Another Perspective in the Education of Netherlands in Indonesia During Colonial Period (1799 - 1942)

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Abstract

During the colonial period in Indonesia (1799-1942), education played a pivotal role in the Dutch colonial government’s strategy of establishing and maintaining its rule. This study employs qualitative analytical methods to provide a comprehensive analysis of the Dutch educational policies implemented throughout this period, examining their objectives, strategies, and impacts on Indonesian society. The Dutch applied a Western-style education system alongside the existing traditional Islamic education, with the dual aims of training personnel for the colonial administration and promoting cultural assimilation. The findings reveal the implementation of a “dual education system”, with Western-style schools using Dutch as the language of instruction and traditional schools teaching in local languages. Over time, the education system evolved, establishing various types of schools, from primary to university levels. However, racial discrimination persisted in access and opportunities, posing significant barriers for indigenous Indonesians compared to their Dutch and Eurasian counterparts. Notably, this study highlights the unintended consequence of Western education nurturing an educated indigenous elite class, many of whom later became driving forces behind the nationalist movement for Indonesian independence. While serving colonial interests of training a loyal workforce and promoting cultural assimilation, the Dutch educational policy inadvertently laid the foundation for the modernization of Indonesia's education system and the emergence of a new intellectual class. The research findings contribute to understanding the complex role of education in the colonial context and its long-lasting impacts on Indonesia's development trajectory.

Keywords: Netherlands, Indonesia, colonial education, colonialism, history
1. Introduction

From very early on, Indonesia has attracted considerable attention from countries around the world, with ambitions to dominate this nation due to its abundant spice resources, famous flavors, and strategic position on the East-West international maritime route. In the late 15th to early 16th centuries, internal conflicts and power struggles between local leaders led to the collapse of the Majapahit dynasty, giving rise to Islamic kingdoms such as Samudra-Pasai, Goa, Bone, Ternate and Tidore (Doanh, 1995, p. 92). Standing at an advantageous position in the Southeast Asian trading network, possessing abundant spice resources and undergoing many political and social changes, Indonesia became a target for Western fleets and explorers (Giang & Hiep, 2011; Mai, 2011), hence the Dutch successfully controlled the entire country and made Indonesia their colony.

After the victory of the bourgeois revolution in the late 16th century, the Netherlands became the first country to establish a bourgeois republic. The superior and pioneering nature of this republic equipped the Dutch with the ability to mobilize all advantages to develop a commercial economy, becoming a “capitalist model country” (Mai, 2012). With strong backing from the bourgeoisie and a powerful navy, a mighty fleet helped the Dutch gain an advantage in the competition with countries like Portugal, Spain, England and France in Indonesia. From the early 17th to early 19th centuries, the Dutch successfully repelled English intervention and suppressed native uprisings to complete the colonization of Indonesia (Ninh et al., 2018, p. 329). In parallel with the invasion and domination of Indonesia, the Dutch colonists quickly established their influence through colonial policies in all fields such as economy, politics, culture and society. Among them, education was an area that the Dutch authorities highly regarded, viewing it as a “basic weapon” to ensure victory in conquering and ruling the Indonesian colony.

Education has long been recognized as an important tool for the development and progress of nations. In addition to imparting knowledge and skills, education also shapes the perceptions, values and ethics of society, contributing to prosperity, stability and sustainable growth. Therefore, education policy is considered one of the most critical policies for any nation (Murray, 2023). Throughout the colonial period, the Dutch authorities realized the importance of education and used it as a tool to establish and maintain their rule in Indonesia. They built a Western-style education system to train a workforce to serve the colonial government apparatus and promote the process of cultural assimilation. The Dutch education system in Indonesia was characterized by the parallel existence of two education systems: the Western-style education system and the traditional education system. While the Western education system was designed to train personnel to serve the colonial government, the traditional education system was maintained to teach Indonesian cultural and religious values.

When implementing this policy, the long-standing presence and important role of Islamic education for the indigenous people became a major obstacle for the Dutch in enforcing a new colonial-style education system in Indonesia. This forced the Dutch to find ways to “integrate” with traditional cultural elements, since complete exclusion was impossible. Therefore, the Dutch authorities made adjustments and applied different education policies throughout the colonial period to achieve their defined goals. Initially, they focused on establishing Western-style primary and secondary schools to train personnel for their governing apparatus. Subsequently, they expanded the education system by establishing universities and vocational schools to meet the growing demand for human resources. It can be seen that the emergence of a new Western-style education system brought a new perspective to the educational landscape of Indonesia during the Dutch colonial period.

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1 Majapahit was a great empire in the feudal history of Southeast Asia in general and the history of the Indonesian nation in particular. During its 200 years of existence (1293-1527), Majapahit made many important contributions, leading the country of Indonesia to increasingly develop and become a powerful nation at that time.
Although there have been many studies on the Dutch education policy in Indonesia, most have focused on a specific period or particular aspect. This study aims to provide a comprehensive view of the Dutch education policy throughout the colonial period, from the late 18th century to the mid-20th century. The purpose of the study is to analyze the goals, strategies, and impacts of the Dutch education policy on Indonesians, while evaluating the role of education in the process of cultural assimilation and the construction of the Dutch colonial regime in Indonesia. The research findings will contribute to elucidating the role of education in the colonial context, as well as the long-term impacts of colonial educational policies on Indonesia’s future development.

