

GENDER IDEOLOGY AND EDUCATIONAL DISADVANTAGES IN INDONESIA

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ABSTRAK

Di Indonesia, meskipun angka pendaftaran sekolah terus meningkat, namun angka *drop out* terutama di kalangan anak perempuan masih merupakan isu utama. Ketidaksetaraan gender di bidang pendidikan ini perlu mendapat perhatian. Dalam makalah ini, gender perspektif digunakan untuk mengamati ketidaksetaraan pendidikan bagi kaum perempuan dan bagaimana hal tersebut dapat terjadi. Paper ini mengemukakan argumen bahwa peran gender yang ditanamkan oleh sosial budaya yang dominan dalam hal ini patriakal dinormalisasikan dalam lingkungan keluarga, diperparah oleh keterbatasan ekonomi, dan kemudian tercipta kembali di lingkungan pembelajaran pada gilirannya akan membawa kaum perempuan pada ketidaksetaraan dalam bidang pendidikan.

Key words: drop out rates, gender, gender inequality

INTRODUCTION

Education is not only central to improve the quality of life for men and women, old or young, but is also a fundamental human right. Further, education is the primary vehicle for women not only to build basic skills, but also to enable them to play a role in bringing about equitable social and economic development. Around the world, government agencies and local non government organizations continue to concentrate their efforts on increasing the enrolment of girls in school. In Indonesia, every citizen is legally guaranteed their fundamental right to education. The Indonesian government is also fully aware that education is a way to progress and has therefore identified education as one of the most important platforms in its national development process. Indonesia has participated in many international forums which promote education such as the United Nations,

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Education for all (EFA) conference in 1990 and the establishment of Millennium Development Goals (2000). In 1994 Indonesia legislated to make nine years of basic education compulsory. This consists of six years of elementary (*Sekolah Dasar/SD or Madrasah Ibtidaiyah /MI*) and three years of junior secondary school (*Sekolah Menengah Pertama/SMP or Madrasah Tsanawiyah/MTs*). Currently, the Asian Development Bank (ADB) records that Indonesia with 93 percent of Net Enrolment Rates.¹ To be on track in achieving universal primary education enrolment rates. However, enrolment rates are not accurate indicators of school retention. High dropout rates, particularly among girls, remain a major issue. With low educational achievements, young women face barriers in entering the labour market and experience limited economic opportunities later in life. Further, girls with limited or no formal education will be excluded from the employment market as they have few marketable skills. The most widely possible available work for girls who have only finished elementary or lower secondary school is domestic work. Entering this sector puts a stop to girls' opportunity to gain further education. This condition will shape the quality and development of human resources in the future.

The Indonesia Human Development Report notes that despite the great majority of children being enrolled, only about half finish the compulsory nine years of education² Further, although the ADB report does not quantify drop out rates, it states that girls' dropout rates are higher. Data from the Ministry of Education shows that in both primary and junior secondary school, for every 10 children who drop out, six are girls and four are boys. At senior secondary school, the gender gap widens slightly: three boys drop out for every seven girls.³ In Indonesia, the Gender Statistics in Education 2000-2004 shows that around 1.8 million children of primary school age (7-12) years, and 4.8 million children aged 13 to 15 years are not in school. Furthermore, there is a disparity in mean years of schooling: girls

¹Asian Development Bank (ADB), *Indonesia country gender assessment*, (Manila: 2006), p. 8.

²BPS-Statistics Indonesia, Bappenas, UNDP Indonesia, *National human development report, the economics of democracy: financing human development in Indonesia*, (Indonesia: 2004), p. 35.

³United Nations International Children Education Fund (UNICEF), 'Fact sheet of girls' education in Indonesia', 2007, p. 1.

have 6.5 years, while boys average 7.6 years.⁴ Clearly, there is significant gender inequality in access to education, and accordingly, it is important to examine the factors influencing drop out rates.

So, this paper argues that it is important to decode gender bias as this contributes to the withdrawal of girls from education. And then, socio-cultural perspective, economic constraint and gender ideology are considered as factors which contribute to the high dropout rates among girls in Indonesia. In order to discuss the matter, in this paper examine three areas of gender relations; the family, society and the classroom. However, these divisions should not be considered separate, as they intersect.

