# POLICY *Brief*

## Addressing Inadequacy of Bilingual Teachers in International-Standard Public Schools

by Anis Sundusiyah

**Doctoral Core II – Educational Policy and Praxis**
**School of Education**
**University of Pittsburgh**

**Spring Term 2010**

# Executive Summary

The English bilingual initiative, implemented in International Standard Schools, or SBI, establishes high standards and expectations for students learning performance. While it is evident that teachers' knowledge, skills and dispositions influence students' learning performance (King and Newmann, 2000), the bilingual policy lacks resources and coherent supports to assist bilingual subject teachers in meeting the high expectations. SBI schools are short of qualified subject teachers with solid instructional English competence.

Teaching is a professional activity open to collective observations, study, and improvement (Hiebert, Gallimore, and Stigler, 2003), thus, building an accountable and quality teacher corps requires collaboration and shared responsibilities among stakeholders. In the spirit of sustainable collaboration, three key recommendations are proposed for policy makers at district and local government levels.

The first is to establish a district-wide bilingual partnership as a collaboration effort among professionals and experts for sustainable and continuous capacity building. At the early stages, the partnership focuses on resolving emergent school-level bilingual issues, providing right-on-target instructional advocacy and channeling teachers' collective bargaining. The second recommendation advocates for higher education institutions to develop bilingual concentration for pre-service Math-Science teachers, to offer English for Academic/Specific Purposes (EAP/ESP) courses for English pre-service teachers, and to have their faculty involved in the bilingual advocacy partnership. The third recommendation suggests governments align maximum resources and support, including scholarships and grants. The three recommendations altogether will reduce the critical gap between bilingual teachers' supply and demand, and they require immediate action.

## 1. Background and Context

The 'international' label has been a common term attached to as many as sixty-two private schools in Indonesia (Kustulasari, 2009), offering English-Indonesian bilingual education and curriculum adopted from international education agencies. These days, public high schools in Indonesia have also been using the 'international' term for several classes in their buildings. This trend began with the issuance of the National Law 20/2003 on National Education System (MONE, 2003), followed by several ministerial and local mandates on the establishment of International Standard Schools, known as SBI.

These SBI schools run the so-called International classes—in addition to their regular classes—where English is used as Medium of Instruction or EMI. It implies an expectation for subject teachers to be able to offer their instruction in English, especially Math and Science (Biology, Chemistry, and Physics) teachers.

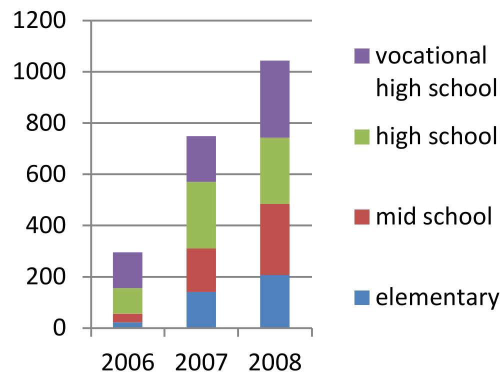
EMI has been a substantial aspect of this ongoing nation-wide SBI project (Mariati, 2007; Haryana, 2007). It mirrors the Immersion model, applied by international schools in OECD countries, where subject contents are taught in English. This market-driven policy aims at improving students' competence in English, as a lingua franca, and thus, boosting their academic and professional competitiveness at global level (MONE, 2003; 2009a; 2009b). The widening access to and scholarships for higher education overseas serve as a reason for a strong enforcement of EMI in public high schools. The growing market of transnational companies in Indonesia also signifies the economic utility of English proficiency for success in getting top-notch and well-paid jobs.

**SBI schools initiate English bilingual classes, in which instructions are partially or fully delivered in English. Aiming at advancing students' English competence, this initiative requires teachers to function with instructional English in Math and Science classes.**

To enroll in SBI schools, prospective students must pass the school entry exam and English proficiency test, and sign a financial contract as agreed during parent-school interviews. With their English bilingual and instructional technology programs, SBI schools have been able to attract those who are willing to pay more to elite public schools offering accelerated instructions. Table 1 indicates the increasing number of SBI schools, where there are 1043 SBI school candidates by 2008—with 207 in elementary, 277 in middle school, 259 in high school, and 300 in vocational high school levels.

By 2009, as many as 319 public high schools in more than 270 districts have been certified or will be certified as SBI schools, after a series of evaluative selection for the past four years by the central office (Key persons interview findings, personal communication, February 2010).

Table 1.
Number of SBI School Candidates
Year 2006 to 2008




Source: *MONE Strategic Planning of 2010-2014* (2009b)

## 2. Framing the Issues

While the growing number of SBI schools seems to be a positive trend, unfortunately, this quantity of achievement is not in parallel with the quality and availability of bilingual teachers at SBI schools. Several studies (Mariati, 2007; Haryana, 2007; Kustulasari, 2009) claim most SBI schools lack qualified subject teachers with solid instructional English competence. The competence and qualifications of bilingual teachers in SBI schools demonstrates the struggling quality of bilingual instruction, and thus, defects on the SBI schools accountability.

