

COMPARISON OF ISLAMIC EDUCATION IN INDONESIA AND MALAYSIA

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Abstract-*Islamic education is not only aimed at providing an understanding of theory and religious teachings, but also at building mental attitudes as realized in good deeds. Islamic education is an attempt to improve the quality of morals and social characters. It also plays a major role in determining the quality of a nation and directing people to have good attitudes and characters, imbued by spiritual values. In Indonesia and Malaysia, Islamic education initially emerged along with the arrival and spread of Islam on both countries. Although both are countries with the majority of Muslims in Southeast Asia and have undergone several phases including against colonialism, the dynamics of Islamic education in those countries are not necessarily the same. The present study discusses the Islamic education in Indonesia and Malaysia, ranging from the history of the arrival of Islam to the initial and development of Islamic education that still evolves until today.*

Keywo □ □ *Islamic education, Indonesia, Malaysia*

Abstrak-*Pendidikan Islam tidak hanya bertujuan memberikan pemahaman tentang teori dan ajaran agama, tetapi juga membangun sikap mental seperti yang diwujudkan dalam perbuatan baik. Pendidikan Islam adalah upaya untuk meningkatkan kualitas akhlak dan karakter sosial. Ini juga memainkan peran utama dalam menentukan kualitas suatu bangsa dan mengarahkan orang untuk memiliki sikap dan karakter yang baik, yang diilhami oleh nilai-nilai spiritual. Di Indonesia dan Malaysia, pendidikan Islam pada awalnya muncul bersamaan dengan kedatangan dan penyebaran Islam di kedua negara. Meskipun keduanya adalah negara dengan mayoritas Muslim di Asia Tenggara dan telah mengalami beberapa fase termasuk melawan kolonialisme, dinamika pendidikan Islam di negara-negara tersebut belum tentu sama. Penelitian ini membahas tentang pendidikan Islam di Indonesia dan Malaysia, mulai dari sejarah kedatangan Islam hingga awal dan*

perkembangan pendidikan Islam yang masih berkembang hingga saat ini.

Kata kunci: *Pendidikan Islam, Indonesia, Malaysia*

A. Introduction

Education is a key for the transformation and progress of a nation. It supports the development of human resources (HR) through the mastery of knowledge, main characters, and technology. Moreover, in the recent ASEAN Economic Community (AEC), these three aspects become the major determinants of competitiveness among ASEAN nations and countries. Essentially, education is vital in escorting the younger generation in attaining the achievement of those three aspects.¹ In addition to its role in determining the quality of a nation, it functions to guide people in possessing noble attitudes and personalities, which are imbued by spiritual values. In this context, religious education, especially Islamic education, is the main factor to realize the goals of education. Zakiyah Darajat suggests “Islamic Education” is primarily aimed at improving mental attitudes that will be realized in both theoretical and practical good deeds, for the interests of oneself and others.²

Basically, Islamic education is an integral or partial part of the national education system, which also functions as a complement to the national curriculum. As a country with the majority of Muslims, the existence of Islamic education in Indonesia is in line with the arrival of Islam. The span of the inclusion of Islamic education in Indonesia has been able to prove its existence even today. It has endured many phases as well as capricious government policies from time to time, yet it survives against all obstacles. This is an evident that there is a rigid consciousness among people to uphold Islamic teachings, leading the fortification of

Likewise, Malaysia as one of the developed countries of ASEAN is able to manage the implementation of Islamic Education in its educational system. As a multi-ethnic and multi-religion country, Malaysia has firmly established Islam as the official religion of the country.³ Certainly, there are many similarities can be unveiled when

¹Budi Haryanto, “Perbandingan Pendidikan Islam di Indonesia dan Malaysia”, *Adabiyah Jurnal Pendidikan Islam*, I(1), September 2015, p. 80.

²See Sudadi, “Pengantar Studi Islam Untuk Mahasiswa dan Umum”, (Yogyakarta: Mediatara), 2015, p.60.

³Budi Haryanto, “Perbandingan Pendidikan Islam di Indonesia dan Malaysia”,

comparing Indonesia and its neighbouring country, Malaysia. Both having the majority of Muslims and with the same background, the existence of Islamic education in Malaysia is also in line with the beginning of the arrival of Islam, which also originated from the trade routes. In addition, Malaysia was once colonized by Europeans, which at that time also succeeded in issuing policies that eventually hampered the spread of Islam and Islamic education in Malaysia. Yet resolute attempts have proven that Islamic education can still be held today .

Based on the background, the present study addresses a topic that discusses the comparison of Islamic education in Indonesia and Malaysia. It reveals the initial process of the arrival of Islam in the two countries, and the dynamics of development and the journey of Islamic education in both countries. Nevertheless, even though at a glance they have the same background, the implementation and education systems in those countries, especially Islamic education, are not necessarily the same.

B. Literature Review

Literature review is a review of related literature.⁴ The present study discusses the implementation of Islamic education in Indonesia and Malaysia. Literature review was conducted as a comparison to highlight the goal of this study. The results found several journals are relevant to this study as elaborated below.

First, a journal written by Budi Haryanto entitled “*Perbandingan Pendidikan Islam di Indonesia dan Malaysia*” in 2015. It became the main reference for the present study, in which with the same title, it explained the comparison of the implementation of Islamic education in Indonesia and Malaysia. Both countries have the majority of Muslims in Southeast Asia. Although it has many similarities, there are many differences in Islamic education system in these countries. Furthermore, it clarifies the social, cultural and economic conditions of each country. It also reveals the journey of Islamic education from the beginning to the present, which is able to develop and sustain its existence. The findings show that the implementation of Islamic education in Indonesia and neighbouring country, Malaysia, is not the same. The establishment of Islamic religion as an official religion in Malaysia does not necessarily ensure the proportional implementation of Islamic education at every

Op.cit. p. 85.

⁴See a quantitative study by Arip Oktiana, Universitas Islam Negeri Sunan Kalijaga, 2014.

level of education. In Indonesia, Islamic education is divided into four phases, ranging from the beginning of the arrival of Islam to the current phase where modernity and new thought in the Islamic educational realm has evolved. By using comparative studies in juxtaposing the dynamics of Islamic education in Indonesia and Malaysia, this study clearly depicts and provides information about the implementation of Islamic education in both countries.

