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Comparative Study of Education Systems: A Focus on Indonesia and Countries Across Asia and Australia

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Abstract: This study aims to conduct a comparative analysis of the education systems in Indonesia and other countries across Asia and Australia. The countries included in this comparison are Japan, China, South Korea, Vietnam, and Australia. The objective is to identify best practices and challenges that Indonesia faces in improving its educational quality and global competitiveness. A qualitative library research method was employed, involving an extensive review of literature, including academic journals, research reports, and official documents, to gather comprehensive data on various aspects of each education system, such as curriculum structure, assessment methods, technology integration, and educational philosophies. The results indicate significant differences in educational approaches, with Indonesia's centralized curriculum focusing on uniformity and cultural values, while other countries emphasize flexibility, innovation, and technology-driven practices. Strategic recommendations are provided to improve Indonesia's education system, ensuring it meets local needs while remaining competitive on a global scale. This analysis serves as a valuable resource for policymakers, educators, and stakeholders aiming to enhance educational outcomes.

Keyword: Education System, Comparative Analysis, Indonesia, Asia, Australia.

INTRODUCTION

Education plays a crucial role in shaping the character, skills, and knowledge of individuals, contributing to the advancement of society. Through education, people can develop their potential, improve their quality of life, and actively participate in building a more advanced civilization (Dananjaya, 2023). Furthermore, education serves as the foundation for addressing global challenges and creating innovations that drive human civilization forward toward a better future.

All countries worldwide recognize the central role of mastering science and technology, which enhances competitiveness and resilience in the face of global challenges (Winarso et al., 2014). Therefore, we need to improve the quality of our human resources to face increasingly complex challenges in the modern era.

Indonesia, despite having great potential with a large and diverse population, still struggles with education quality problems, especially in remote areas. Challenges such as lack of infrastructure, shortage of qualified teachers, and educational disparities between urban and rural areas still need to be addressed. Improving the curriculum and improving the quality of teaching are also focus for increasing the competitiveness of Indonesian education at the international level.

The comparison of the education system in Indonesia with other countries in Asia such as Japan, China, South Korea, Vietnam, and Australia is based on the need to understand and improve the quality of education in Indonesia. These countries have demonstrated success in various aspects of education which can be used as a reference and lesson.

In Indonesia, although various efforts have been made to improve the quality of education, there are significant challenges such as gaps in access between urban and rural areas, teacher quality, and inadequate educational infrastructure. Meanwhile, Japan and South Korea are known for their highly disciplined and structured education systems, with adequate technological support and resources. China focuses on improving innovation and quality of education through continuous policy reforms. Vietnam has achieved significant progress in student academic achievement at the international level, showing that education reform can produce positive results.

Australia, as a neighboring country in the Asia-Pacific region, has an education system that is inclusive and oriented towards developing 21st century skills. Their approach to education that combines theory and practice, as well as an emphasis on student engagement and social inclusion, can provide valuable insights for Indonesia in its efforts to improve its education system.

This research is important to identify successful best practices from neighboring countries, to then be adapted and applied in Indonesia. By understanding the factors that contribute to the success of the education system in these countries, it is hoped that the right solution can be found to improve the quality and equality of education in Indonesia, so that it can produce a more competitive and globally competitive next generation.

METHOD

This research utilizes a qualitative approach, specifically library research, to analyze and compare the education systems in Indonesia with other countries in the Asia: Japan, China, South Korea, Vietnam, and Australia. The data were collected through an extensive review of various literature sources, including books, academic journals, research reports, official documents, and other reliable publications. This library research method enables the researcher to gain an in-depth understanding of the characteristics, policies, curricula, teaching methodologies, assessment systems, and educational innovations adopted in each of these countries.

The selection of Asian countries such as Japan, China, South Korea, Vietnam, and Australia as research objects is based on the significant success in their education systems which can be a reference for Indonesia. These countries have significant success in their education systems which can be a reference for Indonesia. Their best practices in discipline, technology, and educational innovation, as well as inclusive approaches in Australia, provide relevant insights for improving the quality and equity of education in Indonesia.

