We were not given access to proper education

Marthin Senandi

Papua lags behind in education because we have not been given equitable access to education programmes. This is not because we were incapable. We were capable, but we were excluded. Yes, maybe the available education funds were used up by our cousins from other regions. And education really is important because without education, governance cannot run smoothly.

So, if autonomy is granted, we will accept it if there really is no other option so that our children can be directly sent to learn. It will not be too difficult if we want to see to it. If we want to send our children to study in schools of higher learning abroad, we will be able to. I think they too can learn, because they too have brains.

For example, before, we worked ourselves half to death to teach the children in the interior, but now they can learn. I see this in the area of arithmetic. Originally, we on the coast only used to count to five. Just think of how counting is done in our local languages: we count up to five, then add one, and another one, and so on, up to ten. Beyond ten you have to keep on adding ones. But in the interior, the Ekari counted from one to ten in their tribal language. So their brain power was already strong. It was only that they and all of us had not yet been given an opportunity! Compared to our brothers and sisters elsewhere, we are not that far behind. We have just not been given the opportunity.

Educational institutions already exist here. But not many academic institutions are available; they are still very limited. There are already a lot of public schools, but there is also a lot of unemployment. There is academic-level education in places such as Jayapura and Manokwari. You could say that the locations of the universities are the same as they were before (in the Dutch period). Formerly, to go to junior high school (PMS) we had to go to Hollandia. And now, it is high time that our chil-
dren should be able to attend the existing universities. And this is what is not yet going well.

Actually, there are a lot of people from the younger generations who can take over our positions in the world of government administration, but they are limited to certain positions only. This is the problem. If they were given the opportunity to lead, they would certainly be able to implement all the programmes, and everything could work well. But when they are controlled, it is not possible for them to act freely to create programmes in the interest of government here.

**NATIVE SONS ARE MARGINALIZED**

The young generations of Papua are educated enough, only in applying for jobs, for example, when they take civil service tests, they do not get passed. The newcomers, because they have relations with the leaders, are the ones who get hired instead. I have experienced this a lot, since I am often involved in civil service personnel affairs. I see that there are games that cause our children to be unemployed. I went through this situation myself right here in Nabire after I was transferred here from Manokwari. I was placed in the personnel division in order to try to ensure that local young people could receive help, but the plan did not succeed because of the power games blocking them. I saw that they were no different from me. Because I was struggling in the interests of our people, I opposed the detrimental policies. But ultimately, I left the government to become a member of the Dewan Perwakilan Rakyat Daerah (DPRD, Regional Council of People’s Representatives), so they continued without further opposition. Thus, many of our children are still unemployed. The immigrants may only have been here for a short time. They too take the tests, and they are the ones who pass. But if you were to measure their intelligence, I do not think you would find any difference.

I think this is one thing that should be given attention to ensure that the situation we are experiencing now does not continue any longer, since these are the ones who could not possibly do things to harm the public. But because they are dissatisfied, they do bad things, such as burning things down here and burning things down there. A few years ago, the DPRD buildings in Nabire were burned by the masses because of the manipulation of civil-servant job applications.