

The Cambridge Curriculum as an Effort to Strengthen Global Perspectives in Elementary Education: A Literature Review

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Abstract

This study aims to analyze the implementation of the Cambridge Curriculum as an effort to strengthen global perspectives in elementary education in Indonesia through a literature review approach. The method employed was library research by examining five relevant journal articles. The findings indicate that the Cambridge Curriculum contributes significantly to improving students' English proficiency, critical thinking skills, creativity, and international awareness. The integration of the Cambridge Curriculum with the national curriculum has proven effective through various models, such as the Shared Binoculars Integration model, hybrid curriculum implementation, and benchmarking-based dissemination of best practices. The main challenges in its implementation include limited infrastructure, teacher preparedness, and financial constraints. However, several creative strategies, including the utilization of simple technologies, peer mentoring systems among teachers, and the development of hybrid curriculum guidelines, have been shown to address these obstacles effectively. The findings underscore the significant contribution of the Cambridge Curriculum in preparing Indonesian elementary school students to face global challenges while maintaining their local identity and cultural values.

Keywords: Cambridge Curriculum; Global Perspective; Elementary Education; Curriculum Integration; Literature Review.

INTRODUCTION

The development of globalization has brought significant changes to various aspects of life, including education. Twenty-first-century education is no longer solely focused on the acquisition of academic knowledge but also on the development of global competencies, including critical thinking, communication, collaboration, creativity, and awareness of global issues. In this context, elementary education plays a crucial role as the foundation for preparing students to adapt to and actively participate in a global society while maintaining their national identity and local cultural values.

In Indonesia, efforts to improve educational quality have been continuously pursued through various policies and curriculum innovations. The implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum represents a strategic initiative to promote student-centered learning and character development through the Pancasila Student Profile. Nevertheless, global challenges require the strengthening of international perspectives that can equip students with cross-cultural understanding, foreign language proficiency, and skills relevant to global demands. Consequently, many schools have begun adopting international curricula as a complement to the national curriculum.

One of the most widely implemented international curricula in Indonesia is the Cambridge Curriculum. Developed by Cambridge Assessment International Education,

this curriculum is recognized for its competency-based approach that emphasizes critical thinking, problem-solving, creativity, communication, and English language proficiency. Furthermore, the Cambridge Curriculum is designed to foster students' global perspectives through contextualized learning materials, internationally oriented content, and opportunities to develop an understanding of cultural diversity and global issues (Ahmada et al., 2025; Thornhill-Miller et al., 2025).

The implementation of the Cambridge Curriculum at the elementary school level in Indonesia has shown considerable growth. Many schools integrate the Cambridge Curriculum with the national curriculum to create learning models that accommodate global educational needs while preserving local values. Through this integration, students not only acquire internationally recognized academic competencies but also develop the ability to understand diverse perspectives, appreciate cultural differences, and participate as responsible global citizens (Ramadianti, 2023).

Despite its advantages, the implementation of the Cambridge Curriculum faces several challenges. Limited infrastructure, teacher readiness, the need for continuous professional development, and the process of integrating the curriculum with national educational standards are among the factors affecting its effectiveness (Ningrum, 2025). Moreover, appropriate strategies are required to ensure that the global perspectives promoted by the Cambridge Curriculum remain aligned with the values of Pancasila and the cultural identity of Indonesia.

Although numerous studies have examined the implementation of the Cambridge Curriculum in Indonesia, most have focused on specific aspects, such as improvements in English language proficiency, academic achievement, or implementation challenges in particular schools. Research specifically investigating the role of the Cambridge Curriculum as a means of strengthening global perspectives in elementary education remains limited. Therefore, a more comprehensive examination is needed to understand its contribution to developing students' global competencies and to identify effective implementation models within the Indonesian educational context.

Based on this background, this study aims to analyze the implementation of the Cambridge Curriculum as an effort to strengthen global perspectives in elementary education through a literature review approach. Specifically, the study seeks to: (1) analyze the concepts and characteristics of the Cambridge Curriculum as an instrument for strengthening global perspectives; (2) identify implementation models applied in elementary schools; (3) map the challenges and opportunities associated with its implementation; and (4) formulate strategic recommendations for the development of globally oriented elementary education while maintaining alignment with Indonesian local values.

METHOD

This study employed a library research method as its primary approach. This approach is considered effective for conducting an in-depth synthesis of literature on international curriculum issues, as demonstrated in previous studies examining the implementation of the Cambridge Curriculum in Indonesia (Ningrum, 2025). The method was selected because it enables a comprehensive synthesis of findings from existing studies, thereby providing a deeper understanding of the topic under investigation. The data sources consisted of five scientific journal articles relevant to the implementation of the Cambridge Curriculum at the elementary school level in Indonesia. These articles were selected based on the following criteria: (1) relevance to the implementation of the Cambridge Curriculum; (2) focus on elementary education; (3) publication in accredited

scientific journals; and (4) inclusion of substantial empirical or theoretical data and analysis.

