

Rebo nyunda: Is it decolonising early childhood education in Bandung, Indonesia?

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Abstract: Since 2012, Indonesia has been obsessed with the notion of *melestarikan budaya lokal* (preserving local culture) as part of Indonesian Cultures. In West Java, Indonesia, the cultural revitalisation program is called “*Rebo Nyunda*”. *Rebo* means Wednesday; *nyunda* means being Sundanese. Sunda is the dominant ethnic group in West Java and the second largest ethnic group in Indonesia. Childhood often becomes a site for implanting ideologies, including nationalist ideology through the rhetoric of *anti-West*. *Rebo Nyunda* is expected to be able to shape future generations with strong cultural roots and unshaken by negative foreign ideas. Using focus group discussions this paper investigates the extent to which teachers understand *Rebo Nyunda* as a mean of cultural resistance to foreign forces amid the wholesale adoption of early childhood education doctrines from the West, such as the internationalisation of early childhood education, developmentally appropriate practices, neuroscience for young children, child-centred discourse, economic investment and the commercialisation of childhood education. This paper examines the complexity of and contradictions in teachers’ perceptions of *Rebo Nyunda* in Bandung, a city considered a melting pot of various ethnic groups in Indonesia.

Key words: early childhood education, post-colonialism, cultural revitalisation, Indonesia.

Introduction

Indonesian early childhood education (ECE) development has never been independent of international influence. Western influence started from the

era of Dutch colonisation, followed by education globalisation in the postcolonial era. The World Bank and other international agencies such as AusAID and PLAN play a significant role in the universalisation of ECE in postcolonial Indonesia (Newberry, 2012). Adriany and Saefullah (2015) argue that the universalisation of ECE should be examined critically since the concept of childhood is not universal. Rather, it is contextual and culturally specific. Hence, decolonising ECE should focus on finding an ECE approach that better fits the concept of childhood in the respective context.

In a country with such enormous cultural diversity as Indonesia, the concept of childhood can vary from region to region, culture to culture. However, from 1928 to 1998, an Indonesian national identity was built at the expense of local identities, and this affected the concept of childhood too. Unitary politics was used to fuse the diverse cultures in the archipelago as part of the pre-independence anti-colonial struggle and the post-independence national stability in the Sukarno (1945–1967) and Suharto eras (1967–1998). Only after the fall of Suharto did cultural diversity and local identities come to be celebrated (Budianta, 2006). Since 2012, Indonesia has been obsessed with the notion of *melestarikan budaya lokal* (preserving local culture) as part of the Indonesian cultures. Wallace (1956) refers to this as a cultural revitalisation movement: “a deliberate, organised, conscious effort by members of a society to construct a more satisfying culture.” Although the revitalisation movement began before 2012, Joko Widodo, the governor of DKI Jakarta (2012–2014) and now president of Indonesia (2014–2024), introduced the compulsory wearing of traditional dress day on specific days. He instructed the government officials in his municipality to wear Betawi traditional dress on Wednesdays. Many other government leaders, local and national, followed in Joko Widodo’s footsteps and made the wearing of traditional dress on Wednesdays compulsory for government officials, school pupils and children attending kindergarten.

The rhetoric behind the policy is infused with a neo-colonial logic: that modernisation and the invasion of foreign cultures, mainly Western ones, has eroded Indonesian cultures (see Hafid, 2017; Presiden RI, 2016). In West Java, the wearing of traditional dress on a Wednesday is called “*Rebo nyunda*”. *Rebo* means Wednesday; *nyunda* means being Sundanese. Cultural revitalisation movements, such as *Rebo nyunda*, are a form of ethnic movement celebrated in the Indonesian democratic era. It is difficult to find research about *rebo nyunda*. Most of the available research focuses on the importance of *rebo nyunda* in revitalising and preserving local Indonesian culture (see Choirunisa & Alia, 2015; Mayangsari, Noviyanti & Adham, nd).

