

## The Implementation of Non-Formal Education and Training Programs to Encourage the National Economy Concerning the Unemployment Rate in Southeast Asia



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**ABSTRACT:** This research raises the topic of comparing the implementation of non-formal education and training after the COVID-19 pandemic to encourage the national economy through economic recovery policies on the concerning issue with the unemployment rate in the Southeast Asia region. The aim is to compare the implementation of non-formal education and training for workers in Indonesia, Malaysia, and Singapore which have been organized by the national government, namely: "Kartu Prakerja" from Indonesia, "SkillsFuture" from Singapore and "Upskill" from Malaysia. Each country has a similar background in handling educational programs after the COVID-19 pandemic, but it has differences in implementing the workforce programs. A qualitative approach is used with data sources obtained through literature studies in the form of official documents, websites, press releases from state governments and journals based on their relevance. Data analysis was carried out comparatively. The results of the research show that the implementation of non-formal education and training includes two aspects of management; organizing and implementing, each country has differences and similarities adjusted to the beneficiaries and the actualization of non-formal education and training programs that have been carried out in the country.

**KEYWORDS:** Training, Non-Formal Education, Indonesia, Malaysia, Singapore.

### INTRODUCTION

The impact of the Covid-19 pandemic is not only centered on the health sector but also affects the economic and education sectors identified by the increasing problem of unemployment of the working-age population in Southeast Asia since 2020.

In Indonesia, the Central Bureau of Statistics (BPS) recorded that the number of job losses due to Covid-19 through the National Labor Force Survey (Sakernas) in 2022 was 960.000 people out of work, although this figure has continued to decline (BPS-Statistics Indonesia, 2022). Meanwhile, in Singapore, Minister of Manpower Tan See Leng stated that long-term unemployment as a labor force who became unemployed for more than six months has dropped to around 0.8% in 2022, while the rate before the Covid-19 pandemic was around 0.7% so that the condition of Singapore's unemployment problem has resembled the situation before Covid-19 occurred in 2020 (CNBC, 2022). According to the Malaysian Department of Statistics (DOSM), the underemployed rate has dropped to its lowest level since the beginning of the coronavirus outbreak remaining at 602,000 workers found in October 2022, and claimed by the chief statistician Datuk Seri Dr Mohd Uzir Mahidin in an official press release that in February 2020, the rate of people struggling without a job stayed at 3.6 per cent, 0.3 per cent higher, compared to the pre-pandemic rate of 3.3 per cent (The Star, 2022)

The governments of Indonesia, Singapore and Malaysia have organized non-formal education and training programs to add skills to the workforce to encounter Covid-19's economic fallout. Education and training are applied to add workforce competence while also to increase productivity and improve the condition of the ready-to-train state and increase the achievement of service quality in each occupational hierarchy expected to encourage the development phase towards a developed economy.

Kartu Prakerja is a semi-assisted program of the Indonesian government with the mission of developing the competence of the workforce, increasing productivity and competitiveness of the workforce, as well as developing entrepreneurship, specifically for the workforce group seeking employment. SkillsFuture is a national program for Singaporeans to provide opportunities to develop human capital potential including skills acquisition to drive Singapore's development phase towards an advanced and inclusive society. Upskill is a comprehensive training and skills development program for Malaysians, offered by the Malaysian government through the ministry, with the objective of assisting the community in improving skills and knowledge while increasing the marketability of the workforce. The program allows the Malaysian government to monitor all upskilling, re-skilling and multi-skilling programs offered by government ministries and agencies in a centralized, structured and cohesive manner.

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This research examines the implementation of workforce education and training that has been organized by the governments of Indonesia, Malaysia and Singapore since the Covid-19 pandemic broke out, as well as describing the role of education and training institutions in each country. This research raises the topic of comparative implementation of non-formal education and training which aims to analyse the landscape of education and skills training held in the three countries. Where there is a comparison of programs organized by the government to boost the national economy to address the problem of unemployment rates in the working-age population due to the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic.

### **METHOD**

A qualitative approach is used in this research. The data was obtained through literature studies in the form of official documents as well as websites or official press releases of state governments and scientific journals that are relevant. This research examines the implementation of non-formal education and training programs organized by Indonesia, Malaysia and Singapore covering two aspects of management in the form of organizing and implementing non-formal education and training programs. The data in this study were analysed using a comparative analysis.

