# Comparative Study of Levels and Curriculum in Education Systems of Indonesia and Australia

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**ABSTRAK**

This research aims to analyze and compare the education systems of Indonesia and Australia, focusing on the levels and curricula to identify key similarities and differences. The primary objective is to uncover insights into the strengths and challenges faced by each system, with particular attention to issues such as quality, accessibility, and global relevance. A Literature review methodology was employed, involving the analysis of academic articles, policy documents, and educational reports from both countries. The findings reveal that while both countries are committed to improving education, Indonesia emphasizes access and technology integration, whereas Australia prioritizes inclusivity, 21st-century skills, and teacher professional development. Despite differences in structure and curriculum, both systems aim to prepare students for global challenges through the development of critical thinking, digital literacy, and vocational skills. The research recommends that Indonesia adopt practices from Australia, particularly in terms of curriculum flexibility and teacher development programs, to further enhance the quality and relevance of its education system. Additionally, it suggests that Indonesia could benefit from a more inclusive approach in curriculum design, ensuring better representation of local cultures and global perspectives in education.

## INTRODUCTION

In 2023, the International Education Database (IED) released the world education rankings once again. Around 203 countries were ranked by the site. South Korea ranked first, followed by Denmark, and the Netherlands in third place. Indonesia ranked 67th, while Australia was in 17th place (*International Education Database*, 2023).

IED is an organization that frequently shares education rankings from various countries. One of its programs is the World Top 20 Education Poll. IED collects statistical data from six international organizations: OECD, PISA, UNESCO, EIU, TIMSS, and PIRLS. This poll is conducted by a non-profit organization in the field of education, namely the New Jersey Minority Educational Development (NJ MED) (Yusro, 2023).

The ranking is based on five levels of education: early childhood school enrollment rate, primary school completion rate, secondary school completion rate, high school graduation rate, and college graduation rate. Additionally, scores in Mathematics, Science, and reading proficiency at the primary and secondary levels are also key assessment criteria.

Education rankings provide an overview of the progress and development of education in a country. The progress and development of education serve as indicators of a country's advancement. This can be seen in several Western countries, such as the United States and European nations, which are frequently referenced in discussions about education. It is also evident that the United States and Europe remain popular destinations for Indonesian students seeking to pursue higher education. There are valid reasons for Western countries to remain favored educational destinations; various data provide information on their educational

excellence, such as teaching models, research outcomes, graduates' quality, and so on.

Indonesia is a developing country that is currently seeking an educational formula to make its education system at least on par with developed countries. Throughout its history, Indonesia has implemented various curricula that have changed over time, starting with the Kurikulum Berbasis Kompetensi (Competency-Based Curriculum) in 2004, Kurikulum Tingkat Satuan Pendidikan (the School-Based Curriculum) in 2006, the 2013 Curriculum (K-13), and most recently, Kurikulum Merdeka (the Independent Curriculum) introduced in 2022 (Althaf, 2022), places greater emphasis on character education (Balok, 2023). These curriculum changes are intended to fulfill the vision and mission of the National Education System as outlined in Indonesian Law No. 20 of 2003 *(UU RI Nomor 20 Tahun 2003)* on the National Education System *(SISDIKNAS)*, which states:

> "The establishment of an educational system as a strong and authoritative social institution to empower all Indonesian citizens to develop into quality human beings, capable and proactive in meeting the ever-changing challenges of the times." The mission of SISDIKNAS is: "To strive for the expansion and equitable distribution of opportunities to obtain quality education for all citizens" *(UU RI SISDIKNAS: 41)."*

There are many challenges faced by Indonesia's education system in creating an excellent generation through education. The quality of education in Indonesia is still considered far from expectations. Disparities in access to education between regions, uneven distribution of teachers, and the high number of low-quality graduates are suspected to be the main causes.

From a brief overview of Indonesia's education rankings and the main goals of education in Indonesia mentioned above, it serves as the initial basis for comparing it with more advanced education systems, such as the education system in Australia. This is referred to as a comparative study. Many factors influence the development of educational quality, so it is highly possible for differences in the quality of education between one institution and another or between one country and another. These differences are the reasons why researchers examine the education system and its implementation in other countries to absorb positive information as a basis for improving and advancing education.

The main objective of a comparative study is to undertake benchmarking efforts so that the position of the existing education system in one's own country can be identified. Consequently, strengthening strengths and addressing weaknesses can be done accurately, effectively, and efficiently. On a smaller scale, an educational institution can compare itself with other educational institutions.