SOCIO-CULTURAL FRAMEWORK AND EDUCATIONAL DISADVANTAGES

Research suggests discrimination against women in Indonesia is lower than in neighbouring countries such as India and China, and also lower than in other mostly Muslim nations such as Pakistan or Bangladesh. According to Dube in Frankenberg *et. al.*, there is no tradition demanding that women take care of elder parents, though in some groups, the responsibility for parental support goes to the younger daughter.⁵ Nor is there a fixed tradition that after marriage a girl should follow her husband as there is in India.

However, Hsin states that girls especially in rural areas, face a number of socio-cultural challenges that influence their educational levels.⁶ According to Ismawati, in Javanese culture, and filtering across all culture in Indonesia, there is an assumption that it is unnecessary for women to enter higher education, because they will end up as wives,

⁴Ministry for Women's Empowerment of the Republic of Indonesia, *Gender Statistics in Education 2000-2004*, (Jakarta: MENEG PP, 2007), p. 1.

⁵Frankenberg et al, 'Health, education, and the economic crisis in Indonesia', paper presented for the 1999 Population Association of America meetings, New York, March 25-27, 1999, p. 12.

⁶Hsin, 'Children's time use: labor divisions and schoolings in Indonesia', on line working paper series, California Center for Population Research CCPR-005-05, University of California, Los Angeles, 2005, p. 4.

mothers and housewives.⁷ Similar statements are also expressed by Pulungsih which shows the common opinion among society which considered women just as having domestic roles.⁸ Further, the CEDAW Working Group Initiatives (CWGI) 2005 report on the implementation of CEDAW in Indonesia, states that traditional values in Indonesia determine that the main role of women is in the domestic sphere.⁹ Suyanto and Karnaji in their study in eight regions in rural East Java note that girls are socialized to be involved in and responsible for domestic work.¹⁰ This socialization can lead to a division of labour where girls perform child care and housework, while boys work on the family farm.. Kevane and Levine also show that rather than attending school, the first daughters often assist their mothers with child care and domestic tasks, despite differences in ethnographic backgrounds.¹¹ Further, Desai and Jain (in Hsin) comment that such tasks place greater demands on girls' time, as rural households commonly lack infrastructure such as access to clean drinking water or electricity.¹² Further, Hsin's analysis of children's time use in Indonesia through time diaries and shows that girls spend more time in household work than boys. On the whole, 89 percent of girls perform domestic chores compared to 54 percent of boys. Girls spend an average of 1.28 hours carrying out domestic tasks while boys spend only 0.68 hours per day performing their work. Girls spend almost double the time in household work that boys do, and fewer boys are required to perform such work. So, gender differentiation has been introduced and traced early in the lives of Indonesian children.

⁷Ismawati, *Transformasi Perempuan Jawa*, (Surakarta: Pustaka Cakra, 2005), p. 34.

⁸Pulungsih, 'Pemberdayaan pendidikan perempuan', *Info Dikdasmen* Vol. 15, No. 2, 2006, p. 3.

⁹CEDAW Working Group Initiative (CWGI) 'Implementasi konvensi penghapusan segala bentuk diskriminasi terhadap perempuan (CEDAW) di Indonesia,' 2005, p. 40.

¹⁰Suyanto and Karnaji, 'Pola belajar dan factor penyebab siswa yang tinggal kelas dan drop out di jenjang pendidikan dasar, *Journal Penelitian Dinamika Sosial*, 2004, p. 259.

¹¹Kevane and Levine, 'The changing status of daughters in Indonesia', Institute for Research on Labour and Employment, Working Paper series, University of California, Berkeley, 2000, p. 20.

¹²Hsin, *op. cit.*, p. 6.

