



A Comparative Analysis of Curriculum Strategies in Five Countries: Indonesia, Finland, Singapore, Japan, and the United States

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Abstract: This study compares curriculum strategies in Indonesia, Finland, Singapore, Japan, and the United States to identify common goals and distinctive approaches in facing global educational challenges. Using a qualitative descriptive method through library research, data were collected from academic journals, policy documents, and official reports. The findings show that all five countries view the curriculum as a strategic tool for developing human resources with 21st-century skills, such as critical thinking, creativity, collaboration, and communication, while also emphasizing character education. Indonesia's curriculum has evolved into the flexible and student-centered Merdeka Curriculum, though challenges remain in teacher readiness and regional disparities. Finland applies a trust-based and holistic approach centered on equality and teacher autonomy. Singapore implements a systematic and adaptive curriculum guided by the vision of "Thinking Schools, Learning Nation." Japan emphasizes stability, discipline, and moral education, while the United States adopts a decentralized and innovative system focused on inclusivity and competency-based learning.

Keywords: 21st-Century Skills; Comparative Education; Curriculum Development; Curriculum Strategy; International Education Systems.

1. INTRODUCTION

Education plays a crucial role in shaping the quality of human resources and determining a nation's ability to respond to social, economic, and global challenges. As societies face rapid changes driven by globalization, technological advancement, and shifting labor market demands, education systems are required to continuously adapt in order to remain relevant and effective. One of the most strategic components of an education system is the curriculum, as it functions as the core framework that guides learning objectives, content organization, teaching strategies, and assessment practices (Marie & Domingo, 2024).

Curriculum is commonly defined as a planned learning experience designed to facilitate students' intellectual, moral, and social development (Davis & Krajcik, 2005). An effective curriculum emphasizes student-centered learning, meaningful engagement, and the integration of knowledge, skills, attitudes, and values. Learning is most effective when students actively construct knowledge based on prior understanding, engage in practice, and experience supportive learning environments that are logically structured and coherent (Drake & Burns, 2023). These principles underscore the importance of curriculum strategies that promote lifelong learning, reflective thinking, and adaptability in facing future challenges.

Historically, education in Indonesia has played a vital role in shaping national identity and character formation. Curriculum development in Indonesia has undergone several

transformations, reflecting changes in political orientation, social needs, and global influences (Abidin et al., 2023; Batubara & Davala, 2023). The most recent reform, the Merdeka Curriculum, emphasizes flexibility, competency-based learning, and student autonomy, aiming to address learning loss and enhance creativity, critical thinking, and independence among students (Aliyyah et al., 2023; Hidayat et al., 2025). However, despite its progressive orientation, challenges remain in terms of uneven implementation, teacher readiness, and disparities in educational resources across regions (Alhamuddin & Murniati, 2025).

Every country develops its education system based on its philosophical foundations, socio-cultural context, and national development goals. Consequently, curriculum strategies vary across countries while maintaining similar overarching objectives, particularly the development of high-quality human resources. Finland, for example, is widely recognized for its trust-based and holistic curriculum approach, emphasizing equality, teacher autonomy, and student well-being rather than high-stakes testing (Halinen, 2018; Hakala & Kujala, 2021). Singapore adopts a strategic and systematic curriculum aligned with its national vision “Thinking Schools, Learning Nation”, integrating academic excellence, character education, and future-oriented competencies (Gopinathan & Deng, 2006; Deocades & Escarlos, 2025).

Japan maintains a stable and structured curriculum system with a strong emphasis on moral education, discipline, and social responsibility, supported by professional teacher development practices such as Lesson Study (Nishioka, 2021; Tanaka et al., 2016). Meanwhile, the United States implements a decentralized curriculum strategy that allows local autonomy and innovation, guided by national frameworks such as the Common Core and Next Generation Science Standards, with a focus on inclusivity and competency-based learning (Khan & Law, 2015; Schmidt et al., 2006).

Despite contextual differences, curriculum strategies in Indonesia, Finland, Singapore, Japan, and the United States share a common goal: preparing learners who are academically competent, morally responsible, socially engaged, and equipped with 21st-century skills such as critical thinking, creativity, collaboration, and communication (Setiawan, 2018; Supriani et al., 2022). Governments continue to play a key role in determining the general direction and framework of national curricula, even though the degree of centralization varies. Therefore, a comparative analysis of curriculum strategies across these five countries is essential to identify best practices and policy insights that can inform sustainable and contextually relevant curriculum development, particularly in strengthening Indonesia’s national education system.

2. RESEARCH METHOD

This study employs a library research method with a qualitative descriptive approach. This method is chosen because the research aims to examine, compare, and analyze curriculum strategies implemented in five countries, namely Indonesia, Singapore, Finland, Japan, and the United States, based on relevant and credible written sources. The data sources used in this study consist of secondary data obtained from various types of literature, including educational textbooks, national and international journal articles, official government reports, curriculum policy documents, and publications from educational institutions and international organizations. The selected literature is based on its relevance, accuracy, and up-to-date information related to curriculum development and implementation strategies in each country.

