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The Great Depression and the changing trajectory of public education policy in Indonesia, 1930–42

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From the turn of the century up until the 1930s, public education under Dutch rule in Indonesia developed both quantitatively and qualitatively, but this expansion was interrupted, and even reversed, by the onset of the Great Depression. Focusing on schoolteachers in particular, this essay examines the trajectory of education policies in colonial Indonesia in response to the crisis, from the initial measures, to partial recovery in the mid-1930s, up to the Japanese invasion of 1942. The crisis ushered in the policy of indigenisation, which saw large-scale education reorganisation, including the substitution of European teachers with much lower paid Indonesians. Indigenisation was also a political response to the spreading of nationalist ideals through the growing number of independent schools run by Taman Siswa and the Muhammadiyah. Hence, the intention was also to transform Indonesian teachers into cultural agents who would propagate a government-formulated concept of cultural identity among their own community. However, indigenisation contributed to the gradual delegitimisation of colonial authority through the exodus of well-educated Indonesians who had been intended as docile imperial subjects.

Introduction

At the end of the 1920s the Dutch Indies government launched a new policy, *concordantie* (concordance), aimed at making Dutch-language public education in Indonesia equivalent to that in the Netherlands. The concordant education system was designed such that a leaving certificate issued by a Dutch-language school in Indonesia would enable its holder to continue at a corresponding school of a higher level in the Netherlands without having to sit for the Dutch matriculation. The *concordantie* program completed the series of education reforms which the government had undertaken since the turn of the twentieth century. When the *concordantie* program began, public schools in Indonesia had expanded in number and gradually improved in quality to an extent that the historian I.J. Brugmans was to claim in 1938 that the changes which had taken place in the first two decades of the twentieth

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century 'were much more than all the changes in the previous three centuries combined'.[1] Now, in the late 1920s, public education in Indonesia was to be accredited to an equivalent level to that in Europe. Although the program was meant only for the elite schools — where Dutch was used as the language of instruction and thus strengthened the dualistic education system which discriminated against the indigenous majority — the breakthrough policy is worth mentioning as the first case of the internationalisation of education in Indonesia.

The Great Depression severely impacted this vision of educational internationalisation in the late 1920s Indonesia, however. The crisis and political tensions that followed were to force the government to cut its education budget drastically and significantly alter its long-term strategy for education in the Indies. Even the latter had to be aborted when the Japanese invaded Java in March 1942, ending Dutch rule.

The immense impact of the Great Depression on education in Indonesia has been neglected by scholars who have dealt with multiple dimensions of the crisis in relation to economic growth, political dynamics and social change in Southeast Asia and beyond.[2] The significance of the crisis on acculturation through schooling appears to have been ignored in these otherwise extensive studies. This essay aims to fill this gap by examining the impact of the Depression on the state and accessibility of public education in Indonesia and to analyse the ensuing changing trajectory of colonial education policy in the final years of the 1930s.

Put simply, the Depression rocked and disrupted the political as well as cultural foundations of colonial schooling in Indonesia. It forced the government to terminate a number of Dutch-language schools, shift its focus from Western to indigenous education, and postpone indefinitely the implementation of its *concordantie* reforms.

This postponement also disrupted the project of cultural dissemination by which docile colonial subjects were to be made. The switch of the government's focus from Western to indigenous schooling rapidly stimulated the growth of independent education, especially the Taman Siswa and the Muhammadiyah schools. Many Indonesians who had studied at government schools who were now unable to find jobs in the colonial civil service or Western business sectors joined the nationalist movement.[3] In short, not only did the Great Depression put a stop to the educational reforms of the 1920s, it also contributed to the gradual delegitimisation of colonial authority through the exodus of well-educated Indonesians who were intended as

1 '[…] er in Indië van 1904 tot 1914 meer veranderd is dan in de drie voorafgaande eeuwen te zamen', I. J. Brugmans, *Geschiedenis van het onderwijs in Nederlandsch-Indië* (Groningen & Batavia: J.B. Wolters, 1938), p. 289.

2 But see, for example, Anne Booth, 'Growth collapses in Indonesia: A comparison of the 1930s and the 1990s', *Itinerario* 26, 3/4 (2002): 73–99. Others have noted that, as elsewhere, the crisis created business opportunities for some: see, for intance, Peter Post, 'The formation of the *pribumi* business elite in Indonesia, 1930s–1940s', *Bijdragen tot de Taal-, Land- en Volkenkunde* 152, 4 (1996): 609–32, while Jan van der Putten discusses the Depression-era boom in entertainment and publishing houses in Malaya in 'Negotiating the Great Depression: The rise of popular culture and consumerism in early-1930s Malaya', *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies (JSEAS)* 41, 1 (2010): 21–45.

3 See, for example, William Joseph O'Malley, 'Indonesia di masa Malaise: Suatu studi terhadap Sumatera Timur dan Yogyakarta di tahun 1930-an', *Prisma* 11, 8 (1983): 31–49; Anne Booth, 'Living standards and the distribution of income in colonial Indonesia', *JSEAS* 19, 2 (1988): 310–34.

docile subjects. Looked at through the case of education, the Great Depression reflects the symbolic fall of the colonial state in Indonesia.

Education in Indonesia and in other former Western colonies in Asia has been studied generally through a dualistic coloniser–colonised perspective. Although it is hardly possible to avoid such a framework, it has to be noted that the results of educational policy and practice in a colonial context also mirrored 'natural' trends in pedagogy and educational management. By this I mean that the carrying out of particular educational theories themselves could also have directed colonial policy-making regardless of their ideological undertones. As Remi Clignet puts it, 'the relationship developed […] in the colonial context cannot be entirely accounted for by the overall economic and political structures of the colonising society nor the position occupied by the individual[s] within such a structure.'[4]

Education developments 1900–30

By the dawn of the twentieth century children of different ethnicities and social classes had access to schools from primary to higher levels in Indonesia. A member of Chatham House in London, H.A. Wyndham, called this phenomenon 'downward and upward growth'. The downward growth 'meant relinquishing the theory that education should be confined mainly to the upper classes and that it should percolate through Indonesian society from the top'. The upward growth reduced 'the dualism between European and native education which had hitherto been characteristic of Java'.[5]

One fundamental reform that would lay the basis for the twentieth century educational expansion was the foundation in 1893 of two types of primary schools: the First-Class schools (*de scholen der eerste klasse*) for the children of indigenous chiefs and other distinguished (*aanzienlijke*) or well-off (*gegoede*) indigenous families, and the Second-Class schools (*de scholen der tweede klasse*), for the children of the indigenous population in general.[6] Although offering quite modest curricula, both types of schools provided ordinary Indonesians access to public primary education, which until that time had been the preserve of the European and 'Foreign Oriental' (i.e. largely Chinese) communities. Then in 1907, in light of the so-called Debt of Honour Policy (the Ethical Policy), the government founded another type of primary school, the *volksschool* or *desaschool* (village school), which, according to Brugmans, was exclusively meant for 'the great masses of the agricultural population' (*grote massa der agrarische bevolking*).[7]

4 Remi Clignet, 'Damned if you do, damned if you don't: The dilemmas of colonizer–colonized relations', in *Education and the colonial experience*, rev. ed., Philip G. Altbach and Gail P. Kelly (New Brunswick and London: Transaction Books, 1984), p. 79.

5 H.A. Wyndham, *Native education: Ceylon, Java, Formosa, the Philippines, French Indo-China, and British Malaya* (London: Oxford University Press, 1933), p. 88.

6 'Historische Nota over het Inlandsch Onderwijs in Nederlands-Indië', in *Algemeen verslag van het Inlandsch onderwijs in Nederlands-Indië loopende over de jaren 1893 t/m 1897 met aanhangsel betreffende de jaren 1898 en 1899* (Batavia: Landsdrukkerij, 1901), pp. 52–4. Until 1914 the government published separate reports on Indigenous and European education. Henceforth, references to colonial education reports will be: *Verslag v/h Inlandsch Onderwijs* for reports on Indigenous education, *Verslag v/h Europeesch onderwijs* for reports on European education, and, from 1915, *Verslag v/h onderwijs* for combined reports on both education, followed by the year(s) reported, volume, and page number(s).

7 Brugmans, *Geschiedenis*, pp. 305–6.

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Hence in the early twentieth century, the so-called 'dualistic system of primary education' in the Netherlands Indies referred to two pillars (*verzuilingen*) of schooling. One was for the indigenous community consisting of three different types of primary schools which used vernacular languages and Maleis (Malay/Indonesian) and was oriented towards local culture and society. The other pillar was a Dutch-medium education at the *Europese Lagere Scholen* (ELS, European Primary Schools) for the European and Foreign Oriental communities, culturally oriented towards a European lifestyle.

