

Comparison of educational policies and curricula of Japanese and Indonesian elementary schools at the present time

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Abstract

Education plays an important role in the progress of a nation, and Japan has long been an example of an effective and efficient education system. This research compares the education policies and elementary school curricula between Japan and Indonesia today. Using the literature study method, this research describes how Japan integrates moral values and life skills in education through the “*Doutoku-Kyouiku*” program and *seikatsu* lessons, which teach students about everyday behavior. Meanwhile, Indonesia adopted the Pancasila Learner Profile as a reference for character education based on the Minister of Education, Culture and Research Regulation No.12 of 2024. The results show that although the two countries have different approaches, both are committed to providing quality and inclusive education. Japan emphasizes the development of academic competence and character, while Indonesia focuses more on character development through Pancasila values. The Japanese education policy and curriculum can thus be used as a reference for Indonesia to improve the quality of education in the future towards the Golden Indonesia 2045.

Keywords: Education policy, Elementary school curriculum, Japan, Indonesia

Introduction

The development of a nation requires education as the key to modernization and improving the quality of human resources. Education also serves as the basis for economic growth and technological innovation. With quality education, a country can increase global competitiveness, create innovation, and advance social welfare (Shaposhnykov et al., 2022; Skydan, 2023).

Education in Japan has long been considered a symbol of national progress, reflecting how the country successfully transformed itself from a feudal society to one of the world's leading industrialized nations. Japan's transformation was supported by an effective and efficient education system. Education in Japan is not only seen as a means to improve competence but also as a key pillar in national development and innovation.

Indonesia, as a developing country, faces various challenges in improving its educational outcomes, including disparities in access, quality, and equity. Understanding these challenges in successful education policies and curricula such as Japan provides valuable insights to address these issues.

Education in Japan has deep roots in Japanese tradition and culture, with influences from Confucianism that emphasize values such as hard work, discipline, and respect for authority. According to Liu (2019), the modernization of Japanese education began in the Meiji Restoration era (1868-1912), when the Japanese government took steps to adopt the Western education system. This included the establishment of public schools, compulsory education, and a structured curriculum.

Education in Japan is highly centralized, with a national curriculum set by the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology (MEXT). This national curriculum is designed to ensure consistent education standards across the country. The Japanese curriculum places great emphasis on basic subjects such as math, science, Japanese language, and social studies, as well as moral and character education.

Since the 1970s, Japan has been experiencing a period of rapid and complex social and economic transformation, necessitating a swift and flexible response from its population. Japanese people have incorporated elements from foreign cultures into their daily lives. One notable example is the phenomenon of "*Itoko-Dori*," which refers to the harmonious integration of foreign cultural elements into daily life, with a discernible process of filtering and adaptation (Novi Hardianti, & Linna Meilia Rasiban, 2022).

In response to the evolving socio-political landscape and the emergence of global challenges, Japan implemented curricular reforms. One significant reform was implemented in 2002 by the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology (MEXT), which introduced the concept of *ikiru chikara*, i.e. zest for living (Mori, 2023). This concept emphasizes the development of critical thinking skills, creativity, and the ability to cope with the demands of the times (Kokolas, 2024). Additionally, the reform diminished the academic burden and allocated more time for extracurricular pursuits and personal growth. In conjunction with technological advancements, Japan has initiated the integration of information and communication technology (ICT) into its educational system. This encompasses the utilisation of computers, tablets, and the internet to facilitate learning, in addition to curriculum development that incorporates digital literacy and information and communication technology (ICT) skills development (Kizuna, 2021).

The Japanese education system is undergoing a period of significant transformation, with a primary focus on enhancing the quality of education, aligning it with global standards, and fostering the integration of technology in learning. Recent reforms have included efforts to introduce project-based learning, enhance global literacy, and reinforce science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) education (Adeoye, 2023).

Japan's influence on Indonesian education policy was primarily evident during the Japanese occupation (1942-1945) and in the post-independence period. During the Japanese occupation, Indonesian was promoted as the language of instruction in schools, replacing Dutch (Amirullah Abduh, & Rosmaladewi Rosmaladewi, 2019). This constituted a significant alteration introduced by the Japanese, and this impact persisted after Indonesian independence, where Indonesian eventually became the primary language of instruction.

