

Establishing Foundations for Early Childhood Education: A Comparative Curriculum Perspective of Indonesia, Mexico, and Brunei Darussalam

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ABSTRACT

Each curriculum possesses its own uniqueness and distinctive approaches, emphasizing child-centered learning that involves authentic learning experiences. The objective of this study is to ascertain commonalities, differences, and best practices that can be adopted to enhance the effectiveness of early childhood education. The research methodology employed a literature review approach, where relevant information was gathered from various sources such as scholarly journals, reference books, educational policy documents, and official publications. The data obtained from the literature was systematically analyzed to identify commonalities, differences, and best practices in early childhood education curricula. The findings of this study reveal that Early Childhood Education Curricula in Indonesia, Mexico, and Brunei Darussalam share a common focus on the social, emotional, and cognitive development of children. These three countries promote holistic learning by emphasizing essential aspects such as character development, creativity, and religious education. In Indonesia, the Early Childhood Education Curriculum (Kurikulum Merdeka) emphasizes meaningful learning through play, while Mexico's Programa de Educación Preescolar focuses on child development and motivation for learning, and Brunei Darussalam's National Education System - SPN21 encourages high-level skills and preparation for subsequent levels. Continuous evaluation, review, and collaboration are crucial for enhancing the quality of early childhood education globally.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Education plays a central role in shaping individuals and societies [1];[2];[3]. In the context of education, it holds a crucial role in establishing a strong moral, spiritual, and academic foundation. One significant phase in Islamic education is during early childhood, where character and fundamental values are molded from a very young age.

In the effort to establish quality early childhood education, the curriculum is one of the key elements that guide the planning, implementation, and evaluation of education [4];[5];[6]. Early childhood education curricula exhibit significant variations across different countries because each nation has its own traditions, cultures, and educational contexts.

In the context of comparing early childhood education curricula, Mexico, Brunei Darussalam, and Indonesia emerge as intriguing research subjects. These three countries have diverse cultural backgrounds, traditions, and local wisdom, which directly influence the progression of young children's growth and

maturation education in each nation. The interconnectedness between educational institutions, families, and communities, within which social mobility and cultural changes (cultural shifts) are interrelated, plays a significant role [7]. One effort to bridge these differences is through multicultural education [8]. Differences in ethnicity, race, and culture can be harnessed as sources of strength to advance education in Indonesia [9].

This research aims to establish the foundation for early childhood education through a comparative curriculum approach applied in Mexico, Brunei Darussalam, and Indonesia. By conducting a comparison of these three curricula, this study seeks to identify similarities, differences, and best practices that can be adopted to enhance the efficiency of preschool education in Indonesia.

Through a deep understanding of the differences and similarities in early childhood education curricula among these three countries, this research is also expected to provide valuable insights in formulating recommendations and strategies for the development of early childhood education that are relevant to the Indonesian context. This will contribute to strengthening the educational system for young children in Indonesia.

The benefits of this research extend beyond just a curriculum comparison study but aim to make a tangible contribution to fortifying the early childhood education system in Indonesia. The findings of this research are expected to offer insights to educators, practitioners, policymakers in the field of education, and to the entire community concerned with building a young generation with a strong educational foundation.

Through the comparative curriculum approach within the realm of education for young children, it is hoped that we can identify best practices, examine the successes and challenges faced by each country, and formulate recommendations for the improvement within the realm of education for young children in Indonesia.

In this article, we will delve deeply into the comparison within the realm of education for young children curricula in Mexico, Brunei Darussalam, and Indonesia, along with its implications within the realm of education for young children in Indonesia. As a result, readers will gain a comprehensive understanding of the developments and challenges in within the realm of education for young children in these countries and their relevance in the Indonesian context.

2. METHOD

This research employs a literature review approach to analyze and compare within the realm of education for young children curricula in Mexico, Brunei Darussalam, and Indonesia. The literature review approach was chosen because it allows the researcher to gather relevant and reliable information from various existing literary sources.

The first step in the research method involves collecting literature related to within the realm of education for young children curricula in these three countries. The sources of literature include academic journals, reference books, educational policy documents, and relevant official publications. The collected literature will cover essential aspects such as objectives, content, teaching methods, assessment, and challenges faced in curriculum implementation.

