

**Education as a light for the nation**  
**- The responsibility and authority on education in Indonesia**

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The story of structured and modern education in Indonesia cannot be separated with its history. Frederick and Worden (2011)<sup>1</sup> noted that it was started by R. A. Kartini's thoughts in early of 1900s that her own people may look forward by following Dutch educational patterns. Following her desire, Indonesian indigenous people—it was called Dutch East Indies people—had hoped to create a new *priyayi* class (a high class society based on achievement rather than birth, devotion to modernity rather than tradition). There are at least two important movements from Dutch East Indies indigenous people in their recognition of the importance of education: (1) In 20 May 1908, the youth group “Budi Utomo” (Noble Endeavor) was established by Wahidin Sudirohusodo, and (2) In 1922, a school named “Taman Siswa” was founded by Suwardi Suryaningrat (Ki Hajar Dewantara).<sup>2</sup>

These educational organizations developed because their founders were educated in Dutch educational patterns provided by the colonial power. Frederick and Worden proved it by this evidence:

“The most important institutions to appear were the School for Training Native Government Officials (OSVIA) and the School for Training Native Doctors (STOVIA), both established in 1900, and the Dutch–Native Schools (HIS), established in 1914, which were Dutch-language primary schools for the upper classes. There was also a significant expansion of vernacular primary village schools (*sekolah desa*).”<sup>3</sup>

From the short reflection of Indonesian's history of education above, we may conclude that education is very important for everyone, especially in the context of nation building. Thus we see the importance of education on how indigenous people in the land of Dutch East Indies had realized their identities and then became aware of their unity. In 1967, Ruth T. McVey identified the era before Indonesia's independence as a national awakening era.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Frederick, W. H., & Worden, R. L. (Eds.). (2011). *Indonesia: A Country Study* (6th Ed.). Washington, DC: Federal Research Division, Library of Congress.

<sup>2</sup> It may well note here that Suwardi Suryaningrat had concluded the importance of education for his contemporaries, after he pursued studies in Netherlands. He went there with Dr. Tjipto Mangunkusumo because they were exiled by the Dutch after Suryaningrat wrote “Als ik eens Nederlander was” (What if I were a Dutchman?). Suryaningrat finished studies in field education, while Mangunkusumo fell ill and returned home to Indonesia. Suryaningrat writing actually was a striking protest against the plans of the Dutch Colonial Government to celebrate 100 years of Dutch Independence in the land of Dutch East Indies.

<sup>3</sup> Frederick & Worden, *Indonesia: A Country Study* (6th Ed.), p. 42

<sup>4</sup> <http://cip.cornell.edu/seap.indo/1107137512>

### Isn't education neutral?

I was wrong to think  $2+2=4$  is neutral. At first, I was thinking that all people whether they are religious<sup>5</sup> or not, may come to the same conclusion that  $2+2$  equals 4. "Math is a fact and neutral", some claimed loudly. In the Christians context, William H. Willimon in 1977 had contended that "Christian schools possibly were racist, isolationist, and antithetical to the spread of the gospel."<sup>6</sup> These arguments of neutrality and the divisiveness of faith-based schools are also held by many people especially in Indonesia today when they see how Moslems' *madrrasah* school system is giving educational opportunities to only Muslim children.

I did not change my mind on math neutrality until I had been studying the subject of Christian education in Korea and found that such neutrality is only a myth. Edlin (1999, p. 42) boldly states:

"Education has never been neutral, nor can it ever be. The founders of modern education acknowledged this to be true; the evidence of what goes on in myriads of classrooms daily acknowledges this to be true, and even modern thinking humanists recognize that this is so."

