

## Transforming the Arts Education Curriculum as a Strategy for Strengthening 21st-Century Competencies: A Comparative Study of Indonesia and Singapore

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**Abstract:** Arts education serves to foster students' creativity and visual skills, collaboration, and reflective abilities for the development of 21st-century competencies. Southeast Asian countries use different methods to improve arts education amidst the era of globalization and digital transformation. Singapore emphasizes outcomes aligned with 21st-century competencies (21CC) and systemic support from the education ecosystem, while Indonesia emphasizes local cultural values and character building through the independent curriculum. The purpose of this study is to compare arts education curricula in Indonesia and Singapore with a focus on four main dimensions: philosophy, structure, implementation, and evaluation. This research was conducted through a qualitative approach combined with a comparative study design. Primary data came from official policy documents, such as the Independent Curriculum (Indonesia) and the MOE Arts Syllabus 2024 (Singapore), while secondary data came from scientific literature related to 21st-century arts education. The results show that the philosophy and structure of the curriculum differ significantly. The independent curriculum emphasizes flexibility and local wisdom, allowing for pedagogical innovation, but faces differences in school competency levels. In contrast, Singapore's curriculum is more consistent in its implementation because it is systematic, tiered, and integrated with 21CC, and supported by institutional collaboration and digital technology. Singapore emphasizes authentic assessment, portfolios, and process rubrics, while Indonesia continues to rely on conventional assessments, which can be strengthened with standardized rubrics and teacher training. These findings confirm that alignment between the philosophy, structure, implementation, and assessment of the curriculum determines the effectiveness of arts education in developing 21st-century competencies.

**Keywords:** Arts Education Curriculum, 21st Century Competencies, Comparison of Indonesia and Singapore

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### PRELIMINARY

In the 21st century, educational transformation is influenced by increasingly complex global dynamics, particularly technological advances, increased global mobility, and worsening climate change. Education systems must incorporate social and

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environmental concerns to produce students with academic excellence. According to numerous studies, to ensure future sustainability, 21st-century education must enhance critical thinking skills, innovation, collaboration, and global awareness (Anwar & Rahman, 2021; Widodo, 2020).

Education is increasingly crucial for enhancing environmental literacy and social responsibility among the younger generation in addressing the challenges of environmental sustainability and climate change. Conversely, advances in information technology are accelerating the exchange of values and knowledge across cultures, requiring education to balance creativity, socio-emotional, and cognitive aspects. UNESCO emphasizes the importance of reorienting educational goals. They should focus on transformative learning that enhances critical thinking, empathy, and the ability to solve complex problems. According to national research, creativity and socio-emotional learning are crucial for preparing students to face global uncertainties (Suyanto & Hisyam, 2022).

UNESCO's proposed principles for education in Indonesia align with the direction of the independent curriculum reform, which emphasizes meaningful learning through the creation of a Pancasila Student Profile. The Independent Curriculum is rooted in local wisdom values and addresses global demands by emphasizing creativity, problem-solving skills, mutual cooperation, and environmental stewardship. The Independent Curriculum incorporates aspects of social-emotional learning, environmental literacy, and real-world problem-based projects to help students become individuals who are not only academically intelligent but also have character, are creative, and responsible for a sustainable future. Research shows that the independent curriculum encourages project-based learning, real-world contexts, and character building.

One of the crucial components in a nation's development is education. Good education will impact creative and critical human resources. Therefore, arts education plays a strategic role in this situation because it facilitates creativity, cultural literacy, and critical thinking skills. The 21st century requires arts education to build skills, particularly creativity, communication, and multicultural awareness (Sukardi & Sunarto, 2020; Setiawan, 2021). The success of arts education depends heavily on consistent policy implementation and clear curriculum design.

However, the independent curriculum still faces cultural and structural challenges in Indonesia. Teacher preparedness, school leadership, and equitable resource support across all regions are necessary for a flexible curriculum. Empirical studies show limitations in the use of original evaluations, variations in teacher quality, and differences in implementation across regions. This is particularly true for creativity-based subjects such as arts education (Karoso, 2024; Mulyasa, 2021). Furthermore, the consistency and sustainability of curriculum implementation at the educational unit level are also influenced by the tendency for changes in education policy following changes in national leadership.

