

COMPARISON OF EDUCATION IN NEW ZEALAND AND INDONESIA IN SCIENCE SUBJECTS IN PRIMARY SCHOOL

Budi Puspito Karno¹, L. R. Retno Susanti², Hudaidah³, Farhan⁴

Universitas Sriwijaya

bdpsptkrn@gmail.com; retno_susanti@fkip.unsri.ac.id

Abstract

In New Zealand, science education is also tailored to the local context and Maori culture, which provides an additional dimension to science learning in primary school. On the other hand, Indonesia has a different approach to science education in elementary schools. The purpose of this study is to understand the differences in science education approaches in New Zealand and Indonesia and their implications for student learning outcomes in elementary schools. This study uses a comparative descriptive approach to evaluate the differences in the approach to science education in primary schools between New Zealand and Indonesia. The results of this study show that there are significant differences in the approach of science education in primary schools between New Zealand and Indonesia, which has an impact on students' learning outcomes and scientific understanding. New Zealand implements an inquiry-based learning approach supported by adequate laboratory facilities and a more ideal teacher-student ratio. This allows students to engage directly in experiments and observations, which helps them develop critical thinking skills and a deeper understanding of science. In Indonesia, the science learning approach tends to focus on memorization and theory, with limited laboratory facilities and a large number of students per class, which limits the implementation of practice-based learning. As a result, Indonesian students have lower scientific comprehension scores, as seen in the PISA results. Differences in the quality of educational facilities, teaching methods, and time allocation for science learning in both countries are the main factors that affect student learning outcomes.

Keywords: Education; Indonesia; New Zealand; IPA; Primary school

INTRODUCTION

Globally, science education in primary schools has a vital role in shaping the foundation of knowledge and critical thinking skills in children from an early age. With the rapid development of science and technology, the need for science literacy is increasing, not only to meet academic demands, but also to prepare a generation that is able to think logically, creatively, and solutely in facing various challenges in society. Effective science education at an early age has also been proven to have a positive effect on children's problem-solving skills and reasoning power at the next level of education. Developed countries, such as New Zealand, have long integrated inquiry-based learning in their science curriculum. This approach emphasizes students' hands-on experience through exploration, experimentation, and observation thereby encouraging active involvement in learning. The inquiry approach also allows students to develop a deeper understanding of scientific concepts as well as increase their motivation and interest in science. This approach is designed so that students not only understand concepts theoretically, but can also apply them in everyday life (Fekih Zguir et al., 2021).

In New Zealand, science education is also tailored to the local context and Maori culture, which provides an additional dimension to science learning in primary school. By integrating elements of local culture, students not only learn science in the abstract but can also see the connection between science and daily life, so that learning is more meaningful. This helps students develop a more holistic understanding of the natural environment and ecosystem connectivity, which is expected to have an impact on eco-friendly behavior from an early age. On the other hand, Indonesia has a different approach to science education in elementary schools. The science curriculum in Indonesia is more structured on memorizing concepts and achieving academic standards assessed through written tests. In this education system, students tend to memorize theories without in-depth hands-on practice, so their critical thinking and scientific analysis skills are less honed. The lack of practicum and experimental methods in the classroom has an impact on the low ability of students to apply science in real situations. In addition to the curriculum approach, the limited educational resources in Indonesia are one of the main obstacles in the implementation of inquiry-based science learning. Many schools in Indonesia, especially in remote areas, face the problem of limited facilities, such as adequate science laboratories, teaching aids, and experimental materials. This causes science learning in elementary schools to be limited to

theory without any opportunity for students to make their own observations and experiments (Rieser & Naumann, 2024).

