A REVIEW OF EDUCATIONAL RESEARCH TREND IN SOUTHEAST ASIA

Rohaida Mohd Saat
*Hidayah Mohd Fadzil
Faculty of Education, University of Malaya
* hidayahfadzil@um.edu.my

Ang Chiew Way
Faculty of Economics and Administration, University of Malaya

ABSTRACT

In recent years, Southeast Asia region has grown rapidly, particularly in the field of education due to the development of human capital and the influence of globalization. Rigorous educational researches have emerged from and was conducted in Southeast Asia countries. The purpose of this study is to critically examine educational research conducted in Southeast Asia through a narrative review of articles for a 3-year period, from 2016 to 2018. The review focuses on identifying the characteristics of educational research involving (1) temporal distribution of research studies in education field, (2) area of educational research, (3) research level, (4) countries within Southeast Asia that conducted and (5) the methodological design employed in the research. Published journals from two web-based service providers were selected based on research related to education conducted in Southeast Asia. The findings summarize the core emphasis in the education literature across the educational disciplines and the trend across Southeast Asia countries.

Keywords: *Southeast Asia, Trend In Educational Research, Narrative Review*

INTRODUCTION

Southeast Asia is a sub-region of Asia which consists of eleven countries which are Malaysia, Singapore, Thailand, Vietnam, Philippines, Cambodia, Laos, Indonesia, Myanmar, Brunei and Timor-Leste. The culture of Southeast Asia region is greatly influenced by various factors such as cultural, ideology, religion, consequences of colonial era and the openness to trade and investment (Andaya, 2019; Kumar, 2019; Maca & Morris, 2015). This has greatly changed the cultural norm across Southeast Asia countries. These changes of culture have greatly influenced the development of Southeast Asia countries' policy until today.

Although Southeast Asia countries has their respective culture and different level of socio-economic development, all of them emphasize on human capital development. It was believed that human capital development is the key to improve and develop a nation (Goujon & Samir, 2008). In Southeast Asia, economic expansion rates have been robust. According to OECD Development Center's *Medium-Term Projection Framework* (MPF- 2019), the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) in the region is estimated to grow an annual average of 6.1% in 2019- 2023. The domestic demand is expected to grow gradually as the job market remain vibrant. With the job market, the region focuses on the human capital development aligning with respective countries' mission and vision.

Human development is a major consideration in economic growth in terms of industrialization and modernization of countries. The significant importance of human capital has been discussed in studies by Mankiw, Romer and Weil (1992) and You (2019), that a sustainable of long-term growth can be

attained through education and skills. A high productivity labor goes along with a well-educated people. The human capital development has inspired Southeast Asia countries in education reforms and shaped the knowledge production of their education. Thus, education became one of the crucial sections focused by policymaker and the government as it plays a role in developing the country's human resources. With better human resources, the economic development of the country could then be improved gradually (You, 2019).

There was not much development in education across Southeast Asia countries in the 20th century since almost all of the countries were colonized by Western countries, with Thailand being the only exception (Goujon & Samir, 2008). After achieving independence, each respective country started implementing certain policies and solutions in order to uplift its educational level and economy. However, the development of the education changes across the time was inevitable due to globalization. An example that can be used is the integrated STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics) approach that has started to emerge in the education setting across Southeast Asia countries. Based on studies (e.g. Jeyarajah, Saat, & Rauf, 2014), this approach focuses on the development of cognitive and social skills such as critical thinking, communication, teamwork and creativity which are essential skills in the 21st century. Thus, the development of the education field varies across countries and time.

The current development of the education field is aligned with the current development of the country. This could be implied into the research on the education field by researchers. The focus of research on education changes based on the development of the education of the country. Policy makers and researchers demand that educational policies and practice should be informed by quality educational research (Bridges, Smeyers, & Smith, 2008). Educational research can reliably inform what works and what does not work. Thus, it is crucial to know not only the types of educational research in Southeast Asia countries, but also its latest focus in educational research. Therefore, we would like to investigate the current trend of the education research of Southeast Asia region from the year 2016 - 2018. Southeast Asia was chosen in this study because Southeast Asia countries share a common vision which was to strengthen the competitiveness of the country through education regardless of having different political systems, historical backgrounds and educational structure. These three years (2016 -2018) has shown to be the peak period wherein Southeast Asia region has shown the most development in human capital development within Asia (UNDP, 2018). In addition, the articles and papers related to educational research in Southeast Asia countries are limited and terribly outdated. Hence, it would be beneficial to determine the current education development of the region.

