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Islamic Educational Leadership: Southeast Asia perspectives

Abstract

This chapter explains the emerging landscape of educational leadership knowledge based in Southeast Asia region, which usually called as Muslim archipelago. Historical, political and socio-cultural forces forms unique Islamic identity in this region which resulted to different practice and thinking about Islamic educational leadership. Based on empirical and theoretical perspective from peer reviewed journal articles, it found out that different country in this region has salient emphasize. Influence of the Western theories still has effect, as well as trying to formulate unique Islamic thinking about educational leadership; whereas country's development also reflecting kind of Islamic educational leadership is practiced in their school institutions.

Introduction

Study of leadership is abundant and informs that contextual conditions are essential to form its style and characteristics. A comprehensive bibliometric study conducted by Hallinger and Kovacevic (2019) for instance shows that educational leadership, as a subset of educational administration, is developed progressively. Based on more than 22 thousand journal articles as corpus of literature in the span of 58 years, ideas of educational leadership have been changing dynamically. The discussion of educational leadership was highly dominated by the researchers with Western context and its constructs were derived from North America and Europe. The knowledge base underwent a bit change in 2000s in terms of origin of empirical research studies such as from Asia, Africa and Latin America, but still mostly adopted from the Western concepts. One perspective that started to emerge in the 2000s was about original research in the

topic of educational leadership from Islamic view that offered different understanding of the body of knowledge. As Shah (2017) shows that, since education is cultural activities that involve values and belief in each society, the notion of Islamic educational leadership is unavoidable since approximately a quarter of world's population are Muslims. Such Islamic notion views that education is not only to make people smart, to increase their knowledge and skills, but it plays as an act of worship and manifestation of good deeds as well (Othman et al., 2017). However, the face of Islam itself is not merely monolithic, even the teaching that comes from the same source of the Quran and the *Sunnah*¹, but it also interacts with local tradition, geography, and its history to make the manifestation itself salient in every region.

This chapter explores ideas and practices of Islamic educational leadership in the Southeast Asia context. The efforts to incorporate Islamic values and principles in terms of leading school management and administration are shown in peer-reviewed journal articles that are discussed from Southeast Asia perspectives. The first section will provide brief history and school system in Southeast Asia region. This section informs colonial experiences as well as Islamic revivalism. This is then followed by discussion about Islamic conceptualization in regard to educational leadership. After that, theoretical and empirical perspectives of the growing corpus of Southeast Asia's Islamic educational leadership are explored. The chapter will be closed with discussion and future direction of the issue.

Brief information of Islam in Southeast Asian context

The expansion of Islam since the 7th century from the Arab Peninsula up to now has been showing differences in terms of races, locations, cultural norms, languages and traditions which

¹ Sunnah in Islamic term refers to Prophet Muhammad's sayings, actions, and approvals recommended to follow.

are also syncretic and amalgamated with many other aspects in different civilizations. It is something common that similar concept and procedure in Islam can have slightly different perceptions in meaning and understanding. As a result, such meaning and understanding lead us to know the conceptual and practical aspects of Islamic educational leadership perspectives in each education system better, being worthwhile endeavor to pursue (Brooks & Mutohar, 2018; Shah, 2017).

Southeast Asia has the largest share of Muslims in the world, making up of more than 240 million people or nearly twenty five percent of the total Muslim population in the world (Aljunied, 2019; Feener, 2004). Having the largest adherents of Islam, Southeast Asia which is a unique topographical and strategic location lying between two oceans and two continents, with so many islands, is usually called Muslim archipelago (Yusuf, 2021). In Indonesia, Thailand, and the Philippines, Islam is an officially recognized religion; whereas, in Malaysia and Brunei, Islam is the official religion. Even Indonesia is the most populous Muslim country in the world, reaching to estimated 230 million Muslim people or 87% of the country's population (Arifin et al., 2018; Brooks et al., 2020; Weintraub, 2011). Muslims in the Southeast Asia region come from different ethnic groups in their respective countries. They speak different local languages; however, it is also regarded as ethnic identity. For instance, Malays are Muslims either resided in Indonesia, Malaysia, Brunei, South Thailand or South Philippines. Unlike in the Middle East, most Muslims in Southeast Asia are Sunni sect² and follow

²Sunni sect comprises Muslims who follow Prophet Muhammad's closest companion (Abu Bakr) as the first caliph and the other three caliphs (Umar, Ustman, and Ali), accept Quran, Hadith, and five pillars of Islam, as well as follow the four major madhabs (Hanafi, Maliki, Shafi'i, and Hanbali).

predominantly Shafi'i madhhab³ (Yusuf, 2021) among the four major Sunni madhabs (Hanafi, Maliki, Shafi'i, and Hanbali).

