

# **Exploring how a Child's History Meets the Education System in Remote Areas within Indonesia**

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## **Abstract**

The study I am going to present is about how the children historical background constructed the concept of early childhood education in around the world. Indonesia as a developing country and one of the largest islands with lots of problematical in education tries to apply the real concept in early childhood education (ECE). The importance of ECE centres in Indonesia had been socialised since 2002 and it stated in the Law No. 20 of 2003 on National Education System. Based on UNESCO data in 2012, the indicative target of children enrolled in pre-primary school in Indonesia only 48% from 80%. This number is away from Brunei Darussalam as a neighbour country, which stated 92%. Meanwhile from Global Monitoring Report 2012, Indonesia is in the 64<sup>th</sup> from 120 countries for its education. The purpose of this study is to investigate the historical background of children and childhood which then links up to the education in Indonesia and its problem with children in remote areas and how to cope it. From the reading research, I found that the most challenging revealed from its uneven education system and uneven number of teachers in several areas.

Keywords: Child's history, education system, remote areas, Indonesia

## **Introduction**

The aim of this paper is to investigate the historical background of children and childhood which then links up to the education in Indonesia and its problem with children in remote areas and how to cope it. This study also looks at the implication on children's rights and policy from the government. The reason for taking the remote area as the object's background is to observe the education system, policy, and child's rights and to compare with other developed counties.

Children all over the world have the history of their well-being. The universal history was grouped based on the continent where the child lived: European, American, African, Latin American, and Asian child have their own history of childhood. The images of childhood relate

to development, health and well being (Grant, 2005; Hughes-Warrington, 2009; Wells, 2009). For example, the context of childhood in the US began with the poverty and also the racism of African-American, and Negro, and the term 'sacralisation' aroused to discussed about the transformations that happened in the nineteenth and twentieth century in the economic and affective value of children (Georgeson, Payler, and Campbell-Barr, 2013; Jenks, 2005).

In England, at the so-called Wage-Earning period, children were treated as mini adults, where they have to work and act like an adult (Wells, 2009). Either boys or girls, adults exploited children to work in factories for 14 hours a day, and their family supported this condition; what they did was essential for the family. Child's health was abandoned and indeed, they were not in school. Then, the policy changed with the Factory Act in 1833 and led to the policy to not employ children under 9 and limited working day to 8 hours for 9-13 year olds (Williamson, 2013) .

Thereafter, Philippe Aries, a historian came out and reformed the concept of children and childhood. In his phenomenal book, Aries (1962) cited in Wells (2009), argued that children were not adult but merely dressed to look like adult. The differentiation of children's live by class, ethnicity, and region. Aries' statement was triggered by the studies of childhood in the Middle Ages in Europe, which treated children like small adults who can work either at home or at the factory, to clean chimneys or machines. His thought brought deep impact for the concept about children. Simultaneously, histories bring lights from educational experts' times to times; with their theories about child's well being and their achievement.

Archard (1993) discussed John Locke -one of the most important and influential philosopher figures-. In his book he mentioned that Locke's idea about children is as the recipients of an ideal upbringing, citizens in the making, fledging, but imperfect reasoners and blank sheets filled by experience. It is indicate that children are individuals who still need guidance and shelter from the adult, thus they are depending with their environment to nurture and nature them. In the contrary, Grant (2005) in her study, she criticise that historians of children and childhood pay much lip service nowadays. She outlined, this occurred because they prefer to choose the notion of comparative work rather than to actually do it and would effect on the historical expertise.

One question needs to be asked, however, what is actually children and childhood is? Simultaneously, histories bring lights from educational experts' times to times; with their theories about child's well being and their achievement. Based on Archard's (1993) study, it is indicated that children are individuals who still need guidance and shelter from the adult, thus they are dependent within their environment.

To compare the context of childhood between Indonesia and developed countries would require discussion furthermore. The caused is related to Indonesia's independence which far beyond the European civilisation. Even so, it affect to the system particularly for the education system. The statistics of the education system are still far below the developed and rich countries. According to Global League Table from Pearson in 2012, Indonesia was in the lowest rank for the education system altogether with Mexico and Brazil, while England was in the sixth position (BBC, 2012). While according to the UNESCO in the Global Monitoring Report 2012, Indonesia was in the 64<sup>th</sup> from 120 countries for its education. Meanwhile Education Development Index (EDI) data showed the position in 2011 was in 69 from 127 countries. It means Indonesia had an increasing statistic in the education system, but still away to compare with Western's education statistic.

