Poverty reduction has been the top priority of the Indonesian government’s developmental projects. At the age of climate change, however, the implementation of the policy faces greater challenges. Empirical observation gives rise to a question as to why do the climate change mitigation programs fail to bring about favorable effect to poverty reduction? The paper employs an intermestic approach to critically explaining the underlying problems concerning climate change and poverty reduction in Indonesia. The argument is that the political economy of climate change accelerates the existing structural factors which alienate the government from the poor people, and annihilates the moral relationships between the ruler and the ruled. To clarify this position, the discussion proceeds in two main parts. The first section outlines the significant use of the intermestic approach to analyzing the disconnection between climate change and the Indonesian government’s economic policy to reduce poverty. The second section goes on to discern the structural factors which exacerbate the circumstances under which poverty reduction becomes a trivial issue in the ostensibly development policy directed to achieve economic progress. The concluding section reflects what can be learnt from the ongoing situation; on how to bring the state back into the right direction.

**Keywords:** Climate Change; Indonesia; Policy Redirection; Poverty Reduction; Structural Factors

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Volume 23, Number 2, February 2017

Selected Peer-Reviewed Articles from the 2016 International Conference on Education (ICOED), Jakarta, Indonesia, 12–14 April 2016
pp. 693-694(2)
Authors: Soh, Ping Jack; Abd Aziz, Mohamad Zoinol Abidin Bin; Sulaiman, Asyrani Bin Hamzah; Othman, Mohd Azlishah Bin; Abd Malek, Mohd Fareq Bin

Word Stemming Methods for the Malay Language: A Review
pp. 695-698(4)
Authors: Kassim, Mohamad Nizam; Maarof, Mohd Aizaini; Zainal, Anazida; Wahab, Amirudin Abdul
Promoting Autonomous Learning Using ICT in School Setting—Constructivist Perspectives  
pp. 699-703(5)  
Authors: Mantoro, Teddy; Andryani, Arry; Dewanti, Ratna; Ayu, Media A

Unique Features of Indonesian Wayang in Book Ornament Prototype Through Visual Communication Design Perspective  
pp. 704-707(4)  
Authors: Widyokusumo, Lintang; Wijaya, Hanny

Internal Competition in Engineering Education—A Case Study of Project Design Competition in UNITEN  
pp. 708-711(4)  
Authors: Chua, Yaw Long; Koh, Yit Yan

Parental Involvement and Awareness Using Malaysian's Smart School Management System  
pp. 712-716(5)  
Authors: Hussein, Shawqi Mohammed; Shariff, Sya Azmeela; Mantoro, Teddy

Ladies Underwater and ES Crime: The Language Used in Society  
pp. 717-721(5)  
Authors: Dewi, Ienneke Indra; Winiharti, Menik

Design Engineering Freight Vehicle Load Detection Perspective Competence as an Operator, Inspectors and Auditors for Road Transport Safety  
pp. 722-725(4)  
Authors: Thamzil, Mohammad; Kustuno, Djoko; Purnomo, ; Sudjimat, Dwi Agus; Mardji, .

Practice-Led Project as a Creative Method to Enhance Theoretical Knowledge in Art and Design Education  
pp. 726-729(4)  
Author: Wijaya, Hanny

Smart Learning Contents Adaptation Engine for Learning Devices Types and Learner’s Property for Smart Learning  
pp. 730-734(5)  
Authors: Chung, Kwang Sik; Kim, Min Young
Constructionism for Language Immersion: A Case Study of Thai Education Development

Authors: Jintapitak, Manissaward; Chakpitak, Nopasit; Sureepong, Pradorn; Chaipravat, Olarn

Critical Pedagogy-Based Instructional Materials: Effects on Language Proficiency, Social Awareness, and 21st Century Skills

Authors: Agdeppa, Joan Y; Metila, Romylyn

Gingerbread and Teak House Heritage Studies: Phrae, Northern Thailand

Authors: Jintapitak, Manissaward; Jintapitak, Nantanat

Understanding Chinese Culture and Tradition Through Observation in Chinese Restaurant as a Study Case of Informal Education

Authors: Salim, Polniwati; Wijaya, Hanny

Design of Computerized Interactive ABS/ESP Self-Direct Learning Simulator (CIA-DLS) with Andragogical Method Prespective to Improve the Learning Output

Authors: Kaharmen, Herman M; Kustono, Djoko; Waras, .; Tuwoso, .; Puspitasari, Poppy

For the Nth Time, Does Educational Technology Really Make a Difference? —A Large-Scale Investigation of the Effects of Educational TV on Academic Achievement

Authors: Lapinid, Minie Rose; Gustilo, Leah; Magno, Carlo P; Barrot, Jessie; Gabinete, Mari Karen L; Anito, Jovito C

The Use of Emerging Technologies by EFL Teachers in Primary Schools

Authors: Mantoro, Teddy; Fitriani, Dian; Wendi, Usino; Ayu, Media A; Rusdah, .

