

# UNIFYING DIVERSITIES: EARLY INSTITUTIONAL FORMATION OF THE INDONESIAN NATIONAL EDUCATION SYSTEM, C. DECEMBER 1949–AUGUST 1950

*Agus Suwignyo\**

## ABSTRAK

*Tulisan ini mengulas proses penyatuan sistem persekolahan di Indonesia dari Desember 1949 hingga Agustus 1950. Penyatuan sistem pendidikan dalam kurun waktu delapan bulan mencerminkan dinamika pembentukan Negara Indonesia pada tahapnya yang paling dini. Proses indonesianisasi ini dikendalikan oleh kaum nasionalis dari pemerintahan Republik Indonesia di Yogyakarta. Perihal campur-tangan negara dalam pengajaran agama dan posisi sistem persekolahan bagi anak-anak non-Indonesia yang masih ada ketika itu mencuat sebagai dua dari persoalan paling serius yang menyertai proses sentralisasi kebijakan pendidikan. Tujuan tulisan ini adalah menelisik proses awal terbentuknya negara Indonesia melalui pembentukan sistem pendidikan nasional. Tulisan memanfaatkan arsip-arsip koleksi Arsip Nasional Republik Indonesia (ANRI) sebagai sumber data.*

**Kata Kunci:** *sistem pendidikan, penyatuan, Negara Indonesia Serikat (RIS), Negara Kesatuan Republik Indonesia (NKRI), pembentukan Negara*

## ABSTRACT

This paper explores the unification of the school system in Indonesia from December 1949 to August 1950. The unification of the educational system during this eight-month period reflected the Indonesian state formation in its earliest stage. It was a process of *indonesianization* in which the Indonesian Republicans in the Yogyakarta administration dominated the arena. State intervention in the teaching of religious courses and the position of the school system for non-Indonesian children were two of the most critical issues. At the same time, centralization of educational policy making was looming. The aim of this paper to examine the early process of the Indonesian state formation in education by making use of the archives disposed at ANRI that so far have been much neglected in the writing of the history of Indonesian education.

**Keywords:** *educational system, unification, Republic of the United States of Indonesia (RUSI), Unitary States of the Republic of Indonesia (USRI), state formation*

---

\* The History Department, Faculty of Cultural Sciences, Gadjah Mada University Yogyakarta

## INTRODUCTION

Between 1945 and 1949, there were two autonomous governments administering the geographical areas of what had been known as the Netherlands Indies during the pre-Second World War period (Anderson, 1983: 477-96). One was the so-called Netherlands Indies Civil Administration (NICA). In numerous documents published after 1947, this administration was also identified as the government of the Federal States of the Netherlands Indies. The other government was one of the Negara Kesatuan Republik Indonesia (NKRI, the Unitary State of the Republic of Indonesia/USRI), whose territory had predominantly included Central Java and Central Sumatra by December 1949. The two governments respectively had their own administrations and ministerial departments. Although archival sources indicate the precarious nature of public services, including education, in the jurisdiction of the USRI (henceforth Indonesian Republic), they also tend to show the relatively dominant position in policy making of the NICA. The 'dualistic' geographical views on the policy making officially ended in December 1949 when the Kingdom of the Netherlands transferred the authority over pre-war Netherlands Indies (except West Papua) to the government of the Republic of the United States of Indonesia (RUSI, or Republik Indonesia Serikat/RIS) (Secretariat-General of the Round Table Conference, 1949a). By then, the Indonesian people in general attained a world-wide recognition as an independent nation which was forming a sovereign state.

The transfer of authority conceptually strengthened the autonomy and the rights to self-determination the Indonesian people had claimed by the Declaration of Independence four years earlier. In practice, however, it marked the commencement of a tumultuous process of political unification at the national level which, more often than not, cost local uniqueness and characteristics. The years following the transfer of sovereignty made up the waves of the breaking of the dam of the older structure of the society. The havoc which resulted therein characterized

the public policy and practice until more than a decade later.

This paper deals with the tumultuous process of political unification in the educational system and policy making in Indonesia during a particularly brief period of eight months from December 1949 to the August 1950. This was when the RUSI was established and received the transfer of sovereignty but was immediately dissolved as the participating federal states merged into the Indonesian Republic, the USRI. This brief period was one of the most critical ones in the early years of the Indonesian state formation. Unfortunately it is often only touched in passing in the writing of Indonesian (education) history. Publications on the history of Indonesian education by Indonesian and non-Indonesian writers have generally overlooked the RUSI period of educational transition. One publication which addresses it in some details is *Sejarah Pendidikan di Indonesia Zaman Kemerdekaan* by Helius Sjamsuddin, Kosoh Sastradinata and H. Said Hamid Hasan. Chapter 2 of the publication by Sjamsuddin *cum sui* concerns the transition from the RUSI to the USRI educational systems (Helius Sjamsuddin, Kosoh Sastradinata and H. Said Hamid Hasan, 1993: 41-70). Unfortunately, this publication provides few sources, particularly *Sedjarah Pendidikan-an Indonesia* by Sutedjo Bradjanagara (1956) and *Pendidikan dalam Alam Indonesia Merdeka* by Soegarda Poerbakawatja (1970). Whereas Bradjanagara and Poerbakawatja presented an eyewitness perspective of the history of Indonesian education, the numerous archives preserved at the Arsip Nasional Republik Indonesia (ANRI) in Jakarta serve as valuable sources for another perspective of history on the topic concerned.

