## Educational Reform in Singapore and Indonesia

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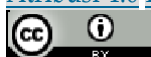**Corresponding Author:** Nahdatul Hazmi hazminahdatul@gmail.com

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| <br><br> | This article discusses on educational reformation programs conducted in two countries which have different background as well as different ideology, social, economic, political, and geographical circumstances i.e., Singapore and Indonesia. Some of the main educational reform agendas in Singapore are Teach less, Learn More; Thinking School, Learning Nation, and School Excellent Model. Meanwhile, educational reform programs in Indonesia are conducted through educational decentralization within the framework of school based management, School-level Curriculum and the 2013Curriculum and teacher certification. It can be understood that Singapore has succeeded in conducting educational reform. This can be seen from the quality of Singapore's education which has been ranked high in achieving he benchmark of international education standard. Meanwhile, Indonesia still needs to struggle to achieve the desired outcomes of educational reforms agendas. The differing result of educational reform revealed in these two countries resulted from different background of the countries. Thus, it can be concluded that there are a number of factors influencing the success of educational reforms agendas in a country. |

**INTRODUCTION**

Globalization and the presence of the knowledge era require dramatic changes in the character and function of education. An era marked by rapid and uncertain change and a shift in the definition of capital from ownership of goods to ownership of knowledge and intellectuals affecting all lines and aspects of life. This condition inevitably influences education policy, the learning process, and demands educational reform.

The school structure and the materials taught are becoming obsolete and no longer relevant to the economic and environmental conditions and challenges of the current era. To increase excellence and respond to the needs of the global era for the creation of a competitive society, comprehensive education reform needs to receive serious attention and policies from the government. Related to this, several countries in the world have implemented various forms of policies in the education sector which are expected to be able to answer the challenges of the development era of globalization.

In June 2013, the central government in China issued a green evaluation policy which is a guide for all provinces in reforming the education quality assessment model as well as an academic burden reduction policy that encourages regions and schools to reduce the academic burden for basic education students. In South Korea, the influence of the College Scholastic Aptitude Test (CSAT), which is considered "sacred", has resulted in education in South Korea being driven more by tutoring institutions. For this reason, the South Korean government has carried out several reforms to reduce dependence on tests, namely by conducting raids on tutoring institutions that still have study activities after 22.00 and encouraging universities to accept students not only based on CSAT scores. Meanwhile, because it feels left behind by East Asian countries in various global education maps, the United States is pushing for core curriculum initiatives.

The federal government uses budget politics to encourage states to align their local curricula and standardized tests with the Common Core. In 1998, Poland carried out educational reforms starting with creating a new core curriculum. Poland also sent 25% of teachers back to LPTK to be re-educated, and changed educational pathways by pushing back students' majors for a year. Teachers are also given the autonomy to choose their own textbooks and develop or choose among more than 100 specific curriculum options that have been approved by the central government (Baswedan, 2014).

Meanwhile, Singapore as a developed country which is one of the economic dragons in Asia has also implemented programs aimed at educational reform such as the implementation of Teach less Learn More, School Excellent Model, Thinking School, and Learning Nation (Lee, Hung, & Teh, 2013; Ng, 2017; Tan & Gopinathan, 2010; Tee Ng & Chan, 2008). Education reform in Singapore is a form of effort to change the educational paradigm which is deemed urgent to equip citizens to face the era of globalization with critical thinking skills (Kadir, 2009). With different political, social, economic and geographical conditions, Indonesia as a neighboring country to Singapore has also implemented education reform with an education decentralization format which aims to reduce the role

of the central government in determining education policy and hand over education management to the local level, namely at the district level, so that It is hoped that educational goals and activities will be more targeted and adapted to the environmental conditions and needs of each region (Bjork, 2004; Firman & Tola, 2008; Yeom, Acedo, & Utomo, 2002).

With different background contexts, Singapore and Indonesia are trying to carry out educational reform in order to improve and improve the quality of life of their people as well as to respond and respond to the challenges of changing times. As countries that are close geographically but differ significantly in various aspects such as social, cultural, political, economic and geographical conditions, it is important to look at the implementation of education policies in both countries, so that the background to the implementation of these policies can be revealed and can provide further information. an inspiration for countries that are trying to improve the quality of their education through educational reform.