Data collection is conducted through document analysis, which involves reading, recording, and classifying important information from selected sources. The collected data are then analyzed using content analysis techniques, focusing on identifying key concepts, policies, objectives, and characteristics of curriculum strategies in each country. Furthermore, a comparative analysis is carried out to identify similarities and differences in curriculum strategies among the five countries studied. The results of the analysis are presented in a descriptive-analytical form to provide a systematic and comprehensive overview of curriculum strategies across the five countries. Through this research method, the study is expected to generate meaningful insights and recommendations that can be utilized in strengthening curriculum strategy development in Indonesia.

3. RESEARCH FINDING

Curriculum Strategy in Indonesia

Curriculum strategy is a systematic approach used to design, implement, and evaluate curricula in order to effectively achieve national education goals. In the Indonesian context, curriculum strategy is not merely understood as a written document, but as a direction of educational policy that reflects the nation's philosophy, societal needs, and the demands of global development. The curriculum serves as the main guideline in the learning process and functions as the heart of the national education system.

The curriculum strategy in Indonesia is designed to develop students' potential holistically, encompassing aspects of knowledge, skills, attitudes, and character values. Therefore, the curriculum is not solely oriented toward academic achievement, but also toward the formation of personality, moral integrity, and 21st-century competencies. If it is associated with teaching, the strategy may also be interpreted as general patterns of teacher and student activities in the

realization of teaching and learning activities to achieve the objectives outlined. Strategy, in education, is defined as planning which contains about a series of activities designed to achieve certain educational goals.

Besides, Subana (2003: 16) explains that the learning strategy is a design or pattern used to determine teaching and learning process. It can be concluded that the learning strategy is an action plan (series of activities) including the use of methods and utilization of various resources/ strength in learning. The strategy is formulated to achieve a certain goal, which means that the direction of all strategy-making decision is the achievement of objectives, that the compilation of learning steps, the utilization of various facilities and learning resources are all directed to achieve the objectives. However, a clear goal whose success can be easily measured needs to be arranged. Resident Soekarno's government emphasized education as a crucial tool for national struggle and development in the Old Order era. The curriculum implemented during this period was designed to instill a strong sense of nationalism and perseverance among students. The educational content primarily focused on fostering patriotism and preparing the younger generation to contribute to the nation's progress.

However, after the political transition in 1966, the New Order under Suharto introduced significant changes to the educational system. One of the major reforms was the introduction of the Competencies-Based Curriculum (KBK) in 1975. KBK was designed to produce graduates better prepared for the workforce by emphasizing practical learning and skill development. Despite its intended benefits, KBK underwent a significant revision in 1984 when the government replaced it with the Education Unit Level Curriculum (KTSP). KTSP gave schools greater autonomy in developing curricula that suited local needs and student characteristics. While this approach was intended to enhance educational relevance and flexibility, its implementation faced several challenges, including unclear evaluation standards and difficulties in applying the curriculum consistently at the national level.

An expository learning strategy is a strategy which emphasizes the process of verbal material delivery of a teacher to a group of students so that students can master the subject optimally. It is a form of teacher-oriented learning approach because the teacher plays a very important or dominant role in this strategy. The teacher presents in a well-prepared, systematic, and complete formula that students stay listening and digesting nicely and accurately. Appropriate learning method describes the following strategy:

a) Lecturing

Lecturing method is an oral illumination of learning the material to a group of listeners to achieve certain learning objectives in a relatively large number. It is in

line with the meaning and purpose of the Expository Strategy. It is a lecture or one-way strategy.

b) Demonstration

Demonstration method is a way of presenting lesson material by demonstrating or displaying to students a particular process, situation or object studied in either real or imitational presentation. The teacher physically demonstrates the learned material.

c) Socio drama Sociodrama essentially dramatizes behavior about social problems. The teacher explains the material by dramatizing the behavior in the class as an example.

The Indonesian education system has undergone numerous changes throughout history, reflecting the nation's evolving needs and challenges. Despite these variations in implementation, the fundamental goal of education remains the same: to develop individuals who contribute positively to society. Each era has necessitated adjustments in the education system to align with national priorities and global advancements. The historical shifts in Indonesia's education system, from the pre-independence era to the present, serve as valuable lessons on the importance of education in shaping national character and progress. Curriculum development is crucial in this process, as it serves as a blueprint for learning and must continuously adapt to societal demands.

Over time, Indonesia has revised its curriculum at least 11 times, reflecting efforts to enhance educational quality. These reforms have had positive and negative impacts, influencing teaching methods, student competencies, and workforce readiness. While some changes have improved educational outcomes, others have faced challenges in implementation due to inadequate resources or resistance to change. However, the continuous evolution of the curriculum highlights the government's commitment to improving education and ensuring that it remains relevant in an ever-changing world. Ultimately, curriculum reforms must be carefully designed to balance tradition and innovation, ensuring that education remains a driving force for national development.

