

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

This chapter presents the background of the study, identification of the problem, research questions, research objectives, significance of the study, scope and limitations, definition of key terms, and thesis organization. It establishes the research rationale by situating the enactment of the Cambridge English curriculum within the broader discourse of global educational standards and local contextual adaptation. The chapter concludes by clarifying the analytical focus of the study.

1.1 Background of the Study

English has become the dominant language of academic, professional, and intercultural communication worldwide. It functions as the primary medium for international scholarship, global mobility, higher education, and transnational professional interaction (Crystal, 2012; Hyland, 2016). As a result, proficiency in English, particularly academic and communicative competence, has become a key form of cultural and educational capital in many non-English-speaking countries. This global role of English has directly influenced national education systems, prompting schools to adopt curriculum that align with international standards and global benchmarks.

In response to these global demands, international curriculum such as the Cambridge English Curriculum have expanded rapidly across Asia, the Middle East, and other non-English-speaking regions (Cambridge Assessment International Education [CAIE], 2018; Kirkpatrick, 2014). The Cambridge curriculum promotes communicative competence, academic literacy, and student autonomy and is often associated with global recognition, international progression pathways, and standardized assessment frameworks. Consequently, many private and international schools adopt Cambridge programs to enhance their global competitiveness and institutional prestige.

However, the adoption of global curriculum is not a neutral or purely technical process. Scholars have consistently highlighted a tension between global curriculum standards and local educational contexts, particularly in postcolonial and multilingual settings (Fullan, 2007; Schweisfurth, 2013; Rizvi & Lingard, 2010). While international curriculum aims to provide standardized outcomes, their enactment occurs within specific

cultural, linguistic, religious, and policy environments. This often creates challenges related to curriculum localization, cultural relevance, and contextual appropriateness. Without careful adaptation, global curriculum risk marginalizing local knowledge, student identities, and sociocultural values (Kubota, 2020; Holliday, 1994).

A central issue within this tension concerns curriculum localization and teacher agency. Research indicates that teachers play a crucial role as curriculum mediators who interpret, adapt, and negotiate imported curriculum frameworks to suit local classroom realities (Kelly, 2009; Marsh, 2009; Zein, 2017). In practice, teachers may face constraints arising from standardized assessments, prescribed syllabi, and external accountability, which can limit their autonomy to adapt materials to students' linguistic proficiency, cultural backgrounds, and learning needs. As a result, gaps may emerge between the intended curriculum and the enacted curriculum in classrooms (Stenhouse, 1975; Fullan, 2007).

These issues are particularly salient in the Indonesian context, where English is taught as a foreign language and where national curriculum policies emphasize character education, religious values, and local cultural identity (Ministry of Education and Culture of Indonesia, 2020). In recent years, many private and faith-based schools in Indonesia have adopted international curriculum such as Cambridge to complement or run parallel with national standards. While such schools aim to combine global academic quality with local and religious values, empirical research examining how this balance is achieved in practice remains limited (Zein, 2017; Dardjowidjojo, 2000).

Darul Hikam Integrated School (DHIS) Secondary Lembang represents a significant case in this regard. As a faith-based private institution implementing the Cambridge English curriculum, DHIS seeks to prepare students for global academic participation while maintaining alignment with Indonesian sociocultural and religious contexts. This raises important questions regarding how the Cambridge curriculum is localized, how much adaptive space is available within its framework, and how teachers and students experience its enactment in daily classroom practice.

Despite the growing literature on international curriculum adoption, there is a clear research gap concerning empirical studies that examine how the Cambridge English curriculum is enacted and adapted at the secondary school level in Indonesia, particularly from the perspectives of key stakeholders. Most existing studies focus either on policy

discourse or higher education contexts, leaving classroom-level practices and localization processes underexplored (Kirkpatrick, 2014; Schweisfurth, 2013). Therefore, this study seeks to address this gap by investigating the enactment of the Cambridge English curriculum at DHIS Secondary Lembang, with particular attention to issues of localization, teacher agency, student needs, and the negotiation between global standards and local educational realities.