Second, a journal written by Zaitun, *Pendidikan Islam di Malaysia* (Riau, Universitas Islam Negeri Uska, 2011), which explains the Islamic education system in Malaysia is a sort of “legacy” of the English education system. It is, however, has similarity with the Indonesia’s system, in term of the types of public schools and private schools. Likewise, Malaysia also has various levels of education, namely: preschool, primary education, secondary education, and higher education. The Royal Malaysian government requires its citizens to attend an 11-year compulsory education program, which includes six-year of primary education and five-year of secondary education. Since 2003, Malaysia has utilized English as the medium of instruction in

Third, a journal written by Andi Aslindah entitled *Pendidikan Islam di Malaysia: Jenis, Jenjang, Kebijakan dan Tujuan Pendidikan* (Sulawesi Selatan, Pesantren Mbaul Ulum Maros, 2015). Islamic education in Malaysia is classified as an advanced program since the government promotes and emphasizes Islamic education and moral values in building a society. This is evidenced by the number of universities in Malaysia that offer Islamic study programs, i.e., International University of Malaysia (IIUM), University Kebangsaan Malaysia (UKM), University Malaysia (UM), and University Sains Malaysia (USM). After its independence in 1957, policies regarding Islamic education in Malaysia have been focused on the inclusion of Islamic studies in the national curriculum. Recently, the Ministry of Education has invented various measures to strengthen Islamic education. In 1982, Prime Minister Mahathir Muhammad made a decision to implement a policy of instilling Islamic values in the government. Later in 1983, the Ministry of Education regulated a policy where moral values were enclosed in the curriculum for non-Muslim students, while Islamic study became a subject for Muslim students. Education is primarily aimed at developing the whole and integrated potential of each individual to create a balanced and harmonious person in terms of intellectual, emotional, spiritual and physical aspects,

based on faith in God. It is intended to create individuals who have knowledge, skills, noble character, and who are responsible for society and the country.

Fourth, journal written by Mohd Roslan Mohd Nor entitled *Sejarah dan Perkembangan Pendidikan Islam di Malaysia*.⁵ It discusses the arrival of Islam in Malaysia that has changed the way of life of people and made Islam the official religion, despite of the fact that Malaysia once a former British colony. The study of Islam also has a virtue. Evidently, it is depicted from several education certificates that were signed also contained issues related to Islamic teachings in schools and recitation institutions. It shows that Islamic Education is supported by citizens who need education and also from the Monarchy that ensures

Fifth, journal written by Achmad Syafrizal entitled *Sejarah Islam Nusantara*,⁶ which explicates several theories related with the history of Islam in the archipelago. It claims that Islam entered Indonesia at the beginning of the Islamic era, even though it was still adhered to by foreigners and had not been recognized by indigenous Muslims.⁷ In this journal various theories of the arrival of Islam are explained, including Arabic, Chinese, Persian, Indian/Gujarat and also Turkish theory. The last theory may be not popular among people in which it is marked by the large number of scholars from Kurdish, Turkey, who taught various subjects related with Islamic teachings for Indonesian scholars. Moreover, there are many “Kurd” loanwords used in Indonesia. Even so, despite there are evidences that reinforce each of all those theories, yet weakness

Sixth, journal written by Faizal Mubarak entitled *Perkembangan Kebijakan Pendidikan Islam di Indonesia* (Jurnal Ta’lim Mu’alim, 4(8)), which discusses Islamic education from the beginning of the period of Islam in the archipelago, to the current types and policies of Islamic education. Education surely has a significant portion in the society, including Islamic education. In addition to the major implication of education, the interests of Islamization have encouraged Muslims to carry out Islamic teaching.⁸ Unlike Budi Haryanto who divides the

⁵Mohd Roslan Mohd Nor. “Sejarah dan Perkembangan Pendidikan Islam di Malaysia”. *Jurnal At-Ta’dib*, 6(1), p. 59-78.

⁶Achmad Syafrizal, “Sejarah Islam Nusantara”. *Jurnal Ismuna*, 2(2), December 2015, p. 235-253.

⁷*Ibid.*, p. 237.

⁸Faizal Mubarak, *Perkembangan Kebijakan Pendidikan Islam di Indonesia*, Jurnal Ta’lim Mu’allim, 4(8), p. 226.

developmental process of Islamic education into four phases, this journal divides it into three stages, namely: (1) the early period, (2) the Dutch and Japanese rules period, and (3) the implementation of the Ministry of Religion's policy regarding Islamic education system in Indonesia.

Seventh, journal written by Pendi Susanto entitled *Perbandingan Pendidikan Islam di Asia Tenggara*,⁹ which compares the implementation of Islamic education in the scope of Southeast Asian countries. Nevertheless, it limits the discussion only on the systems in Indonesia, Malaysia, Singapore and Thailand. It provides an overview about Islamic education that is not only implemented in Muslim-majority countries (i.e., Indonesia and Malaysia), but also in countries where Muslims are minority group such as Singapore and Thailand. It also underlines Islamic education in the southern region of Thailand called Pattani. However, the implementation is obviously di □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □

Eighth, a journal written by Agus Kusman entitled *Islam di Asia Tenggara*.¹⁰ In contrast to previous journals, this study more emphasizes its discussion on the arrival and spread of Islam throughout Southeast Asia. It describes the pathways of the spread of Islam in Indonesia, i.e., trade, marriage, Sufism, education and arts. It is widely known that Islam entered the archipelago through trading alone, but this study explicates other paths, including Sufism. The Sufis allegedly introduced theosophy, which was mixed with teachings that had been embraced by the people of Indonesia.¹¹

Ninth, journal written by Moh Miftachul Choiri and Aries Fitriani, entitled *Problematika Pendidikan Islam Sebagai Sub Sistem Pendidikan Nasional di Era Global*.¹² In Indonesia, Islamic education becomes a part of the National Education System, in which the historical facts show its existence was a response that flourished and thrived from the enthusiasm and appreciation of Muslim communities against the discriminatory treatment from the Dutch colonial era. Under a repressive circumstance, Islamic education was blooming and growing

⁹Pendi Susanto, "Perbandingan Pendidikan Islam di Asia Tenggara", *Jurnal Pendidikan Islam*, IV(1), June 2015.