The aim of this paper is two-fold. It is to explore the early process of the Indonesian state formation in education by making use of the available related archival sources at the ANRI disposal that so far have been much neglected in the writing of the history of Indonesian education. The unification of the educational system during the afore-mentioned eight-month period was one of the first steps taken to achieve

the imagined Indonesian state. It showed the efforts of the government(s) to overcome the chaos in educational policy. Seen in a larger political context of the time, the unification of the educational system reflected the process of the Indonesian state formation and was part and parcel of the 'nation building', by which to unify the mind and the consciousness of the people. Keeping this in mind, the focus of this paper is to analyze an early stage of institutional formation of an educational system which would become *the* educational system of independent Indonesia. Historian M.C. Ricklefs (2008: 270) says that one lesson learnt from the four years of Indonesian revolution (1945-1949) was that 'Indonesia was not to be several things: neither a federal state, nor an Islamic state, nor a Communist state, nor above all a Dutch colony'. Here Ricklefs is perhaps referring to several 'landmark' political events in the Indonesia history from 1945 to 1950. The dissolution of the RUSI in 1950 apparently laid bare the rejection of a federal structure of the State. It concluded the resistance against the returning Dutch colonial power. Then, the discarding of the so-called Jakarta Charter in June 1945 was a sign that Indonesia would not be an Islamic state. The Jakarta Charter drafted a State ideology in which everyone embracing Islam was bound by a State law to observe the Islam syari'at. Finally, the inimical public reactions to the 1948 revolt of the Indonesian Communist Party in Madiun, East Java, indicated a common trend against a predominantly Communist-ruled state. From an Indonesian's perspective, the administrative unification of the USRI and the dissolution of the RUSI in 1950 completed the political revolution fought since 1945. Now Indonesia 'faced the prospect of shaping its own future' (Ricklefs, 2008: 273). Notwithstanding this, political independence was a paradox of hopes and realities. Soon after the transfer of sovereignty, the Indonesian political elite realized that there were fundamental issues which they had not had the opportunity to confront during the years of anti-colonialism and revolution but which would rise up to challenge them in the years following the political revolution (Ricklefs, 2008: 270). These issues concerned the

formation of the ideal *State* and its implication for the creation of the expected 'exemplary citizen' on the one hand, and the social realities affecting the competence, wellbeing and ideological consciousness of the majority of the Indonesian *Nation* on the other hand. It was then publicly realized that more than freedom from colonialism, oppression and poverty, the Indonesian people had desired freedom to achieve self-determination, dignity and equality among other world nations (Preamble to *Undang-Undang Dasar 1945*).

### FROM 'RUSI' TO 'USRI'

When the Kingdom of the Netherlands transferred sovereignty on December 27, 1949, the Republic of the United States of Indonesia (RUSI or RIS/Republik Indonesia Serikat) was the licit recipient (Secretariaat-Generaal van de Ronde Tafel Conferentie. 1949a-b). At the practical level, this event meant the replacement of the federal state of the Netherlands Indies by the RUSI, of which the Indonesian Republic was a member. Therefore, when the RUSI was dissolved in August 1950 because all participating federal states merged into the Indonesian Republic, the Netherlands post-war authority over the State in Indonesia also became null and void. The Indonesian Republic and the other federal states and territories re-grouped into the Unitary States of the Republic of Indonesia (USRI or NKRI/Negara Kesatuan Republik Indonesia).

Neither the RUSI provisional constitution nor the Charter of the Transfer of Sovereignty contains any clause, which affirms an imperative condition for the return of sovereignty to the Kingdom of the Netherlands should the RUSI be dissolved. The chairman of the Netherlands delegation to the Round Table Conference (RTC) was already aware of this 'point of no return'. In his speech during the opening ceremony of the RTC in The Hague on August 23, 1949, he said: 'This transfer of sovereignty, once having been effected, shall never again be revocable. Any idea that the sovereignty could even return to the Netherlands is excluded' (Secretariate General of the Round Table Conference, 1949b: 73-5). Accommodating the speech somewhat, Article 1 of the Charter of

Transfer of Sovereignty reads: 'The Kingdom of the Netherlands unconditionally and *irrevocably* [italics added] transfers complete sovereignty over Indonesia to the Republic of the United States of Indonesia and thereby recognizes [the] said Republic of the United States of Indonesia as an independent and sovereign State' (Secretariat-General of the Round Table Conference, 1949a: 9). From the perspective of the Republicans' 1945 Constitution (UUD 1945, article 1), the USRI achieved the ideal structure of the Indonesian Republic, which was proclaimed on August 17, 1945. Therefore, the USRI legacy dated back to the war, even the pre-war period. Its emergence and the *raison d'être* of its existence did not have anything to do with the political and military claims, which the post-war Netherlands had made to Indonesian territories.

Awareness of this position might help understand the setting and the course of educational policy and practice in Indonesia during the post-war period. Between 1945 and 1949, the making of educational policy was in the hands of different autonomous governments. The post-war Netherlands Indies Education Department in Batavia, which operated as an umbrella institution for the federal states and the territories outside the Indonesian Republic, had resumed its operations as early as 1947.

Six federal states and nine autonomous constitutional territories operated under the umbrella jurisdiction of the Netherlands Indies government (RUSI Provisional Constitution, article 2). The pertinent question is in how far these federal states actually existed and if so worked on the development of their education. Limited sources indicate that the East Indonesia State, one of the federal states, had had its own Department of Education since April 1947. Figure 1 shows the structure of the educational system of the East Indonesia State. In 1948 the Netherlands Indies government in Batavia proposed an educational budget of 133 million guilders to the Netherlands government in The Hague and projected 33 million of it to be assigned to the East Indonesia State (*De Volkskrant*, 13 November 1947). To what extent the educational system of the East Indonesia State ever

materialized is not known. In December 1948, the Dutch official C. Nooteboom observed that, however well established the East Indonesia State seemed to be, its government suffered from a severe lack of educated officials, its parliament was short of experienced politicians, and there was no clear set-up of any organized party system. The political arena was dominated by three principal groups, namely feudal princes and royal families, the Christian Ambonese and Minahassans, and sympathizers of the Indonesian Republic (Nooteboom, 1948). According to American analyst H. Arthur Steiner (1947, 624-52), the East Indonesia State and the other federal states which fell under the umbrella jurisdiction of the Netherlands Indies did not gain international recognition.

