background information

INDONESIA GOES TO SCHOOL

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An American teacher visiting Indonesia would find education there quite unlike that in the USA. If, however, he took into account the fact that Indonesia's economic development is now at about the same stage reached by the United States in 1870, and compared American education of that time with present-day Indonesian education, he would find more similarities.

But by doing so, the American teacher still has to take into account that, unlike Americans, Indonesia's people speak at least 25 different languages and 250 or more dialects. They also belong to at least 8 different types of religion. No wonder that an educational system which fits such a plural society, resembles so little the pattern of teaching we are acquainted with in our own society.

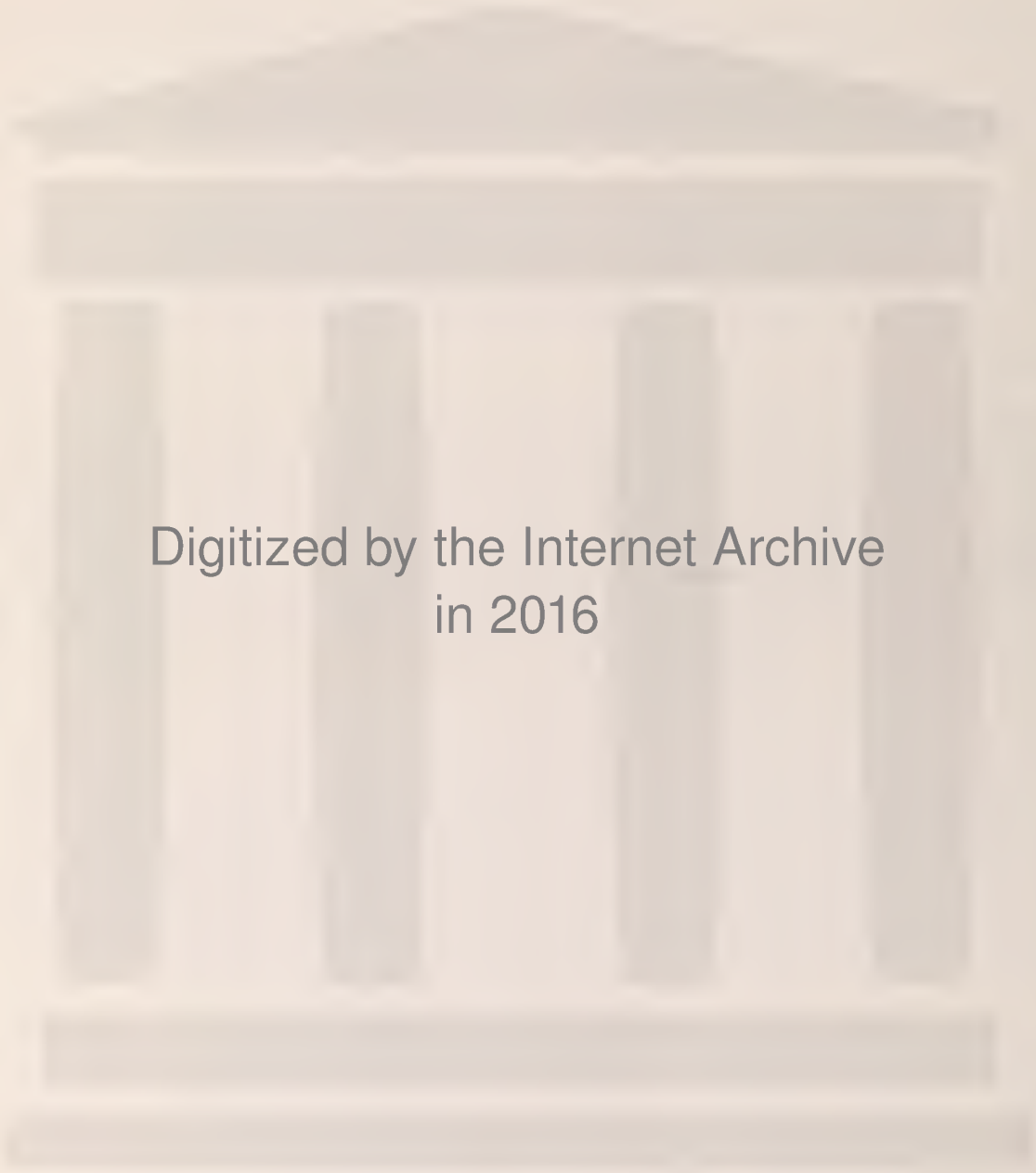
Without exception mass education has improved in quantity and quality only as economic development has created a demand for educated personnel in business and government. Furthermore, until the economy creates this demand, it cannot afford schools and teachers for the entire population. For instance, it was estimated before the war that most of Indonesia's government revenue would have to be spent on education in order to provide facilities for the whole school-age population. As it was, about 10 per cent of the government budget was devoted to education, making it possible for 40 per cent of Indonesia's children to attend school.

