

## FINDING THE COMMON THREAD OF THE INDONESIAN VS UNITED STATES EDUCATION SYSTEM

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**Abstract:** This study aims to analyze and compare the education systems in Indonesia and the United States, focusing on the Educational Goals and Philosophies of the Two Countries, Curriculum, Learning Methods, Role of Teachers and Teacher Training, Evaluation and Assessment, Equitable Access to Education and the Use of Technology in Education applied in both countries. In the context of globalization and the development of information technology, a deep understanding of the differences and similarities in this education system has become very important. The research methods used are literature studies and comparative analysis, which involves collecting data from various sources, including official documents, scientific articles, and educational reports. The results show that despite significant differences in the approach and implementation of the education system, the two countries have the same goal, which is to create a competent generation ready to face global challenges. This study also found that cultural, economic, and government policy factors play a major role in shaping the characteristics of each education system. Thus, this research is expected to provide broader insights for educators, policymakers, and researchers in an effort to improve the quality of education in Indonesia and the United States.

**Keywords:** *education system, comparison, goals and philosophy, curriculum, learning methods, role of teachers and teacher training*

### INTRODUCTION

Education is one of the main pillars in the development of a nation, playing an important role in creating quality and competitive human resources. In the current era of globalization, the education system in various countries has undergone significant transformation, including in Indonesia and the United States. Although both countries share the same goal of creating a quality generation, the approach and implementation of their education systems are very different. Indonesia, as a developing country, faces challenges in improving the quality of education, while the United States, as a developed country, continues to innovate in teaching methods and curriculum to meet changing needs.

In this situation, it is crucial to understand how these two education systems function and influence each other. Previous research has discussed various aspects of comparative education systems between Indonesia and the United States. (Mustika et al., 2022) in his article "A Comparative Study of Basic Education Policies in Indonesia and the United States" highlights differences in basic education policies, especially in the curriculum structure implemented in the two countries. They found that despite significant differences in curriculum approaches, the two countries are trying to implement the best basic education systems according to their respective capacities.

The main focus of this study is the lack of literature. Very few studies compare the education system in Indonesia and the United States. This is important because each country's social, cultural, and economic context is very different, which can provide

new insights into the development of education policies. Meanwhile, (Julian et al., 2025) In "Analysis of the Comparative System of Education in the United States with the State of Indonesia" analyzes various important aspects of the education system in both countries, including the curriculum, educational structure, government policies, and the quality of human resources in the education sector. As in Indonesia, we basically know that Indonesia has utilized technology in the world of education, such as research conducted by (Hasriadi, 2022) saying that the use of media in learning activities must pay attention to the principles of media use. The results of the analysis show that the United States has a more flexible education system with a high level of innovation, while Indonesia still faces major challenges in terms of education equity and teaching quality. and based on research by (Indrawaningsih, 2023) stating that the development of education in schools at this time still needs to reform the education system. All this time it has been assumed that teachers are the ones who know the most and students are only listeners.

Research conducted by (Budiman Akli et al., 2023) In "Comparison of Education Systems in the United States and Indonesia" discusses the differences in educational structure, funding, and curriculum between the two countries. They found that the United States implements "No Child Left Behind" laws with education funding sources coming from states and districts, while Indonesia has seen changes in education patterns since the 1998 reforms toward decentralization.

However, these studies still have limitations, especially in the in-depth analysis of how the Indonesian education system differs from the United States. In addition, there have not been many studies that address the practical implications of the adoption of certain elements of the United States education system into the Indonesian context, taking into account existing social and cultural factors.

The purpose of this study is to find a common thread of similarities and differences of the education system in Indonesia and the United States which includes in terms of the Goals and Philosophy of Education of the Two Countries, Curriculum, Learning Methods, Role of Teachers and Teacher Training, Evaluation and Assessment, Equal Access to Education, Use of Technology in Education to build readers' knowledge about the differences between the Indonesian and United States education systems.

## RESEARCH METHODS

This study uses a qualitative method with a comparative study approach. This approach was chosen because the main purpose of the study is to compare two education systems, namely the education system in Indonesia and in the United States, in order to find similarities (common threads), differences, and learning potentials that can be taken from each system.

The analysis technique used is the analysis of literature studies which is carried out by reading, understanding, grouping, and comparing the content of the literature that has been collected. The main focus of this analysis is on aspects such as:

- Goals and Philosophies of Education of the Two Countries
- Curriculum
- Learning Methods
- The Role of Teachers and Teacher Training
- Evaluation and Assessment

- Equitable Access to Education
- The Use of Technology in Education

Through this analysis, the researcher will identify the common thread or common ground of the education systems of the two countries, as well as propose policy recommendations or practices that can be adapted by Indonesia from the United States education system.