The analysis was carried out by comparing these aspects through a relevant theoretical framework, aiming to identify the strengths, challenges, and best practices of each education system. This comparative study considers not only the technical aspects but also the social, cultural, and economic factors that influence the implementation of educational systems in different regions. The findings are expected to provide valuable insights and strategic recommendations that could be applied to the development and enhancement of Indonesia's

education system, allowing it to improve its global competitiveness while meeting local needs.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The education system in Indonesia exhibits several significant differences when compared to countries such as Japan, China, South Korea, Vietnam, and Australia.

Comparison of the Education System in Indonesia and Japan

One of the defining characteristics of Japan's education system is the national curriculum, which is developed by the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science, and Technology (Monbukagakusho or MEXT) (Fredriksson et al., 2020). This curriculum is standardized across the country and includes core subjects such as the Japanese language, mathematics, science, social studies, arts, physical education, and moral education, which focuses on character development. In addition to academic subjects, the Japanese education system emphasizes the instillation of social values such as discipline, responsibility, and cooperation. Students participate in daily classroom and school cleaning activities, which are part of their educational experience.

The Japanese education system has several notable strengths, including a very high literacy rate and a strong culture of discipline among students. However, there are challenges, such as unequal access to education in rural areas and a decline in the student population due to low birth rates. To address these issues, the Japanese government has been implementing reforms, such as reducing exam pressure, improving the work-life balance of students, and preparing them for the 21st century with skills like creativity, collaboration, and digital literacy.

There are significant differences between the education systems of Japan and Indonesia in terms of structure, curriculum, and teaching methods. Japan follows a 6-3-3-4 system, with six years of elementary school, three years of junior high school, three years of senior high school, and four years of university education. Compulsory education in Japan lasts until junior high school, and nearly all students continue to senior high school, even though it is not mandatory. In contrast, Indonesia follows a 6-3-3 or 6-3-4 structure, with compulsory education only extending to junior high school. At the senior high school level, Indonesian students are directed into either academic or vocational tracks, providing an earlier specialization compared to Japan, which places more emphasis on general education.

Teaching methods in Japan focus on hands-on learning and student interaction. Students are encouraged to take collective responsibility, such as cleaning their classrooms every day, which helps foster discipline and a sense of social responsibility (Takizawa et al., 2023). On the other hand, teaching in Indonesia is often lecture-based, with assessments mainly focused on exams. Japan also places greater emphasis on process-oriented assessments, with national exams held only in upper secondary or higher education, whereas in Indonesia, summative exams are more common, although there is a shift toward competency-based assessments.

Extracurricular activities also serve as a key distinction. In Japan, extracurricular activities such as sports, arts, and science clubs (*bukatsu*) are an integral and mandatory part of student life (Nakajima, 2017). In Indonesia, extracurricular activities are optional, allowing students to pursue their interests more flexibly. From a philosophical standpoint, Japan's education system is centered around collectivism, aiming to shape students as members of a harmonious society. In contrast, Indonesia's education system is based on the values of Pancasila, which emphasizes cultural, moral, and religious diversity.

In conclusion, Japan's education system is more structured and uniform, with a strong focus on character formation, discipline, and social ethics. On the other hand, Indonesia's education system is more flexible and adaptable, catering to local needs and cultural

diversity. Both systems, despite facing unique challenges, strive to produce competent, ethical, and well-rounded individuals in line with their respective cultural values.

Comparison of the Education System in Indonesia and China

China's education system is currently among the largest and most well-organized in the world, reflecting the country's strong commitment to human resource development. The education structure in China is divided into several levels: primary, secondary, and higher education. Compulsory education spans 9 years, consisting of 6 years of primary school and 3 years of junior secondary school. During this period, education is provided free of charge by the government, aiming to enhance literacy rates and ensure equal access to education. Core subjects such as Mandarin, mathematics, science, English, and moral education, which focuses on character building, are taught to students from an early age (Li & Li, 2019).