¹⁰Agus Kusman, "Islam di Asia Tenggara" Jakarta: Sekolah Pascasarjana UIN Syarifhidayatullah.

¹¹*Ibid.*, p. 7

¹²Miftahul Choiri & Aries Fitriani, "Problematika Pendidikan Islam sebagai Sub Sistem Pendidikan Nasional di Era Global", *Jurnal al-Tahrir*, 11(2), November 2011.

appropriately just like mushrooms in the rainy season. It functioned as a medium to fight against the hegemony of the Dutch rule.

C. Theoretical Framework

The history of the arrival of Islam in the archipelago has been a debatable topic among scholars, giving rise to a number of theories. *First*, a theory that Islam originated from Gujarat and Malabar.¹³ Several prominent scholars put forward this theory, including Snouck Hurongce. In this theory, Islam arrived directly through Arabs who settled in India and later reached the Archipelago. It is evidenced by the similarity of the school of Islamic law adopted by the Muslims in the archipelago and Gujarat, namely the Syafi'i madhhab. *Second*, the theory that Islam originated from Bengal (Bangladesh). Similar to the previous theory, there are several scholars adhere this theory, among them is Bousqute. Nevertheless, this second theory is deemed weak since in fact, Muslims in Bengal adhere to the Hanafi school while those in the archipelago adhere to the Shafi'i school.

Furthermore, Uka Tjandra Sasmita proposed six theories of the arrival of Islam in the Archipelago.¹⁴ *First*, the theory of trade route. This channel for the spread of Islam was a certain benefit for kings and nobles as the owners of ships and shares. They built mosques and sent religious clerics called *mullah*. *Second*, the theory of marriage. In the economic field, Muslim merchants had a higher social status than the indigenous people. Hence, both noble and local women were interested in marrying them. *Third*, the theory of Sufism. The Sufis introduced theosophy which later combined by the people of Indonesia with numerous teachings. The proficiency of the Sufis in magic and healing powers is outstanding. Sufism or *tawasuf* among the people of Indonesia had similarities with the former mindset which previously influenced by Hinduism. *Fourth*, the theory of education. The spread of Islam in Islamic boarding schools (*Pesantren* or *Pondok*) was carried out by clerics, scholars and religious teachers. Many students mastered Islamic sciences and returned to their hometowns to becoming clerics after completing their studies. *Fifth*, the theory of arts. Arts became a means to introduce Islam in the Archipelago, for instance through *wayang* performance in Java. Sunan Kalijaga was one of the nine saints (*wali sanga*) who was adept at performing *wayang* or shadow puppet.

¹³Agus Kusman, "Islam di Asia Tenggara" Jakarta: Sekolah Pascasarjana UIN Syarifhidayatullah p. 3

¹⁴*Ibid.*

He asked nothing but the submission of the audiences to recite the Creed (*shahada*). The plays included the Mahabarata and Ramayana stories. In addition, there were also other forms of arts, i.e., tales, chronicles, architectures and carving. *Sixth*, the theory of politics. In Maluku and Sulawesi, the majority of people converted to Islam after their kings embraced Islam. The conquest of Islamic kingdoms against non-Islamic kingdoms was able to attract the attention of common people to convert to Islam.¹⁵ Archipelago refers to all islands in Indonesia, in which in the discussion about the initial arrival of Islam in Southeast Asia, Indonesia can be classified as the earliest countries accepting Islam,¹⁶ therefore this theory becomes relevant in the context of the arrival of Islam in one part of Southeast Asia, namely Malaysia.

1. Orientation of Islamic Education

In general, education is perceived as an element of the socialization process within the society. It involves a process of the socialization of values and knowledge. Moreover, it holds an important key in the realization of a sophisticated and decent nation. The better the implementation of a national education system, the higher the quality of a nation. Islamic education presents as a component of this system. "Islamic Education" is basically interpreted as a distinctive subject, namely education with a religious background.¹⁷ Essentially, it is an effort to transfer the Islamic values, knowledge and culture to a person. It also illustrates the demand for not only intellectual quality, but moral intelligence and spiritual intelligence as fundamental benchmarks. Through the subject of Islamic teachings, it is expected that the Muslims will have attitudes and behave based on it in daily life.

As a sub-system of national education, Islamic education encloses the aspects of: *Firstly*, Islamic education as a subject or a component of the curriculum in schools. It must be taught to students in which it aims to elevate students' beliefs, understanding, appreciation, and practice of Islamic teachings, in addition to building pious characters or personal qualities as well as social piety at the same time.¹⁸ *Secondly*, the institutionalization of Islamic education. It is a part of an educational institution that has distinctive values and particular Islamic insights in

¹⁵*Ibid.*

¹⁶*Ibid.*

¹⁷Pendi Susanto, Perbandingan Pendidikan Islam di Asia Tenggara, *Jurnal Pendidikan Islam*, IV(1), June 2015, p. 73.

