contexts.

Problem-Based Learning (PBL) has gained significant attention as an effective pedagogy among student-centered models. As Arends (2012) defined, PBL is a teaching strategy where students learn by solving real-world problems. It fosters problem-solving, self-directed learning, and collaboration skills, guiding students to apply knowledge to authentic challenges. Arends outlines five phases of the PBL process: (1) orient students to the problem, (2) organize students for study, (3) assist independent and group investigation, (4) develop and present artifacts and exhibits, and (5) analyze and evaluate the problem-solving process. These stages highlight active participation and encourage students to take ownership of their learning. Building on Arends' framework, Tan (2003) emphasized PBL's ability to foster a sense of ownership over the learning process.

Students are encouraged to collaborate, explore, and collectively construct solutions by engaging with real-world scenarios. This collaborative element is crucial in vocational education, where practical skills and teamwork are integral to professional success.

Despite its theoretical strengths, implementing PBL in vocational education presents challenges. Vocational students, particularly in Culinary Arts programs, are required to master both theoretical knowledge and practical skills. A procedure text is a form of writing designed to guide readers in completing a specific task or process through clear, step-by-step instructions. Knapp and Watkins (2005) described procedure texts as directing the reader through an organized series of actions, ensuring clarity and precision to prevent confusion. Procedural writing, for instance, is a fundamental competency in Culinary Arts, involving the creation of structured instructions such as recipes or operational guidelines. Integrating PBL into procedural writing lessons allows students to connect theory with practice by tackling real-world culinary challenges, such as designing a recipe or solving a kitchen operation issue. However, transitioning to a student-centered model like PBL requires a significant transition in teaching and learning.

An interview with a Culinary Arts teacher at SMKN 8 Medan was conducted on 21st December, 2024 to gain deeper insights into the implementation of PBL and its impact on students. The following are excerpts from the conversation:

Table 1. 1 Interview Transcript: Culinary Arts Teacher's Insights on PBL

Researcher	Teacher
Assalamu'alaikum, Ma'am. Thank you for taking the time to speak with me today. I am conducting a study on the implementation of Problem-Based Learning (PBL) in vocational education. I would greatly appreciate it if you could share your insights and experiences with me.	Wa'alaikumsalam. Sure dear, I would love to share with you.
Could you share your thoughts on how the students are adapting to Problem-Based Learning (PBL) in your classroom?	The students are still adjusting. They are accustomed to more **teacher-centered approaches**, so they find the self-directed aspect of PBL a bit challenging. They also tend to struggle with **collaboration**, as their **limited vocabulary** makes it difficult to communicate effectively during classroom activities. So, I always switch the languages into Indonesian.
What do you think the main challenges students face with PBL?	One major challenge is the level of **independence** required. Some students are used to being guided step-by-step, and PBL demands them to take ownership of their learning. Additionally, the lack of vocabulary often hinders their ability to express their ideas clearly in group discussions, which affects their collaboration.

Researcher	Teacher
How do you plan to address the challenges the students face in adapting to PBL?	I am focusing on gradually shifting their mindset. I will continue to guide them but also give them more opportunities to lead discussions and solve problems on their own. I will incorporate activities to help them build their vocabulary and communication skills, which will eventually improve their collaboration.
Do you think PBL has had a positive impact on their learning?	Yes, PBL pushes students to think beyond the theory and apply what they have learned in practical scenarios. Despite their vocabulary limitations, I have noticed an increase in their enthusiasm and a greater sense of responsibility for their learning, although they have to put in extra effort to achieve this.
Ma'am, do you think your students enjoy the Problem-Based Learning (PBL) model in the classroom?	Although the students may not enjoy it at first, over time, they become curious about the worksheets and activities. Gradually, they start to engage more in the PBL activities. While they still face some difficulties with vocabulary, I am there to support and guide them throughout the process.

Researcher	Teacher
Thank you very much for your time and valuable insights, Ma'am. Your perspectives are incredibly helpful for my research.	You are welcome. I hope my insights are of use to you.
I am sure they will be. Have a wonderful day, Ma'am. Assalamu'alaikum.	You too. Wa'alaikumsalam.

