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## Literacy Policy in Southeast Asia: A Comparative Study between Singapore, Malaysia, and Indonesia

EVY FATIMATUR RUSYDIYAH<sup>\*1</sup>, ZAINI TAMIN AR<sup>2</sup> AND MOH. RIFQI RAHMAN<sup>2</sup>

∞ This study starts with two questions: why is the literacy of 15-year-old Indonesian students low, and how does this compare with other countries? This study aimed to examine the literacy policies in Singapore, Malaysia, and Indonesia and discuss the strategic policies to improve literacy in each country. The qualitative comparative research method was employed to acquire a comprehensive understanding of the literacy policies in these three countries. According to the findings, Singapore, Malaysia, and Indonesia each have distinct literacy policy trends. The context of each country's education system and language affects the government's literacy policies: Singapore emphasises industrialisation; Malaysia refers to its multi-ethnic life; Indonesia reflects the 2013 curriculum. Meanwhile, the National Library Board (NLB; Singapore), the Malaysian National Literacy Agency (Malaysia), the Language and Book Development Agency, as well as the Archive and Library Agency (Indonesia) contribute to the implementation and commitment of these literacy policies. As part of their programme implementation, each institution has a literacy activity.

**Keywords:** comparative studies, educational policy, literacy, Southeast Asia

1 <sup>\*</sup>Corresponding Author. Faculty of Education and Teacher Training, UIN Sunan Ampel Surabaya, Indonesia; evifatimatur@uinsby.ac.id.

2 Doctoral candidate of Education Study Program, UIN Sunan Ampel Surabaya, Indonesia.

## Politike opismenjevanja v jugovzhodni Aziji: primerjalna raziskava med Singapurjem, Malezijo in Indonezijo

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EVI FATIMATUR RUSYDIYAH, ZAINI TAMIN AR IN MOH. RIFQI RAHMAN

☞ Ta študija se začneja z dvema vprašanjema: zakaj je pismenost 15-letnih indonezijskih učencev nizka in kako se to lahko primerja z drugimi državami. Raziskava se usmerja v preučevanje politik opismenjevanja v Singapurju, Maleziji in v Indoneziji, pri čemer obravnava strateške ukrepe izboljšanja pismenosti v vsaki izmed omenjenih držav. Pri tem je bila uporabljena kvalitativna primerjalna raziskovalna metoda, zato da smo lahko pridobili celostno razumevanje politik opismenjevanja v teh treh državah. Glede na izsledke imajo Singapur, Malezija in Indonezija različne smernice glede politik opismenjevanja. Kontekst izobraževalnega sistema posamezne države in jezik vplivata na vladne politike opismenjevanja; Singapur poudarja industrializacijo, Malezija se sklicuje na večletnično življenje, Indonezija pa odseva svoj kurikulum iz leta 2013. Medtem *Svet narodne knjižnice* (angl. National Library Board; Singapur), *Malezijska državna agencija za pismenost* (angl. Malaysian National Literacy Agency), *Agencija za razvoj jezika in knjige* (angl. Language and Book Development Agency) pa tudi *Agencija za arhiviranje in knjižnice* (angl. Archive and Library Agency; Indonezija) prispevajo k izvedbi in predanosti tem politikam opismenjevanja. Kot del njihovega izvedbenega programa ima vsaka ustanova svojo opismenjevalno dejavnost.

**Ključne besede:** primerjalna raziskava, edukacijske politike, pismenost, jugovzhodna Azija

## Introduction

Literacy is a crucial demand in the so-called fourth industrial revolution because it is essential in ensuring the independence of lifelong learning in the information and digital era. To support this, qualities such as basic literacy, problem-solving, and character are required, which are connected with reading skills and the ability to critically and analytically evaluate and reflect on information (UNESCO, 2003). Literacy is described as the ability to utilise information related to social life and to understand, use, and comprehend reading to acquire and develop personal knowledge and the potential to play a role in a particular community. Literacy is the ability to use reading resources to increase one's understanding to be valuable in the community (Kirsch et al., 2002).

