

# STUDENTS' UNDERSTANDING ON THE SIMILARITIES BETWEEN MALAYSIA AND INDONESIA EDUCATION SYSTEM

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**Abstract** - Malaysia and Indonesia are two neighboring countries with their own education system. The implementation of the education systems in both countries is basically for the purpose of developing their human resources for nation development. This paper discusses findings of a survey study conducted to identify students' understanding on similarities between Malaysian and Indonesian education system for the aspects of education philosophy; curriculum and its implementation; and pupils' learning assessment. Selected Malaysian students who studied in Indonesia and Indonesian students who studied in Malaysia were involved as participants of this study. The finding shows that the participants understand that there are similarities on the concept and its implementation of such aspects. Philosophically, divinity is the main foundation that underlying both countries' education systems. For the aspect of curriculum, it is found that knowledge, skills and values are to be developed among school pupils in an orchestrated and harmonious way for the purpose of preparing competence future citizens and human resources for the countries. Pupils' learning assessments are not mainly on the final paper and pencil test but also on the learning process. On a positive note, these similarities can be viewed in terms of the benefits to both countries. As in the wave of globalization and global challenges keep on changing, one day there might become ideas to have mutual collaborations between Malaysia and Indonesia in educating their future citizens for human resources development.

**Keywords:** *Education system, human resource development.*

## I. INTRODUCTION

Malaysia and Indonesia are two neighboring countries that are in the same cluster called the Malay Archipelago or Nusantara. Thus the peoples of the two countries said to be allied in a group of Malay stock. Both countries were once colonized by western colonial powers, namely Portuguese, Dutch and English. After gaining independence from colonization, Malaysia and Indonesia rose to reconstruct the country by exploiting their natural as well as human resources for nations development. It is understood that there is a strong relationship between education and human resources development. Almost every country spends larger budget for education of its citizens. Better education is towards a production of more effective and efficient human resources. In other words, better education is for the better work place of tomorrow. Misalignment in the treatment done in

education will result to the generation of low quality human resources. Thus, Donna Dare (1996) in his article emphasizes that 'education is a human resources development'.

## II. RESEARCH BACKGROUND

Only since 1988 education system in Malaysia has its written education philosophy namely Malaysia National Education Philosophy (NEP). Before the date, the education system was based on the interpretation of Malaysia Education Act 1961 and its related policies. The education philosophy was then enshrined in Malaysia Education Act 1996, Article 505 with the following statement:

“Education in Malaysia is an ongoing effort towards further developing the potential of individuals in a holistic and integrated manner, so as to produce individuals who are intellectually, spiritually, emotionally and physically balanced and harmonious, based on a firm belief in devotion to God. Such an effort is designed to produce Malaysian citizens who are knowledgeable and competent, who possess high moral standards, and who are responsible and capable of achieving high level of personal well-being as well as being able to contribute to the harmony and betterment of the family, the society and the nation at large”. Malaysia Ministry of Education (2006)

Meanwhile in Indonesia, Pancasila is a main policy that is used to govern the overall country's policies including the policy of its education system. Pancasila is the nation wide ideology of Indonesia as stated in the Constitution of Indonesia since 1945. Five inter-related basic principles of Pancasila are: (1) Belief in the one and only God. (2) Just and civilized humanity. (3) The unity of Indonesian. (4) Democracy guided by the inner wisdom in the unanimity arising out of deliberations among representatives. (5) Social justice for all people of Indonesia. Such principles include the aspects of divinity, humanity, society and statehood.

Since Pancasila is the policy that governed the overall country's policies, therefore Pancasila basically can be said as the philosophy of its education system. It is confirmed in MPR Decree No. 11/MPR/1988. This

is also confirmed in UUSPN No.2 of 1989, that national education in Indonesia is Pancasila. Based on Pancasila, the development of abilities and characters among citizen in Indonesia is through education. Through education, it is also aim to develop students' potential to produce citizens who are noble to their God; noble in their character; physically fit; knowledgeable and competent; creative and independent. It is toward citizens' development of Indonesia with democratic and accountable to peoples and spirit of the country.