In this situation, arts education plays a strategic role because it fosters creativity, cultural literacy, and critical thinking skills. According to research published in respected national journals, arts education plays a crucial role in developing 21st-century competencies, particularly in creativity, communication, and multicultural awareness (Sukardi & Sunarto, 2020; Setiawan, 2021). However, the success of arts education depends heavily on clear curriculum design and consistent policy support. Indonesia differs from other developed countries such as Singapore in terms of curriculum implementation.

Countries with advanced education systems carefully consider arts education curricula that support twenty-first-century needs. One prime example is the arts and visual arts syllabus released by the Singapore Ministry of Education (MOE) in 2024. The syllabus emphasizes that arts education must support 21st-Century Competencies (21CC): Critical, Adaptive, and Inventive Thinking; Communication, Collaboration, and Information Skills; and Community, International, and Multicultural Literacy (Ministry of Education Singapore, 2024).

Singapore is known for its centralized yet adaptive education system, with consistent and long-term curriculum planning. The Singapore Ministry of Education (MOE) creates an arts education curriculum with a clear national framework that encompasses learning objectives, competency standards, and learning outcomes. The implementation of the arts curriculum focuses not only on mastering artistic skills; it also helps students become more creative, critical thinkers, communicators, and culturally aware, all aligned with the 21st-Century Competencies (21CC) Framework. Therefore,

Singapore's arts curriculum policy serves as a strategic part of developing a comprehensive graduate profile, rather than an optional subject.

Singapore's arts education curriculum has been successfully implemented in schools thanks to a continuous teacher training system, adequate learning resources, and an evaluation system aligned with curriculum objectives. Within the established national framework, arts teachers serve as both curriculum implementers and curriculum designers. This allows for a balance between pedagogical flexibility and standardization. Furthermore, arts education enables learners to connect arts practices to social, cultural, and technological contexts through the integration of project-based learning approaches and interdisciplinary collaboration. This implementation pattern demonstrates that policy design is not the sole determining factor in the success of the Singaporean curriculum; continuity between policy formulation, school implementation, and an organized support system are other factors.

Although Indonesia and Singapore prioritize the development of 21st-century competencies as a strategic goal in their curriculum policies, there are fundamental differences in their approach to policy design, implementation, and consistency, particularly in arts education. While Indonesia's Independent Curriculum emphasizes flexibility and local contextualization, its practice still faces challenges in terms of regional implementation alignment, policy sustainability, and the availability of supporting resources. Field implementation faces significant challenges, such as variable teacher quality, resource shortages, and suboptimal evaluation (Karoso, 2024).

In contrast, Singapore has a systematic, stable, and integrated arts education curriculum, based on the 21st Century Competencies (21CC) framework. This makes it easier to measure the relationship between curriculum policies and student competency outcomes. Few studies have comprehensively compared the two approaches, particularly in relation to strengthening 21st-century competencies within the arts education curriculum.

The purpose of this study is to conduct an in-depth comparison between the arts curriculum models in Indonesia and Singapore. This will provide important insights into how arts education can be used as a strategic tool to enhance 21st-century skills by analyzing aspects of curriculum philosophy, learning structures, implementation strategies, and assessment systems. This study aims to identify elements of effective

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curriculum design and implementation and offer concrete policy recommendations to ensure that arts education in Indonesia maintains a cultural aspect rooted in cultural values and character, and is relevant to global and future demands.

This research focuses on how the arts education curriculum models in Indonesia and Singapore differ and are similar from the perspectives of philosophy, structure, implementation, and evaluation of learning, and how each model helps improve competencies in the 21st century. Thus, this research contributes to the discourse on arts education and national curriculum reform that is responsive to social, cultural, and technological transformations worldwide.

## **METHOD**

This research method analyzes policies and literature. Primary sources include government policy documents from both countries (Singapore's Ministry of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology), reports from international institutions (NCEE; Brookings), and academic research articles published from 2015 to 2025. Descriptive-comparative analysis was used to identify patterns, strengths, weaknesses, and policy implications (Zuhro, 2025). Therefore, this comparative research is crucial for identifying similarities and differences, as well as strategic practices that can serve as references in creating and implementing a sustainable and contextual arts education curriculum in Indonesia.