Subsequently, the data from the collected literature will be systematically analyzed. The analysis process includes reading, understanding, and comparing literature from the three countries to identify similarities and differences in early childhood education curricula. Relevant information will be extracted and systematically organized according to the identified themes or topics.

During the analysis process, the researcher will also identify best practices that can be adopted in the development within the realm of education for young children curricula in Indonesia. This will be done by comparing the strengths and weaknesses of each existing curriculum.

Additionally, the researcher may pose questions or formulate hypotheses based on the findings in the literature to provide a stronger theoretical foundation. The literature review also allows the researcher to identify existing research gaps and contribute new knowledge.

The entire research process will be documented in detail and transparency. Proper citation of the literature references will be included in the research report to maintain academic integrity and give credit to the authors of those sources.

Through the literature review approach, this research is expected to provide a comprehensive understanding within the realm of education for young children curricula in Mexico, Brunei Darussalam, and Indonesia. The findings of this research will offer valuable insights for the progression of young children's growth and maturation in Indonesia and provide recommendations to enhance the standard of education for youngsters.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The research findings will encompass a detailed description of the early childhood education curricula in these three countries. This will include the components included in the curriculum, such as educational objectives, core curriculum content, teaching methods, learning approaches, and assessment methods. The discussion of this research will highlight the differences and similarities among the three curricula. It will delve into the policies and strategies underlying curriculum development in each country, as well as the theoretical foundations used. The discussion will also cover the strengths and weaknesses of each curriculum, as well as the efforts made to improve the standard of education for youngsters in each country. This research will provide valuable insights into early childhood education in three different countries, strengthen understanding of best practices in curriculum development, and provide a foundation for improving early childhood education in each country.

3.1 The Early Childhood Education Curriculum in Indonesia

In the Indonesian education system, it is known that based on the decision of the Minister of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology number 262/M/2022 concerning guidelines for the implementation of the curriculum in the context of learning recovery, Indonesia has adopted a new curriculum known as the 'Merdeka Curriculum' [10]. Specifically, the components of the Merdeka Curriculum for early childhood education are as follows.

The intracurricular learning activities in the Merdeka Curriculum are designed with the primary goal of facilitating children in achieving the defined learning outcomes. The adopted approach is 'Merdeka Belajar, Merdeka Bermain' ('Freedom to Learn, Freedom to Play'), where kids are provided with the chance to acquire knowledge through meaningful play. Intracurricular activities are carefully chosen, taking into account enjoyable experiences and children's developmental progress. This approach also integrates real and existing learning resources around children, such as their environment, natural materials, and everyday experiences. If these learning resources are not readily available, relevant children's literature and technology can be used [10];[11].

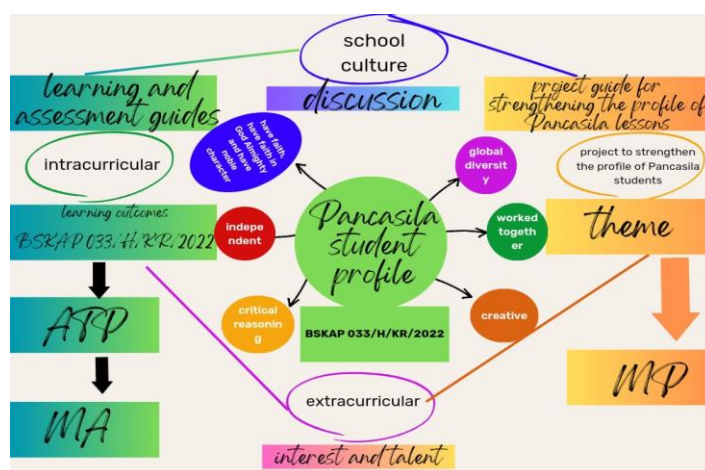


Figure 1. Structure of the Merdeka Curriculum in Indonesia [12]

Project P5 aims to strengthen the profile of Pancasila learners, encompassing the values of Pancasila and aspects of national identity. This project provides flexibility for each educational institution to choose and implement projects that are suitable for their local context. These projects can vary, such as environmental activities, local cultural introductions, humanitarian activities, arts and culture, and activities that promote inclusive attitudes and respect for diversity. The goal is to reinforce Pancasila values and awareness of national identity from an early age [13];[14];[15].

