



Sekolah Radja "Kweekschool Fort de Kock": Exploring History and Role in Teacher Education in the Netherlands East-Indies

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Abstract

This research aims to analyze the background and history of establishment, contributions, and educational impacts of the presence of the "School Radja," Kweekschool Fort de Kock, on indigenous students in the Dutch East Indies. The method employed is historical methodology, involving the collection, analysis, and interpretation of various historical sources related to the Kweekschool Fort de Kock school with new perspectives on methodology, methods, theories, and themes in historical research, social sciences, and particularly education. The findings indicate that the establishment of Kweekschool Fort de Kock was part of Dutch colonial efforts to educate and control the indigenous population in the Dutch East Indies. This school provided teacher education for indigenous students with the aim of creating educators loyal to the colonial government. In conclusion, the existence of Kweekschool Fort de Kock played a significant role in the history of education in the Dutch East Indies, aiming to educate the nation's children but also reflecting the dynamics of colonial power influencing the education process and cultural identity of indigenous students. This study underscores the importance of understanding the historical context of colonial education in evaluating the educational legacy left behind and its impact on indigenous communities.

Keyword: : Fort de Kock, Kweekschool, Colonial Education

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INTRODUCTION

How's the education situation in Indonesia? The Covid-19 pandemic situation that has been spreading since March 2020 has continuously raised concerns about the quality of education in Indonesia. (Abidah dkk., 2020). Undoubtedly, the pandemic situation disrupts education. This situation is not only faced by Indonesia but also experienced globally (Achmad Sunjayadi, 2022).

The emergency conditions of the COVID-19 pandemic have also impacted the learning situation, which in turn has affected the changes in education in Indonesia. (Nugraha, 2022). Around the same time as the spread of the COVID-19 pandemic, the Indonesian government, through the Ministry of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology (Kemdikbudristek), implemented the Merdeka Belajar Curriculum policy as one of its efforts to address the learning crisis. Its implementation has been increasingly intensified in schools, even extending to the lowest level of early childhood education (PAUD), under the name of the Strengthening Student Project - Pancasila Student Profile (Dzata Rahmah dkk., 2022), by incorporating the

concept of project-based learning that will guide learners to be more active in the learning process (Safithri dkk., 2021).

In essence, the Merdeka Belajar Curriculum aims to create an enjoyable learning atmosphere. (Khoirurrijal, Fadriati, Sofia, Anisa Dwi Makrufi, Sunaryo Gandi, Abdul Muin, Tajeri, Ali & Fakhruddin, Hamdani, and Suprapno, 2022). Nevertheless, the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic has indeed shaken the direction, goals, and learning atmosphere of our students. For the majority of our society, recent times have been far from enjoyable. There are concerns about symptoms of loss learning and perhaps loss of mind, which refers to the decline in academic knowledge and skills among students and scholars. (Jojor, A., & Sihotang, H, 2022), (Rajib, M., & Sari, A. P., 2022), (Cerelia, J. J., Sitepu, A. A. & Toharudin, 2021). Another issue from the findings of Engzell et al. (2021) suggests that the results of student learning show little to no progress at all from remote learning and have a significant detrimental impact on countries with weaker infrastructure. (Engzell dkk., 2021).

Nevertheless, we must not surrender to the situation; rising as quickly as possible is the best course of action. One study by Renti Oktaria et al. suggests that 21st-century education and learning programs, such as the current one, also require support for the development of artificial intelligence (AI)-based learning media. In this case, an example is the ChatGPT application. (Oktaria dkk., 2023). This also includes utilizing various educational facilities and infrastructure, with libraries being part of strengthening literacy and learning for students (Putra dkk., 2023), (Wilders, 2017), to actively promote reading through various efforts to encourage reading in children and to enhance the reading interest of children, families, and the general community (Liu & Li, 2022).

Nevertheless, we still need to search for appropriate methods in line with the concept of Independent Learning and determine educational goals. There is no harm in revisiting various historical records of indigenous education, especially during the Dutch East Indies period when access to education was severely limited for indigenous people. During the colonial era under the Dutch Colonial Government, not all native citizens could enjoy the available educational facilities at that time; access to education was a privilege that not everyone could experience.

During that period, if we talk about the education policy implemented by the Dutch East Indies Government, it can be said that much of it aimed to prepare students to become administrative staff in government offices or Dutch-owned companies. This is reflected in the emphasis on education up to the level of European Elementary Schools (ELS). However, the level of proficiency possessed by graduates of ELS was still inadequate to hold higher positions, so these positions were still more often filled by individuals from the Netherlands with higher education.

