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The Difference in The Education Curriculum System of Asean Member States: Indonesia and Singapore

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ABSTRACT

Education is one of the most important components of life. Since humans began engaging in educational activities, they have successfully realized various developments and advancements in all aspects of their lives. Generally, the process of education has also experienced significant progress, both in terms of methods and the goals to be achieved. The Indonesian government has consistently worked to improve the quality of education by implementing various changes in the education sector, with the curriculum serving as a key tool for enhancing educational quality. Differences in curriculum systems provide a way to understand various aspects related to the education systems of Indonesia and Singapore. This research is qualitative in nature, employing a descriptive method. The author collected data from journals, books, and online media. The study utilizes the theory of differences in curriculum systems. The aim of this research is to identify the differences in the education curriculum systems between Indonesia and Singapore. In conclusion, education is crucial for both developed and developing countries. For developed countries like Singapore, the education curriculum is used as an effort to continuously improve the quality of life for its citizens. Meanwhile, for developing countries like Indonesia, the education curriculum is implemented as an effort to catch up with more advanced nations.

Keywords: *Curriculum System Differences, Educational Curriculum, Indonesia, Singapore.*

INTRODUCTION

Education is a highly significant aspect of national life. It serves as a strategic medium to enhance the quality of human resources (Sudarsana, 2016). This has made education a vital component for the continuity of development and progress of a country (Supriadi, 2017). Education is one of the most essential components of life (Hasibuan & Rahmawati, 2022). Studying curriculum differences is a method to understand various aspects related to the education systems of Indonesia and other countries (Bahri, 2017), particularly concerning the strengths and weaknesses present in those systems (Putra, 2017).

When comparing two countries, one often involves a developing nation and the other a developed one. Developing countries face increasingly complex educational challenges. Through the examination and comparison of educational systems, it is possible to identify the core issues affecting education in both developed and developing nations. Singapore is one of the countries that has made significant progress in the field of education (Fitrianah, 2018). On the other hand, Indonesia is still far from being advanced in the field of education. However, Indonesia can serve as a reflection to further improve and perfect its education system.

Curriculum

The curriculum is an educational program provided by educational institutions (schools) for students. Based on this educational program, students engage in various learning activities that foster their growth and development in accordance with the educational goals that have been established (Hamalik, 2010). In Indonesia, the term "curriculum" only became popular in the 1950s and became known outside the educational sphere (Suwendra, 2018).

Previously, the term used was "lesson plan," which essentially means the same as the curriculum. Furthermore, the curriculum is the core of education across three main areas: educational management, student guidance, and the curriculum itself. Among these, the curriculum has the most significant direct influence on student development (Knowledge Development Team).

Curriculum models can be divided into four types:

1. **Humanistic Curriculum:**
   This model emphasizes integrity, where the unity of behavior is not only intellectual but also emotional and action-based (Purba et al., 2021).

2. **Academic Subject Curriculum:**
   This curriculum model is based on the systematization of individual disciplines. Each field of knowledge has its specific systematization, which differs from others (Taufik, 2019).

3. **Social Reconstruction Curriculum:**
   This model develops the curriculum or educational program based on societal problems. It employs science and technology while working cooperatively and collaboratively to find solutions, aiming to create a better society (Hanafi, 2014).

4. **Technological Curriculum:**
   Education is an effort to prepare students for the future and adapt to the rapid societal changes caused by advancements in science and technology. Therefore, the development of educational curricula must use a science and technology-based approach (Mustari & Rahman, 2014).

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Education

According to the Indonesian Dictionary (KBBI), education is defined as a process or stage in changing the attitudes, ethics, and behavior of an individual or group to improve human thinking patterns through teaching, training, and educational actions (Writing Team, 2016). Education is an effort to nurture and develop human personalities from spiritual and physical aspects (Isma et al., 2022) in a gradual process (Hasibuan & Prastowo, 2019). Therefore, education can be summarized as a conscious effort carried out in a planned and organized manner to transform ignorance into knowledge, incapacity into capability, and to cultivate moral character.

The purpose of education, according to Law No. 20 of 2003 on the National Education System, is to develop the potential of students to become individuals who are faithful and devoted to God Almighty (UUD, n.d.), ethical and moral, and democratic citizens who are responsible (Azkia & Rohman, 2020). Meanwhile, according to MPRS No. 2 of 1960, the purpose of education is to shape individuals with a true Pancasila spirit, based on the principles outlined in the Preamble of the 1945 Constitution and the content of the 1945 Constitution (Gesmi et al., 2018).