Literacy comprises four stages: performative, functional, informative, and epistemic. Symbols can be read, written, and conversed with at the performative level. Language satisfies daily demands at the functional stage, such as reading directions. During the informative stage, language can be utilised to obtain knowledge. Finally, people must update their knowledge (National Commission of Education, 2001). Educational policies and evaluations can help build these four stages, which can be seen in, for example, achieving competencies under national academic standards that summarise the achievement of literacy competency.

The fundamental goal of literacy is to provide students with literacy skills to contribute to society. This goal is not limited to paper, formal contexts, or standard language that only reflects the dominant language and culture; the scope of literacy must be widened to include social change and technological growth, which will alter language skills and the quest for knowledge. Literacy can help in research, teaching, and learning activities if they are already set in place (Sang, 2017) the conventional view of literacy and literacy education may no longer satisfy students' needs in working and social lives, especially beyond classroom settings. Therefore, expanded territories of literacy have been proposed to better support teachers' and students' literacy education and practices. This paper conceptualized two expanded perspectives of literacy that are important and useful to understand literacy and literacy education in the modern society, which provide theories and frameworks for scholars, educators, and practitioners in the field of education.

1. Introduction An important mission of teaching and learning literacy is to equip students with literacy skills so that they can fully participate in social and cultural activities in the modern world. The conventional view of literacy, however, is limited to the mastery of "page-bound, official, and standard forms of the national language" (The New London Group, 1996).

Literacy programmes can boost students' enthusiasm and reading skills, but the educational institution must support them. Reader communities, for example, are built and developed by maximising the teaching materials in class and library usage. This system is essential because systematic literacy activities encourage students to appreciate reading (Bafadal, 2009). Reading fondness is a part of character education in Indonesia (President of Republic Indonesia, 2017). The movement may be able to assist Indonesia in resolving literacy issues. According to the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) survey (Harususilo, 2019a), the reading interest in Indonesia is still low, followed by a considerable illiteracy level. These two factors impact Indonesia's Human Development Index ranking (HDI). According to OECD data from 2009 to 2015, Indonesia consistently scores in the bottom ten in terms of literacy quality. The reading literacy of 15-year-old students in Indonesia is 371 points, compared to an OECD average of 487 points. In terms of mathematics literacy, the average 15-year-old student in Indonesia scores 379 points, compared to an OECD average of 489 points. Finally, in terms of scientific literacy, the typical 15-year-old student in Indonesia has 396 points, compared to 489 points on average in OECD countries (Schleicher, 2019).

According to the United Nations Development Programme data, Indonesia's HDI in 2013 ranked 108<sup>th</sup> out of 187 countries. If Indonesia wishes to enhance its HDI, it must undertake literacy initiatives to increase reading enthusiasm and minimise illiteracy (Ministry of Education and Culture, 2017). Furthermore, the 2018 PISA survey results revealed similar findings: Indonesia is in 72<sup>nd</sup> place out of 78 nations, showing that Indonesian children's capacity to absorb and utilise reading content at the age of 10 remained in the bottom 10 among OECD countries (OECD, 2019).

The encouragement of policy implementation in a country is one of the variables impacting educational advancement. As a result, the government should regard survey or study results from independent or international institutions as a driving force for change, as the key to successful learning and obtaining other points of view (Debray-Pelot & McGuinn, 2009; Harususilo, 2019b). To meet the objectives, these policies must be accurately, equitably, and substantively assessed (Meens & Howe, 2015).

Technical issues, such as classroom layout arrangements, classrooms' social organisation, and curriculum, must be addressed in educational policy for the development of literacy. The National Literacy Strategy explains the implementation review of the pedagogical structure related to the adopted reading time, arrangements, and alterations that enable student movement and curriculum standardisation (Moss, 2004). Thus, educational policies must increase students' literacy abilities and establish an appropriate curriculum to promote

literacy skills and make literacy a basic standard of education (Shanahan, 2014). Educators and researchers should support students in developing reading skills, criticise the educational policy, and identify aspects and features that are not yet appropriate (Bianco, 2001). Literacy educational policies should provide and implement practical ideas to develop literacy skills (Castleton & McDonald, 2002). Literacy does not develop and work independently; it must be packaged to be appropriately presented in the educational curriculum.

