

Assessing English Medium Instruction Policy in Internationalization of Indonesian Higher Education

Possibility and Reality

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Abstract: One policy taken in internationalization of higher education in non-English speaking countries is the use of English as medium of instruction. The goal of building World-Class University is believed to be hand-in-hand with the presence of internationalized programs including its curriculum, courses, instructors and students. In Indonesia, even though there has been the conduct of international classes in universities for several years, the specific policy of English Medium Instruction (EMI) is absence. The current strategy of internationalization seems to focus on the advancement and intensification of research and publication. Through a qualitative approach of methodology, this paper discusses the policy of English Medium Instruction in internationalization of Indonesian higher education. The assessment will be on the debate between possibility and reality of the policy implementation, in the context of internationalization strategy. In the end, this paper summarizes whether the EMI policy derives more benefits or shortfalls for the internationalization of Indonesian higher education.

1 INTRODUCTION

The force of globalization and the transition towards knowledge-based economy have changed the nature of higher education and its institutions. Universities are now expected to be world-class, which constitute to the presence of international programs, curricula, researches, publications, and university's body. Internationalization has taken and is still taking place as the major effort to achieve the goal of making World-Class University (Knight, 2004).

Although there are various strategies of internationalization initiatives, the use of English as medium instruction (henceforward EMI) has widely used as one policy taken by non-English speaking countries to boost up the number of international students also the widespread of reasearch and publication readership (Coleman, 2006; Wilkinson, 2013; Hu and Lei, 2014). According to Kirkpatrick (2011), almost all East Asian and South East Asian countries even have promoted the use of English as educational language from primary and secondary education, even at tertiary level. At university level, Asian universities followed their European counterparts, implement the EMI policy as their

internationalization strategy for several reasons, including to attract international students; to prepare domestic students for global labour market; and to raise the institutions' profile (Doiz, Lasagabaster, and Sierra, 2011).

In the case of Indonesia, as one of the key players in South East Asia, even the internationalization efforts have been actively pursued by the universities, the specific EMI policy is absence. The conduct of international class to increase the presence of international body in university has not been dominance, since the main strategy of internationalization is still focusing on the advancement and intensification of research and publication.

This paper discusses an early assessment of the EMI policy in internationalization of Indonesian higher education with qualitative approach of method. By first reviewing the policy and practices of EMI in other countries, this paper shall elaborate the debate between possibility and reality of the policy implementation, in the context of internationalization strategy of Indonesian higher education.

2 RESEARCH METHODS AND ANALYTICAL FRAMEWORK

The qualitative approach method used in this study is literature review and assessment from the policy documents related to the topic. This method is used as a preliminary step to broaden and deepen the understanding of the internationalization of Indonesian higher education, especially the English Medium Instruction (EMI) Policy. The data mainly gathered from the websites and policy documents of Ministry of Research, Technology, and Higher Education, as well the selected reputable universities in Indonesia.

As for analytical framework, the main concept utilizes in this study is internationalization. Here, internationalization refers to what Knight (2004) stated as *“process of integrating an international, intercultural or global dimension into purpose, functions or delivery of post-secondary education”*. For internationalization strategy, this study refers to the previous study from Shin and Kehm (2013) that examine the strategies of building world-class university *—where internationalization counts as crucial element—* by the characteristic of national higher education system; the use of English as instructional language; and the context of economic development and internationalization of their academics.

This paper will focus in assessing the aspect of “use of English as instructional language” with the English as Medium Instruction (EMI) Policy, in the internationalization of Indonesian higher education.

3 ENGLISH MEDIUM INSTRUCTION: POLICY AND PRACTICES

The aspiration of being international, has been dominating almost all higher education institutions in the world. Where according to Ritzen as cited in (Doiz, Lasagabaster, and Sierra, 2011), in order to be considered as international, university has to recruit international students from diverse cultures and nationalities. This discourse of internationalization and globalization on higher education then always closely relate to the extension of use and influence of English globally.