To analyze the arts education curriculum models in Indonesia and Singapore, this study employed a qualitative approach with a comparative study design. This method was chosen because it allows researchers to comprehensively understand the structural, philosophical, and policy elements of the curriculum within various social, cultural, and political contexts. Qualitative comparative studies are useful for investigating education policies across countries, particularly how curricula are designed and implemented to support 21st-century competencies (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

### **a. Research Design**

The analysis focuses on four main dimensions: (1) the philosophy and objectives of the arts education curriculum; (2) the structure and organization of the curriculum; (3) the implementation of learning and assessment policies; and (4) the focus on strengthening 21st-century competencies. These four dimensions stem directly from

the background and formulation of the research problem, ensuring that the methodological approach used and the research objectives are consistent.

### **b. Data Sources and Data Types**

There are two sources of data for this research, namely: primary data and secondary data.

#### 1. Primary Data

Primary data comes from official government documents that describe the philosophy, structure, policies, and evaluation systems of arts education curricula in both countries. The Independent Curriculum: Arts Learning Outcomes (Indonesia), the Independent Curriculum Learning and Assessment Guide (Indonesia), the 2024 Arts Syllabus (Ministry of Education Singapore), and the 21st Century Competencies Framework (MOE Singapore) are the documents analyzed.

#### 2. Secondary source data

Secondary data consists of national and international journal articles, educational institution reports, and academic publications related to arts education, curriculum, and 21st-century competencies from 2018 to 2025. In addition to contextualizing the research findings within broader academic discourse, this literature helps strengthen the analytical framework and strengthen the interpretation of the results.

### **c. Data collection technique**

The data collection technique involved a thorough document analysis. Since this research focused on policy and curriculum design rather than direct classroom practice, document analysis was used as the primary method. In qualitative research, document analysis can function as an independent method if supported by systematic procedures and a clear analytical framework (Bowen, 2009).

- (1) Identification and selection of relevant policy documents is part of the data collection process.
- (2) Verify the credibility and authenticity of documents.
- (3) Organize documents according to country and policy type, and
- (4) In-depth reading, or brief reading, to identify important themes related to 21st-century competencies and arts education.

#### **d. Data Analysis Techniques**

Comparative thematic analysis was used to analyze the data. Documents were analyzed by coding the main themes identified: curriculum philosophy, learning structure, policy implementation, and learning evaluation. Next, cross-country comparisons were conducted to identify similarities, differences, and emerging policy patterns.

This analytical method allows researchers to describe curriculum differences and interpret the policy implications of each curriculum model for strengthening 21st-century competencies. The choice of this design is based on the research objectives, which focus on modern competency orientation in both countries, policy analysis, curriculum philosophy, learning structure, and curriculum philosophy (Creswell). The research data sources consist of (1) Primary Data (Policy Documents); Official government documents related to arts education curricula, such as the Independent Curriculum: Arts and Culture Learning Outcomes/SBdP (Indonesia); Learning and Assessment Guidelines (Indonesia); MOE 2024 Arts Syllabus (Singapore); and the 21st-Century Capabilities Framework (MOE Singapore). These documents were selected because they reflect the philosophy, structure, objectives, and assessment of the curriculum being analyzed. (2) Secondary Data (Scientific Literature): Journal articles and academic publications from 2018–2025 on arts education, curriculum, and the 21st century.

It is important to remember that qualitative research requires robust documentation of research procedures and data collection techniques. The research report should include details about the research methodology. Document analysis has been used as a research method in its own right, although it is mostly used as part of other research methods. In fact, there are certain types of qualitative research that rely solely on document analysis (Bowen, 2009).

## **RESULTS**

This study examines the philosophy, structure, implementation, and evaluation of arts education strengthening curricula in Indonesia and Singapore. To achieve this objective, the analysis focuses on four key dimensions of the curriculum: philosophy, structure, implementation, and evaluation. These dimensions are widely recognized as key factors determining the quality and effectiveness of education systems. This study

examines how both countries interpret the goals of arts education in a global context characterized by cultural mobility, 21st-century competencies, and sustainability by examining curriculum philosophy. According to the analysis of curriculum structure, differences exist in content organization, competency frameworks, and integration across educational levels.