¹⁸Budi Haryanto, Perbandingan Pendidikan Islam di Indonesia dan Malaysia, *Adabiyah Jurnal Pendidikan Islam*, I (1), September 2015, p. 82.

its implementation. *Thirdly*, Islamic education is a value, which implies its ability in providing specific values and motivation to an individual. The essence of Islamic values is relied on its benefit and prosperity to all beings (*rahmatan lil 'alamin*), and democratic, egalitarian and humanist attributes.¹⁹

2. Comparative Education

Terminologically, comparative education is linked to the practical aspects, namely “to compare with” or “to find comparison”. In this context, comparative education is defined as an attempt to compare the implementation of an educational activity or find comparisons between educational-related activities.²⁰ It is commonly interpreted as to analyze two or more concepts in the sphere of education to figure out for similarities and dissimilarities as well as strengths and weaknesses.²¹ Carter V. Good suggests comparative education as a field of study whose task is to make comparisons of theories and practices of education as found in diverse countries throughout the world.²² It refers to the operational aspects of education that exist in a country or society. Moreover, Ishak L Kandel highlights the behind the scene, interpreting comparative education as a study of the theory and practice of education affected by numerous backgrounds as the continuation of the history of education.²³

In reviewing the education system of a country, the implementation of comparative study should focus on the dimensions of time, the geographical conditions, and other factors that are crucial in educational research. Comparative study must be understood as a form of study that compares systems, policies, materials, models, theories, or other

¹⁹*Ibid.*

²⁰Nikmatus Shaliha, Implikasi Kajian Comparative Education Terhadap Lembaga Pendidikan, cited from Philip G. Albach, *Comparative Education* (London: Mc Millan Publishing, 1982), p. 3. Study of comparative education is originally practical studies but it gradually alters into scientific studies with an emphasis is scientific methodology.

²¹Nikmatus Shaliha, Implikasi Kajian Comparative Education Terhadap Lembaga Pendidikan, cited from Binti Maunah, *Perbandingan Pendidikan Islam* (Yogyakarta: Teras, 2001), p. 1.

²²*Ibid*, p. 2-3.

²³Nikmatus Shaliha, Implikasi Kajian Comparative Education Terhadap Lembaga Pendidikan, cited from L. Ishak Kandel, *Sejarah dan Teori Pendidikan, Pendidikan komparatif dan Internasional*. Trans. (Jakarta: Nasional Press, 1991), p. 21.

aspects relating to education based on comparison between countries, regions, periods, in a balanced perspective.

Furthermore, comparative education is a branch of the educational sciences. It requires the scrutiny of ideas and practices of education in countries outside the borders of a specific country. Such a scientific activity is useful to extend insight into the dynamics of contemporary educational developments in the country or other regions, as well as to record notions for the evaluation process in the process of improving education system in a particular country or region. Comparative education also provides a broad understanding since it can reveal assorted strategic roles for the development of national education system. For instance, how the state's policy can break down the problems as well as offer a strategic solution if a sector faces a crucial problem. In the social, cultural, political, ideological and economic realities, comparative education can guide the state in providing support and resolving the problems of national education. Briefly, it discloses the alternatives in solving the problems related to education in a country by considering the r

In developing knowledge, Kandel in Bernadib as cited by Haryanto,²⁴ distinguishes the three approaches of melioristic, historical functional, and reportorial descriptive. The goal of melioristic approach is to divulge a work of comparative education that seeks to improve a national education system by carrying out a series of formulas for improving systems or policies. Furthermore, the historical functional approach seeks to identify data or the phenomenon of education-related policy in a country to figure out the factors that underlie the policy making. Meanwhile, the reportorial descriptive approach attempts to disclose the information about the status of educational progress. The objective of the present study is related to the development of education, particularly to identify the phenomena of Islamic education i

Based on the title of the present study, it is obvious that the comparative Islamic education becomes the research object. Nevertheless, it is limited to the dynamics of the development of Islamic education in Indonesia and Malaysia. They have similar background, both of which are countries in Southeast Asia whose population is predominantly Muslim. Moreover, they have also been colonized by Europeans. In addition, it is believed that Islam entered Indonesia and

²⁴Budi Haryanto, "Perbandingan Pendidikan Islam di Indonesia dan Malaysia", *Adabiyah Jurnal Pendidikan Islam*, I(1), September 2015, p. 84.

Malaysia through Muslim merchants who carried out business in the Strait of Malacca.

As one of the subjects in this study, Indonesia has undergone several phases related to the development of Islamic education. In fact, its presence is in line with the spread of Islam in the archipelago. It is such a long journey, beginning from the simplest where Islamic education was merely restricted on how to read and write the Qur'an. It was conducted in typical spaces, i.e., *surau*, *langgar* and even mosques. In contrast to the implementation of the current Islamic education which is more extensive, even divided into structured subjects in the national education curriculum. Today, Islamic education is also a compulsory subject matter for Muslim students in every public school, starting from elementary school to higher education level. Meanwhile, Malaysia has made Islam the official religion of the country. Consequently, the implementation of matters relating to the religion of Islam, including policies, is regulated and monitored by the *Yang Dipertuan Agung*. However, as a multi-ethnic and multi-religion country, the implementation of Islamic education in Malaysia is fairly different from those in Indonesia.

D. Discussion

1. Islam in Indonesia

Islam is *rahmatan lil 'alamiin* or the pity of the entire world. Islamic teachings cover creed, laws, and moral/characters that can be accepted by all people. It is beyond the classification of ethnicity, race and country, all one in the shade of Islam.²⁵ In fact, Islam entered and spread throughout Indonesia through various processes and long journeys. Many theories develop, along with the existence of evidence that is used as the basis of the theory. Among them are briefly explained as follows:

The first theory states that Islam arrived directly from **Arabia** in the 7/8th century. Crawford, Hamka, Al-Attas, and Mukti Ali are among the adherents of this theory. Evidence shows that in that century, the Strait of Malacca was an important trading centre, including for Muslims merchants from various countries. Hamka also confirms the theory based on Chinese records which explain the presence of the envoys of Arabia Kingdom, Ta Cheh and Ta Sheh, to Indonesia. These evidences indicate that the countries of Southeast Asia, including Indonesia, were

²⁵Achmad Syafrizal, "Sejarah Islam Nusantara", *Jurnal Islamuna*, 2(2), December 2015, p. 236.

major trade centres. Moreover, political interactions occurred between the three foremost powers, namely China (Tang Dynasty), Srivijaya Empire and Umayyad Dynasty (660-749) in that century.

