

Plagiarism brings down Flinders-trained professor in Indonesia

A HIGH-FLYING Indonesian social scientist with a PhD from Flinders University has resigned in disgrace after admitting to a plagiarism offence.

Anak Agung Banyu Perwita was awarded a doctorate in international relations at Flinders in 2003 and published his thesis in book form as *Indonesia and the Muslim World: Islam and Secularism in the Foreign Policy of Soeharto and Beyond* (NIAS Press, 2007).

Perwita, 43, was last year made full professor in international relations at the Parahyangan Catholic University in Bandung, a leading academic city southeast of the capital, Jakarta. He was at the time the country's youngest professor in his field, and was short-listed for an Australian Alumni Award, a distinction previously bestowed on such luminaries as Indonesian Vice-President Boediono and newspaper magnate James Riady.

He was given a Distinguished Alumni Award by Flinders University in 2008 for his contribution to higher education in Indonesia.

However, Perwita was forced to resign last week after admitting to having used material from an article by Australian academic Carl Ungerer for an opinion piece in the nationally distributed English-language newspaper *The Jakarta Post*.

Flinders University deputy vice-chancellor (research) David Day said this week he would be watching "with interest" the outcome of Perwita's case.

There is so far no evidence of plagiarism in Perwita's PhD but a Flinders statement of congratulations on his accession to full professorship, in which Perwita expressed a hope his career success could push "future collaboration between Flinders . . . and Parahyangan", will now come under extreme scrutiny.

His formal resignation has yet to go to the Parahyangan board of trustees but the university senate released a statement last week expressing its "extreme regret" at the plagiarism and recommending the board accept Perwita's offer.

He can then expect to formally be stripped of his professorship by the Indonesian government.

Perwita's opinion piece, entitled "[Republic Indonesia] as a new middle power", was based almost entirely on a 2007 article by Dr Ungerer in the *Australian Journal of Politics and History*, entitled "The middle power concept in Australian foreign policy".

Dr Ungerer is in Turkey but told HES via email he had not been aware of the theft until The Jakarta Post published an apology and retraction this month.

"The case shows the power of Google to catch out people," the former Office of National Assessments analyst and security adviser to Simon Crean observed.

Perwita's PhD supervisor at Flinders, Colin Brown, an Indonesianist who is no longer at Flinders, said there was "nothing in the past with his work to suggest that this was likely to be an issue".

In an email response to HES, Perwita wrote: "What I can say is that I did apologise for the stupid mistakes that I have done.

"I did regret it and as the consequence, I have resigned from my current unpar [Parahyangan University].

"I'm jobless now."

<http://www.theaustralian.com.au/higher-education/plagiarism-brings-down-flinders-trained-professor-in-indonesia/story-e6frgcjx-1225831096998>