Embracing Globalisation and Ensuring Relevance in Providing Quality Education

Authors: Tan, Abby; Shahrill, Masitah; Ali, Dewi Kartika; Daud, Sabrina; Naing, Lin
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Pages</th>
<th>Authors</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Exploring Patterns Through Mosaic Workshop as a Learning Method in</td>
<td>773-775(3)</td>
<td>Nediari, Amarena; Wijaya, Hanny</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Building Material Subject</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Analysis of Students’ Cognitive Problem Solving Skill in Solving</td>
<td>776-780(5)</td>
<td>Kurniati, Dian; Annizar, Anas Ma’ruf</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PISA Standard-Based Test Item</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prevalence of Cyberbullying among Students in Malaysian Higher</td>
<td>781-784(4)</td>
<td>Lai, C. S; Mohamad, M. M; Lee, M. F; Salleh,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Learning Institutions</td>
<td></td>
<td>Mohd; Sulaiman, N. L; Rosli, D. I; Chang,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>W. V. S</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Development of Interactive E-Learning Using Multimedia Design Model</td>
<td>785-789(5)</td>
<td>Lestari, Ambar Sri</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Promoting Model Skills, Humanist, Mental (SHM) for Development of</td>
<td>790-795(6)</td>
<td>Suherman, ; Wibowo, Firmanul Catur</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professionalism Teacher</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Use of Learning Management System (LMS) for College Students to</td>
<td>796-800(5)</td>
<td>Mantoro, Teddy; Utami, Putri; Dewanti, Ratna;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Become an Active Learner: Constructivism View</td>
<td></td>
<td>Yudhi, Wahdi S. A; Ayu, Media A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Educational Value of Sang Pencerah Film by Hanung Bramantyo:</td>
<td>801-803(3)</td>
<td>Puspitasari, Dyah Gayatri; Sabana, Setiawan;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aesthetic Research of Chiaroscuro</td>
<td></td>
<td>Ahmad, Hafiz Azis; Wijaya, Hanny</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Go Virtual: Exploring Augmented Reality Application in Representation</td>
<td>804-808(5)</td>
<td>Abdullah, Fadzidah; Kassim, Mohd Hisyamuddin</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>of Steel Architectural Construction for the Enhancement of Architecture</td>
<td></td>
<td>Bin; Sanusi, Aliyah Nur Zafirah</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Developing a Pedagogy Framework for Institution-Wide Implementation of MOOC: A Case Study from a Malaysian Private University
pp. 809-813(5)
Authors: Ayub, Enna; Leong, Lim Chee

Assessment and Validation of Effective Supervision Among Technical and Engineering Students in Malaysian Technical Institutions
pp. 814-818(5)
Authors: Ismail, Affero; Hamid, Hashima; Ahmad Sidiki, Ahmad Firdaos Syauqi; Samad, Noorazman Abd; Harun, Hairuddin

The Use of Interactive Games Enhances Nutritional Knowledge and Healthy Lifestyle Habits Among Chilean Elementary School Children
pp. 819-823(5)
Authors: Muñoz, Yasna; Cortés, Manuel E. Cortés; Alfaro, Andrea

The Phenomenology of Institutionalizing Change
pp. 824-829(6)
Authors: Dela Pena, Jonathan S; Prudente, Maricar S; Aguja, Socorro E

Naturally Ventilated Colonial School Classrooms in Malaysia are Conducive to Learning Environment
pp. 830-833(4)
Authors: Sanusi, Aliyah Nur Zafirah; Azmin, Aida Kesuma; Abdullah, Fadzidah; Kassim, Mohd Hisyamuddin Bin

Self Awareness Mapping of Ubinus Students Toward the National Culture Based on the Values of PANCASILA (3rd Principle: Unity of Indonesia)
pp. 834-838(5)
Authors: Ch, Rina Patriana; Irawan, Iwan; Pane, Murty Magda

Effectiveness of Microscopic Virtual Simulation (MVS) for Conceptualizing Students’ Conceptions on Phase Transitions
pp. 839-843(5)
Authors: Wibowo, Firmanul Catur; Suhandi, Andi; Rusdiana, Dadi; Ruhiat, Yayat; Darman, Dina Rahmi; Samsudin, Achmad

The Impact of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) Toward Learning Process and Students’ Attitudes
pp. 844-847(4)
Authors: Mantoro, Teddy; Fitri, Evi Maulida; Rusdah, ; Ayu, Media A; Usino, Wendi
An Automatic Document Classification System to Support Project-Based Learning Process in Engineering Education: A Case of Industrial Engineering
pp. 848-852(5)
Authors: Choi, Jonghyeon; Kang, Minsoo; Kim, Moon-Soo

Learning by Conscience as a New Paradigm in Education
pp. 853-856(4)
Author: Saifullah, .

Islamic' Vocational Culinary Training at Teen Rehabilitation Centre, Malaysia
pp. 857-860(4)
Authors: Esa, Ahmad; Selamat, Asri; Aziz, Zalina @ Siti Aishah Abd; Padil, Suhaili

The Professionalization Process of Pre-Service Technical Teacher Education in Thailand: The Problem of Recruitment to the Career Retention
pp. 861-864(4)
Authors: Innoi, Papaikan; Chai-Aroon, Teeradej; Phlainoi, Nawarat; Intaraprawat, Chanchai

Creativity and Teaching Strategies in Institution of Higher Learning
pp. 865-868(4)
Authors: Rahman, Saemah; Surat, Shahlan; Azmi, Najwa Hanis

Students' Understanding of Genetics Through Blended Learning Activities
pp. 869-872(4)
Authors: Santiago, Jacklyn C; Aguja, Socorro E; Prudente, Maricar S

Impact Assessment of the PC Recycling Project in Region 2
pp. 873-876(4)
Author: Bitanga, Mary Jane S

A Service-Learning Pedagogy Model for Higher Educational Institutions in the Philippines: Development and Validation
pp. 877-881(5)
Author: Sipacio, Philippe John F

Biomorphic Concept for Form Development
pp. 882-884(3)
Author: Nordin, Nurhafizah Amir
Level and Quality of Knowledge Using Confidence-Weighted NRET Scoring Method in Multiple Choice Test
pp. 885-889(5)
Authors: Cisneros-Pahayahay, Ma. Rosanna; Pahayahay, Gemar

Physical versus Augmented Reality Model: Comparative Study Toward Learning Experiences at Heritage Studies Gallery
pp. 890-893(4)
Authors: Kassim, Mohd Hisyamuddin; Abdullah, Fadzidah; Denan, Zuraini; Arafat, Khandoker Ahmad

Innovativeness, Absorptive Capacity and Innovation Among Malaysian Micro-Enterprises: A Cross-Industry and Cross-State Comparison
pp. 894-896(3)
Authors: Mamun, Abdullah Al; Muniady, Rajennd A/L; Nawi, Noorshella Binti Che; Malavizhi, Chinnasamy Agamudainambhi; Permarupan, P. Yukthamarani