The development of curriculum strategy in Indonesia cannot be separated from social, political, and national development dynamics. Since the early years of independence, the curriculum has been designed as an instrument to shape national identity and instill values of nationalism. Over time, curriculum strategies have evolved to adapt to advancements in science and technology as well as the demands of globalization. Each curriculum reform reflects the

government's efforts to improve educational quality and ensure the relevance of graduates to societal needs.

During the Old Order era, curriculum strategies emphasized character formation and national spirit. In the New Order period, the curriculum was increasingly oriented toward efficiency, knowledge mastery, and skill development to support economic growth. This orientation was evident in the implementation of the 1975 and 1984 curricula, which emphasized instructional objectives and systematic learning approaches. At this stage, curriculum strategy was largely centralized, with the central government playing a dominant role in determining curriculum content and implementation.

In the reform era, Indonesia's curriculum strategy shifted toward educational decentralization. The implementation of the Competency-Based Curriculum (KBK) and the School-Based Curriculum (KTSP) provided greater autonomy for schools to develop curricula that met local needs and student characteristics. This strategy aimed to enhance flexibility, creativity, and learning relevance, although its implementation faced challenges such as limited resources and disparities in educational quality across regions. Further development of curriculum strategy was realized through the 2013 Curriculum, which emphasized a balanced development of attitudes, knowledge, and skills. Learning strategies focused on the scientific approach, authentic assessment, and character education. This curriculum aimed to produce learners who are not only academically competent but also possess strong character and 21st-century skills.

Currently, Indonesia continues to develop its curriculum strategy through the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum. This strategy emphasizes learning flexibility, differentiation based on students' needs, and the strengthening of the Pancasila Student Profile. The Merdeka Curriculum reflects Indonesia's effort to respond to rapid global changes and to prepare human resources who are independent, creative, and competitive. Overall, the development of curriculum strategy in Indonesia demonstrates a continuous commitment to improving national education quality through innovation and contextual adaptation.

The implementation of curriculum strategies in Indonesia faces various complex challenges and problems, both in terms of policy and human resources as well as social and geographical conditions. One of the main challenges is the disparity in educational quality across regions. Differences in access to facilities, technology, and learning resources result in uneven implementation of curriculum strategies. Schools in urban areas are generally better prepared to implement new curriculum strategies compared to schools in remote and underdeveloped regions. In addition, teacher readiness and competence constitute a significant issue in

curriculum strategy implementation. Rapid curriculum changes are often not accompanied by sufficient training, causing many teachers to struggle with understanding new concepts, learning approaches, and assessment systems. The heavy administrative workload placed on teachers further limits their ability to focus on effective teaching and learning processes. As a result, the implementation of curriculum strategies at the classroom level is often less than optimal.

Curriculum Strategy in Firlandia

The education system is a whole component of education that is interrelated with one another. Better education system of a country will have a straightforward impact on the quality of the people in the country. The education system in Indonesia and Finland has differences and similarities. Teachers are both given autonomy to develop their teaching. Finland school is a place to grow and develop and is not a place to play and get scores but in Indonesia it is still score oriented, parents will be proud of their children who get good grades. In terms of educator recruitment, Finland set a minimum standard of S2 while in Indonesia at least S1. On the aspect of financing in Indonesian education, it still gets fund from students, but the government provides a variety of educational assistance at all levels such as BOS funds so that at the elementary and junior high school levels the cost of education is free because it is already covered by government assistance funds. Whereas Finland eliminates all education costs at all levels.

Finland is known for its equal education system and for the high quality of teaching and learning. Equity and equality are promoted by providing equal access to education for everyone, by encouraging and supporting every student's learning and well-being as well as by ensuring, by means of highquality support systems, that everyone has opportunities to be successful in learning. Differences between schools and municipalities are small. Education is free of charge in Finland, even at the university level. The education system is flexible and always provides a way forward for students who want to study and move from one level to another. There are no dead ends in the system. Having good and motivated teachers is probably the most important factor influencing the quality of education. In Finland, teachers are highly educated and valued professionals. The teaching profession is very popular among young and talented people because there is much room for autonomy and creativity in teachers' everyday work. Teachers are not stressed by inspections or high stakes testing. Instead of controlling systems, the culture of trust, support and collaboration is central.

In the Curriculum approach, the role of the teacher differs from that in the Bildung/Didaktik approach. In the former, there is much less institutional trust in teachers'

professionalism. The teachers' task is not to interpret but to implement the curriculum (Westbury 1998). As one teacher-educator from the US sums up in an email discussion in 2019: "In our state, everyone is supposed to use the state standards to guide them, but there are so many programs for sale on how to reach the best results for kids. Schools will pay for reading programs, math programs etc. to use as a canned curriculum that all teachers have to follow". In curriculum, much attention is paid to support materials for teachers; in *Bildung/ Didaktik*, most resources are directed to teacher education. Finnish curriculum tradition is, historically, a mixture of influences from the two curriculum approaches above. The ideal of *Bildung* still prevailed in Finland in the first half of the twentieth century. After World War II, Finland adopted ideas about education not from Germany but from the United States. Rational planning and behavioral (later, cognitive) psychology entered the field of education, and the spirit of *Bildung* inherited from German philosophy and science of education became marginalized. Instead of giving up teacher autonomy, it gained a new, scientific basis the idea of the teacher as a researcher gradually emerged. This scientific basis fostered by research-based teacher education legitimized teacher autonomy, and still does.