This study investigates *Rebo nyunda* from a critical postcolonial perspective. We examine the complexity of and contradictions in teachers' understanding of *Rebo nyunda* in Bandung; a city considered a melting pot of various ethnic groups in Indonesia. We analyse the extent to which kindergarten teachers understand *Rebo nyunda* as a means of cultural resistance to foreign forces amid the wholesale adoption of early childhood education doctrines from the West, such as the internationalisation of early childhood education, developmentally appropriate practices, neuroscience for young children, child-centred discourse, economic investment and the commercialisation of childhood education (see Adriany & Saefullah, 2015; Solehudin & Adriany, 2017; Adriany, 2018).

Postcolonial Perspective

Postcolonial theories are diverse (Young, 2001); nonetheless, their main purpose is to critically analyse the various forms of continuity in colonisation in the contemporary world (Hall, 1996). According to Said (1989) colonisation continues through the persistence of the colonial knowledge hierarchy that promotes the otherness of some cultures. Within a postcolonial perspective, it is important to understand that historical colonial experience is interconnected with the contemporary neo-colonial condition (Williams & Chrisman, 1994). Although it initially emerged from scholars interested in the anti-colonial struggles of formerly colonised countries (Young, 2001), in the postcolonial perspective the definition of colonisation has been extended to cover not only the domination of one nation/country over another nation/country, global over local, but also the domination of one type of knowledge/discourse over another (Subedi & Daza, 2008; Crossley & Tikly, 2004). Feminist encounters with postcolonial theory have also highlighted the way in which postcolonial theory intersects with multiculturalism (Dryzek, Honig, Phillips & Gilroy, 2008). Therefore, the postcolonial framework is often used to analyse issues such as race, gender, class, ethnicity, slavery, identity formation, hybridity, nationalism, language and indigenous rights (Ashcroft, Griffiths & Tiffin, 1995). One of the main points in the postcolonial perspective adopted in this paper is that colonial history has to be examined if we are to understand the contemporary multicultural condition.

The field of education is often used to promote nationalism. The postcolonial perspective is useful for critically examining the formation of a national identity, often at the expense of minority identities (Subedi & Daza, 2008). In a formerly colonised country like Indonesia nationalism is always strongly associated with a rejection of Western cultural discourse.

In this paper, we use the postcolonial perspective not only to analyse the power relations between the Global North and the Global South, the international world and a country or nation, the global and local, but also to analyse the domination of one group or one identity over another in a local multicultural setting. This paper uses the postcolonial perspective to understand how the hegemonic culture is perpetuated in the Indonesian context through the *Rebo Nyunda* project, which claims to revitalise and lend a voice to the local culture (in this case, Sundanese). In a culturally diverse country like Indonesia, *Rebo Nyunda* may potentially marginalise other local cultures associated with Sundanese culture coexisting in the geographical location, which we assume contradicts the postcolonial spirit strongly related to multiculturalism and the recognition of differences, diversity and plurality (Kubota, 2014; Dryzek et al., 2008). Drawing on Dryzek et al. (2008), we combine the postcolonial perspective with multiculturalism to enable us to critically examine the hierarchy within Indonesian diversity.

The Context of the Study

Indonesia is an archipelago of more than 17,000 islands and has around 1,300 ethnicities. It is difficult to define Indonesian culture due to the great diversity in culture, religion, race, language and customs. Sunda is the dominant ethnic group in West Java and the second largest ethnicity after Javanese. According to the last population census, in 2010 the Sundanese represented 15.5% of the total population of Indonesia (BPS, 2011). During the Dutch colonial era (1600s–1949), the Sundanese area was called the *priangan* regency. This area is now called *Jawa Barat* (West Java). The way in which the ethnicities and cultures on the island of Java and in the Indonesian archipelago are categorised is part of the colonial legacy. The Dutch distinguished between regions and cultural units on the basis of the spoken language in the region (Moriyama, 2005). Unlike Javanese culture, which dominates Indonesian culture, Sundanese culture has no single centre of cultural and spiritual power that could influence the Sundanese region as a whole (Moriyama, 2005). As a result, Sundanese culture is not monolithic. Different regions have different dialects and cultures. Therefore the term *rebo nyunda* is problematic since it is not clear which version of Sundanese culture the programme supports.