The Ministry of Instruction of the Indonesian Republic in Yogyakarta existed independently of Batavia (Kementerian Penerangan RI, 1955: 15-27). On November 11, 1947, Minister of Instruction Ali Sastroamidjojo established an advisory body for the formulation of an educational bill. This advisory body surveyed the aspirations of Indonesian (Republican) society. Its recommendation to the government came to be the basis of Fundamentals of Education and Instruction Act No. 4/1950 of the Indonesian Republic (*Arsip Sekretaris Kabinet-Undang-Undang* No. 105, p. 12). The educational law produced by the Republican administration during these revolutionary years would largely shape educational policy throughout Indonesia in the years to follow. Unfortunately, little is known about schooling practice in Republican jurisdiction, except that it was prone to disruption for the military mobilization necessitated by Dutch attacks on the capital, Yogyakarta.

The ratification of the Charter of Transfer of Sovereignty in December 1949 was decisive to the future educational programme. According to the Statute agreed, the RUSI and the Kingdom of the Netherlands would co-operate in promoting cultural and educational developments in the two countries (Secretariat-General of the Round Table Conference. 1949a: 10-5). Such co-operation would encompass exchanges of professors, teachers and experts in the field of

science, education, tuition and the arts (Secretariat-General of the Round Table Conference. 1949a: 37-40). The RUSI government should take over all the civil servants (including school teachers) formerly in the service of the Netherlands Indies government. In future, the two governments could freely recruit personnel for the civil services from among each other's nationals and in each other's jurisdiction (Secretariat-General of the Round Table Conference. 1949a: 50-3).

### **CENTRALIZING THE SYSTEM, MONOPOLIZING THE POWER**

Soon after the transfer of sovereignty, the RUSI government in Jakarta—consisting of a president, a premier and fifteen ministers (Simanjuntak, 2003: 91-107; Kementerian Penerangan RI, 1955: 30-35)—began work on the elaboration of the transitional measures and other agreements it had reached with the Kingdom of the Netherlands. Abu Hanifah of the Masyumi, a political party, served as the RUSI minister of Education, Instruction and Culture. Deriving its legacy from the former Education Department of the Netherlands Indies administration, the RUSI Education Department inherited the bulk of the educational reform plan Batavia had begun to implement in 1947, with its emphasis on higher education expansion, the establishment of the centre for national culture, and making headway in illiteracy eradication (Kementerian Penerangan RI, 1955: 44-5). However, the political dynamics of the federal states, both inside and outside the territories of the Indonesian Republic, edged Indonesia away from the RUSI construction.

On February 8, 1950, the Indonesian Republican premier, Abdul Halim, presented the programmes of his cabinet to the *Badan Pekerja*—the Working Body or the provisional parliament of the Republic in Yogyakarta. The Republican government would continue to work on achieving the ideal unitary structure of State to cover the entire jurisdiction of Indonesia (the RUSI jurisdiction). The democratization of political life and administration would be achieved by calling general elections. In the meantime, in order

to comply with the 1945 Constitution of the Indonesian Republic, the government was planning to set up strategic programmes to effect a prosperous society. Those taking part in defending the Republic would be compensated. The school children who had participated in the war mobilization would be exempted from re-starting the classes they had missed in public schools; they would be admitted directly in the year which they should have been. 'The government was bound to develop the spiritual as well as the intellectual capacities of the people,' the educational programmes of Halim Cabinet read. It would expand religious and school education (*Arsip Kabinet Perdana Menteri Republik Indonesia Yogya* No. 63; Simanjuntak, 2003: 106-7; Kementerian Penerangan RI, 1955: 44).

The programmes of the Halim Cabinet's invited a wide range of critical feedback from the twenty-one members of the *Badan Pekerja*. The response to the feedback which Halim announced during the parliamentary meeting on February 16 demonstrates this point (*Arsip Kabinet PMRI Yogya* No. 9). The programme devised to realize the unitary structure of State was given whole-hearted support by the eleven members of the *Badan Pekerja*. Halim assured the *Badan Pekerja* members that the (Republican) 'government would take active, vigilant and careful measures' to achieve the objects of this programme (*Arsip Kabinet PMRI Yogya* No. 9: 4). He said that the Republican government endorsed the proposal sent forward by Sudiono and Asrarudin, both *Badan Pekerja* members. Asrarudin, who represented the Trade Union, suggested that the government should nationalize foreign and domestic companies which were vital to improving people's living standard. For his part, Sudiono said the Republican government should encourage the RUSI government to nationalize strategic companies all over Indonesia. Although saying that the government endorsed the proposal, Halim also reminded the *Badan Pekerja* members that nationalization was not the only way to achieve an economic progress. Before nationalizing any companies, the Republican government would empower the agricultural and plantation

sectors and the small- and medium-scale enterprises, like the batik industries (*Arsip Kabinet PMRI Yogya* No. 9: 7-11). Unfortunately, Halim gave only a short response to educational issues. He said education was the principal foundation of economic progress. The government would focus on schooling which improved the people's skills and knowledge of agriculture (*Arsip Kabinet PMRI Yogya* No. 9: 7).

The educational programme of the Halim Cabinet, as set out in the job description of his ministries, seemed to be less political than implied in the parliamentary debate (*Arsip Kabinet PMRI Yogya* No. 63: 4). The Republican government would redefine the characteristics, sorts and contents of formal schooling and extra-mural education. Policy would embrace formal, adult and social education, but not the religious instruction, which was to remain in the domain of the Department of Religious Affairs. The government would develop strategic measures by which to support and supervise existing schools, including those for non-Indonesians. Schoolbooks would be printed on a large scale and study materials were to be purchased. Public libraries would be made available even in rural areas. The government would compile statistics in order to obtain quantitative figures of the educational situation in the Republican territories during the 'Revolution years'. Last but not least, the government would develop cultural centres and would work on international co-operation in education and culture. The education department of Halim's administration, which bore the same name as that of the RUSI, was chaired by S. Mangunsarkoro of the Partai Nasional Indonesia (Indonesian National Party).

