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# The (In)visibility of Taiwan – Indonesia Relations: Indonesian Student on the Side-line

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## **Abstract**

*This paper aims to examine the role of students in Indonesia-Taiwan relations. Students are important agents of change in Indonesia's nation building as apparent during Indonesia's struggle for independence in 1945 and democratization movement in 1998. However, with over 3,052 Indonesian students in Taiwan, Taiwan government has not taken such advantage from this situation to increase its bilateral relations with Indonesia which has been for long overshadowed by Taiwan status and Indonesia's one China policy. There are two arguments developed in this paper. First, Taiwan academic relations with Indonesia are still focusing on the effort to increase the number of Indonesian students in Taiwan and neglect their potential as agent of cooperation. This condition has made the students as agent become invisible. Second, Taiwan's policy in academic cooperation with Indonesia is not in line with Taiwan's effort to upgrade its relation with Indonesia. As an impact, Taiwan – Indonesia relation remains stagnant and invisible. In collecting the data, this paper uses observations and interviews to Indonesian students in Taiwan.*

Key words: *Indonesian student, Taiwan-Indonesia relations, academic exchange*

## **Introduction**

Discord with China over sovereignty has positioned Taiwan to exercise extensive effort in maintaining their existence in the world. China's consistent claim and diplomatic isolation have created complexity for Taiwan to exercise their international relations in an official form. Therefore, semi-official and unofficial forms become visible options for Taiwan in dealing with other states. This forms include economic, socio-cultural as well as academic relations with other states in the world, especially those

who do not have diplomatic relations with Taiwan.

As the nearest region, Southeast Asia has become Taiwan's primary destination for struggle of existence. Their semi-official relations with countries in the region have begun since many decades ago through the establishment of de-facto representative office. Through this office, Taiwan is trying to establish connection, coordination and cooperation to ensure Taiwan relations and presence in the region. Elizabeth Freund Larus (2006) states that the establishment of Taiwan's semi-official relation is to

maintain unofficial relation that has switched diplomatic relations from Taiwan to China. This effort attempts to broaden Taiwan's international space by strengthening non-political relations with Southeast Asian countries, the so-called pragmatic diplomacy. Yet, the practice is also driven by economic interest.

In this context, Indonesia, as the biggest and influential nation-state in Southeast Asia, is a potential partner for Taiwan in exercising their foreign relations and influence. However, like many other non-diplomatic partners, relations between Taipei and Jakarta are built upon the establishment of semi-official representative institutions; Taiwan under Chinese Chamber of Commerce to Jakarta and Indonesia through Indonesian Chamber of Commerce to Taipei in 1971 (Jie, 2002). Although there is an absence of Indonesia's political recognition to Taiwan but this kind of obscure institutional arrangement has expanded both government operation and to some extent enhance probability to

create cooperation. Herein after, cooperation between both sides starts to emerge on agricultural, mail services, and air services.

In 1989, Taiwan upgraded their office into Taipei Economic and Trade Office (TETO) after receiving permission from Jakarta. Nonetheless, influenced by Jakarta's understanding of "One China Policy", reciprocal action had to wait the memorandum of understanding (MoU) on diplomatic restoration signed between Indonesia and China on August 8, 1990. Five years later, Indonesia also upgraded its office into Indonesia Economic and Trade Office to Taipei (IETO). The upgrade of those offices has made enormous progress to Indonesia-Taiwan relations in economic as well as socio-cultural aspects. In total, both Indonesia and Taiwan have signed 27 agreements and memorandum of understandings in 11 different fields. Those cooperation have increased Taiwan's visibility in the region particularly with Indonesia. (Elias, 2015)

**Table 1. Field and Amount of Indonesia-Taiwan Cooperation**

Phase	Total	Fields	Name
1971-1988	11	3	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Agreement on agricultural technical cooperation</li> <li>2. Agreement on agricultural technical cooperation</li> <li>3. Agreement on agricultural technical cooperation</li> <li>4. Memorandum for extension and amendment to the agreement on agricultural technical cooperation</li> <li>5. Agreement on agricultural technical cooperation</li> <li>6. Memorandum for extension and amendment to the agreement on agricultural technical cooperation</li> <li>7. Amendment II of the agricultural technical cooperation agreement</li> <li>8. Agreement on agricultural technical cooperation</li> </ol>

Phase	Total	Fields	Name
1989-1994	6	3	9. Memorandum for extension and amendment to the agreement on agricultural technical cooperation
			10. Memorandum of understanding on international express mail service
			11. Air services agreement
1995-Present	10	8	1. Memorandum of understanding concerning cooperation for the promotion of investment
			2. Agreed minutes on matters related to the air services
			3. Agreement for the promotion and protection of investments
			4. Amendment on the annex to air service agreement
			5. Agreement on agricultural technical cooperation
			6. The extension to the agricultural technical cooperation agreement
			1. Agreement for the avoidance of double taxation and the prevention of fiscal evasion with respect to
			2. Memorandum of understanding on marine and fisheries cooperation
			3. Memorandum of understanding on recruitment of Indonesian worker
			4. Agreement on agricultural technical cooperation
5. One village one product agribusiness cooperation plan			
6. Memorandum of understanding on recruitment, placement and protection of Indonesian overseas workers			
7. Memorandum of understanding on cooperation in the field of higher education			
8. Memorandum of understanding on concerning cooperation in immigration affairs, human trafficking and people smuggling prevention			
9. Memorandum of understanding on Morotai development project			
10. Agreement on agricultural technical cooperation			