The Finnish education curriculum is designed based on the philosophy that education is a human right and the foundation of societal well-being. Therefore, every citizen has the right to receive a quality education without discrimination. The foundation of the Finnish curriculum emphasizes social justice, equal opportunity, and meaningful learning for all learners. The national curriculum is regulated by the Finnish National Agency for Education (EDUFI), which establishes a general framework, while schools and teachers have the freedom to adapt it to local contexts and student needs. This reflects Finland's decentralized and trust-based education system.

Finland's education system is known for its quality, equity, and focus on learning over testing. Finland offers high-quality education, student-centric support, and academic freedom, making it the perfect spot for international students. Unlike in many countries, there are no regular national exams. Instead, teachers assess students based on curriculum objectives. The only nationwide test, called the matriculation examination, happens at the end of high school. According to the 2022 report, the literacy rate in Finland is 100%. Finnish method is a play based and group-based learning which focuses on individual progress. It believes in minimum homework and four 15 minutes break during the school hours. The Finnish school day starts anywhere from 9 to 9:45 a.m., and students typically spend only about five hours a day in the classroom. Finnish students typically have little to no homework. Apart from one exam at the end of a student's senior year in high school, Finland has no mandated standardised tests. There

are no rankings, no comparisons or competitions between students, schools or regions. Schools in Finland are supported by the government. Education in Finland is entirely free for European Union (EU), European Economic Area (EEA) and Switzerland students. However, international students who apply to study in Finland need to pay the required tuition fees.

The educational administration in Finland is flexible and supportive. The ethos of it is based on clearly defined, common national goals and objectives. These are given in the educational legislation and in the national core curriculum. In place of control, the focus is on supporting and developing the work of municipal education authorities, schools and teachers. During basic education, there are neither school inspections nor national tests of learning outcomes on the basis of which schools could be placed in an order of superiority. There are no ranking lists of comprehensive (basic education) schools. Instead of comparison and competition between schools, the role of self-evaluation and cooperation is emphasised.

This self-evaluation of municipalities and schools is supported by national, sample-based evaluations of student achievement and of students' health and welfare, and by thematic evaluations. At the national and municipal level, the information gathered from these evaluations is used for the development of education and in the training of teachers. Mutual trust, cooperation and interaction are the important prerequisites for the development of Finnish education. The Finnish Parliament renders decisions on educational legislation and the general principles of education policy. The Government, the Ministry of Education, and the Finnish National Board of Education are in charge of the implementation of this policy at the central administration level. The municipalities are responsible for providing education. Municipalities and schools are granted a great deal of autonomy in matters of how to organise education and how to implement the core curriculum. The Government participates in school expenditures by discharging the so-called statutory government transfer to the education provider.

The national norms directing municipal educational arrangements and instruction create common lines, and build a solid foundation upon which municipalities and schools can plan their work. The most important element of the system in meeting the goals set for education, and in meeting the various needs of students, is the every-day teaching and learning process, the interaction between the learners and the teachers. The central goal of the entire steering system is to support this process in order to promote successful learning and the healthy growth and development of all students. Teachers' initial (pre-service) and in-service education offered mainly by universities, as well as textbooks and other study materials produced mainly by private publishers, support the implementation of the core curriculum

guidelines. Together these three elements, curriculum, teacher education and study materials, form a strong and coherent basis for teachers' work. In most cases, school curriculum reforms aim at having meaningful impacts on a school's everyday life and especially on teachers' pedagogical practices. This requires that teachers perceive reform goals as comprehensible and relevant for school development. Previous studies have shown that the coherence of the reform's goals has a great influence on how the reform is understood by the teachers. Accordingly, the more coherent the goals are, the more likely they enhance teachers' understandings of the curriculum, and through this promote school development and perceived curriculum coherence in practice. Hence, achieving school level impact requires curriculum coherence, especially for those in charge of developing and implementing the curriculum at school. This requires individual and shared coherence making during the reform, involving teachers' and professional communities' constructing of the understanding of goals and meanings of the curriculum. Teachers' prior knowledge and experiences with reforms shape how they understand and interpret, and hence embrace curriculum reform goals. The experiences also result in individual variation between the teachers both in the way they craft the coherence and how they perceive it.

The curriculum's ability to support teachers in terms developing their teaching, for example relevant content that allow more holistic and integrated teaching or teaching methods and assessment that supports learning, can be seen as yet another aspect of curriculum coherence. It entails harmonising teaching and encouraging teachers to use activating teaching methods and assessment that supports learning. As an element of curriculum coherence, an integrative approach to teaching and learning is related to a holistic approach to teaching, connecting and applying learning to a larger purpose.