2. Literature Review

Regarding the educational situation in Indonesia during the Dutch colonial period, there have been many studies discussed by Vietnamese and international scholars. In Vietnam, some notable works on the history of Indonesia as well as education from the late 18th to mid-20th century include:

“Summary of Indonesian History” by Nhung (1962) provides an overview of Indonesian history from the pre-colonial period to the 1980s, however this study only mentions the important historical events taking place in Indonesia, without discussing the Dutch colonial education policy. Additionally, “History of Indonesia (from the 15th-16th centuries to the 1980s)” by Tong (1992) provides a comprehensive view of Indonesian history from the medieval to modern times. This study presents an overview of Indonesian history from ancient times to the late 20th century. In particular, it analyzes the Dutch colonial rule in Indonesia, but remains general, without going into details about Dutch rule in specific areas, especially education.

Furthermore, “History of Southeast Asia: The Colonial Period and the Struggle for Independence (from the 16th century to 1945)” by Khanh (2012) discusses the history of Southeast Asian countries, including Indonesia. The study mentions the Dutch colonial education policy in Indonesia, but remains general and does not specifically discuss the Dutch education policies applied in Indonesia. On the other hand, “Re-examining the Reform Movements in Indonesia, the Philippines and Myanmar in the late 19th and early 20th centuries” by Tan and Loc (2014) discusses how Indonesia, the Philippines and Myanmar all fell under Western colonial domination early on, and these countries all carried out reforms to liberate their nations from enemy control. Regarding education, the study also analyzes the unintended consequence of the colonial regime being the training of an educated class in the Western style, many of whom had patriotic thoughts and participated in the struggle against the colonial regime, which is also related to the issue of education.

In general, these works have provided valuable information about the historical context and educational situation in Indonesia under Dutch rule. However, most studies focus on a specific period or particular aspect of colonial education policy. There has not been any research in Vietnam that provides a comprehensive view of the development and changes in Dutch education policy in Indonesia throughout the long historical period from the late 18th to mid-20th century.

Regarding the research situation of international scholars, there have been a number of studies related to the Dutch education policy in Indonesia during the colonial period, typically including the following studies:

“Indonesia Education Today: Dating Back Its History of Islam and Imparting European Education System” by Harits et al. (2017) pointed out the characteristics of the Indonesian education system during the Dutch colonial period, arguing that “The education system that the colonialists applied was completely discriminatory and racially discriminatory. Schools for the Dutch/East Indian Government would differ in curriculum, system, and certainly facilities, which were much better than those for Indonesians. Meanwhile, education for Indonesians was also distinguished between the upper class, such as the sons of chiefs or high-ranking officers, and the lower class. In fact, those from lower classes had no opportunity to get a better education. Schools for Europeans, Indonesians and other East Asians such as Chinese were also different. Therefore, they separated from each other according to their own race and social status” (Harits et al., 2017).
On the other hand, “The Theosophical educational movement in colonial Indonesia (1900-1947)” by Nugroho (1995) studied the Theosophical education movement in Indonesia during 1900-1947 and concluded that “The educational activities of the Theosophical movement in colonial Indonesia played an important role in impacting on the Indonesian nationalist movement, and indeed helped shape the course of Indonesian history. In establishing educational facilities from kindergarten to university and technical levels, the Theosophical Education Movement aimed at reaching the youth with Theosophical propaganda in order to realize the core aim of the movement, which was to foster a spirit of unity among Indonesians regardless of gender, class, religion and race. It provided an important forum for Indonesians to meet and discuss ideas. Theosophical views played a crucial role in shaping ‘national’ values and a national ideology” (Nugroho, 1995, p. 268).

More recently, “The Transformation of Education in Indonesia from the Colonial Era to the Digital Era is Reviewed from a Historical Perspective” by Noviningtyas and Pandin (2021) analyzed the education policies implemented by the government from the colonial era to the digital age. The results of this study show that changes in the Indonesian education system over time have had a positive impact on the development of the country of Indonesia. “Dynamics of the development of Dutch colony education in Simalungun 1907-1945” by Saragih (2022) discussed the dynamics of educational development in the Simalungun community during the colonial period 1907-1945, then called Afdeeling Simeloengoen en Karolanden and now becoming the Simalungun district in North Sumatra, Indonesia. This study concludes that during the Colonial period in Simalungun the development of education was carried out by the Dutch colonial government, the private sector, Christian sending institutions, which established educational institutions in the form of schools. On the one hand, this educational development has brought progress to the Simalungun people, so that they migrated out of their territory.

In addition, “Educational Policy in the Colonial Era” by Suratminto (2013) analyzed the educational situation in some places in Indonesia during the Dutch colonial period such as Bukittinggi, Tapanuli, Tondano, Ambon, Probolinggo, Banjarmasin, Makassar and Padang Sidempuan, Simalungun, etc. Furthermore, “Islamic education in Indonesia during the Dutch colonial: the case Muhammadiyah and NU” by Hijazi (2011) provided in-depth analysis with objective assessments of the situation of Islamic education in Indonesia during the Dutch colonial period.

These studies have provided in-depth analyses of specific aspects of colonial education policy such as moral education, the development of education in certain regions, the role of the Theosophical movement in education, and the situation of Islamic education. However, there is still a lack of comprehensive studies evaluating the different stages of Dutch education policy and its long-term impacts on Indonesian society. The current study aims to fill these gaps by providing a comprehensive view of the development process of Dutch education policy in Indonesia, from the early years of establishment to the changes and reforms in later periods (1799-1942).

3. Methodology

The research design of the paper takes a qualitative approach, focusing on in-depth analysis of historical documents, research works, and related reports to achieve a comprehensive understanding of the research subject. The research is conducted through the following steps: data collection and systematization, detailed analysis of policy aspects, comparison across periods, and finally, synthesis and overall evaluation of Dutch education policy in Indonesia throughout the colonial period.