The research was conducted in Bandung, the city we live in and whose culture we are most familiar with. Bandung is a metropolitan city and the capital of West Java province. It is also a melting pot of many ethnicities from across Indonesia, with its three famous state universities and more

than twelve private universities. Bandung has been becoming urbanised due to the unequal economic development in the region and its popularity as a location for higher education (Nurwati, Setiawan & Suwartapradja, 2005; Pitoyo & Triwahyudi, 2017). There is no accessible data about the ethnic composition of Bandung; however, the last census showed that in 2010 the Sundanese domination of West Java had decreased by two per cent from 73 per cent in 2000 to 71 per cent in 2010 (Pitoyo & Triwahyudi, 2017).

Method

As university lecturers who have worked in ECE for more than fifteen years, we have access to an extensive network of ECE centres in the West Java region. We chose two of the government-owned public kindergartens in this network as the data collection site. Public kindergartens were chosen as they have to implement government policies and programmes. We invited the kindergarten principals to participate in our study and obtained consent from the principals and teachers. To gain extensive information about the teachers' perspectives on *Rebo nyunda*, we held focus group discussions with five teachers in each kindergarten. The discussions focused on the background, main purposes and pedagogical activities related to *Rebo nyunda*. Throughout the discussions and interviews we listened to the participants' comments without interrupting, so as to avoid influencing their answers. We did not give any negative feedback or signal approval/disapproval of the participants' comments. We conducted a thematic analysis of the data and generated the teachers' general ideas about *Rebo nyunda*.

Reflexivity is critical in this type of research. As we are Sundanese people who have been exposed to Western theories, we realised that we might not be sufficiently critical in examining our own culture. We thought we might become trapped in what Narrayan (1997) defines as an emissary mindset, the assumption that everything that comes from the West is problematic or vice versa. There was a risk we might take a Western idea for granted. Therefore, in the process of the research, we constantly checked our perspective, maintaining a critical attitude to both our own culture and Western ideas.

Findings

Rebo nyunda takes place every Wednesday. Teachers and students have to wear traditional dress that day. Girls and women wear the *Kebaya* and boys and men the *Pangsi*. The teachers use Sundanese as the language of instruction, and teach the children Sundanese songs, poems, games and

etiquette. Both the colonial legacy and postcolonial thinking can be seen in the way teachers explain their understanding of *rebo nyunda*. The following sections explain the complexities of that understanding.

Sundanese as local content in a curriculum

For teachers *rebo nyunda* is part of the local content of the curriculum – more a top-down policy than a bottom-up one. They call it *muatan lokal* (local content). Erni, one of the teachers interviewed, said,

It [*Rebo nyunda*] started in 2004; we joined a training session about preserving Sundanese culture through Sundanese language, performance arts and culinary traditions. Around that time the government introduced a new curriculum, the 2013 curriculum, which required every school to identify its locality. Our principal thought that it was good to adopt this as part of the curriculum's local content. So she [the principal] decided to do it [teach the children Sundanese culture], but it was not called *Rebo nyunda*. It has only been called *Rebo nyunda* after 2012, with the Mayor's Decree. (Erni, FGD on the 7 January 2019)

Since 2004 the government has encouraged schools to adopt their own curriculum to ensure contextual education. The change was a consequence of the law on the National Education System established in 2003. The law states that the diverse reality of the Indonesian archipelago, including the differing cultures, local wisdoms and other local potential resources or regions, and the children's diversity (Law of Republic of Indonesia No. 20, 2003) should be respected in education. In the law, diversity is understood in relation to grasping the potential differences in learning and teaching in the various regions (Marliana & Hikmah, 2013). The contextuality of children's learning is seen in line with Vygotskian recommendations about the importance of understanding the socio-historical context in children's learning and the development of children's knowledge (Rogoff, 2003; Gauvain, 2001; Tudge et al., 2006; Ball, 2010; Spodek, 1996), which should be at the core of decolonising education.