Curriculum Strategy in Singapura

Singapore is known as one of the most effective and competitive education systems in the world. This success is the result of a well-planned, adaptive, and human resource-based national curriculum strategy. The Singapore Ministry of Education (MOE) is the primary institution that designs and oversees the implementation of the curriculum in all schools. Its primary goal is to prepare young people to face global challenges by emphasizing mastery of knowledge and 21st-century skills, as well as the development of moral character and nationalism. The Singapore curriculum is based on the principle of "Teach Less, Learn More" meaning the focus is not on the quantity of material, but on quality, in-depth understanding, and real-life application.

The curriculum landscape in Singapore has been undergoing significant changes recently. While there exist a national curriculum and a central curriculum agency, the Curriculum Planning and Development Division (CPDD) within the Ministry of Education (MoE), there is a movement toward what is termed “school-based curriculum development.” This movement can be seen as a consequence of the implementation of numerous educational initiatives progressively launched since the mid-1990s. Such a movement creates new challenges for schools and teachers, and has far-reaching implications for curriculum development, instructional effectiveness, and teachers’ professional development.

Education in Singapore is very adaptable to children's development. This means that during a student's development stages, he or she experiences a process of psychological formation from stage to stage, so each student's psychology will not always be the same. So, students from 3-7 years old should not be exposed to hard lessons like mathematics. Because this will affect their way of thinking, those who should still be at playing age are faced with a tough educational process so that when they enter the middle and upper education process, they easily get bored and don't want to stay in class for long.

Singapore is starting to develop its fundamental strength with capital in the education sector. The foundation of Singapore's education system is that each student has special talents and interests. Singapore has a flexible strategy to develop student potential. Singapore's education system has changed from the traditional British education model to one that focuses on developing talent and meeting individual needs. Community foundations, religious associations, social organizations, and businesses run kindergartens in Singapore. They are registered with the Ministry of Education. The Ministry of Community Development and Sports has granted the child care center permission. Most kindergartens conduct two training sessions daily, each lasting 2.5 to 4 hours, five days per week.

Additionally, teachers can create and support more engaging learning environments for children if they better understand how children grow and learn. NEL believes that children learn and develop holistically. Thus, children gain knowledge in various learning themes. Whatever they learn is very meaningful for a child. When children are actively interested in learning, they learn well. According to research, children are better at remembering things. Every child can learn, and every child learns uniquely. Each child is an individual with unique abilities and limitations. Children build new knowledge from old knowledge and previous experiences, and their thinking and reasoning develop over time. The various social and cultural circumstances in which children live impact how they develop. Due to the many families, cultures, and communities in which they are raised, children have a variety of social

and cultural experiences. When children feel safe and given attention, they learn and develop best. Thanks to this support, they will be able to act spontaneously and with confidence. Therefore, it is very important to create a safe atmosphere for children to play, including Being supported and appreciated during the educational process. Feel motivated and successful when learning new things.

The Singaporean education curriculum is designed with clear strategic objectives and is oriented towards developing holistic human beings, who excel not only academically but also possess character, moral values, and critical thinking skills to face global challenges. The primary objective of the Singaporean curriculum is rooted in the national vision of "Thinking Schools, Learning Nation," which is to build schools that train thinking skills and create a nation of lifelong learners. This vision reflects the Singaporean government's commitment to making education the primary foundation of national development, emphasizing that the nation's success depends on the quality of its human resources.

One of the main strategic objectives of the Singaporean curriculum is to develop critical, creative, and innovative thinking skills. In this system, students are taught not only to memorize knowledge but also to understand, analyze, and apply it in real-world contexts. Each lesson is designed to encourage students to solve problems independently, think reflectively, and generate new solutions. This approach makes Singaporean graduates adaptable to change and prepared to face the dynamics of the 21st century, which demands higher-order thinking skills. Furthermore, the Singaporean curriculum aims to encourage lifelong learning. The government and educational institutions recognize that knowledge continues to evolve with technological advances and globalization. Therefore, Singapore's education system is not solely focused on exam results, but also fosters curiosity, interest in learning, and the ability to learn independently. Students are guided to develop intrinsic motivation to continue developing themselves, even after completing formal education.

Another strategic goal is to build strong character and moral values. Singapore places character education as a central component of its curriculum through the Character and Citizenship Education (CCE) program. This program instills values such as honesty, responsibility, perseverance, respect, and caring for others. In this way, the Singaporean curriculum not only produces intelligent individuals but also citizens with integrity, ethics, and a sense of community. The Singaporean curriculum is also geared towards preparing a competent and globally competitive workforce. Education in this country is closely integrated with economic and industrial needs, so that every level of education strives to develop skills relevant to the world of work, such as communication, collaboration, digital literacy, and

complex problem-solving. This is done so that Singaporean graduates are not only ready for work but also able to innovate and lead in a knowledge-based economy.

Singapore's curriculum development strategy is systematic, purposeful, and adaptive to changing times. The Singapore government, through the Ministry of Education (MOE), views the curriculum as a strategic tool for developing superior and globally competitive human resources. Therefore, all education policies focus on developing intellectually intelligent individuals with strong character and capable of contributing to national social and economic progress. Curriculum development is based on the national education vision "Thinking Schools, Learning Nation," which emphasizes that every school should be a place for developing thinking skills and that every citizen should be a lifelong learner.