After the occupation period, several elements of the education system introduced by Japan, such as an emphasis on efficiency, simplicity, and discipline, continued to influence the structure of education in Indonesia. Additionally, the educational model focused on skill training implemented by Japan inspired the development of vocational education in Indonesia in the subsequent years. Japan can serve as a model country in the field of education due to its various advantages, and Indonesia, as a developing nation, should learn from Japan's education system to enhance the quality of education domestically. Currently, Japan's educational policies and elementary school curriculum can be a good example for Indonesia.

A literature study was undertaken to analyze the similarities and differences between the educational policies and elementary curricula of Japan and Indonesia, with the aim of identifying actionable recommendations for improving Indonesia's education system. The literature review approach enables a systematic understanding of how Indonesia might adopt policies and strategies from Japan, particularly in areas such as character education, curriculum flexibility, and technological integration, while ensuring these adaptations align with the values and philosophy of Pancasila.

Conceptual framework

This study's conceptual framework compares the educational policies and elementary school curricula of Japan and Indonesia. Japan emphasizes centralized curriculum standards, character education through programs like "*Doutoku-Kyouiku*," and technological integration (MEXT, n.d.), while Indonesia focuses on democratic, inclusive education rooted in Pancasila values (Menteri Pendidikan, Kebudayaan, Riset, dan Teknologi Republik Indonesia, 2024). Japan's curriculum is guided by the "*Chi-Toku-Tai*" principle, integrating academic, moral, and physical development (MEXT, n.d.), whereas Indonesia's Merdeka Curriculum prioritizes essential content mastery, character development, and flexible learning (Menteri Pendidikan, Kebudayaan, Riset, dan Teknologi Republik Indonesia, 2024). Both systems share a commitment to quality education and character formation but differ in implementation strategies and cultural focus, offering insights for mutual learning and improvement.

Research objectives

The purpose of this study has been following specific research objectives, which are:

1. Describe the comparison of Japan's education policy with that of present-day Indonesia.
2. Describe the comparison of the Japanese elementary school curriculum with that of present-day Indonesia.

Methodology

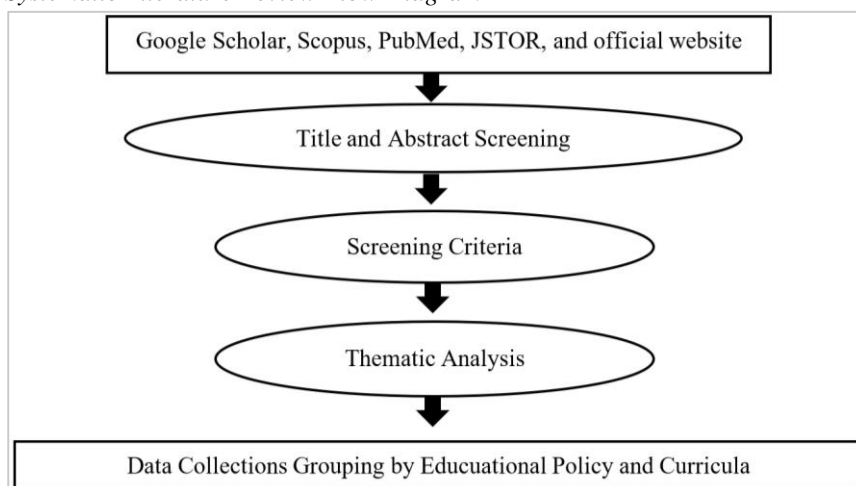
Research design

The research begins with the formulation of research questions focused on the similarities and differences in education policies and elementary school curricula in Japan and Indonesia, and how Indonesia can learn from Japan's education system. To address these questions, relevant literature is gathered from databases such as Google Scholar, Scopus, PubMed, and JSTOR or official website owned by the government and schools using keywords such as "Japan education policy," "Indonesia education policy," "comparative education systems," and "elementary school curriculum." Searches are conducted in both English and Indonesian to ensure broad coverage.