*Source:* Compiled from many sources by author

Despite many agreements have been successfully conducted between both parties, nevertheless most of them are merely technical, particularly in air services, mail services, marine and fisheries, agribusiness and agricultural, as presented on **Table 1**. Those agreements only regulate coordination, information exchange and capacity building between both sides. On the other hand, MoU on labour is only based on supply and demand, whereas MoU on immigration has no progress on operational phase

which makes it on framework-basis agreement only. Even the three economic agreements are emphasizing on technical part only. The most promising economic agreement, MoU on Morotai Development Project, has encountered stalemate since it was signed in December 2012 (IETO, 2012). Even though the steering committees have conducted a meeting for three times, up to this end the blueprint of the project is still far from being released (IETO, 2013). Those agreements are unable to provide much contribution on the

enhancement of Indonesia-Taiwan relation because of the precautionary actions taken by Indonesian government due to Indonesia's effort to maintain good relation with China in accordance to their understanding of One China Policy.

The only agreement that potentially could enhance Indonesia-Taiwan relation is academic relation. However up to date, academic relation is still under-explored in order to achieve maximum gains. Therefore, this paper aims to correlate academic agreement with the enhancement of Indonesia-Taiwan relation. There are two arguments to be delivered in this paper. First, Taiwan academic relations with Indonesia are still focusing on the effort of increasing the number of Indonesia students in Taiwan and neglecting their potential as agent of cooperation. Second, Taiwan's policy in academic cooperation with Indonesia is not in line with Taiwan's effort to upgrade its relation with Indonesia.

### **Taiwan's Effort in Enhancing Relations with Indonesia: An Overlapping Effort**

To enhance its relations with Indonesia, Taiwan is utilizing five approaches: institutional relations, technical assistances, economic relations, informal forum, and academic relations. First, institutional approach is established through direct contact between de- facto institution TETO and IETO. Starting with the establishment of Taiwan's Chinese Chamber of Commerce to Jakarta in April 1971, Indonesia reciprocally established Indonesian

Chamber of Commerce to Taipei in June 1971 (Jie, 2002). Since then, cooperation has emerged in technical matters. In its development, Taiwan received permission to upgrade the officialdom of their office in October 1989 into TETO that shifted the institution from being obscure to be more official. Five years later, after signing MoU with China on 8 August 1990 to restore its relation, Indonesia also upgraded its office into IETO. Although both offices by nature are de-facto, they have made enormous progress to Indonesia-Taiwan relations, increased the number of cooperation and expanded it into various fields.

Second, technical assistance approach includes providing assistance, conducting coordination and information exchange with Indonesia in the field of agricultural, air and mail services, marine and fisheries, and agribusiness. The purpose of this approach is to gain good perception about Taiwan appearance to Indonesian government as well as the people who become the beneficiary. It is clear that Taiwan is trying to construct their good image as cooperation counterpart by showing their goodwill in assisting developing countries like Indonesia. It can be perceived through agricultural technical assistance which was chosen by Taiwan as the first field cooperation with Indonesia in 1976 due to two reasons. First reason is that Indonesia is an agricultural country, thus accepting technical assistance in agricultural is suitable and such technical assistance is giving less obligation and less formal arrangement for Indonesia. The second

reason is that the receiver of the program's is a targeted group of people, particularly farmers. In addition, this approach also becomes stimulant for economic approach and people- to-people exchange through tourism and flights by adopting cooperation in mail and air services. Both cooperation are to expedite people-to-people interaction through tourism and facilitate business movement and exchange.

Third, economic approach applies through economic diplomacy and cooperation. As Kuo-hsiung Lee (1990) states, Taiwan's economic achievement is the tools for Taiwan to establish cooperation with Southeast Asian countries. The economic diplomacy is utilized by Taiwan to gain their economic interest through cooperation and in the same time increase their international political status. Similarly, Gary Klintworth (1995) states that Taiwan economic cooperation is built upon the flow of investment which gives compatible effect to Taiwan and counterparts. Investment flow from Taiwan is needed by developing countries like Indonesia in pursuing higher economic growth. It will create more jobs to Indonesia large population whereas on the other hand gives access for Taiwan to competitiveness cost of labour, natural resources as well as increases Taiwan's influence in the Southeast Asia.

In order to embed their economic cooperation with Indonesia, Taiwan established technical economic cooperation through MoU on

Promotion of Investment, Agreement on Promotion and Protection of Investment, and Agreement on Avoidance of Double Taxation and the Prevention of Fiscal Evasion. Those agreements have promoted businessmen from Taiwan to invest in Indonesia. In recent years, Taiwan has become Indonesia's 10th largest investor with total amount US\$ 15,360,000,000 (BKPM, 2014). This amount keeps increasing as represented by recent data from Indonesia Investment Coordinating Board. From October until December 2013 Taiwan's investment in Indonesia has reached US\$ 402 million. In trade, Taiwan has become Indonesia's 9th largest trade partner whereas Indonesia is Taiwan's 10th largest trade partner with total trade US\$ 12,299,446,111.

