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# Comparison of the Educational System in Singapore and India and How India Can Reform Its Current Practices to Improve the Quality of Learning

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## ABSTRACT

*The world is changing day by day and with it is changing the ideas and perception of the education system in different countries. Many countries come up with an innovative proposition to inspire their students and help them acquire the necessary knowledge and skill to sustain in this competitive world of 21<sup>st</sup> century. This article explores the differences in the educational system in both the countries and how India can improve in this field, to provide an extensive learning experience to its students.*

**Keywords:** Ideas and Perception, Innovative Proposition, Knowledge, Competitive, Extensive Learning.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

The education system in Singapore aims at the excellence for the students, with great importance and flexibility been given to effective communication, perseverance, time management and building relationships. Singapore's education system has been the focus of worldwide attention and interest in the past few years. It is so successful that many countries look up to it for inspiration and is acclaimed as a model that is worth emulation in order to reform schools that are not keeping up to the standards. The higher secondary sector has received the status of "Asia's global education hub" and witnessed significant growth. The former Senior Minister of state for Education, Peter Chen when talking about the education system in Singapore and knowledge based economy said: "In a knowledge economy, intellectual capital is the nation's wealth. But intellectual capital is not just about a person's mental or intellectual capability. It also embodies other equally important aspects that make up a whole person. The education system in a knowledge economy should be to provide a balanced and well-rounded education that will develop every individual morally, intellectually, physically, socially and aesthetically so that his or her full potential can be realized". Highly important lessons can be extracted from Singapore's development in the education sector for other countries for survival in this world.

India is a huge country with a large populace. Due to this factor, there is fierce competition amongst the students in the Indian schools. For centuries India was a major centre for education and consisted of many famous universities. But at the present time, it is facing many challenges in case of its primary education. The Indian government has greatly subsidized education and there are many government-funded schools in each major city. Despite efforts to integrate all sections of the society into the Indian education system, a large number of young people are still without schooling.

The Singapore education system is quite different from what is seen in India. In Singapore, there is a wide range of courses which is both academic as well practical knowledge oriented and students are given the option to choose subjects as per their interests under a few conditions and Singapore relies on the system of feedbacks. Within a short period of just one generation, Singapore boasts of a highly skilled workforce.

With continuous support from the government, Singapore has grown to become a major economic player in Asia. The Singapore Education System is praised as being one of the best in the world and it could cater to the needs of the Indian education system to achieve its full potential.

## 2. CONCEPT

Education is an important indicator of human development. It is just not merely about academics; to be more precise it is mostly about exploration, inquisitive learning and acceptance of changes and everything happening around. India and Singapore are traditionally diverse and culturally rich countries and both have a lot to learn from each other. Both the countries exhibit different levels of economic development and growth. In order to survive in this progressing world of 21<sup>st</sup> century, measures must be taken to use the most appropriate skills to motivate and inspire all students to perform well, not just in academics but also in other components of education like cultural activities or sports. A country with a good workforce provides fair and consistent treatment to all. It is achieved by placing more emphasis on reforming and reorganizing the education sector which in turn leads to a substantial growth and it also minimizes the problems arising from the continuous changes the countries are facing. Each and every citizen fall under the fundamental category of human resource. There is a need to develop effective learning environment by making effective policies and directions in the field to strengthen the skills that are crucial for this century in order to become an engine of massive economic development. Therefore the countries could do better by balancing their achievements to factors like emotional and physical being to improve quality of education.

