

Comparative Study of Indonesia's Education System Strategy with Malaysia through an Institutional Approach

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Abstract

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This article analyses the comparison of the education systems in Malaysia and Indonesia through an institutional approach, examining the theory and implementation of education in both countries. The study uses a library research approach with a descriptive qualitative methodology to interpret legal documents and educational policies from each country. The results of the comparison show that Indonesia has adopted a combination of centralised and decentralised systems, with centralised policies and relatively autonomous local implementation. Indonesia has implemented the Merdeka Curriculum, which focuses on developing character, creativity, and competencies through project-based learning, although it still faces challenges such as a shortage of teachers and disparities in teacher welfare. Conversely, Malaysia has implemented decentralisation, giving regions a relatively high degree of autonomy while maintaining coordination with the central government, with a curriculum that emphasises holistic individual development (JERIS) and is relatively stable. The Malaysian government also pays close attention to teacher well-being and learning innovation, supported by substantial education funding. In terms of curriculum development, the principles of Ralph Tyler's model, which include setting goals, selecting learning experiences, organising them, and evaluating them, are implemented in the education systems of both countries. This comparison highlights the need for policies to be adapted to the local context, as well as the importance of government support in terms of funding and teacher welfare to achieve national education goals comprehensively.

Keywords: Education, Malaysia, Indonesia, Institutional Approach, Curriculum, Ralph Tyler

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INTRODUCTION

The government has the primary responsibility for regulating, organising, and financing national education as mandated by the 1945 Constitution and various related regulations, which cover curriculum development, educational standards, and improving the quality of teaching staff (Pratama & Apriani, 2023). Additionally, differences in governance systems, such as centralisation and decentralisation, influence the distribution of educational authority between the central and local governments, which impacts the effectiveness of education management at the local level, but if in centralisation, all education policies and management are strictly regulated by the central government, including curriculum development, teaching standards, and resource allocation (Mubarok et al., 2023).

Conversely, the decentralisation system gives greater authority to local governments to manage education according to the conditions and needs of each region. In Indonesia, the education system adopts a combination of both, with centralised policies but relatively autonomous implementation at the local level. Meanwhile, Malaysia implements decentralisation that grants relative autonomy to regions, yet remains within the framework of coordination with the central government, thereby creating a balance between national policies and flexibility in education management.

Educational institutions themselves play an important role as a forum for character building, professional competence of teachers, and the development of learning innovations that support the progress of the nation's driving forces (Suyantingsih et al., 2023). Therefore, comparing governments through the aspect of educational institutions can provide an understanding of how policies and government structures determine the quality of education that influences national development as a whole.




COUNTRY	EDUCATION RANK (WT20 2024)	↑	LITERACY RATE	DATA YEAR
 Indonesia	67		96%	2020
 Serbia	68		99%	2019
 Timor-Leste	69		70%	2020

Figure 1. Indonesia's Literacy Rate in the World

The Ministry of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology (Kemendikbudristek) plays a strategic role in managing and developing the education system in Indonesia, which currently ranks around 67th according to World Population Review. Through integrated policies, Kemendikbudristek strives to improve access and equity in education without social, economic, or geographical discrimination, as well as boosting the quality of human resources through improved competencies and the well-being of educators.

COUNTRY	EDUCATION RANK (WT20 2024)	↑	LITERACY RATE	DATA YEAR
 Malaysia	89		95%	2019
 Kenya	90		83%	2022

Figure 2. Malaysia's Literacy Rate in the World

The Malaysian Ministry of Education plays a vital role in managing and developing the education system in Malaysia. Although Malaysia ranks around 89th according to World Population Review, the ministry continues to strive to improve access to and equity in education regardless of social, economic, or geographical background. The implementation of comprehensive education policies, including curriculum improvements that emphasise 21st-century skills and the use of technology in learning, is a key focus. Additionally, reforms to the student admission system and efforts to enhance teacher quality through professional

training and certification are being carried out to achieve inclusive and high-quality education.

RESEARCH METHOD

The method used in this article is a library research method with a qualitative descriptive approach from S et al. (2024), which aims to explore, interpret and compare legal documents and education policies of Indonesia and Malaysia. Data were obtained through a search of the constitution, education laws, ministerial regulations, and national education policy documents from each country.

