

Chapter 8

Colonial education systems and their post-colonial development impact in the Congo and Indonesia

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Abstract

This chapter compares the development of the state-based colonial education system in the Dutch East Indies with the mission-based system in Belgian Congo from a long term economic development perspective. It is argued that the small opportunities for Indonesian children to attend a full Western curriculum of primary, secondary and tertiary education played a key role in the development of national leadership in post-colonial Indonesia, while the *de facto* racial segregation in the education system and in the administration of the state and the major companies prevented the development of a similar class of experienced leaders in the Belgian Congo.

1. Introduction

The spread of formal education to broad layers of the indigenous population was the cornerstone of the “civilization mission” as envisaged by European colonial powers since, roughly, the start of the twentieth century. In the Dutch East Indies the initiative to expand school enrolment rates formed tangible proof of a major re-orientation in colonial policy: a shift from excessive exploitation of indigenous labor under the Dutch cultivation system (*het cultuurstelsel*, ca. 1830-1870) towards a ‘paternalistic’ mode of colonial rule, generally referred to as the ‘ethical policy’ (*ethische politiek*). In the Belgian Congo native education started to expand in higher gear after the end of Leopold’s domaniale regime (*domaniale stelsel*, 1891-1908). The improved stability of the colonial state and the rapid progress in effective preventions and treatments against tropical diseases, opened up a new horizon for missionaries to ‘conquer’ the Congo basin via missionary education. Even though the colonial state was unable to enforce some degree of standardization in the structure and content of colonial education before 1925, the Belgian government was also keenly aware of the role education could fulfill in their attempt to dissociate from the atrocities committed under Leopold’s rule.

This chapter explores the comparative nature and pace of educational development since the introduction of the ethical policy in Indonesia (1901) and the annexation of the Congo Free State by the Belgian state (1908). More specifically, this chapter focuses on the relationship between these different formal education systems and their implications for the development of indigenous state leadership. The experience of early independence leaders was critical for the design of crucial macro-economic policies and also for the continued expansion of the colonial education system in the post-colonial era. The main argument developed here is that the opportunities for Indonesian children to attend a full Western curriculum of primary, secondary and tertiary education, however small they were, enabled a tiny class of Indonesian intellectuals to develop the leadership experience required to, at least, ensure the further development of

educational capacity, which proved critical in the adoption of sound macro-economic policies under Suharto (1967-1998). The segregation policies in Belgian Congo prevented access of Africans to the higher ranks of state administration and, *mutatis mutandis*, modern forms of higher education. This distinction in the level of education enjoyed by the early independence leaders in the Congo, may clarify part of the political context in which Mobutu would ruin the national economy and destroy the educational structures which had evolved under Belgian colonial rule.

Mass education requires investments in school supplies, physical infrastructure (buildings), teacher training programs and school inspection teams. In a colonial context it also requires decisions regarding the language of instruction (vernacular or metropolitan?), the contents of the offered curriculum (Western or indigenous?) and the distribution of the financial burden (central state budget, school fees, missionary funds?). In view of all these issues it is not surprising that colonial administrations tended to develop very different strategies to accommodate the call for educational expansion, with varying rates of success.

The colonial administration in Belgian Congo pursued a strategy common in large parts of colonial Africa. They offered free entry to Catholic and Protestant missionaries who supplied the lion's share of the human, financial and organizational capacity to set up mission schools. During the interwar years the colonial government especially encouraged Belgian Catholic missions to broaden their activities. The subsidy program for the Catholic mission schools was formalized in the 1925 *Projet d'organisation de l'enseignement libre au Congo belge avec le concours des sociétés missions nationales*.¹ Only after the Second World War did the Belgian colonial government claim primary responsibility and authority over educational affairs, which led to deep conflicts with the major Catholic figureheads in the church and in Belgian society. The colonial government rapidly increased the education budget to also include Protestant

mission schools in their subsidy program and created a new infrastructure for public lay education (*neutraal onderwijs*) (Depaepe and van Rompaey 1995: 185-199).

In the Dutch East Indies the missions did never develop a comparable degree of control over the education system. Despite the support from the colonial administration to upscale their activities during the mid-nineteenth century, the dominance of Islamic religious instruction posed a serious barrier to a widespread diffusion of mission schools. The Dutch were reluctant to increase tensions by offering open support to Christian mission activities in Muslim communities, and were even less inclined to support the expansion of Islamic education itself. Since the late nineteenth century consecutive Dutch governments endorsed the liberal political viewpoint that a neutral colonial state should take the initiative in the development of colonial education (Hartgerink 1942: 45-53). In Belgium a similar political debate about the primacy of secular over religious education (*de eerste schoolstrijd*) ended in a landslide victory for the confessional parties (Witte *et al.* 2009). Mission schools in Indonesia thus became largely concentrated in the Outer Areas (*de Buitengewesten*), where the opposition of local communities against Christian missionary encroachment was less vehement and the colonial state had fewer interests in the direct control of the curriculum.

There are at least three major channels through which education affects long term economic development. First, ample literature confirms the beneficial effects of education on public health. Healthy people tend to be more productive people and they also are likely to remain economically active for a longer period. Educated people generally have a better understanding of the importance of hygiene, a more accurate knowledge of disease risks and prevention measures and also have better access to sources of medical knowledge. Numerous studies have found a negative correlation between educational attainment and rates of infant and maternal mortality, fertility, diseases and the use of proven prevention measures. The health effects of schooling accumulate as they are transmitted between generations. In this process the education

of mothers appears to play a key role (Banarjee and Duflo 2011: 41-70; Klasen 2002; Lloyd *et al.* 2000; Mokyr 2002: 163-217).

Second, education contributes to the accumulation of human skills and knowledge which, in combination with capital-embodied technology, raises opportunities for productivity growth according to standard production function theory (Mankiw *et al.* 1992). Education is by no means a sufficient condition for productivity growth, but it is a necessary condition to reap sustained benefits from the technological innovations which sustain the process of modern economic growth (Helpman 2004; Kuznets 1966; Lucas 2002; Nelson 2000). For this reason governments of modern welfare states have vastly increased their expenses on public education since the late nineteenth century (Lindert 2004) and in the majority of less developed countries education budgets have exponentially increased during the postwar era as well (Birdsall *et al.* 1997; Clemens 2004; Frankema 2009). Congo is one of the very few examples among the lesser develop countries, where government spending on education has completely collapsed and never recovered in the last three decades of the twentieth century (Depaepe 1996: 153-156).