A preliminary interview with a Culinary Arts teacher at SMKN 8 Medan revealed that students face challenges adapting to the independence and collaboration required in Problem-Based Learning (PBL). Accustomed to teacher-centered instruction, they struggle with self-direction and effective communication during group activities, often due to limited vocabulary. To address this, the teacher switches to Indonesian to ease communication and incorporates activities to build vocabulary and foster collaboration. While these challenges remain, the teacher noted positive impacts, including increased enthusiasm and a growing sense of responsibility, and continues to support students in gradually developing the skills needed for successful independent learning and teamwork.

Besides the interview, based on the researcher's observation, students initially appeared hesitant and disengaged during PBL activities, as they were unfamiliar with the method and lacked confidence in expressing their ideas. However, curiosity about the worksheets and activities grew, leading them to participate more actively. Although vocabulary limitations continued to pose

difficulties, students were willing to collaborate and gradually adapted to the PBL model with the teacher's guidance and support. In light of these insights, the researcher desires to explore students' perceptions of the implementation of Problem-Based Learning.

Goldstein (2010) defined perception as the process of organizing and interpreting sensory information in order to make sense of the surrounding environment. In educational settings, students' perceptions of a particular teaching model play a crucial role in shaping their engagement, participation, and overall learning outcomes. As Irwanto (2002) suggests, positive perceptions of Problem-Based Learning (PBL) are often linked to increased motivation, active involvement, and deeper understanding. Conversely, negative perceptions may lead to resistance, lack of interest, and disengagement from the learning process.

Research by Aslam et al. (2021) demonstrated that PBL enhances students' engagement and problem-solving abilities but primarily examined its effect on learning outcomes rather than students' perceptions. Similarly, Zahra and Samsi (2022) explored PBL's role in procedural text writing but focused on general secondary education, making their findings less directly applicable to vocational students. The current research builds on these studies by examining the perceptions of 10th-grade Culinary Arts students at SMKN 8 Medan regarding the use of PBL in procedural writing lessons. By focusing on vocational education, this study aims to provide a deeper understanding of how PBL supports students in developing essential writing and problem-solving skills within their professional context.

B. The Problem of the Study

Based on the description of the background of the study stated above, the problem of the study is formulated as follows:

How are the students' perceptions on the implementation of Problem-Based Learning at SMKN 8 Medan?

C. The Objective of the Study

Based on the problem of study above, the objective of the study is:

To analyze the students' perceptions on the implementation of Problem-Based Learning at SMKN 8 Medan.

D. The Scope of the Study

To achieve the expected objective of the study, the researcher limits the study to the following parameters: the study focused on X Culinary Arts 5 at SMKN 8 Medan during the Even semester of the 2024/2025 school year. Specifically, this research explored students' perceptions in implementing Problem-Based Learning (PBL) in procedural writing skills through procedure text. The study conducted over a single meeting comprising four hours of instructional time.

E. The Significances of the Study

This study holds theoretical and practical significances, contributing to the knowledge of Problem-Based Learning (PBL) and its application in vocational education. By examining students' perceptions of PBL, this research promotes academic understanding and provides academic understanding and provides actionable insights for teachers, students, and future researchers.

1. Theoretically, the findings of this research are expected to enhance the understanding of Problem-Based Learning (PBL) within vocational education. By exploring students' perceptions of PBL, this study can contribute to the theoretical framework surrounding active learning strategies and their impact on student engagement and skill development.
2. Practically, the findings are useful for:
   a. For the teachers, the results are supposed to offer teachers insights into students' experiences with PBL, enabling them to refine their teaching methods and create more effective learning environments. This understanding can lead to instructional strategies better tailored to students' needs.
   b. For the students, this study is supposed to emphasize their perceptions on PBL. Recognizing the value of PBL in developing practical skills can motivate students to engage more actively in their learning, fostering a greater sense of ownership and responsibility.
   c. For the future researchers, the findings are supposed to serve as a foundation for further studies on PBL in various educational contexts. Future researchers can use this study to explore additional dimensions of student perceptions and their implications for teaching practices, contributing to ongoing discussions about effective pedagogical approaches in vocational education.