

Proposed Panel Title: Understanding Diversity and Education in Contemporary Indonesia: Potential and Challenges

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The first half specifically focuses on discussing the interrelationship between religion and education in Indonesia, in the context of politically contested processes of decentralisation, democratisation, and globalisation. Indonesia has the largest Muslim population in the world, but it is not a Muslim state. It legally recognises other religions, as a form of manifestation of values embedded in its national motto of 'Bhinneka Tunggal Ika' (Unity-in-Diversity). In Indonesia, identification to a religion is compulsory, and education has been a significant medium to inculcate religious values, especially under the current character education agenda. As a site of identity construction, schools thus play an important role in shaping one's religious belief. Nonetheless, as the third largest democracy, schools also share a great responsibility in preparing young people as tolerant citizens in this highly diverse society to achieve harmony. The papers presented here aim to explore and discuss how schools at different levels and of different contexts attempt to balance this dual role, among others.

The second half of the panel reflects on key challenges brought about by the diversity Indonesia possesses, beyond the scope of religion and offers alternative ways of analysing the issue.

Presenters:

1. Irfan L. Sarhindi (UCL Institute of Education, irfanlsarofficial@gmail.com)
2. Dr Chang Yau Hoon (Universiti Brunei Darussalam and University of Western Australia, changyau.hoon@ubd.edu.bn)
3. Tracey Yani Harjatanaya (University of Oxford, tracey.harjatanaya@education.ox.ac.uk)
4. Talitha Amalia (University of College London, talitha.amalia@fulbrightmail.org)
5. Muhammad Ryan Sanjaya (RMIT University, Australia and Universitas Gajah Mada, Indonesia m.sanjaya@rmit.edu.au)

***Participants are welcomed to join this panel.**

ABSTRACTS

Indonesian Islamic Education Revisited: Critical Thinking to Eradicate Single Story? by Irfan L. Sarhindi (UCL Institute of Education)

This study departs from the assumption that there is a tendency of the single story in Indonesian Muslim community. The reasons are as follows: (1) Indonesian Muslim community possesses power, hegemony and privilege which makes some of its members fail to recognize others' values and rights; (2) Indonesian Islamic education appears to be less critical thus less-critical mind could be easily radicalized; and (3) globalisation makes the society more complex therefore reciprocal inter-religion understanding is far more necessary. Simply put, the single story occurs when an individual sees the world only through her viewpoint. One-side truth claim, as well as stereotyping, appears to be the result. As it could cost a critical misunderstanding, it could also endanger inter-religion tolerance and multi-cultural harmony. If it is the case, promoting critical thinking in Indonesian Islamic education appears to be the promising option. As the students are encouraged to do the questioning, reasoning, investigating, contextualizing and meaning-making, they are nevertheless pushed to widen up their perspectives. Once they recognize that there are various viewpoints, they could overcome comprehensive understanding. If it cannot be claimed that comprehensive understanding could build up inter-religion tolerance, then it is arguably the kind of one-step closer to it.

Religious Education Institutions and the Promotion of Tolerance in Indonesia by Dr Chang-Yau Hoon (Universiti Brunei Darussalam & University of Western Australia)

Indonesia is one of the most culturally and linguistically diverse countries in the world. To accommodate diversity in this vast country, Indonesia's national motto, as stated in the 1945 Constitution, is "Unity in Diversity" (Bhinneka Tunggal Ika). The country officially recognizes six religions, namely Islam, Christianity (Protestantism), Catholicism, Hinduism, Buddhism and Confucianism. The study of the social impact of education provided by religious institutions has increased in the aftermath of the 9/11 incident in the US, the Bali bombings and the various episodes of religious conflicts that took place across the country since the fall of Suharto in 1998.

Indeed, religious education institutions play an important role in shaping the attitude of their students towards difference. In this regard, these institutions have as much capability to promote tolerance, pluralism and peace, as to advocate hatred, fanaticism and extremism. However, most of these studies to date have focused on Islamic education in Madrasah and Pesantren. The corresponding role played by Christian education institutions, especially theological seminaries, has rarely been covered in the literature. To fill this lacunae, this paper will examine the role of Christian seminaries in promoting tolerance (or lack thereof) in Indonesia.

Accommodating a vision of diversity in schools: “Unity-in-Diversity” in Indonesia by Tracey Yani Harjatanaya (University of Oxford)

A recent study conducted by the Indonesian Ministry of Religious Affairs measuring inter-religious harmony (IRH) index in all provinces in Indonesia, reveals that Jakarta – the capital city of Indonesia which is religiously dominated by Muslim – scored below the national index (Kementerian Agama RI, 2015). Bali as the only Hindu-dominant city in Indonesia, on the other hand, performed well and had one of the highest scores. In an attempt to respond to the IRH study, this study aims to explore the delivery of education in these two cities to get a better understanding into the practices of diversity in the two very culturally distinctive cities. In particular, it examines the ways in which schools in Indonesia accommodate the national vision of a multicultural society, specifically focusing on Indonesia’s longstanding national policy term of “*Bhinneka Tunggal Ika*” (Unity-in-Diversity). Using a case study research approach, through observations, interviews and documentary analysis, it looks at the ways head teachers, teachers, and students from state and private schools with different mixes of pupil ethnicity and religiosity in Jakarta and Bali understand and accommodate this national education vision into educational practices. The paper provides findings from preliminary analysis of the research.

Cultural Heterogeneity and Day-to-day Violence in Contemporary Indonesia by Muhammad Ryan Sanjaya (RMIT, Australia & Universitas Gajah Mada, Indonesia)

Many conflict studies in economics focused on inter- and intrastate fights using cross-country analysis. In these studies, factors that may explain conflict is generally divided into economic variables (Collier & Hoeffler 2001; Fearon & Laitin 2003) with political repressions and cultural divisions variables (Cederman & Girardin 2007; Esteban, Mayoral & Ray 2012; Montalvo & Reynal-Querol 2005). However, endogeneity and measurement problem that beset cross-country studies pushed the research agenda towards microdynamic, country-case and subnational analysis of violent conflict (Blattman & Miguel 2010). In post-reform Indonesia, the country experienced several episodes of violent conflict that were linked to cultural heterogeneities such as religion and ethnicity. Since we are not looking at systematic, intergroup conflict, it is more appropriate to build the empirical model around the primordialist argument where individuals prefer to live with those coming from similar cultural identities, rather than on the classical contest model that focused on economic rent-seeking (Hirshleifer 1989). Nonetheless, existing studies on this topic in Indonesia typically employ UNSFIR data that only span from 1990-2003. Using data from the recently published National Violence Monitoring Survey dataset, this study will focus on day-to-day violence in recent years and observe how it may or may not be related with cultural heterogeneity after controlling for the role of education, economic variables, and institutions. We expect cultural heterogeneity to predict violence, but then its role winds down after progression in education and economy came into place.