



INDONESIA by Adsina Fibra Ibrahim

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Overview

The Government of Indonesia made political commitments at the World Education Forum (2000), along with other Governments and organizations, for achieving basic education for all. In this broader context, the national level reflections were engaged for developing a new vision of education, as part of the reform in Indonesia, which emphasizes the implementation of the principles of democracy, autonomy, decentralization, and public accountability. The reforms in the education system have given prominence to enhancing its performance in the framework of even distribution of educational opportunities. This reform process has a fundamental impact on the national education system and its mission to meet various challenges in the present day world.¹ Two significant pieces of legislation provided the legal foundation for this education reform; a) the 2003 Education Law (Law No. 20/2003 on the National Education System) and; b) the 2005 Teacher and Lecturer Law (Law No. 14/2005 on Teachers and Lecturers). Both these laws were intended to facilitate improved management of the national education system.

Dharma (2008) states the vision of Indonesian education as the realization of the educational system as a solid and authoritative social institution to empower Indonesian citizens to become intelligent persons able and proactive to stand facing

the ever changing challenges of the era: bright (spiritually, emotionally, socially, intellectually, and kinesthetically) and competitive citizens. The educational system encompasses all forms, types, and levels of education: formal, non-formal, and informal.²

The structure of schooling

The Ministry of National Education (MONE) has authority for managing both formal and non-formal education. Formal education is divided into three levels, primary, secondary and tertiary (higher) education. The Ministry of Religious Affairs (MORA) has authority for managing *Madrasah* (Islamic schools). The Islamic schools have similar three educational levels and apply 70 % of the non- religious curriculum established by MONE and 30 % of the Islamic curriculum established by MORA. MORA only manages *Madrasah*; but other private religious schools such as Catholic and Protestant schools are under MONE and these schools apply 100% of the secular curriculum. According to the 2003 Education Law:

- Basic education takes the form of primary schools, that is, *Sekolah Dasar* (SD) as well as *Madrasah Ibtidaiyah* (MI), or other schools of the same level, and junior secondary schools, that is *Sekolah Menengah Pertama* (SMP) as well as *Madrasah Tsanawiyah* (MTs), or other schools of the same level.
- Secondary education comprises general secondary education and vocational secondary education. Secondary education takes the form of senior general secondary schools, that is *Sekolah Menengah Atas* (SMA) as well as *Madrasah Aliyah* (MA), and senior vocational secondary schools, that is, *Sekolah Menengah Kejuruan* (SMK), as well as *Madrasah Aliyah Kejuruan* (MAK), or other schools of the same level.
- Higher education is a level of education after secondary education consisting of diploma, bachelor (*s a r j a n a*), masters and specialized postgraduate programs, and doctorate programs imparted by a higher education institution. Apart from the levels of education mentioned above, pre-school education is also provided. The types of pre-school education are kindergarten and play groups. Kindertgartens are part of the school based education system while the play groups are part of the out-of-school system. Pre-school is provided for children from 4 to 6 years old for a one to two years period of education, while play groups are attended by children of 3 years and below.

The legal framework

Indonesia's 1945 Constitution is one of the oldest constitutions in the world that guarantees the right of education for its citizen,³ This Constitution was amended in 2002, and this is the Article 31, Education and Culture;

1. Each citizen has the right to an education.
2. Each citizen is obliged to follow elementary education and the government has the duty to fund this.
3. The government organizes and implements a national education system, to be regulated by law, that aims at enhancing religious and pious feelings as well as moral excellence with a view to upgrading national life.
4. The state shall give priority to the education budget by allocating at least twenty percent of the state's as well as of the regional budgets to meet the requirements of implementing national education.
5. The government advances science and technology along with holding religious values and national unity in high esteem with a view to promoting civilization as well as the well-being of humanity.

The latest Law on the National Education System was enacted in July 2003. The Law creates a legal framework for the major educational goal, policies and plans. The key targets include expansion and equity, the improvement of quality and relevance, and the implementation of autonomy in higher education. The Law seeks to open access to education at all levels and all forms -formal, non- formal, as well as informal- for all the citizens of Indonesia. Its main thrust is to make education relevant to societal needs; to develop further community-based education; and to enhance participation by communities in supporting basic education. It provides rights and obligations of citizens, parents, community, and Government.