Another cultural value which disadvantages women is the perception of girls' vulnerability and need to be protected. To some extent, Oey-Gardiner argues that that boys have more freedom to travel to schools at a distance is still applied by parents in rural areas, despite some improvements in transport.¹³ Parents are more worried about their daughters' moral integrity and this discourages girls being sent to school.¹⁴ These data might be a bit out of date, however, a study by Sinta, a worker from Education Network for Justice (*Jaringan Pendidikan untuk Keadilan*), in Raja Ampat, Papua shows the same fact that distance and cost are the main barriers to children's education. If there is no school in their area, children have to travel by boat to another island which has a school. Further, there is no government funded boat to get children to school, and if the tide is high, it is impossible for them especially girls to travel.¹⁵ In Tiara Village, Muara Uya South Kalimantan, primary school is only available until year three. If students want to continue to year four, they have to walk one to three km up and down hill to the nearest school which serves year four up to year six students.¹⁶ In such circumstances, girls who are regarded as vulnerable are greatly limited in access to education. There are fewer lower secondary schools than primary schools. Eighty-eight percent of villages in rural areas had a primary school, but only 26 percent and eight percent had junior and senior secondary school respectively. Moreover, senior high schools are usually located at some distance from villages and not every district has a senior secondary school.¹⁷ In Nain Island, North Sulawesi for example, there is no lower or upper secondary school at all. And accordingly this condition has led to high rates of illiteracy and dropout among girls. There are many other areas in Indonesia which are very

¹³Oey-Gardiner, 'Gender differences in schooling in Indonesia' *Bulletin of Indonesian Economic Studies*, Vol. 27, No. 1, 1991, p. 66.

¹⁴Parker, 'Engendering school children in Bali', *The Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute*, Vol. 3, No. 3, 1997, p. 509.

¹⁵*Kompas*, 'Indonesia dikhawatirkan tidak bisa capai target pendidikan dasar', 25 June 2005.

¹⁶*Banjarmasin Post*, 'Kiat guru terpencil bujuk anak agar sekolah', 03 September 2007.

¹⁷Suryadarma et al., 'From access to income: regional and ethnic inequality in education', A paper from the SMERU Research Institute, with support from AusAID and the Ford Foundation, 2006, p. 5.

remote, so it is geographically difficult for people to access education. As a result, it becomes an obstacle for the state to provide education for people. In combination with poverty, transport costs can act as significant barriers for children in isolated rural areas to continue their education. This means that if the next level school is available nearby, parents are more likely to send their daughters to school. However, schools in rural and isolated areas tend to be of low quality.¹⁸ For girls in remote or rural areas, the challenge of location and distance from schools intersect with lack of transport to exclude girls from education. Such factors are in conflict with the cultural injunction to monitor girls in order to ensure their moral and sexual integrity is protected.

Consequently, parents fear rumours about their daughters will arise if they are not under supervision and do not want their daughters to acquire bad reputations as these adversely affect girls' marital prospects. The social requirement in Indonesia, as in many Asian settings, that a husband has at least the same level of education as a prospective wife, means that it takes time to find an appropriate match.¹⁹ This results in parents arranging marriages for their daughters which commonly at a very young age.²⁰ Even though nationally the median age of first marriage of Indonesian women in 2003 was 19 years, Heratni's research in West Java confirms the occurrence of early marriage. In the areas of her study, parents marry off their daughters at around 13 to 15 years old in order to avoid the stigma of daughters being referred to as 'old maids'.²¹ Akhmadi in his study of the Madurese community in Pontianak, observes that the traditional practice of daughters marrying after graduating from primary school is widespread.²² In West

¹⁸Jones & Hagul, 'Schooling in Indonesia: crisis related and longer-term issues', *Bulletin of Indonesian Economic Studies*, Vol. 37, No. 2, 2001, p.212.

¹⁹Malhotra, 'Gender and timing of marriage: rural-urban differences in Java', *Journal of Marriage and the Family*, Vol. 59, No. 2, 1997, p. 439.

²⁰Subrahmanian, 'Gender and education, a review of issue for social policy', Social Policy and Development Programme Paper No. 9, United Nations Research Institute for Social Development, 2002, p. 16.

²¹Heratni, 'Family planning decision making : case studies in West java Indonesia', Paper presented at 12 Biennial Conference Population and Society: issues, research, policy, 15-17 September 2004, Canberra, Australia, 2004, p. 4.

