

# Education systems in australia, singapore and the uae



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The primary goal of this project is not just to study, analyze and assess the currently prevalent systems of education being followed in Australia, Singapore and the UAE but also to be able to draw a comparative analysis citing the advantages and drawbacks of these in comparison to each other. For this purpose, it is important for us to understand what an education system of a country means and how they can vary with respect to each other.

Education is defined as an act that is responsible for having a positive developing impact on the person indulging in it, not just on the mind, but the character as well as the physical and mental abilities of the individual.

Education is a means through which the society in general is responsible for the transmission of all the collective knowledge set along with certain values and the acquired skill that has been accumulated over the generations. This makes education a sequential continuous process and therefore, different countries and societies and establishments employ different techniques as deemed correct and necessary by them to transmit this knowledge.

## **Education system in Australia**

In Australia, education is considered by the system as the responsibility of the respective states or the territories as appropriate. The state governments are held responsible for being able to provide the funds for education as well as regulate and monitor public and private schools. The federal government, on the other hand, is engaged in funding the universities, which however set their own curriculum. In Australia, like in a lot of other places around the world, a three-tier based system or model is followed which comprises a compulsory primary education for all in primary

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schools, which is then followed up by a secondary education in secondary/high schools. The final tier in this system is the tertiary education in federal government managed universities or TAFE colleges across the country.

The Australian system of education has been ranked at 6th for their Reading on a worldwide scale, on 8th for their Sciences and on 13th for their Mathematics also on worldwide scales by the Programme for International Student Assessment in the year 2006. Also, Australia has been listed as 0.993, being among the leading in that scale, in the Education Index that was published by the UN in 2008. They are tied at the first position for Education Index with other countries like Denmark, Finland and New Zealand.

Education in Australia is mandatory till a specified age, which may vary between states which have complete jurisdiction over the education in their respective states. However, this age varies between 15-17 years in general, which means that education up to the secondary level is compulsory for all.

Besides monitoring and regulating the activities of a school in a state by the state government, each state also has a Vocational Education and Training (VET) or otherwise a Technical and Further Education system (TAFE). The main objective and function of VET is to be able to prepare people for work in a career that may not necessarily need a university degree to be attained. It is the responsibility of each state in Australia to manage and coordinate their own system for VET and the training and education of individuals and prepare them for their work, and state representatives meet on a national level to synchronize and coordinate their efforts and unify them

in a common direction towards the education of these individuals for specified tasks. Also, the national meet ensures that VET continues to be acknowledged between different states and remain applicable and valid even if a personal travels from one state to another. A VET course done in on particular state is applicable in all the other states within the Australian domain. Typically, the course of VET takes around two years of study.

The universities in all the states are funded by the central or the national government. However, each of these universities is entitled to set their own course curriculum and the government has no jurisdiction over this matter. However, for a course to run in a university set by its governance, the course must be endorsed by some professional body. A course in one of the universities in Australia takes a time period of roughly three to four years at the minimum.

In the work place and the offices as well as other places of employment, the employers take into account only the courses endorsed by some professional body to employ new staff for the purpose of training or employment. The training received as one of the ongoing work places of a company, if provided in some form of documentation, adds to the advantage of the student and counts into the overall qualification of a student pursuing a course.

## **Education system in Singapore**

the entire system of education in Singapore is coordinated, and managed by the Ministry of Education, or the MOE, which has the responsibility of controlling the proper governance, development and management of the

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state schools, which receive funding from the central government. The government also has a role in advising and supervising the activities of private schools. There are set principles to determine the role of the government in the curriculum and the autonomy the schools have, along with the nature and kind of aids that the government provides and the admission policy to the various private and public schools. There are SPEDs or schools with special education for children with disabilities and the funds for these come in parts from Voluntary Welfare Organizations as well as the MOE and the national budget, of which about 20% is contributed to these schools. In Singapore, education is compulsory till the age of primary school level, and it is a criminal offence for parents to not be able to provide their wards with this. English is the primary medium of communication in the education system in Singapore and is even the first language for the children in their preschool age. The education system in Singapore is defined as world-leading and it is one of the very few that were picked out especially for praise by the education minister Michael Gove of the United Kingdom. Singapore also follows a system which is in a manner of speaking a three-tier model but in existence has four fundamental levels. The difference comes in the precollege/pre-university level which is considered an intermediate level between school and college but essentially is an extension of senior school itself.