Although it would take time to implement the entire educational programme, the Republican education department worked fast on strategic issues. Five weeks after the transfer of sovereignty, it began to centralize educational management in the Republican territories in Sumatra. The purpose of this policy was 'to guarantee a standardized level of quality education' throughout the Republican territories. Until January 1, 1950, the Commissariat of the (Republican) Central Government in Bukittinggi

was responsible for the supervision and administration of schools in Sumatra. After this date, the Department of Education in Yogyakarta assumed the authority of Bukittinggi over these schools. It began on February 6, with public senior high schools and the six-year teacher training schools (*Sekolah Guru A* or SGA) in the provinces of Aceh (Kotaraja), Tapanuli (Padang Sidempuan and Tarutung), Central Sumatra (Bukittinggi and Padang Panjang), and southern Sumatra (Bengkulu). The transfer of junior high schools followed on March 28. The Republican central government would subsequently assume the financial responsibility for those schools (*Arsip Kabinet PMRI Yogya* No. 12).

In April 1950, the centralization policy was elaborated in far greater detail and made effective in all territories, including the State of East Java, which had joined the Indonesian Republic by then. The central government and autonomous local administrations agreed to share different portions of responsibility. The composition of educational curricula, schoolbooks, requirements for teacher recruitment and student admission, all fell under the authority of the central government. The central government also held the authority of supervise, evaluate and finance, in short, to set a national standard of education. The provincial government took charge of the founding and the administration of *Sekolah Rakyat*, the primary school of the Republican type. It also had to establish training programmes for teachers who would work for the compulsory education project. In the extra-mural sphere, it bore responsibility for the founding, administration and maintenance of community learning centres and the public libraries, as well as for matters concerning the local youth and the arts. One stage higher, the regency government was to establish centres for compulsory education and illiteracy eradication programmes. It should also establish centres for community learning, the arts and public libraries, all with a focus on local needs and characteristics. Under this regulation, the lowest administrative level, the *desa*, was not accorded any particular educational responsibility (*Arsip Kabinet PMRI* No. 269).

The aim of such a division of responsibility, the Education minister S. Mangunsarkoro said, was 'not to reduce the autonomy of local or regional administrations'. The division of responsibility, which put preponderance of authoritative aspects on the central government, was devised to promote the uniformity of the system and to standardize the quality of education. In this respect, Mangunsarkoro stated, the position of the primary school was critical as it was the basis for education at higher levels. Therefore primary school should be under national aegis. Another consideration was that the financial capability of one regency was not that of another, so that their competence to handle primary education might vary. Although this was often the case, subsidiary assistance between regencies was out of the question because each of them was autonomous. For example, the transfer of school teachers from regency to another which needed more teachers was hindered by the teachers' status as the employees of certain regency. The transfer of some authority to the central government would solve these problems, Mangunsarkoro believed (*Arsip Kabinet PMRI* No. 269: 1-2).

The Indonesian Teachers Association (PGRI, *Persatuan Guru Republik Indonesia*) insisted that the central government take over the authority for primary school entirely, but the government decided to raise the administrative authority from the regency to the provincial level. It did no more than assume a supervisory authority. Mangunsarkoro was convinced that the regency should continue to play a critical role in compulsory education and illiteracy eradication. These programmes, if successful, could be transformed into primary education, which would then have to be handed over to the provincial government (*Arsip Kabinet PMRI* No. 269: 1-2). Later, in November 1951, the policy governing the distribution and sharing of educational authority was finalized and made fully binding all over Indonesia, when the government ratified *Peraturan Pemerintah* (Government Regulation) No. 65/1951 (*Arsip Peraturan Pemerintah* No. 97).

## **TO TAKE A SIDE OR TO STAND NEUTRAL?**

In the meantime, the afore-mentioned educational Act No. 4/1950 caused a public outcry about religious instruction. The Law recognized the individual right of schoolchildren to receive instruction in their religion. To comply, public schools would have to provide religious lessons for pupils according to their respective religions. Private schools held full authority to decide what religious lessons were most suitable to their institutional ideology. Consequently, in private schools schoolchildren—regardless of the religion they adhered to—would most probably be instructed in the religion on which their school based its educational values. However, the Educational Act did not lay down whether or not the children were obliged to follow religious lessons. It was up to the children and their parents to decide whether they wanted to attend a religious lesson. Under the Act, a success or failure mark in religious lessons should not be a component in the school exams. In short, under the Educational Act No. 4/1950 the State recognized the people's religious beliefs by letting them exercise freedom of choice in religious instruction (*Arsip Sekretaris Kabinet bagian Undang-Undang* No. 105).

The 'neutral' position adopted towards religious education by the State in the Educational Act provoked resistance from the *Partai Sarikat Islam Indonesia* (PSII) and the *Masyumi*. In its motion of April 25, 1950, PSII insisted that the government review and reconsider the implementation of the Act, especially regarding the teaching of Islam. The PSII argued that school education should provide both temporal and religious learning. 'PSII opposes any educational system which humiliates mankind,' the motion reads, implying that the Act No. 4/1950 should meet this condition (*Arsip Kabinet PMRI Yogya* No. 270).

An even more explicit motion had been adopted by the *Masyumi* two days earlier, on April 23. The *Masyumi* refused to accept the Educational Act because it did not contain any

article which made religious education at school compulsory. 'By not making religious lessons a compulsory subject for schoolchildren, the government is jeopardizing the future life of the Indonesian people, in particular Muslims. The government has made a policy which diverges from the first principle of the State ideology, the Pancasila,' the Masyumi motion states. The motion of the Masyumi declares that the draft of the Law had only been approved by the Badan Pekerja in early 1949, following the walk-out of the Masyumi members from parliamentary debates. At that time, it had immediately elicited resistance throughout the Republican territories. In Sumatra, Mohammad Sjafei of the nationalist NIS school in Kayutanam was in the van of the defiance. He submitted what was known as the Sumatra Memorandum to Minister of Instruction, Ali Sastroamidjojo. He was followed by the Military Governor of Aceh who submitted another statement, the Aceh Memorandum, to Minister S. Mangunsarkoro. Soekarno, who was still the president of the Republic in early 1949, did not ratify the educational law already passed by the parliament because he was aware of the Muslim reaction. Assaat, who acted as the Republican president replacing Soekarno in December 1949, had no such qualms and ratified the educational law so making it effective and binding throughout the Republic. 'We condemn the Acting-President for not realizing the potential danger arising from the educational Act,' the Masyumi motion reads. 'We call on all members of the Masyumi to continue to resist the implementation of the Act' (*Arsip Kabinet PMRI Yogya No. 270*). Act No. 4/1950 was perhaps the most critical source of dispute about school policy in the Republican politics during the first few months after the RUSI was established but the archives available do not indicate whether the dispute affected the centralization policy on which the government was working.

