

**Wardah Hayati**

**EDUCATION AND DROP OUT  
RATES IN INDONESIA**

**IAIN ANTASARI PRESS**

**2014**

# EDUCATION AND DROP OUT RATES IN INDONESIA

Penulis

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Cetakan I, Desember 2014

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E-mail: aswaja<sup>pressindo</sup>@gmail.com

15,5 x 23 cm; viii + 62 halaman

ISBN: 978-602-0828-06-0

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## DECLARATION

I certify that this work does not incorporate, without acknowledgement, any material previously submitted for a degree or diploma in any university; and that to the best of my knowledge and belief it does not contain any material previously published or written by another person except where due reference is made in the text.

Student's signature

**Wardah Hayati**

09 November 2007

I believe that this thesis is properly presented, conforms to the specification for thesis presentation in the university, and is prima facie worthy of examination.

Supervisor's signature

**Dr. Yvonne Corcoran-Nantes**

09 November 2007



## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Many people have helped to bring this thesis to completion. I owe a lasting debt of gratitude to Dr. Yvonne Corcoran-Nantes, my supervisor and lecturer for all her assistance during my study in the Women's Studies Department. Many thanks for her enthusiastic encouragement, guidance and generosity since the beginning of my study.

I am also indebted to all my lecturers in this department: Assoc. Prof. Barbara Baird, Dr. Heather Brook, and Deidre Michell. Insightful feminist ideas have been introduced during their lectures and tutorials.

A deep expression of gratitude also goes to Laura Deane, who helped me not only in editing this thesis, but also in all her weekly language and study skills support throughout my Masters program. Thank you also to Barbara Triffett of the Women's Studies Department, and to Elaine Kane and colleagues in the International Students' Services Unit. I am also grateful to Ausaid for giving me a scholarship to study at Flinders University.

Last but not least, my never ending gratitude goes to my family: my beloved parents, my husband, and my three lovely children: M. Rizka Wardhana, Dhiya I. Setiawan and Dinda Sausan Lestari. I thank each of them for their unconditional love and ongoing support. Many thanks also to my postgraduate colleagues for all their support, help and care during our study.





# CHAPTER I

## GENDER AND EDUCATION IN INDONESIA

### **Education and Gender Inequality**

Education is not only central to improve the quality of life for men and women, old or young, but is also a fundamental human right. Further, education is the primary vehicle for women not only to build basic skills, but also to enable them to play a role in bringing about equitable social and economic development. Around the world, government agencies and local non government organizations continue to concentrate their efforts on increasing the enrolment of girls in school. In Indonesia, every citizen is legally guaranteed their fundamental right to education. The Indonesian government is also fully aware that education is a way to progress and has therefore identified education as one of the most important platforms in its national development process. Indonesia has participated in many international forums which promote education such as the United Nations, Education for all (EFA) conference in 1990 and the establishment of Millennium Development Goals (2000). In 1994 Indonesia legislated to make nine years of basic education compulsory. This consists of six years of elementary (*Sekolah Dasar/SD or Madrasah Ibtidaiyah /MI*) and three years of junior secondary school (*Sekolah Menengah Pertama/SMP or Madrasah Tsanawiyah/MTs*). Currently, the Asian Development Bank (ADB) records that Indonesia with 93 percent of Net Enrolment Rates (2006, p. 8) to be on track in achieving universal primary education enrolment rates. However, enrolment rates are not accurate

indicators of school retention (Subrahmanian 2005, p. 400). High dropout rates, particularly among girls, remain a major issue. With low educational achievements, young women face barriers in entering the labour market and experience limited economic opportunities later in life. Further, girls with limited or no formal education will be excluded from the employment market as they have few marketable skills. The most widely possible available work for girls who have only finished elementary or lower secondary school is domestic work. Entering this sector puts a stop to girls' opportunity to gain further education. This condition will shape the quality and development of human resources in the future.

The National Human Development Report on Indonesia notes that despite the great majority of children being enrolled, only about half finish the compulsory nine years of education (BPS, BAPPENAS, UNDP 2004, p. 35). The Asian Development Bank (ADB) confirms this (2006, p. 20). Further, although the report does not quantify drop out rates, it states that girls' drop-out rates are higher (ADB 2006 p. 21). Data from the Ministry of Education shows that in both primary and junior secondary school, for every 10 children who drop out, six are girls and four are boys. At senior secondary school, the gender gap widens slightly: three boys drop out for every seven girls (in UNICEF 2007, p. 1). In Indonesia, the Gender Statistics in Education 2000-2004 shows that around 1.8 million children of primary school age (7-12) years, and 4.8 million children aged 13 to 15 years are not in school. Furthermore, there is a disparity in mean years of schooling: girls have 6.5 years, while boys average 7.6 years (Ministry for Women's Empowerment 2007, p. 1).

Clearly, there is significant gender inequality in access to education. Accordingly, it is important to examine the factors influencing drop out rates. However, since Indonesia is a very large country, consisting of almost 13 000 islands and 33 provinces with a huge disparity among these, it is necessary to limit the area of research. In Indonesia, substantial educational disparities exist between urban and rural areas, as well as between boys and girls. Data from The Ministry for Women's Empower-

ment (2007, p. 6), on educational status of people above 10 years by sex and region, shows that the percentage of girls attending school is lower than boys both in urban and rural areas. In urban areas 20.16 percent of girls are attending schools (*SD, SMP, SMU*) compared to 21.86 of boys, and in rural areas 17.00 percent compared to 18.77 of boys. Moreover, the percentage of the population who enter junior and senior high school and higher education in rural areas is only 7.97 percent for girls and 9.51 percent for boys compared to 13.70 percent for girls and 14.63 percent for boys in urban areas (Ministry for Women's Empowerment 2007, p. 6). Education figures for rural areas in Indonesia clearly demonstrate a wider inequality. It is important therefore to examine the factors, including cultural and socio-economic, that contributes to this inequality.

Without neglecting the importance of reports of the unequal distribution of girls' and boys' participation in schools, Rothchild (2006) argues that a critical analysis to examine how gender as a process is constructed and maintained both in homes and schools is required (p. 2). Furthermore, she claims this form of analysis gives a better understanding of obstacles and opportunities for girls and boys in schools. The existing research tends to focus on enrolment rates rather than dropout rates, and research that does interrogate the issue of gender bias in schools is limited to socio-economic analysis, cultural analysis, or examines gender bias within the school setting. This thesis examines the intersections between these to demonstrate how a patriarchal cultural framework structures gender and socio-economic inequality and how this is reproduced in the curriculum and in teaching practice.

In Indonesia, especially in rural areas, education is gendered. Gender differentiation cannot be divorced from socio-economic and cultural practices regarding girls' expected role in the family, gender stereotypes in society, educational expectations, and girls' experiences in school. This is in line with Betsy Lucal's statement that 'gender is pervasive' and nobody can resist it (Lucal 1999, p. 791). Although the establishment of the Compulsory Education Law in Indonesia in 1994 laid the legal foundation for gender equality in schooling, household economic considerations

culturally-related expectations regarding male and female roles at home and in society, and the quality of local schools all influence the continuity of girls' access in schooling. Gender bias occurs in rural girls' life-settings whether in the family, society or in schools. These contribute to their withdrawal from education. Using a feminist analysis provides another dimension to the question of whether gender equality provides another dimension to the question of whether gender equality in education is being met.

## **Research Methodology**

The study uses a qualitative methodology in order to analyse demographic, socio-cultural and economic data. It also surveys previous research in the field of education and gender in rural Indonesia. However, this study will not investigate all issues associated with gender inequality. It will focus only on gender inequality in girls' education, in terms of formal basic schooling in rural areas and therefore does not reflect the conditions across the country. According to Glesne (2006, p. 4), qualitative methods provide research advantages because they allow for a deep understanding of the issue, and researchers can locate variables in relation to social phenomenon. Moreover, Unterhalter, Challender and Rajagopalan (2005, p. 60) state that qualitative work can deepen knowledge about the nature of gender inequalities and these are enacted and reproduced.

## **Research Outline**

This project is divided into five chapters. Here, I have provided an overview of the context for this research. Chapter Two investigates the current literature regarding the importance of education for girls, issues of gender equality in education, and factors contributing to girls' dropout rates. Chapter Three examines the education system in Indonesia, to assess the status of women's education, especially in relation to the government's role in shaping gender ideology in schools. Chapter Four discusses those factors contributing to girls' dropout rates. There

are three main settings that reproduce gender bias: socio-economic structures, the cultural framework and school environment. The final chapter summarizes the key points of the study and makes recommendations to the Indonesian government for addressing the issues.



## CHAPTER II

# EDUCATION AND GENDER EQUALITY

The objective of this chapter is to review the literature examining the importance of education, gender equality in education, and some contributing factors to girls dropping out of school. The main argument proposed in this chapter is that education is an important way for women to be empowered; however, it is only through equal education opportunities that this can be achieved. In Indonesia, enrolment rates are high, but the dropout rate for girls is much higher than boys. In elementary and junior secondary schools, for every four boys who drop out, there are six girls. The numbers are higher in senior secondary where for every three boys, seven girls drop out. A review of the literature demonstrates the disadvantages of girls dropping out from school, both at an individual and state level.

