

**THE EDUCATIONAL SITUATION OF
LEARNING CENTRES FOR THE CHILDREN OF
INDONESIAN MIGRANT LABOURERS: A CASE
STUDY IN SABAH**

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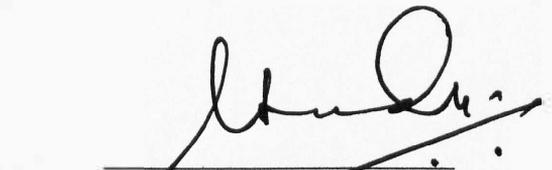


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DECLARATION

I, Kathryn Anne Rivai, declare that this thesis, submitted for the requirements for the award of Doctor of Philosophy, in the Faculty of Psychology and Education, University of Malaysia, Sabah, is wholly my own work unless otherwise referenced or acknowledged.

The document has not been submitted for qualifications at any other academic institution.



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To all the children of migrant workers. I am full of hope for a brighter future for you, in which your lives will be respected, and you will be acknowledged as citizens contributing to a better world. I have absolute faith that you can succeed. Thank you for teaching me so much about overcoming challenges in life.

To the migrant parents and families, I trust that your prioritising of education will bring improvement to the lives of your families, your homeland and the state of Sabah.

To my husband and children who believed I could do this. After my reminding our children for years to study, now the tables were reversed and mum had to study. Your endless encouragement and reminders to study kept me going when work pressures pulled me in other directions. Thank you.

The dreams of the poor were always dreamt for them by distant others who were removed from the daily struggles of the working class and were either unable or unwilling to recognise the dreams that burned in the habitats of their hearts.”

Paulo Freire, *Philosophy of Pedagogy*.



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ABSTRACT

There is extensive literature to be found addressing Indonesian migrant labourers in Sabah. However, research concerning migrant labourers' children, especially that pertaining to access and quality of education, has generally been neglected. This is a critical issue facing the local and foreign populations in Sabah and one that has long-term ramifications for Sabah in general. The purpose of this inquiry was to investigate the learning situation in schools for children of migrant Indonesian labourers. Through this inquiry, I hoped to gain insight into issues surrounding the learning programmes and to hear the 'voice' of the children, their teachers and their parents about what learning they need for their lives now and in their future. I wanted to know if the existing learning programmes would benefit the children wherever they chose to live and work. The children of migrant Indonesian labourers, illiterate and marginalised from education, are engulfed in serious problems in their personal and community development; indeed, the entire social fabric of their local society is torn by severe stresses. I wanted to find out if the problems encountered in the children's personal lives had an effect on the way they learn and did the learning programmes need to be changed to meet this need. It was the intention of this research to try to discover what a quality and beneficial learning programme relevant to the needs of these stateless and marginalised children might look like. Through this inquiry I was able to establish that changes are necessary to make the learning programmes more relevant to the lives of the learners. The main qualitative methodology I chose to investigate this theme was the case study and its relevant methods. The data collection and subsequent analysis resulted in seven major categories emerging of areas the informants want programme planners to consider. The implications of these results will, with support from the teachers and curriculum developers improve and develop relevant learning programmes for these children. Finally, one of the most important intended outcomes and recommendations of this writing is to generate further discussion and research for providing, a relevant education for all children of Indonesian migrant labour in Sabah with additional focus on pre-school preparation and, importantly, providing a quality education giving equity for all children to achieve their life goals.

ABSTRAK

Tajuk: Suasana Pembelajaran Pusat Pembelajaran Anak-Anaka Pekerja Migran Indonesia: Kajian Kes Di Sabah