In early-twentieth-century Netherlands Indies, a Dutch-language education was favoured because the language was essential for jobs in the colonial business world and civil service.[8] The ELS were soon flooded by both European and non-European children, especially the Chinese, despite the restrictions on non-European enrolment. As Table 1 shows, the numbers of both European and non-European children in the ELS grew rapidly, with the population of Foreign Oriental children 11.57 times higher in 1910 than in 1900, and that of indigenous children 2.29 times higher.

Table 1: Non-Europeans in Dutch-medium Europese Lagere School (ELS), 1900–10

Year	No. of Europeans	No. of Natives	No. of Foreign Orientals	Total non-Europeans
1900	17,025	1,615	352	1,967
1905	19,049	3,935	731	4,666
1910	21,731	3,710	4,074	7,784

Source: J.S. Furnivall, *Netherlands India: A study of plural economy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1939), p. 368.

This dramatic influx of non-European children worried the authorities for it 'threatened to destroy the European character of these [ELS] schools'.[9] The government thus decided in 1907 that for indigenous Indonesians, the only Dutch-medium education was to be the First-Class school.[10] Then, in 1908, it established another type of Western-style school, the *Hollands Chineese School* (HCS, Dutch Chinese School), designated specially for the Chinese community.[11] Brugmans described the use and the teaching of Dutch in the First-Class schools as one of 'Dutchification' (*vernederlandsching*) of the Indies.[12] British official and scholar J.S. Furnivall commented that while the teaching of Dutch was designed to make indigenous children 'more docile instruments of the official welfare policy', the Indonesians themselves wished to benefit from a Dutch-language education so as

8 See further Kees Groeneboer, *Gateway to the West: The Dutch language in colonial Indonesia 1600–1950: A history of language policy*, trans. Myra Scholz (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 1998).
9 J.S. Furnivall, *Educational progress in Southeast Asia* (New York: Institute of Pacific Relations, 1943), p. 74.
10 *Verslag v/h Inlandsch onderwijs 1907*, vol. 1, pp. 1 and 6.
11 Ming T.N. Govaars-Tjia, *Dutch colonial education: The Chinese experience in Indonesia, 1900–1942*, trans. Lorre Lynn Trytten (Singapore: Chinese Study Centre, 2005), p. 85.
12 Brugmans, *Geschiedenis*, p. 292. The *Van Dale Digital Dictionary* translates the verb 'vernederlands' as 'Dutchify'.

'to penetrate the secret of European power and, also, to qualify themselves for the highly paid appointments which were the preserve of Europeans'.[13]

Meanwhile, the establishment of the HCS was a milestone not only for the Chinese (and others classified as Foreign Orientals), but also for educational policy-making in the years to follow. As Ming Govaars-Tjia and Didi Kwartanada suggest, it represented the government's recognition of long-standing aspirations of the Chinese community in the Indies.[14] Many Indonesians felt, on the other hand, that the establishment of the HCS strengthened the policy of excluding them from entering the European cultural and economic sphere. Although the First-Class school had become more Western in character by virtue of the use of Dutch and the addition in 1907 of a subject titled 'Geography and History of the Netherlands and Europe', it remained in the separate Indigenous stream and its graduates were not sought after in the competitive colonial job market. Indonesians began to demand their own Dutch-language schools which would be equivalent in standards and accredition to the HCS and ELS. In response, in 1914 the government changed the name of the First-Class schools to '*Hollands Inlandse scholen*' (HIS, Dutch Indonesian Schools), and transferred their administration to the Western education stream.[15]

By 1914, the 'dualistic system of primary education' in the Netherlands Indies referred to the Indigenous stream, which consisted of the Second-Class and the village schools using Maleis and other vernacular languages, and the Western stream, which 'housed' the ELS, the HCS, and the HIS, all using Dutch. There was no further reorganisation of public primary schools in the Netherlands Indies, except for the addition of two other types of schools to the Indigenous stream.[16] Further developments then focused on secondary and tertiary education, including the establishment of fully Dutch-medium general schools at the junior level (*Meer Uitgebreid Lager Onderwijs*, MULO) in 1916, at the senior level (*Algemene Middelbare scholen*, AMS) in 1918, at the higher level (*Faculteit der Letteren* in 1919, *Technische Hogeschool* in 1920), and reforms of various sorts of vocational secondary schools, such as a teachers' training school and the household school for girls.

As the educational system was gradually established, more schools of each type were set up and student enrolments were increasing. Unfortunately all these developments were interrupted by the onset of the Great Depression, both quantitatively by the shutting-down of schools, and qualitatively, by the downgrading of educational standards, student facilities and cuts in teachers' salaries.

13 Ibid.

14 Govaars-Tjia, *Dutch colonial education*, p. 71; Didi Kwartanada, 'The Tiong Hoa Hwee Koan school: A transborder project of modernity in Batavia, c. 1900s', in *Chinese Indonesians reassessed: History, religion and belonging*, ed. Siew-Min Sai and Chang-Yau Hoon (Abingdon: Routledge, 2013), pp. 27–44.

15 Director of Education and Religious Affairs [DERA] to Gouvernor General [GG], 17 Mar. 1913 and 20 Nov. 1914, in S.L. van der Wal, *Het onderwijsbeleid in Nederlands-Indië 1900–1940: Een bronnenpublikatie* (Groningen: J.B. Wolters, 1963), pp. 227, 286–8; J. Kats, *Overzicht van het onderwijs in Nederlands-Indië* (Batavia: Landsdrukkerij, 1915), p. 19.

16 These were the *vervolgscholen* (continuation schools) established in 1915, and the *schakelscholen* (bridging schools) established in 1921. See: Government Secretary to DERA, 7 May 1914; DERA to GG, 2 Dec. 1914; DERA to GG, 11 Mar. 1920, in Wal, *Het onderwijsbeleid*, pp. 273–82, 362–3; Brugmans, *Geschiedenis*, pp. 315–7; 337.

Table 2: Indies public education system: Schools, pupils, and teachers, 1900–40

Year	Total no. of	Public Primary Schools of Indigenous Stream (vernacular languages and Maleis)					Public Primary Schools of Western Stream (Dutch)			Public General Secondary Schools (Dutch)	
		Volks-Schools (founded 1907)	Second-Class schools (1893–1930)	First-Class schools (1893–1914)	*Vervolg-schools* (founded 1915)	*Schakel-schools* (founded 1921)	*Hollands Inlandse Schools* (HIS, founded 1914)	*Hollands Chineese Schools* (HCS, f. 1908)	ELS	Junior High (MULO, founded 1916)	Senior High (AMS, founded 1918)
1900	Schools		506*	27*					169		
	Pupils			61,742*					15,462		
	Teachers			470*					597**		
1905	Schools		625	49					184		
	Pupils			95,075					19,382		
	Teachers			572***					656		
1910	Schools	1,161	953	68				17	191		
	Pupils	71,239		151,466			2,740	21,774			
	Teachers	?	E = 116; I = 820; C = –#				?	823			
1915	Schools	4,448	1,202		?		102	27	195	13	
	Pupils	310,867	186,330		?		19,719	5,414	25,002	1,043	
	Teachers	6,327	4,921		?		741	165	895	69	
1920	Schools	7,771	1,845		?		132	34	196	18	2
	Pupils	423,314	241,414		?		26,659	7,975	27,160	2,634	82
	Teachers	9,407	7,044		?		938	191	839	E = 134; I = 22	20
1925	Schools	10,769	2,176		734	13	156	41	182	24	2
	Pupils	734,495	271,115		59,190	706	36,196	10,142	26,173	67,421	255
	Teachers	14,641##	8,012		1930###	?	E = 259; I = 865; C = –	256##	836##	E = 262; I = 18##	27##
1930	Schools	13,716	1,732		1,047	43	192	65	196	35	7
	Pupils	1,074,777	308,316		91,308	3,658	38,708	12,998	24,409	7,845	872
	Teachers	23,506	7,310		2,928	E = 44; I = 131; C = –28	E = 520; I = 879; C = 7	E = 310; I = 19; C = 102	914	E = 386; I = 27	84

1935	Schools	14,482	51	2,338		190	62	170	32	5
	Pupils	1,404,608	9,809	194,542	3,057	40,926	12,806	22,828	5,584	1,005
	Teachers	28,076	208	5,812	E = 21; I = 88; C = –	E = 163; I = 1,034 C = –	E = 236; I = 21; C = 102	E = 734; I = 5	E = 206; I = 42; C = 1	E = 36; I = 2; C = –
1940	Schools	15,131	30	2,452	35	186	62	174	37	6
	Pupils	1,662,484	8,715	258,747	3,901	47,355	13,620	22,719	8,561	1,065
	Teachers	30,404	159	7,264	E = 24; I = 121; C = –	E = 166; I = 1,119 C = 1	E = 247; I = 25; C = 113	E = 801; I = –; C = 10	E = 340; I = 41; C = 2	E = 51; I = 1; C = –

Notes: *data of 31 Dec. 1899; **data of 1901; ***data of 31 Dec. 1904; #E = European, I = Indonesian, C = Chinese; ## = data of 1924; ###data of 1927; ? = Not available in any of the referred sources.