METHODOLOGY

The study identified published research using Science Direct and Taylor Francis Online as the scanning database. The two data bases were found sufficient for the purpose of this study and it is among the common databases subscribed in these countries. The databases selected also represent international publishers in educational research. These databases were scanned to obtain the published articles on the current trend of educational research across Southeast Asia region from 2016 to 2018. The key terms such as "educational policy", "education", "technology", "Southeast Asia" etc. were used to screen and retrieve the related articles. All papers involving education research done in any of the Southeast Asia countries were selected; particularly from authors coming from the Southeast Asia countries. A total of 75 published articles were identified. By analysing the articles' titles, abstracts and research area, the paper provides a glimpse of the temporal distribution of research studies in education field, area of research, research level, countries and methodological design employed. Based on the analysis of the articles retrieved, a narrative review supported by descriptive empirical statistics was employed to interpret the findings in this paper. Narrative review is an approach that offered organized and systematic procedures for critical analysis (Chinedu, Wan-Mohamed, & Ogbonnia, 2018; Polanin, Maynard, & Dell, 2017). The approach of narrative review has been referred to by many different terms, including meta-analysis, meta-synthesis, systematic review and overview of reviews (Polanin et al., 2017). According to Ferrari (2015), narrative review plays an important role in providing readers with up-to-date knowledge about a specific topic or theme. Therefore, the narrative review was used in this

study, as a means to a better-informed setting of a comprehensive foundation for the future research in the development of various education settings, specifically in the context of Southeast Asia countries.

RESULTS

The findings of this paper provide a descriptive analysis of the educational research field in the Southeast Asia from 2016-2018. The findings are organized in five (5) main sections;

a) Temporal distribution of research studies in education field
b) Area of research
c) Research level
d) Countries
e) Methodological design employed

a) Temporal distribution of research studies in education field

Figure 1 presents the distribution of articles during the studied period (2016-2018). The total number of articles analysed is 75 throughout a period of 3 years. The distribution of education related articles published by Southeast Asia countries portrayed a positive outlook when the reviewed articles increased 100.00% from the year 2017 to 2018. Hence, this paper aims to summarize all past research on education through published articles.
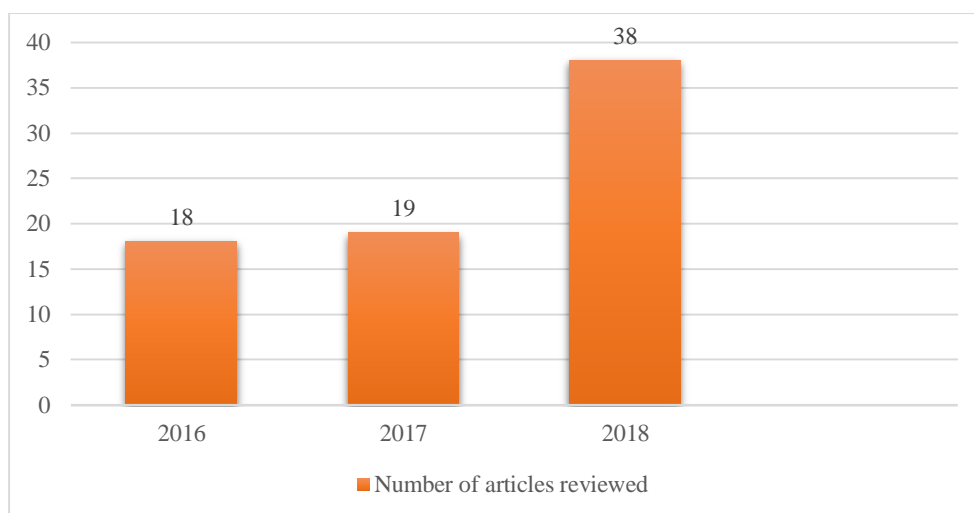

Figure 1. Distribution of Reviewed Articles from Year 2016 to 2018

b) Area of Research

There are 17 research areas that have been summarized from 75 articles related to education in Southeast Asia countries. Some articles have more than one research area or issue but most of them have one main issue in their write up. Table 1 describes the frequency of the research areas discussed in each field of education in the published articles.