In his book<sup>7</sup>, Edlin gives examples of these acknowledgements of non-neutrality from some secular educators including the fathers of modern education such as Horace Mann and John Dewey. Both have been known as contributors to the foundation of modern public education. And they had their clear purposes, non-Christian agenda. Dewey claimed:

"Faith in the prayer-hearing God is an unproved and outmoded faith. There is no God and there is no soul. Hence there are no needs for the props of the traditional religion. With dogma and creed excluded, then immutable truth is also dead and buried. There is no room for fixed, natural law or moral absolutes." (Edlin, 1999, p. 43–44)

Philip W. Jackson, an esteemed scholar of curriculum and instruction in general education circles, argues eloquently that "even our definitions [and our questions<sup>8</sup>] are not neutral but are a part of our argument."<sup>9</sup>

In a similar endorsement of the non-neutrality of education, Koole (2003) was re-stating what Brumellen said in 1981 that "There is no neutral ground in educating children. All schools are

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<sup>5</sup> We usually associate the "religious people" are individuals who are devoting their lives to a religion, then following and doing its law such as Islam, Christianity, Catholic, Buddhism, Hinduism, or Confucianism. But it actually is not! All people are religious, atheists and agnostics are included. For an atheist, for example, his/her religious belief is "there is no God". An acknowledgment that God does not exist is his/her confession of faith.

<sup>6</sup> Edlin, R. J. (1999). *The cause of Christian education* (3rd ed.), p. 42. Blacktown, Australia: National Institute for Christian Education. However, Willimon then repudiated his 1977 views in his 1993 article.

<sup>7</sup> Edlin, *The cause of Christian education* (3rd ed.), p. 42–51

<sup>8</sup> Emphasize by us

<sup>9</sup> Jackson, P. (1992). Conceptions of curriculum and curriculum specialists. In P. Jackson (Ed.), *Handbook of research on curriculum*, p. 12. New York, NY: Macmillan.

based on a philosophy of life that promotes particular values.”<sup>10</sup> Moreover, the quotation by famous atheist scientist Prof. D.M.S. Watson, in an article published by the British Association for the Advancement of Science and also Nature magazine clearly demonstrates the non-neutrality of education. He said that the theory of evolution is...“a theory universally accepted not because it can be proved by logically coherent evidence to be true but because the only alternative, special creation is clearly incredible.”<sup>11</sup>

Let us then answer the question, “How is math not neutral?” James Nickel (2001), a mathematician, says, “We cannot answer fundamental questions<sup>12</sup> when we based any disciplines including math on a human assumption, removing God from the issue.” He adds, “When we remove God, we may only teach students just the mechanics of mathematics; a vast gold mine of history, philosophy, and breathtaking revelations of the manifold wonders of God’s creation lie behind the mathematical formulae.”<sup>13</sup> Similarly, Patricia Ahlborn, who is also a math teacher, argues that all people may come to the same content of mathematics ( $2+2=4$ ), but each teacher will *do* math differently depending on his/her belief. For the humanist, for example, they think that math is manmade; but for Christians, we learn math because God created the many parts of the universe with a numerical and spatial aspect<sup>14</sup>, and math is one of the many language (including words, music, and art) that He has given us to explore His world.

### **Who is primarily responsible for the nation’s education?**

This question is a critical one, because there is no neutrality. Our belief will generate to a particular answer that will be different to others. And our answer will direct the whole story to a specific path that (once again) will be different with other paths if we answer it differently.

Due to its long-term character, education can be imagined as a journey. Once a direction was selected, one year, five years, or ten years from the starting point, each sojourner will arrive at a different place.

Before we can answer the question, we may ask other questions such as: Who are the students? What is the purpose of formal education? Fennema answers, “The purpose of formal education is

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<sup>10</sup> Koole, R. (2003). *For the love of your child* (Revised Ed.). Ontario, CA: SCSBC.

<sup>11</sup> D.M.S. Watson, Adaptation, British Association for the Advancement of Science, Vol. 97, July/August 1929, 95.

<sup>12</sup> For examples: “Why does a mere product of man’s autonomous mind accurately model the workings of the physical world?” Why can you with the aid of mathematics, picture the trajectories, velocities, and fuel needed in order to place a man on the moon with an unrivaled degree of accuracy?” (James Nickel, *Mathematics: Is God silent?*, p. xix).