For the aspect of curriculum, Malaysia is implementing Primary School Standard Curriculum (KSSR in its Malay acronym) that began on 2011 in upgrading the former Primary School Integrated Curriculum (KBSR in its Malay acronym). The cohorts of the pupils are now in secondary schools that follow Secondary School Standard Curriculum (KSSM in its Malay acronym) that began in the year 2017. On the other hand in Indonesia, Curriculum 2013 is now implemented to upgrade the former Curriculum 2006 (KTSP - Kurikulum Tingkat Satuan Pendidikan). Indonesia is also implementing the concept of an integrated curriculum with no separation or compartmentalization between the domains of cognitive, affective and psychomotor in developing pupils' potential. The concept of integration in the curriculum also includes the integration of knowledge, values, skills and divinity; without any separation between each other. The concept of integration in the curriculum also involves aspects of theory and practice as well as contextual between flog and real lives. Thus, aspects of local knowledge are also taken into account in the curriculum. The scenarios are common in Malaysia as well as in Indonesia.

Development of competencies among pupils in schools of Malaysia and Indonesia is among the main important points that cannot be set aside. Therefore school pupils' assessments are not only for the sake of grading, instead actually to ensure the development of pupils' competencies. Malaysia is implementing school base assessment. Pupils' assessment in both countries is in parallel with the concept of 'assessment for learning' instead of 'assessment of learning'.

### III. PROBLEM STATEMENTS

At present they are many businessmen, workers, tourist and social visitors from Indonesia in Malaysia and vice versa. Besides that, there are also numbers of Indonesian students study in Malaysian universities; and at the same time Malaysian students who study in Indonesian Universities. Why this mobilization happened? Why Malaysian students study in Indonesia and vice versa? There might be some interesting points to be noted besides language, way of life, geographical distance and food, whereby they used to make further study across border instead of doing it in their own country's local universities. Furthermore, it seems like there are some basic knowledge and understanding regarding with both countries education system that

make them decide to make further study across the border. This case study aims to identify students' understanding on the similarities between education system in Malaysia and Indonesia.

### IV. SIGNIFICANCE OF STUDY

Significant of this study is to get the idea about students' mobilization across the border between Malaysia and Indonesia for their further education in the era of globalization. For higher education institutions of the said countries, it is in line with internationalization policy whereby the institutions are now 'opening their doors' and welcoming foreign students. Besides that, the findings of this study hopefully may illuminate how promotion can be made by the higher education institution to attract foreign students to the institutions.

### V. RESEARCH QUESTIONS

Research questions are as follows:

- How's students' understanding on the similarities between Malaysian and Indonesian education system for the aspect of their education philosophy?
- How's students' understanding on the similarities between Malaysian and Indonesian education system for the aspect of their curriculum and its implementation?
- How's students' understanding on the similarities between Malaysian and Indonesian education system for the aspect of their pupils' learning assessment?
- How's students' understanding on the similarities between Malaysian and Indonesian education system that affecting their interest to do their study across border?

### VI. METHODOLOGY

A survey study was done to participants that consist of Malaysian students who studied in Indonesian tertiary education institutions; and Indonesian students who studied in Malaysian tertiary education institutions. The study was done with the assumption that the participants had well understood with their own country's education system. Particulars of the participants are as in Table 1.

Table 1  
Particulars of the participants

Interview Participants	Number of Participants	Remark
Malaysian Student	5	Syah Kuala University (Aceh, Indonesia)
Indonesian Student	5	Sultan Idris Education University (Perak, Malaysia)

Besides their study in the said university, the participants of the study also had experiences visited schools; interact with teachers of the schools and observing teaching and learning process in classrooms. Semi-structured interviews were done to get their view on the aspects of education philosophy; curriculum and its implementation; and pupils' learning assessment. The interview sessions were audio recorded.