Using Graphs to Develop Geographical Skills Among Pre-University Students
pp. 897-900(4)
Authors: Yunos, Norhayati Ummi Juriyah; Jawawi, Rosmawijah; Matzin, Rohani; Shahrill, Masitah; Mundia, Lawrence; Jaidin, Jainatul Halida; Petra, Nur-Ashikin; Mahadi, Mar Aswandi

The Use of Rubrics in Developing Students' Understanding of History
pp. 901-904(4)
Authors: Idris, Sarana Haji; Jawawi, Rosmawijah; Matzin, Rohani; Shahrill, Masitah; Mundia, Lawrence; Jaidin, Jainatul Halida; Petra, Nur-Ashikin; Mahadi, Mar Aswandi

Social Media, Socio-Political Influence and Youth's Leadership Participation in Malaysia: A Conceptual Framework
pp. 905-907(3)
Authors: Ekpe, Isidore; Mohamad, Mohd Rosli; Mat, Norsiah; Simpong, Derweanna Bah

Peer Assessment: A Challenge in the New Generation
pp. 908-911(4)
Authors: Abidin, Noor Atikah Binti Zainal; Sahdan, Shafizza binti

pp. 912-915(4)
Authors: Sahdan, Shafizza Binti; Abidin, Noor Atikah Binti Zainal
Multicultural Education as A Must in Indonesia (A Hermeneutic Analysis to Bina Nusantara University Student’s Perceptions Towards ASEAN Community)  
pp. 916-919(4)  
Authors: Fios, Frederikus; Manurung, Catarina; Peter, Ramot

Recognition of Teachers about Students' Competencies of Media and Information Literacy for Social Network Services  
pp. 920-924(5)  
Author: Yoshida, Masami

Improving Teacher's Commitment by Improving External Factors  
pp. 925-928(4)  
Authors: Benawa, Arcadius; Gea, Antonius A; Willyarto, Mario Nugroho

Improving Students' Learning Motivation by Increasing Lecturer’s Ability and Learning Model  
pp. 929-932(4)  
Authors: Benawa, Arcadius; Laurentius, LeloYosep; Irawan, Iwan

Religious Tolerance in Jakarta State University Students: Case Study Attitudes and Views on Different Religious Beliefs  
pp. 933-935(3)  
Authors: Masrukhin, Agus; Tirtawinata, Ch. Megawati; Ma’mun, Sukron

Needs Analysis for Academic Operation Staff at BINUS University in Facing World Class Operational Excellence  
pp. 936-940(5)  
Authors: Asmani, Almodad Biduk; Wiharja, Chandra Kurniawan

Need Analysis for CLIL Synchronization in BIPA Learning  
pp. 941-943(3)  
Authors: Oktriono, Kristianus; Wishnoebroto, .

Implementing Task-based Language Teaching in ESL Classrooms  
pp. 944-947(4)  
Author: Barrot, Jessie

Process, Results, and Consequences of Madrasa Accreditation: A Case Study in Lampung, Indonesia  
pp. 948-952(5)  
Author: Makbuloh, Deden
The Development of Work-Process-Orientation Training Material for National Dual Training System (NDTS) Implementation
pp. 953-957(5)
Authors: Tokeran, Mohd Faizal; Razzaly, Wahid

Students’ Strategies: Insights for Teaching Lexical Cohesion
pp. 958-960(3)
Author: Simanjuntak, Risa Rumentha

Using Self-Assessment to Monitor ESL Learners’ Academic Achievement in a Malaysian ESL Context: A Case Study
pp. 961-964(4)
Author: Singh, Charanjit Kaur Swaran

The Role of a Teacher in Foreign Language Teaching Enhanced by Information and Communication Technologies
pp. 965-967(3)
Author: Klimova, Blanka

Transferable Skills for Ph.D. Students to Finish the Journey
pp. 968-971(4)
Authors: Sumarwati, Sri; Yunos, Jailani Md; Ibrahim, Badaruddin

Parent’s Knowledge About the Nutritional Labelling of Snacks Consumed by Chilean Primary School Students: When Do We Start to Educate Parents?
pp. 972-975(4)
Authors: Cortés, Manuel E. Cortés; Badínez, Nicole; Contreras, Valeria; Catalán, Macarena; Muñoz, Yasna

The Competency Analysis of the Undergraduate Student in the Air Cargo Management Program with the Adaptation of Quality Function Deployment Method
pp. 976-978(3)
Authors: Northaw, Jane; Tungkunanan, Pariyaporn; Manon, Wattana

Strategies for Developing Educational Management Potential of Sub-District Administrative Organization, Thailand
pp. 979-982(4)
Authors: Tungkunanan, Pariyaporn; Suwanchote, Bamrung
Coaching Leadership Styles Among Malaysian Polytechnic Athletes
pp. 983-985(3)
Authors: Lajim, Faeizah Mohd; Mohamed, Zulkifli

Case Based Reasoning (CBR) Model for Buying or not Buying Towards the Body Shop as a Green Product in East Java
pp. 986-990(5)
Author: Susanti, Christina Esti

pp. 991-994(4)
Authors: Raso, Daoprakai; Tungkunanan, Pariyaporn; Anukulwech, Abhichat

Best Educational Management Practices of Thai Provincial and Municipality Administrators
pp. 995-999(5)
Authors: Booranakit, Nipa; Tungkunanan, Pariyaporn; Suntrayuth, Dhorn

Applying the Humanistic Learning Theory: Effects on the Experience and Learning Pattern Related to the Prevention of Child Obesity
pp. 1000-1004(5)
Authors: Rahman, Saemah; Marzuki, Maziah Ahmad

Developing Positive Multicultural Attitudes in Student Organization
pp. 1005-1007(3)
Authors: Gea, Antonius Atosökhi; Tampubolon, Simon Mangatur; Lakonawa, Petrus

