Negotiating local and glocal discourse in kindergarten: Stories from Indonesia

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Abstract: This paper aims to explore how kindergartens in Indonesia become a space to negotiate local and global discourses. Informed by postcolonial theories, it seeks to identify a hybrid space that goes beyond the binary between South and North. Based on fieldwork in three different kindergartens in Indonesia, this paper illuminate different forms of negotiation adopted by the kindergartens. Two most pervasive global discourses found are related with child-centredness and neoliberalism. The kindergartens negotiate these discourses through a social aspiration, character building, and religious values discourses. The finding suggests how juxtaposed ideas continue to intersect with one another ECE.

Key words: kindergarten, postcolonial, hybrid space, negotiation.

Introduction

Indonesia is a multicultural country with more than 300 ethnicities, each with its own traditions (Misachi, 2018). However, it is also a country with a long history of colonialisation and was colonised by the Dutch for more than 350 years, followed by the Japanese in 1942–1945 (Kingsbury, 2002). The legacy of colonisation remains very pervasive in Indonesia. Spivak (1988) argues that when colonisation is still alive in the minds of the colonised, a postcolonial condition develops. In Indonesia that condition is evident in almost all aspects of life. From TV shows and the existence of multinational companies and international brands to the country’s education system, postcolonialism always comes about through the country’s interaction with globalisation (During, 1998; Gupta, 2008).
Early Childhood Education (ECE) in Indonesia has not escaped either the neocolonial nor the postcolonial condition. Most ECE practices in Indonesia are based on theories and practices from the Global North, such as Piaget’s theory of child development and the work of Vygotsky and Montessori, as well as programmes such as BCCT (Beyond Circle and Centre Time) (Adriany, 2013, 2018a). However, as Bhabha (1994) suggests, in the postcolonial era, the local culture and the colonial culture negotiate each other. This produces a new area, a grey and hybrid area. A hybrid place is a place that goes beyond “the old dichotomy of coloniser/colonised” (Prabhu, 2007, p. xiii).

Previous research has attempted to explore ECE practices around the globe through postcolonial lenses, such as that by Pacini-Ketchabaw and Taylor (2015); Viruru (2001, 2005). Critical approaches have been used to gain an understanding of how ECE can become a space for resistance and decolonisation. Other studies, such as those by Gupta (2006, 2008, 2018), Huang (2013b), and Jahng (2013) reveal the hybridisation process that allows the local and global culture to interact and negotiate with one another. Despite Indonesia’s long history of colonisation, there has been little research attempting to understand ECE practices from a postcolonial perspective. This paper therefore aims to explore the extent to which ECE in Indonesia is becoming a space of negotiation between local and global discourses.

On Using Postcolonial theories in Early Childhood Education

This paper draws on postcolonial theories. The application of postcolonial theories is essential, particularly if we wish to understand the lived experiences of children in the South. As mentioned earlier, children in the South are often assumed to the development standard and norms developed in the North (Penn, 2011; Viruru, 2005). Hence, the binary division between children in the North and South persists.

Postcolonial scholars such as Gupta (2006) have considered the extent to which Western penetration of ECE may involve the legacy of colonisation, a result of the activities of the Global North in countries in the Global South. As Childs and Williams (1997) assert, the legacy of colonialisation sustains even once the country is no longer occupied. It becomes more salient, controlling the minds of the people (Spivak, 2000). The Western construction of children and childhood is privileged and seen as the norm against which
children all over the world should be understood. There is no doubt the Western construction has become, to use Foucault’s (1980) notion, “the regime of truth”: the only way to understand children’s development. Hence, non-Western constructions of childhood are often seen as inadequate, and thus, the children are often seen in terms of being other (Tesar, 2015).