Next, the implementation dimension is examined to understand how the curriculum is implemented in school learning. This dimension encompasses arts community involvement, supporting resources, and the role of teachers. Finally, the evaluation analysis examines the alignment of the assessment system with the curriculum objectives. This primarily examines students' artistic processes, creativity, and visual literacy. The results and discussion of this comprehensive methodology provide not only a descriptive comparison but also a critical analysis of the strengths, challenges, and prospects for arts curriculum development in Indonesia and Singapore. This analysis serves as a basis for identifying strategic implications that can help shape future national curriculum policies.

#### **a. Curriculum Philosophy: Orientation of Arts and Values Learning Objectives**

##### **1) Indonesia**

The Independent Curriculum (Curriculum Merdeka) considers art as a tool for developing creativity, preserving local wisdom, and building character. This philosophy emphasizes cultural values and character, and provides significant scope for local content and adaptation in educational units. However, the philosophy's impact on 21st-century competencies is not always accompanied by consistent implementation policies at the regional or school level. Case studies of implementation not only demonstrate the advantages of local philosophies but also demonstrate implementation shortcomings (Win et al., 2024). This situation suggests that the Independent Curriculum philosophy can only function effectively if it is accompanied by appropriate operational policies, adequate support for teachers, and an organized system of supervision and mentoring.

Philosophical principles such as creativity, a focus on local culture, and strengthening character may remain conceptual and not truly realized in students' learning experiences without consistent implementation. This demonstrates that curriculum change requires strong collaboration between normative concepts, implementation strategies, and the readiness of the educational ecosystem.

Therefore, the mismatch between philosophy and practice in the Independent Curriculum is not only an important note but also a strategic opportunity to improve policies that are more competency-focused and evidence-based in the 21st century.

Technology has transformed nearly every aspect of life, including the way we learn and teach. However, in arts and culture education, its potential has not been fully utilized. For example, the use of tools such as virtual reality, social media, and online learning platforms can significantly increase student participation and engagement in arts and culture learning (Wiratmoko & Sampurno, 2021). The results indicate that technology integration is no longer merely an add-on to arts and culture learning, but a strategic component that can expand creative exploration, enhance aesthetic experiences, and provide access to a wider range of art practices worldwide. The use of digital technology can help transform the curriculum by connecting local cultural values with contemporary art developments. It can also encourage students to learn modern skills such as innovation, collaboration, digital literacy, and creativity. Consequently, the discrepancy in the use of technology in the Independent Curriculum must be taken seriously. This is especially important when compared to countries like Singapore, which have systematically integrated digital arts literacy into their curriculum. Maximizing the potential of technology in arts and culture education requires policy support, teacher capacity building, and equitable access to digital resources.

## 2) Singapore

The Ministry of Education (MOE) states that learning objectives to support 21CC include fostering a creative disposition (curiosity, adaptability), critical-adaptive thinking skills, visual and visual communication skills, and a sense of identity or culture. According to the Student Curriculum Development Division, the revised 2024 curriculum emphasizes the development of critical, adaptive, and creative thinking and the use of technology to support arts learning.

Throughout history, art has been a valuable means of human communication in arts education in Singapore. Our lives are deeply influenced by art. Art captures memories, communicates, creates principles, and evokes feelings. Art can be found in various forms around us, from the colors, shapes, and patterns found in nature to the images and designs we see every day in magazines, products, and media. Art is

an essential part of every student's overall development, serving as an academic component of the school curriculum (Ministry of Education Singapore, 2024). This emphasis demonstrates that Singapore views art as more than just entertainment; it is a crucial component in building students' identity, visual literacy, and intellectual skills. The Singaporean curriculum integrates the arts into a broader framework of 21st-century competencies, such as creativity, visual communication, and reflective thinking, by positioning them as a crucial component of holistic development. From this perspective, the arts' position within the curriculum is strengthened as a strategic tool for developing creative, adaptive citizens capable of understanding the complexities of the contemporary visual world. This philosophical commitment forms a strong foundation for a more structured, organized, and consistent Singaporean arts curriculum across all levels of education.