To conduct this research, the historical and logical methods are applied to investigate the implementation of Dutch educational policies in Indonesia from 1799 to 1942. The events and educational policies are examined in chronological order and analyzed from a historical perspective to understand their contexts of emergence, developments, and impacts.

Additionally, the synthesis method is used to combine and systematize data collected from various sources, including historical documents, academic research, official reports, and records related to colonial education. This synthesis process aims to construct a comprehensive overview of
Dutch education policy in Indonesia.

On the other hand, the analytical method is applied to study in depth the specific aspects of education policy such as goals, content, teaching methods, school systems, and types of training. The study analyzes in detail the strategies and measures implemented by the Dutch authorities in each historical period.

Ultimately, the comparative method is used to contrast and evaluate the different educational policies between periods, as well as compare with colonial educational policies in other colonies. This helps the research identify the unique characteristics and evolution of Dutch education policy in Indonesia. Moreover, in the analysis process, the study also considers and evaluates factors such as financial resources, human resources, facilities, and socio-economic conditions that impacted policy implementation. These factors are analyzed to better understand the changes in policy across different periods.

4. Result and Discussion

4.1 The Education Situation in Indonesia before the Colonial Period by the Dutch

Before the introduction of Western education, traditional education in Indonesia had a spiritual nature influenced by Hinduism and Buddhism since the 5th century. The Hindu-Buddhist education system was known as Karsyan, focusing on characteristics, moral and spiritual development. Subjects taught in the Karsyan education system included the Vedas, Tripitaka scriptures, astronomy, literature mainly from the Mahabharata and Ramayana, mathematics, martial arts, architecture, sculpture, and more. Urban schools also provided knowledge about royal ceremonies, construction, and other productive activities, considered essential for the life of a monk or scholar in Indonesia. To facilitate the study and absorption of Hindu and Buddhist texts, students in Karsyan were taught to read and write in Sanskrit and Pali.

From the late 13th to the 14th century, Islam began to appear in Indonesia and gradually became widespread, even displacing the influence of other religions (Nhung, 1962, p. 15). “From this point on, Islam became intertwined with the lives of the indigenous people, becoming the dominant religion in their country” (Van, 2016). After Islam was established and strongly influenced Indonesia, the Sultans wanted to further develop this religion, leading to the gradual establishment of an Islamic education system for their citizens. This education system is called Pesantren2. “This education system only teaches religious subjects; teaching reading the Quran, preaching, Islamic law (Sharia), and various Islamic customs and traditions” (Vinh, 1992). Secular subjects and vocational training were not included in Pesantren.

The Islamic education system focused solely on teaching the doctrines of the Quran, requiring students to know Arabic. Therefore, learning Arabic was considered essential because, in the Islamic world, people read the Quran and pray in this language. However, Arabic was challenging to learn, resulting in very few students becoming proficient in the language. “The main purpose in learning to read seems to have been to enable the student to recite the Quran, and apparently only very few santri (students) managed to learn to understand Arabic” (Penders, 1968, pp. 3-4). Therefore, Malay remained the primary language used in Pesantren classes. This was also a dominant factor in the rapid development of Islam in Indonesia because it utilized the native language (Chu, 2002).

The most important content in the curriculum was the memorization of the Quran and understanding the basic principles of Islam, which was a mandatory requirement. Therefore, the “rote learning” method was the predominant educational approach at that time. This teaching method somewhat resembled the Confucian education system in Vietnam, involving reciting what

2 In some other Southeast Asian island countries such as Malaysia, this system is called Pondok.
the teacher had lectured without much creative input. Santri (students) were not divided by age groups, and there were no opportunities to demonstrate progress through exams. Upon completion of the educational program, no certificates or diplomas were awarded. “In these schools, there was no fixed curriculum, and students (santri) were not graded into classes” (Penders, 1968, p. 3).

When Islam was recognized as the “national religion”, Indonesians considered it an essential part of their daily lives. For Indonesians, Islam was crucial for the personal development of every child (Tan & Loc, 2014). Therefore, they established Quranic classes to educate their future generations. Traditional Islamic education continued from generation to generation, becoming widespread in Indonesian communities. It can be said that Islamic education played a crucial role and was the core source of the culture and morality of Indonesians, both individually and in the broader context of maritime Southeast Asia.

Thus, before the introduction of Western-style education, traditional Indonesian education was primarily related to religions. Consequently, the literacy rate was not high, with “in some areas such as West Irian, parts of Borneo, and Sumatra, there were probably no literates at all, while in other regions, a considerable number of people were able to read and write” (Penders, 1968, pp. 2-3). With an education content related only to religion, students were entirely unaware of natural sciences, contemporary scientific and technological achievements. This created a need for the acceptance and adoption of a more modern education system, paving the way for the Dutch to quickly establish Western-style education in Indonesia.

4.2 Dutch Education Policy in Indonesia during the Colonial Period (1799-1942)

4.2.1 Objectives

With the Dutch colonial ruling policy, Indonesia experienced a unified state across the country, and the education system developed relatively comprehensively and progressively compared to the previous era. One factor that prompted the Dutch to swiftly implement educational policies in colonial Indonesia was the desire for a loyal workforce to serve their colonial government. Isolated in a foreign land, the Dutch needed political stability, a skilled workforce, and loyalty necessary for the colonial government’s machinery. Considering the need for political stability, a competent workforce, and the indigenous people’s obedience and gratitude towards the colonial government, all these desires were entrusted to the educational endeavors led by the Dutch. Thus, an education system was established to train human resources for appointments to positions in the colonial government and the workforce directly managed by the Dutch.

