7 Colonial education and post-colonial governance in the Congo and Indonesia

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1 Introduction

Education affects long-term social and economic development through at least three major channels.[1] First, education positively affects public health. Educated people possess a better understanding of the importance of hygiene, a more accurate knowledge of risks of disease and preventive measures, and tend to have better access to sources of medical knowledge. Studies have found a negative correlation between educational attainment and, for instance, infant and maternal mortality rates, the use of contraceptives, and fertility rates. Healthy people tend to be more productive, and the health effects of education tend to accumulate as they are transmitted between generations, a transmission in which maternal education plays a key role (Banarjee and Duflo 2011: 41–70; Klasen 2002; Lloyd *et al.* 2000; Mokyr 2002: 163–217).

Second, education contributes to the accumulation of productive skills and knowledge, which in combination with capital-embodied technology, raises opportunities for productivity growth according to standard production function theory (Mankiw *et al.* 1992). Education is not a sufficient condition for productivity growth, but it is a necessary condition to keep up with the technological innovations that sustain the process of modern economic growth (Helpman 2004; Kuznets 1966; Lucas 2002; Nelson 2000). For this reason, governments of modern welfare states have vastly increased their public education expenditure since the late nineteenth century (Lindert 2004). During the post-war era, most of the less developed countries exponentially increased their education budgets as well (Birdsall *et al.* 1997; Clemens 2004; Frankema 2009). The Congo is one of few examples, even among the least developed countries, where government spending on education collapsed in the closing decades of the twentieth century (Depaepe 1996: 153–6).

This chapter addresses a third channel that has received less attention in socio-economic historical literature. Education raises governance capabilities and increases the potential for popular checks on power. Governance capabilities are essential in the management of complex political, economic, and social affairs. A government capable of collecting useful information and acting upon the basis of information is a prerequisite for political and macro-economic

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stability. Stability of economic institutions (including financial market institutions) and government spending programs is vital to creating and sustaining a favorable climate for investors and optimizing conditions for private entrepreneurship. State capacity is also required to levy taxes and fees, and to reallocate public resources to sustain, amongst others, the public education effort. In addition to governance capacities, education also affects the socio-economic and political context in which government activities are embedded. When the state is controlled by a dominant coalition of rent-seeking elites who are overwhelmingly occupied with the preservation of personal interests, state policies tend to limit access to economic resources and political influence by the majority of the population (Khan 2000; North *et al.* 2009). A large group of "independent" intellectuals raises the probability of certain formal and informal checks on overt power abuse, as intellectuals are better positioned to lead political opposition and are usually better equipped to communicate calls for civil liberties (for example, freedom of speech and public assembly, independent jurisdiction, and political representation) in a more effective way (Hall *et al.* 1986). Again, educated leadership is by no means a sufficient condition for good governance, but it is a necessary condition for the decent management of complex societies.

Precisely for these reasons colonial governments have always been ambivalent toward providing higher education to indigenous subjects. On the one hand, colonial administrations required a certain number of skilled people in state service, including doctors to modernize the health care system and engineers and technicians to develop mines, plantations, and infrastructural networks. At the same time, colonial governments feared the rise of anti-colonial sentiments through popular education (Coleman 1954; Sutton 1965; White 1996). In the 1910s and 1920s, Dutch politicians openly ventilated their concerns about the growing white-collar proletariat in the Netherlands Indies, which they considered a threat to the stability of colonial society (Lelyveld 1996; Van der Veur 1969). The Belgians in the Congo expressed similar concerns regarding the access of literate Congolese to subversive literature and anti-colonial ideologies, such as Pan-Africanism and Communism (Depaepe 1996: 147; Dunkerley 2009: 89–94).

This chapter explores the comparative nature of colonial educational development following the introduction of the Ethical Policy in Indonesia (1901) and the annexation of the Congo Free State by the Belgian state (1908). More specifically, this chapter focuses on the relationship between the education system and the development of indigenous nationalist leadership. The main argument suggests that the opportunities for Indonesian children to benefit from a full Western curriculum in primary, secondary, and tertiary education enabled a class of Indonesian intellectuals, however small it remained, to develop the leadership experience required to ensure, at least, the further development of educational capacity, which proved critical in the adoption of sound macro-economic policies under Suharto (1967–98). In the Belgian Congo, mission schools spread much faster than in most other African colonies, and primary school enrollment growth also outpaced the Netherlands Indies. However, the strict commitment to African–European segregation policies prevented Congolese access to the higher ranks of

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government administration, the military, and business management. Modern forms of higher education for the indigenous population were considered both unnecessary and potentially dangerous. This distinction in the level of education enjoyed by the early independence leaders in Indonesia and the Congo constitutes a fundamental part of the political context in which the Mobutu clan could ruin the national economy and destroy the fragile educational structures that evolved under Belgian rule.

2 Different approaches to colonial educational development

The advance of popular education constituted one of the cornerstones of the "civilizing mission" as envisaged by European colonial powers from, roughly, the start of the twentieth century. In the Netherlands Indies, the political initiative to expand school enrollment formed tangible proof of an important reorientation in colonial policy – a shift from excessive exploitation of indigenous labor and natural resources under the Dutch Cultivation System (*het Cultuurstelsel*, *c.*1830–70) toward a "paternalistic" mode of colonial rule, generally referred to as the Ethical Policy (*Ethische Politiek*) (see also Thee, Chapter 2 above). In the Belgian Congo, educational opportunities expanded at increasing rates after the transition from Leopold's "domanial regime" (*domaniale stelsel*, 1891–1908) toward Belgian colonial rule. The increased stability of the colonial state and rapid progress in tropical medicine opened up the horizon for missionaries to "conquer" the vast Congo basin through missionary education. Even though the state was unable to enforce any degree of standardization in the structure and content of colonial education before 1925, the Belgian government was keenly aware of the role education could fulfill in its attempt to dissociate itself from the atrocities committed under Leopold's rule (Dunkerley 2009).

The colonial administration in the Belgian Congo pursued a strategy that was common in large parts of non-Islamic Africa: they granted free entry to Catholic and Protestant missionaries who supplied the financial, human, and organizational capacity to set up networks of mission schools (Callego and Woodberry 2010; Cogneau and Moradi 2011; Frankema 2012; Nunn 2010). During the interwar years, the colonial government encouraged Belgian Catholic missions especially to upscale their activities. The subsidy program for the Catholic mission schools was formalized in the 1925 Projet d'Organisation de l'Enseignement libre, au Congo Belge et au Ruanda-Urundi avec le concours des Sociétes de Missions nationales.[2] Only in 1954, when the liberal–socialist government coalition broke the political dominance of the confessional party (Christelijke Volkspartij, CVP), did the colonial government claim primary responsibility and authority over educational affairs. The colonial government rapidly increased the education budget to also include Protestant mission schools in its subsidy program and create a new infrastructure for public lay education (*neutraal onderwijs*) (Depaepe and van Rompaey 1995: 185–99). The reforms implemented as the result of the second Belgian *schoolstrijd* led to deep conflicts with the Catholic establishment (Briffaerts 1999).

