

## Merdeka Curriculum vs National Preschool Curriculum Standard: Early Childhood Education Curriculum in Indonesia and Malaysia

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### ABSTRACT

The importance of early childhood education as a factor influencing child development and the role of curriculum in improving academic standards form the basis of this study. This study aims to examine and describe the standardized early childhood education (ECE) curriculum in Indonesia and Malaysia. The Merdeka Curriculum in Indonesia and the National Preschool Curriculum Standards in Malaysia are the main subjects of this study. This research uses a qualitative method with comparative analysis. Data were collected from two ECE institutions through documentation studies, interviews, observations and document analysis at TK Negeri Pembina Tingkat Nasional Indonesia and Tadika Kaffah Kids Malaysia. The findings show that both countries prioritize ECE, although in different ways. The Merdeka Curriculum in Indonesia emphasizes flexibility and adaptability to local needs and the uniqueness of Indonesian children, allowing teachers to choose the most appropriate materials and learning approaches. Meanwhile, Malaysia's National Preschool Curriculum Standards are more organized and consistent, focusing on achieving consistent essential academic competencies. In conclusion, both countries can benefit from each other's best practices to improve early childhood education standards despite differences in approach and implementation.

**Keywords:** Early Childhood Education, Curriculum Standardisation, Merdeka Curriculum, National Preschool Curriculum Standard (NPCS)



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## 1. INTRODUCTION

Early childhood education (ECE) is critical for forming the basis of children's development. It is considered a crucial period during which children develop cognitive, social, emotional, and physical skills that lay the foundation for later learning (Adi et al., 2022; Adriany, 2022). The type of education received during this period greatly influences a child's ability to reach their full potential in the future. Therefore, governments and stakeholders in various countries, including Indonesia and Malaysia, pay special attention to early childhood education standards.

Countries worldwide have adopted several international frameworks and standards to improve early childhood education standards. However, how each country implements these standards may vary depending on the country's social, cultural, and educational policy context. Therefore, understanding early childhood education standardization in Indonesia and Malaysia can provide valuable insights in a global context.

Southeast Asia has two nations with sizable populations and diverse cultures: Malaysia and Indonesia. Despite their different histories, cultures, and education systems, both are committed to improving the quality of early childhood education as part of achieving sustainable human development (Omwami et al., 2020). Government policies and regulations, such as the 2013 Curriculum and National Education Standards, aim to standardize early childhood education in Indonesia (Dini, 2022; Ulum, 2020). However, their execution must guarantee the same caliber throughout Indonesia's numerous and

varied regions. Multiple public, private, and community-based programs require updating to enhance the caliber of education.

Indonesia's approach to implementing ECE curriculum standards is still evolving. Curriculum changes have happened at a rapid pace since the National Education System Law No. 20/2003 was passed. From KBK in 2004 to KTSP in 2006, and most recently, Curriculum 2013 (C-13) in 2013. A prototype curriculum was presented in 2021 by the Ministry of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology of the Republic of Indonesia. Through the process of implementation, the curriculum was refined and made more autonomous by promoting individual learning styles. The goal of Indonesia's newest educational policy initiative, "Freedom of Learning," is to make learning comfortable and pleasurable for all parties involved, including instructors and students.

Nadiem Anwar Makarim, Minister of Education and Culture of the Republic of Indonesia, emphasized the implementation of the Merdeka curriculum that fosters a creative mentality among teachers and students. The concept of the Merdeka curriculum is based on "freedom to learn" and "freedom to play." Kids should choose activities that they enjoy and find fulfilling as a result. The new Merdeka curriculum is scheduled to replace the national curriculum in 2024. In other words, this change will not occur until the K-13 curriculum has been implemented for eleven years and the education minister has made at least four modifications.