Beyond rhetorical differences, Singapore's philosophy emphasizes competency outcomes (21CC), while Indonesia emphasizes cultural and character values and provides curricular flexibility. The key is philosophical alignment, measurable outcomes, and implementation support to foster 21st-century competencies. Systematic studies have shown that interdisciplinary practices and STEAM enhance creativity and problem-solving, making the proactive 21CC philosophy beneficial (Samaniego et al., 2024).

## **b. Program Structure: Independent Curriculum vs. Singapore Curriculum**

### 1) Singapore (segmented and tiered structure)

The MOE 2024 syllabus outlines a detailed arts learning structure for each level (primary, lower secondary, and upper secondary). It also includes progressive statements, learning outcomes, and examples of organized learning activities. Furthermore, the guidelines support the development of 21CC through the use of external resources and technology (industry collaboration). This structure demonstrates that Singapore's arts curriculum is systematically and hierarchically designed, emphasizing the continuity of competencies from primary to secondary school.

Conversely, the curriculum is not created in a one-off manner. This system allows students to gradually develop their skills. This is enabled by progression statements, learning outcomes, and guided learning activities. This allows students

to continuously improve their creative, artistic, and visual literacy skills. Furthermore, supporting the use of technology and collaboration with industry demonstrates a pragmatic orientation, framing arts as part of the contemporary creative ecosystem and the creative economy, rather than simply traditional art or aesthetics.

This approach reflects the demands of the twenty-first century, where art must be a medium for innovation, digital literacy, and global skills. At the same time, this approach paves the way for students to join the creative community.

## 2) Indonesia (contextual and flexible structure)

The Independent Curriculum simplifies core competencies and gives schools the freedom to choose from a variety of arts styles (such as dance, music, or visual arts). Its structure is flexible, allowing for local change, but can lead to variations in competency achievement across schools. The implementation of visual arts and dance in some elementary schools demonstrates that innovative pedagogy is successful in schools with resources and trained teachers, while others face limitations (Win et al., 2024).

The normative strengths of the Independent Curriculum include simplifying core competencies, giving students the freedom to choose artistic approaches, and providing a promising foundation for contextualized pedagogical innovation rooted in local wisdom. However, empirical evidence suggests that this freedom leads to differences in achievement. Schools with adequate resources and experienced arts teachers can implement innovative learning approaches such as projects, inquiry, and technology integration, which have seen increases in students' creativity and appreciation of the arts.

Conversely, schools lacking facilities, instruments, or teacher skills experience limitations in implementation and achievement. These findings emphasize that operational policies must balance curriculum flexibility. This policy should include more equitable resource allocation, standardized assessment rubrics, and tiered professional development programs to ensure the vision of the Independent Curriculum truly produces equitable competencies for the 21st century (Ummah et al., 2024).

Singapore has a more detailed and tiered structure that facilitates alignment between objectives, activities, and assessments, thus facilitating the achievement of 21CC. Indonesia has a more flexible structure, which is good for local wisdom content, but requires operational guidelines (rubrics, modules), and capacity building to ensure flexibility does not compromise achievement. Experimental studies have shown that a differentiated approach to the Independent Curriculum can improve arts outcomes with appropriate instructional design.

### **c. Learning Implementation**

#### **1) Teacher readiness and professional skills**

According to empirical literature, one of the most significant obstacles to improving arts education and competency in the 21st century is teachers' educational backgrounds that are not aligned with arts subjects. Case studies in Indonesia found that teachers who teach arts subjects but lack specialized backgrounds tend to face difficulties in lesson planning, mastering arts techniques and content, and creating and using authentic assessments. As a result, learning becomes less effective and may result in a decline in the 21CC (creativity, critical thinking, teamwork, and digital literacy). Therefore, to fill this competency gap, specialized, tiered, and practice-oriented professional development programs are needed.

Without systemic professional development interventions, curriculum reform, no matter how progressive its philosophy, will struggle to be implemented evenly in the field. Teacher quality, consisting of content knowledge and pedagogical skills, is a critical factor in successful curriculum implementation and student competency achievement. This finding is consistent with program evaluations and multidisciplinary studies (Steward et al., 2024).