Sources: S.L. van der Wal, *Het onderwijsbeleid in Nederlandsch-Indië 1900–1940* (Groningen: J.B. Wolters, 1963), pp. 691–700; *Verslag v/h Inlandsch onderwijs 1899 t/m 1904*, pp. 82–9; 203–7; *1910*, pp. 13 and 21; 38–9; *Verslag v/h Europeesch onderwijs 1901*, p. 140; *1905*, p. 96; *1910*, p. 124; *Verslag v/h onderwijs 1925*, pp. 87; 188–9; *1930/1931*, pp. 42–9; *1935/1936*, pp. 118–32; 126–7; *1939/1940*, pp. 320–1; 326–7; 338–9; 350–1—of second volumes; *Statistisch jaaroverzicht van Nederlandsch-Indië jaargang 1924* (Batavia: Departement van Landbouw, Nijverheid en Handel), pp. 45–52; *Onderwijs statistiek 1927* (Batavia: Departement van Landbouw, Nijverheid en Handel, 1928), Tables I–III.

Impact of the Great Depression

The quantitative impact of the Great Depression on education is observable even by a brief look at the statistics on schools, pupils and teachers (Table 2).[17] Between 1900 and 1930 there was a steady growth in the number of public primary schools of all types (both in the Indigenous and the Western streams) and general secondary schools, with corresponding increases in student and teacher numbers. Between 1930 and 1935, however, both trends reversed. Then between 1935 and 1940, there was a slight growth trend. So, when the Indies government claimed that the Depression had not reduced the number of schools although it had forced the authorities to tighten the education budget, this was sheer rhetoric![18] In fact, the formal cutting of the education budget did not happen until 1932, but school closures and other efficiency measures had begun as early as 1930.

Table 2 shows that, while steady growth between 1900 and 1930 paralleled the establishment of a structured education system in the Indies, the trends between 1930 and 1940 indicated two striking changes in education. First, during the Depression years a decrease in numbers was apparent in all types of schools except for the *volksscholen* and the *vervolgscholen* — the two most modest types of colonial public schools. Second, there was a marked increase in the number of Indonesian teachers in the *schakelschool*, which was a hub between the Indigenous and the Western streams of education, and in the Western primary schools. In the HIS the number of Indonesian teachers surpassed that of the European teachers (see also Table 7). Indonesian teachers also began to staff the HCS, the ELS, the MULO, and the AMS! Undoubtedly, in the 1930s, the focus of government policy shifted from the Western-oriented schools and their highly paid largely European staff to the much more modest and cost-efficient indigenous ones.

Generally speaking, in terms of the education sector, the Depression hit schoolteachers the hardest. As early as 1930, the Dutch-medium school for Indonesian teacher training (Hollands Inlandse Kweekschool/HIK) in Blitar had ceased admitting new pupils and sent its upper level students (*bovenbouwen*) to the public HIK in Yogyakarta. Unfortunately, after 1933 the Yogyakarta HIK too had to stop taking upper level students, as is evident from the fact that its last graduation was held in 1936.[19] The lower level remained in operation until the Japanese invasion in 1942. Similarly, upper-level training at the HIK in Bukittinggi was moved to Bandung on 1 July 1931.[20] The lower level admitted new students only up to 1932, after which the school was closed down.[21] In 1932, the normal school for indigenous assistant-teachers in Meester Cornelis, Batavia, was transferred to the vacated HIK Bukittinggi building.[22]

17 I thank Maretta Kartikasari for helping me collect *Statistisch Jaaroverzicht* for this table.
18 See the Annual Report on Education for the school year 1932–33, *Verslag v/h onderwijs 1932/1933*, vol. 1, p. iii; S.L van der Wal, *Some information on education in Indonesia up to 1942* (The Hague: Netherlands Universities Foundation for International Cooperation, 1960), p. 8.
19 Suwandi D. Suwondo, 'Memperingati HIK Yogya 60 tahun', *Gema edisi yubileum: HIK Yogyakarta 60 tahun* (Yogyakarta: Keluarga Ex-HIK Yogyakarta, 1987), p. 8.
20 *Aboean Goeroe-Goeroe*, 11, no. 5, May 1931, p. 101.
21 Interview with Alatif Azis, a 1933 alumnus of the Bukittinggi HIK, conducted in Bandung, 27 Nov. 2006. See also the autobiography of Abdul Haris Nasution, *Memenuhi panggilan tugas jilid 1: Kenangan masa muda* (Jakarta: CV Haji Masagung, 1990), pp. 25–35.
22 *Verslag v/h onderwijs 1933/1934*, vol. 1, p. vii.

In the meantime, in 1931 the government had to cancel the opening of eighteen new Dutch-language primary schools: two for European, four for Chinese and twelve for indigenous children, respectively. It also withdrew subsidies from private primary schools and called a provisional halt to the expansion of village schools.[23] Again in 1931, the government had to move or combine several HIS it considered too small to operate independently.[24]

In the 1932–33 school year, as many as thirteen public HIS underwent a 'soft closure', which meant that Dutch was taught as a subject only in the top three years. These thirteen HIS were located in Cilegon (West Java), Tapatuan, Lok Seumaweh (Aceh), Siak Sri Indrapura (Riau), Tanjung Pura (Sumatra East Coast), Fort van der Capellen (Sumatra West Coast), Toboali (Bangka), Sintang, Sambas (Kalimantan), Bontang, Palopo, Singkang (Sulawesi), and Piru (Maluku).[25] This survey paints an unvarnished picture of the impact of the Great Depression on education and teacher training in Indonesia.

Yet the economic crisis, which started in 1929 according to some economic historians,[26] did not affect public expenditure on education straightaway. In 1931, the total education budget was still 119.9 per cent (Fl. 47,228,100) of that in 1928.[27] In 1932, the budget was cut by up to Fl. 4.6 million.[28] Even so, it was actually still 111.5 per cent that of 1928. Over the next few years the budget continued to decrease, namely from Fl. 32,264,200 in 1934 to Fl. 25,668,600 in 1935.[29] Only in 1937 did the economy seem to be showing some signs of improvement. So the education budget did not begin to drop until 1932 and it showed a rise again as early as 1937. A factor that has to be considered here is the impact of the unstable budget and of the economic situation on the projected growth of schools. Importantly, the budget in the Education Report did not necessarily indicate whether, in actual practice, the education sector had remained unscathed by the crisis until 1932. As a matter of fact, education in general, and the teaching profession in particular, had been seriously hit by the crisis ever since its outbreak.

As early as 1931 the government had taken some measures to deal with the economic crisis, for example by cancelling the opening of new schools and merging small schools. Students who had to move to another school because their original school had either been merged with others or shut down now had to pay a higher fee for accommodation. On 1 October 1931 the government halted the granting of new scholarships except for students at the European teacher training school (*kweekschool*).[30] 'Not only the reduction in the expenditure,' the government argued, 'but an increase in government income were essential in striving to take some feasible steps to adjust to the changing economic circumstances.'[31]

23 *Verslag v/h onderwijs 1931/1932*, vol. 1, p. iii.
24 Ibid., p. iv.
25 *Verslag v/h onderwijs 1932/1933*, vol. 1, p. xii.
26 See, for example, Peter Boomgaard and Ian Brown, eds, *Weathering the storm: The economy of Southeast Asia in the 1930s Depression* (Leiden: KITLV and Singapore: ISEAS, 2000).
27 *Verslag v/h onderwijs 1936/1937*, vol. 2, p. 268.
28 *Verslag v/h onderwijs 1931/1932*, vol. 1, p. iii.
29 *Verslag v/h onderwijs 1936/1937*, vol. 2, p. 268.
30 *Verslag v/h onderwijs 1931/1932*, vol. 1, p. v.
31 Ibid., pp. v–vi.

Students at the MULO and AMS were required to reimburse their examination and school-leaving fees when they finished their studies. Students at the Secondary School for the Training of Indonesian Doctors (Middelbare Opleiding School voor Indische Artsen/MOSVIA), the trade schools, the teacher training and the vocational schools for girls had to pay for their final examination. Primary school-leavers who attended the MULO also had to pay registration fees, and those going to the community schools (*burgere scholen*) and engineering schools now had to pay admission fees. The fee for taking the examination for the so-called additional-certificate for teaching in primary school was doubled.