Short history of Indonesia's school system.

Indonesia's first private western school was opened in 1643 by Governor-General Van Diemen. The school had to provide "adequate training" for a mixed group of young men destined to follow a career in "administration or church". The number of schools in the 17th and 18th centuries remained limited, and the issue of education in the overseas territories a subject of intense controversy. Only the efforts of a Liberal Protestant Minister Van Hëevell met with the desired result in the beginning of the 19th century.

The first public school for Europeans was established in 1816; in 1820 there were seven such schools and twelve private institutions. An investigation made the year before revealed the existence of a network of several thousand Mohammedan religious schools spread all over the Archipelago. Also native chiefs did encourage schools on western lines, but most of these failed for lack of teachers and money. Some changes were made as a consequence of the Constitution in 1854, which instructed the Governor-General to establish schools for the native population, but in practice, very little was achieved.

The new schools which were set up in each district or regency were designed for the education of native administrative officials. Soon difficulties arose. Many feudal chiefs (regents) did not send their children to these schools, because they preferred the traditional Mohammedan schools. They were of the opinion that their sons would obtain positions without any formal education, as a heritage.



As to European officials, many of these preferred the old apprentice system by which young boys were first taken into their personal service as house-servants or messenger-boys in the office, learned the ways of the white people, learned to write and to understand the practice of the administration by accompanying the white administrator on his tours of inspection, and then, later, received a job as a native official.

Interior view of an industrial school organized by the Catholic Mission on the Kei Islands in East Indonesia.

Better results were achieved by the missionary schools in the Christian districts which were placed under the superintendence of Protestant and Catholic pastors. Missionary schools for the native population were numerous in the Batak regions on Sumatra, in the Minahassa region on Celebes, on Amboina, on Ceram and on Flores.

Although the Netherlands Indies Government had already recognized the cultural value of popular education in Indonesia as early as 1818, a general system of education only started to arise in 1871. In that year a special Royal Decree established the rules on which the future native educational system had to be erected. This decree also contained rules for the set-up of secondary schools and of teachers training colleges. A special Department of Education was already created in 1865.

The 1871 decree was a result of strong Indo-European pressure, which minority group felt itself discriminated against by government and business in their preference for European educated personnel. Private initiative had meanwhile established the first secondary school in Batavia in 1860, which school in 1875 became a public institution. It was followed by a secondary school in Surabaya in the same year and a similar school in Semarang in 1877.

Since the formulation of the "ethical policy" by H.M. Queen Wilhelmina in 1901, primary education in Indonesia advanced by "one school per day". Then, the system of vocational schools and schools for adults was also started. Their purpose was to improve agricultural methods, and to supply the knowledge needed for the establishment of new and improved small-scale native industries. These new vocational schools also served to alleviate the ever-growing population-pressure on Java.

Reviewing the achievements up to 1940, we find that in the last pre-war years Indonesia had:

primary schools	- Dutch language	756
	- native vernacular	20,699
advanced elementary and secondary schools (incl. grammarschools)	- Dutch language	102
	- native vernacular	7
vocational schools	- Dutch language	118
	- native vernacular	622
schools on the university level		4

which amounts to a total of: 22,308 schools with 2,415,253 pupils and 51,651 teachers.

Indonesia's colleges are not great in number, but they have met the need for skilled personnel, providing training in law, medicine, engineering and governmental administration. In 1920 an Institute of Technology was founded in Bandung, and in 1929 a Law School was established in Batavia. In 1926 a School of Medicine was opened at Batavia, supplementing an older school in Surabaya which trained great numbers of practical medical workers, but which did not give a full medical degree.

In addition, many special schools are maintained for training civil servants, railway and public service experts, and in Buitenzorg there has been an Agricultural College since shortly before the war. An agricultural extension service has long maintained instructors and advisors throughout the Archipelago, and has played a tremendous role in disseminating modern methods, in combatting plant disease and in improving animal stocks and plant strains.