The ongoing effect of colonialisation is also evident in the ECE curriculum. The work of Adriany (2018a) in Indonesia, Gupta (2006) in India, Huang (2013a) in Taiwan, and Jahng (2013) in Korea points out just how much the curriculum in these countries relies on Western theories. Developmentalism is widely used in many Global South countries. Piaget’s theory of children development, Vygotsky’s concept of learning and the various ECE movements such as Montessori, High Scope, and Roger Emilia, all demonstrate the influence of Western theories in ECE. While these theories do contain some critical insights into curriculum development, as Viruru (2005) asserts, there are discrepancies between theory and practice, since they are frequently not culturally sensitive.

Government policy in the South is also affected by the postcolonial condition. Many countries in the South rely on loans provided by global financial institutions such as the World Bank (Adriany, 2018b; Penn, 2002, 2011). To qualify for these loans, governments must agree to implementing economic, social and education reforms set out by the international donor agencies. Very often, education reforms follow a neoliberal agenda in which education is perceived merely as a means of achieving economic development (Peach & Lightfoot, 2015).

The postcolonial aim, however, is not to perpetuate the binary divide between the North and the South. Instead, the aspiration is to go beyond it. As mentioned before, Bhabha (1994) has suggested there exists a third hybrid space that allows for constant negotiation between the colonised and the coloniser. Within that act of negotiation, resistance can be made visible, even though the act of resistance sometimes uses the languages of the coloniser (Spivak, 1988).

In addition to the use of postcolonial theories, this paper is also informed by Foucault’s notion of discourse (Foucault, 1984). Here the discourse refers to a system in which regulatory and governmentality become the dominant values (Kaščák & Pupala, 2011). It holds hegemonic power and hence becomes the regime of truth, the only way to perceive the reality (Foucault, 1980, 1984). In this paper, I will demonstrate how the discourse operates
within ECE in Indonesia. However, because of my engagement with postcolonial theories, this paper will also show how the dominant discourse continues to be negotiated in kindergarten settings.

**ECE Practices in Indonesia**

Indonesia is a vast country, with approximately 17,508 islands, about 6,000 of which are inhabited (Embassy of the Republic of Indonesia, n.a.). It has 34 provinces, over 580 languages and ethnicities, and Javanese is the largest ethnicity in Indonesia. Currently, it is home to more than 270 million people; around 90% are Muslims (World Population Review, 2018). Given this depiction, one can only imagine the complexity of Indonesia, including in the field of ECE.

ECE practices in Indonesia can be traced back to the Dutch colonisation when the Dutch government introduced a pre-school that adopted Froebelian and Montessori approaches (Thomas, 1992). Ki Hadjar Dewantoro, in an act of resistance, established the first national kindergarten in 1922. The kindergarten adopted and modified the Froebelian and Montessori approaches to the Javanese context. In other words, child-centred practices have existed in Indonesia since the period of Dutch colonisation.

Although ECE was established long ago in Indonesia, greater attention began to be paid to ECE in the 2000s with the push from the international agencies such as the World Bank, UNESCO and Save the Children (Adriany & Saefullah, 2015). The government used a World Bank loan to initiate programmes to develop ECE in rural areas such as the one village, one ECE centre programmes (Satu Desa, Satu PAUD) (Ministry of Human Development and Culture Coordinator, 2016). Within the programmes lies the idea of constructing a more legitimate version of childhood because the existing village childhood is seen to be inadequate. In addition to focusing on the children, the programme is also directed at parents in an attempt to improve their parenting style (Tomlinson & Andina, 2015).

The fact that the government cooperates with international agencies demonstrates the penetration of neoliberal ideology into ECE. Among the ideas circulated by international agencies is the link between ECE and a country’s economic development. ECE is seen as a form of investment that can bring a higher return to society in the future (Heckman & Masterov, 2007). Without doubt, this demonstrates the pervasiveness of the human capital discourse within ECE (Peach & Lightfoot, 2015).
Neoliberal ideology is also disseminated through another discourse. ECE in Indonesia is not part of compulsory education, and hence it is the responsibility of the parents to select the best ECE for their children. This provides room for private kindergartens to emerge. A growing number of early childhood education institutions follow market-driven pre-school programmes or are operated by international franchises (Newberry, 2010). Many market-driven school programmes are franchises of global international programmes such as High Scope, Tumble Tots, Beyond Centre and Circle Time (BCCT) and many more.