The basis for policies concerning the Minister of Education and Culture of the Republic of Indonesia no. 137 and 146 of 2014 or subsequent versions is the National Education Standards Government Regulation of the Republic of Indonesia No. 57 of 2021. This regulation encompasses eight (8) standards that cover graduate competency, content, process, assessment, educational staff, facilities, infrastructure, management, and financing (Indonesia, 2021; Syahidan & Rahmat, 2023). Following the guidelines outlined in Government Regulation No. 57 of 2021, the national education standards incorporate the following curriculum standards:

Table 1. Merdeka Curriculum Standards for Early Childhood Education in Indonesia by Government Regulation No. 57 of 2021

Merdeka Curriculum Standards for ECD	Graduate Competency Standards	Standard Levels of Child Development Achievement
	Content Standard	Scope of Material
	Process Standard	Planning Implementation Process Assessment
	Assessment Standard	Report Card; Anecdotal Record; Checklist; Work Result; Photo Series

Meanwhile, the standard of early childhood education that is referenced in Malaysia based on the Malaysian Ministry of Education's 2017 regulation is the National Preschool Curriculum Standard (NPCS). The implementation of the National Preschool Curriculum Standard (NPCS) in Malaysia consists of content standards, learning standards, and achievement standards, which place a focus on standardising early childhood education in Malaysia (Abd Ghani, 2020; Madar, M. A., & Othman, 2022). Malaysia also emphasises the availability of highly qualified teachers in early childhood education, and the programme aims to ensure that children receive a consistent and quality education by emphasising their cognitive, emotional, social, and physical development.

Despite the efforts made in these two countries to improve early childhood education practices, there are still problems and differences in education settings. One of the main issues to be addressed is the inequality of accessibility and quality of education between regions, especially in rural or remote areas. Some factors that can impact the quality of early childhood education include unequal teacher quality, subpar facilities, and a lack of local government support.

In addition, the issue of parents' lack of involvement in early childhood teaching is also a concern. Parents often need to understand the importance of helping their children grow at home, which can impact the quality of education their children receive at home and outside school.

Differences in educational structures and curricula also affect ECE standardization practices in Indonesia and Malaysia. While Indonesia faces difficulties adapting the national curriculum to local and cultural needs, Malaysia may need help ensuring that the national standard curriculum can reach all culturally diverse children.

The early childhood education provided by the private sector has an impact on standardization as well. Standards and quality differences between public and private institutions can unevenly impact early childhood education access, even though the private sector can significantly increase educational accessibility.

This problem can be addressed in part by standardizing early childhood education in Malaysia and Indonesia. A detailed assessment of current practices and problem identification can be carried out in order to raise accessibility, guarantee uniform education quality, and raise standards in these two nations.

A comparative analysis of standardized early childhood education curriculum practices in Indonesia and Malaysia is expected to be more effective in supporting children's overall growth and development and preparing them for a better future. This can be achieved by understanding existing problems and applying principles that align with early childhood development theory.

This study aims to enhance the quality of early childhood education in Malaysia and Indonesia by comparing and analyzing the strategies employed by both nations to align their curricula. This project aims to conduct a comprehensive comparative analysis to identify strategies for improving the quality of early childhood education in both countries.

### **1.1 Curriculum Development in Indonesia**

Curriculum is an important component of education because it describes the goals to be achieved and provides details about the unique learning experiences of each student, both of which are necessary for the direction of education to be clear (Chimbunde & Moreeng, 2024). The curriculum is a collection of rules that govern the subject matter of educational programs and the methods that serve as the foundation for teaching and learning (Button, 2021; Hapidin Yuli Pujianti Wahyuni Nadar, 2021). One goal of curriculum and education in society is to prepare pupils for life after school. The curriculum is a set of guidelines for allocating learning tasks to meet predetermined learning objectives. Plans and preparations are included for the methods, learning resources, content, and objectives (Ayuningsih et al., 2020; Helda & Syahrani, 2022; Pujianti et al., 2024).

The Indonesian curriculum evolved in two different periods, from 1945 to 2013, and then in 2022 created the Merdeka curriculum. Other than improving teaching standards and learning design in schools, curriculum changes have only one purpose. There have been eleven curriculum changes in Indonesian education since the primary school curriculum was first introduced in 1947. Curriculum 2013 was the last curriculum to be updated before the introduction of the Merdeka curriculum in 2022 (Hadiasnyah et al., 2020; Herman et al., 2023; Santika et al., 2022).