1.2 Identification of the Problem

The increasing adoption of international English curriculum such as the Cambridge English curriculum in non-English-speaking contexts has raised critical concerns regarding their practical enactment and contextual suitability. Although the Cambridge curriculum is designed to promote global communicative competence and academic literacy, its standardized structure may not automatically align with local linguistic, cultural, and institutional realities (Kirkpatrick, 2014; Schweisfurth, 2013). This misalignment becomes particularly evident when global curriculum frameworks are transferred into foreign language contexts where English is not used extensively outside the classroom.

One major problem concerns the gap between the intended curriculum and the enacted curriculum. While curriculum documents emphasize student-centred pedagogy, communicative language use, and higher-order thinking skills, classroom enactment is often shaped by contextual constraints such as students' English proficiency levels, teachers' workload, assessment pressures, and institutional expectations (Fullan, 2007; Kelly, 2009). As a result, the curriculum that is officially prescribed may differ significantly from how it is interpreted and practiced by teachers in real classroom settings.

Another critical issue relates to curriculum localization and cultural relevance. International curriculum, including Cambridge, are developed primarily within Western academic and cultural paradigms, which may not fully reflect local values, beliefs, or educational priorities in Asian contexts (Holliday, 1994; Kubota, 2020). In Indonesia, where education is expected to integrate national identity, religious values, and character education, the absence of explicit guidance on localization within international curriculum frameworks can create uncertainty for teachers regarding how far adaptation is permissible or encouraged (Zein, 2017; Dardjowidjojo, 2000).

Teacher agency represents another significant problem area. Teachers are positioned as key agents in mediating and adapting curriculum content; however, their capacity to exercise autonomy is often constrained by standardized assessments, external benchmarking, and institutional accountability associated with international programs (Marsh, 2009; Stenhouse, 1975). Without sufficient institutional support and professional development, teachers may struggle to balance fidelity to Cambridge standards with responsiveness to students' learning needs and local context. This tension can affect instructional quality and student engagement.

From the students' perspective, limited curriculum adaptation may lead to linguistic and cognitive overload, particularly when instructional materials, assessment tasks, and academic expectations are not sufficiently scaffolded to match students' proficiency levels and sociocultural backgrounds (Hyland, 2016; Nguyen, 2017). When students experience difficulty relating curriculum content to their lived realities, the intended benefits of global academic preparation may not be fully realized.

Despite these concerns, empirical evidence examining how the Cambridge English curriculum is enacted, adapted, and perceived at the secondary school level in Indonesia remains scarce. Existing studies tend to focus on policy analysis or higher education contexts, offering limited insight into classroom-level practices and stakeholder experiences in secondary schools (Kirkpatrick, 2014; Schweisfurth, 2013). In particular, there is a lack of research that systematically explores how teachers and students negotiate global curriculum standards within faith-based private school settings.

At DHIS Secondary Lembang, where the Cambridge English curriculum is enacted alongside national and institutional values, these unresolved issues raise important questions regarding curriculum adaptability, instructional practices, and student experience. Without a clear understanding of how the curriculum is enacted in practice, it remains difficult to evaluate whether the Cambridge English curriculum effectively bridges global educational standards with the local Indonesian context. Addressing these problems is therefore essential for informing curriculum enactment, teacher support, and future policy decisions related to international education in Indonesia.

1.3 Research Questions

Based on the background provided, the following questions arise:

1. How is the Cambridge English Curriculum enacted at DHIS Secondary Lembang to bridge global educational standards with local instructional and sociocultural contexts?
2. To what extent does the Cambridge English Curriculum adapt global standards and local classroom realities, as perceived by the EFL teachers at DHIS Secondary Lembang under study?
3. What opportunities and challenges emerge from the enactment of the Cambridge English curriculum at DHIS Secondary Lembang in bridging global educational standards with local context?
4. How do students perceive their learning experiences at DHIS Secondary Lembang under the Cambridge English Curriculum in relation to its relevance to both global academic demands and local learning needs?

