

Trends and Emerging Issues: Implications For Brunei Darussalam

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Abstract

This paper is based on focused research which was conducted by the Centre for Strategic and Policy Studies (CSPS) as part of an ongoing *Foresight Study Project*², in order to: (1) *identify* current and emerging issues as well as trends likely to impact Brunei in the near and medium term future, and (2) *prioritise* emerging issues and trends in order to provide specific future-oriented policy advice on a number of topics of concern.

Increasing socio-ecological and informational complexity in the early 21st century has shattered the assumption of a ‘normal’ or ‘given’ future. Rapid change among cultures and with technology means that we can no longer expect the future to be an uneventful continuation of the past or present. Apparently unlikely and marginal events can, and often do, create significant ripple effects not only locally but also globally. Global systems have become interconnected: one relatively small event in one country can be felt across global markets, as well as impact collective thinking on a number of issues. We are faced with disruptive forms of change (technological, ecological, social and political) in a rapidly shifting landscape. Scanning for signals and events that may be significant in the future should thus also be an ongoing effort and activity if policymaking is to be responsive and anticipative.

The outcomes of the CSPS’ ongoing *horizon scanning for emerging issues and trends* research summarized here are, therefore, preliminary and should be regularly updated. Given the current rate of change, only a continual scanning process to identify relevant upcoming issues early on can assist governments and businesses to create responsive and anticipatory decision-making. This ensures policymakers and leaders “evaluate the situations strategically in order to reduce ‘surprises’, to increase the room for manoeuvre, and to improve the overall flexibility of governance” (Habegger, 2010). In addition, the process ensures that policies and strategies are relevant to a landscape of rapid and unexpected change.

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2 Foresight Study Project was led by José Ramos of Action Foresight, Australia. This policy brief makes extensive use of the Train the Trainers Manual for the course in Strategic Foresight and Horizon Scanning produced by Dr Ramos for the CSPS.

Alternative Futures for Brunei: Exploratory Development Scenarios

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Abstract

It is well established in theory and practice that one of the key factors preventing adequate and flexible responses to ever changing global and local conditions is the diminished ability to imagine futures beyond “business as usual”. Brunei, like most other countries and regions, is in the midst of a challenging global transformation, with a restructuring of its economy, society and human engagement with its environment. The country is experiencing an economic downturn, with falling oil prices substantially affecting the oil-driven economy, coupled with decades-long efforts to diversify the economy which have not significantly materialised. As a response, the Brunei government has recently introduced unusually drastic budget cutbacks which are likely to continue. Even with the possibility of Brunei’s sovereign funds moderating the ups and downs of the economy, it is likely that “business as usual” approaches will no longer be adequate in a constantly changing world.

The Centre for Strategic and Policy Studies (CSPS) has therefore embarked on the ambitious and challenging task of infusing proactive and anticipatory approaches into advising policymaking. More concretely, CSPS has engaged in the Foresight Study Project in order to: (1) identify emerging issues and trends likely to impact Brunei in the near and medium term future, (2) conduct thorough horizon scanning processes in order to provide more futures-oriented policy advice, (3) expand the current mindset from “more of the same”/”business as usual” approaches to strategic planning, and, (4) identify specific strategies and policies more likely to lead towards the fulfilment of the overall goals and the eight main strategies of Wawasan Brunei 2035.

This report summarises the outcomes of one section of CSPS’s Foresight Study Project: a scenario generating process and the further research and the subsequent application of scenario methodology. The action-learning process was undertaken in 2016, involving most researchers within CSPS.

As a pilot study, this alternative development scenarios process focused on generating innovative and diverse ways to question the future and thereby “open up the future” towards multiple possible

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Strategic Planning in Brunei Darussalam: History, Experience and Lessons Learned

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Abstract

This paper provides an overview of strategic planning in Brunei Darussalam. It is based on an ‘insider’s view’ – including participating in the formulation of the first strategic plan for the Brunei Prime Minister’s Office and nearly three decades of experience with planning in Brunei. First, the history of planning both globally and in the context of Brunei is summarised. Second, the paper then proceeds to outline the benefits and challenges of strategic planning processes and outcomes as well as to define and simplify what strategic planning is and could potentially be. Third, the 5D model of strategic planning, which is aimed specifically at Brunei’s civil service, is described, so that it can be used by civil servants to prepare their strategic plans. Fourth, the paper concludes with some crucial lessons learned whilst engaging in the process of strategic planning. These lessons are intended to further enhance the benefits and positive outcomes obtained from strategic planning in Brunei in the future.

Keywords: *history of national development planning, strategic planning, policy making, implementation, Brunei Darussalam.*

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Assessing Online Interaction of Bruneian Children

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Abstract

With emerging technologies and ubiquitous ‘anytime, anywhere, any device’ internetting, global connectivity can either disseminate opportunities or threats to Internet users regardless of identity and age. This present study assesses the risks and opportunities experienced by Bruneian children as a result of their Internet use. It aims to provide insights into the types of online activities of this vulnerable group of the population. This study utilises a convenience sample of 308 children to complete a ‘Brunei Children Online Survey (BCOS)’ in order to identify the ways in which the children engaged with the Internet and online or digital technologies in their daily lives, under four areas of investigation: access and use, activities and digital skills, risks and outcomes, and mediation by parents, teachers and peers. The key findings of the study indicate that 1) the children access the Internet and own smartphones at a young age; 2) engage in more risk-prone activities than actively seek online opportunities for learning and development; 3) possess low levels of digital and coping skills; and 4) receive little mediation from parents, teachers and peers. The main policy recommendations of this study include the need to introduce strategies to empower children with better self-management and coping skills, to empower parents, guardians and teachers to be more aware and up-to-date in protecting and educating children, and for government agencies and relevant stakeholders to regularly review the situation. This should be done with the help of empirical evidence and taking into account national-level policies.

Keywords: *Internet use, digital skills, online risks, online opportunities, mediation, Bruneian children.*

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Unemployment Issues among University Graduates in Brunei Darussalam

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Abstract

In recent years the issue of unemployment among university graduates in Brunei Darussalam has attracted considerable attention. Acknowledging the lack of research on employment and unemployment issues among university graduates, in 2012 CSPS conducted a national survey of university graduates. The purpose of this working paper is to illustrate the main findings of the survey, with specific attention to unemployment issues. The paper estimates a logit model to identify the main factors affecting the probability of unemployment. Our findings suggest that several characteristics have an impact on the probability of unemployment, acting both through the individual labour supply and preferences – shifting the reservation wage – and through the signals sent to the employers – shifting the distribution of the potential wage offers.

Keywords: graduate unemployment, higher education

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