

## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

This chapter provides an overview of the proposed research. It contains the background, research question, research purpose, research significance, clarification of key terms, and paper organization.

#### **1. 1 Background of study**

In 2021, I was a teacher at a State Junior High School in Bandung, Indonesia when I received shocking news that I would be replaced, essentially let go. This news shocked and confused me, especially since I had not even completed a full year in my teaching role. Shortly before I was set to leave, I had the chance to meet the teacher who would take my place. He was an elementary school teacher now tasked with teaching at a junior high school. Without any preconceived notions, I started a conversation with him to understand the circumstances that had brought us both to this unusual point in our lives. We both wanted to uncover each other's stories, especially in my case, where I needed to understand why I was forced to leave a career I was passionate about. I believed that every situation had its own story to tell.

The teacher then revealed that he used to work as an English teacher at an elementary school. Shockingly, he did not aspire to be a homeroom teacher. Instead, he had meticulously planned to pursue a career as an English teacher, charting a well-thought-out path to seize opportunities in the education field. His efforts proved successful, and he became an English teacher at an elementary school for a while.

Unfortunately, all his endeavors faced a setback when the 2013 Curriculum was implemented. During that period, he had to transition from being an English teacher to taking on the role of a homeroom teacher. The regulations introduced by the Curriculum change prevented him from formally teaching English due to the misalignment of his educational background with the requirements of the system. This was a consequence of the shift of English from being an intra-curricular subject to an extracurricular one in the 2013 Curriculum.

Naturally, he felt disappointed and disheartened. Because it was not what he truly desired. After all the hard work he put into becoming an elementary school English teacher, he felt that it had all gone to waste. He had to accept his fate as a homeroom teacher. This change in roles rendered his previous learning seemingly futile. He had to learn many aspects of his new job as a homeroom teacher from scratch, starting with how to teach thematic lessons and even some subjects he had not mastered before. A question nagged him: What was the point of spending years studying English education in college?

After hearing the teacher's story, several questions also arose in my mind about what happened with Curriculum 2013, the nature of its changes, and the real-life events that led him to lose the job he aspired to - becoming an English teacher, especially in a public school.

After learning about the challenges faced by teachers due to the curriculum change, I found myself at a new school a few weeks later. The same questions resurfaced - *how had the 2013 Curriculum affected the careers of elementary school English teachers?* I met a teacher whose situation was similar to the previous teacher, with a slight difference in direction; she moved from teaching English at the elementary level to the junior high school level.

In the case of the teacher I met at this new school, she was still teaching English but had to change her teaching level. She went from teaching English at the elementary school to teaching it at the junior high school. The same feelings were visible in her, and it was inevitable that disappointment was a recurring theme when discussing the years she had to the transition.

One can imagine that after nearly a decade devoted to teaching English at the elementary level, where she had developed her teaching methods and even envisioned creating her modules, she had to let go of her vision and surrender to the circumstances. Despite still being an English teacher, changing her workplace, especially with the differences in student characteristics, presented challenges in various aspects, especially in terms of pedagogy.

I was surprised to learn that English had been removed from the elementary school curriculum, resulting in significant consequences for teachers. These

consequences ranged from job reassignments to outright dismissals, deeply impacting English language teachers. Furthermore, discussions with two teachers I had met earlier revealed a personal connection – wherein, lately, the same issue seems to be resurfacing. Discourse suggests that English and other foreign language lessons might be removed from the core curriculum. Naturally, this has raised concerns about my future career as an English teacher.

With this newfound knowledge and driven by a series of narratives, I decided to explore the changes in the curriculum landscape in Indonesia, especially in English language education. As an English language teacher, I was vulnerable to potential curriculum changes, and I was curious about the various aspects surrounding the significant shift that was the 2013 curriculum revision.

My journey of inquiry started with looking back at the history of English language education itself. In the context of Indonesia's educational evolution since its independence in 1945, the nation's educational landscape has undergone multiple curriculum changes, tallying approximately seven revisions, commencing from the early "Perencanaan Pelajaran" (Curriculum Planning) in 1945, followed by the "Rencana Pendidikan Dasar" (Basic Education Plan) in 1965, and several other iterations leading up to the 2013 curriculum and the revision of 2013 Curriculum in 2017 (Wahyuni, 2016). In tandem, the teaching of English in schools emerged on the scene around 1967, receiving further reinforcement from the Indonesian government through legislation in the early 1990s, ultimately evolving to its current status (Faridatuunnisa, 2020; Depdiknas, 2006).