## VII. DATA ANALYSIS

The audio data recorded from the interview sessions was transcribed and analyzed according to the selected themes to answer the research questions as mention above. The analyzed data is then presented narratively on the aspects of education philosophy; curriculum and its implementation; and pupils' learning assessment as mentioned earlier.

## VIII. FINDINGS

There are similarities on the concept and its implementation of education system in Malaysia and Indonesia despite differences. Anyway presented in this paper is only on the students' understanding on the similarities between Malaysia and Indonesia education system so that it helps to illuminate how they have their intention to study across the border between Malaysia and Indonesia.

- How's students' understanding on the similarities between Malaysian and Indonesian education system for the aspect of their education philosophy?

Participants from Malaysia admitted to say that Malaysia and Indonesia have a similarity on the aspect of education philosophy.

*"In Malaysia the national education philosophy (NEP) clearly states that education must based on the belief of god; whereas in Indonesia education must base on Pancasila whereby 'belief in the one and only God' is one of the principles in the Pancasila"*

(MS1)

On the other hand, participants from Indonesia also admitted in line with the idea of similarity between Malaysia and Indonesia.

*"Education in Indonesia is in parallel with its national ideology and the implementation of education aimed to develop students' potential in order to be individuals who are faithful to God; individuals who are noble in their character. This principle is not much difference from Malaysia"*  
(IS4)

From the aspect of education philosophy, participants of the interviews said that both countries rely on divinity as the main foundation that underlying their education systems. Furthermore, philosophically education in both countries is focusing more on the development of pupils' basic potential and thus education is seen as pupils centered.

- How's students' understanding on the similarities between Malaysian and Indonesian education system for the aspect of their curriculum and its implementation?

In terms of curriculum, the development of three basic domains namely cognitive, affective and psychomotor where included for the harmonious development of the pupils.

*"The curriculum in Malaysia is for developing students' basic potential namely intellectual, spiritual, physical and emotion as stated in NEP and it undeniably happens in Indonesia where the curriculum is actually towards the development of cognitive, affective and psychomotor"*

(MS3)

The participants of the interviews also said that there are similarities between Malaysian and Indonesian curriculum in terms of its development. Curriculum in Malaysia as well as in Indonesia has a dynamic characteristic where by it keeps on changing to sake for the better.

*"As in Malaysia, the curriculum in Indonesian education system also keeps on changing for the better and relevance with the current and future challenges. For example in Malaysia KBSR and KBSM changed KSSR and KSSM, whereas in Indonesia KTSP 2006 had changed to Curriculum 2013"*

(IS1)

In terms content of the curriculum, the development of three basic contents namely knowledge, skills and values where included in the curriculum for the harmonious development of the pupils.

*“Malaysia as well as Indonesia not denying the importance of developing knowledge, values and skills among pupils, therefore the aspects are not taken for granted or been set aside in the curriculum development and implementation.”*

(IS5)

*“Knowledge, skills and values are three basic content that has to be delivered or inculcated to among school pupils. Schools in the countries are focusing that. Anyway the detail of the knowledge, skills and values may different between the countries.”*

(MS3)

For curriculum implementation, participant of the interviews pointed out as follow:

*“I understand that student-centered learning is among the common approach chosen by Malaysian as well as Indonesian teachers in conducting their classroom.”*

(IS4)

*“I found that there are similarities between Malaysian and Indonesian schools where active learning always happen during teaching and learning session in classrooms”*

(IM1)

From their statements it can be summarize that the participants understand about the similarities between the two countries in terms of curriculum and its implementation in their education system.

- How’s students’ understanding on the similarities between Malaysian and Indonesian education system for the aspect of their pupils’ learning assessment?

