

EDUCATIONAL STRUCTURE AND DYNAMICS IN INDONESIA: AN OVERVIEW

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The republic of Indonesia covers most of the world's largest archipelago, a domain of over 3 000 equatorial islands stretching more than 5 000 kilometers east to west across seas that separate continental southeast Asia from Australia. It is the world's fifth most populous nation, with over 150 million residents in the early 1980s.

The extent of Indonesia was originally determined between the early seventeenth and early twentieth centuries by a succession of Dutch colonial conquests. Over a 350-year period, sea traders and soldiers from the Netherlands won control over more and more islands eventually forming the Netherlands east Indies colony as it existed prior to the second world war. Throughout this same period the Moslem religion, introduced earlier by traders from India, spread throughout the island's peoples to become the dominant religion of the region.

In 1942, the Japanese army and navy captured the East Indies, ousted the Dutch colonist, and ruled the territory until the Japanese themselves were defeated by Allied troops in late 1945. Following the Japanese surrender, the Dutch returned to reclaim the region. However, on August 17, 1945, the indigenous peoples of the archipelago declared their independence and then fought the Dutch army over the next four years until they won uncontested self-rule at the close of 1949.

The nature of the present-day Indonesian educational system has been significantly influenced by both the geography of the nation and the people's experience under Dutch colonialism and under

Islam. One outcome of the geography of widely dispersed islands was the emergence over the centuries of a multiplicity of distinctly different cultural groups, a diversity of societies caused by peoples being separated by barriers of seas, mountain, and dense jungles. This isolation fostered the development of over 400 languages and dialects.

Such ethnic and linguistic variety has posed problem for both political leaders and educators. The question of what language would best serve as national tongue, unifying the many sub societies, was settled when independence was declared in 1945. The republic's leaders choose a version of Malay as the official language and labeled it Indonesian has been leaned willingly by virtually everyone. It has served as the language of government, of mass communication, and of instruction at all educational levels above the second grade of primary school. Local languages have been the media of instruction in the first two primary grades and have been taught as subjects in upper grades. Such a pattern of instruction is designed to promote the national motto of unity in diversity (*bhinneka tunggal ika*). This language policy has faced educators with special problems in textbook production, teacher training, and teacher placement.

The nation's geography and the way the population is distributed across the islands have affected the efficiency of administering the centralized system of schools from the capital city of Jakarta on the island of Java. Because of the great distances between islands and the shortage of transportation facilities, school supplies and directive sent to remote islands can take months to arrive. The task of collecting accurate statistics from all parts of the nation for purposes of national planning has been difficult.

The rate of population increase has also strongly influenced the task of education. Under Dutch colonialism, prior to 1942, only a

minor segment of the school-age population attended school. But, under the republic, after 1950, the goal of providing every Indonesian with at least six years of primary schooling was included in the basic education law. The government sought to achieve this ambition by erecting more schools and training more teachers each year. However, a high birth rate and decreasing death rate continually accelerated the growth of the child population, so that by the early 1980s the goal of universal education still had not been reached. The burden of providing schooling was particularly heavy since such a large part of the population was under the age of 15 (46 percent of the populace in 1975), that is the nonproductive segment of the population, consisting of children who could not be expected to contribute effectively to the nation's economy. Prior to the 1970s, little or no effort was exerted to limit the birth rate. However, under the Suharto government, which took office in the late 1960s family-planning programs have been set up, aimed at reducing the number of children born each year. According to the 1980 census, the growth rate was 2.34 percent. If such a rate continues, the nation's population will reach 200 million by the mid-1990s.

Two additional factors influencing the progress of education are political and economic conditions at different times between 1950 and the early 1980s. Under the government of president Sukarno, from 1950 until late 1965, the Dutch and other European interests that still played a significant role in the island's economy were gradually eliminated and their enterprises nationalized. At the same time, the Indonesian communist party gained increasing influence over national affairs in comparison to other political factions including the religious parties. The bonds of national unity were also threatened during the 1950s by periodic armed rebellions against the central government on the part of separatist groups. These disturbances, coupled with an economic policy that spurned both local capitalistic enterprises and investment by foreigners,

contributed to the accelerating e accelerating decline of the nation's economy. Under such conditions, the ability of the educational system to fulfill its function deteriorated as well. While enrollment continued to increase, they did so at a slowing pace, school buildings fell into disrepair, teacher's salaries were insufficient to pay even minimal living expenses, pupil dropout rates were high, and class size were large.

