

READING THE DIRECTION OF ASEAN EDUCATION: A COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF THE CURRICULUM OF INDONESIA AND THAILAND

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Abstract: Global educational developments are driving each country to undertake curriculum reforms to produce adaptive human resources with character and 21st-century competencies. Indonesia and Thailand are two countries in Southeast Asia with different curriculum policies but a common goal: improving the quality of education. This study aims to comparatively analyze the basic education curricula in Indonesia and Thailand based on their philosophical foundations, curriculum structure, learning approaches, assessment systems, and the relevance of the HighScope Curriculum. The study used a comparative qualitative approach through document analysis of the Merdeka Curriculum, Basic Education Core Curriculum B.E. 2551 (2008), UNESCO and OECD reports, and various relevant scientific articles. Data were analyzed through reduction, categorization, comparison, thematic interpretation, and conclusion drawing. The results show that both countries implement learner-centered learning, character building, and 21st-century competency development. The difference is that Indonesia places greater emphasis on curriculum flexibility through Learning Outcomes (CP), Learning Objective Paths (ATP), Teaching Modules, and diagnostic, formative, summative, and authentic assessments. Meanwhile, Thailand develops its curriculum through Eight Learning Areas, Grade-based Indicators, a Local Curriculum, and approaches such as Active Learning, Inquiry Learning, Experiential Learning, and an integrated assessment system. Thailand's learning approach also aligns with the Plan-Do-Review cycle of the HighScope Curriculum. This study concludes that both curricula have complementary strengths. Indonesia excels in learning flexibility, while Thailand is more consistent in integrating character education, local wisdom, and sustainability. These findings contribute to the development of curriculum policies in the ASEAN region through a policy learning approach that combines national identity with global competencies.

Keywords: comparative education; Independent Curriculum; Basic Education Core Curriculum; HighScope Curriculum; ASEAN.

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INTRODUCTION

The changing global education landscape in the 21st century has prompted various countries to undertake curriculum reforms in an effort to improve the quality of human resources, adapting to developments in science, technology, and global socio-economic dynamics. This transformation is not only aimed at improving students' academic achievement but also at strengthening 21st-century competencies, including critical thinking, creativity, communication, collaboration, digital literacy, and character development that support lifelong learning (OECD, 2023; UNESCO, 2021). In this context, the curriculum is viewed as a strategic instrument that determines the direction, goals, and quality of a country's education system, making its renewal an unavoidable necessity in line with changing demands of the global community (Fullan, 2020).

In Southeast Asia, curriculum reform is a key agenda item in supporting the realization of a globally competitive ASEAN community. Through regional cooperation in education, ASEAN member countries are encouraged to develop education systems that are not only oriented toward improving academic competency but also capable of building character, cultural identity, and 21st-century skills relevant to the needs of modern society (ASEAN Secretariat, 2020; UNESCO, 2021). Despite having relatively similar goals, each country continues to develop its curriculum based on different educational philosophies, cultural values, social systems, and national policies. These differences result in unique curriculum characteristics that are interesting to study through a comparative approach.

Indonesia is one of the countries actively pursuing curriculum reform. After undergoing various changes since independence, the government is currently implementing the Independent Curriculum as part of the Independent Learning policy, which aims to improve the quality of learning through a more flexible, contextual, and student-centered approach. This curriculum provides teachers with the flexibility to adapt the learning process to the needs, characteristics, and potential of students through the implementation of differentiated learning and strengthening formative assessment. Through this approach, the Independent Curriculum is expected to produce students who possess academic competencies and character that align with the values of Pancasila and the demands of global society (Ministry of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology, 2022, 2024).

On the other hand, Thailand implemented the Basic Education Core Curriculum B.E. 2551 (A.D. 2008) as the primary guideline for the implementation of national basic education. This curriculum is built on the

foundation of Buddhist moral values and the Sufficiency Economy Philosophy (SEP) introduced by King Bhumibol Adulyadej. This philosophy emphasizes a balance between intellectual, moral, social, economic, and environmental development through the principles of moderation, rationality, and resilience to change. The implementation of the Thai national curriculum also provides space for schools to develop local curricula so that learning can be tailored to the cultural characteristics, community needs, and potential of each region (Ministry of Education Thailand, 2008). Various studies have shown that the integration of local cultural values and character education in the Thai curriculum contributes to increased learning engagement, student character development, and strengthening national identity amidst globalization (Wangkamhan et al., 2024). The differences in philosophical orientation between the Independent Curriculum in Indonesia and the Basic Education Core Curriculum in Thailand demonstrate that curriculum reform is influenced not only by scientific and technological developments, but also by state ideology, culture, history, and national development needs. Therefore, a comparative study of the two curricula is crucial to understanding how each country develops education policies to address global challenges without neglecting its national identity. The results of such studies are expected to provide insights for policymakers, academics, and education practitioners in developing more adaptive, inclusive learning systems oriented toward strengthening student competencies and character (UNESCO, 2021).