#### **2) Institutional Collaboration**

Singapore allows the Ministry of Education (MOE) and the National Arts Council (NAC) to collaborate on various issues, including the development of learning resources, residencies, and talent pipeline programs. This support enhances implementation and enriches student experiences, such as through the integration of technology, teacher guidance, and selected resources. The announcement regarding the curriculum adjustments in 2024 mentioned resources for co-

development and mentorship with industry specialists (Ministry of Education Singapore, 2024). Arts education in Singapore relies on curriculum documents and cross-institutional collaboration. Singapore ensures that the arts curriculum remains aligned with technological advancements, professional practices, and the needs of the creative economy by involving the MOE, NAC, and creative industry players in the development of learning resources and learning guidelines. This co-development effort with industry experts demonstrates that arts learning is seen not merely as aesthetic entertainment; it is also considered a strategic tool for acquiring modern skills through rich, contextual, and real-world learning experiences.

Singapore not only establishes an arts curriculum as a textbook but also creates a strong environment to support it. In practice, the various forms of support generated by this collaboration include the development of expert-curated learning resources, residency programs for teachers and artists, studio-based training, and a talent pipeline program that prepares high-potential students to pursue professional arts education. This ensures that arts learning is not only academically relevant but also linked to employment within the arts world and the creative economy. Thus, students not only gain theoretical knowledge of art but also gain a foundational understanding of professional standards, technological innovations, and creative techniques used in the field. This collaborative approach is crucial to making Singapore's arts curriculum more consistent, experiential, and aligned with the needs of 21st-century competencies, particularly in terms of creativity, visual literacy, and readiness for the creative industries.

### 3) Use of techniques and technology

As demonstrated by systematic evaluation studies, students' creative abilities are enhanced by the integration of STEAM, experiential learning, and digital tools. The Ministry of Education and Culture (MOE) also emphasizes technology guidelines for arts and blended learning. Project and inquiry methods, which have successfully enhanced creativity, have been used by several local initiatives in Indonesia, but these have remained small-scale (Samaniego et al., 2024).

Effective implementation requires three pillars: (1) trained educators and specialists; (2) infrastructure and resources (including technology); and (3) institutional collaboration. Singapore excels systematically in the latter two pillars.

Indonesia may excel in local wisdom, but it requires significant investment in PD and partnership networks to transform curriculum flexibility into a consistent reinforcement of 21CC (Ministry of Curriculum and Student Development, 2024).

Overall, the results indicate that modern arts education relies on the sustainability of three key pillars: teacher competence, availability of resources and technology, and strong institutional collaboration. Singapore can systematically integrate these three pillars through a structured curriculum, technology support, and MOE-NAC-industry collaboration. This enables Singapore to build a consistent and future-oriented arts learning ecosystem.

#### **d. Evaluation and Assessment: Product and Competency Assessment**

##### **1) Singapore Strategy**

The Ministry of Education (MOE) develops critical thinking and creativity through process and product assessment (portfolios, performance assessments, and rubrics). Syllabus 2024 emphasizes educational progress and evidence of dispositions or actions that support the 21CC (Ministry of Curriculum and Student Development, 2024). Singapore views examinations as a crucial part of the educational process, aimed at developing students' thinking. They are not merely tools for measuring final results. The MOE ensures that arts learning evaluation accurately captures the development of creativity, critical reflection, and the quality of students' artistic practices through the use of portfolios, process-based rubrics, and achievement assessments.

Singapore's commitment to comprehensive, competency-oriented, and consistent evaluation across levels is reinforced by the revised 2024 Curriculum Guidelines, which prioritize educational progress and evidence of behaviors that support the 21CC. Therefore, assessment serves not only as a tool for reporting learning outcomes but also as a catalyst for arts learning that fosters students' creativity, visual literacy, and innovative abilities.

##### **2) Indonesia's Strategy**

A liberal curriculum conceptually supports authentic assessment (portfolios, projects), but case studies show that assessment practices in the field often rely on conventional assessments and numerical rankings. Some local studies have

developed more appropriate evaluation models, but rubric standardization and capacity building are needed (Bilqis et al., 2023).