As stated in Article 26 the Universal Declaration of Human Rights 1948, education is a fundamental human right shared by everybody (UNESCO 2000b, p. 16). Furthermore, UNESCO regards that other rights such as economic, civil, political, social and cultural rights are only able to be put into effect through education. The Department of International Development (DFID) positions education as 'the heart of development' because it is through education that people are able to improve their quality of life (DFID 2001, p. 10). In addition, Schultz regards investing in education as one of the basic strategies by which a nation and its citizens can progress and develop (in Subrahmanian 2002, p. 1). However, not all citizens enjoy equal access to education, es-

pecially girls, even though almost 215 years ago pioneer feminist, Mary Wollstonecraft (1759-1797) advocated women's intellectual equality through equal education (Janes 1997, p. 293).

The prominent role of education not only applies to men but to women as well. Education for women, who are considered 'mothers of the nation', is reflected in the Indonesian proverb 'to teach the women means to teach the whole nation'. Education is the primary vehicle for women not only to build basic capabilities, but also to play a meaningful role in bringing about equitable social and economic development for themselves and for the next generation. This is due to the role women have in culture. As Sen (1999, p. 189) states, women are not merely the passive recipients of development but are 'active agents of change and the dynamic promoters of social transformations'.

## **The Role of Education for Women**

The foremost function of education for women is to empower them. Kabeer 2001 (in Malhotra 2003, p. 3) defines empowerment as 'the expansion in people's ability to make strategic life choices in a context where this ability was previously denied to them'. So, the heart of empowerment is the 'ability of a woman to control her own destiny' (Malhotra, Schuler & Boendar 2002 in UN Millennium Project 2005 a, p. 3). Central to the ability to build empowerment are equal capabilities, equal access, and agency, and education has a role in building capabilities (UN Millennium Project, 2005a, p. 33). The improvement of women's own well being, and that of their families can be achieved more effectively by educating women. Educated women have knowledge and skills to obtain the most benefit from services and opportunities available, and can seek alternative opportunities (UN Millennium Project 2005a, p. 37). This is because education has certain effects at the level of individual cognition and behavior. It improves access to knowledge, information, and new ideas as well as the ability to use these effectively (Kabeer 2003, p. 175).

The benefits of access to education can be manifested in women's lives in a variety of ways; for example, increased bar-



gaining power in the household, increased decision-making power, autonomy, control over their fertility, and participation in public life. The benefits of education increases women's ability to cope with issues such as domestic violence. For example Sen's research (1999) in India indicates that women with at least some schooling are more likely to resist violence and to leave an abusive relationship than women without formal education (in Malhotra, Grown & Pande 2003, p. 11). However, they argue this research is flawed as the respondents were women who had reported violence and much domestic violence goes unreported. Clearly, a more careful analysis is needed as educated women worldwide still suffer violence. Furthermore, education enhances women's wellbeing and gives them greater choices in household decisions. Rima Salah from her study of Palestinian women also identifies that educated women were valued and given a voice in decision making at home and in the community (UNICEF 2005, p. 69). Clearly, access to education contributes to women's empowerment and increases women's life choices.

In terms of the labor market benefit to educated women, figures from Africa, Latin America, and Asia show that the probability of women engaging in formal paid employment increased according to their levels of education (Cameron, Dowling & Worswick in Gupta and Malhotra 2006, p. 4). The education of girls may lead them to earn higher wages. A study by Psacharopoulos and Patrinos (2002, pp.1-36) shows that giving girls one year of education beyond the average can increase wages by 20 per cent. Further, the gains that women can achieve from formal labor participation as a result of their higher levels of education will be higher than men's (Birsall and Fox 1985 in Gupta & Malhotra 2006, p. 4). In addition, girls' education can also benefit the nation as a whole. A study of 100 countries by the World Bank shows that annual per-capita income grows by 0.3 percentage points if there is an increase of 1 percent in the numbers of women with a secondary education (Dollar and Gatti in Herz & Sperling 2004, p. 3).

Education increases the possibility of women to look after their own and family well being. Bhatia and Cleland's study in-

dicates the effect of education on women's own health and outcomes for risks of diseases (Malhotra, Grown, & Pande 2003, p. 8). Moreover, according to Sen (1999, p. 199) educated women tend to 'have greater freedom to exercise their agency in the family decision making including the case of fertility and child birth'. Kabeer (2003, p. 176) observed this in Nigeria, where both less-educated and educated women were likely to have their children immunized but educated women were more likely than uneducated women to know about family planning. However, only secondary mothers with a secondary school education showed a deep understanding about disease and prevention. Education can also reduce women's vulnerability to HIV/AIDS. Herz and Sperling in their paper (2004, p. 35) reported that educated girls have a better understanding of risky behavior, refuse the 'myths' regarding sex, and have strategies to refuse sex in difficult situations.

Education not only benefits women who receive it but also benefits the next generation. Schultz found that infant mortality could be cut by five to ten percent for every additional year of a mother's schooling (in Gupta & Malhotra 2006, p. 4). There is also significant evidence that increased education and literacy rates for women can reduce the mortality rates of children. Murthi, Guio and Dreze's statistical analysis indicates that in quantitative terms the effect of female literacy on mortality rates is significantly more powerful than other variables such as availability of medical facilities (Sen 1999, p. 197). Educated women are more likely to delay marriage and childbirth. They are more knowledgeable about nutritional requirements for children so that they tend to have fewer children and their children tend to be healthier, and have higher survival rates (UNICEF 2006, p. 71).

Maternal education is one of the key factors in determining children's educational attainment. A mother's level of education will increase her daughters' access to education. This positive relationship between mothers and daughters is stronger than between mothers and sons. Moreover, this is more significant than the effects of a father's education on daughters (Birdsall,

Levina & Ibrahim 2005, p. 4). A UNICEF survey (2006, p. 27) shows that children whose mothers attended primary school are twice as likely to have a longer period of study than children whose mother never attended primary school. In addition, these children are less likely to repeat a grade. There is an important relationship between a mother's education and her children. First, educated mothers are more likely to be employed, have their own earning capacity and a bargaining position within the family that allows them to influence decisions about sending their children to school. Second, educated mothers may give more assistance to children by encouraging and assisting them with homework and preparation for examinations. Third, educated mothers act as role models for their children (UN Millennium Project 2005a, p. 62). So ensuring that girls have access to education will be a channel to promote educational progress from one generation to the next.

However, the benefits of education are influenced by the economic, political, and social context (UN Millennium Project 2005b, p. 30). The majority of studies that Malhotra, Grown, and Pande, (2003) reviewed show a positive relationship between education and labour participation for women. This is influenced by a number of factors including the level and type of education women received; occupational status and participation in the formal and informal economic sector; and the marital status of women. Schooling does not result in long-term benefits until a minimum threshold is attained, particularly for women (UN Millennium Project 2005b, p. 161). Malhotra, Grown, and Pande (2003, p. 27) conclude that in less patriarchal or relatively egalitarian societies education has a more significant impact on women's status. Higher levels of education are required to improve conditions for women in less egalitarian societies. Furthermore, research conducted by an International Center for Research on Women (ICRW) reveals that while basic education alone is not adequate to empower women, secondary or higher levels of education do contribute to women's empowerment (Gupta & Malhotra 2006, p. 6). Heward argues that education can provide women with five kinds of autonomy: 'knowledge of the outside

world, decision-making in the family, mobility emotional autonomy away from kin towards the nuclear family, and self-reliance socially and economically (Heward 1999, p. 6). However, these forms of autonomy are not able to be achieved in a highly patriarchal setting if women only attain primary levels of schooling. At the very least, they need secondary and/or higher education (Heward 1999, p. 6). Heward also articulates the relationship between the schooling a woman has and family size. Findings have shown that a change in desired family size requires attendance at junior middle or secondary school (1999, p. 6). These examples show the necessity for women to continue in education after primary school. If primary schooling itself can not provide full benefits to women, girls who drop out before completing primary schools then will only get the minimum benefit of their education.

## **Gender Equality in Education**

Education is important for individuals, society and the nation, so increasing women's access to education is a commitment to be achieved. This has been stated in the United Nation Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989); the World Conference of Education for All (1990); the Beijing Declaration (1995); Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), and the World Education Forum in Dakar (2000). Goal 5 of Education for All (EFA) relates to gender and education and signals a commitment to:

Eliminating gender disparities in primary and secondary education by 2005 and achieving gender equality in education by 2015 with a focus of ensuring girls' full equal access to and achievement in basic education of good quality' (UNESCO 2007, p. 3)

This goal indicates that there are two aims to be achieved in education: gender parity and gender equality. This is in line with Subrahmanian's explanation (2005, p. 395) that these are two dimensions in both the EFA and Millennium Development Goals. Gender parity refers to ensuring that the same number of boys and girls enter education (Aikman & Unterhalter 2005, p. 3). Gender parity is static and simply reflects 'formal' equality and

just one step towards the rights 'to' education. It is measured in terms of access, survival, attendance, retention and in some circumstances, transition between levels of education (Subrahmanian 2005, p. 397). Gender parity can not instill the other two dimensions of rights in education, as indicated by Wilson: 'rights within and rights through education (in Subrahmanian 2005, p. 400).