### **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

A competent workforce is the one who is supported by qualifications, training, education and experience (Dippy, 2022). Education is carried out over a long period of time compared to training activities, education teaches students, while training involves professionals (Kyoo-Man Ha, 2016). Currently, the job market is characterized by changing challenges that make the work ecosystem more complex and uncertain, requiring a workforce with practical experience through training activities to acquire new skills and abilities (Neriz et al., 2019).

It is aimed to facilitate workers to obtain the necessary knowledge, expertise or skills and attitudes to carry out current and future work occupations by human resource development (Basri & Rusdiana, 2015). Both education and training are organizational investments in workforce resources with the aim of increasing workforce capabilities to support organizational performance (Zainal et al, 2019).

In developing teaching materials, facilitator in non formal education are possibly guided by several approaches including using topic-based syllabus on the placement of common topics, skills-based syllabus targeted skills with main ideas, task-based syllabus with activities based on instructions, competency-based syllabus based on descriptions of abilities and skills as well as attitudes and knowledge in carrying out tasks or scope of work activities (Sundayana, 2017).

#### **Kartu Prakerja Program in Indonesia**

The aim of Kartu Prakerja program during COVID-19 is to improve work competency in order to maintain the buying power of workers or SMEs affected by COVID-19, the type of training is long distance for limiting people's mobility. Beneficiaries in the 2020 academic year are 5.6 million people, for laid-off workers, informal workers, and SMEs. This program includes the Indonesian government's social safety net during the handling of COVID-19 or semi-social assistance in accordance with Presidential Regulation Number 36 of 2020 concerning Work Competency Development Through the Kartu Prakerja Program. In 2020, this program would have 3.5 thousand types of online training held by 246 training institutions collaborating with official partner digital platforms in Indonesia (Coordinating Ministry for Economic Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia, 2021).

Job training is an activity which improves work competency skills, productivity and capacity, work attitudes and ethics, or skills suitable to position or job qualifications, competency-based training is based on work competency standards on workplace agility required in the work place (Employment Data and Information Technology Center, 2021). The vision of the Republic of Indonesia government, through the national economic recovery policy, is as an effort to make Indonesian society a learning nation and a driver of Indonesia's vision in 2045 as a country with the 5th largest economy in the world. And the mission is: (1) developing workforce competency, (2) having increased productivity and competitiveness of the workforce, (3) developing entrepreneurship (Cabinet Secretary Of Republic Indonesia, 2022)

Kartu Prakerja program is a learning process using internet technology with a combination of asynchronous learning and synchronous learning for students throughout Indonesia. Students can interact directly in real time using the synchronous learning method, with a predetermined lesson schedule on the learning media platform. The learning media used include scheduled face-to-face meetings so that students and teachers can interact at the same time. In the asynchronous learning method, students can also not interact directly at the same time and can access audio-visual media, electronic teaching materials, indirect assignments, and participate in discussion forums without limitations on teaching time and location (Kartu Prakerja, 2023).

The learning information management system takes place from upstream to downstream which is accommodated by digital platform partners, such as the initial process of accepting students until graduation and obtaining a certificate. In the initial registration system, students who have received confirmation of participation from the management implementing the Kartu Prakerja program can continue into the distance learning activity system by selecting topics of interest according to the classification

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of positions. Students can also review the presentation of the training objectives on the digital platform page, such as a general description of the training, syllabus, teaching methods, assessment and evaluation mechanisms, and details of teaching staff and organizers (Kartu Prakerja, 2023).

Kartu Prakerja program as an empowerment program in the employment sector during the pandemic (Septiyadi & Rahayu, 2022) revealed that tracing regulation governing the implemented program provides empowerment through policy and program planning by targeting the number of beneficiaries reaching millions numbers of participants. In addition, the effect of the post-covid 19 Kartu Prakerja program on the income and long-term benefits for households in Payakumbuh city, suggests that there is a strong influence of the Kartu Prakerja program on people's income and benefit (Herdiomy et al, 2023).