²²Akhmadi, 'Kesenjangan akses terhadap pendidikan dasar,' SMERU Newsletter, No. 16, 2005, p. 20.

Nusa Tenggara, according to Zaini Arony, Head of Education, Youth and Sport Section in the region, the practice of *merarik* (elopement) is one of the factors that prohibit girl students from completing nine years of compulsory education. In 2002/2003 there were 20 girl students of junior secondary schools in East Lombok and Central Lombok that withdrew from school just one night before examinations due to *merarik*.²³ Suyanto and Karnaji's research in East Java also confirms the existence of early marriage. Early marriage is common even below the age at which girls are permitted to marry: 12-13 years. Girls of this age have not finished elementary school. Girls in rural Indonesia are more likely to marry early than urban girls, 28 percent to 18 percent respectively in 2002.²⁴ Undeniably, economic restrictions lead to cases of early marriage, because many parents in rural areas believe that marrying off their daughters will lighten their economic burden. The responsibility for cost to support the daughter will be transferred to the husband. Early marriage actually functions as a form of survival for rural families living in poverty.

Early marriage therefore negatively impacts on girls' education. According to Singh and Samara the expectation that motherhood will be the focus of their lives exists at the expense of formal education or training for employment. Levine and Ames argue that once girls are removed from school, they rarely go back.²⁵ Furthermore, CWGI observes that state schools in Indonesia elementary, lower secondary or upper secondary prohibit married women and pregnant women from continuing their studies, but do not provide alternative pathways for women to continue to study.²⁶ This regulation discriminates against women, thereby greatly limiting their future economic opportunities. Gender is itself an obstacle for women, but socio-cultural factors are complicated further by economic factors to disadvantage girls education opportunities.

²³*Kompas*, "Merarik", melaksanakan adat atau penyingkiran hak perempuan", 7 February 2005.

²⁴ADB, *op. cit.* p. 3..

²⁵Levine and Ames, 'Gender bias and the Indonesian financial crisis: were girls hit hardest?', Center for International and Development Economics Research, 2003, p. 5.

²⁶CWGI, *loc. cit.*

ECONOMIC CONSTRAINTS

Access to quality education is surely is affected by socio-economic conditions. The wealthy commonly have better access than the poor. In Indonesia, the problems due to economic hardship was serious. According to National Statistics (2006), the poor people in Indonesia comprised almost 39.05 million people. A survey of female domestic workers conducted by Human Rights Watch (2005) showed that it was the cost of education that made them drop out before completing the compulsory nine years of school.

In the Indonesian context, Cameron in Kevana & Levine found persistent unequal treatment of girls among agricultural households especially during the economic crisis. Girls 12 to 17 years old were more likely to be withdrawn from school than boys.²⁷ During 1997 economic crisis, it was found that families with school age girls reduced their spending on education in response to crop losses, while families of school age boys did not. Thus, accordingly girls' dropout rate is higher especially among disadvantaged families. So, selective education, a condition where some children attend school while others have to stay home to help with household work or to earn money, is a common practice in developing countries.²⁸

Ignoring girls' educational needs can be a form of 'survival' for parents, because while parents may wish to educate all of their children, financial limitations often force them into choosing precisely who can attend school.²⁹ Further, they need to keep some at home to manage domestic and agricultural tasks. However, despite these compelling justifications, decisions to confine girls to the home are gendered. Dominant stereotypes for women normalise domestic works as responsibility of women. As Subrahmanian says, 'gender and economic disadvantage intersect to provide forceful constraints against female education relative to male education'.³⁰ In a similar vein Rothchild argues that 'economic

²⁷Kevana & Levine, *op. cit.*, p. 16.

²⁸Rankin and Aytax, 'Gender inequality is schooling: the case of Turkey', *Sociology of Education*, Vol. 79, No. 1, 2006, p. 28.

²⁹Nussbaum, 'Women's education: a global challenge', *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society*, Vol. 29, No. 2, 2003, pp. 340-341.