Despite the longstanding presence of English language education in Indonesia, its incorporation into the elementary school curriculum was relatively recent. It was introduced and implemented in 2004 under the KBK curriculum, subsequently continuing through the KTSP curriculum in 2006. While it was not explicitly outlined in the curriculum, it became an integral part of mandatory local content. However, after a decade of its introduction in 2004, English language education in the Indonesian curriculum underwent a significant transformation in 2013, transitioning from an intra-curricular subject to an extracurricular one (Alfarisy, 2021).

The rationale behind this change of English from the elementary school curriculum, according to Musliar Kasim, the Deputy Minister of Education and Culture at the time, was twofold. First, it aimed to allow students to bolster their proficiency in the Indonesian language before delving into foreign languages. Second, it stemmed from concerns about the lower proficiency levels in Indonesian compared to English, with apprehensions that this discrepancy might erode nationalistic sentiments among the younger generation (Cahyati & Madya, 2019; Zulhermindra, 2018). Moreover, the fear of dwindling regional language speakers over time served as another factor and is near to becoming nearly extinct in Indonesia (Eberhard et al., 2020; Kohler, 2019).

While these two reasons formed the foundation for the curriculum change, alternative approaches beyond removal were certainly worth considering. Rather than making English the scapegoat for promoting regional languages and Indonesian culture, the government could have encouraged schools to infuse English language instruction with elements of history, culture, and values unique to Indonesia. By doing so, students would have gained insight into their cultural heritage and national legacy, all without the need to eliminate English from the intra-curricular curriculum (Alwasilah, 2012).

Moreover, the implementation of the policy to shift English from intra-curricular to extracurricular had far-reaching effects on various aspects of English language education, impacting parents, students, school administration, and the teachers who bore the brunt of the change. To put it into perspective, the shift made Indonesia the only ASEAN nation not to teach English at the primary school level (Kirkpatrick et al., 2019; Kirkpatrick & Lixun, 2020).

The most immediate repercussions were felt by the students, whose access to quality English language education became restricted. Not all schools could offer English due to regulatory constraints. As a result, students received vastly different English language instruction than when it was intra-curricular (Zein, 2017). This limited access to knowledge had the potential to erode the language skills of children, as they were no longer regularly taught. Opportunities to speak, read, listen, and write in English within the classroom environment dwindled, and their

proficiency levels were likely to suffer (Eddraoui & Wirza, 2020). Consequently, students, particularly those attending public schools, found themselves compelled to seek private courses or tutors if they desired English language classes—an option out of reach for many.

Another critical element affected by these changes was the teaching profession itself. With the removal of English from the intra-curricular domain, the role of English language teachers at the elementary level was significantly diminished. Their impact was felt across pedagogy, professional standing, and administrative functions. Shockingly, there was a shortage of literature and academic discourse concerning the repercussions of curriculum changes on teachers, especially those teaching English.

Several studies have explored the impact of limited access to English Subject language knowledge in the context of extracurricular English language instruction. Tsiplakides (2018) examined the link between private supplemental tutoring and social class inequalities in secondary education in Greece. The study employed both qualitative and quantitative methods and found that students from higher and middle social classes gained advantages, enhancing their employment prospects (Tsiplakides, 2018).

Murray (2020) conducted qualitative research on the influence of social class on the acceptance or rejection of English language teaching in specific social contexts. This research highlighted how social class could promote equity or perpetuate imbalances in English language instruction policies. It emphasized the importance of recognizing the complexity of English instruction as an educational transformation (Murray, 2020).

Zein (2017) investigated language-in-education policy regarding the teaching of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) in Indonesian primary schools. The study analyzed various policy domains and offered recommendations, which have relevance not only for Indonesia but also for Indonesia and policymakers in other countries involved in elementary EFL education (S. Zein, 2017).

While these three studies address the limitations in chances to have an English language education, they predominantly concentrate on the impacts felt by

students. In this context, there has been relatively limited exploration of the teachers' perspectives as policy implementers. Therefore, in this research, I seek to fill the gap that the exploration is still lacking. This study aims to present the perspectives, experiences, and criticism of the 2013 Curriculum from elementary school English teachers. The teachers were affected by the 2013 curriculum when the English subject made the transition to an extracurricular status.