Southeast Asian countries have taken the issue of literacy very seriously. Singapore, for example, has taken the lead in developing literacy policy, while Malaysia and Indonesia were among the countries that followed (UNESCO, n.d.). Implementing these policies demonstrates that the quality of literacy determines the quality of education in a country. Singapore has the highest education quality in the Association of Southeast Asia Nations (ASEAN), while Malaysia is the third, and Indonesia is the fifth (Welle, 2017). This research raises questions about how the implementation of the policy, orientation, language, and forms of literacy policy implementation in Southeast Asia compared with a comprehensive education system.

As a result, this research aims to discover literacy-related policies in Southeast Asian countries, including Singapore, Malaysia, and Indonesia, by utilising a comparative analytical approach to provide a more comprehensive picture. This study intends to add to the literature and extend awareness, mainly to Southeast Asian countries' governmental policies, to the execution of literacy programmes, which is critical in advancing education. This research is also expected to be a specific reference for Southeast Asian countries and other countries in the development of literacy policies based on cultural identity, socio-economic development, formal/non-formal primary education, community learning, gender equality, governance, and civil society.

## **Research methods**

This study employed qualitative comparative research, specifically focusing on analysing empirical data to generalise the analysis, taking into account the possibility of replication in subsequent studies and constructing logical propositions based on the qualitative study of the phenomenon in question (Woodside & Zhang, 2012). This strategy can efficiently and effectively address the issues outlined in the preceding paragraph, and it produces outcomes that complement and enrich the state of the art of such research.

The material in this study was the literacy policies in three Southeast Asian countries: Singapore, Malaysia, and Indonesia. The HDI results from

nations with a high HDI score in Southeast Asia (Singapore) and Malaysia's medium HDI value. Literacy policy variables are divided into four categories: implementation policy, orientation, language, and policy form.

The data from government policies in the form of laws, data from state official websites, and the interviews with policymakers were used as the study instrument. All qualitative data analysis approaches required coding data into themes and then categories. All notes from the course document analysis, interview transcripts, and field diary observations were coded. The coding procedure was carried out by reading each document and assigning a code to each sentence, paragraph, or section (Table 1).

**Table 1**

*Coding of Literacy Policy*

Variable	Coding
Implementing policy	Literacy programme Facilitate Evaluation programme
Orientation	Information validation Curricula education
Language	Mother language Foreign language
Policy form	Formal policy form Non-formal policy form

## Results and discussion

### Literacy policy in Southeast Asia

The literacy policies discussed in this article include the context of the educational system and literacy providers. The following are the literacy policies in three Southeast Asia countries: Singapore, Malaysia, and Indonesia.

#### *Literacy policy in Singapore*

Singapore's National Library Board (NLB) has developed a reading programme in schools for students aged 7 to 12 years to familiarise them with reading at the start of their schooling. Tan Huism, the Chair of Singapore NLB, noted that the initiative strives to meet the demands of the millennial generation, according to Huism, is one that thinks quickly and is adaptive to change. As a result, it is vital to assist them at the start of their education (Mariana, 2019).

To optimise the effectiveness of this programme, NLB educates Early Childhood Education teachers on literacy so that they can provide relevant teaching materials to their students. In addition, the Source, Understand, Research, and Evaluate programme, which is open to people of all ages, attempts to teach people how to validate information, particularly internet-based information. For this programme to work effectively, the NLB collaborates with the Singapore Ministry of Education. This initiative also adopts some steps, such as producing school curricula, implementing school librarians, and creating materials on a diverse and exciting website. The NLB has partnered with volunteers, training institutions, and military education to reach deep into society.

The following are concrete programmes that have become the main instruments for literacy development in Singapore.