The Model of Ethnic Community Public Policy
pp. 1008-1011(4)
Authors: Nak-Ai, Worayuth; Jiawiwatkul, Uthaithip; Temsirikulchai, Lakkhana; Nontapattamadul, Kitipat

The Use of Humour in Mathematics Teaching and Its Relationship with Students’ Concentration and Motivation
pp. 1012-1015(4)
Authors: Muhammad, Syawal Amran; Rahman, Saemah
Performance Profile of the Coffee Plantation Area Students in Solving the Math-Science Problem
pp. 1016-1018(3)
Authors: Suratno, ;; Kurniati, Dian

Nurses Occupational Well-Being of Retired Nurses with Productive Aging
pp. 1019-1021(3)
Authors: Sanveingchan, Suvimon; Phlainoi, Supavan; Chai-Aroon, Teeradej; Tongvichian, Sulee

The Problem of Chinese Students Facing in Critical Reasoning in Graduate Management Admission Test
pp. 1022-1024(3)
Authors: Chen, Gong; Guo, Jiahong

Solving Physics Problems by Playing with Equations
pp. 1025-1029(5)
Authors: Anito, Jovito C; Prudente, Maricar S; Limjap, Auxencia A; Aguja, Socorro E; Rubi, Pamela S

Corrective Feedback in ESL Writing: Students’ and Teachers’ Perspectives and Preferences
pp. 1030-1033(4)
Author: Salipande, Aldrin L

Research Dissemination and Productivity of Faculty Members in a Higher Education Institution
pp. 1034-1038(5)
Author: Tabago, Lorelei C

Physical Science Students’ Study Habits, Attitudes and Readiness
pp. 1039-1042(4)
Author: Solis-Foronda, Marisol

Problem Solving Abilities of Physical Science Students in Stoichiometry
pp. 1043-1046(4)
Author: Aquino, Jonathan Lord R

Efficacy of Using STAD and LDM in Teaching College Algebra
pp. 1047-1050(4)
Author: Donceras, Ronald Cesista
The Elderly Family Solidarity: The Case Study of the Urbanized Elderly Couple in Bangkok
pp. 1051-1054(4)
Authors: Sowat, Chantana; Jiawiwatkul, Uthaithip; Phlainoi, Supavan; Yoddumnern-Attig, Bencha

Digitalk: An Analysis of Linguistic Features and Their Functions in Filipino Computer-Mediated Communication
pp. 1055-1059(5)
Authors: Gustilo, Leah E; Dino, Chenee M

Educating Diversity, Understanding Ambiguity: Trailing Indonesian University Students' Attitudes Through Instant Poems
pp. 1060-1063(4)
Authors: Akun, Andreas; Andreani, Wiwik

Book Sharing: Parents' Read Aloud Activities in Supporting Emergent Reading and Arts for Early Literacy (Second Edition)
pp. 1064-1067(4)
Authors: Chasanatun, Fida; Sunardi, ; Nurkamto, Joko; Asrowi, ; Rochsantiningsih, Dewi

Gearing K to 12 Philippine Science for National Development and ASEAN Competitiveness
pp. 1068-1072(5)
Authors: Limjap, Auxencia A; Santos, Gil Nonato C; Lapinid, Minie Rose C; Roleda, Lydia S; Anito, Jovito C

The Effects of Worked Examples Presentation on Sub-Cognitive Loads
pp. 1073-1076(4)
Authors: Yusof, Yusniza; Sern, Lai Chee; Foong, Lee Ming

Comparing Teachers' Self-Efficacy Beliefs and Students' Perception in Teaching Literature
pp. 1077-1080(4)
Authors: Delima, Ermel M; Dagdag, Shiela Marie O

Outcomes-Based Education (OBE): Its Effect to the Mathematics Performance, Mathematics Skills and Attitudes Towards Mathematics of the BSCS Students
pp. 1081-1084(4)
Author: Cabrera, Freddie R
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Pages</th>
<th>Authors</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Efficacy of NRET Scoring Method in Paper-and-Pen Multiple Choice Test</td>
<td>1085-1089(5)</td>
<td>Cisneros-Pahayahay, Ma. Rosanna; Pahayahay, Gemar</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Development of Life Skills Model for Muslim Youth within Private Islamic Schools in Three Southern Border Provinces: A Case Study of Chong Rak Sat Witthaya School, Pattani, Thailand</td>
<td>1090-1093(4)</td>
<td>Manmanah, Direak; Un-Ob, Praphaphan; Jiawiwatkul, Uthaitip; Lanui, Awang</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lexical Patterns in the Early 21st Century Philippine English Writing</td>
<td>1094-1098(5)</td>
<td>Dimaculangan, Nimfa G; Gustilo, Leah E</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Old Speak or Young Speak: An Analysis of Netspeak Features in Filipino Netspeak</td>
<td>1099-1103(5)</td>
<td>Gustilo, Leah E; Dino, Chenee M</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A Survey of Technology Enabled Active Learning in Teaching and Learning Practices to Enhance the Quality of Engineering Students</td>
<td>1104-1108(5)</td>
<td>Hassan, Nur Farha; Puteh, Saifullizam</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>An Approach of Excellence Talent in Engineering Education Programme of Enhancing the Quality of Students</td>
<td>1109-1112(4)</td>
<td>Sanusi, Amanina Muhamad; Puteh, Saifullizam</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Semiotics in Visual Literacy Pedagogy of Junior High School Teachers in the Philippines</td>
<td>1113-1117(5)</td>
<td>Gabinete, Mari Karen L</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Use of GeoGebra Applets: Students' Attitudes and Achievement in Learning Quadratic Functions, Equations and Inequalities</td>
<td>1118-1121(4)</td>
<td>Urgena, John Nico A; Lapinid, Minie Rose C</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Student Perceptions of Online Homework in Mathematics of Accounting and Finance
pp. 1122-1125(4)
**Author:** Sarmiento, Celina P

Introducing Lesson Study as a Professional Development Model in the Islands of the Philippines
pp. 1126-1129(4)
**Author:** Elipane, Levi Esteban

