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Lessons from Indonesia's Bilingual Education: A Revisit of the RSBI Abolishment with Insights for Taiwan

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Research Article

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Abstract

Background/purpose. This research paper investigates the lessons Taiwan can learn from Indonesia's bilingual education policy, especially regarding abolishing the "Rintisan Sekolah Bertaraf Internasional" (RSBI) initiative. In line with this objective, the paper presents recommendations based on these lessons.

Materials/methods. This study employs a qualitative approach that includes a comprehensive literature review method to analyze various sources, such as academic journal articles, government documents, and media reports, aiming to understand the complexities faced by the RSBI program.

Results. The findings highlight several key factors that contributed to its discontinuation, such as educational inequality, financial challenges, concerns about national identity, curriculum issues, lack of teacher preparation, and differing perspectives among stakeholders. These results have important implications for bilingual education policy in Taiwan, stressing the necessity for a balanced strategy that aligns language policy with national identity, fosters educational equity, enhances curriculum quality, and focuses on teacher training. By learning from Indonesia's experiences, Taiwan can develop inclusive, equitable, and culturally aware educational policies that improve international competitiveness while honoring local contexts.

Conclusion. The paper concludes with a proposed framework for delivering inclusive and culturally responsive bilingual education in Taiwan, providing a clear structure to guide future policy development.

1. Introduction

The evolution of bilingual education in Asia highlights the complex relationship between global competitiveness and local identities, providing valuable insights for countries facing similar educational challenges. In Indonesia, the Rintisan Sekolah Bertaraf Internasional (RSBI) program, initiated in 2006, aimed to elevate selected public schools to international standards by incorporating global educational practices (Kemendikbud, 2003; Ma'arif, 2011). However, the program faced several challenges, including unequal resource access and insufficient teacher training. Critics pointed out that it prioritized English over Bahasa Indonesia, which is vital to the nation's identity (Hendarman, 2011; Dharmaningtias, 2013). In 2013, the Constitutional Court declared the RSBI policy unconstitutional, citing its incompatibility with the principles of equality and inclusivity established in the 1945 State Constitution (Mahkamah Konstitusi, 2012). This decision highlighted the challenges of implementing bilingual education in a diverse and developing country.

Many Asian countries pursuing bilingual education share the common goals of promoting multilingual proficiency and preserving cultural identities. However, they face significant hurdles. For instance, in Thailand, initiatives like the Mini English Program (MEP) and the English Program (EP) were launched in 1999 to improve students' competitiveness on a global scale. Despite these efforts, the programs have struggled due to insufficient qualified bilingual teachers and inadequate infrastructure (Laksanasut, 2019; Huebner, 2019). Similarly, bilingual education in Vietnam integrates English for core subjects like Mathematics and Science and Vietnamese for cultural subjects such as history and literature. However, limited resources, unqualified teachers, and concerns over English undermining Vietnamese literacy remain significant obstacles (Chi, 2017; Anh & Huertas-Abril, 2022). In contrast, Singapore has successfully embedded bilingualism into its national identity by using English for global engagement. The language planning policy in Singapore began in 1959 under Lee Kuan Yew. It has evolved over time. The Singapore government believes that language is important for both the economy and culture (Ng, 2011). They carefully plan and manage it. The Speak Mandarin Campaign highlighted a contradiction regarding the decline in proficiency in mother tongues following the release of early policies (Pakir, 1991; Zhuo, 2019; Lee & Phua, 2020). These various experiences showcase the complexities of bilingual education in Asian countries. They emphasize the need for policies that effectively balance linguistic proficiency with the preservation of cultural identity. The rich cultural landscape of Asian countries makes this balance essential (Fry, 2013).

While these countries reflect shared goals, Taiwan's "Bilingual Nation 2030" policy offers a unique opportunity to learn from Indonesia's RSBI program. Taiwan's policy aims to create a bilingual society proficient in both Mandarin and English, aiming to boost global competitiveness while preserving local culture (MOE Taiwan, n.d.; Yaofeng, 2021). Taiwan's commitment to lifelong English learning and public service reforms (National Development Council, 2021; Executive Yuan, n.d.) shares similarities with Indonesia's RSBI initiative. However, Taiwan must avoid the challenges Indonesia faced—particularly in terms of national identity preservation, educational equity, curriculum development, and teacher preparedness—by drawing lessons from Indonesia's experience. Despite existing studies on bilingual education policies, a significant research gap remains in systematically comparing the specific challenges that resulted in the abolition of Indonesia's RSBI program with the anticipated issues in Taiwan's approach. This gap restricts our understanding of which practices need modification for successful implementation. Therefore, this paper aims to explore what lessons Taiwan's "Bilingual Nation 2030" policy can learn from Indonesia's RSBI initiative, especially the challenges that contributed to the initiative's abolition. Specifically, it seeks to answer the following questions: How does Indonesia navigate the challenges of implementing the RSBI program, and what lessons can be learned from its experiences to inform the implementation of bilingual education in Taiwan?

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2. Literature Review

2.1. Indonesian Education Landscape and RSBI Background

Indonesia's education system has evolved significantly, influenced by its colonial history and developments after independence. During Dutch rule, the primary language of instruction was Dutch (Setiawan, 2020). After gaining independence, Bahasa Indonesia was established as the national language, promoting unity and national identity (Sukmayadi & Yahya, 2020). English was later introduced as a foreign language during the New Order regime (1966-1998), reflecting the global importance of English in an increasingly interconnected world (Abduh & Rosmaladewi, 2019; Lamb & Coleman, 2008). This period laid the groundwork for bilingual education policies, including the RSBI initiative, which aimed to enhance Indonesian education by integrating global best practices, mainly through English language instruction (Sundayana, 2011; Pajarwati et al., 2021).