One of the education systems considered to be among the best is the Australian education system, known for its dynamic and innovative approach. This is evidenced by the increasing number of students who choose Australia as their educational destination. In 2022, the total number of international students reached 619,371 out of a total of 746,387 enrollments, with 361,247 of them enrolled in higher education. This number increased from the previous year, reaching 572,349 out of a total of 716,025 enrollments, with 365,714 enrolled in higher education (Australia International Student Statistics, n.d.).

The number of Indonesian university students in 2022 was recorded at 9.32 million, an increase of 4.02% from the previous year, 2021. Additionally, the number of Indonesian students currently studying abroad is 59,224, with 11,683 in Australia and 9,682 in Malaysia. (Marietha, 2024) Meanwhile, the number of foreign students studying in Indonesia totaled 6,000 students (Al Qurtuby, 2023). From the descriptions above and the data presented, it can be seen that there is a disparity in the quality of education between Indonesia and Australia.

This research aims to analyze and compare the levels and curricula of the education systems in Indonesia and Australia to identify the key differences and similarities between the two systems. By conducting this comparative study, the research seeks to uncover insights into the strengths and challenges of each system, particularly in addressing issues related to quality,

accessibility, and relevance to global educational standards. The findings are expected to provide valuable recommendations for policymakers and educators in Indonesia to improve the national education system by adopting or adapting effective practices from Australia's education model.

## RESEARCH METHOD

This research employs a descriptive qualitative research approach with a literature review method. This method is used to identify the educational gap between Indonesia and Australia by examining the policies regarding the education systems implemented in both countries. This research begins with the collection of data on educational theories, especially comparative education theories. Subsequently, data collection on education system policies and implemented curricula is conducted. Then, the results of the data collection are analyzed to identify the best practices in the education systems of both countries.

## RESULT AND DISCUSSION

*Result*

Based on the research findings, the education systems in Indonesia and Australia exhibit distinct characteristics in terms of their levels of education and curricula. Both countries share a similar vision of integrating 21st-century skills into their curricula. However, their implementation approaches differ. In Indonesia, character development is explicitly outlined within the learning themes. Meanwhile, in Australia, skills such as critical thinking and problem-solving are integrated across various subjects.

**Comparison of Education Systems in Indonesia and Australia**

The education system in Indonesia is regulated by the Ministry of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology (Kemendikbudristek) as well as the Ministry of Religious Affairs (for religious education). Education policies in Indonesia have undergone various changes and developments over time to enhance the quality and accessibility of education for all citizens.

The education system in Australia is known as one of the best in the world, with an approach that focuses on quality, inclusivity, and innovation (Mubarak, 2019). Education in Australia is managed by each state and territory, but there are also national policies and standards that regulate some important aspects. Some key policies in the education systems of Indonesia and Australia can be seen in the following points:

1. **Educational Levels**
   a. **Educational Levels in Indonesia**

   Education in Indonesia begins with Early Childhood Education (PAUD), which includes Playgroups (KB), Kindergarten (TK), and similar programs. Students at this level are focused on character development, social skills, and basic academic preparation, typically at the age of 5 years old.

   In the education system in Indonesia, there is a policy known as the 12-year Compulsory Education *(wajib belajar/wajar)* which began in 2016. This 12-year compulsory education is a manifestation of the Smart Indonesia Program *(Program Indonesia Pintar/PIP)*, which aims to increase access for children aged 6 to 21 years to receive education services until completing secondary education. The program aims to ensure that every child in Indonesia receives free primary and secondary education (PIP Kemendikbudristek). The 12-year compulsory education includes Primary Education, namely Elementary School (SD) or its equivalent, which consists of 6 grade levels, and Junior High School (SMP) or its equivalent, which consists of 3 grade levels. The subjects taught at this level include core subjects such as Indonesian Language, Mathematics, Natural Sciences (IPA), Social Sciences (IPS), Pancasila and Civic Education (PPKn), as

well as Arts and Culture. Next is Secondary Education, which includes Senior High School (SMA) consisting of 3 grade levels, or Vocational High School (SMK) with a focus on vocational skills. SMA has streams such as Natural Sciences (IPA), Social Sciences (IPS), and Languages, while SMK offers various vocational programs according to industry needs.

