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A COMPARATIVE VIEW ON BASIC EDUCATION IN INDONESIA AND JAPAN ¹

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Presented on
The Symposium on Basic Education on CRICED held in Indonesia
University of Education, Bandung - Indonesia, on 19-20 August , 2009

I. INTRODUCTION

During the last two decades various efforts have been made by curriculum developers in national, district as well as school level, nearly in all countries in the world to reform their education systems and review their existing curriculum policy, curriculum design, implementation, and curriculum evaluation. This paper highlights the initial steps done by curriculum policy developers in three countries (*Indonesia, and Japan*) in *revitalizing and reforming the basic education school curriculum in primary school and junior secondary school* to meet with the challenge of changing technological, social, economic, national and global environment.

This paper also elaborate how curriculum developers in national level as well as district and school level, in 2 countries make decision in planning and developing basic education curriculum design, policy, implementation, and evaluation regarding to overall approach to basic education curriculum design as well as to the subject areas that will be implemented in primary school and junior secondary schools. Eventhough, this paper is mainly developed and written based on literature study taken from various sources and research publication on basic education curriculum in two countries.

The purpose of this paper are :

(i) to have degree of appreciation of similiarities and differences between Indonesia and Japan in efforting the revitalization of basic

¹ The Center of Research on International Cooperation in Education Development (CRICED) held in Indonesia University of Education, Bandung - Indonesia , on August 19-20 2009

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education (primary and junior secondary school) curriculum development;

(ii) to identify general trends and indigenous aspects in developing primary school and junior secondary schools curriculum between 2 countries;

(iii) to brief cross-nationally analyse of each educational system and other related matters in reforming basic education in primary school and junior secondary schools curriculum between 2 countries.

II. BRIEF DESCRIPTION ON BASIC EDUCATION SYSTEM

A. INDONESIA

The national education system of Indonesia, is generally aimed at elevation the intellectual life of the nation and developing the Indonesian people fully, i.e as people who are devoted to God, have knowledge and skills, are in good physical and spiritual health, are independent and fair, and feel responsible for their country and nation. It has been geared towards achieving the nation's vision to prepare children to become knowledgeable, trained and skilled individuals to meet the growing needs of the millennium. It is envisaged that this can be achieved by emphasizing science and technology, use of information technology, and inculcating good moral and work ethics suitable for the Information Age.

The Republic of Indonesia through The Ministry of National Education (MONE) has continuously improved curriculums in all levels of school, beginning with pre school curriculum, primary school curriculum and secondary school curriculum. Beginning with 2006, MONE has launched new curriculum called "Kurikulum Tingkat Satuan Pendidikan (KTSP)" or "curriculum developed by school level" (CDSL). This new curriculum is regarded as a revised for the previous curriculum that based on some researchs it contains many potential limitation. By having implemented the new curriculum, it is expected that pupils are more facilitated during their process of learning in order to gain meaningful knowledge, skills, and values as basis requirements for their daily and future life.

The implementation of CDSL is not separated with the issues with some governmental laws/decrees have launched by the government that have significantly changed the system of government in Indonesia, included the management system of education that shift from centralized based on to decentralized based. This condition has significantly changed human resources development system by means

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of education system. In other words, the educational system has shifted from centralized based to decentralized based by giving more autonomy in planning, implementing, and evaluation of education program in districts level, and also at school level.