The decentralization of Indonesia's education system and the introduction of competency-based curricula in 2006 were vital for implementing the RSBI initiative. Introduced under Law No. 20 of 2003, the RSBI program was an ambitious effort to elevate Indonesia's educational standards to international levels. This initiative aimed to integrate global best practices into the curriculum, mainly by adopting English and using frameworks inspired by OECD countries (Kemendikbud, 2003; Depdiknas, 2007; Purnami, 2011). The Ministry of Education and Culture sought to establish internationally standardized schools nationwide by combining national curricula with international curricula adopted from OECD countries (Hendarman, 2011). However, the program faced significant challenges that hindered its effectiveness, such as limited access for disadvantaged students, the marginalization of local languages and cultures, and a lack of qualified teachers (Widyastono, 2010; Sakhiyya, 2011; Hendarman, 2011; Dharmaningtias, 2013). Finally, The Constitutional Court abolished the RSBI program after a lawsuit filed by three parents, Andi Akbar Fitriyadi, Milang Tauhida, and Nadya Masykuria, challenged the constitutionality of Article 50 paragraph (3) of Law No. 20 of 2003, arguing that the program's reliance on foreign philosophies, curricula, and languages violated the principles of inclusivity and equity mandated by Pancasila and the 1945 Constitution (Mahkamah Konstitusi, 2012).

2.2. Taiwan Bilingual Education Policy

Taiwan's "Bilingual Nation 2030" policy aims to promote Mandarin-English bilingualism nationwide. This initiative is designed to enhance the nation's global competitiveness and connect Taiwanese industries with international markets (Yaofeng, 2021; National Development Council, 2021; Chang, 2022; Wang et al., 2023). Taiwan has implemented a policy similar to Indonesia's RSBI initiative, focusing on improving English language skills to foster economic development and strengthen its position in the global market (National Development Council, 2021). However, Taiwan's approach is unique in promoting bilingualism while preserving local languages and cultural heritage (Li et al., 2023). This contrasts with the RSBI program, which prioritized English and raised concerns about the potential loss of cultural identity. Other critics have raised concerns about the policy's narrow focus on Mandarin and English, fearing it might undermine Taiwan's rich multilingual legacy. They also question the policy's ambitious targets and unclear benchmarks.

Despite these concerns, the strategy's positive aspects—including promoting English as a quasi-official language for better international integration, preserving local culture, and taking a comprehensive approach to bilingual education—highlight Taiwan's commitment to overcoming these challenges and creating a balanced, progressive education system. Learning from Indonesia's experience, Taiwan's bilingual education strategy emphasizes the need to maintain national identity while enhancing proficiency in global languages. Although both countries aim to improve global competitiveness through bilingualism, Taiwan attempts to avoid the challenges of inequity and cultural marginalization associated with the RSBI program. Taiwan's strategy focuses on inclusivity,

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teacher training, and fostering a multilingual identity, presenting a more holistic approach to bilingual education (Executive Yuan, n.d.; National Development Council, 2021). This approach aims to prevent the elitism and cultural issues faced by Indonesia. Finally, this study aims to answer the research questions: How does Indonesia navigate the challenges of implementing the RSBI program, and what lessons can be learned from its experiences to inform the implementation of bilingual education in Taiwan?

3. Methodology

This study employs a qualitative descriptive methodology, which is particularly effective for understanding complex phenomena (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015), such as the evolution and impact of bilingual education policies in Indonesia and Taiwan. The primary data collection method is a comprehensive literature review synthesizing various sources to provide a holistic understanding of the topic. This review method is ideal for integrating both quantitative and qualitative findings from various sources, including research articles, book chapters, government reports, and media (Onwuegbuzie & Frels, 2016; Snyder, 2019). This approach allows the researcher to gain extensive insights from different perspectives and ensures a valid understanding (Moher et al., 2009). This comprehensive literature review is particularly valuable in examining the complexities surrounding the abolishment of the RSBI program in Indonesia and the bilingual education policy in Taiwan. It enables the integration of both global and local contexts, offering a deeper understanding of the subject.

This study employed a systematic seven-step process for data collection and analysis to guide the literature review process. Initially, the information was organized and categorized, followed by a critical analysis to identify key themes (Onwuegbuzie & Frels, 2016). The Seven-Step process includes:

1. Topic Exploration: The first step involves examining the abolishment of the RSBI program in Indonesia and its implications for Taiwan's bilingual education policy.

2. Initiating the Search: Relevant keywords such as “RSBI,” “court case of RSBI,” “Indonesian international schools,” and “bilingual education in Taiwan” were identified to initiate a broad search for academic articles, government reports, and other pertinent sources.

3. Storing and Organizing Information: Data was systematically stored, with key themes and categories tagged for easier retrieval and analysis.

4. Selecting and Deselecting Information: After reviewing the sources, the authors selected the most relevant and high-quality data, particularly those included in the national indexing journal, government official documents, and university repository. RSBI issues are not an international topic, making it challenging to find papers in international journal indexing. The authors set aside irrelevant or lower-quality sources to ensure the robustness of the review.

5. Expanding the Search: The search was broadened to include additional types of data, such as media reports, government documents, and secondary data from experts in bilingual education.

6. Analyzing and Synthesizing Information: The information was critically analyzed and synthesized to draw meaningful insights and conclusions regarding the RSBI program and its impact on Taiwan’s bilingual education policy.

7. Presenting the Review: This report organized and presented the findings, focusing on the challenges, controversies, and lessons learned from the RSBI program.

This structured process facilitates a comprehensive and systematic literature review, ensuring the study remains holistic and methodological. Figure 1 below presents the framework for the research procedures, offering a structured outline of the methodology employed in the study.