Assessment of Students’ Metacognitive Awareness Level in College Algebra
pp. 1130-1133(4)
**Authors:** Pahayahay, Gemar; Cisneros-Pahayahay, Ma. Rosanna

An Investigation of Thai Principals’ Technology Leadership and Understanding of Mobile Technology in Education: Apply the TPACK Framework
pp. 1134-1139(6)
**Author:** Chaemchoy, Sukanya

Women in Cinematic Era: Language of Oppression and Liberation
pp. 1140-1143(4)
**Author:** Dayawon, Marinel P

Raising the Bar of Undergraduate Research
pp. 1144-1148(5)
**Authors:** Delima, Precila Catabian; Delima, Ermel Manalang

The Development of Diploma 3 (D3) of Road Vehicle Inspection Program at Polytechnic of Road Transportation Safety in Accordance with the Professional Education Program of Road Vehicle Inspectors
pp. 1149-1153(5)
**Authors:** Sahri, Agus; Marji, ; Purnomo, ; Sugandi, R. M; Puspitasari, Poppy

Effectiveness of Professional Practice Work with Discovery Learning Methods in Engineering Program D IV Automotive Safety
pp. 1154-1157(4)
**Authors:** Suyitno, ; Mukhadis, A; Suhartadi, Syarief; Sutadji, Eddy; Saroso, ; Puspitasari, Poppy
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Pages</th>
<th>Authors</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Explanatory Domain and Indicator for Integration Public Skill Training Institute with Private Training Center for Automotive Industry Trainees</td>
<td>1158-1161(4)</td>
<td>Samad, Noorazman Abd; Wan Ahmad, Wan Mohd Rashid; Sern, Lai Cee; Harun, Hairuddin; Awang, Halizah; Ismail, Affero</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elaboration of Science Self-Learning Modules from the Perspective of Instructional Design: A Pilot Study</td>
<td>1162-1166(5)</td>
<td>Cortés, Manuel E. Cortés; Llona, Isabel</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Comparison of Animal Idioms in Chinese and Indonesian</td>
<td>1167-1170(4)</td>
<td>Ying, Yi; Mursitama, Tirta Nugraha; Rumeser, Johnannes A. A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Optimizing History of Mathematics: A Lesson Study</td>
<td>1171-1175(5)</td>
<td>Baroja, Samuel Joshua D; Arceo, Claribelle Pia; Dancel, Darlferhen; Natividad, Angelyn; Obrial, Jessica; Santos, Paul Jorel; Tungul, Katherine Theresse; Elipane, Levi Esteban</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fast Feedback Methods in Teaching G7 Physics</td>
<td>1176-1179(4)</td>
<td>Alcantara, Karen R; Roleda, Lydia S</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Development Model of “Community College Teachers' Professional Learning Community”: A Case Study of Phang-Nga Community College, Thailand</td>
<td>1180-1183(4)</td>
<td>Wiangkham, Lapasrada; Jiawiwatkul, Uthaithip</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teamwork Competency Mapping of Ubinus Student Toward the ASEAN Economic Community</td>
<td>1184-1187(4)</td>
<td>Pane, Murty Magda; Lake, Silverius CJM; Patriana, Rina</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Effect of Learning University Movement in Universiti Industri Selangor</td>
<td>1188-1192(5)</td>
<td>Hasan, Rosli; Mohd Hajazi, Mohd Zaidi; Mustaffa, Jamilah; Rosli, Yanti</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Title</td>
<td>Page Range</td>
<td>Authors</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>----------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>------------</td>
<td>-------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>English Teaching in Post-Colonialism Discourse: EFL Students’ Perception Toward English and Native English Teachers in Indonesia</td>
<td>1193-1196(4)</td>
<td>Andreani, Wiwik; Dewi, Udiana Puspa</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Effectiveness of Blended Learning Approach in Redesigned Anatomy Curriculum for the Faculty of Health Science Undergraduates Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia</td>
<td>1197-1200(4)</td>
<td>Rosli, Yanti; Ishak, Ismarulyusda; Saat, Zakiah Mohd</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Information Study of Solar Flare Events on November 3, 2013 and August 9, 2011</td>
<td>1201-1204(4)</td>
<td>Khumlumlert, T; Kanjanapa, W; Aiemsa-Ad, N</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Promoting Conceptual Understanding on Magnetic Field Concept Through Interactive Conceptual Instruction (ICI) with PDEODE*E Tasks</td>
<td>1205-1209(5)</td>
<td>Samsudin, Achmad; Suhandi, Andi; Rusdiana, Dadi; Kaniawati, Ida; Coştu, Bayram</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teachers' Experiences in Engaging in Lesson Study</td>
<td>1210-1215(6)</td>
<td>Ferrer, Gerald; Lapinid, Minie Rose</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Technical Vocational Education Training Branding from Perspective of Stakeholder (Parent) in Malaysia</td>
<td>1216-1219(4)</td>
<td>Hussin, Azliana; Mohamad, Marlina; Hassan, Razali; Omar, Abdul Jalil</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Barriers to Teaching Evidence Based Medicine in a Hybrid Problem Based Learning Setting in Indonesia</td>
<td>1220-1224(5)</td>
<td>Widyaningsih, Vitri; Maftuhah, Atik; Putri, Anak Agung Alit Kirti Estuti Narendra; Aryoseto, Lukman; Probandari, Ari</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A Review of the 21st Century Skills in Technical Vocational Education and Training (TVET)</td>
<td>1225-1228(4)</td>
<td>Salleh, Nan Nurul Hidayah Megat; Puteh, Saifullizam</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Instructional Rubrics as an Alternative Approach for Improving Practical Teaching Among Teachers Candidate
pp. 1229-1233(5)
Authors: Mohamad Zahid, Nor Hartini Che; Hanafi, Nurfirdawati Muhamad; Puteh, Saifullizam

Effect of Boundless Updated Knowledge Offline (BUKO) on Students’ Retention of Physics Concepts
pp. 1234-1237(4)
Authors: Mulig-Cruz, Charity; Liwanag, Grace; Morden, Ivy Claire