Terdapat banyak literatur yang menyebut mengenai pekerja asing rakyat Indonesia yang berada di negeri Sabah. Namun penyelidikan mengenai kanak-kanak pekerja asing terutama yang berkaitan kebolehcapaian pendidikan dan kualiti pendidikan umumnya telah diabaikan. Ini merupakan isu kritikal yang dihadapi oleh warga tempatan dan rakyat asing yang berada di negeri Sabah dan ianya telah memberi kesan jangka panjang kepada masyarakat di negeri ini secara umumnya. Tujuan penyelidikan ini dijalankan adalah untuk meneroka situasi pembelajaran di sekolah yang dialami anak-anak pekerja asing Indonesia di Sabah. Melalui penyelidikan ini, penyelidik telah mampu menyelami isu-isu berkaitan program-program pembelajaran serta 'mendengar rintihan' kanak-kanak, ibu bapa mereka, dan guru-guru mengenai pendidikan yang diperlukan untuk kehidupan mereka masa kini dan akan datang. Penyelidik ingin menerokai sama ada program-program pembelajaran yang ada masa kini memberi manfaat kepada kanak-kanak apabila mereka menceburi alam pekerjaan atau menjalani kehidupan di masa akan datang. Kanak-kanak pekerja asing Indonesia yang buta huruf dan terpinggir daripada mendapat pendidikan mengharungi - masalah serius dalam membangunkan perkembangan diri dan masyarakat, malah keseluruhan masyarakat mereka digoyahkan dengan situasi stres yang melampau. Penyelidik ingin mengetahui samada masalah yang dihadapi dalam kehidupan peribadi kanak-kanak mempunyai kesan keatas cara mereka belajar dan juga samada program pembelajaran yang ada perlu diubah untuk menampung keperluan ini. Hasrat penyelidikan ini juga cuba mendapatkan pandangan mereka cara bagaimana sepatutnya program pembelajaran yang berkualiti dan menguntungkan serta relevan kepada keperluan kanak-kanak yang tiada kewarganegaraan dan terpinggir ini. Melalui penyelidikan ini Penyelidik telah dapat mewujudkan perubahan yang diperlukan untuk menjadikan program pembelajaran lebih relevan kepada kehidupan pelajar. Metodologi kualitatif yang dipilih untuk meneroka tema ini ialah kajian kes dan metod-metod yang berkaitan dengan penyelidikan ini. Pengumpulan data dan serterusnya analisa yang dibuat telah menghasilkan tujuh kategori dimana informan-informan meminta perancang-perancang program mengambilkira mengenainya. Implikasi-implikasi, dapatan atau keputusan kajian ini dengan sokongan guru-guru dan pengembang-pengembang kurikulum, mampu meningkatkan dan membangunkan program-program pembelajaran yang relevan dengan kanak-kanak. Akhir sekali, satu daripada hasil dapatan yang di diharapkan dan cadangan-cadangan daripada penyelidikan ini ialah mewujudkan perbincangan dan penyelidikan lanjut. Tujuannya ialah untuk menyediakan pendidikan yang relevan untuk semua kanak-kanak pendatang asing Indonesia di Sabah, dengan fokus utamanya persediaan pra-sekolah dan yang penting sekali, ialah memberi pendidikan berkualiti dengan memberi peluang yang sama untuk semua kanak-kanak agar mereka mencapai cita-cita dalam kehidupan mereka.

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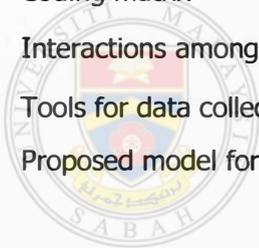
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ABBREVIATIONS

| | |
|------------------|--|
| CRC | - Convention on the Rights of the Child 1989 |
| CSO | - Civil Society Organisation |
| CSR | - Corporate Social Responsibility |
| DEPDIKNAS | - Departemen Pendidikan Nasional (National Education Department) |
| EFA | - Education for All Global Monitoring Report (UN) |
| FIDH | - International Federation for Human Rights |
| KBK | - Kurikulum Berbasis Kompetensi (Competency based Curriculum) |
| KEMDIKBUD | - Kementerian Pendidikan dan Kebudayaan Indonesia. (Ministry of Education and Culture Indonesia) |
| KJRI | - Konsulat Jenderal Republik Indonesia (Consulate of the Republic of Indonesia) |
| KTSP | - Kurikulum Tingkat Satuan Pendidikan (Unit Level Curriculum) |
| LAMP | - Literary Assessment and Monitoring Programme (UNESCO) |
| LC/CLC | - Learning Centre/Community Learning Centre |
| NGO | - Non-Governmental Organisation |
| SD | - Sekolah Dasar (Primary school) |
| SMP | - Sekolah Menengah Pertama (Junior High School) |
| UN | - United Nations |
| UNESCO | - United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation |
| UNHCR | - United Nations High Commission for Refugees |
| UNICEF | - United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund |
| WCEFA | - World Conference on Education for All |

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION TO THE RESEARCH PROJECT

1.1 Introduction

The introduction will begin by setting the scene for the inquiry searching for an understanding of the background of the Indonesian migrant workers' children and their educational situation. Connelly and Clandinin (1998) write that it is crucial to recognise the role the past has played when collecting data in the present so we need to explore the background of the phenomenon to understand the current situation.