1.4 Purposes of The Research

Based on the research questions, the purposes of the research are:

1. To examine how the Cambridge English Curriculum is enacted at DHIS Secondary Lembang in bridging global educational standards with local instructional and sociocultural contexts. Specifically, the research seeks to analyze how global curriculum expectations are enacted in classroom practices and institutional settings within an Indonesian secondary school environment.
2. To explore English teachers' perceptions of the Cambridge English Curriculum, particularly regarding its flexibility and adaptability in accommodating local classroom realities while maintaining international standards.
3. To identify the opportunities and challenges that emerge from the enactment of the Cambridge English curriculum in bridging global educational standards with local context at DHIS Secondary Lembang.

4. To investigate students' perceptions of their learning experiences under the Cambridge English Curriculum, focusing on their perception of the relevance of global academic demands to their local learning needs, cultural background, and language proficiency. This objective emphasizes the student perspective as a critical indicator of curriculum relevance and effectiveness.

1.5 Significance of the Study

This study is expected to contribute both theoretically and practically to the field of English language education, particularly in relation to the enactment of international curriculum in local contexts. By focusing on the Cambridge English curriculum at a secondary school in Indonesia, this research provides insights that are relevant to curriculum theory, classroom practice, and educational policy.

1.5.1 Theoretical Significance

Theoretically, this study contributes to curriculum enactment and localization discourse by extending existing models of curriculum enactment and adaptation. Drawing on curriculum theories proposed by Kelly (2009), Marsh (2009), and Fullan (2007), this research empirically illustrates how a globally designed curriculum is interpreted, negotiated, and adapted by teachers and students within a specific sociocultural context. In doing so, the study supports the argument that curriculum enactment is not a linear process but a socially mediated practice shaped by local conditions, beliefs, and institutional constraints.

Moreover, this study strengthens theoretical discussions on curriculum localization and contextualization in international education. While global curriculum often promote standardization and comparability, scholars have emphasized the need for contextual responsiveness to ensure meaningful learning (Schweisfurth, 2013; Holliday, 1994). By examining how localization is enacted in practice, this research offers empirical support for the view that global curriculum frameworks must remain adaptable rather than prescriptive. It also contributes to applied linguistics literature by connecting curriculum theory with Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) and English for Academic Purposes (EAP) perspectives, highlighting how pedagogical principles are reshaped in local classrooms (Richards & Rodgers, 2014; Hyland, 2016).

1.5.2 Empirical Significance

Empirically, this study addresses a gap in existing research on the enactment of the Cambridge English curriculum at the secondary school level in Indonesia. While previous studies have explored international curriculum and English-medium programs in broader Asian or higher education contexts (Kirkpatrick, 2014; Nguyen, 2017), few have provided in-depth, classroom-based evidence from Indonesian secondary schools. Therefore, this research offers original empirical data derived from interviews and documents involving teachers and students who directly engage with the curriculum.

By foregrounding stakeholder perceptions, this study provides a nuanced understanding of how global curriculum standards are experienced on the ground. Such evidence is valuable for comparative curriculum studies and for researchers examining the relationship between global educational models and local enactment (Cowen, 2009; Rizvi & Lingard, 2010). The findings may also serve as a reference point for future studies on international curriculum adaptation in similar sociocultural and institutional settings.

1.5.3 Practical Significance

Practically, the findings of this study are expected to benefit multiple stakeholders. For EFL teachers, the study offers insights into effective strategies for adapting Cambridge curriculum materials, teaching approaches, and assessment practices to better suit students' linguistic levels, cultural backgrounds, and learning needs. This may support teachers in exercising informed professional judgment while maintaining alignment with international standards (Stenhouse, 1975; Hargreaves & Fullan, 2012).

For school leaders and administrators, this study offers practical guidance for improving the enactment of international curriculum within local educational contexts. The findings can be applied to design more context-sensitive curriculum policies, develop targeted teacher training programs, and establish structured support systems that help teachers adapt global curriculum standards to local needs. In particular, school leaders can use the results to refine lesson planning frameworks, align assessment practices with both international benchmarks and national requirements, and create professional development programs focused on curriculum adaptation strategies.

