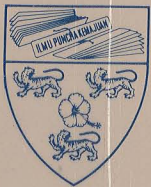


Lee Kam Hing

EDUCATION
and
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in
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1945-1965



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Preface

This study is based on a Ph.D. dissertation which attempted to look at the development of education in Indonesia in the twenty years after independence. Education was one field of development in Indonesia where there had been credible achievements during a period when performance in other areas had been relatively disappointing.

The progress made in education was widely in evidence such as in the building of new schools throughout the country, enrolment of millions of new students, training of teachers, and establishment of universities. Less visible but just as important was the creation of an education system encompassing an administrative structure, curricula, courses, textbooks, and a common language of instruction, all of which were markedly new and different.

The transformation of an education system from a colonial to one that was aimed at fulfilling the aspirations of an independent nation was not easy although the difficulties, viewed after a passage of time, may not now appear to be all that formidable. But Indonesia then had very few administrators with the qualifications and experience to plan and implement a new education system. Those who assumed the new responsibility were largely Dutch-educated who had spent their earlier careers as teachers.

In taking over they had to cope with a difficult and demanding agenda. There was the clamour for school places, for training of additional teachers, for relevant courses, and for a bigger budget. All these had to be met amidst an expanding population but a deteriorating economy.

There was also the desire by Indonesians to have a more unified education system. Implementation of this was not easy because it often impinged on regional, religious, and ethnic preserves, and there were some resentment to standardization of content or centralized control. In the early years resistance occurred in regions which had experienced or aspired to some degree of autonomy such as in East Nusa Tenggara and Aceh where the school systems were legacies of slightly different historical experiences. Standing out even more strikingly were the schools of the Chinese which, using a non-indigenous language of instruction and class content, stood outside the mainstream of Indonesian education. Then there were the private institutions such as the *Taman Siswa* and *Muhammadiyah* which, though relatively small in the number of schools and enrolment, nevertheless still enjoyed some standing in society because of their distinctives and past role in the nationalist struggle.

While striving towards a standardized and unified education system to enhance national integration and nation-building, the authorities were also mindful of the need to allow a degree of autonomy, both in control and in curriculum formulation. Towards this, moves to grant some power in education administration to the provinces were made within the provisions of the Decentralization Law of 1951. Likewise, religious education was placed separately under the charge of the Ministry of Religious Affairs. This was a response to the post-independence demand by Muslim leaders that the religious stream should maintain its separateness. The Muslim community also insisted that religious education should be supported by state funding and, more importantly, to have an accepted place within the public education system. To gain this status it was acknowledged that parts of the religious schools' curriculum should be upgraded to become comparable in content and quality to those in the state secular schools. Furthermore, there was an insistence to make the teaching and attendance of religious instruction compulsory in the secular schools, a matter that turned out to be very contentious during the KNIP debate on the Education Law.

The Indonesian government had high expectations about educational development. As with so many countries that emerged out of colonial rule, there was hope that the creation of a new education system would bring modernization and development to Indonesia. Political leaders saw education playing a vital role in producing a work-force equipped with all the essential skills to move the economy. Schools and universities were expected to prepare all levels of vocational and professional expertise. Secondly, Indonesian leaders regarded education as important

in the socialization of their young citizens, particularly in inculcating new values and to encourage a sense of loyalty and national identity. Finally, to many, education should open up new opportunities to all, thereby ending existing social, economic, ethnic, and cultural divisions.

In Indonesia these expectations were expressed very early when political leaders in 1949 debated the provisions in the Education Bill. But it became clear even then that there were varying perceptions in the understanding of what education should and could do. These differences subsequently came to be articulated more openly when some of the early expectations remained unfulfilled. Indeed, difficulties and shortcomings became evident as the schools expanded rapidly. Questions were asked about quality and standard, about curriculum relevance, high drop-out rates and wastage, and the seeming inability of the education system to relate productively to economic development.

The disappointments felt by many Indonesians led to questions being asked about the direction of Indonesian education. There were various proposals as to what ought to be done, and these were associated with competing political views prevailing in the country. Increasingly in the Guided Democracy years these educational expectations came to be articulated in the political language of the period. The political significance of the differences was not always obvious to the casual observer then because all groups, at least nominally, supported calls for radical reforms in the school system so that education should primarily serve state and society. In the politics of the 1960s this came also to mean that the education system should be guided by the political ideas propounded by President Soekarno. The ensuing debates, however, did not completely conceal that what was taking place at the institutions of education was part of a contest for political power between the communists and the non-communists.

The disputes during the Guided Democracy years underline how closely linked education had always been with the politics of the day in Indonesia. It was not only that political developments shaped the school system but indeed discussions in the education field mirrored and at the same time exercised some influence on the course of the country's political history. Equally important, because many of the episodes in the development of education occurred at some distance from the epicentre of major political events and decision-making, an additional and different viewpoint is available to understand Indonesia's political history. The key players here were mostly ordinary people such as students, parents, teachers, and administrators. They were an integral part

of Indonesian society and their story is therefore just as worthwhile to be traced.

Developments in Indonesia are still too recent to allow a more comprehensive analysis of the long-term impact of the interaction of politics and education. A new body of data has to become available and different methodological approaches employed before a more satisfactory study could be achieved. It is the hope, nevertheless, that this study of the first twenty years of educational development will provide the basis for further investigations.

The completion of this study was made possible because of the assistance which I received from so many people. In particular, I am grateful to Dr A. Zainuddin who so patiently supervised my research and imparted to me her knowledge of Indonesian history and education. I am also indebted to Dr H. Feith who supervised the earlier part of the work and who continued to provide valuable comments. To Prof John Legge and Prof J. A. C. Mackie, I wish to express heartfelt thanks for the opportunity to be at the Monash Centre of Southeast Asian Studies where I was able to participate in the research and seminar activities. The late Mrs. B. Musken of Monash Library was most helpful in allowing me to purchase materials in Indonesia relevant to my study but with the understanding that these be eventually deposited in the library.

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