Actually, there are moral considerations to educate the natives so that modernization in the field of education can be achieved promptly. The government's attention is also driven by pressures from the Dutch themselves to establish advanced schools. However, the implementation always experienced failures. Then, after Franssen van der Putte, one of the Dutch Ministers along with liberal and humanist politicians, condemned the implementation of the forced cultivation system which was successfully abolished in 1870 and appeared in the government in the Netherlands, had the intention to carry out education with a liberal character (Widya Lestari Ningsih, 2023).

From that moment on, education implemented in Indonesia experienced expansion. It was not only limited to the Dutch, but also extended to the indigenous people (Bumiputera). Franssen van der Putte, known as a liberal figure, introduced liberal education and emphasized the need for the expansion of education for indigenous children, especially after the mid-19th century (Ayi Budi Santosa dan Encep Supriatna, 2008). In his opinion, education for indigenous children should exist and be expanded. Schools were not only intended to prepare candidates for government officials but also to advance the population, as was done in the Netherlands (Baudet H. dan I.J. Brugmans, 1987).

One of the schools is Kweekschool Fort de Kock, which would later become a milestone in education in West Sumatra (Tim Merdeka, 2024). Teacher Education (Kweekschool) is the oldest institution that has been around since the beginning of the 19th century. This institution was established by the missionary and missionary circles with course programs. The colonial government of the Netherlands also began to organize teacher training programs called Normaal Cursus, aimed at training prospective teachers for Village Schools.

In the 20th century, the structure of teacher education underwent changes into three types. First, Normalschool, a four-year teacher training school accepting graduates of primary schools with five years of education and using the local language as the medium of instruction. Second, Kweekschool, a four-year

teacher training school accepting graduates of primary schools with Dutch as the medium of instruction. Third, Hollands Indlandsche Kweekschool, a six-year teacher training school with Dutch as the medium of instruction (Departemen Pendidikan dan Kebudayaan, 1986).

METHODS

This research is a qualitative study focusing on historical analysis. The method applied in this research is the historical method. This approach focuses on the analysis and interpretation of historical data to understand the development of phenomena or events over time. The historical method consists of four stages: heuristic, external criticism and internal criticism, interpretation, and historiography. With an effort to present a new perspective in historical research, social sciences, and especially education (moving beyond the general topics of politics, economics, and military) (International Conference on history, social sciences, and education & Universitas Negeri, 2022), which is highly relevant to the research on the topic of Kweekschool Fort de Kock, an educational institution in the Dutch East Indies in the 19th century.

The first stage, heuristics, involves collecting relevant historical sources related to Kweekschool Fort de Kock. Subsequently, the external and internal criticism stages are used to evaluate the reliability and accuracy of these sources, including documents related to the establishment of the school. Then, the interpretation stage involves systematically analyzing historical data to identify relevant patterns and relationships related to the history of Kweekschool Fort de Kock. Finally, the historiography stage allows researchers to create clear and systematic research reports based on their findings and interpretations, including the educational impact of the existence of Kweekschool Fort de Kock. By using the historical method, the research can gain a deep understanding of the context and development of education in the Dutch East Indies, including the role played by institutions like Kweekschool Fort de Kock.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Assorted historical sources, including primary and secondary sources, observer comments, researcher reflections, and other supporting data, were meticulously analyzed, and the findings from these investigations revealed the following elements. This section covers every element that contributes to the overall results and discussion of the research.

Background and Establishment History of Kweekschool Fort De Kock

During Van den Bosch's time, between 1829 and 1834, on the island of Java, the Dutch East Indies government established schools for the indigenous population in the regency courtyards. These buildings were simple but well-maintained due to the attention from the regents. However, the situation outside of Java was different, with many schools established in unsatisfactory conditions. This was because the cost of the schools was borne by the local community and did not receive assistance from the central government. Some schools were even just makeshift shelters made from branches and bark. The curriculum was primarily focused on training future employees, including mastery of the Malay language, which was used as the official language at the time. One example is the teaching of land measurement, which was related to the implementation of forced cultivation.