A Phenomenological Inquiry: Essence and Experience of Learning English Among International Students’ at Florida State University
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Authors: Shariff, Sya Azmeela; Abas, Hafiza

Selected Peer-Reviewed Articles from the 2016 International Conference on Science and Technology Applications in Climate Change (STACLIM 2016), Kota Kinabalu, Sabah, Malaysia, 11–12 August 2016
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pp. 1243-1247(5)
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Comparison of Improved $p$-Charts with One and Two Terms Corrections
pp. 1254-1258(5)
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Investigation on the Implementation of the Holt-Winter Method for Ionospheric Delay Forecasting
pp. 1325-1328(4)
Authors: Elmunim, Nouf Abd; Abdullah, Mardina; Hasbi, Alina; Bahari, Siti Aminah

Investigation of Ionospheric Minimum Frequency Near Dip Equator
pp. 1329-1332(4)
Authors: Bello, Saeed Abioye; Abdullah, Mardina; Hamid, Nurul Shazana Abdul
Protoplast Isolation from *Hibiscus sabdariffa* L.
pp. 1333-1336(4)
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The Structural and Optical Properties of Poly(Triarylamine) (PTAA) Thin Films Prepared at Different Spin Rate Using Spin Coating Method
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Estimation of Thunderstorm Activity in Tawau, Sabah Using GPS Data
pp. 1370-1373(4)
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Wavelet Denoising Applied to Light Emitting Diode Lidar Signal
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Hydrogeochemistry Study of Groundwater in Labuan Island, Malaysia
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Spectral-Temporal Variations of Aerosol Ångström Exponent Over Manila, Philippines
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Climate Change as a Critical Factor to Poverty Reduction in Indonesia
pp. 1461-1464(4)
Authors: Suyanto, Bagong; Wicaksana, I. Gede Wahyu

Effects of Outliers in the Analysis of Taguchi Experiments
pp. 1465-1469(5)
Authors: Fitrianto, Anwar; Berahim, Nor Sapinah

Statistical Approach in Analyzing Acetylcholinesterase Inhibitor
pp. 1470-1474(5)
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Climate Change as a Critical Factor to Poverty Reduction in Indonesia

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Poverty reduction has been the top priority of the Indonesian government’s developmental projects. At the age of climate change, however, the implementation of the policy faces greater challenges. Empirical observation gives rise to a question as to why do the climate change mitigation programs fail to bring about favorable effect to poverty reduction? The paper employs an intermestic approach to critically explaining the underlying problems concerning climate change and poverty reduction in Indonesia. The argument is that the political economy of climate change accelerates the existing structural factors which alienate the government from the poor people, and annihilates the moral relationships between the ruler and the ruled. To clarify this position, the discussion proceeds in two main parts. The first section outlines the significant use of the intermestic approach to analyzing the disconnection between climate change and the Indonesian government’s economic policy to reduce poverty. The second section goes on to discern the structural factors which exacerbate the circumstances under which poverty reduction becomes a trivial issue in the ostensibly development policy directed to achieve economic progress. The concluding section reflects what can be learnt from the ongoing situation; on how to bring the state back into the right direction.

Keywords: Indonesia, Climate Change, Poverty Reduction, Structural Factors, Policy Redirection.

1. INTRODUCTION

One of the priorities of the Indonesian government’s development programs is poverty reduction. In the early 1950s, of the 80 million populations, it was estimated there had been about 83 percent peoples living under the conditions of poverty. The condition did not seem to be improving significantly over the next two decades.1 This is arguably because of political instability which prevented the success of the state’s economic development.2 However, the Indonesian economic landscape changed by the end of the 1980s when the government was successful to decrease the number of poor people to approximately 20 percent of the total populations.3 Despite the fact of the surge in population number to double, political economists were generally optimistic that Indonesia would be the model of effective poverty reduction governance. Moreover, during the first years of the 1990s Indonesia had enjoyed the so-called ‘economic boom’ with high growth which was higher than 5 percent, and low poverty rate which was less than 10 percent.4

The most convincing explanation for such an economic achievement indicates the symbiosis between political and economic factors; that is the stable domestic politics under the New Order leadership made economy work well.5

This status of being in an economically thriving nation did not last long. Following the Asian financial crisis in 1997–1998 Indonesian economy collapsed. Domestic politics experienced heavy turbulence, and consequently the poverty rate rose to more than 24 percent in the early 2000. This profile has risen to 30 percent in 2005.6 Over the last ten years, however, the situation has been getting better whereby the poverty rate can be reduced to about 0.4 percent annually.7

This historical overview on poverty in Indonesia leaves an important question to address as to why did the recently claimed economic advancement—especially under the government of President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono—fail to boost the programs of poverty reduction. If politics were well-thought-out as the determining factor to economy, this argument would no longer be valid. The government is relatively stable. But why the poverty rate does not ease impressively.

This paper proposes a different framework to analyzing the problem. It draws upon the relationship between geography/nature and economic performance. Climate change is regarded as the relevant empirical phenomenon by which human activities, including economic production, are affected.

To clarify this position, an intermestic approach is used as a tool to observe and comprehend what and why some structural
factors can bring about the hurdles to the effectiveness of poverty reduction programs in Indonesia.

2. THE RELEVANCE OF THE INTERMESTIC APPROACH

The term intermestic is understood as the linkages between the international and domestic environments in which social and natural events take place. It is usually used to demonstrate independent characteristics of any circumstances which influence on the occurrence of a particular phenomenon.

The intermestic approach and strategy for research is considered to be able to provide the more extensive space and stronger explanatory power for conducting scientific inquiries dealing with problems arising from human activities which their effect expanding through the global to the local levels.

This style of analysis receives greater attention from social scientists who are aware of the pervasive impact of globalization on national and regional aspects of life. Against the tendency of becoming positivist in the social epistemology, the proponents of intermestic approach believe in the usefulness of thinking eclectically and doing research for the practical benefits rather than the abstract ones.