Historically, Southeast Asians were estimated firstly to know Islam in the 12th century. It was brought by the merchants from south India and China, then continued by another wave up to the 17th century directly from Arabian peninsula (Lambourn, 2008; Shamsul, 2005). The adoption of Islam made traditional religious teachings in the community smoothly change from prior Hindu or Buddhist teachings to Islam which was initially introduced by sufi mysticisms being familiar with the locals (Johns, 1993; Ricklef, 2006). Islamic teachings were mostly conducted traditionally in informal institutions known as *pondoks* or *pesantrens*⁴ which were managed locally by local Muslim scholars with classical Islamic textbooks (Hefner, 2009). Later, with the availability of steamships, Southeast Asia Muslims can travel for Hajj pilgrimage to Mecca, many of them stay longer and study Islam in Middle East. When they return home, other movements such as puritanical Wahabism and Islamic modernism emerge (Yusuf, 2021).

In addition to traditionally-managed Islamic institutions, modern school education was introduced by colonial governments from Europe (British, Spanish, Portuguese, and the Netherlands) in Southeast Asia region and it grew widely in the 19th century. However, the colonial governments mostly practiced secular and segregated education system between elite European and local people with the intention based on their interest. Islamic teachings were mostly conducted in traditional way across the archipelago. Countries in Southeast Asia gained independence in the 20th century. Then the states and communities built and developed their schools and education systems, firstly mirroring practices from their previous colonial

³A madhab is a method on how scripture is interpreted by a school of scholars through thought to be used as guideline in practicing the teachings of Islam.

⁴Pondoks or pesantrens, and also called pondok pesantrens, are Islamic education institutions where students reside to learn and practice the teachings of Islam.

governments usually for public school systems, but gradually searching for practices based on their own values and philosophies including the religion they practiced.

The current education situation in each country in this region is unique. For example, the two Muslim-majority countries in Southeast Asia, Indonesia and Malaysia, have very diverse school types including public and private school system that provide both secular education and Madrasahs. The latter combine Islamic teachings and secular subjects. However, typically private institutions continue legacy to provide traditional Islamic teachings with *pondoks* or *pesantrons* which mostly offer religious/*diniyah* (Islamic) subjects such as *fiqh*⁵, *syariah*⁶ and Arabic language in a residential learning type directed by a Muslim scholar (Ahmad & Salamun, 2013). In case of Indonesia, Islamic schools or Madrasahs are originated and evolved from *pesantrons* which show Islamic education transformation (Mutohar, 2020) and are nearly similar to those in Thailand (Raihani, 2017). This dualism between the religious and the academic system is always the biggest challenge for countries in Southeast Asia (Othman et al., 2017). Further, Ahmad and Jory (2011) asserted that the development of Islamic education can be seen from historical context, and each country in the Southeast Asia has its unique history. For instance, Indonesia experienced a hard struggle for Islamic education during secular nationalism period under Sukarno's Old Order regime (1950-1965) and a highly political control period under Suharto's New Order regime (ended in 1998).

In Malaysia, the struggle for development for Islamic studies has been about integration the Islamic studies into the university system. The implementation of knowledge Islamization has

⁵Fiqh is a set of rules concerning human understanding and practices of Islamic law particularly on how to worship and to carry out *muamalah*, based on the Quran and Sunnah.

⁶Shariah is a set of Islamic law regulating religious rituals and human life aspects including solutions to human problems.

also been under way due to dissatisfaction with knowledge westernization. In Brunei, like in Malaysia, knowledge Islamization has been integrated into all education levels and Islamic studies have become a state agenda (Ahmad & Jory, 2011).

Meanwhile, Islamic schools in Thailand and the Philippines where Muslims as the minority is tell a different story. They have a very challenging situation because of the continuing history of ethno-religious conflict between Muslim groups and the central government (Al-Qurtuby, 2013). In Thailand, Muslims mostly live in its southern provinces. Another influential aspect in southern Thailand is that Islamic education has been in struggle against national assimilation projects initiated by the Thai state since the 1940s. Whereas, in the southern Philippines, Muslims have also become minorities and have been a long way of struggle due to the minority status, where the state is reluctant to provide the Muslims with more autonomy in education, in addition to limited resources (Ahmad & Jory, 2011).

