

Research Article

Management of Primary Education for Ethnic Chinese Children during the Dutch Colonial Period 1900-1920

Sumardi*

Department of History Education, Faculty of Teacher Training and Education, University of Jember, Indonesia, Jl. Kalimantan 37, Jember 68121, Indonesia

Article history:

Submission May 2023

Revised May 2023

Accepted June 2023

*Corresponding author:

E-mail:

sumardi.fkip@unej.ac.id

ABSTRACT

The management of primary education for ethnic Chinese children during the Dutch colonial period 1900-1920, to analyze the primary education of ethnic Chinese children (HCS) by the Dutch Colonial Government in 1900-1920. This research method uses five steps: Topic Selection, Heuristics, Verification, Interpretation, and Historiography. The results showed that the establishment of primary education for ethnic Chinese was due to the large number of immigrant children from China who did not get the proper attention to go to school. Then the Chinese community association *Tiong Hoa Hwee Koan* (THHK) began to think about the education of its descendants and established Primary Education. Apart from this, Chinese children who attended ELS could also not follow the lessons properly. This reason strengthened the colonial government to build a particular school for ethnic Chinese children, namely *Hollandsch Chineesche School* (HCS).

Keywords: Colonial period, HCS, Primary education

Introduction

The Chinese have lived in Indonesia since the 5th century. They migrated to Indonesia because of wars and natural disasters. In addition to these reasons, they also make a living by trading. Chinese people have the motivation to migrate to fulfill their lives in the new land. Furthermore, so that they get a more decent life, it extends to politics, culture, morals, sentimentality, and education (Utama, 2007). Then the increasing number of overseas and the stability of life required the Chinese to settle and live in Indonesia. After the economy improved, a new life began. Chinese people started to pay attention to education in the 20th century. At that

time, European education was very popular in Indonesia (Dutch East Indies).

Modern education based on ethnicity is most striking in Batavia. At that time, Batavia was the largest urban center where secondary and higher education was located (Nabila, 2021). For three centuries after the Dutch arrived in Indonesia, the colonial government did not interfere with Chinese education and did not want to provide financial assistance even though the Chinese paid taxes well. Japan's victory over Russia built Asia with the young Chinese movement. Nationalism and the greatness of the country began to fill the minds of the Chinese living in Indonesia (Nasution, 1995). The

How to cite:

Sumardi (2023). Management of Primary Education for Ethnic Chinese Children during the Dutch Colonial Period 1900-1920. *Basic and Applied Education Research Journal* 4(1): 28 – 33. doi: 10.11594/baerj.04.01.04

urge required the Chinese people to come forward and form a young movement or *Jong Chinese Beweging*. The association was formed so that ethnic Chinese could foster and instill a sense of Chinese nationalism among the Chinese population in the Dutch East Indies.

There was an association of Chinese people living in Indonesia called *Tiong Hoa Hwee Koan* (THHK) in 1900, which was established in the conference hall with the mission of spreading Chinese culture, customs, and morals according to the teachings of *Kong Fu Tse*. Then it was interesting for the association of Chinese people to establish education for their children. Its establishment was based on the modern thinking of modern Dutch East Indies society, which used modern methods in politics (Nabila, 2021). The school founded by the THHK association was originally in Dutch. It turned out that the Dutch did not like it when their language was used by non-Dutch people. Because entering ELS for the Chinese was difficult, THHK finally paid Dutch teachers at a high cost and asked the Dutch East Indies government for help. The colonial government rejected the request. Then THHK asked for help from China and replaced the teachers with English teachers. Thus the Dutch language was removed from the THHK school curriculum.

The Chinese had an opportunity for the importance of English. Because they realize that outside Indonesia, such as the Malay peninsula, the Philippines, Hong Kong, India, and Japan are open to people who can master English. The British themselves are happy to teach their language (Nasution, 1995). Unfortunately, the schools that have been opened are Dutch schools with Dutch as the language of instruction. These schools are considered elite, requiring high education funds to enter. So students who can attend Dutch schools are mainly from the official class and the rich. Then one of the burdensome conditions is requiring students to master the Dutch language (Dayanti & Budiman, 2012).

More and more Chinese people sent their children to the Raffles Institute in Singapore. The Chinese emperor showed interest in developing education in the Dutch colonies. The emperor also realized that education could achieve a close connection between overseas

Chinese and their ancestral homeland. THHK schools became a part of the Chinese state education system. By 1906 there were 76 primary schools with 6,393 students and secondary schools under the auspices of the Ministry of Education in Peking, an official institution. Chinese youth underwent military and civilian training in China.

The Chinese emperor also planned to build a university for Indonesian students in Peking. As a consequence of the National awakening, the Chinese language became the center of education. Education was nationalistic in THHK schools with Chinese and English teaching. Dutch lessons were sidelined. The Chinese looked down on the Dutch language and culture and had an anti-Dutch attitude, a concern, and a threat to cultural supremacy that might involve Dutch politics.