#### **AND THE 'GRASSROOT' RESPONDED**

During this period, the political dynamics outside government offices were gaining ground against the federal administration of the RUSI.

As early as January 20, 1950, the Bogor Chapter of the Ikatan Pemuda Pelajar Indonesia (IPPI, Association of Indonesian Students and Youth) stated it could not accept the administrative system which resulted from the RTC agreements and included all schools in the area of Bogor in the Pasundan State administration. The IPPI insisted the RI government in Yogyakarta 'take the necessary measures to resume control of the supervision and management of schools in Bogor'. The IPPI claimed to represent students of the junior and senior high schools, the teachers' schools and the domestic science schools for girls in the area of Bogor.

The IPPI stated that the Pasundan State of West Java was not the creation of the people. Nor was its foundation inspired by the will of the people. The IPPI could not comply with the RTC agreements which affirmed that higher education should be under the direct supervision and management of the central RUSI government in Jakarta, while the supervision and management of secondary and primary education would remain on the hands of the federal states. As the jurisdiction of the Pasundan State also covered the RUSI capital Jakarta, the IPPI feared the Pasundan State government would favour schools in the Jakarta area above those in other areas under its jurisdiction. 'Students in Bogor are no less enthusiastic in pursuing education than those in Jakarta,' the IPPI motion read (*Arsip Kabinet PMRI Yogya No. 25*).

The Corps Peladjar Siliwangi (CPS, the Siliwangi Students Corp) and the Corps Peladjar Daerah Bogor (CP, the Bogor Students Corps) issued another motion on February 11, 1950. The majority of the members of these two bodies were ex-members of the *Tentara Peladjar* (TP, Students Brigade) of the Indonesian Republic. Before joining the TP, many of them were students of transitional public schools in the Republican area of West Java under the terms of the Renville Agreement. The CPS and the CP urged the Republican government in Yogyakarta to take 'concrete action' about sending the ex-members of the TP back to school. The CPS and CP motions read:



'There should be regulations like those in Central and East Java concerning the education of former TP members in West Java as soon as possible. The Indonesian Republic Department of Education has put an announcement in the daily *Merdeka* of February 6, inviting ex-TP members in Central Java to return to school. We, the students in West Java and especially those in Bogor, do not want to lag behind of our counterparts in Central Java. The Republican government has to take action as soon as possible because the Residency of Bogor decided in January [1950] to sever its relationship with the Pasundan State administration and to return to the Indonesian Republic' (*Arsip Kabinet PMRI Yogya No. 29*).

In Yogyakarta, in a speech he delivered during the Taman Siswa Congress on March 1-5, 1950, Ki Hadjar Dewantara criticized the RTC results, especially Articles 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 15, 16 and 17 of the Cultural Agreement between the RUSI and the Kingdom of the Netherlands. His point was that the RTC agreements would open the way for the return of the colonial power. It was not an exchange between equal partners. The agreement about the exchange of professors and experts would never be carried out in its true sense; because Indonesia did not (yet) have professors and experts, what would happen instead of exchange was that Dutch professors and experts would flood into Indonesia. Dutch newspapers, books and reading materials would dominate Indonesian literacy. The cultural agreements, although explicitly aiming to promote equal co-operation and exchange, would imply the covert practice of colonialism. Therefore, 'because the RUSI is bound to the agreements with the Netherlands, it is the Indonesian Republic which has to prevent the danger [of returning colonialism]. The Taman Siswa repudiates the RTC agreements and will help the Republic abort them' (*Arsip Kabinet PMRI Yogya No. 107*).

### **THE MELTING STATE(S)**

Whether this statement by Ki Hadjar Dewantara made an impact on the government policy is not known. Nor do the archival sources I collected indicate whether the Cultural Agreement

between the RUSI and the Netherlands elicited any reaction in the jurisdictions outside the Pasundan State and the Indonesian Republic. This incident nevertheless presents a relevant background to the process of the homogenization of education which happened next. In June 1950, a Joint Commission was formed by representatives of the RUSI and the Indonesian Republic Departments of Education (Table 1). The task of the Joint Commission was to discuss the structure of the school system and the structure of the Education Ministry of the Unitary State, and to deal with the status of educational officials and employees after administrative unification. In its report signed by Hadi, Chairman of the Republican delegates, the Commission stated out that the legality of its existence was based on the Government Instruction on 'the merger of the ministries' (*Arsip Kabinet PMRI Yogya No. 62*).

Details of the basis for the formation of the Joint Commission are found in the explanatory addendum to Law No. 12/1954 on the passing of Law No. 4/1950 of the Indonesian Republic. It is explained that on May 19, 1950, the prime ministers Mohammad Hatta of the RUSI and Abdul Halim of the Indonesian Republic, signed a Charter of Agreement covering three points. First, both governments agreed to merge to form a unitary structure of the State, which had been the ideal of the Proclamation of Independence of August 17, 1945. Secondly, until the USRI established its own laws, the existing federal laws should remain effective in the respective federal territories. However, it was strongly encouraged that those federal states should seek to adopt the laws which were already effective in the Republican jurisdiction. Finally, both premiers agreed to form joint commissions, which would take care of the merging of corresponding ministries of the two administrations (*Arsip Sekretaris Kabinet bagian Undang-Undang No. 105: 3*). It was on the basis of this Charter that the Joint Commission of the education departments was formed.