Theoretical aspect: Islamic Educational Leadership

Leadership as well as educational leadership has been defined and theorized in various ways (Shah, 2010). For instance, based its components, Northouse (2021) defines it as a process where a leader influences his/her followers for the pursuit of the shared goal. It takes place in a context, and "...no single form of leadership is effective for all contexts, particularly when the contexts are differently characterized" (Raihani, 2017, p. 273). Most of the leadership theories and models on leaders' personal perspectives and its influence on their leadership practices are Western-based and their applicability in a non-Western context remains arguable (Qian et al., 2017) as leadership is context-specific in nature (Hallinger & Wang, 2015; Pan et al., 2017). Such contexts as societies, cultures, ethnics, and religious beliefs result in different interpretations of leadership (Shah, 2006), that is, certain leadership is appropriate for a certain

context. For example, in the context of Muslim society or organization, Islamic leadership is claimed to be appropriate (Egel & Fry, 2017). Even more is that educational leadership is differently conceptualized across and even within societies and cultures. This is then people differently interpret leadership, reflecting how they look at leadership as well as how they philosophically and theoretically assume it (Shah, 2017).

However, in fact, it is imbalance that leadership has been so far discussed from Western researchers' perspectives, with many perspectives focusing mainly on Western contexts and constructs (Davies, 2005). This is because "Ethnocentric concepts, theories and practices in education, predominantly embedded in western philosophy and values, tend to ignore the growing multicultural nature of educational institutions" (Shah, 2017, p.363).

Difference in leadership, as afore mentioned due to its different interpretations, also takes place in a geographical context. To illustrate, Irawanto et al., (2020) compare between how leadership is defined in Western context and in Eastern context. In the Western contexts, scholars tend to define leadership by looking at the functions of leaders in organizations and classifying leadership into leadership styles, with little consideration on cultural value effects despite influencing effectiveness of leadership. For the Eastern context, such cultural values are much considered, and thus paternalistic leadership is more appropriate to be applied. This phenomenon can also apply to the context of Southeast Asian countries. However, Islamic educational leadership remains a question whether it varies across and within countries in the Southeast Asia region.

Specifically, in terms of educational leadership, Islam views that educational leadership raising teaching and learning to a holy responsibility of the uppermost command is created from the links between knowledge, education, and religion. These links lead to the model of Islamic

educational leadership (Shah, 2006) and such model lies in three dimensions: parent (caring, commitment and responsibility), educator (teaching with knowledge and understanding), and prophet/leader (guiding with values and wisdom). Caring, teaching, and guiding are intertwined activities, with a broader responsibility (Shah, 2006). Such educational leadership in Islam is educational leadership which is elevated to the level of holy and religious responsibility. Such responsibility is an internal drive of the leaders to provide the best they can do for the communities and this is devoted merely to Allah and for the sake of Allah (Shah, 2017).

Another interesting concept of Islamic educational leadership is proposed by Brooks and Mutohar (2018), where the second author is Indonesian, completed with sources from other scholars. They outline that Islamic educational leadership framework consists of inner ring and outer ring. The inner ring of the framework consists of four leadership belief domains: Islam, education, culture, and leadership. Such domains influence the worldview of leader's practice routinely. Further, elaboration about this is provided below.

Firstly, Islam means submitting to God's will and commandments to obtain His favor for life in both the world and hereafter. For this to happen, Muslims need to reach *taqwa* (God-fearing) which can be gained with knowledge or *ilm*. Thus, knowledge acquisition is obligatory for every Muslim. There is no dichotomy between intellect (*al-aql*) and spirit (*al-ruh*) but are closely linked for knowledge creation with implications for Islamic ontology (what is knowledge) and for epistemology (how knowledge is acquired) leading to a religious activity as previously explained. Supreme spiritual, moral, and intellectual values must be practiced in the world. The primary sources of knowledge which are used to guide Muslims in their life are the Quran and the Sunnah of the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) (Almoharby & Neal, 2013). This concept of knowledge shapes Islamic philosophy of education (Shah, 2017).

Secondly, education, as a process of obtaining knowledge in Islam, is aimed at providing Muslims with knowledge not only to develop individually, to get employed, and to gain economic benefits, but also, and more importantly, to gain knowledge on how to worship Allah or how to do a religious activity. Shah (2017) asserts that, based the Quran, Islamic philosophy of education highlights the role of education not only for the individual but also for the society to seek a happy life from this world to hereafter. Such education comprises three types: *tarbiyah* (nurturing), *ta'lim* (learning) and *ta'dib* (goodness). The first term, *tarbiyah*, broadly means to increase and grow, underlining the elements of nurturing and care. The second is *ta'lim*, which means *to know*, with an emphasis on learning. The third term is *ta'dib*, which is drawn from the *Hadith* and it means disciplining the mind, body and soul; its root word is *adab*, which implies the teaching of good manners, ethics and politeness (Shah, 2008). Each of these terms has been debated by Muslim scholars to support specific views of the Islamic education. These three terms, *tarbiyah*, *ta'lim* and *ta'dib*, have been most commonly used to define education in Islamic thought, which taken together might convey the meaning and scope of education in Islam, both formal and non-formal (Iqbal, 1996). However, scholars have interpreted each term according to their own understandings and views, using them separately or in combination to emphasize their preferred interpretations of Islamic education (Shah, 2017). In essence, the educational concepts of Islam as noted by Shah (2017) include: the command of learning (*iqra*), compulsory education, education for all, and lifelong learning.

