

CHAPTER I INTRODUCTION

A. Research Background

In the 21st century and this 4.0 revolution era, the world is becoming increasingly complex as the advance in science and technology is affecting the flow of information, and information is growing and more accessible. The rapid advancement of technology at this time has an impact on humans such as changing the way people live in learning, working, and interacting with other people. New skills have emerged since the proliferation of technology, these skills have been able to change the human mind, change the manner of life, and interact with others. The combination of applied sciences with the new industrial revolution has affected not only a few areas or industries in the world but also every sector of the government, institution, education, and society.¹ Our world and our lives are increasingly changed, globalized, and digitized and it all has consequences and demands on various fields. Regarding this, public awareness must be increased due to the ever-growing development of time and adaptive human resources are needed in all fields especially in the education sector.²

In the framework of education, educational systems and curriculum changes have been made by many countries to make it possible for teachers and students to adapt to the 21st century. The skills that are needed for students to learn in 21st century education are also highly emphasized in order to survive in today's life. The role of educational institutions plays a very important role in preparing human resources. This requires policymakers to develop education systems based on not to fill up students with particular kinds of existing knowledge, but to increase students' ability namely by strengthening competencies or skills that are emphasized in the 21st century besides mastering science and technology in accordance with the fields that they are involved in. The emphasized skills that must be possessed by students are Critical Thinking, Creativity, Communication, and Collaboration (4Cs).³ These 21st century skills

¹ K. Schwab, *The Fourth Industrial Revolution* (New York: Crown Business, 2017), 21.

² Yamith Jose Fandino, "21st Century Skills and the English Foreign Language Classroom: A Call for More Awareness in Colombia," *Gist Education and Learning Research Journal* 1, no. 7 (2013): 192.

³ Shobahul Hoir, M. Subandowo, & Yoso Wiyarno, "Improve Your English through the 21st Century Skills," *Jurnal Kajian Teknologi Pendidikan* 4, no. 1 (2019): 39.

are emphasized so that everyone is able to master these skills which are the means to achieve success in society life.

The existence of teachers for a nation is very important, especially for a nation that is developing, especially for the life of the nation in the midst of crossing times with increasingly sophisticated technology and all changes and shifts in value that tend to give the nuances of life that demand knowledge in levels dynamic to adapt. A teacher is a key holder in achieving educational goals. Teachers must have skills in planning and carrying out the learning process so that teachers can be responsible for their duties as teachers who are educated in schools and also in society. Teachers do not only provide teaching materials or simply convey knowledge, but teachers also have to educate students regarding ethics and aesthetics in facing the challenges of life in society. Hence, teachers are at the forefront of implementing education. In other words, the teacher is the element that has the most influence on the creation of quality educational processes and results. Therefore, the contributions and efforts of teachers who have creativity, professional souls, and competence are able to advance education.

The role of the teacher has become very crucial and more complex than in the previous era. The teachers are expected to be problem solvers and capable of recognizing and weighing diverse perspectives.⁴ This is in accordance with the 2013 curriculum revision in accordance with The regulation of the Indonesian National Education Minister (Permendikbud) No. 22 of 2016 regarding the Standards for the Primary and Secondary Education Process explains the implementation of learning in primary and secondary education units to achieve graduate competence.⁵ These competencies require educators to develop learning so that students are able to master several skills such as Critical Thinking, Creativity, Communication, and Collaboration (4Cs).⁶ This circumstance shows that teachers have to develop interactive varieties of pedagogy and emphasizes on multiple disciplines and cultural perspectives, in order to cultivate students' capacities and skills. Therefore, the present teachers must

⁴ R. A. Sprott, "Factors that Foster and Deter Advanced Teachers' Professional Development," *Teaching and Teacher Education* 77, no. 1 (2017): 322.

⁵ Permendikbud, "22 Tahun 2016, Standar Proses Pendidikan Dasar dan Menengah," (6 Juni 2016).

⁶ Afandi, *et al.*, "Development Frameworks of the Indonesian Partnership 21st-Century Skills Standards for Prospective Science Teachers: A Delphi Study," *Jurnal Pendidikan IPA Indonesia* 8, no.1 (2019): 91.

have a strong character and become more creative in developing the competencies or skills needed to face the 21st century era.

On the other hand, language learning in the current era of globalization is very important for humans since as social beings, we must have the ability to communicate and interact with other people. In the current era, we are expected to be able to master a second language or foreign language such as English. English has a very vital role in all aspects of life because English is a worldwide communication language. That is why English is the main concern of almost all countries, including Indonesia, to be taught at all levels of education, both formal and informal. English learning for now should not only focus on grammar and learning from rote, but English learning should also focus on developing skills that are in accordance with the demands of the current era in order to foster a critical thinking attitude and social sense in students.⁷