After completing the 12-year compulsory education, students proceed to Higher Education, which includes diploma programs (Diploma II and Diploma III), bachelor's degrees (4 years), master's degrees (2 years), doctoral degrees (3 years), and specialist programs offered by Higher Education Institutions (Sisdiknas Law Article 19). Higher Education Institutions are obligated to implement the Tri Dharma of Higher Education, which includes education and teaching, research, and community service *(UU SISDIKNAS Nomor 20)*.

In Indonesia, educational institutions are divided into two categories: state-run institutions (directly managed by the government) and private institutions (managed by non-government entities). Each institution, whether public or private, has two curriculum provisions, namely the curriculum set by the Ministry of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology (Kemendikbudristek) and the Ministry of Religious Affairs (Kemenag).

**b. Educational Levels in Australia**

In Australia, there is also a compulsory education program, which applies to children aged 6 to 16 years old, although some states and territories have slightly different age variations. This includes primary and junior secondary education. Sometimes, before entering primary school in Australia, there is an education stage called kindergarten or preschool.

Quoting from the Australian Qualifications Framework (AQF) for the regions of New South Wales, Victoria, Tasmania, and the Australian Capital Territory; Primary School education lasts for 6 years, followed by Junior Secondary School for 4 years, and Senior High School for 2 years. Meanwhile, for the regions of Queensland, South Australia, Western Australia, and the Northern Territory; Primary School education lasts for 7 years, followed by Junior Secondary School for 3 years, and Senior High School for 2 years. At the Senior High School level, students prepare for different final certification exams in each state (for example, The Higher School Certificate (HSC) in New South Wales, Victorian Certificate of Education (VCE) in Victoria).

For the subjects taught in years 1-6, they include: Mathematics, English, History, Science and Technology. For years 7-10, subjects may include: Aboriginal Studies, Agricultural Technology, Information and Software Technology, Languages, Marine and Aquaculture Technology, Music, Personal Development, Health and Physical Education, Visual Design, Visual Arts, Geography, Graphics, and others. For years 11-12, subjects may include: Arts, Business and Economics, Career Development, Humanities and Social Sciences, ICT and Design, and others.

The next level is Higher Education, known in Australia as Tertiary Education in Universities (TEU) or Technical and Further Education (TAFE) College. Bachelor's Degree programs typically last for 3 to 4 years, Master's Degree programs last for 1.5 to 2 years, and Doctoral Degree (PhD) programs last for 3 years.

The detailed overview of the education levels in Australia can be seen in the image below:
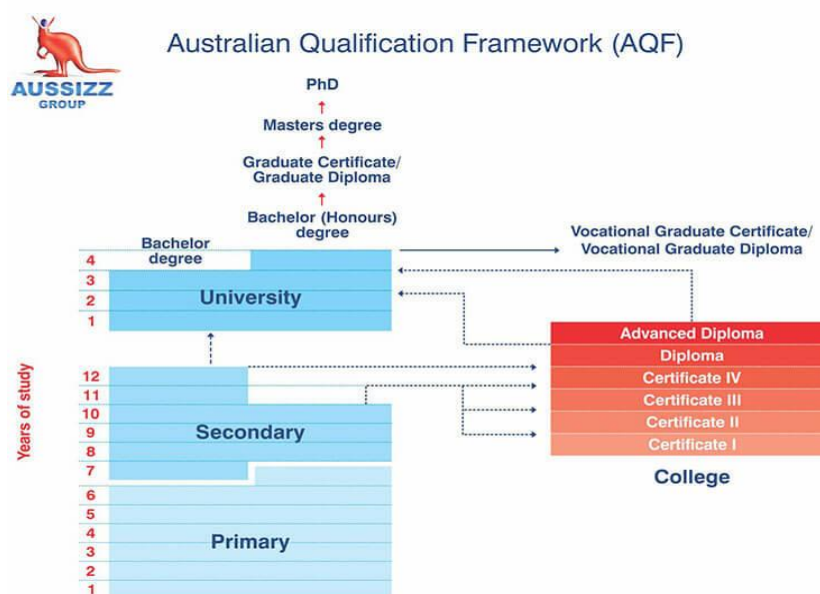
**Figure 1.** Australian Qualification Framework (*AQF*, n.d.)

Educational institutions in Australia are categorized as either Public (managed by the government) or Private (managed by non-government entities), sometimes affiliated with specific religions.