To link arts learning to 21CC outcomes, evaluations that focus on processes, portfolios, and rubrics that measure creativity, collaboration, and critical thinking are crucial. Singapore appears to be better prepared to implement this model systematically, while Indonesia needs to strengthen national rubric guidelines and provide teacher training to enable the consistent implementation of authentic assessments. Differences in assessment quality are influenced by curriculum documents and the capacity of PD providers. While the Singapore Teachers Academy (AST) is gradually building a PD ecosystem in Singapore, Indonesia does not yet have a comparable arts institution.

#### e. Implications of Findings for Capacity Building in the 21st Century

Based on the synthesis of empirical evidence and documents:

- 1) Curricula that explicitly link arts objectives to twenty-first-century competencies (such as the Ministry of Education) tend to be more effective because they facilitate the organization of learning and assessment activities. (Evidence: Ministry of Education 2024 curriculum; systematic review of effective practices) (Ministry of Education, 2024).
- 2) Flexible curricula in Indonesia support cultural context and pedagogical innovation, but without operational guidelines such as rubrics, PD modules, and partnerships, this flexibility can lead to disparities in competency achievement between schools. (Evidence: implementation studies and experiments in elementary schools)

Overall, these two findings suggest that the success of arts education in developing twenty-first-century competencies depends heavily on how clearly the curriculum provides direction and adequate operational support.

Singapore demonstrates that cross-school learning can be more focused and consistent when arts objectives are explicitly linked to creativity, collaboration, critical reflection, and visual literacy. When supported by implementation tools such as rubrics, industry-based resources, and assessment examples, the learning process will be more focused and consistent. Indonesia's independent curriculum, on the other hand, allows for innovation and strengthens cultural context. However, without systemic supporting tools,

this flexibility can lead to variations in learning quality and achievement gaps across educational units. Therefore, the success of an arts curriculum is determined not only by its philosophy but also by the existence of a supporting structure that ensures that pedagogy, assessment, and objectives remain aligned.

**Table 1. Comparison of Indonesian & Singaporean Arts Curriculum**

| Component                               | Indonesia (Independent Curriculum)   | Singapore (MOE Arts Syllabus 2024)  |
|---|--|---|
| <b>Arts Curriculum Philosophy</b>       | Emphasizes character building, local cultural preservation, creativity, and freedom of exploration. The philosophy is strongly localized but not always followed by consistent implementation. | Art is positioned as an integral part of holistic development, shaping visual literacy, creativity, and reflective skills. The philosophy is directly linked to 21CC and professional practice. |
| <b>Main Objectives of Arts Learning</b> | Adaptive, based on the cultural context of the school/region. Focuses on self-expression, collaboration, and creativity.   | Explicitly links art outcomes to 21st-century competencies: critical and inventive thinking, communication, and reflection. Learning dispositions are clearly formulated.                       |
| <b>Curriculum Structure</b>             | Flexible; educational units choose the arts discipline (music, dance, theater, visual arts). The structure is quite loose; progression between levels is not standardized.                     | Highly structured; progression statements per level (Primary → Lower Sec → Upper Sec). Learning outcomes are detailed and tiered.   |
| <b>Learning Resources</b>               | Delegated to schools/teachers; high variation. There is no national arts curriculum equipped with standardized technical modules.  | Learning resources are curated by MOE–NAC. There are project guides, gallery resources, curated artifacts, sample rubrics and portfolios.   |
| <b>The Role of Technology</b>           | Not a mandatory component; utilization depends on school/teacher capacity. Technology integration is still limited.  | Curriculum policy includes digital tools, blended learning, online galleries, and multimedia art creation guidance.   |
| <b>Institutional Support</b>            | Not yet strong; there is no dedicated national arts development agency. Teacher training varies across agencies/districts.   | Very strong: MOE collaborates with NAC, creative industries, and museums. There are artists-in-residence, teacher networks, and studio-based PD.  |
| <b>School Implementation</b>            | Varied; schools with specialist teachers are more successful, while many schools rely on non-specialist teachers.  | Consistent; teachers are trained at AST and NAC, and implementation follows the MOE structure. School-community collaboration is very active.   |
| <b>Assessment</b>                       | Not standardized; many rubrics are not yet available. Assessments often focus  | Holistic & structured: portfolios, performance tasks, rubrics based on  |

| Component        | Indonesia (Independent Curriculum)   | Singapore (MOE Arts Syllabus 2024)  |
|------------------|--|---|
|                  | on the product, not authentically assessing the creative process.  | learning progression, evidence-based dispositions.  |
| <b>Kekuatan</b>  | Local wisdom, pedagogical flexibility, space for innovation, integration of arts with regional culture.                | Strong standardization, 21CC integration, institutional support, technology, and industry partnerships. |
| <b>Kelemahan</b> | Variation between schools is high; teacher readiness and facilities are uneven; and there is no national arts section. | Less room for local cultural flexibility; more top-down and systemic.                                   |