RESEARCH RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Malaysian Education Institution

The education system in Malaysia underwent many changes after independence, especially in the 1980s. Based on a report from the Cabinet Committee that evaluated the implementation of the National Curriculum in 1979, the New Primary School Curriculum (KBSR) began to be implemented in all primary schools in Malaysia in 1983 (Najibullah et al., 2022).

KBSR emphasises mastery of basic reading, writing and arithmetic skills (3M). In addition, the curriculum also focuses on the overall development of individuals, covering physical, emotional, spiritual, intellectual and social aspects (JERIS). In 1989, the Integrated Secondary School Curriculum (KBSM) was introduced in all secondary schools (Huda, 2023). KBSM was designed to develop students' potential in a comprehensive and integrated manner based on JERIS aspects, with the aim of producing knowledgeable students with good character who are able to contribute to the progress and welfare of the country.

The education curriculum in Malaysia is set by the Malaysian Ministry of Education and tends to be stable. For example, the primary school curriculum (KBSD) that was in effect from 1982 to 2007 is still in use (Marzam et al., 2022). Interestingly, textbooks in Malaysia, particularly those for science subjects, are written in English. Teacher welfare is also highly prioritised; according to the website inilah.com, teachers' salaries in Malaysia range from RM2,000 to RM5,000, or approximately Rp7.6 million to Rp19 million.

The main vision and mission of the Malaysian government is to make the country a centre of quality education that can compete with higher education institutions in other countries. Malaysia has experienced prosperity thanks to its natural resources and industrial development, but they are aware that this prosperity will not last long without good human resource development (Mahfud et al., 2023). Therefore, the government sees education as the main means of preparing an excellent generation and is seriously pursuing educational development.

Indonesia can learn from Malaysia that the education system must always be updated and innovative. In addition, the success of education also depends heavily on professional teachers and adequate teacher welfare. Currently, teacher welfare conditions in Indonesia still need to be improved. Malaysia also has high-quality universities such as the National University of Malaysia, the University of Malaya, the University of Technology Malaysia, the Islamic

Understanding Institute of Malaysia, and the International Islamic University of Malaysia.

Malaysian Prime Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim announced that the government has allocated a total of RM82.1 billion to the ministries of education and higher education in the 2025 National Budget (Ismail et al., 2024). The funds are intended to improve schools, provide more support to students, and enhance research and development at Malaysian universities. The Ministry of Higher Education has allocated RM18 billion, an increase from RM16.3 billion in the previous year. The government has also provided RM4 billion for scholarships, loans, and educational grants, while the National Higher Education Fund Corporation (PPTN) will offer educational loans totaling RM500 million, particularly for students pursuing STEM-related fields.

When presenting the budget to parliament on 18 October 2024, Anwar stated that funding for research and development (R&D) had increased to RM600 million from the previous RM510 million, managed by the Ministry of Higher Education and the Ministry of Science, Technology and Innovation. As part of the government's efforts to enhance technological capabilities, RM50 million will be allocated to teach courses related to artificial intelligence (AI) at research universities, and RM20 million will be provided to Universiti Teknologi Mara (UiTM) to train more electrical and electronic engineers needed in the semiconductor sector (Ismail et al., 2024).

The University of Malaya is focusing on using AI in the medical field, particularly in the fight against serious diseases such as cancer (Marzam et al., 2022). The University of Putra Malaysia will build a technology and cryptology centre in collaboration with the National Cyber Security Agency (Nacsa) to address cyber security threats. The University of Science Malaysia is also developing AI for the semiconductor industry, supporting Malaysia's position as a global semiconductor hub and strengthening cooperation with major companies such as Intel and Infineon (Irrubai et al., 2024). Meanwhile, Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia is leading an AI translation project to develop the Malay language as a language of science. Additionally, this budget places significant emphasis on technical and vocational education and training (TVET), allocating RM7.5 billion for industry collaboration and training programmes targeting disadvantaged youth, including those from urban, rural, and indigenous communities.

Currently, Malaysia is facing a shortage of more than 20,000 teachers by 2024, which is putting significant pressure on the education system. Teachers are not only responsible for teaching but are also burdened with administrative tasks that add to their workload. As a result, there are reports indicating high stress levels among educators, which could impact the quality of teaching in the classroom. Of course, KPM 33 plays a crucial role in significantly increasing teacher recruitment and providing additional training to enhance teachers' capabilities. Teacher welfare is also considered highly important. According to the website inilah.com, teachers' salaries in Malaysia range from RM2,000 to RM5,000, which is approximately Rp7.6 million to Rp19 million.