Although numerous studies have been published on the Independent Curriculum and the Thai education system, most of these studies focus on the curriculum's implementation in each country separately. Research on the Independent Curriculum generally examines the implementation of differentiated learning, strengthening the Pancasila Student Profile, teacher readiness, and the effectiveness of the Independent Learning policy (Rahmadayanti & Hartoyo, 2022; Musdalipa & Anwar, 2026). Meanwhile, research on the Thai education system focuses more on the integration of Sufficiency Economy Philosophy, character education, and the development of a local culture-based curriculum (Wangkamhan et al., 2024). These studies have significantly contributed to the development of education policies in their respective countries, but they have not provided a comprehensive overview of the similarities, differences, and policy implications of the two curricula within the context of education development in the ASEAN region.

On the other hand, comparative research comparing the Indonesian and Thai curricula is still relatively limited, particularly those that integrate analysis of the philosophical foundations, curriculum structure, learning approaches, assessment systems, and their relevance to the development of

21st-century competencies. Some previous studies have only compared specific aspects, such as subject structure or education policies, without linking them to the dynamics of regional education reform and the global challenges facing ASEAN countries. Consequently, a research gap remains regarding how the two countries develop national curricula based on their respective local values while also accommodating the increasingly complex demands of global education. This gap provides an important basis for conducting more in-depth comparative research to generate a more comprehensive understanding of the direction of basic education curriculum development in Indonesia and Thailand.

Based on a review of various previous studies, it can be identified that studies on the Independent Curriculum in Indonesia and the Basic Education Core Curriculum in Thailand have largely been conducted separately, focusing on policy implementation, student competency development, or curriculum implementation evaluation in each country (Rahmadayanti & Hartoyo, 2022; Wangkamhan et al., 2024). Comparative research comparing the two curriculum systems is still relatively limited, particularly those that integrate analysis of the philosophical foundations, curriculum structure, learning approaches, assessment systems, and their relevance to the development of 21st-century competencies in the context of ASEAN educational integration. Most previous studies also fail to link the implementation of the national curriculum with innovative learning paradigms developing internationally, thus failing to provide a comprehensive picture of the direction of education reform in the Southeast Asian region.

The novelty of this research lies in the comparative analysis that not only compares the characteristics of the Indonesian Merdeka Curriculum and the Thai Basic Education Core Curriculum, but also analyzes the relationship between educational philosophy, curriculum structure, learning approaches, assessment systems, and the orientation of 21st-century competency development from an ASEAN regional education perspective. Furthermore, this study presents a discussion of the relevance of active learning approaches, including the principles of the HighScope Curriculum, as an international reference that can enrich the implementation of learner-centered learning in both countries. Thus, this research offers a new perspective on how national education systems can maintain cultural identity while responding to the demands of educational globalization.

METHOD

This research uses a qualitative approach with a comparative study design through document analysis combined with a systematic literature review to compare the basic education curricula in Indonesia and Thailand. This approach was chosen because it allows for in-depth interpretation of policy documents, regulations, and scientific publications related to curriculum development in both countries. Document analysis is considered effective in education policy research because it is able to identify meanings, patterns, and relationships between policies based on authentic written evidence (Bowen, 2009; Creswell & Poth, 2018). The research data consists of primary data in the form of official documents of the Merdeka Curriculum published by the Ministry of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology of the Republic of Indonesia and the Basic Education Core Curriculum B.E. 2551 (A.D. 2008) published by the Ministry of Education of Thailand. Secondary data were obtained from scientific articles, academic books, and reports from UNESCO, the OECD, and the ASEAN Secretariat compiled through the Scopus, Web of Science, ERIC, Google Scholar, and ScienceDirect databases. Documents were selected using purposive sampling, with the criteria being that they discussed the Indonesian or Thai primary education curriculum, were published by official institutions or reputable journals, contained information on educational philosophy, curriculum structure, learning approaches, or assessment systems, and were published in Indonesian or English.

Data analysis used Qualitative Content Analysis developed by Schreier (2012). The analysis stages included collecting and thoroughly reading documents, open coding, categorizing, comparative analysis based on predetermined themes, and interpreting the findings by linking them to curriculum theory, comparative education, previous research, and the educational context in the ASEAN region. To ensure data validity, the study employed source triangulation, theory triangulation, and peer debriefing. Source triangulation was conducted by comparing information from policy documents, scientific articles, and international organization reports, while theory triangulation was conducted through the use of various theoretical perspectives in interpreting the findings. Furthermore, the analysis results were compared with previous research to ensure the consistency, credibility, and validity of the research interpretations.

As a basis for analysis, this study uses the following four main indicators.