This study, however, will particularly deal with a third channel: education is needed for the development of the governance capabilities used in the management of complex political, economic and social affairs. A strong, informed and committed regulatory body is an absolute requirement to ensure political and macro-economic stability. Stability of prices, of economic institutions (including financial market institutions) and government spending programs is vital to create and sustain a favorable investor's climate and optimize conditions for private entrepreneurship. State capacity is required to levy the taxes and fees, and to reallocate public resources to sustain the education effort. When the state is controlled by a dominant coalition of rent-seeking elites who are overwhelmingly occupied with the preservation of personal interests, state policies tend to limit access to economic resources and political influence to the majority of the population (Khan 2000; North *et al.* 2009). Rent-seeking can impede economic

development in various degrees, depending largely on the type of economic distortion it produces. High transactions costs deter economic initiatives and impersonal exchange. A large group of non-coopted intellectuals raises the probability of certain formal and informal checks on overt power abuse. Intellectuals more often take the lead in the organisation of political opposition and are usually capable of communicating their call for civil liberties (e.g. freedom of speech and public assembly, independent jurisdiction, political representation etc.) in a more effective way (Hall *et al.* 1986).

For this reason colonial governments stood particularly ambivalent towards the provision of higher education. Colonial society needed skilled people for administrative tasks in service of the colonial state and major enterprises, they needed doctors to develop a health care system and they needed engineers to construct, maintain and employ mines and infrastructural networks. At the same time colonial governments feared the contra-productive rise of anti-colonial sentiments via education. In the 1910s and 1920s Dutch politicians openly ventilated their concerns about the growing white-collar proletariat in the East Indies, which was considered as a threat to the stability of colonial society (Lelyveld 1996; van der Veur 1969). Similar concerns about the access of literate Congolese to subversive literature and anti-colonial ideologies (Pan-Africanism, Communism) were expressed by the Belgians in the Congo (Depaepe 1996: 147; Dunkerley 2009: 89-94). These concerns were not misplaced, as many studies have revealed a link between the provision of Western education and the rise of anti-colonial nationalism (Coleman 1954; Sutton 1965; White 1996). And as we will argue below, this is also a crucial factor in the Congo-Indonesia comparison.

2. State and missions: different objectives, different approaches

To secure British support for his claim to the Congo domain at the Berlin conference in 1884-5, Leopold had to promise that he would secure free trade and free entry to missionaries of all

denominations (Pakenham 1992: 247-250). Although the Protestant societies worked outside the orbit of the colonial administration, their presence greatly added to the missionary schooling potential that was to develop in later years. The Belgian Catholic missionary societies actively co-operated in Leopold's colonial project. He arranged land concessions to the missions in return for missionary schools focusing on agricultural training and manual labour. The fact that Leopold himself never dared to visit his colony for fear of catching a tropical disease (van Reybrouck 2010) illustrates how vital the development of early mission stations was to the effective occupation of the Congo territory. The Catholic missionary schools were also needed to train Congolese soldiers for the army (*La Force Publique*) and native clerks for the lower ranks in the government administration (Dunkerley 2009: 34-35).

The ultimate goal of the missionary zeal was the conversion and salvation of as many indigenous souls as possible. The missionary effort thus focused on the diffusion of mass education with low quality standards and limited opportunities to enroll in a post-primary school trajectory. In the distant rural areas mission schools were generally ungraded and managed by one or two native missionary-teachers with a curriculum confined to the lower grades of primary education. Post-primary education was offered in the larger cities, but focused on teacher training programs in order to enlarge the group of indigenous missionary-teachers. Hence, the missions were an efficient medium to civilize and socialize colonial subjects without raising a class of indigenous intellectuals that could challenge the legitimacy and authority of the colonial state. Besides, the missions also operated at extremely low costs to a colonial state with very limited budget possibilities because of its international commitment to free trade (no custom revenues).

The public call for increased government involvement in African education, endorsed by the report of the Phelps-Stokes committee in 1922, rose the pressure on the Belgian colonial government to increase its education budget. The 1925 project in Belgian Congo set out to

standardize the colonial primary education system in three tiers: a first tier of two years tuition focusing on acquiring manual skills and work discipline. In the rural areas the education focused particularly on agricultural labour activities, in the urban areas there was more attention for teaching basic literacy skills. A second tier of three years in the urban centers where the value of contact with Europeans was emphasized by teaching a wider range of subjects, including some French language instruction and manual skills such as carpentry or woodworking. A third, rather exclusive two-year tier, intended to steer the talented urban students towards the jobs demanded by the colonial economy and polity. These schools would separately prepare the boys for work as a tradesmen, lower rank clerk, army official or missionary school teacher and the girls for domestic-agricultural tasks (Dunkerley 2009: 39-45). Obviously, this implied a reformulation of the responsibilities of the state and the missions in educational affairs. Although the Catholic missions fiercely resisted the plan to introduce state inspection in return for additional financial support and managed to postpone the implementation of the system until 1929. At the same time, however, the Catholic missions became even more indispensable to the success of the Belgian colonial project (Depaepe and van Rompaey 1995: 60-63).

In the Dutch East Indies the power-contest between the state and the missions had been settled long before. In the last quarter of the nineteenth century around a quarter of the students in 'recognized schools' on Java and Madura attended a mission school (*zendingschool*) and in the Outer Areas the mission schools formed the majority (Hartgerink 1942, p. 39). But the colonial administration refused to hand out public subsidies to private schools (*bijzondere scholen*), following the arguments that were put forward about the separation between Church and state in the Dutch *Schoolstrijd* (1889-1917). Since the 1870s the Dutch colonial government started to annex the mission schools that were unable to stay in business (Hartgerink 1942).

The Dutch embarked on a path towards a dual system of public education, in which the mission schools were tying up the loose ends and the Islamic schools were gradually outcompeted.² In

this dual system European schools offered the standard Dutch curriculum to children of European and Indo-European descent. These schools were open to the top layer of the Indonesian elites who closely cooperated with the Dutch. European schools prepared children for a career in the colonial administration and offered access to higher education in the Netherlands. The public schools for the common people (*Volksscholen*) served as a basic and cheap alternative to Western education (Brugmans 1938: 302-317; Lelyveld 1996), with the purpose to prepare Indonesians for a position in Indonesian society. As of 1907 the government launched a campaign to promote the development of village schools, the so-called *desa schools*, which became the major driver of enrolment rates between 1907 and 1940. Students enrolled in a program of three years primary education focusing on the elementary principles of reading, writing and calculation in the vernacular. Possibilities to attain a standard vernacular curriculum of six years were gradually enlarged (Boone 1996).

