

## **COMPARISON OF PRIMARY EDUCATION SYSTEMS IN SOUTHEAST ASIA (INDONESIA, MALAYSIA, SINGAPORE)**

***Marsella D. Gui*** <sup>1,1</sup>,  
***Meiske Puluhulawa*** <sup>2,1</sup>,  
***Ditya Ibrahim*** <sup>3,1</sup>  
***Tomu Bidjai*** <sup>4,1</sup>,  
***Maryam H. Dumako*** <sup>5,1</sup>,  
***Abdul Haris Panai*** <sup>6,1</sup>  
***Sitti Roskina Mas*** <sup>7,1</sup>,  
***Nina Lamatenggo*** <sup>8,1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Gorontalo State University  
[marselladesriyarini@gmail.com](mailto:marselladesriyarini@gmail.com)

### **INTRODUCTION**

Education which consists of everything that is related and helps each other. The education system is everything related to an education to produce good educational goals. A good country that wants to progress must also have a good education system, and of course the main factors that must be built in an education are a good education system and curriculum. Education is so important that a nation can be measured whether the nation is advanced or backward, with education it can produce good quality human resources in terms of spirituality, intelligence and skill, and education is the process of creating the nation's next generation. If the output of this educational process fails, it is difficult to imagine how progress can be made. For a nation that wants to progress, education must be seen as the quality of education that also influences the development of a nation, and each country has different educational conditions, both covering the education system, educational goals and primary education curriculum. The education system, through the school system, is an important element for a country in its efforts towards developing society from an economic, political and social perspective.

Primary education is a very important level of education that underlies secondary education and higher education. Primary education helps students develop intellectual, social, personal, and spiritual aspects according to their developmental characteristics so that they have the ability to continue further education. Each country has its own special characteristics in organizing primary education. Indonesia as a country in Southeast Asia is trying to improve its education system so that it can be on par with neighboring countries, especially Malaysia and Singapore, in providing quality education.

In several countries, primary education is mandatory for all citizens, including in Indonesia. In Indonesia, every citizen aged seven to fifteen is required to attend primary education as stipulated in Law No. 20 of 2003 concerning the National Education System. Other countries in Southeast Asia are also developing the quality of their education. Many studies have been conducted to find out the comparison of education in various countries, for example research of Daga, AT (2020) has produced an overview of comparative character education in the elementary school curriculum in Malaysia, India and Indonesia. Then Yuliyanti, Y., Damayanti, E., Nulhakim, L. (2022) research has described the development of the elementary school curriculum in Indonesia and the differences from curricula in several countries. However, no one has compared primary education in Southeast Asian countries (Indonesia, Malaysia

and Singapore). To find out about primary education in other countries, the authors compare the implementation of primary education in Indonesia, Malaysia and Singapore. The comparison in question is focused on aspects of the education system, educational goals, and primary education curricula in the three countries.

## **METHOD**

The method used in this research is literature study, namely method by collecting data by understanding and studying theories from various literature related to the research (Adlini, MN, Dinda, AH, Yulinda, S., Chotimah, O., Merliyana, SJ, 2022) relating to differences in primary education systems in Southeast Asia (Indonesia, Malaysia, and Singapore). Data collection was carried out by sorting reference sources and scientific literature related to differences in primary education systems in Southeast Asia (Indonesia, Malaysia and Singapore). Then review and analyze and present it in a systematic arrangement.

## **DISCUSSION**

### **Comparison of Education Systems**

The education system is a strategy or method used in the teaching and learning process to achieve the goal so that students can actively develop their potential. An education system is really needed because this is what will later regulate the course of education in a country and will become a guideline for the course of the educational process.

