

# Adopting the Dutch Education System: Innovations to Improve the Quality of Education in Indonesia

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## Keyword

education innovation, Dutch education system, Indonesia education system, vocational education, teacher training

## Abstract

The study explores the potential of adopting elements of the Netherlands education system to enhance the quality of education in Indonesia. Given the longstanding historical and educational ties between the two countries, this research identifies key innovations from the Dutch system that could be adapted to the Indonesian context. The study examines differences in vocational education, teacher training, and student performance. The methodology involves a descriptive analysis of educational data from both countries, supported by qualitative insights from literature review regarding the issues raised. Results reveal that the Netherlands approach to a strong vocational training, and continuous teacher development leads to higher student satisfaction and academic achievement. These findings suggest several actionable strategies for Indonesia, such as strengthening ties with industries for vocational programs, and enhancing teacher training initiatives. Implementing these recommendations could significantly improve Indonesia's educational outcomes and global competitiveness. The study contributes to the ongoing discourse on educational reform by highlighting practical innovations that can be customized to address local needs and challenges in Indonesia.

## INTRODUCTION

In 1899, Van Deventer published an article titled "A Debt of Honor" in the magazine De Gids, stating that the Netherlands should repay the profits they had gained from the Dutch East Indies which is now known as Indonesia. In 1901, this idea was adopted by the Dutch Queen in her speech, marking the beginning of the ethical policy, a new approach that emphasized the Dutch's moral obligation towards the indigenous people. However, this ethical policy conflicted with colonial exploitation and focused on education, irrigation, and transmigration for colonial interests. Education, which became the main pillar of the ethical policy, shifted to a Western system and used Dutch as the language of instruction, benefiting the indigenous elite. Figures like J.H. Abendanon and A.W.F. Idenburg played key roles in developing this education system, including providing free access to education at ELS (European primary schools) for indigenous people, which was utilized by figures like R.A. Kartini.

The relation between Indonesia and the Netherlands has a long and complex history, from the colonial period to modern partnerships in various fields, including education. After independence from the Netherlands in 1945, Indonesia has endeavored to build an independent and quality national education system. However, many challenges remain, such as educational disparities between urban and rural areas, varying teaching quality, and a lack of adequate educational facilities (Tilaar, 2002). On the other hand, the Netherlands is known for its innovative and high-quality education system, which is recognized worldwide. The Dutch education system emphasizes flexibility, personalization and close links with the world of work, which can be a model for improving the quality of education in Indonesia (Westerheijden, et al., 2007).

One prominent aspect of the Dutch education system is its student-centered approach, where students are given the freedom to explore their interests and develop critical skills. The Netherlands is also known for its strong vocational education system, which prepares students to enter the workforce with relevant practical skills (Cedefop, 2012). On the other hand, Indonesia's education system tends to be centralized with a rigid curriculum approach, which limits students' creativity and innovation (Suryadarma & Jones, 2013). As such, adopting key elements of the Dutch education system can help address some of the key challenges in the Indonesian education system. By studying and adopting key elements of the Dutch education system, it is hoped that Indonesia can improve some of the weaknesses in the current education system and increase students' competitiveness at the global level.

Indonesia as one of the countries that was colonized by the Netherlands also received influence in the field of education from the Netherlands. This can be proven by the same learning strategies as the Netherlands, one of which is at the elementary school level. The Netherlands has a better quality education system compared to the education system in Indonesia (Sari, et al., 2021). In the context of Indonesia-Netherland relations that have evolved into a more equal partnership, the adoption of educational innovations from the Netherlands can strengthen this bilateral relationship. Cooperation in education can be an avenue for mutually beneficial knowledge and experience sharing. This research is expected to contribute to improving the quality of education in Indonesia as well as strengthening the cooperative relationship between the two countries (Gonzalez & Wagenaar, 2003).

