



A Comparative Literature review of Educational Policy Strategies in Indonesia and Singapore Toward Global Quality Standards

Timtim Siti Mariam^{1*}, Deni Darmawan¹, Khammataliev Dostnazar Omonovich², Burieva Kibrio²

¹ Primary Teacher Education, Universitas Pendidikan Indonesia, Bandung, Indonesia

² Chirchik State Pedagogical University, Faculty of Pedagogical, Chirchik, Uzbekistan

*Corresponding author email: timtimsitimariam@upi.edu

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ABSTRACT

This study analyzes education policies in Singapore and Indonesia with a focus on alignment with global standards for quality education. Using a literature review approach, the study examines how government policies, education equity, infrastructure development, and technology adoption affect education systems in both countries. The examination highlights differences in policy implementation and states that Singapore's educational system is more managed, productive, and world-class due to the extensive policy support and specialized professional training for teachers in the country. At the same time, Indonesia struggles with problems of social economic imbalances, particularly with urban-rural divides, policy implementation, and infrastructure development. Even so, there is progress in the enhancement of opportunities for participation and access. The conclusions drawn indicate that there is benefit for Indonesia in employing a Singapore style managed, but locally contextualized policies focused on results and evidence. This research is insightful for Indonesian policymakers seeking innovations in education by improving its quality, equity, and competitiveness in comparison to international standards.

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INTRODUCTION

In the context of the current fierce global competition, providing quality education is considered one of the primary drivers of progress and refinement for any nation. Unlike the past when education was perceived only as a process of knowledge transmission from instructors to students, in contemporary times, it is recognized as one of the critical tools for improving a country's competitiveness in global affairs. A notable consequence of this is the increase in educational systems globally during what has been termed the Fourth Industrial Revolution, characterized by rapid technological change and accelerated digital transformation, as they attempt to adequately face the challenges posed by 21st century conveniences.

In addition to these global concerns, countries are also facing the challenge of having to meet the internationally set benchmarks for educational attainment. PISA: The Programme for International Student Assessment, is one of the most prominent global benchmarks

internationally with authoritative status for evaluating student achievement. As a consequence of the 2015 PISA results, there was significant disparity in the performance of students from Indonesia as compared to those from Singapore. Indonesian students in reading, mathematics, and science significantly scored below the OECD PISA average. In clear contrast, Singaporean students consistently ranked among the global top performers in these subjects. “Disparities are not only in student learning achievements but also in policies, governance systems, and administration structures of the two countries.” The efforts to dissect components of the curricula of both Indonesian and Singaporean educational systems were analyzed in several studies (Haryanti & Karim, 2024; Nasution et al., 2022), character development (Nisak et al, 2022; Syamsurrijal, 2018), and pedagogical aims (Debrah et al., 2000).

Most of the literature, however, is largely comparative in nature and fails to address deeply integrated aspects such as policy core frameworks, governance wedges, or the systematic use of policy evidence in policymaking. There is, however, a lack of how cohesive policy frameworks that govern the formulation, execution, assessment and revision cycles of data driven constructs and continuous improvement mechanisms ensure systematic accountability is integrated into education policy (Sa’adah, 2019; Meijustika et al, 2024).

This was created based upon the preliminary results which signal that the policy scope concerning the sector of education in Indonesia is frequently depicted as inconsistent with its multifaceted integration and planning, execution, and evaluation processes which do not seamlessly flow into one another (Khumaidi & Hamdani, 2024). On the other hand, Mulia (2024) and Le and Edwards (2022) recognize Singapore as having a highly sophisticated developed education system which is termed to be driven by foresight, logical frameworks, and was evidence-based. This difference illustrates the lack of comprehensive, holistic understanding of policy design and governance that relate to cross-national differences in educational quality as a gap in educational policy research.

This study aims to conduct a comparative policy analysis of education policies of Indonesia and Singapore. It examines the sociopolitical and ideological aspects of policy formulation, implementation, and evaluation, considering educational policies as adaptable systems within specific contexts. This research also evaluates how far Indonesia is able to adapt some elements of Singapore’s policies within the prism of Indonesia’s structural and cultural system.

This study has sought to fill the gap on the policy and practical divide posed by previous comparative studies by drawing on real-world evidence to construct policy recommendations. At the same time, it seeks to contribute to the broader ASEAN regional initiative to level the education quality as a contribution to the achievement of SDG 4. In this scenario, Singapore is establishing itself as an educational hub while exercising knowledge diplomacy and Indonesia concentrates on external education reform and expanding capabilities. This comparative research holds immense value not only to the ongoing discourse but also to policymakers intending to refine the education system in Indonesia using impact global benchmarks.