Hence, the key similarity in the expansion of the Belgian and Dutch colonial education systems was that it responded to a growing call in Western public opinion to “develop” and “civilize” instead of “exploiting” the overseas territories. And it also responded to a growing desire among the indigenous populations to acquire useful knowledge, improve material living standards and explore new job opportunities. The differences are twofold, however. First, the Dutch were, contrary to the Belgians, committed to secular education from the very beginning. In Belgian Congo the mission schools prevailed until after independence. Second, indigenous access to Western education in the Dutch East Indies was very limited, but slowly extended over time. In the Belgian Congo the maintenance of de facto racial segregation policies made it impossible for the children of the Congolese elites to engage in a standard curriculum of Western primary education and never became qualified for attending modern forms of higher education.

3. Comparing school enrolment rates, 1900-2000

A comparison of primary and post-primary school enrolment rates provides deeper insight in the effects of different educational policies on the expansion of educational access. Figure 3.1 shows the twentieth century evolution of gross primary school enrolment rates for the age group of 6-11 years (the official school age in both post-independence countries). The time-series for the Dutch East Indies are taken from van Leeuwen (2007: 264-266). These include the enrolment of Indonesians, Europeans (mainly Dutch) and other Asians (mainly Chinese), but exclude the children enrolled in the so-called “unrecognized schools”, that is, schools which did not receive state subsidy. The bulk of these unrecognized schools consisted of Islamic boarding schools (*pesantren*) and mosque schools (*madrasah*), offering classes in religious philosophy and spiritual training (meditation), Koran recitation (in Arabic), martial arts and a variety of manual skills (Steenbrink 1974). Colonial governments were reluctant to recognize these “traditional” schools because they paid insufficient attention to the core values of Western primary education: reading, writing (literacy) and calculus.³

In so far the Koran study enhanced literary abilities the economic side-effects of religious education cannot be neglected (Reid 1988: 218; van Leeuwen 2007: 49). For comparative purposes it is necessary to have at least some idea about the relative size of Islamic education. Combining the official enrolment rates in the unrecognized sector reported in the *Koloniale Jaarcijfers* of the 1880s (ca. 250,000-300,000) with Furnivall’s estimate of 1938 (ca. 450,000), we estimate that the relative share of unrecognized schools declined from ca. 75 to 16 per cent of the official primary school enrolment figures. The dotted line for Indonesia reflects this trend.

[Figure 3.1 about here]

For the Congo the available data should be treated with even greater caution, especially for the years between 1885 and 1930, when education statistics were not collected on a systematic basis at all. Following the work of Liesenborghs (1939), Depaepe and van Rompaey (1995: 38, 247)

put the number of students enrolled in 1908 at ca. 46,000, of which ca. 27,000 were enrolled in Protestant mission schools and 19,000 in Catholic ones. What seems certain, however, is that the numbers increased spectacularly after 1908, to approximately 100,000 in 1913, 150,000 in 1921 and 350,000 in 1929. For the period 1930-1960 the Belgian *Annuaire Statistique* provides annual accounts of the number and type of schools and the number of students enrolled. For the post-colonial era we used the official estimates presented in the UNESCO *Statistical Yearbooks*.

Another major problem concerns the lack of reliable population data. Census takers faced the sheer impossible task to survey immense hinterland areas without any developed infrastructure. Moreover, the death toll due to the sleeping sickness pandemic and Leopold's aggressive rubber policies, make it extremely difficult to estimate the size of the population on the basis of backward extrapolation from postwar census estimates. The short-cut we applied is to backward extrapolate the post-1950 population series with a fixed annual growth rate of 1.0 per cent. Changes in the assumed population growth rate (to 0.5 or 2 per cent) will not alter the following main observations, however.

First, there was a dramatic collapse of school enrolment rates in the Congo during the 1980s and 1990s, after a decade of stagnation in the 1970s. This was just one of the many tragic effects of the social, political and economic deterioration which characterized the major part of Mobutu's thirty year's rule. Exactly in this period Indonesian gross enrolment rates started to exceed 100 per cent, indicating that not only the aim of universal primary education was accomplished, but that it was also combined with a major reparation effort among higher age cohorts.

Second, figure 3.1 shows that enrolment rates in the Belgian Congo surpassed enrolment rates in the Netherlands Indies in the three decades between 1920 and 1950. In Belgian Congo the expansion of enrolment followed a gradual upward trend between 1910 and 1970 with a few minor interruptions in the early 1940s (WWII) and the late 1950s (independence). In Indonesia

the colonial era was set apart from the post-colonial era by a major trend break. Before 1940 gross primary school enrolment rates did not surpass 20 per cent. During the years of the Japanese occupation (1942-1945) enrolment rates even halved. The big push to mass education occurred right after the end Indonesia's declaration of independence in 1945. Enrolment rates jumped from 20 to 80 per cent of the school age population in less than two decades between 1945 and 1962.

Third, the relative success of the missionary approach in the Belgian Congo also appears from a broader African comparative perspective. Belgian Congo was part of a select group of mainly British African colonies such as the Rhodesia's (Zambia and Zimbabwe), Nyasaland (Malawi) and Uganda with gross enrolment rates (age 5-14) surpassing 20 per cent at the eve of the Second World War. This was higher than the British African average (18.2 per cent) and much higher than the French (5.4 per cent) or Portuguese African (5.3 per cent) average (Frankema 2011b). Primary school enrolment in the Dutch East Indies, on the other hand, fell considerably behind those of the neighbor countries such as British Malaya, Formosa (Taiwan) and the Philippines. In Thailand enrolment rates were even three times as high as in the Netherlands Indies (Furnivall 1943).

When we turn to the enrolment trends in secondary and tertiary education, as displayed in figure 3.2, there are again some notable similarities and differences. In both colonies the expansion of post-primary school attainment was very limited until independence. In Indonesia a trend break in secondary schooling occurred after the mid-1940s. In Belgian Congo a similar trend break in the early 1960s occurred right after independence. This is not to say that the number of students in secondary school was stagnant, but rather that enrolment rates hardly outpaced population growth rates. The expansion of tertiary school enrolment followed a decade later in both countries, which is not surprising of course.