Table 1 Comparative Analysis Framework of Indonesian and Thai Curriculum

Aspects Analyzed	Indonesia	Thailand
Philosophical foundation	Pancasila and the Independent Learning Paradigm	Buddhisme and Sufficiency Economy Philosophy
Curriculum structure	Phase-Based Curriculum and the Pancasila Student Profile Strengthening Project	Eight subject groups and achievement indicators per level
Learning approach	Differentiated Learning, Active Learning, and Project-Based Learning	Active learning, local curriculum, and learner-centered learning
Assessment system	Formative, Summative, and Authentic Assessment	Tiered assessments from class level to national level

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The results of this study were obtained through a comparative analysis of curriculum policy documents that serve as the basis for primary education in Indonesia and Thailand. The analysis focused on official documents but also offered a conceptual understanding of best practices that can serve as references in primary education curriculum development in Indonesia, Thailand, and other ASEAN countries..

Philosophical Foundations of the Indonesian and Thai Curriculum

An analysis of education policy documents shows that philosophical foundations are the primary foundation shaping the direction, objectives, and implementation of curricula in both Indonesia and Thailand. Although both countries strive to build education systems capable of meeting the challenges of the 21st century, they develop curricula based on different philosophical values, national ideologies, and socio-cultural characteristics. Indonesia developed the Independent Curriculum (Kurikulum Merdeka) based on the Pancasila philosophy, implemented through the Merdeka Belajar (Freedom to Learn) paradigm, emphasizing the principles of humanistic education and constructivism as the foundation of learning. Conversely, Thailand developed the Basic Education Core Curriculum B.E. 2551 (A.D. 2008) based on Buddhist teachings and the Sufficiency Economy Philosophy (SEP), emphasizing moral development, life balance, and sustainable living as the primary goals of education (Ministry of Education Thailand, 2008; UNESCO, 2021).

The Independent Learning paradigm represents a transformation in education policy that places students as the primary subjects in the learning process. Through this paradigm, teachers gain the flexibility to design learning tailored to student characteristics, while students are given the

opportunity to develop their potential, interests, and creativity through contextual and meaningful learning experiences (Kemendikbudristek, 2024). This approach demonstrates a shift from a learning model oriented toward mastery of material to one oriented toward developing competencies, character, and independent learning. This transformation aligns with UNESCO recommendations (2021), which emphasize that future education must develop students' abilities for lifelong learning, critical thinking, and collaboration in an increasingly complex society.

The Independent Learning paradigm is closely related to the Humanistic Education theory developed by Abraham Maslow and Carl Rogers. Humanistic education recognizes that each individual possesses unique potential that must be developed through a learning process that respects students' freedom, experience, and needs. According to Rogers (1969), effective learning occurs when students are actively involved in constructing their own learning experiences, while teachers act as facilitators, creating a democratic learning environment that supports students' personal development. Meanwhile, Maslow (1970) emphasized that the ultimate goal of education is to help individuals achieve self-actualization, namely the ability to develop all intellectual, emotional, social and spiritual potential optimally.

In addition to humanistic education, the Independent Curriculum is also based on a constructivist paradigm, the view that knowledge is actively constructed by students through learning experiences and social interactions. Piaget's (1972) constructivist theory asserts that cognitive development occurs when individuals construct new knowledge schemas through the processes of assimilation and accommodation. This view is reinforced by Vygotsky (1978), who stated that social interaction, collaboration, and the zone of proximal development (ZPD) play a crucial role in the development of students' thinking skills.

Constructivist principles are reflected in the implementation of project-based learning, problem-based learning, differentiated learning, and authentic assessments within the Independent Curriculum. Teachers no longer function as information centers, but rather as facilitators, guiding students in constructing knowledge through real-life experiences, exploration, reflection, and collaboration. This approach is in line with the concept of learning by doing put forward by Dewey (1938), namely that direct experience is the main basis for forming meaningful and sustainable conceptual understanding.

Buddhism, Sufficiency Economy Philosophy, Moral Education, and Sustainable Living in the Thai Curriculum

Unlike Indonesia, Thailand's education system is based on Buddhist philosophy, which prioritizes moral development, wisdom, self-discipline, and balance in life as the primary goals of education. Buddhist values are integrated into the curriculum through character building, self-control, respect for others, and responsibility towards society and the environment. Education is viewed not only as a means of acquiring knowledge, but also as a process of developing individuals with wisdom, compassion, and ethical behavior in daily life (Ministry of Education Thailand, 2008).

This philosophical foundation is reinforced by the Sufficiency Economy Philosophy (SEP), introduced by King Bhumibol Adulyadej. This philosophy emphasizes three main principles: moderation, reasonableness, and self-immunity, supported by knowledge and moral integrity. In an educational context, SEP encourages students to develop the ability to make wise decisions, live simply, utilize resources responsibly, and develop resilience to social, economic, and environmental change (Office of the National Economic and Social Development Council, 2017). Therefore, the Thai curriculum is not only oriented towards academic achievement but also develops students who are able to maintain a balance between the needs of the individual, society, and the environment.