The neoliberal ideology is also disseminated through the child-centred discourse. The national education law stipulates that ECE practices in Indonesia must subscribe to the child-centredness principle (“Law of the Republic of Indonesia: National Education System,” 2003; Ministry of Education and Culture of the Republic of Indonesia, 2014). The child-centred discourse echoes neoliberal principles with its emphasis on individuality and rationality (Duhn, 2010). Even though child-centredness has existed since the Dutch era, it has now become a state-sponsored practice.

Methodology

This research was conducted in three geographically distinct kindergartens in Indonesia. A qualitative case study approach is used. My understanding of case study research is informed by Merriam (1998), who defines it as “an intensive, holistic description and analysis of a bounded phenomenon such as a programme, an institution, a person, a process, or a social unit” (Merriam, 1998, p. xiii). In this paper, the bounded phenomenon is the kindergarten and the research is an attempt to present the complexities between the three kindergartens. The first kindergarten, the Rainbow Kindergarten, is located in a small village in South Sulawesi. The second kindergarten, the Colourful Kindergarten, is situated in a small town in Bengkulu province and the last kindergarten, the Flower Kindergarten, is in a town in West Java. The participants are the teachers and children in the kindergartens. The data was gathered mainly through interviews with the kindergartens’ principals and teachers. Non-participatory observation was also used to understand the daily practices of the kindergartens.

The data analysis faithfully follows Merriam’s (1998) approach. She argues that a qualitative case study involves six types of analysis: “ethnographic, narrative, phenomenological, constant comparative method, content, and analytic induction analysis” (Yazan, 2015, p. 130). In case study
research the analyst seeks a thick, detailed depiction of the unit or units being studied, and compares the groups being investigated throughout. To achieve this, I tried to compare and contrast the three kindergartens. At the same time, when analysing the data, I was also guided by my theoretical framework: postcolonial theories. Hence, I focused my analysis on how local and global values mutually interact and negotiate.

Conducting research in which the unit of analysis is an institution, like the kindergartens in this research, is always fraught with difficulty. I adhered to ethical principles throughout. Prior to conducting the research, consent was obtained from the adult participants, and from the children’s parents. In addition, because research with young children always entails problematic ethical issues, I implemented what Warin (2011) refers to as continuous consent, where the children’s consent is sought verbally and attention is paid to their non-verbal communication. As an adult researcher, I was aware of my power and how children are constructed in Indonesia as fragile individuals, and so I tried my best not to exert my power. Although I did not interview the children directly in my research, the observation involved the children, so I tried to ensure my presence did not cause any inconvenience to the children. I also attempted to protect the participants’ privacy and confidentiality by not revealing their real names, the names of the kindergartens or the names of the towns and villages where the research was conducted. All the participant names in this paper are pseudonyms.

Findings and Discussion

*The Rainbow Kindergarten: Social aspiration and human capital discourse*

The Rainbow Kindergarten is situated in a small village, on a hill in South Sulawesi. To reach the kindergarten, one must first take a two hour flight from Jakarta to Makasar, followed by an eight hour drive to the village. The village is up a hill. There is no public transportation to it. People usually walk or take an *ojek* (motorcycle transportation). The people who live there tend to be farmers as the village grows a lot of crops such as coffee and pepper.

ECE is considered to be a new phenomenon in the village. According to the kindergarten’s principal, the kindergarten was established six years ago. One of the drivers behind the setting up of the kindergarten was, as mentioned before, the government’s policy of one village, one ECE centre. The
The kindergarten system has encouraged volunteerism in the community; it is mainly women who set up kindergartens in villages in Indonesia (Newberry & Marpinjun, 2018). The kindergarten tuition fee is Rp 5,000.00 (EUR 0.31), but many parents have difficulty affording it.