Inclusion and exclusion criteria are applied to maintain the quality and relevance of the results. Literature published in the last 10 years, peer-reviewed, including relevant laws and regulations, as well as studies directly discussing education policies and curricula in Japan or Indonesia, are considered. Examples include comparative analyses, case studies, or policy evaluations. Non-peer-reviewed articles, those published before 2013, or those not related to elementary education are excluded from the review.

Figure 1

Systematic Literature Review Flow Diagram



The screening process is conducted in two stages: title and abstract screening to eliminate articles that do not meet the criteria, followed by full-text screening to ensure quality and relevance. After screening, key data is extracted from each study, including the research objectives, methodology, main findings, and recommendations for Indonesia's education system. These data are then analyzed thematically, grouping the findings into areas such as educational goals, curriculum structure, implementation challenges, and character education strategies. These data were then analyzed thematically, grouping the findings into key areas such as educational objectives, curriculum structure, implementation challenges, and character education strategies. Each area is presented in organized subsections to provide clarity and facilitate the flow of ideas, ensuring each theme is discussed in-depth and integrated.

This systematic literature review approach was chosen because it ensures objectivity, reproducibility, and allows for an in-depth comparison between Japan's and Indonesia's education systems. Additionally, this methodology helps identify best practices that can be adapted to Indonesia's context.

Findings and discussions

Table 1

Comparison of Japanese and Indonesian Education Policies in Present Day

Aspects	Japan	Indonesia
Fundamental principles of education	Chapter 26 of the Constitution of Japan	Indonesian Constitution (UUD RI) Number 20 Year 2003
Education budget	Japanese government allocates 5.34 trillion yen budget by 2024 for MEXT	The Indonesian government allocates an education budget of IDR 665 trillion for 2024.
Education system	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Kindergarten (幼稚園, <i>Yōchien</i>) b. Integrated Early Childhood Education Center (幼保連携型認定こども園, <i>Yōho renkeigata nintei kodomoen</i>) c. Elementary School (小学校, <i>Shōgakkō</i>) d. Junior High School (中学校, <i>Chūgakkō</i>) e. High school (高等学校, <i>Kōtōgakkō</i>), f. Special Needs Education School offering customized programs (特別支援学校, <i>Tokubetsu shien gakkō</i>) g. Universities, Colleges, Schools of Technology, and Professional and Vocational Schools (<i>Daigaku</i>) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Kindergarten b. Early childhood education (PAUD) c. Elementary School (SD) d. Junior high school (SMP) e. Senior high school (SMA)/ Vocational high school (SMK) f. Inclusive School g. Higher Education (University, Institute, Polytechnic, Academy, College)
Compulsory education policy	Primary and secondary education is compulsory for people aged 6 years to 15 years.	12 years of primary and secondary education is compulsory for every Indonesian citizen
School management organization	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Public School (公立学校, <i>kōritsu gakkō</i>) b. Private School (私立学校, <i>shiritsu gakkō</i>) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Public School b. Private School

The Constitution of Japan sets out a fundamental national education policy, as follows: “All persons have the right to receive equal education according to their abilities” (Prime Minister of Japan and his Cabinet, 1946). The Japanese government is obliged to provide public education stipulated by law to all boys and girls under their protection (Ryuya, 2024). The principles of Indonesian education are organized democratically, fairly, and non-discriminatory, emphasizing the cultivation, empowerment, role models, creativity, literacy culture, and community participation to ensure the quality of lifelong education services as stated in the National Education System Law Number 20 of 2003 (Rusdiana et al., 2020). Both countries demonstrate their commitment to the principles of equal and inclusive education by creating education systems that not only provide equal access for all individuals, but also adapt those systems to best meet the needs of diverse learners.