The need for indigenous teachers, especially to teach in schools attended by indigenous students, was pressing. The education of indigenous teachers in the Dutch East Indies began in Ambon in 1834, with the involvement of private entities such as mission organizations. In the following period, teacher training schools were established in Minahasa in 1852. Both teacher training schools in Ambon and Minahasa used Malay as the medium of instruction. These two teacher training schools in Ambon and Minahasa were privately operated.

Missions (zending) and missionaries indeed played a significant role in the development of education in the Dutch East Indies. Apart from spreading religious teachings, this group was active in educational activities since the VOC era. Some missionary missions in the Dutch East Indies include: *Nederlands Gerefomeerde Zendingsvereniging* (NGZV), *Zending van de Christelijk Gerefomeerde Kerk* (ZGCK) (Haarlem's Dagblad, 1961), *Rheinische Missionsgesellschaft* (RMG) (Rhenish Missionary Society, 1970). RMG is one of the largest missionary (zending) organizations from Germany and is well-known in the regions of Sumatra and Kalimantan.

Initially, there was a plan to organize native education with the assistance of the *Nederlandsch Bijbelgenootschap*. However, the Government held back this plan due to its association with Christian religious propaganda being deemed dangerous amidst the Muslim population. Later on, the colonial government decided to establish special teacher training schools called *Kweekschool*. *Kweekschool* was considered as advanced education, following the completion of primary education.

The decision was made to establish 20 provincial schools in Java and a *Kweekschool* for native teachers in Surakarta in 1852, marking the first government-owned teacher training school. Outside of Java, in 1857, 10 village schools were established on the West Coast of Sumatra under the guidance of missionaries. In 1856, the *Kweekschool Fort de Kock* was also founded, becoming the second government-owned teacher training school to open. Subsequently, teacher training schools were established in Tapanuli in 1864, in Tondano in 1873, in Ambon in 1874, in Probolinggo and Banjarmasin in 1875, in Makassar in 1876, and in Padang Sidempuan in 1879. (Brugmans 1938). Actually, the increase in the number of schools could be considered slow; by 1865, Java only had 58 native schools. In 1884, the Government even made budget cuts by reducing the education budget. (Blink, H, 1913).

In the context of the Central Sumatra region, secular education has actually been known to the Minangkabau community since 1825. In that year, a Dutch-style school was established in Padang on the recommendation of Governor General H.J.J.L. Ridder de Stuers. The *Radja School*, which was established in Fort de Kock, originated from the advice of a Dutch colonial education advisor, Reverend S.A. Buddingh. This school was one of the well-known secular schools in Minangkabau. Its students, who came from various regions in Sumatra and Kalimantan, many of whom succeeded in becoming professionals and working in various places in the Dutch East Indies.



Figure 1: Kweek School Sekolah Radja zaman dulu kurun waktu 1873-1908

Source: Sumber foto: Nawawi St. Makmoer dan T. Kramer, *Gedenkboek Kweekschool Fort de Kock, 1873-1908*

The first director of the *Radja School* was G. Van der Wijck, who was later succeeded by J. Van der Toorn until 1895. The school was led by assistant-resident J.A.W. van Ophuijsen, assisted by a native teacher named Abdoellatif, the son of Toeankoe-Imam in Kota Gedang (Nawawi St. Makmoer dan T. Kramer, 1908). Another notable Indonesian teaching staff member was Guru Nawawi St. Makmur. Nawawi gained distinction and was classified as a European Teacher due to his proficiency, which was considered on par with European teachers. Initially, he had only 10 students. Between 1856-1866, only 49 students graduated from this school, 12 of whom became teachers, while the rest became clerks, warehouse managers (coffee

warehouse supervisors), smallpox ministers, coffee ministers, etc. In 1869, teacher Abdoellatif fell ill and was replaced by Saidina Asin from Koto Laweh, Padang Panjang, who had previously been a Malay teacher in Bengkulu.

In 1866, the Dutch education advisor, J.A. Van der Chijs, issued a report on the Radja School in Fort de Kock. He requested that the quality of education at the school be improved. Therefore, significant improvements were made to the school starting from March 1, 1873: more teachers were added and their quality was enhanced, and the number of students was increased to 50. Between 1873 and 1907, a total of 356 students graduated from this Radja School in Fort de Kock.

Roles and Dynamics of the Journey of Kweekschool Fort de Kock

After its establishment, Kweekschool Fort de Kock evolved into a significant center for teacher education in the Sumatra region. In the Minangkabau region, during its time, this school was also known as Sekolah Rajo or Sekolah Radja. It's important to note that the purpose of establishing Sekolah Rajo was to produce teachers capable of assisting the Dutch East Indies in dealing with the indigenous population. This institution not only offered formal education courses for prospective teachers but also served as a place where the values of Dutch colonialism, including religious and cultural values, were instilled in education.