It can be seen that one of the main objectives of Dutch colonialism was the spread of culture and, eventually, cultural assimilation. The key to achieving this goal was discouraging education in the native languages and imposing education in the language of the colonial government for administrative work and commercial transactions. “Alongside the policy of discouraging the study of the native languages, the demand for jobs attracted a section of the indigenous population, mainly the upper-class, to study in Western schools” (Khanh, 2012, p. 240).

Throughout the colonial rule, alongside the consolidation of administrative regimes and increased exploitation, the Dutch colonial government intensified its education policies in the colonies. The colonial government viewed the educational front as a primary tool in achieving cultural assimilation goals and supporting its ruling policies in the colonies.

4.3 Dutch Education Policy in Indonesia during the Colonial Period

The First Education Policy in Colonial Indonesia (1799-1892)

Before the direct management of Indonesia by the Dutch government, the region had long been under the control of the Dutch East India Company (VOC). However, the VOC did not prioritize education for the people of Indonesia because their primary purpose was commerce. They did not
invest extensively in indigenous education as it was not essential to their goals, or in other words, investing in education would require significant funds for an activity that was not crucial to them (Rothrock, 1975, p. 40). This was a key difference between Spain, France, and the Netherlands in the early stages of establishing colonial rule. For Portugal, the establishment of education in the Philippines was carried out through missionary activities combined with commerce (Chuong, 2013). Regarding the French, after completing the conquest of Vietnam, they initiated the establishment of Western-style education to eliminate the long-standing Confucian education that had deeply influenced all layers of society (Loan, 2020, p.61; Hoa, 2006). After the VOC declared bankruptcy on December 31, 1799, all activities in Indonesia came under the control of the Dutch government. From this point onwards, policies were introduced not only to serve economic interests but also to address political concerns, with education being a means to achieve this.

Under the rule of Governor-General Herman Willem Daendels (1808-1811), the European Elementary School (ELS) was established for European children living in Indonesia in 1808. This was a well-equipped school with competent teachers, and it received substantial funding from the colonial government (Harits et al., 2017). Also in the same year, the Governor-General issued instructions for officials in Java to build schools for indigenous children in the region and appoint qualified teachers in 1808. However, the implementation of this directive did not last long as Indonesia fell under British occupation. During the 5-year period (1811-1816) of British control, all activities in all areas, including education, were overseen by the British. When the Dutch government was re-established in Indonesia in 1816, education policies were among the new colonial strategies. In 1818, through the Fundamental Law of the Netherlands Indies, it was stated that “it was the duty of the government to provide educational facilities for indigenous as well as European children” (Penders, 1968, p. 7). From this point onwards, Indonesian children were allowed to attend schools following the Western model established by the Dutch. In 1848, after reaching a significant agreement between the Hague dynasty and the Batavia government, a royal decree was passed. According to this decree, the Dutch monarch would provide the colonial government with an annual budget of 25,000 guilders for education development (Suratminto, 2013).

By 1852, the Dutch government had established several Teacher Training Schools (Kweekschool) in Surakarta, Bukittinggi, Tapanuli, Tondano, Ambon, Probolinggo, Banjarmasin, Makassar, and Padang Sidempuan. In Batavia in 1860, the Koning Willem III High School was established (now in front of the National Library building in Salemba) (see Figure 1), and later the Lager Onderwijs en Lagere Scholen voor Europeanen secondary school was established, with a study period of 3 years. In 1867, this school was renamed Hogere Burger School (HBS). To enroll in this school, students had to pass a Grootambtenaarsexamen examination with a curriculum following the Western model.

Figure 1: Gymnasium Koning William III HBS in Batavia (now Jakarta) (1910-1932)
Source: National Archives of Indonesia
To better manage education in Indonesia,

“A Department of Education was set up in 1867, and the number of public schools for Indonesians increased somewhat rapidly after 1870” (Basu, 1982, p. 70). “The new Department was a powerful ally in support of the humanitarians and missionaries in their demand for education as an instrument of culture” (Hutagaol, 1985, p. 16).

With the establishment of HBS high schools and the formation of the Ministry of Education, the colonial government focused more on training qualified personnel to serve its ruling purposes. In 1871, the Dutch government issued a new education decree, emphasizing the establishment of a public education system in many places across the Indonesian archipelago. Consequently, the number of schools and students developed rapidly in Indonesia after this period:

“In Java and Madura, the number of schools increased from 82 in 1873 to 193 in 1883, and in all other islands, the number increased from 17 to 284. The number of pupils and members of the teaching staff in Java and Madura increased regardless of ethnic background, respectively from 5,512 to 16,214 and from 223 to 582. In the islands outside Java and Madura, the number of pupils also jumped, again regardless of ethnic background, from 11,276 to 18,694, and the number of teaching staff increased from 188 to 659 teachers during the same time span” (Suwignyo, 2012, p. 52).

According to this new regulation, teacher training received more attention than before. Between 1873 and 1879, six teacher training colleges were established with a 4-year program taught in Dutch. However, due to the challenging curriculum and Dutch language instruction, the number of graduates remained modest (see Table 1).

Table 1. Number of students in teacher training colleges in Indonesia from 1873 to 1899

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Period</th>
<th>Number of students</th>
<th>Number of graduates</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1873-1877</td>
<td>249</td>
<td>49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1878-1882</td>
<td>655</td>
<td>128</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1883-1887</td>
<td>590</td>
<td>156</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1888-1892</td>
<td>393</td>
<td>218</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1893-1897</td>
<td>364</td>
<td>176</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1898-1899</td>
<td>105</td>
<td>80</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Penders, 1968, p. 29.

