Barriers to the implementation of the 2013 English curriculum in high schools in Mataram City: mapping teachers' problems, needs, and supplementary literacy materials for the 2013 English curriculum

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Abstract: Although the 2013 Curriculum has been implemented for over 4 years, up till now few numbers of research studies pertaining to its implementation have been reported. Thus, the teaching of English under the 2013 Curriculum in high schools remains to experience problems and hurdles but they are not well addressed yet. The present study aims to (a) identify the barriers to the implementation of English Language learning under the 2013 Curriculum at high schools in Mataram City, (b) establish teachers' needs that enhance the implementation of the 2013 Curriculum, and (c) generate supplemental literacy materials that support the teaching of English at high schools. The research employed a qualitative research method. Data were collected through in-depth interviews with 12 key informants in 6 high schools in Mataram. Among other findings, the present study reports tentatively that although teachers had received a number of substantial professional development in the implementation of 2013 Curriculum, they still experienced difficulties in changing their practices in implementing the new English Curriculum in high schools. With relatively large number of language skills and knowledge to be taught and lesser amount of learning time allotted, they needed to have supplementary literacy materials for out-of-class activities that supported the present recommended books. Upon the completion of the current study, various English supplemental literacy materials that support the spirit of 2013 Curriculum will be produced for independent learning.

Keywords: 2013 Curriculum, professional development, literacy, independent learning

Introduction

Globalization has profoundly triggered a fundamental change of school curriculum worldwide. A number of researchers, such as Waks (2003), Amimo et.al (2014), and Tejeda (2018), contend that the trend of curriculum change come up globally due to social, ideological, political, economic and technological reasons. The impact of such a change can be exciting as well as daunting for teachers who work as the spearheads of the curriculum. For those who are well trained and highly competent, the coming of new curriculum may bring about virtues and good opportunities to learn something new. For others, it may be seen as threats and burdens, especially when teachers have little readiness and low competence to put the new curriculum into action.

Such a condition has obviously affected teachers' mindsets and the course of their pedagogical practices in the implementation of the new curriculum.

A number of recent publications on Indonesian education indicate that the coming of 2013 Curriculum has brought about incessant pros and cons among researchers, educators and policy makers in Indonesia. The controversy generated by the change of SBC of 2006 into the 2013 Curriculum signifies the pull-and-push of power between the central and regional/local governments. With no scientifically research-based evidence, the 2013 Curriculum came to replace SBC of 2006. The rationale for the emergence of the 2013 English curriculum was not clearly known to the public (Ahmad, 2014). Such a change may cause the emergence of dissonance among implementers of the new curriculum. According to Kusumaningrum & Triwiyanto (2015) the birth of 2013 Curriculum has set back the spirit of bottom-up model of curriculum change as contained in the previous School Based Curriculum (SBC) of 2006. The

emergence of the new curriculum is identified as the control of central government over the regional and local governments. With varied teachers' abilities and competences from region to region, the success of the implementation of 2013 Curriculum will be very likely at stake.

Results of the study of teachers' readiness and competence to implement 2013 Curriculum reported by Rumahlatu et.al (2016) provides evidence for the proposition above. According to Rumahlatu et.al, the implementation of 2013 Curriculum faces challenges due to the lack of learning materials, the low morale of teachers and students, and the lack of training and dissemination of information about 2013 Curriculum. Although methodologically results of this study cannot be generalized to the entire regions of Indonesia, it informs significantly that there are problematic issues that need to think of. Other important publications that support Rumahlatu's research findings are reported by Jaedun et.al (2014), Maisyaroh, et.al (2014), Ekawati (2016), and Suyanto (2017). In general, these authors critically see although many of the teachers have been involved in a number of in-service training programs, they still face problems in implementing the new curriculum in the field.

To deal with such aproblem, Van Driel&Berry (2012) suggest that professional development programs provided for the new curriculum users should be directly linked with the common ground of teachers' professional practice. In every introduction of curriculum change, therefore, ongoing professional development activities should be devoted to facilitate teachers to build awareness about the needs of new curriculum (Sahlberg, 2009). Commonly, teachers resist changing their professional practice as they are not well equipped with good understandings of the underlying reasons for the change. For this reason, any professional training that precedes the introduction of curriculum change should address this perceived need.

To look at whether teachers succeed or struggle in implementing a curriculum change, Doyle & Ponder (as cited in Vandenberghe, 1986) advocate three criteria: (1) instrumentality (2)

congruence and (3) cost. The term instrumentality is simply referred to the construct of how clear the curriculum is understood and implemented by teachers. Doyle & Ponder suggest that this first criterion is used to look at how well teachers translate principles, objectives and outcomes of the curriculum into appropriate procedures and how well they are equipped with clear classroom examples for executing the curriculum.