Republic of Indonesia is an archipelago country, It consists of 17,508 islands and only about 6000 are inhabited (ASEM, 2010) spread in around the big five; Sumatera, Java, Kalimantan/Borneo, Sulawesi, and Papua. Every island enriches this country to have various culture, tribes, and language. Hence, they use Bahasa Indonesia as a united language to communicate one to another. Jakarta, the capital city of this country is located in the island of Java. A recent study mentioned, Indonesia had extraordinary high levels of economic growth for the last quarter of the twentieth century (Wells, 2009). According to the World Bank's data (2012), the poverty in this region has slightly decreased year by year. Meanwhile, the education and school enrolment in this country increased gradually (TWB, 2012). With its advancing development, it shall bring positive impacts for the nation and the citizens.

On the other hand, several studies mentioned that Indonesian children need supporting systems such as education and school. According to Indonesian elementary school portal, there are 148.162 elementary schools widely spread in the islands of Indonesia (Team, 2013). Moreover, in 2010, there were 68 percent of schools across the country had a surplus of teachers,

meanwhile those located in remote areas have been suffering from a lack of teachers (Fitriawan, 2010). This portrayed that this country need to boost its education which is included in the nation well-being. As an example, children in West (Europe, US, Australia) are supported by the systems i.e. government and the school as well as in the infrastructure, learning, curriculum, and tuition free (Coughlin, 1996). This condition is in line with Pollard and Lee (2003) who described that well-being as a term that is commonly used and should be defined in the study of child development.

In the summary of the Child's Rights (UNCRC), Article 13 mentioned, children have freedom of expression and information. Thus, children need to have knowledge for their learning in their lives. Furthermore, Alderson (2000) explained, that child have right to freedom of expression, to receive and impart information and ideas of all kinds, regardless of frontiers, either orally, in writing or in print. Hence, school is one of the places to gain the information and knowledge for children. Nevertheless, a remote area still has an inhibitory factor to enhance children to gain information. Mostly, the locations of schools are in remote areas far from the community, and this information told us that children should have the ease of learning to access the education well.

Several studies have been investigating remote or disadvantaged area as a community district with relative less developed region than other regions in Indonesia (KPDT, 2011). This definition limits the administrative regions that are lagging districts (Risadi, 2013). This condition assessed by two aspects of society and areas into six basic criteria; economy, human resources, infrastructure, fiscal, accessibility, and regional characteristics. Moreover, the accessibility and regional characteristics are a geographical position, where they may be unreachable, in the middle of mountains and swamp, and prone to natural disasters such as earthquakes, landslides, and volcanoes (Effendi, 2012). Therefore, it is difficult to access by public transport use i.e. land, water, air. Certainly, it also challenges the government to reduce the number by facilitation and education as well.

The existence of remote areas located in almost all parts of Indonesia is worthy of notice. Although Indonesia has succeeded to decrease poverty step-by-step each year, they still have remote areas in almost every part of the island, including Java Island. This situation is supported by natural geographical conditions. Based on data in *Kementerian Pembangunan Daerah*

*Tertinggal* (KPDT-Ministry of Rural Development Republic Indonesia) (2011), there are 183 districts in 27 provinces classified as remote areas; for example, in West Java, where the capital city is next to this area, there are two districts stated as remote areas; *kabupaten* Sukabumi (Sukabumi district), and *kabupaten* Garut (Garut district). It is not an easy job to do to reduce the numbers. For this reason, Budi Utomo (2010), Cadre Division Head of Education and Training Ministry of Interior said, this country needs the government interference to improve the quality of education to attain the nation's purpose. There will be many challenges to overcome, slowly but sure to have the educated people in those areas.

This view is supported by UNESCO which state "the true measure of a nation's standing is how well it attends to its children – their health and safety, their material security, their education and socialization, and their sense of being loved, valued, and included in the families and societies into which they are born" (UNESCO, 2007). So far, however, these conditions brings to Roger's theory about self-actualisation of the human being to reach the goal if the society supports the needs of the children (Nutbrown, 2008). Moreover, the supporting system is definitely construct children to be more understood to learning from their surrounding and build up scaffolding as the base of what the children will be, and teachers are the most important thing for the system to transfer the knowledge.

Remote areas are interesting to explore particularly for the education system, because of the location being challenging. Disadvantaged regions indeed lack of education. The resources are limited, especially for the primary school. Education then becomes the parameter of the condition of the area, whether it is a welfare area supported with good systems or not (Rahmadi, 2008). The majority of the children in remote areas are not supported with good infrastructure such as; building, teachers, books, and or even technology. As an example, children in Jambi district would run barefoot through the woods for two days and two nights; they are as far as 45 kilometres from their destination and only armed with shabby bag containing books, *sarong*, three packs of instant noodles, and two packets of bread; what they are doing is to get to a building which is "school" (Tambunan, 2011). General portrait of students in this setting is very alarming. What make the school become very lively is their passion, enthusiasm, and excitement to having information, which is called as "knowledge".