Another challenge faced by science education in Indonesia is the number of students in one class that is often too large. With many students, teachers have difficulty giving full attention to each student during the learning process. This condition affects the effectiveness of the teaching methods applied, especially when teachers must manage large classes with limited resources. In this condition, practice-based teaching methods become difficult to apply optimally (Natasha & Martha, 2023). Data from international surveys such as the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) shows that the science skills of Indonesian students are still below the average of other countries, including New Zealand. PISA assesses students' skills in applying scientific concepts in real-life situations, and the results reflect the challenges faced by science education in Indonesia in developing students' deep scientific understanding and analytical skills. This low score indicates that differences in educational approaches have a significant impact on student learning outcomes. In contrast, students in New Zealand showed better results in PISA assessments. This is allegedly related to their inquiry-based curriculum approach and prioritizing student involvement in the learning process. This approach allows students to understand scientific concepts in depth and be able to apply the knowledge they learn in real-life situations. Thus, students not only have a theoretical understanding but also high critical thinking skills (Kostyrykina et al., 2021).

In this context, comparative research on science education between New Zealand and Indonesia becomes relevant to evaluate differences in teaching approaches, availability of facilities, and other factors that affect student learning outcomes. Through this study, it is hoped that insights into the advantages and disadvantages of each approach applied in both countries can be obtained. Through the application of effective practices that have been proven to improve students' scientific understanding and critical thinking skills, Indonesia is expected to improve the quality of science education, especially in elementary schools. This study will highlight the importance of developing education and training facilities for teachers to be able to implement more interactive and practice-based teaching methods. As one of the countries with a large student population, Indonesia needs to consider innovations in curriculum and learning methods to face the challenges of limited facilities and increase the competitiveness of the young generation in the international arena (Rafi & Heri, 2023).

This comparison, it is hoped that a more comprehensive understanding of the relationship between educational approaches, facilities, and student science learning outcomes can be obtained. This will be an important foundation for compiling appropriate recommendations for education policy in Indonesia, especially in an effort to improve the quality of science education in primary schools. The purpose of this study is to understand the differences in approaches to science education in New Zealand and Indonesia and their implications for student learning outcomes in elementary schools, to identify strategies to improve the quality of science education in Indonesia through the application of best practices from other countries (Nugroho et al., 2019).

METHODS

This study employs a field research approach to examine differences in science education practices between primary schools in New Zealand and Indonesia. Data were gathered through on-site observations in selected primary schools, allowing for a direct view of the classroom environment, teaching practices, and interactions during science lessons. Semi-structured interviews were conducted in person with primary school science teachers in both countries, facilitating in-depth insights into their experiences with the curriculum, instructional strategies, and specific challenges encountered in science education. Additionally, document observations were carried out with the national science curricula and instructional guidelines, with a focus on comparing curriculum objectives, subject matter, and assessment methods in New Zealand and Indonesia. Secondary data from the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) results were used to supplement these findings, offering a comparative perspective on student outcomes in science. Data analysis was performed qualitatively, synthesizing insights from field observations, interviews, and document reviews to draw conclusions about similarities and differences in science education approaches. This field-based comparison aims to provide a nuanced understanding of the practical and contextual factors that influence the effectiveness of science education in primary schools across the two countries. The findings are expected to inform practical recommendations to enhance the quality of science education in Indonesia based on observed practices in New Zealand. The research was conducted between 12 August 2024 and 05 November 2024 (Sugiyono, 2018).

RESULTS

The results of this study show that there is a significant difference in the approach to science learning in elementary schools between New Zealand and Indonesia, which has an impact on student learning outcomes. An analysis of the curriculum, teaching methods, educational facilities, and learning outcomes shows that the inquiry-based approach applied in New Zealand results in a deeper understanding of scientific concepts as well as higher critical thinking skills in students compared to the more common rote-based and theory-based approaches in Indonesia. In addition, the limited facilities and the large number of students per class in Indonesia also affect the effectiveness of science learning. Based on data from the PISA survey, the average science score of New Zealand students is above the international average, while the score of Indonesian students is still below the average. The following table presents a comparison of PISA scores in science between students in New Zealand and Indonesia.