³⁰Subrahmanian, *op. cit.*, p. 12.

constraints-push gender constraints further'.³¹ This is the result of cultural values which tend to assert that it is unnecessary for women to study to the highest possible level, so when the families have limited resources, boys are prioritised, or girls are withdrawn first. Low female participation in education, including high dropout or early withdrawal rates and irregular attendance as the result of parental decision-making. Such decisions are manifestations of parental preferences in educating sons or daughters. Although economic factors influence these decisions, the socio-cultural framework that determines girls' roles contributes to this inequality.

Along with problems of primary schooling in remote areas, transition to lower secondary school is a problem for many of the poor in Indonesia. There are high costs associated with sending children to lower secondary school. The cost of schooling for poor families is particularly high, comprising between 20 to 30 percent of family income.³² and it becomes more expensive especially for higher levels of schooling. Jones estimates that the cost of educating children in lower secondary school is almost two and a half times the cost of primary school. This consists of school fees, transport costs, uniforms, food, and books and stationery.³³ The distance of school from home, also creates a barrier because transport costs in addition to morality considerations contributes to girls withdrawing. Additionally, as NGOs and University professors told Human Rights Watch that textbooks in school change yearly and this places additional burdens on families who have to buy new books for each child.³⁴ Under these very difficult economic conditions, even when parents want to ensure their children attain higher educational levels, they are obliged to prioritise daily necessities over education

Moreover, most poor families with heavy economic burdens depend on their children's involvement in income generating activities.

³¹Rothchild, *Gender trouble makers, education and empowerment in Nepal*, (London: Routledge, 2006), p. 92.

³²Herz & Sperling, *What works in girls' education: evidence and policies from the developing world*, (USA: The Council on Foreign Relation Inc., 2004), p. 42.

³³Jones, 'Strategies and achievements in expanding lower education enrolments: Thailand and Indonesia', Asian Meta Centre Research paper series No. 13, Asia Meta Centre for Population and Development Analysis, 2003, p. 21.

³⁴Human Rights Watch, 'Always on call: Abuse and exploitation of child domestic workers in Indonesia', vol. 17, no. 7 (c), 2005, p. 44.

As a consequence, it would be very difficult to have them send their children to school because this consumes their children's time from early in the morning till midday, reducing household income as a result. Children in Pontianak (in West Kalimantan) help their parents by working in plantations, tapping rubber in the forest, or looking after siblings while parents work.³⁵ This is common in plantation region and rural areas, especially if these areas offer unskilled jobs. Hence participation in basic compulsory education in these areas is very low

The research reveals that as in many other developing countries, in Indonesia the case of children who work part-time, is mostly a rural phenomenon with rates of child labour almost three times higher than in urban areas. Furthermore, this research shows that the incidence of child labour is higher among boys than girls. However, this does not accurately reflect the real share of work performed by girls because labour is defined as 'activities intended to generate income'. So, activities performed mostly by girls such as housework, and child care are not counted as labour. Additionally, it also does not include the '*ngenger*', a tradition in Java and East Nusa Tenggara as well, which boys or girls from poor families live with more prosperous relatives with the promise that they will be sent to school in return for helping with the household work.³⁶ Parents perceive at least two benefits from this custom; reducing economic burdens related to food and accommodation, and the hope that children will have the opportunity to continue their schooling.³⁷ However this is not always the case, as it depends on the goodwill of the host family. This concept is not restricted just to children living with relatives, but other prosperous families as well. This results in children becoming domestic workers for the wealthy. In Indonesia, domestic workers are not considered *pekerja* or workers but, *pembantu* or helpers. In 2002-2003, of 2.6 million domestic workers 34.83 percent were children and 93 percent of those were girls under the age of 18.³⁸ The reason for such large numbers of girls working in these roles is

³⁵Priyambada, Suryahadi, and Sumarto, 'What happened to child labor in Indonesia during the economic crisis? The trade-off between school and work', A paper from the SMERU Research Institute, with support from AusAID and the Ford Foundation, 2002, p. 20.

³⁶Human Rights Watch, *op. cit.*, p. 9-10.

³⁷Jones, *op. cit.*, p. 22.