In addition, economic diplomacy has promoted movement of businessmen in constituting the opportunity to establish cooperation in labour affairs. In Chen Jie's argument, pragmatic diplomacy especially in economy is built not only upon government effort but businessmen as well. Further, he elaborates how businessmen channel has created an impact to the government from both entities to establish closer relations (Jie, 2002). Taiwan domestic economic demand for workers has been creating adjacent relations related to business and labour affairs with Indonesia. Thus, with its larger population, Indonesia is the largest supplier for foreign workers in Taiwan (Taiwan Ministry of Labour, 2014). Data in 2017 demonstrated that there was 258.000 Indonesia people in

Taiwan which 97% of them are workers. They are not only working in productive sector (manufacture, construction, and other industry) but in social welfare (domestic sector) as well. This has encouraged both governments to work closely in dealing with this matter. Thus, in respond with this issue, TETO and IETO signed “Memorandum of Understanding between The Indonesian Economic and Trade Office to Taipei (IETO) and The Taipei Economic and Trade Office in Indonesia (TETO) on The Recruitment, Placement and Protection of Indonesian Overseas Workers”, on January 24th, 2011.

Fourth, the informal forum approach. Along with above three approaches, Taiwan also conducts several informal forums to share and promote cooperation as well as build good perception about Taiwan as a friendly neighbour. This approach is carried out by inviting scholars, parliament members, government officers, and influential individual to have a short visit to Taiwan. In conducting such effort, TETO is acting as the inviting party to potential individual in policy circle. Most of the visits are organized secretly to avoid protest from China embassy in Jakarta. The agenda of this informal forum mostly are visit to government offices, research centre and think- tank, university and industrial company. In maintaining the balance of information, several Taiwanese government representatives are also invited to visit Jakarta with agenda courtesy meeting with university, company, research centre, ASEAN

secretariat and other government or private institution.

**Table 2. Recipients of Taiwan Scholarship**

Academic Year	MOE	HES	ICDF	MOST
2009/2010	9	5	N/A	-
2010/2011	9	5	N/A	-
2011/2012	9	5	0	-
2012/2013	10	5	2	-
2013/2014	10	6	5	-

*Source:* Taiwan Economic and Trade Office in Jakarta

Lastly is the academic approach which is conducted through academic exchange. The embryo of this approach started in 2004 when Taiwan provided aid in academic area through Taiwan Scholarship program. The scholarship is given to Indonesian students who are eager to pursue their degree in one of Taiwan education institutions. In its development, Taiwan is increasing the number of scholarships by diversifying the scheme from different government institutions such as Minister of Education (MoE), Minister of Science and Technology (MoST), International Cooperation and Development Fund (ICDF) as well as scholarship for Mandarin Language under Huayu Enrichment Scholarship (HES). Currently, Taiwan is providing 20 scholarships every year for Indonesian students. In supporting research collaboration, Taiwan academic exchange is built upon Taiwan

scholarship program under the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Taiwan. The objective is to award foreign scholars and expert to conduct advance research with topics related to Taiwan, cross-strait relations, mainland China, Asia-Pacific region and Chinese studies at universities or

academic institutions in Taiwan. Since 2010, there are six recipients who have been awarded Taiwan scholarship with various research topics such as economics, international migration, non-traditional security and Disaster Management (Taiwan Fellowship, 2015).

**Table 3. Recipients of Taiwan Fellowship from Indonesia**

Year	Recipient			Research Topic
	No	Position	Institution Origin	
2010	1	Researcher	LIPI	International Migration and Economic
2011	2	1.Researcher 2.Doctoral candidate	1.LIPI 2.Green Talent Scheme Sponsored by the German Federal Ministry of Education and Research	1.Green Economy 2.International Migration
2012	1	Associate Professor	Padjajaran University	Non-traditional Security (Human Trafficking)
2013	2	1.Researcher 2. Assistant Professor	1.University Brunei Darussalam 2.University of Airlangga	1.Non-traditional Security (Health Security) 2.Disaster Management

Source: Taiwan Fellowship, 2015

In addition, both parties also successfully conduct joint research between *Lembaga Ilmu Pengetahuan Indonesia* (LIPI) and Chung-Hua Institute for Economic Research (CIER) on “The Dynamics and Current Status of Taiwan – Indonesia Relations” and “Feasibility Study of Economic Cooperation Arrangement (ECA) between Taiwan – Indonesia”. The researches, which can be perceived as policy recommendation, have concluded that economic cooperation between Indonesia and

Taiwan will not only increase trade and investment flows but also reduce the trade barriers. Suitability and compatibility between both economic may direct them to build economic cooperation arrangement which could enhance economic development in various fields including SMEs, human resources, electronics and automotive industries as well as agriculture (LIPI, 2012).

Apart from scholarship and research, academic approach is also

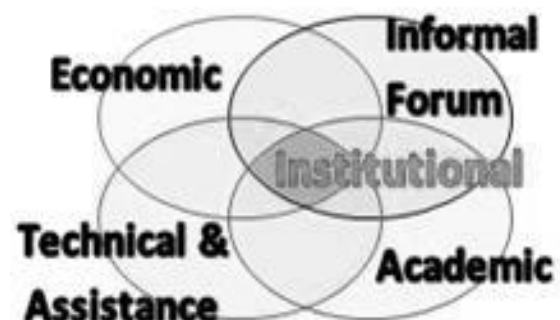


attempted to establish agreement. On May 21, 2011, Ministry of Education from both parties successfully conducted Taiwan-Indonesia Higher Education Summit in Bali Indonesia followed by signing MoU in the field of higher education. This MoU covers cooperation in six academic areas such as academic exchange, providing scholarship, developing bilateral programs, training educational administrators and teachers, facilitating joint research & international publications and Mutual Recognition of Degrees and Professional Qualifications (Lin, 2012). The MoU is projected to strengthen academic exchange between both sides which until 2009 already concluded 55 inter-university bilateral agreements. In supporting the implementation of the MoU, Taiwan established Taiwan Education Center (TEC) in Surabaya, a non-profit organization that has an objective to promote higher education in Taiwan and strengthen bilateral academic exchange between Taiwan and Indonesia. As an education centre, TEC is operated to fulfil several services i.e. providing related information about Taiwan education, participating in overseas education exhibitions, holding the annual Taiwan Higher Education Exhibition, assisting Taiwan institutions to establish academic and administrative staff exchanges with Indonesia (Taiwan Education Center, 2015).