#### ***Primary Education System in Indonesia***

In Indonesia the primary education system is regulated in the national education system with general provisions in government regulations Law Number 20 of 2003 concerning the National Education System: 1) Primary education is general education with a duration of nine years, held for six years in elementary school and three years in Junior High School or equivalent education unit. 2) Elementary school is a form of primary education unit that organizes a six-year program. Law Number 20 of 2003 concerning the National Education System strengthens the 9 Year Compulsory Primary education program. Article 6 paragraph 1 of the law explains that every citizen aged seven to fifteen years is obliged to attend primary education. Besides being obliged to support the wider community, the implementation of education must also receive serious attention from the government. The Government and Regional Governments are obliged to provide services and facilities, as well as guarantee the implementation of quality education for every citizen without discrimination and ensure the availability of funds for primary education.

The essence of implementing the 9-year Compulsory Education Primary education program is the government's systematic effort to improve the quality of Indonesia's human resources. Quality human resources will certainly be able to actively participate in overall national development, be more adaptable in absorbing developments in science and technology, and be responsive to changing times in an increasingly globalized world. In order to realize Indonesia's formidable human resources, without exception, all citizens living in cities, villages, and communities in remote areas as well as indigenous peoples have the right to obtain quality primary education (Sofa, A., Mawarni, E., Maros, A., 2023).

#### ***Primary Education System In Malaysia***

Education in Malaysia is under the responsibility of the federal government. The national education system covers education from preschool to university. Pre-tertiary education (from preschool to secondary education) is the responsibility of the Malaysian Ministry of Education; while tertiary education is the responsibility of the Malaysian Ministry of Higher Education. Types and levels of education in Malaysia

can be grouped as follows: preschool education, primary and secondary education, secondary education, tertiary education, private education (From, AT, 2020).

The implementation of the education system that is carried out is adjusted and follows the needs of the Malaysian people. The education system of the Malays is based on Islamic religious teachings, namely the holy book Al-Quran. The mission of the Malaysian Ministry of Education is to develop a quality and world-class education system, in addition to developing the full potential of individuals and fulfilling the aspirations of the nation. The best school system is a school system that covers the entire life of the Malaysian people, which does not only stop when someone finishes school or finishes teaching at a higher education institution, but becomes a continuation of life into old age by contributing to the dignity of the nation and the State (Jamaluddin, MKABM, 2011).

Malaysia in developing education has its own education system, of course like other countries (Aslan, 2019). Malaysia has four levels of education. The level of education includes lower education for six years, then comprehensive high school for three years. The aim of education in Malaysia is to develop the potential or abilities possessed by each individual in a comprehensive and integrated manner to create a balanced and harmonious human being in terms of intellectual, spiritual, emotional, physical based on belief in and obedience to God. The national curriculum is an educational program that includes curriculum and activities that cover all knowledge, skills, norms, values, elements of culture and beliefs. The purpose is to help the development of students as a whole and emotionally as well as to instill and improve the desired moral values. The Malaysian Ministry of Education divides the national curriculum into: childcare and early childhood education curriculum, national pre-school standard curriculum, primary school integrated curriculum, primary school standard curriculum, secondary school integrated curriculum (From, AT, 2020).

### ***Primary education System in Singapore***

Over the years Singapore has developed from a traditional English-style education system into an education system that aims to meet individual needs and develop students' talents (Nasution, T., Khoiri, N., Firmani, DW, Rozi, MF, 2022). Compulsory education in Singapore lasts for ten years, although continuing university education in Singapore takes 13 years of primary education. Primary and secondary schools last for 10 years (Syakhrani, W, A., Malik, A., Hasbullah., Budi, M., Maulidan, MR, 2022). Primary education in Singapore consists of four years of foundation level where students are required to follow a basic curriculum that emphasizes a focus on English, mother tongue and mathematics. In 2000 the Compulsory Education Law codified compulsory education for children of primary school age (except for those with special needs), and made it a criminal offense for parents to fail to enroll their children in school and ensure their attendance. Exceptions were made. for full-time home schools or religious institutions, but parents must apply for an exemption from the Ministry of Education and meet the minimum benchmark.