1.2 Historical Background: Setting The Scene

The porous border of Borneo between the northeast Indonesian province of Kalimantan and the southeastern coastal town of Tawau and a long Sabah coastline has meant thousands of illegal or legal Indonesians, either labourers or visitors, transit between the two nations seamlessly. There are endless ways of transmigration, both legally and illegally (Mantra, 1999). Wan Hassan (2013) commented that normally an estimate of a population of about one million Indonesians is reported but, due to the high mobility of the migrant labourers, accuracy of census data collection has limitations.

He continues by saying that these labourers may have entered legally but if they do not renew their permit or they move to another estate or mill they will automatically become illegal. In the multi-case study areas in this study, it was common for workers to let their passports expire, and despite being legal for a month on entry, they seemed not overly concerned to revert to illegality again. Their children born in Sabah are stateless, possessing no legal documents for their existence.

1.2.1 The Social Enigma Of The Statelessness Of The Children Of Migrant Workers

As many of the Indonesian migrants have entered Sabah as undocumented workers, their children - many of whom are born in Malaysia - are not registered in either nation, so becoming stateless. These are Sabah's 'invisible' children, unacknowledged by all. Coutin (2003) observes these children live in spaces of 'non-existence', being unacknowledged as human beings. UNHCR (2014, p. 8) notes: "it may not even be possible to register the birth of a stateless child, making that infant an instant 'non-person' in the eyes of governments." Young children accompanied by their parents come in and out without needing any travel documents, resulting in thousands of children in Sabah without legal papers. Kassim (1997) explains they are neither Indonesians nor Malaysians: thousands were born in Sabah but are claimed or recognised by no one.

UNICEF (2014) observes that stateless and marginalised children are confused by their status and illegality and this gives rise to concerns: are we making them more confused by imposing a foreign (in this case from Indonesia) curriculum in learning centres with its content that perhaps has little relevance to their day-to-day life in Sabah, which is to all intents and purposes their home? Their security and peace of life are never guaranteed but the school with carefully thought-out learning content can provide this security, giving them confidence and a sense of self-worth and belief in themselves. Given such a tenuous background the school must become the trusted constant in the lives of these children, upon which they can depend on to satisfy their educational requirements.

I am curious how the stateless children feel about this situation and through inquiry and data collecting tools it may be possible to unravel their complicated status and find how they feel about their lack of acknowledgement as a person and how this relates to their desire (or lack of desire) to learn. The current generic Indonesian curriculum used certainly does not cover such areas that generate pressures on the stateless child. Before embedding an imported academic curriculum the psychological needs of the child need to be attended to, so I will encourage reflection on the part of the informants about such critical life and learning issues in

their vulnerable environment.

1.2.2 Children In A Vulnerable Environment

Migrant workers' children are exposed to numerous problems due to their status, and - with a lack of education, lack of access to health care and lack of social protection - they are leading tenuous lives. A lack of education puts them fair and square in the cycle of poverty from which many may not emerge unscathed. These young children do not understand what is happening to themselves. They are increasingly vulnerable to so many social ills from exploitation, such as glue sniffing, drugs, theft, petty crimes, smuggling and begging (Bryant, 2005).

Many labourers are exploited in their places of work, receiving well below the minimum wage, and this sets up the situation where young children must work to assist the income of the parent rather than attend school (Kassim, 1997). Nettleton (2012) acknowledges that the child labour force assisting families or working independently gives rise to numerous human rights concerns about the stability and normality in the child's life. Yet the problem goes much deeper, including areas of retention and their isolation from urban areas where schools are found. This disquieting theme of the primary child at work needs to be explored in relation to providing schooling for children who must work (Ono, Chikamori & Kita, 2007).

Stateless children too are vulnerable to immigration raids. From the initial contact in the advance organiser for this inquiry, it was discovered that children cannot travel freely; they endure raids by the immigration authorities. In one of the case study schools, children run away and hide in neighbouring villages or among the oil palm trees when the immigration authorities make their rounds (Ng, 2015). Children of economic migrants live and play alongside children who have citizenship and who have access to all their needs; one wonders how they feel when they are excluded from all these things. What social relationships exist and how can being in school and receiving an education point to a change in the way they see themselves?

The UNESCO (EFA) Education Act for All Global Monitoring Report reports that education will break the illiteracy barrier and put these children on an equal footing

with their better-off peers so that they have the opportunity to create a better life for themselves (UNESCO, 2006). EFA promotes a good quality basic education equipping students with literacy skills for life and further learning. Formal schooling is the essential component for literacy acquisition and the quality of the schooling seems to be a critical agent in the acquisition of literacy throughout communities.

