

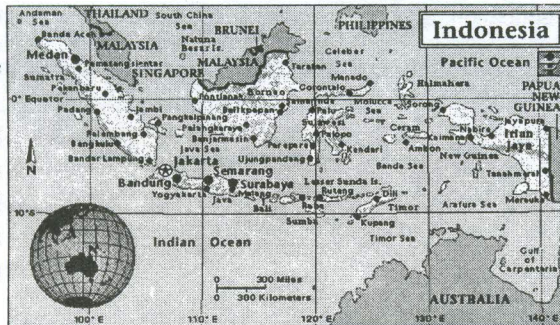


Curriculum Development in Indonesia, Malaysia and Singapore

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The role of education in Indonesia, Malaysia and Singapore has been shaped by the countries' colonial history, geographic size, cultural diversity and other social, political and economic factors. This article briefly surveys the education practices of these three Southeast Asian countries. Specifically, it discusses their educational aims (as defined by and within the context of national goals) and how these are integrated or translated into their education curriculum.

Table 1 presents how the educational aims of Indonesia, Malaysia and Singapore have been realized and achieved via curriculum development.



with different curricular orientations were seen as a potentially divisive factor in a multi-ethnic society" (Sharifah, Lewin, 1991: 226). The link between education and national development is reflected in the Fifth Malaysia Plan (1986-1990): "... the role of education and training in Malaysia is to produce knowledgeable, trained, and skilled individuals for the manpower requirements as well as the growing social needs".

Singapore's education is geared towards economic development and this is being achieved through a curriculum that exploits the full potential of each pupil. An attendant issue is forming "greater social cohesion to build a

EDUCATION and NATIONAL GOALS

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In Malaysia, the guiding force in nation building and in educational policies have been the principles of the Rukunegara (the national ideology) which was formulated as a result of the 1969 racial conflict (Sharifah, Levin, 1991). The development of a distinctively Malaysian outlook is a preoccupation that continues to dominate educational planning. However, attempts at national unification had been made even before the racial conflict. Before Malaysia's independence in 1956, efforts had been made to develop a national system of education as "the different types of schools existing relatively independently

nation out of various racial groups" (Khoo, 1991:132) and the response has been the use of English as the medium of instruction. The choice of English underscores Singapore's thrust for economic development and national unity: a society whose economy depends on trading with other countries needs citizens competent in English (English being the emerging international language). As to racial harmony, English is not the native language of any ethnic group so that its choice and use as the language of instruction eliminate racial friction arising from "linguistic privileging".

Education in Indonesia faces the dilemma of having to provide for the country's diversity- geographically and culturally. It must also deal with the attendant occupational conditions (Thomas, 1991). Social and political developments in the 60s and 70s such as

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