This article discusses education reform efforts in Singapore and Indonesia by first providing a review of the background to policy implementation and a description of education reform policies in Singapore, followed by a discussion of the background to education reform in Indonesia and its implementation. Furthermore, it is concluded that understanding the implementation of educational reform in a country should start from an understanding of the background conditions and ideology of the country and involve a broader analysis which includes social, economic, political, cultural and geographical aspects surrounding the country.

## IMPLEMENTATION AND METHODS

The type of research used in this research is qualitative research, namely research that is based on efforts to build views that are studied in detail, formed with words, holistic and complex images (Moleong, 2007). Meanwhile, the approach used is a descriptive analytical approach which is intended to obtain in-depth and meaningful data and examine current problems (Sugiyono, 2018). With a descriptive analytical approach, this article examines comprehensively, objectively and systematically the implementation of educational reform in Singapore and Indonesia. The method used in this research is a literature study, namely a data collection method by conducting a study of various literature in the form of books, journals, notes and reports related to educational reform both in Singapore and Indonesia (Nazir, 1988). Data collection was carried out by sorting reference sources and scientific literature related to educational reform, the background and conditions of education in Singapore and Indonesia, policies related to educational reform in Singapore and Indonesia and conditions after the implementation of these policies, then reviewing and analyzing and presenting it in a systematic arrangement.

**RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**
**Education Reform in Singapore**

In contrast to other countries in Asia which have a long history, Singapore is a young country that only gained independence on August 9 1965. In 1819, The British East India Company, a British trading company with experience traveling the world, decided to build a trading port at the tip of Malaysia at that time was still an undeveloped swampy area. Sir Thomas Stamford Raffles, a national visionary, led the colonization efforts in the area so that in 1825 Singapore was transformed into a busy port. Over a hundred years later, Singapore became a British colony and continued to grow. However, this development had to stop with the outbreak of World War II when Japan invaded in 1942.

Singapore, which was considered an impregnable fortress in the Pacific area, fell to Japan in just a matter of days. Next, Singapore was occupied by Japan for three and a half years. The British and Europeans who were living in Singapore at that time were imprisoned while the native population had to suffer and even experienced torture that ended in death. When the Japanese army withdrew at the end of World War II, Singapore's native population began a movement for independence and in 1959 Britain relinquished its control over Singapore. Thus a new history as an independent entity began. Initially, Singapore still joined Malaysia because of its dependence on food, water and natural resources.

However, efforts to incorporate Singapore as part of Malaysia did not produce results because Singapore is actually a Chinese city where 70% of the population is Singaporeans are of Chinese descent, 15% are of Indian descent, and 10% are of Malay descent. Finally in 1965 Singapore completely separated from Malaysia and It was in this year that Singapore's history as a country began. At that time, this newly born country did not yet have a school system, constitutional system, army, navy or adequate natural resources. This country's main strength rests on three things, namely its strategic position on the busiest sea route, ownership of the largest sea port, and human resources. From these three capitals, Singapore built a country (Koh, 2007).

In its development, Singapore has consistently been able to achieve superior quality in the field of education. For more than forty years, Singapore has gone through several stages of development, namely survival (1959-1978), efficiency (1979-1996), capability (1997-2011), and studentcentric, values-driven (2012) (Ministry of Education, Singapore, 2012a in Mok, 2008). During that time, Singapore was very concerned about its unique geopolitics and lack of natural resources. These stages are also a response to developments over time, where Singapore always tries to adapt the State's vision to the demands of the times (Ng, 2017). In preparing for a new era, the Singapore government has openly stated the importance of educational reform in order to prepare its citizens to be more competitive and competent in the global era. The idea of "Thinking schools, learning nation" (TSLN), which was first introduced by Singapore Prime Minister Goh Chok Tong in July 1997, has become a central theme for mainstream education reform in Singapore. The concept of "thinking schools" is related to

school education to instill independence and critical thinking skills in students, while "learning nation" aims to foster sustainable learning habits, so that it is in line with the challenges of change in the era of globalization and information (Mok, 2008). The main strategies for realizing the TSLN idea are 1.) Explicit teaching of critical and creative thinking skills; 2.) Reduction of subject content; 3.) Revise the assessment model; and 4.) Emphasis on the process, not the outcome (Ministry of Education, 1997).