According to Vicente et al., (2024), Japan's education system offers various levels and types of education, ranging from early childhood education to higher education. Kindergartens (*Yochien*) cater to children aged 3-5, while Integrated Early Childhood Education Centers (*Yohorenkeigata-ninteikodomoen*) combine the functions of a kindergarten and daycare. Elementary Schools (*Shogakko*) provide compulsory education for children aged 6-12, and Junior High Schools (*Chugakko*) provide education for children aged 12-15. Compulsory Education School (*Gimukyoiku-gakko*) provides continuous education from grades 1-9. High School (*Koto-gakko*), which is optional, requires an entrance exam and offers general, specialized, as well as integrated courses. Schools of Secondary Education (*Chuto-kyoiku-gakko*) provide six years of integrated education that includes junior high and senior high education. Higher education includes Universities, Colleges, Schools of Technology, and Professional and Vocational Schools, each offering degrees and specialized training. For children with disabilities, the Special Needs Education School offers customized programs.

Based to Vidi Sukmayadi and Azizul Halim Yahya (2020) the Indonesian Education System consists of Kindergarten / Early Childhood Education (PAUD) serving children aged 2-5 years. Elementary School (SD) serves children aged 6-11 years. Junior High School (*Sekolah Menengah Pertama*) serves children aged 12-14 years. Senior High School (SMA) serves ages 15-17 years, for vocational there is a Vocational High School (SMK). Universities serve 17-21-year-olds starting from undergraduate and diploma levels down.

The education systems of Japan and Indonesia have similar structures, both aiming to provide equal access to quality education for all children, with Japan and Indonesia emphasizing continuing education from early childhood to higher education with a variety of program options.

According to the (Statista, 2024) in fiscal year 2024, the annual budget of the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology (MEXT) in Japan amounted to approximately 5.34 trillion Japanese yen. The Japanese government allocates about 20% of national income to education (Mohamed Elasmay Mahrouse, 2021). The ministry consists of several agencies that manage and promote projects related to improving the country's education and culture. Indonesia's education budget of IDR 665 trillion is allocated to central government spending, local government transfers, and allocations to the Ministry of Education and Research (Kementerian Pendidikan dan Kebudayaan, 2024). This commitment is demonstrated by the fulfillment of 20% of the state budget for education as stated in the National Education System Law Number 20 of 2003. Thus, both countries show significant efforts in education budget allocation, although with different approaches and amounts.

Japanese primary and secondary education is compulsory for people aged 6 years to 15 years (MEXT, n.d.). Children of compulsory education age will receive a notification to enroll in school. The Japanese government is very serious about ensuring that every child has the opportunity to get a quality basic education. Meanwhile, the Indonesian government has issued a 12-year compulsory education program or often called the universal secondary education program as a continuation of the 9-year compulsory education program which is intended to prepare a golden generation in Indonesia in 2045 (Vidi Sukmayadi, & Azizul Halim Yahya, 2020). Compulsory primary and secondary education in Japan and Indonesia shows that both countries have a strong commitment to education although both face challenges in its implementation.

School management institutions in Japan are divided into public and private schools. Public schools (公立学校, *kōritsu gakkō*) are organized by prefectural or municipal governments, while private schools (私立学校, *shiritsu gakkō*) by legal entities. Public schools are funded by the government and are usually free, while private schools require higher fees with unique programs that can improve student engagement and learning outcomes (Mohamed Elasmay Mahrouse, 2021). Correspondingly in Indonesia, private schools collect fees from students, while public schools provide lower tuition fees or are free (Marcucci & Harris, 2024). According to Ikuzo (2020), private schools in Japan can implement additional curricula and offer more diverse educational programs compared to public schools, which are bound to the national curriculum. Japan, with its secular ideology, prohibits religious education in public schools but allows it in private schools, whereas Indonesia requires religious education in all schools as part of its Pancasila ideology (Deding Ishak, 2021). Public schools in Indonesia use the National Curriculum prepared by the government, while private schools have the freedom to implement public or international curricula, such as that of *Sekolah Harapan Penerangan* which uses the "International Baccalaureate" curriculum (Pandu Adi Cakranegara, 2021). Public and private schools in Indonesia almost have the same quality of education and have characteristics that are tailored to the school's vision (Muhamad Nanang Suprayogi et al., 2018). A comparison of school management institutions in Japan and Indonesia shows that public schools follow the national curriculum set by the government and are usually free, while private schools have the freedom to implement additional or international curricula at a higher cost, creating variations in educational experience and accessibility for students in both countries.