Singapore has a basic aspect of thinking that every student has unique talents and interests. With the aim of forming a highly cultured Singaporean society in terms of ethics, discipline and daily social behavior, as well as developing the creativity of students, especially in the field of information technology. The advantage of the education system in Singapore lies in its dual language policy (English and mother tongue, namely: Malay, Mandarin, Tamili (Thai)) and a complete curriculum where innovation and entrepreneurial spirit are highly prioritized. Formal education in Singapore begins from the Kindergarten School level or equivalent to Kindergarten (TK). After graduating students will continue to the Primary School level for six years. To continue to the next level, students must continue to secondary school for four or

five years. In the Singapore curriculum students will study English and their mother tongue, mathematics, science, and culture/social (Nasution, T., Khoiri, N., Firmani, DW, Rozi, MF, 2022).

### **Primary Education Goals in Indonesia, Malaysia, and Singapore**

Education is a process of changing an attitude or behavior of a person or group of people to be able to mature people through an effort in the form of teaching and also training, ways, processes and actions to educate. The education system in general has a meaning, namely a strategy or method in which there are various components which of course are also interconnected with each other to be able to achieve common educational goals. Each country has its own educational goals as well as Indonesia, Malaysia and Singapore.

Indonesia's national education goals are in accordance with law no. 20 of 2003, that is, education is attempted by starting from human beings as they are (actualization) by considering various possibilities as they are (potentialities), and directed towards the realization of human beings who should or human beings aspire to (ideality). The purpose of education is none other than human beings who have faith and are devoted to God Almighty, have noble character, are healthy, intelligent, have feelings, are willing, and are able to work; able to meet various needs naturally, able to control his passions; personality, social and cultured. The implication is that education must function to realize (develop) the various potentials that exist in humans in the context of the dimensions of diversity, morality, morality, individuality/personality, sociality and culture as a whole and integrated. In other words, education serves to humanize humans.

National Education Goals, in accordance with MPRS Decree No. XXVI/MPRS/1966 concerning Religion, education and culture, it was formulated that the purpose of education is to form a true Pancasila man based on the preamble of the 1945 Constitution. Furthermore, in Law no. 2 of 1989 reaffirmed that national education aims to educate the life of the nation and develop the whole Indonesian human being, namely human beings who have faith and are devoted to God Almighty and have noble character, have knowledge and skills, are physically and spiritually healthy, have a strong and independent personality and a sense of social and national responsibility. Thus, Indonesian education tends to prioritize the development of social and religious attitudes in the implementation of education in Indonesia.

The education policy in Malaysia has three educational policy objectives First, the purpose of the education policy is to create an education system that can meet the needs of the country and promote cultural, social, economic and political development. Second, to produce students who are disciplined and obey and respect both their parents where this principle is in line with policy and education to hold a capable and efficient teaching and learning process with the need to avoid unorganized public spending. Third, it aims to ensure that this policy can be implemented effectively, especially in determining the development of a progressive education system and the national language is used as the main language of instruction. The aim of education in Malaysia is to develop the potential or abilities possessed by each individual in a comprehensive and integrated manner to create a balanced and harmonious human being in terms of intellectual, spiritual, emotional and physical based on belief in and obedience to God. This goal is expected to be able to produce Malaysians who are knowledgeable, have skills, have noble character, and are responsible for society and the State (Syakhrani, AW, Fathiyah, F., Janah, F., & Fauziyah, F., 2022).

The basis of education in Singapore views that each student has unique talents and interests and the aim is to form a highly cultured Singaporean society in terms of ethics, discipline and daily social behavior, as well as developing the creativity of students, especially in the field of information technology (From, AT, 2020). For more explanation, it can be seen in the following table:

**Table 1**

**Southeast Asia Primary Education Goals  
(Indonesia, Malaysia, Singapore)**

No.	Country	Primary Education Objectives
1.	Indonesia	Increasing piety, intelligence, skills and noble character, a sense of love for the motherland (patriotism), fostering self-development and being jointly responsible for building the community.
2.	Malaysia	Developing the potential or abilities possessed by each individual in a comprehensive and integrated manner to create a balanced and harmonious human being in terms of intellectual, spiritual, emotional, physical based on trust and obedience to God.
3.	Singapore	Forming a highly cultured society in terms of ethics, discipline and daily social behavior, as well as developing students' creativity, especially in the field of information technology.