The TSLN vision is considered a comprehensive descriptor of the education system as a whole to face the challenges of the 21st century. Singapore is considered too small to have an influence on the creation of a global agenda for the world's future, so the quality of human resources is very crucial for preparation in facing future challenges. In general, on the one hand, the idea of TSLN was introduced as an educational reform effort in order to respond to changes arising from the global economy, as well as to prepare the country and its citizens for the realization of the knowledge economy era on the other hand (Mok, 2008). Furthermore, as a continuation of TSLN, the idea of teach less, learn more (TLLM), was also proposed. The TLLM concept focuses on classroom pedagogy which seeks to enable teachers to reflect on how to teach in class and what is taught in order to improve the quality of the student learning process in an environment that supports a culture of open sharing while emphasizing the importance of reducing the amount of material provided to make room for activities. reflection. Teachers are expected to carry out in-depth reflection activities related to their tasks and work, so that they can come up with innovative ideas for the learning process.

The right to carry out the learning process rests with teachers and schools with the school's task as a provider of support to improve teacher pedagogy in involving students. At the system level, the Singapore Ministry of Education is very flexible by relinquishing control and facilitating teachers and schools in carrying out their duties. The main aim of this reform is to strengthen teachers' professional activities by strengthening leadership, learning curriculum and teacher pedagogical practices. It is hoped that the TSLN and TLLM policies can strengthen the development of value-based professionalism in the teaching community in schools, which is based on a strong teacher identity, a shared professional ethos, and a student-centered learning process, so that it is hoped that the culture of collaboration and shared responsibility between fellow teachers will be strengthened. , where these teachers can organize and develop themselves in a community that maintains a superior culture of teacher professionalism (Low, 2011).

Through the vision of TSLN and TLLM, schools in Singapore have the task of transforming themselves into superior schools. With the concept of educational decentralization, these schools are given broader autonomy, so they can be more flexible and responsive in meeting student needs. The government also encourages diversification of the education system to accommodate the differences and diversity of student characteristics. For this reason, school principals are encouraged to become Chief Executive Organizations (CEOs) in

schools who are tasked with leading their members, managing the school system and creating educational innovations (Tee Ng & Chan, 2008)

To support the realization of superior schools while maintaining quality assurance, starting in 2000, the school assessment model underwent changes. Middle school rankings changed to a more lenient grouping system. However, what is more significant at this time, all levels of education in Singapore, including primary, secondary and secondary school levels, are required to carry out self-assessments using the concept of The School Excellence Model (SEM). The School Excellence Model (SEM) is a school self-assessment model adapted from various quality models used by business organizations, namely The European Foundation of Quality Management (EFQM), The Singapore Quality Award (SQA) and The American Malcolm Baldrige National Quality Award model (MBNQA). Various efforts have been made to align SEM with SQA, so that schools are expected to be able to position themselves in accordance with national guidelines for superior organizational formats.

SEM aims to provide a tool that can objectively identify and measure a school's strengths and areas that can be further developed. SEM also allows for benchmarking of similar schools, stimulating development activities that can positively influence improving the quality of schools which ultimately contributes to the quality of the education system in general. SEM's core values emphasize the importance of school leadership with character with clear goals, placing students' interests as the main priority, and positioning teachers as the main key to realizing quality education. SEM recognizes the importance of student-focused learning processes in order to achieve superior results. SEM also assumes that learning outcomes are not only measured and seen in academic achievement alone. School academic performance is important and needs to be continued, but superior schools must continue to provide holistic and quality education (Tee Ng & Tan, 2010).

