

Interview by Jemma Purdey with Simon Widjawarko, Malang, 21 October 2014

Food Science, MA at UNSW, PhD at University of Newcastle, 1980s cohort



PART 1

[00:00:05]	Born in Kediri, East Java, on 3 October 1952. Moved to Surabaya when 18 months old and did all his schooling there. His father was a public servant in the health department in Kediri but worked in industry (plantations) in Surabaya. Prof Simon was one of eight, he had one brother and six sisters, he was the fifth. His 97-year-old mother lives with him now.	Family background
[00:05:22]	Had a good life growing up, except for his primary school years because the family's income dropped when his father left work to be an archery coach. He was the East Java archery champion. When Prof. Simon was in the first year of high school his father went back to better-paid work at the company but he died of a heart attack in 1972 when Prof. Simon was in his first year of engineering, agronomy, at Brawijaya University. Financially, it was a struggle to finish university, but in third year he got work as an assistant at the university.	Childhood; Family; Undergraduate education
[00:09:23]	In 1978, after graduating, he continued working as an assistant at the university and joined a sugar manufacturer. Qualified engineers were rare then so it was easy to get a job. 120 students enrolled with him in 1972 and only about twelve graduated, most of the rest failed the exams. He kept the uni job because there was no clear future at the sugar factory and he wanted to keep learning. Also the dean at that time, Prof. Sudono, had done his PhD at Queensland University on an AIDAB scholarship. He inspired Prof. Simon to study overseas.	Early career; Connections with Australia
[00:15:34]	It was difficult then, to get an Australian	Application for

	<p>scholarship. He had to sacrifice money, give up extra work, to spend time learning English. Once he'd been accepted, he got training from the British Council. Luckily, in 1979, the University of NSW ran a short course in food science and technology at Brawijaya and Prof. Simon met Ron Edwards, Ken Buckle and Michael Wotton (who became his MA supervisor). This motivated him to apply for an Australian scholarship. Finished his MA in 1983, came back to Indonesia for two years then applied for another scholarship to do a PhD at Newcastle University with Ron Wills.</p>	<p>scholarship; Pre-departure preparations; Studying in Australia</p>
[00:20:01]	<p>He married in 1979 and went to Australia in 1980, leaving his wife and daughter behind with his parents-in-law. It was very hard. His wife was studying and had to finish her bachelor degree. After one year he was granted permission to go home to visit but he had to pay for the ticket himself. His own mother was with his siblings in Jakarta.</p>	<p>Family; Living in Australia</p>
[00:23:17]	<p>Most of Prof. Simon's sisters went to university but aren't working in their fields. His mother and father went to primary but not secondary school and they didn't plan for their children to go to university. He advised his two daughters to go to a famous university. The eldest is an architect from Bandung Institute of Technology (ITB) the second did medicine at Airlangga and is now specialising in obstetrics at Brawijaya.</p>	<p>Family background and education</p>
[00:26:46]	<p>Prof. Simon and his siblings wanted to go to university because it seemed the only way to get a good job since they weren't experienced in private enterprise or business. He chose agriculture because his father worked at a sugar cane plantation. His brother worked for the Department of Internal Affairs after studying administration and business. One sister manages food and beverages at a big hotel in Jakarta, one did economics and works as a bank teller, two are mothers without paid work. His wife is a social economist and lectures at Islamic University of Malang in the Faculty of Agriculture.</p>	<p>Early education; choosing of field of study; Family</p>
[00:31:46]	<p>Going to Australia was his first time overseas, found it very luxurious. Arrived in Sydney and was taken to a boarding house near the university. There was no boiled rice, only bread and potatoes, and he found it very hard. [Takes a phone call from Jakarta, universities there want him to be an assessor because of his expertise and scholarship</p>	<p>Arriving in Australia; Living in Australia</p>

	network.]	
[00:37:35]	Did a language course for a month in Sydney, was taken on field trips to the Blue Mountains, Snowy Mountains and Canberra with other international students from different countries. There were five or six other Indonesians from different universities. [Prof. Simon makes a phone call.]	Living in Australia; Travel; Socialising