1. **Born to Read, Read to Bond.** This programme has been developed by NLB to encourage lifelong reading (Thulaja, 2018) and is implemented by the Singapore Ministry of Community Development and sports partnerships. This programme is expected to develop a reading generation at a young age and spread this to all family members and the community. Furthermore, the programme's concept is to use reading as a bonding bridge for personal relationships between children and parents. This programme's unique implementation emphasises the provision of reading packages (books and educational aids), complete with counselling to new mothers. This programme enlisted the participation of nine prestigious hospitals. Books, magazines, and brochures are all examples of reading materials. Furthermore, the initiative provides new mothers with library membership cards while also holding public presentations on how to teach children to read.
2. **The Asian Children's Festival (ACF),** held annually by NLB since 2000, has received much positive feedback from the public. This agenda's focus was on children aged 4 to 12. This event was created specifically for special-needs youngsters (National Library Board Singapore, 2020). ACF seeks to shape Asia Pacific children's identities, raise understanding of customs and culture, provide creative activities for children, and encourage children to write more actively. Furthermore, ACF serves as a forum for publishers, particularly book publishers, to exchange ideas and develop works that continue to nurture children's enthusiasm for reading.
3. **KidsREAD.** In 2004, NLB established KidsREAD, a national event to build a collaborative reading programme for children aged 4 to 8 years and foster reading habits, particularly in children from low-income

- homes. This programme seeks to instil ethnic values in children. Kid-sREAD has enhanced the reading potential of nearly 2,000 middle-class children aged 4–8 and has established more than 45 reading communities (National Library Board Singapore, 2020). Many volunteers participate in this programme as facilitators, helping improve the children's reading skills, telling stories, and creating various learning activities.
4. 1,000 Reading Fathers. This programme has been organised by NLB in collaboration with the Center for Fathers since 2007. This programme seeks to increase fathers' involvement in their children's learning to read and write (National Library Board Singapore, 2020). This goal is vital since a father's attention to his children will promote their interest in reading. To participate in this programme, the fathers are provided with various guidebooks. Fathers and children are assisted in implementing library notebook swaps, which serve as a daily report book.
  5. The Quest – First-Ever Collectible Card Game was launched by NLB in June 2009. Children who struggle to read or open books will gather short story cards and exchange them once they have finished reading the tale behind them. This strategy is simple and has been shown to increase their reading interest. This campaign has inspired almost 70,000 children to read. The event, held at the national library, resulted in the rental of two million books and the exchange of 1.5 million game cards (National Library Board Singapore, 2020). According to the programme, 75% of children are interested in collecting and exchanging tale card games.
  6. Read It! Singapore. Read it! Singapore has been the most popular literacy programme since its inception in 2005. This programme recommends books to youngsters and encourages them to read them (Lim, 2013). The programme organisers hold many major seminars and meetings between panellists and readers. Web pages were used in this programme to allow readers of all ages to share their reading experiences. Since 2010, this programme has held the 'Asian Young Writers Award' for youngsters and an award for young writers.

The six programmes above are the result of the Singapore government's policy to create communities with above-average reading interest. In Singapore, the educational condition is rapidly developing, which serves as actual proof of the success of the nation's literacy policy. Some of the programmes that become state policies can be reflected by other countries to formulate policies to improve the literacy ability of their people.



### *Literacy policy in Malaysia*

Literacy can be measured using either the level of human development (children, adolescents, and adults) or the level of education (preschool, elementary, secondary, and higher learning) (Edzan, 2008). Given Malaysia's multiethnicity, it is estimated that the average Malaysian student already has functional literacy in two or more languages. The official language is Malay, the second language is English, and the regional languages are Tamil and Chinese (Pandian, 1997).

The Malaysian National Literacy Agency oversees literacy in the country. The Minister of Education, the Ministry of Rural Development, the Ministry of Human Resources, the Ministry of Youth and Sports, and the Ministry of Entrepreneurship were among the involved central government agencies (Ministry of Education Malaysia, 2013). These organisations encourage academic and casual reading activities, ranging from basic to advanced. The ministries are interested in rural development by, for example, developing literacy classes for farmers. Farmers are taught materials related to agriculture and the tasks of their daily lives.