Dutch colonial affairs Minister D.Vock considered establishing a Dutch school for Chinese children. A school for Chinese children, the *Holandsch Chineesche School* (HCS), was then opened. In 1910 the Dutch colonial government passed a law that Chinese were Dutch subjects, in contrast to the indigenous people whose status was lower than that of the foreign Orientals. The view of the Chinese community reminded the Dutch government to abandon the policy of non-intervention in the education of ethnic Chinese children. The colonial government established the *Hollands Chineesche School* (HCS) in 1908. HCS officially opened on May 1, 1908 (Syaharuddin & Susanto, 2019). The aim was that the Dutch language could defeat the desire to learn more about the Chinese language and culture. The HCS curriculum was equalized with ELS so Chinese children could receive a pure Dutch education (Nasution, 1995).

Methodology

The research method is the steps taken by researchers to collect the information or data according to the topic to be studied. The historical research method, according to Kuntowijoyo (2018), has the following five steps: (i) topic selection, (ii) heuristics (source collection), (iii) verification (historical criticism, source validity), (iv) interpretation (analysis and synthesis), (v) historiography (historical writing).

The first stage of this research is topic selection. The topic of education history was chosen based on the author's interest and the availability of sources. The second stage is heuristics, namely source collection. Researchers have searched for primary and secondary sources and other sources in accordance with this research topic. The third stage is verification, namely historical criticism, which consists of external and internal criticism. The fourth stage is interpretation, namely analysis and synthesis, which is an interpretation used as the core of subjectivity. The fifth stage is historical writing, as below.

Management of Ethnic Chinese Primary Education at *Hollandsche Chinese School during the Dutch Colonial Period 1900-1920*

Primary education in Indonesia (Dutch East Indies), especially in the center of government (West Java) at that time, had experienced very rapid progress. The Dutch colonial government utilized this progress to create a diverse education system such as classifying the population according to descent or layers of social classes that existed based on the nationality groups that prevailed at that time, one of which was HCS (*Hollandsch Chinese School*) (Ekajati et al., 1998).

Results and Discussion



Figure 1. *Hollandsch Chineseesche School Makassar in 1910 (Universiteit Leiden, Digital Collections)*

a. Curriculum HCS (*Hollands Chinese School*)

This development in the field of education did not reduce the possibility that non-Europeans wanted to sit in school as well. One of them is the Chinese ethnic group. At first, Chinese children had difficulty entering ELS (Basic Education for Dutch children) schools. This difficulty resulted in upheaval in the Chinese ethnic group. Then they tried independently so that their descendants could go to school. This is shown by the Chinese organization (THHK)'s willingness to pay a high price for their children's education. THHK was willing to pay Dutch teachers to educate their children. Unfortunately, this request was rejected by the Dutch colonial government. Therefore, the organization asked for direct assistance from

their home country, China. Surprisingly, this got the attention of the Emperor of China.

The excellent relationship between overseas China and its ancestors gave the education ministry in Peking an official stamp to use all its correspondence and plan education that could help the future of Chinese children. Until further education for Chinese children was more centralized and directed to China. Dutch teachers were replaced with English teachers. English was taught in the belief that outside Indonesia, English language skills would be useful (Arta, 2015). The THHK organization was considered too independent and could threaten the colonial government, so the colonial government established HCS (*Hollandsch Chineseesche School*).

HCS (*Hollandsch Chineesche School*) became a particular school for Chinese children established by the colonial government. The length of study is seven years. The curriculum used in this school is more or less the same as that of ELS. The purpose of this school was also to educate Chinese children to be able to learn the Dutch language. English and French were also taught. French and English are generally conducted in the afternoon at HCS. This was the difference between HCS and ELS, as these subjects were not taught at ELS. Because of trade interests, these languages were eventually taught.

THHK created a preparatory class for 5-year-old children who can then enter HCS. This is intended to make it easier for children to follow lessons in grade one. Unfortunately, such facilities are not available to children of Indonesian descent. The teaching of Chinese was a serious problem. The Dutch colonial government flatly refused to allow Chinese language learning. Yet some voices advocated for the Chinese language according to the needs of the students (Nasution, 1995). The colonial government was not willing to finance the nationalist goals of other nations. Chinese groups often organized Chinese language teaching outside schools, eventually leading to various problems.

Malay language learning was also unsuccessful because Malay was considered a market language commonly used by servants. In connection with this, the Chinese wanted Western culture, and many of them used Dutch in daily life and households (Nasution, 1995). Later the THHK (*Tiong Hoa Hwee Koan*) organization became an educational institution explicitly teaching Chinese and English. Chinese lessons and their use as the language of instruction gradually began to be abandoned. It is considered less popular among students. Although Chinese language lessons were to be maintained, the Dutch government did not allow it or provide operational funds.

