



The Mirror and the Map

What Global Assessments (PISA, TIMSS, SEA-PLM) Reveal About Our Future: Evidence-Based Strategies for Southeast Asian Education Leaders

" We don't measure just to rank. We
measure to *understand*. These
assessments are not a report card.
They are a diagnostic tool.

"

A mirror reflecting our strengths, and a map pointing to
our potential.

Outline of the Presentation



- * What Are We Measuring?
- * Regional Reality
- * Implications
- * Recommendations

What Are We Measuring?



PISA

Tests 15-year-olds on applying knowledge in Reading, Math & Science to **real-life problems**.
(Focus: Application)



TIMSS

Tests Grades 4 & 8 on **curriculum-based** knowledge in Math & Science. (Focus: Curriculum)



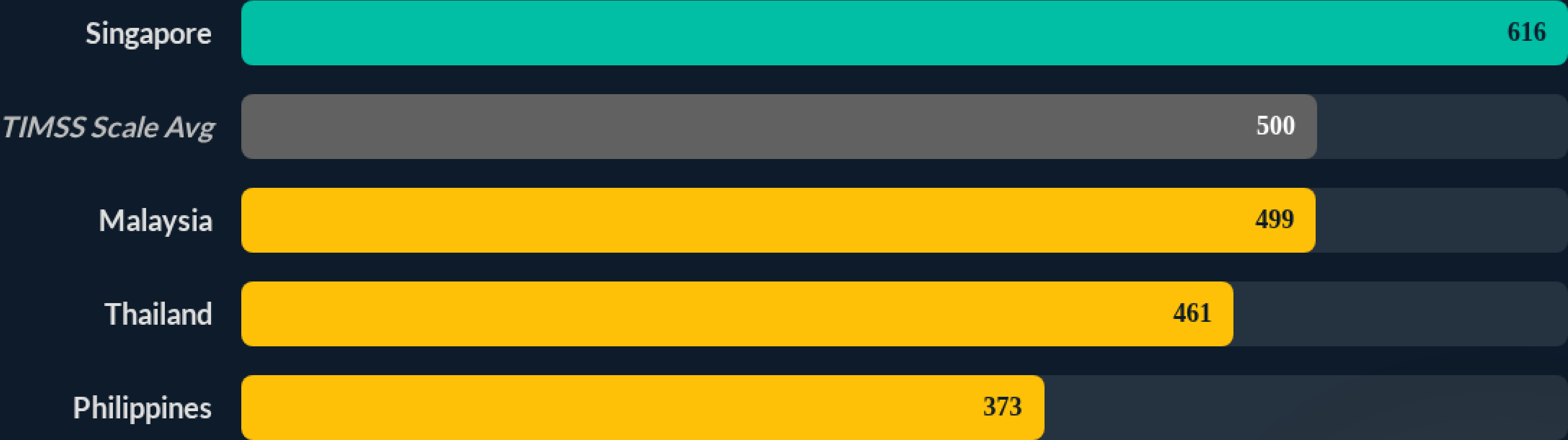
SEA-PLM

Tests Grade 5 on **foundational** Reading, Writing, Math & Global Citizenship. (Focus: Foundational)

The PISA 2022 Snapshot

Country / Economy	Mathematics	Reading	Science
Singapore	575	543	561
OECD Average	472	476	485
Vietnam	438	462	471
Malaysia	409	388	401
Thailand	394	379	409
Indonesia	366	359	383
Philippines	355	347	356
Cambodia	336	337	347

The TIMSS 2019 Reality (G8 Math)



*The TIMSS 'curriculum' assessment shows a wide gap, suggesting issues in both **what** we teach and **how** we teach it for mastery.*

The SEA-PLM Warning (2019 Data)

60%

Of Grade 5 students (in 4 of 6 nations) struggle with basic reading comprehension.

Our 'Check Engine' Light

The 2019 SEA-PLM results revealed that a significant percentage of Grade 5 students have not mastered foundational skills expected from early primary years. The data shows a critical need to re-focus on foundational literacy and numeracy. We are building on shaky ground.

Implication 1: Skills Over Scores

The data is clear: Our students can often **memorize**, but they struggle to **analyze, create, and apply**.

The future economy won't reward rote learning. It will reward critical thinking, problem-solving, and adaptability—the very skills PISA measures.



Implication 2: The Pedagogy Gap

Student outcomes are inextricably linked to teacher quality. The data suggests a need for massive investment in in-service pedagogical training. Teachers need support to move from "sage on the stage" to "guide on the side."