The allocation of learning time in Early Childhood Education (PAUD) is adjusted according to the age of the child, with a minimum of 900 minutes per week for ages 4-6 and a minimum of 360 minutes per week for ages 3-4 [10].

Learning Achievements are the competencies that which students must attain. However, as a policy set in place, CP does not provide sufficiently concrete guidance for guiding day-to-day learning activities. Therefore, an operational learning goal flow document has been prepared to assist educators in planning and directing the learning process. This learning goal flow serves as a clearer and more directed guide in implementing the Merdeka Curriculum [16];[17].

The Merdeka Curriculum for early childhood education has three main learning outcomes. These outcomes encompass religious and moral values, identity, as well as the core principles of reading, mathematics, science, technology, engineering, and the arts. The purpose of these learning outcomes is to guide children's development in aspects of religion-morality, physical-motor, emotional-social, language, and cognitive development. By achieving these learning outcomes, it is expected that children will be prepared to advance to the subsequent educational level [16];[17].

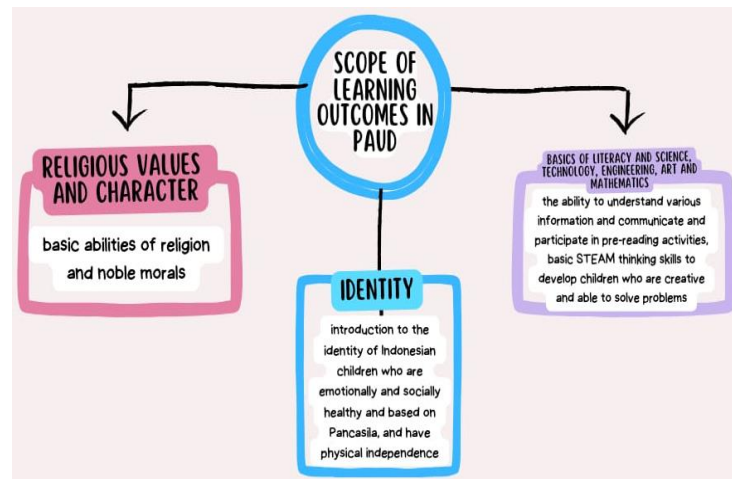


Figure 2. Early Childhood Education Learning Achievements in the Merdeka Curriculum [18]

Education in the early years of childhood (Incorporating preschool, early childhood educational and developmental initiatives, early childhood learning centers, and religious early childhood education) covers various aspects of child development, including religious-moral values, physical-motor, socio-emotional, Pancasila values, language, and cognitive development [19]. The approach to learning in Early Childhood Education is a holistic approach that integrates all aspects of child development. Educators provide structured learning support (scaffolding) by engaging children in everyday conversations. They present challenges, support, and appropriate guidance to help children develop motor, social, moral, language, and environmental exploration skills.

The 'Merdeka Belajar, Merdeka Bermain' ('Freedom to Learn, Freedom to Play') approach in the Merdeka Curriculum emphasizes the importance of providing space for children to develop creativity, curiosity, and independent thinking. Children are provided with the chance to acquire knowledge through purposeful play. Educators present various games and activities that challenge children, providing opportunities for them to explore, try new things, and develop their skills.

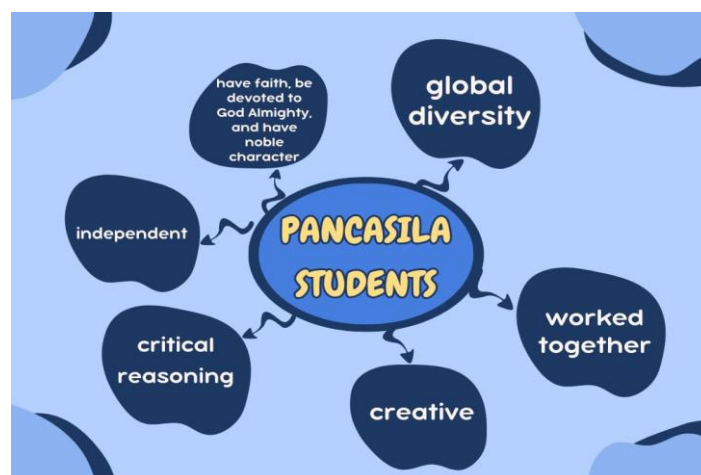


Figure 3. The 'Freedom to Learn, Freedom to Play' Concept Through Project P5 [18]