To reach Rainbow Kindergarten, one must take a footpath. When I entered the kindergarten, I was greeted with a picture of a boy and a girl displayed on the wall. The kindergarten has only one room, of approximately 20 square meters. A closet separates the room, and one section is used as the classroom, and the other part as the teachers’ office. By office, I mean a section containing a single table and chair for the teacher. The table was covered in all the children’s work, such as their drawings and art. Some pictures were hanging on the wall. There was also an alphabet poster on the wall.

The kindergarten is run by only two teachers. One acts as both a teacher and the principal, and the other, who is the principal’s daughter, is the class teacher. The kindergarten takes children aged three to six years old. There were 20 children altogether in the kindergarten. Due to the lack of classrooms, the kindergarten has a schedule for each class. The three to four year olds attend the school on Friday only, while the four to five year olds go to school every Tuesday and Thursday, and the five to six year olds go to school every Monday and Wednesday. Each session lasts around two hours. The class usually began with circle time, where the children sit in a circle on the floor, and the teachers explain the activities for that day. Then they moved on to the main activity and the teachers assign one activity to the children. After the main activity, the children had their snack and play time, and the whole session was concluded with them singing together.

There were no chairs and tables in the classroom, presumably because the kindergarten was not spacious enough to accommodate them. All the children were seated on the floor. The principal said that was “a blessing in disguise” because:

No, we don’t have chairs and tables in our classroom, but I think this makes our school more child-centred. Just like the school supervisor said that in the kindergarten all the activities should be done in a circle and the children should move around freely, with no chairs or table to restrict their movement. So, ya...even though the reason for not having the chairs is because we don’t have money (laugh), but then it makes our school more child-friendly.
The teachers in the kindergarten strongly believe that ECE is vital to improving living conditions, particularly the economic development of the village. This understanding seems to be derived from a human capital approach that sees education as a vehicle to improving the country’s economy (Formen, 2017; Lee, Tseng & Jun 2015; Peach & Lightfoot, 2015). As the principal asserts: “Maybe one day, one of our pupils will get a PhD or become a company manager. They don’t have to become a farmer like their parents again”.

During my observation in the school, I noticed there was an emphasis on academic activities such as reading and writing, especially for the children aged five to six years old. Although the seating arrangement was a circle, all the activities were quite teacher-centred, with the teachers in charge of decision-making. Most of the time, the children were seated, with little room for physical activities. Almost all the activities were pencil and paper based. However, my observation also showed that despite the activities in the school being entirely academic, the children seemed to enjoy it. They sat and did everything with great enthusiasm. As Gupta (2006) and Jahng (2013) suggest that there is an emphasis on physical activities in the Global North, while in the Global South, academic activities seem to be preferred.

The kindergarten’s emphasis on academic activities seems to derive from their desire to achieve economic success in the future. As the principal said:

I understand that the directorate [of early childhood education] does not encourage kindergarten children to read and write. They said the activities are developmentally inappropriate. But at the same time, the parents demand it, because they want the children to be successful in the primary school later on. If we do not teach them how to read and write, then they will be left behind later. I think the most important thing is we don’t force them, and they are still happy to do the activities.

The principal’s statement illuminates what Naafs (2018, p. 2) labels “ways of imagining their futures”. ECE is seen as a social mobility tool where professions other than farmer are seen as possessing more social capital and privilege. At the same time, this also highlights the neoliberal values that construct children as “potential adult and earner” in the future (Kaščák & Pupala, 2011, p. 55).