### **3. STATEMENT OF PROBLEM**

India is mostly compared with the Western countries in terms of education but what we don't realize are the stark differences between these countries in terms of every pragmatic parameter. It would be more effective if we compared India to Singapore because both the cultures have many similarities however they are very different in terms of implementing these. The times are changing and at the scale at which the world is developing today, many things will change within the two countries in very short time, hence appropriate steps have to be taken. Few of the problems that exist in the Indian education system include a focus on theory over practical application of it and importance over quantity over quality whereas the situation is much better in case of Singapore. It would be difficult to include the Singapore standards of education due to the wide disparities in the educational status that exist in different regions and the quality of education in many areas is poor due to the high pupil to teacher ratios. Most of the student population comprises of children mainly from the marginalized groups and a large gap exists between students in the private and government schools and there exists the need for a common school system like in Singapore, instead, the students are channelled into private and government schools based on their social class and ability to pay. Another major problem is the lack of interest from the side of the government. There is immense academic pressure on both the students and teachers because the system encourages rote learning rather learning through analysis and application. The attributes that actually deserve more attention are curiosity, creativity, physical and emotional well-being, teamwork and leadership qualities rather than just mugging up everything. Today's education system lacks social values; the social fabric gets weakened. The Indian education has many problems and there is an immediate need to improve the quality and quantity of the education provided to the growing generation.

### **4. LITERATURE REVIEW**

**Charlene Tan (2005)**, conducted a research "The potential of Singapore's ability driven education to prepare students for a knowledge economy". The study was carried out in Singapore and highlights the launch of a new education known as Ability Driven Education (ADE) by the government to prepare the students for a knowledge economy by helping them keep up with the practical challenge and get over stress. The research gives various suggestions to encourage the students to improve their performance and also mentions the importance of stakeholders in education to achieve the best for the students and the society.

**Chia Siow Yue (2014)** conducted a research on "SINGAPORE: TOWARDS A KNOWLEDGE-BASED ECONOMY". The study brings to light the various changing factors that Singapore has faced in order to develop the country as well as the quality of its human resources in order to maintain economic competitiveness. The dominant role of the government in restricting the nation shows the high quality leadership the country has and how its decisions helped the country to come out of the troubles by moving towards an economy that helps in globalization. The paper thus highlights Singapore's movement towards the knowledge based economy and how it helps in achieving the country's economic vision.

**C. Neelaveni and S. Manimaran** conducted a research on "A statistical study on higher educational institutions in India". The study talks about the effectiveness of Higher education Institutions in India and the competitiveness. The main objective of this paper is to motivate the institutions in India to analyse the lack of growth and increased effectiveness in various aspects. It talks about the growth of the country and the requirement of Higher education to increase and maintain the standards and quality of education.

**Daniel Maxwell (2017)** wrote on "LESSONS FROM SINGAPORE EDUCATION SYSTEM". The article presents the assessment of the Singapore education system and elements to learn from the country's achievements and how to replicate the country's high academic standards. The four factors that attributed to Singapore's educational success as mentioned in the article are curriculum, pedagogy, teaching standards, leadership development and culture which is talked upon in the article. The challenges while attempting to mimic the country's education system is also discussed.

**Goh Chor Boon and S. Gopinathan (2008)** wrote on "Education in Singapore: Development since 1965". The purpose of the paper is to guide through the overall development of education in which was quite similar to many African countries. The major goal of education in Singapore was that all Singaporeans regardless of their race, gender, language or religion to be educated. This proved to result in a transformation leading to economic independence and improved standards of living amongst the educated people in Singapore society leading to certain disparities just as in the OECD countries. The study has shown that strong political guidance has resulted in economic and social development.

**Leo.W.H.Tan (1999)**, conducted a research “Shaping the Education of the Future – Singapore’s Expectations”. This study shows the building blocks that have helped to transform Singapore slowly into a knowledge based economy. As it is evident that the main purpose was to equip teachers with crucial skills, expertise, and mindsets who encourages the students and nurture their creativity, critical thinking and effective communication skills and help retain their identity and expertise according to the need. The research shows the path the education system in Singapore takes while at the same time ensuring the growth of the country.

**Naganathan Venkatesh (2012)**, conducted a research on “Comparative Study on Singapore VS Indian Higher Education System”. This article presents an assessment of the higher education system in Singapore and India and how the emphasis has been given to developing an environment with a mix of various educational services around the world. However, the differences are also clearly stated. The results from this paper reiterate the fact that high quality education at reasonable rates is always favoured worldwide.