Data analysis was conducted through three stages. The first stage involved data reduction, which included selecting and focusing on relevant information from each source. The second stage was data display, in which the findings were organized and presented in narrative form and synthesis tables. The final stage involved drawing conclusions by identifying patterns and formulating comprehensive findings across the reviewed literature (Miles & Huberman, 1994). Through these procedures, the study was able to generate an integrated understanding of the role of the Cambridge Curriculum in strengthening global perspectives in elementary education.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

1. Characteristics of the Cambridge Curriculum as an Instrument for Strengthening Global Perspectives

The Cambridge Curriculum was developed by Cambridge Assessment International Education (CAIE) as a structured educational framework known as the Cambridge Pathway. This framework consists of four levels: Cambridge Primary (ages 5–11), Cambridge Lower Secondary (ages 11–14), Cambridge Upper Secondary, and Cambridge International AS & A Level, which prepare students for higher education (Ahmada et al., 2025). Within the context of elementary education, Cambridge Primary is the stage most widely adopted by schools in Indonesia.

Based on the review of the five selected studies, five key attributes characterize learners nurtured through the Cambridge Curriculum: (1) **Confident**—self-assured in working and communicating; (2) **Responsible**—accountable to themselves and their environment; (3) **Reflective**—committed to lifelong learning; (4) **Innovative**—capable of adapting and thinking creatively in new situations; and (5) **Engaged**—actively involved intellectually and socially (Ramadianti, 2023; Cambridge Assessment International Education, 2019).

The Cambridge Curriculum also emphasizes the development of the 4Cs: **Critical Thinking, Creativity, Collaboration, and Communication**, which are aligned with the competencies required in the twenty-first century (Thornhill-Miller et al., 2025). This approach differs fundamentally from national curricula that tend to focus on content mastery and memorization. Within the Cambridge Curriculum, the learning process is prioritized over academic scores alone, thereby fostering students' creativity and active engagement.

From the perspective of strengthening global awareness, the Cambridge Curriculum contributes through three main pathways. First, the use of English as the medium of instruction enables students to communicate in the international lingua franca—not merely learning English as a Foreign Language (EFL), but using English as a Second Language (ESL) in a more functional manner (Ramadianti, 2023). Second, internationally recognized academic standards provide students with opportunities to pursue higher education at prestigious universities worldwide. Third, exposure to multicultural perspectives and global issues through the curriculum helps cultivate globally minded, open-minded, and socially aware citizens (Adilah et al., 2023).

2. Models of Cambridge Curriculum Implementation in Indonesian Elementary Schools

The review of the five studies identified at least three different models of Cambridge Curriculum implementation in Indonesian elementary schools: the **Shared Binoculars Integration Model**, the **Character-Based Integrated Curriculum Model**, and the **Hybrid International Curriculum Model**.

a. Shared Binoculars Integration Model

This model has been implemented at the Laboratory Elementary School of Universitas Negeri Malang (SD Lab UM) since 2006. Under this model, the National Curriculum (Curriculum 2013) is delivered thematically, while the Cambridge Curriculum is implemented separately and in parallel, particularly in three core subjects: English, Science, and Mathematics (Ahmada et al., 2025). The model is designed to ensure that students achieve national academic competencies while simultaneously developing global skills within a bilingual learning environment.

Its implementation is supported by a full-day school system, a bilingual environment through the English Habits program, and inquiry-based learning methods that encourage students to ask questions, explore, discuss, and discover concepts through direct learning experiences. The CCL (Social Emotional Learning) program is also designed to strengthen speaking, discussion, and collaboration skills. As a result, SD Lab UM has successfully balanced national educational standards and international expectations, leading to improvements in English proficiency, critical thinking, and student self-confidence.

b. Character-Based Integrated Curriculum Model

This model is implemented at SD Budi Mulia Dua Panjen, Yogyakarta, which integrates three curricula simultaneously: the national curriculum, the Cambridge Curriculum, and the school's distinctive curriculum. The uniqueness of this model lies in its combination of international academic standards with character education based on five pillars (Faith in Allah, Honesty, Respect, Responsibility, and Cleanliness) and eight learning foundations (Ghozali & Firmansyah, 2025). This model demonstrates that integrating an international curriculum does not necessarily compromise Islamic identity and local values; instead, it can strengthen them within a global perspective framework.