Not only at teacher training schools but also the number of students in European-style primary schools had a relatively low graduation rate. According to reports from the schools, the rate of students dropping out or not graduating before completing the course was quite high:

“In the period 1878-1882, Indonesian children on average stayed away from school one day out of every five, while in the same period 69.7% of pupils left school during the first year, 19.4% during the second year, and 7.5% in the third year, leaving only 3.4% of first-year entrants to receive a school certificate” (Penders, 1968, p. 24).

Although the colonial government made efforts to build many schools to meet the needs of the people, the results were not as expected. The reasons could be the challenging curriculum, high tuition fees, and especially the opposition from the aristocracy, as having their children study together with commoners in the same school was considered an affront (Rothrock, 1975, p. 47). Therefore, the Dutch government repeatedly implemented two educational reforms in the late 19th and early 20th centuries to reform the education system in colonial Indonesia.

Overall, although the initial stage of the Dutch educational policy in Indonesia did not achieve
significant results due to many difficulties and limitations, it laid an important foundation for building a Western-style education system in Indonesia. The establishment of public schools, vocational schools, and especially teacher training schools created the first group of teachers for the new education system. This contributed to forming the basis for the later development of education in Indonesia.

Educational Reforms by the Dutch Government - Progress in Colonial Education in Indonesia (1893-1930)

In 1893, the Dutch government implemented the first educational reform in Indonesia, changing the education system. They “introduced two systems of elementary school management, specifically designed for the indigenous people: one called the First Class Indigenous School, intended for the children of the aristocracy, officials (Priyayi), and the other called the Second Class Indigenous School designed to provide basic education for children of various classes, mainly for the poor in rural and urban areas” (Khanh, 2012, p.247). The courses for the two schools were defined as follows: the First Class school consisted of 5 years, while the Second Class school had only 3 years. Each day, students from both schools attended classes for 5 hours, with first-year students having 3.5 hours of instruction and a 30-minute break. The language of instruction was the local language, and for regions where the local language did not meet the standards for primary education, those schools had to use Malay. For islands like Java, Surakarta, Sundan, Bandung, Madurese, Sumenep, Malacca, and the Riau Archipelago, Malay was the mandatory language of instruction. The curriculum for both schools was the same, including Reading, Writing, and basic subjects such as Mathematics, Indonesian Geography, History, Art, and Surveying. The age for attending primary school was set by the colonial government to be between 6 and 17 years old. The tuition fees for First Class primary schools were always higher than those for Second Class primary schools (Suwignyo, 2012, p. 54). Regarding the number of students in each school, the Dutch government also had specific regulations:

“A first-Class school should have between thirty and 210 pupils, a Second-Class school between twenty-five and 110 pupils, but this regulation was not fixed” (Suwignyo, 2012, p. 55).

This was considered an important event for colonial education because,

“the reform of 1893 paved the way to the improvement of the schools for Indonesia children, setting them on the road towards achieving that of their European counterparts, and also extended the access of education to a wider array of the Indonesian population” (Suwignyo, 2012, p. 53).

The 1893 educational reform laid the foundation for expanding the two education systems into the early 20th century, known as the “dual education system”.

“The reform of 1893 also paved the way for indigenous children of ordinary, economically underprivileged families to enjoy Western education, however simple the instructions provided by the Second - Class schools might have been. Although still very limited in access for the majority of the indigenous Indonesians, the foundation of the First - Class and Second - Class school in 1893 marked the provision of Western education for the general, non-noble children of the indigenous society” (Suwignyo, 2012, p. 25).

With their efforts, the Dutch established the First Class and Second Class school systems with certain results.

“By December 31, 1899, there were in total 224 First-Class and 234 Second-Class schools distributed across twenty-three districts in Java, Madura, Bali, and Lombok. By the same date, 299 Second-Class schools had been founded in the Outer Islands spreading from Tapanuli in North Sumatra to Halmahera and New Guinea in the central east to Roti and Sawu in the South-east of the Archipelago” (Suwignyo, 2012, p. 57).
In 1901, the Dutch government issued the “New Course” or “Moral Policy” with the doctrine “Government of Indonesia for Indonesians”, gradually granting self-governance and equality to the Indonesian people in all aspects. To achieve this, the colonial government established banks, invested in human resource development, and improved the intellectual level of the natives through the establishment, consolidation, and expansion of the education system, as well as a Western-style healthcare network. The issuance of the “New Course” aimed to “minimize conflicts between the Indonesian people and Dutch colonialism” (Tong, 1992, p. 43). The focal point of the Moral Policy was the education and health (Noviningtyas & Pandi, 2021).

When the Dutch government implemented the Moral Policy in the early 20th century, education became a means, an effort to compensate the indigenous people for the losses they had suffered from their harsh rule. The number of vocational training programs provided to students after completing primary school also was emphasized more. In 1909, a commercial training school was established, and by 1917, the Dutch government built additional agricultural training schools (Ronaodidjojo, 1968, p. 37). Both primary schools and vocational training schools used the local language for instruction. As for the secondary and higher education systems, the colonial government implemented them rather “slowly” because of the fear of creating a “class of intellectual proletarians” against themselves.

A significant development in education in the native land occurred in 1907 when Governor Van Huetz initiated the establishment of Village Schools (Desa schools) - Volkschool. “The approach was for each village or several villages to build a school, usually with materials provided by the government at no cost, and contribute 90 guilders annually for school maintenance” (Hall, 1997, p. 1081). The Dutch government provided teachers and textbooks to support learning. Some Desa schools required parents to pay tuition fees, but often they were exempt. The duration of study at Desa schools was 3 years, and the local language remained the language of instruction. The purpose of Desa schools was to combat illiteracy among rural children, with subjects such as reading, mathematics, and writing taught at the schools (Ronaodidjojo, 1968, p. 35). Until 1930, over 1.5 million children attended Desa schools.