The second criterion is known as congruence. This term is referred to how the content of the new curriculum is aligned with teachers' present teaching beliefs and practices. This second criterion is used to explore how the procedural content of teaching practices contained in the curriculum matches with teachers' common professional practices.

The term cost simply means how teachers make extra time and efforts to implement the new curriculum. This third criterion is used to scrutinize how much tangible and intangible benefits teachers gain from the new curriculum; and what assistance they actually need to implement the curriculum. A number of literature works (see McKinney et.al, 2009; Yeung, 2012; Cheung & Wong, 2012, Nkosana, 2013)show that these three criteria have been widely used as lensesto study curriculum change.

Through this literature study, the researchers seek to develop deeper insights into the problems that underlie teachers' practices of the current curriculum. As such, the research questions of the present study are stated as follows:

a. What types of barriers did teachers experience in the implementation of the 2013 Curriculum in their schools?

b. What needs did teachers consider to be able to enhance the implementation of 2013 Curriculum?

c. What supplemental learning resources did teachers think helpful to support the teaching of English at high schools?

Method

This study employs the theory of symbolic interactionism, which analyses patterns of interaction between individual teachers and the new policy and how meanings are produced from such interaction (Atkinson& Delamont, 2011). The researchers choose this theory because it emphasizes the interpretation of meanings that an entity brings as a result of the social interactions (Patton, 2002). Through the use of this theory, the researchers sought to interpret what and how participants thought, perceived, felt, and responded to the implementation of new curriculum in high schools in Mataram City.

To make sense of the data, the researchers employed thematic analysis. This analysis involved the acts of identifying, observing, and recording patterns of interactions that participants made with the curriculum change. Using the thematic data analysis the researchers wanted to look at barriers and teachers' needs that pertained the current implementation of the 2013 Curriculum. The combined symbolic interaction theory and thematic analysis were hoped to yield a comprehensive research results about the implementation of the 2013 Curriculum in high schools in Mataram City.

As regards data collection, the researchers interviewed 12 key informants from 6 high schools in Mataram City through in-depth interviews. These informants consisted of mixed junior and senior teachers who had taken part in the professional development of curriculum change. The researchers employed semi-structured interviews for this purpose. The direction of interviews was focused onrevealing participants' answers to the three research questions above.

Upon the completion of the interviews, the researchers transcribed and read the interview transcripts, and identified themes and/or categories that appeared from the data. The data analysis involved the processes of transcribing, coding, classifying and generating data into different categories as suggested by Green et al. (2007). The emerging themes from the data were marked and highlighted to ease the classification of data patterns.

Findings and discussion

1. Barriers to the implementation of English Language learning under the English 2013 Curriculum

Most teachers interviewed informed that they did not have adequate understandings of how to translate the principles of the new curriculum into classroom practices although prior to implementing the new curriculum they had taken part in a number of professional development programs. A number of evidence appears from the data that justified the problem. For example, Teacher-1 expressed her thought, "*What I got from the training all are too general*". In the same manner, Teacher-4contended that the preliminary training of the 2013 Curriculum conducted by the local education authority was *too short, confusing* and *unclear*. Almost all participants remarked they experienced similar difficulties in implementing the 2013 Curriculum because they were not well informed about how to transform the underlying concepts of the Curriculum into appropriate pedagogical procedures.

The lack of clarity pertaining to the pedagogical procedures made participants experience dissonance in implementing the 2013 Curriculum. In their views, there was a wide gap between the procedures of their 'normal' teaching practices and the one introduced by the new curriculum. Such a problem unduly created confusion among those participants as they were not adequately equipped with practical knowledge to bridge such a gap. Most participants perceived that the knowledge they received from the professional development they attended was '*far beyond their teaching practices*'. This condition caused the participants to feel insecure to try out the new approaches suggested by the curriculum as these approaches were incongruent with teachers' daily pedagogical practices.

The data also revealed that participants developed various responses to deal with pedagogical problems. Pertaining to methods of assessment, for example, some teachers reported that they just simply returned to the old assessment model and did not follow the authentic assessment format advocated by the

new curriculum. At this point, Teacher-9 asserted that the current assessment model was '*beyond imagination*'. He contended, "*How can I remember to note every student's behavioural change while I teach the class? I teach 12 classes and each class is comprised of 30 students!*" The majority of participants commented that the current assessment model was *too demanding*, *time-consuming*, and *beyond their understanding*. To deal with classroom evaluation, Teacher-2 used approximation in her evaluation. She focused marking only on the smart students and the most problematic ones. Then, she put average marks for the rest of the students. With reduced number of learning period, from 4 to 2 hours per week, most participants were sceptical that they could succeed in running the assessment model dictated by the curriculum.