3.2. The Early Childhood Education Curriculum of Mexico

The Preschool Curriculum in Mexico, known as the "Programa de Educación Preescolar," is the result of curriculum reform that began in 2001. The curriculum reform started in 2001 and reached its peak in 2002-2003 with an internal evaluation of hundreds of preschools in Mexico. The goal of this reform was to pinpoint areas of proficiency and areas needing improvement of the preschool education system and to review the curriculum that had been in use since the 1920s [20];[21];[22].

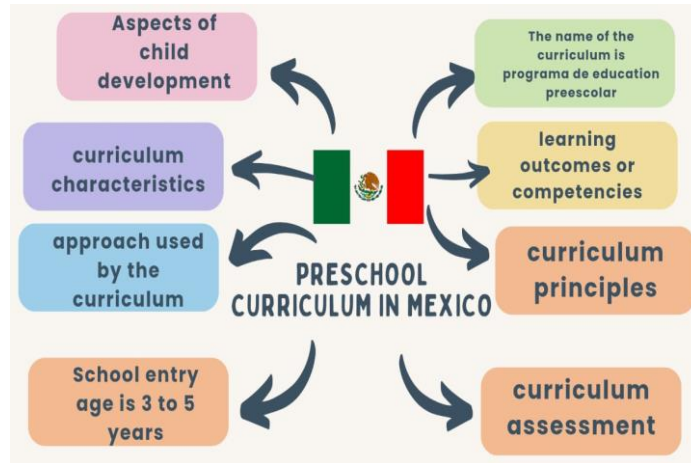


Figure 4. Curriculum Structure in Mexico

The preschool curriculum in Mexico is based on three main principles. First, the principle of child development and the learning process emphasizes the importance of laying the foundation of knowledge and skills in children for further development. The role of teachers in motivating children to learn is also a primary focus. The second principle is diversity and equality, emphasizing that schools should provide equitable chances to all youngsters, irrespective of their cultural background. The third principle highlights schools as interventions that support child development through a learning-friendly environment [20];[21];[22].

The preschool curriculum in Mexico has distinctive features. It has a national orientation, focusing on child development areas through the delivery of top-notch experiences and child-centeredness. Additionally, the curriculum is open-ended, allowing flexibility in its implementation [20];[21];[22];[23].

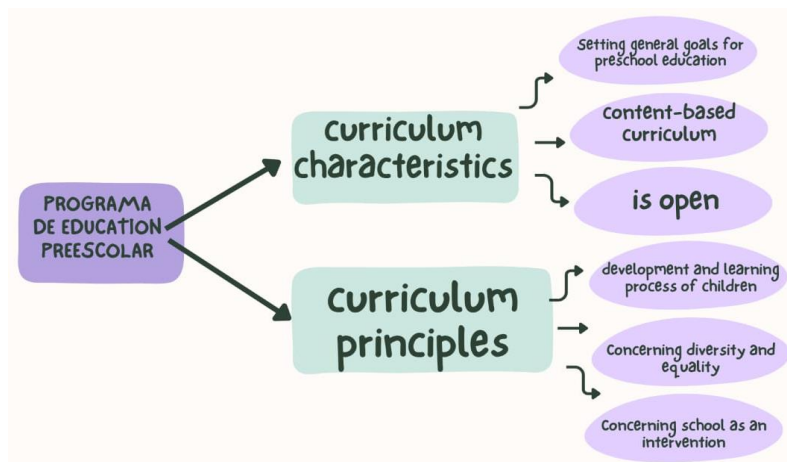


Figure 5. Characteristics and Principles of the Programa de Educacion Preescolar Curriculum

The preschool curriculum in Mexico focuses on six aspects of child development. Such aspects encompass social and individual growth, linguistic and communicative skills, mathematical cognition, exploration and comprehension of the world, artistic expression and appreciation, along with physical and health progress. The targeted learning outcomes include personal independence and self-reliance abilities, interpersonal connections, verbal and written communication, numerical understanding, spatial awareness,

media literacy, comprehension of the natural environment, cultural awareness, and social acumen, as well as an appreciation of musical expression, dance, visual arts, and drama [20];[21];[22].