The autonomy of implementing education program has raised some implications in districts as well as schools level in order to develop curriculum in according to their own characteristics, vision, aspiration and potential issues they have existed. In addition, schools have become more powerful by having more opportunities to develop and implement curriculum based on students' need and local environmental aspiration. It means many variations potentially exists by implementing issues of curriculum among schools and districts level as consequences of change of curriculum paradigm that significantly accommodate needs and potency of districts and schools. The diversified curriculum (DC) as an innovative issue on new curriculum in Indonesia was directly intended to support to the implementation of CDSL in school setting. It is obviously influenced and based on the new policy of autonomy and desentralization of education in district level and school level. In national guideline plan 1999-2004, it has been officially stated that the direction of national education development system policy is addressed one among other mostly by implementing curriculum innovation, such as implementing diversified curriculum in order to have more chances to serve all heterogeneous of pupils, and accommodate local need and aspiration in districts as well as school level. In addition, by publishing Law no 22 1999 on local government, it was critically stated that it seem to be compulsory to have some innovation of newly diversified curriculum that potentially give more chances for to individual district/school to develop its own curriculum that serve heterogeneous pupils, diversified type of professional education staffs, local potentially issues in line with ditrict/local need. Then, as it has been stated in the decree number 20 2003 on national education system, new curriculum for all school levels and type of education will be developed and implemented by means and approaches of diversification principles in accordance to the spirit of diversification and potency of individual districts, regions, and school level such as diversification and differentiation of pupils. In other words, by having developed and implemented DC in school setting, it is optimistically expected that schools would be able to accommodate existing heterogeneity of pupils' potency and differentiation of pupils' ability in gaining their own core competencies those were reflected through ways of thinking, doing, learning and attitude they

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would be reflected in their daily life for gaining meaningful and fruitful learning experience.

In line with basic education program, compulsory education has been launched almost 4 decades ago. Presidential Instruction Decree No. 10 of 1973, initiated Indonesia's program of compulsory education and by 1984 the government of Indonesia had fully implemented the six year compulsory education for primary school age children (7-12 years). The result of this new policy was significant in that the participation rate in primary school reached 92 percent in 1993 compared to 79 percent just 10 years earlier. Ten years after the compulsory primary education program came fully into effect, Indonesia launched the Nine Year Basic Education Program, as proclaimed on 2 May 1994, extending compulsory education to the 13- to 15-year-old population. The compulsory nine-year basic education affords opportunities for Indonesian citizens to get an education. The extension from six years to nine years of basic education was also intended to alleviate the problem of child labor.

According to the National Education Law No. 2/1989 and the Government Regulation No. 28/1990, basic education is a general education program with a duration of nine years—six years of primary education and three years of junior secondary education. The nine-year Compulsory Basic Education Program attempts to provide an education for every Indonesian in the 7 to 15 age group. In term of academic year, at the primary and secondary levels the school year lasts 38 weeks on the average. The average length of teaching periods on the primary level is 30 minutes in grades one and two, 40 minutes in grades three to six, and 45 minutes in junior secondary school.

Curriculum development in Primary School Education

Basic education offered in primary schools aims to provide the ability to read, write, and do arithmetic, and to instill primary knowledge and skills that are useful for pupils in line with their development levels, as well as to prepare students to attend education in lower secondary school. Basic education is also carried out in lower secondary schools and is aimed at expanding the knowledge and improvement of skills obtained in primary schools that are useful for

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students to develop their lives as individuals, members of society, and citizens.

The education program for primary schools is prescribed by Article 39, Clause 3, Law No. 2/1989 and Article 14, Clause 2, Government Regulation No. 28 of 1990, and the February 25, 1993 decree of the Ministry of Education and Culture No. 060/U/1993. The curriculum content of compulsory primary education consists of subject matter covering Pancasila education, religious education, citizenship education, Indonesian language, reading and writing, mathematics, introduction to science and technology, geography, national and general history, handicrafts and art, physical education and health, drawing, and the English language. Such subject matter groups are not necessarily course titles as more than one material group can be combined with another subject; likewise, one subject can be divided into more than one subject.

Secondary School Education: The general secondary school curriculum is determined by the 25 February 1993 decree of the Minister of Education and Culture No. 061/U/1993. This program covers study materials and subjects required for Class I and II students: Pancasila education and citizenship, religious education, Indonesian language and literature, national and general history, English language, physical and health education, mathematics, natural sciences, social sciences, and arts education. The language program consists of four subjects: Indonesian language and literature, English language, other international languages, and cultural history. The natural science program includes physics, biology, chemistry, and mathematics. The social science program offers economics, sociology, public administration, and anthropology. These subjects are aimed at improving pupils' abilities and stimulating interactive relationships with the social, cultural, and natural environment.