**Primary education Curriculum**

One important component in education that is often overlooked is the curriculum. The curriculum has a strategic position because in general the curriculum is a description of the vision, mission and goals of a nation's education. It is at once positioning the curriculum as the center of the values that will be transformed to students. Curriculum is a set of learning plans consisting of structured, programmed and well-planned content and lesson materials related to various activities and social interactions in the environment in organizing teaching and learning activities with the aim of achieving educational goals.

In a broader sense, curriculum is a set of values designed to be transformed to students, both values in cognitive, affective and psychomotor forms. by obtaining a set of these values, the mindset and behavior of students will be formed in accordance with the direction and goals (Bahri, S., 2017). Curriculum is the heart of education, of the three main areas of education management, student guidance and curriculum. Curriculum is the field that has the greatest direct influence on the development of students. Each country has its own curriculum to achieve educational goals (Yuliyanti, Y., Damayanti, E., Nulhakim, L., 2022). The following is an overview of the primary education curricula in Indonesia, Malaysia, and Singapore.

**Primary Education Curriculum in Indonesia**

Curriculum in Indonesia is structured to realize national education goals by taking into account the stages of development of students and their suitability with the environment, national development needs, developments in science and technology and the arts, according to the type and level of each educational unit. The implementation of educational activities in educational units is based on the curriculum that applies nationally and a curriculum that is adapted to circumstances, as well as environmental needs and the characteristics of the educational unit concerned. The curriculum that applies nationally is determined by the material, or

other material, or the heads of non-departmental government agencies based on the delegation of authority from the material.

The content of the curriculum is an arrangement of study materials and lessons to achieve the objectives of implementing the education unit concerned in the context of efforts to achieve national education goals. The contents of the curriculum for each type, path and level of education must include Pancasila education, religious education, and citizenship education. The contents of the primary education curriculum contain at least study materials and lessons on Pancasila education, religious education, civics education, Indonesian language, reading and writing, mathematics (including arithmetic), introduction to science and technology, geography, national history and general history, crafts hands and art, physical and health education, drawing, and English (RI Law No. 2 of 1989).

**Table 2**

**Indonesian Primary Education Curriculum**

No.	Type	Information
1.	Compulsory education	Pancasila education, religious education, civic education
2.	Primary education	Pancasila education, religious education, civics education, Indonesian language, reading and writing, mathematics (including arithmetic), introduction to science and technology, geography, national history and general history, crafts and arts, physical and health education, drawing, and language English

***Primary Education Curriculum in Malaysia***

The New Primary School Curriculum Plan (KBSR) began to be implemented in all primary schools across the country starting in 1983. This KBSR plan emphasizes the mastery of the 3M basic skills of reading, writing and counting. In addition to that, it also focuses on individual development comprehensively covering the physical, emotional, spiritual, intellectual and social aspects (JERIS). The education curriculum in Malaysia is set by the Malaysian Ministry of Education. The education curriculum in Malaysia is relatively stable. For example, the primary school education curriculum (KBSD) that ran from 1982 to 2007 is still in use (Syakhrani, AW, Fathiyah, F., Janah, F., Fauziyyah, F., 2022).

The primary education curriculum in Malaysia consists of the National Preschool Standard Curriculum (KSPK) (Revision 2017), the Primary School Standard Curriculum (KSSR). The National Curriculum is an educational program including curriculum and co-curricular activities that includes all knowledge, skills, norms, values, cultural elements and beliefs to help the development of a student fully in terms of physical, spiritual, mental and emotional as well as to instill desirable moral values and to impart knowledge. The national curriculum includes the following curriculum based on the level/level of schooling (Ministry of Education Malaysia, 2017).