The intermestic approach consists of three methodological tenets. They are derived from a set of eclectic analytical framework in which salient concepts borrowed from various disciplines such as Development Studies, Public Policy, Sociology and International Relations are combined to create a critical perspective on social issues with global importance. First, the actors influencing world issues should not be focused on individuals, groups and dominant players. A systematic attention must be given to understand the emergent network of power relations amongst actors being involved.

For example, on the climate change negotiations, studies have to be devoted to uncover the ways in which interrelated actions and policies of the Great Powers hinder the process of dialogue to generate productive outcomes. The emphasis is put on the multilateral configuration, involving China on the one side, and the United States on the other, against the interests of the Developing Countries.

Second, economic and development issues should not be assumed as chiefly economic, rather it is better deemed as the multidimensional cause and effect mechanisms. Economic problems can have noneconomic contents, either demographic or cultural, and also noneconomic implications, either political or social. This premise is particularly applied to capture the impact of biophysical shifts which is accompanied by the downsizing environmental capacity of the people to render resources for the fulfillment of basic human needs.

Third, scrutiny to the phenomenon of social change should embrace the multifaceted contexts of analysis, from local and national to global; from domestic to international politics and policy. This practice is recommended in order to grasp the dynamics and connections between wide ranging activities which in turn affect the quality of living of certain communities.

These foundational assumptions lead to the more comprehensive view on how to explicate the nature of climate change and its structural hurdles may be posed onto the Indonesian economy. Research, professional inquiries, and policy analysis validate that in Indonesia the most affected economic sectors due to climate change are ones like forestry, fishery and agriculture. Their point is commonly construed in the understanding about the natural consequences of global warming, in terms of drought, rainfall, wave surge and flood, to food security, energy provision and health problems.

Climate change experts are convinced that the failure to manage such negative implications will complicate the government’s work to ease poverty, since the majority elements of the poor in the country, such as farmers, fishermen, and labors, are grappled with the lack of food, energy resources, and health care. With this knowledge in mind, it is right arguing that the poverty rate continues to increase.

The above argument is an incremental explanation, however. In fact, climate change to get impacted on a large scope of community does engage other aspects of social life, including the nature of people to people and state to state relations, policy preferences and the transnational context. Clearly, climate change is not a localized issue to Indonesia. For instance, Wicaksana shows that the Indonesian government’s policy on containing the effect of global warming has faced both domestic and international impediments. The latter even incites a more formidable obstacle to the policy execution in significant ways.

The general situations of the domestic context of climate change mitigation and adaptation prove this argument. First, there are too many vested interests playing and disrupting in the course of environmental protection programs both at national and local governance. Second, it is noticeable that sectoral conflicts amongst the state’s agencies responsible for designing and implementing concrete strategies complicating the ongoing problems. Third, local resistance to the important components of the top down projects on environmental reconstruction and rehabilitation, such mainly as the REDD++ programs, has made disadvantageous implications for the policy improvement and structures.

3. CLIMATE CHANGE AS A CRITICAL FACTOR TO POVERTY REDUCTION PROGRAMS

This section analyzes the intermestic hindrances to poverty reduction programs in Indonesia, which are derived from the political economy of climate change.

The Indonesian government’s endeavor to uplift standard of living of poor people is very much influenced by the formula inculcated by international financial institutions, mainly the World Bank with its developmentalism and the United Nations through its Millennium Development Goal projects. Beside these two external schemes, the Ministry of National Development Planning (Kementerian Perencanaan Pembangunan Nasional) has settled for various engagements with foreign governmental and nongovernmental organizations that are facilitated to contribute their ideas and experiences to establishing the so-called kemitraan untuk memberantas kemiskinan (partnership for eliminating poverty) in Indonesia.

As a result, the policy feature is divergent, less original, and in a sense not efficient. This is because, for one thing, what happens in the country is approached through outside means. The problem is not related to the discourse of local issues have to be resolved completely by local instruments, nevertheless, every actor, including donor institutions, technical operators, as well as academics/professionals are political, and in the political attitude it conceives extensive economic motivation.
Such a skeptical viewpoint is not without reason. Under foreign institution assistance the Indonesian government has to make considerable commitments to implementing the agenda and following the target which have been dictated beforehand. They are formed in a long-term development through aid and philanthropy interference which catalyze the entrance of the liberal thinking into the state’s rulemaking and bureaucracy. To suit with the liberal design, internal rationalization and adjustment are conducted strictly, unless the governmental structures will be unable to function within the anticipated policies. Several important economic sectors are under scrutiny and be set up to meet the practice of standard economic progress in accordance with the donor’s guided principles and operationalization. This has included, but not limited to, energy, agriculture, trade, and infrastructure construction. Explicitly, this is predicated in the rhetoric of efficiency, good governance and economic empowerment. The political primer for the mechanization of the externally penetrated economy is what seen as a democracy.

However, the economy which is tightened turns out to be fragile. First, the government lacks sufficient financial resources to be allotted to carry out crucial social welfare and protection programs. Second, the structure of the state’s expenditure is apparently subjugating the needs of the poor for more kinds of immediate governmental assistance on account of tremendous cut-off against the post for consumption. At this domestic setting of change, a new and affecting agenda is arising, consciously added to assess the Indonesian government’s developmental success that is the global warming mitigation and adaptation.

Undeniably, global warming occurs and derives biophysical alteration to a large extent of the social environment of Indonesian poor societies. However, the inclusion of environmental achievement and economic measures to the state’s public responsibilities, while its scope to maneuver is narrowing, has yielded unfavorable consequences to poverty reduction. Critically, this is to say that the primacy of environmental protection at the expense of the other public necessities hits the poor’s basic interests more than those of the wealthier. The agenda of environmental protection in many occasions is accompanied by a new different type of either national or local governance or regulation. Their perception about the meaning of the objective of development is put forward in the more visionary, but over reaching it self; that is saving the planet for the future generation. There is nothing wrong about this ideal, although it seems to be enforcing a cosmopolitan outlook rather than one which is communitarian and applicable to the context of Indonesia. The problem is that it is encountered the accumulation of distortion in the process of making the environmental protection a pivotal policy over poverty reduction.