An outstanding feature of the Law is the implementation of compulsory basic education, free of cost, for all Indonesian citizens. Henceforth, "Every seven to fifteen years old citizen shall have the right to receive basic education", as the Law provides. This is a major step towards creating a critical mass in the area of education for national development, as recognized in the National Plan of Action: Indonesia's Education For All (2002). The Law provides, in compliance with constitutional amendment of 2002, that 20 percent of the national budget shall be allocated for education. The Government has thus taken a major decision that financing of basic education for all shall be primarily the responsibility of the Government.⁴

Freedom to establish non-state schools

There is freedom to establish non-state schools. Schools are run either by the Government or privately. Every formal and non-formal education unit established has to have a license from the central or local government. The requirements for obtaining a license include educational contents, the number and qualification of the educational personnel, educational facilities and equipment, educational funding, evaluation and certification systems, management and educational process.

Islam is the religion of 85.2% of the population, designating Indonesia as the largest Moslem country in the world. However, Indonesia is not an Islamic country. The Constitution guaranteed the freedom of religions and the Government recognized six religions. The remaining population consists of Protestants (8.9%); Catholics (3%); Hindus (1.8%); Buddhists (0.8%) and other religions (0.3%). The private religious schools have greatly contributed to Indonesian education. They reach people in both rural and urban areas, for example *Majelis Pendidikan Katolik* (Catholic Education Board), *Konfederasi Wali-gereja Indonesia* (Indonesian Church Union), and two largest Islamic organizations named *Muhammadiyah* and *Nahdlatul Ulama* serve millions of students from kindergarten to university level. These religious institutions also provide non-formal education for local communities, for example business, women's, and health education.

Homeschooling

Home schooling is relatively new in Indonesian education. According to Budiarjo, a director at Homeschooling Kak Seto, a private education foundation, the number of students enrolled in its home-learning program had shot up from 250 to 485.⁵

Homeschooling is legal in Indonesia (Indonesian: *Pendidikan Rumah*). It is regulated under National Education System 2003 under division of informal education. This enables children being homeschooled to take a national exam to obtain an "equivalent certificate". Homeschooling is recently becoming a trend in upper-middle to upper class families with highly educated parents with capability to provide better tutoring or expatriate families living far away from an International School.

School choice not limited by family income

School choice is guaranteed by the Constitution, as it is stated under the Fundamental Human Rights, Article 28E (1) "Each person is free to worship and to practice the religion of his choice, to choose education and schooling, his occupation, his nationality, his residency in the territory of the country that he shall be able to leave and to which he shall have the right to return."

The Government of Indonesia has been fully conscious of the need for creating equality of opportunity in education and to ensure that basic education is made available to all, including those belonging to economically disadvantaged or socially marginalized groups, and those living in remote areas. The Education Law reflects certain fundamental principles, notably universal access to basic education without gender bias, non-discrimination, equality of opportunity, and equity in education.

The Education Law specifies that "Government is obliged to guarantee full financing of

compulsory basic education for children aged 7-15 and no cost should be charged to children or their families.” However, decentralization had shifted fiscal responsibility from the central government to provinces and communities. There is little country-wide information available on the financing of education and what is available points to inequalities. Primary education is free in parts of the country, for-fee in others. Like in any other part of the world, the poorest communities and provinces are the least able to ensure public funding for education. Education International reported that “fees, official and unofficial, including payments for registration, books, examinations, testing, and uniforms” continue to be charged.⁶

The majority of Indonesians perceive that state (public) schools perform better than private schools. Fahmi (2009) states that public schools in Indonesia are widely perceived to have better inputs and to be superior to the private schools. Public schools also benefit from advantages of high-scoring peer effect as entry to some junior secondary public schools in urban area is based on national exam score in the elementary school. These findings are supported by the evidence on schooling input and students-teacher ratio. Newhouse and Beegle (2006) clarify that Indonesian public schools, particularly junior secondary schools, generally provide more textbooks than do their private counterparts. The education level of teachers in public schools is higher than in private. Teachers of public schools are less likely to have a second job. Other factors that may support the advantage of public schools is that their tuition fees on average are higher than those of private schools.⁷ Newhouse and Beegle’s study presents evidence that Indonesian public junior secondary schools are more effective than their private counterparts at imparting cognitive skills, as measured by students’ scores on the national exam administered upon completion of junior secondary school.