The Malaysian Ministry of Education divides the national curriculum into: early childhood care and education curriculum, national pre-school standard curriculum, low school integrated curriculum, low school standard curriculum, secondary school integrated curriculum (Daga, AT, 2020). In Malaysia the National curriculum is an educational program that includes curriculum and activities that cover all knowledge, skills, norms, values, elements of culture and beliefs. The aim is to foster the full development of a student physically, spiritually, mentally and emotionally as well as inculcating and enhancing the moral values desired to impart knowledge. The

National Curriculum is divided into: 1) Early Childhood Care and Education Curriculum which aims to provide quality early care and education to children and provide learning opportunities that can stimulate the minds of children in the age range from birth to 4 years. This curriculum focuses on the holistic growth and development of children from the physical, emotional, spiritual, intellectual and social aspects. 2) The National Preschool Standard Curriculum (KSPK) which aims to develop the potential of children aged 4 - 6 years comprehensively and integrated in physical, emotional, spiritual, intellectual and social aspects through a safe, nutritious learning environment as well as fun, creative and meaningful activities. This is to improve skills, instill confidence and form a positive self-concept in students so that they succeed in the existing environment and are ready to overcome challenges and responsibilities in primary school. 3) Primary School Integrated Curriculum (KBSR) which aims to develop the potential of each individual as a whole to produce balanced, harmonious and virtuous people. Elements of knowledge, skills and values are integrated in all curriculum and co-curricular activities. 4) Primary School Standard Curriculum (KSSR) which aims to expand the potential of individual students holistically to produce human capital that is balanced, harmonious, noble, critical, creative, innovative and has soft skills as a preparation to face the challenges of the present and the 21st century. (Rahman, YA, 2017).

### ***Primary education Curriculum in Singapore***

The advantage of the education system in Singapore lies in its dual language policy (English and mother tongue namely: Malay, Mandarin, Tamili (Thai) and a comprehensive curriculum where innovation and entrepreneurial spirit are highly prioritized. Individuals show talents that are related to each other and the ability to survive in an environment full of competition and be prepared for a brighter future (Yuliyanti, Y., Damayanti, E., Nulhakim, L. 2022). Formal education in Singapore starts from the Kindergarten School level or the equivalent of Kindergarten (TK) in Indonesia. After graduating students will continue to the Primary School level or the equivalent of Elementary School for six years. To go to the next level, students must continue to the Secondary School level for four or five years. In this track students will study English and mother tongue, mathematics, science, and socio-culture. Subjects taught: English, Regional Languages (Malay, Chinese, Tamil) according to student's ethnicity, Mathematics (emphasis on literacy and numeracy), and Science (starting in grade 3). There are additional subjects such as arts, sports, moral education, as well as co-curricular.

### **CONCLUSION**

Primary education is a very important level of education that underlies secondary education and higher education. Primary education helps students develop intellectual, social, personal, and spiritual aspects according to their developmental characteristics so that they have the ability to continue further education. Each country has its own special characteristics in organizing primary education. Countries in Southeast Asia including Indonesia, Malaysia and Singapore are trying to improve their education systems so that they can provide quality education for their citizens.

Based on the comparison results, the results of the primary education systems in Indonesia, Malaysia, and Singapore have their own education systems that are regulated and protected by local country laws. The aim of education in Indonesia, Malaysia and Singapore in general is to optimally develop the potential of students. The goals of education in Indonesia are to increase piety, intelligence, skills and noble character, love for the motherland (patriotism), foster self-development and be jointly responsible for building the community. While the aim of education in Malaysia is to

develop the potential or abilities possessed by each individual in a comprehensive and integrated manner to create a balanced and harmonious human being in terms of intellectual, spiritual, emotional, body based on belief in and obedience to God. And the purpose of education in Singapore is to form a highly cultured society in terms of ethics, discipline and daily social behavior, as well as developing the creativity of students, especially in the field of information technology.

The curriculum has a strategic position because in general the curriculum is a description of the vision, mission and goals of a nation's education. This simultaneously positions the curriculum as the center of the values that will be transformed to students. Curriculum is a set of learning plans consisting of structured, programmed and well-planned content and lesson materials related to various activities and social interactions in the environment in organizing teaching and learning activities with the aim of achieving educational goals. Curriculums in Indonesia, Malaysia and Singapore are adapted to the educational goals of those countries.

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