Gender equality refers to the 'concept of equal rights and entitlement' (Leach 2003, p. 21) which implies a fuller meaning of equality. It focuses both on the equality of opportunities and equality of treatment, which in turn leads to equality of outcomes (Subrahmanian 2005, p. 403). Gender equality in education includes whether girls and boys who have the same opportunities in education are equally treated within the educational process, and whether education opens the same opportunities for boys and girls after their schooling. Therefore, it covers the three rights approach in education: equal access to education, equality within education and equality through education (UNESCO 2003a, p.115-153). UNESCO clearly defines that:

Full gender equality in education would imply that girls and boys are offered the same chances to go to school and that they enjoy teaching methods and curricula free of stereotypes and academic orientation counseling unaffected by gender bias and it implies equality of outcomes in terms of length of schooling, learning achievement and academic qualifications and more broadly, equal job opportunities and earning for similar qualifications and experience (UNESCO 2003a, p. 116)

The objectives of gender equality are difficult to achieve in most societies, especially in terms of outcomes. Many inequalities between men and women exist, whether in terms of job opportunities, inequality in incomes, inequality in political representation and other areas including within the education system. Boys and girls who complete education at the same school will not automatically be offered the same opportunities, especially if the education system reproduces the gender bias which exist in the society. Wider social change is necessary in order to achieve gender inequality in education (Mary Wollstonecraft in

Pateman 2002, p. 15; Subrahmanian 2005, p. 405-406; UNESCO 2003a, p. 116).

In developing countries even achieving gender parity is still problematic. Despite the rising rates in the enrolment of girls in developing countries, which has increased to 88 per cent (United Nations 2007, p. 6), girls' retention rates and outcomes in education still pose a challenge (Moletsane 2005, p. 62). The completion of schooling is an important issue because many children drop out before finishing the fifth grade. Low retention rates do not concentrate only in certain regions but also in certain parts of the population. In Western and Central Africa, less than half of the children living in poverty are able to complete even the first grade (Birdsall, Levina & Ibrahim 2005, p. 338). Seventy percent of rural children attend school compared to 82 percent of urban children (United Nation 2006, p. 7). Furthermore, girls are more vulnerable to dropping out in a larger numbers than boys (Leach 2003, p. 6; Moletsane 2005, p. 66). For instance in Africa, only 51 percent of children who complete primary education and of this only 46 percent of girls do (Birdsall, Levina, & Ibrahim 2005, p. 338). Research conducted by Rugh (2000, p. 5) shows that almost one quarter of the world population aged between 6 to 11 are not at school with girls comprising around 60 percent of all out-of-school children in the age group. It is predicted that the total number of girls not attending school will double by the year 2015 compared with 1990 rates. If this is the case, the Millennium Development Goals set in 2000 which aim to eliminate gender disparities in primary and secondary education by 2005 at all levels by 2015 will be difficult to achieve.

### **Contributing Factors to Girls Dropout Rates**

In Subrahmanian's view (2002, p. iv) decisions in household spending are gendered because they are shaped by existing social and cultural norms. This is in line with Maggie Humm who defines how gender has 'culturally shaped' the attributes of males and females (in Sunderland 1998, p. 49). Gender prescribes socially determined roles, responsibilities, expectations and activi-

ties. Different societies have different views on what is considered appropriate for men and women (Leach 2003, p. 16). Gender bias, according to Davis is 'the inequitable treatment of males and females' (in Hulley 2001, p. 3). There are different sets of perceptions about the value of educating each gender, about suitable role, the accessibility of jobs, and other factors which discriminate against women in their efforts to access education (Leach 2003, p. 6). The Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA 2003, p. 3) claims that gender discrimination is still a dominant factor which prevents girls from enjoying the same rights in education as boys.

Deep rooted cultural perspectives can be a source of gender bias with respect to girls' education. In West Bengal, for instance, there is a traditional perception that men are superior to women, so it is less valuable for girls to have education (Bagchi in Nussbaum 2003, p. 344). Narayan and Petesch (2000, p. 209-210), in *Voices of the Poor*, also reveal that educating daughters is seen as a waste of family resources because husbands will provide for them. In other words, educating girls will only benefit the 'receiving' families. However, this depends on context: in urban areas, an educated woman is more desirable as a marriage partner, but in rural areas where economic resources are limited and the stigma of 'being an old maid' is widespread, parents tend to prioritize boys. Early marriage is also a common practice which can put a stop to the educational progress of girls (Abraham et al. in Subrahmanian 2002, p. 16). In Nepal for example, almost 40 percent of girls are married when they are 15, thus being educated is seen as less important than having a husband (Oxfam GB 2006b, p. 7). UNICEF figures show that globally 36 percent of women aged 20-24 were married before they were 18. In most cases, early marriage is rationalized as reducing a family's economic burden (2006, p. 4)

Distance from schools can also negatively impact on girls' education, especially in areas where girls' mobility is restricted (Subrahmanian 2002, p. 16). The issue of bodily integrity and sexual harassment, known by the innocuous term 'Eve teasing' are commonly experienced by girls who study far from home.

Girls who live in more remote areas are more vulnerable to potential risks. This has caused parents in Nepal, India and other countries to send their daughters to the nearest schools, even though they may be of poor quality. If there is no nearby school, they withdraw their daughters from education (Oxfam GB 2006b, p. 7). A study in Laos also confirms this. When the safety and security of girls were not ensured, parents took them out of schools (UNESCO 2003b, p. 33).

Wisconsin's study shows that the socio-economic status of parents affects the educational attainment of children (in Hallinan 1988, p. 253). The effect is especially revealed in gendered decision making in families coping with household poverty. Parents are more likely to prioritize the education of boys if they must choose between daughters or sons. Further, for poor families in which children's labour is part of family economic survival and productivity, education has never been 'free' (Booth et al. in Subrahmanian 2002, p. 28). Girls are more affected by the lack of family resources. For example, in India, although boys are more likely to be involved in paid labor, girls are increasingly being employed because they can be paid less than boys. Furthermore, according to Guttman (2001, p. 13), many girls work as domestic workers and few have opportunity to attend school.

The opportunity costs of girls' schooling are significant for poor households (Oxaal 1997, p. 1). Studies reveal that on average girls are in charge of several household chores such as cooking, cleaning and as caregivers for younger siblings. On the contrary, boys are almost never expected to handle household work. Girls who withdrew from schooling in Ethiopia and Guinea stated the obligation to help the family at home as their reason for dropping out (UNESCO 2003a, p. 122). For girls who continue to study while performing domestic duties and sometimes also paid work, these multi-demands on their time can lead to limited leisure time for studying so that their academic performance is likely to be poorer than their male counterparts. So, even though they are formally enrolled in school they tend to have higher repetition rates, which in the end, leads to drop out rates (Oxfam GB 2006b, p. 5).



Even if girls are able to enroll in and attend school, it is very difficult to retain them. According to CIDA (2003, p. 3) low retention rates for girls in school are due to the low quality of education they receive, and because the education system does not fulfill their gender needs. Moreover, gender inequality which exists in the society continues to be exposed and reinforced in educational settings (Moletsane 2005, p. 62; Smith 2000, p. 1149). Low gender awareness among teachers (Sadker & Sadker in Rothchild 2006, p. 16) can be the source of gender bias in the classrooms. Children's perceptions of gender are affected not only by overt forms of gender bias but also by the 'hidden curriculum'. Being told that they can or can not do something because of their gender is a form of overt gender bias while the 'hidden curriculum' consists of subtle lessons that they encounter in their everyday lives, for example through a teacher's behavior, feedback, or class activities (Frawley 2005, p 221). Teachers in Africa, for example treat male and female students differently (Kabeer 2003, p. 179). They give more encouragement and classroom time to boys who are usually more demanding.

The combination of gender bias in teaching with a gender biased curriculum will reproduce gender inequality (Rothchild 2006, p. 17). Teaching materials, especially textbooks, can imply gender bias (Sunderland 1994, p. 55; Sadker & Sadker 1994, p.17; Measor and Sikes 1992, p. 56). According to Kabeer (2003, p. 179) gender stereotypes in textbooks usually reinforce traditional gender roles: girls are passive, modest, and shy, while boys are assertive, brave and ambitious. When girls confront this daily, they internalize and absorb the stereotypical roles and expectation the culture produces. Differences in treatment contribute to a girl's lower self esteem, lower self confidence, and reduced risk taking, thus generating a 'culture of low self esteem and low aspiration' (Kabeer 2003, p. 180). Sander claims this condition limits girls' ambition and achievement (in Benjamin & Irwin-De Vitis 1998, p. 68; Frawley 2005, p. 221). The Lao data (UNESCO 2003b, p. 34) shows that poor performance creates discouragement, loss of self esteem and lowered confidence which are all

responsible for girls gradually withdrawing from school and eventually not coming at all.