METHODS

This study uses a literature review method to analyze the differences and similarities in education policies in Indonesia and Singapore in the context of global education standards. The literature review method was chosen because there are quite a lot of sources such as journals, books, research papers, and policy documents from governments and international institutions

that contain education policies from both countries. This technique focuses on collecting, filtering, and evaluating data related to the education policies of both countries. The research process begins with a literature search in academic databases such as Google Scholar and Taylor & Francis, because these two sources provide relevant international publications. The selected articles include literature on education policies in Indonesia and Singapore as well as comparative research related to the implementation of education policies in both countries. Basic references used include Wibowo et al. (2020) which discusses a comparative study of education quality based on PISA, Huang and Emery (2019), and the study by Le and Edwards (2022) which documents the education system in Singapore.

Following the collection of relevant literature, an assessment of the sources was performed with respect to their relevance and quality. The criteria for selection included documents addressing strategic education policy delineation, outcome-based frameworks of policy model discussion, and general analysis for policy evaluation towards enhancement of subordinate national educational systems. From the chosen literature, thematic analysis was done with the aim of finding the predominant policies in Indonesia and Singapore along with comparing the overall global educational targets' efficiency, effectiveness, and achievement.

The data analysis procedure was carried out by grouping the literature based on the main themes that emerged in the education policies of both countries, such as curriculum policies, education management, teacher quality development, and education system evaluation. Each theme was analyzed to compare the policy approaches used by Indonesia and Singapore and the education outcomes achieved. The analysis also considered the social, cultural, and political contexts of each country, including the influence of globalization and transnational information flows on education policy. In addition, this study emphasizes evidence-based policy analysis by looking at existing data and evaluation results, such as PISA results and the global competitiveness index, to measure the extent to which policy strategies implemented in each country can improve the quality of education at the international level. Singapore's education policy, which is often considered a global education model, will be compared with Indonesia's more diverse and complex policies, taking into account local factors and decentralization policies that influence its implementation (Khumaidi & Hamdani, 2024; Fitria, 2024).

The approach in solving this research problem uses a comparative analysis method. This analysis compares Indonesian and Singaporean education policies based on policy focus: strategic planning, implementation mechanisms, and evaluation of results. This stage includes identifying and assessing existing education policies in both countries regarding their impact on national education standards, taking into account the interaction between resource constraints, education governance structures, and the sustainability of policies formulated and implemented. As part of the analysis, the researcher uses a policy framework based on Outcome-Based Policy, Policy Transfer Theory, and Policy Learning Theory. This framework aims to analyze the level of adaptation or adoption of policies related to Singapore's education governance into the Indonesian context, as well as lessons that can be learned from Singapore's policies and governance structures (Le & Edwards, 2022; Wu & Tan, 2021). These are the Research Stages in this study:

1. Literature Search and Selection: The very first step involves locating literature through Google Scholar or Taylor & Francis and obtaining sources about educational policies of Indonesia and Singapore, including their comparative studies or international relations studies.

2. Literature Selection: Relevant literature is chosen to meet the research objectives and is checked for quality and theme appropriateness. The major focus is given to highly credible sources that pertain to the comparison of education policies in both countries.
3. Thematic Analysis: After selection, the literature available is analyzed by dividing the information into main themes, which for this work are education policies of Indonesia and Singapore. Each policy theme is analyzed thoroughly to identify and assess the prevailing policies and their implementation strategies to ascertain the patterns and differences.
4. Evaluation and Comparison: Relevant data and information are collected and analyzed, then the education policies of the two countries are compared in detail. Singaporean policies, as analyzed, are found to be effective and the researcher explains the challenges Indonesia faces in these adoptions.
5. Conclusion Formation: As a result of the conducted analysis, further findings alongside policies to be recommended for Indonesia and the strategies mandated to be successful by Singapore are the final conclusion drawn by the researcher.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

In this comparative study on Singapore and Indonesia, a difference in the formulation and enactment of education policies in both countries emerged. Singapore undertakes a systematic and evidence-based approach which centre on the continuous improvement of quality through the School Excellence Model that underscores outcome-based evaluation and data-driven management. On the other hand, Indonesia faces much more intricate structural difficulties such as regional disparities, uneven quality of human resources, and absence of systematic policy evaluation.