Nowadays, many countries where English is counted as the foreign language or not the first language, have taken the EMI policy as one way to internationalize their higher education institutions. In this sense, EMI policy refers to the policy of the

teaching of a subject using the medium of the English, where English is not the national language and the aims of the teaching is not learning the language (Madhavan and McDonald, 2014).

In Europe, the expansion of EMI started after the Bologna Process which is the framework agreed by universities across Europe on standardization of offered degrees. As one of the aims of this process is to increase the student mobility between European universities, also to make European universities more attractive, the fact leads to the vast adoption of English as medium of instruction (Kirkpatrick, 2014). The “success” level of practices of EMI policy in European universities are also varied depend on the sociolinguistic feature of use of English from one country to another (Doiz, Lasagabaster, and Sierra, 2011).

As for Asian countries, several leading higher education providers such as Japan, Hong Kong, Singapore, South Korea, Malaysia and recently China have included the EMI policy in their internationalization efforts. In the case of Hong Kong, there is very little small of negative remarks on the insistence of EMI, as both in institutional and national level, the stakeholders believe that it will help achieving the target to rise the international ranking of Hong Kong universities also the target of being education hub (Kirkpatrick, 2014).

In Japan and South Korea, the government has driven grand strategy to enhance the competitive strength of their higher education. The government of Japan, in 2012 declared the Global 30 Project which aimed to attract 300.000 international students to study in Japan in its thirty best universities that offer various courses that conducted in English also degree programs in English. While in South Korea, the recruitment of international student is of the major implementation strategies of internationalization of Korean higher education. This strategy and other strategies are delivered through programs that linked each other.

The Study Korea Project was first introduced in 2004 as the main program for the international students’ recruitment (Ahn, 2010). The first goal was to attract 50.000 international students by 2010. However, comparatively successful than the Japan case of Global 30, there was an unexpected high increase of international students in Korea by around 49.720 in 2007. The South Korean government then set new goal of the Study Korea Project to attract up to 100,000 international students by 2012, followed by the most recent target which is 200.000 international students by 2020.

Furthermore, the other compelling EMI policy in South Korea took place with the establishment of Graduate School of International Studies in several top-notch universities in South Korea, where almost all courses are fully conducted in English. The government, realizing the importance of the EMI policy, even “force” the implementation of the policy by funding the financial support to universities offering EMI, even further connect their evaluation for research project funding to the EMI proportion within all courses offered by university, to encourage the universities to offer EMI courses (Byun, et al., 2011).

Kirkpatrick (2014) mentioned in his study of other cases of the implementation of EMI in Malaysia, Philippines and China, where the trend of importing “foreign universities” by opening the campus branches, also existed. However, regardless of the general feature of the intensification of use of English, strategy of internationalization also could be approached depend on the features of one country’s higher education system, economic development and internationalized academics.

4 ASSESSING ENGLISH MEDIUM INSTRUCTION POLICY IN INTERNATIONALIZATION OF INDONESIAN HIGHER EDUCATION

According to the research from Shin and Kehm (2013), the national level grouping of institutionalization or world-class university system within a country can be mainly assessed through two aspects: a) the developed and developing system of higher education, b) the uses English as the main language in their teaching and research activities. Based on the classification, for countries belong to the non-English speaking developing category, the challenges of internationalization are mainly on the establishment or research-based higher education and the adoption of English as the main academic language (Shin and Kehm, 2013).

Therefore, these non-English speaking developing countries are usually adopting several policies to overcome the challenges. The policies include special funding projects to boost research productivity, uses of English in research and teaching, also inviting English-speaking foreign professors came from English-speaking countries,

and give huge incentives for indexed international publication in reputable journal with high impact factor (Shin and Kehm, 2013).

Indonesia, as the other Asian counterparts, is also currently playing an active movement towards the internationalization of its higher education. The specific target of building World-Class Universities in Indonesia is for the top universities to enter the top 500 of world university ranking. In order to achieve the goal, the government draw several attentions on internationalization efforts, which are the importance of international cooperation management, including the establishment of international office in universities; the socialization on internationalization; also, the encouragement of international programs.