In China, the teaching approach is largely teacher-centered, with lectures being the dominant method. However, in recent years, the government has increasingly encouraged the use of technology and interactive learning strategies to foster student creativity (T. Wang, 2019). A hallmark of the Chinese education system is the critical role of examinations in evaluating student performance. The National College Entrance Examination (Gaokao) is the pinnacle of this system, with its results determining students' chances of gaining admission to top universities. This highly competitive exam system exerts considerable pressure on both students and their families.

In addition to academic education, China places significant emphasis on vocational education to support the needs of the labor market, particularly in the industrial and technological sectors. Vocational schools are designed to equip students with practical skills aligned with the demands of the economy, strengthening the workforce's competitiveness in the modern era. The government has also made substantial investments in educational technology, promoting the digitalization of learning and the integration of artificial intelligence into the teaching process.

Despite these advancements, challenges related to educational equity, particularly in rural areas, remain a concern. In response, the government has implemented a variety of programs, including the development of school infrastructure, the provision of quality teachers, and scholarships for students from disadvantaged backgrounds (T. Wang, 2019).

In recent years, education in China has increasingly become more globalized. Chinese universities have attracted a growing number of international students through high-quality programs and international collaborations. Moreover, innovation has become a central focus in higher education, with significant emphasis on scientific research and technological advancement. Overall, China's education system reflects the nation's aspirations to become a global leader in the fields of economy, technology, and science. Despite facing internal challenges, China's methodical and strategic approach has positioned its education system as one of the most competitive worldwide.

Comparison of the Education System in Indonesia and South Korea

South Korea's education system is considered one of the most advanced and competitive worldwide. The country has successfully developed a highly structured educational framework, underpinned by substantial government investment and a cultural emphasis on education. Over recent decades, South Korea has demonstrated exceptional achievements in literacy, science, and mathematics, as evidenced by international assessments such as the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA). However, the system faces challenges such as intense academic pressure and the need for a balance between academic success and student well-being (Ha et al., 2020).

Compulsory education in South Korea spans nine years, consisting of six years of primary education and three years of junior secondary education. The educational pathway

then continues with senior secondary education, divided into general and vocational tracks, followed by higher education, which includes prestigious universities such as Seoul National University. The national curriculum is centrally controlled by the Ministry of Education and covers essential subjects like science, technology, mathematics, English, the arts, and moral education. Confucian cultural values, emphasizing respect, ethics, and diligence, remain central to the educational experience (Mo et al., 2022).

In recent years, technology has become a fundamental component of South Korea's education system. Schools are equipped with digital devices, high-speed internet, and online learning platforms. The integration of artificial intelligence for personalized learning is increasingly prevalent. The COVID-19 pandemic accelerated the adoption of these technologies, facilitating a seamless shift to remote learning (Mo et al., 2022).

South Korea has also emerged as a global education hub, attracting many international students through English-language programs and competitive scholarship opportunities. The widespread popularity of Korean culture, particularly K-pop and the Hallyu wave, has further amplified global interest in the country's educational system. Despite its global recognition, South Korea faces ongoing challenges, particularly in balancing academic achievement with student well-being. To address these issues, the country is continually reforming its educational approach to ensure that education is not only a tool for academic success but also a platform for fostering personal growth (Kim & Choi, 2023).

The differences in the education systems and curricula between South Korea and Indonesia are striking, particularly in terms of structure, approach, and educational culture. While both countries are committed to producing well-equipped young individuals ready to tackle global challenges, they prioritize different aspects of education. Below are some key differences in the educational systems and curricula of South Korea and Indonesia.