The Malay language was complex for the Chinese to adjust to. They did not accept the use of Malay as the language of education. Malay was considered a market language used only by servants. They used Dutch in their daily lives

(Arta, 2015). HCS has the same basis and education system as ELS. It was established because the colonial government did not want the Chinese to jeopardize its position in Indonesia.

b. HCS Teacher

HCS has the same curriculum and textbooks as ELS. Of course, because of these similarities, teachers of the same standard were needed. Politically, the HCS should have hired Dutch teachers, but as the number of HCS grew, educating Chinese teachers of the same quality as Dutch teachers became an urgent option. In 1916 the HKS (*Hogere Kweekschool*) was opened, a higher-teacher school to educate HIS teachers who could educate Chinese teachers. However, the Chinese argued that it would be a setback if prospective HCS teachers were brought together with Indonesian teachers because they were competing for the same legal status as the Japanese, who were equalized with the whites.

The hostility between the Indonesians and the Chinese became the motive for establishing the Islamic Union. The Indonesian Chinese had already familiarized themselves with the Indonesian people and enjoyed Indonesian literature, culture, and arts. In essence, the Chinese felt they were different from the Indonesians and did not feel safe under the same roof. Finally, in 1917, HCK (*Hollands Chineesche Kweekschool*) was established, a Chinese teachers' school in Meester Cornelis, Batavia. Prospective teachers were taken from HCS/ELS and MULO graduates. School fees, dormitory living, and books were free of charge. Special dormitories were provided for female students.

Each student was given an allowance of f 20 a month. The provision of Chinese teachers was not to adopt the school program to the needs of the Chinese but to get cheap teachers for the growing number of HCS. The curriculum has not been changed, and the Chinese teachers have become so Westernized that they feel alienated from their own culture. In reality, HCS was a school that provided Western education like ELS (Nasution, 1995). In West Java, HCS is located in Bandung and Jakarta (Depdikbud, 1998).

c. HCS Inspection

Inspections were an essential aspect of the Dutch colonial education system. The 1818 school regulations were primarily about inspections. It stipulated that each school must be visited at least once a week. This was possible due to the small number of schools. After the number of schools increased, a special inspection body was formed to visit schools once a year. The inspectors were required to carefully check that the official curriculum provided by the Netherlands could be followed in the schools.

The inspectors attended teaching and learning activities between teachers and students. They then made suggestions for improvement in a calm and thoughtful manner. Teachers could know the results of the inspection and defend themselves. Usually, the inspection results contain the mistakes and shortcomings of teachers and schools. Inspections also praise and reward good efforts. The school is also closely monitored in all its actions. It is supervised by a local school committee chaired by the head of the local area.

School review activities are similar to those of ELS. As both schools had the same curriculum, HCS was placed under the same inspection as ELS. Two well-educated Chinese were appointed as members of the Dutch school commission to manage the HCS (Nasution, 1995).

d. HCS Textbook

The Dutch colonial government directly regulated the textbooks used for Dutch schools. Several authors introduced their textbooks to the Dutch colonial government. Among them were A. Van Ekris introduced his work textbook entitled *Begin eener Nederdutch Spraakunts Vor Inlander, Meer Bepaald Voor de Inwoner der Molukken* (The First Teaching of the Dutch Language, more intended for residents of the Maluku Islands). The government decision brought this book to the *Bataviaasch Genootschap* institution to be tested. After testing, it was found that the book was not suitable for learning because the book was too long, the language too scientific, theoretical, and less practical. However, even books that had been proposed, such as Van Ekris' book, had to be used for non-Western schools, such as the

Inlandsch School der Eerste Klasse in 1892 and the HCS (*Hollandsch Chineesche School*) in 1914.

The HCS curriculum, similar to ELS, did not allow for the textbooks that HCS used in teaching and learning activities. HCS used Dutch textbooks as a foreign language and became the second language of instruction used in schools formed by the Dutch government. In 1900-1950, the method of reading lessons applied was very influential and developed in schools established by the Dutch government, including HCS. The "*Mijn Hollandsch Boek*" method by J.W. Coes became the colonial government's method of teaching the Dutch language used in ELS, HCS, and HIS schools (Makmur, 1993).

e. HCS Student Admission

HCS was opened to children who wanted to study a Western education dominated by Chinese-Indonesian descendants born and raised in Indonesia. Many Chinese-born children did not understand Chinese and were not interested in the Chinese national school. HCS was founded on political considerations to rival the THHK. The colonial government's efforts could not have been successful as many Chinese still sent their children to China to study. For example, the Chinese who lived in West Kalimantan. They preferred to send their children to Singapore or Shanghai rather than Batavia because they considered it closer. They sent their children to Chinese schools and then to China.