The SEM framework consists of two categories, namely Enablers (conditions that allow something to happen) and Results. The Enablers category consists of cultural components, processes and resources related to how the results will be achieved. Meanwhile, the results category relates to what the school has achieved or what the school is trying to achieve. SEM includes nine criteria for assessing school quality (Ministry of Education, 2000), namely: 1.) Leadership, namely how school leaders and their leadership systems accommodate values and focus on student learning processes and superior school performance; and how schools carry out their social responsibilities to society; 2.) Strategic planning, namely how the school designs a clear strategic direction that focuses on stakeholders; develop activity plans to support the implementation of the strategic plan, distribute the plans and monitor their performance; 3.) Staff management, namely how the school develops and utilizes the full potential of its staff to create a superior school; 4.) Resources, namely how the school manages its internal resources and external partnerships effectively and efficiently to support strategic planning and implementation; 5.) Student-focused processes, namely how schools design, implement, manage and improve the main learning processes to provide holistic education and work to improve

students' well-being; 6.) Administration and operational achievements, namely what is being attempted to be achieved in relation to school efficiency and effectiveness; 7.) Staff achievements, namely what is being attempted to be achieved in relation to training, development and staff morale; 8.) Partnerships and social achievements, namely what is being sought to be achieved in relation to partnerships and the community at large; and 9.) Achievement of main performance, namely what is being sought to be achieved in terms of holistic development of students and specifically in terms of the extent to which the school achieves the expected educational outcomes.

Thus, SEM basically describes a superior school where leaders direct staff, plan strategies and distribute resources in a systematic and clearly identified manner aimed at a student-focused learning process by designing targets, monitoring and managing performance. These enablers can then generate staff and stakeholder satisfaction while having an impact on society, all of which contribute to achieving school goals and educational quality (Tee Ng & Chan, 2008). These three educational reform ideas in Singapore are capable of producing undoubted quality education. Achieving quality education through educational reform has significantly contributed to the country's economic progress and stability, so that Singapore has become one of the countries with the strongest economy in Asia with quality human resources that are ready to compete in facing the challenges of the globalization era.

**Education Reform in Indonesia**

Indonesia is an archipelagic country in Southeast Asia which has more than 13,000 islands along the equator line between Asia and Australia. The population is less more than 250 million people consisting of around 3,000 ethnic groups and 200 regional languages. Indonesia currently occupies the fourth position in the country with the largest population after China, India and the United States and is categorized as a country with lower middle income (World Bank, 2008). Indonesia's condition, with its cultural, linguistic, ethnic and religious diversity, is a big challenge for the government that manages this archipelagic country. Facts prove that despite this diversity, Indonesia is one of the countries in the world with the most centralized social, political and economic systems. To overcome this, since independence in 1945, the Indonesian government has on various occasions initiated the idea of transferring authority from the center to the regional level. Initially, the government indicated that regional government representatives would be entrusted with managing broad autonomy. The enactment of the first Decentralization Law in 1948, namely the Basic Law on Regional Government, gave the impression that power would truly be distributed throughout the regions. Although politicians and officials provided support for the idea of decentralization, the lack of legislation hampered plans to hand over authority to local governments (Firman & Tola, 2008). This has an impact on overall unpreparedness for the implementation of decentralization which ends in state management with a very centralized nature.

On the other hand, the economic crisis that hit the world in 1997 had a negative impact on the Indonesian economy. Although conditions began to improve in late 1998, doubts about the ability to return to a thriving economic position remained high. This means that the workforce will still experience various problems that have an impact on social disadvantage and family welfare. With increasing political shocks with the culmination point of the overthrow of the New Order leadership in May 1998, the Indonesian economy experienced paralysis due to the decline in the Rupiah exchange rate. The economic crisis which had a severe impact on social life affected the sustainability of family welfare with high rates of employee layoffs as well as high rates of inflation (Manning, 2000).

Striving to minimize the social effects of the crisis, the Indonesian government is paying special attention to the welfare of children and women as the parties most affected by the decline in household income. In the field of education, the main focus is on the fairly high school dropout rate. For this reason, the government considers the need for education reform in order to safeguard the education budget from the effects of inflation. The three main priorities for educational reform that have been set by the government to improve and improve education in Indonesia are increasing equality and expanding access to education, improving the quality and relevance of education, and strengthening educational management and accountability (Firman & Tola, 2008). Among Indonesia's main educational reform ideas are the decentralization of education in a school-based management format, the Education Unit Level Curriculum, and teacher certification.