Table 1. Competency Aspects in the Programa de Educacion Preescolar Curriculum

COMPETENCE	
Formative Field	The Aspect In Which They Are Arranged
1. Social and personal development	1. Personal identity and autonomy
	2. Interpersonal relationships
2. Language and communication	1. Spoken language
	2. Written language
3. Mathematical thinking	1. Number
	2. Form, space, and media
4. Exploration and knowledge of the world	1. Natural world
	2. Culture and social life
5. Artistic expression and appreciation	1. Expression and appreciation of music
	2. Body expression and appreciation of dance
	3. Plastic expression and appreciation
	4. Dramatic expression and theatrical appreciation
6. Physical development and health	1. Coordination, strength, and balance
	2. Health promotion

This curriculum is equipped with assessment tools to evaluate the attainment of developmental and educational results. Evaluation is conducted through teacher observations of individual and group behaviors and works of the children. The assessment results are used to guide teaching practices, including any necessary interventions [20];[21].

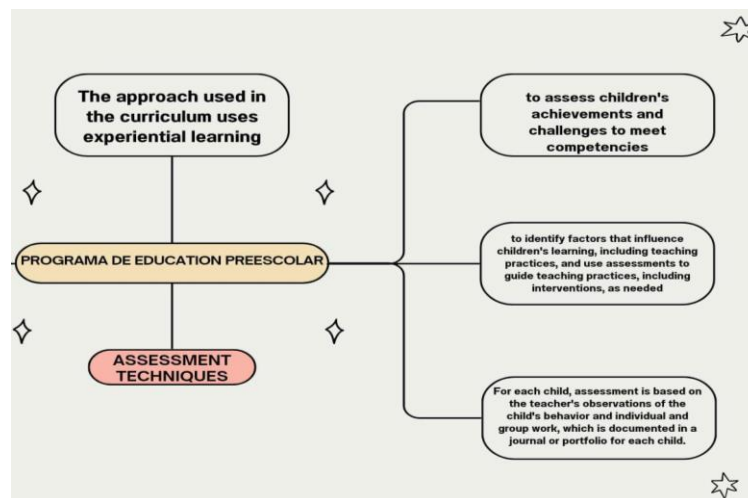


Figure 6. Assessment Techniques in the Programa de Educacion Preescolar Curriculum

Collaboration among educators, parents, and experts is highly important in aiding the progress of children in the preschool curriculum in Mexico. Through collaboration, comprehensive information can be shared, integrated approaches can be applied, emotional support and motivation can be provided, appropriate intervention plans can be devised, continuity and consistency in approaches can be ensured, and social support can be strengthened [24];[20];[21];[22].

The preschool curriculum in Mexico, Programa de Educación Preescolar, is the result of curriculum reform that focuses on child development. This curriculum is based on principles that emphasize child development and the learning process, diversity and equality, and the role of schools as interventions. With its child-centered characteristics and experiential learning approach, this curriculum targets learning achievements in various aspects of development. Collaboration among educators, parents, and experts becomes a critical factor in supporting children's development within this curriculum.

3.3. The Early Childhood Education Curriculum of Brunei Darussalam

The education curriculum in Brunei Darussalam, known as the National Education System (SPN21), aims to provide continuous learning and achieve core educational goals, which include developing competitive learners, enhancing achievement, fostering lifelong learning abilities, and equipping learners with high-level skills [25];[26];[27]. In this article, we will delve deeper into the school curriculum in Brunei Darussalam, focusing on its key strategies and characteristics. This curriculum is designed to attain holistic educational objectives through three strategic themes of the Ministry of Education: excellent teaching and learning, professionalism and accountability, as well as efficiency and innovation. It emphasizes the development of high-level skills and provides comprehensive education for all learners [28];[29];[30].