When the education budget was ruthlessly cut in 1932, among the internal sectors most affected was that of personnel, which faced a cut of up to Fl. 2,370,000. The consequences of this were enormous. The number of in-service teachers was slashed at all levels. The position of extra-teacher was abolished and parallel classes were unified, all on the grounds of efficiency. Preparatory classes in the Dutch-language schools were eliminated. As the number of in-service teachers decreased, those remaining were overburdened with all kinds of tasks previously handled by specially appointed personnel. In normal schools, there was very little money to cover daily student necessities such as meals. In other schools, subsidies were no longer available for pocket money for the students during the so-called *ambulatio* activity (charity visits), held once a week. More seriously, the secondary schools received only very small subsidies for their libraries and could no longer afford sports facilities.

The budget cuts also had obvious consequences for auxiliary non-teaching personnel. The positions of adviser and local-adviser for village schools were done away with. Local officials took over their duties. The number of school handymen and cleaners (*schoolbediende*) was reduced. Many of them had to retire early and were replaced by outsourced personnel (*losse koelies*). Efficiency also took the form of a limited use of water and lights and strict rules governing the purchase and maintenance of infrastructure and learning materials.[32]

Commencing on 1 July 1932, there was a charge for student use of learning materials, and writing and drawing implements at school. This regulation applied to students of the ELS, HCS, HIS, *volksscholen*, *vervolgscholen*, and second-class schools, the trade schools, the teacher training schools, the normal schools, MULO, the engineering schools and MOSVIA.[33] The charge was fixed per student per month.[34] To lessen the burden, by Government Decree No. 41 of 11 June 1936, this charge was estimated on an annual basis and could be paid in ten instalments (see Table 3).[35]

The one-year preparatory class (*voorklas*) for the ELS, HCS and HIS was abolished. This affected preschool education in the *Fröbelscholen*. This preparatory class was intended to provide children with a foundation for the seven-year primary education in Dutch. However, in a letter to the Governor General on 23 May 1932, the Director of Education and Religious Affairs, B. Schrieke, argued that the preschool

32 Ibid., pp. iii–vi.
33 See DERA 11 Mar. 1932, p. 7, in *Openbaar verbaal* (*OV*) 25 Aug. 1932 No. 3, Nationaal Archief, The Hague (NA), Inventory Number (no.) 3340.
34 *Verslag v/h onderwijs 1931/1932.* vol. 1, p. vi.
35 *Handboek Indonesische onderwijzers bond* (Batavia: Drukkerij Persatoean Goeroe, 1942), pp. 158–9.

Table 3: Annual fee for materials and tools (per student, 1936 tariff)

Student of	ELS and HCS	HIS	MULO and Commercial school for Girls	Bridging school
Preparatory class	n.a.	n.a.	Fl. 7.50	n.a.
Grade 1	Fl. 1.50	Fl. 0.60	Fl. 15	Fl. 1.20
Grade 2	Fl. 2	Fl. 1.80	Fl. 18.80	Fl. 1.20
Grade 3	Fl. 2.50	Fl. 2.40	Fl. 18.80	Fl. 1.20
Grade 4	Fl. 3	Fl. 3	n.a.	Fl. 1.20
Grade 5	Fl. 3.50	Fl. 3.60	n.a.	Fl. 1.20
Grade 6	Fl. 4	Fl. 3.60	n.a.	n.a.
Grade 7	Fl. 4.50	Fl. 4.24[a] /4.20[b]	n.a.	n.a.

Note: No data was found on the charges in the other types of schools. The fee was payable in ten instalments; [a]*Handboek*; [b]*Almanak goeroe*; n.a. = not applicable.
Sources: *Handboek Indonesische onderwijzers bond* (Batavia: Drukkerij Persatoean Goeroe, 1942), pp. 160–1; *Almanak goeroe 1939* (Batavia Centrum: Balai Poestaka, 1938), p. 150.

year was unnecessary because the ELS, HCS and HIS were intended for children who spoke and used Dutch at home. The preparatory year, which in practice focused mostly on the study of Dutch, would be superfluous because children enrolling for the Western schools first had to meet the prerequisite of knowing Dutch. Schrieke also demanded that the inspectorate officials develop a new curriculum in such a way that only children who had studied for seven years could achieve the required equivalent level of Western education, which used to take eight years. To maintain educational standards, as measured by the level of competency in Dutch, the Director suggested the addition of two extra hours per week of Dutch classes at the ELS, HCS and HIS, by the expedient of shortening the class breaks from 30 to 20 minutes.[36] The Minister of the Colonies agreed to Schrieke's proposal on 29 October 1932. The letter of approval was officially dated 31 October, but issued by the ministry office only on 2 November. Nevertheless the Education Report of 1931/1932 mentions that the abolition of the preparatory class was already a done deal on 1 July 1932.[37]

In the grim climate, teacher training, especially in Western schools, was put on a tighter rein.[38] At the beginning of 1931, a thorough evaluation was carried out to ensure that the qualifications, structure and teaching responsibilities of the teachers, including their number of hours per day, was as economical as possible.[39] In public primary schools the ratio between teachers who held a head-teachers' certificate and those who held an assistant-teacher certificate was 4:5. In numerous private subsidised schools the ratio was 5:4 or even, in some extraordinary cases, 6:1.[40] This ratio was

36 DERA 23 May 1932, *OV* 31 Oct. 1932 No. 1, NA no. 3355.
37 *Verslag v/h onderwijs 1931/1932*, vol. 1, p. iv.
38 Ibid.
39 DERA 13 Feb. 1931, *OV* 25 Aug. 1932 No. 3, NA no. 3340.
40 Ibid.

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uneconomical and imbalanced in terms of the spread between public and private subsidised schools. Schrieke recognised that staffing costs could be cut if those certified as head-teachers could be replaced by those with assistant teacher certificates, without any detrimental effect on the education provided.[41]

The government then decided that in both public and private subsidised schools, the number of teachers holding a head-teacher's certificate would not exceed two at every ELS and HCS, and one at HIS.[42] When a holder of a head-teacher's certificate retired, the resulting vacancy was to be filled by the holder of an assistant-teacher certificate.[43] In practice, as Schrieke had anticipated, the release of the highest-ranking teachers was no easy task because of its impact on schools. Between 1930 and 1940 the number of teachers holding a head-teacher's certificate in the ELS, HCS and HIS only slightly decreased (Table 4). In 1935, for example, 472 teachers with a head-teacher certificate (see Table 4) staffed 170 ELS (Table 2). Some ELS still employed more than two teachers of the highest rank.

In contrast, the number of the so-called second and third-rank teachers increased. Examples of these were holders of certificates from the HCK, HIK or its predecessor, the *Hogere Kweekschool* (HKS, upper-level teacher training). As Table 4 shows, their presence in the HIS increased dramatically during the last colonial decade. With the exception of the school principal, European teachers at HIS and HCS had to hand over their positions to their indigenous and Chinese counterparts respectively. HIS teachers holding a normal-school certificate, who could be paid a lower salary, were favoured over those with a *kweekschool* certificate. Because they were restricted to teaching at the HIS for which their training had originally been intended, towards 1940 more and more teachers with a *kweekschool* certificate staffed the *vervolgscholen* — at the lowest end of the system. Indeed, judging from the extensive reshuffling of teaching personnel, the Depression caused more mobility in the public school system for Indonesian teachers than for their Chinese or European counterparts.

Commencing in 1933, the student–teacher ratio was strictly supervised. For a minimum of twenty-five and a maximum of sixty pupils, a Western public school should have only one fully qualified teacher other than the principal on its staff. To have two teachers (also excluding the principal), a school had to have an enrolment of between 61 and 100 pupils and to have three, between 101 and 120. One more teacher would be appointed only for an additional minimum of 50 students.[44]

The government also managed to economise on teachers' working hours at school. As a rule, classes for the first three years of primary school (the first two years in the case of HIS) ended at 11 a.m. in the morning (classes started at 7 a.m.). After 11 a.m., seven teachers plus one principal were present for four (five at HIS) current classes. So, three teachers (two at HIS) were actually already off duty by 11 a.m. These teachers were called 'two-thirds teachers' (*twee-derde leerkrachten*) to reflect their new hours. The work-load division already applied at school was that the principal was released from teaching duties and after 11 a.m. some classes

41 DERA 16 Dec. 1931, *OV* 22 June 1932, NA no. 3323.
42 *Verslag v/h onderwijs 1933/1934*, vol. 1, pp. vi–vii.
43 DERA 11 Mar. 1932, p. 6, *OV* 25 Aug. 1932 No. 3, NA no. 3340.
44 *OV* 22 June 1932, NA no. 3323.