B JAPAN

Compulsory education begins in Japan for all children after they have turned six years of age. A majority of children also attend kindergarten (*yochien*). In 2004, the number of new entrants to kindergarten was approximately 60 percent of the number of new entrants to primary school. Approximately 80 percent of students at the kindergarten level are enrolled at private institutions, a number of which are selective. These selective kindergartens better the odds

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for parents wishing to have their children gain access to highly selective schools at subsequent levels of the education ladder. There are even pre-kindergarten classes available to help children prepare for the admissions tests. As of 2003, there were 1,753,396 students enrolled in kindergarten.

Primary school (*shogakko*) is six years in length (grades 1-6) and is for children between the age of six and 12. The vast majority of schools at this level are public (2003: 98.4%), but there is considerable competition to enter one of the small number of prestigious private schools, usually affiliated with a private university foundation, where entry virtually guarantees entry to affiliated schools all the way up to university.

In 2004, there were approximately 7,220,929 students attending primary school, marking a significant drop from a 1981 peak of 11,925,000 students. There are no tuition charges for children attending public schools. At the end of primary school a certificate of completion is awarded. Attendance at primary school is almost universal (99.98%). Students who complete the primary cycle are automatically accepted into lower secondary school.

Duration of Program: Six years in length (Grades 1 to 6).

Curriculum: Japanese language (reading, writing, literature), mathematics, science (grades 3 to 6), social studies (grades 3 to 6), arts, music, physical education, moral education, home-making (grades 5 and 6), life environment studies (grades 1 and 2), special activities (includes periods for class activities and club activities) and periods for integrated studies to combine skills learned in different subject areas (grades 3 to 6).

Leaving Certificate: *Shogakko Sotsugyo Shosho* (Elementary school Certificate of Graduation).

SECONDARY EDUCATION

Secondary education is divided into two three-year cycles: lower and upper secondary. Lower secondary school is compulsory and enrollment is almost universal (99.98 percent). Although upper secondary school is not compulsory, 97.3 percent of lower secondary school students in 2003 went on to enroll at upper secondary school. A number of private

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schools offer six years of continuous education, covering the lower and higher secondary cycles.

As at the primary level, there has been a significant drop in the number of students attending lower secondary school since the baby-boom peaks of the 1960s and 1980s. Enrollment peaked at 7,328,000 in 1962, and again in 1986 at 6,106,000. Since the 1986 peak there has been a steady decline. In 2003, there were 3,663,512 students enrolled at lower secondary schools. This pattern is mirrored at the upper secondary level with 1965 and 1989 peaks of 5,074,000 and 5,644,000 respectively. In 2003, there were just 3,810,000 students attending upper secondary schools.

Lower Secondary school (*Chugakko*)

The lower secondary stage (grades 7 - 10) of the education cycle, from 12 to 15 years of age, is a very important phase in the educational process for Japanese students. Results at lower secondary school can determine whether or not the student gains access to a good upper secondary school and by extension to a good university and career.

As at the primary level, the vast majority of lower secondary schools (97 percent) are public and tuition free. In 2003, only six percent of the lower secondary school student body attended private schools. These private schools require students to pass an entrance examination. Entrance to public lower secondary schools is by allocation of the local education board, except at national public schools – of which there were just 76 in 2003 – where entrance is by examination.

In the second and third year of the lower secondary cycle, attendance at *Juku*, or cram schools, is common as students prepare for the competitive upper secondary school examinations. Students completing the lower secondary cycle are awarded a graduation certificate and are eligible to take admissions examinations for upper secondary school.

Duration of Program: Three years.

Curriculum: Japanese (1st year 140*, 2nd & 3rd 105*), social studies (1st & 2nd year 105, 3rd 85), mathematics (105), science (105), music (1st year 45, 2nd & 3rd 35), fine arts (1st year 45, 2nd & 3rd 35),

health and physical education (90), industrial arts and homemaking (1st & 2nd year 70, 3rd 35), moral education (35), special activities (35 – includes class activities, pupils' councils, club activities and school events'), elective subjects (1st year 0-30, 2nd 50-105, 3rd 105-165), foreign languages (105 – English and Chinese are most popular), and periods of integrated study (70-130).

*Number of yearly periods per grade (each period lasts 50 minutes).

The Japanese educational system is a moderately centralized, single-track system. The government is responsible for setting national standards for curriculum development, for authorizing textbooks, and for ensuring the uniform use of textbooks in all schools. Compulsory education in Japan extends only through the lower secondary level (i.e., through approximately age 15), and competition for positions in upper secondary schools - and later for positions in universities - is usually intense.

