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Introduction to issue on Education for a tolerant and multicultural Indonesia

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SPECIAL ISSUE
EDUCATION FOR A TOLERANT AND MULTICULTURAL INDONESIA

Introduction

Lyn Parker and Chang-Yau Hoon

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Ethnic, religious and linguistic diversity is intrinsic to the concept of Indonesia. The national motto of Bhinneka Tunggal Ika, often translated as 'Unity in Diversity', though more directly translatable as 'Diverse but One', is emblazoned on the national symbol, the Garuda, which appears in classrooms, offices, statues and even living rooms all around the country. Indonesia has long enjoyed the reputation of a diverse and tolerant country. However, after the fall of Suharto in May 1998, it seemed to erupt in a conflagration of violence. Religious and ethnic conflicts alerted both citizens and scholars of Indonesia to the danger of disintegration, and the nation's famed tolerance appeared fragile.

This special issue of *South East Asia Research* is devoted to the theme 'Education for a tolerant and multicultural Indonesia'. This is also the title of a large research project, funded by the Australia Research Council.[1] The main aim of the project was to see how education could contribute towards building a more tolerant and multicultural Indonesia, in light of the eruption of violence after 1998.

With more than 300 ethnic groups and 700 living languages, Indonesia is one of the most culturally and linguistically diverse countries on earth. The Javanese comprise the largest ethnic group, making up approximately one-third of Indonesia's population. They live in Central and East Java, and have spread all over the archipelago in the wake of transmigration programmes as well as voluntary migration. The second largest ethnicity is Sundanese, whose homeland is West Java. Other major groups that feature in the following papers are the Malays, Minangkabau, Balinese, Banjarese and different groups of Moluccans. There are also Indigenous peoples and people of Chinese, Indian and Arab descent, and of mixed descent, who make up significant and well known minorities; the Chinese, in particular, are well known because of their paradoxical position in Indonesia –

[1] This was an ARC Discovery Project, DP0984683 Education for a Tolerant and Multicultural Indonesia, based at the University of Western Australia. The leader was Lyn Parker; Chang-Yau Hoon was Partner Investigator and Raihani was Postdoctoral Fellow.

while they play a significant role in the nation's economic life, their national belonging has always been problematic.

On the religious front, the situation seems much simpler: there are officially only six religions in Indonesia. According to the 2010 census, 87.2% of the population follow Islam, 7% follow Protestantism, 2.9% Catholicism, 1.7% Hinduism, and a smaller percentage Buddhism; since 2006, Confucianism has been identified as a recognized religion (BPS, 2010). Indonesia is the largest Muslim-majority country in the world. An estimated 20 million people in Java, Kalimantan, Papua and elsewhere practise animism and other types of traditional belief systems, which are called, for administrative purposes, '*Aliran Kepercayaan*' [belief streams] (Oslo Coalition, 2008). Some followers of these belief systems combine their beliefs with one of the government-recognized religions, so the numbers in this category are unreliable. All citizens must identify their affiliation with one of the six religions in all sorts of official documents required by government, such as birth and marriage certificates and the national ID card (KTP).

During the New Order, Indonesia's main method of dealing with ethnic and religious plurality was largely to pretend it did not exist (see Kipp and Rodgers, 1987). The acronym SARA was coined to encapsulate the four sensitive areas that could not be discussed in public: ethnicity [*suku*], religion [*agama*], race [*ras*] and inter-class [*antar golongan*] differences. Assimilation into a national culture was the dominant discourse in Suharto's Indonesia (Foulcher, 1990; Acciaioli, 1985 and 1996; Taylor, 1994; Hoon, 2008; see also Mujibarrahman, 2006, Chapter 5).

Under the New Order, this national culture appeared to include ethnic and religious diversity – for instance, in the 'fashion parade' of exotic ethnic culture embodied in an invented folk costume for each province (usually conflated with ethnic group) – but in reality this national culture failed to accommodate, let alone engage in, a truly inclusive multiculturalism (Parker, 2003, Figure 10-9 shows the fashion parade).

After the interminable 32 years of New Order government, Indonesia almost seemed to erupt in ethnic-religious violence (Sidel, 2007). It patently failed to uphold its national motto of Unity in Diversity, as trouble spots flared in ugly, violent conflict: there were attacks on the Chinese in several towns and cities, ethnic violence in Central and West Kalimantan, religious and ethnic conflict in Poso, Sulawesi, in Lombok, Halmahera and Ambon, and elsewhere. This is apart from the separatist movements in East Timor, Papua and Aceh. With the economy in disarray, analysts began to worry about the possibility of national disintegration as well as rising religious extremism in Indonesia.

