

Interactive comment on “Disaster Risk Reduction education in Indonesia: Challenges and Recommendations for Scaling up” by A. Amri et al.

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General Comment:

This paper is a timely and useful contribution to professional efforts striving to realize effective disaster risk reduction (DRR) in practice. It is beneficial for looking beyond the more frequent information provided by institutional discussions that encourage the subject more generally as a desirability but with little detailed consideration of the efforts involved. However, as the paper points out by its admittedly small and localized sampling the task is not an easy one. The paper illustrates the challenges and suggests practical measures to overcome them, but at a decidedly local and inconsistent manner in the target location. Nonetheless, the risk remains that the deferred values of early education exposure to “DRR” can easily get lost in discussions about “disas-

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ters” themselves. The authors note that youths have important and viable roles to play in DRR within their own families and local communities, but much of the credibility of DRR education also hinges on a shared and consistent understanding of the concepts involved among distinctive audiences. The nature of the sampling employed among three groups of respondents may have contributed to this partial appreciation of the resulting analysis. Despite these limitations, the paper serves a purpose in highlighting the need for further attention in countries to pursue empirical evaluation of the demonstrated efficacy of DRR policy intentions.

Specific Comments:

The substance of DRR education is obscured in the nature of the enquiry and the discussion for this reviewer, with insufficient consideration given to a clear understanding of “DRR” as understood by official government policymakers, local communities, educators, and the academic researchers themselves. This weakness is that these perceptions are not sufficiently clear and explicit about the distinctive substance of “DRR education” in contrast to the “preparedness and emergency action at the time of a ‘disaster’” reminiscent of an earlier era of disaster management. While school safety plans and general community awareness is mentioned, the majority of subject examples mentioned in terms of activities” to advance DRR, are more commonly expressed in terms of preparedness and emergency relief actions or long conventional exercises and drills. These activities are undoubtedly relevant to a limited degree, but they eclipse what should be a more evident concern or contemporary awareness concerning matters of risk identification, the various types or extent of exposure and vulnerability in the local surroundings implied by DRR thinking. These latter features are the core of DRR in practice, so their absence makes the paper less incisive than suggested by its title. This reviewer had a lingering concern at the conclusion about what is really being analyzed here in substantive terms. However, that impression itself may reflect a difficulty in seriously evaluating the efficacy of any “established” efforts of periodic or singular actions to acquaint younger students to disaster risks beyond

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simply identifying hazards and relief assistance during disasters.

The intention to provide multiple perspectives of the subject from educators, NGO representatives and students was a good idea, but this reviewer believes it was not fully realized. The educators were the most conversant respondents of what they understood about the professional and systemic requirements, opportunities and impediments to address their understanding of “DRR” in the classroom. The more limited selection of only international NGO affiliates in the focus group had a different and typecast programmatic view of the subject. Unfortunately, the students’ opinions solicited from only one school were not so convincing beyond identifying prevalent hazards. The limitations of their combined responses were more disappointing as their views were solicited particularly because the selected school supposedly had a program to advance DRR education. However, their enthusiasm to learn more about disasters and their own community when asked should not be doubted, and may be an indicative reflection of the principal’s efforts.

Beyond these limitations of DRR definition and the sampled respondents, the paper describes the purpose of the exercise carefully. Within its own terms, the paper is able to validate both deterrents and the facilitating features of primary education to advance at least “disaster-related” issues in a limited, but justifiable, local disaster-affected environment. The design of the enquiry usefully proceeds from and expands upon a prior study about disasters and preparedness (Johnston and others, 2014). It usefully is able to provide additional substance to describe continuing challenges that need to be overcome, and to identify additional means and mechanisms to address them. Referenced documentation that outlined official policies that had been formulated and guidelines that were disseminated was beneficial. These official efforts typified the risk of partial efforts resulting in the absence of a fully coherent strategy and tendencies of only piecemeal approaches for implementation.

This wider perspective provided by the authors, extending beyond the localized purview of the respondents is an attribute of the study that can motivate self-initiated re-

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source and information mechanisms among educators. The authors’ encouragements for more engagement and means of continuous information exchange among educators and a more assertive effort to identify or provide access to reference material better suited to DRR are commendable. Several sources that exist may be included in the paper as supplemental references, such as the Education and School Safety Special Interest Group on Preventionweb with its nearly 20 online resources (<http://www.preventionweb.net/english/themes/education/>). Let Our Children Teach Us!: A review of the role of education and knowledge in disaster risk reduction (Wisner, B, 2006. UNISDR) is particularly valuable with its explicit DRR orientation and many examples with wide cultural scope. (Wisner, B., 2006. Geneva: UNISDR. <https://www.unisdr.org/we/inform/publications/609> These and other examples

Concluding Comment:

The recommendations that relate to the particular Indonesian situation observed encourage further and more systematic involvement in progressive teaching and learning about DRR in small-scale, local community contexts, ideally with children’s full participation. The paper makes clear that such ambitions require a more comprehensive mechanism and supportive human and material resource mechanisms. The conclusions suggest that extended systemic requirements will be needed to translate policy into wider understanding and productive learning activities, while also suggesting beneficial measures to engage educators with each other, and with additional actors.

In this last respect to more fully accommodate the wider socioeconomic considerations and analysis of DRR beyond a more narrowly construed disaster management orientation alone, it may be useful to include a closing line or two for future consideration. It could refer to the envisioned state of children “living in a safe, clean and healthy community, being aware of the well-being of their natural environment and the beneficial values of good health, science and understanding their local environment and weather among other established school subjects. This may help to frame a wider operational context in vernacular terms for the desired goals of DRR education.

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