

## EFL Cambridge Curriculum Implementation at Kharisma Bangsa Middle School: Teachers' Perspective

Megita Ameliya\*<sup>1)</sup>, Lidiyatul Izzah<sup>2)</sup>, and Angel Illaw Aguirre<sup>4)</sup>

<sup>1)</sup> Kharisma Bangsa School, South Tangerang Banten, Indonesia

<sup>2)</sup> Universitas Muhammadiyah Jakarta, South Tangerang Banten, Indonesia

<sup>3)</sup> Sta. Cecilia Parochial School, Inc., St. San Mateo, 1800 Rizal, Philippines

✉ [megitaameliya@kbs.sch.id](mailto:megitaameliya@kbs.sch.id)

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### ABSTRACT

This study investigates the implementation of the Cambridge Curriculum at Kharisma Bangsa Secondary School and its impact on teaching English as a Foreign Language (EFL). Data were collected using a qualitative case study approach, which included interviews, observations, and document analysis. Miles, Huberman, and Saldana's models were used in the analysis, with emphasis on the systematic phases of data collection, condensation, analysis, and aggregation. The purpose of this study is to assess the effectiveness of the Cambridge Curriculum in meeting learning objectives and improving the quality of EFL education. It investigates a variety of topics, including curriculum implementation strategies, supporting and challenging factors encountered, and the curriculum's overall outcomes in the Indonesian educational context. The primary results indicate that the Cambridge Curriculum has significantly influenced the teaching methodologies and assessments.

**Keywords:** Cambridge International Curriculum, EFL Instruction, Curriculum Implementation

### ABSTRAK

Penelitian ini menginvestigasi tentang penerapan Kurikulum Cambridge di Sekolah Menengah Kharisma Bangsa dan dampaknya terhadap pengajaran Bahasa Inggris sebagai Bahasa Asing. Data dikumpulkan menggunakan pendekatan studi kasus kualitatif, yang mencakup wawancara, observasi, dan analisis dokumen. Model Miles, Huberman, dan Saldana digunakan dalam penganalisisan data, dengan penekanan pada fase sistematis pengumpulan data, kondensasi, analisis, dan agregasi. Tujuan dari penelitian ini adalah untuk mengukur efektivitas Kurikulum Cambridge dalam mencapai tujuan pembelajaran dan meningkatkan kualitas pendidikan Bahasa Inggris. Penelitian ini menyelidiki berbagai topik, termasuk strategi penerapan kurikulum, faktor pendukung dan tantangan yang dihadapi, serta hasil keseluruhan dari kurikulum dalam konteks pendidikan Indonesia. Hasil Penelitian menunjukkan bahwa Kurikulum Cambridge telah secara signifikan memengaruhi baik dari metodologi pengajaran ataupun asesmen.

**Kata kunci:** Kurikulum International Cambridge, Pengajaran Bahasa Inggris sebagai bahasa asing, implementasi kurikulum

## INTRODUCTION

Education is the foundation of society because it prepares students to face today's complex issues (Yudha, 2016) and provides them with the necessary skills and knowledge for future challenges. The urgent need for educational development emphasizes the importance of implementing a high-quality curriculum that meets the diverse needs of all students. Therefore, a well-designed curriculum is crucial for establishing learning objectives, content, and experiential opportunities that promote student development (Jameson et al., 2018; Yasar & Aslan, 2021; Syomwene, 2020).

Furthermore, effective curriculum development is critically important for achieving specific learning objectives. This process involves several important steps, including planning, selection, organization, implementation, and assessment of instructional strategies (Jawabreh & Gunduz, 2021). According to them, curriculum development must adapt to the rapid changes in educational and scientific advancements. A well-defined curriculum not only improves learning opportunities but also serves as a guiding framework for educational endeavors, ensuring that students acquire the necessary knowledge and skills for personal and academic development. Thus, a comprehensive and adaptable curriculum is critical for preparing future generations for success in a dynamic and changing environment (Liguori & Winkler, 2020).