According to UNESCO, the goal of education in improving the quality of a nation can only be achieved through enhancing the quality of education. The United Nations, through UNESCO, has introduced four pillars of education that apply to both the present and the future (Mustari & Rahman, 2014):

1. **Learning to Know**
2. **Learning to Do**
3. **Learning to Be**
4. **Learning to Live Together**

These four pillars combine the goals of intellectual intelligence (IQ), emotional intelligence (EQ), and spiritual intelligence (SQ). Thus, the purpose of education essentially serves as a means to develop personality and potential, enhancing knowledge through education.

Curriculum in Indonesia

The curriculum in Indonesia has undergone numerous changes since independence. In the 2013/2014 academic year, Indonesia began implementing the 2013 Curriculum. Its implementation was carried out gradually (Rohman, 2021). The 2013 Curriculum is an improvement of the 2006 Curriculum, designed based on the goals of national education and an evaluation of previous curricula to address future challenges faced by the nation.

The development of the 2013 Curriculum emphasizes a balance of knowledge, attitudes, and skills, as well as a scientific approach to learning, including project-based and problem-based learning models. It also incorporates authentic assessment. This curriculum places a strong emphasis on character education, integrating character-building efforts into all areas of study (Wandini et al., 2021). Additionally, the curriculum highlights the development of spiritual attitudes in Core Competence 1 (KI 1) and social attitudes in Core Competence 2 (KI 2) (Alawiyah, 2013).

Regarding educational management in Indonesia, it relies on standardized and sustainable institutions where teaching and learning processes take place. These institutions serve as places for educating the younger generation, who are the nation's successors, and where they take their first steps toward achieving their dreams. However, the current state of education in Indonesia still faces challenges

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related to quality, including limited access to education, uneven distribution of teachers, inequality in education, and the insufficient quality of teachers (Hadi, 2018).

Curriculum in Singapore

Singapore is one of the countries with advanced human resources and education systems globally, particularly in Southeast Asia (Nawawi, 2017). This makes Singapore a popular destination for pursuing education. Over the years, Singapore has evolved from a traditional British-style education system to a more education aimed at meeting individual needs and developing students' talents.

The strength of Singapore's education system lies in its bilingual policy (English and a mother tongue: Malay, Mandarin, Tamil, or Thai) and its comprehensive curriculum, where innovation and entrepreneurial spirit are highly prioritized. Formal education in Singapore begins with **Kindergarten School**, equivalent to Kindergarten (TK) in Indonesia. After graduation, students proceed to **Primary School**, equivalent to Elementary School (SD) in Indonesia, for six years. To advance to the next level, students move to **Secondary School** for four or five years.

At this stage, students study English, their mother tongue, mathematics, science, and culture (social studies). Schools are also permitted to offer **Applied Grade Subjects (AGS)** as supplements or alternatives to the standard curriculum, providing various options to students. AGS generally emphasize practical or vocational education, such as polytechnics (Susianti, n.d.).

Singapore's educational progress is supported by several factors, including adequate facilities (Putra, 2017). For example:

- Every school in Singapore has free internet access and a school website to connect students, teachers, and parents.
- A well-developed transportation system provides access to all schools, making it easier for students to commute.

Additionally, education costs in Singapore are tailored to citizens' financial capacity, supplemented by scholarships for underprivileged citizens.

Another factor contributing to Singapore's status as the country with the best education system in ASEAN is its teachers. The selection process to become a teacher is rigorous, with candidates accepted based on the actual demand for teachers, ensuring all accepted candidates secure employment. Once selected, prospective teachers undergo training before starting their jobs, equipping them with prior preparation. Moreover, teachers in Singapore receive high salaries, ensuring their welfare is well-supported (Kosim, 2010).

Education Curriculum System in Indonesia

The curriculum in Indonesia differs significantly from those in other countries. It has undergone approximately 11 changes since 1947. In 1947, the curriculum was still designed by the Dutch colonial government under the term **Leerplan** (learning plan). **Pancasila** is established as the foundation of the curriculum in Indonesia. The educational approach during this period was highly political, as it marked the transition from Dutch to national education (Krissandi & Rusmawan, 2015).

The 1947 curriculum emphasized character development to shape Indonesians as sovereign, independent individuals equal to citizens of other countries. It focused on character education, civic

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awareness, and societal responsibilities, with minimal emphasis on intellectual education. Additionally, physical education and the arts were given significant attention.

This curriculum. Then, in 1952, improvements were made to the 1947 curriculum, which came to be known as the **1947 Lesson Plan**. A significant change was that each teacher would teach only one subject. Every lesson in this curriculum was linked to real-life events. The detailed 1952 lesson plan reflected a national education system, rather than a transitional phase like the 1947 Lesson Plan (Rahman, 2017).