<sup>13</sup> Nickel, *Mathematics: Is God silent?*, p. xx.

<sup>14</sup> <http://www.ahlborn.us/Philosophy/Philosophy.htm>

designed to equip students for living life—learning the content, skills, and values necessary to function fully and successfully as adults.” In short, education is meant to be a life preparation.<sup>15</sup>

As socio-human beings, children (and this can also be applicable to adults) have manifold identities. They are children of their parents, friends of their friends, students of their teachers, members of their congregations/religions, and also citizens of countries. From this fact, we conclude that they can be influenced from many areas of their lives. If so, who is primarily responsible for nation’s education? Parents? Peers? Teachers? Churches/other religion bodies? Or Governments?

From a Christian perspective, parents are the people primarily responsible for the education of their children.<sup>16</sup> It means that parents are also responsible for choosing a suitable (the right) education for their children either private, public schools, or even home-schools.

How about Governments? In the context of Indonesia as a pluralistic country, article 29 verses 2 in the constitution should be the answer for this. The extract says that “The State guarantees all persons the freedom of worship, each according to his/her own religion or belief.”<sup>17</sup>

In another words, since education is never neutral, which means that it is part of our worship, the State cannot persuade her citizens to endorse only public schools as an eligible option for all people’s formal education. By endorsing equal educational rights for all citizens, it means that the State should finance all types of education under the law equally, wherever parents prefer education for their children.

Indonesia is a full member of the United Nations, and thus binds our country to implement UN declarations. In 1948, the UN passed its charter for Human Rights. Central to that charter is the affirmation that parents must have the primary right to choose the religious direction of their children’s education. This is made potently clear in article 26 of the charter, as outlined below:

***Article 26 of The Universal Declaration of Human Rights***<sup>18</sup>

(1) Everyone has the right to education. Education shall be free, at least in the elementary and fundamental stages. Elementary education shall be compulsory. Technical and professional education shall be made generally available and higher education shall be equally accessible to all on the basis of merit.

<sup>15</sup> Fennema, J. (2006). Transforming education: Parents. In R. Edlin & J. Ireland (Eds.). *Engaging the culture: Christians at work in education*, p. 9. Blacktown, Australia: National Institute for Christian Education.

<sup>16</sup> Fennema, Transforming education: Parents. In R. Edlin & J. Ireland (Eds.). *Engaging the culture: Christians at work in education*, p. 8.

<sup>17</sup> *The 1945 Constitution of the Republic of Indonesia*. It can be read online in <http://www.embassyofindonesia.org/about/pdf/IndonesianConstitution.pdf>

<sup>18</sup> <http://www.un.org/en/documents/udhr/index.shtml#atop>

(2) Education shall be directed to the full development of the human personality and to the strengthening of respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms. It shall promote understanding, tolerance and friendship among all nations, racial or religious groups, and shall further the activities of the United Nations for the maintenance of peace.

(3) Parents have a prior right to choose the kind of education that shall be given to their children.

In this paper, we will discuss those possible stakeholders' roles in education consecutively: parents, teachers, students, media/information technology, government, and especially learn from policy of government of Netherland in the era of Abraham Kuyper as her Prime Minister, one of neo-Calvinists thinkers.

### **The role of parents**

It is a widespread idea that schools are places where parents can buy some services and in return, parents will receive their children well-educated. We deny this "pseudo-truth" as a lie. On the contrary, from Christian perspective, parents should take the role as responsible educators for their children, not schools, churches/other religion bodies, or governments.

Given this truth, it does not mean that parents have to do the actual teaching all the time. Parents may delegate some of that responsibility to teachers, and true teachers need to be able to fulfill parenting function too, but certain responsibilities do continue.<sup>19</sup>

In the context of Indonesia, the State provides public schools, some private foundations provide private schools, and some parents choose to home-school their kids. Whatever education parents will choose for their children, let these two important truths remind them:

- *There is no neutrality.* Public or private schools have specific agendas (and the agendas are always religious) in what kinds of knowledge they will give and how they will educate students. This is also applied to home-schooling materials. Each textbook has its particular religious direction either acknowledging God<sup>20</sup> as the source of everything or denying that reality, and putting something else in God's place.
- *What is the purpose of the particular school?* Or in the context home-schooling, what is the purpose of the materials? Will our children acknowledge God or be taught to put themselves

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<sup>19</sup> Fennema, Transforming education: Parents. In R. Edlin & J. Ireland (Eds.). *Engaging the culture: Christians at work in education*, p. 18.

