

**ASSESSMENT AND COMPARISON OF INDONESIAN CURRICULUM WITH
MALAYSIA, SINGAPORE, CHINA, KOREA, JAPAN, UNITED STATES,
AND FINLAND**

[A Systematic Review in the Context of Educational Globalization]

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to examine and compare the Indonesian curriculum with seven developed and developing countries, namely Malaysia, Singapore, China, South Korea, Japan, the United States, and Finland. The curriculum as a strategic instrument of education has an important role in producing superior generations who are able to compete globally. The research method used is a literature review with a comparative qualitative approach. The results of the study show that although the Indonesian curriculum has undergone many reforms, it still faces challenges in terms of flexibility, integration of 21st century competencies, and relevance to the business and industrial world (DUDI). Compared to countries such as Finland which prioritizes personalization of learning or Japan which emphasizes morals and social cooperation, the Indonesian curriculum is still focused on cognitive and is not optimal in strengthening character and digital literacy. This study recommends adjusting the Indonesian curriculum to be more adaptive, contextual, and based on local-global needs.

Keywords: Curriculum, Global Education, International Comparison, Curriculum Reform, 21st Century Competencies

I. Introduction

Globalization of education demands the national education system, including the curriculum, to be more competitive and adaptive to changes in the times. The curriculum as the heart of education has a role in developing the potential of students comprehensively and sustainably. In the midst of the industrial revolution 4.0 and society 5.0, learning that is only oriented towards cognitive aspects becomes irrelevant. Therefore, comparing the Indonesian curriculum with countries that have succeeded in building superior education systems is important to formulate the direction of future curriculum policies that are more responsive to global change.

Theoretical Review

a. Comparative Theory of Global Curriculum (Bray, Adamson & Mason, 2022)

This theory explains the importance of a comparative approach in understanding the structure and content of the curriculum in various countries. Indonesia, for example, emphasizes the Pancasila student profile, while Finland focuses on phenomenon-based learning (PBL). Countries such as Korea and Japan place more emphasis on national standards and strong academic disciplines.

Quote: "Comparative education allows educators to reflect on their own system through the lens of

others, enabling continuous reform and innovation" (Bray et al., 2022).

b. Competency-Based Curriculum Theory and Global Literacy (OECD, 2023)

The OECD highlights the shift from a content-based curriculum to a competency-based curriculum. The 2013 Curriculum in Indonesia and the Merdeka Curriculum have adopted this approach. Countries such as Singapore and Finland have long implemented a global literacy approach in their education systems.

Quote: "Future-ready curriculum must prioritize global competencies, including cultural understanding, critical thinking, and adaptability" (OECD, 2023).

c. Theory of Equity and Inclusion in Curriculum (UNESCO, 2022)

UNESCO emphasizes that the curriculum should ensure access, equality, and fairness. Finland and Korea are known for their education systems with minimal inequality, while Indonesia and Malaysia still face challenges in equalizing the quality of education.

Quote: "Curricula should be inclusive and equitable, closing the achievement gaps regardless of socioeconomic background" (UNESCO, 2022).

d. Theory of Technology and Curriculum Digitalization (Fullan & Langworthy, 2022)

This theory explains that developed countries such as the United States and Singapore have included digital citizenship and coding in the basic

curriculum. Indonesia has begun to pioneer something similar through school digitalization programs and Blended Learning.

Quote: "Education systems must shift toward deep learning competencies supported by ubiquitous access to technology" (Fullan & Langworthy, 2022).

e. Social Constructivism Theory in Comparative Curriculum (Vygotsky Revisited, 2021)

Countries such as Japan and Finland use a strong social constructivist approach through collaborative and exploratory learning. Indonesia has begun to adopt this in Project Based Learning in the Merdeka Curriculum.