Both countries place a high emphasis on moral education, though the approaches differ. In South Korea, moral education is closely linked to Confucian values, such as respect for elders and teachers, as well as discipline. The development of character through social values and patriotism is also a significant focus in the curriculum. In contrast, Indonesia's character education is grounded in the principles of Pancasila, stressing tolerance, diversity, and national unity. Additionally, religious education plays a vital role in Indonesia's curriculum, with students required to engage in religious studies based on their personal beliefs.

Comparison of the Education Systems in Indonesia and Vietnam

In recent decades, Vietnam's education system has undergone profound changes. As the country transitions from an agrarian to a modern industrial economy, education has become a central priority in its national development agenda. The Vietnamese government continues to prioritize the improvement of educational quality as a means to drive both economic and social advancement. This emphasis on education has also contributed to the growth of other sectors, such as technology and industry, strengthening Vietnam's position in the global competitive landscape.

The enhancement of educational standards has made Vietnam an increasingly sought-after destination for international students. As a result, the country has attracted students from around the world, who come to study at its universities and higher education institutions. Today, Vietnam is recognized for offering high-quality education, with programs closely aligned with global industry trends, making it a popular choice among international learners.

Education in Vietnam begins with optional preschool education, including kindergarten and playgroups for young children. Primary education, which lasts for five years from grades 1 to 5, is compulsory. Afterward, students move on to lower secondary education (grades 6 to 9), followed by upper secondary education (grades 10 to 12). At the secondary level, students begin to decide whether to pursue higher education or opt for vocational education, which focuses on skill-based training.

Several key strengths define Vietnam's education system. First, the Communist Party of Vietnam plays a pivotal role in the management and development of the country's education policies. Through the Party, the government ensures that education aligns with the broader goals of socialism and economic growth. Consequently, education policies focus on national development goals such as reducing social inequalities and enhancing the quality of life for citizens.

Second, the country's curriculum is highly centralized and standardized across both urban and rural areas, ensuring that all students, regardless of their location, receive an education of equal quality. Third, Vietnam has made significant efforts to standardize school infrastructure nationwide. By ensuring that all schools, both urban and rural, have comparable facilities, the country creates an optimal learning environment that promotes effective teaching and enables every student to reach their full potential.

Fourth, the Vietnamese education system has performed exceptionally well in international assessments such as the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA). These results highlight the system's emphasis on mastering core academic concepts and developing the analytical skills needed in the global workforce. This success underscores Vietnam's ability to build an education system that is not only effective but also responsive to global demands, despite its developing economy.

Finally, the education system in Vietnam places a high value on its teachers, with the government taking continuous steps to improve their welfare. Measures have been implemented to increase teacher salaries, provide ongoing professional development, and ensure access to comprehensive training programs.

Comparison of the Education System in Indonesia and Australia

Australia has a globally renowned education system, characterized by high-quality teaching, comprehensive facilities, and a well-rounded curriculum. Furthermore, the Australian government is committed to ensuring equal access to education for all citizens. This is achieved through various programs and initiatives, such as the development of educational infrastructure nationwide, the provision of scholarships, and the advancement of distance learning technologies. With its focus on quality, accessibility, and flexibility, Australia's education system produces highly skilled human resources that contribute significantly to the country's progress.

The Australian education system consists of primary education, secondary education, and tertiary education. Primary and secondary education comprises six years of primary school, four years of secondary school, and two years of senior secondary school, with compulsory education for children aged 6 to 16. This compulsory schooling covers grades 1 to 9 or 10, depending on the state. Tertiary education includes pathways to higher education and vocational training, where students in grades 11 and 12 can choose their preferred educational track. The federal government sets national educational standards, covering essential skills, critical thinking, and personal development. Each state or territory is responsible for organizing and assessing education, with curricula and assessments varying slightly while maintaining high standards.

The academic year in Australia runs from February to December, divided into three to four terms, with each term lasting approximately 10 to 12 weeks, followed by term breaks. The Vocational Education and Training (VET) program begins in late January and ends in mid-December, allowing students to complete training and certification in various skills. Higher education in Australia generally follows a semester system, starting in February and concluding in November.