In contrast, education is a key for the progress of a nation. No developed nation exists, which is not supported with strong education (Joesoef, 2011; Pearson and Degotardi, 2009). Like health and infrastructure, education is a priority the government must address in remote regions (Sweetland, 1996). In the other words, government still has to do many things conducting the education to achieve the target. Conditions of the children in remote areas are lack of supporting systems in education. Another example, to avoid the elementary students walking 7 kilometres to reach the school and study, local residents in Sukabumi district have been forced to build a makeshift classroom to help facilitate long-distance teaching and learning activities for the last eight years (Sufa, 2009).

Compared with children in remote area who lack resources, children in the cities can obtain school atmosphere “normally”. Most of them have good education in mainstream school with all the resources from teachers and school such as the ability of computer facilities, laboratory, and even some schools have internet network or Wi-Fi (Karim, 2013). Additionally, schools in urban areas also have trainers or teachers who teach the subjects in accordance with their means, and only teach a subject area of study only. They are supported with stationery, proper bags, and uniforms. Even if the school is far from their house, they can find public transport easily.

Children in remote areas absolutely need the education. Athey (2007) cited in Bruce (1987) suggest, that early intervention, an education that involves parents, professionals, and a clear pedagogy can enhance children’s cognitive development. This theory is supported by the UNCRC which mentioned Education and cultural life in Article 28; primary education shall be compulsory and free to all (Alderson, 2000). Despite the explanations, the fact is there are many things to deal with education in remote areas.

A substantial point about the explanation above, brought us to Penn’s statement, that being poor in a poor area also shapes how young children grow and what they learn (Penn, 2005). It means, children will not be able to absorb the information very well, if teachers are still using an old method, and it will be a huge impact for the nation. The Young Teachers are trained to conduct the class activity with lots of methods and problem solving (experiences) with approaches that are relevant in the area. They also consider the society is still to uphold the tradition from ancestor. Some analysts pointed out that, development of technical skills are

needed for teaching, and also aware of moral issues involved the education, an ability to negotiate and develop one's practice within the culture of the school, the development of personal qualities and an ability to reflect and evaluate both in and on one's actions (Calderhead and Shorrock, 1997; Tickle, 2000a). In short, the process is needed to put together the skills to gain professional skills that can be able to carry out their duty.

School as a "shelter" for student is often far away from the remote population. In this case, Stern pointed out that 'school is about the whole of life, and teachers need to draw on the outside world, including the world of pupils' and families.' (Stern, 2003). Meanwhile, Wells (2009) identifies, school is not the only kind of moral technology, but it is the important one in the lives of children. All the studies reviewed so far, however, suffer from the fact that almost in every part of the country, rural schools often receive less state funding and often have a limited local tax base to fund their local schools (Hodge, 2007). The lack of cognition brings them to poverty, and limitations of discourse.

Nevertheless, the topic about children and childhood and the relation with their education is mentioned in the UNCRC (1989) that, childhood is the period 0-18 years. Numerous definitions have attempted to explain childhood. Tina Bruce (1987) for example, she stated that childhood is part of life and not simply a preparation for it. She added, what children can do (rather than cannot do) is the starting point for the child's education. In line with Bruce, furthermore, Montgomery (2009) found that, the idea of child comprised the category of age, gender, birth order, and ethnicity which impact on them in different ways. These childhood concepts are variety, each constructed by our understanding of childhood and what children are and should be (Dahlberg, Moss, and Pence, 1999).

A child is different and unique to one another, even though children are in the same country, same area, same language or even twin. They have different characteristic, attitude, and intelligence. Generally, children's development is influenced by their genetic inheritance, including how young brains develop. Their development begins since in womb, and certainly from the earliest days of infancy (Lindon, 2010). This first stage of nurture-nature is crucial part in their next stage in the future to fulfil their childhood as their golden period. Thus, as children, they should have their rights to gain better education, and achieve the goal of education as

mentioned in child's rights Article 29; education must develop every child's personality, talents and abilities to the full.

One problem that still faced in Indonesia is the education system that needs to be fixed step by step is about the uneven number of teachers in several areas. Educator as a main provider of education in remote area is crucial for student's welfare. Teachers are the single most influential and powerful force for equity, access and quality in education (Bokova n.d). In the Indonesian Constitution No. 14, article 1 mentioned, teachers are professional educators, their primary task of educating are; teaching, guiding, directing, training, assessing, and evaluating students on early childhood education, formal education, elementary education, and secondary education (Kemdikbud, 2010). On the other hand, people with higher degrees who are willing to be a teacher in remote area are not many. There are variety of reasons for refusal, one of the reasons is teachers are unwilling to live with the 'hassle' for workplace affairs (Ponda, 2011). Without any technology and far from civilization, it is hard for them who are used to be in touch with technology to be able to survive in a long period.