<sup>20</sup> Christians believe to God in the Bible that creates the world, and because man had sinned against Him, God sent His only begotten Son, Jesus Christ, to redeem His world and put everything (including education) under His Lordship.

in God's position? (secular humanism) The decisions made by parents on education will impact much of their children's lives in the future.

From a Christian point of view, parents should listen to what the Bible says as the authoritative Word of God:

- The student is not above the teacher, but everyone who is fully trained will be like their teacher.<sup>21</sup> The word “teacher” can be replaced by “textbooks”, or “children” (themselves—whatever they want to be) if parents put their children in schools that focus their programs on content-centered or child-centered respectively.<sup>22</sup>
- Fathers, do not exasperate your children; instead, bring them up in the training and instruction of the Lord.<sup>23</sup> Do we want our children acknowledge God's sovereignty for their lives or boast their individual self-centered achievements?
- Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one. Love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength. These commandments that I give you today are to be on your hearts. Impress them on your children. Talk about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up. Tie them as symbols on your hands and bind them on your foreheads. Write them on the doorframes of your houses and on your gates.<sup>24</sup> Jack Fennema's comment on these verses is: “This nurture in the things of God is not a part-time job. It is to take place 24/7, both in the privacy of one's home and in the marketplace. Life before the Lord is not dualistic—part sacred and part secular—, all of life has been declared holy by God.”<sup>25</sup>

### The role of teachers

Founders of the world's great religions have been known as teachers, because of their directive teaching. If some people say that all religions are going to the same direction, they do not really understand the matter, because each religion will direct each follower to specific destination. And Christianity claims to be exclusive.

In Christianity, Jesus was also a teacher, being called as a *rabbi*<sup>26</sup>, and for Christians, He is a Teacher of teachers. Once He said, “The student is not above the teacher, but everyone who is

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<sup>21</sup> Luke 6:40.

<sup>22</sup> *Dead Poets Society* movie portrays these two clashed philosophies. See Edlin, *The cause of Christian education* (3rd ed.), p. 28–29.

<sup>23</sup> Ephesians 6:4.

<sup>24</sup> Deuteronomy 6:4-8.

<sup>25</sup> Fennema, Transforming education: Parents. In R. Edlin & J. Ireland (Eds.). *Engaging the culture: Christians at work in education*, p. 10

<sup>26</sup> <http://www.jewfaq.org/defs/rabbi.htm> *Rabbi* is a Hebrew word that means a religious teacher and person authorized to make decisions on issues of Jewish law. He also performs of the same functions as a Protestant minister.

fully trained will be like their teacher.”<sup>27</sup> Edlin (1999)<sup>28</sup> argues that the teachers should be a mentor and role model for their students. And teachers, according to Guy Doud, are molders of students’ dreams. It does not mean that teachers are replacing the role of parents, but teachers teach children on behalf of parents. In other words, the parent should be the most important teachers that children can ever have, and they must ensure that those they enlist to help them in this task share their own perspective on life.

In formal schools, the role of formal teachers is very important, because they will meet their students in average: 6 to 7 hours a day, 5 days a week (and probably longer than the parents do). And to make it worse, Indonesian government has been thinking to add more schooling time because the State thinks that parents are too busy to have time to take care of their children, so schools will be a help for this situation.<sup>29</sup>

The error is not on adding schooling time per se, but on the reasoning why government should add more schooling time. Because parents are too busy, it does not necessarily means that schools or governments must take over parents’ responsibilities.