Utilizing those approaches, Taiwan is attempting to enhance and upgrade their relations with Indonesia. Although there are five approaches,

however, from above elaborations, essentially those approaches are overlapping. Institutional approach become the centre of gravity to other approaches which contributes in initiation, process and concluding phase while the rest are supporting each other. Taking economic approach as example, institutional approach is indeed the main utilized approach to realize the agreement whereas other approaches are obviously perceived supporting it by: conducting academic research on feasibility studies, creating technical economic agreement, and inviting related stakeholder.

#### **Matrix 1. Taiwan Five Approaches in Enhancing Relations with Indonesia**



*Source: Elias, 2014*

#### **Obstructions in Taiwan-Indonesia Relations**

Although Taiwan could maintain and nurture their relations with Indonesia by utilizing those approaches, however, the development of their relations remains stagnant since the establishment of TETO and IETO two decades ago. Indonesian foreign policy is much left behind compare to other major ASEAN members like Singapore and Malaysia. In

both countries, the function of Taiwan's office is already expanded not only in economic related but cultural as well under the name of Taiwan Economic and Cultural Office. Reciprocally, their offices in Taipei also have political officer assigned by their Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

Taiwan – Indonesia relations become stagnant because of three factors: first, Indonesian rigid policy over Taiwan which was built under consideration of the MoU 1990 with China. It stated on the MoU that Indonesia's relations with Taiwan is established only in economic and trade relations which is non-government in nature. Thus, in maintaining their relations with Taiwan, Indonesian Ministry of Foreign Affairs released "One China Policy" guideline to avoid mistreatment of their domestic institution especially governmental when deal with Taiwan. The guideline, to some extent, is preventing Indonesia to expand mutual benefit relation with Taiwan.

Second, limited understanding about cross-strait relations. Restriction in governmental, measured by the guideline, has made the understanding of policy makers regarding Taiwan-China relations limited, especially related to "One China Policy". On interviews with few government officials who remains anonymous as requested, their understanding about "One China Policy" is very limited to zero sum game understanding. They said, "One China Policy" means profound relations with Taiwan is highly avoided because

Indonesia has diplomatic relations with China. They also understood China-Taiwan relations in discord relation where Taiwan is part of China (IETO Taipei Official, 2014). Their knowledge about development of cross-strait relations was lack behind even they did not understand about the "92 consensus". It can be assumed, from the interview, that Indonesian government has a very limited understanding about cross-strait relations which contributes to stagnant relations with Taiwan.

Third, limited function of the de-facto institution. Accumulation of the first two factors has contributed to the limited function of de-facto institution. IETO was established under Presidential Decree No. 48/1995 which the basis was come from the MoU in 1990. On the decree, the first dictum determines the increasing role of Chamber of Commerce into IETO whereas the second dictum is stressed on its non-governmental economic institution status. Moreover, the fourth dictum states in general that IETO is under coordination of Indonesia Ministry of Trade (Indonesian Presidential Office, 1994). However although the decree regulates the enhancement of economic and trade relations but in the implementation 47,4% of IETO activity is consular, 15,8% is research, 5% is promoting Indonesia tourism and 31,6% is economic and trade mostly to promote and coordinate trade related issues (IETO, 2014). Thus, limited function creates limited relations. Therefore, Taiwan-Indonesia relations could be enhanced

and upgraded if only those obstructions can be solved through appropriate effort.

### **Indonesian Students in Taiwan as Agent of Cooperation**

The above obstruction in Taiwan-Indonesia relations could be potentially improved by enhancing the fifth pillars, the academic cooperation. The effort can be implemented by conducting treatment and collaboration with Indonesian students in Taiwan as counterpart. In order to be able to construct the analysis, it is highly important to understand the concept of epistemic community as stated by Peter Haas (1992). He mentions that epistemic community is a network of professionals with recognized expertise and competence in a particular domain and an authoritative claim to policy-relevant knowledge within that domain or issue-area. Yet, it is not necessary to identify epistemic community made up of natural scientist per se. Social scientists or even individuals from any discipline and profession can be defined as epistemic community as long as they have a sufficiently strong claim to a body of knowledge that is valued by society. He further argues that the epistemic community may come from various background or expertise but they share four principles in common; which are (1) shared set of normative and principled beliefs, (2) shared causal beliefs, (3) shared notions of validity, and (4) a common policy enterprise. Altogether, these four principles not only provide the value-based rationale for their analysis but also

deliver their professional competence towards certain policy.