### Major Issues

There are two major issues related to this resources shortage. *First*, the current in-service teachers of Math and Science at SBI schools have minimum proficiency of general and instructional English. These teachers only encounter English as a foreign language course during high school and college years, and most of them may not be active English users. Curriculum for Math and Science teacher preparation programs do not provide the pre-service teachers with an intensive course of instructional English. Pre-service teachers in English Language Programs also do not receive specific intensive training in Math and Science content.

The teacher hiring policy does not specifically impose English skill as a requirement, except for English teachers, although the nation-wide recruitment test contains an English language section. As an anticipatory effort, most SBI schools implement the so called transitional semi-bilingual instruction (Baker, 2003), which, in several classes, results in reduced time for subject content discussion and constrains teachers' performance (Mustikasari, Sani, Farida, 2009).

*Secondly*, there has been a huge gap between bilingual teachers' supply and demand. In the future, EMI program will be effective for all classes in the buildings—with reduced fee. The Ministry of National Education (MONE) targets 75% of total public schools in Indonesia for becoming SBI schools by 2014 (MONE, 2009b). This necessitates a significant supply of bilingual subject teachers. Right now, a mid-size SBI school needs an additional fifteen bilingual Math and Science teachers at a minimum, excluding English teachers (Key person interview findings, personal communication, March 2010). Arguably, as of today, the Nation needs more than 15,000 Math and Science teachers with English skills to serve 1,043 SBI schools and SBI candidates in 33 provinces in Indonesia (this number excludes the 2014 target estimation). Meanwhile, in the academic years of 2006/2007 and 2007/2008, the Math teacher preparation programs in Indonesia only produced 2,123 graduates altogether, and the Science teacher preparation programs graduated 4,607 students (MONE, 2007; 2008). Clearly the number of teachers graduating does not meet the demand.

### Current Efforts and Challenges

At the national level, the Directorate General of Basic and Secondary Education (DGBSE) have been assisting SBI schools through the medium of SBI facilitators—i.e. professionals from schools and district offices. Beside any regular meeting agenda, these facilitators have been communicating with SBI school leaders and teachers through several online forums on any emergent managerial and instructional issues. While exemplifying collaboration and collective tasks, these moderator-controlled virtual forums rarely come up with in-depth and sustainable discussion of bilingual instruction. Most of the time, it only serves as medium to circulate managerial announcements and reports.

At the district level, SBI facilitators work more closely in person with each school on both management and instruction. However, there is no district-wide group exclusively assigned to deal with bilingual instruction and instructors. When scheduled, a District Education Office administers bilingual-related workshops, conferences or courses for all related teachers in the district. These types of short-term professional trainings would have been more effective if they provide sustained follow-ups and opportunities for teachers to study, to experiments and to receive immediate feedback.

**The on-going teacher development efforts rely a lot on outside experts (e.g. expatriates, language agencies, and universities) without integrating these resources into existing systems of peer collaboration.**

At the school level, bilingual teachers and English language teachers form an English language working group for peer assistance. TOEFL courses seem to be a must-have agenda for SBI teachers groups, despite the fact that TOEFL content is more American academic context-based. Some schools hire English-native fellow teachers for teaching students English courses and assisting bilingual subject teachers. As costly as it is, SBI Schools usually employ expatriate teachers only for one-year working contracts.

Most school-wide professional development programs heavily depend on the school's budget and priorities which to some extent creates an intellectual gap and competition among SBI teachers. Some schools provide funding for their subject teachers to attend a two or three semester instructional English course in local universities. The State University of Semarang or UNNES, for example, offers a three semester English for Academic Purposes for Math and Science teachers.

Higher education institutions, as a provider of future bilingual teachers, have not yet made a wide-scale significant contribution to respond to SBI bilingual teachers shortages. Until recently in 2009, the Directorate General of Higher Education (DGHE) launched a competitive grant for higher education institutions to administer the so-called International Program for Math and Science Teachers, albeit a Math and Science teacher preparation program strengthened with English (DGHE, 2009).

The issues and challenges above entail serious implications for schools' external accountability. Schools' accountability, both internal and external, comes from qualified instructors with quality instruction. If SBI schools promote bilingual instruction without paying prime attention to their teacher force, they certainly will lose the public trust.

## 3. A High Quality Teacher Force

There has been a plethora of research suggesting indicators for accountability of human resource systems. These have been proven effective for teachers' quality improvement and schools' increased accountability.

*Focused and sustainable professional development*.

Teachers would gain more from professional training that addresses specific and focused content knowledge and skills (Birman et al, 2000) and that helps teachers plan, organize and evaluate their courses and relevant policies. An extended and sustained professional engagement (Kedzior and Fifield, 2004) is necessary as teachers need to inquire into their disciplines and to review and revise their pedagogical content knowledge over time.