Table 2

Comparison of Japanese Elementary School Curriculum with Indonesia in Present Day

Aspect	Japan	Indonesia
Curriculum guidelines	National Course of Study (学習指導要領, <i>Gakushū Shidō Yōryō</i>)	Merdeka curriculum
Curriculum principles	<i>Chi-Toku-Tai</i> Principle (知-徳-体)	Essential content focus, character development, flexible learning
Subjects	Japanese, english, sociology, math, science, music and art, home economics, and moral education	Religious education, indonesian language, pancasila education, mathematics, physical

continued

		education sports and health, arts and culture, natural and social sciences (IPAS), and local content
Character education	Habits of life (<i>せいかつ/Seikatsu</i>)	Pancasila student profile
School time	08.00 - 15.00 JST, Monday-Friday	07.15 - 15.15 (depends on local time zone), Monday-Saturday

The Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology (MEXT) of Japan has developed guidelines known as the National Course of Study (*学習指導要領, Gakushū Shidō Yōryō*) to define the curriculum content at all levels of education, including elementary, junior high, and high schools. These guidelines are outlined in the National Curriculum Standards 2017-2018 Revision (MEXT, n.d.) and are revised every ten years to update educational content and objectives (Yamanaka & Suzuki, 2020). In Indonesia, the elementary school curriculum is referred to as Kurikulum Merdeka which was designed and regulated under Regulation of the Minister of Education and Culture No. 12 of 2024 by the Ministry of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology to replace the 2013 Curriculum (Menteri Pendidikan, Kebudayaan, Riset, dan Teknologi Republik Indonesia, 2024). This curriculum undergoes periodic revisions, typically with each change in government (Beni Setiawan & Edi Suwandi, 2022). Thus, the curricula in Japan and Indonesia adopt different approaches to organizing and updating educational content, yet both focus on enhancing the quality of learning and character development among students.

The Japanese curriculum emphasizes the principles of *Chi-Toku-Tai* (*知-徳-体*), which align with Bloom's three domains of knowledge. *Chi* (*知*) focuses on a strong academic foundation, including the ability to learn fundamental scientific concepts, *Toku* (*徳*) develops values, emotional intelligence, and character among students through subjects like moral education and environmental studies that instill the importance of moral values and character, and *Tai* (*体*), meaning physical health, is applied through physical education subjects (Takayama, 2021). Therefore, the Japanese curriculum not only strengthens academic competencies but also fosters moral values and physical health among students.

The Merdeka Curriculum in Indonesia prioritizes three main principles: Essential Content Focus, which simplifies teaching materials so that students can deeply understand key concepts; Character Development, which instills spiritual, moral, social, and emotional values through integration in learning—such as the Pancasila Student Profile; and Flexible Learning, allowing teachers to adjust teaching methods according to student needs, thereby creating relevant and effective learning experiences (Menteri Pendidikan, Kebudayaan, Riset, dan Teknologi Republik Indonesia, 2024).

Both curriculum principles aim to enhance learning quality and character development among students but employ different approaches. The Japanese curriculum places greater emphasis on academic competency development, moral education, and physical health, while Indonesia's Kurikulum Merdeka focuses more on character development and flexibility in learning.

The curriculum of elementary school education in Japan includes learning the Japanese language, including reading and writing in hiragana, katakana, and kanji; English, which is introduced from grade four and becomes compulsory in grades five and six through informal activities; sociology, which studies Japanese culture and history; mathematics, which focuses on basic numerical skills and problem-solving; science, which develops an understanding of the natural world; music and art, which nurture creativity; physical education, which promotes a healthy lifestyle; home economics, which teaches practical skills for family life; and moral education, which aims to develop moral values through daily interactions and school routines (MEXT, n.d.).