The curriculum in Brunei Darussalam is based on subject content. Each educational level, from pre-school to secondary school, consists of approximately 7 to 9 subjects. English is taught from preschool to primary school (grades 1-3), while subjects such as Islamic religious education, arts, crafts, and Malay Islamic Berjaya (MIB) are taught in the Malay language. Mathematics, History, Science, and Geography are taught in English [28];[29];[30].

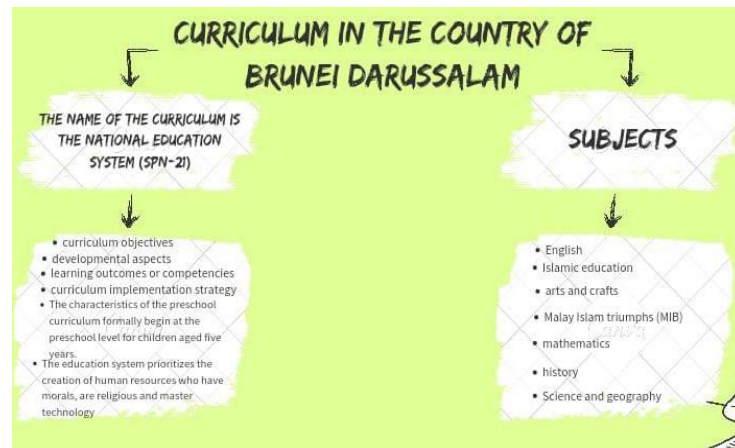


Figure 7. Structure of the SPN-21 Curriculum in Brunei Darussalam

The education system in Brunei Darussalam emphasizes the creation of morally upright, religious, and technologically proficient human resources (HR). Education not only focuses on academic aspects but also on the formation of strong character and personality [28];[29]; [30].

Preschool education in Brunei Darussalam commences at the age of five. At this stage, the primary focus is on socio-emotional development, self-identity formation, and preparation for primary levels. Some crucial aspects of the teaching and learning process in preschool include fostering showing curiosity in investigating their surroundings, emphasizing spiritual, emotional, and social growth, encouraging cognitive, motor, and coordination development, mastery of language and numeracy skills, as well as nurturing creativity and cheerfulness in every activity [31];[28];[29]; [30].

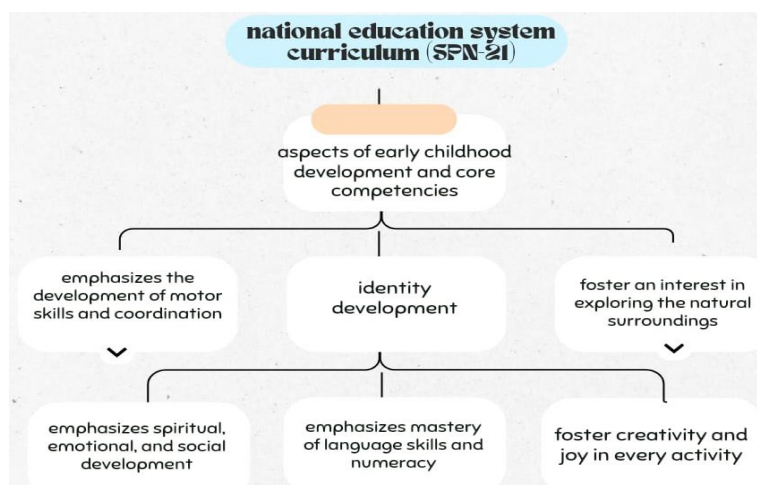


Figure 8. Competency Aspects of the SPN-21 Curriculum

The education curriculum in Brunei Darussalam, known as the National Education System (SPN21), encourages holistic learning and the development of high-level skills. With a focus on subject content and an emphasis on the formation of morally upright, religious, and technologically proficient individuals, this curriculum aims to prepare students to face future challenges [32]. In the preschool curriculum, the emphasis is placed on socio-emotional development, self-identity formation, and preparation for primary education. Thus, Brunei Darussalam continues to transform towards comprehensive and sustainable education [33].

