



International Reconciliation Studies

# Working Paper

2025

---

No.1

Education beyond human capital  
development: Engaging education  
for reconciliation

Rita Z. NAZEER-IKEDA

Oct, 2024



Grant-in-Aid for fund the Promotion of Joint International Research.  
The Japan Society for the Promotion of Science (International Leading Research)

## **Education beyond human capital development: Engaging education for reconciliation**

Using Singapore as a case study, this working paper argues that although education for human capital development and education for reconciliation have seemingly contradicting goals, they are interdependent in the processes and outcomes. This examination is a nexus of three theoretical considerations – the nation-state, human capital development, and reconciliation. It investigates how education has been engaged at different stages of Singapore's development, from pre- to post-independence. This uncovers the dimensions that needed reconciliation over time and how education policies addressed them. Nevertheless, even though this working paper provides a baseline understanding, more data and structured analysis are necessary to prove the argument scientifically. Thus, Topic Modeling as a policy discourse analysis method is proposed as the next step.

Keywords: education for reconciliation; human capital development

The utilitarian function of education as a means for nation-states to prepare citizens for political, social, and labor participation has been widely employed and discussed (Labaree, 1997; Olmos & Torres, 2009). In the particular use of education for labor preparation, the concept of human capital development is often engaged, referring to the embodied knowledge, skills, competencies, and attributes that can increase a person's capacity, employability, and income (OECD, 2001; Ali et al., 2023). Broader notions of human capital development also connect investments in health as another contributor to productivity (World Bank, 2018; World Bank, 2021).

The human capital approach to development has been repeatedly contested (Fägerlind & Saha, 1983; Klees, 2016), with scholars arguing that education should be a fundamental right accorded to all for its intrinsic benefits of personal growth (Mundy, 2006). However, this dichotomy of education as human capital or a human right has