The following tiers are maintained in the learning process of a student right from the beginning:

Kindergarten: the first phase in the education cycle is the preschool phase or the kindergarten. This is meant for children from ages groups three to six years, after which they move to the next level of education.

Primary school: this is the post kindergarten phase which is further divided into the following: Foundation stage, in which a basic introduction is given to the students about English, their mother tongue or a regional language, Mathematics, History and Civics and sometimes even basic sciences. The next is the orientation stage where more in depth knowledge in English, mathematics and other related courses is given depending on the ability of the student assessed so far in the preschool and the foundation stage. At the end of this, there is a primary school leaving examination (PSLE) conducted on the national level which determines whether a particular student is ready to leave the primary school at this stage. Also, the scores in this examination determine what seat the student gets in the secondary level of education.

Secondary education: based on the score achieved in the PSLE, the students get different tracks or streams in the secondary school. The different streams or tracks are: Special, Express, Normal (Academic), or Normal (Technical).

At this level, the aim of the education system in Singapore is to make a clear distinction between students belonging to different levels of aptitude. This has its pros as well as cons. The criticism made against this system is that the age of ten to twelve years in a student's life is too less to make a comparison of him with his other peers and it may be de-motivational towards the student in not granting him a chance to study and excel with

students of higher academic capabilities. Also, the distinction made creates a divide among the students and the general sense of belonging to the same class is lost. The sixth grade, some believe is too early for competitive studies and this kind and degree of competition can often become very difficult for the students to handle. However, the traditionalists believe that it is this system which is in a way helping students of all levels of aptitude cope with the pressure of academics. By putting all the high performers of the exam together and similarly, dividing the class up into separate sections, each having different difficulty levels of academics not only helps the weaker students as they no longer have to compete with the academically brilliant students who are not of the same league, but also the smarter students by putting them in a competitive environment where they get a chance to interact and learn with other students of similar potential. Hence, the Singapore system of education does believe in having students of equal intellect and aptitude studying together, while always emphasizing and encouraging the need for having a competitive environment where every student is aspiring to do well.

The grading system followed by most of the schools in Singapore is similar to the one followed at the Singapore-Cambridge GCE examination at the level O. This exam is taken by students after they have completed about four to five years of education at the secondary level, with each student appearing for a minimum of six subjects or courses. The marks obtained in this exam have a corresponding grade attached to them and therefore, and these obtained grades have a meaning attached to them as mentioned below:

A1/A2 (Distinction)

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B3/B4 (Merit)

C5/C6 (Credit/Pass)

D7 (Sub-Pass/fail, that is, passing at a lower standard in the exam or fail)

E8/F9 (Fail)

The overall total performance of a student academically is calculated through various different systems of scoring which include the L1R5, the L1R4 and L1B5 systems. For the purpose of evaluation of exams that are of a non-major kind, many schools are known to use the Mean Grade per subject method of evaluation. Schools that have currently been running the Integrated Program have also been known to use the GPA system for the purpose of evaluation, that is, the Grade Point Average method of grading. Extra-curricular and co-curricular activities are mandatory for all students at the secondary level in schools, in which all the students are required to participate in a minimum of one such activity, and this participation and their performance is graded along with other academic achievements through the four years of their education. This system of scoring is known as LEAPS (“Leadership, Enrichment, Achievement, Participation, Service”).