At a glance, this is consistent with the postcolonial spirit which is critical of universalisation projects in education (see Viruru, 2006; Crossley & Tikly, 2006). However, the law serves to perpetuate the "persistent neo-colonial relations" (Bhabha, 1994, p.9) evident in the Indonesian education system, especially in ECE. The law specifies that the child/student-centred approach should be used at each stage of education, including ECE. Developmentally

Appropriate Practices (DAP) should be the foundation of children's education in ECE (Herlina & Indrati, 2010). There have been a number of scholarly works critically examining child-centeredness and DAP from a postcolonial perspective (see Viruru, 2005b; Ryan & Grieshaber, 2004; Soto & Swadener, 2002; Gupta, 2006). Adopting DAP and a child-centred approach will not break the cycle of colonialism, as it is nothing other than the continuation of colonialism through the global ideation of individualistic and independent neoliberal agency (Adriany & Saefullah, 2015).

Wita, a teacher, realised that there had been a change in children's etiquette such as in the manner in which they talk to and behave in front of an older person and their peer group. However, Wita and other teachers do not aware of the individualisation embedded in the child-centrism that might have caused the change. Wita explained,

Kids these days are not as polite as we used to be. They are not as obedient as kids in my time. We were scared to say no to teachers and parents. Kids now are more critical; they need to know the reason. They can decide what they want or do not want. (Wita, 7 January 2019)

The child-centred approach unquestionably remains the default and ideal in ECE practices. Thus, local content is limited to deciding which cultural products – such as songs, foods, dance, games and stories – should be taught to children rather than being a means of finding a Sundanese way of learning and teaching, of knowing and being, which are, according to Subedi & Daza (2008), the key point of decolonisation in education.

Protecting Sundanese identity from global influences

In a similar vein as the Mayor of Bandung's Decree on the preservation of the Sundanese language, most of the teachers agreed that the Sundanese identity is under threat. Susi, a teacher, commented,

Western values, now Korean values, easily reach the children. The children absorb them very quickly because of technology. As a consequence, our children now have a different attitude towards older people. They are becoming *ngalunjak*, *culangung*, *calutak*. They do not respect older people the way we do. (Susi, FGD, 7 January 2019)

Ngalunjak, *culangung*, and *calutak* are Sundanese words used to refer to a disrespectful act towards someone who is older or from a higher social

hierarchy. Sundanese society was a feudalistic society with a recognised social hierarchy and a people's code of conduct that reflected that hierarchy. The social hierarchy is reflected in the language hierarchy¹ and in the embodiment of hierarchical cultural norms. Susi and other teachers were concerned about the lack of respect for older people, reflected in the demise of making respectful gestures towards older people. When younger people walk past an older person or someone from a higher hierarchy, they should bow to an angle of roughly 30 degrees, with their right arm and hand stretched a little bit forward to show respect. Using their right hand, younger people should take the older person's right hand and kiss the back of it. One teacher said that the children's lack of understanding of Sundanese etiquette was the result of contemporary parenting methods that prioritise the children's freedom to think over obedience. She said,

When we were young, it was imperative we obeyed our parents and teachers. What they said was our command. We cannot say no. We always believe whatever they say. They [parents and teachers] were authority figures. They taught us about *pamali*, and we believed them. Kids now do not believe in *pamali*. Kids now are critical and need a rational explanation. (Rani, FGD, 7 January 2019)

Rani talked about how her parents and teachers had taught her to do or not do things through the notion of *pamali*. *Pamali* is a Sundanese word that means something we must not do. If we do it, there will be consequences. The consequences are not rationally related to the forbidden conduct. For example, it is *pamali* (forbidden) to sit on the doorway, because if we did, we would not get a husband or a wife for the rest of our lives. Rani did not say that she wanted *pamali* to be upheld. However, she thought that it would be easier to control the children if they believed in *pamali*. Rani did not relate teachers' loss of control to the child-centred approach in ECE, which enhances and encourages children's autonomy.