Table 1: The RUSI and RI Education Ministries Joint Commission

RUSI representatives		RI representatives	
Name	Position at RUSI Education Department	Name	Position at RI Education Department
Soemitro Reksodipoetro	Secretary General	Hadi	Secretary General
Soekanto	Chief, Public Affairs	Soegardo Poerbokawotjo	Inspector General
A. Bachtiar	Chief, Instruction Affairs	Soetedjo Brodjonagoro	Chief, Mass Education
Sadarjoen Siswomartojo	Chief, Education Affairs	Soedarsono	Chief, Cultural Affairs
S. Soemardjo	Chief, Cultural Affairs	Soejono Kromodimoeljo	Chief, Personnel Affairs
X.S.M. Ondang	Chief, Personnel Affairs		

Source: 'Laporan Singkat Pekerjaan2 Panitia Bersama Kementerian2 PPK RI dan RIS', *Arsip Kabinet PMRI Yogya No. 62*.

During its first meeting in Jakarta from June 2 to 3, the Joint Commission members agreed to use the school system of the Indonesian Republic in all Indonesian territory (*Arsip Kabinet PMRI Yogya No. 62: 1 & Appendix A*). This would be effective commencing with the School Year 1950/1951, which began on July 31, 1950. Under the agreement, all other types of schools would be abandoned. The Republican school system itself would subject to continuous review and improvement. Table 2 presents a list of the types of schools which had to go and those which replaced them (*Arsip Kabinet PMRI Yogya No. 12*).

The institutional organization of the new Education Department would consist of a top

management, an administrative office, offices running formal education, non-formal education, culture, and infrastructure, and a division dealing with educational and teaching research. This decision was made during the second meeting of the Joint Commission in Yogyakarta from June 27 to 29, 1950 (*Arsip Kabinet PMRI Yogya No. 62: 1*). The institutional organization was agreed to be centralized in nature. The decision making was in the hands of central offices and the co-ordination and the supervision would be carried out by their corresponding subordinate offices at provincial and regency levels. For the national working programme, the Commission adopted the educational programme of the Halim Cabinet (*Arsip Kabinet PMRI Yogya No. 62*).

Table 2: Abolished and surviving schools as of July 31, 1950

Abolished school	Surviving school
Elementary education:	
1. Algemene Lagere School	
2. Lagere School	
3. Sekolah Rakjat	Sekolah Rakjat (national elementary school)
4. Sekolah Reger	
5. Hollands Chinese School	
6. Hollands Arabische School	
General secondary education:	
1. Meer Uitgebreid Lager Onderwijs (MULO)	
2. Middelbare School	Sekolah Menengah (Junior High School)
3. Indonesische Middelbare School	
4. Sekolah Menengah	
5. Hogere Burger School	
6. Algemene Middelbare School	
7. Voorbereidend Hoger Onderwijs	Sekolah Menengah (High School)

Abolished school	Surviving school
Teachers' education:	
1. Kweekschool Nieuwe Stijl	Sekolah Guru enam tahun (SGA, six-year Teacher Training School)
2. Normaalschool	Sekolah Guru empat tahun (SGB, four-year Teacher Training School)
3. Opleiding van Volksonderwijzers/essen	(merged with SGB)
4. Optrekcursus Kweekschool Nieuwe Stijl	Kursus Persamaan SGA (Courses equivalent to SGA)
5. Optrekcursus Normaalschool	Kursus Persamaan SGB (Courses equivalent to SGB)
Technical education:	
1. Middelbare Technische School	Sekolah Tehnik Menengah (STM, Senior Engineering High School)
2. Technische School	Sekolah Tehnik (ST, Junior Engineering High School)
3. Ambachtsschool	Sekolah Pertukangan (S.Ptk., Technical School)
4. Sekolah Tehnik Rendah	(idem)
Domestic science education for girls:	
1. Opleidingschool Vakonderwijzeressen	Sekolah Guru Kepandaian Putri (SGKP, Training School for teachers of Household Education School for Girls)
2. Sekolah Kepandaian Gadis	Sekolah Kepandaian Puteri (SKP, Household Education School for Girls)
3. Primaire Nijverheidsschool	(idem)
4. Opleidingschool Hulpvakonderwijzeressen	Kursus Guru Keradjinan Wanita (Courses for teachers of Household Education for Girls)
Trade and Economics education:	
1. Primaire Handelsschool	Sekolah Dagang (SD, Trade School)
2. Secundaire Handelschool	(idem)
3. Tertiaire Handelschool (Middelbare Handelschool)	Sekolah Ekonomi Menengah (SEM, Secondary High School in Economics)
Physical education:	
1. Opleiding Lagere Akte voor het geven van Lichaamsoefeningen	Sekolah Guru Pendidikan Djasmani (SGPD, Training School for teachers of Physical Education)
2. Applicatie cursus Lichaamsoefeningen	Courses of Physical Education

Source: 'Putusan Menteri Pendidikan, Pengadjaran dan Kebudayaan Republik Indonesia No. 5122/B', *Arsip Kabinet PMRI Yogya No. 12 (ANRI)*

In this process of merger, the schools for non-Indonesian children and the status of the educational officials and teachers emerged as crucial issues. The Joint Commission stated that the new government to be formed in Indonesia would recognize but differentiate between Indonesian citizens and foreigners. Places at public schools would be available to all Indonesian citizens, would use Indonesian as the language of instruction, and would teach Indonesian history from an Indonesian perspective (*Arsip Kabinet PMRI Yogya No. 62: 2 & Appendix B*).

The Indonesian government would not run specific schools for foreigners. However, it permitted foreigners to run their own schools up to the end of the 1949/1950 School Year. Beginning the 1950/1951 School Year, these schools for foreigners had to become private institutions. All private schools had to have the Indonesian language at least as a course subject. If the educational curriculum of the public schools was adopted, these private schools would receive a government subsidy. Last but not least, the government would hold supervisor authority over

these schools (*Arsip Kabinet PMRI Yogya No. 62*).