This philosophy is implemented through the Moral Education and Sustainable Living approaches, integrated into various subjects and learning activities. Moral education is aimed at developing integrity, responsibility, discipline, empathy, and respect for cultural diversity. Meanwhile, the concept of sustainable living encourages students to understand the importance of sustainable development, environmental conservation, efficient use of resources, and the balance between economic growth and social welfare. Wangkamhan et al. (2024) explain that the integration of local values and the SEP philosophy in the Thai curriculum contributes to strengthening cultural identity, increasing learning participation, and developing student character that is adaptive to global challenges.

Comparatively, the educational philosophies of Indonesia and Thailand demonstrate similarities in their orientation toward developing the whole person, but differ in their emphasis on development. Indonesia positions Pancasila as the foundation for character development, combined with the paradigms of Freedom to Learn, Humanistic Education, and constructivism. Thus, learning emphasizes freedom of learning, creativity, critical thinking, collaboration, and the development of individual potential. Conversely,

Thailand positions Buddhism, Sufficiency Economic Philosophy, Moral Education, and Sustainable Living as the primary foundations for developing students with morals, simple, responsible lives, and a balance between intellectual, social, and environmental development.

Despite philosophical differences, both curricula share the same goal: to produce graduates capable of facing global challenges without losing their national identity. Indonesia emphasizes innovation, creativity, and autonomous learning in response to changes in the workplace and technological developments, while Thailand emphasizes character building, social resilience, and sustainability as the foundation of national development. These findings indicate that curriculum reform in the ASEAN region is evolving through diverse approaches, but shares a common orientation toward building quality, character-based, and sustainable education. Therefore, good practices from both countries have the potential to become important references in developing educational policies that are able to integrate global competencies with local cultural values.

Comparative Analysis of the Philosophical Foundations of the Indonesian and Thai Curricula: Similarities, Differences, and Implications

The analysis shows that Indonesia and Thailand share similarities in utilizing education as a strategic instrument for holistic human development. Both countries view the curriculum not merely as an administrative tool for organizing learning materials, but rather as a means to develop students' intellectual competence, character, morals, and social skills to enable them to face the challenges of the 21st century. Both the Merdeka Curriculum in Indonesia and the Basic Education Core Curriculum in Thailand integrate character values throughout the learning process and place students at the center of learning activities (learner-centered education). These findings demonstrate that both countries have adopted a modern educational paradigm that emphasizes a balance between mastery of knowledge, skills, and character (values), as recommended by UNESCO (2021) and the OECD (2023).

Despite these shared orientations, the research reveals fundamental differences in the philosophical foundations that influence the direction of curriculum development in each country. The Independent Curriculum is built on the Pancasila philosophy combined with the Independent Learning paradigm, emphasizing freedom of learning, differentiation of learning, creativity, critical thinking, collaboration, and the development of individual potential. In contrast, the Thai curriculum is grounded in Buddhist teachings and the Sufficiency Economy Philosophy (SEP), which places morality, life

balance, simplicity, social responsibility, and sustainability as the primary foundations of education (Ministry of Education Thailand, 2008; Office of the National Economic and Social Development Council, 2017). Thus, while Indonesia places greater emphasis on developing individual capacity to adapt to global change, Thailand's education focuses more on developing individuals capable of maintaining harmony between self, society, and the environment.

These differences can be explained through the theoretical perspectives of Humanistic Education and Constructivism. The Independent Curriculum exhibits characteristics closely aligned with the humanistic educational theories developed by Rogers (1969) and Maslow (1970), as it positions students as individuals with unique potential who need to be facilitated to achieve self-actualization. Curriculum flexibility and differentiated learning reflect efforts to build meaningful learning experiences tailored to students' needs. At the same time, the implementation of project-based learning, problem-based learning, and authentic assessment demonstrates the strong influence of Piaget's (1972) and Vygotsky's (1978) constructivist theories, which emphasize that knowledge is built through experience, reflection, and social interaction. In contrast, Thailand's educational philosophy is more closely aligned with Moral Education, which views education as a process of character formation and moral wisdom through the internalization of cultural and spiritual values (Lickona, 1991). The integration of the Sufficiency Economy Philosophy also demonstrates a strong connection with the Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) concept developed by UNESCO (2020), namely education that promotes a balance between economic development, social welfare, and environmental sustainability.

The findings of this study align with those of Wangkamhan et al. (2024), which demonstrated that integrating local cultural values into the Thai curriculum strengthens cultural identity, increases learning participation, and fosters student character development that is adaptive to social change. Similarly, research by Faiz and Purwati (2022) demonstrated that the Independent Curriculum provides teachers with greater scope to develop contextual, flexible, and student-centered learning. However, this study expands on previous findings by demonstrating that the differences between the two curricula lie not only in the structure and implementation of policies but also in the philosophical paradigms that shape the overall curriculum design. In other words, the success of a curriculum cannot be separated from the value system underlying its development.