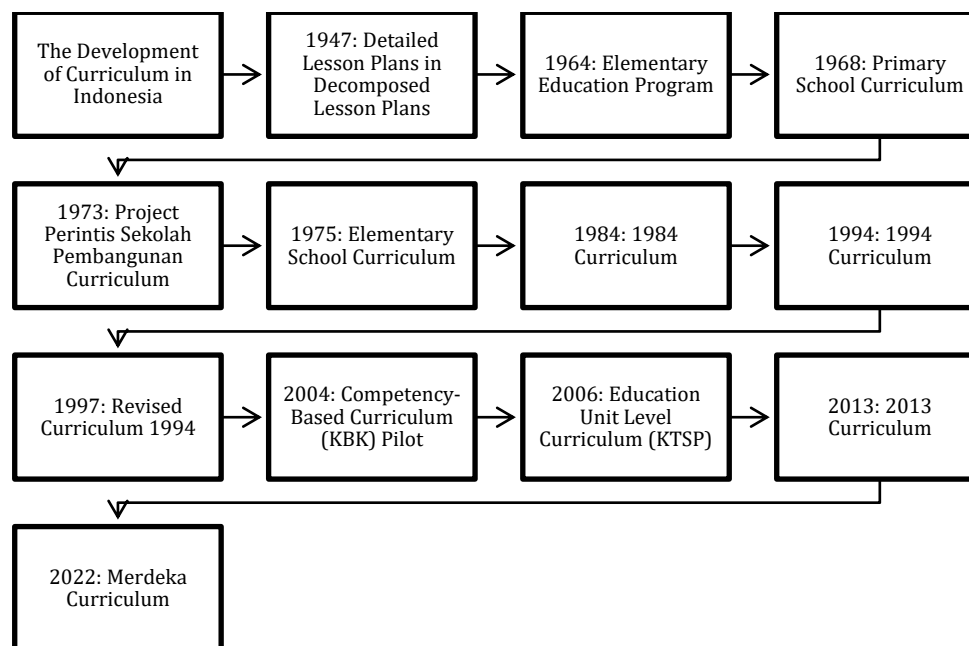


Figure 1 : Indonesia's Curriculum Change Direction

## 1.2 Merdeka Curriculum in Indonesia

The development of curricula and instructional strategies to achieve national education goals is based on the National Education Standards. The goal of raising these standards is to systematically, specifically, and persistently align education with local, national, and international developments (Indonesia, 2021). The policy regarding national education standards in the Republic of Indonesia is regulated by National Education Standards Regulation No. 57 of 2021. The Republic of Indonesia's rule Number 4 of 2022, which pertains to amendments to Government Regulation Number 57 of 2021 on National Education Standards, ultimately supersedes the rule above.

According to Government Regulation RI No. 4 of 2022, the National Education Standards are applied in education conducted by the central government, local governments, and communities through formal, non-formal, and informal education channels. The National Education Standards, which regulate early childhood education (ECE), can be referred to as a reference standard for the implementation of ECE in Indonesia. These laws provide criteria for the implementation and administration of Early Childhood Education (ECE) within the territory governed by the Unitary State of the Republic of Indonesia to improve the quality of education. Teachers will not interpret essential competencies differently from the curriculum once standards are in place. Teachers will focus on something other than the administrative goals specified in the technical instructions and implementation guidelines. They will, instead, focus on the desired outcomes. Standards, in Martin's opinion (Usman et al., 2022) "is a criterion that is established and used to measure the achievement of objectives.". The National ECE Standards can be defined as the minimum standards that must be met. These standards describe the needs and idealistic aspects of the activity (FENI, 2021).

The Republic of Indonesia's Ministry of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology introduced a prototype curriculum in 2022. It was later improved into an autonomous curriculum by encouraging individual learning styles during implementation. A new policy initiative in Indonesia called "Freedom of Learning" aims to make learning comfortable and enjoyable for all participants, including teachers and students. The concept of a complimentary curriculum, according to Nadiem Anwar Makarim, Minister of the Ministry of Education and Culture of the Republic of Indonesia, is the application of a curriculum with a learning process that fosters an innovative mindset in both teachers and students. "Freedom to learn, freedom to play" is the central idea of learning activities based on this Merdeka curriculum concept. According to this, children should be able to have a positive and enjoyable experience with the selected activity (Jannah & Rasyid, 2023; Mulyasa, 2023; Zaeni et al., 2023).

### 1.3 Curriculum Development in Malaysia

The Education Act of 1996 stipulates that the National Education System begins with preschool education and that a standardized curriculum should be implemented in all national preschools to ensure that children acquire knowledge, skills, and values by the end of the preschool education period. Although the Malaysian Ministry of Education oversees the implementation of the curriculum, it pays particular attention to the development of preschool education, particularly in the creation of the curriculum.