2. **Curriculum**

    a. **Education Curriculum in Indonesia**

    The curriculum in Indonesia has undergone several changes. In 2006, it was known as the School-Based Curriculum (KTSP), which was developed into the 2013 curriculum (K-13), which was then further refined with the Independent Learning (Merdeka Belajar) curriculum launched in 2022. This curriculum emphasizes project-based learning and 21st-century skills such as creativity, critical thinking, collaboration, and communication. It also provides flexibility for schools to develop materials according to the needs and characteristics of students.

    Changes in the education curriculum in Indonesia often occur due to changes in policy makers (Minister of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology), such as the transition from the Competency-Based Curriculum (KBK) in 2004 to the School-Based Curriculum (KTSP) in 2006, based on the Regulation of the Minister of National Education of the Republic of Indonesia Number 22 Year 2006 concerning Content Standards for Primary and Secondary Education, and Regulation of the Minister of National Education of the Republic of Indonesia Number 23 Year 2006 concerning Graduate Competency Standards for Primary and Secondary Education. KTSP provides schools with greater autonomy to develop curricula according to local needs and potentials. Schools are authorized to design syllabi and learning implementation plans. This curriculum emphasizes the achievement of basic competencies and national competency standards for graduates.

    The next change occurred in 2013 with the implementation of the Curriculum 2013 (K-13) gradually from the academic year 2013/2014 onwards. This curriculum aimed to improve the KTSP with a more integrated and holistic approach. It was based on the Regulation of the Minister of Education and Culture of the Republic of Indonesia Number 67-70 Year 2013 concerning the Basic Framework and Curriculum Structure for Elementary Schools (SD/MI), Junior High Schools (SMP/MTs), Senior High Schools (SMA/MA), and

Vocational Schools (SMK/MAK). K-13 emphasizes the balanced development of attitudes, skills, and knowledge. It employs integrated thematic learning for elementary education (SD) and subject-based approaches for secondary education (SMP/SMA). The assessment is comprehensive, covering cognitive, affective, and psychomotor aspects.

Then, in 2016, based on the Regulation of the Minister of Education and Culture of the Republic of Indonesia Number 24 Year 2016 concerning Core Competencies and Basic Competencies of Subjects in the 2013 Curriculum for Primary and Secondary Education, K-13 was further refined. The refinement and revision of this curriculum aimed to address various challenges that arose during implementation, based on evaluations conducted by the government. This revision focused on simplifying and adjusting the curriculum content to be more easily understood and determined by teachers, enhancing teacher competencies through training and intensive mentoring, and integrating character education into every subject.

And the latest (up to now) is the *Kurikulum Merdeka (2022)*. The Merdeka Curriculum was introduced as part of the *Merdeka Belajar (2020)* policy initiated by the Minister of Education and Culture, Nadiem Makarim. This curriculum provides more freedom to schools and teachers to adapt the learning process to students' needs. The focus of this curriculum includes: emphasis on student-centered learning, flexibility in curriculum development and assessment of learning outcomes, and integration of technology in learning and development of 21st-century skills.

The use of technology in education has also been increasingly emphasized, especially after the COVID-19 pandemic. School digitization programs and the development of online learning platforms, such as *Rumah Belajar*, have helped students and teachers stay connected and continue the learning process even in situations where face-to-face interaction is not possible.

The government is committed to providing inclusive education for all children, including those with special needs. Inclusive schools and special education programs are developed to ensure that every child receives equal access to education rights.

To support the needs of skilled labor, the government also develops vocational education. Vocational High Schools (SMK) are strengthened with curricula relevant to industry needs, as well as partnerships with the business world and industry for apprenticeship programs and job training.

In terms of improving the quality of teachers and educational staff, the government provides various training and certification programs to enhance teacher competencies. These include; Teacher Learner Program *(Program Guru Pembelajar)* Aimed at enhancing teachers' 4 competencies (pedagogical, professional, social, and personality). This program offers various learning modules accessible online and offline. (Directorate General of Teachers and Educational Personnel). Teacher Professional Education and Training Program *(Program Pendidikan dan Latihan Profesi Guru/PLPG)* Part of the teacher certification program aimed at enhancing teacher competencies and professionalism through intensive training and competency tests. (Minister of Education and Culture Regulation Number 10 Year 2017 concerning Certification for Teachers Appointed before 2016). Continuous Professional Development Program *(Program Pengembangan Keprofesian Berkelanjutan/PKB)* Designed to ensure that teachers continue to develop their competencies in line with advancements in science and technology and societal needs. It includes training, workshops, seminars, and other activities supporting the professional development of teachers. (Continuous Professional Development Guidelines from the Ministry of Education and Culture). School Digitalization Program *(Program Digitalisasi Sekolah)* Part of the Independent Learning policy, aiming to enhance teachers' abilities in using digital technology in teaching.