Over time, Kweekschool Fort de Kock played a crucial role in creating a network of qualified and trained teachers in the Sumatra region. The graduates of Kweekschool were then dispersed to various areas to teach in local schools, which in turn contributed to the spread of Dutch culture and values among the indigenous population. However, it cannot be ignored that teacher education under colonial rule was also a tool to control and strengthen Dutch dominance over the indigenous population. Although Kweekschool graduates possessed knowledge and teaching skills, they were also expected to serve as agents for spreading colonial culture and values within society.

An unidentified photograph, with no known photographer or year of creation, depicts seven male students of the Kweekschool in Fort de Kock. The seven students are shown confidently standing under a tree in the schoolyard. Six students are facing the camera, while one student standing on the tree roots is looking towards the left of the camera. They are dressed in closed jackets, white trousers, and shoes. One student wearing a cap resembling a "pici" is standing on the left side.



Figure 2: "Een groep leerlingen van de kweekschool te Fort de Kock" Sebuah kelompok siswa dari sekolah guru di Fort de Kock.

Source: COLLECTIE TROPENMUSEUM Een groep leerlingen van de kweekschool te Fort de Kock TMnr 10005004.jpg

Since the Dutch colonial era, Kweekschool Fort de Kock has stood as the oldest secondary education institution in West Sumatra, marking the early development of education in the region. After a long history, in 1878, the building of Sekolah Rajo was relocated from its old location to the new building, which now houses SMA 2 Bukittinggi. Today, the school still stands but has transformed and changed, now known as SMAN 2 Bukittinggi. This school has become an integral part of the educational history of West Sumatra, evolving from Kweekschool Fort de Kock to its current form as SMAN 2 Bukittinggi (Tia Nurullatifah, 2023).

Before becoming the school as it is today, this school underwent several name changes, starting from Sekolah Rajo, Kweekschool, SMA Birugo, Sekolah Menengah Tinggi, Sekolah Menengah Atas II AC, and finally Sekolah Menengah Atas 2 Bukittinggi. Function transitions also occurred, as the school originally intended for teacher education now became a general school. In 1835, the school, still named Sekolah Rajo, was temporarily closed. The building with its characteristic "atap gadang" roof came back to life after Indonesian Independence.

From a glimpse of documents and archives regarding education in Indonesia's past, we can understand its atmosphere and dynamics. Various parties, regardless of their interests, evidently played a role in educational activities and processes, especially in teaching and learning. From history, we learn that those who were once students later became teachers. Those who were once seekers of knowledge later shared and spread knowledge.

The Benefits of Kweekschool Fort De Kock for Indigenous Education

In reality, the primary goal of the Dutch East Indies government in providing education to the indigenous population was to obtain educated labor at low cost, as employing administrative government officials or workers from the Netherlands would incur significant expenses. Van den Bosch, who served as the Governor-General of the Dutch East Indies during the period 1829-1834, felt that without the assistance of educated indigenous people, the economic development in the Dutch East Indies, which was his main task, would not succeed. For this purpose, education for the indigenous population was opened, from elementary schools to colleges, so that the implementation of the Cultivation System could generate significant profits and improve the economic conditions of the Netherlands.



Figure 3: Rumah Kepala Sekolah Kweekschool te Fort de Kock, Tahun 1900-1940

Source: Collectie NMvWereldculturen, TM-10016850, Repronégatief- 'Directeurswoning bij de vroegere kweekschool te Fort de Kock.', fotograaf onbekend, 1900-1940.jpg.

There was one figure, later known as the founding father of Indonesia, an indigenous person named Tan Malaka who was also a graduate of the Sekolah Radja, Kweekschool in Fort de Kock. His nickname was Ibra. From 1903 to 1908, Tan Malaka studied at Sekolah Kelas Dua. Sekolah Kelas Dua was established due to the ethical policy of the colonial government. However, Sekolah Kelas Dua failed to provide opportunities for further education; its graduates typically sought new job opportunities in the West.