Teacher role is very important in education to transferring knowledge to learners; they are also providing education of character and role model for the students. Pamela May points out that 'the practitioner must take on with confidence and enthusiasm if young children's rights are to be safeguard' (May, 2007). Many theorists are optimistic of well-being teacher as an educator. Nevertheless, Baswedan (2012) considers, there are three main problems for education in Indonesia, those are; teachers' welfare, teachers' quality, and uneven teachers' distribution (Iim, 2012). One question that needs to be asked, however, how big is teacher's problem in this country?

The findings have been more interesting. Firstly, teachers' welfare is still under the wage; honorary or part time teachers' salary is only one seventh of the minimum wage, they only receive Rp. 200-300 thousands ( $\pm$  £12 - £17) net per month (Iqbal, 2013). These wages are not proportional with their workload; teachers hold important role for children development and children knowledge ability. Surprisingly, the condition of teachers being paid less than other professions is also happening in other developed countries such as USA, UK, and Australia (Lam, 2012). Teaching is perceived as a highly demanding career that comes with heavy workload, heavy emotional demand but has low social status and pays low salary (Lam, 2012;

Richardson and Watt, 2006). From reviewing the literature, it seems a common problem in every country, the difference between one country to another is affected by socio-cultural and economic conditions.

Secondly, referring to the National Education System Policy No. 20 year 2003, qualified teacher is a professional teacher including profession, professionalism, and professionalisation (Dedy, 2011). However, many analysts argue that 54% Indonesian teachers do not have enough qualifications for teaching (Berkibar, 2013). In absolute terms, numbers of teachers are adequate, but the qualities are generally still low. Subsequently, many of them also do not teach according to their disciplines. For instance, a law degree teaching for kindergarten, they do not have enough concepts for early childhood education, and it will not be effective for the learning outcome. The last point of the problems is about teacher distribution, which is uneven. Gultom argues, that the ratio of the number of teachers versus the number of learners is around 1:18, and it is an ideal comparison (Akuntono, 2011). But the fact is the World Bank data in 2007 shows 66% of schools in remote areas have teacher shortages (Jalal and Hendarman, 2007). It means that the lack of teachers in various regions is triggered by poor systems in the distribution of teachers.

According to the Minister of National of the Republic of Indonesia Act No. 16 Year 2007, about academic qualification standards and competencies teachers, as for all kinds of competencies that should be possessed by teachers include: (1) pedagogical, (2) personal, (3) professional, and (4) social acquired through professional education. The fourth competency is integrated in teacher performance (Khoirunnisa, 2013). This view is supported by Tickle (2000b), who describes teachers are also expected to model citizenship and personal ethics because educators are supposed to maintain social norms and lead the behavioral socialization of the young. Since 2004, Indonesian government had established the policy for teacher to be a creative teacher while teaching children. The curriculum itself had changed many times to make benefit for the children and the teacher.

Since the well being of children have a long journey and long process to enhance their wealth, thus the early childhood education in Indonesia indeed needed solutions to overcome these problematic. Government hold a very crucial role to fix up the education system. In consequence, there should be collaboration between the control holder and the society to

supervise the situation within the educational process. This is one way to avoid fraudulence in the distribution of funds budget, also to create an education environment quality. It also related with the education equity in all over the region. The policy which has been made should include all the education aspects such as curriculum that can be able to apply in other region. According to PGRI chairman Sulistyono, the mind-frame with which the curriculum was created was “difficult to comprehend (Pandaya, 2014). Therefore, an applicable curriculum is essential and should be fit for everyone in every region.

Cooperation with companies may also reduce the education complexity in remote areas. This support along with the program to develop early childhood education may deliver high quality teachers or tutors to remote areas. These actions could be activities such as teachers teaching children, and teachers teaching tutors (training of trainers). One thing for sure is, the tutors should be local tutors. This is to maintain the quality of education which has been transferred. An example of this program is Medco foundation which has been pioneering a programme entitled School Improvement Programme (SIP) (Karsiwan, 2012).

## **Conclusion**

The history of children and childhood from time to time has had major impact for children’s rights and policy for children in the world. Even the history made unbalance development and between one country to other and unbalance comparison for the education system between rich country and developing country, but at least developing country such as Indonesia for about 68 years of its independence showing the increasing the statistic in education system every year. Although the statistic slightly raises step by step, the systems are getting better to bring up the welfare for the citizen.

The amendment to develop children in remote areas in Indonesia still need to be improved. This task also requires all of the society to contribute for the child’s education in remote areas. Moreover, it is already stated in the children rights to nurture and care children as a dependant individual. Children’s rights and needs always become the topic in every country. Notwithstanding the education of children in remote areas should be facilitated. Therefore, the government, society along with other support parties such as companies and NGO should work together to be able to support children to obtain what are their rights. It had been mentioned in

UNCRC article 28 that, every child has the right to education. Thus, the needs to have education, with teachers spread all over the remote areas should be assisted.

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