Table 1
Research Areas in Education

No.	Research Areas	Frequency of article	Percentage (%)
1.	Teacher education	18	24.00
2.	Educational management	14	18.00
3.	Comparative education	6	8.00
4.	Special education	5	7.00
5.	Higher education	5	7.00
6.	Language education	5	7.00
7.	Gender studies	4	5.00
8.	Mathematics education	3	4.00
9.	Educational technology	3	4.00
10.	Quality assurance	2	3.00
11.	Sociology	2	3.00
12.	International education	2	3.00
13.	Nursing education	2	3.00
14.	Educational leadership	1	1.00
15.	Educational psychology	1	1.00
16.	Drama education	1	1.00
17.	Music education	1	1.00
	Total number of publications	**75**	**100.00**

The greatest number of research areas in education which was studied for a period of three (3) years from these two databases was the teacher education which contributed a total of 24.00% (n=18). Teacher education includes training for either pre-service (n=6) or in-service (n=12) teachers. The second research area was educational management with the total of 18%. Research management in this context included research in policy reform and policy review. Comparative education was also observed to be given priority with respect of educational research area in Southeast Asia countries. The analysis also shown that most of the comparative studies involved comparison either between Southeast Asia or countries in Asia, as shown in Table 2.

Table 2
Countries involved in comparative education studies

Authors	Year	Countries
Yonezawa, Horta, & Osawa	2016	Southeast Asia East Asia
Sin, Leung, & Waters	2017	Malaysia Hong Kong
Baildon, Sim, & Paculdar	2016	Singapore Philippines
Ho & Seow	2017	Singapore Philippines
Shams & Huisman	2016	Malaysia Singapore
Deng & Gopinathan	2016	Singapore High performing countries in Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA)

The fourth most published research areas were the special education, higher education and language education with the percentage of 7.00% (n=5) respectively. Special education included studies in inclusive education (n=4) and gifted education (n=1). Interestingly, Singapore, Malaysia, Thailand and Indonesia were the only countries that was involved in special education related studies. Studies conducted in higher education research areas were mostly associated with university ranking, vocation and students' employability. In language education, most of the studies were related to the issue of English education curriculum in primary and secondary school level.

Other areas that have been examined in this paper include gender studies with the percentage of 5.00% (n=4), and mathematics education and educational technology with the percentage of 4.00% (n=3) respectively. Surprisingly, there were not many studies conducted in the area of educational technology and the studies mostly focused on students' engagement in using technology such as mobile applications. There were only two studies conducted in each of the area of quality assurance, sociology, international education and nursing education based on the analysis of these two databases (3.00%), and only one study was carried out in the areas of educational leadership, educational psychology, drama education and music education.

c) Research level

There are five (5) major groups of research level that were emphasized in the published research articles from the Southeast Asia countries. These groups of participants vary from pre-school to Grade 12 (K-12), primary school, secondary school, primary and secondary school and up to university level. The analysed studies have employed the groups as their research participants to gather feedback on the researched fields or employed issues related to that particular research level in the studies. The following Table 2 describes the research level involved and the number of studies for each level.

Table 3
Research level

Level	Number of studies	Percentage (%)
K-12	13	17.00
Primary school	14	18.00
Secondary school	14	18.00
Primary and secondary school	6	9.00
Higher education	28	37.00
Total number	**75**	**100.00**

It is observed that educational research in Southeast Asia has highlighted more on the higher education level with the percentage of 37.00% (n=28) of the total number of publications analysed in this study. It involves various area of research such as comparative education, gender study, educational management, quality assurance and pre-service teacher training. Research trend also discloses the extent of importance given to primary (n=14) and secondary educations (n=14) as more articles has been published using primary and secondary school students.

d) Countries

Educational research conducted for the three-year period showed an increasing trend with 18 studies conducted in 2016, 19 studies in 2017, and 38 studies in 2018, as demonstrated in Figure 1. When analysed according to countries, ten out of eleven SEA countries were involved in publishing educational research in these databases for the three-year period. The highest number of articles published is 15 and the lowest is one published article. The greatest number of researches published between 2016 to 2018 were conducted in Malaysia (n=15), followed by Vietnam (n=14) and then Singapore (n=12). Brunei and Myanmar had the least number of researches published with each country published one research. The distribution of the research published in the SEA countries is illustrated in Table 4 and Figure 2.