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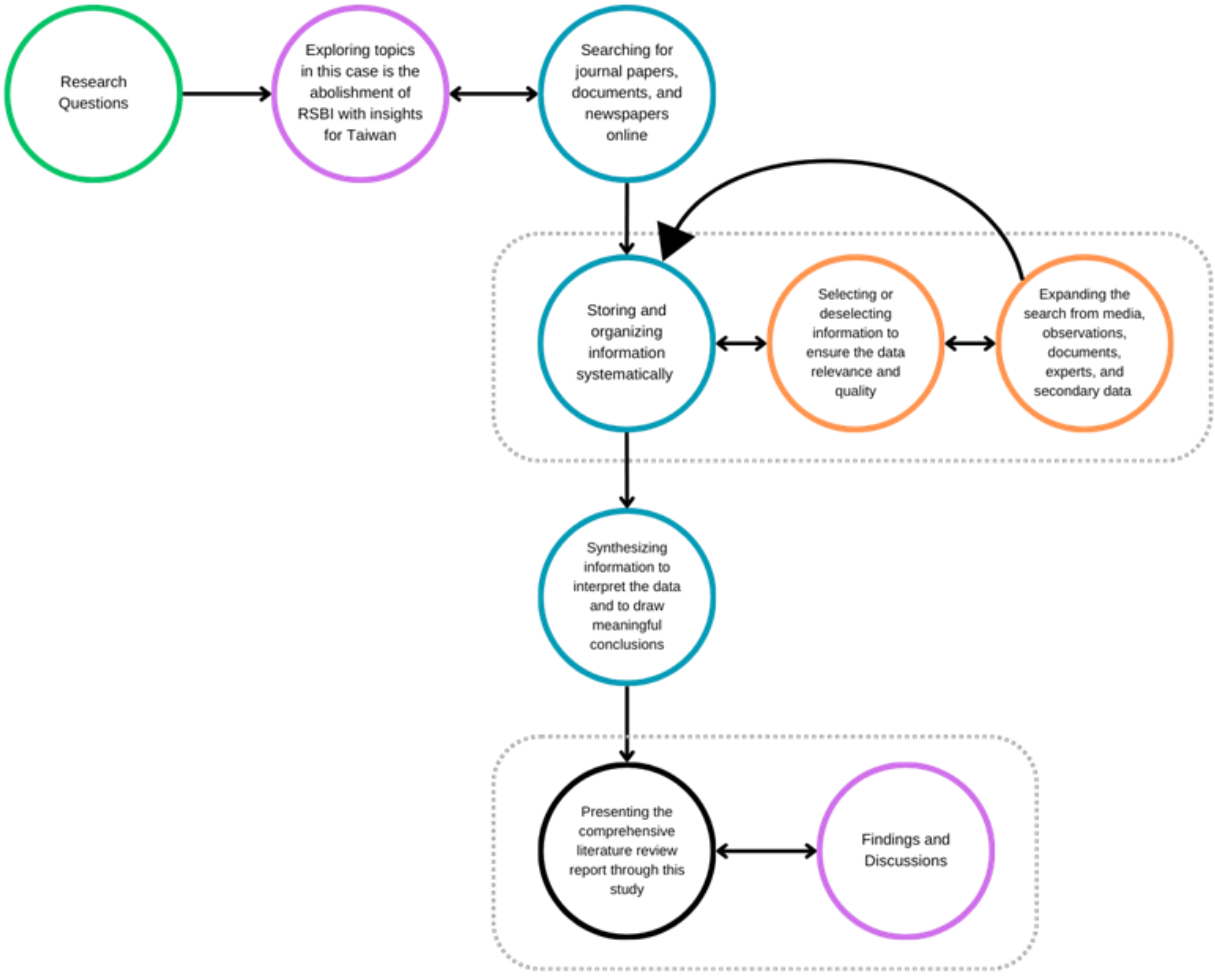

Figure 1. The research procedures

Note: adapted from the Seven-Step Model for conducting a comprehensive literature review, reprinted from Seven Steps to a Comprehensive Literature Review: A Multimodal and Cultural Approach (p. 58), by A. J. Onwuegbuzie & R. K. Frels, 2016, SAGE Publications.

The themes stored in this study included national identity and language, equity and accessibility, financial issues, curriculum and teacher qualifications, and stakeholder perspectives. The themes emerged from a synthesis of the existing literature and were critical in creating the study's core findings. For clarity, the coding results can be found in Table 1. This structured approach to data analysis ensures that the findings are both comprehensive and meaningful.

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Table 1. Key themes

Category	Coding
National Identity and Language	• Preservation of national language (NIL-PNL) • Cultural identity concerns (NIL-CIC) • English dominance (NIL-ED) • Globalization (NIL-G)
Equity and Accessibility	• Socioeconomic distinctions (EA-SD) • Urban-rural divide (EA-URD)
Financial Issues	• High tuition fees (FI-HTF) • Insufficient government funding (FI-IGF) • Resource allocation issues (FI-RAI)
Curriculum and Teacher Qualifications	• Curriculum development challenges (CTQ-CDC) • Teacher proficiency and training (CTQ-TPT)
Stakeholder Perspectives	• Teachers (SP-T) • Parents (SP-P) • Students (SP-S) • Government responses (SP-GR)

4. Results

This paper explores the challenges associated with bilingual education policies in Indonesia, specifically the RSBI program. It identifies several significant obstacles the country faces in implementing these bilingual education frameworks. The findings reveal critical issues related to demographics, the impact on national identity and language, equity and accessibility, financial barriers and resource allocation, curriculum quality, and teacher qualifications. Additionally, it looks into stakeholder perspectives and the government's response to these challenges.