Thirdly, cultures, as well as societies and communities, contribute to different interpretation of leadership including educational leadership (Shah, 2006). For example, in Malaysia, as Islam becomes its state religion, the cultures are dominated by Islamic traditions and sources (Shah, 2020). In an Islamic school in Thailand, Raihani (2017, p. 281) conducted

observation and found “the Islamic schools’ rituals, ceremonies, day-to-day interactions, and events that can be inferred as typical of the Islamic school culture”. Another illustration, in their interview, Khalil and DeCuir (2018, p. 101) found that an assistant principal has conducted spiritual leadership as described as Islamic culture, where a leader is required “to be honest and ... to be forgiving, and ... to be compassionate and merciful, even when nobody is watching it ... [because even] if nobody saw it, then Allah [Almighty] has seen it”.

Fourthly, leadership including educational leadership as noted by Shah (2017) is influenced by culture and there is the interplay as well as relationship between leadership and culture. In Islam, it is emphasized that “Muslim culture represents the worldview of faith” (p. 41). Muslims and other people from faith backgrounds have different conceptions and perceptions on educational leadership. The differences result in the ways educational leaders exercise and practice educational leadership in their faith communities. Members of such communities join in activities associated with their cultural and ideological knowledge (Shah, 2006).

There is the interplay between this four domains and outer ring (Brooks & Mutohar, 2018), which are the beliefs the leaders hold about and these domains encircle Islamic values in the outer ring of the Islamic educational leadership framework. The outer ring of the framework includes eight values: *nasiha* (good counsel), *ikhlas* (sincere conduct), consultation (*shura*), *ikhtilaf* (dissent), *maslaha* (public interest), *al-amr bi al-maruf wa'l-nahy an al-munkar* (encouraging right and discouraging wrong), *hisba* (accountability), and *tafakkur* (reflection) (Brooks & Mutohar, 2018).

To practice the good counsel/*nasiha*, Muslim leaders need to have good knowledge and information about the problems to be solved, search for the best course of action, and act with

others in mind. In terms of sincerity/*ikhlas*, Muslim leaders, when making decisions, need to act sincerely to result in the greatest results for all. For effective practice of good counsel/*nasiha* and sincerity/*ikhlas*, Muslim leaders need to have such attributes as just, principle, and moral (Brooks & Mutohar, 2018). To practice *shura*/consultation, Muslim leaders need to do consultation with well-informed people to attain an agreement to achieve a resolution and make balance between individual and community needs. It promotes democracy and justice mandate because *shura* encourages involvement and serves dissent (*ikhtilaf*). When practicing *ikhtilaf*, Muslim leaders need to be flexible in making a decision and try to make ummah in agreement. All these efforts are intended for *maslaha*.

Maslaha, also called public interest, is an Islamic concept that necessitates Muslim leaders to determine decision-making to achieve the common good for all community members. In schools, such leaders should apply any appropriate leadership, for example democratic school leadership, to fulfill student needs, that is, the common good (Brooks & Mutohar, 2018).

The next value is *al-amr bi al-maruf wa'l-nahy an al-munkar* which means enjoining the right/honorable and forbidding the wrong/dishonorable. This concept is used in the Quran nine times, referring to the collective duty of the Muslim community to encourage righteous behavior and discourage immorality, as recognized by reason and the Islamic moral and legal system. It aims to remove oppression from society and instead establish justice. It is applied to moral, social, political, and economic facets of life. It is, ideally, the distinguishing trait of the Muslim nation (Esposito, 2004). For Muslims, this concept is mandatory because Islamic law lists it at the mandatory level of law (Brooks & Mutohar, 2018).

The next value is *hisbah*. It is an endeavor used to make sure that everything related to human life is accountable or on the right track, leading to doing the right and avoiding the

misdeeds. This is a way of implementing *al-amr bi al-maruf wa'l-nahy an al-munkar* following the command of Allah, to ensure human life well-being in both the world and hereafter (Ibrahim, 2015).

Finally, *tafakkur* is as one of the eight values in the outer ring of the Islamic educational leadership framework. *Tafakkur* is a way to self-reflect on what Allah has created and to improve knowledge and faith in Allah. It is a value that can stimulate students not only to acquire knowledge but also to think outside the box towards a higher thinking level. Also, teachers can use the *tafakkur* approach to promote higher order thinking skills (Jamil et al., 2018).

