

Preface: Education and Society

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Publishing articles in scholarly journals is an unavoidable activity for academics. Some courses require postgraduate students to publish in a journal in order to pass their classes. Some Indonesian institutions require students to publish articles in a journal before graduation and journal publication has become one of the requirements for lecturers to be promoted into a higher-ranked job. Out of these obligations, there are many benefits of publishing articles in a journal. One of these is that our thoughts and expertise will be conveyed to the public. This will attract further benefits such as being invited to be the speaker on the topic about which we have written or being invited to collaborate on further research and publications.

Nevertheless, it is not easy to write. In order to write, we need to read a lot and this requires much of our time. In addition, writing can be a never-ending activity, in which we need to write, revise and re-write again based on the feedback from peers or reviewers. In addition, most of us are busy with our daily routines such as going to work and fulfilling duties at home, leaving us less or no energy at all to write. Sometimes, in my experience, we need external forces to encourage us to write. These external forces can be participating in writing competitions and responding to calls to submit papers for a conference. That is why we have organised two events, the Writing Competition and Annual Conference, to encourage academics to write. Also our newly “born” journal, the *Muslim Education Review (MER)* can publish many good quality papers. We do hope that *MER* can facilitate many academics in publishing their research.

Another external impetus to write is a special invitation to write. However, a special invitation to write generally applies only to well-known writers such the renowned

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scholar, Professor Robert W Hefner from Boston University, USA. We are grateful to him for kindly accepting our invitation to be one of the speakers in the First Faculty of Education Annual Conference 2022. His paper published here at *MER* is the paper he presented as the keynote address to the conference. The rest of the papers were written by the winners of the First Education Faculty Writing Competition. The other five papers were selected, from among the 78 submitted, by two judges and then they were sent to be blindly reviewed and then revised by the authors based on the reviewers' comments. We will process some other winning papers for the publication of the second edition of *MER*.

The main theme for the first edition of *MER* is Education and Society. This one of the courses offered in the Master of Arts (MA) in Education program. The sub-themes we drafted for our conference were derived from the topics of the Faculty of Education students' papers submitted for this course. We are delighted that we also received many papers from outside our university; some of them are published in this edition, addressing the theme of our first annual conference: *Education in the Muslim societies: Addressing critical educational issues during the challenging time*. Indeed, now is a challenging time for us, that in the middle of the COVID-19 pandemic many things have changed, including our way of teaching and learning, which has generally moved from face-to-face learning into online learning. This creates problems, for example, for *pesantrens* which are wishing to maintain their traditional values, and for underdeveloped regions which have a lack of recourse to access online learning. Online learning may not be as exciting as face-to-face learning, resulting in procrastination among some students. Everybody has a right to access education, including juveniles who are in prison. It is challenging for them to maintain their well-being, self-efficacy and engagement during their learning in prison. However, it is even more challenging for women in Afghanistan whose rights to education have been inhibited by the Taliban. All of these issues can be read about in this *MER* first edition.