Figure 2

Sample Lesson Schedule for Elementary School in Japan

	Mon	Tues	Wed	Thurs	Fri
1st Period 8:50-9:35	Japanese	Japanese	Life/ Environment	Morality/ Good Behavior	Arts and Crafts
2nd Period 9:40-10:25	Arithmetic	Arithmetic	Physical Education (PE)	Life/ Environment	Arts and Crafts
3rd Period 10:45-11:30	Physical Education (PE)	Life/ Environment	Japanese	Japanese	Physical Education (PE)
4th Period 11:35-12:20	Japanese	Japanese	Arithmetic	Reading in Library	Japanese
Afternoon Recess 12:30-1:20	Lunch/ School Cleaning				
5th Period 1:30-2:15		Music	Homeroom Activities	Music	Arithmetic

From *Subjects of Study and School Schedule* (2024), by Yamanashi Kodomo Net, n.d. (https://kodomonet.sakura.ne.jp/en/contents_2_6.html#pagetop1). In the public domain.

The subjects of the Merdeka Curriculum in Indonesia consist of: Religious education is the learning of believers in belief in God Almighty carried out in accordance with statutory regulations regarding education services for belief in God Almighty; Pancasila education in elementary schools (SD) aims to instill the values of Pancasila; mathematics aims to understand mathematical concepts and solve problems systematically; Indonesian language learning in elementary schools (SD) aims to improve students' ability to use Indonesian; Physical Education, Sports and Health (PJOK) is the teaching of physical activities to develop children's potential holistically; Natural and Social Sciences (IPAS) examines living and non-living things in the universe and their interactions. Art and Culture includes fine arts, music, dance, and drama; and local content contains the uniqueness or local potential of the region can be a stand-alone subject or integrated with other subjects or the Pancasila (P5) student profile strengthening project (Menteri Pendidikan, Kebudayaan, Riset, dan Teknologi Republik Indonesia, 2024).

Figure 3

Sample Lesson Schedule for Elementary School in Indonesia

NO	JAM	SENIN	SELASA	RABU	KAMIS	JUM'AT
1	07.15-07.30	Upacara	SS	Apel	SS	Senam Bersama
2	07.30-08.05	Pendidikan Agama dan Budi Pekerti	Matematika	Pendidikan Pancasila	PJOK	Projek
3	08.05-08.40	Pendidikan Agama dan Budi Pekerti	Matematika	Pendidikan Pancasila	PJOK	Projek
4	08.40-09.15	Pendidikan Agama dan Budi Pekerti	Matematika	Pendidikan Pancasila	PJOK	Projek
	09.15-09.30	Istirahat	Istirahat	Istirahat	Istirahat	Istirahat
5	09.30-10.05	Bahasa Indonesia	Matematika	Pendidikan Pancasila	Bahasa Jawa	Projek
6	10.05-10.40	Bahasa Indonesia	Seni	Bahasa Indonesia	Bahasa Jawa	Projek
7	10.40-11.15	Bahasa Indonesia	Seni	Bahasa Indonesia	Bahasa Inggris**	Projek
8	11.15-11.50	Bahasa Indonesia	Seni		Bahasa Inggris**	

From *Jadwal Pelajaran Semester I Tahun Pelajaran 2023/2024 SD Negeri Ngaliyan 01 [Academic Calendar of SDN Ngaliyan 01 Semarang 2023/2024]*, 2024), by SD Negeri Ngaliyan 01, n.d., (<https://sdnngaliyan01.dikdas.semarangkota.go.id/page/jadwal-pelajaran-20232024>). In the public domain.

The Japanese elementary education curriculum includes Japanese language, mathematics, science, music and art, physical education, home economics, and moral education, while the Indonesian Merdeka curriculum consists of religious education, Pancasila, mathematics, Indonesian language, physical education, science and social studies, arts and culture, and local content that focuses on developing different values and skills.