In October 1965, an unsuccessful coup attempt, for which the Indonesian communist party was held responsible, launched the nation on more than a year of civil strife and resulted in the fall of the Sukarno government. The new Suharto government welcomed investment and financial and technical aid from the west, and the economy rapidly improved. Because Indonesia's major export product is oil, increases in world oil prices since the mid-1970s brought large sums in to the national treasury, and a significant portion of this income has been allocated to improving the educational system. For example, in 1973, president Suharto issued a special instruction providing extra funds from oil revenues to erect thousands of additional elementary-school buildings each year. By 1978 the number of such buildings in the public-school sector had reached 24,065, representing 30 percent of the nation's total of secular public schools. The 1980 national budget provided for the construction of 10,000 more and for the addition of 15,000 new classrooms in existing schools and repair of 15,000 existing buildings.

In summary, the increase in political stability and economic prosperity over the 1950 to 1980 era was accompanied by increases in the size and quality of the facilities of the nation's educational enterprise.

Structure and Size of the Educational System

By the early 1980s, the nation's goal of achieving universal literacy and compulsory schooling for at least six years had not yet been reached. However, substantial progress had been made, so that by 1980 an estimated 70 percent of the population over the age of 10 had at least minimal reading skills, while perhaps 75 percent of children aged 7-12 were in primary school and 40 percent aged 13-18 were in secondary school¹.

These enrollment figures must be regarded as only general estimates, since the compilation of statistics in Indonesia has been confounded by two factors. Firstly the system for collecting data from the nation's more than 160,000 schools spread across hundreds of islands is far from perfect. Secondly, schools are of two major varieties; secular (under the ministry of education and with school enrollment trends. As the graph illustrate, the rise in enrollments has been particularly steep in recent years as increasing amounts of oil revenue have enrollments in non-Islamic schools administered under the ministry of education totaled 27,990,275 at the elementary level, 6,543,200 in secondary schools, and 616,117 in higher education. The proportion of males to females was 52/48 in elementary schools, 59/41 in secondary school, and 68/32 in tertiary institutions. At the secondary level, 87 percent of the enrollment was in general academic schools, 9 percent in vocational school, and 4 percent in teacher training. The teacher/pupil ratio in elementary schools was 1:29. Children in nursery schools and kindergartens, all of which were privately administered and financed, totaled 1,242,215².

The growth of higher education over the 30-year period from 1950 was even more dramatic than that of primary and secondary schooling. Since private schools were not obliged to send statistics to either the Ministry of Education or the Ministry of Religion, the

exact total of postsecondary schools and students is not known. However, general estimates are available. In 1950, there were 10 higher learning institutions enrolling 6,500 students. By 1970 there were over 450 institutions and 237,000 students and by 1980 over 480 institutions and more than 400,000 students³.

The expansion in higher education has been motivated not only by Indonesia's modernization program which has called for more highly trained personnel, but it is been stimulated even more by an increasing demand for advanced schooling on the part of the populace. Studies conducted in the early 1980s showed that 90 percent of the students in representative high schools planned to enter higher learning institutions. Since the most prestigious public universities had room for only 10 percent of applicants in the early 1980s, increasing numbers of private colleges were being set up to accommodate the rejected applicants. In addition, demands from political leaders in outlying islands to have their own universities caused the central government to establish even more public institutions. In 1981 two new universities in Central Sulawesi were added to the nation's existing 40 public universities and institutes despite the warnings of academicians that quality education could not be expected under conditions of rapid expansion in remote region. Furthermore, because of increasing attendance in higher learning institutions the nation was faced with the prospect of growing numbers of unemployed college graduates and of youths over-qualified for the jobs they could find.

To improve the quality of education under such conditions of rapid growth, the Ministry of Education in the early 1970s set up consortia consisting of academic departments of identical type in different universities.

The consortia are made up of departments of medicine,

agricultures education, the sciences, social science, and the like. The moist mature universities in each consortium are designated as centers of excellence, responsible for upgrading the staffs and facilities of less advanced institution.

In addition to the formal schools, Indonesia in recent years has developed a broad variety of non formal program intended to serve the needs of both the populace and the country s economic development plans. During the 1970s efforts in both the public and private sectors were directed toward increase adult literacy, providing out-of-school primary and secondary education for school dropouts, improving community health. By 1979, more than 5,400 private commercial organizations operated vocational-skill courses attend by an estimated 900,000 participant⁴.