These findings also reinforce Fullan's (2020) view that curriculum reform will be successful if policy changes are supported by a transformation in

educational culture. In the Indonesian context, the success of the Independent Curriculum depends not only on changes to the curriculum documents but also on teachers' readiness to implement truly learner-centered learning. In contrast, Thailand demonstrates that consistency between national philosophy, cultural values, and educational policies can produce a relatively stable education system. Therefore, the two countries actually have complementary strengths: Indonesia excels in pedagogical innovation and learning flexibility, while Thailand excels in consistent character education and the sustainability of cultural values.

The educational implications of these findings suggest that curriculum development in the ASEAN region should not be directed at standardizing educational models, but rather at strengthening national identity combined with global competencies. Indonesia can adopt Thailand's best practices in more systematically integrating moral education, sustainability, and local wisdom into all subjects. Conversely, Thailand can utilize the Independent Curriculum approach to provide greater space for learning innovation, differentiation, and the development of student creativity. This policy learning approach aligns with the concept of comparative education, which emphasizes that cross-border learning is not aimed at directly copying policies but rather at adapting best practices to suit the social, cultural, and national contexts and needs (Bray et al., 2018).

Critically, this study demonstrates that both countries still face challenges in translating philosophical foundations into classroom learning practices. In Indonesia, the implementation of Independent Learning (Merdeka Belajar) is still influenced by variations in teacher competency, school readiness, and disparities in educational facilities between regions. Consequently, curriculum flexibility has not yet fully resulted in equitable, quality learning (OECD, 2023). In Thailand, a strong orientation toward morality and social stability has the potential to limit exploration, creativity, and innovation if not balanced with the development of higher-order thinking skills. Therefore, curriculum reform in both countries requires a balance between character building, 21st-century competency development, and pedagogical innovation to produce graduates who not only possess moral integrity but are also adaptive, creative, and competitive in a global society.

Document analysis shows that the curriculum structures in Indonesia and Thailand share a similar orientation toward developing student competencies holistically, yet they employ different approaches to curriculum organization. Indonesia's Independent Curriculum is designed based on student learning development through a phase-based curriculum, while

Thailand's uses a grade-based curriculum combined with eight learning areas and local curriculum development. These differences demonstrate that curriculum organization is influenced not only by national education policies but also by the educational philosophy, student characteristics, and socio-cultural needs of each country (Ministry of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology [Kemendikbudristek], 2022; Ministry of Education Thailand, 2008).

Table 2. Comparison of the Curriculum Structure of Indonesia and Thailand

Aspects	Indonesia (Independent Curriculum)	Thailand (Basic Education Core Curriculum B.E. 2551)
Level Structure	Using Phases A-F based on student development, not solely based on grade level.	Using a Grade-Based Structure (grades 1-12) with achievement indicators at each grade level.
Competency Standards	Using Learning Outcomes (CP) as competency targets for each phase.	Using Learning Standards and Grade-Based Indicators for each subject.
Learning Planning	Teachers develop Learning Objectives (ATP) and Learning Modules based on student characteristics.	Teachers develop lesson plans based on national learning indicators and the school curriculum.
Character Building	Deep learning and daily learning experiences are implemented.	Integrated into all subjects through Moral Education, the Local Curriculum, and school activities.
Subject Groups	Subjects are structured based on developmental phases and school flexibility.	Consists of Eight Learning Areas: Thai Language, Mathematics, Science, Social Studies, Health and Physical Education, Arts, Occupations and Technology, and Foreign Languages.
Local Curriculum	Schools have the flexibility to develop contextual learning through ATP and Learning Modules.	Schools are required to develop the Local Curriculum according to social, cultural, economic, and regional potential conditions..
Curriculum Orientation	Learning flexibility, differentiation, and 21st-century competencies.	National standards, character education, cultural identity, and sustainability (Sustainable Development)

Source: Kemendikbudristek (2022, 2024) and Ministry of Education Thailand (2008).

Comparative Analysis of Curriculum Structure

Research findings indicate that both countries developed curriculum structures with a similar orientation: producing students with academic competence, character, and 21st-century skills. However, the approaches used differ conceptually. Indonesia implements a developmental stages approach, which divides the learning process into six phases, Phase A through Phase F. This approach provides teachers with the flexibility to adapt learning to students' learning readiness, rather than solely based on age or grade level (Ministry of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology, 2022). In contrast, Thailand maintains a grade-based curriculum approach, where learning outcomes are specifically defined at each grade level through grade-based learning indicators that serve as national benchmarks (Ministry of Education Thailand, 2008).

These differences demonstrate two distinct paradigms in organizing the curriculum. The phase-based approach implemented by Indonesia reflects the Developmental Curriculum theory, which places student development as the basis for developing learning experiences (Bruner, 1960). Through Learning Outcomes (CP), teachers have the flexibility to develop learning according to student characteristics without being limited by material targets for each grade. Furthermore, the Learning Objectives Flow (ATP) serves as a bridge between learning outcomes and classroom implementation, while the Teaching Module provides teachers with the flexibility to develop contextual, innovative, and differentiated learning strategies. The combination of these three components demonstrates that the Independent Curriculum provides greater room for teacher creativity than the previous curriculum (Rahmadayanti & Hartoyo, 2022).