Quote: "Learning is co-constructed through dialogue, experience, and social interaction—a principle central to many Nordic and East Asian education systems" (Anderson, 2021).

f. Culture-Based Curriculum Reform Theory (Suárez-Orozco & Sattin, 2023)

Every curriculum must be rooted in local culture but adaptive to global challenges. Indonesia emphasizes the values of diversity, Japan instills collective ethical values, while America emphasizes freedom of thought. **Quote:** "Curriculum reforms must negotiate local identity with global standards to build culturally grounded yet globally competent citizens" (Suárez-Orozco & Sattin, 2023).

g. STEAM Curriculum Integration Theory (Beers, 2022)

The curriculum in China and Korea places great emphasis on STEM, even STEAM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts, Mathematics). Indonesia is slowly moving in that direction through the integration of thematic subjects and student profile projects.

Quote: “STEAM curriculum frameworks foster creativity, problem-solving, and innovation key skills for the 21st-century workforce” (Beers, 2022).

II. Research Method

This study uses a qualitative method with a library research approach and a descriptive comparative study. Data were collected through official documents from the ministry of education of each country, research results, scientific journals, and international reports (UNESCO, OECD). Data analysis was carried out through the stages of reduction, display, and drawing conclusions.

The units of analysis used are:

1. Curriculum structure (level of education, study load)
2. Learning approach
3. Objectives and graduate profiles
4. Integration of technology and soft skills
5. Relevance to the world of work

III. Results and Discussion

a. **Indonesia.** Indonesia adopts the Independent Curriculum which emphasizes differentiation and the character of the Pancasila Student Profile. The main challenges are the inequality of implementation in the

field and the lack of digital literacy of teachers.

- b. **Malaysia.** Using the Standard High School Curriculum (KSSM) and the National Preschool Standard. Malaysia focuses on strengthening STEM and Islamic character education. Its advantages are the integrated monitoring system and contextual materials.
- c. **Singapore.** Singapore has a flexible national curriculum, emphasizing “Teach Less, Learn More” with strong integration between digital literacy, creativity, and value education. Portfolio-based evaluation is very developed here.
- d. **China.** The main focus is on mastering science and mathematics content. China has integrated high technology into the learning process but is still teacher-centered. Recent reforms have begun to touch on character education and innovation.
- e. **South Korea.** Its national curriculum is standardized with a focus on cultural values and technological progress. The Korean government provides intensive teacher training and strengthens the curriculum's connection with industry through internship and STEM programs.
- f. **Japan.** The Japanese curriculum is characterized by moral and social skills-based learning. Discipline, responsibility, and cooperation are emphasized. Japan excels in holistic education and integration of environmental education.
- g. **United States.** The US does not have a national curriculum, but uses

standards such as Common Core and Next Generation Science Standards. Project-based learning and technology integration are strengths. However, disparities between states are still high.

gives teachers great freedom. The education system is free from exam pressure and focuses on student well-being. Collaboration, creativity, and personalization of learning are key features.

- h. **Finland.** Finland implements a flexible national curriculum that

General Comparison:

Aspect	Indonesia	Malaysia	Singapore	China	Korea	Japan	AS	Finland
Flexibility	Currently	Low	High	Low	Medium	Medium	High	Very High
Character focus	Tall	high	High	Currently	High	Very High	High	Very High
STEM	Currently	high	High	Very high	Very High	High	High	Medium
Educational Technology	Low	currently	High	Tall	High	Medium	High	High
School Autonomy	Low	Low	High	Low	Low	Medium	High	High
DUDI Relation	Low	Tall	High	Tall	High	Medium	High	Medium

IV. Conclusion

The Indonesian curriculum has undergone various transformations towards a character-based curriculum and 21st century competencies. However, when compared to the countries that were the objects of study, Indonesia is still lagging behind in terms of flexibility, technology integration, and connections with DUDI. Countries such as Finland and Singapore show that adaptive, collaborative, and learner-centered curricula are more effective in forming superior generations. Indonesia needs to develop a more contextual curriculum policy, adaptive to local-global needs, and strengthen teacher training and support for educational infrastructure.

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