This section depicts Islamic educational leadership that is possibly similar to as well as, of course, different from that of non-Islamic educational leadership. However, it is clearly noted by Shah (2017) that leadership works in any context in which two or more people are engaged; leaders are responsible for their followers. However, in the Islamic educational perspective, leaders' responsibility is not only the followers, but also to Allah, the Only God, aimed to obtain His favor for life in both the world and hereafter. The following section is explaining about research evidences of the Islamic educational leadership perspectives in the Southeast Asia.

Southeast Asia perspective: research evidences

One Indonesian Islamic intellectual stated that there are two faces of Islam: conceptual Islam and actual Islam (Rakhmat, 1991). The former is an ideal thing based on Islamic knowledge source as elaborated in the previous section, where ideas of Islamic educational leadership are discussed. On the other hand, the latter is something that is manifested and conducted by the Muslims to develop the society and civilization, where in this context it is actualization of Islamic educational leadership in Southeast Asia. As Shah (2017) put it that leadership is the product of social interaction in certain cultural context and is influenced by their location and

geographical elements. Then, understanding Southeast Asia perspectives of Islamic educational leadership requires one to see it as a work in progress based on empirical study of larger knowledge corpus about the field.

The corpus of literature of Southeast Asia's perspectives on Islamic educational leadership is limited for the time being (year 2021). We have tried to gather empirical research papers from many available databases such as ERIC, Scopus, Web of Science, and Google Scholar with specific keywords like "Islamic educational leadership", as well as with more general keywords like "educational leadership", not many articles appeared in the context of Southeast Asia. For instance using ERIC, there were 48 articles; while in Scopus database, document search using multiple field methods, such as in using field "article title, abstract and keywords" and "affiliation country" in Southeast Asian country with above keywords, total 113 publications generated. The number of papers became fewer when we done sorting were conducted to remove non education field publication or identify practicing other religions of educational leadership. Next, selection were based on better publication quality (e.g. peer-reviewed and non-predatory journal manuscripts). After this screening process, 19 publications remained. Another illustration about this, Adams et al., (2021) conducted comprehensive bibliometric study about educational leadership and management in Malaysia but only identified five articles (1.5% from total) that focus on Islamic leadership, where three of them are written in English. So far, four Southeast Asian countries that published in this category, respectively in terms number of papers, are come from Indonesia, Malaysia, Thailand, Singapore and the Philipines.

The approaches that were used by the prior authors are various. Few of them used a literature review method on a concept of Islamic educational leadership (see Jaffar et al., 2019, Othman et al., 2018; Salleh, 2018), several used a quantitative approach (for instance, Abdullah

& Kassim, 2012; Othman & Wanlabe, 2012; Saleemad et al., 2012; Taib et al., 2016); some used a mixed method approach (see Ahmad & Salamun, 2013; Ail & Abdullah, 2016; Salamun & Shah, 2012; Salamun, 2015). However, studies that used fully a qualitative paradigm provide more insights about the issue and show interesting findings about Islamic educational leadership in the Southeast Asian context (see Arifin et al., 2018; Abbas & Tan, 2019; Brooks et al., 2020; Milligan, 2010; Mutohar, 2020; Raihani, 2007, 2017; Shulhan, 2017). The following section discusses of these approaches and its findings further.

Conceptual papers

Salleh (2018) points out that, based his perspective, Islamic educational leadership can be explained by the acronym LEADERSHIP, which he elaborates each letter (where *L* stands for *leading*, *E* for *education*, *A* for *aims*, *D* for *delivery*, *E* for *empowerment*, *R* for *resilience*, *S* for *style*, *H* for *humbleness and humility*, *I* for *integrity*, and *P* for *piety*). This informs about the Muslim competency based on guidance from verses in the Quran and the Prophet's (PBUH) words and practices. For instance, when discussing the first letter L for leading, Salleh (2018) explains about traits possessed by a leader such as intelligence and good cognitive ability. In Islam, their task as a leader is doing good deeds to the society for the sake of Allah as instructed in the Quran. The exception is for letter S (style) which explains about various leadership patterns of behaviour that the ideas are borrowed from Western research.

In addition, Jaffar et al. (2019) analysed sixteen Quranic verses about *ulul albab* theme which simply means gifted individual and proposed the concept of *ulul albab* principal leadership. They found that this type of leadership has three dimensions: Quranic, encyclopedic, and *ijthadic*. The first dimension means that Quran is the only and absolute preference for a leader as well as a way of life; the second dimension portrays educational leader's intelligence and knowledge quality; and the last dimension context is an effort to do continuous

improvement and consistently commit towards perfection (Jaffar et al., 2019). As can be shown, this is an effort to try an approach to characterising ideal educational leadership based on Quran verses.