Since teachers are supposed to take some parents’ teaching areas and may have more time with children than their own parents, teachers should prepare themselves in such a way, so that they may accomplish the tasks of nurturing and admonish their students in *tandem* with parents.

In preparing teachers to fulfill their role in developing relationships with their students, it is useful to remember four basic relationships of life that we call it “the process of knowing”:

- Knowing God
- Knowing others
- Knowing creation
- Knowing one’s self

Even though this process seems similar in some degree to other beliefs and Christian teachers may teach same contents of subjects at times with other schools, the entire framework of curriculum has been transformed. In Christianity, teaching is in the context of relationship with students, the direction of teaching is toward the face of God, and the purpose of teaching is to bring glory to God through responses on the part of the children, of obedience and praise.<sup>30</sup>

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<sup>27</sup> Luke 6:40.

<sup>28</sup> Edlin, *The cause of Christian education* (3rd ed.), p. 120–135.

<sup>29</sup> <http://esq-news.com/2012/berita/09/19/pemerintah-berencana-menambah-jam-sekolah.html>

<sup>30</sup> Fennema, Transforming education: Parents. In R. Edlin & J. Ireland (Eds.). *Engaging the culture: Christians at work in education*, p. 16–18

## The role of students

In the context of education, students are usually assumed to be passive. They are objects of education. On one hand, this assumption can be partly true, because in early years until perhaps 17 or 18 years old, parents usually choose suitable education for their children. But, on the other hand, students should be active in learning, so that they can identify and develop their talents and abilities in a self-aware manner.

From a Christian perspective, students should accomplish what the Bible commands them to do:

- Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. "Honor your father and mother"—which is the first commandment with a promise—"so that it may go well with you and that you may enjoy long life on the earth."<sup>31</sup>
- Honor your father and your mother, so that you may live long in the land the LORD your God is giving you.<sup>32</sup>
- Commit and live as what God intends you to be, by following Jesus, because He says, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life."<sup>33</sup>

In Christian education, students are regarded as God's creation and have been created in the image of God.<sup>34</sup> They are knit by God in their mothers' wombs, fearfully and wonderfully made by the Creator.<sup>35</sup> As adults, we should accept children just as Jesus did, for the kingdom of God belongs to such as these.<sup>36</sup>

Meanwhile, they are sinners who need to be redeemed by God's grace alone; because they cannot save themselves to pay the wages of sin they did, even by doing good deeds.<sup>37</sup> So, by attending Christian schools, students are being expected to know how precious are their lives, and at the same time to be conscious that they need a Savior to fix their broken lives because of sin.

Moreover, by studying each subject at school, students should meet the Creator's revelation and have relationship with Him, as they learn about the world and their places and tasks in it. For example, learning history cannot be seen as a history of mankind per se but all events in the past are talking about His-story.

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<sup>31</sup> Ephesians 6:1-3.

<sup>32</sup> Exodus 20:12.

<sup>33</sup> John 14:6a.

<sup>34</sup> Genesis 1:27.

<sup>35</sup> Psalms 139:13-16.

<sup>36</sup> Mark 10:13-16. What Jesus meant by the word "these" refers to a "child-like character". This noble character must be understood as the opposite of "childish" character that Jesus condemns.

<sup>37</sup> Romans 6:23.

## The role of media and information technology

We live in the 21<sup>st</sup> century where everyone seemingly cannot live without technology, media, and internet. From a Christian perspective, we see all these innovations and advances in technology as potentially good and useful, but impacted by the Fall<sup>38</sup>. We have to be careful, because there is no neutrality. Kamary (2010) states, “The media not only informs, educates and entertains, it also forms. It forms our hearts, our minds and guides our responses to life experiences.”<sup>39</sup>

The presence of smart-phone and portable handheld alike can send any information faster, and reach anyone (including our students and adults as well), anywhere in a stunningly short period of time. But technology can have negative effects from irresponsible people that may use the internet for crime, and spreading violence or pornography. We must teach children how to make discerning use of the internet and IT.<sup>40</sup>