School of Law and Social Sciences in Batavia, Java.

In post-war days university education was reorganized into one institution: the University of Indonesia. Several subjects were added to the university curriculum:

(1) a Faculty for Social Studies and a Philosophical and Literary Faculty in the Batavia Law School;
(2) a School for Pure Sciences in the Bandung Institute of Technology;
(3) a School for Dentistry in Surabaya;
(4) a School for Agriculture and Veterinary Science in Buitenzorg;
(5) a Faculty for Economics in Macassar;
(6) a Foreign Service Academy in Batavia.

School of Medicine
in Batavia, Java.

Indonesian contributions to the general school system.

The oldest and most influential Indonesian contribution to the native schoolsystem are the local Mohammedan religious schools. These schools can be found mainly on Java and Sumatra, and can be divided into two groups: elementary education in the "langgars" and more advanced in the "pesantrens". Teaching is done individually; each pupil receives the guru's (teacher) personal attention. The purpose is to make the young people acquainted with the Moslem way of life. Often the Arabic alphabet is also taught. The schools are maintained by gifts of the population.

A later Mohammedan effort took place by the Moslem organization "Mohammadyah"- founded in 1912 by Kyahi Hadji Ahmad Dahlan-which not only established elementary religious schools, but also secondary schools on a western basis. Apart from educational facilities, this society took care of the handicapped in the native community, and erected institutions for the blind, orphanages, hospitals, and the like. In 1929, Mohammadyah had 64 native elementary schools, 13 advanced elementary institutions, 3 elementary schools with the Dutch language as the language of instruction, and 7 teachers training schools. In 1941, Mohammadyah had approximately 3000 schools. Unlike the local Mohammedan religious schools, Mohammadyah is financially supported by the Provisional Indonesian Government.

Other Moslem efforts are the Djam'ijah Waslijah schools in East Sumatra and the Nahdatul Ulama schools on Java and South Borneo. Djam'ijah Waslijah, founded in 1931, erected 312 elementary religious schools up to 1941. Nahdatul Ulama until 1936 had 377 elementary schools for boys, 26 for girls and 2 for adults,on a purely religious basis.

Quite different from the Moslem institutions are the "Taman Siswa" schools. These schools have adopted their own system of education. The leader of the Taman Siswa movement is the Indonesian educator Ki Hadjar Dewantoro (Raden Mas Suwardi Surianingrat), who propagates a system aimed at the formation of a new way of life which had to be developed out of the existing moral standards and indigenous traditions. The movement has its headquarters in Jogjakarta, Java. In 1938, Taman Siswa had 225 schools with 700 teachers and 16.000 pupils.

Taman-Siswa School in Mataram, Java.

Other, less important Indonesian contributions, are the Kaju Tanam schools of Mohammed Sjafei, near Padang, Sumatra. The Ruang Pendidik system-another name for Sjafei's Schools-advocates a "practical approach" by teaching the children "how, along western lines, to use their common sense to become practical and observant individuals and avoid to be conceited intellectuals". For this purpose, Sjafei has adopted the teaching of handicrafts, and physical education in the normal curriculum of his schools.

Important for womanhood in Indonesia are the Kartini schools. These schools for Indonesian girls were born out of the disobedience of a young Indonesian princess Raden Adjeng Kartini, who refused to conform with the traditional subordinate role of women in Indonesian society life.

The impetus to the creation of the Kartini schools was given by the well-known Dutch educator Van Deventer in 1913. In that year, a special organization "Kartini Fonds" was founded which supervised the set-up and curricula of the new schools. The organization's main purpose is to make Indonesian girls into good and modern housewives and mothers.

Another Indonesian girls school is the Raden Dewi School, founded in Bandung, West Java in 1904 by a Sundanese lady Raden Dewi Sartika.

Kartini School.

Organizational difficulties.

The touchstone of modern mass education is universal literacy, a goal also accepted in Indonesia but one which there and in other parts of Asia is still many generations away. Yet during pre-war years great steps were taken towards this objective, and a public school system was established which is the backbone for future Indonesian education.

Indonesia is a plural society, and one of the greatest stumbling blocks in attaining general literacy is the fact that Indonesia's peoples speak 25 languages and 250 dialects which fact made it almost an impossibility to supply school-texts, or out-of-school printed matter in order to maintain the reading habit once it had been established.