The teachers' sense that the identity is being subverted emerges from the perceived symbolic threat to Sundanese values in the adoption of foreign values. A symbolic threat arises when a group of people perceive another group's norms, values, worldview and way of life to threaten the continu-

¹ There are three hierarchical registers in Sundanese: *kasar* (colloquial), *sedang* (middle), and *lemes* (refined/polite) (Wessing, 1974). Sundanese also has different words for referring to oneself (the speaker) and to others (the addressee). The rules of the language are complicated. Using language not accordingly to the hierarchy in Sundanese can be considered impolite.

ity of their group's cultural identity (Gonzalez, Verkuyten, Weesie & Poppe, 2008). Susi made this point, saying,

Sundanese culture should continue to exist. Do not let foreign culture take over our generations and wipe out our culture. If we did not preserve the culture the people, the language, the morality and the culture itself would vanish. (Susi, FGD, 7 January 2019)

Throughout the discussion, the teachers used the words *foreign culture/values* interchangeably with *western culture/values*. Although Susi's comment seems to be strongly aimed against foreign values, other teachers did not see foreign values in completely negative terms. They agree that globalisation is unavoidable. They thought that there were positive western values the children could adopt. They realised that in education they had adopted a lot of western values which they think are good, such as discipline, punctuality and awareness of safety, cleanliness, law and order. However, they also think that some western ways of life are morally unacceptable in Sundanese culture. As Rina said,

We cannot work against the *zaman* [time]. This is the era of globalisation. It [globalisation] is not all negative. We took a lot from the West, like education. However, our children are also exposed to global information and global culture, which do not fit in our culture. We need to build a wall so that our children are protected from bad influences. We want our children to be able to filter out what is bad for them and retain what is good. Which one is acceptable in our culture and which one is not? I remember in the 70s, Indonesian young people liked to go to discotheques, which wasn't and isn't part of our culture. Now, our children like songs from foreign and western countries. The music is good, and the children dance to the songs, but the lyrics are bad! *Rebo nyunda* introduces Sundanese morality to the children. This [Sundanese morality] will be the filter for [rejecting] unacceptable western or foreign values. (Rina, FGD, 7 January 2019)

Blaming the West is not new or unusual. Sukarno, the first president (1945–1967), used strong anti-West rhetoric to build nationalism (Anwar, 2008). The West has often been blamed for various issues, from morality, economics to politics. The Western way of life is seen as a threat to Indonesian identity, especially to Indonesian Muslims. As documented by Mashuri et al. (2016), many Indonesian Muslims believe in an anti-West conspiracy theory about terrorism in the country, despite there being significant evi-

dence that Islamic radicals were behind the terror. Anti-West rhetoric is also used in political campaigning to gain votes (see Aspinall & Mietzner, 2014). Recently, the West Java Broadcasting Commission (WJBC) prohibited TV and radio stations from broadcasting 17 popular songs from the West before ten o'clock at night due to the sexual content of the lyrics (Ispranoto, 2019). Example songs are "Shape of You" by Ed Sheeran and "That's What I Like" by Bruno Mars. Although there are many Indonesian and Sundanese songs that contain sexual lyrics, it is Western songs that are blamed for corrupting children's innocent minds regardless of whether children understand the words of the songs. Even though the children may understand the words better than they do those in Western songs, Indonesian and Sundanese songs are not seen as corrupting as Western songs. Banning Western songs and music was part of Sukarno's anti-colonialism and anti-imperialism policy in 1959–1967 (Soyomukti, 2010). The teachers in this study used the same rhetoric as Sukarno used; children need saving from the negative influence of the West.