2. Identified teachers' Needs to Enhance the Implementation of 2013 Curriculum

Data analysis pertaining to the second research question yields two urgent needs revealed by the participants: (1) on-going professional development on teaching pedagogy and (2) assessment matters. As regards professional development, these participants perceived that the preliminary professional development provided by the local education authority did not adequately address their needs as it was done on the top-down basis. All teacher participants therefore suggested that they needed to upgrade their knowledge through a bottom up model of on-going professional development.

The participants also critically thought that they needed special training to conduct an appropriate authentic assessment. These teachers felt burdensome and daunted when they had to conduct students' assessment as they did not have sufficient skills to do so. A number of apprehensive expressions appeared from the interviews — such as "*too much paper work*"; "*too many variables to look at*"; "*too complicated assessment forms*" and "*too much time spent on students' assessment*" All of participants admitted that they needed clear direction of how to deal with the great demands for authentic assessment ascribed by new curriculum.

3. Identified supplemental learning resources required by Teachers

Pertaining to the third research question, participants of the study informed that commonly, they used only one textbook entitled '*When English Rings a Bell*' supplied by the Central Government. They were of the opinion that that this core-book was not well accompanied by adequate supplemental learning resources. This core book contained too many teaching contents that involved the use of high linguistic knowledge and skills. Thus, it was quite difficult to be used for out-of-classroom independent learning. With such an invariability of learning materials, teachers restrained themselves from varying their teaching and engagement. In other words, they became dependent only on one resource. For that reason, participants suggested that it be necessary for the education authority to evaluate the use of one only textbook policy.

Further, the lack of supplemental learning resources made it difficult for participants to address the inclusion of character education into their teaching practices. In their view, the present book lacked explicit examples for character education. To bridge the gap, participants therefore suggested that the curriculum 'authority' provide a supply of supplemental textbooks that supported the inclusion of character education in the teaching of English language. In this connection, the study identified that there were three themes of English supplemental books required to accompany the present curriculum: (1) local-based, (2) national-based and (3) global-based supplemental learning materials. They contended that students should be exposed to variety of local and national wisdom prior to learning the norms and values of global culture.

Discussion

Using Doyle and Ponder' three criteria for evaluating curriculum change. The current study has identified three problems of that pertain to the impact of the implementation of 2013 Curriculum to teachers' professional practices. The study reveals that regardless of participating in a number of professional developments to

address the demand of the new curriculum, teachers experienced difficulties to transform their experiences into practice because the professional development provided did not match with their professional needs. Therefore, they failed to translate the underlying principles of the curriculum into practice. This hurdle, according to Vandenberghe (1984), occurs because the curriculum authority fails to recognise teachers' needs to align the new teaching procedural content with their professional practices.

The study also unveils that there was a wide gap between teachers' common teaching beliefs and the new pedagogical procedures suggested by the curriculum. As these pedagogical procedures were not congruent with teachers' common beliefs, teachers were inclined to return to their old teaching practices. To respond to such incongruence of pedagogical practices, most participants did not respond the new curriculum enthusiastically. Thus, they implemented the new curriculum on the perfunctory basis.

The study identifies two actual, present needs, i.e. (1) a bottom up model of on-going professional development on teaching pedagogy and (2) assessment matters. The present problematic implementation of the new curriculum appeared because these needs were not well identified by the education authority. It is therefore suggested that the education authority realize these needs immediately to assure that the curriculum change went to the correct direction.

Results of the study also show that there was a need to develop additional textbooks as the supplement for the present core textbook. Participants commented that the present core book was problematic in terms content and language structure. It was therefore expected that the curriculum authority considers developing appropriate, interesting supplemental textbooks that stemmed from local, national, and global wisdoms. Thus, teachers could have adequate resources for the inclusion of character education in the English language teaching.

Conclusion

The present study shows that the implementation of the new curriculum of 2013 experienced difficulties due to 3 factors, i.e. (1) teachers' lack of understanding about the principles, objectives and outcomes of the present curriculum, (2)a gap between teachers' professional teaching beliefs and the pedagogical practices advocated by the new curriculum, and (3) teachers' lack of supports to the current implementation of the curriculum. This paper concludes that the minister of Education and Culture should re-evaluate the use of top-down policy of professional development and the production of supplemental learning resources to assure the success of the curriculum change.

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