**OECD (2010)** published a book on named “STRONG PERFORMERS AND SUCCESSFUL REFORMERS IN EDUCATION: LESSONS FROM PISA FOR THE UNITED STATES” and has dedicated a chapter on Singapore named “Singapore: Rapid Improvement Followed by Strong Performance”. The chapter gives a clear outline of what Singapore has achieved so far and so rapidly. The purpose of this study was to highlight the elements that led to the success of the nation. The capability of the government and its focus on matching the supply with the demand of education, improving skills of both the teachers and the students and how Singapore has pursued its vision of high quality education over a long period of time has been discussed explicitly. It was an attempt to find out the reasons due to which the education system continuously improves which in turn leads to the improvement of the country’s performance as well.

**Sahil Sharma and Purnendu Sharma (2015)** conducted a research on “Indian Higher Education System: Challenges and suggestions”. This article presents the assessment of the higher education system and the part it plays in providing quality based education and the main challenges faced by the system. The article stresses upon the initiatives taken by the government and also various suggestions to improve the education system, economic growth, and development of the entire country.

**Sanat Kaul (2006)** in his paper “HIGHER EDUCATION IN INDIA: SEIZING THE OPPURTUNITY” talks about the existing policies in India that enable the country to address the challenges that exist in the education sector; especially the higher education sector. The paper also gives insight into the goals and also various strategies that have been recommended to create quality education and overall improvement of the sector.

## **5. METHODS**

Seaman research design refers to the way in which the researcher plans and structures the research process. The design provides flexible guide post that keeps the research headed in the right direction.

It deals with the methodology selected for the study. It includes research approach setting of the study, population criteria, for sample selection, sampling technique, pilot study data collection and plan of the data analysis.

## **6. SOURCE OF DATA**

### **1. Secondary Data**

The data will be gathered from online sources by referring to journals, magazines, articles, and books which focuses mainly on the different aspects related to the education and its reform which resulted in the development of the students studying both in Singapore and Japan.

In this research, the age group 10 – 16 yrs have been focused to understand changes that they go through with the changes in the education system. It provides large and efficient data which saves time and cost constraint for our research.

## **6. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

This study set out to compare the differences in the education system in both Singapore and India, and also what India can adopt to improve its present education system. Singapore is known for creating various reforms in its educational system and how important it is considered to develop an environment for the students to learn more by studying less. Singapore is transforming into a knowledge based economy by initiating and encouraging students towards skill enhancements and expertise in the area which they choose as their major. India should adopt such a learning culture where the pressure is not to attain marks but to develop the skill and traits which makes us different than others which should train by the education institutions which can happen only if both the teachers and staff are equipped with crucial skills, knowledge, and expertise.

Singapore recently launched a new education programme that is Ability Driven Education (ADE) which give students a knowledge based environment by helping them keep up with the challenges of real life and get over their stress which helps in improving their overall performance. This study further analyzes that India has more than 9500 schools spread over rural and remote parts of their country which makes it difficult to instantly go for reform in the country and also India is a multicultural society where almost half the students speak another language as their mother tongue. Therefore, taking steps to reform India’s educational system should consider the diversity of each region and also by providing provision for more and cheaper physical resources to create a sense of commitment to learn and understand the uses of information and communication technologies. Singapore’ vision for a total learning environment included students, teachers, parents, workers, companies, community organisations and the government which was made known by the former Prime Minister Goh Chong Tong, ”Thinking Schools, Learning Nation”. For achieving this vision he said that the current curriculum and assessment system should be reviewed to develop better creative thinking skill and learning skills required for future. Such a measure can also be taken up in India, to provide an extraordinary learning experience to the students. Some key principles and practices that can be adapted by India are as follows:

- Vision and leadership

- Focusing on the education system to achieve economic development goals
- Consistent follow up of the Education system
- Keeping clear goals, ideas, and standards
- High quality and knowledgeable staff
- Accountability and strong central power
- Paying for the hard work and efforts (Merit rewards)

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