On the other hand, Thailand's curriculum structure demonstrates a higher level of standardization through the implementation of the Eight Learning Areas, which serve as the main framework for basic education. These eight subject groups ensure that each student receives a balanced learning experience across language, mathematics, science, social studies, health, arts, technology, and foreign languages. Furthermore, the introduction of Grade-Based Indicators allows the government to conduct more systematic quality control of learning because achievement indicators have been formulated in detail for each grade level (Office of the Basic Education Commission, 2017). This approach reflects a more structured and consistent curriculum orientation in maintaining national education standards.

Nevertheless, Thailand continues to provide flexibility to schools through the development of the Local Curriculum, a curriculum designed based on community needs, local cultural characteristics, regional economic potential, and local wisdom. These findings indicate that curriculum decentralization in Thailand is not achieved through changes to the national structure, but through the integration of local content into learning. Wangkamhan et al. (2024) explain that this approach can increase the relevance of learning to community life while strengthening students' cultural identity.

When linked to curriculum theory, the structure of the Independent Curriculum strongly influences the constructivist theory developed by Piaget (1972) and Vygotsky (1978), as learning is designed based on student development, learning experiences, and social interactions. Conversely, the structure of the Thai curriculum more closely aligns with Biggs' (1996) concept of curriculum alignment, which involves a systematic link between learning objectives, achievement indicators, the learning process, and assessment. This approach results in high consistency in curriculum implementation at the school level.

The results of this study reinforce the findings of the OECD (2023), which stated that curriculum reforms in various countries currently tend to increase learning flexibility while maintaining national competency standards. This research also aligns with UNESCO (2021), which emphasizes the importance of balancing school autonomy and education system accountability. However, this study shows that Indonesia and Thailand have chosen different reform paths to achieve these goals. Indonesia emphasizes flexibility through CP, ATP, Teaching Modules, and P5, while Thailand maintains strong national standards through the Eight Learning Areas and Grade-based Indicators while allowing for adaptation through the Local Curriculum.

Critically, each curriculum structure has advantages and limitations. The flexibility of the Independent Curriculum allows teachers to tailor learning to students' needs, but also demands high pedagogical competence, so its implementation remains uneven across regions (OECD, 2023). Conversely, Thailand's curriculum structure provides the certainty of strong national standards, but has the potential to limit learning innovation if schools are too focused on achieving predetermined indicators. Therefore, curriculum development in the ASEAN region requires a balance between flexibility, standardization, and contextualization to produce an adaptive and high-quality education system. These findings suggest that good practices from both countries can complement each other in supporting curriculum reforms oriented toward competency, character, and sustainable development.

Indonesian and Thai Learning Approaches

The analysis shows that the learning approaches implemented in Indonesia and Thailand share similarities in placing students at the center of the learning process, but differ in their implementation strategies. Indonesia emphasizes differentiated and project-based learning as part of its implementation of the Independent Curriculum, while Thailand promotes active learning combined with scientific inquiry, real-world experiences, and the integration of local wisdom. A comparison of the learning approaches of the two countries can be seen in the following table.

Table 3. Indonesian and Thai Learning Approaches

Aspects	Indonesia (Independent Curriculum)	Thailand (Basic Education Core Curriculum B.E. 2551)
Learning Orientation	Student-centered learning with flexible learning tailored to student needs.	Student-centered learning through active, contextual, and holistic learning that emphasizes a balance between academics, character, and social life.
Main Approach	Student-centered learning (SCL), differentiated learning, and project-based learning (PjBL).	Facilitators create an active learning environment, guide exploration, and support student reflection.
Teacher's Role	Facilitator, mediator, guide, and feedback provider in the learning process.	Active Learning, Inquiry Learning, Experiential Learning, and Local Wisdom.
Student's Role	Actively explore knowledge, discuss, collaborate, complete projects, and reflect.	Actively conduct investigations, experiments, observations, discussions, field practice, and reflection on learning experiences.
Learning Strategy	Differentiated learning based on student readiness, interests, and learning profiles; project-based learning; collaborative learning.	Inquiry-based learning, real-life experiences (Experiential Learning), collaborative activities, and integration of local culture (Local Wisdom).
Competency Development Focus	Critical thinking, creativity, communication, collaboration, independence, character, and problem-solving skills.	Critical thinking, problem-solving, creativity, collaboration, leadership, social responsibility, and preservation of local culture.
Theoretical Foundation	Piaget's constructivism, Vygotsky's social constructivism, Rogers' and Maslow's humanism, Dewey's experiential learning.	Piaget and Vygotsky's constructivism, Bruner's Discovery Learning, Dewey and Kolb's Experiential Learning, and the Sufficiency Economy Philosophy (SEP).