[Figure 3.2 about here]

Although secondary education expanded a few decades earlier in Indonesia, enrolment rates did not expand faster than in the Congo. In fact, in the two decades following independence in 1945 gross secondary school enrolment rates rose from ca. 1 to 13 per cent. In Congo the rates increased from ca. 1 per cent in 1960 to 20 per cent in 1980. The obvious difference is that the expansion effort continued unabated in Indonesia and even sped up during the 1970s, whereas in the Congo enrolment rates stagnated completely after 1980.

The second major difference occurred in the expansion of tertiary education (high schools and universities). In Indonesia some 10 per cent of all children continued their schooling careers into post-secondary level in the last quarter of the twentieth century. In the Congo tertiary school enrolment rates never exceeded 1.5 per cent until the present day.

In sum, a survey of long term enrolment rates reveals that the missionary approach in Belgian Congo was relatively successful in expanding primary school enrolment rates, but formed a weak basis for the development of higher education, and especially tertiary education. The colonial government in the Dutch East Indies performed weakly in expanding mass education from a comparative perspective, but we will argue below that the colonial education system laid a more solid foundation for access to modern forms of higher education.

4. The missionary effort in the Congo

The success of the missionary schooling effort in the Congo cannot be understood without taking into account the presence of an exceptionally large number of Western missionaries. Oliver has estimated that the number of Christian missionaries in East Africa reached a maximum of 3,500 persons during the interwar years (Oliver 1962: 231-245). Table 4.1 shows

that the number of foreign missionaries in Belgian Congo was not only higher already before 1940, but also continued to increase thereafter. These foreign missionaries were of course crucial for the rapid spread of missions schools, but their presence also signals favorable local conditions for conversion practices, regardless of the high health risks involved (malaria, sleeping sickness, yellow fever).

[Table 4.1 about here]

As argued elsewhere (Frankema 2011b), the presence of foreign missionaries only made sense in areas with a revealed indigenous demand for missionary services and such demand was not self evident. Table 4.1 shows that the number of foreign missionaries increased with a factor 15, while enrolments rose with a factor 37 between 1908 and 1957. This was only possible because of a rapidly increasing involvement of native African missionaries. In 1958 there were no less than 6,934 Protestant mission schools in the Congo and circa 1,550 foreign Protestant missionaries. The majority of these schools were run by Congolese converts. Local demand for missionary services was a pre-condition for the *Africanization* of the missionary effort.

Revealed demand for missionary services in combination with the virtual absence of institutional entry barriers created favorable conditions for denominational competition. Belgian Catholic missionary societies became actively engaged in the race against Protestant missions to conquer the “high-potential areas”. The Congo colony was Belgium’s only overseas possession (together with the official mandate over Ruanda-Urundi granted by the UN after World War I), which meant that the ratio of the colonial over the metropolitan population remained low.

Belgian citizens with overseas ambitions concentrated their efforts on the Congo colony and this especially appealed to the large group of Belgian Catholic missionaries. Table 4.2 demonstrates that the metropolitan capacity, in terms of population size, may indeed have been a factor.

Although Indonesia was a similar “single big colony” for the Dutch, the differences in

demography equaled the ratio the British were dealing with in the heydays of their global empire.

[Table 4.2 about here]

The large carrying capacity of the Belgian labor force, is also reflected in the number of foreign (i.e. Belgian) administrators. Richens has shown that in a sample of 33 African colonies in the late 1930s Belgian Congo counted by far the highest number: 728 against an African colonial average of 94! In British Nigeria, with more than twice as many inhabitants, the number of administrators was less than half (353) (Richens 2009: 21, 64-65). These numbers conceal an important feature of Belgian rule in Africa: they make clear how the Belgians managed to rule the single largest colonial territory in Africa without depending on high ranked indigenous officials with major administrative responsibilities.

Nunn (2010) has recently argued in line with Johnson (1967) that the presence of navigable waterways, have had a positive impact on the spread of missions in Africa. Johnson has shown that the diffusion of mission stations in the Congo neatly followed the upstream courses of the Congo river and its tributaries. Water transport allowed missionaries to travel back and forth in a relatively efficient way and facilitated the delivery of the necessary supplies (school, medical, food, bibles etc.). Many local communities were living close to the river as they economically depended on it. Yet, the role of such geographical advantages should not be overstated, especially in view of the huge risks missionaries were willing to take by working in the tropics in the first place. Moreover, the big population centers in Indonesia were also easy to reach for foreign missionaries, but the institutional constraints were decisive.

The strength of the missions in spreading education had much to do with their efficiency and flexibility: short lines of communication, high levels of personal responsibility entrusted to the

people in the field, low levels of labor remuneration and a strong, religiously motivated, spirit to endure. Colonial bureaucracies worked in a different way and this is one of the reasons why enrolment rates in the Dutch East Indies grew at a slower pace, despite the much longer tradition of supplying formal education. Bureaucracies are designed to control, to work within delineated budgets and directives and, not unimportant, bureaucracies do not compete for converts. In the Dutch East Indies the teachers of the *desa-schools* had to fulfill a number of teacher qualifications in order to be liable to a state salary. Teacher training schools (*de kweekscholen*) gradually expanded, but the pool of qualified students remained small. Moreover, the state had to provide official permission for the establishment of a new school if it was to receive state subsidies to pay for qualified and salaried teachers. The required investments, inspections and feedback procedures took time. This also suggests, that the quality standards in the public education system in Indonesia were higher than in the Congo. Is there any evidence for this hypothesis?

5. The role of quality standards in education

When investigating the comparative development of education in the Congo and Indonesia one is immediately confronted with the great differences in the collection of education statistics. Since the late nineteenth century the Dutch colonial government recorded the number of schools, the type of schools, the number of students in school per grade and the percentage of children that left school with a certificate. This percentage was extremely low in the late nineteenth century but improved quickly as more children continued into the third grade (Hartgerink 1942: 88-89, 136-137).⁴ The simple fact that this information was collected on a central level indicates the degree of control that was exercised on quality improvement. The mission schools in the Congo enjoyed a much larger degree of freedom because there was no central authority imposing and monitoring prescribed curricular standards.