This method was chosen because it is suitable for studying social and educational phenomena in depth, without numerical or quantitative limitations, and allows for a broader interpretation of the available data.

## **FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS**

### **Goals and Philosophies of Education of the Two Countries**

In Education, it is necessary for a country to think about the purpose of Education and what basis will be the role model of Education with the modernity of the times and knowledge is increasing and technology is increasingly rampant and commonly used in the world of Education, but Education needs an important foundation that is the goal and the need for us to compare between the goals and philosophies of one negative one and another in order to become a benchmark and source of progress for Education in the country such as the developing countries of Indonesia and the developed countries of the United States.

Education in Indonesia is rooted in the philosophy of Pancasila, which emphasizes the values of divinity, humanity, unity, democracy, and social justice. This philosophy aims to form individuals who are faithful, pious, noble, healthy, knowledgeable, capable, creative, independent, and democratic and responsible citizens. Ki Hajar Dewantara, an Indonesian education figure, emphasized that education is a humanization process that aims to build individuals with a balance of intellectual, moral, and character(Asiva Noor Rachmayani, 2023). The implementation of this philosophy is reflected in the "Merdeka Belajar" initiative which was introduced in 2019. This program aims to improve learning outcomes by providing flexibility to educational units in managing the curriculum, so that learning is more relevant to the needs of students and the challenges of the times (OECD, 2023).

Whereas the goals and philosophies of education in the United States have evolved over time, influenced by various thoughts and needs of society. Historically, education in the U.S. has aimed to achieve four main aspects: academic, economic, democratic, and social. The academic aspect emphasizes the mastery of basic knowledge and skills; the economic aspect focuses on the preparation of a competent workforce; the democratic aspect aims to form participatory citizens; and the social aspect seeks to instill moral and cultural values.(Commission, 2021). In addition, the philosophy of education in the United States also emphasizes the importance of STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics) education to prepare students to face global economic challenges and technological advancements. Chris Talgo in his article "Point & Counterpoint: STEM is Way to Compete in the Future" (2025) highlights the need for an emphasis on STEM education to ensure the competitiveness of American students in the future. In the development of the education system, it is important to strike a balance between character formation and mastery of technical skills. Indonesia can learn from the United States in terms of emphasis on STEM and

practical skills, while the United States can learn from Indonesia on the importance of moral values and character building in education.

In this case, of course, there are similarities and differences between Indonesia and the United States in terms of their educational goals and philosophies, so that the similarity between the two countries lies in their efforts to adapt the education system to the needs of the times and prepare students to face global challenges. The two countries also emphasized the importance of developing critical thinking skills and active participation in society. The difference is that Indonesia emphasizes the values of Pancasila and character formation as the core of education, while the United States focuses more on mastering technical skills and practical knowledge relevant to the needs of the job market. However, there are still things that need to be considered so that they can become a benchmark for the state to advance Education, namely the similarities and differences between the two countries in determining the goals and philosophies of their countries that are able to bring Education to a quality education for students. The advantages of the Indonesian education system are the emphasis on the formation of character and moral values, but the lack of is to ensure effective implementation and relevance to global needs. On the other hand, the United States education system excels in its emphasis on practical and technical skills, but faces criticism regarding declining academic standards and a lack of emphasis on character building. So that many things need to be considered in the development of the education system, it is important to balance between character formation and mastery of technical skills. Indonesia can learn from the United States in terms of emphasis on STEM and practical skills, while the United States can learn from Indonesia on the importance of moral values and character building in education.

## Curriculum

In education, the curriculum is very important and needs to be considered to achieve the expected educational goals, especially it is necessary to pay attention to the comparison of education from one country to another to increase the benchmark of one country in getting to know relevant education and can create education that is useful for the future and the comparison between developed countries and developing countries can be a good example and role for the development of education in the future such as Education in Indonesia and the United States.

Indonesia has implemented the Merdeka Curriculum in response to the challenges of modern education. This curriculum gives more autonomy to schools and teachers in designing learning that suits the needs of students. (Dian Fitra, 2023) emphasizing that the Independent Curriculum allows flexibility in learning, so that students can develop their potential optimally. However, the implementation of the Independent Curriculum faces challenges, including teacher readiness and uneven educational infrastructure. (Masri et al., 2023) highlighting that the active participation of all parties, including teachers, students, parents, and the government, is critical to the successful implementation of this curriculum. In addition, research by (Umar et al., 2025) discuss how the implementation and development of the Independent Curriculum contributes to realizing quality education in Indonesia. Then what are the differences and similarities with developed countries, namely the United States?