Table 1. Comparison of PISA Scores in Science between New Zealand, Indonesia, and OECD Average

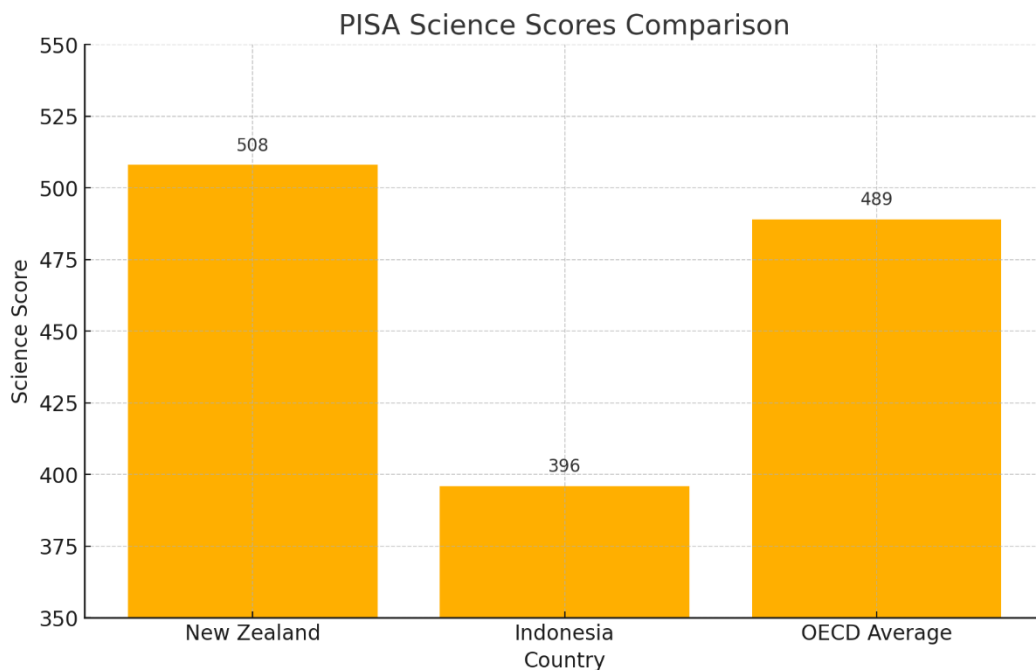
Country	PISA Score (IPA)
New Zealand	508
Indonesia	396
OECD Average	489

Source: Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA)

From the table, it can be seen that the science score of New Zealand students (508) is higher than the OECD average (489), while Indonesia's score (396) is far below the average. This reflects the difference in quality in the implementation of the curriculum and science learning facilities. Teachers in New Zealand report that the inquiry approach they apply helps students better understand the material and increase their motivation to learn. On the contrary, teachers in Indonesia admit that limited facilities and time hinder the implementation of practicum, which in turn reduces students' conceptual understanding of science materials. Overall, the results of this study show that the inquiry-based science learning approach applied in New Zealand is effective in improving students' analytical skills and scientific understanding. As for Indonesia, improving facilities and reducing the number of students per class are some of the steps that can be taken to improve the quality of science education in elementary schools. In addition, the following graph shows the level

of student involvement in inquiry activities, such as experiments and hands-on observation in science classes, which are more common in New Zealand compared to Indonesia (Susilawati et al., 2021).

The graph above shows the comparison of PISA scores in science between New Zealand, Indonesia, and the OECD average. New Zealand's student score reached 508, higher than the OECD average of 489, while Indonesia's student score was only 396, below the international average. This data corroborates the finding that the inquiry-based learning approach in



Graph 1. Comparison of PISA Scores in Science between New Zealand, Indonesia, and OECD Average

Source: Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA)