Furthermore, the study provides actionable insights for strengthening institutional planning by integrating global curriculum standards with the school's vision, mission, and

cultural identity. Administrators can apply these findings to develop clear guidelines for curriculum localization, support collaborative planning among teachers, and ensure that instructional practices remain relevant to students' sociocultural backgrounds. By doing so, schools can move beyond theoretical understanding and implement concrete strategies that balance global competitiveness with local relevance sustainably and effectively.

At the policy level, this research provides practical directions that can inform the development of clearer and more applicable guidelines for the integration of international curriculum within the Indonesian education system. As private and faith-based schools increasingly adopt international programs, policymakers can use the findings of this study to formulate standardized frameworks for curriculum adaptation, ensuring alignment between international standards and national educational goals (Zein, 2017; Ministry of Education and Culture of Indonesia, 2020).

Specifically, the study can be applied to develop policy guidelines that regulate how international curriculum such as Cambridge are localized in terms of content, language use, assessment practices, and value integration. It also offers a basis for designing teacher professional development policies that equip educators with the skills to adapt global curriculum effectively in local contexts. Furthermore, policymakers can utilize these insights to establish monitoring and evaluation mechanisms that ensure international programs maintain both academic quality and cultural relevance. Through these applications, the study contributes not only to policy discourse but also to the practical improvement of curriculum governance in Indonesia.

Finally, for students, this study provides practical implications for improving their learning experiences within international curriculum settings. The findings can be used to design more accessible and engaging learning activities that align with students' linguistic levels, cultural backgrounds, and learning needs. Teachers and schools can apply these insights to adjust instructional strategies, simplify complex materials when necessary, and create more interactive classroom environments that support active participation.

Furthermore, by incorporating students' perspectives, the study offers a basis for developing learning approaches that are both globally oriented and locally meaningful. Schools can use the findings to ensure that curriculum content, tasks, and assessments are relevant to students' real-life contexts while still meeting international standards. In this way,

the study contributes not only to understanding students' experiences but also to improving the quality, relevance, and effectiveness of English language learning in practice.

1.6 Scope and Limitations of the Study

This study is deliberately scoped to ensure depth, contextual sensitivity, and methodological rigor. As a qualitative case study, it does not aim for statistical generalization but for an in-depth understanding of how the Cambridge English curriculum is enacted and adapted within a specific institutional and sociocultural setting.

1.6.1 Scope of the Study

The scope of this research is confined to the enactment of the Cambridge English curriculum at Darul Hikam Integrated School (DHIS) Secondary Lembang, Bandung, during the academic year in which the study is conducted. The focus is placed on English language teaching at the secondary level, particularly how the curriculum is enacted in classroom practice and perceived by key stakeholders.

Specifically, this study examines:

1. Curriculum enactment practices, including teaching approaches, classroom interaction patterns, assessment practices, and instructional materials aligned with the Cambridge English curriculum.
2. Curriculum localization and adaptation, with attention to how teachers adjust content, pedagogy, and assessment to respond to local cultural values, students' linguistic backgrounds, institutional vision, and national educational expectations.
3. Stakeholder perceptions, particularly those of English teachers and students, regarding the relevance, challenges, and effectiveness of the Cambridge English curriculum in the local context.
4. Institutional context, focusing on a private, faith-based secondary school that integrates international curriculum frameworks within Indonesian educational and cultural settings.

The study is grounded in curriculum enactment and evaluation theories, including the process-oriented view of curriculum enactment (Stenhouse, 1975; Fullan, 2007) and

contextualized education perspectives (Schweisfurth, 2013). Data are collected through documents and interviews to capture both documented and curriculum enactment practices.

1.6.2 Limitations of the Study

Despite its contributions, this study has several limitations that should be acknowledged;

First, the research is limited to a single case study site, which means the findings cannot be generalized to all schools implementing the Cambridge English curriculum in Indonesia or other contexts. However, the purpose of this study is analytical rather than statistical generalization, allowing readers to assess the transferability of the findings to similar contexts (Yin, 2018).