In fact, there were primary schools for indigenous children established by the colonial government not only in cities but also in villages. In 1892, the government created two types of schools: Tweede Inlandsche School-Tweede Klasse School (Second Class Native School) and Eerste Inlandsche School-Eerste Klasse School (First Class Native School). The First Class School was intended for children of Dutch East Indies government officials. The duration of education, initially four years, was extended to five and eventually to seven years. In addition to arithmetic, writing, and reading, subjects included geography, history, biology, drawing, and land measurement. Graduates were expected to work as civil servants in government offices and trading companies.

Meanwhile, Sekolah Kelas Dua lasted for three years and was intended for ordinary indigenous people. Subjects taught included arithmetic, writing, and reading. The school, also known as Ongko Loro, was referred to as a village school. Bung Karno (Sukarno) once attended Ongko Loro when his father was assigned to Mojokerto around 1909-1912. Later, when he reached fifth grade, his father transferred him to ELS. Bung Karno continued his education at the Hogere Burgerschool (HBS) in Surabaya in 1915.

Returning to Tan Malaka, after completing Sekolah Kelas Dua in Nagari Pandam Gadang, a rural area in the hinterland of Minangkabau, he initially struggled to continue his education. Nevertheless, his teachers hoped that Tan Malaka would continue his education due to his perceived intelligence. Then, based on recommendations from admiring teachers, in 1907, he was able to continue his education at the Teacher School Kweekschool Fort de Kock, an education institution for Indonesians in Sumatra. Here, he learned the Dutch language and to play the cello, even participating in the school orchestra led by GH Horensma, who called him Ipie. Besides being skilled in music, Tan Malaka was also proficient in playing football, which became his favorite sport, and he later even had a career with the Vlugheid Wint (VW) club in Haarlem.

In 1913, Tan Malaka completed the final theory exam at Kweekschool Fort de Kock and then participated in teaching practice at indigenous elementary schools. In October 1913, Tan Malaka, along with Horensma and two other students, was given the opportunity to study in the Netherlands. He arrived in the Netherlands on January 10, 1914, and attended Kweekschool Haarlem, completing his studies there in 1916 (A. Poeze, 1976). History records that two out of the three comrades sent to the Netherlands eventually became famous; Tan Malaka became an important figure in the independence movement (Harry A. Poeze, 2007). Meanwhile, Dahlan Abdoellah became a prominent activist in the Indische Vereeniging and was later appointed by President Soekarno as the first RIS Ambassador and stationed in Baghdad, Iraq.

In the context of national figures like Tan Malaka, his decision to continue his education at Kweekschool Fort de Kock reflects the significant challenges and opportunities faced by young Indonesians at that time. Although education under Dutch colonial rule was often viewed as an instrument of oppression, for Tan Malaka and some other national figures, this was not the case. The presence of various schools established by the colonial government, including Kweekschool Fort de Kock, also provided an opportunity to acquire knowledge and skills that could be used in the struggle for independence from colonial rule in the future.

Perhaps this is one of the best examples. Tan Malaka, an indigenous person and one of the graduates of Kweekschool Fort de Kock, successfully positioned education as a political tool aimed at shaping Indonesians who were not only intellectually astute but also refined in their feelings. In addition to Tan Malaka, other Indonesian students who graduated from Kweekschool Fort de Kock include Rustam Effendi, a writer who later joined the Tweede Kamer (lower house) of the Dutch Parliament as a representative of the Communist Party of the Netherlands. There were also prominent Minangkabau scholars, Sheikh Ahmad Khatib and Baginda Dahlan Abdoellah.