There are however a few criticisms made of the prevalent education system in Singapore, often by parents of students there, that the education system is too rigid, sometimes even elitist and over-specialized in certain cases. A sharp contrast to the education system in the United States, an often faced criticism is that there is little or no support and encouragement in the system for creative thinking and little emphasis on arts and creative vision.

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The argument put in response to this has always been that the students of Singapore have always outperformed the others from different parts of the world in international competitions of mathematics as well as the sciences. However, what is argued is that the fact that Singaporean students performing better shows only that they are better prepared and more oriented towards preparing for these particular kinds of examinations than developing skills and the ability of free creative and critical thinking.

## **Education System in UAE**

With the amelioration that United Arab Emirates has been undergoing over the past few years, one can very well predict the development in the system of education. The administration of the country has not only increased academic opportunities in big cities like Abu Dhabi and Dubai but also in every remote area constituting the country geography. The country now has mature enough to offer education comprehensively to students ranging from kindergarten and going all the way to university levels. In fact the academics department has also made education free to the citizens of the country. This is the reason that the policies like Emiritization are seen to be successful in UAE. The students are being trained from the early days so that once they are grown-ups they have the capability to beat the best in the world. Moving further into the advancements that the country's education has seen in the recent past, private education is provided to children of both sexes who pursue higher education abroad. Several thousand students in the country have done exceptionally well and have also made the country proud by being amongst the best by this system of the country. If one compares the education system existing in the country in the 1970s when the seven

Emirates were formed, there has been a drastic change. With consistent policies of privatisation, UAE has been going great guns. This can be seen in the re-evaluation of the Government's role. There is a special organization in the country's capital that is looking after this privatisation policy helping the country and its citizens mutually. This body is called the Abu Dhabi Education Council (ADEC). Pioneer institutions like United Arab Emirates University (UAEU), Zayed University (ZU) and also Higher Colleges of Technology (HCT) are doing a remarkable job in the context. So, now that the country is seeing so many reforms, one can very well see that the motive behind the same is the country wants its youth to be able to meet the challenges of the new century. Also, the quality of education given to the individuals is good enough so that once they are graduates; they are capable enough to have jobs in the corporate world. (UAE Education Centre - General information, 2010)

The country has provided the following breakdown to the education system:

Kindergarten: 4 -5 years old

Primary: length of programme 6 years old with an age level between 6-12 years old

Preparatory: length of programme 3 years old with an age level between 12-15 years old

Secondary: length of programme 3 years old with an age level between 15-18 years old

In this program, secondary school certificate is awarded

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Technical Secondary School: length of programme 6 years old with an age level between 12-18 years old

In this program technical secondary diploma is awarded

The education system of the country has become so strict on the past few years that it has made primary education compulsory for all levels of the society without any discrimination of its citizens. The best part of the system is that the ratio of staff to children has been kept as 1: 20 which was much beyond reckoning when the Emirates were formed. This ratio is increased to 1: 15 at intermediate and secondary levels of education.

Another very significant mark in the development of the education system in the country is the formation of Federation. The weekend schedule of the education system was also revised in the year 2006 with Friday and Saturday being considered to constitute the weekend.

## **Levels of Education**

### **Primary and Secondary Education**

As it has been mentioned, education at this level has been made compulsory in the part of the world. It has four-tiers in this sector. This has been mentioned as follows:

4-5 years old: Kindergarten

6-11 years old: primary Schools

12-14: Preparatory Stage

## 15-17: Secondary School

In order to ensure that the children of this age are well-equipped with Islamic principles and the traditional culture of the place, the teaching staff is also chosen in the basis of Emiritization to an extent which would reach 90% by the end of year 2020.

At the moment, the number of pupils attending primary school is of the order of 40%. Many of them offer foreign language courses as well but at the same time maintain the integrity of the place. The Government has allowed admissions to expatriates but on the basis of merit which would also levy fees.