3.4. Comparison of Early Childhood Education (ECE) Curricula in Indonesia, Mexico, and Brunei Darussalam

The following is a more detailed description of the comparison of the three PAUD curricula for Indonesia, Mexico and Brunei Darussalam:

Independent Curriculum The PAUD curriculum in Indonesia has experienced the latest developments with the introduction of the self-directed syllabus. This curriculum is implemented in accordance with the directive outlined in Minister of Education, Culture, Research and Technology Decree number 262/M/2022 regarding guidelines for curriculum implementation within the framework of learning recovery. The Merdeka Curriculum aims to facilitate children in achieving specified learning outcomes.

One of the approaches adopted in the Merdeka Curriculum is "Freedom to Learn, Freedom to Play." Children are provided with the chance to acquire knowledge through purposeful play, ensuring that curricular learning activities are crafted with the main aim of facilitating children in achieving specified learning outcomes. Intracurricular activities are chosen carefully, paying attention to enjoyable experiences and increasing children's achievements. This approach also integrates real learning resources that exist around children, such as the surrounding environment, natural materials, and everyday experiences. If these learning resources are not directly available, technology and relevant children's reading books can be used.

In the Independent Curriculum, there is also the P5 Project (Pancasila Student Profile) which seeks to enhance the Pancasila students' characteristics. This initiative provides flexibility for each educational unit to select and implement projects that suit their local context. These projects can be varied, such as environmental activities, introduction to local culture, humanitarian activities, arts and culture, as well as activities that encourage inclusive attitudes and respect for diversity. The aim is to strengthen Pancasila values and awareness of national identity from an early age. The PAUD curriculum in Indonesia also pays attention to the allocation of learning time according to the child's age. At the age of 4-5 years, children are invited to play and learn in a fun and cheerful atmosphere. They are given the opportunity to explore, be creative and interact with the surrounding environment. Through play activities, children can develop gross and fine motor skills, social and cognitive skills and language skills.

Furthermore, at the age of 5-6 years, children begin to be introduced to more structured learning. They are taught basic skills, such as reading, writing and arithmetic. Learning also involves exploration, observation and asking questions, so that children can actively participate in the learning process. The aim of the PAUD curriculum in Indonesia is to help children develop their potential holistically, including physical, cognitive, social, emotional and spiritual aspects.

Mexico's PAUD curriculum, Programa de Educación Preescolar (PEP), early childhood education is managed through the Programa Nacional de Educación Inicial (PNEI), which is the national curriculum for early childhood education. PNEI focuses on the holistic development of children and emphasizes four main dimensions of development, namely physical-motor, cognitive, language and social-emotional development.

PEP uses an approach that involves play and exploration activities as the main learning method. Children are given the opportunity to participate in a variety of creative and play activities that stimulate their development. Apart from that, PEP also encourages parents' participation in their children's education by involving them in learning activities and providing support for children's development.

The PEP curriculum is designed to meet the needs and cultural context of the Mexican community. For example, in language learning, PEP places emphasis on developing Spanish, which is the official language in Mexico, but also respects the cultural diversity and regional languages that exist in the country.

Brunei Darussalam State PAUD Curriculum, Early Childhood Education Framework. Brunei Darussalam has a PAUD curriculum framework known as the Early Childhood Education Framework. This curriculum focuses on the holistic development of children by integrating physical, social, emotional, cognitive and moral aspects.

Brunei Darussalam's Early Childhood Education Framework places emphasis on learning that is child-centered and involves real and meaningful learning experiences. Children are encouraged to play, explore and interact with their environment. This curriculum also takes into account the individual needs of children and ensures that each child receives support appropriate to their level of development.

Apart from that, the PAUD curriculum in Brunei Darussalam also encourages parents' active participation in their children's education. Parents are invited to be involved in learning activities and communicate with teachers to support children's development.

The three countries Indonesia, Mexico and Brunei Darussalam have different approaches to the PAUD curriculum. The Merdeka Curriculum in Indonesia emphasizes "Freedom to Learn, Freedom to Play" with the integration of Pancasila values, while PEP in Mexico prioritizes play and exploration activities and involves the role of parents. In Brunei Darussalam, the Early Childhood Education Framework places emphasis on learning that is child-centered and involves real learning experiences.