Additionally, the rapid growth of technology and industry at this time has had an impact on English education in Indonesia. The role of the English teacher is very significant because it will affect the future of every student where the times are developing. English is a very important language and has spread to all fields of work and others. This situation shows that English teachers must have the ability in the field of digital technology and be able to develop interactive learning.⁸ It seems important to further investigate about the roles of English teachers in education, especially in the 21st century era. Then, the researcher chooses MTs NU Hasyim Asy'ari 2 Gebog Kudus because before carrying out the research, the researcher conducts an interview with one of the English teachers. The teacher said that English learning at this school is still not superior to other favorite schools so that the roles of the teacher are very necessary, especially in strengthening the competencies of students in the current era.⁹ Therefore, the researcher chooses the school regarding from its weakness so that the researcher wants to know about the roles of English teachers in strengthening students' critical thinking and communication competencies and the challenges faced by English teachers and their solutions at MTs NU Hasyim Asy'ari 2 Gebog Kudus. This study did not discuss all skills (4Cs) in this era because

⁷ Vacide Erdogan, "Integrating 4C Skills of 21st Century into 4 Language Skills in EFL Classes," *International Journal of Education and Research* 7, no. 11 (2019): 116.

⁸ L. Angelianawati, "Being an English Teacher in Industrial Revolution 4.0: An Overview About Roles, Challenges, and Implications," *JDP* 11, no. 3 (2018): 308.

⁹ M. Syaifuddin Zuhri, The interview from the researcher, November, 4th, 2021, Interview 1, transcript.

it adapted to the researcher's objectives, the condition of the school, and this is a recommendation from researcher's consultant.

B. Research Focus and Scope

There are several skills or competencies that must be possessed by students in facing the 21st century era called 4C Skills, namely Critical Thinking, Communication, Creativity, and Collaboratively. In this study, the researcher did not discuss all of these competencies but focused on two competencies (Critical Thinking and Communication) because it adjusted to the objectives, background, and condition of the object so that this research is more in-depth. The researcher only focused on describing the roles of English teachers in strengthening students' critical thinking and communication competencies and the challenges faced by English teachers and their solutions in carrying out those roles in the 21st century era at MTs NU Hasyim Asy'ari 2 Gebog Kudus.

C. Research Problems

Based on the background of the study above, the problem discussed in this paper is about the role of English teachers in strengthening students' critical thinking and communication competencies in 21st century era. Furthermore, the researcher formulates the problem as follows:

1. What are the roles of English teachers in strengthening students' critical thinking and communication competencies in 21st century era?
2. What are the challenges faced by English teachers and their solutions in strengthening students' critical thinking and communication competencies?

D. Research Objectives

The objectives of this research to as follows:

1. To describe the roles of English teachers in strengthening students' critical thinking and communication competencies in 21st century era.
2. To find out the challenges faced by English teachers and their solutions in strengthening students' critical thinking and communication competencies in 21st century era.

E. Research Significances

This research is expected to be able to contribute more to both theoretical and practical improvement of the English language teaching and learning. Moreover, this study can also be beneficial for English teachers, students, and other researchers.

Firstly, the result of this research will be helpful for English teachers in the preparation, process, and evaluation of teaching in strengthening students' competencies.

Secondly, the result of this research will be useful for the students to improve their knowledge, and understanding more about critical thinking and communication competencies or another skill in the 21st century era.

Lastly, this research is also expected to be a reference and give many benefits to other researchers who want to conduct a research.

F. Definition of Key Terms

In this study, the definition of key terms is provided by the researcher so that the reader can easily understand. They are described as follows:

1. The teacher's role: is an action taken by the teacher for the progress and development of students in accordance with certain situations and contexts.¹⁰
2. Critical thinking: the ability to think carefully by analyzing, assessing, and evaluating certain information or problems.¹¹
3. Communication: an activity of conveying information, meaning, ideas that are carried out by individuals to other individuals or groups to other groups and understanding each other.¹²
4. 21st century era: an era where the development of technology and knowledge is increasingly advanced, making people must have the skills and attitudes needed to face this global challenge.¹³

¹⁰ L. Angelianawati, "Being an English Teacher in Industrial Revolution 4.0: An Overview About Roles, Challenges, and Implications," *JDP* 11, no. 3 (2018): 310.

¹¹ Linda Elder & Richard Paul, "Critical Thinking Competency Standards Essential for the Cultivation of Intellectual Skills," *Journal of Developmental Education* 34, no.2 (2010): 38.

¹² Tabhita W. W., *et.al.*, *Communication Skills* (United States: Lap Lambert Academic Publishing GmbH & Co. KG, 2012), 2.

¹³ C. L. Scoot, *The Futures of Learning 2: What Kind of Learning for the 21st Century?* (Paris: UNESCO Education Research and Foresight, 2015), 8.

G. Organisation of Thesis

The organization of thesis is a part that explains to readers exactly what a paper is about and is used to provide the structure of the research clearly. The organization of this thesis is as follows:

Chapter I is the introduction. This chapter contains the research background, research focus and scope, research problems, research objectives, research significances, and definition of key terms.

Chapter II is review of related literature. This chapter describes about the theoretical description, theoretical framework, and review of related previous studies.

Chapter III is research methodology. This chapter will provide the type of research method, research setting, research participants or subjects, instruments and data collection technique, research data validity, and data analysis technique.

Chapter IV is research findings and discussion. This section consists of the overview of research objects, description of research, and data analysis will be provided from the research.

Chapter V is closing. This chapter briefly presents the conclusion based on the discussion, implication, and suggestion as the interest for the development of further research.