**b. Education Curriculum in Australia**

The current educational curriculum implemented in Australia is the National Curriculum, which has been in effect since 2008 as outlined by the Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority (ACARA). This curriculum is designed to ensure that all students receive comprehensive and quality education, regardless of their location. Similar to Indonesia, the educational curriculum in Australia has also undergone several changes, starting from the early colonial period (1777-early 1900s). During this time, education in Australia was highly fragmented with a strong influence from the British education system. Schools were established by religious groups and communities, with curricula focusing on basic reading, writing, and mathematics. Colonial governments began to engage in education in the late 19th century by adopting education laws that led to free and compulsory primary education. In the early 20th century, the education system became more structured with the introduction of more formal and uniform curricula in various states. Secondary education began to develop, and curricula began to incorporate more subjects such as History, Geography, and Natural Sciences. Following World War II (1945-1970s), there was a greater emphasis on Science and Technology Education in response to global developments. The curriculum began to focus on preparing students for the workforce and economic contribution, with the addition of vocational and technical subjects. Then came the Curriculum Reform (1980s to 1990s), during this period educational reform began to emphasize student-centered education and the development of critical thinking skills. There was an increase in the inclusion and accessibility of education for various societal groups, including education for students with special needs. (Collins & Yates, 2009; Green, 2021)

In 2008, the Australian Government initiated the development of the Australian National Curriculum aimed at providing consistent curriculum across all states and territories. The National Curriculum covers eight learning areas: English, Mathematics, Science, Humanities and Social Sciences, The Arts, Technologies, Health and Physical Education, and Languages. This curriculum is designed to ensure that all students, regardless of their location in Australia, have access to high-quality education with the same standards. (ACARA, n.d.; Donnelly & Wiltshire, 2014)

This curriculum includes General Capabilities, encompassing seven general capabilities: Literacy, Numeracy, Information and Communication Technology (ICT) Capability, Critical and Creative Thinking, Personal and Social Capability, Ethical Understanding, and Intercultural Understanding. These capabilities are integrated across learning areas to help students develop various skills needed in life and work (*General Capabilities*, n.d.). Additionally, there are Cross-curriculum Priorities. There are three cross-curriculum priorities designed to enrich the curriculum: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Histories and Cultures, Asia and Australia's Engagement with Asia, and Sustainability (*Cross-Curriculum Priorities*, n.d.).These priorities aim to provide students with a broader understanding of contemporary issues and important contexts.

The Curriculum development in Australia is underpinned by eight condition, namely; (1) cultural diversity, (2) changes in the family structure, (3) rapid pace of technologival change, (4) global environmental issues, (5) changing nature of social conditions, (6) change in the workplace, (7) inter-dependence in the global economy, (8) uncertain standards of living (Nasihin, 2018). The implementation of the curriculum in Australia is managed by each state and territory, which have the flexibility to adopt and adapt the curriculum according to their specific needs and schedules. This decentralized approach allows for regional differences while maintaining consistent national standards.

The Australian government, through the Department of Education, has policies

and initiatives supporting inclusive education as a top priority. The government ensures that all children, including those with special needs, have equal access to education. Schools are encouraged to create inclusive learning environments and support all students in reaching their potential. (Australian Department of Education)

Australia has a highly developed vocational education and training system, known as VET (*Vocational Education and Training*, n.d.). This system offers various courses related to specific industries, providing practical skills that can be directly applied in the workforce. VET is supported by collaboration with industries to ensure the relevance and quality of training.

The Australian government, through various agencies such as the Australian Skills Quality Authority [ASQA] and the Department of Education, Skills and Employment, ensures the quality and accreditation of VET programs. The primary providers of VET courses are Technical and Further Education (TAFE) institutions along with Registered Training Organizations (RTOs), which play a significant role in delivering vocational training. Australia also has research institutions and data providers focusing on vocational education, including the National Centre for Vocational Education Research (NCVER), which assesses the effectiveness and relevance of VET training.

Education in Australia strongly supports the use of technology in the learning process. Many schools have robust digital programs, providing access to computers, tablets, and the internet as learning tools. This is reinforced by government programs and policies that support the integration of technology in education.