School distinctiveness protected by law and policy

There are six religions recognized by the Government, namely Islam, Christianity, Catholicism,⁸ Hinduism, Buddhism and Confucianism. The majority of private schools are run by religious institutions. These schools are protected by the Education Law:

1. Religious education is provided by Government and/or by any group of people belonging to the same religion in accordance with the law in force.
2. Religious education has the function to prepare learners to become community members who understand and practice religious values and/or acquire expertise in religious studies.
3. Religious education can be conducted through formal education, non-formal education, and informal education.
4. Religious education can take the form of *diniyah* education (an Islamic school), *pesantren* (an Islamic boarding school), *pasraman* (a Hinduism School), *pabhaja samanera* (a Buddhist School), and other education forms of the similar type.

Distinctive character

The Education Law sets forth aims and functions of education, and national standards and the principles of the education system. It applies to all educational institutions that exist or may be created in the Republic of Indonesia. Its underlying philosophy is that education is a national movement in order that different stakeholders participate in the development of education as a life-long process. One of the main purposes of the Law is to inculcate in young minds respect for human rights, for cultural pluralism and learning to live together, promotion of morals and character building as well as unity in diversity (*Bhinneka Tunggal Eka*) in the spirit of brotherhood and solidarity.⁹

Decisions about admitting pupils

At the elementary school level, parents can register their children in any school that they choose, subject to capacity. The school cannot reject admitting the pupils if the pupils meet the basic criterion of age. Since each school has a classroom quota, admission is based on first come, first served. At the junior high school and high school levels, the national exam score is an important piece in pupils' admission. The school sets a range of scores and students must compete to get into schools. The favorite schools either state or private set the highest score in the region and they get the best students in term of academic skills.

Decisions about staff

There are three levels of institutions that have authority to hire teachers. First is the central government through its Ministries (MONE and MORA), district government, and foundations that own private schools. All teachers in state schools (both MONE and MORA) are central government civil servants, although some government schools also hire non-civil servant teachers and pay their salaries out of the school's budget. MONE and MORA receive annual hiring quotas for new civil servant teachers, based on discussions among the national (central) Civil Service Commission, Ministry of Finance (MOF), and Parliament about budget availability. For MONE teachers, these quotas are then distributed to districts that actually carry out the recruitment in accordance with national requirements and guidelines. MORA recruits centrally; however, submission of application forms and test administration is implemented at the district level. MONE teacher recruits are automatically assigned to the districts that recruited them, and MORA teacher recruits tend to be assigned to the districts where their applications were submitted and processed. MONE civil servant teacher salaries are paid by the central government through the general block grant from the central budget to district budgets. MORA civil servant teachers are paid directly through the central MORA budget, with the funds flowing through the MORA vertical hierarchy. The central ministerial budgets also cover

certain salary supplements required by Law 14/2005 concerning teachers and university lecturers.

Second, districts have the authority to hire district government civil servants, including teachers. Their salaries are paid through the district budget, but are not covered by the general block grant. There is another group of teachers who are referred to as “contract teachers.” These are teachers hired by and funded through the district education budget, but who are not district government civil servants. District governments attempt, with varying degrees of success, to have these teachers included as successful recruits in the annual MONE civil service quota. Government Regulation 43/2007, which revised Government Regulation 48/2005 concerning recruitment of contract personnel as civil servants, lists teachers as the first priority for such recruitment, followed by health service personnel, agricultural extension workers, and “other” personnel.

Private schools have two other categories of teachers: permanent and nonpermanent. Permanent teachers are permanent employees of the foundation, with all the legal rights of permanent employees. They are paid a base salary with supplements plus incentive pay, based on actual number of teaching hours. These permanent teachers are eligible for salary supplements under Law 14/2005, and those supplements are covered through the central MONE and MORA budgets. All civil servant teachers are permanent employees of the foundation. Nonpermanent teachers are hired on annual or multiyear contracts. They are usually paid a (low) base salary, with no supplements, and earn most of their income from the teaching-hour based incentive pay.¹⁰

Table 1. Types of Teachers and Funding Sources by School Type

School Type	MONE	MORA
State	Central civil service salaries via district budget	Central civil service salaries from MORA budget
	District civil service salaries from district budget	
	Central contract teachers' salaries from central budget	Central contract teachers' salaries from central budget
	District contract teachers' salaries from district budget	
	Non-civil service salaries from school budget government provides some supplements	Non-civil service salaries from school budget government provides some supplements
Private	Central civil service salaries via district budget into school budget but teacher incomes from school budget	Central civil service salaries from MORA budget into school budget but teacher incomes from school budget
	Non-civil service: permanent salaries from school budget government provides some supplements	Non-civil service: permanent salaries from school budget government provides some supplements
	Non-civil service: nonpermanent salaries from school budget	Non-civil service: nonpermanent salaries from school budget

According to MONE (2008) statistics, of the 2.78 million teachers in Indonesia, more than 50 percent of teachers (approximately 1.5 million) are civil servants.¹¹ The rest numbers of teachers are contract or honorary teachers employed directly by the school.