The unification of employees in education was problematic. 'The employees will feel unsettled because of the possibility of positions being transferred or even rationalized,' the Commission report reads (*Arsip Kabinet PMRI Yogya No. 62: 2*). Indonesian employees of the RUSI could not simply be affiliated to corresponding positions in the Republican administration. Dutch employees had to be strictly selected for re-employment, among other criteria for their mastery of the Indonesian language. There would be a rigorous determination whether these employees truly matched the new requirements and demands. Because of the complicated nature of the issue, the Joint Commission could not make a final decision about the status of the RUSI employees. The chairman of the RUSI delegates to the Joint Commission, Soemitro Reksodipoetro, and the RUSI minister of education, Abu Hanifah, suggested that the Commission hand the employee issue over to the education minister of the Unitary Republican government, which would soon be established (*Arsip Kabinet PMRI Yogya No. 62: 2*). Despite their recommendation, the Joint Commission decided that, for the duration of two years starting December 27, 1949, the government would cover half the number of the teaching staff of the primary schools for non-Indonesian children (*Arsip Kabinet PMRI Yogya No. 62: 2*).

The government opened vacancies for Dutch teachers who wanted to enter Republican service. Commencing with 1950/1951 School Year, these Dutch teachers were only allowed to teach in Indonesian. To allow them to do so, special courses in the language were offered. Dutch teachers who specialized in Pedagogy for Lower and Secondary Education—as shown by Lager Onderwijs Akte or Middelbare Onderwijs Akte—were recruited by the government. They were to train Indonesian teachers, who would teach in secondary schools. Other Dutch teachers would be subjected to a strict selection process (*Arsip Kabinet PMRI Yogya No. 62: 2*).

By August 11, 1950, the process of merger or unification had almost been completed. Joint representative offices of the Department of Education were established in Surabaya, Bandung and Palembang. The Surabaya office handled the transition of education in the former States of East Java and Madura, as well as in the former Dajak autonomous constitutional territories of South and East Kalimantan. The Bandung office handled the transition in the former Pasundan State, and the Palembang office that in the former South Sumatra State. An educational inspector assumed office in Semarang to deal with the former autonomous constitutional territory of Central Java. The government would evaluate the process of school re-organization in the Republican Sumatra territories of Aceh, Tapanuli, Medan, Padang, and Bengkulu. Representative offices of education followed in other states and territories, like Bangka and Belitung as well as the East Indonesian State. Later these were upgraded to provincial offices of educational inspection (*Arsip Kabinet PMRI Yogya No. 62: 1*).

The Republican Education Department in Yogyakarta came to the fore in the decision making in step with the unification process, co-ordinating with the RUSI Education Department in Jakarta. It made sure that those representative offices followed the Republican school system as presented in Table 2. In the new educational curriculum, history lessons were reformed 'to educate children to be good Indonesian citizens and principled persons'. The Dutch language was completely dropped from schools so that it was no longer even a course subject. The government allowed the use of Dutch up to the 1949/1950 School Year only in the HBS, the AMS and other secondary schools like the VHO (*Voorbereidend Hoger Onderwijs*). If they wanted to continue the use of Dutch, these schools had to opt to become private schools and, as formerly indicated, were required to teach Indonesian as a course subject. The Republican government also agreed that the RUSI Education Department should organize the final examination of the 1949/1950 School Year

for the schools in the federal territories, but it would supervise the exam materials. Only non-Indonesian students would have to sit the final examination on Dutch. Indonesian students were obliged to sit an exam on Indonesian (*Arsip Kabinet PMRI Yogya* No. 62: 1-2).

The Education Department ensured that the literacy programmes were operating all over Indonesia. This task included overseeing the programmes of illiteracy eradication and community education at the regency as well as the provincial levels. Representative offices and educational inspectorates were encouraged to open public libraries in which Indonesian literature and reading materials would be accessible to the people. They also had to initiate and support reading clubs in urban and rural communities. It was reported that, by August 1950, East Java had moved fast in establishing centres for community learning and running public libraries. Perhaps for nationalist sentiments, the East Java local authorities closed down Dutch public libraries (the Taman Pustaka Belanda) in the territory, made a list of all the books and reading materials, and collected these books and materials at the provincial inspection office in Surabaya (*Arsip Kabinet PMRI Yogya* No. 62: 2-3). It is not known what happened to these books and reading materials. Nor is there any record of how other territories worked out details on the educational programmes.

## CONCLUSION

Within a relatively short period of eight months, the educational policy making had been centralized and increasingly homogenized throughout the country. This process of centralization and homogenization was also a process of *Indonesianization*. Indonesians or, more specifically, the Indonesian Republicans in the Yogyakarta administration, now dominated the arena of educational policy making and determined the educational goals. The institutional organization, the educational system, curricula and the school personnel were all transformed into what the Republicans claimed to be of an