### **UpSkill Program in Malaysia**

UpSkill is a comprehensive program that provides training and skills development offered by the Malaysian Government through its ministries and bureaux. It is specifically for all Malaysians, and integrated into the workforce ecosystem to improve sustainable skills and encourage lifelong learning for Malaysian people. The objectives are: (1) providing relevant training on skills and knowledge, (2) increasing the marketability, competitiveness and working standard of the workforce for a long-term career in industry, (3) managing and monitoring skills improvement programs, skills retraining, and multi-skills offered by ministries and government bureau in a centralized, structured and cohesive manner (Upskill Malaysia, 2021).

The Malaysian government funds the implementation of this program with the aim of providing benefits to all Malaysians regardless of educational and socio-economic background. The Malaysian government provides funding to private organizing institutions with comprehensive procedures in line with programs/initiatives implemented by Malaysian government ministries. The UpSkill program is an upskilling, reskilling and multi-skilling platform designed to meet real-world industry demand. In addition, it is a free registration for students, all training costs offered through Upskill Malaysia are fully funded by the Government (Upskill Malaysia, 2021).

Designated private providers of job training are responsible for ensuring training was conducted in accordance with a set of criteria and ensuring learners participating in training comply with program prerequisites, private institution will provide reports, statistics or effectiveness studies to the Malaysian government Human Resource Development (Upskill Malaysia, 2021).

This program is distance learning with hybrid learning, as well as independent e-learning, with freedom for students about how they want to receive learning and development, covering a variety of topics and skills for all age groups. The skill areas covered include retail and merchandising, safety & health, security & armed forces, shipping & maritime, soft skills, supervisory, team building & motivation, and learning methods include classroom (Upskill Malaysia, 2021).

“Reskilling and upskilling programs” are significant for improving the skills of higher education students because most existing jobs in the pandemic era require a new skill to ensure a continuation in the graduate selling points, where the implemented program must collaborate with an industry to train students in proficient knowledge so that they will be hired by the industry (Bikar et al., 2023).

### **SkillsFuture Program in Singapore**

A national education and training program was directed to Singaporean community providing opportunities to develop lifelong potential for workers of various ages and career stages. This program provides industry-oriented training added with job placement during the COVID-19 pandemic, with a new form as SGUnited Skills and SGUnited Pathway Programs – Company Training, created to support job seekers affected by the outbreak. More than 26,000 Singaporeans participated in this program by the end of March 2022, with 64% aged under 40 years, 56% aged 40 years and above (Ministry of Education Singapore, 2023)

The aim of the continuous education and training program is to meet the needs of companies and individuals, in which the Singapore government collaborates with private institutions and industrial partners. So that the Singapore government can identify workforce needs and skills gaps, anticipate the emergence of demand for skills and changes in job roles (Ministry of Education Singapore, 2023). The areas of training need covered in this program are: Accounting, banking & finance; Advertising, sales & marketing; Aerospace; Agriculture & fishing; Air transport and other relevant fields related industry in Singapore (SkillsFuture Singapore, 2023).

Singapore's SkillsFuture Movement is the government's strategy to promote and fund the skill based training, professional conversion programs to ensure a long-term career, where there are strong collaborative efforts between government agencies, trade associations, training providers and higher education institutions, as well as students to fit in with the digital economy. and disruptive technologies, as well as highlighting factors of key success that are important to ensure social cohesion and public welfare as an effort to keep the economic growth and stability (Narot & Kiettikunwong, 2021).

Singapore has identified the concept of lifelong learning through the SkillsFuture initiative to support recent reforms in the country's higher education and skills development policies, to meet the evolving skills for the future, and drive the step forward in the actions to be taken for winning the global world competition in technology (Chia & Sheng, 2022).

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The lack of natural resources in Singapore has led to the importance of human capital, the Singapore government considers lifelong learning as a strategy to improve the workforce. SkillsFuture was launched in 2015 as a national movement to promote lifelong learning and it adapts to business needs and job specifications such as skills in data analytics, finance, cybersecurity and languages to prepare the workforce for vocational training (Lim et al, 2023).

### **The Similarities and differences in the implementation of non-formal education and training in Indonesia, Malaysia and Singapore**

#### **The Similarities**

These three countries have implemented training programs based on determining the needs where these activities are important by creating a training program for non-formal education projects in the country. The process of determining the needs begins with estimating potential receivers through a determination survey conducted by the data and information technology center of the country by providing a digital platform page that the potential affected recipients can easily access.