Indonesia's decision to decentralize its system of governance in 2000 has transformed the nature and quality of the delivery of all public services, including education. The arrangements governing the decentralization of the education system is outlined in the Education Law. According to this law, the principal responsibilities, authority, and resources for the delivery of education have been transferred to lower levels of government, with significant decision-making power being transferred to schools themselves.

In 2006, the Ministry of National Education launched the teacher certification program. To be qualified for the program, a school teacher must have a four-year diploma or an undergraduate degree from a recognized tertiary institution. There are two types of teacher certification. First, junior teachers with achievements are encouraged to take part in a teacher certification program through teacher training that lasts two semesters. Second, senior teachers are required to take part in teacher certification through portfolio assessment. These two types of teacher certification are conducted in more than 35 in-service teacher certification centers throughout Indonesia. The majority of these centers are located in state and private universities that were once teachers' colleges and are still running teacher training programs. Successful participants receive an "Educator Certificate" entitling the holders to, among other things, financial incentives and improved chances for career promotion (MONE and World Bank, 2004 and 2009).

There is not any restriction for teachers of a different religious background to teach in a school that belongs to a particular religious institution, for example a Christian teacher can teach in a Muhammadiyah school (an Islamic private school) or a Muslim teacher can teach in a Catholic school. In Bali, there is a local *pesantren*, an Islamic boarding school, which has several Buddhist teachers.

Accountability for school quality

In term of academic accountability, Indonesia uses a national standard for education and has a national examination to assess it. The Government conducts three national examinations at the completion of Grades 6, 9, and 12. These examinations are very important to determine that students graduate and continue their study to a higher level. There are three subjects tested at the elementary school (Grade 6): Math, Natural Science, and Bahasa Indonesia (the national language). The same subjects plus English are tested at the junior high school (Grade 9), while at high school (Grade 12), there are three core subjects tested, Math, Bahasa Indonesia, and English, while students are tested on other subjects depending on their major. Those majoring in Natural Science are examined in Physics, Biology, and Chemistry; those in Social Science in Economics, Sociology, and History; those in Literature in History, Indonesian literature, and one International literature (English, Chinese, Japanese, French, or Arabic); those in Islamic Studies in Interpretation of Al Quran (*tafsir*), prophet's sayings (*hadits*), and theology (*ilmu kalam*); and those in Vocational Education in History, vocational practicum, and vocational theory.

According to the Education Law, Article 57

1. Evaluation shall be undertaken to monitor and control the quality of education nationally, as a form of public accountability of providers of education in relation to stakeholders.

2. Evaluation shall be made of learners' achievement, institutions, and education programs in formal education and non-formal education at all levels, units, and types of education.
3. Furthermore, Article 59, (1) The Government and local governments shall carry out an evaluation of all education providers, units, streams, levels, and types of education. (2) Community and/or professional organizations shall have the right to set up an independent evaluation body to conduct an evaluation.

Besides evaluation from government and its local representatives (the local education office), the Education Law also states the role of the School Committee and Education Board to supervise accountability of education quality. The specific roles and purposes of these two institutions are stated in the Ministry of National Education's Decree number 44/ 2002. The School Committee is created by community initiative at the school level, and the Education Board is created by community initiative at the district level. These institutions are not government institutions and they monitor and supervise the education quality within their authority. They also play a role as bridge between school, community and government. The School Committee and Education Board are a new effort to promote transparency, accountability, and democratic practice in education.

Teaching of values

Civic education, religious education and *Bahasa Indonesia* (the national language) are three subjects taught from basic to higher education level. Civic education emphasizes educating students to be democratic citizens. The core values are democracy, tolerance, *gotong royong* (mutual assistance), justice, responsibility, human rights, and patriotism. *Bahasa Indonesia* is a tool to unite the nation. Indonesia has over 500 ethnic groups. Many Indonesians speak their ethnic language as their mother tongue. However, *Bahasa Indonesia* is the official language and it is taught at all schools and most Indonesians are proficient in using the language for communication.