Table 4
Distribution of Research Published by Countries

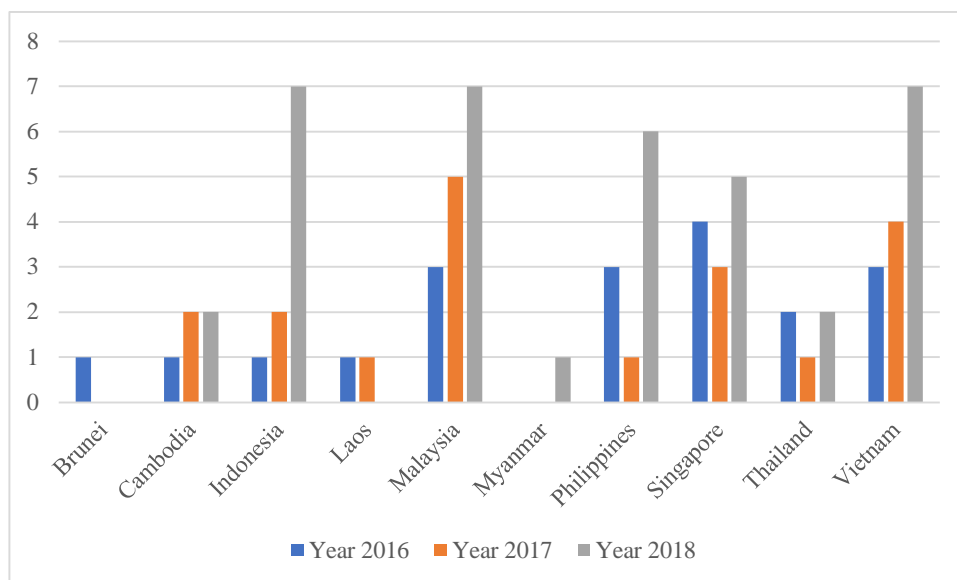| Countries	Year 2016	Year 2017	Year 2018	Total
Brunei	1	0	0	1(1.30%)
Cambodia	1	2	2	5(6.70%)
Indonesia	1	2	7	10(13.30%)
Laos	1	1	0	2 (2.70%)
Malaysia	3	5	7	15(20.00%)
Myanmar	0	0	1	1(1.30%)
Philippines	3	1	6	10(13.30%)
Singapore	4	3	5	12(16.00%)
Thailand	2	1	2	5(6.70%)
Vietnam	3	4	7	14(18.70%)
				75 (100.00%)

Figure 2. Distribution of Countries involved in Research

It can be observed that Indonesia, Malaysia and Vietnam show an increasing number of research articles published for the three-year period. Philippines, Singapore and Thailand show a dip in 2017 but increased in publication again in 2018. Brunei only published in 2016 and Myanmar published in 2018.

e) Research Methods Employed

The methodological design trend over the three-year period shows that three main methods employed in all the educational research conducted. The methods were qualitative, quantitative and mixed method.
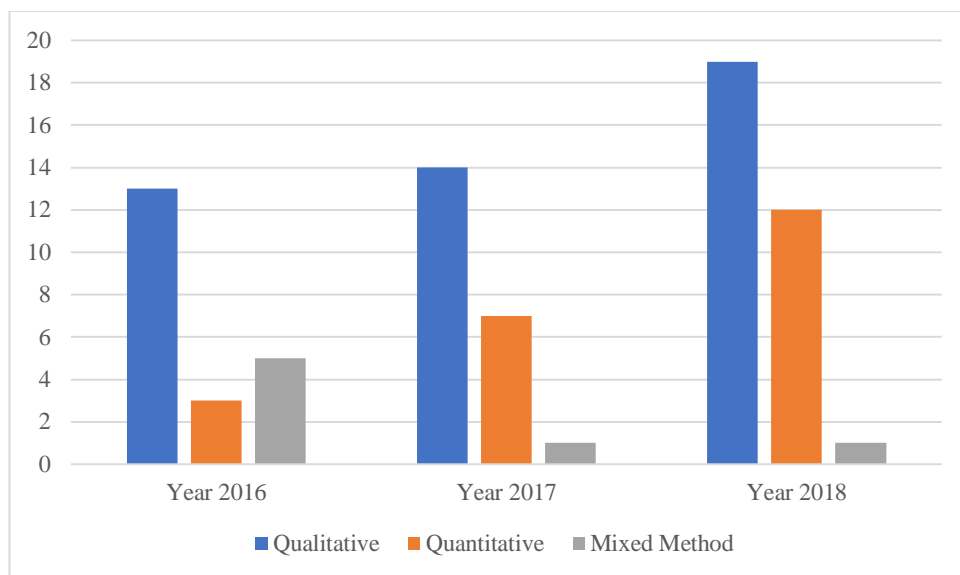
Figure 3. Distribution of Research Method Employed