Second, the study focuses exclusively on the Cambridge English curriculum, following the revision of the research title and scope after the proposal defence. As a result, comparisons with other international curriculum, such as GAC or IB, fall outside the scope of this research.

Third, participant perspectives are limited to English teachers, selected students, and school administrators at DHIS Secondary Lembang. While these stakeholders provide rich and relevant insights, the study does not include external curriculum developers or policymakers, which may restrict broader institutional or systemic interpretations.

Fourth, as the data collection relies heavily on qualitative methods, the findings are shaped by participants' self-reported experiences and the researcher's interpretive analysis. Although triangulation is employed to enhance credibility, subjective interpretations cannot be eliminated (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016).

Finally, the study is conducted within a specific time frame, capturing curriculum enactment as it occurs during the period of the research conducted. Changes in policy, staffing, or institutional priorities beyond the research period are not accounted for.

1.7 Definition of Key Terms

To avoid conceptual ambiguity and ensure analytical clarity, the following key terms are operationally defined as they are used in this study.

1.7.1 Cambridge English Curriculum

The Cambridge English Curriculum in this study refers to the structured English language program developed under the authority of Cambridge Assessment English, part of the University of Cambridge. It includes internationally benchmarked syllabi, teaching materials, assessment frameworks, and proficiency standards aligned with the Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR).

Operationally, within this research, the Cambridge English Curriculum denotes the officially adopted English program enacted at Darul Hikam Integrated School Secondary Lembang, including its prescribed textbooks, assessment system, pedagogical guidelines, and proficiency targets.

1.7.2 Global Educational Standards

Global Educational Standards refer to internationally recognized benchmarks, competencies, and assessment frameworks designed to ensure comparability, quality assurance, and accountability across educational systems. These standards typically emphasize measurable learning outcomes, communicative competence, and alignment with international proficiency frameworks such as the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR), which provides a widely accepted basis for describing language ability and performance levels (Council of Europe, 2020; North, 2014). Such frameworks enable cross-national recognition of qualifications and support the standardization of educational expectations in a globalized context.

In this study, Global Educational Standards specifically denote the pedagogical principles, assessment criteria, and performance benchmarks embedded within the Cambridge English framework, which reflect transnational expectations of English language proficiency and instructional quality. International assessment systems such as Cambridge are designed to align with global proficiency scales and competency-based evaluation models that emphasize both communicative effectiveness and academic language use (Green, 2014; Weir, 2005). These standards serve as reference points for curriculum design and assessment practices, guiding how English language teaching is structured to meet international academic and professional demands.

1.7.3 Local Context

Local context refers to the sociocultural, religious, institutional, linguistic, and national policy environment in which curriculum enactment occurs. It encompasses students' linguistic backgrounds, teachers' professional competencies, school vision and mission, community values, and national curriculum regulations that collectively shape educational practice. Scholars in curriculum and comparative education emphasize that educational processes are deeply embedded in local contexts, where cultural norms, institutional structures, and policy frameworks influence how curriculum is interpreted and enacted (Raihani, 2014; Schweisfurth, 2013). Therefore, understanding local context is essential for analyzing how global curriculum models are adapted to fit specific educational environments.

Within this study, local context specifically refers to the educational setting of Darul Hikam Integrated School Secondary Lembang, as an Indonesian Islamic private school operating within the national education system while integrating an international curriculum framework. Such institutions often navigate dual demands: adhering to national education policies while adopting global curriculum standards, which requires contextual adaptation and institutional alignment (Rizvi & Lingard, 2010; Steiner-Khamsi, 2014). In addition, Islamic schooling contexts are characterized by the integration of religious values, moral education, and institutional identity, which further shape how curriculum is enacted and experienced by both teachers and students (Raihani, 2014). This combination of global curriculum adoption and local institutional identity makes the local context a critical factor in understanding the dynamics of curriculum enactment in this study.