Administration and Finance

Indonesia s schools, from kindergarten through universities operate under a centralized system directed from the nation s capital in Jakarta, with directives channeled through educational offices in the nation s 27 provinces. Around 75 percent of educational institutions, including private schools sponsored by christen societies and secular groups, are under the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Education and Culture. Nearly all the remaining 25 percent are Islamic schools, public and Private, operated under the Ministry of Religion. Many private schools receive government financial subsidies, a practice inherited from Dutch colonial time.

Funds for schooling derive from a variety of sources. The Ministry of Education finances teachers salaries and the construction of facilities for secular secondary and tertiary Education; the minister of home Affairs does the same for elementary schools; and the Ministry of Religion is responsible for

public Islamic schools. Private Schools are funded by religious organizations, fees paid by parents, and government subsidies. In public Schools in recent years, parents have paid a special educational tax for those of their children who are enrolled above grade three in a primary school, however, in addition, most schools individually charge parents a variety of special fees, although without government approval. As a result of these practices, the 3 or 6 percent of the national budget listed officially as the nation's annual expenditure for education is a marked understatement of the actual cost of schooling in Indonesia

Supplying Educational Personnel

In the early 1950s, after the Republic had emerged from four years of Japanese military occupation followed by the four year revolution against the Dutch, the nation suffered an acute shortage of teachers. Not only had the existing supply of teachers been depleted by the social upheaval of the latter 1940s, but the nation was now seeking the entire population rather than the minority served during colonial times.

To solve the problem of teacher shortage, the government established a hierarchy of training programs at the beginning of the 1950s. The lowest level courses consisted of a short period of study for primary school graduates who then became primary school teachers. A more advanced training program for primary teachers was given in special junior high schools, while a still higher level was offered in senior-high teacher-training schools. To provide secondary school teachers, in 1954 the government opened the first of a series of teachers colleges, offering a three year program for preparing junior high teachers and a five year program for preparing senior high instructors. The Ministry of Religion later created similar set of secondary teacher training

schools and colleges to provide teachers for Islamic primary and secondary Schools.

By the 1970s, the standard qualification for primary teachers was a certificate from a teacher training high school, while secondary teachers were qualified upon graduating from a teachers college. However, compared to these standards, many of the nation's educational personnel, the Ministry of Education began in the mid-1970s to provide in service training that would reach virtually all teachers. A short course for primary teachers was given by teams of instructors from teacher training high schools who traveled in motor vans and power boats to all sections of the archipelago. Courses for secondary teachers were offered in district centers. Radio broadcasts also played a significant role in in service teacher education.

Traditionally, training the administrative positions in the educational system has consisted of on-the-job experience and such continues to be the case for most headmasters (and headmistresses) and supervisory personnel. However special training in administration is also offered in the teacher training colleges and during workshops for administrators currently in service.

Problems and Prospects

As in the past, the most serious problems for educational planners in the 1980s and 1990s will continue to be the rising number of candidates for schooling. Unless the population growth rate can be decreased substantially, there appears little hope that even the present levels of enrollment can be maintained. The goal of universal primary schooling is still a realistic expectation if the high level of funding for education made possible by high oil export prices in the 1970s can be maintained. However during the early 1980s the drop in world crude oil prices strongly affected the

Indonesian economy and made the continued high investment in educational facilities and improved teacher salaries problematic. Expanding secondary school facilities will become even more difficult in an economy of diminishing income from exports. Thus, reducing the population growth rate by means of the nations family planning program will be even more important in the coming years than it was in the past.

In Addition to the problem of furnishing ever greater quantities of education, Indonesia faces the task of solving the deficiencies in the quality of schooling that were identified during the extensive educational evaluation programs conducted in the 1970s. Experimental projects designed to test ways of improving the quality of formal and non formal education were assessed in the early 1980s so that features of the successful projects could be disseminated into the general school system beginning in the mid 1980s. The innovations that showed promise for such dissemination were ones involving self instructional materials, improved text- books, science teaching methods social sciences teaching methods (including history), a more efficient educational supervision system pre service and in service teacher education, achievement testing programs, experimental services for the gifted and talented as well as evaluation and modification of the 1975 curriculum.

References

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