³⁸Human Rights Watch, *loc. cit.*

that domestic work is considered as 'natural' women's work. According to Human Rights Watch, girls are in great demand because they can be hired at lower rates than adults and can be 'easily managed'. Impoverished and uneducated girls therefore end up in unskilled and lower paid work, further entrenching disadvantage. If women are unable to continue their education due to poverty, their employment opportunities limit them to work that reinforces their poverty. However, economic circumstances alone can not explain girls' high dropout rates.

GENDER IDEOLOGY AND THE STATE EDUCATION SYSTEM

Education not only plays an important role in the teaching of literacy and numeracy, but also functions as a medium to transfer state ideology including gender ideology. The reproduction and enforcement of gender ideology in society may take place in the formal school system through the selection process in access to education, the curriculum, the way that subjects are taught, and the kinds of knowledge girls and boys receive³⁹. Furthermore, Leach also states that as the school curriculum strengthens the 'political order', so proposed changes to it will often be challenged. A study by of a number of teachers in Jakarta indicates that teachers are unaware that they treat boys and girls differently.⁴⁰ Even those teachers who are aware of the need for gender equality in their teaching practice performed and reproduced gender ideology. It seems little has been done to remove gender bias in education. Almost 22 years ago Logdson (1985) pointed out that gender bias existed in Indonesian textbooks. In 1990, the United Nations Economic and Social Council recommended that governments revise gender biased textbooks by 1995.⁴¹ The Indonesian government has re-evaluated some school textbooks which admittedly contain gender bias, but these efforts are considered inadequate as according to the CWGI, gender bias continues to exist across the curriculum. There has been no

³⁹ Leach, *Practising gender analysis in education*, Oxfam GB, UK 2003, p. 89.

⁴⁰ Rostiawati, 'Antara kenyataan yang dipelajari apakah dunia pendidikan mengikuti zaman?', Paper presented in Seminar of Education for Women, conducted by Rahima in Jakarta 5 January 2005, p. 2.

⁴¹ Stromquist, 'Gender sensitive educational strategies and their implementation', *Int. J. Educational Development*, Vol. 17, No. 2, 1997, p. 207.

significant improvement in the curriculum in subjects such as *Bahasa Indonesia*, history and civic education. The government enacted National Education System (*Sisdiknas*) Law no 20, 2003 in an effort to address gender inequality (article 4 and 5) but at all levels, the curriculum continues to be gender biased.

Parker's analysis of pictures in textbooks of both Balinese and Indonesian language found distinct gendered social roles that reflect state gender ideology. Men are placed in the public-political world, while women manage the private-domestic world.⁴² Suryandaru also found that in elementary school textbooks, traditional gender roles are promoted to students. He concludes that men dominate the public domain and are engaged in productive activity, whereas women occupy the private domain either in productive or traditional women's roles such as housewives, secretaries, or nurses⁴³. Results of a study conducted by The Women's Studies Centres of the State University of Semarang and the State University of Surakarta indicate that gender bias in teaching materials is found in almost all subjects including Math, *Bahasa Indonesia*, *PPKn* (civic education), and English.⁴⁴ Astiatun in *Kompas* also found gender bias in two *Bahasa Indonesia* textbooks, published by Erlangga and Balai Pustaka. In both books, she found that women are illustrated mostly in domestic sphere.⁴⁵ Despite it being 22 years since Logdson demonstrated the existence of gender biased teaching materials, it still persists in Indonesian textbooks. Not only do texts and pictures imply gender bias, they also manipulate women's real roles. In math books, women are represented as having no rights to land despite women's land and property rights existing in law and culture.⁴⁶ Gender bias is not only found in national curriculum materials, but also in the in the local curriculum. This consists of subjects added by each province according to their local needs, most commonly language and vocational subjects. A study of the local curriculum, *Bahasa Dayak* (Dayak Language) in Central Kalimantan, found evidence of gender

⁴²Parker, *op. cit*, p. 502.

⁴³Suryandaru, 'Diseminasi bias jender lewat buku ajar', *Kompas*, 23 September 2002.

⁴⁴*Suara Merdeka*, 'Pendidikan perempuan masih tersisih', 17 June 2004.