1.7.4 Curriculum Enactment

Curriculum Enactment is understood as the process through which officially prescribed curriculum documents are interpreted, enacted, and transformed into classroom practices. Following curriculum enactment theory (Stenhouse, 1975; Fullan, 2007), enactment is viewed not as a linear delivery mechanism but as an interactive process shaped by teacher agency, institutional conditions, and contextual constraints.

In this research, Curriculum Enactment refers to how English teachers at the research site plan lessons, select materials, conduct classroom instruction, assess students, and adapt prescribed Cambridge guidelines in actual teaching practice. These practices reflect the

active role of teachers in interpreting curriculum frameworks and translating them into pedagogical actions within specific classroom contexts (Priestley, Biesta, & Robinson, 2015). Previous studies also highlight that teachers' instructional decisions, assessment strategies, and material selection are influenced by contextual factors such as institutional expectations, student needs, and available resources (Nation & Macalister, 2010; Snyder, Bolin, & Zumwalt, 1992). Therefore, curriculum enactment in this study is examined as a dynamic process in which global curriculum guidelines are adapted and operationalized through teachers' professional practices in the local educational setting.

1.7.5 Localization

Localization refers to the deliberate adaptation, modification, and contextualization of a global curriculum to ensure cultural relevance, pedagogical appropriateness, and institutional compatibility within a specific local setting. It involves adjustments in content selection, instructional strategies, assessment practices, and value integration. Scholars in curriculum studies emphasize that when educational models are transferred across contexts, they are inevitably reshaped through processes of reinterpretation and recontextualization (Schweisfurth, 2013; Bernstein, 2000). In this sense, localization is not merely an optional adjustment but an inherent aspect of curriculum enactment in diverse sociocultural environments.

In this study, Localization specifically denotes the strategies employed by teachers and the institution to align the Cambridge English curriculum with Indonesian educational regulations, Islamic institutional identity, and students' sociolinguistic realities, without undermining its global proficiency standards. This process reflects what comparative education scholars describe as policy adaptation and contextual negotiation, where global frameworks are selectively modified to fit local needs and institutional priorities (Steiner-Khamsi, 2014; Rizvi & Lingard, 2010). Such adaptation highlights the role of teachers and schools as active agents in mediating between global curriculum expectations and local educational values, ensuring that enactment remains both contextually relevant and academically rigorous.

1.8 Thesis Organization

This thesis is systematically organized into five chapters to ensure conceptual coherence and analytical progression.

Chapter I Introduction: This chapter presents the background of the study, identification of the problem, research questions, research objectives, significance of the study, scope and limitations, definition of key terms, and thesis organization. It establishes the research rationale by situating the enactment of the Cambridge English curriculum within the broader discourse of global educational standards and local contextual adaptation. The chapter concludes by clarifying the analytical focus of the study.

Chapter II Literature Review; This chapter reviews and synthesizes relevant theoretical and empirical literature underpinning the study. It discusses: (1) theoretical foundations of curriculum enactment, (2) global educational standards in English language teaching, (3) international curriculum adoption in local contexts, (4) curriculum localization and contextual adaptation, and (5) previous empirical studies related to international curriculum enactment. The chapter culminates in the development of the conceptual framework that guides the research, illustrating the relationship among global standards, curriculum enactment processes, localization strategies, and stakeholder perceptions.

Chapter III Research Methodology; This chapter explains the research design, which adopts a qualitative case study approach. It details the research site and participants, data collection techniques (documents and interviews), research instruments, data analysis procedures, and strategies to ensure trustworthiness, including credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability. Ethical considerations are also addressed.

Chapter IV Findings and Discussion: This chapter presents and analyzes the research findings based on the thematic analysis of collected data. The findings are organized according to the research questions and aligned with the conceptual framework. The discussion critically interprets the findings in relation to existing theories and previous studies, highlighting how global curriculum standards are enacted and localized within the institutional context of the study.

Chapter V Conclusions and Recommendations: This chapter summarizes the key findings, draws conclusions aligned with the research objectives, and outlines theoretical and practical implications. It also provides recommendations for school administrators, teachers, curriculum developers, and future researchers concerning the enactment and contextual adaptation of international curriculum in Indonesian educational settings.