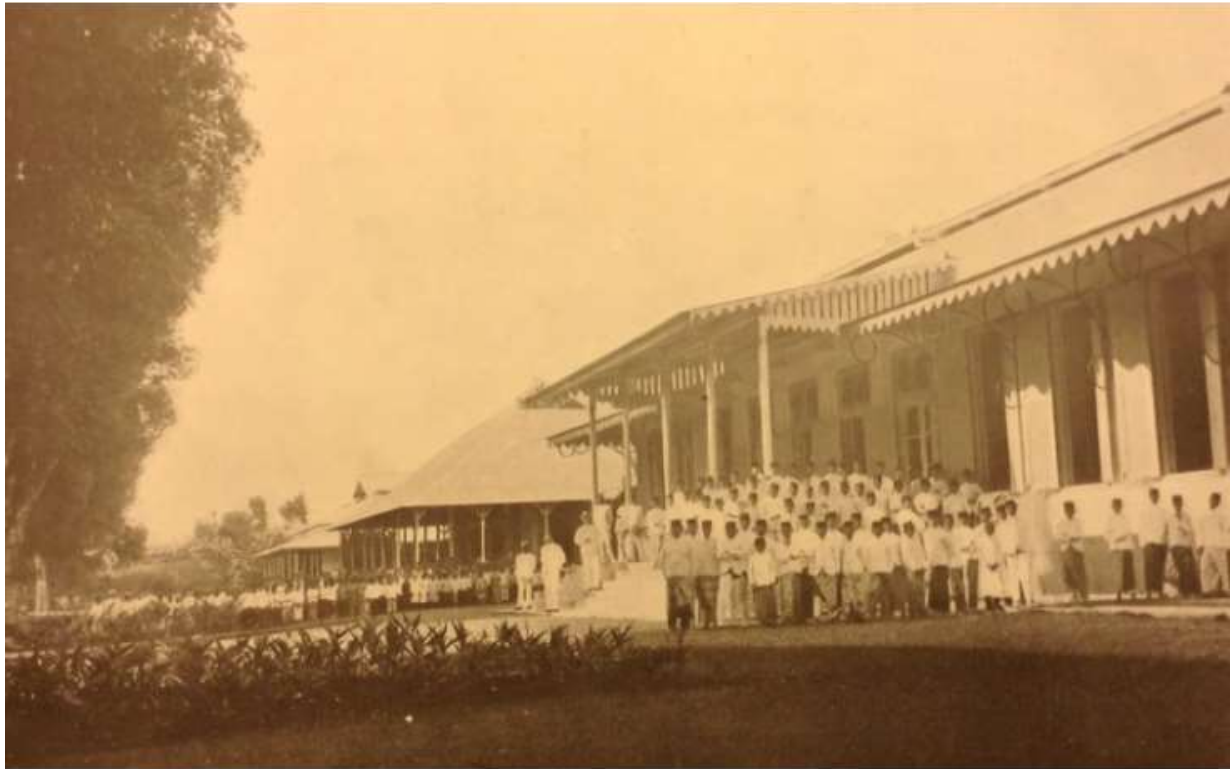


Figure 4: Kweekshool Fort de Kock tahun 1908

Source: Nawawi St. Makmoer dan T. Kramer], Gedenkboek Kweekschool Fort de Kock / Kitab Peringatan Sekolah-Radja Boekit-Tinggi, 1873-1908. Arnhem: G. J. Thieme, 1908: 33). Dalam Murid-murid Kweekschool Fort de Kock, 1908 <https://niadilova.wordpress.com/2017/03/20/minang-saisuak-294-murid-murid-kweekschool-fort-de-kock-1908>

A year after his two students Ibrahim Tan Malaka and Baginda Dahlan Abdoellah, who later gained fame as political movement activists, began studying at this school, Tan Malaka was registered along with his classmates as students who entered Kweekschool Fort de Kock in the 1907 academic year. They included: Tan Malaka, Djalín, Dahlan Abdoellah, Bermawi (from Gouvernement S.W.L. Sumatra's Westkust), Padjar, Ma'az (from Tapanuli), T. Oesman, Nja Oemar (from Aceh), Djamal, Doeng (from Lampong), Abd. Gani (from Palembang), Moh. Daoed, Moestafa (from Bengkoelen), Ahmad (from West Borneo), Marah Kamin (from Tapanuli), and Sjarifah (from Gouvernement S.W.K.). In total, there were 16 students. Sjarifah was the only female student in the school. She was the first Minang girl to receive secular education, the daughter of the charismatic native teacher, Nawawi Soetan Makmoer, who taught at the school. Those who were once students later became teachers, enabling them to better understand the issues facing their nation and ultimately realizing Indonesian independence in the future.

CONCLUSION

During the colonial period, or specifically when the Dutch government ruled these islands, not all indigenous people could enjoy the 'facilities' available at that time, one of which was the education program. Although Teacher Education (Kweekschool) is the oldest institution and has existed since the beginning of the 19th century, access to the institution was not always open to indigenous people. This institution was established by the missionary community with a course program, but the majority of participants were Dutch or of European descent, while indigenous people were often overlooked or given limited access. This reflects the inequality in education that occurred during the colonial period, where education policies favored the colonial class over the native population. Nevertheless, the existence of Kweekschool Fort de Kock played a very important role in the history of education in the Dutch East Indies, to educate the nation's children and eventually produce educated indigenous generations who later demanded Indonesia's independence from colonial bondage and imperialism.

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