One of the key strategies in Singapore's curriculum development is the implementation of an integrated national curriculum framework (National Curriculum Framework). This framework serves as the basis for designing curricula from primary to pre-university levels, balancing academics, character, and 21st-century skills. The curriculum focuses not only on exam results but also on learning processes that foster critical thinking, creativity, communication, and collaboration. This approach ensures that every student possesses the cognitive and non-cognitive skills necessary for success in the dynamic modern world.

The curriculum implementation in Finland emphasizes a trust-based system for teachers, school autonomy, and a student-centered learning approach. Teachers are considered professionals with high competence and integrity to determine the most effective learning strategies according to classroom conditions. The government does not implement a strict monitoring system or national exams, believing that trust is the foundation of true educational quality.

Through this strategy, Finnish education has succeeded in fostering an inclusive, humanistic, and sustainable learning environment. Each student is viewed as a unique individual with different potential and learning styles, so the education system is designed to help them develop holistically encompassing cognitive, social, emotional, and moral aspects. Furthermore, the curriculum is designed so that learning does not focus solely on academic achievement, but also on character development, empathy, creativity, and critical thinking skills. This approach aligns with the Finnish educational philosophy, which emphasizes that education is not simply a process of transferring knowledge, but a process of developing the whole person. Teachers serve not only as instructors but also as facilitators and guides, helping students discover interest, motivation, and meaning in learning. In practice, learning activities are conducted through collaborative, project-based, and interdisciplinary learning methods that

enable students to connect theory to real-life situations. Furthermore, Finland implements a formative and reflective assessment system, where student success is measured not through standardized exams but through observation of learning processes, portfolios, and individual development. The goal is to foster self-confidence and independent learning without excessive competitive pressure.

Curriculum Strategy in Japan

Japan is known as a country with an advanced, disciplined education system oriented toward character building. The success of education in Japan lies not only in the high academic achievement of students, but also in the implementation of a comprehensive, balanced, and values-oriented curriculum strategy. The Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science, and Technology (MEXT) is responsible for developing and overseeing the implementation of the national curriculum. The Japanese national curriculum, known as the "Course of Study" (*Gakushū Shidō Yōryō*), serves as the national guideline for every level of education from elementary school, junior high school, senior high school, to vocational high school.

On the other hand, Japan, as a developed country, has a highly structured and stable curriculum system. The national curriculum in Japan is designed and managed by the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology (MEXT). This curriculum is reviewed periodically and is designed to cover cognitive, affective, and psychomotor aspects in a balanced manner. One of the characteristics of the Japanese curriculum is a strong emphasis on character education, discipline, and social responsibility, which are reflected in daily school life. Moral education is even taught as a separate subject, and a culture of cooperation is instilled from an early age through daily activities such as school cleaning activities carried out by students. Comparing the curriculum structure of Indonesia and Japan is important because it can provide insight and inspiration for the development of a more contextual, efficient, and relevant national curriculum. Developed countries like Japan have succeeded in building an education system that emphasizes not only academic achievement but also the development of strong character and critical thinking skills.

Japan is recognized as having one of the most superior education systems in the world due to its complete facilities and highly competent human resources. Many developing countries often look to Japan as an example for improving their own educational standards. This research aims to analyze and compare the educational curricula implemented in Indonesia and Japan. The method used in this study is a Literature Review, conducted through the analysis of scientific articles, books, and other relevant sources related to educational problems, theoretical frameworks, and published documents that support the discussion.

The results of this research show several key findings. First, the structure of education in Japan is similar to that of Indonesia, consisting of nine years of basic education (six years of primary school and three years of junior high school), followed by three years of senior high school both general and vocational and higher education. Second, the Japanese curriculum is revised every ten years, while in Indonesia, curriculum revisions often occur whenever there is a change in government leadership. Third, the general goals of education in both countries are similar, aiming to develop students' potential. However, Japan's educational goals are more specific and detailed, outlining the ideal characteristics that Japanese children are expected to possess. Fourth, there are significant differences in the subjects taught at the elementary school level in both countries, especially in terms of language instruction and the variety of lessons offered. In addition, the learning approaches and curriculum orientations of the two nations show notable distinctions, particularly in how they emphasize language skills and specific competencies. Fifth, the Indonesian curriculum adopts scientific methods and a project-based learning approach, with teachers acting as facilitators to encourage active student participation. Meanwhile, the Japanese curriculum utilizes the Lesson Study model, which applies an open and problem-solving approach. In this model, teachers serve as facilitators with the guiding principle that students must understand the lesson, be able to apply it, and enjoy the learning process.

Lastly, both Indonesia and Japan no longer implement a National Examination (UN) as a form of student assessment. Instead, both countries focus on authentic and formative assessments that emphasize students' learning processes, skills, and personal development rather than solely test-based results. Overall, this comparison shows that while Indonesia and Japan share similar educational structures and goals, Japan's curriculum stands out for its long-term stability, teacher professionalism, and strong emphasis on moral education and character development.