4.1. Demographic

Implementing the RSBI initiative in Indonesia highlights significant demographic gaps within the national education system. Initiated by Government Regulation No. 19 of 2005, RSBI is part of a three-tiered framework to improve educational standards. This framework consists of Minimum Service Standards (SPM), National Standard Schools (SSN), and International Standard School Pilot Projects (RSBI) (Hendarman, 2011; ACDP, 2013). Around 1,305 schools are designated as RSBI, serving over 1,000,000 students and employing 65,000 teachers. However, the distribution of these schools is quite uneven. Notably, 57% of RSBI schools are located in Java, while regions like Aceh, Bali, and South Sumatra have significantly fewer resources even though they have some RSBI programs (ACDP, 2013). The geographical distribution further reveals that 14% of these schools are in large cities, 30% in small cities, and 56% in district areas (Kemendikbud, n.d.; Saputra, 2020). While Indonesia's

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educational reform sets ambitious goals, this distribution underscores significant regional imbalances in access to internationally standardized education.

4.2. Impact on National Identity and Language

Several scholars have raised concerns about its impact on national identity and language policy. Most of the critics argued that the program's emphasis on English as the primary language of instruction could erode cultural identity and diminish the importance of Bahasa Indonesia, which is vital for national unity and pride (Noviansyah & Reza, 2023; Laksono et al., 2013). This focus on English conflicted with Indonesia's constitutional mandate, as stated in Law No. 24 of 2009, highlighting the importance of the Indonesian language in education, culture, and governance. Despite the program's goal of achieving international standards, it was seen as fostering elitism and distancing students from their cultural roots, ultimately threatening Indonesia's autonomy in curriculum development (Prastowo, 2012; Dharmaningtias, 2013; Fitriati, 2015; Noviani, 2024).

The Constitutional Court's decision to abolish the RSBI program reflected a significant societal reaction against perceived neocolonial influences and a Western educational model that undermined national identity (Noviani, 2024). The judges noted that prioritizing English weakened Indonesian education's cultural and philosophical foundations, reducing equitable access and decreasing pride in the Indonesian language and heritage (Noviansyah & Reza, 2023). Scholars have suggested that the deconstruction of the RSBI could help reduce educational inequalities and enhance the significance of Bahasa Indonesia, fostering inclusivity and national unity among diverse ethnic and socioeconomic groups (Ernanta et al., 2013; Miftah, 2016; Arfani, 2019). This case presents valuable lessons for other multilingual and multiracial countries, which also contend with balancing international educational standards while preserving national identity. Such countries should strive to prevent the erosion of their national identity and the loss of indigenous languages.

4.3. Equity and Accessibility Issues

Several significant criticisms concerning its role in intensifying educational inequality have been discussed previously, particularly on equity and accessibility. While the intention was to elevate educational standards by integrating international practices, the program's high tuition fees and additional costs primarily benefited upper-middle-class families. As a result, many students from lower-income backgrounds found quality education out of reach (Noviansyah & Reza, 2023; Setiawan & Rosita, 2023; Noviani, 2024). Although quotas were established to include high-achieving students from underprivileged families, these measures proved insufficient, as many capable students were excluded due to strict academic requirements. The funding structure, which relied on the central government's 50% of its budget, further failed to provide equitable access. This disproportionately benefited wealthier families and marginalized students from disadvantaged socioeconomic backgrounds (Sakhiyya, 2011; Ipnugraha, 2013; Setiawan & Rosita, 2023; Noviani, 2024).

Additionally, the gaps in resources and opportunities between RSBI and non-RSBI schools widened the educational divide, contradicting Indonesia's constitutional commitment to educational equality (Laksono et al., 2013). Critics, including the Anti-Commercialization Education Coalition (KAKP), argue that adopting foreign curricula and selective enrollment practices in RSBI schools undermine the social justice principles institutionalized in Pancasila, Indonesia's foundational ideology (Dharmaningtias, 2013). In a landmark ruling, the Constitutional Court declared the RSBI system discriminatory in Decision No. 5/PUU-X/2012, emphasizing the need for equitable treatment across all government schools (Ernanta et al., 2013). The ACDP (2013) evaluations underscored the program's weaknesses, particularly its failure to fulfill the mandated 20% quota for low-income students. This failure has led to social tensions between paying and non-paying students and has exposed systemic flaws in the program's inclusivity efforts.

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4.4. Financial Barriers and Resource Allocation

One of the most frequently cited challenges relates to significant financial barriers and deficiencies in resource allocation. The funding structure of RSBI heavily depended on additional fees from parents, which placed a substantial burden on lower-income families, making many unable to access these schools (Dharmaningtias, 2013; Hendarman, 2011). While the central government contributed 50% of the funding, local governments were responsible for the remaining costs—30% came from provincial budgets and 20% from municipal or district budgets (Subhkhan, 2011; Ipnugraha, 2013). This dependency on often inconsistent local contributions forced RSBI schools to charge parental fees ranging from IDR 6 to 15 million annually per student, effectively commercializing public education and diminishing its affordability (Dharmaningtias, 2013).

Additionally, RSBI schools frequently failed to meet the mandated 20% enrollment quota for low-income students, with an average of only 12.25% across schools. There were prominent inconsistencies, particularly in elementary institutions and poorer regions (ACDP, 2013). Thus, these higher-cost international-standard classes further intensified inequalities, leading to a dual-track system that separated students based on their financial means (Winarti, 2008). Although scholarships were available, they were not enough to overcome the systemic financial barriers, making RSBI schools broadly accessible only to upper-middle-class families (Noviansyah & Reza, 2023). Additionally, Dharmaningtias (2013) and Ipnugraha (2013) have found that the focus on advanced technology and infrastructure added to the financial strain, marginalizing lower-income students and underscoring the program's reliance on substantial funding to achieve its objectives.