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In the Netherlands Indies, Christian missionary societies never developed a comparable degree of control over the colonial education system. Despite support from the colonial administration to increase their activities during the mid-nineteenth century, the dominance of Islamic religious instruction posed a serious barrier to the diffusion of missionary stations and schools. The Dutch were reluctant to increase tensions by offering open support to Christian mission activities in Muslim communities and were even less inclined to support the expansion of indigenous Islamic education itself. Since the late nineteenth century, consecutive Dutch governments endorsed the liberal political viewpoint that a neutral colonial state should take the initiative in the development of colonial education (Hartgerink 1942: 45–53). In Belgium, a similar political debate about the primacy of secular over religious education (*de eerste schoolstrijd*) had ended in a landslide victory for the confessional parties (Witte *et al.* 2009). Mission schools in Indonesia only gained primacy in some of the Outer Islands (*de Buitengewesten*), such as the Minahassa (Sulawesi) and the Moluccas, where the opposition of local communities to Christian missionary encroachment was less vehement, and the colonial state had fewer interests in controlling the curriculum.

To secure British support for his private claim to the Congo domain at the Berlin Conference (1884–5), the Belgian King Leopold II committed himself to free trade and free entry of missionaries of all Christian denominations (Pakenham 1992: 247–50). Although the Protestant societies worked largely outside the orbit of the colonial administration, their presence added considerably to the supply of missionary schooling. The Belgian Catholic missionary societies actively cooperated in Leopold's colonial project. Leopold arranged land concessions to the missions in return for missionary schools focusing on agricultural training and manual labor. The fact that Leopold himself never visited his private domain for fear of catching a tropical disease (Van Reybrouck 2010) indicates how vital the development of early mission stations was to the effective occupation of the vast Congo territory. In this early period, the Catholic missionary schools were also needed to train Congolese soldiers for the army (La Force Publique), native clerks for the lower ranks in the government administration, and technicians for developing transport and communications infrastructures (Dunkerley 2009: 34–5).

The primary goal of the missions was to convert as many indigenous souls as possible. The missionary effort thus focused on the diffusion of mass education with low-quality standards and limited opportunities to enroll in a post-primary school trajectory. In the distant rural areas, mission schools were generally ungraded and managed by one or two native missionary teachers with a curriculum confined to the lower grades of primary education. Post-primary education was offered in the larger cities, but initially focused on teacher training programs in order to enlarge the group of indigenous missionary teachers. Hence, the missions were regarded as an efficient medium to "civilize" and "socialize" colonial subjects without raising a class of indigenous intellectuals who could challenge the legitimacy and authority of the colonial state. The missions also operated at

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extremely low cost to a colonial state with limited budget possibilities because of its international commitment to free trade (no customs revenues).

Education policies did not immediately change after the transition of the territory in 1908 to Belgian rule. The region witnessed a steady expansion of missionary activities and primary schooling spread accordingly, especially in the villages located along the major navigable rivers (Johnson 1967). The public call for increased government involvement in African education, endorsed by the two reports of the Phelps-Stokes committees in 1922 and 1925, increased the pressure on the Belgian colonial government to expand its education budget.[3] The 1925 project in the Belgian Congo sought to standardize the colonial primary education system in three tiers, as illustrated in Figure 7.1. The first, two-year tier focused on acquiring manual skills and work discipline. In rural areas, the education focused particularly on agricultural labor activities, while in the urban areas more attention was focused on teaching basic literacy skills. A second, three-year tier of education in the urban centers gave value to contact with Europeans by emphasizing a wider range of subjects, including French language instruction and manual skills such as carpentry or woodwork. A third, rather exclusive, two-year tier was intended to steer talented urban students toward the jobs required by the colonial economy and polity. These schools separately prepared boys for work as tradesmen, lower-rank clerks, army officials, or missionary school teachers, and the girls for domestic-agricultural tasks (Dunkerley 2009: 39–45). These reforms obviously implied a reformulation of the responsibilities of the state and the missions in educational affairs. The Catholic missions became even more indispensable to the success of the Belgian colonial project (Depaepe and van Rompaey 1995: 60–3) than they had already been, but at the same time they fiercely resisted the plan to introduce state inspection in return for additional financial support and managed to postpone the implementation of the system until 1929.

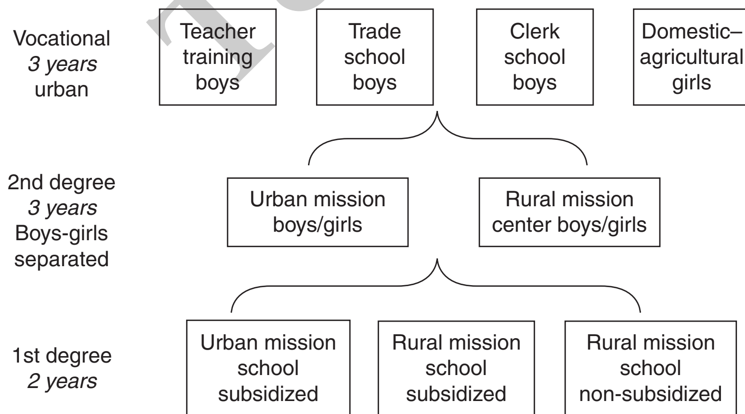

Figure 7.1 The education system in the Belgian Congo after 1925/9 (source: Author's own figure based on Dunkerley (2009: 39–45)).

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In the Netherlands Indies, the power contest between the state and the missions had been settled long before, and with a diametrically different outcome. The dominance of liberals in Dutch politics from 1848 led to a stricter policy of separation between state and church. In the last quarter of the nineteenth century, around a quarter of the students in "recognized schools" on Java and Madura attended mission schools (*zendingschool*), and in the Outer Islands the mission schools formed the majority (Hartgerink 1942: 39). Government-sponsored European schools were developed simultaneously and made accessible to children from the top layers of the Indonesian and Chinese elites. Between 1874 and 1895, the colonial government even refused to hand out any public subsidies to private mission schools (*bijzondere scholen*), in line with the policy advice dictated by the Dutch Schoolstrijd (1889–1917). In this period, the Dutch colonial government also annexed mission schools that were unable to stay in business or forced them to introduce lay education in return for continued financial support (Hartgerink 1942).

At the turn of the century a dual system of public education emerged in which the mission schools and the Islamic schools gradually gave way to publicly subsidized village schools.[4] In this dual system, European schools offered the standard Dutch curriculum to children of European and Indo-European descent. European schools prepared children for a career in the colonial administration and offered access to higher education in the Netherlands. The public schools for the common people (*Volksscholen*) served as a basic and cheap alternative to Western education (Brugmans 1938: 302–17; Lelyveld 1996), with the purpose of preparing Indonesians for a position in Indonesian society. As of 1907, the government launched a campaign to promote the development of village schools, the so-called *desa* schools, which became the major driver of increasing primary school enrollment rates between 1907 and the end of Dutch rule in 1942. Students enrolled in a three-year primary education program focused on the elementary principles of reading, writing, and calculating in the vernacular.