Ted Baehr (2010) presents some interesting facts related to media:<sup>41</sup>

- Movies that expose sex and bad languages will decrease their possibilities to get higher rank of box office.
- Christian contents increases box office.
- Children spend little time talking to their parents, as the result of mishandled media and technology.
- The media impacts what we think, what we do, and how we feel.
- There are many cultural conduits that can influence our children: stories, theater, novels, fine art, games, movies, music, new media, television, and internet.
- Graphics show that using media by children age 8-18 in US are increasing significantly: from 1999 of 7:29 (seven hours and twenty nine minutes) a day to 2009 of 10:45 (ten hours and forty five minutes) a day.
- Baehr offers good news for parents on helping them to be selective of their children’s movies. The website is [www.movieguide.org](http://www.movieguide.org).

Some useful quotations from Baehr’s presentation related to how media impacts people and that can also be used as validations of “there is no neutrality especially in media”:

- Walt Disney: “Movies can and do have tremendous influence in shaping young lives.”

<sup>38</sup> The meaning of Fall is a man’s rebellion toward the goodness of God. It should be seen in the context of “The story that makes sense of all stories”, and its place as part of the sequence: Creation Fall Redemption Consummation. See [http://www.cslewisinstitute.org/webfm\\_send/528](http://www.cslewisinstitute.org/webfm_send/528)

<sup>39</sup> [http://www.koreatimes.co.kr/www/news/opinion/2010/03/137\\_63215.html](http://www.koreatimes.co.kr/www/news/opinion/2010/03/137_63215.html)

<sup>40</sup> IT stands for Information and Technology

<sup>41</sup> Ted Baehr presented his sharing and experiences as a media expert on ACSI conference in Suwon, Korea, on November 25-27, 2010. He is Founder and Publisher of *Movieguide* and Chairman of the Christian Film & Television Commission, as well as a noted critic, educator, lecturer, author, and media pundit.

- Theodore Roosevelt: “If you educate a man’s mind and not his heart, you will have an educated barbarian.”
- Ingmar Bergman: “The movie theater is the church of the post-modern world.”
- John Locke: “Whoever defines the word, defines the world.”

Equipping children to use IT wisely means that our schools in concert with parents must address serious issues such as cyber-bullying and sexing which have become huge challenges in contemporary youth culture. Christian schools have the opportunity to do this in the context of God’s laws which views all individuals as precious and worthy of respect, and which views relationships and sexuality in a tender and non-exploitive manner.

### **The role of government**

Indonesia is proud to be seen as a country that is based on the rule of law.<sup>42</sup> For the purpose of this booklet, we may look at the role of Indonesian government in education in the light of Indonesian constitution namely “The 1945 Constitution of the Republic of Indonesia.” There are three parts of the constitution that regulate education in Indonesia. They are: (1) the preamble to the constitution, (2) article 28E of Chapter XA, and (3) article 31 of Chapter XIII, as follows:<sup>43</sup>

#### ***The Preamble to the Constitution***

Whereas independence is the inalienable right of all nations, all colonialism must be abolished in this world as it is not in conformity with humanity and justice; And the moment of rejoicing has arrived in the struggle of the Indonesian independence movement to guide the people safely and well to the gate of the independence of the state of Indonesia which shall be independent, united, sovereign, just and prosperous; By the grace of God Almighty and motivated by the noble desire to live a free national life, the people of Indonesia hereby declare their independence.

Subsequent thereto, to form a government of the state of Indonesia which shall protect all the people of Indonesia and all the independence and the land that has been struggled for, and to improve public welfare, to educate the life of the people and to participate toward the establishment of a world order based on freedom, perpetual peace and social justice, therefore the independence of Indonesia shall be formulated into a constitution of the Republic of Indonesia which shall be built into a sovereign state based on a belief in the One and Only God, just and civilized humanity, the unity of Indonesia, and democratic

<sup>42</sup> <http://www.embassyofindonesia.org/about/pdf/IndonesianConstitution.pdf>

Article 1 verse (3) says that “The State of Indonesia shall be a state based on the rule of law (Negara hukum)”. “The rule of law” was translated from German: *Rechtsstaat*.