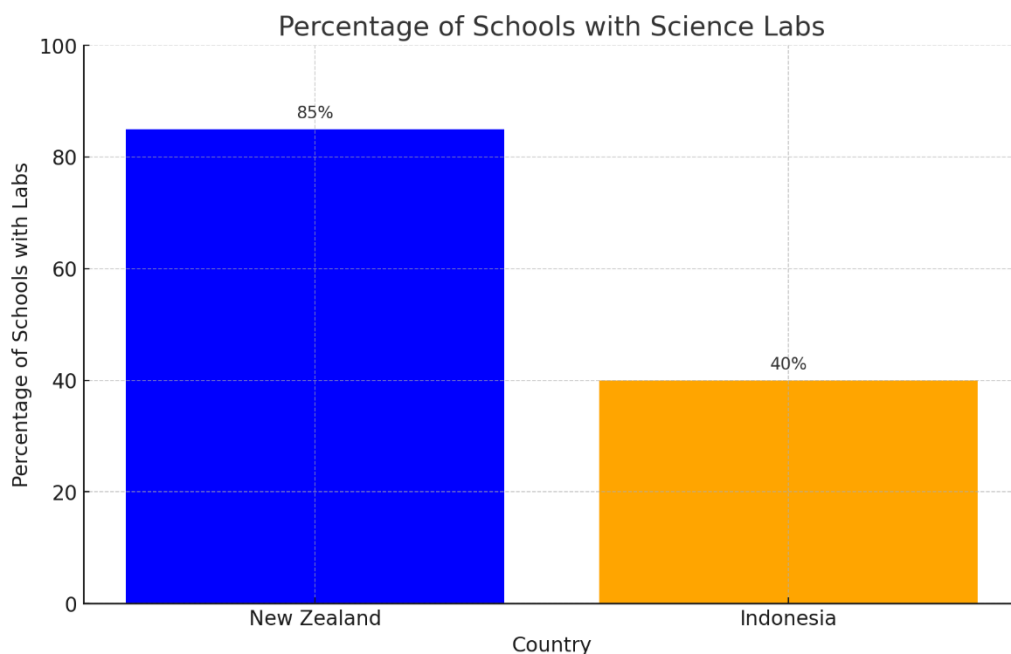
New Zealand is more effective in improving students' scientific understanding than the more rote-focused approach in Indonesia. The results of the analysis also showed significant differences in the number of teachers and the availability of science laboratory facilities between the two countries. The following table summarizes the teacher-to-student ratio and the number of schools with science laboratory facilities in New Zealand and Indonesia:

Table 2. Comparison of Teacher Ratio and Percentage of Schools with Science Laboratories between New Zealand and Indonesia

Country	Teacher Ratio	Percentage of Schools with Science Laboratories
New Zealand	1:18	85%
Indonesia	1:30	40%

Source: Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA)

This table shows that the teacher-student ratio in New Zealand is smaller (1:18) than in Indonesia (1:30), allowing teachers in New Zealand to give better attention to students. The percentage of schools with science laboratories in New Zealand is also much higher, reaching 85%, while in Indonesia only 40% of schools have laboratory facilities. This shows that facilities in New Zealand are more supportive of the practice-based science learning process. The following graph illustrates the difference in the percentage of schools with science laboratories in both countries, showing that New Zealand has a much higher availability of facilities than Indonesia.



Graph 2. Percentage of Schools with Science Laboratories in New Zealand and Indonesia

Source: National and International Education Data

The graph above shows the percentage of schools that have science laboratories in New Zealand and Indonesia. As many as 85% of schools in New Zealand have science

laboratory facilities, much higher than Indonesia which only reaches 40%. The availability of these laboratories plays a crucial role in supporting inquiry-based and hands-on experiment-based science learning for students, which helps to improve their conceptual understanding and practical skills. With this comparison of data, it is clear that the learning facilities and approaches in New Zealand are more conducive to the development of students' critical thinking skills and scientific understanding than in Indonesia (Camila et al., 2023).

The results of this study also show that student involvement in inquiry activities, such as experiments and direct observation, is higher in New Zealand than in Indonesia. In New Zealand, students are invited to be more active in science learning through an approach that emphasizes exploration and problem-solving. This approach not only helps students understand scientific concepts better, but also encourages them to think critically and logically in every stage of learning. In Indonesia, due to limited facilities and resources, practicum and experimental activities tend to be less frequent, which limits students' opportunities to learn contextually. Teachers in New Zealand also have training that is more focused on inquiry-based learning and the application of interactive learning methods (Naheed et al., 2021). They are trained to guide students in scientific exploration and design learning activities that are relevant to the surrounding environment. On the other hand, in Indonesia, the limited teacher training and the large number of students per class are challenges in the application of the inquiry method. Teachers in Indonesia are often more focused on fulfilling the academic curriculum and achieving value standards, so learning methods tend to be theoretical and centered on memorizing concepts (Gulo & Koestoer, 2024). This difference is also seen in student learning outcomes, where New Zealand students consistently score higher on scientific comprehension tests than Indonesian students. This is shown in the PISA score in science which shows that students in New Zealand are able to understand and apply scientific concepts better than students in Indonesia. Factors such as curriculum approaches, teaching methods, and access to laboratory facilities are the main causes of this difference in learning outcomes (Ulya & Hidayat, 2021).