The possibilities for Indonesians to attain a standard Western primary education were gradually enlarged (Boone 1996). The Dutch–Chinese school (Hollands–Chinese School, HCS) emerged to prepare children of the Chinese minority for a position in the intermediary levels of business and state administration. The Dutch–Indonesian School (Hollands–Inlandse School, HIS) was founded in 1914 in response to growing discontent regarding the meager opportunities for high-quality education to Indonesians and the privileged position of the Chinese. As Figure 7.2 shows, these schools together with the so-called *schakel school* (literally "switch school") created opportunities to advance into Dutch-style secondary schools and further into tertiary education.[5] A survey from 1926 indicated that, despite the low numbers of indigenous children who eventually progressed into these higher echelons of the education system, access was certainly not restricted to the wealthiest indigenous families (Van der Veur 1969: 3).

Another important Congo–Indonesia distinction was the earlier and much stronger rise of nationalist reform movements in Indonesia, movements with outspoken educational agendas. The Muslim reform movement that took root in the

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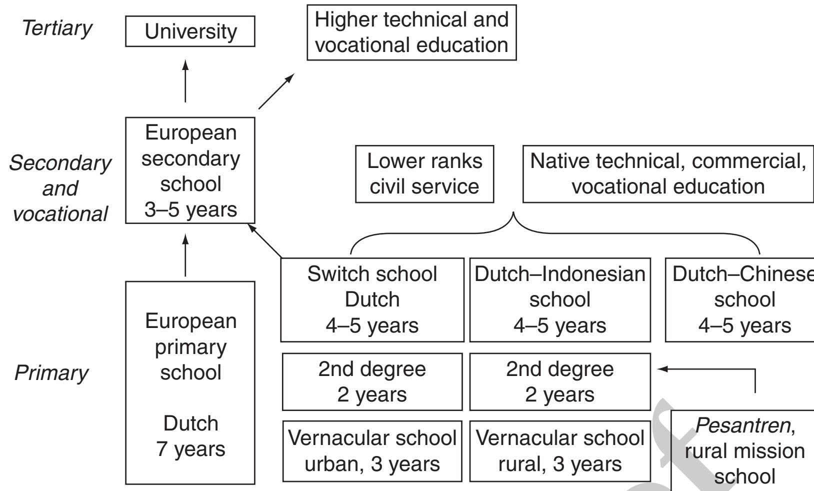

Figure 7.2 The education system in the Netherlands Indies in the 1920s (source: Author's own figure based on van der Veur (1969)).

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Minangkabau (Central Sumatra) during the 1900s provided as the basis of an influential political party (Sarekat Islam). Islamic anti-colonial ideology generated a number of new educational institutions that aimed to offer a broader training than the traditional *pesantren* (Islamic boarding schools) in order to prepare people for self-government. The leaders of the Islamic nationalists belonged almost without exception to the educated class of Islamic scholars (*ulama*) and were "teachers" of Islamic law. The rise of Islamic schools prompted a reappreciation of Christian mission schools by the Dutch colonial government, because they could help to limit the activities of Muslim missionaries in areas that were less affected by Islamic anti-colonial sentiment (Noer 1973: 162–75).

The Taman Siswa (Garden of Pupils) was another influential nationalist movement that aimed to unite and emancipate Indonesians from various social classes through a schooling campaign. The colonial government accused the Taman Siswa of spreading Communist ideology and implemented several laws in the 1920s and 1930s to prevent the spread of so-called *wilde scholen* (wild schools). These wild schools were not only beyond the control of the colonial administration; they were also suspected of teaching subversive ideas. The wild school ordinance of 1932 ruled that all teachers working in unrecognized schools should register themselves with the local authorities and undergo a "quality check" by an official state representative. This ordinance proved a formidable example of counter-productive policies; the protest against the ordinance led by the Taman Siswa became so vehement that the government had to repeal the law only a few months later and never again proposed such far-reaching measures to control the development of indigenous schooling (Tsuchiya 1987: 151–97).

The Belgian authorities also feared Islamic influence in Congolese schools, but the small size and concentration of the Islamic minority in the Eastern Province made this a more minor concern. Indigenous religious movements, such as Kimbanguism and Kitawala, were considered to be potentially far more dangerous. However, these movements differed in critical respects from those in the Netherlands Indies. They used animist rituals and mysticism to attract followers, but were essentially rooted in Catholic or Protestant orthodoxy. Second, these movements did not call for, let alone develop, their own educational institutions. The Belgian response was draconian. They suppressed these movements and forced them underground by brutal armed force. In areas where Kimbanguism gained popularity, the administration also started to establish special state-ordained schools as an alternative, prohibiting any type of religious instruction. But even the Catholic missions met with increasing suspicion as they were removing people from their traditional cultural values and, by doing so, at least to some extent supported “free-thinking” and “independent-mindedness” (Dunkerley 2009: 82–5).

Yet crucial to understanding the different features of post-colonial leadership is the twofold distinction between the education systems in the Netherlands Indies and the Belgian Congo: different opportunities of accessing post-primary education combined with different degrees of indigenous initiative in educational development at the local level. The post-independent Indonesian leaders were not only trained as university graduates in a Western education system; they were also able to tap into a deep pool of nationalist-religious ideology common to broad layers of society. Popular anti-colonial movements viewed education as the basic principle of self-determination. In the Congo, the involvement of the colonial state in schooling was evidently smaller, but its ability to contain the spread of politically subversive ideas through the education system was, paradoxically, bigger in many respects.

3 Comparing school enrollment rates, 1880–2000

A comparison of primary and post-primary school enrollment rates provides deeper insight into the effects of different educational policies on the expansion of educational access. Figure 7.3 shows the twentieth-century evolution of gross primary school enrollment rates for the 6–11 age group (the official school age in both countries during the post-independence era). The time series for the Netherlands Indies are taken from van Leeuwen (2007: 264–6). These include the enrollment of Indonesians, Europeans (mainly Dutch), and other Asians (mainly Chinese), but exclude the children enrolled in the so-called “unrecognized schools,” that is, schools which did not receive state subsidies. The bulk of these unrecognized schools *pesantren* and mosque schools (*madrasah*), offering classes in religious philosophy and spiritual training (meditation), recitation of the Koran (in Arabic), martial arts, and a variety of manual skills (Steenbrink 1974). Colonial governments were reluctant to recognize these “traditional” schools because they were regarded as breeding grounds for anti-colonial

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sentiment and were accused of paying insufficient attention to the core values of Western primary education: reading, writing (literacy), and arithmetic.[6]

For comparative purposes, a rough idea of the relative share of unsubsidized schools is necessary. Van der Wal (1963) offered an estimate of 2200 schools with an enrollment of 142,000 pupils in the late 1930s, but this figure is certainly too low because it excluded the Taman Siswa schools. Rather, this chapter combines the official enrollment rates in the unrecognized sector reported in the colonial annual accounts (*Koloniale Jaarcijfers*) of the 1880s (*c*.250,000–300,000) with Furnivall's estimate of 1938 (*c*.450,000). This figure implies that the relative share of unrecognized schools declined from approximately 75 percent to 16 percent of the official primary school enrollment estimates. The broken line for Indonesia reflects this trend.