Focus on Pedagogy: Shift training from just subject mastery to **how** to teach that subject for deep understanding and application.



Data-Driven Teaching: Train teachers in formative assessment—how to use real-time student data to adjust instruction immediately.



Build Learning Communities: Create Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) **within** and **between** schools to share best practices.

Implication 3: Access VS Quality

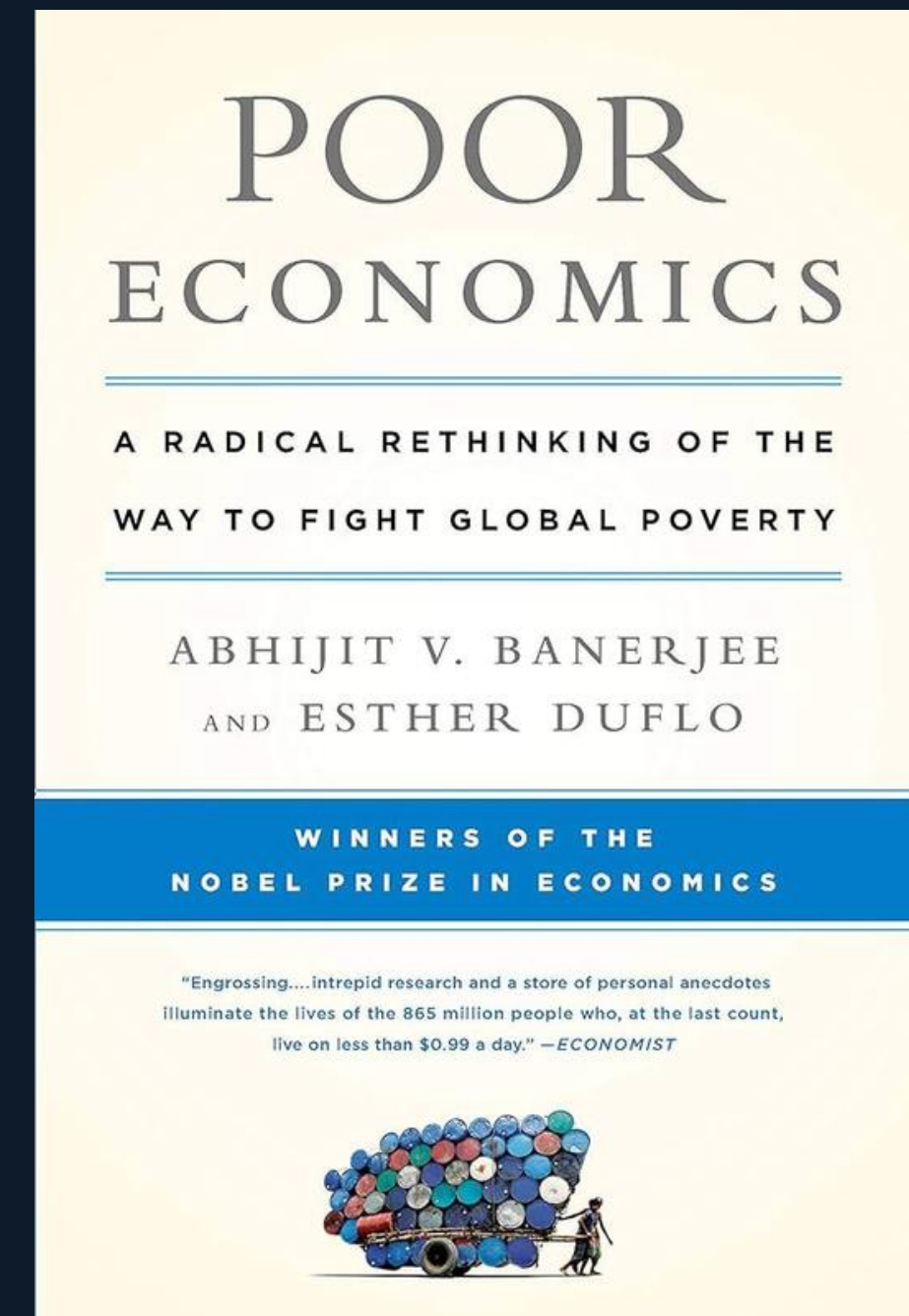
If Education is good, why don't everyone wants to pursue learning?

'Poor Economics' teaches us is that the barriers to education are often not what we think. They are small, practical, and non-obvious.

The poor are not lazy or irrational; they are making complex economic decisions under extreme stress and with imperfect information.