Next, in 1964, the elementary school (SD) curriculum was centered on the **Pancawardhana Program**, which comprised skill development, physical education, emotional/artistic expression, intelligence, and moral growth. The government designed the 1964 curriculum to provide citizens with a solid academic foundation, making it more comprehensive than previous curricula.

In 1969, during the New Order era, the 1964 curriculum—an Old Order product—was replaced by the 1968 curriculum for political reasons. The objectives of this new curriculum included shaping individuals with genuine Pancasila values, fostering physical strength, improving intelligence and practical skills, cultivating moral character, and reinforcing religious beliefs. However, the 1968 curriculum was largely theoretical and lacked relevance to real-life issues. The learning activities were designed to enhance students' skills, intelligence, and physical strength to ensure they were fit and healthy (Machali, 2014).

In 1975, the concept of **Management by Objectives (MBO)** influenced the birth of the **1975 curriculum**, aimed at making education more effective and efficient. Learning objectives, methods, and materials were detailed in **PPSI (Instructional Systems Development Procedures)**. This curriculum was known for its "lesson units," or lesson plans for each subject. Each unit was further broken down into General Instructional Objectives (TIU), Specific Instructional Objectives (TIK), teaching tools, learning materials, teaching-learning activities, and assessments. The extensive components of this curriculum required teachers to be skilled in documenting detailed objectives and lists for every learning activity (Alhamuddin, 2014).

Following this, the **1984 curriculum** was an enhancement of the 1975 curriculum and was often referred to as the **Improved 1975 Curriculum**. It focused on a process-oriented approach to learning, where the process itself was emphasized without disregarding the importance of goals. This curriculum introduced the **CBSA (Active Student Learning)** model, equivalent to the international education method **SAL (Student Active Learning)**.

This method, proposed by **Professor Dr. Conny R. Semiawan**, Head of the Curriculum Center at the Ministry of National Education from 1980-1986, positioned students as active participants in learning. Students engaged in various activities such as discussions, group work, and reporting their findings. While the concept worked well in pilot schools and yielded excellent results, its nationwide implementation faced challenges. Classrooms often became noisy due to discussions, messy with stickers and drawings, and teachers shifted away from traditional lecturing, which was difficult for some to adapt to In front of the class.

Every new curriculum is always created to improve upon the previous one. Similarly, the **1994 curriculum** was an enhancement of the **1984 curriculum**. This curriculum was implemented under **Law No. 2 of 1989 on National Education**. A significant change introduced was the shift from a semester-based system to a trimester system. One academic year was divided into three phases, with the hope that students could absorb more lessons.

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Next, the **2004 curriculum** emphasized diverse methods and approaches in learning activities, making them less monotonous. Learning resources were not limited to teachers, allowing students to learn from various sources as long as they fulfilled educational elements. This curriculum focused on achieving both individual and class-wide competencies, with an orientation towards learning outcomes and diversity. Assessments were based on both the process and the outcomes of learning in an effort to achieve a specific competency. Knowledge and skills for each subject were structured and grouped based on subject-specific aspects.

The competency structure used in this curriculum was based on **Basic Competencies (KBK)**, which were organized according to class components, aspects, and terms. KBK featured three core elements:

1. Specified evaluation indicators to measure the success of competency achievement.
2. Selection of appropriate competencies.
3. Development of learning methods (Ramadhani et al., 2020).

Then came the **KTSP (School-Based Curriculum)**, aimed at ensuring national education aligned with the distinct characteristics, conditions, and potential of each region, educational institution, and student. The central government only established competency standards and basic competencies, leaving it to local schools and teachers to develop syllabi and assessments tailored to their specific regional conditions and needs.

The responsibility for compiling KTSP rested with schools under the guidance of local education authorities. However, a lack of understanding led to the perception that the **2006 curriculum** was unsuccessful, resulting in its discontinuation in 2012. The assessment criteria in this curriculum included four aspects: attitudes, behavior, skills, and knowledge (Baharuddin, 2009).

The **2013 curriculum** introduced new content, such as mathematics, while simplifying materials like Indonesian language, Civics (PPKN), Social Sciences (IPS), and others. Standards for Science and Mathematics subjects were raised to international levels (TIMSS and PISA) with the aim of aligning Indonesian education with other countries. However, these efforts remained inconclusive (Rijal, 2018).

Additionally, **education levels** in Indonesia are stages of education defined by students' developmental levels, the objectives to be achieved, and the skills to be developed. The educational system in Indonesia comprises three levels: **basic education (SD/MI, SMP/MTs)**, **secondary education (SMA/MA, SMK)**, and **higher education (Academy, Polytechnic, Colleges, Institutes, Universities)**.