Figure 3 illustrates that qualitative research design is the most commonly method employed. A total of 46 research (61.30%) published used qualitative methods and the most commonly data collection techniques was document analysis. The documents analysed were mainly policy documents, teachers' reflective logs and curriculum materials. This accounts that the highest number of researches published was in the area of teacher education which contributed a total of 24.00% (n=18) and educational management with a total of 18%. Both areas of research require analysis of documents related to policies, educational acts, government records and curriculum materials.

The second most employed research method was quantitative research method (n=22). Quantitative data most commonly collected were surveys, secondary data from government agencies and international agencies. Mixed method research design is the least emphasized research method in the articles published where only seven published articles employed this method.

Based on Figure 3, there is an increasing trend in using qualitative research method over the three-year period. There were 13 studies employed qualitative research method in the year 2016, 14 studies in 2017 and 19 studies in 2018. Meanwhile, quantitative methods have an increasing trend with three (3) studies in 2016, followed by seven (7) studies in 2017, and 12 studies in 2018. However, the mixed-mode research method experienced a declining pattern where five (5) studies employed the mixed method and one (1) study in both 2017 and 2018 respectively.

DISCUSSION

It was observed in the present review that there is an increasing number in educational research published in these two databases within the three-year period. Other than the quantity, the quality of the research is also vital. Quality educational research will have an impact on educational practice and formulation of new educational policies (Cai et al., 2017). Education is seen as a tool in any nation building where education has played a pivoted role in the enhancement and transformation of the citizen of a country. There is the emphasis on human resource development as a key in developing the whole nation. It is realized that this region is moving fast toward the situation in which all nations need operate towards the era of globalization. This is in line with the aims of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) which is to unite the South East Asian countries to promote better opportunities for the member countries in different areas such as economics and education (Agustin, Lourdes, & Montebon, 2018). This is evidently portrayed in the area of research that teacher education is the most highly researched in Southeast Asia countries.

Providing training to teachers, be it pre-service or in-service training, is vital in order to produce competent and quality teachers. Quality teachers are the key to ensure quality education. Continuous studies need to be carried out to address issues in education setting and to seek innovative instructions to teaching as to keep abreast in the ever-changing landscape of education globally. The concern in development of teacher education is not surprising since teacher education and the training of educational personnel have been the most frequently discussed topics by educators at all levels of education in the ASEAN region. Over time, governments in the region have been seriously engaged in reorganizing their educational endeavours and redefining their educational goals (ASEAN, 2013).

Educational management is the second most published area in the three-year period. The researches mainly reviewed existing policies and making recommendation for reform in the policies. Evidence-based information gathered through research will provide a more credible better information to any decision made for any transformation move in education especially in the Southeast Asia region (ASEAN, 2013). Adopting foreign educational policies especially from the west is no longer applicable. The historical and culture context in this region differs greatly with foreign countries, thus indigenous policy should be adopted. It is observed that educational research in Southeast Asia has highlighted more on the higher education level in these two databases within the three-year period. This is in line with the recent Kuala Lumpur Declaration on Higher Education that has agreed to acknowledge the critical importance of higher education as one of the catalysts in accelerating ASEAN's economic, political and sociocultural development agenda (The International Association of Universities (IAU), 2016).

Based on the narrative review, Singapore, Malaysia and Vietnam has produced the greatest number of research articles published in the two databases for this three-year period. This might be related with the status of these countries, as suggested by Mankiw et al. (1992) that human development is a major consideration in economic growth in terms of industrialization and modernization of countries. Singapore for example, is a developed nation that places a higher focus on the development of their human resources through quality education. This scenario is also true for Malaysia. Meanwhile, Vietnam is a country in Southeast Asia that shows a fast moving and rigorous development in their economic growth. Amendolagine, Presbitero, Rabellotti, and Sanfilippo (2019) stated that Vietnam is rapidly expanding as the policy of the country encouraged the entry of foreign capital and the establishment of joint ventures with local firms. Vietnam has emerged as one of Asia's manufacturing powerhouses (Hollweg, Smith, & Taglioni, 2017). Thus, education became one of the crucial sections focused by the respective countries' policymaker and government as it plays a role in developing their human resources. This can be reflected by the number of educational research articles published by this country.