## **1. 2 Research Questions**

Considering the discussion above, the research questions have been formulated as follows:

1. What are the teachers' experiences regarding the Curriculum changes in Indonesia?
2. How do the curriculum dynamics impact the teachers' professional and socio-economic dimensions?

## **1. 3 Research Objectives**

The main objective of this study is to understand the thoughts and reflections of teachers who have been at the forefront of implementing the curriculum for 10 years. Researchers can learn about various events and incidents that occurred during those years from teachers' reflections. Experience, contemplation, and evaluation will all be very important as a foundation for considering more restrictions. Furthermore, the goal of this study is to listen to teachers' stories whose voices are often unheard.

## **1. 4 Scope of the study**

This section will go through the research's limits as well as what it can accomplish. This study focused on teachers' perspectives on how they have felt, observed, and criticized the shift of English from the main curriculum to extracurricular over the last ten years. Geographically, the participants in this circumstance are two teachers in Bandung who may represent opposing viewpoints. First, teachers who are administratively impacted cannot return to the

primary level but must teach at the secondary level. Second, some teachers can teach for 10 years despite the lack of administrative references and an excellent core curriculum. It should be noted that, due to the narrow scope of the research, this study may not represent Indonesia in general. However, they will still be the voice of representatives of affected teachers.

In practice, this research conducted a narrative inquiry, which will not provide a comprehensive picture of this teacher's perspective. Nevertheless, what this study provides is a depth of contemplation that exists in the two participants in this study. This study also included a series of interviews and a document examination of the teachers' records.

### **1. 5 Research Significances**

This research is expected to have theoretical, practical, social, and policy implications related to teachers' reflections on the shifting of the English curriculum from main to extracurricular based on a variety of factors within the teachers, beginning with experiences and criticism on the policy.

Theoretically, the purpose of this research is to add knowledge to the scope of narrative inquiry, English language education policies, and how a policy can affect a teacher's perception.

Practically, this study can help figure out the practical implications of the shifting of the English curriculum from main to extracurricular activities. Teachers' reflection on this policy can provide useful insight into how these changes affect classroom teaching and learning methods. Teachers' feedback can also be used to highlight areas where present policies should be updated or refined.

Socially, the study could have far-reaching social ramifications. English is considered a gateway to prospects for higher education, employment, and social mobility in many nations. As a result, every policy that affects English teaching and learning is of significant importance to the larger population.

Regarding policy implications, this research seeks to serve as a reference and evaluation for policymakers to consider when developing future policies in the development of English teaching at the primary level.

### **1. 6 Clarification of Key Terms**

Numerous terminologies are clarified below to eliminate any possibility of misunderstanding or ambiguity.

- *Navigating*: This term suggests that English teachers had to find their way through the 2013 curriculum change. They had to learn new teaching methods, adapt to new curriculum requirements, and deal with the challenges of implementing the new curriculum.
- *Muatan Lokal or Local Content* refers to a component of the Indonesian education curriculum that is designed to teach students about their local culture, history, and language. The goal of *Muatan Lokal* is to help students develop a sense of pride in their local identity and to prepare them for life in their local community. In this context, English was being taught as *Muatan Lokal* in Indonesian primary schools before the implementation of the 2013 Curriculum.
- *Socio-economic*: Socioeconomic aspects encompass the interrelation between social and economic factors that influence a society's development, well-being, and overall conditions. It refers to the intricate interplay between social structures, institutions, and processes, and the economic systems that govern production, distribution, and consumption. In this research context, the term focuses on wealth distribution and employment.

### **1. 7 Organization of Paper.**

The general organization of a research report is made up of five elements. The first section is the *Introduction*, which includes the research background, research questions, study objectives, study importance, term clarification, paper organization, and concluding remarks. The theoretical framework of the study is presented in the second chapter, *Theoretical Framework*. The third chapter is



*Research Methods*, which covers the design, the location and participants, data collecting, and data analysis. *Narratives* is the fourth chapter, and it narrates and re-tells the stories that will be collected in this investigation. The final section is *Conclusions and Recommendations*. It gives the conclusion and recommendations based on the elaboration and discussion.