BACKGROUND

Despite the Government of Indonesia’s allocation of 20% of its national budget, the quality of education in Indonesia has stagnated at a low level. As part of its broader effort to understand how national and district governments in Indonesia are working together to implement policy towards improving teachers’ welfare and student educational outcomes in the era of decentralization, the RISE Programme in Indonesia is seeking to document the educational reform practices of a leading district: Kota Yogyakarta of the Special Region of Yogyakarta. Kota Yogyakarta, also known as the city of education, has consistently designed and implemented promising educational reforms. The city is also known for their students’ and teachers’ high achievements as compared to other parts of Indonesia. This study will thus seek to document the process through which educational innovation occurred in Kota Yogyakarta and what factors have contributed to the existence of these local initiatives to date.

OBJECTIVE

This presentation contributes to the panel’s discussion on educational anthropology in Indonesia by offering insights from the domain of education policy research. Focusing on a case study that the Research on Improving Systems of Education Programme (RISE Programme) is conducting in Yogyakarta, Indonesia, this presentation will discuss the importance of ethnographic research in strengthening systems-based understandings of how education reforms are implemented within the context of regional autonomy in Indonesia.

DESCRIPTION

Ethnography is employed in this study considering the wide range of factors and processes in the districts that we will examine. We will document and analyse, for instance, the implementation of the districts’ education programmes and activities, then investigating factors and processes behind the success and failure of the programmes. The ethnographic approach supports us to have a better understanding on the districts as this approach respects the wholeness or holistic perspective of local people, their beliefs, and the place where they live in (Zaharlick 1992; Reeves et al. 2008).

Through ethnographic research, we will also able to uncover the hidden curriculum and ‘surrounding milieu’ that usually influence the current practices of learning at schools and within communities (Sindell 1969; Otto 1985). Thus, we will also be able to find out the politics and governance of education that will be reflected on educational performance (Ogbaru, 1981). Those aspects are paramount to obtain thick descriptions about the drivers of the study districts to innovate and the obstacles hindering the creation or sustaining local innovations in decentralized education of Indonesia.

For purpose of this study, we define innovation as a result of capacity from all stakeholders in the district to create, collaborate, and implement any programme which aims to improve or ensure the betterment of education.
FINDINGS

Through ethnographic approach, the team seeks to understand the educational system of Kota Yogyakarta as well as the implementation of 3 relatively sustainable local initiatives: Jam Belajar Masyarakat (Community Learning Hours/JBM), Konsultasi Belajar Siswa (Student Learning Consultation/KBS) and Pguyuban Orangtua (Parents Group in each class). Furthermore, educational ethnography sees education as ‘cultural transmission’ which includes cultural learning at all levels: hidden, tacit, and implicit (Splinder & Splinder 1985). Previously, Kusanagi (2013) reported the difference teacher’s engagement towards an educational reform called lesson study. The findings informed that the difference of sociocultural factors in Japan and Yogyakarta is somewhat different. Therefore, ethnography is suitable to address such problem to disseminate educational reforms.

We then examine the socio-cultural and political-economic factors and practices surrounding the decision-making on education practices at local government and community levels to investigate through which the local innovations occurred and see the community responses toward the initiatives. Apart from that, ethnography also allows flexibility for us to gain information from central government regarding the local innovations. Consequently, it becomes a big challenge for us to have wide range of stakeholders to be observed and interviewed because the unit of analysis of public policy is district level.

CONCLUSION

All in all, ethnography enables us to specifically design to follow closely innovation trajectories in Kota Yogyakarta which is well-known for the high achievement in educational performance. This study examines the sociocultural context of the city and its surrounding milieu in order to have crystal clear understanding on how the environment contributes to a district’s capacity to innovate. By doing so, this study will inform further analysis of political economic forces that have constituted an innovative district in Indonesia.

Through ethnography, we hope that this study would come up with adoptable lessons for other local government to innovate and maintain local initiatives. Therefore, ethnography has helped us to reach the preliminary findings which indicate educational reforms or innovations are possible to be replicated if a local government can hold commitment, integrity, and stimulate the development of local capacity to create innovations in improving the quality of education in Indonesia.

*Keywords: educational ethnography; local innovation; decentralized education; educational reform; innovative district; educational policy*

BIBLIOGRAPHY


“WHO AM I?”: METHODODOLOGICAL DILEMMA IN THE FIELD OF TRANSNATIONAL ISLAMIC MOVEMENT
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In this so called “an accelerated world” (Eriksen, 201631), most anthropologists realized that a clear demarcation between home and abroad is getting blurred. Therefore, some arguments stating that cultural identity is a fixed category has always been questioned since it is socially constructed and situated in a given context. This particular condition has shaped and reshaped the way ethnographers depicting the complexity and diversity of socio-cultural practices in one particular locality. Meanwhile, they seem to be less sensitive and/or ignoring the fast exchange of information and knowledge that has also been influencing their subjectivity – as a social being or a researcher, about the field. On the other hand, I assume that the field is not merely as a passive object but also the potential one distracting ethnographer’s subjectivity. This paper is the modification of methodological chapter of my dissertation, in which I engaged with multi-sited ethnography by following Tablighi Jama’at mission – an Islamic reformist group established in India performing “door to door missionary” style from Indonesia to Cambodia. This paper is somehow my reflexivity on how I deal with several positionalities since the early stage of proposal writing into the ongoing research in the field. In short, as a Muslim studying Islam and/or Muslim community will certainly put me into paradox, on one hand this shared religious identity somehow becomes advantageous for me to be easily accepted by board members of Tablighi Jama’at, but on the other hand, my subjectivity – personal social life, has also been distracting my view over this community. Besides that, I have to deal with the pragmatic choice where the Tablighi Jama’at members often assure me that in order to understand them, there is no other choice than practicing what they do.