Character training in Japan is conducted through moral education or “*Doutoku -Kyouiku*” starting from elementary school to high school (Sulis Setiawati et al., 2022). Character training through *seikatsu*, or life skills, lessons teach students about moral values and how to behave in daily life, such as how to cross the street and train manners (Tini Gustriani Amri et al., 2024). These lessons not only focus on theory, but also engage students practically by teaching them how to park and board trains (Budi Mulyadi, 2020). This character that makes Japan a developed country is that it makes its citizens have the character of hard work, discipline, simplicity and love for the country, which is not owned by other countries in the world (Wuisang Justien, 2020). Meanwhile, in Indonesia, the Pancasila Learner Profile is a reference for student character education based on the Minister of Education, Culture and Research Regulation No.12 of 2024 Menteri Pendidikan, Kebudayaan, Riset, dan Teknologi Republik Indonesia, 2024). The Strengthening the Pancasila Learner Profile (P5) project aims to develop the basic character of students who adhere to the values of Pancasila, namely: religious, nationalist, integrity, independence, and mutual cooperation (Arifin Ariffin, 2023; Susanti Susanti et al., 2023). The P5 program also has links to local wisdom referring to local culture (Firda Nurul Fauziah et al., 2023; Herlis Setiawan Karim et al., 2023). Character training in Japan through “*Doutoku-Kyouiku*” which includes *seikatsu* lessons, teaches moral values and how to behave in daily life in a practical way, while in Indonesia, the Pancasila Student Profile is a reference for student character education which aims to develop students' basic character with Pancasila values.

Elementary school hours in Japan run from 08.00 to 15.00 JST, where tardy students are asked to sign a letter of agreement not to repeat it, and learning begins with morning reading and learning activities before entering the lesson hours, while in Indonesia it runs from 07.15 to 15.15, with time zones that adjust to the Indonesian region, and tardy students are given punishments such as reading Al-Quran (Rahmat, 2022), standing on the flagpole, pulling grass, and others (Ratna Putri Widjayanti et al., 2024). Before learning begins, elementary schools in Japan often hold ceremonies on certain days to love the country and commemorate special days, while in Indonesia, flag ceremonies are held every Monday to foster patriotism and love for the country, as well as on certain days to commemorate and celebrate important moments; in Indonesia, in addition to ceremonies, students also live religion according to their respective religions (Muthoharoh Muthoharoh, 2022) and strengthen local content in the Pancasila student profile (Saphira, 2022). Thus, it can be concluded that the education systems in Japan and Indonesia have significant differences in terms of school hours, handling student tardiness, and the tradition of ceremonies before learning.

Conclusions and recommendations

The Japanese government's education policy focuses on technological innovation, internationalization, and the formation of 21st century skills. The system is highly centralized with a strict national curriculum. Meanwhile, Indonesia's education policy focuses on equal access to education, character development, and improving teacher quality. Policies tend to be more decentralized, with variations between regions.

The implementation of the elementary school curriculum in Japan is highly structured with a strong emphasis on science, math and technology, and moral education. "In the Merdeka Curriculum, teachers are given the freedom to adjust their teaching according to the conditions and needs of each student through a differentiated learning approach. Differentiated learning refers to the way teachers design learning experiences that cater to the diverse abilities and learning styles of students. This approach aligns with the concept of Teaching at the Right Level (TaT), which emphasizes the importance of providing content that matches students' understanding levels to ensure they can learn effectively and develop according to their abilities."

Japan implements free nine-year compulsory education while Indonesia has 12-year compulsory education, but differs in learning methods, curriculum structure, and character building. In Indonesia, curriculum changes occur frequently, which can hurt the quality of education as schools find it difficult to adapt. Although there is freedom to incorporate local curricula, the content is often irrelevant.

According to the author (Muhammad Nurrahman), The Indonesian government can adopt education policies similar to those in Japan, particularly to improve the use of technology in learning and prepare students for the Industrial Revolution 4.0, while ensuring that these policies align with and reflect the values of Pancasila. Adopt the Japanese approach to ethical and moral formation through early education. Encourage more scientific research and international student exchanges to build global competitiveness. Implementation of a Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math-focused Elementary School Curriculum to prepare a more competitive future generation for the Golden Indonesia of 2045.

Conflict of interest

I declare that there are no conflicts of interest associated with this work. I have neither received financial nor non-financial support from any third party, and there are no affiliations or relationships that could be seen as influencing this manuscript. This work was conducted independently, and all views expressed are solely my own.

Author contribution

1. Muhammad Nurrahman: Sole author
2. Sri Marmoah: Research adviser

Data availability statement

1. No data was used for the research described in the article
2. The data that has been used is confidential

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