Each curriculum is unique and has a different approach, but the main goal is the same, namely facilitating the holistic development of young children and helping them reach their full potential in physical, cognitive, social and emotional aspects. Curriculum choices depend on cultural context, national values, and local community needs. give me relevance to previous studies and give me the limitations of discussing the research.

3.5. Relevance of Previous Research

In previous studies on Early Childhood Education (PAUD) curricula in Indonesia, Mexico, and Brunei Darussalam, research relevance can be found in understanding the learning approaches used in the curricula, the role of parents in child education, and the emphasis on holistic child development.

Firstly, the understanding of the learning approaches employed in PAUD curricula in these three countries can be relevant to previous studies. Prior research may have discussed the effectiveness of the "learning through play" approach implemented in the Merdeka Curriculum in Indonesia [34], the exploration of play in the PEP curriculum in Mexico [35], and the exploration of play in the SPN21 curriculum in Brunei Darussalam [30]. By comparing previous research findings with the current curricula under study, similarities, differences, and strengths of each approach can be identified.

Secondly, the emphasis on holistic child development in PAUD curricula is also relevant to previous studies. Prior research may have explored the impact of PAUD curricula on the physical, cognitive, social, and emotional development of children in Indonesia [36];[37], as well as in Mexico [38], and in Brunei Darussalam [39]. Within the contexts of curricula in Indonesia, Mexico, and Brunei Darussalam, research can compare the developmental achievements of children associated with the implementation of PAUD curricula and evaluate the extent to which the curricula meet the goals of holistic child development.

3.6. Research Limitations

In comparative research on PAUD curricula in Indonesia, Mexico and Brunei Darussalam, there are several limitations that need to be taken into account. This research may only involve a few PAUD educational institutions in each country or only select a limited sample for analysis. This limitation may affect the representativeness and generalizability of research findings to the entire early childhood education population in the country. Data limitations can occur if not all information and documents related to the PAUD curriculum in the three countries are available or accessible. This can limit a comprehensive understanding of the curriculum and its implementation. This research may have time limitations in collecting data and analysis. This may limit an in-depth understanding of the comparison of PAUD curricula in the three countries and their long-term implications. Although this study compares PAUD curricula in three countries, each country has its own unique cultural, political, and social context. These factors can influence differences in the design and implementation of PAUD curricula. Therefore, it is important to remember that such comparisons cannot describe all relevant aspects and there may be other factors that have not been considered. This research may not involve in-depth analysis or direct evaluation of the implementation of PAUD curricula in each country. These limitations can limit understanding of the true effectiveness and impact of each curriculum. This research may only focus on sources available in a particular language, such as Indonesian, Spanish, or English. This limitation may overlook important research and resources in other languages that could provide additional insight.

4. CONCLUSION

This conclusion shows that despite differences in approaches, components, and learning objectives, PAUD curricula in Indonesia, Mexico, and Brunei Darussalam are similar in their focus on children's social, emotional, and cognitive development. These three countries encourage holistic learning by paying attention to important aspects such as character, creativity and religious education.

Educational curricula for early childhood in Indonesia, Mexico and Brunei Darussalam have similar goals and approaches in preparing children for their future. Although there are differences in curriculum

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components and strategies, the similarities that exist can become the basis for best practices in developing PAUD curricula globally. It is important for every country to continue to improve the quality of early childhood education through ongoing evaluation, review and collaboration.

The PAUD curriculum in Indonesia (Kurikulum Merdeka) emphasizes learning through meaningful play, with an emphasis on enjoyable experiences and increasing children's achievements. Meanwhile, the PAUD curriculum in Mexico (Programa de Educación Preescolar) focuses on the development and motivation of children to learn, with an emphasis on six aspects of child development. In Brunei Darussalam, the PAUD (National Education System - SPN21) curriculum encourages holistic learning by emphasizing high-level skills and preparation for lower-level ones.

In a global context, these three curricula reflect the efforts of these countries to optimize children's potential through different approaches. In implementing the PAUD curriculum, it is important to understand the local context, children's needs, and pay attention to important aspects of child development such as social, emotional, cognitive, character, creativity and religious education.

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Please attach clear photo (3x4 cm) and vita. Example of biographies of authors:

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