It is clear that the importance of equality education consists of both parity and quality is a prerequisite to empower women and girls. Furthermore, concentrating on the numbers of girls' enrolled may not give a comprehensive picture of girls' education since these merely reflect a government commitment to ensuring girls have the right to access to education. A deeper understanding of girls education must take girls' drop out rates into account, as this problematizes the question of equal rights within education. Gender relations produced by the dominant cultural frameworks are reproduced in schools. Therefore, education is a site in which gender codes must be made visible in order to explain the inequalities that are normalized through a patriarchal cultural context.

## CHAPTER III

### CONSTRUCTIONS OF WOMEN: THE INDONESIAN CULTURAL CONTEXT

The importance of education particularly for women requires an examination of the education system in Indonesia, including the basis of the education system, its structure, its implementation of basic formal education, and a consideration of gender and equality. In Indonesia, the state has a prominent role in shaping education especially through its ideology, and this constructs existing conditions for women. A discussion of how gender ideology shapes opportunities for girls to access education demonstrates that women's status is culturally constructed.

#### **The Educational System in Indonesia**

The national education system is based on the country's 1945 Constitution and the state ideology known as *Pancasila*. The State guarantees citizens' rights to education in Article 31, section 1, which states that 'each and every citizen shall have the fundamental right to education'. In Indonesia (Department of Education and Culture of the Republic of Indonesia 2003, p. 17), education is categorized in three ways: formal, non-formal and informal. Formal education refers to education which is given in school and structured from primary, secondary, tertiary level, college or university. Non-formal education is conducted outside of the formal system and might consist of several levels, for example courses, or skill training. Education that occurs within the family and community is called informal education. In 1984, to promote the importance of basic schooling for children, six

years of compulsory education were introduced. Then in 1994, basic compulsory education in Indonesia was extended to nine years, higher than the international target for universal primary education. Basic education consists of six years in elementary school and three years in junior secondary. The nine years compulsory education is part of government efforts to build the nation by providing at least basic knowledge and skills. This basic competence should enable graduates to either continue schooling or start earning a living in society (UNESCO 2005, p. 11). The program to provide nine years of basic education in Indonesia is conducted through the formal and non-formal systems. Basic education consists of six years of elementary school (*Sekolah Dasar/SD* or *Madrasah/MI* or other school at the same level) and three years of junior secondary school (*Sekolah Menengah Pertama/SMP* or *Madrasah Tsanawiyah/MTs* or other school at the same level). While *SD* and *SMP* are under the supervision of the Ministry of National Education, the Islamic schools, *Madrasah Ibtidaiyah* and *Madrasah Tsanawiyah*, are administered by the Ministry of Religious Affairs. Non-formal education consists of Package A and Package B. Package A is similar to primary education and Package B is similar to junior secondary school. The non-formal system, administered by the Directorate of Community Education (*Direktorat Pendidikan Masyarakat/DIKMAS*), is intended for school age children who cannot go to formal schooling as well as adults who did not to school.

Feminist educators argue that compulsory education will increase children's enrolment, especially for girls (Pennells 1998, p. 10; Nussbaum 2003, p. 343-344). Furthermore, the implementation of compulsory education is a sign that national governments have a commitment to advance education in their state (UN Millennium Project 2005b, p. 6). However, in Indonesia, even though basic education is compulsory for children aged seven to fifteen, this is not strictly enforced. There are no sanctions for parents who do not ensure their children attend school (The World Bank 2007, p. 22). Moreover, the government of Indonesia has not been able to fulfill the requirement of the 1945 Constitution to allocate at least 20 percent of national and regional

budgets to education (The World Bank 2007, p. 18). Until 2006, the government has only been able to allocate 9.1 percent of its budget to education (The *Jakarta Post*, 22 August 2006). Budget constraints affect the implementation of the policy of education for all.

The National Education System Law No. 20 (p. 20) proclaims that 'government and local government guarantee the implementation of compulsory education at least for basic education free of cost' (Department of Education and Culture of the Republic of Indonesia 2003). Theoretically, education up to junior high school is free. Moreover, compulsory education is only applicable if it is free of charge as education becomes the state's responsibility (Permanasari in *Kompas*, 2005). In many countries where compulsory education has been implemented, barriers which inhibit children accessing education have been abolished, including fees. However, in Indonesia, basic compulsory education is not free. Ample evidence suggests that parents have to make various contributions to schools for example school administration fees, books, clothing, or materials (Human Rights Watch 2005, p. 43-45). This obviously has impeded the achievement of universal basic education. Indeed, the state target to educate 95 percent of the nation's students by 2004 was unable to be achieved due to the economic crisis.

## **Women's Education in Indonesia**

Before considering the smaller institution, that is households and schools, it is important to analyze the education at the macro scale or state level. As Rothchild (2006, p. 5-6) argues that 'all social institutions are gendered whether at micro level or macro level'. The condition of women's and girls' education in Indonesia must be examined. The state is dominant in shaping women's roles and access to education, but this strengthens both state and patriarchal values. This is particularly evident in the Soeharto era. Legally, there is no difference in women's rights to education in Indonesia. Within Islam, the dominant religion in the country, there is no inequality in education either, as its believ-

ers are obligated to improve their knowledge. The first word of Islam is '*iqra*' which means read. The prophet Muhammad said 'educate everyone, both *Muslim* and *Muslima* which means both men and women. He also said 'give education to children, even if for your education you have to go to China', because China was considered as the farthest point of the world. The prophet insists on education (Rima Salah in UNICEF 2005, p. 68). However, some interpretations of verses in al-Qur'an state that men are responsible for their wives and children (An-Nisa, 43) and men's position as heads of family and protectors of women. Such interpretations have led to many Muslim men and women considering women as 'naturally' subordinate to men.

Additionally, culture also has a prominent role in shaping people perceptions, opinions, and attitudes. To highlight Javanese culture as representative of Indonesian culture is not to suggest Indonesia is not culturally diverse, as it consists of Banjarese, Batakese, Ambonese and many other ethnic groups. However, Javanese is the culture of the people who determined the educational system and therefore it had considerable influence on the policy. The Javanese value system is considered dominant in Indonesia (Oey-Gardiner & Sjahrir 1989, p.105). Javanese includes the term *kanca wingking* (backside friend) to refer to a wife. This positions women in the family not in an egalitarian relationship with men, but in the kitchen which is usually located at the back of the house. In Javanese conceptions, according to Sukri and Sofwan (2001, p. 7) the wife's areas are limited to 3 Ms: *Macak* means to be beautiful for the husband; *Manak* means to deliver the next generation; and *Masak* means to cook for the family. Moreover, a well known proverb, '*swarga nunut nraka katut*' asks women to follow their husbands whether to hell or to paradise. These show that women do not have any desires that are not male defined (Sukri & Sofwan 2001, p. 7). Enculturation of Javanese conceptions of women and their roles have been transmitted from generation to generation. Significant changes slowly emerged after Raden Adjeng Kartini (1879-1904), Indonesia's first feminist, called for women's rights to education.

Kartini advocated women's right to access and opportunity in education and the right to work rather than being relegated to bearing and raising children (Utomo & Hatmadji 2004, p. 2). Through her friendship with J. H. Abendanon and his wife Rosa Abendanon, Kartini was encouraged to gain an education. She was the first Indonesian women to attend a Dutch elementary school. Through her letters, she described how social inequality existed in her period and how she regarded education as the most important tool to advance and overcome all types of deprivation, especially for women (Suryochondro 2000, p. 226). Kartini also struggled to open a school for girls in Jepara (Central Java) at beginning of the 1900s (Sukri & Sofwan 2001, p. 10). Her vocation to promote education for girls was taken up by other Indonesian women such as Dewi Sartika who founded schools in Bandung (West Java), Maria Walanda Maramis who opened a school for Indonesian girls in Menado, while in the West Sumatra, Rohana Kudus and El Yunussiyah also promoted girls' educational opportunities (Blackburn 2004, p. 39).

The first National Congress in Yogyakarta in 1928 discussed girls' education. Due to problems of requiring parents to send daughters to coeducational schools, it demanded government provide schools specifically for girls (Congress *Perempoean* in Blackburn 2004, p. 49). Siti Sundari, a prominent speaker at that Congress, disputed the notion that parents can treat children any way they like as they consider children a type of possession. According to Blackburn (2004, p. 50) Siti Sundari regarded women's role as mothers a primary contribution to building the nation, and this is the basis for her argument to educate girls and in increase their autonomy. Nyi Hajar Dewantara, the wife of Ki Hajar Dewantara, was another influential speaker. She regarded that women's nature (*kodrat*) was to bear children and that they should behave in line with this destiny. In fact, in Blackburn's view, this idea is similar to her husband's idea. Ki Hajar Dewantara supported coeducation because he considered that the girls' attendance in school had a civilizing effect on the behavior of boys. But, in order to protect women's *kodrat*, girls' learning had to be differentiated from boys, for example in sport.

Indonesian women were warned not to copy western sports clothing in case they lost their femininity (Blackburn 2004, p. 51).

