The State of Anthropology of Indonesian Education: Critical Reflections on Theories and Methods

Coordinators: Jessica Peng (University of Pennsylvania), Jenny Zhang (University of California, Berkeley), & Askuri Ibn Chamim (Indonesian Consortium for Religious Studies)

This panel seeks to reflect on the state of educational anthropology in Indonesia and offer new theoretical and methodological approaches through the discussion of four projects focused on different facets of contemporary educational issues. Upon a brief discussion of the state of the field, Jenny Zhang (University of California-Berkeley) will first discuss her comparative study on the practices, developmental processes, and outcomes of an influential childhood literacy campaign, Literacy Boost, in Kabupaten Belu, NTT, and in Jakarta Utara, DKI Jakarta. Drawing on ethnographic research, discourse analysis, and language socialization frameworks, Zhang will share her findings on the intended and unintended outcomes of the literacy intervention, which include how literacy was framed and assessed in classroom practice; the power dynamics and democratic practices at participating schools; and discipline and constructions of authority, both in classrooms and among adult stakeholders of the program. Second, Askuri Ibn Chamim (Indonesian Consortium for Religious Studies) and Joel Kuipers (George Washington University) will discuss their ongoing study on science education in Islamic schools at the junior high school level. Askuri and Kuipers will describe the unique ethnographic approaches they take to understand processes of student learning, and more specifically how religious motivation links to motivation in learning science. Third, Jessica Peng (University of Pennsylvania) will discuss her research on the “pedagogical labor” that goes into developing an outer island youth labor force under the current administration’s goal of “developing Indonesia from the margins” [membangun Indonesia dari pinggiran]. Through this presentation, Peng will offer ideas about how to approach a study on education outside of schools, drawing on theories of semiotics and social learning. Finally, Valentina Utari (SMERU Research Institute) will present on the RISE Indonesia’s ongoing study on pre-service teacher education program. Through engaging with teacher journaling, this team seeks to follow student teachers over the course of two years to understand what shapes teacher identities.

The Decline of Lecturers’ Critical Consciousness under Neo-Liberal and New Managerialism Regime in Campus

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The penetration of the neo-liberalization and New Managerialism in most of Indonesia’s higher education lead the institution to run a more market-driven policy. In this case, neoliberalism in higher education has been a major object of criticism for years by few scholars, e.g. Nugroho (2002), Darmaningtyas et al. (2009, 2014), Gaus (2015), Subkhan (2016), dan Sakhliyya (2018). But there is no serious attention given to the implementation of New Managerialism in Indonesia’s higher education despite of it blatant evidences that changed the vision of the higher education, especially state university to be more compatible with lot of neoliberal’s assumptions, e.g. emphasizing on austerity, efficiency, performance, productivity, and accountability.