For the Congo, the available data should be treated with even greater caution, especially for the years between 1885 and 1930, when education statistics were not collected on a systematic basis. Following the work of Liesenborghs (1939), Depaepe and van Rompaey (1995: 38, 247) estimated the number of students enrolled in 1908 at 46,000, of whom around 27,000 were enrolled in Protestant mission schools and 19,000 in Catholic ones. What seems more certain, however, is that the numbers increased spectacularly after 1908, to approximately 100,000 in 1913, 150,000 in 1921, and 350,000 in 1929. For the period

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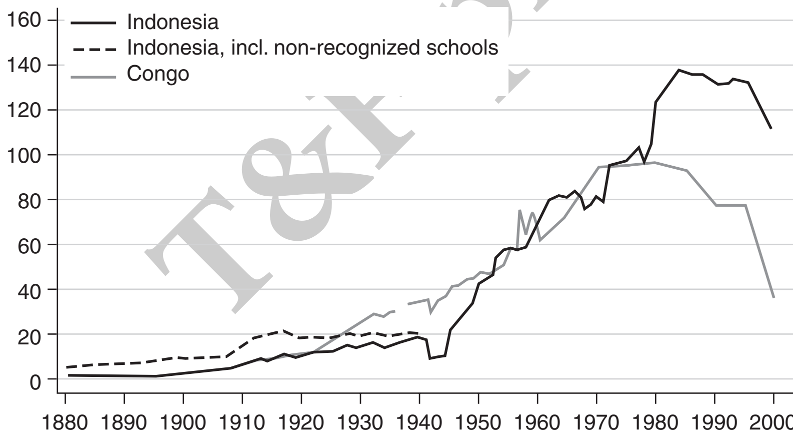

Figure 7.3 Gross primary school enrollment rates (age 6–11) in the Belgian Congo and the Netherlands Indies, 1880–2000 (sources: Indonesian enrollment rates based on van Leeuwen (2007), Furnivall (1943), and on the *Jaarcijfers voor het Koninkrijk der Nederlanden (Koloniën)* 1880–1922, and Departement von Ekonomische Zaken, *Statistisch Jaaroverzicht van Nederlandsch-Indië* 1923–39. Data for the post-1950 years is from UNESCO, *Statistical Yearbooks*, various issues 1964–99; Data for the Congo is from Depaepe and van Rompaey (1995: 247) and the *Annuaire Statistique de la Belgique et du Congo Belge*, 1911–60. Data for the post-1960 years is from UNESCO, *Statistical Yearbooks*, various issues 1964–99).

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1930–60, the Belgian *Annuaire Statistique* provided annual accounts of the number and type of schools and the number of students enrolled. For the post-colonial era, the official estimates presented in the UNESCO *Statistical Yearbooks* were used.

Another problem with the calculation of enrollment rates concerns the lack of reliable population data from the Congo. Census takers faced the impossible task of surveying immense hinterland areas with little logistical means. Moreover, the death toll due to the sleeping sickness pandemic, Leopold's aggressive rubber policies, and the drop in fertility caused by the spread of venereal diseases made it extremely difficult to estimate the size of the population on the basis of backward extrapolation from post-war census estimates (Vansina 2010: 127–49). The shortcut used here involves retroactively extrapolating the post-1950 population series with a fixed annual growth rate of 1 percent. However, changes in the assumed population growth rate (to 0.5 or 2 percent) will not alter the following general observations.

First, a dramatic collapse of school enrollment rates occurred in the Congo during the 1980s and 1990s, after a decade of stagnation in the 1970s. This decline was just one of the many tragic effects of the social, political, and economic deterioration that characterized most of Mobutu's 30-year rule. During this exact period, Indonesian gross enrollment rates started to exceed 100 percent, indicating that not only was the aim of universal primary education accomplished, but that it was also combined with a major reparation effort among higher age cohorts.

Second, Figure 7.3 shows that enrollment rates in the Belgian Congo surpassed enrollment rates in the Netherlands Indies in the three decades between 1920 and 1950. In the Belgian Congo, the expansion of enrollment followed a gradual upward trend between 1910 and 1970 with a few minor interruptions in the early 1940s and the late 1950s. In Indonesia, the colonial era was set apart from the post-colonial era by a major trend break. Before 1940, gross primary school enrollment rates did not go above 20 percent. During the years of the Japanese occupation (1942–5), enrollment rates even halved. The big push toward mass education occurred immediately after Indonesia's declaration of independence in 1945. Enrollment rates jumped from 20 percent to 80 percent of the school age population in less than two decades between 1945 and 1962.

Third, the relative success of the missionary approach in the Belgian Congo is also evident from an African comparative perspective. The Belgian Congo was part of a select group of mainly British African colonies such as Northern and Southern Rhodesia (Zambia and Zimbabwe), Nyasaland (Malawi), and Uganda where gross enrollment rates (age 5–14) were over 20 percent on the eve of World War II. This rate was higher than the British African average (18.2 percent) and much higher than the French (5.4 percent) or Portuguese African (5.3 percent) averages (Frankema 2012). Primary school enrollment in the Netherlands Indies, on the other hand, fell considerably behind those of its neighboring countries, such as British Malaya, Formosa (Taiwan), and the Philippines. In Thailand, enrollment rates were three times as high as in the Netherlands Indies (Furnivall 1943).

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Notable similarities and differences are evident in the enrollment trends in secondary and tertiary education, as displayed in Figure 7.4. In both colonies, the expansion of post-primary school attainment was limited until independence. In Indonesia, a trend break in secondary schooling occurred after the mid-1940s. In the Belgian Congo, a similar trend break in the early 1960s occurred immediately after independence. This is not to say that the number of students in secondary school was stagnant, but rather that enrollment rates hardly outpaced population growth rates. The expansion of tertiary school enrollment followed a decade later in both countries.

Although secondary education expanded a few decades earlier in Indonesia, enrollment rates did not expand faster than in the Congo. In fact, in the two decades following independence in 1945 gross secondary school enrollment rates rose from around 1 percent to 13 percent. In the Congo, the rates increased from around 1 percent in 1960 to 20 percent in 1980. The key difference is that the expansion effort continued unabated in Indonesia and even sped up during the 1970s, whereas in the Congo enrollment rates stagnated and even declined after 1980.