On the other hand, this study finds that in Indonesia there are major challenges in supporting inquiry-based learning due to limited infrastructure and educational resources. Many schools, especially in remote areas, do not have adequate laboratories, props, or experimental materials. The absence of these facilities causes science learning to focus

more on theory than practice. In addition, the relatively large number of students per class in Indonesia makes it difficult for teachers to give enough attention to each student and implement more interactive teaching methods. In addition to the availability of facilities, the time provided for science subjects in both countries is also different. In New Zealand, students have more flexible and varied time to explore science, so they can make the most of the lab. In Indonesia, the time allocation for science lessons is more limited, especially in elementary schools, because it has to be shared with other subjects in a dense curriculum. This limits students' opportunities to delve into scientific concepts in a practical way (Muthmainah & Hidayat, 2021).

Overall, the results of this study show that New Zealand has a science education system in primary schools that is more supportive of the development of students' critical thinking skills and scientific understanding through an inquiry approach and adequate facilities. On the other hand, in Indonesia, limited facilities, learning methods that tend to be theoretical, and a large number of students in one class are the main challenges in improving the quality of science learning. With the results of this research, it is hoped that it can be the basis for providing recommendations in improving the quality of science education in Indonesia, including improving facilities and training teachers to be more able to apply an inquiry approach in learning (Fadillah & Azhari, 2024).

DISCUSSION

This study explores the comparison of science education in primary schools between New Zealand and Indonesia, focusing on learning approaches, quality of facilities, and student learning outcomes. Science education has an important role in shaping the foundation of science knowledge necessary for the younger generation to face increasingly complex global challenges. With the growing need for science literacy, it is important for both countries to develop effective education strategies. One of the main findings of this study is the significant difference in learning approaches applied in both countries (Deehan et al., 2024). New Zealand uses an inquiry-based approach that encourages students to be actively involved in the learning process through exploration, experimentation, and observation. This approach has proven to be effective in improving students' understanding of scientific concepts and critical thinking skills. On the other hand, Indonesia tends to adopt a more traditional learning approach, focusing on memorization

and achieving academic standards. This method often ignores students' involvement in hands-on experiments, which can hinder their in-depth understanding of science material. These limitations have the potential to shape students' more passive mindsets, thus reducing their interest in science (Rahman & A'la, 2022).

Educational facilities also play an important role in supporting science learning. The study shows that New Zealand has a much higher level of laboratory availability, with 85% of schools having such facilities. The availability of laboratories allows students to conduct hands-on experiments, which is an essential element in inquiry-based learning. In contrast, in Indonesia, only about 40% of schools have adequate science laboratories (Toyibah, 2020). This limitation results in students not having the opportunity to engage in science practice directly. Thus, science learning in Indonesia is more theoretical, which has an impact on students' low scientific understanding. The ratio of teachers to students is also an important factor that affects the quality of science education. The study found that the teacher-student ratio in New Zealand is better (1:18) compared to Indonesia (1:30). With fewer students per teacher, in New Zealand teachers can provide more individualized attention and support students' active learning. In addition, the time allocated for science subjects is also different in both countries. In New Zealand, students have more flexible time to explore and conduct experiments in science lessons. This allocation of time allows them to delve into the concept of science and understand its application in daily life (Kuklin, 218 C.E.).