As far as the citizens of the country are concerned, they are experiencing the highly liberal policies of ADEC where the organization has taken the responsibility to bear all the fees of model school. Integration with Zayed University has also planned to improve English speaking capability of the masses. There are 30 faculty members from the same to look after English speaking courses in the schools at the primary and secondary levels. (Zayed University announces the five year strategic plan , 2009)

## **IT Education**

The Ministry of Education in UAE is making its best possible efforts so that the plans and strategies related to the development of educational programs are able to meet international standards. As a part of all the educational strategies made by the company, there is special attention given to the introduction of latest IT resources at every level of education. Being at par with the latest IT services would make the country highly competitive on the <https://assignbuster.com/education-systems-in-australia-singapore-and-the-uae/>

global front. The education system is working on providing a computer amongst every ten children at the kindergarten level. The stupendous success of Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid IT Education Project (ITEP) has advanced the IT system of education in the country. It has not only installed various labs in the region but it has also provided a highly valuable education resource available at [www.itep.ae](http://www.itep.ae). ITEP serves about 40 schools in the country so far including about 13, 000 students. The success rate of the students is of the order of 97%!

## **Higher Education**

The most remarkable fact about UAE education is that it has been able to diversify itself in very little time. The Government institutions are available free of charge. Even some internationally accredited private institutions are also available free of charge making it highly easy for the citizens to receive impeccable education. Universities like United Arab Emirates University (UAEU) offers leading research facilities in higher education. There are more than 70 undergraduate degrees and also a substantial number of streams at the graduate level. As the country has now collaborated with many international institutions, the quality and diversity of education has gone up tremendously. Talking about Al Ain, there is more than 280, 000 square meters of space available for residential as well as educational purposes. The country is also focussing to a large extent on public-private partnership in education. Top organizations of the fame of Mubadala Development Company and also UAEU have undergone the execution of a 30-yrs concession agreement. This will allow BOOT (Build Own Operate and Transfer) basis development. (build, own, operate, transfer, 2010)

## **Zayed University**

This University was established with a motive to educate the women citizens of UAE. It has a facility of the worth of 370 million Dhms which encompasses an area as large as 711, 000 square metres. There are in all six colleges with different departments and laboratories. The academic division of the university has been mentioned as follows:

Arts and Sciences

Business Sciences

Communication and Media Sciences

Education

Information Systems

The main motive of the University is to infuse bilingual knowledge in both English and Arabic with a proficiency in IT and also a considerable capability of quantitative and research skills. The University has been undergoing tremendous innovations in the past few years. Dubai Internet City (DIC) is an example of this. ZU has also partnered with IBM so as to make an enhancement of its e-business and also communication activities. The University also organized, ' Women as Global Leaders' conference in 2006. This is done to ensure that the students of the University are prepared well enough so that they could make an active participation in the society.

## **Higher Colleges of Technology**

In order to provide technically a more sound system of education, a system of UAE colleges was devised in the year 1988. It started with only 4 colleges but has 12 colleges for men and 12 for women in cities like Abu Dhabi, Sharjah and Fujairah. The advancement in the number of students has gone from 239 to 15, 000 in only about 2 decades. There are a number of examples in this area. As for example, Dubai Men's College provides a cent percent digital atmosphere. Academic assignments, examination mark sheets, the number of classes missed and also the library can now be accessed online in the college. The commercial arm of Higher Colleges of Technology is Applied Research and Training (CERT) has made a number of alliances with multinational firms and many elite organizations which helps in the professional development in the region. CERT is also planning to make a separate ' CERT City'. The idea behind doing the same is to have a fully integrated facility for research, innovation and also entrepreneurship.

## **Conclusion of Comparison**

If one puts it on the developed and the developing scale, Australia and Singapore would certainly lie on the developed side and United Arab Emirates would lie on the developing scale. The reason for the same is that it has been only about 30 years since the formation of the Emirates. As we have seen, most of the development in the country has come from the making of the federation. Such bodies were significant much before the UAE system of education even started. But as far as the growth in education system is concerned, one would definitely put UAE right on top. The provision of free and compulsory education for the citizens is one of the

traits of a country that is developing its education system. But with the rate of growth that UAE has been witnessing over the past few years, in little time, the country would be able to catch up with the likes of Australia and Singapore which are relatively developed. Very soon the results of organization like ITEP and UAEU would certainly see international levels. It is the collaboration with multi-national concerns that by the end of this decade, the country could be of the likes of Singapore and Australia.