Democratization and decentralization effectively strengthened ethnic and regional identities (Aspinall and Fealy, 2003; Nyman, 2006; Schulte-Nordholt, 2004). Democratization opened the way for expression of tension, and decentralization meant that there was plenty to fight for: local elites played up tensions within communities in their own self-interest (Aspinall and Mietzner, 2010; Turner *et al*, 2003).

Although there was 'no clearly stated rationale for decentralization' in Indonesia (Turner *et al*, 2003, p xiii), democratization entailed decentralization. It was the notion of local community participation that articulated democratization and decentralization (Turner *et al*, 2003, p 6). Decentralization connoted the devolu-

tion of finances, power and control of local affairs to local authorities, the accountability of local authorities to local constituencies, and the equitable distribution of each region's own wealth to its region (Aspinall and Fealy, 2003, p 2).

Over a rather longer period, since the 1980s, Islamization has produced a more Islamic public space in Indonesia (Fealy and White, 2008). While Islam is very diverse in Indonesia, and there is a continuum from tolerance to terrorism (Barton, 2005; van Bruinessen, 2002; International Crisis Group, 2006 and 2007), fundamentalism has emerged as an important force in Indonesian society. Although Islamist terrorism is the prism through which the Western media have mainly represented Indonesia since 2002, inside the country the trend has been towards more scrupulous observance of the five obligatory acts for Muslims and a much more public expression of piety. Other evidence of Islamization includes *jilbabisasi* (the trend among women to wear the tight Islamic headscarf), mosque building and increased enrolments in Islamic schools. On the other hand, Islamization has not produced a more Islamic political landscape: Islamic political parties have not generally been any more successful since 1998 than they were previously.

Simultaneous with democratization, and to some extent in reaction to the greatly enhanced media freedom, there has been a swing towards intolerance. Most famously there were mass protests and counter-protests from 2006 over a proposed anti-pornography bill (see, for example, Allen, 2007). In 2005, the Indonesian Council of Ulama (MUI) decreed that praying together with non-Muslims was prohibited for Muslims; in 2005, it also issued a *fatwa* forbidding Muslims from marrying non-Muslims, and outlawed the Islamic minority sect, Ahmadiyah, and pluralism, secularism and liberalism in general (see Gillespie, 2007). In 2008 came the extraordinary Joint Ministerial Decree which prohibited members of Ahmadiyah from proselytizing (see Budiwanti, 2009 and Crouch, 2009). Apart from MUI's *fatwa* against inter-faith marriage, there are very real legal problems for those of different religions who want to marry, as the 1974 Marriage Law treats marriage as a religious affair, stipulating that (Elucidation, Article 2): 'There is no marriage outside the laws of the respective religions and beliefs' (Cammack, 2009).

Education in Indonesia

Education has been one of the great success stories of Indonesia since Independence. At the end of the colonial era only 6% of the non-European and non-Eurasian population (11% of males and 2% of females) was literate in any language (Jones, 1976, p 40, based on the 1930 census, the last official one before the Second World War).

The 1945 Constitution states that 'each citizen has the right to education' and that the 'government must implement a national education system'. The young Republic faced many challenges, including regional secession, mass illiteracy, a dysfunctional economy and an impoverished population. In the field of education, the focus was on primary schooling and the spread of Indonesian as the national language. It was not until the 1970s, when the primary school enrolment rate was about 70% and revenues from the oil boom really began to flow, that universal primary schooling became a realistic goal. Between 1973 and 1984, the number of primary schools doubled, increasing from 65,000 to 130,000 (Kristiansen

and Pratikno, 2006, p 515). In 1984, six years of primary schooling became compulsory (Takahashi, 2011, p 396); and in 1994, nine years.

Indonesia now claims that 98% of the population aged 7–12 attends primary school, with 86% aged 13–15 attending junior high, and a further 56% aged 16–18 attending senior high school (BPS, 2013). This is a tremendous achievement, especially for a country with such a large population (237.6 million in 2010) dispersed around an archipelago, with such a low economic starting point and such cultural diversity.

The contemporary basic education system consists of three levels: primary school (six years), junior high (three years) and senior high (three years). There are also pre-school playgroups for children aged 2–4 years and kindergartens for children aged 4–6. The vast majority of these are run by private organizations. Of course, there is also tertiary education.