Furthermore, Haas (1964) defines complexity and uncertainty as problem for decision makers in the stage of policy design. Complexity occurs because interlinkage of issue in the current global world has forced decision makers to deal with the complex interplay among issues and interests. On the other hand, uncertainty occurs as consequences of growing number of issues and limited information received by decision makers. As mentioned by Alexander George, characterizing conditions of uncertainty, as those under which actors must make choices without "adequate information about the situation at hand" or in the face of "the inadequacy of available general knowledge" is needed for assessing the expected outcomes of different courses of action. Thus, control over knowledge and information is an important dimension of power which it is best served by epistemic community.

Haas does believe that epistemic community is an actor to define complex problem. They can give knowledge-based expert in international policy making by giving influence to the decision makers that encounter complexity and uncertainty with beneficial information. It arises through their ability in helping to formulate policy using three main ways: first, elucidating cause-and-effect relationship and providing advice on the likely result of various courses of action. Their ability to explain causality relations of phenomenon is helping to estimate

various probabilities which could bring various answers to what will happen in the future. Second, shedding light on the complex interlinkages between issues. Ability to gain information could make them resolve interlinkages between issues on the interconnected events.

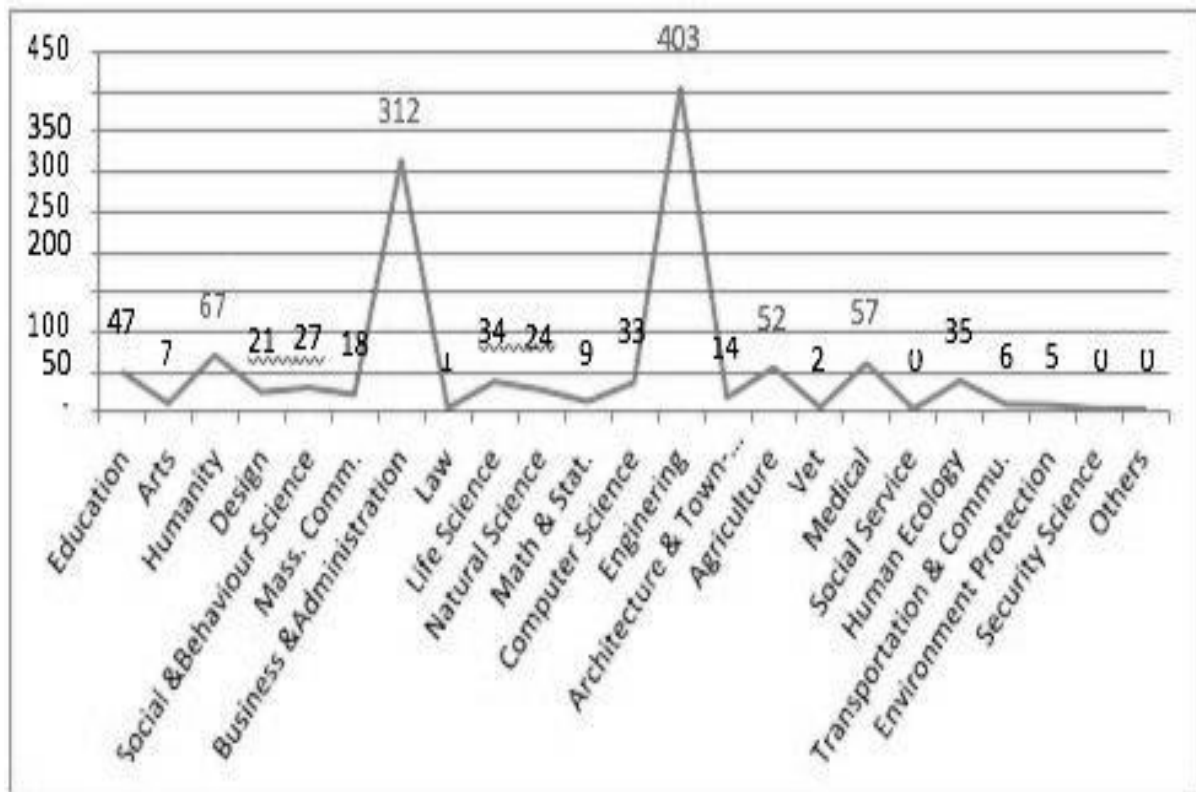
Third, helping to define the self-interest of states. It derives from the process of explaining causality relationship which leads to redefinition or identification of new idea. The diffusion of new ideas along with information can lead to new patterns of behaviour and is proved to be an important determinant of international policy coordination. Hence, as demands for information arise in decision making setting, epistemic communities are becoming one possible provider in providing information and advice. They have capabilities to produce and provide the information in helping states to identify their best interests, form the issues for collective debate, recommend specific policies, as well as identify substantial element for negotiation which decision maker could learn new patterns of reasoning. In sum, epistemic community is able to explain causality relations of phenomenon to estimate various probabilities, gain accurate information and redefinition or identification of new idea which consequently begin to pursue new state interests.