Recognizing that curriculum development is inherently dynamic necessitates continuous adaptation in response to technological developments and changing educational demands. As a result, educators, as central figures in this process, must carefully consider the needs of those around them and adapt their

teaching methods accordingly. However, challenges in teacher preparedness frequently arise as educators shift from conventional roles to more creative and collaborative roles in student learning. Vreuls et al. (2022) identify several barriers to the development of a responsive curriculum, including handling conflicts, role management, and stakeholder engagement. This raises critical questions about the need for curriculum developers to have teaching experience, leading to the curriculum design process (Pieters et al., 2019).

Furthermore, the development of a responsive curriculum is based on current contributions from stakeholders, highlighting the significance of collaboration between educators, administrators, and the community at large in ensuring that the curriculum effectively meets the diverse needs of students. This collaborative work not only enriches the curriculum but also encourages a sense of responsibility among stakeholders, which leads to a more inclusive and effective learning environment.

In Indonesia, the National Education Standards (SNP) regulate quality education by establishing minimum requirements for the educational system. The most significant educational leaders such as KH Ahmad Dahlan and KH Ki Hajar Dewantara have continually called for teachers to have a comprehensive understanding of the school's curriculum and how to implement it effectively in the classroom. To address curricular gaps in Indonesian schools, the Ministry of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology (Kemendikbudristek) implemented the Merdeka Curriculum Policy (Meke et al., 2021). This reform requires the establishment of a national education system that encourages

faith, piety, and noble character while improving overall educational quality (Kemendikbud RI, 2023).

In addition to the transition to the Merdeka Curriculum, there has been a significant rise in interest in international curricula, which has led to significant changes in educational practices around the world. The adoption of international curricula, such as the Cambridge International Curriculum (CIC) and Cambridge International Examinations (CIE), by many Indonesian schools indicates an increasing need for higher educational standards. Specifically, the Cambridge International Curriculum (CIC) has grown in popularity within Indonesia's educational framework.

The implementation of the Cambridge curriculum within Indonesia is distinctive in its dual focus on both national educational standards and the Merdeka or freedom to learn curriculum. The present situation necessitates an integration of international and local educational systems, particularly in language teaching (Simanjuntak et al., 2022). According to research, such integration may result in significant benefits, but it also presents challenges that require extensive research and strategic consideration (Simanjuntak, 2020). Finally, the interrelationship of curriculum development, educational standards, teacher competency, and Cambridge curriculum implementation highlights the critical need for ongoing improvement in Indonesia's educational environment. By addressing curriculum implementation challenges and developing a supportive learning environment, educational stakeholders can better prepare students to face future challenges.

An exemplary case of successful Cambridge curriculum implementation is Kharisma Bangsa Middle School, established in 2006 with the Ministry of Education, Culture, Research,

and Technology's support. This institution provides quality STEM education and character development for K-12 students while equipping them for higher education. By integrating both national and Cambridge curricula, Kharisma Bangsa enables students to achieve internationally recognized qualifications (kharismabangsa.org, 2023).

Despite the potential benefits of the Cambridge Curriculum, its implementation at Kharisma Bangsa Secondary School presents several challenges that require further investigation. As a result, the current study aims to clarify how the Cambridge Curriculum is implemented in the context of teaching English as a Foreign Language (EFL) and to figure out its impact on educational outcomes. The study will respond to several critical questions about the effectiveness of the implementation strategy in improving English learning quality, and it will also identify supportive and challenging factors that influence this process. Furthermore, it will provide insight into how the Cambridge Curriculum influences students' enthusiasm and the overall learning environment. By exploring these dimensions, this research intends to provide valuable insights into the benefits and limitations of the Cambridge Curriculum within Indonesia's distinctive educational setting.

The key questions addressed in this study include:

1. How does the implementation strategy of the Cambridge Curriculum improve the quality of English learning at Kharisma Bangsa Middle School?
2. What are the supporting and challenging factors affecting the Cambridge Curriculum's implementation in enhancing learning quality?
3. How does the Cambridge Curriculum impact students' enthusiasm and the

overall learning atmosphere at Kharisma Bangsa Middle School?

## RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The study was conducted at the Kharisma Bangsa School in Indonesia. It was aimed at investigating the use of the Cambridge Curriculum in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) instruction, with a particular emphasis on how it enhances teaching effectiveness. This study used a descriptive qualitative research design to learn about the perspectives and experiences of English teachers during the implementation process. This approach aims to provide comprehensive, specific insights into the nuances of what they have experienced (Caggiano & Weber, 2023; Morse, 2022), in addition to the curriculum's impact on teaching and learning outcomes.