Critics from the scholars about the RSBI funding models have been generated, most of them mentioning the intensifying the existing gaps and highlighting a lack of financial sustainability, as considerable government subsidies were necessary to supplement the fees collected from parents (Sutedjo, 2012; Purnomo, 2011). The Constitutional Court's ruling (Putusan Nomor 5/PUU-X/2012) considered the system unfair and inconsistent with the fundamental role of public education in providing equal opportunities for all students. In light of these issues, some regions, including Batam City, abolished the RSBI program, demonstrating that eliminating financial barriers could significantly enhance access to quality education for students from lower-income backgrounds (Shahrullah et al., 2014). These challenges highlighted the pressing need for more inclusive policies, ultimately leading to the abolition of the RSBI program to address inequalities and reduce the commercialization of public education in Indonesia.

4.5. Curriculum and Teacher Qualifications

The RSBI program also revealed several critical challenges in aligning national and international educational standards, particularly regarding curriculum and teacher qualifications. A significant issue was the dual-curriculum system, which placed a heavy burden on both teachers and students. This system required instruction in English, effectively doubling teaching time and conflicting with national examination demands (Fitriati, 2015). Furthermore, integrating international curricula from OECD countries, such as those from Cambridge and the International Baccalaureate (IB), complicated matters by introducing overlapping content, increasing workloads for educators (Arfani, 2019). Although proposals were to recognize international examinations as equivalent to national assessments, no formal policy changes occurred (Arfani, 2019). The inconsistencies between national and international curricula, particularly the emphasis on diverse learning sources in programs like Cambridge International Education, often conflicted with traditional Indonesian teaching methods (Purnami, 2011). Additionally, the limited success in achieving international accreditation for RSBI schools underscored the gap between the program's aims and actual outcomes. This was hindered by issues related to infrastructure, resources, and regulatory frameworks (Fattah et al., 2009).

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Teacher qualifications posed another major challenge for the RSBI initiative, which set strict criteria for educators. These requirements included holding advanced degrees, demonstrating proficiency in information and communication technology (ICT), and achieving a minimum TOEFL score of 500 (Dharmaningtias, 2013; Ipnugraha, 2013). Unfortunately, meeting these standards proved challenging; less than 10% of senior high school teachers achieved the postgraduate qualification target (ACDP, 2013). For example, at SMKN 3 Singaraja, only 10% of teachers possessed master's degrees, and many were reluctant to pursue additional training in ICT or English (Sutedjo, 2012). English proficiency emerged as a significant concern, with around 50% of RSBI teachers nationwide demonstrating only novice-level skills, unfulfilled by the TOEFL competency requirement (ACDP, 2013). This lack of proficiency severely affected their ability to teach complex subjects in English (Noor, 2011). Consequently, many educators resorted to using Bahasa Indonesia, with 55% of schools primarily teaching in Bahasa Indonesia and only 16% predominantly using English, particularly in mathematics and science, to ensure clarity in their instruction (ACDP, 2013; Fitriati, 2015). This low compliance indicates that teachers were to deliver lessons in English, relying instead on Bahasa Indonesia to facilitate understanding. Moreover, the limited teacher training programs further compounded the problem, as they lacked adequate preparation for educators to teach in English with technology literacy effectively. As a result, many teachers in RSBI schools did not possess the necessary language skills, leading to inconsistent quality in language instruction (Sikki et al., 2013; Marcellino, 2015; Hawanti, 2015). These challenges underscore the urgent need for comprehensive professional development initiatives to improve teacher qualifications and support the successful implementation of bilingual education policies.

4.6. Stakeholder Perspectives

The implementation and eventual termination of the RSBI program in Indonesia stimulated a range of perspectives among stakeholders, each with its expectations, concerns, and priorities. Supporters, including some public figures and educational leaders, believed that RSBI could improve Indonesia's education system by introducing international curricula, innovative teaching methods, and better facilities. They argued that these changes could raise educational standards, better prepare students for global competition, and promote international competencies (Shahrullah, 2014). On the other hand, critics, particularly from non-governmental organizations like Indonesia Corruption Watch (ICW), pointed out several issues. They highlighted the high tuition fees, corruption, and commercialization of education as significant problems. Critics contended that RSBI fostered an elitist system, intensifying inequalities by excluding underprivileged students and neglecting national educational priorities (Kristono, 2009; Prastowo, 2012; Rosser & Curnow, 2014). Additionally, adopting foreign curricula, such as the Cambridge system, raised concerns about compatibility with Indonesia's educational goals and cultural values, leading to questions about the program's long-term relevance and sustainability (Ginanjar, 2012; Purnami, 2011).

Furthermore, the sudden termination of RSBI, following a ruling by the Constitutional Court, triggered mixed reactions among teachers, parents, and students. Teachers who had faced challenges—particularly with using English as the medium of instruction—welcomed the return to the national curriculum, seeing it as an opportunity for greater creativity and inclusive education (Fitriati, 2015). However, others expressed disappointment over the loss of bilingual programs and the diminished international exposure for students (Triyono & Supriani, 2018). Initially, parents viewed RSBI as a pathway to better educational opportunities, but they grew dissatisfied with the program's high costs, raising concerns about financial exploitation (Noviansyah & Reza, 2023). The abolition of RSBI alleviated some of these financial burdens, making education more accessible; however, some parents worried that it might lead to a decline in educational quality at former RSBI schools (Wijanarko & Sularso, 2014). Students also reacted negatively to the dissolution, citing fewer

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opportunities to practice English and a perceived decrease in government support for facilities, which they saw as a drop in educational standards (Triyono & Supriani, 2018).