The trend in the research design employed in educational research published signify that the research method depends on the nature of concerns. With regard to the methodological design trend, the qualitative research method is the most commonly used for this three-year period since most researches done were related to understand the existing educational policies and curriculum which will be used to formulate new policies or initiatives. This is in agreement with Dumas and Anderson (2014) that emphasize on the ability of qualitative research to be relevant to policy makers, practitioners, and other stakeholders in transforming educational policy. The quantitative research methodology was employed among researchers across Southeast Asia countries on the other hand, investigated the status-quo of issues such as gender inequality, inclusive initiatives in special education, and the effectiveness of instructional practices.

CONCLUSION

The findings of this paper offer some insight into the current trends in the educational research in Southeast Asia region over a three-year period. These findings need to be interpreted cautiously since they are extracted from only a three-year period of time due to the time constraint that this study encountered. Therefore, these findings are not intended to be generalized in the statistical sense. In conclusion, the analysis of the trend in educational research published in these two data bases provide a glimpse of the current educational concern in Southeast Asia countries. These findings could provide the roadmap in educational research for this region, especially in enhancing the quality of education in

this region, thus enhancing human capital development and improve the economy of these countries. Some limitations of the present paper need further investigations. A further study should target a larger web-based service provider or the journal databases for over a longer period of time which could then provide a more comprehensive scenario of the trend in educational research in Southeast Asia countries.

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APPENDIX

No	Author	Year	Area of Research	Level of Participant	Country
Francis and Taylor					
1.	Yonezawa, Horta & Osawa	2016	Comparative education	Higher education	Southeast Asia, East Asia
2.	Sin, Leung & Waters	2017	Comparative education	Higher education	Malaysia, Hong Kong
3.	Ogisu	2018	Comparative education	K-12	Cambodia
4.	Yeo, Chong, Neihart & Huan	2016	Special education: inclusive education	Primary school	Singapore
5.	Chong	2016	Special education: inclusive education	K-12	Malaysia
6.	Kuldas, Sinnakaudan, Hashim & Ghazali	2017	Mathematics education	Primary school	Malaysia
7.	Goy, Wong, Low, Noor, Fazli-Khalaf, Onyeneho & Ginika Uzoigwe	2018	Gender studies	Higher education	Malaysia
8.	Wan, Chapman, Hutcheson, Lee, Austin, Md. Zain	2017	Higher education	Higher education	Malaysia
9.	Wan	2018	Gender study	Higher education	Malaysia
10.	Lim	2018	Language education	Secondary school	Malaysia
11.	Yoo	2018	Mathematics education	Secondary school	Singapore
12.	Dickerson, Jarvis, Levy & Thomas	2017	Teacher education: pre-service	Primary school	Malaysia
13.	Barrot	2018	Language education	K-12	Philippines
14.	Courtney	2017	Teacher education: pre-service	K-12	Cambodia
15.	Saito, Atencio, Khong, Takasawa, Murase, Tsukui & Sato	2018	Educational management	Secondary school	Vietnam
16.	Anuruthwong	2017	Special education: gifted education	Higher education	Thailand
17.	Hickey	2018	Language education	K -12	Thailand
18.	Brooks & Sungtong	2016	Leadership	Secondary school	Thailand
19.	Kaur, Noman, & Awang-Hashim	2016	Teacher education: in-service	K-12	Thailand
20.	Nguyen	2017	Teacher education: in-service	Secondary school	Vietnam
21.	Dickerson, Thomas, Jarvis & Levy	2018	Teacher education: in service	Primary school	Malaysia