Data were gathered using semi-structured interviews, classroom observations, and document analysis. In-depth interviews with EFL teachers were conducted to gather qualitative information about their experiences with the Cambridge Curriculum. The interviews were conducted using adapted interview sheets and focused on implementation strategies, supportive and challenging factors, and perceived curriculum outcomes. Classroom observations were also conducted to evaluate EFL instruction, with a structured observation sheet documenting key elements such as lesson preparation, implementation, and assessment. The researcher further looked at relevant documents, such as attendance records and instructional materials, aiming to triangulate findings and gain a better understanding of how the curriculum is integrated into the classroom.

Data analysis was then conducted using the analytical techniques outlined by Miles, Huberman, and Saldana (2014), which included

four key stages: data collection, condensation, presentation, and conclusion verification. The raw data, which included interview transcripts and observational notes, was organized and coded systematically to identify principles and changes related to curriculum implementation and its effects on learning quality. The study's detailed and progressive analytical process aimed to produce valid and reliable conclusions about the Cambridge Curriculum's effectiveness in promoting EFL instruction at Kharisma Bangsa School, along with insights that could inform future curriculum development in similar educational contexts.

## FINDING AND DISCUSSION

### Findings

This section provides a comprehensive analysis of data gathered from interviews, observations, and document reviews regarding the Cambridge curriculum's implementation at Kharisma Bangsa Secondary School. The study took a descriptive qualitative approach to key research questions about English language teaching and learning. This analysis combines insights gained from structured interviews with English teachers, direct classroom observations, and relevant documentation.

### *Interview Results*

Interviews were conducted with several English teachers to learn about their experiences and insights into implementing the Cambridge curriculum. The responses focused on effective teaching strategies, supportive and challenging factors encountered during implementation, and the overall success of this curriculum adoption.

- Q: Which strategies have teachers found most effective for implementing the Cambridge curriculum? A: Teachers emphasized student-centered learning strategies such as

collaborative group work, project-based activities, and incorporating real-world scenarios into lessons. This approach allows students to interact meaningfully with the language while improving their EFL skills.

- Q: *What challenges did teachers face while implementing the Cambridge curriculum?* A: Teachers identified several challenges, including limited resources, varying student proficiency levels, and a need for additional training on specific aspects of the curriculum. They also highlighted the challenge of balancing comprehensive language skill development with student engagement.

- Q: *Can you give examples of supportive factors that helped to ensure successful curriculum implementation?* A: Strong administrative support, access to high-quality teaching materials, and teacher collaboration were all important factors. A common understanding of the curriculum's goals, as well as the formation of a community of practice, facilitated the exchange of best practices.

- Q: *How do teachers integrate EFL competencies into their lesson plans?* A: Teachers should align their lesson objectives with the EFL competencies outlined in the Cambridge curriculum. This entails creating activities that address skills such as reading comprehension, oral communication, and writing proficiency while also encouraging critical thinking and cultural awareness.

- Q: *What results have teachers observed after implementing the Cambridge curriculum in their classrooms?* A: Teachers reported increased student engagement and motivation, as well as significant gains in language proficiency. Students demonstrated increased confidence in using English in academic and social settings, which contributed to a positive overall learning experience.

- Q: *What feedback have teachers given on the strengths of the Cambridge curriculum?* A: The curriculum's structured approach and emphasis on real-world language use are widely praised. Teachers believe it effectively prepares students for exams and improves their communication skills. Furthermore, the variety of resources available accommodates different learning styles.

- Q: *What areas did the feedback highlight as needing improvement?* A: Feedback indicated a need for more efficient resource allocation, particularly in terms of technology and teaching materials. Furthermore, ongoing professional development sessions focusing on curriculum updates and innovative teaching methods were identified as essential.

- Q: *How do teachers approach ongoing professional development with the Cambridge curriculum?* A: Teachers actively pursue professional development through workshops, peer observation, and attendance at educational conferences. Continuous learning and adaptation are emphasized to ensure that instructional practices are relevant and effective.

- Q: *What ways do teachers foster a student-centered learning environment?* A: Teachers foster a student-centered environment by giving students a voice in their learning processes, providing options for how they demonstrate understanding, and encouraging collaborative learning through group projects and discussions. This encourages independence and ownership of their education.