The second theory states the significant role of **Chinese Muslims** in spreading Islam in the archipelago.²⁶ This theory is linked to the trade routes that mediated the spread of Islam to China in Guangzhou (Canton) during the Emperor of Tai Tsung (r.627-650), and followed by the arrival of Tang Dynasty to the archipelago precisely during the reign of Srivijaya Empire in Indonesia. Nevertheless, this theory is claimed inapt due to the absence of specific explanation about Chinese Muslims who brought Islam in Indonesia instead of their role or the records relating to other theories about the history of the arrival of Islam in the archipelag □

The third theory explains the influence of the **Persians** in the spread of Islam in Indonesia based on in the aspect of language. For instance, the Sundanese term '*Abdas*' is a loanword from Persian, which means 'Wudu'. In addition, the Persian loanwords of Arabic origin are often used also by Indonesian people.

The fourth theory explains the arrival of Islam in the archipelago in the 13th century. It claims Islam did not directly spread from Aceh, but from **India**. Evidence that supports this theory is from inscription on tombstone, which is similar to those in **Gujarat**, India. Yet many scholars speculated the weakness of this theory and questioned its validity. During that period of the century, in India, especially in Gujarat, the reign was held by Hindu Kingdom. At that time, Islam had not been spread extensively and Hinduism was the religion of the majority of people.

The fifth theory is proposed by Martin Van Bruinessen.²⁷ It claims that in addition to Arabic and China, the spread of Islam in the archipelago was also carried out by **Kurds of Turkey**. Evidence confirms this theory, including:

- The number of Kurdish scholars in Indonesia in which their books also became an influential reference.
- Ibrahim al-Kurdi was among the scholars in Medina who had many pupils from Indonesia. He is a prominent scholar from Kurds in Turkey.
- The tradition of *Barzanji* or *mawlid* gathering held on the 12th day of the Islamic month of Rabi al-Awwal to commemorate the

²⁶*Ibid.*

²⁷*Ibid.*, p. 240.

conservative and restricted. Both at *Surau* and *Langgar*, the activity was led by a *kyai* (cleric) who was perceived to understand Islamic teachings. It was also limited to the study of the Qur'an. Meanwhile, *Meunasah* is another term for *madrassa* (primary education level), which initially served as a place for holding religious ceremonies. Unlike those taking place in *Surau* and *Langgar*, *Meunasah* has peculiar position in Aceh. *Meunasah* was a compulsory education for the people in Aceh thus it is not surprising that Acehnese have high religious fanaticism.²⁹

In fact, the system of *pesantren* and *madrassa* was obviously different with the current education institution. Sodjoko Prasodjo distinguishes *pesantren* as religious education and teaching institution by using the non-classical approaches, in which a *kyai* teaches Islamic teachings to *santri* based on the books written in Arabic by medieval scholars.³⁰ Similar to Islamic education in *Surau*, *Langgar* and *Meunasah*, the method used to be very simple, with *halaqoh* and *sorogan*. The materials were primarily derived from classical books. After the establishment of Islamic boarding schools, Islamic education in *madrassa* began to emerge. It was certainly different from the current system. Essentially, *madrassa* is Islamic-based educational institution that is designed attractively in order to implement the goals of national education.³¹ In addition, *madrassa* did not have its own buildings and facilities, hence its implementation was done in mosques or other spaces.

b. Islamic Education in Dutch and Japanese Occupation

Indonesia experienced a long period of colonialism. The Netherlands came to Indonesia with the aim of 3G, namely Gold (wealth), Glory, and Gospel (the spread of Christianity). The Dutch rule certainly hindered the implementation of Islamic education. In 1831, the Governor-General of the Dutch East Indies, Johannes van den Boss, issued a policy to establish residential Christian schools in each region. The National Education Office was merged with the Department of Religion Affairs.³² As a result, the status of Islamic schools was inferior and deemed to be less useful for the Dutch rule. The situation was

²⁹*Ibid.*, p. 227.

³⁰*Ibid.*

³¹Miftahul Choiri & Aries Fitriani, "Problematika Pendidikan Islam sebagai Sub Sistem Pendidikan Nasional di Era Global", *Jurnal al-Tahrir*, 11(2), November 2011, p. 312.

³²Miftahul Choiri & Aries Fitriani, "Problematika Pendidikan Islam sebagai Sub Sistem Pendidikan Nasional di Era Global" *Op.cit.*, p. 228.

exacerbated by the policy for the establishment of *Priesterraden* which main task was to monitoring the implementation of religious activities, including Islamic education. In 1925, there were restrictions imposed by the Dutch on the role of *Kyai*, specifically by allowing only certain clerics to teach Islamic education. Subsequently, in 1932, there was a policy regulating the establishment of *wilde school ordonantie*. In this period, there was a bold dualism of education that distinguished general sciences and religion sciences.

The end of the period of Dutch occupation did not automatically restore the implementation of Islamic education in Indonesia. The country had to experience Japan colonialism. Initially, the presence of Japanese brought hope for Indonesia people, but it immediately faded away. Despite the Japanese was more flexible in allowing the implementation of Islamic education, the portion of Japanese-content subjects that focused on lines and movements certainly suboptimized the process of Islamic education.

3. Islamic Education in the Post-Independent Era

After various problems and policies that deterred its implementation, Islamic education in Indonesia eventually showed its existence. In 1966, the People's Consultative Assembly issued a decree (TAP MPRS No. XXVII/MPRS/1966), which the article 1 stipulates Religious Education as a subject in the curriculum of primary to higher education.³³ It was followed by the establishment of institutions, i.e., Public Madrassa, Madrasah Aliyah Special Program (MPAK/MAPKN) and Modern Islamic Boarding Schools, STAIN, IAIN and UIN in Indonesia. Public Madrassa began to transform from the former madrassa, especially madrassas with the public label in the post-independence to the current institution under the auspices of the government. The obvious difference is the current madrassas having their own buildings and various facilities that can support the teaching and learni□ □ □ □ □ □

In addition, there is no restriction for the current madrassa to solely providing Islamic education. Its curriculum also incorporates general sciences that are similar to those in public schools. Nevertheless, it can be distinguished from the portion of subjects in madrassa which is far more than those in public schools. The level of madrassa consists of: *Madrasah Ibtidaiyah* (MI) that is equal to elementary school, *Madrasah*

³³Budi Haryanto, "Perbandingan Pendidikan Islam di Indonesia dan Malaysia", *Adabiyah Jurnal Pendidikan Islam*, I(1), September 2015, p. 90.