Learning Contextualization	Learning is linked to real life through projects and contextual problem-solving.	Learning is linked to the environment, culture, and society, as well as the development of a Local Curriculum.
Special Characteristics	Emphasizes differentiated learning based on individual student characteristics.	Emphasizes the integration of local wisdom (Local Wisdom) and experiential learning (Experiential Learning).
Final Goal	Develops 21st-century competencies, character, independent learning, and readiness to face global challenges.	Developing students holistically with academic competence, character, wisdom, social awareness, and sustainable living skills.

Indonesian and Thai Curriculum Assessment Systems: A Comparative Analysis

Document analysis shows that the assessment system is a crucial component that differentiates curriculum implementation in Indonesia and Thailand. Both countries view assessment as an integral part of the learning process, not simply a tool for measuring learning outcomes. However, there are fundamental differences in its orientation, mechanisms, and level of implementation. The Independent Curriculum in Indonesia emphasizes assessment as part of the learning process (assessment for learning), while the Thai education system integrates assessment at three levels: Classroom Assessment, School Assessment, and National Assessment, to maintain a balance between student development and accountability for educational quality (Ministry of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology [Kemendikbudristek], 2022; Ministry of Education Thailand, 2008).

Table 4. Comparison of the Indonesian and Thai Assessment Systems

Aspects	Indonesia (Independent Curriculum)	Thailand (Basic Education Core Curriculum B.E. 2551)
Assessment Orientation	Assessment for Learning dan Assessment as Learning	Assessment of Learning dan Assessment for Learning
Diagnostic Assessment	Conducted before learning to identify students' readiness, initial abilities, and learning needs	Not a separate component, but initial identification is carried out through Classroom Assessment.
Formative Assessment	Conducted during the learning process as feedback for teachers and students	Implemented continuously through Classroom Assessment.
Summative Assessment	Conducted at the end of a unit, semester, or phase to determine the achievement of Learning Outcomes	Implemented at the end of the semester and at the end of the year as a School Assessment.
Authentic Assessment	Using projects, portfolios, observations, presentations, performance, and reflection	Using projects, observations, practical assignments, and community-based activities.
National Assessment	No longer focused on graduation exams, but using National Assessments to evaluate educational quality	Using National Assessment to monitor national competency standards.

Source: Diolah dari Kemendikbudristek (2022, 2024) and Ministry of Education Thailand (2008).

Comparative Analysis of Assessment Systems

Research shows that Indonesia is implementing a more progressive assessment paradigm through a combination of diagnostic, formative, summative, and authentic assessments. Diagnostic assessments are conducted prior to the learning process to identify students' learning readiness, difficulties, and needs, allowing teachers to design differentiated learning (Kemendikbudristek, 2024). This approach demonstrates a shift from an outcomes-based evaluation culture to a process-based evaluation (assessment for learning). Black and Wiliam (1998) explain that continuous formative assessment can improve the quality of learning by providing feedback that helps students improve their learning.

Furthermore, formative assessments in the Independent Curriculum are implemented throughout the learning process through observation, discussion, reflection, quizzes, and simple assignments. Teachers use these assessment results to adjust learning strategies according to student development. Summative assessments are still used to measure the achievement of Learning Outcomes (CP) at the end of a unit or phase, but are no longer the sole indicator of learning success. Furthermore, the Independent Curriculum develops authentic assessments, namely assessments conducted through projects, portfolios, demonstrations, presentations, products, and performance, so that students are assessed based on their ability to apply knowledge in real-life situations (Mueller, 2018). This approach demonstrates that the Indonesian assessment system is increasingly orienting itself towards holistic competency development.

Unlike Indonesia, Thailand's assessment system is structured at three complementary levels: Classroom Assessment, School Assessment, and National Assessment (Ministry of Education Thailand, 2008). Classroom

Assessment is conducted by teachers during the learning process through observations, assignments, projects, practical exercises, and class discussions to continuously monitor student progress. School Assessment is used by schools as the basis for determining learning outcomes at the end of a semester or at the end of a term. Meanwhile, the National Assessment is implemented by the government to evaluate the quality of national education and ensure the achievement of competency standards throughout Thailand (Office of the Basic Education Commission, 2017).

Research findings indicate that Thailand's assessment system is more standardized than Indonesia's. Uniform assessment standards facilitate the government's national mapping of education quality while maintaining consistent curriculum implementation. However, schools are still given space to develop various forms of project-based assessment, practice, and community activities according to the characteristics of the Local Curriculum, so that contextual aspects remain an important part of learning evaluation (Wangkamhan et al., 2024).

When linked to educational assessment theory, the Indonesian system aligns more closely with the concept of Assessment for Learning developed by Black and William (1998), which positions assessment as part of the learning process. Assessment not only measures learning outcomes but also provides feedback that helps students improve their understanding and learning strategies. In contrast, the Thai system reflects a balance between Assessment for Learning and Assessment of Learning, combining the learning function with the accountability function through school assessments and national assessments. Thus, the two countries have different orientations in managing the balance between learning flexibility and standardization of educational quality.