Bil. 15/2002, Surat Pekeliling Ikhtisas Government preschools and private preschools in Malaysia must follow the National Preschool Curriculum, according to a 2003 decree by the Ministry of Education in Malaysia. To prepare students for entry into primary school, the National Preschool Curriculum seeks to maximize their potential in all areas of their development, equip them with necessary skills, and cultivate positive attitudes (Ministry of Education Malaysia, 2003). The National Preschool Curriculum Standard was updated in 2010 and 2017 to meet modern needs and bring it into compliance with the 2013–2025 Education Development Plan (Ministry of Education Malaysia, 2003). The 2010 and 2017 revisions to the Standard Preschool Kebangsaan Curriculum brought it into compliance with the 2013–2025 Education Development Plan and addressed contemporary needs (Kalsum et al., 2023; Rahman & Noor, 2018; SHAFIE, n.d.).

The Malaysian curriculum is implemented through what is known as a "preschool curriculum," which refers to curriculum guidelines approved by the Minister under section 22 for the use of parks, as per the Education Act of 1996 (Act 550). The 2010-implemented National Preschool Curriculum Standard (NPCS) has been updated to align with the new policy mandated by the Malaysian Education Development Plan (PM) 2013–Curriculum 2025. The quality is up to par with international standard (Madar, M. A., & Othman, 2022; Narayanasamy & Jaafar, 2024).

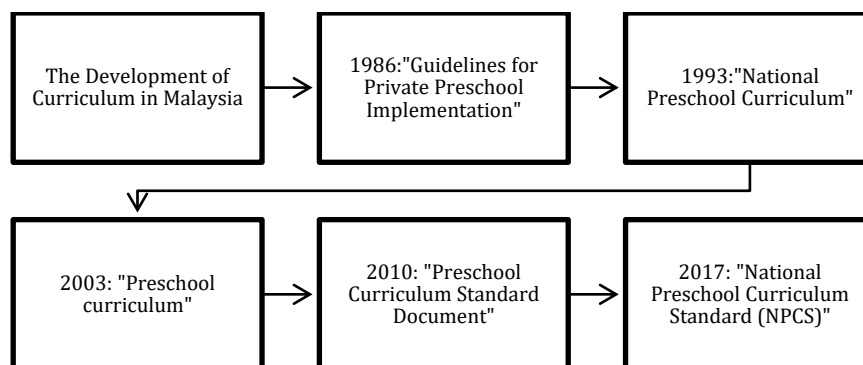


Figure 2 : Malaysia's preschool curriculum's direction of change

### 1.4 National Preschool Curriculum Standard (NPCS) in Malaysia

The Malaysian National Preschool Curriculum Standard is the basis for children's early education in Malaysia for children aged 4-6 years. The curriculum is intended to help preschool institutions provide their children with a quality learning experience. The curriculum is designed to support the cognitive, emotional, social and physical development of preschool children with a focus on overall development.

The National Preschool Curriculum Standard employs a child-centred methodology to establish a learning atmosphere that fosters, upholds, and advances preschoolers' well-being and holistic growth. As a result, before children enter formal education, this curriculum is essential to laying a solid foundation for their growth and development.

The National Preschool Curriculum Standard is a reference manual that all kindergarten owners and managers must follow. It describes the essential guidelines and materials that kindergartens ought to use. The six pillars children should be taught about are spirituality, attitudes, values, self-skills, physical and artistic development, science and technology, and humanity. Preschool education, then, seeks to support the holistic and integrated development of the potential of children ages four to six.

The 2010 curriculum for the National Preschool Curriculum Standard has been updated to align with the new standards established by the Malaysian Education Development Programme 2013–2025. The Curriculum and Evaluation Standards document, which includes Content Standards, Curriculum

Standards and Assessment Standards, has been created to follow the international standards of practice that have been implemented in NPCS (Madar, M. A., & Othman, 2022).