*The Characteristic and Nature of Indonesia Student in Taiwan*

In this paper, Indonesian students in Taiwan are considered as the epistemic

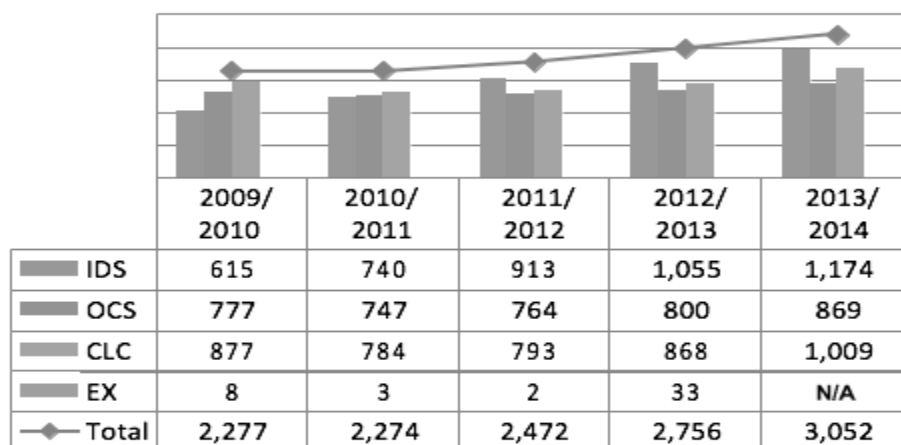
community. They could play certain roles as agent of change as well as agent of cooperation. Their ability to some extent would contribute in enhancing Taiwan-Indonesia relations, particularly Indonesia's policy over Taiwan. Indonesian students are the third largest foreign students in Taiwan with total number of 3,052 students. This number consists of International degree seeking (IDS), overseas Chinese student (OCS), Chinese Language Center (CLC) student and exchange student. IDS is non-Chinese ethnic student who seek for degree in Taiwan from undergraduate level until doctoral level with total number in 2014 1,174 student (Taiwan Ministry of Education, 2015). They come to Taiwan after gaining scholarship from Taiwan scholarship scheme, Indonesian government scholarship scheme like Aceh scholarship, or local scholarship from the university in Taiwan. On contrary, overseas Chinese student is Indonesian Chinese student who seeks for degree in Taiwan and mostly are on undergraduate level with total number of 1,009 students (Taiwan Ministry of Education, 2015). Considering the OCS comes from businessman family, most of them are funded by their parents in enrolling at Taiwan academic institution. Both IDS and OCS are studying in Taiwan for more than one year, depend on their degree and achievement. In term of field of studies, for IDS, top five fields in 2013/2014 are engineering 403, followed by business and administration 312 and humanities 67, medical 57 and Agriculture 52 students.

Figure 1. Detail Number of Indonesian Student by Field of Study



Source: Taiwan Ministry of Education

In contrast, CLC student and exchange student have only limited time of studying in Taiwan. Their program would be finished in six months to one year period. CLC student is those who learn Mandarin in Mandarin Language Center while exchange student is those who join an exchange program for a short period in Taiwan universities. A number of Indonesian students who enrol in the CLC are 1,009 in 2014 while there are 33 students join the exchange program in 2013 (Taiwan Ministry of Education, 2015).

**Figure 2. Demography of Indonesian Student in Taiwan 2009-2014**

Source: Compiled by author from many sources

By its nature, Indonesian students had played major role in carrying out changes in politics and policy realm. Starting with the establishment of first student organization in 1908, which was called Boedi Oetomo, the Indonesian students arranged an event in 1928, called “Youth Pledge”, which enabled to unify Indonesia’s diverse ethnics under three principles; one nation, one country, and one language of Indonesia. Indonesian students continued playing major role in Indonesia’s independence from Japan’s colonialism by kidnapping Soekarno and Hatta, and forcing them to declare Indonesia’s independent as soon as Japan lost the battle in World War II. Initially Soekarno and Hatta were resistant in doing so but due to the pressure of Indonesian students, they agreed to declare the independence of Indonesia on August 17, 1945 (Weiss, 2012).

Furthermore, Indonesian students were also the forces behind Indonesia’s reformation in 1998. The New Order era,

under President Soeharto, have ruled Indonesia with authoritarian leadership for 32 years and resulted economic crisis. The poor economic and politic performance under the New Order regime have triggered Indonesian students to organize mass through student organization bodies and held a massive demonstration in asserting President Soeharto to step down from the presidential office. Their militancy and heroic action resulted a major change in Indonesia’s political realm. Pursuant to the aforementioned elaboration, Indonesian students by nature are, indeed, the agents of change in Indonesia’s major history conducted by their ability in organizing themselves on student organization.

On the other hand, many Indonesian students who pursue their education in Taiwan also come from various backgrounds. Nevertheless, they successfully established three different student organizations to accommodate their interests and network in Taiwan. The

first student organization, as well as the oldest one, is *Persatuan Pelajar Indonesia* in Taiwan/PERPITA (The Association of Indonesian Students in Taiwan). It was established in 1960 and mainly to facilitate the issues of cultural differences and communication among Indonesian students in Taiwan. PERPITA is affiliated with *Ikatan Citra Alumni Indonesia se-Taiwan* (ICATI) which is a Jakarta-based association of Indonesian student alumni who obtain their degree in Taiwan. In order to become the member of PERPITA, the students have to apply and pay membership fee. In addition, most of PERPITA members are the overseas Chinese students who are enrolling in undergraduate program. In achieving its organization purpose, PERPITA holds various activities, such as seminar and sports activity, for the Indonesian students in Taiwan.