In the appendix section, Table 1 is presented as a summary of the primary comparisons of the two countries in the aspects of education policy developed.

Policy Aspect	Singapore	Indonesia
Policy Focus	Data-driven outcome evaluation	Decentralization and inconsistent curriculum
Teacher Development	Continuous training, evidence-based performance evaluation	Uneven training, varied teacher quality
Technology Utilization	Integrated and systematic	Limited, infrastructure constraints
Policy Evaluation	Systematic and sustainable	Inconsistent, lacking evaluative oversight
Main Challenges	Ethnic minority achievement gaps	Regional disparities and policy implementation
International Achievement	Consistently high (PISA, global indices)	Has not reached international standards

The main benefit of this research is to provide a deeper understanding of how different approaches to education policy can affect the quality and outcomes of education at the national and international levels. The findings confirm that education policies based on outcome evaluation and data management such as in Singapore allow for rapid adaptation and

continuous improvement. This is in line with the findings of Hanan et al. (2023) which show that the accuracy of curriculum evaluation is a key factor for success.

In contrast, the findings related to Indonesia indicate the need for significant improvements in policy monitoring and evaluation to be more systematic and integrated, as also conveyed by Mulia (2024) who highlighted the inconsistency in the supervision of policy implementation. This is an important basis for policy makers to develop a sustainable and evidence-based evaluation framework.

In addition, differences in teacher training and development are also determining factors for the quality of education. Singapore's experience in consistently conducting performance-based training shows the importance of improving teacher capacity in facing the demands of the 21st century, as supported by Wu & Tan (2021). Meanwhile, conditions in Indonesia, with uneven training and teacher quality that still vary, show the need for policy focus on continuous professional development.

The use of technology in education is also a major differentiation. Singapore has succeeded in systematically integrating technology to support the learning and evaluation process, while Indonesia is still constrained by uneven digital infrastructure and literacy (Wahyudi et al., 2025). Therefore, improving technology infrastructure and training is a strategic step that needs to be prioritized to support education in Indonesia.

Finally, the results of this study emphasize the importance of adaptive policy learning mechanisms, namely adopting successful practices from other countries with adjustments to the local context. Singapore is a successful example in this regard, which should be an inspiration for Indonesia in improving education policies sustainably.

CONCLUSION

This analysis seeks to understand the comparative educational policy systems of Indonesia and Singapore, observing the disparities that impact their global educational ranking. Moreover, Singapore's education system exhibits a clear policy-driven, well-structured, evidence-based, outcome-focused system that undergoes constant evaluation in Singaporean top-tier educational institutions and is improved on a regular basis to retain dominance as a global benchmark. This success is mainly due to Singapore's coherent policy, its strong institutional capacity to evaluate systems, and its national policy on technological innovation and teacher training development for educational improvement. On the other hand, Indonesia is confronted with a wide range of systemic issues, including inconsistent implementation of policies across regions, a lack of adequate monitoring and evaluation systems, infrastructural challenges, and inequitable distribution of resources. These issues make it difficult for Indonesia to consistently and measurably improve educational standards, as the policies, despite being flexible and adaptive in nature, do not lead to tangible change.

The importance of these findings is that they emphasize the need for Indonesia to adopt more advanced outcome-based evaluations along with rigorous data analysis mechanisms. Additionally, policy improvement frameworks will aid advanced education learning systems like those in Singapore to apply what has been researched to further propel Indonesia's education system. Indonesia stands to gain considerably from studying other more advanced education systems like Singapore's. Adopting these policies requires going beyond imitation to modification guided by the sociocultural, economic, and political realities of Indonesia in a way that guarantees policy effectiveness and durability. The scope of this study is extensive because it

impacts the prospects of policymakers and other stakeholders focused on transforming education in not only Indonesia but also in other developing countries grappling with such challenges. It seeks to advance the understanding and cultivation of evaluation structures, technological intervention systems, and educational reform frameworks within the national and institutional development plans actively or passively in place.

This study fills an important void in the comparative educational policy literature by explaining the reasons policy outcomes differ by context and suggesting how national policies might be synchronized with international expectations. By advocating for a blended framework of balance, contextual flexibility, and careful scrutiny, this research seeks to advance the design of educational policies that are internationally competitive while remaining relevant to local priorities. These findings indicate the need for coordinated innovative policies aimed at cultivating adaptable, skilled, and globally competitive citizens for the evolving world economy.

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