From 1901 onwards, “the colonial government began a public higher education system, especially in fields such as agriculture and law” (Khanh, 2012, p.248). As noted by Christiaan Lambert Maria Penders (1968, p. 66): “The most important achievement perhaps of the Ethical policy was the creation of a nation-wide education system for Indonesians ranging - at least in theory - from the elementary village (desa) school to university level”. Moreover, during this period, the Dutch government sent many students to the Netherlands for training. Sending many students abroad for education resulted in the formation of a new indigenous intellectual, western-educated elite in Indonesia in the early decades of the 20th century. By studying in Dutch schools, some Indonesians had the opportunity to encounter Western democratic ideas. This led them to become nuclei in the nationalist movement, struggling for Indonesia’s independence in the 1920s-1940s.

In 1905, the Dutch colonial government made a decision to replace natives in managerial positions and administration, which were previously only held by Europeans. This was the reason the colonial state increased sending Indonesians to study in the Netherlands, aiming to implement the strategy of “using Indonesians to govern Indonesians” and reducing costs by employing locals instead of paying salaries to Dutch administrators. However, to qualify for these positions, natives had to meet certain conditions: they had to know Dutch, be educated in the Dutch educational system, and be absolutely loyal to the Dutch government.

A notable feature of Dutch education policy in Indonesia was the establishment of a “dual education system”, also known as “double dual education”, meaning that Dutch and native education systems coexisted. “The native school was conducted with the local vernacular as the language for instruction, and the Dutch-oriented schools were operated with Dutch as the language for instruction” (Ronaodidjojo, 1968, p. 29). Thus, similar to the British education policy in Malaya, Dutch colonialism also maintained a dual education policy. This allowed traditional education systems to persist, and later, through contact with Western education in pesantren (Islamic boarding
Accordingly, the Dutch-oriented primary schools included the following types: European Primary School (Europesche Lagere School - ELS), Dutch-Chinese School (Hollandsch Chineesche School - HCS) (see Figure 2 & 3), and Dutch Native School - HIS. With the establishment of these three types of schools, the Dutch government showed genuine concern for education in the colony by prioritizing not only Indonesians but also the Chinese communities.

However, these schools only prioritized the intellectual and wealthy Chinese merchants, providing a better educational environment than that of the indigenous Indonesians, the majority of whom were poor and had fewer opportunities for education. This also reflected a distinctive feature of the education policy with a stratified nature between classes and communities in Indonesia. It was a prominent characteristic of the Dutch education policy, characterized by inequality for students after graduation:

“Having the same degree, studying the same profession, and even excelling in studies, the advancement

Figure 2: Hollandsch Chineesche School in Madiun, East Java
Source: National Archives of Indonesia

Figure 3: Teachers and students at Holladsch Inlandsche School
Source: National Archives of Indonesia

schools), natural sciences were incorporated into the curriculum of Madrasas.
path for natives was always more difficult. Furthermore, there was racial discrimination in salary payments. Even with the same job, indigenous Indonesians had to accept much lower salaries compared to their Dutch or Eurasian colleagues” (Khanh, 2012, p. 248).

In order to improve the quality of education in these primary schools, the colonial government established schools to train a cadre of teachers. While teachers at ELS schools were trained at the Rijkskweekschool in Haarlem (Netherlands), Indonesian teachers were trained at Kweekschool and Horegie Kweekschool (HKS).

“In 1915, there were six public kweekscholen: in Bandung (West Java), Ungaran (Central Java), Probolinggo (East Java), Yogyakarta, Fort De Kock (West Sumatra) - all using Dutch - and Amboina (the Moluccas) - which used Malay and Dutch” (Suwignyo, 2012, p. 88).

After graduating from these schools, students could continue their education at senior high schools. There were various types of high schools that the Dutch government established in Indonesia: Hogere Burger School (HBS) and Meer Uitgebreid Lager Onderwijs (MULO).

For senior high school, there was the AMS (Algemeen Middelbare School). The program at AMS lasted for 3 years and included subjects such as Dutch, history, geography, mathematics, chemistry, biology, fine arts, and physical education. After graduating from these levels, students could continue their education at the university in Jakarta, where they had the choice between professional programs in engineering (established in 1920), law (1924), and medicine (1927), or they could go to universities in the Netherlands. Regarding universities, the Dutch government established them relatively late compared to other countries, with three institutions providing higher education. The first three higher education institutions in the Indonesian archipelago were the Institute of Technology, Law School, and Medical College, each established in the 1920s.

One of the progressive aspects of the Dutch education system was that women were also allowed to attend school, whereas in the past in Indonesia, education was reserved only for boys. The restriction on girls attending school in the pre-colonial education system was not unique to Indonesia but was prevalent in most Southeast Asian countries such as Vietnam and Malaysia (Chi, 2012; Hien, 2017). Unlike Spain, which established a separate education system for women in the Philippines, the Dutch government did not build separate schools for females. In a classroom, there were both male and female students; however, the proportion of female students attending school was lower than that of male students (see Table 2).

Table 2. Number of schools and students of Village schools and Outer Islands (1913-1918)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Number of schools</th>
<th>Number of students</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Boys</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1913</td>
<td>525</td>
<td>30,972</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1914</td>
<td>621</td>
<td>37,841</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1915</td>
<td>752</td>
<td>44,387</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1916</td>
<td>803</td>
<td>46,836</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1917</td>
<td>1,057</td>
<td>55,542</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1918</td>
<td>1,142</td>
<td>55,080</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Penders, 1968, p. 100.