Ki Hajar Dewantara, the first Minister of Education and an educational advisor for a long period, had a very influential impact on education in Indonesia. However, Blackburn (2004, p. 53) argues that his ideas, in combination with other prominent educationists who had studied in his schools, contributed to and perpetuated gender bias in education. In addition, Blackburn critiques Indonesia's history of colonization as contributing to this gender bias. Tiwon (1996, p. 58) describes how Dutch imperialists encouraged girls in the role of housewife. They established several *vakscholen* (vocational schools) where girls were taught about European wifely skills of child rearing, cooking, nutrition, sewing, knitting and many other skills. Western feminists often criticize the teaching of domestic science to girls. They argue that it will place women in the kitchen thus lead to their subordination to men (Parker 2001, p. 57). Another aspect of the Dutch's 'Ethical Policy' was that they trained a core of native civil servant administrators and lower level professionals in the model of the 'European style nuclear family' (Tiwon 1996, p. 58). In this model, there is a clear segregation of public and private work between husband and wife; the father works in a European-style job, the children study in European-style schools, while the mother stays at home to take care of family (Tiwon 1996, p. 58). Both traditional and colonial culture influenced girls' access to education.

As Nussbaum (2003, p. 340) says, calling for women's education is a 'revolutionary' act, because it allows women to gain other sources of power and opportunity. Hence, people who refuse to extend power and opportunity to women will be opposed to women's education, or at least its extension. Further, she argues that opposition occurs in both extreme forms and subtle forms. In line with Nussbaum's (2003, p. 339) argument, sources of resistance may come from 'entrenched culture and power in a society'. This latter source of resistance applies in Indonesia. During the New Order, gender ideology was legiti-



mated and strictly controlled by the state (Blackburn 2004, p. 9). Moreover, there have been structural impediments to women accessing education as a result of the state's gender ideology.

Efforts to improve education in Indonesia from 1973 to 1978 resulted in the establishment of the largest school construction programs on record, *Sekolah Dasar INPRES* (Duflo 2001, p. 810). A Junior Ministry for the Role of Women was established in 1978 and upgraded to a State Ministry in 1983 (UNESCO 2000a, p. 3). Participation in international forums to promote education for women resulted in the ratification of the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) in 1984. But the Suharto's New Order government institutionalised an ideology which subordinated women. During the New Order era, Indonesian women and society in general were systematically socialised into the belief that women's roles were *ibu* (mothers) and *istri* (wives). This ideology is known as 'state *Ibuism*' and 'housewifization' (Machali 2001, p. 1-2). Suryakusuma (1996, p. 101) defines 'state *Ibuism*,' a term coined by Madelon Djajadiningrat-Nieuwenhuis, as the combination of Dutch petit-bourgeois values and traditional *priyayi* (middle class of Javanese) values which legitimized the domestication of Indonesia women as dependent wives who exist for their husbands, their families and the state'. Maria Mies, who coined the term 'housewifization', defines it as a process by which women are socially defined as housewives, dependent for their sustenance and income on their husbands (in Machali 2001, p. 2). Silvey (2000, p. 147) concludes that state *ibuism* (motherism) was 'part and parcel of the state effort to exercise control over Indonesian society. In short, the idealized gender roles promulgated by the state'. Furthermore, Silvey surveys research conducted by Wolf (1992), Blackwood (1995), Sunindyo (1996), Suryakusuma (1996), and Bremer (1998) who were in agreement that the 'new order state's official vision of womanhood idealizes the roles of wife and mother and expects the exemplary women to make the domestic sphere her primary domain'

The state both authored and authorized this gender ideology through its policy and programs. In 1974, *Dharma Wanita*

(Women's Duty), the association for wives of civil servants was established with its main aims to support husbands in their service to state and nation. This national organization was led by the wife of the President and it was mandatory for every wife of a civil servant to join. *Dharma Wanita* adopted the ideology of 'state *Ibusim*', which defines women as attachments of their husbands and idealised female dependency (Suryakusuma 1996, p. 98). This was clearly defined in its leadership structure, which mirrored the hierarchy husbands' rank in civil office (Sunindyo 1996, p. 124). Further, the New Order government established a program for women called *Pendidikan Kesejahteraan Keluarga* (PKK or Family Welfare Guidance). This program aimed to promote 'community well-being' and the target was mostly women in rural areas (Sunindyo 1996, p. 124). There were five principles enshrined in Panca Dharma Wanita (Five Responsibilities of Women): 'a wife is to support her husband's career and duties, provide offspring, care for and rear the children, be a good housekeeper, and be a guardian of the community' (Wieringa in Sunindyo 1996, p. 124-125). Again, these responsibilities reflect the subordination and dependency of women. The media also plays an important role in reinforcing this gender ideology. Aripurnami (1996, p. 254) analyses the stereotypes of Indonesian women in *sinetrons* (a kind of serial drama) in Indonesia television and reveals that women were portrayed as dependent, irrational, emotional, passive, and obedient. Further, education was a medium to socialize and reinforce the ideology that women's futures were tied to motherhood (Utomo & Hatmadji 2004, p. 9.).

Based on data she gathered from previous research, Blackburn (2004, p. 53) states that during the Soeharto period, curriculum and teaching materials were gender biased. For instance, women and girls were stereotyped as nurturing, engaged in child rearing and positioned in the domestic sphere, while boys were active engaged in public life. Furthermore, just as in colonial times, some secondary schools taught home economics exclusively for girls, while boys took technical or trade subjects. However, this gendering was not challenged. According to

Blackburn (2004, p. 53), there are at least three reasons for the absence of criticism about the gendered content of education during the Soeharto era. First, at that time the main priority was to enhance girls' access to education. Second, the outstanding ability of the New Order regime to suppress critics meant that it was only foreigners who studied gender bias in Indonesia at that moment. These include Martha Logsdon (1985), Lynette Parker (1980), and Jan Branson and Don Miller (1992). Moreover, the gender bias that existed in the education system was subtle because it reflected conservative values which were spread in Indonesian society especially among the middle and upper classes. According to Jan Branson and Don Miller (1992), the sexual division of labour reflected in the textbooks, were actually very different from 'older-style village life' (in Blackburn 2004, p. 54). So, even though the state formally promoted education for women, in subtle ways they still limited women's ability to fully develop by promoting ideology that positioned women as mothers. This highly coded gender bias result in the perception that women should not seek to participate in public life. In the post New Era Order, challenges to the existing stereotypes flourished. When Khofifah Indar Parawansa was elected as the Minister of Women's Affairs, under President Abdurrahman Wahid's government, the Ministry was re-named the State Ministry for Women's Empowerment (Robinson and Bessell 2002, p. 4). After the issue of Presidential Instructions No 9, 2000, to implement gender mainstreaming in the national development program, the Ministry of National Education advocated gender mainstreaming within the ministry and in planning new programs. According to Blackburn (2004, p. 55), since the end of the New Order era, some improvements have already been made in education. Further, she notes that gender stereotypes in school textbooks and the girls' inclination to take a limited range subjects are criticized by the National Human Rights Commission and women's organizations.

Clearly, the state of girls' education is an important national issue. Compared with other developing countries in the region, Indonesia features higher enrolment figures both for boys and

girls. Statistics from Bureau Central Statistics and Socio Economic National 2003 show enrolment rates in primary schools of 93 percent with no significant gender gap. However, of those students who enroll in school only about 50 percent finish nine years of education. About 18 percent drop out before completing primary education, while the rest either do not enter or do not complete junior secondary (Asian Development Bank 2006, p. 21; National Human Development Report 2004, p. 35). According to Bureau Central Statistics 2004, only 32.61 percent of girls complete elementary school and at junior secondary level this decreases further to 16.68 percent (in Ministry for Women's Empowerment 2007, p. 5).

The Asian Development Bank (2006, p. 21) states that the girls' dropout rates are higher than boys'. Data from Ministry of Education (2002) shows that at elementary and junior secondary schools out of every 10 children who drop out six are girls and four are boys. At senior secondary level the gender gap slightly widens: for every three boys who drop out, seven girls drop out (in UNICEF 2007. p. 1). Furthermore, there is a gender disparity in mean years of schooling, at 6.5 years for girls and 7.6 years for boys (Ministry for Women's Empowerment 2007, p. 1-2). Besides this parity, disparity also exists between rural and urban areas. Based on the Socio Economic National Survey (2003) the mean years of schooling for the urban population in 2003 was 8.73 years while for rural areas it was only 5.84 years (Alisjahbana 2005, p. 30). The President of the Republic of Indonesia, Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono, in his speech on 16 August 2007, regarded high school dropout rates as a serious educational problem in Indonesia. He cited data from the Department of National Education (2006) which shows that at elementary level (*SD/MI*), there were 846 600 children dropped out, while 174 400 children dropped out of junior secondary level (*SMP/MTs*). And in the same year, four million graduate students of elementary school were unable to continue to junior high school (National Development Planning Agency 2007, p. 5).