In recent years, Japanese industrial and educational practices have received worldwide attention. In spite of the interest in Japanese industry and education, there has been relatively little study of technology education in Japan. This paper describes the history, current status, and future challenges of technology education in Japan. Because of their close relationship, discussion of both technology education at the lower secondary level, *gijutsu ka*, and vocational technical education at the upper secondary and post-secondary level, *shokugyo kyoiku*, are included in this paper.

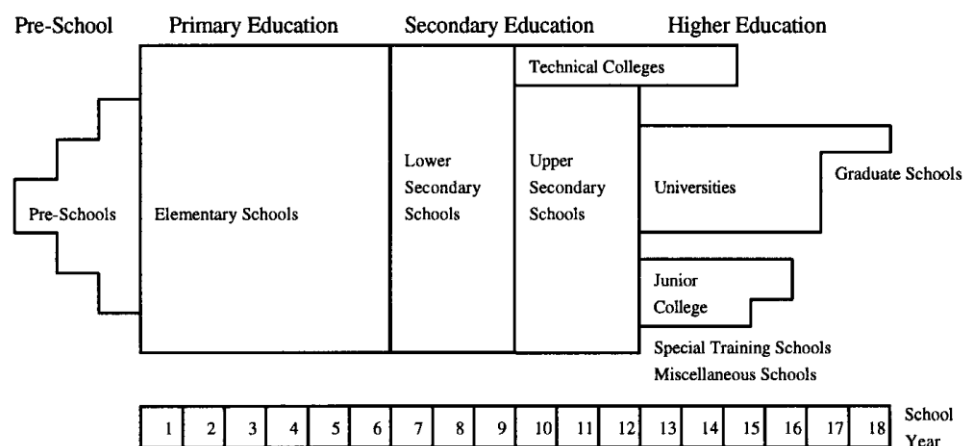


Figure 1. Organization of Japanese School System

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The structure of public education in Japan is largely based on the American model of education which was adopted after World War II. Figure 1 shows the major types of publicly supported schools. The foundation of the modern Japanese educational system is the nine-year compulsory education core, *gimu kyoiku*. Included in the compulsory core is a six-year elementary school, *shogakko*, and a three-year lower secondary school, *chugakko*. Practically all (almost 100%) of Japanese students complete compulsory education. After completing compulsory education, about 95% enter upper secondary school. Of those who enter upper secondary schools, less than two percent drop out before graduating. (Ministry of Education, Science, and Culture, 1991).

The Japanese education system is modeled on and heavily influenced by its American counterpart. The Fundamental Law of Education, passed in 1947 under American occupation, introduced the 6+3+3+4 structure of Japanese education: six years of elementary education, three years at lower secondary school, three at upper secondary school followed by four years at university for those in the academic stream.

Although education beyond the ninth grade is not compulsory, *Monbusho* develops curricular guidelines for senior high schools. The most common types of public senior high schools are regular or academic (*futsu*) high schools and vocational high schools, such as commercial (*shogyo*) and industrial (*kogyo*) high schools.

III. TRENDS, ISSUES, AND FEATURES OF BASIC EDUCATION IN TWO COUNTRIES

In two countries that focused on his paper (Indonesia and Japan), it can be found some trends, issues, and features of the planning, implementing the curriculum of basic education as the following :

1. In 2 countries, it is agreed basic education is regarded as passport for better life of human beings, in achieving that goal compulsory education in two countries have been launched since some decades ago. In Indonesia, the national education system is generally aimed at elevating the educational level that is why
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5. In term of institution that offer vocational education, in three countries can obviously seen that vocational education program is provided : (i) in senior secondary school, (ii) in post secondary schools, non formal centres, institutes, or colleges or (ii) in industries and (iv) in combination of the three program.

i. What each country or community does about vocational and technical education depends upon such factors such as its stages of industrial and economical development, history and tradition, attitudes and values, social structures and physical geographic condition, as well as its educational structure. That each countries is increasingly becoming part of an international community also affects the provision of vocational and technical education. Japan as modern country, suport fully the vocational international program.

