

A COMPARATIVE STUDY ON LEVELS OF EDUCATION IN SINGAPORE AND INDIA

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Abstract:

The education systems of India and Singapore have gained global recognition for their distinct approaches to foundational learning. This study presents a comparative overview of their primary education structures, highlighting key practices and differences through document-based analysis. The study exhibits the comparison of primary education systems of India and Singapore. The structure of education system in both the countries is discussed in brief. This paper aims to give an overview of the significant practices followed in primary education system of India and Singapore in brief and tries to make a comparison. The method employed by the researcher for present investigation is document-based comparative analysis. The comparative analysis of various levels of education system in both the countries has been highlighted in special reference to pre-school, elementary education stages which are together called as Primary Schooling.

Both the countries follow a general pattern regarding the previously mentioned stages of education and types of institutions providing education. On the other hand, these two countries differ a lot regarding the overall structure of education, duration of different stages at school system, access to higher education, affiliation of institutions and so on. The researcher highlights such similarities as well as differences and tries to accentuate areas where India may take ideas from Singapore education system.

1. Introduction

Singapore's education system consistently ranks among the top globally, overseen by the Ministry of Education (MOE), which allocates substantial funding through initiatives like the Edusave program to support student development and achievement (MOE, 2023). It contributes 20 percent of the Singapore Annual National Budget. The Ministry Of Education provides funds on the name of EDUSAVE program. Its aim is to maximize educational opportunities for the Singapore students and reward them on their educational achievements.

In contrast, India's education system is governed by the Ministry of Education, formerly MHRD, and shaped by national policies such as NEP 2020 and the Right to Education Act (2009), with implementation varying across states. Indian Education system faces many challenges, it is crafted and executed by the central level policies such as NEP 2020, SamagraSikshaAbhiyan, BetiBachaoBetiPadhao and more and implemented by the state-level governances. Believing that the education is the milestone for the growth of any country, various constitutional articles have been developed and Right of Children to free and compulsory education Act 2009 was made to provide free and compulsory education to children aged 6 to 14 years.

I. Background of the study

The roots of Singapore's education system trace back to colonial times, evolving through phases of survival-driven schooling and vocational focus. Post-independence reforms in the 1980s emphasized quality and skill development, culminating in the "Thinking Schools, Learning Nation" vision launched in 1997 (Tan, 2008). During the Second World War, Singapore adapted a 'survival driven education' system which provided skilled workforce for the under privileged. After Independence, in 1980's the education policies shifted to quality over quantity and focussed on the vocational and skill based education systems. In 1997, the Singapore Education system started to evolve the transformation towards the vision Thinking Schools, Learning Nations which emphasized on creative thinking, problem solving, collaborative learning, literacy and ICT skills. The Ministry Of Education officially recognized that excellence is not with respect to only academics but it is a mountain range of excellence with many peaks. In today's aspect, Singapore has raised the standard of

education which attracts revenue generating international students and is thus called a 'Global Schoolhouse'.

India's educational heritage spans ancient gurukul traditions, Islamic influences, and colonial reforms. Post-independence, commissions like Kothari (1964–66) and institutions such as NCERT and IITs shaped modern education, with NEP 2020 introducing a 5+3+3+4 structure aimed at holistic development (Government of India, 2020). Early education in India prevailed under the supervision of the gurus who were brahmacharis. They taught vedas, art, culture, architecture. This prevailed until the reign of Mauryan Empire. Later the Islamic Education prevailed during the Mughal Empire. English medium education began during the British rule under the Colonial Government.

After Independence various commissions like University Education Commission (1948-49), Secondary Education Commission (1952-53), University Grants Commission, Kothari Commission (1964-66), Scientific Policy, Indian Institute of technology, National Council of Educational Research and teacher Training (NCERT) (1961) were deputed by the independent Indian Government for the enhancement of education system. The latest policy NEP 2020 was introduced with an educational structure 5+3+3+4 which emphasis on all round development of the child such as holistic development, critical thinking, problem solving skills, STEM education.

II. Objectives

The objectives of the paper are:

- To investigate the system of education in Singapore and India and to make a comparative study.
- To analyse and compare the features of various stages of education in Singapore and India.

III. Research Questions

- Prevailing pattern of system of education in Singapore and India.
- Features and bifurcation of various stages of education in Singapore and India.

IV. Research Methodology

The study is a comparative research which is directed towards the investigation of similarities and differences in the system of education among two nations Singapore and India. Both the countries have varied culture and tradition whose key features of education system are brought under comparison. This study is comparative, interpretive, analytical and qualitative in nature. Findings in the study will be made on the basis of document- based logical analysis.

V. System of Education in India and Singapore

6.1 Singapore

6.1.1 Kindergartens

Children aged 3 to 6 in Singapore attend a three-year kindergarten program regulated by the Early Childhood Development Agency, focusing on social, linguistic, and motor skill development. They are registered under the 'Early Childhood Development agency'. These Kindergartens focus on developing and preparing the child for the formal education ahead. At this stage children learn social behaviour, eating habits, two languages, games and music, focusing on enhancement of fine motor and gross motor skills.