In Indonesia, the time allocation for science lessons is often limited, because it has to be shared with various other subjects. This dense curriculum reduces students' opportunities for contextual learning experiences, which are essential for the development of practical skills in science. Teachers' experience in implementing learning methods also shows significant differences. In New Zealand, teachers are trained to use inquiry-based learning methods and often receive ongoing training. This ensures that they are able to create an interactive and engaging learning environment for students. In Indonesia, despite efforts to improve the quality of education, challenges in teacher training remain. Many teachers have not received adequate training on innovative and interactive teaching methods, so they are more likely to rely on traditional methods in teaching. The results of PISA, which shows the low scores of Indonesian students in the field of science, also confirm the need for a change in the approach to education. With this data, stakeholders in

the education sector in Indonesia should consider adopting best practices from countries with better education systems, such as New Zealand (D'Addezio & Besker, 2023).

To improve science education in Indonesia, it is necessary to implement a number of comprehensive strategies. First, curriculum reform is needed to emphasize inquiry-based learning that encourages students to actively engage in exploration, experimentation, and observation. This approach will help students develop critical thinking and a deeper understanding of scientific concepts. In addition, it is important to improve training and professional development for science teachers, with a focus on modern teaching methods and best practices. Teachers need to be trained to apply an interactive and experiential approach, so that they can create an engaging learning environment. Improving infrastructure and educational resources is also very crucial. The procurement of adequate science laboratories and equipment in schools, especially in underserved areas, will provide students with the opportunity to engage in practical learning. The availability of these facilities will support inquiry-based learning, which is key to effective science education. In addition, a focus on STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics) education through specialized programs and extracurricular activities can arouse students' interest in the field of science and technology (Hao et al., 2024).

Partnerships with universities and industry can also enrich science education by providing students with access to tangible resources, experience, and guidance. Aligning the science curriculum with international standards will ensure that education in Indonesia is globally relevant and competitive. The use of technology in learning, such as simulations and virtual labs, can increase student engagement and provide new ways to understand scientific concepts. Promoting a culture that values science in society through exhibitions and engagement programs is also important to increase interest in science education. In addition, it is necessary to carry out reforms in assessment methods, focusing on understanding and applying science concepts, not just memorization. Involving parents and communities in science education initiatives will create strong support for students. Finally, the government's long-term commitment to invest in science education will be crucial in ensuring sustainability and improving the quality of science education in Indonesia. With these steps, it is hoped that Indonesia can produce a generation that is literate in science and ready to face future challenges. Overall, this study highlights the importance of developing educational facilities, teacher training, and a more interactive learning approach to improve the quality of science education in Indonesia. By adopting some best practices

from New Zealand, it is hoped that Indonesian students can develop better critical thinking skills and scientific understanding, so as to be able to compete at the international level (Káčovský et al., 2024).

CONCLUSION

This study shows that there are significant differences in the approach to science education in primary schools between New Zealand and Indonesia, which has an impact on students' learning outcomes and scientific understanding. New Zealand implements an inquiry-based learning approach supported by adequate laboratory facilities and a more ideal teacher-student ratio. This allows students to engage directly in experiments and observations, which helps them develop critical thinking skills and a deeper understanding of science. In Indonesia, the science learning approach tends to focus on memorization and theory, with limited laboratory facilities and a large number of students per class, which limits the implementation of practice-based learning. As a result, Indonesian students have lower scientific comprehension scores, as seen in the PISA results. Differences in the quality of educational facilities, teaching methods, and time allocation for science learning in both countries are the main factors that affect student learning outcomes .

With the support of adequate facilities and an inquiry approach, New Zealand has succeeded in creating a learning environment that supports exploration and problem-solving, which ultimately increases students' interest and motivation in science. In contrast, in Indonesia, challenges in terms of resources and facilities make students less likely to get contextual hands-on experience in science learning. Based on these findings, improving the quality of science education in Indonesia requires special attention to the development of laboratory facilities, teacher training to apply inquiry-based methods, and reducing the number of students per class so that learning can be carried out more interactively. By adopting some best practices from New Zealand, Indonesia can improve the quality of science education in primary schools, thereby improving students' critical thinking skills and scientific understanding, as well as competing at the international level.

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