However, neoliberalism does not seem to be the only factor that leads to the kindergarten’s emphasis on academic activities. As the principal men-
Negotiating local and global discourse in kindergarten: Stories from Indonesia

mentioned, the activities were stipulated by the parents, reflecting the parents’ personal desire for their children to be successful in the future (Philipson & Sujudin, 2019). The fact that most parents in the village came from low socio-economics status might demonstrate the inequality between the different social classes in the country (Naafs, 2018). Parents’ aspirations should therefore be seen in terms of a desire to improve their socio-economic status.

The fact that the activities in the kindergarten are teacher-centred may also suggest that what happens in the classroom is an extension of the social construction of children and childhood in Indonesia. Children in Indonesia are still constructed as subordinates in relationships with adults. Even though the Indonesian government has attempted to implement child-centredness through the kindergarten curriculum, the societal values regarding children and childhood remain the same. The constant negotiation between child-centredness and teacher-centredness sheds light on the complex relations between the local and global construction of childhood and adulthood in Indonesia. They also reveal the complex associations between the local and parents’ aspirations regarding social mobility and neoliberal values relating to human capitalism.

The Colourful Kindergarten: Local character and the World Bank’s view on children

The Colourful Kindergarten is located in a small town, around a three to four hour drive from Bengkulu, the capital city of Bengkulu province. Bengkulu province is situated on Sumatra Island. To get there, one must take a two hour flight from Jakarta, followed by a three hour drive.

The Colourful Kindergarten takes children aged two to six years old. There are 50 children in the school. The kindergarten is quite big. It has a spacious yard where children can play on the swing, slide and so on. The kindergarten consists of three classrooms. One class is for children aged two to three years old; the other two classes are for children aged four to five and five to six respectively.

The Colourful kindergarten is bigger in term of the size of the building as well as the number of the pupils than the Rainbow kindergarten. Parents pay a small tuition fee of around Rp. 20,000.00 (EUR 1.25) per month. However, just like in the village the Rainbow Kindergarten is located in, most people in this city are farmers. The kindergarten was established in 2013. Like the previous one, it is based around the government policy of one vil-
lage, one ECE centre. However, there was also a concern to correct views of childhood and parenting in the village. As Rita, the school’s principal states:

Before the kindergarten was established, the parents did not know what to do with their children. They often took their children farming with them. Sometimes, they had to travel very far to do that. The children went for months, without education or play.

She continues: “The children in our village used to rant and use swear words a lot...it really breaks my heart to see it”.

Rita’s mission to correct the parents and the children seems to be the reason she decided to establish the Colourful Kindergarten, and it became the kindergarten’s mission: “to develop the children’s character”. She says this is central to the school’s philosophy, helping the children develop their character fully. This strong passion is also rooted in religious practices. The kindergarten places great emphasis on the religious tuition. Every day before the activities start, the children recite some verses from the Quran (Islamic holy book) and stories about good character are read out.

Interestingly the idea of constructing a correct version of childhood and parenting is also similar to the idea disseminated by the global agencies such as the World Bank and UNICEF (Penn, 2002, 2011). In many of the World Bank’s ECE programmes in Global North countries, and in Indonesia, ECE centres are always established in conjunction with the parenting programme (Adriany & Saefullah, 2015). A report prepared by the World Bank clearly states that the aim of the parenting programme is to improve the parenting styles in rural areas (Hasan, Hyson, & Chang, 2013; Tomlinson & Andina, 2015; World Bank, 2006, n. d.). This approach is also followed in the kindergarten which runs a weekly parenting programme. The emphasis is placed on the importance of play and the benefit of reading books, as the school’s principal suggests that “the parents here do not know how to raise their children.” Here, again the school’s emphasis on correcting both the children and the parents intersects with the World Bank’s view on children and parents in the South (Adriany & Saefullah, 2015; Penn, 2002, 2011). This shows how power travels and is celebrated (Penn, 2002). However, as I have mentioned before, the determination to build the children’s character also seems to be derived from the teachers’ religious beliefs. My observations in the Colourful Kindergarten suggest that the kindergarten becomes a space in which seemingly contradictory local and global values continue to be negotiated.
The Flower Kindergarten: Between Islam and the West.