The success of this model was subsequently disseminated through benchmarking activities involving 38 teachers from five elementary and Islamic elementary schools in Cirebon Regency. The results indicated an increase in teachers' understanding of the Cambridge Curriculum from 35% to 85%, while 78% of teachers were able to develop adaptation plans based on best practices suitable for their respective school contexts (Ghozali & Firmansyah, 2025).

c. Hybrid International Curriculum Model

Singapore Intercultural School (SIS) Kelapa Gading, Jakarta, implements a more complex multi-curriculum model. The Singapore Curriculum is applied at the preschool and elementary levels, while the International General Certificate of Secondary Education (IGCSE) is combined with the Singapore Curriculum at the secondary level, and the International Baccalaureate (IB) Diploma Programme is implemented at the junior college level. This model demonstrates how international schools can combine multiple internationally recognized curricula while still fulfilling the requirement to implement the Indonesian national curriculum (Adilah et al., 2023).

The implementation was evaluated using Robert Stake's evaluation model, which consists of three stages: input evaluation, process evaluation, and output evaluation. The findings revealed that student character development integrated the five Cambridge

learner attributes with the six dimensions of the Pancasila Student Profile, reflecting an effort toward educational glocalization—the integration of global and local values in education (Adilah et al., 2023).

3. Advantages of the Cambridge Curriculum in Strengthening Global Perspectives

Based on the synthesis of the five reviewed studies, at least four major advantages of the Cambridge Curriculum in strengthening elementary school students' global perspectives were identified.

First, it promotes functional English proficiency. Students who participate in Cambridge Curriculum-based learning not only memorize vocabulary and grammar but also actively apply English across the four language skills—reading, listening, speaking, and writing. At SD Lab UM, the English Habits program encourages students to communicate in English throughout their daily school activities (Ahmada et al., 2025).

Second, it fosters international awareness and global outlooks. The Cambridge Curriculum has established global standards in education that are recognized by international universities and organizations. At SIS Jakarta, this is reflected in activities such as UN Day, Model United Nations (MUN), and Diwali celebrations, which promote students' awareness of global diversity and multiculturalism (Adilah et al., 2023).

Third, it enhances critical thinking and creativity. Research conducted at SD Lab UM revealed significant improvements in students' critical thinking skills and self-confidence in communication and collaboration (Ahmada et al., 2025). At SD Budi Mulia Dua Panjen, the implementation of deep learning approaches ensures meaningful understanding rather than rote memorization, while mandatory public speaking programs help build students' confidence (Ghozali & Firmansyah, 2025).

Fourth, it prepares students to become future leaders. The Cambridge Curriculum actively encourages learners to develop planning skills, take responsibility for their ideas, and create innovative solutions. Participation in various extracurricular activities—such as coding, photography, cinematography, basketball, and STEM programs at SD Budi Mulia Dua Panjen—helps cultivate leadership qualities, creativity, and decision-making abilities (Ghozali & Firmansyah, 2025).

4. Challenges in the Implementation of the Cambridge Curriculum

Despite its numerous advantages, the implementation of the Cambridge Curriculum in Indonesian elementary schools is not without challenges. The synthesis of the five studies identified four major clusters of challenges.

First, infrastructure and facility limitations remain significant barriers. Not all schools possess computer laboratories, adequately equipped libraries, projectors in every classroom, or specialized learning spaces required to implement Cambridge Curriculum-based learning effectively (Ghozali & Firmansyah, 2025; Ningrum, 2025). These disparities in facilities contribute to differences in implementation quality between urban and rural schools, as well as between private and public institutions.

Second, teacher readiness presents another challenge. The Cambridge Curriculum requires educators who not only possess strong subject knowledge but are also capable of teaching in English, implementing student-centered learning approaches, and designing comprehensive formative assessments. In reality, many teachers still lack a deep understanding of these pedagogical approaches (Ningrum, 2025). In some schools, limited English proficiency among teachers results in the use of bilingual instruction that may hinder rather than facilitate students' understanding (Ramadianti, 2023).

Third, curriculum integration poses considerable difficulties. The overlap between the Cambridge Curriculum and the national curriculum creates additional workloads for both teachers and students (Ningrum, 2025). Educators must reconcile two curricular systems that differ in philosophy and methodology: the national curriculum, which emphasizes national character formation and religious values, and the Cambridge Curriculum, which focuses more on global competencies.

Fourth, financial and accessibility constraints remain major concerns. The high operational costs associated with implementing the Cambridge Curriculum—including licensing fees, teacher training programs, Cambridge textbooks, and supporting facilities—limit access primarily to certain socioeconomic groups. Consequently, disparities in access between students from different economic backgrounds become a significant issue in efforts to achieve equitable educational quality across Indonesia.

5. Strategies for Addressing Challenges: Lessons from Practice

Various innovative strategies have been developed by the schools examined in this study to address the challenges associated with implementing the Cambridge Curriculum.