This research finding aligns with the OECD (2023), which states that assessment system reforms in various countries are shifting from the dominance of memorization-based tests to the assessment of competencies, critical thinking skills, creativity, and problem-solving abilities. UNESCO (2021) also emphasizes that future assessment systems need to provide space for reflective, collaborative, and contextual learning to support the development of 21st-century competencies. The findings of this study reinforce those of Faiz and Purwati (2022), which showed that assessments in the Independent Curriculum provide teachers with the flexibility to develop evaluations tailored to student needs. Furthermore, the study also supports the Office of the Basic Education Commission's (2017) finding that Thailand's assessment system is capable of maintaining the quality of national education through an integrated evaluation mechanism.

Strengths, Weaknesses, Challenges, and Educational Implications

Comparatively, the Indonesian assessment system has advantages in terms of high flexibility, the ability to support differentiated learning, and encouraging individual student development through authentic assessments. This system allows teachers to obtain more comprehensive information on students' academic and non-academic development. However, its weakness lies in the high demands on teacher competency in developing valid and reliable assessment instruments. Furthermore, implementing authentic assessments requires time, resources, and reflective skills that not all schools possess, resulting in varying quality across regions (OECD, 2023).

Conversely, the Thai assessment system benefits from consistent national standards and integration between classroom, school, and national assessments. This systematic assessment structure facilitates the government's control of education quality and cross-regional comparisons. However, strong standardization has the potential to reduce teacher flexibility in developing assessment innovations if its implementation is overly oriented toward achieving national indicators. Furthermore, pressure on National Assessment results can encourage some schools to focus more on achieving scores than on developing students' overall competencies. The educational implications of these findings suggest that both countries possess complementary best practices. Indonesia can strengthen its education quality monitoring system through a more integrated evaluation mechanism, as implemented in Thailand. Conversely, Thailand can adopt more systematic diagnostic and authentic assessment practices to support student-centered learning. This policy learning approach has the potential to produce an assessment system that maintains a balance between learning flexibility, individual competency development, and accountability for educational quality. Therefore, assessment system reform in the ASEAN region should not only focus on improving academic outcomes but also on strengthening character, creativity, critical thinking skills, and preparing students to face global challenges.

CONCLUSION

This research shows that the basic education curricula in Indonesia and Thailand share the same goal: to develop students holistically by strengthening academic competencies, character, and 21st-century skills. However, the two countries implement this goal through different philosophical foundations, curriculum structures, learning approaches, and assessment systems. The Independent Curriculum in Indonesia is based on the Pancasila

philosophy and the Independent Learning paradigm, which emphasizes learning flexibility, differentiation, creativity, and the development of individual potential through Learning Outcomes (CP), Learning Objective Paths (ATP), and Learning Modules. In contrast, Thailand developed a Basic Education Core Curriculum based on Buddhist values and the Sufficiency Economy Philosophy, which places morality, life balance, local wisdom, and sustainability as the main foundations of education through the Eight Learning Areas, Grade-based Indicators, and Local Curriculum.

The research also shows that both countries implement student-centered learning, but with different characteristics. Indonesia emphasizes Student-Centered Learning, Differentiated Learning, Project-Based Learning, and P5, while Thailand develops Active Learning, Inquiry Learning, Experiential Learning, and the integration of Local Wisdom into the learning process. Further analysis shows that Thailand's learning approach aligns conceptually with the Plan-Do-Review cycle of the HighScope Curriculum, thus creating active, reflective, and contextual learning experiences. In terms of assessment, Indonesia has developed a system oriented toward diagnostic, formative, summative, and authentic assessments, while Thailand implements an integrated evaluation system through Classroom Assessment, School Assessment, and National Assessment to maintain a balance between student development and accountability for educational quality.

The primary contribution of this research lies in the development of a comparative synthesis linking educational philosophy, curriculum design, learning approaches, assessment systems, and the relevance of the HighScope Curriculum in the context of Indonesian and Thai primary education. The research findings demonstrate that curriculum reform cannot be achieved solely through structural and policy changes but must also be supported by alignment between philosophical foundations, learning strategies, teacher capacity, and educational culture. Therefore, curriculum development in the ASEAN region needs to be guided by a policy learning approach, namely mutual learning and adaptation of best practices between countries without neglecting their respective national identities and socio-cultural characteristics. Indonesia can strengthen the integration of character education, sustainability, and local wisdom, as implemented in Thailand, while Thailand can adopt the pedagogical flexibility, learning differentiation, and assessment innovations developed in the Independent Curriculum. Thus, the synergy between national identity and global competencies is expected to produce an education system that is more adaptive, inclusive, sustainable, and relevant to the challenges of 21st-century education.

As a limitation, this research is based solely on analysis of policy documents and scientific literature, thus not directly describing curriculum implementation practices at the school level. Therefore, further research is recommended to use a mixed methods approach or field studies through observation, interviews, and case studies in schools in Indonesia and Thailand to gain a more comprehensive understanding of the effectiveness of curriculum implementation, learning practices, and their impact on student learning outcomes.

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