In response to the Constitutional Court's decision, the government focused on reclassifying RSBI schools as regular schools, highlighting the ongoing tension between modernization and cultural preservation within Indonesia's education system (Shahrullah, 2014; Dharmaningtias, 2013). The government expressed concern that the ruling could delay the progress in developing human capital and inhibit Indonesia's engagement with globalization. Instead of altogether abolishing RSBI, the government initially suggested addressing its challenges while maintaining its comprehensive goals, which included fostering global competencies without sacrificing Indonesia's cultural identity. This initiative aimed to blend modern educational approaches with local cultural heritage, nurturing national pride and unity while emphasizing the importance of Bahasa Indonesia as a unifying language (Yuliantoro, 2016). However, implementation challenges were amplified, especially at the local level, where operational inconsistencies restrained progress. Recognizing these intensifying complications, the government highlighted the need to refine policies and improve coordination between central and local authorities, balancing global aspirations with cultural preservation to achieve sustainable education reform aligned with national priorities (Arfani, 2019). Finally, based on the Ministry of Education and Culture's Circular Number 017/MPK/SE/2013, signed by the Minister on January 30, 2013, RSBI schools were reclassified as regular schools. The Minister instructed that all references to RSBI be removed from school signage, letterheads, and stamps used in administrative and management activities. This decision came in response to the Constitutional Court's Decision Number 5/PUU-X/2012, which declared the legal framework for RSBI schools invalid. The aim is to support governmental efforts to create an efficient and effective national education system (Dharmaningtias, 2013). Furthermore, the government continues to oversee educational institutions in line with the improved National Standards of Education (Kartila, 2013).

5. Conclusion

This study aimed to explore how Indonesia faced the challenges of implementing the RSBI program and to identify lessons that could inform Taiwan's bilingual education policy. The key issues discussed in this paper include balancing national identity with language policy, ensuring equity and accessibility, developing the curriculum, and preparing teachers. Additionally, the perspectives of various stakeholders were considered throughout the analysis.

5.1. Balancing National Identity and Language Policy

Indonesia's RSBI program highlighted the challenge of adopting international educational standards while maintaining national identity and cultural heritage. Taiwan could learn from these insights. The program's focus on English as the primary language of instruction raised significant concerns about its potential to erode cultural identity and diminish the role of Bahasa Indonesia, the unifying national language (Noviansyah & Reza, 2023; Laksono et al., 2013). This tension between global ambitions and national priorities was worsened by perceptions of elitism and the Westernization of education, which marginalized students from their cultural roots and alienated Indonesia's diverse linguistic heritage (Prastowo, 2012; Dharmaningtias, 2013; Fitriati, 2015). The Constitutional Court's decision to abolish RSBI reflected widespread public dissatisfaction and a collective effort to reaffirm the importance of Bahasa Indonesia in education and governance (Noviani, 2024). By deconstructing RSBI, Indonesia aimed to alleviate educational inequalities and reinforce national unity, illustrating the necessity of aligning educational policies with constitutional mandates and cultural values (Ernanta et al., 2013; Arfani, 2019).

Furthermore, Taiwan has faced similar challenges with its "Bilingual Nation 2030" policy. Critics argue that prioritizing English risks marginalizing the nation's linguistic heritage, including Taiwanese, Hakka, and indigenous languages (Yaofeng, 2021; Ngangbam, 2022; Ferrer & Lin, 2024). Teaching

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materials often come from Western contexts, which can lack cultural relevance and make them less relatable for Taiwanese students (Graham et al., 2021). The policy's top-down implementation approach has been criticized for overlooking local cultural and linguistic considerations, leading to dissatisfaction among educators and communities (Oladejo, 2006; Graham et al., 2021). Ferrer and Lin (2024) have also mentioned that these criticisms highlight the risk of eroding cultural and linguistic diversity in favor of English as a dominant linguistic identity. They added that the ambiguity surrounding Taiwan's language hierarchies further complicates policy implementation, as the lack of clear distinctions among English, Mandarin, and local languages creates uncertainty about their coexistence. To address these challenges, the government must clarify the functional roles of these languages. For example, the national language could remain the primary medium of instruction to promote national cohesion. Indigenous languages could be integrated into early education and cultural subjects, while Chinese and English could be gradually incorporated into the curriculum. Garcia (2009) has also emphasized that language, as a social construct shaped by cultural and societal forces, is heavily influenced by state policies, which often prioritize specific languages while marginalizing minority ones. This reinforces power hierarchies and contributes to linguistic homogenization, emphasizing the need for policies that balance global language promotion with cultural and linguistic preservation.

By drawing lessons from Indonesia's RSBI initiative, Taiwan could benefit from an inclusive and participatory approach that integrates local stakeholder perspectives, ensuring local cultural elements are reflected in bilingual education policies. Strategies like translanguaging, which encourages the simultaneous use of native languages and English, may support bilingualism while protecting cultural identity (Canagarajah, 2011; Cadias, 2019). Implementing a "glocalized" framework that aligns English proficiency with preserving local languages and cultural heritage may allow Taiwan to engage effectively in globalization without compromising its unique identity (Ngangbam, 2022; Luo, 2024). However, the ongoing tension between globalization and localization underscores the need for institutional support and resource allocation for local languages to prevent their marginalization (Ferrer & Lin, 2024). Explicit planning for multilingualism, alongside the strategic use of English as a Lingua Franca (ELF) for intercultural communication, can foster an inclusive and culturally sensitive bilingual policy that respects Taiwan's national identity and addresses the complex challenges of globalization (Chen et al., 2020; Tsai, 2024).