The National Literacy Policy, which began in 1961 through the Community Development Division of the Rural Development Ministry (MORD), was thought to have reduced adult illiteracy in Malaysia. This responsibility was extended to the states of Sabah and Sarawak in 1963 (Pandian, 1997). Although more than 93 per cent of Malaysians are currently literate, the Malaysian government still needs to develop and implement a lifetime education programme. The initiatives taken by the MORD in overcoming illiteracy are as follows:

1. Harmonious Family Education Programme,
2. Religious Education Programme, Skills Training Programme,
3. Community Resource Centre and Reading Programme,
4. Functional Literacy Programme,
5. Preschool programmes,
6. Community Work Programmes and Community Activity Centres (UNESCO Institute for Statistics, 2002).

Through these programmes, adult students can earn information and skills to become useful citizens.

To make the most of the programme, the Malaysian government has designed strategic methods to enhance literacy (UNESCO Institute for Statistics, 2002). These strategic steps are the following:

1. Programme enhancements for adults and adolescents aged 15 and up, dropout populations, and street children. The following are the

programme's objectives:

- a. Eradicating illiteracy among adults and young people aged 15 years old and older,
  - b. Giving participants skills and knowledge that are useful for their social life,
  - c. Helping participants to overcome social problems that hamper community development,
  - d. Instilling the spirit of unity and love for the nation, people, and religion,
  - e. Providing guidance and encouragement to enable participants to develop the concept of self-development.
2. The Ministry of Rural Development's literacy and non-formal education initiatives, emphasise group teaching and learning, and the classes are delivered at convenient locations and times for participants. A class or group has 15 or more participants. This activity's curriculum includes reading, writing, and arithmetic with the topics of family life, health, economics, civil service, and religion. All teaching, learning, and training activities are carried out in a location-specific manner.
  3. The learning material. To prevent illiteracy from recurring, the Ministry of Rural Development supplies rural communities with reading and learning resources such as books, audiotapes, posters, and educational games through loans. It has attempted to disseminate literacy culture to all groups, including cities and communities in remote areas.
  4. The promotion of information literacy. Individuals must achieve a certain level of information literacy to face the Information Age's difficulties. The Malaysian national policy relates to the Information Technology Agenda and the early appearance of promoting information literacy in Malaysian society. Various entities are attempting to establish an information-literate society to achieve the government's aim of fulfilling the nation's 2020 Vision, which states that all members of society will have access to complete information (Edzan, 2008).

At the very least, some of the strategic stages provided an overview of literacy in Malaysia, which have been used to foster a progressive reading and multiliteracy culture. These efforts may necessitate time for citizens to be multiliterate or participate in various literacy activities. This attempt will be most effective if the political and economic situation is stable with strong leadership and ethnic harmony.

### *Literacy policy in Indonesia*

Indonesia is facing severe challenges in improving literacy. The Early Grade Reading Assessment, which is a survey demonstrating students' poor reading abilities in Indonesia, reported that only half of the country could read in 2012. However, only half of the readers could comprehend the reading texts' content (USAID, 2014). In the same year, UNESCO reported that Indonesia's reading interest index was 0.001%, implying that for every 1,000 Indonesians, only one is interested in reading (Masengi et al., 2014). According to the 2011 Progress in International Reading Literacy Study data, Indonesian children's average reading and comprehension process is still relatively low, which validated this fact (Mullis et al., 2012).

Given that literacy culture is the key to educational achievement, the Indonesian government promotes literacy skills. The government then passed Law No. 3 of 2017 About the Book System, which states that the system intends to foster a literacy culture among the Indonesian people.

Regulation No. 23 of 2015 on Character Development was issued by the Ministry of Education and Culture. According to the regulations, teachers and students must read for 15 minutes before studying (Ministry of Education and Culture, 2015). To ensure that these laws and regulations are followed, the Ministry of Education, through the Language and Book Development Agency, the Archive and Library Agency, and other associated agencies, continues to enhance book acquisition in schools and communities.

As a result, all parties must execute large-scale literacy programmes in schools, Islamic residential schools, tertiary institutions, and the community. The national government has the authority to enact laws to foster a literate culture. The role of the local government is to implement the policy at all levels of education and society. As a result, the local government must foster a literacy culture. The School Literacy Movement, developed by the Ministry of Education and Culture to stimulate students' interest in reading and writing, is one of the literacy programmes in Indonesia.

