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**COVID-19: ADAPTING TO  
NEW NORMS**

# ICE Research Group Investigates COVID-19 Impact On Pedagogy and Research



Beginning in the first week of the new semester 2020-2021, the International and Comparative Education Research Group (ICE) at Universiti Brunei Darussalam (UBD) has conducted a series of weekly seminars on the impact of COVID-19 on higher education institutions in Brunei Darussalam and beyond.



ICE has core members from multiple faculties across the University including education, arts and social sciences, humanities, Islamic studies, Southeast Asian studies, and language and linguistics. Photo: Liam C Kelley

Led by the ICE Research Lead, Senior Professor Phan Le-Ha and the Dr Yabit Alas, the weekly seminars, presented by ICE members have garnered interest, not only from educators across faculties in UBD but also academics from various institutions in Brunei Darussalam.

The weekly seminar series began with a work-in-progress presentation entitled "COVID-19 and Responses from University Teachers and Students in Brunei: An Initial Overview and Implications for Research and Pedagogy" by Dr Najib Noorashid, a graduate of the PhD in Applied Linguistics from the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences (FASS). The scene-setting seminar revealed the scarcity of scholarly works contextualising responses from higher education towards COVID-19 in Brunei Darussalam, even though similar studies have been undertaken

globally. The seminar showcased some pedagogical challenges in the immediate transition from face-to-face learning to online distance learning and some indications of psychological and sociological effects amongst academic stakeholders. The seminar also highlighted the significance of examining educational affairs and situational management in Brunei Darussalam as the Sultanate has been receiving admiration from international communities for successfully 'flattening the curve'.

The following week, Muhammad Adil Iqbal, the president of the UBD International Students Club, and a PhD student at the UBD Sultan Omar 'Ali Saifuddin Centre of Islamic Studies (SOASCIS), presented the experiences and social challenges faced by UBD

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**AT THE SEMINARS, THE AUDIENCE  
SHARE THEIR OWN PERCEPTIONS,  
EXPERIENCES AND COPING  
STRATEGIES IN THE COURSE  
OF UNDERTAKING TEACHING,  
LEARNING AND RESEARCHING IN  
AND OUTSIDE OF UBD.**

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international students amid COVID-19. The seminar “UBD International Students Club and COVID-19 Pandemic: Experiences and Reflections” also highlighted the continuous efforts offered by UBD to maintain the safety and well-being of these international students.

Senior Professor Phan Le-Ha, Dr Yabit Alas and Varissa Mae Yabit, a research assistant at ICE, led the third seminar that focused on the “Effects of COVID-19 on Educational Policy and Stakeholders in Brunei, Malaysia and Indonesia”. This seminar analysed the abrupt changes in educational policy due to COVID-19 in Brunei Darussalam, Malaysia and Indonesia. Early observations revealed that the educational responses and experiences of students, parents and educators, dealing with online teaching and learning, are relatively similar in these countries. However, the sense of obedience and support towards managing the pandemic show differences, which the study hypothesised as being intertwined with the different political and religious experiences in these countries amid combatting COVID-19.

As online learning is essential in the times of COVID-19, Dr Chester Keasberry, a Design and Creative Industries lecturer at FASS shared “Zoom In: Perceptions and Perspectives of Pandemic Pedagogy”. The seminar showcased the voices of educators at different levels of education across several public and private schools, in dealing with the ‘new normalised’ distance learning. The seminar revealed the manifold challenges faced by primary and secondary school teachers, particularly those who had not had prior training on virtual pedagogical platforms, as well as managing anxieties while delivering online classes and providing home-learning packs for their students.

Dr Meredian Alam, an Assistant Professor of Sociology at FASS critically examined various strategies used by YouTube personalities to push forward the stay-at-home order of #DiRumahAja as part of national civic engagement and virtual pedagogy in Indonesia. The seminar entitled “Youth-led Virtual Pedagogy for COVID-19 Prevention” showcased how young Indonesians utilised different social media platforms to raise awareness on the risk of COVID-19 to the public and to gain visibility for the causes they advocate amid the pandemic.

The weekly seminar series has continued to receive attention and support from educators and students in UBD and beyond. At the seminars, the audience share their own perceptions, experiences and coping strategies in the course of undertaking teaching, learning and researching in and outside of UBD. The seminar series will continue to be held every Tuesday at SHBIE during the semester.

The ICE Research Group is dedicated to the study of educational systems globally as well as of established and emerging phenomena in education in the context of community and regional building, globalisation, internationalisation, digitalisation, transnationality and mobilities of people, ideas, technologies, practices, anxieties and aspirations.

It brings together scholars and researchers from multiple disciplines across UBD as well as internationally to build scholarship and pedagogy, cultivate research ideas, work on projects, create knowledge and publications, and engage societies in on-going dialogues related to ICE in its broadest sense. It also reaches out to ministries, higher education institutions, schools and other organisations to involve them in research, professional training and community engagement activities, so as to build a community of researchers, policy makers, professionals and individuals with shared intellectual interests and agendas.