The population census executed in respectively 1961 (Indonesia) and 1962 (Congo) suggests that the education system in Indonesia was more effective in raising literacy rates, despite the fact that the proportion of school-age children enrolled in the Congo between 1920 and 1950 was considerably higher. In Indonesia the literacy rate of the population aged 15+ was 42.9 against 31.3 in the Congo (UNESCO 1965). The gender distribution was highly unequal in both countries: 57.2 (M) versus 29.6 (F) in Indonesia and 49.0 (M) versus 14.0 (F) in the Congo. The literacy rates of consecutive Indonesian age cohorts reveal a steady improvement since the first decade of the twentieth century. Ten year age cohorts which had reached the age of 15 in respectively the 1910s, 1920s and 1930s showed an increase in literacy rates of respectively 5.1, 6.7 and 10.8 compared to the preceding age cohort. After the 1940s these rates improved even faster. The cohort of children attending primary school during the 1950s had a literacy rate in 1961 of 72.1 per cent with a more egalitarian gender distribution.

A comparison of government expenditure patterns provides further insight in possible quality differences. Between 1900 and 1940 the Dutch government gradually increased its investments in education from two to five per cent of the total expenditure budget. From a global comparative perspective this share was far from impressive (Frankema 2011a), but it was much more than in the Congo. Figure 5.1 shows educational expenses per head of the population converted to current US \$ using official exchange rates. This is a rather crude measure, because exchange rates can deviate substantially from purchasing power parities and fluctuated heavily especially in the 1930s. Yet, the size and consistency of the gap in expenditure leaves little doubt that the difference was significant indeed. Prior to 1940 expenses in the Congo remained below 10 dollar cents per head of the population, which was roughly equal to the amount spent in the Indies before 1907. Between 1910 and 1940 the Dutch colonial government spent at least five times as much. Moreover, because enrolment rates in the East Indies were lower, the differences in government expenses *per student enrolled* reached an average rate of 10 to 1 in this period.

[Figure 5.1 about here]

Although the average amount of 10 US \$ per student enrolled in the Netherlands Indies was quite respectable, we have to keep in mind that the distribution around the average was highly unequal. In 1929, for instance, about half of the total education budget was spent on European education, which was reserved for only about 10 per cent of the total enrolled (van Leeuwen 2007). On the other hand, these government funds were increasingly absorbed by Indonesian and Chinese children as they started to outnumber the European children in the Dutch secondary schools (MULO, HBS, Medical colleges) during the 1920s (van der Veur 1969: 14). By the late 1930s ca. 75 per cent of the students enrolled in post-primary education were of Indonesian or Chinese origin (van Leeuwen 2007).

For the Belgian Congo statistics do not allow for a breakdown between expenses on European education and subsidies to the Catholic mission schools. But it is clear that the missionary societies remained its primary financiers, at least until WWII. Protestant missions received no subsidies until 1947 and among the Catholic schools government funds were distributed rather unequally, with a strong bias towards the schools in the major urban centers. These central schools had to be better equipped because of their strategic importance: they trained the next generation of clerks and typewriters necessary for administrative tasks, the medical assistants, technicians and agricultural experts necessary to develop the rural economy and also the catechists and soldiers necessary to evangelize and secure order (Depaepe and van Rompaey 1995: 63-69).

The financial involvement of the Belgian Catholic missions in the Congo played a crucial role in the 1925 convention with the Belgian state. The catholic schools would receive more financial support in exchange for extra efforts to spread mass education across the colony. The

contract was not signed until 1929, however, because the missions rejected the proposal of a state inspection that would monitor and guarantee the quality of colonial education. The fact that the Catholic missions eventually won this battle tells a lot about the balance of power: the Catholics exerted a *de facto* monopoly on the development of colonial education which they held on to until 1948 (Depaepe and van Rompaey 1995: 60-63).

Yet, the rise in government expenditures during the second half of the 1920s only sufficed to meet the increasing costs of enrolment expansion. And there is much reason to assume that the financial hardship even increased during the interwar years. The number of mission schools and students expanded at a much faster rate than the domestically raised funds of the Christian missions. Local communities thus had to make substantial contributions in kind, such as food, clothing or the supply of unpaid labor on the mission fields or in construction work.

Agricultural field work was a standard part of the curriculum in the rural mission schools and served a double purpose: it helped to teach discipline, docility and structure, while it generated an additional source of revenue to finance local missionary activities. Girls' education focused on housekeeping skills, child care, hygiene and the importance of such Christian values as monogamy.

In the Dutch East Indies money made the difference as well. The quality gap between the Islam schools, mission schools and *desa-schools* on the one hand and the European schools (*gouvernement scholen*) was obvious to contemporary observers (Brugmans 1938). The applications for Dutch language schools were far higher than the available seats. European schools could hire better trained teachers, reduce class size and buy more advanced teaching equipment. From the *Koloniale Jaarcijfers* (1934) it appears that pupil-teacher ratios were considerably lower in the European schools: in 1932-33 they counted 31.6 pupils per teacher against 49.4 in the *desa-schools* and 50.7 in the Dutch-Chinese schools.

Yet, in both colonies the village schools constituted the backbone of mass education. The key distinction between the village schools in Indonesia and the rural mission schools in the Congo relates to the secular nature of the curriculum in the former, and the emphasis on religious and moral instruction in the latter. In the *desa-schools* reading and writing (in the vernacular) and calculus formed the core subjects. The curriculum was standardized, graded and subject to state inspection. The primary objective of the missions in Congo was to spread Christianity.

Concerns to “overeducate” the indigenous population existed in both colonies, but with a crucial difference: in the Congo the missionary-teachers themselves guarded the fences between individual intellectual development and docility. In Indonesia these concerns may have been held by the Dutch colonial elite, but not by the Indonesian teachers who provided the education.

6. Education for self-determination

The Japanese occupation of the Dutch East Indies (1942-1945) contributed greatly to the diffusion of anti-colonial sentiments among the Indonesian population. The Japanese occupation uncovered the military and political weaknesses of the Dutch. The large scale mobilization of the Indonesian youth in the armed forces under Japanese rule connected an enormous amount of human energy to revolutionary ideas and military means of power. Moreover, the tyrannical rule of yet another distrusted foreign power endorsed the desire among the Indonesian people to determine their own future. In this respect the declaration of independence in 1945 was a logical consequence of the Japanese retreat, which only the Dutch failed to understand (Ricklefs 2008: 244-248).