*Professional learning community*

A professional learning community instills collaboration and collective responsibility across professionals and institutions, which makes teachers' capacity enhancement effective (Stein, 1998; King and Newmann, 2000; Knapp, Copland, and Talbert, 2002; Smylie, Wenzel, and Fendt, 2003). Teacher learning is most likely when teachers collaborate with professional peers inside and outside their schools, and when they receive further expertise from external experts. Collectivity among professionals has been a powerful force to influence schools' and districts' policies and to seize strategic provisions for teachers themselves.

**Characteristics of effective teacher development: focused, coherent, sustainable, collaborative, clear standards and assessment.**

*Support teachers' generational flow*
Administrative separation between higher education and basic-secondary education institutions does not mean a disconnection of professional works. Both schools and higher education institutions bear shared-responsibilities (Hiebert, Gallimore, and Stigler, 2003) for generating qualified pre-service teachers and strengthening novice and in-service teachers' capacity. Forming a dynamic alliance has been a solution for a total quality education management, where various stakeholders are "merging, reorganizing, down-sizing, rightsizing and flattening structures" (Hubbard, Kennedy, Sutton, and Trefny, 2003, p.7) to restructure the system.

*Collaborative and grounded assessment and standards-setting*
Effective large-scale programs should include all relevant stakeholders in assessing and reestablishing standards (Waters and Marzano, 2006), from experts in central and district offices, professional school leaders, and classroom teachers. Learning evidence gathered from classrooms, schools and districts should collectively make a grounded reference for setting up clear standards (Gaddy, Dean, and Kendall, 2002). This allows teachers to negotiate their voices during program evaluation and re-planning, because classroom practices do manifest and shape policy.

## 4. Recommendations for Local Government

Building an accountability system takes an inclusive collaboration among all potential stakeholders—teachers, schools, higher education institutions, and external experts. District offices and local governments can help by supporting and ensuring good collaborative practices at district and school levels.

### Establishing a district-wide bilingual partnership

A sustainable learning collaboration across professionals and institutions is essential to address teachers' inadequate competence. Bilingual partnership teams up school professionals with experts from higher education institutions to collaboratively resolve any emergent issue, from classroom practice to unregulated instructional standardization policy. Serving an advocacy role, this professional learning community provides right-on-target instructional assistance for in-teachers, with a careful hiring and strong training policy for facilitators. It models a sustainable partnership for a continuous capacity building of all members. A powerful partnership becomes a media to channel teachers' collective bargaining in the process of constructing bilingual instructional standard and assessment.

### Strengthening the bilingual teacher preparation programs

Higher education institutions play a decisive role in preparing pre-service teachers to form a bilingual force in SBI schools. Pre-service teachers in Math and Natural Science must receive an intensive course of English for teaching Math and Science. Pre-service teachers in English Language Programs must receive specific intensive trainings in English for Academic/Specific Purposes (EAP/ESP), because in the long run, they will peer-coach bilingual subject teachers. Faculty of these programs also get involved in bilingual partnership groups to stay up-to-date with school-based issues.

### Alignment of resources and support

Local government, district and school leaders must assure the allocation of professional resources and supports, including time, money, personnel, and materials, for an effective professional development process. This may include setting minimum SBI grant allocations for teachers learning collaborations, re-targeting government fund for teacher developments, and cutting back on or dropping budgets that are less relevant to teachers' needs and learning significance. With the issuance of Act of Republic of Indonesia No 17 Year 2010 on Educational Administration and Management (MONE, 2010), local province governments should have more autonomy and creativity in managing SBI-related funding.

**Establishing a district-wide bilingual partnership**

- A sustainable collaboration across professionals and experts for continuous capacity building
- Resolving emergent issues
- Providing right-on-target instructional advocacy
- Channeling teachers' collective bargaining

**Strengthening the bilingual teacher preparation programs**

- Bilingual concentration for pre-service Math-Science teachers
- English for Academic/Specific Purposes for English pre-service teachers
- Faculty involvement in partnership

**Alignment of resources and support**

- Proper alignment of professional resources and supports, including grant and scholarships.

## 5. Conclusion

In teacher supply-and-demand situation, there are few in-service teachers with solid instructional English available at SBI schools. Meanwhile, pre-service teachers do not receive intensive English for Academic Purposes (EAP) during their college years, which might disqualify them to teach at SBI schools. The on-going efforts to improve the pre- and in-service teacher force rely a lot on outside experts (such as expatriates, language agencies, and universities) without integrating these resources into the existing system of peer collaboration.

Local and district policy makers must play a pivotal role in promoting and assuring the teacher improvement agenda—building a focused, coherent, sustainable, collaborative partnership; strengthening teacher preparation programs with bilingual concentrations; and adjusting the resource and support. These recommendations have direct and significant impacts on the development of current and future bilingual teacher force.

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