The paradox of protecting the Sundanese and Indonesianness

Rebo nyunda is seen as a symbol of resistance to the cultural homogenisation that has been going on for more than 50 years. At the same time, it is also seen as a way of protecting the uniting "Indonesian" identity, which is also significant in the weakening of Sundanese culture.

We need *Rebo nyunda* to preserve our culture. The Sundanese language has almost gone, replaced by Bahasa Indonesia. Modern families choose not to teach their children Sundanese. Indonesian is taking over because it is easier to teach. (Rina, FGD 8 January 2018)

Rina's comment implies that the Sundanese identity is disappearing as Indonesianness grows stronger. This is related to the Indonesian historical background. Indonesia, as a nation, came into being in 1928 when youth organisations from various cultural and ethnic milieux in the archipelago gathered in the spirit of nationalism and to build a unitary national vision as a political struggle against Dutch colonialism (Foulcher, 2000). On 28 October 1928, young people from Java, Celebes, Sumatra, Minahasa, Batak and Ambon declared that they were one nation with one homeland and one language, the Indonesian language (Bahasa Indonesia). A unitary identity was needed for the struggle.

After independence in 1945, the making of the Indonesian identity was in-

tensified by the anti-colonial policy adopted by President Sukarno, in office from 1945 to 1967. Given that Indonesia consisted of various ethnic groups, ethnic politics were undermined as they jeopardised national unity (Tanasaldy, 2012). The discourse of *Bhinneka Tunggal Ika* (Unity in Diversity) was strongly internalised by Indonesians through various superficial means such as carnivals of cultural traditional costumes and songs.

In the New Order era (1967–1998), led by President Suharto, the repression of ethnic politics continued in tandem with an attempt to homogenise Indonesian culture through the adoption of the culture of the dominant ethnic group (the Javanese), to which Suharto belonged, as the national culture. The process was known as “Javanisation” (Sutarto, 2006, p. 40). Javanisation involved the use of Javanese proverbs, terms and symbols in the state’s ideology and formal institutions (Wongkaren, 2007) as well as the adoption of traditional Javanese dress as the national costume.

After the fall of the New Order regime in 1998, Indonesia entered a phase of democratisation and decentralisation that gave voice to ethnic differences. The government allowed multi-culturalism and ethnic movements to grow so long as they were not aimed at political separation (Tanasaldy, 2012). Decentralisation enabled local people to take office in the local and regional governments. Ethnic politics emerged but were relatively weak since ethnic coalition and cooperation had been the norm (Aspinal, 2011). The norm of Indonesian multi-culturalism is shown in Rina’s comment below,

Indonesia is diverse. If Sundanese were to go, Indonesia would lose one of its cultural assets. Indonesia would be less diverse. Thus, protecting Sundanese is also about protecting Indonesia. (Rina FGD on the 7th January 2019)

Despite being aware that building an Indonesian national identity has led to the weakening of the Sundanese language, Rina agrees that Indonesianness is also essential and she stressed that diversity was “the root” of Indonesian identities.

As explained earlier, the making of the Indonesian identity involves the subtle repression of local cultures other than Javanese. Nonetheless, due to the doctrine of *Bhinneka Tunggal Ika*, people have internalised the repression as part of their identity. Instead of seeing Bahasa Indonesia or the nationalism project as the cause of the weakening of the Sundanese, Rina implied that all ethnic groups in Indonesia had contributed equally to the making of

Indonesian national identity. She did not acknowledge the historical fact of Javanese domination. A nation is indeed an imagined community which is built upon the stories told among themselves (Anderson, 2006). Rina seems to have internalised the narrative of unity in diversity; the story Indonesians have told themselves since 1928. The story she tells her students.