The principles of practice underpinning the National Preschool Curriculum Standard align with theories of learning and child development. Six pillars form the basis of the content of the NPCS : communication, science and technology, humanity, spirituality, physical and aesthetic development, and attitudes and values. These six pillars support and integrate each other through critical, creative, and innovative thinking. The transformation indicated in the figure below seeks to cultivate well-rounded individuals who comprehensively understand fundamental religious principles, knowledge, skills, critical and creative thinking, and innovation. The curriculum followed in Malaysian primary schools.

## 2. RESEARCH METHOD

This research uses a qualitative descriptive method with a comparative study approach. Comparative studies aim to find similarities or differences between two or more facts and characteristics of objects (Hanckel et al., 2021; Mello, 2021). Comparative research involves comparing one variable with another to find out more about the research subject (Guerrero-Bote et al., 2021; Plümper et al., 2019). This research used qualitative analysis for field systematization, which refers to a comparative study involving two institutions in Indonesia and Malaysia.

Qualitative research aims to gather information about the different forms of education that communities use. This research uses a comparative study because it wants to see a comparison of standardized early childhood education practices in Indonesia and Malaysia. Data for this study were gathered via observation, interviews, documentation studies, and documentation analysis. The Miles & Huberman interactive model is used to analyze the data; it begins with data collection and proceeds through reduction, presentation, and conclusion drawing (Abdussamad, 2022; Komara, 2023; Suciati et al., 2023).

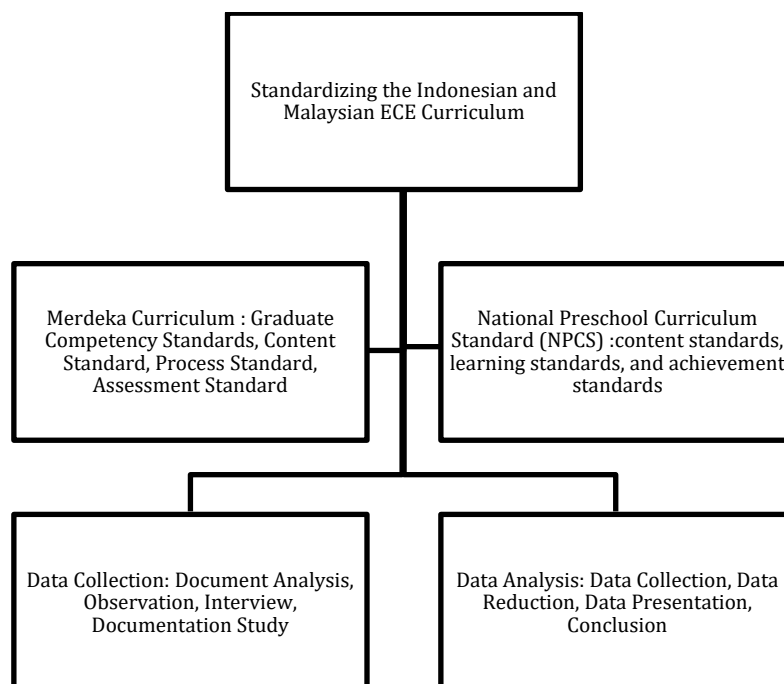


Figure 3 : Research methodology framework

## 3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This research focuses on how the ECE curriculum is used in two countries with different cultural backgrounds and education policies. Early childhood education (ECE) is integral to children's character and cognitive development. Therefore, understanding how the curriculum is implemented can help educators, policymakers, and researchers.

In this situation, Indonesia adopted the Merdeka Curriculum, which emphasizes flexibility and can be adapted to children's local and unique needs. The curriculum fosters children's creativity, independence, and social-emotional skills by allowing teachers to choose the most appropriate learning materials and approaches. Meanwhile, Malaysia's National Preschool Curriculum Standards (NPCS) are more organized and consistent, focusing on achieving consistent essential academic competencies.