Table 4: Distribution of teachers in public schools based on their diploma, 1930–40

Teacher's diploma	1930							1935							1940						
	Public school types							Public school types							Public school types						
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
A											22	157	163	463				24	148	135	447
B											7	63	16	9				9	88	22	13
C				42	237	147	447														
D				3	304	173	452				3	36	125	285				1	38	129	349
E				98	200						35	302	82					61	453	37	
F					27	79					51	327	1					48	368	62	
G	18	200	660	31	532			35	633	36					22	461	19				
H	37	1192	1764	1	44			1381	2912	64		334			549	3608	65	2	182		
I	13121	7	47					15276	34						17548	36					
J	1465	1529	4832		2			3161	2225	108		1			2787	2909	75		1		
K	8574		7		15	1													1		2

Notes: 1 = Village school; 2 = Continuation school; 3 = Second-class school; 4 = Bridging school; 5 = HIS; 6 = HCS; 7 = ELS; A = European head-teacher certificate; B = Indigenous head-teacher certificate; C = head-teacher certificate; D = European certificate for assistant-teacher; E= HKS certificate; F = HIK/HCK certificate; G = *Kweekschool* certificate; H = *normaalschool* certificate; I = certificate for village-school teachers; J = Indigenous certificate for assistant-teacher/*Goeroe Bantoe*; K = without diploma.

Sources: *Verslag v/h onderwijs 1930*, pp. 50–1; *1935*, pp. 119, 122–5; *1940*, pp. 324–9, 334–7, 342–7.

were split so that all the seven teachers could still take a class during the third time block (11.30 a.m.–1.30 p.m.). The ministry argued that the presence of the 'two-thirds teachers' at school after 11 a.m. was superfluous and an inefficient use of personnel.[45]

In July 1931 the People's Representative Board (*Volksraad*) agreed to sign the government draft of the Regulation on the Reduction of the Subsidy for Teacher's Salary in Private Subsidised Schools.[46] In the case of public school teachers, revisions were begun to overhaul the specific regulations already in existence. The Revised Payment Regulation was to apply to both public and private subsidised Western schools and became effective on 1 August 1934.[47]A further revision took place in the Payment Regulation of 1938.[48]

Retirement rules were observed much more strictly than ever before. Temporary teachers who were not family breadwinners had to quit their jobs. Permanent teachers who reached fifty-five years of age had to retire immediately under a reduced retirement salary (*wachtgeld*) scheme. Permanent teachers with more than twenty-five years' service fell into the 'surplus' (*overcompleet*) category and were seriously considered for retirement.[49] As a rule, retired teachers had previously been entitled to a pension, which was 50 per cent of their last-drawn salary. However, following the *Volksraad*'s consent to the Ordinance for the Reduction of the Subsidy, teachers' salaries had already been slashed by 25 per cent. Now, retired teachers would only receive half of 75 per cent of their original salary.[50]

It should be noted at this point that these cuts in teachers' salaries and the tightening of the education budget was not restricted to the Netherlands Indies. The Netherlands, which had been struggling with an economic crisis since the early 1920s, was equally hard hit. It had been obliged to postpone the implementation of the Basic Education Bill of 1920 and the government was forced to take efficiency measures. Between 1923 and 1926, the Netherlands government closed down sixty *Rijksnormallessen* (state-run teachers' training courses) and twenty-two *Rijkskweekscholen* (state-run teachers' training schools) a move that left only ten *Rijksnormallessen* and twenty-nine *Rijkskweekscholen*. Under the terms of the Basic Education Bill of 1920, every class of forty-nine pupils at primary school should have one teacher. For every additional forty-eight pupils, one more teacher would be assigned. Commencing on 1 January 1930, teaching assistants replaced full-time teachers in assignments to schools that had three teachers for 144 pupils. In 1932, married civil servants and breadwinners had to accept an 8 per cent reduction in their salaries while their unmarried counterparts had to forfeit 13 per cent. These efficiency measures saved the Netherlands government some Fl. 5.55 million per year.[51]

45 DERA 13 Feb. 1931, *OV* 25 Aug. 1932 No. 3, NA no. 3340; *Verslag v/h onderwijs 1934/1935*, vol. 1, pp. vi–viii.
46 *OV* 30 Dec. 1931 No. 9, NA no. 3282.
47 *Verslag v/h onderwijs 1934/1935.* vol. 1, pp. i–viii; DERA 16 Dec. 1932, *OV* 22 June 1932, NA no. 3323.
48 *Handboek*, pp. 165–80.
49 DERA 11 Mar. 1932, pp. 1–2, *OV* 25 Aug. 1932 No. 3, NA no. 3340.
50 *OV* 2 Mar. 1935 No. 3, NA no. 3549. Unfortunately further data about the salary scale based on the Revised Payment Regulation of 1934 appears to be absent.
51 Roelf Turksma, 'De geschiedenis van de opleiding tot onderwijzer in Nederland aan de openbare,

Returning to the Indies, the precarious position of female teachers should be highlighted. Officially, as soon as efficiency measures took effect in 1931, married female teachers with permanent positions who were not breadwinners were asked to retire because the reduced salary regulation of 1934 gave priority to breadwinners.[52] When the government realised that the immediate dismissal of all female teachers in that category could seriously undermine the education system, the remaining female teachers were retained, but as 'two-thirds' teachers drawing a smaller salary.[53]

Those who refused to accept the new position as two-thirds teachers were dismissed from service and did not even receive the reduced pension.[54] Male teachers who held the assistant-teacher certificate were maintained as full-time teachers. 'In this decision the consideration that the relegation of all teachers to the two-thirds position would be too much was taken into account,' so reads the government Education Report of 1934/1935, 'and motives of a social nature played a role,'[55] Even in the throes of the turbulence of the 1930s, a gender-based (or -biased) perspective seems to have been enforced.

Unsurprisingly, these efficiency policies elicited grassroots reactions, especially from European teachers. In May 1931, the association of Dutch teachers in the Netherlands Indies (Nederlandsch-Indië Onderwijzers Genootschap, NIOG) sent a resolution to the government. The resolution commented critically on the (draft) regulations pertaining to the position of two-thirds teachers, the reduction in employment and retirement salaries, and the abolition or reduction of the allowance for furlough, re-placement, or examination leave.[56] The NIOG resolution was soon widely welcomed by its members, who began to organise a strike.[57]

Reactions also flowed in from individual teachers, for example, A.G. Gooris, a female teacher at the Foundation of the Reformed Primary Education in Surabaya. Gooris expressed her sense of 'being offended and treated unfairly' because, in her opinion, teachers in the Netherlands Indies were hit twice as hard as other civil servants as a consequence of the economic crisis: their salary had been subjected to a 25 per cent cut, and their position relegated to the two-thirds category. As a result, some teachers found their salary reduced by 50 per cent. In her letter to the Minister of the Colonies on 15 September 1934, Gooris wrote that many teachers had fallen victim to the government salary regulations, which had created 'a feeling of gloom greater than the Depression itself'.[58]

The Department of Education and Religious Affairs, the Department of Finance and the *Volksraad* members engaged in a lengthy debate[59] before an official response was released. The principal argument was that a very difficult financial situation had

Protestants-Christelijke en bijzonder-neutrale instellingen' (Ph.D. diss., Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam, 1961), pp. 182–97.

52 DERA 11 Mar. 1932, pp. 1–2, *OV* 25 Aug. 1932 No. 3, NA no. 3340.

53 *Verslag v/h onderwijs 1934/1935*, vol. 1, p. VIII.

54 DERA 11 Mar. 1932, p. 2, *OV* 25 Aug. 1932 No. 3, NA no. 3340.

55 *Verslag v/h onderwijs 1934/1935*, vol. 1, p. viii.

56 *OV* 20 May 1931 No. 2, NA inv. no. 3226.

57 'NIOG dengan Departement', *Aboean Goeroe-Goeroe*, 11, no. 8, Aug. 1931, pp. 178–80.

58 Letter of A.G. Gooris to Minister of the Colonies 15 Sept. 1934, *OV* 2 Mar. 1935 No. 3, NA no. 3549.

59 Volksraad zittingsjaar 1931–1932 onderwerp 95 stukken 1–7, wijziging van het Europeesch onderwijsreglement, *OV* 2 Mar. 1935 No. 3, NA no. 3549.

forced the administration to take strong measures to make savings, and the education sector could not be exempt.[60]

Indigenisation

In the second half of the 1930s, the economy began to recover, at least this is what economic historians have optimistically argued.[61] In 1935, the real per capita index of the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) was 87.5 per cent of that in 1928, a slight increase on the previous year (85.7 per cent), and kept increasing for the next two years at least.[62]

Such improvements did not seem to have transferred to the human capital sector. Registered urban unemployment continued to grow towards the mid-1930s as John Ingleson has shown (Table 5).[63] Thousands of unskilled Javanese labourers also lost their jobs on the plantations in eastern Sumatra and as many as 57,000 were sent back to Java by their employers.[64] The total number of seasonal workers in the Javanese sugar industry increased from 17,976 people in 1936 to 45,934 in 1939 at the cost of the degraded economic 'value' of academic credentials.[65] Many skilled, educated Indonesians could find no alternatives to compensate the disappearance of their high-paid positions so they sought lower-status or lower-paid jobs. Others were lucky enough to find skilled jobs that had previously been the preserve of Chinese or Europeans.[66] Many employers now preferred inexperienced new recruits working on the basis of outsourced contracts with lower wages to experienced workers who would have to be paid high salaries.[67] In a nutshell, while some macroeconomic indicators showed progress, in such sectors as the job market the economy of the late 1930s had not yet been able to shake off the dampening impact of the Great Depression almost a decade earlier.