'more foreign aid' versus 'free markets' are a waste of time. They are ideologies, not answers.

To actually help the poor, we have to stop guessing what they need from our high-level podiums and start finding out, on the ground, using evidence.



SDG 4 Progress in ASEAN 2025



Challenge



- Minimum Reading and mathematics proficiency.
- Progress in improve basic services is slow and particular affecting students with disabiliies and girls.
- Economic constraints and low communications technology (ICT) skills.

Your Role as Leaders

As leaders in private education, you have the autonomy to innovate. You are the region's R&D labs for pedagogy.

Action 1: Adopt "Reading to Learn"

The Problem

Students often can't solve a math word problem
not because their math is bad, but because their
reading comprehension is. **Foundational literacy** is
the bottleneck for all other learning.

The Solution

Implement "Reading to Learn" strategies across *all
subjects*. This means training all teachers—in Science,
Math, and History—as literacy teachers, embedding
comprehension strategies in every lesson.

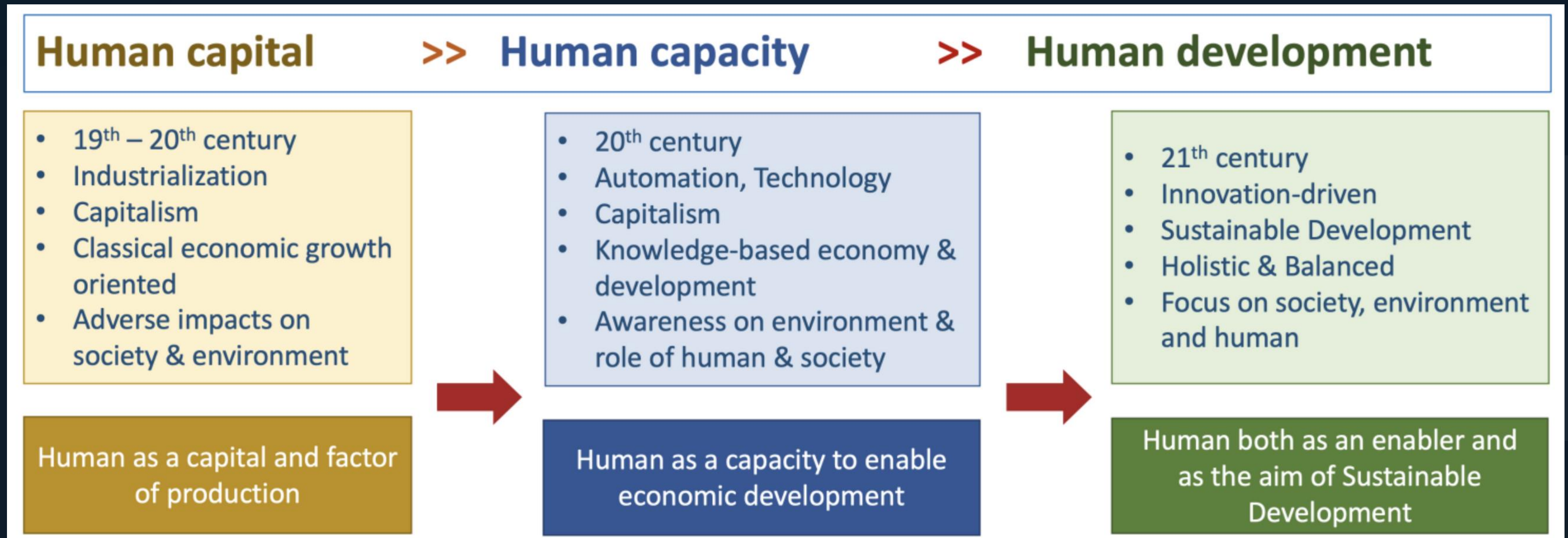
Action 2: Embrace Formative Assessment

Stop teaching for the *final exam*. Start assessing for *immediate understanding*.

Use technology and simple classroom techniques for low-stakes, real-time feedback. This data-driven approach allows for rapid differentiation and intervention, ensuring no student is left behind.



Action 3: Holistic Development



Action 4: Rethinking Education

Education **vs** Learning



An aerial night view of a city, likely Singapore, showing a river, highways, and illuminated buildings. A semi-transparent dark rectangle is overlaid in the center, containing white text.

Let's Build the Map

The mirror has shown us the gaps. But the map shows us the way forward. Let us not be defined by our rankings, but by our **response** to the data. Let us be the architects of a new Southeast Asian learning renaissance.

Thank You

Let's continue the conversation.

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