## DISCUSSION

This research shows that the arts curricula in Indonesia and Singapore differ significantly in how they adapt their philosophy, structure, implementation, and assessment of 21st-century competencies. In the Indonesian context, the flexibility of the free curriculum allows for broad contextual space for locally based arts practices that support individual creativity and expression. This is demonstrated by a study of the implementation of art instruction in elementary schools, which demonstrated active student engagement in project-based learning and the integration of contextual themes of local culture (Komeilitasari & Julita, 2025). However, the empirical results align with previous research showing that the implementation of the arts curriculum faces several significant challenges, including a lack of resources, limited teacher expertise, and uneven understanding of the curriculum (Aida, Gutama, & Nita, 2024). Consequently, the achievement of 21st-century competencies is inconsistent across schools.

This discussion confirms that the flexibility of the Indonesian curriculum has consequences. According to research on the implementation of the Independent Curriculum, although this method has the potential to offer more meaningful and contextual learning opportunities, it faces obstacles such as teacher readiness and the availability of arts learning media (Hulumudi & Sukmayadi, 2025), which aligns with the notion that teacher quality is a key factor in successful arts learning (Zuhro, 2025). These results indicate that the philosophical vision of the Independent Curriculum tends to stop at a normative level and has little impact on achieving the 4C competencies, which are the goals of modern education (Zuhro, 2025).

A study conducted in Singapore showed that consistency in strengthening Middle Age Competencies (21CC) resulted from a combination of curriculum philosophy, a tiered structure, and an authentic assessment system. A systematic review of local evidence available in Singapore indicates that a whole-school approach, teacher preferences, and assessment design are critical components in the formation of 21st-century competencies. This confirms that arts learning becomes not only an aesthetic activity but also a strategic tool for developing creativity, collaboration, and globally relevant visual literacy when the objectives of the arts curriculum are clearly defined and supported by a holistic assessment structure.

Furthermore, this study reinforces the belief that good alignment between curriculum components is key to successful arts education in the 21st century. Although Indonesia's approach of pedagogical freedom embraces innovation and local context, it can lead to disparities in competency achievement across schools if not supported by systematic assessment guidelines and teacher professional development (Saputra et al., 2025). These findings align with research on the challenges of 21st-century teachers, which shows that complex learning objectives such as collaboration and creativity are challenged by limited pedagogical competencies and curriculum understanding (Saputro & Wijayanti, 2025).

According to the strategic implications of this study, improving arts education in Indonesia does not require eliminating curriculum flexibility; rather, it requires better alignment between philosophy, implementation, and evaluation. A flexible curriculum can achieve more equitable 21st-century competencies with the support of operational policies such as contextual guidelines for national assessments, standardization of locally based learning modules, and improved teacher training. In addition, these findings support previous research that the success of 21st-century arts education depends on improving the learning and teaching environment, which involves institutional support, resources, and whole-school learning approaches in daily learning practices.

## CONCLUSION

This comparative study demonstrates fundamental differences in the arts education curriculum between Indonesia and Singapore in terms of philosophy, learning structure, implementation strategies, and assessment systems. The Indonesian arts

education curriculum prioritizes the integration of local culture and character building. Consistency in implementation addresses challenges and strengthens assessments oriented towards the creative process. Meanwhile, Singapore implements a more systematic arts education curriculum integrated with 21st-century competencies, supported by strong policy and the use of digital technology. Indications found that elements of effective curriculum design include alignment between philosophy, learning structure, strategies, and assessment. Therefore, arts curriculum development in Indonesia needs to adopt authentic assessment practices and strengthen teacher capacity without eliminating local cultural character and values, so that arts education can function strategically in equipping students with 21st-century skills relevant to global challenges and the future.

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