What contributed significantly to education recovery, especially in the Outer Province cities of Jambi, Palembang and Pontianak, was the export of rubber. In 1936 the so-called Rubber Fund was founded. One of the aims of the Rubber Fund was to finance public village schools and *vervolgscholen* in these regions.[68] But the income from the rubber tax and hence, the Rubber Fund, was neither stable nor

60 Ibid.
61 See, for example, *Weathering the storm*, ed. Boomgaard and Brown.
62 In 1936 the index had progressed up to 92.4 per cent and by 1941 it had returned roughly to the 1928 level (Booth, 'Growth collapses in Indonesia', pp. 73–99). In 1937 exports were rising toward their 1929 level, creating a positive balance of Fl. 456 million against imports. Real per capita income of the indigenous population in 1937 was already three points higher than that of 1929. Rice production in Java was 89 kg per capita in 1936, compared to 88 kg in 1928. Peter Boomgaard, 'Surviving the slump: Developments in real income during the Depression of the 1930s in Indonesia, particularly Java', in *Weathering the storm*, pp. 23–52.
63 John Ingleson, 'Urban Java during the Depression', *JSEAS* 19, 2 (1988): 292–309.
64 O'Malley, 'Indonesia di masa Malaise', pp. 31–49.
65 Booth, 'Living standards', pp. 310–34.
66 Ingleson, 'Urban Java during the Depression', p. 296.
67 O'Malley, 'Indonesia di masa Malaise', p. 41.
68 Colin Barlow and John Drabble, 'Pemerintah dan industri karet yang muncul di Indonesia dan Malaysia 1900–1940', in *Sejarah ekonomi Indonesia*, ed. Anne Booth, William J. O'Malley and Anna Weidemann (Jakarta: LP3ES, 1986), pp. 258–89.

guaranteed.[69] Once again, this was an economical source of education funding, however, given that earnings from rubber, by which the colonial government was restoring education for the indigenous, largely originated from Indonesians themselves as 54 per cent of plantations in 1940 were local smallholdings.[70]

Table 5: Total registered urban unemployment in the Netherlands Indies 1931–36

	Europeans	Indonesians	Chinese
Jan. 1931	1,822	3,224	
Dec. 1931	2,042	5,696	
Dec. 1932	3,095	9,018	743
Dec. 1933	3,575	9,851	930
Dec. 1934	3,829	11,671	1,205
Dec. 1935	4,801	12,942	1,104
Dec. 1936	5,709	17,663	1109

Source: *Werkloosheid in Nederlandsch-Indië*, Publicatie No. 11 van het Kantoor van Arbeid (Batavia: Landsdrukkerij, 1935), p. 35, as cited by John Ingleson, 'Urban Java during the Depression', *JSEAS* 19, 2 (1988): 293.

Education recovery and reform included the reorganisation of the Second-Class schools, the establishment in 1937 of indigenous MULO (using Maleis), the reform of *normaalscholen* and training courses designed for village school teachers and, last but not least, the introduction of a new administration for Western schools. Alumni of the HIK for male teacher trainees in Yogyakarta recalled that in 1939, the school reopened its upper level program, making effective use of its two dormitory compounds — the northern and the southern.[71] The female HIK in Yogyakarta and Salatiga, which had run the lower-level training on a limited basis of new entrant selection during the crisis years, recommenced public admission sometime in 1937/1938.[72] The lower-level training at the HIK in Bukittinggi, according to one alumnus, was also reopened for admission around 1938, but so far I have not found archival data to support this claim.[73]

In principle, the government meant to reintroduce the idea of *indianiseering* (indigenising) Western education, i.e. schooling for Indonesians that was to be suited as closely as possible to indigenous culture. Indigenisation was not a new concept in the 1930s. Not long after the opening of village schools and the introduction of Dutch to the First-Class schools in Java in 1907, the Directors of Education, G.A.J. Hazeu (1912–14) and K.F. Creutzberg (1916–22; 1923), had already submitted an *indianiseering* proposal. In 1927, the Acting-Adviser for Indigenous Affairs, Charles Olke

69 *Verslag v/h onderwijs 1936/1937*, vol. 1, p. 52.
70 Barlow and Drabble, 'Pemerintah dan industri karet', p. 258.
71 Interview with Moerdiono, a 1939 alumnus of the Yogyakarta HIK, conducted in Yogyakarta on 27 Sept. 2006.
72 Interview with Soesilowati Basuki, a female student of the Yogyakarta HIK from Aug. 1941–Mar. 1942, conducted in Yogyakarta, 28 Nov. 2008.
73 Interview with Alatif Azis, Bandung, 27 Nov. 2006.

van der Plas, also proposed the *nationaliseering* of education for the Indonesian people. *Indianiseering* was based on a critical evaluation that, while the indigenous desire for Western education had grown enormously following the expansion of schooling, the main motivation was the desire to obtain European jobs, which were 'impossible or very difficult to achieve for many Indonesians'. The driving force behind the *indianiseering* was to embed Western education into the indigenous community within the local sociocultural context, thereby preventing an influx of Indonesian children into European schools, which were 'not only limited in number of places, but also not the suitable design of education for [them]'.[74]

The *nationaliseering* sprang from an astute observation of the potential political impact of a 'fully Western oriented education'. Van der Plas believed that many members of the indigenous community who had enjoyed a Western education had lost their innate attachment to their own cultural roots, but neither did they belong in European community circles. These culturally disoriented people were 'prone to the revolutionary propaganda' of the nationalists. The purpose of *nationaliseering* was to reestablish the harmony within indigenous society by introducing a type of schooling which promoted individual formation on the basis of a person's own cultural background thereby developing a counterforce against the nationalists.[75]

Although their points of departure diverged, both the *indianiseering* and *nationaliseering* proposals pointed out the urgency of placing Western education for the Indonesian population within the indigenous social and cultural spheres. Unfortunately, neither was accorded timely political space. While in practice the concept of *indianiseering* did not venture beyond the matter of the language to be used at school, the *nationaliseering* proposal was dismissed in the late 1920s by a sarcastic comment from a decisive authority in Batavia.[76]

Now, in the throes of the changing circumstances of the 1930s, the government reconsidered and adopted the indigenisation proposals. The underlying concept of indigenisation was refined in 1935 as: to reform schools for the indigenous people into cultural institutions which, although pedagogically Western, engaged closely with the local community.[77] The new policy fostered schools to provide instruction which was both related and of practical use to the pupils' daily lives and to prepare them for vocational training at the upper level.[78]

Motivating factors

One obvious reason for indigenisation was economic. Running a European school was prohibitively expensive in the 1930s. Table 6 presents a sample of student enrolments budgets for European and Indigenous/vernacular schools. In 1935/1936, for example, the government allocated as much as Fl. 9,740,900 for the 138,566 students in the Dutch schools (regardless of type), whereas for 1,821,620 students in vernacular schools (also regardless of type) only Fl. 11,609,600 had been set aside. Therefore, for that school year, students in the Dutch schools were allocated Fl.

74 Deputy DERA to GG 17 Jan. 1928, in Wal, *Het onderwijsbeleid*, p. 446.
75 Nota Van der Plas 7 Dec. 1927, in Wal, *Het onderwijsbeleid*, pp. 438–41.
76 Deputy DERA 17 Jan. 1928, in Wal, *Het onderwijsbeleid*, p. 448.
77 *Verslag v/h onderwijs 1936/1937*, vol. 1, p. 6.
78 *Verslag v/h onderwijs1936/1937*, vol. 2, p. v.

70.29 per pupil, as opposed to Fl. 6.37 per pupil in the vernacular schools, i.e. more than eleven times as much! Dutch schools remained much more costly to run than indigenous schools. This economic consideration alone offered the government a strong reason to transform the HIS back into indigenous schools, or, at least, to prevent more indigenous students from attending Western schools.

Table 6: Number of students and amount of budget in the Dutch and vernacular schools

School year	Dutch schools (regardless types)			Vernacular schools (regardless types)		
	No. of Students	Budget	Per pupil expenditure	No. of Students	Budget	Per pupil expenditure
1935/1936	138,566	Fl. 9,740,900	Fl. 70.29	1,821,620	Fl. 11,609,600	Fl. 6.37
1936/1937	142,726	Fl. 9,710,800	Fl. 68.03	1,919,114	Fl. 11,226,500	Fl. 5.84
1937/1938	145,826	Fl. 9,808,700	Fl. 67.26	1,996,436	Fl. 11,605,300	Fl. 5.81

Sources: *Verslag v/h onderwijs 1936/1937*, p. 268; *1939/1940*, p. 6.