There is significant gender inequality in Indonesia as girls are more likely to drop out than boys and as such spend fewer

years in school than boys. The 6.5 mean years of schooling that girls complete indicates that girls in Indonesia still suffer inequality in education and are far from achieving the compulsory nine years determined by Indonesian government. This inequality derives from a gender bias in society and economic disadvantages perpetuated by the education system. High dropout rates among girls needs to be addressed because such conditions pose challenges to Indonesia's commitment to meet objectives ratified in its MDGs, EFA or CEDAW. Moreover, lack of access to education limits women's opportunities in employment relegating them to unskilled work with low wages. The lower status of women is perpetuated by the education system.



## CHAPTER IV

# GENDER IDEOLOGY AND EDUCATIONAL DISADVANTAGES

### **Socio-cultural Framework and Girls' Dropout Rates**

This chapter examines factors contributing to the high dropout rates among girls in Indonesia. It is important to decode gender bias as this contributes to the withdrawal of girls from education. Three areas of gender relations will be examined: the family, society and the classroom. However, these divisions should not be considered separate, as they intersect. Research suggests discrimination against women in Indonesia is lower than in neighbouring countries such as India and China, and also lower than in other mostly Muslim nations such as Pakistan or Bangladesh. There is no tradition demanding that women take care of elder parents, though in some groups, the responsibility for parental support goes to the younger daughter (Dube 1997 in Frankenberg and Kuhn 2004, p. 12). Nor is there a fixed tradition that after marriage a girl should follow her husband as there is in India.

However, Hsin (2005, p. 4) states that girls especially in rural areas, face a number of socio-cultural challenges that influence their educational levels. According to Ismawati (2005, p. 34), in Javanese culture, and filtering across all culture in Indonesia, there is an assumption that it is unnecessary for women to enter higher education, because they will end up as wives, mothers and housewives. Similar statements are also expressed by Pulungsih (2006, p. 3). Further, the CEDAW Working Group Initiatives (CWGI) 2005 report on the implementation of CEDAW

in Indonesia (p. 40), states that traditional values in Indonesia determine that the main role of women is in the domestic sphere. Suyanto and Karnaji (2004, p. 259) in their study in eight regions in rural East Java note that girls are socialized to be involved in and responsible for domestic work. This can lead to a division of labour where girls perform child care and housework, while boys work on the family farm (Hsin 2005, p. 5). Kevane and Levine (2000, p. 20) also show that rather than attending school, the first daughters often assist their mothers with child care and domestic tasks, despite differences in ethnographic backgrounds. Further, Desai and Jain comment that such tasks place greater demands on girls' time, as rural households commonly lack infrastructure such as access to clean drinking water or electricity (in Hsin 2005, p. 6). Hsin (2005, p. 10) analysed children's time use in Indonesia through time diaries and shows that girls spend more time in household work than boys. On the whole, 89 percent of girls perform domestic chores compared to 54 percent of boys. Girls spend an average of 1.28 hours carrying out domestic tasks while boys spend only 0.68 hours per day performing their work. Girls spend almost double the time in household work that boys do, and fewer boys are required to perform such work.

Another cultural value which disadvantages women is the perception of girls' vulnerability and need to be protected. To some extent, Oey-Gardiner's argument (1991, p. 66) that boys have more freedom to travel to schools at a distance is still applied by parents in rural areas, despite some improvements in transport. Parents are more worried about their daughters' moral integrity and this discourages girls being sent to school (Parker 1997, p. 509). A study by Sinta, a worker from Education Network for Justice (*Jaringan Pendidikan untuk Keadilan*), in Raja Ampat, Papua shows that distance and cost are the main barriers to children's education. If there is no school in their area, children have to travel by boat to another island which has a school. Further, there is no government funded boat to get children to school, and if the tide is high, it is impossible for them to travel (in *Kompas* 25 June 2005). In Tiara Village, Muara Uya South



Kalimantan, primary school is only available until year three. If students want to continue to year four, they have to walk up to 1 to 3 km up and down hill to the nearest school which serves year four up to year six students (*Banjarmasin Post* 03 September 2007). In such circumstances, girls who are regarded as vulnerable are greatly limited in access to education. There are fewer lower secondary schools than primary schools. According to Suryadarma et al. (2006, p. 5), 88 percent of villages in rural areas had a primary school, but only 26 percent and eight percent had junior and senior secondary school respectively. Moreover, senior high schools are usually located at some distance from villages and not every district has a senior secondary school. In Nain Island, North Sulawesi for example, there is no lower or upper secondary school at all. And according to CWGI (2007, p. 3) this has led to high rates of illiteracy and dropout among girls. There are many other areas in Indonesia which are very remote, so it is geographically difficult for people to access education. As a result, it becomes an obstacle for the state to provide education for people (UNESCO 2006, p. 11). In combination with poverty, transport costs can act as significant barriers for children in isolated rural areas to continue their education. This means that if the next level school is available nearby, parents are more likely to send their daughters to school. However, schools in rural and isolated areas tend to be of low quality (Jones & Hagul 2001, p.212). For girls in remote or rural areas, the challenge of location and distance from schools intersect with lack of transport to exclude girls from education. Such factors are in conflict with the cultural injunction to monitor girls in order to ensure their moral and sexual integrity is protected.

Consequently, parents fear rumours about their daughters will arise if they are not under supervision and do not want their daughters to acquire bad reputations as these adversely affect girls' marital prospects. The social requirement in Indonesia, as in many Asian settings, that a husband has at least the same level of education as a prospective wife, means that it takes time to find an appropriate match (Cobe in Malhotra 1997, p. 439). This results in parents arranging marriages for their daughters

(Subrahmanian 2002, p. 16), commonly at a very young age. Even though nationally the median age of first marriage of Indonesian women in 2003 was 19 years (ADB 2006, p. 3), Heratni's research in West Java (2004, p. 4) confirms the occurrence of early marriage. In the areas of her study, parents marry off their daughters at around 13 to 15 years old in order to avoid the stigma of daughters being referred to as 'old maids'. Akhmadi (2005, p. 20) in his study of the Madurese community in Pontianak, observes that the traditional practice of daughters marrying after graduating from primary school is widespread. In West Nusa Tenggara, according to Zaini Arony, Head of Education, Youth and Sport Section in the region, the practice of *merarik* (elopement) is one of the factors that prohibit girl students from completing nine years of compulsory education. In 2002/2003 there were 20 girl students of junior secondary schools in East Lombok and Central Lombok that withdrew from school just one night before examinations due to *merarik* (*Kompas*, 7 February 2005). Suyanto and Karnaji's research in East Java ((2004, p. 259) also confirms the existence of early marriage. Early marriage is common even below the age at which girls are permitted to marry: 12-13 years. Girls of this age have not finished elementary school. Girls in rural Indonesia are more likely to marry early than urban girls, 28 percent to 18 percent respectively in 2002 (ADB 2006, p. 3). Undeniably, economic restrictions lead to cases of early marriage, because many parents in rural areas believe that marrying off their daughters will lighten their economic burden. The responsibility for cost to support the daughter will be transferred to the husband. Early marriage actually functions as a form of survival for rural families living in poverty.

Early marriage therefore negatively impacts on girls' education. According to Singh and Samara (1996, p. 148) the expectation that motherhood will be the focus of their lives exists at the expense of formal education or training for employment. Levine and Ames (2003, p. 5) argue that once girls are removed from school, they rarely go back. Furthermore, CWGI observes that state schools in Indonesia elementary, lower secondary or upper secondary prohibit married women and pregnant women

from continuing their studies, but do not provide alternative pathways for women to continue to study (CWGI 2007, p. 40). This regulation discriminates against women, thereby greatly limiting their future economic opportunities. Gender is itself an obstacle for women, but socio-cultural factors are complicated further by economic factors to disadvantage girls education opportunities.

### **Economic Constraints**

UNESCO (2005, p. 11) states that access to quality education is affected by socio-economic conditions. The wealthy commonly have better access than the poor. Jones (2003, p. 8) states that in Indonesia and Thailand the problems due to economic hardship were serious. According to National Statistics (2006), the poor people in Indonesia comprised almost 39.05 million people (*Media Indonesia* 02 May 2007). Mirroring the results of a study conducted by Priyambada, Suryahadi, and Sumarto (2002, p. 12), a survey of female domestic workers conducted by Human Rights Watch (2005, p. 44) showed that it was the cost of education that made them drop out before completing the compulsory nine years of school

In the Indonesian context, Cameron (2000 in Kevana & Levine 2000, p. 16) found persistent unequal treatment of girls among agricultural households especially during the economic crisis. Girls 12 to 17 years old were more likely to be withdrawn from school than boys. During 1997 economic crisis, Cameron and Worswick (2001) found that families with school age girls reduced their spending on education in response to crop losses, while families of school age boys did not (in Levine & Ames 2003, p. 5). CWGI (2007, p. 3) shows that girls' dropout rate is higher especially among disadvantaged families. Rankin and Aytax (2006, p. 28) consider selective education where some children attend school while others have to stay home to help with household work or to earn money, a common practice in developing countries.