6. In term of courses offered, in 3 countries, vocational education are offered : (i) full time, particularly at secondary vocational school, (ii) par time, associated with imployer, industries, including block days and "dual system", (iii) there is serious effort to conduct course via distance learning and multimedia programs. In Japan and Indonesia, vocational education was also offered with the spirit of apprenticeship system.

7. In term of curriculum development, in addition to a theoretical absed, the curriculum for vocational schools is usually characterized by an emphasis upon the achievement of manipulative skills in volvng equioment, materials, and process. Laboratory practice is usually seen as essential programmes. There are many relevant course introduced in social education. Curriculum was also developed by involving expert and practician from relevant fields.

6. In term of Vocational and technical teachers Training, it can be noted briefly that :

- a tendency of an insufficient number of skilled and knowledgeable eople being attracted to become teachers of vocational schools.
- A tendency of a high turn over rate caused by the lost of teachers to industry and commerce.
- The high number of existing teachers who have little adequate preparation as teachers.

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- The relatively few teacher training institutions which have specific programmes for vocational teachers preparation, and have specialized staff, facilities, and adequate sources to provide program.

IV. CONCLUSION

1. There is ongoing commitment to vocational school curriculum policy and development to meet the challenges of the changing technological, social, economical, political, national and global environmental.
2. In three countries appear to be developing vocational school curriculum, qualification, and schooling frame work and structures that able to respond effectively both national and international change and more local needs.
3. In 3 countries, it is still easily found a tendency that vocational schools has "a lower status" than academic education. This lower status is often perceived by potential students and the community and thus affects their attitudes to vocational school. During last several years, this stigma steply changed with the provision of new and better school facilities, new curricula and better trained teachers as well as public advertisement on the new paradigm of vocational school.
4. Some potential problems faced in vocational schools, the 3 countries are attempting to solve problems of :
 - an insufficient students intake particularly of those with higher ability.
 - The lack of relationship between courses provision and manpower needs.
 - Inadequate and frequently outmoded facilities and,
 - Relatively high dropout rates and failures.
5. A trend in vocational school curriculum was identified to move from content based to varying combinations of competency and content based vocational school curriculum frame works that ensure the acquisition of both knowledges and skills.
6. Especially in Indonesia, the curriculum is relatively overloaded as the result from a variety of reasons including

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too much content, too many subject areas, inappropriate early introduction, and some pressure fro politicians to include issues to meet immediate needs.

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Muatan kurikulum untuk mata pelajaran wajib menggunakan standar isi yang telah ditetapkan secara nasional (Keprmendiknas No. 22 Tahun 2006). Mata pelajaran wajib yang menggunakan standard tersebut adalah:

- 1) Pendidikan Agama
- 2) Pendidikan Kewarganegaraan
- 3) Bahasa Indonesia
- 4) Matematika
- 5) Ilmu Pengetahuan Alam
- 6) Ilmu Pengetahuan Sosial
- 7) Seni Budaya dan Keterampilan
- 8) Pendidikan Jasmani, Olahraga, dan Kesehatan

1. Silabus dan RPP Mata Pelajaran Pend. Agama Islam	14
2. Silabus dan RPP Mata Pelajaran Pend. Agama Kristen	20
3. Silabus dan RPP Mata Pelajaran Pend. Kewarganegaraan (PKn)	22
4. Silabus dan RPP Mata Pelajaran Bahasa Indonesia	29
5. Silabus dan RPP Mata Pelajaran Bahasa Inggris	33

/

6.	Silabus dan RPP Mata Pelajaran Matematika	39
7.	Silabus dan RPP Mata Pelajaran Ilmu Pengetahuan Alam (IPA)	43
8.	Silabus dan RPP Mata Pelajaran Ilmu Pengetahuan Sosial (IPS)	46
9.	Silabus dan RPP Mata Pelajaran Seni Budaya	49
10.	Silabus dan RPP Mata Pelajaran Pend. Jasmani (Penjas)	53
11.	Silabus dan RPP Mata Pelajaran Teknologi Informasi dan Komunikasi	56
12.	Silabus dan RPP Mata Pelajaran Mulok Tata Boga	61

/