The second motivation for indigenisation had to do with illiteracy. By 1930, the number of literate Indonesians amounted to 3,746,225 or only 6.14 per cent of a total population of 61 million in 1930.[79] As many as 90.9 per cent of Indonesians over the age of ten were illiterate. This figure was much higher than in neighbouring countries like Malaysia and Singapore (British Malaya), Thailand and the Philippines where 72.2, 63.5, 68.8, and 51.1 per cent of the population was illiterate, respectively.[80]

The poor quality of indigenous school graduates presented yet another problem. In the 1930s, among the Europeans whose social roots were in the colony — known as *blijvers* — it was felt that graduates of the existing indigenous schools did not perform well either in the job market or in intercultural involvement in colonial society.[81] In 1931, an article in a West Sumatran teachers' journal, *Aboean Goeroe-Goeroe*, also mentioned that graduates of indigenous schools (especially the village schools) could manage only very basic reading, writing and arithmetic. Most of them (nearly 99 per cent according to the article) did not go on to *vervolgschool*.[82] The government admitted that the results of the *volksscholen* and *vervolgscholen* remained below the minimum standard, pedagogically and culturally.[83]

Last but not least, by expanding and reforming indigenous education, the government was hoping to counter the progressive growth and influence of the so-called '*wildescholen*', the 'unofficial schools'.[84] Since the 1920s, the 'unofficial schools' had

79 Wal, *Some information*, p. 7.
80 Wal, *Het onderwijsbeleid*, p. 654.
81 M.A.E. Van Lith-Van Schreven, 'Zullen wij onze kinderen naar Holland zenden?', in *Indisch vrouwen jaarboek 1936*, ed. M.A.E. Van Lith-Van Schreven and J.H. Hooykaas-van Leeuwen Boomkamp (Jogjakarta: Druk Kolff-Buning, 1936), pp. 227–41.
82 *Aboean Goeroe-Goeroe*, 11, no. 4, Apr. 1931, pp. 62–4.
83 DERA, 28 Nov. 1938, cited in Wal, *Het onderwijsbeleid*, pp. 595–6.
84 From the government perspective the term 'unofficial school' meant 'private unsubsidised schools'.

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become breeding grounds for Indonesian nationalism.[85] Although the government had attempted to exert some influence over the growth of unsubsidised private schools,[86] they continued to thrive and spread far and wide in towns and rural areas.

Strategies

The government's policy of indigenisation was carried out through four strategies: the substitution of European teachers by Indonesians wherever possible; the devolution of the education budget and management to the provinces and municipalities, the reorganisation of schools and curriculum reform towards indigenous context and content.

Table 7: European and Indonesian teachers of the HIS, 1931–39

Year	No. of European teachers	No. of Indonesian teachers
1931	531	824
1933	264	982
1935	163	1,034
1937	148	1,015
1939	152	1,054

Sources: *Verslag v/h onderwijs 1930/1931*, pp. 44–5; *1933/1934*, pp. 94–5; *1935/1936,* pp. 120–1; *1937/1938*, pp. 234–5; *1939/1940*, pp. 338–9, all the second volume.

The first strategy was to replace European teachers at the HIS with Indonesian counterparts. From 1932 onwards, the government aimed to replace European teachers with Chinese or Indonesian colleagues: 546 at the public HCS, 791 at the public HIS and 56 at the *schakelschool*, the bridging school, respectively. It became evident, however, that the immediate removal of these 1,393 European teachers would be very damaging to both the nature and quality of Western education for non-European children.[87] Moreover, serious doubts were raised about whether a sufficient number of qualified Indonesian and Chinese teachers would be available. Faced with a stringent budget, the Minister agreed to set a gradual substitution in motion.[88] As Table 7 shows, the number of European teachers at the HIS gradually decreased while that of Indonesian teachers increased.

Most of the European personnel still employed in the HIS were principals. A small number were ordinary teachers. Others worked at the *leerscholen* (practice schools) or at special schools and were set apart administratively from the other teachers.[89] Male and female European teachers still working at the HIS were placed only under European principals. In 1937, 46 out of 295 school principals (Europeans and

85 Kenji Tsuchiya, *Demokrasi dan kepemimpinan: Kebangkitan gerakan Taman Siswa*, trans. H.B. Jassin (Jakarta: Balai Pustaka, 1992), p. 262.
86 Ibid., pp. 265–7.
87 *OV* 14 Mar. 1932 No. 15, NA no. 3298.
88 *OV* 22 June 1932, NA no. 3323.
89 *Verslag v/h onderwijs 1937/1938*, vol. 1, p. 106.

Indonesians), were holders of the indigenous head-teacher certificate and 13 held a lower-level indigenous certificate. Because it could be assumed that European principals almost certainly held a European not an indigenous certificate, it can be assumed that these 59 principals (46 + 13) were all Indonesians. Furthermore, if all those 148 European teachers at public HIS in 1937 (152 in 1939) were school principals, approximately 147 school principals (295–148) must have been Indonesians (59 of whom held indigenous certificates). Consequently, in 1937, the ratio between European and indigenous principals at the HIS was 148:147 or almost 50:50. The government claimed rather hastily that by 1938, 'the Hollands Inlandse Scholen, which were headed by indigenous principals, were already completely indigenised [i.e. not a single European principal or teacher remained].'[90]

As Table 8 shows, European teachers received much higher salaries than their Indonesian colleagues. According to the 1934 Revised Regulation on Teachers' Salaries, an indigenous teacher with a *kweekschool* diploma would have a beginning salary of about Fl. 70 per month only after he or she had first completed two years as a teaching cadet (*voorpraktijk*). From 1938, the two years of this cadetship, which had previously counted as full, would only count as half the necessary qualifying component.[91] Meanwhile, in 1938 a new European recruit with a *kweekschool* diploma was entitled to a starting salary of Fl. 180 per month — it would take an indigenous teacher with the same diploma no less than eleven years' service to reach that scale.[92] In addition, only European teachers enjoyed a holiday allowance and a reduced salary (*wachtgeld*) while off duty. Hence, the replacement of many Europeans with indigenous teachers was fully in line with the government's plans for cost-efficency in 1932: 'the aim was to place much cheaper teachers' at the HIS (see Table 8).[93]

Educational decentralisation was another aspect of indigenisation. Batavia handed over the financial responsibility for public education to local governments. In return, local governments were given authority over a substantial portion of indigenous education, for example, to legislate new village and the Second-Class schools and to set regulations affecting the local education budget and school fees. They were also authorised to directly add to the curricula and lesson plans any content they considered necessary to, or characteristic of, their region or municipality.[94] Planned in 1930,[95] decentralisation became effective for Java and Madura only in 1937 and for the Outer Provinces in 1938.[96]

As in the case of vernacular schools, the decentralisation of the HIS and the *schakelschool* implied a budget shared between the central and local governments. Moreover, decentralisation could impose efficiency by making changes in the European standards of the HIS, making the schools cheaper to operate. The vernacular or Malay was used at school and verbal communication was done in a mixture of

90 Ibid., pp. 107–8.
91 *Aboean Goeroe-Goeroe*, 11, no. 4, Apr. 1931, pp. 83–4.
92 *Almanak goeroe 1939* (Batavia Centrum: Balai Poestaka, 1938), pp. 158–9.
93 *OV* 22 June 1932, NA no. 3323.
94 *Verslag v/h onderwijs 1937/1938*, vol. 1, pp. 7–9.
95 Minister of the Colonies to GG 8 Aug. 1931, in Wal, *Het onderwijsbeleid*, p. 492.
96 *Verslagen v/h onderwijs 1936/1937*, vol. 1, pp. 5–6; *1937/1938*, vol. 1, p. 7.

Table 8: European and Indonesian teachers' salary scales, 1940

European teachers		Indonesian teachers	
Diploma	**salary scale**	**Diploma**	**salary scale**
School principal with European head-teacher certificate	Fl. 320–650	School principal with Indonesian head-teacher certificate	Fl. 250–400
Holder of European head-teacher certificate	Fl. 190–550	Holder of HIK or HKS certificate	Fl. 70–250
Holder of lower certificate	Fl. 125–325	Holder of *kweekschool* certificate	Fl. 34–115
Holder of lower certificate with two-third status	Fl. 100–200	Holder of normal school certificate	Fl. 27.50–72.50

Source: A.K. Pringgodigdo, 'Toelating van niet-Europeesche leerlingen tot de Europeesche lagere school', in *Supplement op het triwindoe-gedenkboek Mangkoe Nagoro VII* (Soerakarta: Het Comité voor het Triwindoe-Gedenkboek, 1940), pp. 315–30.