According to Nussbaum (2003, p. 340-341) ignoring girls' educational needs can be a form of 'survival' for parents, because while parents may wish to educate all of their children, financial limitations often force them into choosing precisely who can attend school. Further, they need to keep some at home to manage domestic and agricultural tasks. However, despite these compelling justifications, decisions to confine girls to the home are gendered. Dominant stereotypes for women normalise domestic works as responsibility of women. As Subrahmanian (2002, p. 12) says, 'gender and economic disadvantage intersect to provide forceful constraints against female education relative to male education'. In a similar vein Rothchild (2006) argues that 'economic constraints-push gender constraints further' (p. 92). This is the result of cultural values which tend to assert that it is unnecessary for women to study to the highest possible level, so when the families have limited resources, boys are prioritised, or girls are withdrawn first (CWGI 2007, p. 3). Tansel (in Subrahmanian 2002, p. 112) regards low female participation in education, including high dropout or early withdrawal rates and irregular attendance as the result of parental decision-making. Such decisions are manifestations of parental preferences in educating sons or daughters. Although economic factors influence these decisions, the socio-cultural framework that determines girls' roles contributes to this inequality.

Along with problems of primary schooling in remote areas, transition to lower secondary school is a problem for many of the poor in Indonesia (World Bank 2007, p. 22). There are high costs associated with sending children to lower secondary school. Knodel (in Subrahmanian 2002, p.14) argues that the cost of schooling for poor families is particularly high, comprising between 20 to 30 percent of family income (Herz & Sperling 2004, p. 42) and it becomes more expensive for higher levels of schooling. Jones (2003, p. 21), estimates that the cost of educating children in lower secondary school is almost two and a half times the cost of primary school. This consists of school fees, transport costs, uniforms, food, and books and stationery. The distance of school from home, also creates a barrier because transport costs

in addition to morality considerations contributes to girls withdrawing. Additionally, as NGOs and University professors told Human Rights Watch (2005, p. 44) textbooks change yearly and this places additional burdens on families who have to buy new books for each child. Under these very difficult economic conditions, even when parents want to ensure their children attain higher educational levels, they are obliged to prioritise daily necessities over education

Moreover, most poor families with heavy economic burdens depend on their children's involvement in income generating activities. As a consequence, it would be very difficult to have them send their children to school because this consumes their children's time from early in the morning till midday, reducing household income as a result. Priyambada, Suryahadi, and Sumarto (2002, p. 20) show that children in Pontianak (in West Kalimantan) help their parents by working in plantations, tapping rubber in the forest, or looking after siblings while parents work. This is common in plantation region and rural areas, especially if these areas offer unskilled jobs (Jones and Hagul 2001, p. 220). Hence participation in basic compulsory education in these areas is very low (*Media Indonesia*, 02 May 2006).

As in many other developing countries, in Indonesia the case of children who work part-time, is mostly a rural phenomenon with rates of child labour almost three times higher than in urban areas (Priyambada, Suryahadi, & Sumarto 2002, p. 7). Furthermore, this research shows that the incidence of child labour is higher among boys than girls (2002, p. 10). However, this does not accurately reflect the real share of work performed by girls because labour is defined as 'activities intended to generate income' (Priyambada, Suryahadi, & Sumarto 2002, p.2). So, activities performed mostly by girls such as housework, and child care are not counted as labour. Additionally, it also does not include the '*ngenger*', a tradition in Java, which boys or girls from poor families live with more prosperous relatives with the promise that they will be sent to school in return for helping with the household work (Human Rights Watch 2005, p. 9-10). This kind of tradition also occurs in East Nusa Tenggara (Jones et al., in

Jones 2003, p. 22). Parents perceive at least two benefits from this custom; reducing economic burdens related to food and accommodation, and the hope that children will have the opportunity to continue their schooling. However this is not always the case, as it depends on the goodwill of the host family. This concept is not restricted just to children living with relatives, but other prosperous families as well. This results in children becoming domestic workers for the wealthy. In Indonesia, domestic workers are not considered *pekerja* or workers but, *pembantu* or helpers. In 2002-2003, of 2.6 million domestic workers 34.83 percent were children and 93 percent of those were girls under the age of 18 (Human Rights Watch 2005, p. 9). The reason for such large numbers of girls working in these roles is that domestic work is considered as 'natural' women's work. According to Human Rights Watch, girls are in great demand because they can be hired at lower rates than adults and can be 'easily managed' (2005, p. 10). Impoverished and uneducated girls therefore end up in unskilled and lower paid work, further entrenching disadvantage. If women are unable to continue their education due to poverty, their employment opportunities limit them to work that reinforces their poverty. However, economic circumstances alone can not explain girls' high dropout rates.

## **Gender Ideology and the State Education System**

Education not only plays an important role in the teaching of literacy and numeracy, but also functions as a medium to transfer state ideology including gender ideology. The reproduction and enforcement of gender ideology in society may take place in the formal school system through the selection process in access to education, the curriculum, the way that subjects are taught, and the kinds of knowledge girls and boys receive (Leach 2003, p. 89). Furthermore, Leach also states that as the school curriculum strengthens the 'political order', so proposed changes to it will often be challenged. A study by Rostiawati (2005, p. 2) of a number of teachers in Jakarta indicates that teachers are unaware that they treat boys and girls differently. Even those

teachers who are aware of the need for gender equality in their teaching practice performed and reproduced gender ideology. It seems little has been done to remove gender bias in education. Almost 22 years ago Logdson (1985) pointed out that gender bias existed in Indonesian text books. In 1990, the United Nations Economic and Social Council recommended that governments revise gender biased textbooks by 1995 (Stromquist 1997, p. 207). The Indonesian government has re-evaluated some school textbooks which admittedly contain gender bias, but these efforts are considered inadequate as according to the CWGI (2007, p. 3), gender bias continues to exist across the curriculum. There has been no significant improvement in the curriculum in subjects such as *Bahasa Indonesia*, history and civic education. The government enacted National Education System (*Sisdiknas*) Law no 20, 2003 in an effort to address gender inequality (article 4 and 5) but at all levels, the curriculum continues to be gender biased.

Parker's (1997, p. 502) analysis of pictures in textbooks of both Balinese and Indonesian language found distinct gendered social roles that reflect state gender ideology. Men are placed in the public-political world, while women manage the private-domestic world. Suryandaru (in *Kompas* 23 September 2002) also found that in elementary school textbooks, traditional gender roles are promoted to students. He concludes that men dominate the public domain and are engaged in productive activity, whereas women occupy the private domain either in productive or traditional women's roles such as housewives, secretaries, or nurses. Results of a study conducted by The Women's Studies Centres of the State University of Semarang and the State University of Surakarta indicate that gender bias in teaching materials is found in almost all subjects including Math, *Bahasa Indonesia*, *PPKn* (civic education), and English (*Suara Merdeka* 17 June 2004). Astiatun (in *Kompas* 5 May 2003) also found gender bias in two *Bahasa Indonesia* textbooks, published by Erlangga and Balai Pustaka. In both books, she found that women are illustrated mostly in domestic sphere. Despite it being 22 years since Logdson demonstrated the existence of gender bi-

ased teaching materials, it still persists in Indonesian textbooks. Not only do texts and pictures imply gender bias, they also manipulate women's real roles. In math books, women are represented as having no rights to land despite women's land and property rights existing in law and culture (*Kompas* 08 September 2000). Gender bias is not only found in national curriculum materials, but also in the in the local curriculum. This consists of subjects added by each province according to their local needs, most commonly language and vocational subjects. A study of the local curriculum, *Bahasa Dayak* (Dayak Language) in Central Kalimantan, found evidence of gender segregation: men are in public roles while women continue to be relegated to the private sphere (*Kalteng Post*, 21 October 2006). Commonly, gender bias found in text books takes four forms: productive roles for men and reproductive roles for women; men dominate public sphere activities and women are placed in domestic sphere activities; men are the decision-makers and women are subordinate in the decision-making process; 'masculine' identity include courage and intellectual activity, while 'femininity' encourages girls to be beautiful, obedient and caring. Not only does gender bias exist in Indonesian textbooks, but it strengthens the gender gap as well.

Parker argues (1997, p. 504), that gender differentiation in the classroom is actively employed by teachers and/or voluntarily by students themselves. For example in cleaning-up brigades, girls sweep and boys hoe; segregation also occurs in sports and handicrafts: boys make cigarette-boxes while girls make embroidered cloths. Furthermore, Leach (2003, p.113) argues seating arrangements can also convey messages about gender roles. In most Indonesian classroom, girls sit at the front where they are very obedient, and boys at the back where they can easily talk and play. Parker observes that in Balinese classrooms, the girls are only 'physically in the foreground but educationally in the background' (p. 508). Because of their obedience, girls tend to learn without much attention from teachers, while boys actively challenge knowledge and receive more attention from the teacher. Parker relates this to socialization. Like most other soci-



eties, Indonesian girls are expected not to talk too much and their muteness is a part of 'gendered codes both of civility and of sexual morality' (Parker 1997, p. 508). Gender roles promoted by the dominant socio-political framework are normalised within families and reproduced in classroom resources and teaching practice.