Tsanawiyah (MTs) equal to junior high school, and *Madrasah Aliyah* (MA) equal to senior high school. Religious subjects in the madrassa include: Moral, Fiqh, Arabic, and History of Islamic Civilization. The presence of madrassa has now been recognized by the society and has been able to compete with well-known public schools in Indonesia

In the 1990s, the Ministry of Religious Affairs led by Munawir Sazali initiated the establishment of Madrasah Aliyah Special Program (MPAK) as the extension model of Madrasah Aliyah, or often called Boarding Schools.³⁴ The MPAK and other modern boarding schools became the upgrade model of madrassas and traditional pesantren in the early days of Islam in Indonesia. The system of education in modern boarding schools is almost similar with madrassas in general, although they do not only use classical books like the previous pesantren. They also include general knowledge and higher portion of Islamic education compared with public schools. In addition, the instructional methods are increasingly modern and varied. Moreover, in Indonesia, modern education with the basis of Islamic values and insight is not merely occupied by primary and secondary education, but also public higher education institutions, i.e., Sekolah Tinggi Agama Islam Negeri (STAIN), Institut Agama Islam Negeri (IAIN) and Universitas Islam Negeri (UIN), as well as private institutions. The attempt to create a State University became a reality after the establishment of Islamic universities in 1950 which aim is to develop and comprehend the knowledge of Islam.³⁵

4. The development of Islam in Malaysia

Malaysia is a federation consists of 13 states and three federal territories situated in Southeast Asia.³⁶ In the 20th century, the countries

³⁴Faizal Mubarak, "Perkembangan Kebijakan Pendidikan Islam di Indonesia", *Jurnal Ta'lim Mu'allim*, 4(8), p. 235.

³⁵*Ibid.*, p. 236

³⁶Zaitun, "Pendidikan Islam di Malaysia" *Jurnal Ilmiah Keislaman*, 10(1), January-June 2011. "It has a total area of 329.847 km², Kuala Lumpur as the national capital, and Putrajaya as the federal administrative capital. The population of Malaysia is over 27 million. It is divided into two regions, namely West Malaysia and East Malaysia, based on the decision of Natuna island, Indonesian territory at China Sea. Malaysia shares a land and maritime border with Indonesia, Singapore, Thailand, Brunei Darussalam, and Philippines. It has tropical climate since it is located within equatorial region. The head of state is known as the Yang di-Pertuan Agong, while the head of government is the Prime Minister. The government system has similar model to the Westminster parliamentary system. The ethnic groups include 50% Malays, 10.6% Bumiputera, 7.9% Chinese, and 3.4% Indian. Furthermore, approximately 58.6% of the population practice

of Southeast Asia experienced an economic explosion and extremely rapid advancement. The massive growth in the 1980s—1990s, particularly in 1991—1997, has successfully transformed Malaysia into a novice in industrial countries. It became one of three countries that controlled the Straits of Malacca, leading international trading as a vital part in its economic life. It was a major producer of rubber, palm oil and tin in the world. It is also included in top 18 countries that have the greatest biodiversity in the world. Malay language and Islam become the official language and religion of the state. Malaysia is a pioneer member of ASEAN and has been actively participating in several world organizations, including the United Nations. A former British colony, it is also a member of the Commonwealth of Nations. Nevertheless, the nuance of Islam in Malaysia seems to thicker than the countries whose population is predominantly Muslim. Several factors have fortified the influence of Islam in the history of Malaysia. Since the early period of Malaysia, Islam has a special attachment with the politics and people of Malay. Far beyond the matters of faith, Malays perceive Islam as their identity and the basis of their culture. It is portrayed from Malay traditional clothing that has adopted the Islamic law, namely *kurun*, long skirts and veil for women with the intention of covering the intimate parts of their body (*aurat*). Moreover, the ethics of the family, association and community are also adjusted to the Islamic teachings. Briefly, the customs, traditions and culture of Malaysia have been accentuated by Islamic teachings.

On 31 August 1957, the declaration was read to mark the independence of Malaysia, and the position of Islam is getting stronger within its political system. Islam has a special place and is highly appreciated in the Constitution.³⁷ At that time, the Constitution provided religious freedom to non-Muslim citizens. They had the rights to practice their religion, gain wealth, build religious-based schools, and solve their problems. Nevertheless, they were not allowed to promote and spread their beliefs of religious teachings among Muslims. It was intended to evade the growth and propagation of religions, except Islam, in other regions. Although Muslims had been protected by the

Islam, 18.4% Buddhism, 6.4% Christianity, and 5.3% Hinduism. As a multi-ethnic country, English becomes the daily recognized language among people.”

³⁷Zaitun, “Pendidikan Islam di Malaysia” *Jurnal Ilmiah Keislaman*, 10(1), January-June 2011. See Muhammad Suffian Lee, HP, & Trindade, F.A, (ed) *The Constitution of Malaysia, Its Development: 1957-1977*, (Kuala Lumpur: Oxford University Press, 1978).

constitution and laws, the rights and obligations of non-Muslims and Malays were not the same.

5. The Development of Islamic Education in Malaysia

Similar to the phenomenon in Indonesia, the exact time of the early Islamic education in Malaysia cannot be ascertained, yet it can be estimated from the history of the arrival of Islam in the country, general activities and educational activities that took place at that time. The process of Islamization and arrival of Islam occurred through trade channels over the role of Muslim traders from Arabia and Gujarat. Malaysia was one of the East Indies which became the main subject of Islamic teaching. After its independence in 1957, Islamic religious education was included in the National education curriculum, with specific time of 120 min in a week. However, there was a lack of emphasis from the government hence the subject was also gained less attention from students.³⁸ In the 1980s, the Revitalization of Islam was campaigned in Malaysia, marked by the proliferation of da'wah activities and Islamic studies by Malaysian scholars. It was accompanied by the rampant development of *surau* and mosques in several areas in Malaysia that reflected the spirit of Islamic-based activities. Among them was Bandar Baru Bangi which number and development of mosques and *surau* increased rapidly. Moreover, mosques did not only function as a place of worship but also the medium for conducting Islamic education. For instance, Surau An-Nur in Bandar Baru Bangi became a place for both male and female Muslims to study Al-Qur'an and commentaries, conduct *tahlil*, and provide religious forum to discuss issues related to spiritual and current community problems on the basis of systematic schedule. The Malaysian education system adopts a system from the United Kingdom since it is one of the former British colonies. It becomes a factor behind the progress of Malaysian education because the UK has a high concern about its colonial education. There are three measures that support the progress, namely: 1.) to learn from the developed countries, 2.) to allocate sufficient budget in education, and 3.) to devise systematic long-term planning with consequent ex □ □ .³⁹ The government of Malaysia views the importance of