The School Literacy Movement is a reading, writing, analysing, and investigating activity in which all school members, publishers, academics, the media, the community, and policymakers from the Ministry of Education and Culture must participate (Ministry of Education and Culture, 2015). This policy will undoubtedly need a stage to be implemented and maximised. Policies like this cannot be implemented smoothly and completely in a short period since transforming educational institutions takes time (Wandasari, 2017). All elements must support the School Literacy Movement, from the government to educational institutions, instructors, students, and the larger community.

Students' reading habits are one of the essential strategies to be implemented. Teachers and school residents carry out this activity, and it is tailored to match the various educational institutions (Ministry of Education and Culture, 2015).

When the reading habit is established, the School Literacy Movement can then process the development and learning activities in partnership between productive and receptive learning skills. The School Literacy Movement seeks to shape and develop student's character as lifelong learners by cultivating the process of school literacy while also attempting to establish a literacy culture in schools, increase the number of students who love to read, view school as a learning place, and maintain the continuity of the learning process (Sutrianto et al., 2016).

The School Literacy Movement consists of several stages:

1. The teacher sets a reading time of 15 minutes each day. The schools may choose the reading duration; it can start at the beginning, middle, or end of the teaching process.
2. The teacher provides reading books.
3. Students can bring their books from home.
4. Students read books based on their interests.
5. Reading books in this context is not followed by assignments/assessments.
6. Reading a book at this stage can be accompanied by discussion.
7. Students are reading in a relaxed and pleasant atmosphere. This reading habit can develop through classroom space, lighting, and posters about the importance of reading.
8. The teachers also read books for 15 minutes (Sutrianto et al., 2016).

These stages foster students' interests in reading to master, understand, and carry out the knowledge comprehensively and meaningfully. The reading material contains character values in the form of local, national, and global wisdom, which is adjusted to the student's development.

Through implementing the School Literacy Movement programme, an educational institution must continually encourage the gradual development of literary culture. Coordination and communication of all school inhabitants, parents of children, and other connected parties is one endeavour that can be put forward and become an ongoing concern.

## Discussion

According to the previous description, the three countries in Southeast Asia have different policies in terms of literacy. Their governments are very concerned about literacy development with their respective policy patterns. Table 2 shows the policies of each country.

**Table 2**

*The comparison of literacy policy in the three observed countries*

Variable	Singapore	Malaysia	Indonesia
Implementing Policy	National Library Board	National Literacy Agency	Language and Book Development Agency, Archive and Library Agency
Orientation	Industrialisation	Multi-ethnic society	Character education in the 2013 curriculum
Language	English	Malay, English, Tamil, and Chinese	Indonesian
Policy Form	Born to Read, Read to Bond; ACF; KidsREAD; 1000 Fathers Reading; Quest-First-Ever Collectible Card Game; Read It! Singapore	The reading tradition from the basic to advanced level, both formal and informal	National Literacy Movement, School Literacy Movement

Table 2 illustrates the variations and similarities in the literacy policies of the three countries. The policy and language orientation characteristics are what distinguish them. Singapore's literacy policy implementation was centred on advancing the country's industrialisation. Literacy is used in all areas intertwined with economic features (Boon & Gopinathan, 2008). The planned and constructed literacy programme aims to deal with industrialisation with proper English. Language literacy is a starting point in Malaysia for uniting its multi-ethnicity, which necessitates that pupils be literate in at least two or more languages because the official language in Malaysia is Malay, while the second language is English, and the regional languages are Tamil and Chinese. The literacy policy in Indonesia relates to the 2013 curriculum, which promotes student character formation and growth. This policy is based on Ministry of Education and Culture Regulation Number 23 of 2015 concerning Character Development through a 15-minute reading habit before studying (Ministry of Education and Culture, 2015) and Presidential Regulation Number 87 of 2017 concerning Character Education Strengthening (Presiden Republik Indonesia, 2017). As a result, Bahasa Indonesia is employed as Indonesia's unifying language (Suwandi, 2015).