Another major difference occurred in the expansion of tertiary education. In Indonesia, some 10 percent of all children continued their schooling careers into the post-secondary level in the last quarter of the twentieth century. In the Congo, tertiary school enrollment rates have never exceeded 1.5 percent until the present day. A survey of long-term enrollment rates thus reveals that the missionary approach in the Belgian Congo was relatively successful in expanding primary school enrollment rates, while the development of higher education, and especially tertiary education, lagged behind. The colonial government in the

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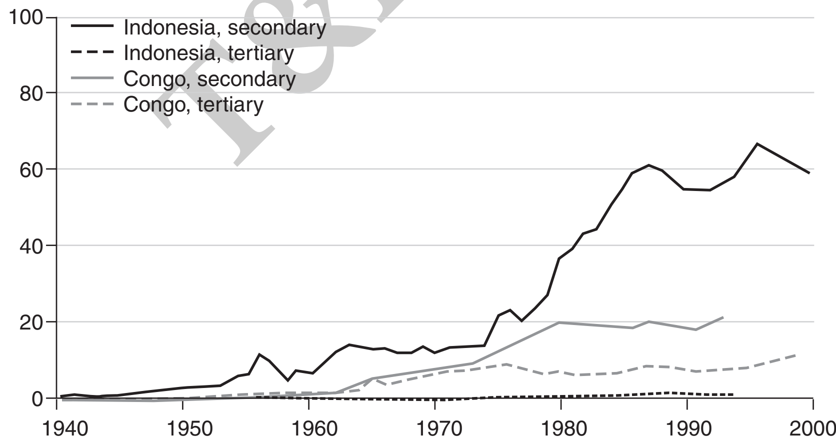

Figure 7.4 Gross secondary and tertiary enrollment rates in the Belgian Congo and the Netherlands Indies, 1940–2000 (sources: see Figure 7.3).

Note
The age groups 12–17 are used for secondary schooling, and 18–23 for tertiary schooling.

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Netherlands Indies performed moderately in expanding mass education, but compared to the Congo, the state-led education system laid a more solid foundation for access to and expansion of modern forms of higher education.

4 The success of the missionary effort in the Congo

The Congolese education system benefited from the presence of an exceptionally large number of Western missionaries. Table 7.1 shows that the number of foreign missionaries in the Belgian Congo came close to 4000 on the eve of World War II and continued to increase thereafter. To put this into comparative perspective, Oliver has estimated that the number of foreign Christian missionaries in the entire region of East Africa reached a maximum of approximately 3500 persons during the interwar years (Oliver 1962: 231–45). Foreign missionaries were of course crucial for the rapid spread of missionary schooling, but their presence also signaled comparatively favorable conditions for conversion. As argued elsewhere, the presence of foreign missionaries only made sense in areas with a revealed indigenous demand for missionary services and African demand was not self-evident (Frankema 2012). This demand for missionary services in combination with the virtual absence of institutional entry barriers sped up denominational competition. Another reason why Belgian missionary societies became actively engaged in the race against Protestant missions to conquer the "high-potential areas" had to do with the extremely strong roots of the Catholic church in Flanders, where religious intensity is comparable to that observed in Ireland and Poland. Almost every Flemish family had at least one member in a religious office and joining a mission in the Congo offered both a challenging and a prestigious opportunity to obey one's calling.

The table also shows that the number of foreign missionaries increased by a factor of 15, while enrollments rose by a factor of 37 between 1908 and 1957. This increase was only possible because of the rapidly growing involvement of native African missionaries and teachers. In 1958, no less than 6934 Protestant

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Table 7.1 Absolute numbers and indices of missionary presence and students enrolled in the Belgian Congo, 1908–57 (1938 = 100)

	1908	*1929*	*1938*	*1950*	*1957*
Foreign missionaries	500	2500*	3732	5336	7205
Index	13	67	100	143	193
School enrollment	46,000	350,000	562,851	970,372	1,718,931
Index	8	62	100	172	305

Sources: 1908 based on Stengers and Vansina (1985); 1929 from Depaepe and van Rompaey (1995); 1938–57 from *Annuaire statistique de la Belgique et du Congo Belge* (1911–60).

Notes

The 1929 number of missionaries is an estimate based on 1931 figures from *Annuaire statistique de la Belgique et du Congo Belge* (1911–60).

mission schools were in the Congo and around 1550 foreign Protestant missionaries. Most of these schools were thus run by Congolese converts. The Africanization of the missionary effort was a prerequisite for the impressive velocity and scale of expansion of primary education that occurred in the Congo.

An important factor in explaining this peculiar evolution is that the Congo was Belgium's only overseas possession.[7] Belgian citizens with overseas ambitions concentrated their efforts on the Congo, which especially appealed to Belgian Catholic missionaries. Moreover, the ratio of colonial versus metropolitan population remained low. Table 7.2 demonstrates that the metropolitan capacity, in terms of population size, made a significant difference. Indonesia was a similar "single big colony" for the Dutch, but in terms of demographic proportions, the Dutch–Indonesia relationship was more in line with the ratio of the British during the height of their imperial power.

The rather large carrying capacity of Belgian society was not confined to missionary societies. Richens has shown that in a sample of 33 African colonies in the late 1930s, the Belgian Congo had by far the highest number of European administrators: 728 against an African colonial average of 94. In British Nigeria, with more than twice as many inhabitants, the number of administrators was less than half (353) (Richens 2009: 21, 64–5). These numbers indicate a rather unusual feature of Belgian rule in Africa as they make clear how the Belgians managed to rule the single largest colonial territory in Africa without depending on indigenous representatives in the higher ranks of the state administration, the army, the judiciary, and the major companies.[8] Indeed, a policy of racial segregation is only possible with a minimum amount of settled Europeans occupying the key positions.

Johnson (1967) argued that the presence of navigable waterways also had a positive impact on the spread of missions in the Congo. She showed that the diffusion of mission stations in the Congo neatly followed the upstream courses of the Congo River and its tributaries. Water transport allowed missionaries to travel back and forth in a relatively efficient way and facilitated the delivery of the necessary supplies (school, medical, food, bibles, etc.). Many local communities lived close to a river because they depended on it economically. That the

Table 7.2 The "population support ratio" in the British, Dutch, and Belgian colonial empires, *c.*1938

	Metropolitan population (1) (× 1000)	*Colonial population (2) (× 1000)*	*Population support ratio (2/1)*
United Kingdom	47.5	358.1	7.5
Netherlands	8.7	68.3	7.8
Belgium	8.4	13.9	1.6

Source: Population data are from Maddison (2010); for the British Empire from the *Statistical Abstract for the British Empire* (1938–40).

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Congolese river system facilitated the spread of missions seems clear, but the role of such natural advantages should not be overstated, especially in view of the huge risks missionaries were willing to take by working in the tropics in the first place. Moreover, the big population centers in Indonesia were also easy to reach for foreign missionaries, but in Indonesia the institutional constraints proved decisive.

The success of the missions in spreading education had much to do with their economic efficiency and flexibility: short lines of communication, high levels of personal responsibility entrusted to the people in the field, extremely low levels of labor remuneration, and a strong, religiously motivated spirit to endure. Colonial bureaucracies worked differently, which was one reason why enrollment rates in the Netherlands Indies grew at a slower pace, despite the much longer tradition of supplying formal education in the latter colony. Bureaucracies are designed to control, to work within delineated budgets and directives, and, most important, bureaucracies are not engaged in a competitive race for converts. In the Netherlands Indies, the teachers of the *desa* schools had to fulfill a number of teacher qualifications in order to receive a state salary. Teacher training schools (*de kweekscholen*) gradually expanded, but the pool of qualified students remained small. Moreover, the state had to provide official permission for the establishment of a new school if it was to receive state subsidies to pay for qualified and salaried teachers. The required investments, inspections, and feedback procedures took time. This situation also suggests that the quality standards in the public education system in Indonesia were higher than in the Congo.