The spirit of independence and revolution unleashed an enormous demand for schooling. Mass education now opened the doors to socio-economic mobility which had remained closed for as long as people remembered. Job opportunities in the civil services expanded enormously and were highly attractive to students and former soldiers. Politicians were eager to hand out higher

income jobs in turn for political support. The Indonesian language became the standard throughout the education system and was also used in all official communications of the state and the mass media. It is one of the major accomplishments of the early Sukarno regime that they managed to facilitate this great expansionist wave without a complete overhaul of the system. Grade repetition and pre-completion drop-out rates remained very high in primary education (ca. 60 per cent in the 1950s), but this did not inhibit the influx of a rapidly growing group of students into secondary and tertiary education (Ricklefs 2008: 274-275).

Universities were erected in various parts of the country and some of the long established institutions achieved respectable standards. The roots of the University of Indonesia (*Universitas Indonesia*), which is one of these top rated academic institutes, go back to a colonial school for medical assistants established in 1851. In 1898 the colonial government transformed this school into STOVIA (*School tot Opleiding van Inlandsche Artsen*) with the purpose to train highly specialized medical doctors. The education program consisted of 9 years and combined aspects of high school and university education. The Bandung Institute of Technology, another top institute, is the oldest technology-oriented university in Indonesia and evolved out of the *Technische Hoogeschool* in Bandung established in 1920.

The graduates of these institutes were to fulfill a key role in Indonesia's independence movement. Sukarno himself was the product of the Indo-European school system. His father was a village school teacher at Java. Sukarno first completed three years of primary education in the vernacular and continued at a European primary school. In 1915 he attended the *Hogere Burger School* (HBS), which represented the highest level of Western secondary education. In 1920 he enrolled in the *Technische Hoogeschool* in Bandung and was among the first students to graduate as an engineer in 1925. No doubt, his long background in Western higher education endorsed his ideas about the importance of education for self-determination, both on a personal as well as a national level (Giebels 1999). Mohammed Hatta pursued a similar route. After his

secondary school in Batavia he travelled to the Netherlands to study economics and business at the *Handelshogeschool* in Rotterdam (currently the Erasmus University). He stayed in the Netherlands for 11 years (1921-1932) and during this period Hatta started to campaign for non-cooperation and mass-actions against the colonial oppressor, activities for which he was detained in the Netherlands and later again in Indonesia (for more than six years in total).

The key figures dominating the political scene during the early years of independence in the Congo had a different background. They grew up in a time when the segregation policies were still strictly maintained. The closed access to higher offices in the colonial administration or key positions in international commerce or the mining industry, also restricted the need to offer higher levels of non-vocational training to the indigenous population. The intellectual development of the early independence leaders was largely shaped by the jobs they fulfilled in the colonial economy. Lulumba, Kasavubu, Mobutu and Tshombe all attended a Christian mission school for their primary education. Lulumba started his working career as a postal clerk and a travelling beer salesman. His highest degree was a one year course at the government post office training school. Kasavubu was trained as a teacher at a Catholic missionary school. Mobutu's educational career was completed at the *Ecole Centrale des Sous-Officiers* in Luluaburg, where he followed a two year's course on accounting and secretarial work. Tshombe was trained as an accountant and pursued the business career of his father in the Katangese retail sector (**refs.**).

Black children began to be admitted to European secondary schools only in the 1950s and their numbers remained very small. The first university in the Congo, the Leuven University, was founded near Léopoldville in 1954. It admitted black students, but ironically, the first cohorts of Congolese students still had to complete secondary school. In 1956 a state university was established in Elisabethville (Mantels 2007). Hence, at the eve of independence in 1960 just a handful of Congolese were enrolled in tertiary education and even fewer actually held a

university degree. Most of the students were enrolled in the humanity and social science faculties, but not in the technical faculties. In 1960 there were 13 students enrolled in natural sciences at the tertiary level, 18 in engineering, 71 in the medical sciences and 26 in agricultural sciences. Together this group formed 30 per cent of a total of 423 students. Moreover, the majority of these students consisted of European students, many of whom were about to leave the country (Mantels 2007; UNESCO 1965).

Various accounts of the negotiations on the conditions for independence at the 1960 round table conference (*ronde tafel conferentie*) in Brussels stress the gap in political cunningness between the young group of Congolese representatives and the haute-couture of Belgium's professional politicians (Etambala 1996: 31-33; van Reybrouck 2010: 278-280). The Congolese delegation was supported by several Belgian "advisers" who had a much higher education than the delegates themselves. The Congolese held jobs as accountant, clerk, journalist, school teacher or tradesmen, but only a few of them held positions which require a deep understanding of overarching national political and economic interests. Hence, naivety was the reason why the Congolese transition government agreed with the Belgian government to dissolve the *Comité Spécial du Katanga*, which formally left the new Congolese state with just a minority share in the *Union Minière*, the biggest mining cooperation in the Congo (van Reybrouck 2010: 279).

Just about the time when Mobutu conquered the stage in the Congo to stay in power for more than three decades (1965-1997), Suharto, the army general, displaced Sukarno. Suharto stayed in power for a similar period (1967-1998). Suharto and Mobutu rank among the most cruel and conscienceless dictators of the twentieth century. They have been responsible for mass murders and their appetite for self-enrichment has become legendary. Their methods were similar: by monopolizing the most profitable industries of the country (copper, oil) they managed to become the wealthiest person in no time. Both dictators controlled power by combining an extensive system of political patronage, a firm control over the army and keeping up a credible

threat of terror against political opponents. Both received support from the Western world (especially the US) for their outspoken anti-communism.

However, the economic policies of Mobutu's "Mobutuism" and Suharto's "New Order" revealed sharp contrasts, not only in name. Suharto managed to combine rent extraction for his personal clientele with an impressive record of macro-economic growth, from which a vast majority of Indonesians eventually reaped the benefits. Few doubt that the macro-economic policies of Suharto's government have positively contributed to the structural transformation of the Indonesian economy and the rapid reduction of urban and rural poverty rates (Booth 1998; Dick *et al.* 2002; Frankema and Lindblad 2006; Hill 2000; Thee 2006; Warr 2006). With the benefit of hindsight the start of the Suharto era in Indonesia can be regarded as a structural break with a period of recurrent inflation, increasing state debt, declining foreign exchange reserves and prolonged economic stagnation (Glassburner 1971).