Japan is known as a country with a highly developed education system that is oriented towards character building, discipline, and social responsibility. The Japanese National Curriculum has an educational philosophy deeply rooted in Japanese cultural values such as cooperation (*kyōryoku*), responsibility (*sekinin*), and respect for others (*sonkei*). Education in Japan emphasizes not only cognitive aspects but also affective and psychomotor aspects. Every student is encouraged to develop their potential in a balanced way between knowledge and morality. One of the hallmarks of Japanese education is the application of contextual and practical learning, where students are directly involved in social activities, the environment,

and daily life at school. Thus, they learn not only through textbooks, but also through real-life experiences that shape their personalities into resilient, independent, and ethical individuals.

The comparison between the Independent Curriculum in Indonesia and the National Curriculum in Japan is interesting to study because both have the same goal, namely to form students with character, competence, and global competitiveness, but have different strategies and approaches. Indonesia with the Independent Curriculum seeks to provide freedom for teachers and students to innovate, while Japan emphasizes a uniform, orderly system based on strong traditional values. Both models have their respective advantages: Indonesia excels in flexibility and creativity of learning, while Japan excels in discipline, stability, and consistency of educational implementation. In terms of practical implementation, Indonesia still faces major challenges in implementing the Independent Curriculum, especially related to the readiness of educators, disparities in facilities between regions, and teachers' understanding of new approaches that require more creativity and adaptability. In contrast, Japan has succeeded in building a stable education system through the support of government policies, a strong learning culture, and active community participation. Nevertheless, Japan also continues to update its curriculum to adapt to global changes, such as the development of digital technology and the needs of 21st-century education.

Curriculum Strategy in United States

The curriculum in the United States has a unique and dynamic character, developed through a decentralized education system each state has the authority to set curriculum policies according to local needs, while still adhering to national standards such as the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) and the Next Generation Science Standards (NGSS). The curriculum strategy in the US focuses on developing 21st-century competencies, including critical thinking, creativity, communication, collaboration, and digital literacy. Furthermore, the integration of the values of diversity, equity, and inclusion is a crucial part of every curriculum design. The learning approach is geared toward producing independent, innovative, and globally oriented students. Through the implementation of strategies such as competency-based learning, project-based learning, and AI-integrated education, the American curriculum system strives to prepare young people to face future social, economic, and technological challenges.

The United States education system is characterized primarily by decentralized education policy, where each state has broad authority to design, implement, and evaluate curricula tailored to local needs. There is no single national curriculum, but there are national guiding frameworks such as the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) for English and mathematics, and the Next Generation Science Standards (NGSS) for science, which serve as

benchmarks for many states. This system allows the American curriculum to be flexible, adaptive, and contextualized, while maintaining national educational quality.

The American curriculum development strategy is based on a competency-based and evidence-based approach. The curriculum is designed to allow students to progress based on mastery of competencies, not just classroom time. This approach allows students to learn at their own pace and ability. Each curriculum design is typically supported by learning outcome data and empirical educational research to ensure its effectiveness. The federal government and educational institutions also use national test results such as the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) to continuously monitor student achievement.

One of the main pillars of the curriculum strategy in the United States is the integration of technology and digital learning. With the development of information technology and artificial intelligence (AI), many schools and educational districts have adopted digital learning platforms such as Google Classroom, Edmodo, and Khan Academy. Furthermore, modern curricula also encourage mastery of AI literacy, namely the ability to understand, use, and evaluate artificial intelligence technology ethically and critically. This strategy aligns with the vision of 21st-century education, which emphasizes critical thinking, creativity, collaboration, and communication (the 4Cs).

The American curriculum also places significant emphasis on the values of diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI). In practice, this strategy is realized through learning that respects differences in culture, race, religion, and student abilities. Inclusive education is a priority, where students with special needs learn alongside regular students in an inclusive classroom system. Teachers are trained in Universal Design for Learning (UDL) to adapt learning materials and methods to the needs of each student. Furthermore, the curriculum strategy in America emphasizes project-based and experiential learning. This approach requires students to learn through real-life activities, such as social projects, field research, and interdisciplinary group work. With this strategy, students acquire not only theoretical knowledge but also practical skills and a reflective attitude towards community issues. This concept, known as service learning, connects academic activities with community service as part of the learning process. In implementing the curriculum, schools and educational districts in America implement a "Continuous Curriculum Improvement" strategy. This process includes planning, implementation, evaluation, and continuous updating based on assessment results and feedback from students and teachers. Teachers play an active role as curriculum designers, having the freedom to determine learning methods that are appropriate to student characteristics and the learning environment. Collaboration between educators is realized through Professional

Learning Communities (PLCs) to share best practices in teaching. In the context of assessment, the American education system is shifting from conventional national exams to performance-based assessment. Students are assessed based on portfolios, projects, and demonstrated real-world skills, rather than simply written test scores. This approach is considered fairer and able to reflect students' abilities as a whole.