Indonesian Educational Institutions

In Indonesia, educational institutions play a vital role in the learning process and character development of individuals. In general, educational

institutions can be defined as organisations established with the aim of achieving specific goals, namely equipping students with knowledge, skills, and cultural and moral values so that they can develop into independent, creative, and responsible individuals in society (Marmoah et al., 2023). In Indonesia, educational institutions are divided into three types: formal, non-formal, and informal (Marzam et al., 2022). Formal educational institutions encompass systematically structured levels, starting from playgroups, kindergartens, primary schools, secondary schools, and up to universities. The main characteristics of these institutions include organised class structures, nationally standardised curricula, and consistent assessment mechanisms. Additionally, non-formal and informal education play a supporting role to formal education, offering more adaptive learning tailored to the needs of society and families. The existence of various forms of educational institutions demonstrates Indonesia's efforts to build an education system that is not only focused on academic achievements but also emphasises character development and the holistic development of students' life skills (Othman, 2016).

As mentioned earlier, there are three types of educational institutions in Indonesia, categorised as formal, non-formal, and informal education. These three types are classified based on their objectives, stages, and outcomes. Furthermore, educational institutions in Indonesia are regulated by Law Number 20 of 2003 concerning the National Education System. According to Article 1, Paragraph 10 of Law Number 20 of 2003 concerning the National Education System, educational units are groups of educational services that provide education through formal, non-formal, and informal channels at every level and type of education (Sari et al., 2024). Regarding the education curriculum, Indonesia uses the Merdeka Curriculum, which provides flexibility for teachers and students in the teaching and learning process, with a focus on character development, creativity, and competencies. A distinctive feature of the Merdeka Curriculum is that it supports the recovery of the learning process through a project-based approach aimed at developing non-academic skills (soft skills) and character in line with the Pancasila learner profile. This curriculum is designed to make it easier for students to understand the material, while also giving teachers the flexibility to adapt teaching methods that best suit the conditions and learning interests of students. This curriculum is also regulated in Ministry of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology Regulation No. 12 of 2024 on the Curriculum for Early Childhood Education, Basic Education, and Secondary Education.

Currently, the Indonesian education sector is facing a problem of teacher shortage. According to data from the Ministry of Education and Culture (Kemendikbud) for the 2022/2023 academic year, Indonesia has 3.31 million teachers, consisting of 2.5 million public school teachers and 600,000 private school teachers (Othman, 2016). This number is still far from the ideal requirement of around 4.2 million teachers. This shortage of teachers can be attributed to several factors, such as the low interest among young people in becoming teachers, the lack of appeal of the teaching profession, both in terms of salary, facilities, and recognition. In 2022 alone, there were approximately 704,503 honorary teachers in Indonesia, plus 141,724 Non-Permanent Teachers (GTT). These figures clearly indicate the diverse roles and responsibilities of teachers at various levels of education across Indonesia. However, when compared to the actual needs in each

region, Indonesia still requires approximately 300,000 teachers. This shortage is most prevalent in remote and underdeveloped areas, which typically rely heavily on contract teachers or even lack permanent teachers altogether (Ratnasari et al., 2019). This shortage can also be calculated based on Article 17 of Government Regulation No. 74 of 2008 on Teachers, which states that the ideal ratio for primary, lower secondary, and upper secondary schools is one teacher for every 20 students. For vocational schools, the ideal ratio is one teacher for every 15 students.

When discussing budgeting in the context of education, President Prabowo Subianto stated that his administration is highly focused on the development of education in Indonesia. It was mentioned that the education budget for 2025 is the highest in history, as cited from the copy of Law No. 62 of 2024 on the 2025 State Budget, the government has allocated an education budget of Rp 724.262 trillion for 2025 (Mahfud et al., 2023). This figure is equivalent to 20% of the total 2025 State Budget expenditure, which amounts to 3,621.31 trillion. The law also states that the education budget includes funding for the operational costs of education. Additionally, the education budget includes government investment funds for the education endowment fund. Regarding the salary levels of teachers in Indonesia, as reported by moneysia.com, these are divided between contract teachers and civil servants. Contract teachers face a significantly different situation compared to those who are already civil servants. Their incomes vary widely, ranging from Rp1.5 million to Rp2 million in urban areas, and only between Rp300,000 and Rp1 million in rural areas. This disparity is not only evident in terms of nominal amounts but also significantly impacts the economic stability and well-being of contract teachers' families. Meanwhile, civil servant teachers receive higher basic salaries, ranging from IDR 2.3 million to IDR 5 million, depending on their rank and years of service, and are entitled to various allowances such as spousal, child, meal, health, and pension benefits (Munastiwi & Marfuah, 2019).