<sup>43</sup> <http://www.embassyofindonesia.org/about/pdf/IndonesianConstitution.pdf>

life led by wisdom of thoughts in deliberation amongst representatives of the people, and achieving social justice for all the people of Indonesia.

***Article 28E of Chapter XA: Human Rights***

(1) Every person shall be free to choose and to practice the religion of his/her choice, to choose one's education, to choose one's employment, to choose one's citizenship, and to choose one's place of residence within the state territory, to leave it and to subsequently return to it.

(2) Every person shall have the right to the freedom to believe his/her faith (kepercayaan), and to express his/her views and thoughts, in accordance with his/her conscience.

(3) Every person shall have the right to the freedom to associate, to assemble and to express opinions.

***Article 31 of Chapter XIII: Education***

(1) Every citizen has the right to receive education.

(2) Every citizen has the obligation to undertake basic education, and the government has the obligation to fund this.

(3) The government shall manage and organize one system of national education, which shall increase the level of spiritual belief, devoutness and moral character in the context of developing the life of the nation and shall be regulated by law.

(4) The state shall prioritize the budget for education to a minimum of 20% of the State Budget and of the Regional Budgets to fulfill the needs of implementation of national education.

(5) The government shall advance science and technology with the highest respect for religious values and national unity for the advancement of civilization and prosperity of humankind.

The Indonesian constitution proclaims the right and responsibility of the Indonesian government to provide schooling for its children – though the right that the government claims to control the religious direction of this education is overemphasized. We note with gratitude that, in practice, the government allows schools with a diversity of religious viewpoints to flourish in Indonesia, for the good of the country.

We also encourage parents and interest groups to lobby the government to ensure a just distribution of tax rupiahs. Currently funding that favors public schools is championing one religious perspective over others, and this is a denial of the Constitution's requirement for just and fair treatment for all.

### Example from the Netherlands

Given the fact that Indonesia is a multi-cultural country, we can consider the Netherlands to be a comparative example on education. One of the reasons is because Netherlands has decided to admit diversity and is proud to be called as a multi-cultural country, besides its long history as an imperialist ruler of Indonesia.

Abraham Kuyper was a Dutch Prime Minister from 1901 to 1905 who implemented the idea of voucher for education. As McKendree R. Langley reports:

“Included in this agenda were bills for school reform, which would give full equality (including a voucher system) to Christian and Catholic schools, for liquor law reform to curb drunkenness, for housing codes to promote public health, for social security benefits for illness and old age, and for tax reform.”<sup>44</sup>

These vouchers in education can be used by parents to pay tuition fees and/or other financing of the school they choose for their children (not necessarily a public school provided by government).

Kuyper was one of promoters of the idea supported by the 1948 UN charter, that *Educational responsibility lies with parents and not with state*. He thought that “The state functions primarily as an “umpire”, deciding disputes between the spheres, but not interfering in their internal affairs.”<sup>45</sup> This segmental differentiation in a functionally differentiated society is called “Pillarization”.<sup>46</sup>

Langley continues:

“Early in December 1901, Premier Minister Abraham Kuyper presented an official statement to clarify his government’s position. He said there were two types of Christian principles: the first were those related to salvation, and the second were those related to natural life (or common grace), including public affairs.

Thus, he brought Christian principles to bear on matters concerning citizens, families, employers and employees, marriage, schools, churches, and government. He felt that in a democratic society it was appropriate for believers to organize on the basis of Christian principles with a common agenda to protect the Christian basis of society. At the same time, he respected the right of the secularist parties to promote their own agendas.”<sup>47</sup>

<sup>44</sup> [http://www.opc.org/new\\_horizons/NH99/NH9901d.html](http://www.opc.org/new_horizons/NH99/NH9901d.html)

<sup>45</sup> <http://historymythbusters.wordpress.com/2012/07/16/abraham-kuyper-gods-renaissance-man-part-1-of-2/>