The Australian government has a strong focus on improving teaching quality as part of its national education policy. They believe that good teaching quality is key to student success. Therefore, various initiatives have been launched to support the professional development of teachers and ensure high standards in teaching practices. Teachers in Australia are required to continually enhance their professionalism through training and further education. They have access to various training programs designed to improve teaching skills, update academic knowledge, and adopt best practices in education. This training covers a range of topics, from teaching techniques to the use of technology in the classroom (AITSL, n.d.).

Teacher registration is regulated by professional bodies in each state and territory in Australia. These bodies are responsible for ensuring that registered teachers meet the established professional standards and are competent in teaching practices. The registration process typically involves an assessment of qualifications, teaching experience, and other relevant competencies (AITSL, 2020). Through these efforts, Australia is committed to ensuring that every student receives high-quality education delivered by skilled and well-trained teachers.

## Discussion

The education system is one of the crucial pillars in the development of a country. Although the primary goal of education is to provide knowledge and skills to individuals to become productive and competitive members of society, the education systems implemented in various countries can vary significantly from one another. These differences are influenced by various factors, including history, culture, economy, and government policies of each country. (Muhardi, 2004)

History plays a key role in shaping the education system. For example, countries that were once colonies tend to adopt educational models from their colonizers, although they have been modified to suit local needs. Culture also has a significant impact. The values and norms upheld by a country's society are mirrored in its curriculum, teaching methods, and educational approaches. The economy is another important factor. Countries with larger economic

resources tend to have better educational facilities and broader access to modern technology. Conversely, countries with limited economic resources may face challenges in providing quality education for all their citizens. Additionally, government policies play a significant role in determining education priorities and budgets, as well as in developing regulations and standards that govern the education sector.

Based on the results above, it is clear that both Indonesia and Australia have a strong commitment to improving the quality of education. While Indonesia focuses on enhancing access and integrating technology into learning, providing institutions with the freedom to manage and develop their educational programs, Australia emphasizes inclusivity, 21st-century skills, and the professional development of teachers (Chalkiadaki, 2018). Therefore, both countries contribute valuable efforts toward achieving high-quality education for all learners, despite having different system policies and implementation strategies.

Both countries, Indonesia and Australia, emphasize the importance of developing 21st-century skills in education, focusing on competencies such as digital literacy, critical thinking, communication, and collaboration. These skills are essential for preparing students to face the challenges of globalization and technological advancements. A strong education system must strategically incorporate these skills into the curriculum to ensure relevance to future needs. Information and Communication Technology (ICT) plays a crucial role in developing these competencies, supported by the availability of technological access, teacher training, and methods for integrating technology into the learning process.

In terms of educational levels, Indonesia and Australia share similarities, starting with primary, secondary, and tertiary education, but differ in duration and implementation. Indonesia has a mandatory 12-year education program, consisting of 6 years for primary education, 3 years for junior secondary education, and 3 years for senior secondary education. In contrast, Australia has a 10-year mandatory education program (from grade 1 to 10, covering both primary and secondary education), with an additional 2 years for senior secondary education. Regarding the 10-year compulsory education, the are regional differences in Australia. In New South Wales, Victoria, Tasmania, and The Australian Capital Territory, primary education lasts 6 years, and junior secondary education spans 4 years. Meanwhile, in Queensland, South Australia, Western Australia, and the Northern Territory, primary education lasts 7 years, and junior secondary education is 3 years long (Marmoah et al., 2021; Michie, 2017; Winarso et al., 2014).

There are significant differences between Indonesia and Australia, each with its own strengths and weaknesses. In Indonesia's primary education level, students are taught various subjects including the national language, Mathematics, Natural Sciences, Social Sciences, Pancasila and Civic Education, English, Religious Studies, and local content. In Australia, the focus at this level is on English language skills and physical development, supplemented by subjects such as Mathematics, Arts and Culture, and Technology. In terms of the quantity of subjects taught, education in Indonesia covers more ground compared to Australia at the primary level, emphasizing holistic development of students in various aspects. Moving to secondary education in Indonesia, the curriculum doesn't differ significantly from primary education, but there's an increase in the complexity of subjects taught. Conversely, in Australia, at the senior high school level, the subjects taught are highly diverse, and students are given the freedom to choose fields of specialization based on their interests.