## METHOD

This research uses qualitative research methods related to the ideas, perceptions, or opinions of the subjects studied, which cannot be measured using numbers. The data used in this study were obtained through a literature review regarding the issues raised. In this research, the object of study is the Dutch education system, including its policies, practices and innovations. The subjects are educators, administrators, students and education policy makers in Indonesia. They are the individuals and entities that interact with or are affected by innovations in the Dutch education system. Their perspectives and experiences are crucial for evaluating the potential effects and benefits of implementing Dutch educational practices in Indonesia. Qualitative research with literature studies emphasizes in-depth assessment of texts and documents where the instrument in this research is through literature review by summarizing, comparing, and evaluating literature relevant to the research topic. The data collection method used in this research is through secondary data (Document Based) and to produce complete data, the author uses sources from third parties such as books, journals, and scientific articles. While the data analysis technique used is through qualitative data analysis techniques, namely by utilizing secondary data that has been accessed online

## RESULTS

Based on the 2018 Program for International Student Assessment (PISA) report, students in Indonesia scored lower than the international average in reading, mathematics and science (OECD, 2019). International assessments show that students in the Netherlands tend to achieve better results in science, math and reading than students in Indonesia. In addition, students in the Netherlands report higher levels of satisfaction with their learning experience. The following table shows the 2018 average PISA results for Indonesia and the Netherlands.

Table 1. Differences in academic achievement between students in Indonesia and the Netherlands from the 2018 PISA report (OECD, 2019).

Subject	Indonesia (Average)	Netherland (Average)
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Science	396	502
Mathematics	379	519
Reading	371	485

Vocational education in the Netherlands is known to be effective in preparing students for the world of work by providing programs tailored to industry needs. Although Indonesia has vocational education programs, it still faces challenges in terms of program relevance and quality. The table below shows a comparison between vocational education programs in Indonesia and the Netherlands.

Table 2. Comparison between vocational education programs in two countries (Westerheijden et al., 2007).

Aspect	Indonesia	Netherland
Linkages with Industry	Less connected to the industry	Well integrated, working closely with companies
Program Availability	Limited to certain fields	Diverse, covering various industry sectors

In the Netherlands, teaching quality and teacher training receive special attention, with strong ongoing training programs and professional support for teacher development. Meanwhile, Indonesia still faces challenges in improving teaching quality and providing appropriate training for teachers. The table below provides a comparison of the level of teacher training and development in the two countries.

Table 3. Level of teacher training and development in two countries (Gonzalez & Wagenaar, 2003).

Aspect	Indonesia	Netherland
Teacher Training Program	Limited, often disconnected	Structured, continuous
Use of New Method	Less exposure to innovative methods	Actively adopt new teaching methods
Professional Support	Minimal	Available, including mentor support

## DISCUSSION

The results of the data analysis show that students in the Netherlands tend to achieve higher scores in international assessments such as PISA than students in Indonesia. This shows a more inclusive and adaptive approach to education in the Netherlands may contribute to a better academic outcomes. A conducive and student-centered learning environment can improve learning outcomes by motivating students to be actively involved in the learning process

(Bandura, 1986). So the education system in Indonesia needs to adopt more student-centered strategies and create a supportive learning environment to improve academic outcomes and student satisfaction.

Vocational education in the Netherlands shows a high level of linkages with industry, which contributes to the student's work readiness. This is in line with human capital theory which states that education should equip individuals with relevant skills to increase economic productivity (Becker, 1964). In contrast, vocational education in Indonesia still faces challenges in ensuring the relevance of the curriculum to industry needs, which impacts the unemployment rate of vocational graduates. Education that is relevant to the labor market can improve labor competitiveness and reduce the gap between education and employment (Boud & Garrick, 1999). Therefore, Indonesia needs to strengthen linkages between vocational education institutions and industry to ensure that curricula reflect the needs of the labor market.

The quality of teaching in the Netherlands is supported by ongoing teacher training programs and strong professional support. This is in line with andragogy theory, which emphasizes the importance of continuing education for educators to improve teaching effectiveness (Knowles, 1980). According to Guskey (2002), continuous professional development for teachers can improve teaching effectiveness and student learning outcomes. In Indonesia, improving teaching quality is hampered by limitations in teacher training and professional support. Hence, the Indonesian government should invest more resources in teacher training and professional development to improve the overall quality of education.