Zuhdi (2005) states religious education is still an important part of the program of Indonesian schools because the country adheres to a fundamental principle known as *Ketuhanan Yang Maha Esa* ("Believe in one God"), which is the first principle of *Pancasila*, the state philosophy which consists of five principles. This suggests that religious education has its own place in Indonesian schools. The Indonesian government recognizes the existence of religion-oriented schools as well as religious education in public schools. One of the reasons for this is the belief that religious education is the best way to inculcate students with moral values (Zuhdi, 2005, p.2).

According to the Education Law, every learner in an educational unit is entitled to receive

religious education in accordance with his/her religion, imparted by an educator who has the same religion. Although Indonesian has become more open in every aspects of life, atheism and communism are still not allowed to be taught in the school. These two subjects can be used in an academic discussion, for example a discussion in the university level, but all citizens are not allowed to practice them. Indonesia has a traumatic experience with communists because they conducted a *coup d'état* attempt in 1968 which caused thousands of deaths. Atheism is banned because it is against the first principle of *Pancasila*.

The Government established the basic framework of curriculum and competency, which includes values taught in school. Dharma (2008) describes the subject cluster and scope, and the competence standards of education:

- a. Religion and noble character
This subject is intended to develop learners as religiously devoted individuals who possess noble characters, consisting of ethics, good conduct in life, or morality as the realization of religious education.
- b. Citizenship and personality
This subject is intended to develop learners' awareness and knowledge with regard to their status, rights, and obligations in community, state, and nation; as well as to improve their quality as human beings. The awareness and knowledge include nationality, spirit and patriotism in defending their nation, appreciation of human rights, national diversity, environmental conservation, gender equality, democracy, social responsibility, as well as the promotion of behaviors against corruption, collusion, and nepotism.
- c. Science and technology
Science and technology at elementary school is intended to introduce, react to, and appreciate science and technology, as well as to instill habits of critical, creative, and independent scientific thinking and behavior. Science and technology at junior high school is intended to develop basic competency in knowledge and science as well as to enhance the learners' habit of scientific thinking critically, creatively, and independently.
- d. Aesthetics
This subject cluster is intended to develop learners' sensitivity as well as ability to express and appreciate beauty and harmony, both in individual life that enable learners to enjoy and be grateful of life and in community that enables them to create togetherness and harmony.
- e. Physical, sport, and health
This subject cluster at elementary school is intended to develop learners' physical potential as well as to implant the spirit of sportsmanship and awareness of healthy life. This subject cluster at junior high school is intended to enhance the learners' physical potential as well as to strengthen the habits of sportive and healthy life.

Endnotes

- ¹ Fajar, M.A, the former Ministry of National Education foreword in the 2003 Education Law
http://planipolis.iiep.unesco.org/upload/Indonesia/Indonesia_Education_Act.pdf
- ² Presented in the Roundtable Discussion in Retrac Governing Board Meeting at Institut Aminuddin Baki, Genting Highland, Malaysia, 27 August 2008. Agus Dharma is Director of the Personnel Education and Training Center, Ministry of National Education, Republic of Indonesia.
- ³ Sources: <http://www.right-to-education.org/country-node/357/country-fee>
- ⁴ Fajar, M.A, the former Ministry of National Education foreword in the 2003 Education Law
http://planipolis.iiep.unesco.org/upload/Indonesia/Indonesia_Education_Act.pdf
- ⁵ Source: <http://www.thejakartaglobe.com/news/indonesian-parents-look-to-advantages-of-schooling-in-the-home/369113>
- ⁶ Source: <http://www.right-to-education.org/country-node/357/country-fee>
- ⁷ [editor's note: !! See James Tooley, *The Beautiful Tree* (2009) for evidence on inexpensive private schools serving poor children in Africa and India, though he argues that their quality is higher]
- ⁸ [editor's note: of course, Catholics are Christian, but the latter term is being used to designate Protestants only]
- ⁹ Fajar, M.A, the former Ministry of National Education foreword in the 2003 Education Law
http://planipolis.iiep.unesco.org/upload/Indonesia/Indonesia_Education_Act.pdf
- ¹⁰ Study of the Legal Framework for the Indonesian Basic Education Sector, Second Edition, 2009 prepared by RTI International for USAID/Indonesia, pp. 15-17
- ¹¹ The Ministry of National Education and World Bank (2009), Teacher Certification Program in Indonesia, p.12

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