This study looks at the practice of curriculum standards in the two countries, comprising standards for graduate competencies, content, process, and assessment, as well as some important aspects of curriculum standardization in the two countries. The analysis findings highlight each approach's benefits and drawbacks and offer recommendations for improving early childhood education standards. The findings of these practices are as follows:

Table 2. Identity of ECE Institutions in Both Countries

COUNTRY	
Indonesia	Name of ECE Institution: TK Negeri Pembina National Level DKI Jakarta Institution Status: State Principal Name : Johana Kastanja, S.Pd
Malaysia	Name of ECE Institution: Tadika Kaffah Kids Perak Institution Status: Private Principal's Name : Dr. Hj Mohd Hizul Azri Binti Hj Md Noor

The results of the discussion of ECE curriculum standardization practices in Indonesia and Malaysia based on the vision, mission, and goals of TK Negeri Pembina National Level in Indonesia and Tadika Kaffah Kids in Malaysia clearly show the similarities and differences, as well as the approaches taken by each institution in achieving the goals of early childhood education. The following are the similarities and differences:

Table 3. Similarities and Differences in Vision, Mission and Goals of ECE

Aspects	Indonesia (TK Negeri Pembina Tingkat Nasional)	Malaysia (Tadika Kaffah Kids)
Vision	Focusing on national culture-based services and management	Focusing on an education system based on the Qur'an and as-Sunnah
Mission	Improving the Skill of Early Childhood Education Professionals Providing information about early childhood education	Creating world-renowned early childhood education modules Creating a line of child-related services and products Becoming a reference platform for parenting and child education tips for parents
Goals	Realising children who love the country and have a global outlook Realising the management of PAUD institutions by quality management standards	Enriching young minds and empowering and motivating children Providing opportunities for children to develop into independent, thoughtful and joyful young people

Based on the findings of the practice of graduate competency standards in National Level Pembina State Kindergarten in Indonesia and Tadika Kaffah Kids in Malaysia, as well as each country's approach to early childhood education, the similarities and differences can be seen. The following are the similarities and differences:

Table 4. Similarities and Differences in ECE Curriculum Graduate Competency Standards

Aspects	Indonesia	Malaysia
Vision	Based on national culture	Based on al-Quran and as-Sunnah
Religious and Moral Values	Focus on religious teachings and ethics	Focus on moral and spiritual values
Self-Esteem	National identity, emotions, social relationships	Self-awareness, self-confidence, emotions
Literacy and Language	Indonesian language, basic literacy	Malay and English, basic literacy
Physical Development	Gross and fine motor skills	Gross and fine motor skills, healthy living habits
Social and Emotional	Positive behaviour, adjustment to the environment	Social interaction, cooperation, positive attitude
Science and Technology	Fundamentals of science, technology, engineering literacy	Simple science and technology exploration

Aspects	Indonesia	Malaysia
Creativity and Arts	Art expression, music, dance	Creative thinking, art, music, dance, drama
Specific Competencies	Basic literacy, math, science, technology, art	Spiritual development, morals, pure values

The graduate competency standards for ECE in Indonesia are the standards for early childhood development achievement levels, which contain learner profiles as a combination of attitudes, skills, and knowledge that describe the developmental achievements of learners as a result of their participation after early childhood education ends. The six aspects of child development are formulated and integrated as descriptions of learning outcomes. The scope of learning outcomes in PAUD (TK/RA/BA, KB, SPS, TPA) includes three mutually integrated stimulation elements. The three elements of stimulation are an elaboration of the developmental aspects of religious and moral values, physical-motor, cognitive, social-emotional, language, and Pancasila values, as well as other areas for the optimization of child growth and development by the needs of 21st-century education in the Indonesian context. Each stimulation element explores aspects of development as a whole and not separately. The three elements of stimulation are: a. Religious values and manners include understanding the basics of religion and noble morals; b. Self-identity includes recognizing the identity of an Indonesian child who is emotionally and socially healthy based on Pancasila and has physical independence; c. Fundamentals of Literacy, Mathematics, Science, Technology, Engineering, and the Arts include understanding various information and communicating and participating in pre-reading activities. Each stimulation element should be used to explore aspects of the child's development as a whole rather than in isolation.

The aim of the Malaysian graduate competency standards for early childhood education is to develop the full and holistic learning potential of students aged four to six in all areas of their lives - intellectual, social, emotional, physical, and spiritual - by creating a safe and nurturing learning environment and engaging them in interesting, creative and meaningful learning activities. Students will gain new skills, confidence, and a positive self-concept, preparing them to face challenges and pursue higher education.