22.	Azman, Che Omar, Md Yunus & Zain	2016	Higher education	Higher education	Malaysia
23.	Nambiar & Thang	2016	Teacher education: in-service	Secondary school	Malaysia
24.	Wong, Pan & Shah	2016	Music education	Primary school	Malaysia
25.	Baildon, Sim & Paculdar	2016	Comparative education	K-12	Singapore & Philippines
26.	Chin Ee Loh	2018	Language education	Secondary school	Singapore
27.	Weninger	2017	Educational management	K-12	Singapore
28.	Ho & Seow	2017	Comparative education	Secondary school	Singapore & Philippines
29.	Peou	2017	Higher education	Higher education	Cambodia
30.	Ogisu	2018	Educational management	K-12	Cambodia
31.	Azman, Sirat & Pang	2016	Educational management	Higher education	Malaysia
32.	Abidin, Mathrani, Hunter & Parsons	2017	Mathematics education	Secondary school	Indonesia
33.	Harjanto, Lie, Wihardini, Pryor, & Wilson	2018	Teacher education: in-service	Primary school	Indonesia
34.	Raihani	2018	Educational management	Secondary school	Indonesia
35.	Kusumawardhani	2017	Teacher training: in-service	Primary school	Indonesia
36.	Zein	2016	Teacher education: pre-service	Primary school	Indonesia
37.	Deng & Gopinathan	2016	Comparative education	Secondary school	Singapore
38.	Chang & Pascua	2017	Educational management	K-12	Singapore
39.	Yeo & Tan	2018	Special education: inclusive education	K-12	Singapore
40.	Berge, Chounlamany, Khounphilaphanh & Silfver	2017	Gender studies	Higher education	Laos
41.	Hewson	2018	Sociology	Higher education	Vietnam
42.	Pañares & Cabangon	2016	Drama education	K-12	Philippines
43.	Bui, Hoang, Phan & Yapa	2017	Educational management	Higher education	Vietnam
44.	Nguyen & Ta	2018	Quality assurance	Higher education	Vietnam
45.	Ortiga	2018	International education	Higher education	Philippines

46.	Go	2018	Teacher education: in-service	Primary school	Philippines
47.	Budiyanto, Sheehy, Kaye & Rofiah	2018	Special education: inclusive education	Primary school	Indonesia
48.	Mante-Estacio, Nino Valdez & Pulido	2018	Language education	Primary & secondary school	Philippines
49.	Shams & Huisman	2016	International education	Higher education	Malaysia & Singapore
50.	Brewis	2018	Educational management	Higher education	Indonesia
Science Direct					
51.	David, Monterola, Paguirigan Jr, Legara, Tarun, Batac & Osorio	2018	Sociology	Primary & secondary school	Philippines
52.	Jhang & Lee	2018	Educational psychology	Primary school	Southeast Asia
53.	Okabe	2016	Gender study	Primary school	Philippines
54.	Rosser & Fahmi	2018	Educational management	K-12	Indonesia
55.	Le	2018	Educational management	K-12	Philippines, Vietnam
56.	Bray, Kobakhidze, Liu & Zhang	2016	Educational management	Secondary school	Cambodia
57.	Tran	2018	Higher education	Higher education	Vietnam
58.	Dang	2017	Teacher education: pre-service	Higher education	Vietnam
59.	Chen, Lin, Li & Lee	2018	Educational management	Primary & secondary school	Singapore
60.	Arunasalam & Burton	2018	Nursing education	Higher education	Malaysia
61.	Crosling	2017	Quality assurance	Higher education	Malaysia
62.	Ariffin, Bush, & Nordin	2018	Teacher education: in-service	Secondary school	Malaysia
63.	Nguyen & Walkinshaw	2018	Teacher education: pre-service	Primary & secondary school	Vietnam
64.	Parba	2018	Teacher education: in-service	Primary school	Philippines
65.	Kainzbauer & Lowe	2018	Educational management	Higher education	Thailand
66.	Barghi, Zakaria, Hamzah & Hashim	2017	Teacher education: in-service	Primary school	Malaysia

67.	Borg, Clifford & Htut	2018	Teacher education: in-service	Primary & secondary school	Myanmar
68.	Al-Rahmi, Alias, Othman, Marin, & Tur	2018	Educational technology	Higher education	Malaysia
69.	Moghavvemi, Sulaiman, Jaafar & Kasem	2018	Educational technology	Higher education	Malaysia
70.	Loh & Liew	2016	Teacher education: in-service	Secondary school	Singapore
71.	Abdul-Mumin	2016	Nursing education	Higher education	Brunei
72.	Crawford, Caine, Hunter, Hill, Mandrusiak, Anemaat & Quinlan	2017	Teacher education: pre-service	Higher education	Vietnam
73.	Yusuf, Samsura, & Yuwono	2018	Higher education	Higher education	Indonesia
74.	Al-Samarrai, Shrestha, Hasan, Nakajima, Santoso & Wijoyo	2018	Educational management	Primary & secondary school	Indonesia
75.	Datu, Yang, Valdez & Chu	2018	Educational technology	Higher education	Philippines