Efforts to improve education in Indonesia require adequate funding, but a major challenge hindering progress is the culture of corruption that harms and reduces the effective use of funds. It comes as no surprise that Indonesia has been contending with corruption as the practice had happened back in the colonial period, where in real time, Indonesia is subtly adopting the Dutch behavior. This phenomenon, rooted in post-colonial theory, reflects a complex process where a newly independent nation emulates aspects of the colonial power that once dominated it, sometimes consciously and other times unconsciously (Angkasa, 2014).

Cases of corruption that existed during the colonial period occurred since the VOC era. At the beginning of the VOC's rule, they routinely reported their finances and it can be said that no cases of corruption occurred. But in the late days of VOC rule their income decreased because it had gone into their personal pockets. Reports related to this corruption case are contained in the colonial government report archive. In the archive, it is stated that the actual acts of corruption that occurred during the colonial period occurred in all circles / layers of society. The upper-class people who had a position and the lower-class people who did not have a position all committed corruption (Loesi, 2022).

Looking back at the Dutch colonial era, Indonesia was once referred to as the Dutch East Indies where around the year of 1830-1870, the Dutch government faced criticism resulting in "The Ethical Policy". Criticism came from figures such as Baron van Hoevell and Multatuli, who, in his book *Max Havelaar* (1860), depicted the suffering of indigenous farmers. In 1899, Van Deventer wrote an article titled "Een Eereschuld" (A Debt of Honor), suggesting that the Dutch repay their moral debt to the indigenous people through programs of irrigation, emigration, and education. This idea was adopted by Queen Wilhelmina in her speech on September 17, 1901, marking the beginning of the ethical policy (Afandi et al., 2020, 23).

Although this ethical policy focused on the welfare of the indigenous people, it conflicted with colonial exploitation as it emphasized the Dutch's moral obligation to the oppressed society. In reality, the implementation of the ethical policy in the Dutch East Indies benefited the colonial government more than the indigenous people (Afandi et al., 2020, 23). Despite the policies of irrigation, emigration, and education, all were directed towards colonial economic interests. Irrigation was more focused on developing the colonial economy rather than the welfare of the people. Emigration was used to relocate people from densely populated islands like Java to other islands, but the available land was instead used for sugar plantations, not for the welfare of the

indigenous people. In education, there was discrimination with two types of schools, and education was only aimed at producing low-level workers. Moreover, the budget for indigenous education was very minimal, reflecting a lack of concern for their welfare (Afandi et al., 2020, 24).

Through all these history records, we can pull through a string that every aspect from the colonialism era has an impact on everything that happens in Indonesia now. How it adopts a similar education system to bad deeds such as corruption as a result of post colonialism. However, despite the similar education system, Indonesia still falls into the failed category because of the corruption issue that has yet to be tackled, which Indonesia's government should take a big note of.

## CONCLUSION

This research explores the potential of adopting the Dutch education system to improve the quality of education in Indonesia. It reveals that there are several key elements of the Dutch education system that can contribute significantly to the improvement of the Indonesian education system. The main breakthrough of this research is the identification of implementation strategies that can be adapted to the local Indonesian context. In addition, the research underlines the importance of strengthening vocational education and improving the quality of teacher training as a way out of the employment challenge.

As a recommendation, vocational education should be more integrated with industry, involving industry in the planning and implementation of education programs. Then, teacher training and professional development should be prioritized to ensure teaching is high-quality and relevant to the needs of today's students. In addition, further research is needed to examine the implementation of specific elements of the Dutch education system and measure their impact on education outcomes in Indonesia.

By adopting effective elements of the Dutch education system, Indonesia has a great opportunity to improve the quality of education and prepare future generations to face global challenges. The implementation of these recommendations is expected to have a positive impact on the quality of national education, strengthen the competitiveness of Indonesian graduates, and contribute to sustainable development

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