To overcome facility and infrastructure limitations, SD Budi Mulia Dua Panjen demonstrated creative solutions through the utilization of simple technologies and free applications, the optimization of classrooms as multifunctional learning spaces, and collaboration with local public libraries. The school library was designed to resemble a café and equipped with diverse collections, including English-language comics, to support Cambridge-based learning, making it an attractive literacy center for students (Ghozali & Firmansyah, 2025).

To address human resource constraints, peer mentoring among teachers proved effective in facilitating continuous knowledge transfer. Intensive training programs, such as the *Designing Cambridge-Based Instructional Instruments* workshop at SD Lab UM and professional development programs conducted four to five times annually at SIS Kelapa Gading, gradually enhanced teachers' competencies and instructional capacities (Ahmada et al., 2025; Adilah et al., 2023).

Regarding curriculum integration, the Shared Binoculars Integration Model implemented at SD Lab UM offers a framework that can be adapted by other schools, allowing the national and Cambridge curricula to operate in parallel without undermining one another. Furthermore, benchmarking activities conducted by Ghozali and Firmansyah (2025) demonstrated that the transfer of knowledge and best practices through socialization programs, workshops, and direct mentoring effectively improved teachers' ability to adapt the Cambridge Curriculum to their respective school contexts.

Ningrum (2025) also recommended the development of a structured hybrid curriculum guideline that integrates elements of both the Cambridge Curriculum and the Indonesian national curriculum. Such an approach represents a long-term solution that can be adopted more broadly without requiring schools to bear the full licensing costs associated with Cambridge Assessment International Education (CAIE).

6. Relevance of the Cambridge Curriculum to the Indonesian National Education Context

The review of the five selected studies revealed strong points of convergence between the principles of the Cambridge Curriculum and the direction of Indonesia's national education development, particularly within the framework of the Merdeka Curriculum.

The Merdeka Curriculum emphasizes student-centered learning, the strengthening of the Pancasila Student Profile, and the development of twenty-first-century skills. These values are highly compatible with the Cambridge Curriculum's focus on student-centered learning, critical thinking, and character development. At SIS Kelapa Gading, the implementation of the Cambridge Curriculum explicitly integrated the five Cambridge learner attributes with the six dimensions of the Pancasila Student Profile, resulting in a comprehensive character development model (Adilah et al., 2023).

The concept of *glocalization* in education—thinking globally while acting locally—has become a guiding principle consistently practiced by the schools examined in this study. SD Budi Mulia Dua Panjen successfully integrated Cambridge's global perspectives with Islamic and national values without compromising cultural identity. Similarly, SD Lab UM maintained Indonesian cultural values and national character education throughout its learning processes despite adopting an international curriculum (Ahmada et al., 2025).

The positive implications of implementing the Cambridge Curriculum have also encouraged the Indonesian national curriculum to adopt more flexible and project-based learning structures that are relevant to real-world challenges, as reflected in the Merdeka Curriculum. Therefore, the Cambridge Curriculum serves not only as an alternative educational model for certain schools but also as a catalyst for the broader modernization of Indonesia's national education system.

CONCLUSION

Based on the review of five relevant studies, it can be concluded that the Cambridge Curriculum makes a significant contribution to strengthening global perspectives in elementary education in Indonesia. The curriculum effectively develops students' functional English proficiency, critical thinking skills, creativity, international awareness, and leadership qualities.

The implementation of the Cambridge Curriculum in Indonesian elementary schools demonstrates a variety of adaptive models, ranging from the Shared Binoculars Integration Model at SD Lab UM Malang, the Character-Based Integrated Curriculum Model at SD Budi Mulia Dua Panjen, to the Multi-International Curriculum Model at SIS Jakarta. Each model illustrates that the integration of the Cambridge Curriculum with the national curriculum can be carried out effectively without compromising cultural identity and local values through the adoption of the glocalization principle.

The major challenges in implementation include limited infrastructure, teacher readiness, the complexity of curriculum integration, and financial accessibility constraints. However, various innovative strategies that have been developed—including the use of simple technologies, peer mentoring systems, benchmarking of best practices, and the development of hybrid curriculum models—have proven effective in addressing these challenges.

This study recommends: (1) the development of integrated hybrid curriculum guidelines that combine the Cambridge Curriculum and the Merdeka Curriculum within the Indonesian context; (2) the implementation of intensive and continuous teacher professional development programs; (3) the provision of more equitable educational infrastructure and resources; (4) the replication of benchmarking and best-practice models in schools across different regions; and (5) longitudinal studies to examine the long-term impact of Cambridge Curriculum implementation on the quality of learning and student achievement.

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