



Submission No 43

Inquiry into Australia's Relations with Indonesia

Organisation: Asia Education Foundation

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Asia Education Foundation

**Submission to the
Joint Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade
on
Building Australia's Relationship with Indonesia**

“Commercial links, alone, will never render war unthinkable. What will, however, are mutual understanding and respect and the banishing of prejudice... if that future is to be one of peace and prosperity our kids will need the capacity to engage in a dialogue with others of different cultures and creeds. And that applies both within Australia and abroad.”

General Peter Cosgrove, Head of the Australian Defence Forces, Working Together on Languages Education, 30 May 2002

“Australians are enmeshed in the rich tapestry of Asia, as Asia is an increasingly important influence on Australia...we must heighten our engagement and cooperation. We must work together. Australia stands ready to do so.”

The Hon. Peter Costello, Treasurer, 16 October 2002

Introduction

This submission has been prepared by the Asia Education Foundation (AEF) and relates to the teaching of Indonesian studies in Australian primary and secondary schools.

The AEF was established by the Commonwealth Department of Education, Science and Training (DEST) in 1993 to promote and support the study of Asia across all curriculum areas in primary and secondary schools. The AEF is a foundation of the Asialink Centre at the University of Melbourne and Curriculum Corporation.

The AEF works in partnership with government and non-government education sectors and works to achieve its goal through four major strategies: curriculum materials development, teacher professional development and schools development.

Whilst the work of the AEF is focussed broadly on Asia, Indonesia has been a major focus nationally.

(Note that the views outlined in this submission do not represent the views of the Commonwealth.)

Teaching about Indonesia in Australian Schools

There has been no formal study as to the extent and nature of Indonesian programs being taught in Australian schools. However, the AEF has, for the past 11 years, supported schools around Australia to include the study of Indonesia in a range of learning areas including English, Studies of society and its environment, the Arts, Maths, Technology and Science. There has been an increase in interest in and curriculum developed on Indonesia by teachers and schools. Appendix 1 outlines some of the education programs which have been developed by the AEF on Indonesia.

It should be noted that there is no national curriculum for Australian schools. State and territory education jurisdictions determine curriculum locally, which in most cases is couched in terms of generic student outcomes. Decisions regarding curriculum content are predominately made by the school and/or teacher, except in the case of NSW where curriculum content is mandated. Therefore any strategy to increase the teaching of Indonesia must be focussed on influencing teachers.

Teacher knowledge is one of the greatest barriers for the implementation of programs on Indonesia. Most teachers have not completed undergraduate programs on Asia. Therefore long-term professional development and training strategies are a crucial component. Programs that offer expert input, in-country study, exchange and sharing of professional expertise, are required to shift the curriculum from being predominately euro-centric.

Since 1995, around \$30 million dollars per annum has been allocated to the National Asian Languages and Studies in Australian Schools (NALSAS) Strategy, which has supported the teaching of four priority Asian languages, Modern Standard Chinese, Japanese, Indonesian and Korean as well as the studies of Asia. The study of Indonesia in schools has been supported by the growth in the teaching of the Indonesian

language, particularly in primary schools. However, NALSAS funding will cease in December 2002. The Commonwealth is currently reviewing its Languages Other Than English (LOTE) Programme which will take account of progress with the NALSAS Strategy. The final report is due December 2002.

Notwithstanding the additional funding provided by the Commonwealth, a recent study showed that at least 50% of Australian schools either do not teach about Asia at all or if they do so, only superficially. In 2000, only 5.5% of Year 12 students learnt an Asian language, of this 1.2% studied Indonesian language.

Whilst the Commonwealth has implemented two key strategies (NALSAS and the AEF) all indications are that there is still much to be done. These levels achieved are not yet adequate to meet the needs of our national interest and would not be considered acceptable in other key national priority areas such as literacy, numeracy and citizenship education. Australia must move forward with a coordinated policy direction if we are to achieve desirable levels of Asian language and studies capability in Australian students.

In addition, the tertiary sector must be targetted. With the average age of teachers being approximately 48 years, educating the next generation of teachers becomes a priority, however, a recent examination of the content taught in university teacher education programs indicated that very little was taught about Asia. Skilling our next generation of teachers must become a focus for the future.

Why Study Asia? Why Study About Indonesia?

The study of Asian language and cultures in schools is in Australia's national interest. Knowledge and understandings of languages and cultures of our nearest neighbours, our major trading partners and the growing number of Asian Australians, are essential to Australia's security, prosperity, regional relationships and the maintenance and growth of an enriched, tolerant multicultural Australia. Australia's Asia knowledge has the capacity to be a rich **national asset and resource**.