Dutch and the vernacular.[97] Students used Dutch and received Dutch lessons only in the last three years. All these measures, coupled with the replacement of European by indigenous teachers, was intended to achieve a large and systemic budget reduction for the central government.

The next relevant policy affected school reorganisation. The Second-Class schools, which had been gradually phased out since 1930, were abolished in 1937. During this period, students were allowed to transfer to the *vervolgscholen* if they desired to pursue a secondary education.[98] Another plan was that the *vervolgschool* would be extended from two years to three by 1943.[99] Hence, the structure of primary education for indigenous people would consist of the three-year *volksschool* and two years at the *vervolgschool*. Graduates of the *vervolgschool* could go on to different vocational training courses at the upper level, including the two-year Training Courses for the Teachers of Village Schools (*Opleiding voor Volksschool Onderwijzers*, OVO) and the four-year *normaalschool* for the *vervolgschool* teachers.

Government reports reveal that the gradual conversion after 1930 of the Second-Class school into *volks-* and *vervolg-scholen* had prompted the dismissal of indigenous teachers, but no statistics are available. At public schools, the oldest staff members, mainly assistant teachers (*goeroe bantoe*), were downgraded to the reduced salary scale (*wachtgeld*). At subsidised indigenous schools, young unmarried normal school graduates had to quit their jobs. These two groups of teachers were reappointed to village schools at the lower salary scale of village schoolteachers.[100]

The final strategy, which was part of the creation of the schoolteacher as an indigenous cultural agent examined below, was curriculum reform that was intended to

97 DERA 28 Nov. 1938, in Wal, *Het onderwijsbeleid*, p. 605.
98 Brugmans, *Geschiedenis*, pp. 315–17.
99 DERA 28 Nov. 1938, in Wal, *Het onderwijsbeleid*, pp. 600–1.
100 *Verslag v/h onderwijs 1934/1935*, vol. 1, p. ix.

turn village schools into cultural institutions in keeping with the students' sociocultural environment.[101]

Reviving the indigenous cultural agent

After the education decentralisation of 1937, autonomous territories were delegated the authority to establish their own teaching corps and to set up suitable local regulations to guide the syllabus, teachers' competence, minimum size of the teaching staff, learning tools and so forth. 'Cultural nativeness' became an important part of the teacher's role. Indeed, teachers for the village schools and *vervolgscholen* had to be from the same cultural background as that of their students.[102]

In Java and Madura, municipal and regency governments were to shoulder the brunt of both the recruitment and the OVO training of village-school teachers, whereas the provincial governments were responsible for the *vervolgschool* teachers in the *normaalschool*. In the Outer Provinces, the municipal, regency and combined-regency governments carried out these tasks.[103]

In the Outer Provinces, the government often provided a daily subsistence allowance for the OVO and *normaalschool* trainees from far away, which varied according to the area, ranging from Fl. 5 to Fl. 10 per student per month in 1937 up to Fl. 11.5 in 1938.[104] In South Sumatra and Timor, the local governments assumed responsibility for student housing. In Java and Madura, *normaalschool* pupils were lodged in boarding houses for a whole year.[105]

As stated earlier, the central government's aim was to maintain and raise the quality of teacher training at the lowest possible price without forfeiting the basic local content in the curricula.[106] Overall, the OVO curriculum consisted of theory and teaching practice, which formed a standard design for the first and second grades of the training.[107] Several hours in second year were devoted to actual experience in the practice school (*leerschool*). As at the OVO, at the *normaalschool* language and pedagogy were the two subjects that took pride of place.[108]

At a practical level, textbooks were an urgent issue. There were already textbooks in Malay, Javanese, Sundanese and Madurese for different course subjects.[109] But these were still limited in supply. The need for vernacular language textbooks clearly had financial consequences for the government, adding to the challenges of providing multi-language reading materials for Javanese villagers since 1920.[110]

Lacking sufficient textbooks for different language speakers and unable to adequately finance the bureaucratic infrastructure necessary for supervision on the

101 *Verslag v/h onderwijs 1936/1937*, vol. 1, p. 6; DERA 28 Nov. 1938, in Wal, *Het onderwijsbeleid*, pp. 596–600.
102 *Verslag v/h onderwijs 1936/1937*, vol. 1, pp. 9–11.
103 *Verslag v/h onderwijs 1937/1938*, vol. 1, pp. 7–9, 38–40.
104 *Verslagen v/h onderwijs 1936/1937*, vol. 1, p. 295; *1937/1938*, vol. 1, pp. 38–9.
105 *Madjallah untuk para pendidik di Indonesia*, no. 5, 1948, pp. 7–8.
106 DERA 28 Nov. 1938, in Wal, *Het onderwijsbeleid*, pp. 599–600.
107 *Almanak goeroe 1939*, pp. 117–19.
108 *Madjallah untuk para pendidik di Indonesia*, no. 5, 1948, pp. 3 and 8.
109 *Almanak goeroe 1939*, pp. 123–9.
110 Minister of the Colonies to the Queen of the Kingdom of the Netherlands, 26 Feb. 1926, in Wal, *Het onderwijsbeleid*, pp. 404–9.

whole, the government came to greatly rely on the OVO leaders,[111] who were the exclusive source of, and point of access to, knowledge and information.[112] Yet this position was officially not that of 'principal' (i.e. implying the holder of a school-leaving certificate, better salary and allowance) but that of a 'course leader', who in 1937 received an allowance of only Fl. 15 per month in addition to a low salary.[113] Nevertheless, even this lower level position served as an instrument of social stratification which preserved a privileged authority to access knowledge.[114]

Conclusion

Confronted with its economic decline as a result of the Great Depression, the Netherlands Indies government revived the idea of indigenisation in education in the 1930s. The overall design was to draw the indigenous majority back into their own cultural spheres by expanding their educational opportunities. The colonial education policy of indigenisation seemed to share similar goals with the Taman Siswa strategy, but each had very different motivations and aims. The Dutch policy of indigenisation in the 1930s came about largely as a means to run a more cost-effective education system. In contrast, Taman Siswa was concerned about 'building a fence' to protect from 'the outsiders' what its leading figure, Ki Hadjar Dewantara, believed to be 'our [Indonesians'/Javanese'] own culture'.[115] In addition, unlike Taman Siswa, which almost entirely focused on the legacy of the 'glory of indigenous cultures', the colonial indigenisation policy was aimed at strengthening imperial citizenship, that is, a sense of nationhood that viewed the Netherlands as the centre. But perhaps indigenisation actually fuelled Indonesian nationalism instead, given the differential treatment of indigenous public school teachers and students in the context of the political movements of the 1930s.

Under the indigenisation policy, the training of local teachers was emphasised, and conducted according to the standards of indigenous and not European education. Colonial education officials had witnessed and begun to realise how progressive the teachers of the unofficial schools (*wildescholen*), including Taman Siswa, were, and how effectively they stimulated grassroots awareness of nationalist ideals.[116] Making the schools for the indigenous commoners (*volkscholen*, *vervolgscholen*) cultural institutions by way of indigenisation, the government intended to transform Indonesian teachers into cultural agents who would propagate a government-formulated concept of cultural identity among their own community. In this sense, the making of a 'culture-conscious teacher' was indeed politically motivated. This argument holds true when the policies of education reform, which S.L. van der Wal identifies as a 'breakthrough', are examined. The reforms neither actually attempted to reshuffle the basic structure of colonial schooling nor to uproot the stratified (i.e. lower)

111 *Verslagen v/h onderwijs 1936/1937*, vol. 1, pp. 295–6; *1937/1938*, vol. 1, pp. 39–40.
112 *Verslag v/h onderwijs 1936/1937*, vol. 1, p. 296.
113 Ibid., p. 294.
114 Tan Malaka, *Dari penjara ke penjara: Bahagian pertama* (Jakarta: Widjaja, 1947), p. 33.
115 Ki Hadjar Dewantara, 'Pengajaran nasional', in Majelis Luhur Taman Siswa, *Karya K.H. Dewantara bagian I: Pendidikan* (Yogyakarta: Majelis Luhur Taman Siswa, 2004), p. 11.
116 See, for example, Soewarsih Djojopoespito, *Buiten het gareel: Een Indonesische roman* (Utrecht: De Haan, 1940).

position of indigenous teachers. Although not immune to the financial effects of the Great Depression, Dutch-medium schools remained exclusive schools for the elite which operated to a large extent in their pre-crisis mode. European teachers remained on a higher salary scale and enjoyed better benefits than their indigenous colleagues.

Although the elite schools remained, the government was actually in the process of switching its focus to providing education for ordinary Indonesian children. Yet while colonial policymakers were aware of the politically strategic position of the vernacular schools and teachers, they failed to understand the entire dynamics surrounding education and society. Nor did their reforms show much understanding of the fact that vernacular schooling and pedagogy by the end of 1930s had gradually shifted toward the paradigm of resistance.