Education administration and funding in Australia are shared responsibilities between the federal and state governments, with arrangements tailored to the educational sector and applicable legislation. The federal government provides funding and policies supporting

higher education and vocational training, while state governments oversee primary and secondary education, including school management, curriculum design, and educational standards. This collaboration ensures that education in Australia is accessible and of high quality, meeting the needs of each region.

The national curriculum policy in Australia is guided by the Australian Qualifications Framework (AQF). The AQF, introduced in 1995, is a national framework for certifying education and training across Australia. It connects various levels of education, from primary schooling to tertiary and vocational education, playing a vital role in establishing high-quality standards that support students, institutions, and industries, both within Australia and internationally.

The AQF governs qualifications across Australia's education and training sectors, including schools, vocational training, and higher education. It aims to provide a consistent qualifications system that allows individuals to progress in their education and training while promoting lifelong learning. The AQF consists of ten levels, ranging from Certificate I to Doctoral degrees, with clear descriptions of the knowledge, skills, and application expected at each level. The framework also supports work-based learning, allowing individuals to achieve career goals through evolving learning pathways.

National evaluations in Australia include several key assessments, such as the National Assessment Program – Literacy and Numeracy (NAPLAN), which is an annual test to measure student literacy and numeracy in grades 3, 5, 7, and 9. Additionally, the NAP Sample Assessment is conducted every three years for selected students as part of further evaluation. At the international level, Australia participates in the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) for 15-year-old students, held every three years, and Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS) for students in grades 4 and 8, conducted every four years. These international evaluations help Australia compare student performance with other countries and identify areas for improvement in the education system.

To support transparency and school performance evaluation, Australia operates the My School website, which provides comparative data on schools based on NAPLAN results. This website offers the public access to assess school performance, allowing parents and communities to make more informed decisions about the education students receive.

Student enrollment in Australia is managed by state and territory governments, which are responsible for organizing schools, developing curricula, and assessing students. The federal government supports this system through funding, research, national policy coordination, and the management of student data across regions. The collaboration between the federal and state governments ensures that education across Australia meets high standards and is accessible to all students, regardless of their geographical location.

Summary of Analysis

Indonesia's education system exhibits significant differences compared to those of advanced Asian nations such as Japan, China, South Korea, and Vietnam. These differences encompass the structure of education, curriculum approaches, the integration of technology in learning, assessment methods, and educational philosophies. In Indonesia, the system tends to be more flexible and emphasizes cultural diversity alongside the values of Pancasila. In contrast, other Asian countries adopt more structured systems with a strong focus on mastering core concepts, leveraging technology, and fostering collective discipline.

While Indonesia continues to strive for improved access and equitable distribution of education, nations like Japan and South Korea have long integrated character building, discipline, and technological proficiency into their curricula. Although Indonesia faces challenges in implementing technology and ensuring quality education in remote areas, its education system remains distinctive in promoting cultural diversity and tolerance as fundamental values.

Table 1: Comparison of Education Systems in Indonesia and Asian Countries

Aspect	Indonesia	Asian Countries
Education Structure	6-3-3 or 6-3-4, compulsory education up to junior high school (SMP)	6-3-3-4 (Japan), 6-3-3 (China, South Korea, Vietnam), compulsory up to junior high school or beyond
Curriculum	Nationally designed with local adaptations	Centralized national curriculum, uniform across the country
Teaching Approach	Lecture-dominated, gradually adopting technology	Interactive, practice-based, integration of advanced technology
Assessment	Transitioning from national exams to competency-based assessment	Process-based evaluation prioritized, major exams only at specific levels (e.g., Gaokao in China)
Extracurricular Activities	Optional and flexible	Integrated into the curriculum, almost mandatory (e.g., Bukatsu in Japan)
Educational Technology	Developing, adoption still limited	Advanced, involving artificial intelligence and online learning
Educational Philosophy	Based on Pancasila, emphasizing diversity and tolerance	Collectivism, Confucianism (South Korea, China), and social ethics
Equity of Access	Still challenging, especially in remote areas	Most countries have ensured equitable access and quality
Academic Pressure	Relatively moderate	High, especially in China and South Korea due to intense competition