Furthermore, the commonality of these literacy policies is seen in the implementation factors and policy forms. The literacy initiatives in Singapore, Malaysia, and Indonesia use a specialist in literacy institutions to carry out literacy policies. The NLB, Singapore's national library agency, serves as a pivot and driving force in implementing literacy programmes. The Singapore government has six major programmes to raise literacy levels (i.e., Born to Read, Read to Bond, to encourage reading through family ties; ACF, to encourage children's lifetime learning practices; KidsREAD aims to instil a love of reading in young people, particularly those from low-income homes; 1000 Fathers Reading promotes fathers as role models for their children to read regularly; Quest-First-Ever Collectible Card Game, to nurture children's enthusiasm in reading in novel ways; and Read It! Singapore, to promote a reading culture among Singaporeans in general). Singapore has become one of the best-educated countries in Asia, if not the world, thanks to NLB. This accomplishment cannot be divorced from the Singaporean community's great reading interest. The six programmes are part of the Singapore government's objective to create a community with a high reading interest. As a result, education is spreading throughout the country.

The literacy programme in Malaysia is managed by the Malaysian National Literacy Agency, the Ministry of Education, the Ministry of Rural Development, the Ministry of Human Resources, the Ministry of Youth and Sports, and the Ministry of Entrepreneurship are all involved (Ministry of Education Malaysia, 2013). The literacy programme promotes reading from primary to advanced levels, both official and informal, in conjunction with several Malaysian government departments. Malaysia used it to foster a progressive reading and multiliteracy culture. These initiatives may take time for citizens to become multiliterate or participate in multiple forms of literacy activities. They will be the most effective if the political and economic environment is stable with strong leadership and harmony among ethnic groups.

Literacy policy in Indonesia is created and executed by the Ministry of Education at the primary, secondary, and university levels. Based on these laws and regulations, the Ministry of Education is working with the Language and Book Development Agency and the Archive and Library Agency to improve the purchase of books in schools and communities. Literacy institutions, educational institutions, and the community assist the Indonesian government in implementing the School Literacy Movement (Ministry of Education and Culture, 2016), which attempts to foster a literacy culture at all school levels. The School Literacy Movement is a Ministry of Education-led initiative that includes all school personnel, parents, publishers, academics, media, community, and policymakers.

## Conclusion

According to the findings of this comparative study, Singapore, Malaysia, and Indonesia have literacy policies reflecting their policy patterns and variations. The background of each country's educational system influences the government literacy policies: Singapore promotes industrialisation, Malaysia relates the policies to its multi-ethnic society, and Indonesia refers to the 2013 curriculum. Meanwhile, the three countries' literacy policies are implemented and committed to specialised literacy institutions: the NLB (Singapore), the Malaysian National Literacy Agency (Malaysia), and the Language and Book Development Agency, as well as the Archive and Library Agency (Indonesia). More research will be conducted on the role of government and related organisations in supporting the literacy programme, which is one of the indicators of a country's success. This article only covers three Southeast Asian countries; additional research, including more countries, is required to gain more comprehensive conclusions and findings on literacy policy in ASEAN countries and beyond, such as Europe.

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## Biographical note

**EVI FATIMATUR RUSYDIYAH**, PhD, is a professor of learning technology on the Faculty of Science and Technology at UIN Sunan Ampel Surabaya, Indonesia. Her main areas of research are: learning strategies, technology-assisted learning, learning psychology, literacy education, instrument development, as well as assessment and evaluation of learning.

**ZAINI TAMIN AR** is a doctoral candidate of Education Study Program at UIN Sunan Ampel Surabaya, Indonesia. He is also a lecturer at STAI YPBWI Surabaya, Indonesia. His main research areas are: pesantren education, education policy and recently he researched about literacy, which includes policy, implementation and some of its aspects.

**MOH. RIFQI RAHMAN** is a doctoral candidate of Education Study at UIN Sunan Ampel Surabaya, Indonesia. His research interests include policy of education, technology-assisted learning, and learning assessment.