The last kindergarten in this research is the Flower Kindergarten. It is located in a town, around 4 hours’ drive from Bandung, the capital city of West Java. The kindergarten is quite high profile and considered to be one of the most popular kindergartens in the town. It is a two storey building set in a very spacious area with a huge front yard. There are 48 teachers in total, and the kindergarten accommodates 279 children. The kindergarten is divided into several classes, starting from daycare for babies and toddlers up to two years old, pre-school 1 for children ages two to three years old, pre-school 2 for children between three and four years old, kindergarten A for children from four to five years old and kindergarten B for children aged five to six years old. The tuition fee is Rp. 750,000.00 (EUR 47) per month.

The Flower Kindergarten is an Islamic kindergarten. In Indonesia there are various interpretations of Islam, varying from a more liberal approach to a more traditional and conservative approach. This kindergarten has a strong affiliation with the Salafi movement, a branch of the Islamic movement that is associated with a literal, strict and puritanical approach to Islam (N. Hasan, 2007). All the teachers wear a niqab, which is not part of the Islamic tradition in Indonesia (Hefner, 2007).

Interestingly, despite the school’s rather rigorous approach to Islam, it also adopts a very American approach regarding the curriculum and teaching practices. The kindergarten follows the Beyond Centres and Circle Times approach (BCCT), which is child-centred. The BCCT was initially developed by Dr Pamela C. Phleps from the Creative Preschool, Florida, United States (DEPDIKNAS, 2006). It is an approach to early childhood associated with the Creative Center for Childhood Research and Training (CCCRT) in Tallahassee, Florida, described as the “Home of the Creative Preschool Model Program Curriculum: Beyond Centers & Circle Time” (CCCRT, 2011). This copyrighted programme is available for purchase, and the CCCRT conducts training and workshops for interested teachers. According to their website, “CCCRT offers educational resources, professional services, scholarly publications and state-of-the-art training to adults working within the field of early childhood education and care”. The programme was brought to Indonesia in 2006 by a local private kindergarten and was then implemented in all early childhood education in Indonesia with the government’s endorsement (Newberry, 2010). The fact that an NGO introduced BCCT to Indonesia may exemplify the making of a liberal and global child that is part of the neoliberal state. The government halted the programme in 2010 because the
contract with the CCCRT was not extended. However, some kindergarten continue to practice BCCT such as the Flower Kindergarten.

The ideal subject in BCCT is a self-directed, self-disciplining child whose education is driven by play-based approaches (Newberry, 2010). As the BCCT’s website states, “Beyond Centers & Circle Time focuses on creating intentional, developmentally appropriate experiences for children ages three through kindergarten” (The Beyond Centers & Circle Time Curriculum Series, n.a.).

Within the BCCT approach, the focus is on the centre. Here centre means an area for children to play and do activities. The kindergarten has seven centres. They are the pre-academic centre where the activities are mostly related to pre-reading, pre-writing, and pre-maths; the art centre where the children do art and craft; the socio-drama area where the children can engage in pretend play and role-plays; the block centre, where the children play with blocks; the physical education centre; the nature centre, where the children play with natural resources from the environment; and the last centre is the religious centre, where the children are taught religion and the emphasis is on memorising the Quran.

School begins at 8 AM. School activities commence with free play. The reason for this is that the kindergarten believes that it allows the children to release energy and so when they enter the classroom, they are ready to learn. After playing, the children recite some prayers, and then proceed to the dining room to have their snack. Once they finish their meal, they go to the classroom where the activities are held. This session begins with circle time with the teacher and children sitting in a circle, and the teacher prompting discussion by explaining the activities for that day. The children then go to one of the centres. At the centre, several activities will have been prepared by the teacher. When I did my observation in the kindergarten, there were 11 activities in the pre-academic centre—each child selected the activities they wanted to do. There is a strong emphasis on the concepts of “choice” and “freedom”. Once the activities in one centre are completed, the children move to another centre and do another activity. In one day, the children usually do activities in three or four of the centres. All the activities are finished by around 2 PM with a break for prayer around 12 PM.