Curriculum strategies in the United States also face a number of challenges, such as disparities in education quality between states, differences in resources between regions, and political influences on curriculum policies (e.g., regarding issues of race, gender, and critical race theory). To address these challenges, many educational institutions are now focusing on personalized learning and collaboration across sectors, including government, universities, and industry, to create more relevant and future-oriented curricula.

Overall, curriculum strategies in the United States reflect a blend of innovation, local autonomy, and national accountability. Curriculum is viewed not only as a learning tool but also as a means of building character, developing life skills, and preparing young people to face global challenges. By integrating technology, social values, and a competency-based approach, the American education system continues to transform toward an inclusive, adaptive, and sustainable model. In addition to the various strategies implemented to improve education quality, curriculum implementation in the United States also faces a number of significant challenges. One major challenge is the disparity in education quality between wealthy and poor districts, which leads to disparities in access to resources, technology, and qualified teachers. Furthermore, the cultural and linguistic diversity of U.S. classrooms demands a flexible curriculum that maintains high academic standards, requiring teachers to adapt teaching methods to meet the diverse needs of students. Another challenge arises from the pressure of national standards-based assessments, which sometimes limits the development of creativity and critical thinking skills. Furthermore, rapid technological developments and the demands of a dynamic job market require curriculum to be continually updated to maintain relevance, while this process of change is often hampered by bureaucracy and resistance to innovation. All of these factors make curriculum strategy in the United States not just about designing learning content, but also about addressing complex social, economic, and cultural barriers.

discussion

Curriculum strategies across the countries studied—Indonesia, Finland, Singapore, Japan, and the United States—demonstrate both shared objectives and distinctive approaches shaped by social, cultural, political, and economic contexts. In Indonesia, curriculum strategy has evolved historically from a nationalist, character-building orientation during the Old Order era

to a more flexible, competency-based, and student-centered approach in the Merdeka Curriculum. Despite continuous reforms aimed at developing knowledge, skills, character, and 21st-century competencies, challenges remain in terms of uneven quality across regions, teacher readiness, and resource availability. Indonesian curriculum reforms emphasize both national identity and adaptability to global developments, balancing tradition with innovation.

Finland exemplifies a trust-based, student-centered education system where teacher autonomy, equality, and holistic development are prioritized. The Finnish curriculum focuses on meaningful learning rather than high-stakes testing, encourages formative assessment, and promotes social justice and equity. Flexibility and support for teachers enable them to innovate while maintaining curriculum coherence, resulting in high-quality education that nurtures the whole child. Singapore emphasizes strategic curriculum design to develop holistic, lifelong learners capable of critical thinking, creativity, and innovation. Guided by the national vision “Thinking Schools, Learning Nation,” the Singaporean curriculum integrates moral character, practical competencies, and academic mastery. It is adaptive to individual student needs, development stages, and global challenges, while also ensuring alignment with economic and societal objectives.

Japan maintains a disciplined, stable, and highly structured curriculum system that balances cognitive, affective, and psychomotor development. With a strong emphasis on moral education, character building, and social responsibility, Japan’s curriculum integrates contextual and experiential learning through models like Lesson Study. Its long-term stability and focus on teacher professionalism ensure consistent implementation and a high-quality education system. The United States employs a decentralized and dynamic curriculum strategy emphasizing local autonomy, competency-based learning, and inclusivity. National frameworks such as the Common Core and Next Generation Science Standards guide curriculum design while allowing adaptability to local contexts. The U.S. curriculum prioritizes 21st-century skills, technology integration, and experiential learning but faces challenges such as disparities in resources, equity issues, and political influences. Continuous curriculum improvement and teacher collaboration are central to addressing these challenges.

Overall, these countries share a common goal of nurturing students who are not only academically competent but also morally responsible, socially engaged, and prepared for the demands of the 21st century. The differences lie primarily in implementation approaches: Indonesia and Singapore focus on flexibility and holistic development; Finland emphasizes trust, equality, and teacher autonomy; Japan values stability, discipline, and character; and the United States prioritizes decentralization, innovation, and inclusivity. Effective curriculum

strategy requires a balance between educational goals, contextual realities, teacher capacity, and societal needs, demonstrating that the quality of education is both a national priority and a dynamic, adaptive process.

4. CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the comparative analysis of curriculum strategies in Indonesia, Finland, Singapore, Japan, and the United States reveals that while each country adopts distinct approaches shaped by its social, cultural, political, and economic contexts, all share a common commitment to developing academically competent, morally grounded, and socially responsible learners equipped with 21st-century skills. Indonesia and Singapore emphasize flexibility and holistic development to respond to global changes, Finland prioritizes trust, equality, and strong teacher autonomy to ensure meaningful and inclusive learning, Japan maintains stability and character education through disciplined and structured implementation, and the United States promotes decentralization, innovation, and inclusivity through adaptable national frameworks. These variations demonstrate that effective curriculum strategy is not defined by a single model but by the ability to balance national goals, contextual realities, teacher professionalism, and societal demands, highlighting curriculum development as a dynamic and continuous process essential to improving educational quality.

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