³⁸Andi Aslindah, "Pendidikan Islam di Malaysia: Jenis, Jenjang, Kebijakan dan Tujuan Pendidikan", *Lentera Pendidikan*, 18(1), June 2015, p. 16-26. See Dewan Redaksi Ensiklopedia Islam, *Ensiklopedia Islam Jilid III*, p. 139.

³⁹Andi Aslindah, "Pendidikan Islam di Malaysia: Jenis, Jenjang, Kebijakan dan Tujuan Pendidikan", *Lentera Pendidikan*, 18(1), June 2015, p. 16-26, see Supriyoko, *Surat Kabar Harian "KEDAULATAN RAKYAT"*, Yogyakarta, 13th ed., December 2000.

education to gain the respect and appreciation from other nations. They also ensure the consistency and realization of the long-term planning that has been devised and legalized. It may not thoroughly reflect the power of Islam in Malaysia and the extent of Islamic education in Malaysia. Even though there are diverse ethnicities and ethnic groups mingled in this country, yet it is very determined in making Islam as an official religion and the basis for education. In fact, almost every part of Malaysia has a very dense Islamic nuance. Although Malaysia is considered as a Muslim country that declares Islam as an official reli

a. Type and Level of Islamic Education in Malaysia

The existence of the first traditional Islamic *Pondok* (literally Hut school) in Trengganu is a proof of its well-know status as the centre of Islamic studies. It was founded in 1820 by Haji Abdul Samad bin Faqih Haji Abdullah or best known as *Tok Pulai Condong*. He was accompanied by several prominent scholars who actively disseminated Islamic teachings through teaching or creating other works. Currently, there are numbers of boarding schools, madrassas and other Islamic schools in Malaysia, especially in the Bandar region and most of their alumni continue their studies in other countries, i.e., Egypt and Pakistan. The implementation of the Islamic education curriculum in Malaysia entails two basic curricula as the framework for curriculum development, namely: *tawhid* as the fundamental element and unchangeable value, and commands to read the verses of the Qur'an. The pillars of the basis of the Islamic education curriculum in Malaysia are: 1) Perfect rules with religion as the basis, consisting of Islamic teachings and values, 2) Universal principles within the content and objectives of the curriculum, and 3) Focus on student's talent, interests, abilities and needs, as well as the natural, physical, and social circumstances, 4) Lenience of differences among students in terms of talents, interests, abilities, needs, and diversity of community environment, 5) Adjustment between developments and changes in the reality, 6) Joining between subjects, experiences and activities in the curriculum, and regulations between the content of the curriculum with the needs of students and the needs of the community.⁴⁰

⁴⁰Andi Aslindah,. "Pendidikan Islam di Malaysia: Jenis, Jenjang, Kebijakan dan Tujuan Pendidikan", *Lentera Pendidikan*, 18(1), June 2015, p. 16-26, see Adi Radili, "Dinamika Perkembangan Islam di Asia Tenggara," *Blog Ar-Sembilan*, <http://arsembilan.blogspot.com/2013/10/makalah-dinamika-perkembangan.html> (23 October 2014).

b. Type of Education in Malaysia

In Malaysia, There is a categorization of schools, namely: 1). **National Schools** or *Sekolah Kebangsaan* that uses Malay as the medium of instruction and are included as primary education, 2). **Cluster Schools** or *Sekolah Kluster*, in which the name of cluster given by school principal, is a merit system implemented in Malaysia granted to high achieving schools, both in terms of management and output, 3). **Vision Schools** or *Sekolah Wawasan*, which use Mother tongue as the medium of instruction to maintain the familiarity between the participants during their interaction, 4). **Islamic Schools** or *Sekolah Agama Islam*, including Madrassa, Pondok, and other schools which became the first schools of origin in Malaysia, 5). **Technical and Vocational Schools** or *Sekolah Teknik dan Vokasional* that provide opportunities for students who have talent and interest in science and technology to meet the needs of workers in the industrial sector, 6). **Residential Schools** or *Sekolah Berasrama Penuh*, namely MARA Junior Science College (*Maktab Rendah Sains MARA (MRSM)*) and Fully Residential Schools, also known as Science Schools. They are used to cater the needs of Malay elites but later expanded as schools for students with outstanding academic, sports and leadership skills. These schools are also modelled after the British Boarding School.⁴¹

c. Level of Education in Malaysia

a. Pre-school Education. The level of pre-school education is realized in the form of *Taman Asuhan Kanak-kanak (TASKA)* for typical age of 2—4. The education model resembles the system of Child Care Centre (*Tempat Penitipan Anak/TPA*) which is integrated with the Playgroup. The facilities and infrastructure are provided by the Monarchy, and the employees (also called cadres) are hired by the Monarchy. The space for the implementation of the program is provided by the local community. It is handled by one caregiver and accompanied by a maid caregiver. It is not free because the children are cared and also educated by teacher and assistant who usually live near the TASKA. All of the children's meals are prepared by the caregivers, while the parents usually supply the milk. In Malaysia, Kindergarten is known as the *Tadika* School. It is not compulsory education and managed by the private agencies. Today, most of the national schools are equipped with preschool classes. Registration in the *Tadika* class is prioritized