The second student organization is *Forum Mahasiswa Muslim Indonesia di Taiwan*/FORMMIT (Forum of Indonesian Muslim Students in Taiwan) which was established in 2006 and applies Islamic tenets as their organization's platform. The purpose of FORMMIT is to facilitate communication among Indonesian Muslim students as well as a platform for Islamic proselytizing. Even though there is no membership to join this organization, all members still have to apply for membership and are limited to Indonesian Muslim students only. FORMMIT holds several religious activities in collaboration with Indonesian migrant workers' organization in Taiwan and Annual International Scholars

Conference in Taiwan (AISCT) which is aimed to conduct technological transfer from Taiwan to Indonesia.

Last, yet most substantial Indonesian student organization, is *Perhimpunan Pelajar Indonesia di Taiwan*/PPI Taiwan (Indonesian Students Association in Taiwan) which was established in 2010. The objective of this organization is to facilitate all Indonesian students regardless their ethnic, religion or background. No registration or membership fee is required as the Indonesian students in Taiwan automatically become the member of PPI Taiwan. The structure of PPI Taiwan is similar with the structure of government where there are two different bodies, namely legislative and executive, in exercising its objectives. In addition, PPI Taiwan has network with other Indonesian students around the world or known as Overseas Indonesian Student Association Alliance (OISAA) which links every PPI in different countries. In order to achieve its objectives, PPI Taiwan has the support from other Indonesian student organization in university level and Indonesian Economic and Trade Office in Taipei (IETO). Their activity consists of conducting research for IETO policy recommendation, holding student capacity building and entrepreneurship program, as well as charity and sport event.

The existence of several Indonesian student organizations in Taiwan is more or less influenced by the various backgrounds of Indonesian

students which can be classified as three major backgrounds; ethnic business network, government officials and scholars. Ethnic business network mainly are the overseas Chinese students who are enrolled as undergraduate students. They have selected Taiwan as destination to pursue their education since 1960s. After graduation, most of them are either continuing to master degree, working in Taiwan or coming back home to help their family business.

On the other hand, government officials mainly come from Aceh province where the local government provides scholarship to its citizens, particularly officers in local and municipal government, through *Lembaga Peningkatan Sumber Daya Manusia Aceh* (Aceh Human Resource Improvement Agency). Most of them are pursuing higher education in master or doctoral degree program. Lastly, the scholars mainly come from Indonesia's public universities, i.e. *Institut Teknologi Sepuluh Nopember*, University of Brawijaya, and University of Indonesia. Most of them are also pursuing higher education degree with the assistance of various scholarship frameworks offer by Taiwanese government. In addition, scholars also come from "DIKTI Bridging Program" under Directorate of Higher Education, Ministry of National Education in 2012. This program is a pre master and doctoral degree scholarship for academicians from the universities in Indonesia to stay for three months in one of the universities in Taiwan. The objective of this program is to grant an access for an Indonesian academicians to

Taiwan and at the end of the program the recipient is expected to get a Letter of Acceptance (LoA) from the university in Taiwan. The bridging program already conducted twice in two batches. The first batch was followed by 85 persons and the second one was followed by 144 academicians from various backgrounds.

**Table 4. Indonesia Student in Taiwan from Aceh Province**

Academic Year	Number of Student
2009/2010	27
2010/2011	33
2011/2012	40
2012/2013	45
2013/2014	22
2014/2015	4
Total	171

Source: *Lembaga Peningkatan Sumber Daya Manusia Aceh*, 2015

Taking into account the ability of Indonesian students in providing policy recommendation, therefore, it demonstrates their ability to influence the government's policy. Furthermore, as they are studying and living in Taiwan, they have direct contact with Taiwanese people and understand Taiwanese society and culture better by gaining trustful information and situation in Taiwan. In addition, the nature of Indonesian students, who are able to encourage student movement in order to create major change, convinces their ability to redefine or identify new idea in pursuing state interest. Thus, Indonesian students can be considered as epistemic community and influence the relation



between Indonesia and Taiwan only if they are treated accordingly as agent of cooperation.

### **Misguided Treatment: Indonesia Student as Invisible Agent of Cooperation**

The aforementioned elaboration is identifying obstructions in Taiwan-Indonesia relation occur because of rigid policy and limited understanding. Approach in institutional, economic, technical and assistance, and informal forum cannot assist much in breaking through the obstructions because they never touch upon the very basic problem. Thus the epistemic community effort has to be encouraged in helping solve the obstructions. However, academic relations with Indonesia which could establish the epistemic community is still not supported by appropriate effort in enhancing Taiwan-Indonesia relations.

Indonesian students in Taiwan are still treated as commodity than as subject of agent of cooperation by Taiwan government. According to Taiwan's MOE, Shrinking population in Taiwan has created a demand of foreign student to support the operation of universities in Taiwan (Wei, 2015) Effort in increasing the number can be seen obviously from two aspects. First from six areas on MoU in higher education, they are only providing scholarship and mutual recognition of degrees and professional qualifications which are successfully implemented but left behind research collaboration and capacity building. Second, as the only Taiwan academic related institution in Indonesia, TEC, is functioned only for

disseminating information of Taiwan education and attracting students especially they who come from Surabaya to study in Taiwan. It can be seen from the services offer by TEC. There is no such effort in developing Taiwan discourses over the Indonesian students e.g. maintaining alumni network or establishing research collaboration.