While Othman et al., (2018) proposed to relate a collegial model in educational institution context to Islamic approaches. They emphasised that effective Muslim educational leaders are those who practise shared decision making where Quran and Sunnah are common values of the educators. This is similar to the concept of *Jamaah*, not only as it's a genuine Muslim identity but it is also a basic condition of Islamic faith (*iman*). Othman et al., (2018) identified three relevant leadership models for collegial model in Islamic educational institutions: transformational, participative, and interpersonal leadership, all reflecting leadership attributes of the Prophet (PBUH). The classical text mentions that characteristics possessed by the Prophet Muhammad PBUH are *shiddiq* (honesty), *amanah* (trustworthy), *fathanah* (wisdom) and *tabligh* (conveying messages), where these attributes are articulated when practicing collegiality in Islamic educational institutions.

Quantitative approach

One distinctive feature from the Malaysian authors is that they use Islamic terms such as Rabbani, Murabbi, and Ulul Albab addressed to the Islamic educational leadership compared to others. For example, they use terms like Rabbani leadership (Ahmad & Salamun, 2013; Salamun & Shah, 2012; Salamun, 2015), Murabbi leadership (Ail & Abdullah, 2016) and Ulul Albab leadership (Jaffar et al., 2019; Taib et al., 2016) to articulate values from Quran and Sunnah in terms of practices of educational leadership. This type of a leader is “someone whose mission and vision in life are solely for the divine path, to be acceptable in the eyes of the Creator” (Ahmad & Salamun, 2013, p. 43). The basic thing from this three concepts is to explore school

leadership practices based on Islamic values and influenced by moral judgment according to God's divine acceptance.

These three leadership terms also offer specific research instruments to measure Islamic educational leadership's latent traits. Rabbani leadership has three constructs with 15 items using a five-point rating scale of frequency (Ahmad & Salamun, 2013). Similarly, Ulul Albab leadership has also three constructs with a total of 73 items using a nine-point rating scale of agreement (Taib et al., 2016). Lastly, Murrabi leadership is developed from qualitative study in order to identify important constructs from experts and has 13 constructs with a total of 132 items (Ail & Abdullah, 2016). There are similarities in terms of constructs used in these three instruments in terms of attitude/perception toward Islamic faith and knowledge, learning and skills, and educational leadership practices. All the articles examined the research instruments using classical test theory approach. The Rabbani leadership research also provides descriptive statistics information, and the other two proposed a structural model which emphasizes relationship between constructs. All the instruments have been used in secondary school context, where all respondents were Muslims. The findings show that the education leaders have the attributes of the Islamic educational leadership.

Influence of Western leadership models and their instruments are also salient from publications in this region, and they adapted and modified such instruments, for example, Principal Instructional Management Rating Scale or PIRMS (Abdullah & Kasim, 2012) from Malaysia, and Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire or MLQ (Othman & Wanlabeh, 2012) and Leadership Practices or LP (Saleemad et al., 2012) in Thailand. Interesting findings are reported from the studies. Research that used PIMRS found that perception of promoting learning environment is higher at Islamic religious schools compared to schools that have government

assistance (Abdullah & Kasim, 2012). While, the research that used adapted LP indicates that in Islamic schools, leaders perceived practices more often in all leadership dimensions compared to general schools' leaders (Saleemad et al., 2012). Study by Othman and Wanlabe (2012) reported that principals in Islamic private schools tend to practice transformational more than transactional leadership, whereas their teachers also perceive that idealized influence and inspirational motivation are more salient in their school leaders.

As such, the results of these typical studies show that Islamic school leaders' traits are also confirmed by the Western leadership theories and their research instruments. Although the researchers have used the available models and instruments, they could not capture all the realities that happen in the schools in Southeast Asia since culture and social variations are so wide. When using the quantitative approach in this area, some limitations emerged from the studies, for example, not applying accurate and precise measurement to the latent traits, and relying on group-centered statistics. When implementing a different approach, Item Response Theory (IRT) is needed to be used because it can reveal more important information and at the same time provides complete psychometric attributes of the instruments (see Salleh et al., 2015). Thus, it is evident that applying this modern measurement model, for instance, can better inform latent traits measured to provide crucial constructs. Also, further testing of the instrument is needed to confirm its qualities in terms of validity, reliability, and usability to be like other well-established leadership scales (e.g. Halinger's PIMRS, Bass & Avolio's MLQ) to be used in the future research. Thus, possibly due to being lack of the qualities, the instruments measuring the three leadership styles (rabbani, murrabi, and ulul albab leadership) have not been used by other researchers yet (Adams et al., 2021).