The quality of leaning process and the quality of learning outcomes are based on competencies. Majority of the participants interviewed in this study said that pupils’ learning assessments at schools in Malaysia as well as in Indonesia are not mainly on the final paper and pencil test. Instead it is also on pupil’s learning process. Participants in the interview from Malaysia said:

*“In teaching and learning process pupils are engaged with activities that teacher observes and assesses”*

(MS5)

*“Malaysia is now implementing school based assessment where teachers are on going assess their pupils’ learning process. I found that this way of assessing pupils’ learning is also practiced in Indonesia”*

(MS2)

On the similar issue, Indonesian participant respond as follow:

*“There are similarities between Malaysian and Indonesians schools in term of pupils’ learning assessment. Pupils’ assessments are on going process. Final exam is part of their assessment”*

(IS3)

No matter whether they are Indonesian participants nor Malaysians, both party understand that there are similarities between the countries with regard of their pupils’ learning assessment.

- How’s students’ understanding on the similarities between Malaysian and Indonesian education system that affecting their interest to do their study across border?

This is an issue about how the understanding on the similarities of education system between the countries affecting their intention to do their study across the border instead of doing it in their local university. In the interviews to participants from Indonesia, one of the participants said:

*“I feel confident to do my further study in Malaysia because in general I know that it has not much difference with my country in terms of education system as well as the life style in Malaysia”*

(IS2)

*“I choose Malaysia instead of other countries for my tertiary education as I know better about Malaysian education system compare to other countries. There is not much difference Malaysia and Indonesia.”*

(IS4)

Besides that, a participant form Malaysia gave respond on self-adjustment during the period of stay and study in Indonesia:

*“Malaysia and Indonesia are two countries that basically have similar in their social and education system. Therefore it is not difficult for me to adapt with the environment when I study in Indonesia”*

(MS3)

As for overall, conclusion can be drawn that students’ understanding on the similarities of the education system, can contributes to students’ interest to study in the neighborhood country. It looks like there is a relationship between them.

## IX. DISCUSSION

Besides students’ individual interest to study abroad either to Malaysia or Indonesia, there are also quite numbers of higher education institutions in Malaysia as well as in Indonesia organizing collaboration programs for their students. For example,

students of Sultan Idris Education University in Perak (Malaysia) had their practical teaching in Palembang, Indonesia with the collaboration of Sriwijaya University. In addition, University Utara Malaysia in Kedah (Malaysia) had their students exchange program at Syiah Kuala University in Aceh (Indonesia).

According Malaysian Qualification Agency (MQA), graduates of National Examination (UN) in Indonesia: from Senior High School (SMA) or Madrasah Alawiyah (MA), after 12 years of schooling in Indonesia is equivalent to High School Certificate (STPM) in Malaysia. This means that graduates of the SMA who meet their qualifications can do their Bachelor's Degree at public institutions of higher learning (IPTA) or private higher learning institutions (IPTS) in Malaysia. It seems that there is a path that can be pioneered towards realization. It is likewise for students from Malaysia to have their study in Indonesia.

The concept of students exchange between Malaysia and Indonesia whether organized formally by education institution or individually by students, potentially it will be better if it is extended to pupils at secondary and primary schools too. For instance Malaysia and Indonesia might one day collaboratively think and start to have their secondary school students exchange programs mutually. It might not for a start in the larger scale, instead it begins with a smaller one. In term of facilities, Boarding Schools or schools with students hostels as found in Malaysia might be potentially be convenient to support the implementation of this idea.

## X. CONCLUSION

On a positive note, the similarities between Malaysia and Indonesia can be viewed in terms of the benefits to both countries. As in the wave of globalization and global challenges keep on changing drastically, one day there might become ideas to have mutual collaborations between Malaysia and Indonesia in educating their future citizens for human resources development. Thus it seems important to ensure Malaysian and Indonesian citizen to know and understand each other and their education system.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This study is part and partial of the whole research supported by Sultan Idris Education University under sabbatical leave program. The authors also would like to acknowledge the contributions of fellow researcher, Dr. Norila Md. Salleh. Grateful acknowledgement also given to each of the participants involved in this study and who have kindly contributed with integrity and honesty.

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