Implementation of Theory

According to Dr. Nazily Shalih on Supianto et al. (2023), educational institutions encompass not only organisational structures, but also the social functions and roles inherent in the education system to achieve its established goals. This institutional approach is highly relevant in comparing the education systems of Indonesia and Malaysia. In Indonesia, the education system adopts a combination of centralisation and decentralisation, where central policies remain the primary reference, but implementation at the regional level is given autonomy to adapt to local needs. Educational institutions in Indonesia consist of formal, non-formal, and informal institutions, all of which play a role in shaping the character and competencies of students.

Meanwhile, in Malaysia, decentralisation remains within the framework of central government coordination, so that national policies are maintained but regions have flexibility in managing education (Mahfud et al., 2023). The curriculum in Malaysia is designed for the comprehensive development of physical, emotional, spiritual, intellectual, and social aspects (JERIS), and tends to remain stable over the long term. The Malaysian government also places great emphasis on teacher welfare and learning innovation, supported by a large education budget and ongoing teacher professional development programmes.

Meanwhile, Ralph Tyler's on Novalinda et al. (2020), curriculum development theory provides a systematic framework for designing, organising, and evaluating curricula. Tyler emphasises four fundamental questions: what educational goals are to be achieved, what learning experiences need to be provided, how those learning experiences can be organised effectively, and how to evaluate the achievement of those goals. In Indonesia, Tyler's principles are reflected in the formulation of the national curriculum, where educational goals are clearly defined, learning experiences are selected according to student needs, and evaluations are conducted on a regular basis.

However, its implementation sometimes faces challenges such as disparities in resources and teacher capacity in various regions. In Malaysia, Tyler's model is also evident in the development of the KBSR and KBSM curricula, where educational goals focus on the holistic development of students, structured learning experiences in organisations, and regular evaluations to ensure that goals are achieved. The Malaysian government periodically evaluates and revises the curriculum based on research and contemporary needs, in accordance with Tyler's principle of continuous evaluation.

CONCLUSION

Based on the results of a comparative analysis of the education systems in Malaysia and Indonesia using an institutional approach, it can be concluded that both countries have a strong commitment to improving the quality of education, although they take different approaches to its management and implementation. Indonesia adopts a combination of centralised and decentralised systems, whereby central government policy is the main reference point, but regions are given autonomy to adapt to local needs. Educational institutions in Indonesia include formal, non-formal, and informal institutions, all of which play a role in shaping the character and competencies of students. The Merdeka Curriculum implemented in Indonesia provides flexibility to teachers and students, focusing on character development, creativity, and competencies through a project-based approach aligned with the Pancasila Student Profile. However, Indonesia still faces challenges such as a shortage of teachers, particularly in remote areas, and disparities in the welfare of honorary teachers compared to civil servant teachers.

On the other hand, Malaysia applies decentralization while remaining within the framework of central government coordination, creating a balance between national policy and regional flexibility. Malaysian curricula, such as KBSR and KBSM, emphasize holistic individual development (JERIS) and tend to be stable. The Malaysian government pays close attention to teacher welfare, learning innovation, and allocates a large budget for education, including for research and development and training in technology and vocational fields. However, Malaysia also faces teacher shortages and high administrative burdens on educators. Conceptually, Ralph Tyler's curriculum framework, which emphasizes four fundamental questions of purpose, learning experience, organization and evaluation, is reflected in both countries' education systems. Indonesia and Malaysia both strive to formulate clear educational goals, select relevant learning experiences, organize them effectively and conduct evaluations to ensure goal achievement. Malaysia shows consistency in curriculum revision based on research

and the needs of the times as per Tyler's principle of continuous evaluation, while Indonesia faces challenges in implementation due to resource disparities.

As such, this comparison highlights the importance of policy adaptation to the local context, as well as the crucial role of government support in budgeting and educator welfare to achieve national education goals. Indonesia can take lessons from Malaysia regarding curriculum consistency and attention to teacher welfare, while Malaysia can consider efficiencies in teacher administrative workload.

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