The HCS establishment is highly esteemed in Java, but it is not appreciated when offered to the Chinese. The Malay language was also ignored, and even the Dayaks learned Chinese to deal with the Chinese. In 1915 the HCS in Pontianak had only 70 students out of 10,000 Chinese in Indonesia. The requirements to enter HCS were made easier for Chinese children. A maximum age of 7 years and mastery of Dutch were not treated strictly. Chinese children had better learning opportunities than Indonesian children. Schools increased in number from 4 in 1908 to 29 in 1915. Then in 1920, there were 34 schools, from 821 to 5,323, and then 7,785 students. These learning opportunities allowed the Chinese to dominate. Not only the commercial field but the intellectual field and aided by favorable financial conditions. Proportionally

more Chinese entered university than Indonesians (Nasution, 1995).

In 1924 there was a subsidized HCS in Surabaya under the name *Chirstelijk Hollands Chineesche School* at Niuwe Kerkstraat, which had 119 students and five teachers. The school now became *Bubutan Koblen*. Then in 1926, a particular school for Chinese women was established with 121 students and five teachers called *Hollandsch Chineesche Meisje School*, which is now on Canal Street. The curriculum was more or less the same, but there were additional subjects, namely Bijbel, English history, and skills lessons for women (Prayudi, 2014).

Conclusion and Suggestions

The above description can be concluded that the primary education established by the Dutch colonial government originally aimed to continue the studies of Dutch children who followed their parents to Indonesia due to work demands. The length of time the Dutch settled in Indonesia resulted in many changes to the governance order in Indonesia. One of them is in the education sector. The establishment of HCS was a hidden intention of the colonial government. In order to prevent the Chinese from rebelling against the Dutch government initially, the Dutch colonial government did not care about the education of Chinese children. But now, there was a great interest in the education of Chinese children because of the political interests of trade in the Far East. Concerns about the lack of loyalty of the Chinese community prompted the colonial government to establish a school with the best learning opportunities, HCS.

Students who attended HCS had the opportunity to continue their education at MULO or HBS. The establishment of HCS, which received so much attention, caused dissatisfaction among the *Bumiputera community*. The *Bumiputera community* demanded that the colonial government also establish the same level of education. Inevitably, the colonial government had to grant this request because Budi Utomo and *Sarekat Islam* were also pressing for it. The existence of HCS became one of the most

important factors in the establishment of HIS schools which were opened for Indonesian children to continue their education to a higher level.

Acknowledgments

The author would like to thank all those who have contributed and provided constructive input and suggestions so that this article can be even better as a result.

References

- 1910, Universiteit Leiden, Digital Collections
- Arta, K. S. 2015. *Sejarah Pendidikan*. Yogyakarta: Media Akademi.
- Dayanti, R. & Budiman, S. (2012). *Peranan Sekolah Tiong Hoa Hwe Koan dan Hollandsch Chineesch School Terhadap Etnis Tionghoa*. *Cakrawala*. XII(1). 17-24.
- Departemen Pendidikan dan Kebudayaan RI. (1998). *Sejarah Pendidikan Daerah Jawa Barat*. Edisi II. Jakarta: CV. Pialamas Pemai.
- Ekajati, E. S., Tiarsah, I., Saputra, S. H., & Sulaeman, E. 1998. *Sejarah Pendidikan Daerah Jawa Barat*. Jakarta: CV. Piala Permai.
- Kuntowijoyo. (2018). *Pengantar Ilmu Sejarah*. Edisi Baru. Yogyakarta: Penerbit Tiara Wacana.
- Makmur, D., Haryono, P. S., Musa, S., & S, Hadi. 1993. *Sejarah Pendidikan di Indonesia Zaman Penjajahan*. Jakarta: CV. Manggala Bhakti.
- Nabila, A.P. (2021). Sekolah Tiong Hoa Hwee Kwan (STHHK) Sebagai Representasi Pendidikan Modern Etnis Tionghoa di Batavia tahun 1901-1942. *Jurnal Mozaik: Kajian Ilmu Sejarah*. 12(2). 163-182.
- Nasution, S. 1995. *Sejarah Pendidikan Indonesia*. Edisi Kedua. Jakarta: Bumi Aksara.
- Prayudi, G. M. & D. Salindri. (2015). Pendidikan pada Masa Pemerintahan Kolonial Belanda di Surabaya tahun 1901-1942. *Jurnal Publika Budaya*. 1(3). 20-34.
- Syahrudin & H. Susanto, B. (2019). *Sejarah Pendidikan Indonesia (Era Pra Kolonialisme Nusantara sampai Revormasi)*. Banjarmasin: Universitas Lambung Mangkurat Press.
- Utama, W. S. (2012). Kehidupan Sosial Budaya Masyarakat Tionghoa di Batavia 1900an-1930an. *Lembaran Sejarah*. 9(1). 19-38.