Regarding schools for noble Indonesian women, there was the Kartini School. In 1902, with the approval of the colonial government, Raden Adjeng Kartini (1879-1904), a progressive Javanese woman, established a school for noble female students, named after herself (Khanh, 2012, p. 405). Despite passing away at a young age of 24, Kartini had a significant impact throughout the island of Java. Her letters to a friend, written in Dutch and published in 1911, expressed her hope for enlightenment and, notably, greater
opportunities for women. With the proceeds from the sales of her book, along with generous contributions from private individuals and government grants, the Kartini Foundation was established in 1913. By 1916, it had opened six private schools in Semarang (1913), Batavia (1914), Madiun (1914), Buitenzorg (1914) (see Figure 4), Malang (1915), Chirebon (1916), and Pekalongan (1916), specifically for providing basic education to daughters of the indigenous nobility (Gouda, 1995).

Figure 4: Kartini School in Buitzenborg (Bogor)
Source: National Archives of Indonesia

Overall, the educational reform of 1893 marked an important turning point in the Dutch educational policy in Indonesia. The establishment of a two-tier school system for the indigenous people - First Class Indigenous School for the children of the elite and Second Class Indigenous School for the majority - expanded access to education for more segments of the population. Although still limited, this was a positive step towards the goal of universal education for Indonesians. Additionally, the “New Course” enacted in 1901 with the principle of “Government of Indonesia for Indonesians” encouraged the development of education and healthcare aimed at improving the living conditions and intellect of the indigenous people. This reflected the Dutch government’s efforts to invest in education in Indonesia, laying an important foundation for the development of education in the following decades.

Education Policy during the Global Economic Crisis (1929-1936)

The global economic crisis also affected the world and the Netherlands, and the colony was not exempt from this impact. The economic decline significantly impacted “government revenue, which fell from 835 million guilders in 1928 to 455 million guilders in 1934, while in the same period, the public debt increased from 1,004 million guilders to 1,508 million guilders” (Penders, 1968, p. 346). The financial difficulties in the colony continued to be severe, leading the colonial government to adjust its education policies, especially by cutting subsidies (see Table 3).

Table 3. Government expenditure on education (1930-1936)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Total Government Expenditure</th>
<th>Expenditure on Education</th>
<th>Index 1930=100</th>
<th>Education as % of total of expenditure</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1930</td>
<td>523,876</td>
<td>55,296</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>10.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1931</td>
<td>481,596</td>
<td>55,285</td>
<td>99</td>
<td>11.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1932</td>
<td>424,877</td>
<td>46,501</td>
<td>83</td>
<td>10.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1933</td>
<td>378,160</td>
<td>38,986</td>
<td>79</td>
<td>10.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1934</td>
<td>349,956</td>
<td>33,071</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>9.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1935</td>
<td>316,107</td>
<td>28,037</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>8.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1936</td>
<td>338,166</td>
<td>26,176</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>7.6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Thus, by 1936, educational spending had been reduced by more than half compared to 1930. This had a significant impact on the education situation in colonial Indonesia. During the period of the global...
economic crisis, many schools had to close (see Table 4).

### Table 4. Number of schools and Indonesian students of Dutch language education system (1931-1936)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Primary Schools</th>
<th>Primary Students</th>
<th>Secondary Schools</th>
<th>Secondary Students</th>
<th>University Students (first year)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1931-1932</td>
<td>772</td>
<td>75,040</td>
<td>87</td>
<td>6,666</td>
<td>90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1932-1933</td>
<td>746</td>
<td>76,538</td>
<td>83</td>
<td>6,502</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1933-1934</td>
<td>734</td>
<td>76,811</td>
<td>81</td>
<td>6,636</td>
<td>116</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1934-1935</td>
<td>723</td>
<td>75,306</td>
<td>85</td>
<td>7,121</td>
<td>107</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1935-1936</td>
<td>724</td>
<td>74,803</td>
<td>89</td>
<td>7,641</td>
<td>93</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Source:** Penders, 1968, p. 372

Overall, although the global economic crisis had negative impacts on the Dutch government’s education budget, their maintaining of a certain level of investment in this area showed the importance of education in their colonial policy. This helped sustain the operations of the existing education system, keeping it ready for recovery and development in the subsequent period.

### Educational policy after the economic crisis (1937-1942)

By 1937, the Netherlands had gradually recovered its economy after being affected by the global economic crisis for more than 6 years. The “strict” measures of the previous years had gradually been relaxed, and educational spending had been restored. Moreover, the Dutch government also pushed for the implementation of an educational policy with certain priorities to restore the education system in the Dutch East Indies (Suwignyo, 2013). One new point in the policy during this period was that the Dutch government established native MULO schools.

The purpose of these schools was to create a connection between Western education and indigenous education (Suwignyo, 2012, p. 156). Unlike Western-oriented MULO schools, where Dutch was the language of instruction and learning, native MULO schools used Malay, the local language, and Dutch. The curriculum of the native MULO schools lasted for 3 years. For students from remote areas, the colonial government also provided many subsidies, including free accommodation in dormitories (see Table 5 & 6).