Qualitative approach

Research of Islamic educational leadership in Southeast Asia that applies qualitative method provides more rich findings and shows essential information. It reveals a big picture of social realities and surrounding faced by the schools and how the education leaders' adapt and adopt to challenging situation. Research findings from Indonesia, Thailand, Singapore and the Philippines clearly indicate that principals' leadership practices are based on their personal set of Islamic beliefs and values which represent their moral purposes for the students and school institution (Abbas & Tan, 2019; Brooks, 2015; Brooks et al., 2020; Milligan, 2010; Mutohar, 2020; Raihani, 2007, 2017; Shulhan, 2018). Studies from Indonesia (Brooks et al., 2020; Raihani, 2007), Thailand (Raihani, 2017), and the Philippines (Milligan, 2010), for instance, have applied bottom-up grounded approach when analyzing the phenomena which provide distinctive perspectives; while other researchers borrow Western framework such as transformational leadership used in their studies in Singapore (Abbas & Tan, 2019) and in Indonesia (Shulhan, 2017).

Muslim school leaders in all of the empirical studies clearly show religious belief. This is the core of their leadership practices as well as the basis of the ways they view education. Interestingly, each study showing unique type of values comes up as salient findings, such as *amanah* or entrusted leadership in Indonesia (Raihani, 2007), *shura* (mutual consultation) and *ihsan* (compassion) in Singapore (Abbas & Tan, 2019), trust and building cohesion in Thailand (Brooks, 2015; Raihani, 2017) and the Philippines (Milligan, 2010). The findings actually somehow reflect social and political situations in their respective countries that make Muslim educational leaders have to make a strategic decision for the good of students, schools and the Muslim community in general.

Raihani's (2007) study found that Islamic belief and values of the three Muslim principals from public secondary schools in Indonesia, which were secular schools, really underpinned their leadership style and practice. The notion of *amanah* in the school context has been actually reflected in the Indonesian situation since the beginning of democracy in the reform era, where rampant corruption became top news (Sumintono et al., 2014; 2015). So, the statement that the struggle to become accountable as leaders in public institutions is supported by religious belief is a wise statement. The principals also state clearly that apart from *amanah*, the most important thing for them is IMTAQ (short from words *Iman* and *Taqwa*, meaning faith and piety). This is like a declaration of self-identity which put them also as a religious leader, where another study conducted Brooks et al. (2020) in Indonesia also mentions it specifically but in the form of education leaders as socio-religious .

Furthermore, studies by Brooks et al. (2020) and Mutohar (2020) show more current situation in Indonesia that Islamic schools' identity is related to radicalism. Muslim education leaders as Brooks et al. (2020) found that there was tension between two continua which are progressive and conservative school leadership. Interestingly, whatever the choice of the principal, "decision based on their interpretation of Islam that was manifest in the policies, practices and procedures in their school" (Brooks et al., 2020, p. 13). On one hand, the principals' socio-religious belief and behavior put them in the category of open, inclusive and plural; on the other hand, they can choose to be closed, exclusive and unitary position. In line with that, Mutohar's (2020) study found that leading with diversity in Islamic schools shows similar spectrum where one end is the choice to embrace local identities and respect various expression of Islam, compared to more exclusive view. The choice of Muslim educational

leaders in this case is very strategic because the impact directly leads to school culture and students' understanding, attitude and behavior.

Interestingly, Indonesia local flavour emerges in these studies. Raihani's (2007) found that *kekeluargaan* values (family-like relationship) stated by the Muslim principals are considered as "uniquely important to help foster effective school teamwork, which creates the cultures of togetherness and collaboration" (p. 487). Whereas, Mutohar (2020) writes that traditional Islamic locals seldom practice in other countries such as "praying at the grave and reciting surah Yassin for a family member who passed away" (p. 3), as an indication of tolerance and implementation of diversity by a Muslim educational leaders, embracing many faces of Islam even in the same country.

In addition, study of Islamic school principals in Indonesia as informed by Shulhan (2017) and Arifin et al., (2018) have to be seen in the context of an effort to improve the educational quality. While, research by Cardozo and Sri Mulyani (2018) is filled in the gap in the context of gender role of educational leadership role. In his study, Sulhan (2017) found that Islamic educational leaders rely on managerialism in order to improve school quality through improving performance of the teachers; whereas Arifin et al. (2018) found that principals at Islamic primary schools apply traditional approach (known as Islamic crash course) which is usually practiced in *pesantrens* in order to improve their school organizational culture, leadership, and application of Islamic value.

The only study in Singapore about Islamic school leadership conducted by Abbas and Tan (2020) found that the situation of schools typical in a developed country situation clearly purses improvement of quality educational services. They conducted a case study of a Singaporean madrasah (Islamic school) using interviews, observations, and artifacts to collect the data. They

revealed that school leaders of the madrasah exhibited the four transformational leadership domains (inspirational motivation, individual consideration, idealized influence, and intellectual stimulation). The leaders behaved through articulating a vision, consulting, motivating, supporting, and exemplary manners, following behaviors of the Prophet Muhammad. The salient Islamic principles and values from the research are *shura* and *ihsan*. *Shura* (consultation) reflects common democratic practice in a stable society, and *ihsan* (compassion) actually shows practice of improvement and commitment to benefit others, a kind of significant contribution in a competitive society.