To meet the need for interesting reading material, a Bureau for Popular Reading, the Balai Pustaka, was founded in 1917, an agency which published books and periodicals in the various languages, established school libraries and ran a travelling library service, the Taman Pustaka.

The school system itself was organized into a dualistic institution which established two types of schools: the one type using the local vernacular as the teaching language, and the other using the Dutch language with so-called "Schakelscholen" (connecting schools) in between. The Schakelscholen made it possible for gifted natives to switch to the secondary and professional schools, eventually to continue their study at a school on university level, where teaching was done in the Dutch language only.

Before the war many vocational schools used the Malay language, but secondary schools and universities still used Dutch, partly because most Indonesians seeking further education learned Dutch in childhood, but chiefly because the translation of advanced texts into Malay would then have been an almost impossible task.

In the future a way will have to be found to adjust education in Indonesia to the new demands for a more extensive use of the Indonesian language in secondary and higher education. This Indonesian language has only recently become the accepted official language of the Indonesian peoples. Although a simplified "market" Malay has been spoken throughout the islands for centuries, the classic Malay was used only by educated Indonesians. With many new words added to meet modern linguistic needs, this language, now called "Bahasa Indonesia", will probably in time be spoken by most Indonesians.

Another obstacle to the further spread of literacy will continue to be the lack of funds for schools, teachers and materials. As was the case in America 75 years ago, Indonesia cannot yet afford universal public schooling. In addition, only gradually will the economy be able to absorb increased numbers of secondary school and university graduates. To further complicate matters, Indonesia's population increases by one million each year, so that if school capacity increases at no more than the same rate it still cannot accommodate those who now go without education.

While the fact remains that education in Indonesia, like its economy, is not yet as far advanced as in Europe or America, the quality, if not the quantity, of secondary and university education has been consistently maintained at Western standards. As the secondary schools and colleges of Indonesia expanded, they retained their previous high standards, with the result that their graduates, even by American standardsm have excellent qualifications. In fact, the training received by high school graduates is, according to J.S. Furnivall, an authority on Asia, the equivalent of that received after two years' university work in India.

Institute of Technology in Bandung, Java.

Undoubtedly the spread of Bahasa Indonesia will make the conquest of illiteracy somewhat easier, but it will still be a long-term job. Also, the fact that for a generation before the war millions of Indonesians passed through the village schools-where Malay was taught as a second language-, has smoothed the way for further expansion of the educational system. Many have learned to read, thus opening a new market for printed matter, which will play an even greater role in Indonesian life and which will thereby increase the practical and prestige value of literacy.

Present efforts.

Now that Indonesia is to become sovereign and independent, its 77 million people also assume new responsibilities for raising the general level of education. Their leaders have, however, asked that Dutch educators continue to work with them for the elimination of illiteracy and the further extension and improvement of the school system.

Already this common effort is being carried out on a new basis, setting a pattern of cooperation which preserves the West's contribution of skill and personnel and which adds the strengthening element of growing Indonesian national consciousness. And although this nationalist spirit alone cannot overcome the very real problems facing Indonesia's schools, it may furnish an important driving force to the population in seeking greater learning.

In recent years, teachers from all over Indonesia have come together to discuss a "new system of education". The dualistic system was abolished, and the curricula more adopted to local needs, especially in primary schools. One general type of primary school was opened to all children, that is in so far as teachers were available. Secondary education was split into general schools and schools for vocational training of many kinds. Handicrafts and physical training were made compulsory in all schools. Courses for social studies have been introduced to educate the children in civic consciousness. Special provisions were made for the re-education of adults. (For further details see attached chart)

Literacy standards.

Exactly what the literacy rate is in Indonesia, is difficult to calculate. Pre-war statistics gave the figure as 7 per cent in 1930, estimated at 10 per cent in 1940. But using the statistical method employed by the US Census Bureau, whereby only those over 10 years of age are counted, the figure is considerably higher, about 18 per cent in 1940, while use of the Philippine method, counting only those over 13 years of age, gives a figure of about 20 per cent.

The Dutch census figures, however, only counted a person as a literate if he could read and write in latin characters. Therefore, the many people in Indonesia who could read and write in Arabic characters were excluded. If one allows for this erroneous omission, the Indonesian literacy rate would now stand at 42 per cent, a figure higher than that of any country in Asia, apart from Japan.

CHART OF THE EDUCATIONAL SYSTEM IN INDONESIA