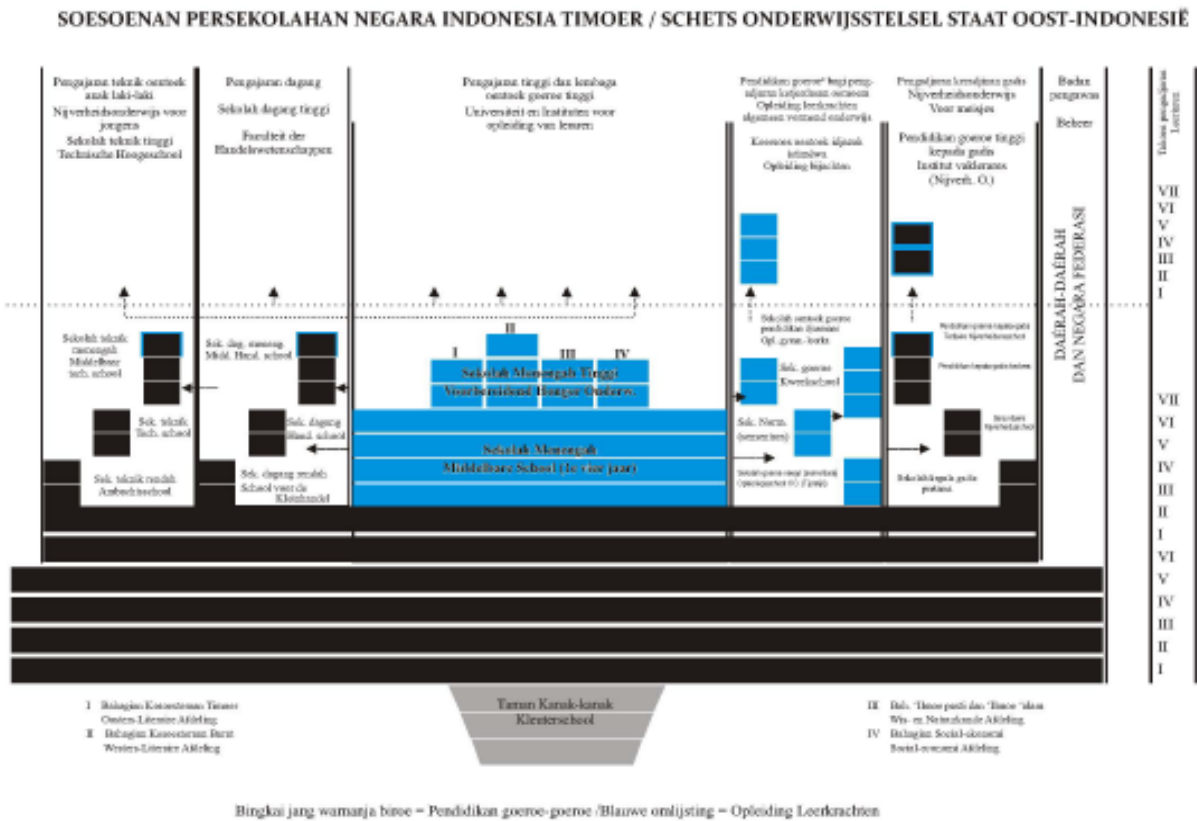
Indonesian character. For the second time after 1942, the Indonesian language replaced Dutch as the language of instruction in all primary schools. The Dutch school system, its students and teachers, once the major focus of public educational policy in the Batavia-controlled federal territories, were now marginalized and superseded by Indonesian (Republican) dominated politics. The *Indonesianization* of education in the early 1950s showed the nationalist inspirations to unite Indonesian people and to stimulate their sense of identity. On the other hand, the sudden and abrupt removal of Dutch language, teachers and school system also meant a closure of the gateway to the West for Indonesians.

## REFERENCES

- Anderson, Benedict R. O'G. 1983. "Old State, New Society: Indonesia's New Order in Comparative Historical Perspective", *The Journal of Asian Studies* Vol. 42, No. 3, May, pp. 477-496.
- Arsip Kabinet Perdana Menteri Republik Indonesia Yogya* No. 9 (collection of *Arsip Nasional Republik Indonesia/ANRI*)
- Arsip Kabinet PMRI Yogya* No. 12 (ANRI)
- Arsip Kabinet PMRI Yogya* No. 25 (ANRI)
- Arsip Kabinet PMRI Yogya* No. 29 (ANRI)
- Arsip Kabinet PMRI Yogya* No. 62 (ANRI)
- Arsip Kabinet PMRI Yogya* No. 63 (ANRI)
- Arsip Kabinet PMRI Yogya* No. 107 (ANRI)
- Arsip Kabinet PMRI* No. 269 (ANRI).
- Arsip Kabinet PMRI Yogya* No. 270 (ANRI)
- Arsip Peraturan Pemerintah* No. 97 (ANRI)
- Arsip Sekretaris Kabinet-Undang-Undang* No. 105 (ANRI)
- Bradjanagara, Sutedjo. 1956. *Sedjarah Pendidikan Indonesia*. Jogjakarta: Badan Kongres Pendidikan Indonesia.
- Kementerian Penerangan RI. 1955. *Kabinet-Kabinet Republik Indonesia*. Djakarta: Pertjetakan Negara.
- Nooteboom, C. 1948. *Oost-Indonesië: Een Staat in Wording: Uittreksel van 'Zaire' December 1948*. Bruxelles: Editions Universitaires.
- Poerbakawatja, Soegarda. 1970. *Pendidikan dalam Alam Indonesia Merdeka*. Jakarta: Gunung Agung.
- Ricklefs, M.C. 2008. *A History of Modern Indonesia Since c. 1200*. 4th Edition. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Secretariat-General of the Round Table Conference. 1949a. *Round Table Conference: Results as Accepted in the Second Plenary Meeting Held on 2 November*

- 1949 in the 'Ridderzaal' at The Hague. The Hague: Government Printing Office.
- Secretariate General of the Round Table Conference, 1949b. *Speeches Delivered at the Solemn Opening of the Round Table Conference, The Hague, August 23, 1949*. The Hague: Secretariate General of the Round Table Conference.
- Secretariaat-Generaal van de Ronde Tafel Conferentie. 1949a. *Ronde Tafel Conferentie te 'S-Gravenhage 1949: Feiten en Documenten*. Den Haag: Secretariaat-Generaal van de Ronde Tafel Conferentie.
- Secretariaat-Generaal van de Ronde Tafel Conferentie. 1949b. *Rules and Procedure for the Round Table Conference at The Hague*. Den Haag: Secretariaat-Generaal van de Ronde Tafel Conferentie.
- Simanjuntak, P.N.H. 2003. *Kabinet-Kabinet Republik Indonesia dari Awal Kemerdekaan sampai Reformasi*. Jakarta: Penerbit Djambatan.
- Sjamsuddin, Helius, Sastradinata, Kosoh, and Hasan, H. Said Hamid. 1993. *Sejarah Pendidikan di Indonesia Zaman Kemerdekaan*. Jakarta: Departemen Pendidikan dan Kebudayaan
- Steiner, H. Arthur. 1947. 'Post-War Government of the Netherlands East Indies', *The Journal of Politics* Vol. 9 No. 4, Nov, pp. 624-652.
- Undang-Undang Dasar Negara Republik Indonesia Tahun 1945
- Volkskrant*, 13 November 1947, 'Paedagogische Problemen in Indonesië: Grote en Spontane Belangstelling voor Scholen en Onderwijs', page unknown.

Appendix 1: Structure of the educational system of the East Indonesia State



Source: *Madjalah Kita Tahoen II* No. 8 (1 Juli 1948), supplement page.