### Table 5. Number of Village Schools in the period 1936-1939

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Schools</th>
<th>Teachers</th>
<th>Students</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1936-1937</td>
<td>14,501</td>
<td>18,180</td>
<td>1,478,125</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1937-1938</td>
<td>14,558</td>
<td>28,699</td>
<td>1,530,648</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1938-1939</td>
<td>14,780</td>
<td>29,561</td>
<td>1,613,838</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1939-1940</td>
<td>15,131</td>
<td>30,404</td>
<td>1,662,484</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Source:** Suwignyo, 2013

### Table 6. Indonesian students in Dutch language schools: 1936-1940

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Primary schools</th>
<th>MULO and other Secondary schools</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1935-1936</td>
<td>74,803</td>
<td>6,502</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1936-1937</td>
<td>78,184</td>
<td>6,666</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1937-1938</td>
<td>81,492</td>
<td>7,279</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1938-1939</td>
<td>84,509</td>
<td>8,692</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1939-1940</td>
<td>88,223</td>
<td>10,021</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Source:** Penders, 1968, p. 410.
Also during this time, both the colonial government and private organizations worked hard to build colleges, universities, as well as vocational schools. As a result, almost every province had a public university and private educational institutions. In addition, indigenous personnel training academies were also a high concern for the Dutch government. Thus, the reopening of many schools in many places in Indonesia in the second half of the 1930s shows the recovery after the years of recession caused by the Great Depression (Suwignyo, 2014). However, to participate in the management and administration of the colonial government, the natives had to meet certain conditions, including knowing Dutch, being trained in the Dutch style, and of course being loyal to the Dutch. However, there was still racial discrimination in education, training, and appointment of civil servants. At these educational institutions, only a very small number of indigenous students were exempted from tuition fees, while the rest had to pay very high tuition fees; whereas Dutch and Eurasians were exempted. This is why the number of Indonesians attending these schools was quite modest (Khanh, 2012, p.248).

Although Indonesia was strongly affected by the global economic crisis, however, when the economy recovered, the Dutch government, to a certain extent, still paid attention to the development of education in the colony and continued to implement it until 1942 when Japan attacked and took control of Indonesia. The Dutch government made efforts to revive and boost investment in education in Indonesia. The establishment of MULO schools for the indigenous people using bilingual instruction (Malay and Dutch) created new opportunities for Indonesians to access Western-style education. Simultaneously, the expansion of the village school (desa) system and vocational training facilities helped increase literacy rates and train a technical workforce for the economy. Although racial discrimination in access to education still existed, these policies laid an important foundation for the later development of education, meeting the country’s workforce needs and shaping a Western-educated Indonesian intellectual class.

4.4 Significance of the Study

This comprehensive study on Dutch educational policies in colonial Indonesia contributes significantly to the existing literature by providing a holistic understanding of the development, evolution, and impacts of these policies across the entire colonial period from 1799 to 1942. By examining the objectives, strategies, and outcomes of the Dutch education system, the research sheds light on the complex role played by education in the colonial context.

The findings elucidate how education was strategically employed as a tool by the Dutch colonial authorities to serve their interests, including training personnel for the administrative apparatus, propagating Western culture, and facilitating the process of cultural assimilation. However, the study also highlights the unintended consequences of these policies, as the Western-educated indigenous elite class that emerged played a pivotal role in fueling the nationalist movement against Dutch rule. Therefore, the research underscores the discriminatory nature of the Dutch education system, which favored the Dutch and Eurasian communities over the indigenous Indonesian population in terms of access, opportunities, and treatment. This aspect holds profound implications for understanding the dynamics of power, inequality, and social stratification within the colonial context.

By providing a comprehensive analysis of the various stages, reforms, and shifts in Dutch educational policies, this study contributes to a deeper understanding of the complex interplay between colonialism, education, and societal transformation in Indonesia. The findings offer valuable insights for scholars, policymakers, and educators seeking to comprehend the long-lasting impacts of colonial legacies on education systems and national development trajectories. Overall, this research serves as a significant contribution to the fields of colonial studies, educational history, and Indonesian studies, offering a nuanced perspective on the intricate relationships between education, power, and nation-building within the context of Dutch colonialism in Indonesia.
5. Conclusion

This study has provided a comprehensive overview of the Dutch educational policies throughout the colonial period in Indonesia (1799-1942). Through the analysis, the article shows that education played a crucial role in the Dutch colonial strategy in Indonesia, being utilized as a tool to train human resources, propagate Western culture, and promote the assimilation process. The research findings reveal that Dutch educational policies underwent various stages of development and reform. Initially, they focused on establishing a Western-style school system to train personnel to serve the colonial administrative machinery. Subsequently, they expanded the education system by establishing universities, vocational training schools, and implementing policies aimed at universalizing education for the indigenous population. However, Dutch educational policies were also characterized by discriminatory practices, favoring the Dutch and Europeans over Indonesians. Although the Dutch’s initial purpose was to serve the interests of the colonial government, their educational policies had far-reaching impacts on Indonesian society in the long run. These policies contributed to raising educational attainment and fostering a new class of Western-educated intellectuals in Indonesia, who played a significant role in the nationalist movement against Dutch rule later on.

For the future development of the Indonesian education system, several aspects need to be addressed: First, equity should be ensured by guaranteeing equal access to education for all, without discrimination based on ethnicity, religion, or social class. Education is a fundamental right of every citizen and the foundation for building a fair and civilized society (Murray, 2023). Second, quality must be enhanced by investing in improving infrastructure, training professional teaching staff, and continually updating curricula according to modern trends. A high-quality education system is crucial for training a globally competitive workforce. Third, the development orientation should aim for a harmonious combination of preserving traditional cultural identity while embracing modern scientific and technological advancements. Mass education should go hand in hand with training a high-quality workforce in key sectors, aligning with the country’s integration and development trends.

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