The idea of decentralization and handing over educational autonomy to regional governments is one of the Indonesian government's efforts to reform the national education system. In the previous two decades, the government had actually encouraged efforts to decentralize education in all sectors from health to agriculture. In the 1980s the Ministry of National Education began evaluating the possibility of decentralizing authority to the school level. In the following year, various programs and policies related to this goal began to be rolled out. The culmination of efforts to reconfigure the authority framework was the promulgation of two laws in 1999 which gave extensive powers to regional and district governments in Indonesia starting in 2001 (Bjork, 2006). This legislation indicates that the education system, like all other government sectors, will be managed by the government and regional level educators and the main responsibility of the Ministry of National Education will shift from an instruction function to a coordination function.

After the economic and political crisis that hit, education reform in Indonesia was strengthened by the promulgation of Law Number 20 of 2003 concerning the National Education System as a legal framework for educational development. This law guarantees that students at the basic education level are exempt from all fees in order to facilitate easy access to education. The law also provides guidelines for curriculum content standards, educational process standards, graduate standards, educational staff standards, infrastructure standards, management standards, financing standards and educational

evaluation standards as references for guaranteeing and monitoring the quality of education. Decentralization of formal education management at the primary and secondary levels which refers to the National Education System Law is implemented within the framework of school-based management principles as an embodiment of educational democracy. With this principle, schools are given the freedom to manage the school independently and to get full support from the community to improve the quality of school services. Decentralization of education within a school-based management framework makes the school community an active participant involved in making decisions related to school programs including curriculum and learning strategies. So that schools can provide educational services that are more relevant to student needs.

In this era of educational decentralization, expanding educational access and services is very dependent on the willingness of regional political leadership to provide full support. So further efforts to support and expand school-based management innovation and community participation initiated by the central government with assistance from foreign parties depend on the willingness of local governments and the availability of budgets to support these programs. Meanwhile, the implementation of school-based management at the school level is very dependent on the leadership of the school principal. Currently, there are still gaps in various regions and schools in the implementation of school-based management. For this reason, long-term efforts need to be made by the central and regional governments to support schools in implementing school-based management effectively.

Apart from implementing school-based management, educational reform within the framework of educational decentralization is realized in the Education Unit Level Curriculum format. Since 2006, a centralized curriculum has been implemented for decades as a result of

Centralized education management is slowly being replaced by the Education Unit Level Curriculum. In the previous curriculum, objectives, content, learning methods and assessment techniques were determined by the Ministry of National Education. In the new curriculum development scheme, the central government through the National Education Standards Agency determines competency standards for graduates at each level of education, curriculum content standards, and guidelines for developing the Education Level Curriculum. In line with national standards and established guidelines, school communities under the supervision of local governments design curricula for their respective schools. This curriculum development strategy ensures the relevance of the curriculum to students' needs and conditions. Furthermore, the school community's sense of ownership of the independently developed curriculum can increase the success of implementing the curriculum itself.

Implementation of the Education Unit Level Curriculum provides freedom for schools and school committees to develop the school curriculum, analyze the internal and external environment of the school, and determine the vision, mission and educational goals initiated by the school. By referring to national standards, each school develops a curriculum that meets nationally

determined guidelines, namely 80% accommodating national content and 20% facilitating local curriculum. Local content materials are determined by the school community to develop student competencies which are designed based on the availability of resources characteristic of each region and the school's special mission.

In collaboration with local governments, schools also determine the educational calendar. Apart from that, the teacher group under the coordination of the school principal and school committee prepares the subject syllabus. To prepare the implementation of the Education Unit Level curriculum in the classroom context, teachers also prepare learning plans. Education Unit Level Curriculum Development is a new phenomenon for schools in Indonesia. As a consequence, there are still many problems related to its implementation in a number of schools. The freedom of schools to independently design curricula that are relevant to students' needs cannot be fully implemented. The Educational Unit Level Curriculum Model that is developed and fully adopted by schools tends to produce a uniform curriculum as was the case during the centralized era.