Mobutu's plans to develop the economy were marked by bright prospects in the first years, but failed miserably in the long run. Yet, fifteen years after the fall of Mobutu the Congolese are still waiting for the first signs of structural economic improvement.

The success of Suharto's economic program and the failure of Mobutu's cannot be fully explained by just a personal difference in economic insight. Suharto assembled a team of experts to get the economy back on track in a deliberate attempt to restore social order. These experts were capable of translating the New Order's development trilogy "growth, stability and equity" into a range of clearly defined objectives focusing on the achievement of self-sufficiency in food production (rice) and, subsequently, on an intensive program of industrialization based on Indonesia's comparative advantages (labor abundance) (Thee 2006). Suharto not only benefitted from the fact that the necessary expertise of well trained economists was available but also, at a much broader level, that there existed a class of entrepreneurs

sufficiently equipped with the knowledge and organizational capacities to realize the potential of modern technology in the major sectors of the economy. So it seems that the Indonesian education system had better prepared Indonesian society for rapid development in both the technical economic and political economic spheres.

Mobutu was also aware of the importance of restoring economic stability for political survival in his early years and, like Suharto, squandered huge amounts of money on megalomaniac projects which never offered the envisaged return (dams, steel mills, aircraft industry). The key distinction is that Suharto operated in a context of well-trained university graduates, with whom he shared part of his power through consultation.

Add paragraphs on Mobutu's economic policies

7. Conclusion

Yet to be written.

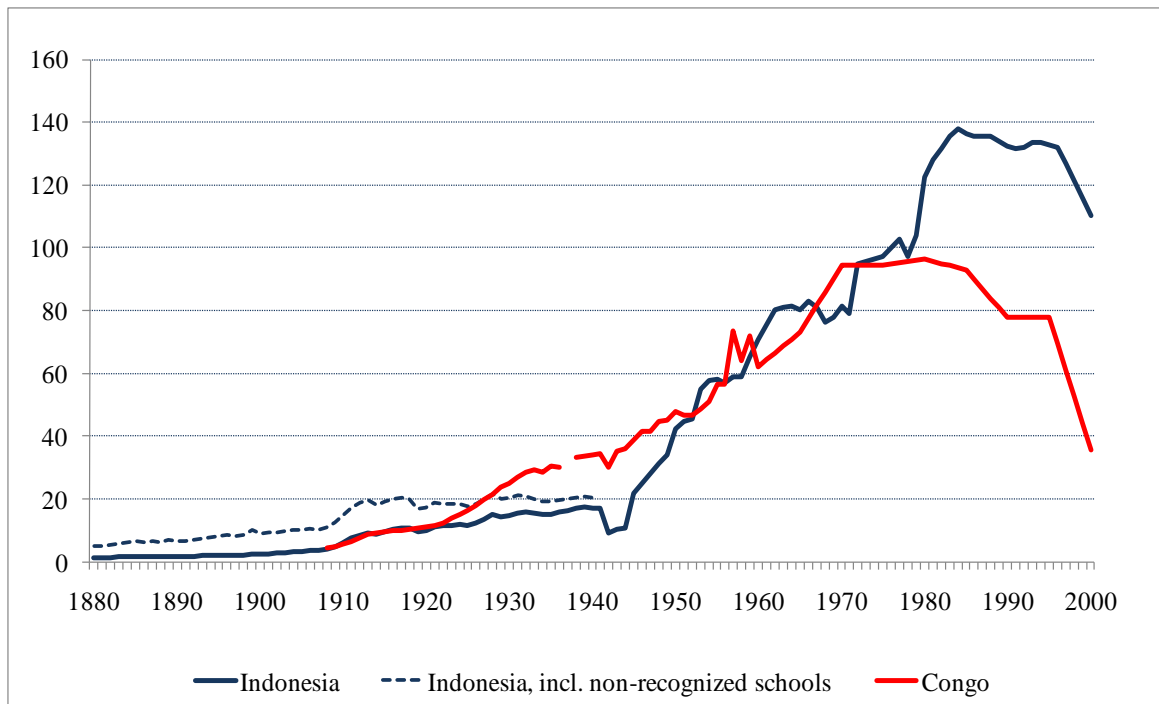
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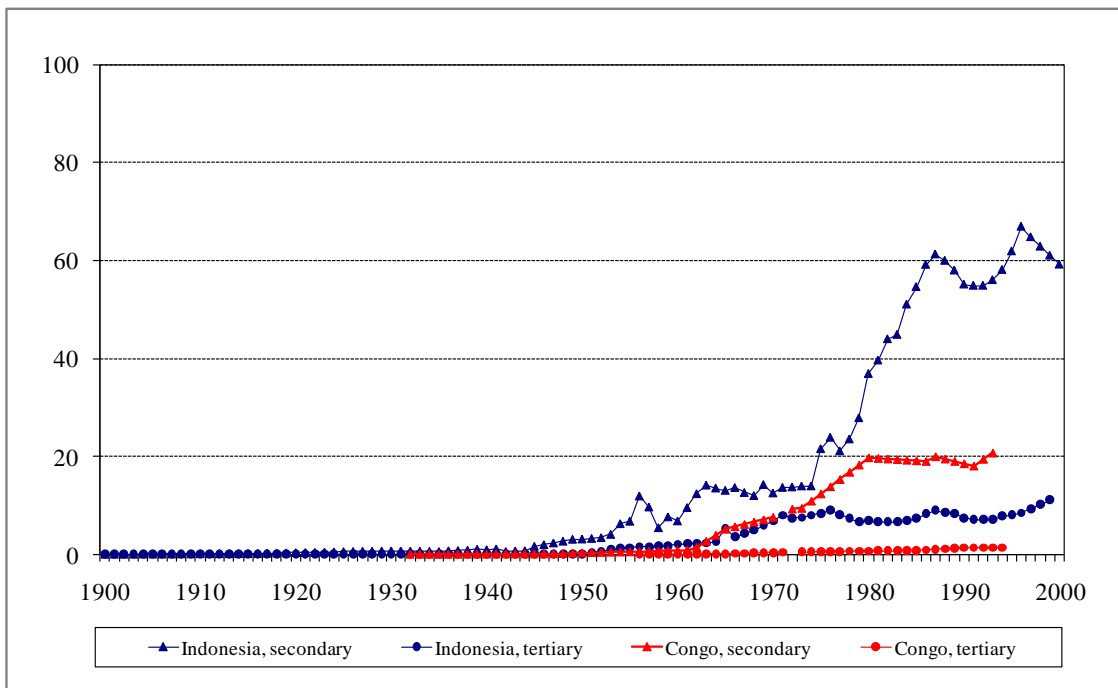
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Figure 3.1: Gross primary school enrolment rates (age 6-11) in Belgian Congo and the Netherlands Indies, 1880-2000