PART 2

[00:00:00]	Visited Canberra, will always remember looking across from the War Memorial to Parliament House. In Sydney was astonished by the good things people put out on the side of the road. He picked up a television and fixed it. Got a colour television for free!	Travel in Australia; Living in Australia
[00:03:33]	For the first three months lived with the Indonesian community, then moved to a cheap boarding house in Randwick, that he found on a notice board, so he had to speak English. It wasn't friendly or clean but he stayed because he had two friends there, an Australian woman and a Sri Lankan woman.	Indonesian community in Sydney; Living in Australia
[00:07:15]	Didn't find study difficult. It was a MA by coursework, food science. Made friends with other students, the tutors were friendly and helpful. The style of teaching was different and technology more advanced. It was difficult to understand the Australian accent for the first three months but got easier.	Studying in Australia
[00:11:09]	Did his MA on sugar technology but wanted to do a PhD on horticulture and processing because there weren't any PhDs about that in Indonesia. So went home for two years then came back to do the PhD with Prof Robbins. His family stayed in Indonesia while he did the MA but eight months into the PhD they joined him in Australia. The elder daughter was five or six and the younger was three. Prof. Simon's wife did babysitting then, when she could speak English, she worked in the HPM factory with other Indonesians and migrants for three and a half years. She enjoyed it. The scholarship was more than enough to live on so her wages could be invested in land.	Studying in Australia; Returning to Indonesia; Connections with Australia; Family in Australia; Scholarship experience
[00:15:31]	The children went to school and their English is very good. One daughter married an Indonesian but Prof. Simon's grandchildren don't speak Indonesian at all because they have mostly lived in the US and Australia. Soon they'll be moving	Family in Australia; International mobility

	to India.	
[00:18:00]	In Sydney the family had barbecues and Indonesian gatherings on the weekends and travelled around, to Brisbane. They had a car. He still has an Australian driver license and bank account, visits every year as a guest professor to Newcastle. The last two years has been to Europe more often to see his daughter. Has research collaborations with University of Queensland and has two PhD students doing part of their study at UQ. Has friends at UNSW but no collaboration there because food technology isn't strong.	Indonesian community in Sydney; Family in Australia; Ongoing connections with Australia
[00:22:05]	Prof. Simon's PhD was about the post-harvest technology of pawpaw, how to extend the shelf life. It involved getting samples from the market and working in the lab. The scholarship was more than enough to live on because they lived simply. Asian food was easy to find but expensive. They could afford it because of his wife's income. They had a boarder that brought in a bit of extra income too. Prof. Simon helped with the housework, vacuuming and taking the washing to the laundrette. Now they have three servants.	Studying in Australia; Family in Australia; Scholarship experience
[00:26:05]	Now earns money consulting outside the university, more than the university salary. This work also promotes the university. Unlike Australia, in Indonesia there is often more than one professor in a department so it's hard to have authority and achieve things. Prof. Simon is fortunate to be the only professor in his department. Wants to be recognised overseas so is encouraging his staff to go overseas. There is funding if people write papers but the staff lack the confidence to write papers. Prof. Simon learnt a lot at UNSW because his supervisor published a lot.	Post-scholarship career; International professional networks; Mentoring
[00:32:14]	The difference between resources available at UNSW and Brawijaya was big before but now is not so different. The lab is OK. The research is mostly local and research funding is competitive, the professor has to write good proposals to get funding. Prof. Simon goes overseas to get ideas for projects. Then his students do them. Many of his post-graduate students work at private universities, not many from industry. Overseas graduates have a better chance of getting work in industry.	International mobility; professional networks
[00:36:12]	PhD assessment in Indonesia is either by an open examination or by dissertation and publishing two papers in a Scopus Indexus journal. The articles	Professional standards; Benefits of international

	<p>need to be written in English and this is difficult for many candidates. It's easier for people who have lived overseas; that's a priceless experience. He has good memories of his time in Australia, no racism except for maybe someone in the boarding house who was rude.</p>	<p>experience; Living in Australia</p>
[00:39:43]	<p>Not many Indonesians in Sydney in the 1980s, less than a hundred, now there are many. And it's a lot more expensive now to live there. Liked fishing, always caught fish at Maroubra Bay beach, Watson Bay beach (there was a naked person there). He put three or four hooks on one line and every hook caught a fish. Played tennis a bit, volley ball and went jogging in the parks with Indonesian friends while the kids played and the wives talked.</p>	<p>Living in Australia; Leisure activities in Australia; Indonesian community in Australia</p>
[00:44:45]	<p>END</p>	