6.1.2 Primary Education

Singapore's primary education spans six years, divided into a four-year foundational phase and a two-year orientation phase, culminating in the PSLE exam. To cater the needs of intellectually gifted students, a special program – Gifted Education Program was designed by the Ministry of Education in 1984. This program emphasis on skills like creative thinking, problem solving, higher order thinking and develops their top potential.

6.1.3 Secondary Education

Based on the result in PSLE students choose their stream in their Secondary Education. At this stage the student has an option to choose a four year program such as "Express" or "Normal (Academic) Level" or "Normal (Technical) Level". Special importance is given to the mother tongue at all these levels. It is monitored by the Ministry of Education Language Centre (MOELC). In the fifth year, students appear for GCE O-Level examination. However few students will be given opportunity to appear O-Level examination in the fourth year itself based on their academic performance.

6.2 India

6.2.1 Pre-Primary Education

India's foundational stage includes Anganwadicenters and classes 1–2, emphasizing activity-based learning and foundational literacy and numeracy (NEP 2020). The Foundational level children are of age group 3 years to 7 years. The focus will be on activity based learning which enhances the motor skills in children. Foundational Numeracy and Literacy is more focussed in Anganwadi (Pre-school) and along with FLN activity based learning is focussed in classes 1 & 2. There will be an examination at the end of class 2, based on the academic performance the child will be promoted to Primary level of education.

6.2.2 Primary Education

Children studying in classes 3 to 5 come under Primary level of education. As they are well versed with the basics of FLN, the focus areas at this stage will be in speaking, reading, writing, physical education, languages, art, science and mathematics. The holistic development of the child starts at this level. At the end of class 5 child has to perform in an examination, based on which they will be promoted further to middle school education.

6.2.3 Middle School Education

Children of age groups 11 to 13, studying in classes 6 to 8 fall under middle school level of education. At this level the concepts in core subjects mathematics, science, social science will be emphasised. Arts and humanities will be given priority. Professional level of sports training will be provided for the performance oriented children. The child's mental and physical development is completely focussed at this level.

6.2.4 Secondary Education

Children studying in classes 9 to 12 of age group 14 to 18 years are under Secondary education level. This phase is also called as the golden period as per psychologists. Classes 9 & 10 are the first phase and classes 11 & 12 are the second phase. These four years are considered to be crucial in student's life as they include multidisciplinary study, coped with development of critical thinking, decision making and problem solving skills which will prepare them to face the society. Multiple disciplines of subjects are provided for the child's choice of interest.

The complete schooling covering all four stages is free and compulsory education initiated by the central government. At state level it is practiced with different titles.

VI. Major Findings

This comparative analysis reflects on the basic yet fundamental differences between Singapore and Indian education system. In Singapore, early education begins at age 3 and continues through a structured kindergarten and primary system. India's foundational stage starts similarly but extends to include classes 1 and 2. While Singapore emphasizes creative and technical skills early on, India's approach integrates literacy, numeracy, and holistic development across a broader age range.

In Pre Primary level, there is a significant difference in the age criteria. In Singapore, the Kindergarten level has only three years of schooling focusing mainly on behaviour aspects and motor skills development. While in India, this stage is divided into Anganwadi and Foundational stages. Classes 1 and 2 also come under this category in the foundational stage. The main focus is on developing Foundational Literacy and Numeracy.

In Primary Level of Education, the age criteria are different. The Singapore system includes 6 to 12 years of children at this level providing the education of Primary 1 to Primary 6 with foundational and orientation stage. This program emphasis on skills like creative thinking, problem solving, higher order thinking and develops their top potential. In India, this stage includes Primary and Middle school education. It includes children of age groups 7-14 providing them with education of classes 3 to 8. Skills like LSRW, Physical Education, Science and Math are focussed on.

In Secondary Level, it is a 4 year integrated program in both nations, yet the age groups are varied. In Singapore the classes 7 to 10 are provided with Secondary education while in India it is for classes 9 to 12. But in Singapore, more emphasis is on technical education related to real life application, which enables children to be innovative and confident at class 10.

Other Findings are that Singapore follows International mandate in primary and secondary level of education, which helps the children to compete globally. While in India, the MHRD and different autonomous bodies, take charge of administering, controlling and supervising different stages of education. It is partially or fully implemented by the state governments. India follows no detention policy according to

RTE2009. Due to various factors, in India, government need to implement schemes to attract children to schools. The integrated Child Development Scheme looks after health and nutrition beside education.

VII. Comparative Analysis

Levels of Education	Singapore		India	
Pre-Primary Education	Kindergarten Nursery, PP1 & PP2	3 to 6 Years	Foundational Anganwadi and Class 1&2	3 to 7 Years
Primary Education	Foundation stage Primary1 - Primary4	6 to 10 Years	Preparatory Class 3-5	7 to 11 Years
	Orientation stage Primary 5&6	10 to 12 Years	Middle School Class 6-8	11 to 14 Years
Secondary Education	Express/ Normal (Academic) Level/ Normal (Technical) Level Grade 7-10	12 to 16 Years	Secondary Education Classes 9-12	14 to 18 Years

VIII. Conclusion

With a few similarities and many differences, both the nations have great planning towards the educational development. In India the present day scenario is that a few schools are providing International curriculum and focussing on hybrid development of the child. However, holistic development of the child and creating a happy learning environment is a global mission of every nation educational sector.

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