

## Submissions Abstract Book - All Papers (All Submissions)

0044

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Examining the transition from academic writing to academics writing: A study of Indonesian doctoral students

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**Research Domain:** Academic practice ,work, careers and cultures (AP)

**Abstract:** Over the last decade, the Indonesian government has stipulated directives to improve the quality and quantity of academic publications emerging from the country's universities. How Indonesian academics learn to produce knowledge through publications writing is now central to the success of the country's HE system, and against which academic professional success is measured. There is also a need to examine the role of doctoral training as these new academic workers aspire to develop the skills to become 'publishable' international scholars. This study uses a cross-disciplinary sample of Indonesian doctoral students in the UK who are academics at private and public universities in their home country to investigate how knowledge is produced and distributed through writing practices and how they conceptualise academic success and prestige. The research fills a gap in the HE knowledge base on how international shifts in HE are creating new sets of expectations on 'Global South' academics.

**Paper: Policy and expectation in Indonesian Higher Education**

Over the last decade, the Indonesian Ministry of Research, Technology and Higher Education ('Ristekdikti') has stipulated directives to improve the quality and quantity of academic publications emerging from the country's private and public universities (Ristekdikti, 2015). This is in line with an increase in government funding with a proviso that Indonesian academics should manage their own research writing agenda through, among other things, increased use of academic publishing in top-ranking international journals (Ristekdikti, 2017a). Concomitantly, there has been a massive increase in the number of international doctoral scholarships for Indonesian students in research-intensive universities globally (Ristekdikti, 2017b). How Indonesian academics learn to produce knowledge through their publications writing is therefore central to the enterprise of the country's HE system, and against which their individual and institutional success is now being measured. Relatedly, there is also a pressing need to examine the role of doctoral training in research-intensive universities as

these new academic workers aspire to develop the skills to become 'publishable' international scholars.

### **A project with Indonesian academics**

In light of these current trends sweeping Indonesian HE, this paper reports on a recent pilot project which sought to examine the professional writing and knowledge creation work of Indonesian academics. The project uses a cross-disciplinary sample of ten Indonesian doctoral students based in one UK research-intensive university, and who are academics at both private and public universities in their home country. The research investigates the specific features of how knowledge is produced and distributed through their writing practices and how this relates to their expectations as doctoral researchers. The Indonesian academics come from a cross-section of disciplines (including STEM, Arts & Humanities, and Business doctorates), are a mixture of men and women, and are academics from various parts of Indonesia. The research attempts to fill a key gap in the HE knowledge base on how international shifts in the HE market are creating a new set of expectations on 'Global South' academics who seek to get more from their doctoral training as a consequence.

Building on the kind of research that was conducted by Tusting *et al*(2019), the project adopts repeat interviews and screen recordings of writing in progress. Through closely examining textual practices, this research set out to examine: How Indonesian academics are learning to write *as academics*; Where systems of support can be better targeted; How digital technologies are shaping these writing practices; The role of doctoral training and the extent to which doctoral experience is a sufficient enough apprenticeship in light of new demands; And how international scholarly identities are produced and shaped by new writing practices.

### **Becoming International**

Among the project's findings are important insights about how writing and publishing are integral to becoming international for the aspiring Indonesian academics in the study. As with academics in other 'middle-income' countries, Indonesian academics aim to publish their work in internationally renowned journals to allow for their work to gain a wider readership and at the same time expand possibilities for networking with scholars overseas. These aims are not just about personal professional development through institutional requirements to publish in journals which are indexed within the Scopus database (regarded as a proxy for high quality across all participants) but they are also related to the need to write for a global audience and achieving wider impact and repute. To this end, connecting and subsequently collaborating with academic colleagues abroad is a key aim of Indonesian academics, and is something which the participants hope to achieve as part of their doctorate programmes abroad.

Additionally, those who successfully publish their research internationally are more likely to gain promotion and receive incentives (e.g. bonuses and honorariums), and increased chances of a leading position in regional (South-East Asian) associations such as SEAMEO and RELC in Singapore. This highlights that 'becoming international' is also bound up with Indonesia's role as an important player amongst South-East Asian economies more closer to home. Ideas of prestige and status

through the profession, therefore, have regional and international indicators.

### **The role of the doctorate**

The role of the doctorate programme was a key part of the study. According to the participants, the expectations of their doctorates are firmly intertwined with their professional expectations. For them, undertaking a doctoral degree program overseas primarily offers international networking opportunities. This networking begins, for most participants, through research collaboration work with their supervisors who, at a later stage, would be expected to help expand the network to a broader scope (e.g. learned societies, other universities) and more substantive work (e.g. joint publications). There is also an expectation that as academic colleagues, the doctoral process will lead to further cooperation such as visiting scholar programs, research collaborations and online lecturing programs.

### **Learning to write as an academic**

Learning to write for publication – in English – is another important expectation for Indonesian academics undertaking their doctoral degree in research-intensive universities. The desire to learn to write research articles in high-ranking journals was deemed a skill so vital that without this proficiency there is no hope for professional success. Yet most of this learning was expected to come via supervisor feedback and comments on work, and attending generic institutional writing training workshops.

The widespread practice of using Scopus indexed journals as the sole proxy for quality also brought forth a number of disciplinary differences from participants. The Scopus database mainly includes journals in the natural sciences, engineering and biomedical research and provides a lesser coverage of other disciplines and other academic knowledge outputs (e.g., monographs, reviewed conference proceedings and reports), thereby limiting the genres and knowledge producing work, or “epistemic cultures” (Knorr-Cetina, 1992) emergent through other domains of academia.

### **Concluding comments**

Whilst so far this paper reports on a small-scale pilot, the research provides an account of the ways in which these Indonesian academics negotiate the practices, purposes and meanings of disciplinary academic work within and beyond their disciplinary, institutional, and national boundaries. Divergences do of course emerge across gender, career stages, specialisms and subject categories, and the status (both financial and prestige related) of the Indonesian universities concerned. These divergences suggest further routes for fine-grained research exploration. Alongside, and in light of the large number of doctoral scholarships for lecturers and academics, there is a pressing need to examine the multifaceted role of the doctorate as a suitable apprenticeship to academic professional life and a form of research training for academics in a global HE arena.

## References

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