<sup>46</sup> Marlou Schrover, *Pillarization, multiculturalism, and cultural freezing*, p. 332. It can be read online in: [http://www.knhg.nl/wpcontent/uploads/Schrover\\_Marlou\\_-\\_Pillarization\\_Multiculturalism\\_and\\_Cultural\\_Freezing\\_Dutch\\_Migration\\_History\\_and\\_the\\_Enforcement.pdf](http://www.knhg.nl/wpcontent/uploads/Schrover_Marlou_-_Pillarization_Multiculturalism_and_Cultural_Freezing_Dutch_Migration_History_and_the_Enforcement.pdf)

<sup>47</sup> [http://www.opc.org/new\\_horizons/NH99/NH9901d.html](http://www.opc.org/new_horizons/NH99/NH9901d.html)

The Dutch example shows us that diversity in educational choice and practice need not cause societal dislocation. Some accuse Islamic schools or *madrassahs* of preaching intolerance and hatred but for the vast majority of them this is not the case. Though we may disagree strongly with their worldview, we maintain the right of Moslem parents along with Christian parents and atheistic humanist parents also, to educate their children in schools that support their religious biases. The role of the state in this setting is to be overseer, to fund all schools equally, and to have an inspecting role to ensure that any school which abuses the rights of children or preaches hatred of others is closed down.

## Conclusion

- Everyone including children has an irrefutable right to be educated based on their beliefs.
- Parents have the primarily responsible to choose kind of education for their children.
- There is no neutrality in education. In consequence, each child should be educated in a way their parents desire for it.
- Government should facilitate the diverse educational desires of her citizens and finance each child's education equally under the law because his/her citizenship cries for it.
- Education should be a light to build a strong nation of Indonesia, because Indonesian's history just proves its efficacy on establishing a new nation in 1945 called Indonesia.

Finally let us dream about what a **CHRISTIAN SCHOOL** might look like. Christian schooling seeks to equip students in the following ways:

- Challenge them with a celebration of the Lordship of Christ over all of life (a response to the First Commandment [Ex 20:3; Deut 6:5]; the Greatest Commandment [Matt 28: 37-39; Luke 10:27]; the 1<sup>st</sup> question in Westminster Shorter Catechism).
- Equip them to be constructive, involved salt-and-light citizens for the good of society, enabling them to engage culture constructively for Christ, as His agents of shalom.
- Provide students with a joyful life-long passion for thinking and learning.
- Develop in them godly wisdom to help them make wise choices in life - vocation, relationships, recreation, etc., thus enabling them to be creative and faithful exponents of the cultural mandate as worthy stewards.
- Deepen their own personal relationship with Jesus Christ and their grasp of the vast extent of the glory and impact of the gospel, now and for eternity.
- Look at God's world God's gospel-centered way by approaching every curriculum area from a biblically faithful worldview perspective.
- Discover and develop their own gifts and talents in a godly way.
- Enable children to use their intellect to the fullest and be well prepared for future academic options according to their ability.

- Learn in a safe, compassionate, rigorous, expansive, discovery, nurturing, and supportive Christian environment.
- Be provided with godly mentoring examples.
- Learning how to deal with sin and blessing, and failure and success, in themselves, their peers, and their teachers, in a God-honoring manner.
- Mix with peers from homes with similar values and goals (1 Cor 15:33).
- Mature into discerning citizens and wise parents themselves.
- Know how to critique and respond faithfully to the beguiling worldviews and gods of our age (technology, sex, secular humanism, economic rationalism, etc.).<sup>48</sup>
- Become equipped to be godly in every vocation and calling and defend truth.
- Be strong and articulate in understanding and defending their faith.
- Operates in support of, and partnership with, the home and the church.

If this really is what Christian schooling is all about,  
why would Christian parents want anything else for their children

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<sup>48</sup> The problem with technology and sex are not on their inherent natures but on how people use and think about those respectively. Both of them have beguiling natures that can stick people on those rather than God, the ultimate Creator.

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