In order to obtain comprehensive analysis, interview session has been conducted to three students who represent three classification backgrounds of student in Taiwan; ethnic business network, government officials and scholars. Based on the interview with ethnic business network, the interviewee said after completing their study, most of OCS would return back home to support their family business. However when the interviewer asked about what kind of cooperation is possible to be conducted between Taiwan and Indonesia, the interviewee was confused due to the received lack of information from Taiwan's side. The interviewee further said there was no effort from Taiwan government to explain the future opportunity in business between Taiwan and Indonesia (Representative of Indonesian Overseas Chinese Student, 2013) The only thing they asked was only to promote and recommend their friend to study in Taiwan universities. This situation has neglecting the fact that almost 60% of Indonesia's economic is run by Indonesian Chinese people. Lack of effort to maintain the information of Taiwan to them would make their potential become invisible.

In the second interview session with government official particularly student from Aceh, the interviewee said, as foreign partners, Taiwan is one of the potential partners which compatible in developing Aceh through their capital and technology meet with Aceh's natural resources. The interviewee further said, the Government of Aceh is considering Taiwan as one of future partners especially to build special economic zone. However, lack of connection with Taiwan government makes this potential factor becomes invisible. Several attempts have been made through IETO to obtain information and connection to reach Taiwan government, according to the interviewee. Nevertheless, the development is still insignificant to establish contact between Aceh local government and Taiwan government. The interviewee also mentioned that their connection with Taiwan only occurs through ESIT when they arrive in Taiwan for the first time (Representative of Indonesian Aceh Student in Taiwan, 2013). Lack of attention to Indonesian students from Aceh makes Taiwan lost an enormous opportunity to establish further economic cooperation.

Furthermore, in interview with scholars, findings resulted that scholars perceive Taiwan's advanced research method as one of the potential research and academic exchange partner. Yet, lack of initiative from the Taiwan government to maintain the network with Indonesian scholars has made the connection only up to relation between scholarship giver and recipient. There is no certain academic

activity for them while they are in Taiwan as well as after they finish their study in Taiwan except studying in Taiwan's university (Recipient of Taiwan Scholarship from Indonesia, 2013). Lack of effort to further reach Indonesian scholars has made academic network opportunity missing. Thus, the scholars who study in Taiwan is only aimed to fulfil their pragmatic purposes to obtain their degree in order to get better position when they return to their institution in Indonesia. Up to this end, the Indonesia scholars in Taiwan become an invisible agent.

Concerning with the obstruction of Taiwan – Indonesia relations, regarding the understanding of cross-strait relations, all of the interviewees responded relatively similar. Their understanding of cross-strait relations is almost similar with perception of Indonesian government that Taiwan and Indonesia have a limited cooperation because of "One China Policy" which is acknowledged by Indonesia. This situation is acceptable concerning the issue is heavily political and most of students enrol in engineering or business as field of studies. However two of the interviewees are recipient of Taiwan scholarship provided by Taiwan government and they stated that no such effort from the scholarship committee in providing understanding on particular issues. Even the government official who came from Aceh who should took orientation for one month held by ESIT, one of Taiwan institution, said that topic regarding such issue was not subject of the orientation and made their perception remain the same. Therefore

Taiwan government through ESIT or other institutions should provide a comprehensive understanding of “One China Policy” in order to avoid misunderstanding among Indonesian people, particularly Indonesian students who study in Taiwan.

Lastly, network of alumni is not maintained appropriately. There is no network of Taiwan alumni particularly Taiwan scholarship alumni. After the completion of their study, their relation with Taiwan also finished. According to the interviewees, although not particular for Indonesian student, there is only ICDF which has global network of alumni. This situation has made Taiwan lose their leverage to deal with the alumni and, to some extent, lose opportunity to conduct collaboration with them. Clearly, a network of alumni for Indonesian student needs to be established not only to facilitate communication among them but as an institution for Taiwan’s government in actuating Indonesian students as agent of change to enhance Taiwan – Indonesia relations through every possible means.

In sum, the attempt to treat Indonesian students seems still to be put on the side-line by Taiwan. So far, Indonesian students only are only required to fulfil the regular requirement of students for Taiwan academic institution. This makes potential ability of Indonesian students to play role as agent of cooperation remains invisible. Although many efforts have been conducting by Taiwan through many

approaches to enhance relations with Indonesia, but the elaboration in utilizing academic cooperation is still far from such objective. Serious effort has to take into account in order to activate the epistemic community that has potential role in constructing new interest of Indonesia in enhancing their relation with Indonesia.

### **Conclusion**

This paper is the continuity of preliminary research on Indonesia students in Taiwan which previously elaborates only on the potential of Indonesian Students as a cooperation agent to enhance Indonesia-Taiwan cooperation. From the analysis, two conclusions can be drawn. First, Taiwan academic relations with Indonesia are still focusing on the effort to increase the number of Indonesian students in Taiwan and neglect their potential as agent of cooperation. This condition has made the students as agent become invisible. Second, Taiwan’s policy in academic cooperation with Indonesia is not in line with Taiwan’s effort to upgrade its relation with Indonesia. As an impact, Taiwan – Indonesia relation remains stagnant and invisible.

Findings from the analysis recommend Taiwan to maintain and give appropriate treatment to Indonesia student. It reaches through providing the understanding about cross-strait relations and maintaining network of alumni of Indonesian students from Taiwan particularly those who receive Taiwan scholarship. In addition, further research

has to be conducted to enrich the concept and effort. It can be reached by conducting comparative studies with other countries especially Malaysia and Singapore regarding the epistemic community role in shaping government relations and policy to Taiwan. Thus, the concept would be fruitful in building mutual benefit between Taiwan and ASEAN countries particularly Indonesia.

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