In the United States, curriculum development often involves collaboration between curriculum developers and educational institutions. Highlight the role of curriculum developers in supporting the development, revision, and renewal of

academic programs at the college level. In addition, the coverage of material in introductory courses in quantum information science at U.S. institutions, highlights the importance of consensus in curriculum development for emerging fields(Meyer et al., 2024). Further, a study by (Dickey & Bejarano, 2023) introduces the GAIDE framework that leverages generative AI to aid course content development, demonstrating the integration of technology in curriculum development.

It can be concluded that there are similarities and differences between the two countries in the application of the curriculum in Education. The similarities between Indonesia and the United States lie in their efforts to adapt the curriculum to the challenges of the times, such as the integration of technology and the response to industrial needs. The two countries also emphasized the importance of flexibility in the curriculum to meet the diverse needs of students.

The difference is that Indonesia tends to adopt a centralized approach to curriculum development, while the United States is more decentralized, with a significant role of curriculum developers and educational institutions in determining curriculum content and structure. And in this case, it is necessary to pay attention to the advantages and disadvantages of both countries in the implementation of the curriculum in their countries. The advantage of the Indonesian curriculum system is the existence of clear national guidelines, but the disadvantage is to ensure effective implementation in all regions with diverse conditions. On the other hand, the United States curriculum system offers flexibility and innovation through decentralization, but it can face challenges in ensuring consistent quality standards across states. Therefore, it is necessary and important for a country to pay close attention by paying attention to the shortcomings, advantages and differences and similarities so that they get the information that needs to be considered to develop. In curriculum development, it is important to consider the readiness of human resources, supporting infrastructure, and evaluation mechanisms and continuous adjustments. Indonesia can learn from the U.S. decentralized approach in giving more autonomy to educational institutions, while the U.S. can learn from Indonesia's centralized approach in setting consistent national standards.

### **Learning Methods**

Study by (Zuhdi, 2018) discusses two innovative approaches in pedagogical practice in Indonesia: PAIKEM (Active, Innovative, Creative, Effective, and Fun Learning) and GASING (Easy, Fun, and Fun). PAIKEM emphasizes the active participation of students in the learning process, while GASING focuses on fun learning to improve understanding of concepts. Both approaches aim to improve the quality of education by involving students more actively. Learning Methods in the Independent Curriculum are quoted from a researcher by (Darmawanti, 2021) Analyze video recordings of history lessons showing that although the curriculum demands an approach that actively engages students, practice in the classroom is still dominated by teacher-centered teaching methods. This shows that there is a gap between curriculum objectives and implementation in the field. Then the Indonesian curriculum underwent a transformation where the OECD Report (2023) highlighted that the new curriculum in Indonesia introduced pedagogical approaches such as project-based learning through the Pancasila Student Profile Strengthening Project. This approach aims to develop students' competencies holistically and relevant to the needs of the 21st century.

Meanwhile, in the United States, where it is interpreted from one of the Study by (Condiffe et al., 2017) shows that Project-Based Learning has been an effective approach in various schools in the United States. This approach allows students to develop critical and collaborative thinking skills through real-life projects that are relevant to their lives. Then the United States integrates technology in learning which is shown in one of the studies by (Zielezinski, 2016) emphasizes the importance of integrating technology in learning to improve student engagement and personalization of learning. The use of technology allows teachers to tailor learning materials according to individual needs of students. And the United States also takes a social and emotional learning approach which is interpreted by one The CASEL report (2020) discusses the implementation of Social and Emotional Learning in schools in the United States. This approach aims to develop students' social, emotional, and academic skills in a balanced manner.

In this case, differences and similarities can be found in education in Indonesia and the United States where both countries show efforts to adopt a more student-centered learning approach and relevant to the needs of the 21st century. However, Indonesia still faces challenges in implementing the approach consistently across the region, while the United States has been more advanced in technology integration and social-emotional learning. Therefore, here it can be seen that these two countries certainly have advantages and disadvantages in the world of education that are applied such as Indonesia's advantages lie in the initiative to develop innovative learning approaches such as PAIKEM and GASING. However, the drawback is the lack of teacher training and adequate resources for effective implementation. The United States excels in technology integration and a comprehensive approach to learning, but faces challenges in technology access gaps in some communities.

