

Fractures of the post-decolonization of higher education in a Third World country

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Introduction

- Over the past few years, higher education in Indonesia, pushed by government regulation, have been oriented towards the so-many performances of indexation and ranking achievement.
- The banner is ‘internationalization’
- There is such “World Class University” or “World Class Research University”
- Celebration or dismay every year whenever big ranking organization like THE and QS issues most recent figures of university rank
- It is also about publication in the scopus- or thomson-reuters-indexed journals

But questions are

1. Why is that? Why does that celebration or feeling of dismay happen?
2. What could all those ranks have been indicating of the real increase (or decrease) of performance of the HE quality in the actual practice?
3. What does it mean to the society where the University is located?

A brief historical view

- Indonesian HE is pretty young compared to HE in other countries, even in the SEA region
- Dutch colonial government set the Faculties of Engineering (1918), Faculty of Letters (1919) and Faculty of Medicine (1920)
- The overall university format of institution arose in the aftermath of the Second World War when Indonesians were still at the war against the Dutch over the former colony.
- Indonesian HE arose as an expression of nationalism and as form of responses of the small intellectual elite towards the demands of the society

Since then

There is now about 2,800 HE institutions throughout Indonesia mostly located in Java (varying forms of University, Institute, Academy)

Student body size up to 5 million

Full professors some 5,000

and some 30,000 associate professor and non-professor staff

Indonesian population in 2018 total 240 million people

Since then

Indonesian HE lecturers have been assigned to perform three types of duty at once:

- Teaching
- Research and publication
- Community service/community engagement

Since then

- Teaching as business as usual
- Research and publication as a new push, but overall lacked behind by neighboring countries
- Community services have been long tradition and constitutes the basic mission of the HE establishment back then in the post-War period.

Since then

Community services include a wide variety of social duties:

- both ones that were long-term programs and
- those that arise incidentally by emergency situations like calamity such as tsunami, earth quake, volcano eruptions

In Indonesian case, community service is definitely the biggest strength and the main performance of HE institutions and staffs.

But this very field of performance is not generally counted in the ranking systems in existence today.

Why?

Now a fracture has emerged.

While social engagement has become a core agenda of decolonization since the birth of Higher Education in Indonesia, the recent embracement towards digitally index-based criteria of performance has driven away the mission to a different direction.

How to compromise the gap?

Conclusions

While attempting to internationalize its higher education by a universalized standard of performance, the Indonesian government has set aside the insensitivity that a ranking system could have possibly employed with regard to historical particularities and social contexts of its own higher education.

Conclusions

The efforts of Indonesian HE to overcome the gap between the social duties stemmed out from decolonization and the neoliberal push to attain internationalized standards of performance have resulted in the ambivalence of the strategic management and achievement indicators, making it inefficiently split in resources.

But where to go from there? What can be done?

Proposals:

- ***Community engagement***: What sort of data is needed for community service activity to be counted in the ranked matrix? → e.g. my home university has established a *Journal of Community Engagement*
- ***As for impact factor of publications***: language does matter? Measure should be made possible from the target reader of a publication, as the language used in the publication is a contextual measure to its readership
- ***University performance measures***: the wholesome points of performance should comprise (1) basic indicators and (2) context specific indicators