5 Comparing the quality of education

Any scholar studying the comparative development of education in the Congo and Indonesia will be struck by the enormous difference in the availability and quality of education statistics. From the late nineteenth century, the Dutch colonial government recorded the number of schools, the type of schools, the number of students in school per grade, and the percentage of children who left school with a certificate. This percentage was extremely low in the late nineteenth century but improved quickly as more children continued into the third grade (Hartgerink 1942: 88–9, 136–7).[9] The fact that this information was centrally collected indicates the degree of control exercised by the colonial administration. The mission schools in the Congo enjoyed greater freedom because they lacked a central authority imposing and monitoring prescribed curricular standards until the 1950s. Perhaps a solid system of information collection is positively correlated with higher standards of quality control, but are there any indications that this was indeed the case?

The population censuses executed in 1961 in Indonesia and in 1962 in the Congo suggested that the education system in Indonesia was more effective in raising literacy rates, despite higher enrollment rates in the Congo between 1920 and 1950. The reported Indonesian literacy rate of the population over age 15 was 42.9 percent compared to 31.3 percent in the Congo (UNESCO 1965).[10] The

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literacy rates of consecutive Indonesian age cohorts reveal a steady improvement from the first decade of the twentieth century. Ten-year age cohorts who had reached the age of 15 in the 1910s, 1920s, and 1930s showed an increase in literacy rates of respectively 5.1 percent, 6.7 percent, and 10.8 percent compared to the preceding age cohort. After the 1940s, these rates improved even faster. The cohort of children attending primary school during the 1950s had a literacy rate of 72.1 percent (observed in 1961).

A comparison of government expenditure patterns provides further insight into possible quality differences. Between 1900 and 1940, the Dutch government gradually increased its investments in education from 2 to 5 percent of the total expenditure budget. From a global comparative perspective, this share was far from impressive (Frankema 2011), but it was much more than in the Congo. Figure 7.5 shows educational expenses per head of the population converted to current US dollars using official exchange rates. Exchange rates can deviate substantially from purchasing power parities and fluctuated, especially in the 1930s, yet the size and consistency of the gap in expenditure leaves little doubt that the difference was significant indeed. Prior to 1940, expenses in the Congo remained below US$ 0.10 per head of the population, which was roughly equal to the amount spent in the Indies before 1907. Between 1910 and 1940, the Dutch colonial government spent at least five times as much. Because enrollment rates in the Netherlands Indies were lower, the differences in government expenses per student enrolled reached an average rate of ten to one in this period.

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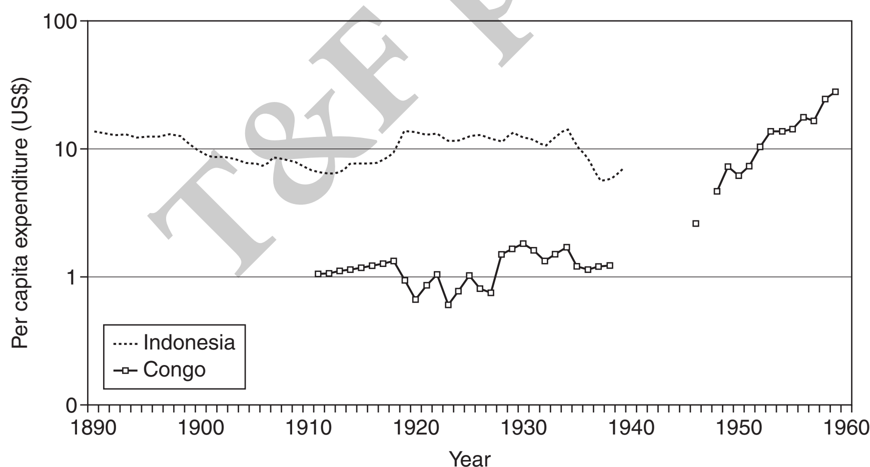

Figure 7.5 Per capita government expenditure on education in the Netherlands Indies and the Belgian Congo, 1890–1940 (in current US$) (sources: Indonesia based on Van Leeuwen (2007), including expenditure on the state level and provincial level; Congo based on the *Annuaire statistique de la Belgique et du Congo Belge* 1911–60).

Note
Dutch florins and Belgian francs have been converted to current US$ using official exchange rates.

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Although the average amount of US$ 10 per student enrolled in the Netherlands Indies was quite respectable, the distribution around the average was highly unequal. In 1929, for instance, about half of the education budget was spent on European education, which was reserved for only about 10 percent of the total enrolled (Van Leeuwen 2007). On the other hand, these government funds were increasingly absorbed by Indonesian and Chinese children as they started to outnumber the European children in the Dutch secondary schools during the 1920s (Van der Veur 1969: 14). By the late 1930s, around 75 percent of the students enrolled in post-primary education were of Indonesian or Chinese origin (Van Leeuwen 2007).

For the Belgian Congo, statistics do not allow for a breakdown between expenses on European education and subsidies to the Catholic mission schools. However, the missionary societies clearly remained the primary financiers of education at least until World War II. Protestant missions received no subsidies until 1947 and among the Catholic schools government funds were distributed rather unequally, with a strong bias toward the schools in the major urban centers. These central schools had to be better equipped because of their strategic importance; they trained the next generation of clerks and typists necessary for administrative tasks, the medical assistants, technicians, and agricultural experts necessary to develop the rural economy, and also the catechists and soldiers necessary to evangelize and secure order (Depaepe and van Rompaey 1995: 63–9).

The financial involvement of the Belgian Catholic missions in the Congo played a crucial role in the 1925 convention with the Belgian state. The Catholic schools would receive more financial support in exchange for extra efforts to spread mass education across the colony. The contract was not signed until 1929, however, because the missions rejected the proposal of state inspection to monitor the quality of missionary education. The Catholic missions eventually won this battle and extended their monopoly on the development of colonial education until 1954, just a few years before independence (Depaepe and van Rompaey 1995: 60–3).

The rise in government expenditures during the second half of the 1920s only sufficed to meet the increasing costs of enrollment expansion, especially as financial hardship increased during the interwar years. The number of mission schools and students expanded at a much faster rate than the domestically raised funds of the Christian missions. Local communities thus had to make substantial contributions in kind, such as food, clothing, and the supply of unpaid child labor on the mission fields. Agricultural work was a standard part of the curriculum in the rural mission schools and served a double purpose: it helped to teach discipline, docility, and organization, while generating an additional source of revenue to finance local missionary activities. On the other hand, the costs of Catholic mission schools could be kept at a minimum because priests and nuns went without salaries; they were only entitled to compensation for cost of living expenses.

Money makes a big difference. In the Netherlands Indies, the quality gap between the European schools (*gouvernement scholen*) and non-European

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schools was obvious to contemporary observers (Brugmans 1938). Applications to Dutch language schools were far higher than the available places. European schools could hire better-trained teachers, reduce class sizes, and buy more advanced teaching equipment. From the *Koloniale Jaarcijfers* (1934), it appears that pupil–teacher ratios were considerably lower in the European schools – in 1932–3, 31.6 pupils per teacher compared to 49.4 in the *desa* schools and 50.7 in the Dutch–Chinese schools.