The central importance of Australian students learning about the peoples, cultures and languages of their regional neighbors, particularly Indonesia, continues to grow:

Australia's future

- Australia is geographically situated in the Asia region – increasingly, for our prosperity, welfare, environment and security, we need to work with our neighbours to forge alliances and agreements to minimize conflict and poverty, restore ecosystems and evolve an agenda of ethics and fairness to which all can be a part

International understanding

- September 11th and the bombing in Bali, Indonesia sharply demonstrated the rapidly growing interconnectedness of our world. It heightens a need for Australia's future citizens to develop knowledge and understanding of different cultures – the Asian region cannot be ignored, particularly Indonesia, the largest Muslim nation in our region

Inherent intellectual value

- Studies of Asia are inherently valuable and form 60% of the world's knowledge and civilization – Indonesia, the 4th most populous nation offers rich source for the study of, the arts, Islam, cultural diversity, post-colonial society etc - an education that does not address study of these cultures is intellectually limited and euro-centric

Trade and business

- Australia's trade with Asia is consistently around 60% of our trade; A significant number of Australian young people require vocational skills to work in and with the countries of the Asian region. Business leaders emphasize the pivotal role of cross cultural knowledge and understanding in business development and success

A tolerant and empathetic community

- close to 10 % of the Australian population come from an Asian background – an harmonious and unified multicultural society requires that its citizens have shared values based on mutual respect, knowledge and understanding of each other

Future Needs

Educating the next generation of Australians must be an integral part of any strategy to build Australia's relationship with Indonesia. The following broad strategies are offered as the foundations for the development of Australians who are skilled to work, learn, understand and interact with fellow citizens of this region, in particular Indonesia:

- **Fostering of people-to-people links** through bilateral exchanges and study tours are important opportunities for Australians and Indonesians to interact and develop greater knowledge and understanding of each other's culture.
- **Teacher professional development and training** is required to increase knowledge and understanding of Indonesia. Teachers and teacher educators who are skilled and confident to teach about Indonesia will generate interest and enthusiasm in students. This is crucial to the development of positive attitudes towards Indonesia and Indonesians.
- **Contemporary curriculum material on Indonesia** for use in Australian schools, such materials should focus on expanding concepts of Asia and Indonesia, exploring the contributions of Indonesia to the world, challenging stereotypes and consider the likely implications of closer Australia-Indonesia links.
- **Teacher education programs** should offer more opportunities for students to undertake programs with a focus on Indonesia. This will ensure that the next generation of teachers and indeed students will be better placed to understand Australia's relationship with Indonesia and the region.

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Appendix 1

Education Projects Focussed on Indonesia

The following is a summary of some of the projects undertaken by the AEF on the studies of Indonesia. These projects are reliant on a range of sources for funds including; the Commonwealth from either DFAT or DEST; education jurisdictions; schools and teachers.

Curriculum Materials:

Indonesia Kaleidoscope, this primary teacher text in the AEF's Access Asia Series, features material on Irian Jaya, Bali, Sulawesi, Kalimantan Java and Sumatra.

Go Indonesia Website

This award winning website for primary teachers and students features classroom activities and resources on Indonesia. This website was funded by the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT) through the Australia-Indonesia Institute (All).

Voices and Visions – Texts from Indonesia for the Senior English Classroom CDROM
Voices and Visions Indonesia is part of a series of CD ROMs featuring contemporary and traditional texts from Indonesia, India, China and Japan. The Indonesia text features literature, popular publishing, visual and performing Arts and film and television.

People-to-People Links:

Linking Latitudes Conference and Fieldtrips – Bali, Indonesia 1997

This AEF program was conducted in partnership with the National Ministry of Education, Indonesia and attended by 200 Australian and 80 Indonesian educators.

Australia-Indonesia Teacher Exchange Program

For the past five years the AEF has conducted study tour programs to Indonesia for Australian educators. With the support of the All, the AEF has established an exchange program for Indonesian educators in Australia. To date the AEF has sent a total of 100 Australian educators to Indonesia on three-week study tours and hosted 36 Indonesian educators.

Australia Indonesia Exchange Program for Language Teachers 2002-3

This project is funded by DEST and will support four Australian ESL teachers to work in Indonesian junior high schools for 6 months and four Indonesian English teachers to work in Australian schools for 3 months. The AEF is working in partnership with Australian Volunteers International to implement this project.

Professional Development

In addition to the above, the AEF has been involved in the delivery of professional development programs for Australian primary and secondary teachers. These programs include a specific focus on Indonesia and in many cases support the teaching of Indonesian language.

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