Studies from both Southern area of Thailand and the Philippines, where ethno-religious conflict still going on for years (Al-Qurtuby, 2013; Brooks & Sungtong 2014), inform different perspectives about Muslim educational leaders in Southeast Asia. Raihani (2017) used a multiple-case study in three selected Islamic schools in three provinces in Thailand, with such participants as students, teachers, and principals to explore how principals in the schools practice their leadership. Research results suggest that building trust is the top priority for school improvement (Raihani, 2017); whereas Milligan (2010) conducted ethnographic study in the island of Mindanao Southern Philippines found out that combining religious authority and technological competences aspiration is more effective to develop the school by the Muslim education leaders in the form which he called pragmatic prophetic leadership. The principals from both countries made their school progress in very difficult and challenging situation showing their leadership qualities and characteristics fit to the local context with appropriate strategy in place.

Milligan (2010) and Raihani (2017) have noted that Muslim educational leaders were keen to collaborate with the central government and abandon their traditional and kinship-based

leadership, accepting general (non-Islamic) curriculum as well as non-Muslim teachers who teach those subjects in their schools. The principals at the same time establish this compromise by involving school stakeholders to provide the community with services by their students and teachers and by building trust to make them be supported by all parties (Brooks, 2015). The principals whose schools are in the conflict zone see themselves have to be accountable with resources to be fulfilled based on their religious belief, provide educational services which make parents believe and choose Islamic schools for their children. This shows that leadership improvisation really works for the greater good of society.

Discussion and Conclusion

In this chapter, we have explained Southeast Asian perspectives of Islamic educational leadership. We see that the knowledge corpus of this area starts to grow and provides some unique but can be considered as limited contributions.

The conceptual papers offer, differentiate identity, and present Islamic elements to the issue of Islamic educational leadership. Something that is salient from the articles is directly related to sacred text (Quran and *Sunnah*) and educational leadership context (see Jaffar et al., 2019; Othman et al., 2018; Salleh, 2018). Other writers (e.g., Brooks & Mutohar, 2018; Shah, 2006, 2017) have crafted their arguments which are more adequate and comprehensive in nature despite explaining mostly the same thing. The limitation of its explanation can be seen when trying to justify sacred text in order to make the English word 'leadership' fit to the discussion (Salleh, 2018), or fulfilling *ulul albab* theme from educational leadership perspective (Jaffar et al., 2019). When seen closely, one of the the restrictions of the articles in this approach does not rely on comprehensive sources that can guide and expand the available research arguments

presented. Promoting more publication in this kind of study is a good priority to elaborate the Islamic educational leadership ideas, since few samples and locations represented so far.

Meanwhile, developing a new educational leadership research instrument is a huge task that needs certain expertises. The three research instruments discuss in this chapter that try to measure Islamic educational leadership's latent trait called with Rabbani leadership (Ahmad & Salamun, 2013), Ulul Albab leadership (Taib et al., 2016) and Murrabi leadership (Ail & Abdullah, 2016) have used the analyses of the scales using classical test theory approach that unfortunately does not provide accurate and precise measurements of the empirical data collected. The validation only confirms at the variable level which does not provide individual-centered statistic information, and it will be more interesting to know if comprehensive validation uses other approaches like item response theory (see for example Hallinger & Wang, 2015).

Nevertheless, the studies conducted in this Southeast Asia's context have a close intersection in terms of ideas, arguments and perspectives presented in the theoretical aspects of Islamic educational leadership in this chapter. As shown from findings of the qualitative research studies, the researchers emphasize that some Islamic values from educational leaders are more salient compared to others as suggested by framework presented previously (Brooks & Mutohar, 2018; Shah, 2017).

Interestingly, the research findings also reflect each country situation and issue faced by the Muslim educational leaders in the region. Condition of Madrasahs in Singapore (a developed country) make the Muslim school leaders focus more on their democratic process and continuous improvement for the society in terms of choice of Islamic values they pursue. In the Southern area of Thailand and the Philippines, it is about survival and finding the best

way to reconcile, requiring Muslim principals to invest much in term of trust building and connect to the community. Meanwhile in Malaysia, producing unique instrument for Islamic educational leadership trait showing they want to emphasize of their identity as a modern Muslim country. Whereas in Indonesia, tension in regard to accountability, radicalism and educational quality makes Muslim educational leaders express their religious beliefs and values differently. All of this research evidences in Southeast Asia show that different contexts need different types of Islamic educational leadership, where the contexts themselves are differently portrayed.

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