In both colonies, however, the village schools, regardless of whether they were subsidized, constituted the backbone of the expansion of popular education. The key distinction between the village schools in Indonesia and the rural mission schools in the Congo relates to the secular nature of the curriculum in the former and the emphasis on religious and moral instruction in the latter. In the *desa* schools, reading and writing (in the vernacular) and arithmetic formed the core subjects. The curriculum was standardized, graded, and subject to state inspection. The primary objective of the missions in Congo was to spread Christianity. No hard evidence exists for the hypothesis that the quality of education was on average higher in the *desa* schools than in the rural mission schools in the Congo, but there are reasons to assume this was the case: children who entered a *desa* school could potentially make their way to a European university, which was unthinkable for a Congolese child.

6 Education for self-determination

Different colonial education systems shaped different contexts for post-colonial governance. This condition worked on at least three levels. First, the nationalist leaders who steered Indonesia toward independence had a distinctively better educational background than the Congolese leaders. Second, the Indonesian leaders such as Hatta and Sukarno could relate to major ideological undercurrents in society, which had a basis in indigenous education movements that were largely absent in the Congo. Third, although the numbers of university-educated were small, Indonesian leaders faced the checks and balances of an emerging intellectual class that was not entirely absent in the Congo, but certainly less developed.

The Japanese occupation of the Netherlands Indies uncovered the military and political weaknesses of the Dutch and furthered the diffusion of anti-colonial sentiment among the Indonesian population. The large-scale mobilization of Indonesian youth in the armed forces under Japanese rule connected an enormous amount of human energy to revolutionary ideas and military means of power. Moreover, the tyrannical rule of yet another foreign occupier endorsed the desire among the Indonesian people to determine their own future. In this respect, the Indonesian declaration of independence in 1945 was a logical consequence of the Japanese retreat, a consequence that the Dutch tragically failed to understand (Ricklefs 2008: 244–8).

The spirit of independence and revolution unleashed an enormous demand for schooling. Mass education now opened the doors to socio-economic mobility –

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doors that had remained closed for as long as people remembered. Job opportunities in the civil service expanded enormously and were highly attractive to students and former soldiers. Politicians were eager to hand out higher-income jobs in return for political support. The Indonesian language became the standard throughout the education system and was also used in all official communications of the state and the mass media. A major achievement of the Sukarno regime (1945–67) was the facilitation of this great expansionist wave without a complete overhaul of the system. Grade repetition and pre-completion drop-out rates remained high in primary education (around 60 percent in the 1950s), but these rates did not inhibit the influx of a rapidly growing group of students into secondary and tertiary education (Ricklefs 2008: 274–5).

Universities were established in various parts of the country, and some of the long-established institutions achieved respectable standards. The University of Indonesia (Universitas Indonesia), which was one of these top-rated academic institutes, originated as a colonial school for medical assistants established in 1851. In 1898, the colonial government transformed this school into a full-fledged medical specialist training institute, called STOVIA (School tot Opleiding van Inlandsche Artsen). The nine-year education program combined aspects of non-academic and university education. The Bandung Institute of Technology, another top institute, was the oldest technology-oriented university in Indonesia and evolved out of the Technische Hoogeschool in Bandung established in 1920.

The graduates of these institutes were to fulfill a key role in Indonesia's independence movement. Sukarno himself was a product of the Indo-European school system. His father was a village school teacher at Java. Sukarno first completed three years of primary education in the vernacular and continued at a European primary school. In 1915, he attended the Hogere Burger School (HBS), which represented the highest level of Western secondary education. In 1920, he enrolled in the Technical School in Bandung and was among the first students to graduate as an engineer in 1925. His background in Western higher education had a decisive impact on his conception of the importance of education for self-determination, both on a personal and on a political level (Giebels 1999). Mohammed Hatta, Sukarno's closest companion, pursued a similar route. After his secondary school in Batavia he traveled to the Netherlands to study economics and business at the Higher Business School in Rotterdam (currently the Erasmus University). He stayed in the Netherlands for 11 years (1921–32). During this period, he began campaigning for non-cooperation and mass action against the colonial oppressor, activities for which he was detained in the Netherlands and again later in Indonesia.

The key figures dominating the political scene during the early years of independence in the Congo had a different background. They grew up when the segregation policies were still strictly maintained. Closed access to higher offices in the colonial administration and key positions in international commerce and the mining industry restricted the need to offer higher levels of non-vocational training to the indigenous population. The intellectual development of the early

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independence leaders was largely shaped by the jobs they fulfilled in the colonial economy. Lumumba, Kasavubu, Mobutu, and Tshombe, the four figureheads of the Congo crisis (1960–5), had all attended Christian mission schools. Lumumba began his working career as a postal clerk and a traveling beer salesman. His highest qualification was a one-year course at the government post office training school (McKown 1969). Kasavubu was trained as a teacher at a Catholic missionary school. Mobutu's educational career was completed in the army, at the School for Non-Commissioned Officers in Luluaburg, where he followed a two-year course in accounting and secretarial work. He rose to be a sergeant-accountant, the highest rank attainable for an African soldier in the Congolese army in his day (Etambala 1996). Tshombe was also trained as an accountant and pursued the career of his father in the Katangese retail business sector.

Although black children began to be admitted to European secondary schools in the 1950s, their numbers remained small. Lovanium, the first university in the Congo, was founded near Leopoldville (Kinshasa) in 1954. The university admitted black students but, ironically, the first cohorts of Congolese students had not completed secondary school. In 1956, a state university was established in Elisabethville (Lubumbashi) (Mantels 2007). On the eve of independence (1960) just a handful of Congolese were enrolled in tertiary education and even fewer actually held a university degree. In 1960, 13 students were enrolled in natural sciences at the tertiary level, 18 in engineering, 71 in the medical sciences, and 26 in agricultural sciences. Together this group formed 30 percent of the total 423 students. Most of the students were enrolled in the humanities and social science faculties, not in the technical faculties. Moreover, the majority of these students were European, many about to leave the country (Mantels 2007; UNESCO 1965).

Various accounts of the negotiations for independence at the 1960 round-table conference (*ronde tafel conferentie*) in Brussels stress the gap in political cunning between the young group of Congolese representatives and the *haute coüture* of Belgium's professional politicians (Etambala 1996: 31–3; Van Reybrouck 2010: 278–80). The Congolese delegation was supported by several Belgian advisors who had had a much more advanced education than the delegates themselves. The Congolese held jobs as accountants, clerks, journalists, school teachers, and tradesmen, but only a few of them held positions that provided a deep understanding of overarching national political and economic interests. Hence, naivety was the reason why the Congolese transition government agreed with the Belgian government to dissolve the Comité Spécial du Katanga, which formally left the new Congolese state with just a minority share in the Union Minière, the biggest mining operation in the Congo (Buelens 2007), one of the many opportunities that the independent Congolese leadership missed to preserve a sound fiscal state in the long run.