Muthali'in's study and observation of two schools in Central Java (2001, p. 76-77) reveals gender segregation both in the process of teaching and learning as well as time outside of study as in flag-raising ceremony, where it is always a girl who brings the flag, while boys are the heads of the ceremony, who raise the flag. Extra-curriculum in school or activities also differentiates between boys and girls. Boys are trained in *silat* (a traditional martial art in Indonesia) to increase confidence, strength and leadership skills. Even if boys learn to dance, boys and girls are trained in different kinds of dancing suitable for their gender (2001, p. 76-77). This differentiation is also confirmed by an article in *Kompas*, which says that girls' extra-curricular activities consist of cooking or dancing so that they will be able to entertain and perform domestic tasks (08 September 2000). Gender bias is normalised, so that gender roles are 'naturalised'.

Clearly, girls from rural areas are disadvantaged in their opportunities to remain at school due to socio-cultural values and societal perception of their vulnerability. These disadvantages are exacerbated by poverty which results in parents prioritizing boys and withdrawing girls from school. In addition, the school setting reinforces cultural gender bias in the curriculum, teaching materials, and teaching practice. This bias in the school system does not directly cause girls to drop out but certainly it affects girls' self image and ambitions to study further. This bias is internalized by girls and leads them to the belief that men and women occupy different spheres in life, resulting in girls self segregating in their future career choices (Muthali'in 2001, p. 53). Oey-Gardiner's research (1991, p. 73) shows many girls aged 13 to 15 claim that they have sufficient education in giving reasons why they dropout. Girls' low expectations are partly reflected in the decrease in girls' participation at senior

high school and higher education, and in their self-segregation in choosing vocational education. Girls' life opportunities are limited as a result of cultural and political ideologies that interact to produce and reproduce gender inequality. Further, poverty and under-resourcing of education in remote and rural areas entrench gender inequality. Indonesia, therefore, faces significant challenges in improving access to education for girls in order to meet its commitment to CEDAW.

## CHAPTER V

# GENDER, EDUCATION AND INCREASING RETENTION RATES

From the discussion of the intersections between gender, culture and educational disadvantage, it is clear that girls in Indonesia, particularly in rural areas, face significant obstacles in accessing and remaining in school. On average girls only spend 6.5 years in school while boys spend 7.6 years. Girls' mean years of schooling fall far below the nine years compulsory basic education determined by the state. The investigation of girls' high dropout rates shows that socio-cultural factors, economic limitations and gendered ideologies perpetuate gender inequality.

Traditional cultural values and misinterpretations of religious teaching create inflexible codes of gender, constructing women's roles mainly within the domestic sphere. Based on this, practices such as assigning girls more domestic work to prepare them to be good housewives, a tendency to confine girls at home or to marry them early and prioritizing boys because they will be breadwinners for their future families are common and naturalised in rural areas. These conditions are exacerbated by the limited economic resources of rural families who mostly have low levels of education themselves, consider early marriage, keeping their daughters at home or sending them out to generate income as survival mechanisms. Clearly, decisions to educate children favour boys, but when families are forced for economic reasons to withdraw a child from school, girls are usually first. This gender bias is reproduced in the school setting both in

the process of teaching and learning and in the curriculum. Moreover, many books used in the Indonesian classrooms are gendered. School is not a gender neutral institution. All of these factors have their own roles in girls' dropout rate in Indonesia.

The state, especially during the Soeharto era imposed a gender ideology that actively disadvantaged women. Through *Dharma Wanita* (Women's Duty) and *PKK* (Family Welfare Guidance), women in Indonesia were actively encouraged to be dependent on men as wives and mothers. Inflexible women's roles were even legislated in some regulations. For example, the Marriage Law No. 1, 1974 states that men are the heads of households. This statement positions women as dependents and requires women to shoulder all the responsibilities for domestic affairs. This regulation shows that the state supports unequal gender relations in its society. However, some women and NGOs in Indonesia such as *Rahima*, an NGO based in Central Java has tried to widen cultural horizons by introducing more gender sensitive interpretations of certain Qur'anic verses and *hadiths*. Some critics from women and NGOs, for example Asoka, have called for a gender issue improvement in the curriculum, teaching and learning, and text books.

However, as Oxfam states, political will is extremely important to create gender equality (Oxfam 2006c, p. 1). In the 1945 Constitution of Indonesia, the state is obligated to allocate 20 percent of its budget in education. But, until 2006, the Indonesian government has been only able to allocate 9.1 percent. This limited budget has affected the implementation of compulsory basic education policy. Compulsory education which is theoretically free is in fact not free at all. Parents pay towards the schooling of their children especially at entry level. These costs can be expensive, consisting of building fund, uniform, textbooks, and stationery. For most rural families living in poverty, these costs associated with sending their children to school constitute an economic burden. As a result, participation rates in basic compulsory education in rural areas are still low.

There are several different strategies which could be applied to improve this, based on approaches adopted by other developing countries. Clearly, the cost of schooling is considered as a barrier for poor parents in rural areas to educate their daughters. So, to give 'conditional transfer programs', which provide cash to families whose children attend school, can serve as social safety nets, increasing poor families' income and improving children's education (UN Millennium Project 2005b, p. 55). Brazil's Bolsa Escola stipend programs provide a scholarship of about \$40 per-family per year with a requirement of 90 percent attendance. In the first year of the program, all of girls whose families participated continued their study (Herz and Sperling 2004, p. 51). Cambodia has also implemented similar policies for girls of ethnic minorities. The objectives are to increase enrolment and attendance among poor girls by compensating for the direct opportunity cost of sending children to school (UNESCO 2004 in UN Millennium Project 2005b, p. 49). The program had a 90-95 percent success rate for enrolment and retention. Other examples include the Female Stipend Program in Bangladesh and Colombia's Secondary School Voucher Programs (Herz and Sperling 2004, pp. 50-52).

Furthermore, it is important to create girl-friendly schools. A common reason for parents to withdraw girls from school is parental concern about their daughters' safety, because of distance, safety on the way to school, or risk of sexual assault (UNICEF 2006, p. 72). As Herz and Sperling articulate, 'the further girls have to walk, the greater their parents' concern for actual safety and reputation' (2004, p 55). Proximity, flexible timetables and a safe school environment should be primary considerations (UNICEF 2006, p. 72). Building new schools close to home has resulted in more girls attending school. In Egypt and Pakistan, girls' enrolment increased from 35 percent in 1981-1982 to 42 percent in 1990-1991 because schools were built nearby. Furthermore, decreasing the distance between home and school also lessens dropout rates.

In addition, the quality of education must consider gender equality. School might be perceived as unnecessary if girls are

taught that they are of less value than boys and channeled into fields of study or low paid jobs considered 'natural' for women (UN Millennium Project 2005b, p. 59). Analysis of textbooks in most countries in Central and Eastern Europe and Central Asia show a clear differentiation in gender roles. For instance, in Romanian primary school textbooks, women are represented as school teachers, villagers, and fruit or flower sellers whereas men have positions of authority as astronauts, or policemen (Magno in UNESCO 2003a, p. 146). In Africa, Asia and the Middle East, women are constantly stereotyped as passive and subordinate while men are represented as intelligent, dominant and take position as leaders (Herz & Sperling 2004, p. 64). A gender sensitive curriculum and equal treatment in the classroom increases the probability that girls will remain in school. Several countries in Asia and Africa have trained teachers and administrators in gender sensitivity to improve education outcomes for girls (Herz and Sperling 2004, pp. 64-65). In order to sustain girls' enrolment, school must be made welcoming through positive approaches in teaching and learning and in curriculum (Oxfam 2006a, p. 2)

Educating parents and communities is crucial as gender disparity arises out of culture and traditional beliefs. Parents and society needs to be encouraged to respect equal rights for both sons and daughters and support them in obtaining a good education. Changing negative attitudes must focus on raising the value of girls' education. As mothers can play a very important role in encouraging girls' education (Birdsall, Levina & Ibrahim, 2005, p. 4), mothers need to participate in discussions about gender issues in order to find solutions to the specific constraints girls face. Communicating messages through the media about how girls' education impacts on society can mobilize support for girls (Rugh 2000, p. 65). UNICEF (in Aikman and Unterhalter 2005, p. 51) has developed the *Meena* cartoon in Bangladesh to promote the importance of girls' education and expanded it to countries in South Asia. Program developers working in the media have a role to play. However, there is no guarantee that every intervention will work. Intervention must be appropriate

to each country's context (UN Millennium Project 2005a, p. 54). Furthermore, strategies and policies to increase girls' retention rates must also consider prevailing gender codes. For example, improvement in infrastructure, transport, sanitation and access to drinking water are necessary to enact gender equality

Gender equality requires a political will to change women's economic and socio-cultural status. However, it takes time to change gender perceptions as these are entrenched in society. However, as Rothchild says gender relations are dynamic, which means they are always in the process of continuously being constructed and reconstructed (2006, p. 141). This means that gender codes can be reshaped in order to address the barriers women face. Future research should examine the changes of dropout rate in intersections with the changing of gender ideologies, socio-economic conditions in certain area or ethnicity, particularly in the context of family and schools.





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