Based on the findings of the practice of content standards or the scope of the ECE curriculum between TK Negeri Pembina National Level in Indonesia and Tadika Kaffah Kids in Malaysia, similarities can be seen in the holistic approach and fun learning methods, as well as differences in educational focus, special activities, and enrichment programs. Here are the similarities and differences:

Table 5. Similarities and Differences in Content Standards or Scope of the ECE Curriculum

Aspects	Indonesia (TK Negeri Pembina Tingkat Nasional)	Malaysia (Tadika Kaffah Kids)
Content or Scope Standards	Religious and ethical values, identity, basic literacy, math, science, technology, engineering, and arts	Module 7: Keys to Development covering academics, physical and mental well-being
Strengthening Project	Pancasila Student Profile Strengthening Project (P5) with specific themes	No similar programme; focus on fun enrichment activities
Education Focus	National values, diversity, culture, and national identity	Integration of Islamic values in daily education
Specific Activity	Academic activities such as literacy, math, science, technology and arts	Practical activities and life skills such as swimming, horse riding, archery, art, and memorization
Learning Methods	Fun, diverse extracurricular activities	Fun, integrated learning system
Enrichment Programme	Project-based with diverse themes	Interesting activities such as little entrepreneurs, fun chefs, arts and crafts, etc.

ECE curriculum content standards are plans and arrangements that specify objectives, subject matter, content, and methods to guide learning activities to achieve specific learning objectives (McLean et al., 2023). The ECE curriculum aims to provide early childhood with a solid foundation in several areas, including moral, social-emotional, language, physical, and cognitive development (Hapidin et al., 2023; Mondy et al., 2021). The content standards for the ECE curriculum in Indonesia consist of: a. Intra curricular ; b. Pancasila Learner Profile Strengthening Project (P5).

The scope or content standards in NPCS Malaysia contain the knowledge, skills, and values that students are expected to acquire by the end of their preschool education. The scope or content standards are described as follows: communication pillar, spirituality, attitude and values pillar, humanity pillar, personal skills pillar, physical and aesthetic development pillar, science and technology pillar.



An actual comparison of the content requirements for early childhood education in Indonesia, where using the Merdeka curriculum allows customization of learning materials to meet students' needs and interests and the specific local environment. The curriculum places a strong emphasis on project-based learning and subjects that are directly relevant to daily life. It encourages the utilization of diverse educational resources, including technology and the surrounding environment, to augment students' learning experiences. As for the practice for content standards of ECE in Malaysia with the implementation of NPCS, it has detailed and standardised content standards for each learning area. The curriculum is designed to ensure consistent coverage and sequencing of materials across the country. The teaching materials in NPCS are more organised and focused on achieving specific competencies in each stage of child development.

The Merdeka curriculum in Indonesia is more flexible to suit the local context and individual needs of children. On the other hand, the NPCS in Malaysia ensures that all children receive the same standard of education, although it may need to be more flexible to adapt to local contexts.

Based on the findings of the standard process practices of the ECE curriculum, it can be seen the similarities and differences between the standard process practices of TK Negeri Pembina National Level in Indonesia and Tadika Kaffah Kids in Malaysia, as well as the approach of each institution in implementing daily activities and child development. The following are the similarities and differences:

Table 6. Similarities and Differences in ECE Curriculum Process Standards

Aspects	Indonesia (TK Negeri Pembina Tingkat Nasional)	Malaysia (Tadika Kaffah Kids)
Fun Learning	Yes	Yes
Learning Day Structure	Yes	Yes
Holistic Development	Yes	Yes
Arrangement of Learning Hours	180 minutes/day, 07.30–10.30 am, Monday–Friday	08.00–15.00, Monday–Friday
Daily Activities	Welcoming, initial activities, core activities, eating, free gross motor, closing	Opening, core learning I and II, Islamic program, self-development, closing
Core Learning	Exploration of materials and tools according to children's development and interests	Academic development, arts, crafts, and creative activities
Islamic Program	Not mentioned	Qiraati, pre-tahfiz, wudhu, prayer practice, surah memorization, hadith, and daily prayers
Self-Development Activities	Free gross motor, closing activity	Fun Chef, Little Entrepreneur, swimming, archery, horse riding

The ECE curriculum process standards regulate various essential aspects of implementing learning activities for early childhood. These standards aim to ensure that every child has a quality learning experience that is developmentally appropriate (McLachlan et al., 2018). To strengthen the Pancasila learner profile, intracurricular learning activities and projects are a standard part of the ECE curriculum in Indonesia. Children between the ages of four and six must receive at least nine hundred minutes per week of learning time in early childhood education or equivalent forms of clothing. Children aged three to four must receive at least 360 minutes per week of learning time in early childhood education or other comparable formats.