The Australian education system is characterized by its mature and well-organized structure, emphasizing quality, accessibility, and flexibility to support lifelong learning. Through a national framework such as the Australian Qualification Framework (AQF), Australia ensures connectivity between different levels of education. Student evaluation is conducted regularly through national programs like the National Assessment Program – Literacy and Numeracy (NAPLAN) and participation in international assessments such as the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) to maintain educational quality and global competitiveness.

In contrast, Indonesia's education system continues to strive for equitable accessibility and quality across its diverse regions, facing complex geographical and social challenges. A significant difference between the two countries lies in the standardized national approach adopted by Australia compared to the localized adjustments in Indonesia. Additionally, Australia demonstrates a higher degree of technology integration and greater flexibility in educational pathways, setting it apart as a more advanced system in these aspects.

Table 2: Comparison of Education Systems in Indonesia and Australia

Aspect	Indonesia	Australia
Education Structure	6-3-3 or 6-3-4 (Primary, Junior Secondary, Senior Secondary/ Vocational)	6-4-2 (Primary, Secondary, Senior Secondary School)
Compulsory Education	Ages 7-15 (Primary and Junior Secondary)	Ages 6-16 (Primary to Year 10)
Funding	Central and regional government, with regional disparities	Federal and state government, collaboratively managed
National Curriculum	Developed centrally, based on Pancasila and religious education	Australian Qualifications Framework (AQF), skills-based, flexible career pathways
Student Evaluation	Competency-based exams are being implemented	NAPLAN, NAP Sample, participation in PISA and TIMSS
Access to Technology	Still in the process of improvement, regional disparities	High, with integration of distance learning technology
Extracurricular Activities	Varied and optional, focused on student interest development	Integrated and supports both vocational and academic pathways
School Management	Primarily managed by central government, with regional involvement	Managed by states, with federal standards

Aspect	Indonesia	Australia
Performance Transparency	Public evaluation is limited	Transparency through platforms such as My School

Building on the above analysis, it becomes clear that strategic and comprehensive recommendations are essential to drive the development and improvement of Indonesia's education system. These recommendations must aim to achieve global competitiveness by aligning with international standards while also addressing the diverse and unique needs of local communities to ensure inclusivity, equity, and relevance. Key areas of focus include:

1. Integration of Technology: Enhance the utilization of technology in education, especially in remote areas, to bridge the digital gap.
2. Improving Teacher Quality: Provide continuous professional development for teachers to improve pedagogical competencies and adapt to global educational innovations.
3. Differentiated Approach: Implement approaches that allow students to develop their potential based on their interests and talents, such as the vocational model in Germany or differentiation in the Netherlands.
4. Curriculum Decentralization: Grant greater autonomy to regions in designing curricula relevant to local needs, following the example of advanced countries like the United States and Australia.
5. Focus on Equity of Access: Prioritize equitable access to education by investing in infrastructure development in remote areas and expanding educational assistance programs.
6. Strengthening Character Education: Combine character development reflecting national values with the development of 21st-century skills, such as critical thinking and collaboration.

CONCLUSION

The education systems in Asia and Australia demonstrate a strong focus on innovation, technology, and differentiation to maximize student potential. In Asia, countries such as Japan and South Korea emphasize collective discipline, mastery of core concepts, and technology. Australia offers a flexible, integrated, and national standards-based education framework. In contrast, Indonesia remains focused on curriculum uniformity, the values of Pancasila, and cultural diversity, while facing challenges in equitable access, educational quality, and technology implementation.

Strategic recommendations for the development and enhancement of Indonesia's education system to ensure global competitiveness while meeting local needs include integration of technology, improving teacher quality, differentiated approach, curriculum decentralization, focus on equity of access, and strengthening character education.

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