Basic education is the foundation for secondary education. All citizens aged between 7 and 15 years are required to complete basic education (Aldi et al., 2020). The government and local authorities guarantee free access to education for all citizens aged 6 to 15 years through basic education.

Curriculum System in Singapore

Primary education in Singapore consists of four years of elementary school, during which students are required to follow a curriculum that focuses on English, mother tongue languages, and mathematics. Science is introduced in Grade 3. Other subjects taught in primary school include civics, moral education, social studies, physical education, arts, and music. The education system in Singapore is divided into several levels, including the following (Rahman, 2017):

1. **Primary Education** Primary education generally starts at the age of 7 and consists of four years of elementary schooling (Grades 1-4) and two years of orientation (Grades 5-6). This education is

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compulsory and regulated under the Compulsory Education Act, which has been in effect since 2003. After completing six years of primary school, students must take the national examination, known as the Primary School Leaving Examination (PSLE). Based on their PSLE results, students will be able to choose the secondary school they will attend.

2. **Secondary Education** At the secondary level, students are required to spend approximately 4 to 5 years completing their secondary education in Singapore, which is divided into three tracks:

   1. **Express Courses**: Students who choose the express course will undergo a four-year education to prepare for the Singapore-Cambridge (CGE) O-Level exams.
   2. **Normal Academic Course**: Students who select this track will also undergo four years of education to prepare for the GCE N(A)-Level exams. The subjects tested are similar to those in the GCE O-Level exams, and students who achieve high scores in the GCE N(A)-Level can opt to take an additional year to prepare for the O-Level exams.
   3. **Normal Technical Course**: Students who choose this track are required to complete education for Four years to take the GCE N(T)-Level exams. Subjects tested include English, mother tongue, mathematics, and technical or practical subjects, with an updated curriculum to enhance practical-based learning**.**
   4. **Tertiary Education** Tertiary education in Singapore is divided into public institutions and private institutions. Students holding an A-Level certificate or its equivalent (from 12th grade) can complete an undergraduate program in 2 to 5 years, depending on their chosen major. Tuition fees vary based on the student's chosen field of study. The higher education system in Singapore is further divided into several categories, including:

☐ **Kindergarten (TK),** a school program with a duration of 3 years for children aged 4 to 6 years, where the 3-year education program includes early childhood development.

☐ **Primary Education (Sekolah Dasar),** this is a compulsory school program in Singapore with a duration of 6 years, consisting of 4 years of basic education from grades 1 to 4, followed by 2 years of orientation from grades 5 to 6.

☐ **Secondary Education (SMP-SMA),** a 4-5 year education program offering specialized tracks such as Express, Normal (Academic), or Normal (Technical), based on the results students obtain in the Primary School Leaving Examination (PSLE). Different curricula are designed for students based on their learning abilities and personal interests.

☐ **Pre-University Education (Pendidikan Pra-Universitas),** a 2-year program to prepare students for the GCE A-Level examination, depending on their chosen majors and final grades. Students who pass can continue their education at local universities in Singapore.

Polytechnic, this institution was established with the mission of training middle-level professionals to support the development of the economy and technology in Singapore. It offers a wide range of majors for its students. Polytechnics are designed to train students to develop themselves according to their interests and skills, preparing them for the workforce upon graduation.

Singaporean Universities (Universitas Singapura), the mission of Singaporean universities is to prepare students not only for the workforce but to equip them for success when they enter the workforce after graduation. Singapore has three local universities: Nanyang Technological University (NTU), National University of Singapore (NUS), and Singapore Management University (SMU). All of these universities offer undergraduate programs recognized internationally.

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CONCLUSION

Education is one of the most important components of life. The curriculum is the core of education, consisting of three main areas: educational management, student guidance, and the curriculum itself. The curriculum also plays a significant role in directly influencing the development of students. Upon examination, it is clear that curricula differ from country to country, due to varying policies from the education ministers in each nation as well as the education systems in place. In addition to the government's influence on the education system, the curriculum is also affected by the language, religion, and the social and cultural background of the society.

Indonesia is indeed lagging behind Singapore in terms of education, as evidenced by the differences in educational levels between the two countries. For instance, the basic education system in Singapore takes only 6 years, while Indonesia requires 9 years (6 years of primary school and 3 years of junior high school). Additionally, in secondary education, Singapore requires 4 to 5 years, whereas Indonesia requires only 3 years. Singapore further differentiates its students by their abilities, offering tracks such as Express, Normal Academic, and Normal Technical, while Indonesia only offers acceleration programs at certain schools.

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