However, the understanding of the importance of diversity as part of Indonesian culture did not extend to recognising other ethnicities that might attend the ECE centre. Ethnicity is a social construction, partly by lineage and partly by society (Yang, 2000). *Rebo nyunda*, however, is not only applied to children with Sundanese ancestry but to every child enrolled in an ECE centre located in West Java (the Sundanese territory).

Most of the teachers involved in this study agreed that all the children in their centres should be committed to learning the Sundanese language and culture because they live in Bandung, a Sundanese centre of culture. Thus, in *Rebo nyunda* ethnicity is seen as being tied more to place or to region than to ancestry. This idea is related to Indonesia's colonial past. The Dutch categorised the ethnicities according to the linguistic differences between communities and within geographical territories (Errington, 2001).

Today, Bandung is a multi-ethnic and multi-cultural metropole. Thus, ideally, the doctrine of unity in diversity in Bandung could be achieved by celebrating all the ethnicities attending the centre. *Rebo nyunda*, however, compels every child in Bandung to learn Sundanese regardless of ethnic lineage. When we asked whether there was any resistance from non-Sundanese parents, they answered,

There is no resistance to this program (*Rebo nyunda*) from parents. There was a child who resisted this program. Every Wednesday he refused to come to school. His parent said that it was because of the language; he could not speak the language and could not understand anything. He was Bataknese. His parent, however, did not protest. His parent supported the program. They also learnt Sundanese [the language]. Slowly the child could understand Sundanese and everything was back to normal. (Nita, FGD, 8 January 2019)

Teti, Nita's colleague, added that there was also a child who refused to wear traditional dress out of dislike. Teti said, "It was only the clothes. It was a typical complaint from a child." Children's rejection of *rebo nyunda* was ignored because it was a minor complaint. The postcolonial spirit is about

critically examining the domination of a certain way of life, culture, doctrine and discourses (Gandhi, 1998). *Rebo nyunda* is paradoxical: on the one hand, it tries to protect the Sundanese from domination by other cultures, but on the other hand, it also imposes domination over other ethnicities within the Sundanese territory.

Revising sundanese culture

Teachers see *Rebo nyunda* not just as a means of protecting the Sundanese culture, but also of adapting the culture. The layers of historical Sundanese marginalisation are manifest in the colonial mentality of the Sundanese. The colonial mentality is a mentality in which the colonised tend to have internalised feelings of inferiority by admitting the colonisers were better (Paranjpe, 2002). This internalised inferiority, the result of cultural oppression, is reflected in Susi's comment about how the Sundanese are reluctant to speak Sundanese.

Some Sundanese feels inferior about speaking Sundanese. It does not bring them prestige. They feel they fit in better when they talk in Indonesian. It is different from Javanese. The Javanese speak Javanese all the time no matter where they are. (Susi, FGD, 8 January 2019)

We asked why the Sundanese were less confident than the Javanese, Rina answered,

We [the Sundanese] are not proud of our own culture. Many of us think that *Bahasa Jakarta* and Indonesian are better. Maybe it is related to city versus village. Jakarta is a big city; it has more prestige than Sunda. The children also learn English better than Sundanese. Probably because it [English] has more prestige. (Rina, FGD, 8 January 2019)

The inferiority can also be dated back to the pre-colonial era and the improvements that came with Dutch colonialism. In the pre-colonial era, the Javanese kingdom, Majapahit, was obsessed with conquering other kingdoms in the archipelago and uniting them under one ruling kingdom, the Majapahit. The Sundanese kingdom was one of a small number of kingdoms that Majapahit failed to conquer (Putri, 2018a). Nonetheless, Majapahit tricked the King of Sunda into entering Majapahit territory, and then surrounded the King's troops. The troops and the King of Sunda were killed; the princess killed herself during the war of 1357. The war led to long-term

deep cultural prejudice between the Sundanese and the Javanese, and cultural reconciliation did not take place until 2017 at the behest of the Governor of West Java and the Governor of Central Java (Nisa, 2017). During the colonial era, the dividing line and prejudice between Sunda and Java was reinforced by the publication of a book about the war. Many Indonesian historians believe that maintaining the dividing line between Sunda and Java was important in sustaining the colonisation (Putri, 2018b).