41 *Ibid.*,

- for children from low-income families, which is around RM 500 or Rp.1,500,000 per month. Moreover, the number of children is limited to a maximum of 25 per class. Interestingly, the government always provides a budget of RM 100 per student/year and food assistance of RM 1.5 per student/day.⁴²It depicts the serious support from the government in the field of education.
- b. **Primary Education.** In Malaysia, Primary Education entails six years of compulsory education, namely the first to sixth grade, for children aged 7—12. In the national education system, Malay and English become compulsory subjects. Moreover, primary education is distinguished into two, namely the National School (*Sekolah Kebangsaan*) and the Nationality Type (*Jenis Kebangsaan*). The majority of students of National Schools are Malay children, while Chinese descendants study at Chinese schools and Tamils study at Tamil schools. The curriculum of primary education is prioritized on the mastery of basic reading, writing and calculating. In general, the school fees must be paid at the beginning of the new teaching year. The amount of contributions ranges from RM 50 to RM 75 per year (approximately Rp125,000 to 187,500) for a student. It covers insurance fee, midterm and final exam fees, typical contribution, work sheet fee, computer practices, exam cards, student data files and report cards. The donation for the Teacher Association is only levied one per family. Therefore, if a family send one or more children to school, the donation is the same, which is RM 25 per family. For the students of sixth grade, they are required to pay an additional fee of RM 70 for USPR.⁴³ At primary education level, the emphasis of Islamic education is on the Qur'an and *Jawi* (Arabic letters) as well as character building, worship, aqeedah, and so on. In addition to participating in the government's curriculum program of USPR, students are also required to attend the religious education program of strengthening obligatory acts (*fardhu' ain*) and Arabic.
- c. **Secondary Education.** General secondary education is an advanced stage of primary education. Malay is used as the medium of instruction for all subjects, except for natural sciences (Biology, Physics and Chemistry) and Mathematics. It entails grade 1 to grade 5, taking a total of five years. Similar to primary

42 Zaitun. "Pendidikan Islam di Malaysia" *Jurnal Ilmiah Keislaman*, 10(1), January-June 2011. P. 131.

43 *Ibid.*, p. 133.

education, each level in secondary education requires one year. At the end of grade 3, students are obliged to take national exam called Lower Certificate of Education (LCE) evaluation system or *Penilaian Menengah Rendah*. Based on the results, students will be categorized into Science stream or Arts stream. The first is often an option, because those classified in this stream are allowed to shift to the second, but rarely vice versa. Those who are not interested in these streams can choose Vocational stream at Technical schools. Islamic Education at the secondary education is conducted six times a week with three sessions of regular class and one session for practicum. The materials include: Al-Qur'an recitations, hadiths, aqeedah, worship, Islamic civilization (*tamaddun Islam*) and moral.

- d. **Higher Education.** In Malaysia the institutions of higher education include universities, polytechnics and colleges. In the 1950s, the Islamic Studies at higher education level was initiated by Universitas Malaya (UM), which is the oldest university in Malaysia. In 1955, Islamic higher education was pioneered in the form of a college, namely the Malaysian Muslim College (MMC) with diploma output. Furthermore, the Institut Kefahaman Islam Malaysia (IKIM) and Universitas Islam Internasional Malaysia (IIU) attempt to strengthen the morals and intellectuals of Muslims to establish the Excellency of Islam for all human behaviour.

6 Comparative Islamic Education: Indonesia and Malaysia

a. Similarities

There are several similarities in the understanding and concepts of the dynamics of Islamic education in Indonesia and Malaysia. Among others are: a) the Islamic education of Indonesia and Malaysia has the same concept in understanding it a process of fostering a generation based on the Qur'an and the Sunnah, particularly to bring students closer to the Creator of the universe for attaining the happiness in the world and the hereafter, b) Islam was disseminated by Muslim merchants from Gujarat who passed through the Malay peninsula and Sumatra, c) Initially, Islamic education was a sort of the introduction of Islamic teachings in the local area, d) there were two educational systems as the influence of the former colonial system, e) the hindrance in spreading Islam during colonialism, f) the renewal in the instructional methods for Islamic education, g) the elimination of the dualism system that separates Islamic education from general education, i) the efforts of

improvement done by the government to perfect the education system in order to attain the ideals of national education, and many more.

b. Dissimilarities

Despite number of similarities in Islamic education system of Indonesia and Malaysia, there are some obvious dissimilarities allegedly resulted from the different backgrounds and dynamics of the development of Islamic education. They include: a) In Indonesia, all religious affairs are handled by the Ministry of Religious Affair, while in Malaysia, they become the affairs under the supervision of Yang Dipertuan Agong due to the systemic decision that the religious affairs are a matter of the state. On the contrary, in Indonesia, all religions have the same position in carrying out their worship as regulated and protected by the Constitution, b) The government is very serious in addressing the output of school graduates in the terms of religious knowledge and competence. Hence, there is a J-Qaf program that facilitates the ability to recite the Qur'an for prospective graduates of primary education, which has been implemented since 2005 in Malaysia. It depicts the high concern from the Malaysian government that heeded the development of the Islamic education system, c) The Malaysian government is very concerned about Islamic education as reflected by the institutionalization of Islamic religious education at various levels, as well as the low cost of education in developed countries like Malaysia, d) Indonesia has a variety of institutions in accordance with the character of Islamic education in Indonesia, i.e., *Pondok Pesantren* or boarding schools in Java, *Surau* in Minangkabau, and *Dayah* in Aceh.

E. Conclusion

The history and dynamic of Islamic education in Indonesia and Malaysia have many similarities, mainly due to the geographical factor, which led them experiencing similar history during the period of international civilization. It is strengthened by the similarity of ethnic Malay as the majority, resulting in peculiar emotional attachment in response to foreign cultural influence. They also share the same spirit in perceiving Islam as Malay identity and fight against the Western education system. The dissimilarity of the dynamics of Islamic education is caused by respective socio-political backgrounds. Malaysia is a Constitutional Monarchy while Indonesia is a Presidential Republic. Consequently, they have different norms in putting the state's instruments into account. However, these differences may lead to

positive impact in which they can be explored to improve the Islamic education system in Indonesia. The Malaysian government has high concern in elevating the quality and role of Islamic education to realize high quality humans imbued by Islamic values.

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