### **The Role of Teachers and Teacher Training**

In the context of Indonesian education, teachers play the role of facilitators and innovators of active and creative learning. Research by (Dwiki et al., 2024) Highlighting the role of driving teachers as learning facilitators, sources of inspiration, and designers of adaptive learning strategies. Driving teachers are expected to be able to create an innovative learning environment and support student development holistically. Teacher training in Indonesia is increasingly leading to a competency-based approach. Study by (Sitopu et al., 2023) shows that online training through platforms such as Zoom has improved teachers' mastery of technology and pedagogical skills. This training is designed to improve the quality of teaching and adaptation to the current curriculum. Despite efforts to improve the quality of teachers through training, challenges still exist, especially in terms of equitable access and quality of training. Research by (Diki Maulansyah et al., 2023) emphasizing the importance of the role of teachers in improving the quality of education and the need for continuous training to support this role. While in the United States, the teaching profession faces serious challenges related to retention and job satisfaction. Report by (Kraft et al., 2022) shows a significant decrease in the number of prospective teachers and low job satisfaction levels, which has an impact on the quality of education. Teacher professional development in the U.S. emphasizes deep continuous learning. Report by (Hammond et al., 2017) highlighting the importance of training that focuses on developing complex skills such as problem-solving and collaboration. Education policy in the U.S. significantly affects teacher training. Study by (Mayer, 2021) discusses how federal and

state policies shape teacher training programs, with a focus on accreditation and competency standards. Both Indonesia and the United States recognize the importance of teachers' role as facilitators of learning and the need for continuous training. Both face challenges in terms of teacher retention and adaptation to changes in curriculum and technology. However, the training approach is different; Indonesia places more emphasis on competency-based training and the use of online technology, while the U.S. focuses on in-depth professional development and policies that support high competency standards.

### **Evaluation and Assessment System**

The education evaluation system in Indonesia has undergone various changes to improve the quality of education. Evaluation is carried out through diagnostic, formative, and summative assessments. Research by (Cirocki et al., 2025) shows that teachers in Indonesia generally use these three types of evaluations to monitor student learning progress, although their implementation still faces challenges in terms of teacher understanding and skills. In addition, a study by (Cirocki et al., 2025) highlights the importance of assessment literacy among prospective English teachers in Indonesia. The results of the study show that the level of assessment literacy still needs to be improved through more intensive training and education.

Evaluation of national education standards is also a focus in efforts to improve the quality of education. Research by (Damanik, 2024) recommend restructuring of national education standards by simplifying indicators and aspects of standards to improve the effectiveness of implementation in the field. While in the United States, educational evaluation systems are constantly evolving to improve effectiveness and fairness. Report by (Too many et al., 2023) evaluate the Innovative Assessment Demonstration Authority (IADA) program, which allows states to develop innovative assessment systems that are more appropriate to local needs and increase student engagement. Study by (Pinar, 2021) discussed the impact of the COVID-19 crisis on curriculum and educational evaluation, emphasizing the need to adapt the curriculum to face new challenges and support more flexible learning. In addition, the journal "Assessment & Evaluation in Higher Education" regularly publishes research related to evaluation and assessment practices in higher education, providing insights into approaches and challenges faced in the context of higher education in the U.S.

With this explanation, there will be similarities and differences between the two countries in the evaluation and assessment system such as, These two countries have similarities, among others, Both countries recognize the importance of formative and summative evaluation in the learning process, challenges in the implementation of effective evaluation, including the need for training for educators, efforts to adapt the evaluation system to local needs and global challenges. And some other differences such as Indonesia is more centralized in the development of evaluation policies, while the US gives more autonomy to states and educational institutions, the US is more active in developing and adopting innovative assessments through programs such as IADA, Assessment literacy among educators in Indonesia is still a challenge, while in the US there are more resources and training to support professional development.

### **Equitable Access to Education**

In Indonesia, there is the implementation of zoning policies as in research by (Purnamasari & Ginanjar, 2025) explained that the zoning policy was introduced in