- Q: *How can administrators help teachers implement the Cambridge curriculum more effectively?* A: Administration can assist teachers by providing access to professional development resources, ensuring adequate materials are available, and encouraging a



collaborative culture among staff members. Regular feedback and open communication can aid in determining teacher needs and concerns.

### *Observations and Document Analysis*

Classroom observations were conducted over three days during the academic year 2023/2024, focusing on eighth-grade Cambridge lessons, particularly vocabulary development. Using a structured observation method, the researchers assessed key phases such as lesson preparation, implementation, and closure. The results showed that lessons were generally well-prepared and in line with Cambridge standards. Besides effectively using a variety of teaching methods, they also identified opportunities to improve student engagement through different instructional techniques and the use of supplemental materials.

Document analysis confirmed the consistency of instructional practices, as evidenced by attendance records, learning activities, and assessment results. Together, these findings reveal the Cambridge curriculum's strengths and challenges, emphasizing the critical importance of ongoing professional development and strategic resource distribution. In summary, the findings reveal that the Cambridge curriculum is being implemented at Kharisma Bangsa Secondary School with a strong commitment to advancing English language teaching and learning.

### **Discussion**

This section highlights the research findings on the implementation of the Cambridge curriculum at Kharisma Bangsa Secondary School, focusing on the various strategies used, the challenges encountered, and the overall impact on English language teaching and

learning. The findings from the Q&A sessions with teachers, combined with observational data, provide a thorough understanding of the curriculum's role in improving English as a Foreign Language (EFL) instruction.

### **Effective Curriculum Implementation Strategies**

The findings show that teachers use a variety of effective strategies to implement the Cambridge curriculum, with a focus on student-centered learning. Teachers emphasized the importance of collaborative group work, project-based activities, and incorporating real-world scenarios into lessons as essential for student engagement (Qomariyah & Khasanah, 2023; Trimadona et al., 2020). This strategic focus is consistent with contemporary pedagogical principles, implying that when students can engage meaningfully with the language, they are more likely to develop strong EFL skills (Q: *Which strategies have teachers found most effective in implementing the Cambridge curriculum?* A: Teachers prioritized student-centered learning strategies such as collaborative group work, project-based activities, and incorporating real-world scenarios into lessons.

Furthermore, effective curriculum implementation strategies include aligning lesson objectives with the EFL competencies outlined in the Cambridge curriculum, as well as encouraging critical thinking and cultural understanding (Cambridge, 2010; Nazizah et al., 2024; Yudha, 2016). Teachers stated that having a clear understanding of these competencies is essential for designing activities that not only develop language skills but also foster a holistic educational experience. A: Teachers should align their lesson objectives with the EFL competencies listed in the Cambridge curriculum.

## Supporting and Challenging Factors

While the implementation of the Cambridge curriculum has many strengths, teachers have reported several challenges. The key issues were:

*Limited Resources:* Teachers frequently cited a lack of adequate teaching materials and technological support as a barrier to delivering high-quality instruction and maintaining student engagement (*Q: What challenges did teachers face while implementing the Cambridge curriculum?* A: Teachers identified several challenges, such as limited resources, varying student proficiency levels, and the need for additional curriculum-specific training.

*Variation in Student Proficiency Levels:* The diverse language skills of students necessitated a balancing act for teachers, requiring them to devise strategies that cater to varying levels of proficiency while maintaining comprehensive language development. Cultural adaptability also presents challenges, as the curriculum largely reflects Western cultural contexts that may not align with local Indonesian cultural dynamics. Therefore, it is crucial to strike a balance between cultural relevance and appropriate language preferences to ensure equitable learning conditions and consistency in student experiences. Additionally, difficulties in assessing speaking skills highlight the importance of creating a supportive learning environment that encourages active participation. Effective evaluation must occur within an interactive classroom dynamic rather than in isolation.

- Need for additional training: Many educators expressed a desire for more focused professional development, specifically tailored to the nuances of the Cambridge curriculum. This emphasizes the importance of ongoing training to provide teachers with the skills

necessary to effectively navigate the curriculum's complexities.