The change in the role of schools from curriculum implementers to curriculum developers actually confuses the school community. This happens because the role and mentality of implementing the curriculum has become so settled. The habit of only carrying out instructions from above cannot replace the role of taking the initiative. Therefore, the capacity of the school community to analyze students' conditions and needs and then implement them in the school curriculum needs to be further improved. The policy regarding the implementation of the Education Unit Level Curriculum was subsequently replaced by the implementation of the 2013 Curriculum which focuses on building strong student character. The 2013 curriculum was developed on a philosophical basis which provides the basis for developing all students' potential to become quality Indonesian human beings as stated in the national education goals, namely education rooted in national culture to build the nation's present and future life. The goal to be achieved in the 2013 curriculum is the birth of a creative and innovative generation with the hope of being able to minimize poverty, ignorance and the backwardness of the nation's civilization. This ideal is a response and adapted to the challenges of changing, uncertain times, so that Indonesia's young generation needs to be equipped with problem-solving skills and creativity with the character of being holistically strong human beings.

The content of the 2013 curriculum is designed in themes that integrate various subjects which in the previous curriculum were separate. This is aimed at gaining students' comprehensive understanding of a phenomenon, so that critical and creative thinking skills can be developed from an early age. The learning method used is inquiry where students are invited to find the answers to various problems themselves, so that the knowledge gained becomes more meaningful. Learning patterns that in the previous curriculum were passive have changed to active-seeking learning which is increasingly strengthened by a scientific approach that is based on providing meaningful experiences for students. one-way learning patterns (teacher-student interaction) are changed to

interactive learning (interactive teacher-student-community natural environment, sources or other media), as well as isolated learning patterns to network learning (students can gain knowledge from anyone and from anywhere that can be contacted and obtained via the internet).

Thus it appears that the 2013 curriculum is designed to respond to the demands of the times. Furthermore, educational reform which is no less important in efforts to improve the quality of education in Indonesia is the implementation of the teacher certification program. Law Number 20 of 2003 concerning the National Education System indicates that teaching as a professional job must fulfill a number of qualifications. Law Number 14 of 2005 concerning Teachers and Lecturers as an extension of the National Education System Law also requires the fulfillment of minimum teacher qualifications, the implementation of teacher certification, the implications of professional teacher certification for teaching authorities, and the right to receive professional incentives as additional income. It is stated that the minimum qualification of a teacher is a bachelor's degree in an area relevant to the subject being taught. A teaching certificate is formal proof of being recognized as a teacher who has met the required competencies to be able to teach in a particular field. Teacher competency consists of four components, namely: 1.) Pedagogical competency; 2.) Personal competence; 3.) Social competence; and 4.) Professional competence.

Teacher professional education and training is directed at developing these four competencies. A teaching certificate previously obtained when completing undergraduate studies in the field of education cannot automatically be considered a teacher certificate as required by the new law. Ministry of National Education Regulation Number 18 of 2007 concerning in-service teacher certification indicates that teachers need a competency test to obtain a professional teacher certificate.

The aim of implementing the teacher certification program is not only to improve teacher welfare through professional incentives but also primarily to increase teacher competence and professionalism. In this way, it is hoped that the teacher certification program can improve the quality of learning and teacher performance in the classroom, so that this teacher certification program is considered an important factor in educational reform in order to provide better educational services in the future.

## CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Various factors including global world trends as well as the economic, social, political, cultural and geographical dimensions of a country are the basis and background for rolling out and implementing reforms in the education sector. Singapore is a country that is still quite young with not very extensive geographical conditions and minimal natural resources. Singapore invests in its future with full attention to human resources through an education system aimed at preparing its young generation to face the challenges of globalization while playing an active role in the global economic agenda. A number of Singapore education reform programs such as Thinking School, Learning Nation; Teach

Less, Learn More, and the School Excellent Model have been proven effective in creating quality human resources that can play an active role on the global stage.

Meanwhile, Indonesia, as a large country with cultural, ethnic, linguistic and religious diversity, also has a number of programs to improve the quality of national education. The education decentralization program within the framework of school-based management, the Education Unit Level Curriculum (KTSP) and the 2013 Curriculum, as well as the teacher certification program are some examples of policies rolled out in the context of education reform. However, these various programs do not seem to be effectively able to improve the quality of education in Indonesia. The large wealth of Indonesia's resources, both natural resources and human resources, actually poses more of a challenge for the realization of educational reform, so that it takes longer time and stronger commitment from all elements of the nation to actively work together to realize the ideals of educational reform.

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