The educational curriculum in Indonesia has undergone several changes throughout its history. It began with the *Rentjana Pelajaran* in 1947, followed by the *Rentjana Pelajaran Terurai* in 1952, the *Rentjana Pendidikan* in 1964, and continued with the Curriculum 1968, Curriculum 1975, Curriculum 1984, Curriculum 1994, and the Supplement to the Curriculum 1999. This progression led to the Competency-Based Curriculum *(KBK)* in 2004, the School-Based

Curriculum *(KTSP)* in 2006, and ultimately the Curriculum 2013 (K-13), which was further refined with the *Merdeka* Curriculum in 2022 (Insani, 2019; Soleman, 2020). These changes often occur due to shifts in policy leadership, but they are always based on continuous evaluations aimed at achieving an ideal education system that evolves with the times. Each curriculum update reflects a response to the changing needs of society, ensuring that the educational system remains relevant and effective in preparing students for future challenges.

The *Merdeka* Curriculum (2022) is part of Indonesia's broader *Merdeka Belajar* (2020) initiative, which focuses on giving schools and teachers more freedom to tailor education to students' needs. This curriculum emphasizes a student-centered approach, where flexibility in the curriculum and assessment is key. The goal is to better prepare students with 21st-century skills like critical thinking, collaboration, and digital literacy. The importance of technology in education has grown, especially following the COVID-19 pandemic. Online platforms like *Rumah Belajar* helped maintain learning during lockdowns, showing the critical role of digital tools in education. The government is also committed to providing inclusive education for all, including students with special needs, and strengthening vocational education by aligning high school curricula with industry needs. Additionally, there are various professional development programs for teachers to improve their skills, such as the Teacher Learner Program and Continuous Professional Development Program, which help teachers stay updated on educational trends and technology use.

Australia's education system has undergone significant development since its early colonial period, transitioning from a fragmented system influenced by British models to a more structured and formalized approach. This evolution included the introduction of compulsory education and the expansion of secondary education, which gradually incorporated more subjects. Post-World War II, the curriculum began to focus more on science, technology, and vocational training in response to societal and workforce needs. Educational reforms in the 1980s and 1990s further emphasized student-centered learning, critical thinking, and inclusivity, addressing the needs of various social groups, including students with special needs. The current National Curriculum, established in 2008, is designed to provide a consistent educational standard across Australia, while allowing for regional flexibility. This approach ensures that all students, regardless of location, have access to quality education. The curriculum also prioritizes the development of essential skills like critical thinking, digital literacy, and social capabilities, preparing students for the challenges of the modern world. Australia's focus on vocational education and training (VET) ensures that students gain practical, industry-specific skills, and the system is supported by strong government initiatives. Teacher professional development is another priority, with ongoing training programs that keep educators up-to-date with the latest educational practices and technology integration. Through these efforts, Australia strives to maintain a high-quality, inclusive, and adaptable education system.

In their curriculum implementation, both Indonesia and Australia adopt an inclusive approach, ensuring that all students, including those with special needs, have equal access to quality education. Both countries are embracing technological advancements and giving attention to local content. However, there is a difference in how local content is incorporated: Indonesia allows educational institutions the flexibility to incorporate regional content, while Australia emphasizes the culture of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders in its curriculum. Regarding assessment systems, Indonesia focuses not only on the final outcome but also on the learning process, using authentic assessments that evaluate attitudes, knowledge, and skills through methods like observation, portfolios, and performance assessments. In contrast, Australia follows a standards-based assessment approach, where evaluations are based on national standards, and the results are reported to help students, parents, and educators track progress and identify areas for improvement. An interesting aspect of Australia's approach is

its cross-curriculum policy, which specifically addresses the inclusion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures in education, ensuring their representation and accessibility within the curriculum.

## CONCLUSION

Based on the results and discussion, this research provides a comparative analysis of the education systems in Indonesia and Australia, highlighting key similarities and differences in their levels and curricula. Both countries emphasize the development of 21st-century skills such as digital literacy, critical thinking, and communication. However, Indonesia focuses more on improving access to education and integrating technology, while Australia prioritizes inclusivity, teacher professional development, and the incorporation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures. To enhance Indonesia's education system, it is recommended to adopt a more inclusive approach to curriculum development, integrating 21st-century skills while considering local culture, as seen in Australia. Additionally, Indonesia could benefit from strengthening its teacher training programs and expanding the use of technology to improve accessibility and flexibility in education. By implementing these strategies, Indonesia can better align its education system with global standards and address the evolving needs of students and the workforce.

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