One significant issue is teacher preparedness; many educators reported feeling unprepared for the Cambridge curriculum (Simanjuntak, 2020). This knowledge gap can negatively impact instructional effectiveness and disrupt the overall learning process. Furthermore, a strong reliance on teacher-centered activities can confront the curriculum's intended student-centered approach, resulting in insufficient student engagement and necessitating a re-evaluation of instructional strategies.

Despite the challenges, several supportive factors aided in the successful implementation of the Cambridge curriculum. Strong administrative support was critical (*Q: Can you provide examples of supportive factors that contributed to successful curriculum implementation?* A: Strong administrative support, access to high-quality teaching materials, and teacher collaboration were all critical factors. Furthermore, the formation of a community of practice among educators facilitated the sharing of best practices, which improved the overall effectiveness of instruction.

## Impact of Curriculum Implementation

The positive outcomes of implementing the Cambridge curriculum are interesting. Teachers reported increased student engagement and motivation, as well as significant improvements in language proficiency (*Q: What results have teachers seen since implementing the Cambridge curriculum in their classrooms?* A: Teachers reported increased student engagement and motivation, as well as significant increases in language proficiency. Students demonstrated greater confidence in using English for academic and

social purposes, resulting in a more enriching learning experience.

The curriculum's structured approach, with an emphasis on real-world language scenarios, was identified as a strength that prepares students for practical applications and improves their communication skills (Golding & Kopsick, 2024; Shobikah et al., 2024). (Q: *What feedback have teachers given on the strengths of the Cambridge curriculum?* A: The curriculum's structured approach and emphasis on real-world language use are highly praised. The problem-solving approach embedded in the curriculum prepares students for real-world applications, enriching their educational experiences and equipping them for success in a globalized context (Höl, 2023)

However, critical feedback highlighted areas that required improvement. Efficient resource allocation, particularly in terms of technology and materials, is critical to supporting diverse learning styles throughout the classroom (Q: *What areas did the feedback identify as needing improvement?* A: Feedback indicated a need for more efficient resource allocation, particularly in terms of technology and instructional materials. Ongoing professional development, with a focus on curriculum updates and innovative teaching methodologies, is also essential for keeping educators current and effective in their instructional practices.

Teachers actively pursue professional development opportunities, such as workshops, peer observations, and educational conferences. This dedication to continuous learning is critical for ensuring instructional relevance and effectiveness (Q: *How do Cambridge curriculum teachers approach ongoing professional development?* A: Teachers actively pursue professional development via workshops, peer observation, and attendance at educational conferences.

In conclusion, the research indicates that the Cambridge curriculum not only elevates academic standards but also transforms the learning environment to promote student agency, thereby fostering meaningful engagement in language learning. By addressing the identified challenges and emphasizing supporting factors, Kharisma Bangsa Secondary School can enhance the effectiveness of the Cambridge curriculum, creating a robust foundation for English language education.

## CONCLUSION

The implementation of the Cambridge curriculum at Kharisma Bangsa Secondary School has demonstrated significant potential to enhance the quality of English language education. The study reveals that various strategic initiatives, including professional development for teachers and the alignment of instructional resources with Cambridge standards, have positively impacted students' learning experiences. By creating a supportive learning environment and placing a strong emphasis on student engagement, the curriculum serves to develop essential English language skills, which are critical for students' academic and personal growth.

However, the findings also highlight several challenges that need to be addressed for optimal curriculum effectiveness. Teacher preparedness emerged as a critical issue, with some educators expressing concerns about their familiarity with the Cambridge curriculum. Additionally, an emphasis on traditional, teacher-centered instructional strategies often limited student engagement. To fully realize the benefits of the Cambridge curriculum, it is essential for Kharisma Bangsa Secondary School to take part in ongoing professional development opportunities and to



adopt more student-centered teaching methodologies.

Overall, the research indicates that while the Cambridge curriculum presents an optimal framework for improving English language instruction, its success depends on the continuous adaptation and support from educational stakeholders. By prioritizing the refinement of curriculum implementation strategies and enhancing cultural relevance, Kharisma Bangsa Secondary School can further strengthen its position as a leading institution in English language education. By addressing both the supporting factors and challenges outlined in the study, the school is well-positioned to create an engaging and effective learning environment that prepares students for future success in a global context.

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