It begins by the trans-nationalization of environmental degradation issues. In Indonesia natural disaster and human activities—including irresponsible industrial activities—are the causes of a large amount destruction to the environment; the most concerning of which is the forest fire. What is happening in the country, such as the haze of forest fire has been constructed to be an international concern; it indeed affects the neighboring countries and produces uneasiness.

Therefore, the inability of the government in Jakarta to take the proper, effective, and quick actions to manage the issue is used as a political hint to put pressure on it. The politics of environment is fruitful anyway. In part this is because Indonesia has not had enough modality to determine its defensive strategies. Consequently, once again the Indonesian government and the people have to accept the exertion of foreign intent in the will of saving the environment. What the state must follow in is not different in substance, albeit expressed in another form of language; efficiency, good governance and the improvement of livelihood quality.

One may question why Indonesia is easy to get caught in such global intrusive processes. The answer could be very simple, it is because Indonesia is a weak state, dependent government, unable bureaucracy, and on top of these is the absence of international legitimacy and credibility that forces it to open the door for external control over domestic affairs—the economy, the environment and the political milieu. In other words, the failing state is susceptible to foreign setting up of its internal working.

The connections between the outside and inside policies are complete after the agenda shaping is done. The actor, the resources, and the pathway to steer Indonesia’s internal development orientation is ready to go. The national development policy can be directed even from the very beginning through the scope and time projected. When Indonesia is experiencing the condition of being intervened, it is not to blame the agenda for protecting the forest, water and land or natural heritage as the permissive cause of weakness and dependency. Environmental protection of the climate change mitigation is genuine in its nature. Yet, it is the intermestic relationships between powerful agents and structures which configure the circumstances which lead to the state’s incapacity to cope with outside influences.

The victim of this externally controlled political economy is the poor people. They are living in the country where their government and decision makers are crippled by foreigners. When economic advances are counted for zealous environmental objectives, the poor loses their rights, notwithstanding they have accomplished them for long, for example to device their surroundings. The ecosystem where they found historical attachment, cultural memories, and economic interdependence is no longer pure and friendly. It has been tied to the campaign of the global-scale ambition to reorder the world through the politics of natural protection.

The key participant is not the sovereign state but the transnational entity. Civil society enjoys larger room for articulating and contributing their ideas to influencing the practice of environmental governance. Multinational corporates act as though they are the generous citizens who use corporate social responsibility (CSR) projects to convert economic desire into collective altruism. Foreign state’s agencies operate to watch and value how the program is getting on. The media report about terrible environmental incidents and expose the government’s misconduct to manage them.

The lists can be extended to other interested parties’ behavior. The consequences are obvious. The poor does not know to whom they should ask for help during a situation like environmental crisis. In what language they have to speak about the relationship between their economic and environmental losses when the disaster plagues their village, house and farm. The political economy of the global warming containment is too difficult for the poor to understand, while the legitimate government is weakening due to its submission to the powerful network of foreign corporate interests. Then it is not difficult to infer the destiny of
the poverty reduction program, that is, it just becomes an addendum of the sociopolitical and economic game behind the populist environmental protection activism.

Our survey in the Jawa Timur Province, for instance, indicates that most of the poor people interviewed do not have clear understanding about the nature and implication of climate change. The interviewees say that climate change is about too long drought and too heavy rainfall. The natural phenomena of weather unpredictability, according to the majority respondents, are disastrous. Nevertheless, when asked about to whom the poor will help for help deal with various negative impact of climate change, such as famine and scarcity of resources, they acknowledge unknowing. The reason is the local governments—both provincial and regency—do never hear them, but do so for the multinational companies (MNCs) and foreign nongovernmental institutions. As a result, the poor people have not had the capacity needed to secure their community from the effect of global warming.28

4. CONCLUSION
How to cope with the impact of climate change and help the poor get out of poverty?
Addressing the above question is a difficult task. The state is nothing but important to represent the will of the poor. The 1945 Constitution mandates the Indonesian government to take all necessary policies to overcome problems related to the management of natural resources. The state is one which has the constitutional power to do so. However, what does really matter is the deficiency of political conscience to consider poverty reduction is belonging not to only economic, but moral duty of the political elite.

In the liberalized polity perpetrated in the Indonesian democracy today, the tenacity for reinforcing constitutionalism is somehow concealed behind material pragmatism. The propensity encompasses for all the inextricable aspects of climate change mitigation and poverty reduction concepts. The implementation suits with such a super structural defiance. More importantly, everyone in the policymaking positions understands, but is paralyzed to evolve against the shortcomings. Let’s say this is the new establishment of environmental authoritarianism. Who can break out of it? The answer might be the knowledgeable and the socially powerful activists. Since the realization of the seemingly natural sense of the chain of the marginalization of the poor, the counter-discourse against the liberal order of environmental protection must be produced and reproduced. This does not connote an easier job than that of writing a critical theory of climate change at academic media and forum.

The claim of axiological value of the so-called science—particularly Social Sciences—is challenged nowhere. One intriguing lesson from the past successful struggle is noteworthy. The downfall of the New Order regime was the result of an evolving symbiosis amongst elements of pro-democracy, progressive intellectuals and critical social activists. The process towards Reformasi did not come about suddenly in the wake of the economic and financial crises. It underwent systematic counter-authoritarian dialectics; from human rights, open political system, transparency and accountability of bureaucracy, free elections and ended up with the loosening of the regime’s power identity—the military and the autocratic party.

The contagious Asian financial crises were part of the catalytically instrumental waves which had moved forward years before. What to do next is firm, for climate change and poverty reduction synergy, to reconstruct the knowledge, practical understanding and the social practices underpinning the suppressive system.

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