Moreover, in the era of Dutch colonialism, the Malay and Javanese received special attention from the colonial government. The Malay and Javanese domination was perpetuated through printed books and newspapers (Moriyama, 2018; Paauw, 2009). The Dutch first printed books in Malay and Javanese in the 17th century, while books in Sundanese were first printed in 1849 or 1850 (Moriyama, 2018). Moesa, a Sundanese writer, wrote that the Sundanese had remained hidden and desolated by the absence of printed Sundanese books. He said the Sundanese had lived “in a valley between two high mountains, the Javanese and Malay” (Moesa, 1867, p. 5).

In post-colonial Indonesia, the Indonesian language is associated with education, literacy, modernity, the elite group, the urban community and social mobility (Wright, 2004; Paauw, 2009). Therefore, Rina’s comment about Sundanese lacking prestige makes sense. Those unable to speak Indonesian are seen as uneducated and un-modern; this is why local (ethnic) languages, including Sundanese, have received less attention than Indonesian, especially during the Suharto era when urbanisation was associated with modernity (Nababan, 1985).

The Sundanese and other ethnicities in Indonesia experienced layers of domination. The Sundanese were not only colonised by the Dutch but also by the Javanese and Indonesians. Thus, the Sundanese feeling of inferiority is not only aimed at Western culture but also against Javanese and Indonesian.

All the teachers in this study agreed that the feelings of inferiority need addressing. They think ECE is the correct field in which to do that. In this sense, the teachers perceived ECE as a site for disengaging with the subconscious colonial knowledge (Crossley & Tikly, 2004). The teachers emphasised the need to build a sense of pride in being Sundanese. Some of the teachers agreed that building pride can be done by eliminating negative stereotypes about the Sundanese. Titi, a teacher, said,

Do not teach the bad side of Sundanese, such as “*pinter dandan hungkul*” [only good at dressing up, focusing more on how they look than on inner quality], “*orang sunda mah siga peuyeum*” [the Sundanese are lame and weak]. Very often the Sundanese compare themselves to the Javanese. We would say, “Don’t be lame! Be strong like a Javanese! They are [thumbs up gesture][Titi gave a thumbs up, a symbol of great or good].” (Titi, FGD, 8 January 2019)

Dewi, a teacher, suggested they modify the folktales and eliminate the slyness in the stories. They should emphasise positive values rather than negative ones. The awareness of the negative sides of Sundanese culture shows that the teachers were capable of being critical toward their own culture. Thus, *Rebo nyunda* is not only an opportunity to revive Sundanese culture but also to revise it.

Conclusion

The teachers’ understanding of the cultural revitalisation embedded in *Rebo nyunda* is paradoxical. In the context of contemporary Indonesia, where every big city has both multi-ethnic and multi-cultural characteristics, implementing a cultural revitalisation program that does not ignore the minority cultures in the region is not without challenges. The first paradox of *Rebo nyunda* is that it revitalises Sundanese culture, but suppresses other cultures in the centre. Second, *Rebo nyunda* is expected to be able to shape future generations who have strong cultural roots and are unshaken by the negative foreign ideas. However, the teachers also criticised some of the Sundanese values and suggested they should be revised through *Rebo nyunda*. Third, the teachers perceived the children’s individualism and the fact that the children are able to express their opinion strongly to be down to western influence yet they did not criticise the doctrine of child-centrism which encourages these characteristics. For *Rebo nyunda* to become a means of decolonising ECE, it will have to be expanded from merely introducing, revitalising and revising Sundanese culture so that it also explores Sundanese values and finds a way to incorporate the multicultural values that are more relevant to the contemporary West Javanese context. Decolonising ECE should be aimed at finding a suitable ECE approach that places the children’s characteristics at the centre rather than placing them within the culture of the location of the centre’s cultural association.

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