Because BCCT is no longer endorsed by the government, a private kindergarten like the Flower Kindergarten need an exclusive license to use BCCR. According to the principal, this license is obtained by attending
a training course on how to run the BCCT programme conducted by Dr Pamela C. Phleps. The training course is held once a year in Jakarta. Participants have to pay approximately Rp. 50 million (USD 3580) for one-week of training. Running the BCCT programme is costly and demonstrates the extent to which the programme attracts middle and upper class children. Most of the children in the kindergarten come from an upper-class background. This also signifies the fact that the notion of excellent quality ECE often does not take into account the idea of equity (Dahlberg, Moss & Pence, 2007).

Another central feature of BCCT is the idea of a rational and unified self. The school principal explained that any disputes and fighting among the children are always resolved through discussion. During my observation of circle time, there was an emphasis on getting the children to talk about how they feel and why they feel that way. I have also mentioned how the school focuses on building the children’s ability to make choices. The discourse resonates with the neoliberal enlightenment though; in the broader society individuals are celebrated as single, coherent and rational subjects who are able to make decisions for themselves (Newberry, 2010).

What happens in the Rainbow Kindergarten demonstrates the convenient marriage between religion and neoliberalism. As Aksoy and Eren Deniz (2018) and (Atasoy, 2009) argue neoliberalism is often celebrated by people as long as it does not directly challenge their imagined religious identity. The social justice issues remain overlooked, evident in the fact that the kindergarten is aimed at upper-class children and hence access may be limited for children from a lower socio-economic background.

Conclusion

The findings of this paper reveal the extent to which ECE in Indonesia is becoming a hybrid space for the constant negotiation between the local and global discourses. This paper highlight the fact that the neoliberal discourses are among the most pervasive global discourses found in ECE in Indonesia. The findings demonstrate how the kindergartens surveyed continue to adapt and negotiate, but also resist the dominant discourse. As presented in this paper, neoliberalism is adapted and negotiated within three main discourses. In the Rainbow Kindergarten, the human capital discourse is mediated through aspirations for social mobility. ECE is becoming an economic imaginary for the people in the village. Understanding the people’s desire for future success allows us to appreciate the kindergarten’s emphasis on teacher-centredness approach. In the second kindergarten, the Colorful
Kindergarten, negotiation occurs between neoliberalism and the character building discourse. By focusing on developing children’s character, the teachers translate the World Bank’s view of children and parents into the local language. Finally, in the last kindergarten, the Colorful Kindergarten, neoliberalism negotiates with the Islamic imaginary.

The findings demonstrate the complexity of the negotiation between the local and global discourses. On one hand, these different forms of negotiation illuminate the acts of resistance whereby they try to challenge the hegemonic discourse using the dominant language itself, but on the other hand, these may yield to the pervasiveness of the global discourses. The link between neoliberalism and colonisation is so powerful that Pacini-Ketchabaw and Taylor (2015, p. 5) asserts how this may show the extent to which

the recent predominance of neoliberal discourses can make it difficult to ascertain how old forms of colonisation are being sedimented, even as new forms of colonial relations or neocolonialism are being mobilised.

Despite the power of both the neoliberal and colonial discourses in ECE in Indonesia, the findings show how ECE is becoming a space in which juxtaposing ideas continue to interact with one another. Hence, the implication of this paper is that we should rethink the complexity and multifaceted nature of ECE in Indonesia rather than imagining it as a coherent, fix and “othered” practice of ECE compared to those in the North. This paper, therefore, should be seen as an invitation to discuss how to ECE could be decolonised in Indonesia.

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