However, in many marginalised communities in Sabah, if children are even fortunate enough to have education, the quality of this education remains a serious concern. Siebrig Schruder, Lecturer in Special Needs at the University of Yogyakarta Indonesia, commented from his observations in Sabah's learning centres that the didactic methodologies of teaching and the lack of facilities as well as teaching materials are hindrances to the quality of learning in the learning centres (Siebrig Schruder, personal communication, August 21, 2012).

Instructional time too, is frequently limited as children need to work sometimes many hours a day. To solve this problem some learning centres arrange shifts for the class times so children can attend after or before work. The UNESCO EFA Global Monitoring Report (2006) stated all children have the right to go to school, and while this may be a human right it is not yet happening in many migrant communities in Sabah.

Vignette 1 sets the scene for the state of the children and narrates three anecdotes from the schools in this qualitative case study. These are real incidents experienced by the teachers and myself in 2012 where children had to stop schooling or manage work and school. The exhaustion they must face and its effect on learning no doubt takes its toll on the capacity of the child to absorb information. These short stories will assist the reader in identifying with the background the children in the learning centres, therefore making it easier to comprehend some of the difficulties they face in learning.

Vignette 1

Story One: Nur and Fran, two little sisters aged 10 and 8. They traversed secondary jungle, and crossed a river using a log bridge on their hour walk from their home to the main road. From the main road, they walked 30 minutes to get to school each morning and back again in the evening. On rainy days, their caring father would come and assist them across the river, and during the monsoon on some days they could not even get through. Nur and Fran helped their father and mother in the estate during the mornings doing little tasks after which, tired out, they would begin their long walk to school and home again in the evening. Yet one never saw anything but a smile on their faces. Once they learnt to read they devoured every book in sight and constantly reminded me to bring them new stories every week. They were stateless and had no national identity but they did not even know what that meant. They were innocent children seeking an education. They eventually stopped school due to the difficulty of access.

Story Two: Lila was 15 years old and desperate to be in school; in fact, she was one of the first to arrive when the school opened in 2011. She knew the alphabet and was quick at math. Lina was a bright and personable girl who had an empathetic nature and knew exactly her status in life. Her determined nature assured us she was headed for success. This young lady got up at 2 am every morning (except rainy days) and traversed the rubber estate with her parents to tap the rubber trees in the rubber holding they were working in. She would go back in the pre-dawn and collect the latex and take it to the collection center where the buyer would weigh the liquid and pay the small holder. By 11.00 am she was back in the house getting ready for school. She walked 45 minutes to the main road where a relative picked her up on most days and took her by motorbike to school. If he did not come to pick her up she walked home again, never reaching her school. The school time was adjusted for children like Lila to have access and still maintain their work at the same time. On her return home Lina did her homework and helped in the household chores. She never flagged, always a constant cheerful, positive character. Sadly, Lila had to stop school after a year for her cousin left the district and she had no transport to cover the six kilometers to the learning centre. She has no passport, no birth certificate, no documentation to show who she is.

Story Three. Razman was 19 almost 20 years old, when he came to the school, illiterate, but he was determined to learn. He began to learn the alphabet with the primary one class. He was taken aside and read easy readers one-to-one to ease the embarrassment of him stammering through words with the extrovert 5-year-olds. Razman worked every morning from the 5 a.m. roll call on an oil palm estate, gathering fruit, cleaning and weeding or spraying until noon when the company gave him time off (with a pay cut) to attend school. Razman progressed well and was reading short sentences when he abruptly left school. His family needed him to supplement the income and that brought his education to an end. Razman could never leave the estate for he was stateless and if caught by authorities outside the estate he would be detained and repatriated leaving his family on the plantation.

All names are changed to protect the children and teenagers.

1.3 The Learning Centres Currently In Existence In Sabah

According to Andika, officer of education at the Indonesian Consulate, Kota Kinabalu, Sabah, when interviewed on May 21, 2015, the number of learning centres - under the auspices of the Consulate - for Indonesian labourers' children had increased exponentially from none in early 2010 to 207 in 2015 (Andika, personal communication, May 21, 2015). One needs to ensure it is not a rush to open everything as fast as possible, because the content, quality and long-term sustainability is yet to be seen.

During a 2013 Al Jazeera broadcast discussion on the marginalised First Nations communities of Canada and why their access to quality education was not on a par with other Canadians, the Canadian journalist Richard Landau commented: "You can't just give people money and say go run a school." Indeed, and this is exactly the context with some of the Sabah learning centres that receive financial support from Indonesia to open the school, fund teachers and buy basic necessities; yet, from the data gathered from this research it is clear from informant responses that the quality of the 'teacher' and the curriculum content taught receive minimal attention.

Learning centres were makeshift schools set up by interested people to provide a basic education for the children who just played all day. These centres