At just about the time that Mobutu conquered the stage in the Congo to hold power for more than three decades (1965–97), Suharto, the army general, displaced Sukarno. Suharto stayed in power for a similar period (1967–98). Suharto and Mobutu rank among the most cruel and conscienceless dictators of the

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twentieth century. They have been responsible for mass murder and their appetite for self-enrichment has become legendary. Their methods were similar. By monopolizing the most profitable industries of the country (such as copper and oil), they managed in no time to become the wealthiest persons (see Abbeloos, Chapter 12 below). Both dictators controlled power by combining an extensive system of political patronage, firm control over the army, and a sustained threat of terror against political opponents. Both received support from the Western world (especially the US) for their outspoken anti-Communism.

However, the economic policies of Mobutu's "Mobutuism" and Suharto's "New Order" revealed sharp contrasts, not only in name. Suharto managed to combine rent extraction for his personal clientele with an impressive record of macro-economic growth, from which the vast majority of Indonesians eventually reaped the benefits. Scholars widely agree that the macro-economic policies of the Suharto government contributed positively to the structural transformation of the Indonesian economy and the rapid reduction of urban and rural poverty rates (Booth 1998; Dick *et al.* 2002; Frankema and Lindblad 2006; Hill 2000; Thee 2006; Warr 2006). With the benefit of hindsight, the start of the Suharto era in Indonesia can be regarded as a structural break with a period of recurrent inflation, increasing state debt, declining foreign exchange reserves, and prolonged economic stagnation (Glassburner 1971).

Can the success of Suharto's economic program and the failure of Mobutu's be fully explained by personal differences in economic and political cunning? This question is difficult to answer. Suharto did assemble a team of experts to get the economy back on track in a deliberate attempt to restore social order. These experts were capable of translating the New Order's development trilogy "growth, stability, and equity" into a range of clearly defined objectives focusing on achieving self-sufficiency in food production (namely rice) and, subsequently, on an intensive program of industrialization based on Indonesia's comparative advantages (Thee 2006). Suharto benefited not only from the available necessary expertise of university-trained economists, but also, at a much broader level, from the existence of a class of entrepreneurs sufficiently equipped with knowledge and organizational capacities to realize the potential of modern technology in the major sectors of the economy. So it seems that the Indonesian education system had prepared Indonesian society for rapid development in the technical and economic realm.

Mobutu was aware of the importance of restoring economic stability for political survival in his early years and, like Suharto, squandered huge amounts of money on megalomaniac projects (such as dams, steel mills, and an aircraft industry) that never produced the envisaged return. But unlike Suharto, Mobutu was known for his distrust of intellectuals, which some biographers have attributed to his removal from secondary school after extending his holidays without permission (Zinzen 2010: 8). Mobutu allowed the education system to collapse with the fiscal state, and the education system did not have the capacity to resist, let alone to challenge, the personal power of a man who, over the years, became increasingly detached from reality and managed to pull the rest of the country

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into chaos with him. One cannot help but think that the virtual absence of any checks on Mobutu's power (except for international, namely Western, pressure that was deliberately kept minimal for political reasons) could only have occurred in a country where the basis of democratic control through intellectual leadership was so weak.

7 Conclusion

This chapter has offered a comparative analysis of the evolution of the colonial education systems in the Congo and Indonesia by arguing that the difference between the state-based education system in Indonesia and the mission-based system in the Congo was not impressive at the primary level. The average quality of education may have been better in Indonesia because of higher and more reliable budgets, teacher training programs, and curricular control, but enrollment expansion was more rapid in the Congo. The key differences were twofold. First, in Indonesia, access to higher forms of education was open to a small class of privileged Indonesians, while the doors remained strictly shut to even the brightest Congolese children after one or two years of secondary education. Second, in the wake of early nationalist tendencies, indigenous communities were allowed, within certain boundaries, to establish their own schools. Indonesian schooling movements, such as Taman Siswa, partly testified to a higher degree of political consciousness in the 1920s than was present in the Congo in the 1950s, and partly also to a less repressive response to the emergence of (presumed) anti-colonial and nationalist movements; the Dutch tolerated more not because they wanted to, but because they were forced to.

The prominent leaders of Indonesian independence, Sukarno and Hatta, had enjoyed a substantially better education than any of the Congolese independence leaders, but this does not automatically translate into different post-colonial economic policies. Mobutu's lack of understanding, or perhaps his unwillingness to understand, the prerequisite of solid debt management for the long-term stability of a national economy was in many ways comparable to Sukarno's blindness to the economic mechanisms behind hyperinflation. Under Sukarno, the economy and parts of the state administration fell into disarray, especially during the 1960s. However, the Indonesian education system did not collapse. Surprisingly, in retrospect, Suharto was able to bring the Indonesian economy quickly back on track, helped by a team of highly trained economic experts. Equally surprisingly in retrospect, Mobutu remained in power for more than 30 years in a state system that stopped providing even the most basic services to the common people. Only a few other countries in the world (such as Afghanistan, Somalia, and Haiti) have witnessed a similar collapse of their education systems, a collapse which has been detrimental to socio-economic progress in all of these countries. Whether this would have happened if a significant part of the Congolese elite had gained access to higher education and higher administrative offices is difficult to know, but it surely would have made this scenario less likely.

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Notes

1 I would like to thank all the participants of the workshops in Utrecht (December 2010) and Antwerp (October 2011) for their comments on earlier drafts of this chapter. I am grateful for financial support from the Dutch Science Foundation (NWO) to my VENI-research project on *The Colonial Origins of Inequality*.
2 The policy document is available online: www.abbol.com/ (see under "schoolbooks project," then under "Legislation and Curricula") (accessed 4 October 2011).
3 Phelps-Stokes is a privately funded non-profit organization based in New York, established by one of the first female philanthropists, Caroline Phelps-Stokes. The organization aimed to bridge intercultural differences and to improve the social and economic conditions of underprivileged communities and societies in and outside America, especially through educational development. The Phelps-Stokes fund was invited by the British Colonial Office to send a commission to investigate educational conditions in West, South, and Equatorial Africa. The reports of this and the second (1924) Phelps-Stokes Commissions to Africa provided the foundation of interwar British colonial education policy in Africa, but also affected policy debates elsewhere. See Jones (1922, 1925).
4 In the first decade of the twentieth century, the colonial government deliberately transferred part of its educational responsibility to the missions in some of the Outer Islands, such as the Moluccas, under the promise of state subsidies (Hartgerink 1942).
5 Dutch secondary education in the Netherlands Indies basically offered two types. The MULO (Meer Uitgebreid Lager Onderwijs) offered a lower-level, non-vocational sequel to primary education, and the HBS (Hogere Burger School) catered for the higher-level students.
6 The Christian mission schools were also criticized for their focus on religious education, but to a lesser extent.
7 After World War I, Belgium also acquired the mandate over Ruanda-Urundi, granted by the newly established League of Nations.
8 This is not to say that the Belgians adopted a model of full-scale direct rule. In the provinces, indigenous African leaders were either respected or appointed to rule and take care of local affairs.
9 These statistics also reveal that the *desa* schools on Java and Madura performed significantly better than in the Outer Islands.
10 The gender distribution of literacy was unequal in both countries: 57.2 percent male versus 29.6 percent female in Indonesia and 49 percent male versus 14 percent female in the Congo.

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