5.2. Equity and Accessibility

Other valuable lessons for Taiwan from RSBI abolishment are the issues of equity and accessibility in bilingual education. At the same time, RSBI aimed to include underprivileged students through quotas, high tuition fees, and RSBI high tuition fees and parental additional costs, and limited access to quality education for lower-income families (Noviansyah & Reza, 2023; Setiawan & Rosita, 2023). The funding structure, which relied heavily on government support and parental contributions, failed to bridge socioeconomic gaps, benefiting wealthier families and marginalizing disadvantaged communities (Sakhiyya, 2011; Ipnugraha, 2013). This inequity was intensified by the uneven distribution of RSBI schools, with a notable concentration in Java and urban regions, leaving rural and remote areas underserved (Kemendikbud, n.d.; Saputra, 2020). Similarly, Taiwan must ensure its bilingual education policies do not disproportionately favor urban centers at the expense of rural communities, where access to resources and exposure to English are often limited (Chang, 2024; Oladejo, 2006).

To address these inequalities, Taiwan can draw from RSBI's struggles by focusing on equitable resource allocation and improving infrastructure in underserved regions. Initiatives such as providing financial support, developing digital platforms, and offering targeted professional development for teachers in rural areas can help to reduce educational opportunity gaps (Executive Yuan, n.d.; Wang et al., 2023; Ferrer & Lin, 2024). The success of these initiatives depends on consistent funding and

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equitable distribution to ensure that remote and underserved regions are not neglected. Recognizing and addressing urban-rural imbalances in resources and opportunities is crucial for Taiwan to establish an equitable bilingual education system that serves all communities, regardless of their geographic or socioeconomic challenges.

5.3. Curriculum and Teacher Preparedness

The challenges associated with aligning national curricula with international standards from OECD countries could also provide insightful lessons for Taiwan's bilingual education policy. The dual-curriculum system in RSBI placed a heavy burden on both teachers and students. This resulted in overlapping content during English instruction and conflicting demands between national exams in Bahasa Indonesia and international assessments in English (Fitriati, 2015; Arfani, 2019). For Taiwan, implementing bilingual models such as Garcia's (2009) Additive Bilingualism and Dynamic Bilingualism could enhance English proficiency while preserving linguistic and cultural identity. Similarly, Hornberger's (1991) Bilingual Education Maintenance Model and her (2004) Continua Model of Biliteracy further emphasize the importance of integrating native languages as resources, promoting both academic growth and cultural preservation. Effective teaching methodologies, including Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) and Teaching English in English (TEIE), should align with local educational practices and utilize translanguaging to balance content mastery with language development (Graham et al., 2021; Luo, 2024). Such strategies can enable Taiwan to develop global bilingual competencies while preserving its cultural heritage.

A critical aspect for Taiwan to learn from the challenges faced by RSBI is teacher preparedness. The strict requirements in RSBI—such as the need for advanced degrees and high English proficiency—proved challenging to meet, resulting in inconsistent teaching quality (ACDP, 2013; Dharmaningtias, 2013). Taiwan must tackle similar gaps by prioritizing comprehensive teacher training programs, including targeted professional development and ICT integration, to support effective bilingual instruction (Luo, 2024). Three key bilingual education models—English teacher alone, content teacher alone, and collaborative teaching—can address varying levels of teacher readiness. However, they require significant training and institutional support to be effective (Luo, 2024). Additionally, Taiwan must ensure that enough qualified teachers are available in all areas, including underserved rural areas. This is important to prevent inequalities in teacher qualifications (Ngangbam, 2022; MOE Taiwan, 2024). By establishing realistic standards, providing ongoing professional development for teachers—especially in English proficiency and IT skills—and promoting inclusive teaching practices, Taiwan can effectively address potential challenges in teacher preparedness while building a sustainable bilingual education system that balances global ambitions with local realities.

5.4. Bottom-up Approach with Stakeholder Engagement

Indonesia's RSBI program provides valuable insights into the challenges of balancing diverse stakeholder perspectives during educational reform. Supporters of RSBI praised its potential to raise educational standards by adopting international curricula and innovative teaching methods, which they believed would prepare students for better global competitiveness (Shahrullah, 2014). However, critics pointed out significant issues, such as elitism, financial exploitation, and the perceived diminishing of national educational priorities. They argued that RSBI primarily benefitted wealthy families while leaving underprivileged communities marginalized (Kristono, 2009; Prastowo, 2012; Rosser & Curnow, 2014). Similar concerns are present in Taiwan, where various stakeholders, including the National Federation of Teachers Unions (NFTU), have criticized the top-down approach of the bilingual policy and the insufficient distribution of resources. Teachers have raised worries about the redundancy of foreign teachers and the challenges that non-native English-speaking

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teachers face in delivering bilingual instruction, especially in content-heavy subjects where language barriers can hinder understanding (Everington, 2022).

The sudden abolishment of RSBI in Indonesia triggered mixed responses from teachers, parents, and students, highlighting the tension between modernization and cultural preservation (Dharmaningtias, 2013; Wijanarko & Sularso, 2014). Taiwan can learn from this experience by implementing its bilingual policy more inclusively and gradually. The recent focus by Minister of Education Cheng Ying-yao on slowing down the policy rollout and emphasizing teacher qualifications and local coordination is a positive step (Lin & Chin, 2024). Ensuring equitable access to bilingual education, particularly in rural and economically disadvantaged areas, addresses inequalities and prevents the policy from magnifying existing divides. Furthermore, the initiative must balance pursuing global aspirations and preserving cultural identity. Concerns have been raised by Taiwanese educators and scholars about the risk of losing linguistic diversity and creativity (Everington, 2022; Singh & Wappel, 2021). Taiwan can establish a bilingual education system that respects linguistic diversity while fostering global competencies by promoting collaboration among local stakeholders, improving resource allocation, and incorporating culturally sensitive practices.