Most primary schools (*Sekolah Dasar*, SD) are state schools. Most junior high schools in Indonesia are known as *Sekolah Menengah Pertama* (SMP). At senior high school level there are two basic types of school: general (*Sekolah Menengah Atas*, SMA) and vocational (*Sekolah Menengah Kejuruan*, SMK). These schools are all under the aegis of the Ministry of Education and Culture. In addition, there are Islamic schools run by the Ministry of Religion, with *Madrasah Ibtidaiyah* (MI) at the primary school level, *Madrasah Tsanawiyah* (MT) at junior high, and *Madrasah Aliyah* (MA) at the senior high school level. These schools use the same curricula and have the same national examinations as non-religious schools for secular subjects. There are private and state schools in all of the categories. The trend has been for the two systems of education to grow closer together – for instance, a graduate of SD may now attend MTs, and a graduate of an MA may attend a non-religious state university (Jackson and Parker, 2008). State schools dominate the education system, although private religious and vocational schools are very important. At the level of senior high school the number of students enrolled in private schools is greater than the number in state schools.

We can credit the education system with having been the most important state element in the construction of the imagined community that is Indonesia and with the creation of 'Unity in Diversity'. Several researchers have examined how schooling has helped to create patriotic citizens who share a national culture (for example, Bjork, 2005; Parker, 1992 and 2002; Fearnley-Sander and Yulaelawati, 2008).

Not surprisingly, as part of democratization and decentralization post-Soeharto, Indonesia has made some important changes to its education system (Bjork, 2006; Kristiansen and Pratikno, 2006; Raihani, 2007). A once remarkably centralized and homogeneous education system has changed significantly towards devolution and heterogeneity. New curricula now focus (at least theoretically) on the achievement of competencies rather than content, and pedagogies are supposed to be student-centred, with the focus on active learning. For instance, the curriculum says that students should be learning to 'think critically, rationally and creatively about citizenship issues' [*Berpikir secara kritis, rasional, dan kreatif dalam menanggapi isu kewarganegaraan*]. The subject 'citizenship education' (*Pendidikan Kewarganegaraan*, or PKn) was introduced in 2002, and focuses on principles of democratic systems, civil society and the rule of law, as well as the state ideology and civic values of *Pancasila*.

However, in the light of the eruption of religious and ethnic violence presaging

and following the resignation of President Suharto in 1998, as well as democratization, decentralization and Islamicization, it is necessary to ask what has been the role of education in forging this unity in diversity. How has schooling contributed to the nurturing of democratic and global citizens? Has the teaching of citizenship and religion in Indonesian schools had any positive effects in creating students who are tolerant and multicultural?

To answer these questions, this issue of *South East Asia Research* presents seven articles on different aspects of education in Indonesia. The first, based on a large-scale survey conducted by Parker, Hoon and Raihani, examines the attitudes of high school students towards inter-ethnic and inter-religious socializing, courtship and marriage. It explores whether and how different variables such as gender, ethnicity, type of school and community affect these attitudes. As school is an important site for the socialization of values and reproduction of identities, the survey results shed light on the role of schools in shaping inter-religious and inter-ethnic relations in Indonesia.

We acknowledge that, globally, 'research into faith-based schooling systems is remarkably underdeveloped' (Grace, 2003, p 150). The subsequent three articles give a rare insight into faith-based schools in Indonesia and the ways in which religion and tolerance are inculcated in these schools. Parker explores the potential contribution of religious schools in providing inter-faith education, focusing on innovative programmes in three religious schools in West Sumatra and Yogyakarta. Based on ethnographic research in a Protestant school in Jakarta, Hoon's study addresses the issue of religious education and character building, focusing in particular on the nexus between discipleship and discipline. In a complementary paper, Christiani examines an innovative religious education curriculum based on an inter-faith approach known as 'religiosity education' implemented in Catholic schools in Yogyakarta.

The next two articles, by Raihani and Amirrachman respectively, look at different approaches to tolerance and peace education in post-conflict areas of Palangkaraya and the Moluccas. These articles reveal the successes and failures of these programmes, and encourage us to rethink approaches to education in a post-conflict context.

The final article by Tanu presents a critical and comprehensive account of the cultural reproduction taking place in an international school in Jakarta. Exploring the practice of cosmopolitanism and the politics of identity among privileged students, also known as 'Third Culture Kids' in the school, Tanu destabilizes the binary between local and global and redefines the boundary of national belonging and national identity.

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