The current approach of internationalization in Indonesia cannot be separated from the major restructuring of higher education management that remarked by the transfer and merger of the Directorate General of Higher Education from Ministry of Education and Culture to the Ministry of Research and Technology in 2015. Under the current Ministry of Research, Technology and Higher Education (Kemenristekdikti), universities are expected to be the main engine of research and innovation that will increase the country’s competitiveness index. The main impact of this grand policy is the intensification of research and publication, due to the current assessment of international publication and citation level of Indonesian academics which is still low compared to other South East Asian countries.

The Indonesian government put the urgency to increase the number of reputable international publication in Indonesia to 30.000 by 2019. To achieve this, universities’ lecturers and researchers are obligated to productively conduct research and publish their work in reputable journals. For research, the government and universities provide a quite huge funding in the form of competitive research grants. As for publications, government and the institutions also currently implement the merit and performance-based incentives and rewards. A more open system of universities’ managerial is also applied with the implementation of selected universities legal enterprise status that give them more autonomy.

Based on the current assessment of internationalization approach of Indonesian higher education, regardless of the emergence of international class programs, also the development of joint-degree, double degree, student exchange, and other similar programs in Indonesian

universities, the specific EMI policy is not in presence. The government, has not yet, put the international student mass recruitment to the main scope of internationalization efforts, and that is why the EMI policy also still not being actively exercised.

Unlike the results of study from Shin and Kehm (2013) on the policies adopted by non-English speaking developing countries, Indonesia only adopt the special funding and grant for boosting research also incentives for the English-publication. Means the use of English still focuses in research and publication, and not yet in the teaching process. For invitation of English-speaking foreign professors to the university, it is also not included in the grand design of strategy, yet.

To further discuss the possibility and reality of the EMI policy in Indonesia, it is important to note that, here, the EMI policy is referring to the policy that driven by the government initiative that implemented by the higher education institutions. Means, this paper does not focus on the institutional level initiatives of the practices of EMI in courses or program offered by the institutions itself.

On the positive side, looking at the success stories of internationalization that implements the EMI policy strategies, it is worth to note that the Indonesian government can include this strategy to complete the current approach taken. Especially, based on the most recent indicator of national ranking of Indonesian higher education institutions, the percentage and number of international students also the international accreditation are counted 28 percent under the institutional aspect (Ristekdikti, 2017). This is almost similarly important with the 30 percent of research and publication aspect. In this respect, it is expected that in the upcoming years, the consideration of EMI policy will gain more attention.

However, there are also the opposite side of the coin in regard of this EMI policy in Indonesia. On the legal basis, as it is mentioned in the National Act on Higher Education No. 12/ 2012, Article 37 point 1, Bahasa Indonesia as the national language is the mandatory language for educational instruction, and the use of foreign language is allowed. This relates to the discourse of how the use of foreign language for medium instruction courses is perceived as a threat, mostly to the status of the first language.

The other important discussions are delivered by Smith as cited in Coleman (2006, pp.6-7), that despite the positive outcome, the pitfalls of EMI policy could be predicted on several problems. Some are: inadequate language skills and the need for

training of local staff and students; unwillingness of local staff to teach in English; inadequate proficiency of incoming international students in the host language; problems in administrative and organizational infrastructure; and much more.

5 CONCLUSIONS

Based on the early assessment, it can be concluded that although in the future the EMI policy will receive more attention in extension of Indonesian higher education market, it is likely that now the reality of using English as medium instruction still facing more pitfalls.

The quality of higher education in general remains the main homework to be finished. After that, the quality of human resources that have global competence also needs to be improved. By achieving the current target of strategic plan from the ministry, step by step, Indonesia can consider the government approach to include the EMI policy to the table. However, as Kirkpatrick (2011) suggested, for Asian countries where English is not the native language, the tertiary sector can implement bilingual policies for teaching and publishing, without endangering the national language and identity.

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