The framework illustrated in Figure 2 presents a comprehensive approach to implementing bilingual education in Taiwan. It focuses on flexibility, equity, and inclusivity. The study suggests that a glocalized framework, which balances English proficiency with the preservation of local languages, can enhance Taiwan's global engagement while maintaining its unique cultural identity. In this context, English serves as a lingua franca for intercultural communication. The framework suggests adaptable bilingual models that accommodate Taiwanese students' diverse linguistic and cultural needs. Key models include Additive and Dynamic Bilingualism, the Bilingual Education Maintenance Model, and the Continua Model of Biliteracy. These frameworks encourage a balanced approach supporting English proficiency and cultural heritage. To ensure curriculum development aligns with local cultural contexts while meeting global demands, the study recommends employing pedagogical strategies such as Translanguaging, CLIL, and TEIE. The framework also addresses the need to bridge urban-rural divides in educational opportunities. It emphasizes equitable resource allocation, inclusive curriculum development, and strong teacher training programs that enhance English proficiency and IT literacy. A bottom-up approach to stakeholder engagement—gathering input from experts, educators, parents, students, and local communities—is essential in balancing national identity and globalization. By connecting curriculum advancement, teacher preparedness, and resource distribution, this holistic approach draws valuable lessons from Indonesia’s experience. It serves as a blueprint for Taiwan to develop a culturally sensitive, equitable, and globally competitive bilingual education policy.

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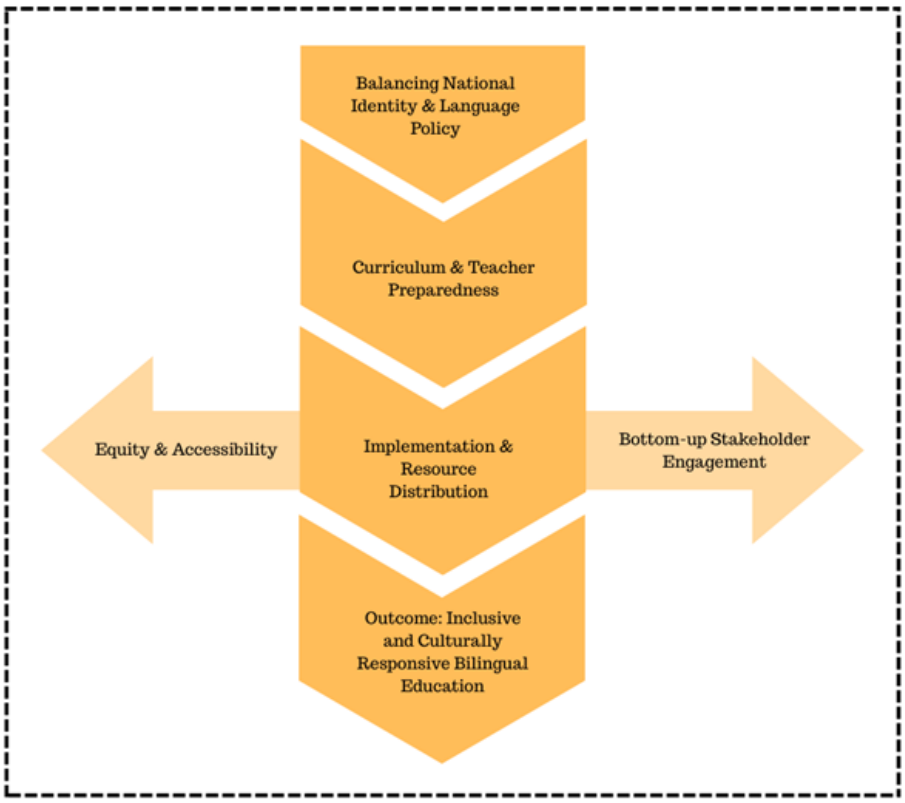

Figure 2. Framework for Inclusive and Culturally Responsive Bilingual Education

6. Conclusion and Implications

This study explores the complexities involved in implementing bilingual education policies, specifically focusing on Indonesia's RSBI program. It outlines key challenges such as curriculum alignment, teacher preparation, equity, and the preservation of national identity. The insights gained from this case are particularly relevant for Taiwan as it develops its "Bilingual Nation 2030" initiative. Creating inclusive frameworks and ensuring equitable resource allocation is crucial to establish effective bilingual education systems. The findings of this study contribute to ongoing discussions surrounding bilingual education by demonstrating that national identity and linguistic diversity can coexist with global development. They highlight the importance of developing multilingual policies guaranteeing all students access to quality education. Policymakers and educators can utilize these insights to formulate adaptive models, such as translanguaging and glocalized approaches, which actively incorporate linguistic diversity into broader educational strategies.

7. Limitation and Suggestion

This study contributes to the existing literature on bilingual education in Indonesia and Taiwan, but it does have limitations. Its primary focus is on policy analysis rather than on long-term educational outcomes. Future research could explore how Taiwan’s bilingual policies impact academic achievement, cultural identity, and linguistic diversity over time. Additionally, exploring comparative studies with other multilingual nations could help identify best practices for balancing local and global priorities. Societies like Taiwan can effectively bridge cultural and linguistic gaps by prioritizing adaptive and inclusive bilingual education policies while addressing global demands. These efforts can enhance educational equity and cultural preservation, ultimately empowering students with the skills they need to thrive in an increasingly globalized world.

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Declarations

Author Contributions. Author 1: Conceptualized the study, conducted the initial literature review, and drafted the manuscript. Author 2: Contributed to data collection, analyzed data, and assisted with manuscript writing and revisions. Author 3: Provided technical and methodological guidance, supervised the research process, and critically revised the manuscript. Author 4: Reviewed the manuscript for intellectual content, contributed to the discussion, and ensured the integrity of the final version. All authors have read and approved the final manuscript.

Conflicts of Interest (as applicable). The authors declare no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this manuscript.

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