The standard process of the ECE curriculum in Malaysia implements integrated learning with the following allocations:

- Early Conversation: 100 minutes per week
- Recess: 150 minutes a week
- Closing Activities: 50 minutes a week
- Learning Activities:
- 500 minutes a week (School of Nationality)
- 440 minutes a week (Nationality Type School)
- Outdoor Activities are timed
- 120 minutes a week covering Physical and Free Play.

The following table shows the similarities and differences in the practice of the standard ECE curriculum assessment process in the National Level Pembina State Kindergarten in Indonesia and

Tadika Kaffah Kids in Malaysia, as well as each institution's approach to assessing children. The following are the similarities and differences:

Table 7: Similarities and Differences in Assessment Standards of the ECE Curriculum

Aspect	Indonesia (TK Negeri Pembina Tingkat Nasional)	Malaysia (Tadika Kaffah Kids Perak)
Observation-based Assessment	Yes	Yes
Portfolio and Deliverables	Yes	Yes
Periodic Reporting	Yes, twice a year	Yes, every semester
Use of Anecdotal Records	Yes	Yes
Qualitative Assessment	Yes	Yes
Assessment Method	Checklist, work product, anecdotal notes, photo series	Daily observations, portfolios, checklists, rubrics, exams, quizzes
Islamic Program Assessment	Not mentioned	Yes, memorization of surahs, hadith, daily prayers, worship practices
Report Card Component	School identity, learner identity, learning achievement report, P5 report, parent reflection, extracurricular report, physical growth report	Progress reports in academic, social-emotional, and physical areas
Extracurricular Assessment	Yes, in the report card	Yes, based on participation and skills
Child Reflection	Not mentioned	Yes, child reflects on learning experience through pictures or stories

Assessment standards in the ECE curriculum regulate the methods used to assess early childhood development and achievement in various aspects of development (Neumann et al., 2019). The goal is to get a complete picture of the child's progress and provide useful feedback to the teacher, parents, and the child.

Assessment Standards for the ECE Curriculum in Indonesia are summative in the form of report cards and formative in the form of anecdotal notes, which are meaningful notes about the child during play. Notes can be in the form of behaviour, babble, or other information related to the child; checklists are daily assessment instruments; teachers need to make indicators of achieving goals before implementing learning; children's work can provide great meaning for teachers to find learning achievements and what is being and has been achieved by students. It is important to note that teachers do not need to provide activities that imprison children whose work is uniform from one child to another, according to the teacher's instructions. Finally, a photo series is an activity process that shows the child's ability with the teacher's brief remarks and notes. These serial photos become evidence that can be analysed and examined further.

Teachers in Malaysia can apply the formative and summative assessment requirements of the ECE curriculum. Summative assessments are completed after a learning unit, semester, or year, whereas formative assessments are completed in tandem with the teaching and learning process.

In Indonesia, implementing assessment in ECE institutions requires a more comprehensive understanding of child development and also requires more time and teacher skills to conduct observations and documentation. Different from assessment at ECE Institutions in Malaysia provides a clearer picture of children's achievement of basic competencies but may not provide a more complete picture of children's overall development.

4. CONCLUSION

Standardizing the early childhood education (ECE) curricula in Malaysia and Indonesia reveals notable variations in how education is implemented in the two nations. The Merdeka curriculum in Indonesia is very flexible, allowing learning materials and methods to be adapted to the needs of students and local situations. It focuses on overall development that includes social-emotional skills, creativity, independence, and other non-academic aspects. On the other hand, Malaysia's National Preschool Curriculum Standard (NPCS) is more organized and consistent, ensuring all children achieve the same basic academic standards across the country. While Kurikulum Merdeka uses formative and summative assessments, the National Preschool Curriculum Standard (NPCS) uses summative and formal assessments. Implementing the Merdeka curriculum requires more support in resources and teacher

training. At the same time, the National Preschool Curriculum Standard (NPCS) guarantees the same quality of education but needs to be more flexible in adapting to the needs of individual children. Running both curricula successfully requires strong government support, ongoing teacher training, and the active involvement of parents and communities. While each approach has advantages and disadvantages, both aim to provide a good education for early childhood.

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