⁴⁵Astiatun, 'Bias gender dalam wacana buku teks', *Kompas*, in *Kompas* 5 May 2003.

⁴⁶*Kompas*, 'Dari bias gender menuju keadilan gender' 08 September 2000.

segregation: men are in public roles while women continue to be relegated to the private sphere.⁴⁷ Commonly, gender bias found in textbooks takes four forms: productive roles for men and reproductive roles for women; men dominate public sphere activities and women are placed in domestic sphere activities; men are the decision-makers and women are subordinate in the decision-making process; 'masculine' identity include courage and intellectual activity, while 'femininity' encourages girls to be beautiful, obedient and caring. Not only does gender bias exist in Indonesian textbooks, but it strengthens the gender gap as well.

Parker argues that gender differentiation in the classroom is actively employed by teachers and/or voluntarily by students themselves.⁴⁸ For example in cleaning-up brigades, girls sweep and boys hoe; segregation also occurs in sports and handicrafts: boys make cigarette-boxes while girls make embroidered cloths. Furthermore, Leach argues seating arrangements can also convey messages about gender roles. In most Indonesian classroom, girls sit at the front where they are very obedient, and boys at the back where they can easily talk and play. Parker observes that in Balinese classrooms, the girls are only 'physically in the foreground but educationally in the background'.⁴⁹ Because of their obedience, girls tend to learn without much attention from teachers, while boys actively challenge knowledge and receive more attention from the teacher. Parker relates this to socialization. Like most other societies, Indonesian girls are expected not to talk too much and their muteness is a part of 'gendered codes both of civility and of sexual morality'.⁵⁰ Gender roles promoted by the dominant socio-political framework are normalised within families and reproduced in classroom resources and teaching practice.

Muthali'in's study and observation of two schools in Central Java reveals gender segregation both in the process of teaching and learning as well as time outside of study as in flag-raising ceremony, where it is always a girl who brings the flag, while boys are the heads of the ceremony, who raise the flag. Extra-curriculum in school or activities also differentiates

⁴⁷*Kalteng Post*, 'Ada muatan lokal berkontribusi terhadap kesenjangan gender', 21 October 2006.

⁴⁸Parker, *op. cit*, p. 504.

⁴⁹Leach, *op. cit*, p 580.

⁵⁰Parker, *op. cit*, p. 508.

between boys and girls. Boys are trained in *silat* (a traditional martial art in Indonesia) to increase confidence, strength and leadership skills. Even if boys learn to dance, boys and girls are trained in different kinds of dancing suitable for their gender⁵¹. This differentiation is also confirmed by an article in *Kompas*, which says that girls' extra-curricular activities consist of cooking or dancing so that they will be able to entertain and perform domestic tasks. In other words, gender bias is normalised, so that gender roles are naturalised.

CONCLUSION

Clearly, girls from rural areas are disadvantaged in their opportunities to remain at school due to socio-cultural values and societal perception of their vulnerability. These disadvantages are exacerbated by poverty which results in parents prioritizing boys and withdrawing girls from school. In addition, the school setting reinforces cultural gender bias in the curriculum, teaching materials, and teaching practice. This bias in the school system does not directly cause girls to drop out but certainly it affects girls' self image and ambitions to study further. This bias is internalized by girls and leads them to the belief that men and women occupy different spheres in life, resulting in girls self segregating in their future career choices. Oey-Gardiner's research shows many girls aged 13 to 15 claim that they have sufficient education in giving reasons why they dropout. Girls' low expectations are partly reflected in the decrease in girls' participation at senior high school and higher education, and in their self-segregation in choosing vocational education⁵². Girls' life opportunities are limited as a result of cultural and political ideologies that interact to produce and reproduce gender inequality. Further, poverty and under-resourcing of education in remote and rural areas entrench gender inequality. Indonesia, therefore, faces significant challenges in improving access to education for girls in order to meet its commitment to reach the goal of Education for All. []

⁵¹Muthali'in, *Bias gender dalam pendidikan*, (Surakarta: University Press, 2001), p. 76-77.

⁵²Oey-Gardiner, *op. cit.*, p. 73.

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