The online education providers in those three countries are provided archive management system that aims to manage knowledge assets electronically and other knowledge management supporting administration is accessed by teaching staff and related stakeholders, also conducting an assessment system used to measure students' initial and final abilities, and the existence of community relations management system, where alumni can participate in communication activities through the organizer's hotline regarding general information regarding training activities, alumni information, which can be accessed easily.

The training organized by those three countries is a programmed learning that is planned to train and develop the workforce effectively and efficiently, producing teaching materials that can be studied by students who are geographical spread and require brief interactions with facilitators. The training is a competency based to create a series of occupation positions allowing the position of official to develop with hierarchical levels of structure and broader obligations.

Furthermore, these three countries have conducted training evaluation accustomed by policy makers as their foundation for developing continuous improvements so that program's disadvantages and advantages can be identified in order to achieve the goal of increasing knowledge and skills.

#### **The Differences**

In Indonesia, the government continues Kartu Prakerja program run as a normal scheme that is no longer semi-social assisted in 2023, focusing more on improving skills with a higher portion of training costs than incentives for beneficiaries, marking the beginning of a new era of the Kartu Prakerja program with a normal scheme, various trainings are carried out by offline, online and a mix of both (Coordinating Ministry for Economic Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia, 2023).

However, the Indonesian government still focuses on targeting to general and vocational high school's graduates, as these populations are the largest contributors to the unemployment rate in Indonesia. Indonesia is currently entering the demographic bonus era, where the productive age population is larger than the unproductive. The President of the Republic of Indonesia emphasized that Indonesia must be able to seize the two opportunities for achieving the Golden Indonesia 2045, namely a demographic bonus, which will reach its peak in the 2030s and a high international trust to Indonesia (Ministry of Communication and Information, 2023).

Meanwhile in 2023, the Malaysian government specializes in digital skills and technical knowledge to maintain the value and relevance of student talents in the digital world, with the launch of a pilot program with Microsoft demonstrating the Malaysian government's commitment to build, nurture, and invest in students to meet the needs of industry, the program will bring together certified educators and Microsoft experts to train students with the digital skills needed (Microsoft Malaysia News Center, 2023). The Ministry of Human Resources in collaboration with Human Resources Development Corp (HRD Corp) is developing a highly skilled knowledge-based workforce through upskilling and re-skilling, the Malaysian government targets to increase the percentage of highly skilled workers in Malaysia to 35% by 2030. The Ministry of Human Resources is also trying to strengthen the technical and vocational education and training ecosystem for upskilling, re-skilling and multi-skilling of trainers and trainees, vocational re-skilling will help Malaysia reduce reliance on low-skilled foreign workers (HRM Asia, 2023).

The workforce training, specially developed by Singapore in 2022, is centered on key achievements including digital economy, interaction and relationship, data visualization, artificial intelligence application, youth outreach, and systems integration because Singapore has been at the forefront of adopting I4.0, and is rapidly moving to become a global centre of advanced manufacturing and innovation through I4.0 digital transformation in manufacturing. The country plans to organize job skills enhancement to support I4.0 growth, such as 3D modelling skills for senior 3D product engineer, design engineer jobs, additive manufacturing skills for product engineer, engineering design, research technologist jobs, mechanical engineering management skills for senior technician, senior electrical engineer, design engineer and quality assurance skills in the jobs of quality control engineer, quality assurance manager, quality control assistant (SkillsFuture Singapore, 2023). It can be said that Singapore is at the forefront of mapping out training to support job skills enhancement to support I4.0 growth.



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## CONCLUSION

Non-formal education significantly improves the quality of country resources. This cannot be separated from the aim of non-formal education to serve people of the country so they can grow and develop earlier with lifelong training to get the improvements on their dignity and quality of life. Non-formal education can cover various aspects of life, namely social education, life and environmental awareness skills educations and cultural education as the keys to prosperity.

The state as the organizer of non-formal education has a major role in organizing appropriate concepts regarding non-formal education programs. Planning non-formal education programs is based on the actual needs with clearer management principles. Non-formal education management has the same functions and tasks as in general in education management, namely the stages of planning, organizing, directing, supervising which include fulfilment standards for educators and educational staff, facilities and infrastructure, management, assessment and graduation competencies.

It is expected that the implementation of non-formal education programs in a country will no longer be just a project but it will be a sustainable program and it will have a significant impact on the recipients, that is the people, of that country.

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