As far as the ' International Maths and Science Study' is concerned, Singapore was placed at the first place showing the mark that it has made in the mentioned subjects. This is contrast with UAE where the focus has never been specifically on Maths and Science. As the stage of development has begun in the technological era, the country focuses largely on IT than in any other subject. The education system in Singapore is more specialized and rigid than any other country. It has also been seen that the education system in Singapore involves lesser amounts of creativity. As we have seen, there is also a segregation of the more intelligent ones and the lesser ones in the education system of Singapore. The teachers are also allotted in the same order of quality. This is likely to make the intelligent more intelligent but the lesser intelligent ones would not get a chance. This has been criticised especially in the primary and the secondary levels. (A guide to universities in Singapore, 2010)

As far as Australia and UAE are concerned, there is a similarity in the fact that both the countries have implemented compulsory education at the primary level. But as far as Australia is concerned, this at times is not called education at the kindergarten level where play-school is highly prominent. <https://assignbuster.com/education-systems-in-australia-singapore-and-the-uae/>



Such availability is not very common in UAE. To be more precise, education is considered to be compulsory in Australia between 5 and 15 only. As far as world ranking is concerned, the country's rank of 6th in Reading, 8th in Science and 13th in Mathematics does place Australia behind Singapore in the latter two subjects. If one compares UAE for that matter, it does not even include Maths in its compulsory system of education. Moreover, there is a huge amount of consideration that is given to Arabic and English in order to make bilingual scholars. The conditions as we have seen are contradictory in both Australia and Singapore. Funding and management of the education system is looked after from territory which is different from that we have seen in the case of UAE. There are certain centralized bodies that have the authority to do the particular job.

Moving on to the system of free education, as we have seen, UAE is a pioneer in providing free education. The case is not similar when compared to Australia and Singapore. In fact it is highly expensive to study in the two countries. When the same is compared to UAE, for the citizens it is absolutely free. This service continues for even abroad studies. Also, the existence of expatriate-citizen is more pronounced in UAE than in the other countries. Singapore and Australia do not have policies like Emiritization to educate the natives more liberally. There are many expatriates who have been going to Australia particularly for their education. UAE also allows meritorious expatriates to study with fees levied on them but it is not as much pronounced as in Australia and Singapore.

The distribution of education is also more segregated in Australia as compared to UAE and Singapore. This is visible in the chart mentioned in the <https://assignbuster.com/education-systems-in-australia-singapore-and-the-uae/>

Australian education sector. As far as flexibility in switching subjects is concerned, Singapore is the most liberal of the three countries. This allows the students of Singapore to be able to choose a subject of their liking. Unlike the other two countries, Singapore allows continuously improved standards to target rather than a single target set of the highest standard and expectations.

As we have seen, Singapore is also alleged to have educational streaming not giving equal opportunities to all to study. In UAE this is there with respect to natives and expatriates, but in Singapore it is on the basis of talent and intelligence. This should certainly be resurrected in the future so that Singapore can produce larger masses of qualified professionals.

As far as preparation for examination is concerned, Singapore is not considered to be a favourable place. This is because; the country has always ranked in Maths and Science and not in other subjects. This is an indication of rote learning which can't be considered to be optimal in the education system. But the Singapore Ministry of Education takes pride in the fact that it ranks in the Maths and Science streams as the country's text books are sold as far as in North America. When it comes to Australia, as the level increases from primary to secondary, the country's education system gets all the more regularized. This is taken care of from the primary level itself in UAE to a considerable extent. (Singapore's Education System, 2010)

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