2017 as an effort to improve access and equitable education for all students. This policy aims to ensure that every child has equal access to quality education regardless of economic status or geographical location. However, the implementation of this policy is faced in research conducted by (Mulyani, 2021) challenges, such as quality inequality between schools and resistance from the community. The Government of Indonesia allocates an education budget of 20% of the state budget as an effort to equalize and expand access to education. However, the distribution of this budget still faces challenges in its implementation, especially in supporting private schools and remote areas. Despite various efforts have been made, the issue of equal distribution of education in Indonesia is still a big challenge. Various schools and educational institutions face obstacles such as inadequate facilities, limited human resources, high education costs, and uneven distribution of teachers. Meanwhile, in the United States, the report "Indicators of Higher Education Equity in the United States" shows that there are gaps in higher education achievement based on student characteristics, such as family income and race. The report highlights the importance of financial aid and support programs to reduce barriers in access to higher education(Report, 2020). Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) policies have become a focus in efforts to improve educational equity in the U.S. However, recently, DEI policies have faced challenges, including the elimination of DEI programs at some educational institutions, which may affect access to and support for students from minority groups. In response to challenges to DEI policies, some universities in the U.S. have begun to adopt a pluralism approach, which emphasizes respectful engagement among ideological, religious, and cultural differences. This approach aims to create an inclusive educational environment for all students. So that Both Indonesia and the United States face challenges in equitable access to education. In Indonesia, the main challenge lies in the uneven distribution of resources and the quality of education between regions. Meanwhile, in the U.S., challenges arise from shifting policies and political tensions affecting programs that support educational equity.

### **The Use of Technology in Education**

Technology plays an important role in life, and how does it play a role in the world of Education such as Research by (Natalia et al. 2024) highlighting the use of digital technology to create interactive learning in elementary schools. The use of digital media such as learning videos and educational applications increases student engagement by up to 35% compared to traditional methods. However, challenges such as technology gaps and lack of digital literacy are still obstacles in their implementation.(Siringoringo & Alfaridzi, 2024) Discuss how e-learning platforms and computer-based evaluation tools can improve teaching efficiency and effectiveness. Technology allows teachers to create engaging and interactive learning environments, although there are still challenges in terms of training and technology adaptation by educators. Research by (Mustakim, 2020) shows that the use of technology-based learning media can increase active participation and student learning outcomes. However, the implementation of technology in learning still faces challenges such as limited infrastructure and teacher readiness. Meanwhile, in the United States, research by (Kritandani et al., 2024) emphasizing the importance of integrating artificial intelligence (AI) in education to enhance learning and support innovation. This report discusses the need for policies that support the use of technology to improve the teaching and learning process. Study by (Ranzato et al., 2025) examine the use of

educational technology (EdTech) to support the learning of students with special educational needs in inclusive elementary schools. This research highlights how EdTech can support more inclusive and adaptive learning. A report by EDUCAUSE (2025) evaluates students' experiences in technology-related higher education, including preferences for hybrid learning and the use of AI in the classroom. This report provides insights into how institutions can adapt to meet the needs of students and enhance their learning experience.

Both Indonesia and the United States have shown significant efforts in integrating technology into their education systems. Both countries face challenges such as the digital divide and the readiness of educators to adopt new technologies. However, there are differences in the approach and focus of technology implementation:

1. Indonesia is more focused on improving access and digital literacy at the primary level, with an emphasis on the use of interactive learning media to increase student engagement
2. The United States emphasizes the integration of advanced technologies such as AI and EdTech to support more inclusive and adaptive learning, as well as prepare students for the needs of the future.

## **CONCLUSIONS**

Based on the results of a comparative study between the Indonesian and United States education systems, I conclude that although the two countries have different social, cultural, and economic backgrounds, they share the same goal of creating a generation that is capable, competent, and ready to face global challenges. Indonesia emphasizes on character formation and moral values rooted in Pancasila, while the United States focuses more on developing technical skills and integrating technologies such as STEM and AI. In terms of curriculum, Indonesia tends to be centralistic through the Independent Curriculum, while the US gives autonomy to each state. Learning methods in Indonesia have begun to adopt active approaches such as PAIKEM and GASING, but their application is not evenly distributed. In contrast, the U.S. has been more advanced in implementing Project-Based Learning and Social Emotional Learning.

The role of teachers in both countries is equally vital, but training in Indonesia still faces the challenge of equitable quality. The evaluation and equitable access to education system also shows that Indonesia needs to strengthen infrastructure, training, and equity policies. On the other hand, the US, although more advanced in educational innovation, still faces the challenge of social and political disparities. The use of technology in education is an important point of this comparison. Indonesia shows great potential in the use of digital media but needs to pursue human resource and infrastructure readiness, while the US has extensively integrated advanced technology in its education system.

From this research, I realized that no system is perfect. It is precisely from that difference that we can learn from each other. Indonesia can draw inspiration from the flexibility and technological advancement of the US, while the US can learn from the approach to values and character that is firmly held in Indonesian education. I hope that

the results of this research can make a real contribution to the improvement of education policies and practices in Indonesia in the future.

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