Sources: For Indonesia (van Leeuwen 2007); *Jaarcijfers voor het Koninkrijk der Nederlanden (Kolonieën)* 1880-192x and *Statistisch Jaaroverzicht van Nederlandsch-Indië* 192x-1939; (Furnivall 1943); UNESCO, *Statistical Yearbooks*, various issues 1964-1999; For Congo (Depaepe and van Rompaey 1995, P. 247) and *Annuaire Statistique de la Belgique et du Congo Belge* 1911-1960.

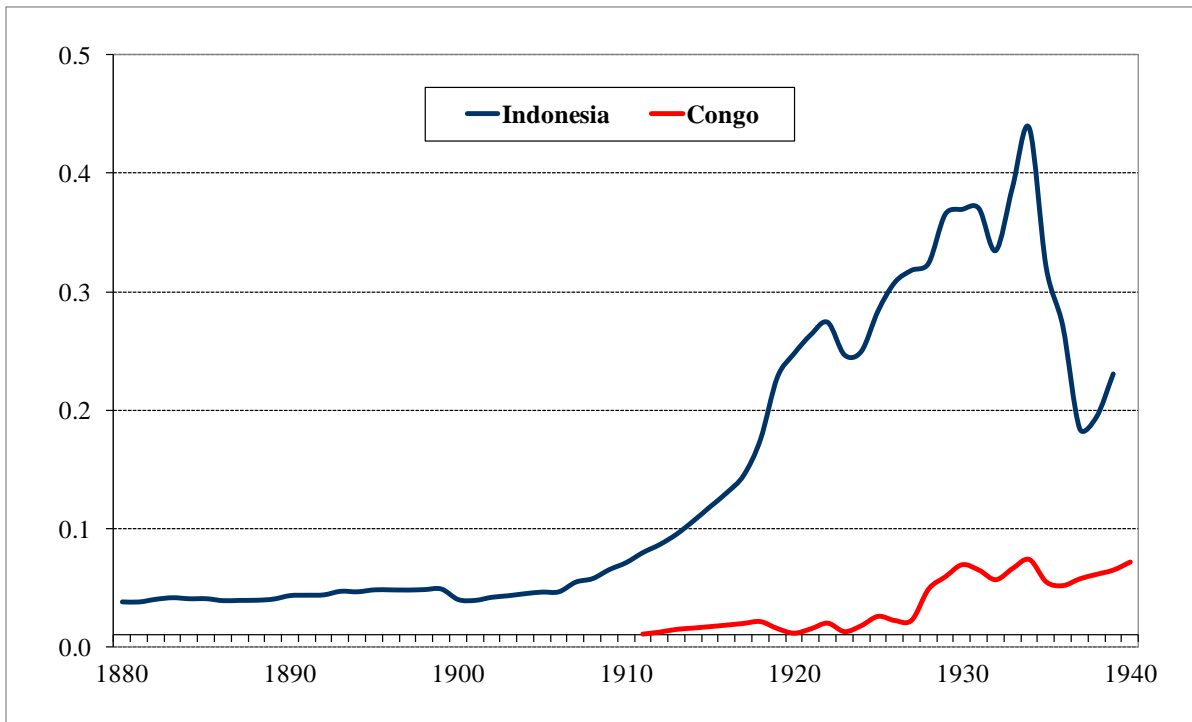
Figure 3.2: Gross secondary and tertiary enrolment rates in Belgian Congo and the Netherlands Indies, 1880-2000



Sources: see figure 3.1.

Note: For secondary schooling we used the age group (12-17), for tertiary schooling (18-23).

Figure 5.1: Per capita government expenditure on education in the Netherlands Indies and Belgian Congo, 1880-1940 (in current US \$)



Sources: For Indonesia (van Leeuwen 2007), van Leeuwen has included expenditure on the state level and provincial level, as published in the reports of the Dutch Indies Education Committee; For Congo *Annuaire Statistique de la Belgique et du Congo Belge* 1911-1960.

Notes: Dutch florins and Belgian Francs converted to US Dollars using official exchange rates.

Table 4.1: Absolute numbers and indices of missionary presence and students enrolled in Belgian Congo, 1908-1957 (1938 = 100)

	1908	1929	1938	1950	1957
Foreign missionaries	500	2,500*	3,732	5,336	7,205
Index	13	67	100	143	193
School enrolment	46,000	350,000	562,851	970,372	1,718,931
Index	8	62	100	172	305

Sources: 1908 from (Stengers and Vansina 1985); 1929 (Depaepe and van Rompaey 1995); 1938-1957

Annuaire Statistique de la Belgique et du Congo Belge 1911-1960.

Notes: 1929 number of missionaries is guesstimate based on 1931 figures from *Annuaire Statistique de la Belgique et du Congo Belge* 1911-1960.

Table 4.2: The ‘population support ratio’ in the British, Dutch and Belgian colonial empires, ca. 1938

	Metropolitan population (1) (x 1000)	Colonial population (2) (x 1000)	Population support ratio
	1938	1938	2/1
United Kingdom	47.5	358.1	7.5
Netherlands	8.7	68.3	7.8
Belgium	8.4	13.9	1.6

Source: Statistical Abstract of the British Colonies 1938-1940; Maddison (2010).

¹ The policy document is available online: <http://www.abbol.com/> (see under “schoolbooks project”, then under “Legislation and Curricula”) (accessed 04-10-2011).

² In the first decade of the twentieth century the colonial government deliberately transferred part of its educational responsibility to the missions in some of the Outer Areas, such as the Moluccas, under the promise of state subsidies (Hartgerink 1942).

³ The Christian mission schools were also criticized for their focus on religious education, but to a lesser extent.

⁴ These statistics also reveal that the desa-schools on Java and Madura performed significantly better than in the Outer Areas.