Historical Continuity and Changes: Understanding the Dynamics of Islamic Education in Indonesia and Malaysia

Kurniawan Dwi Saputra[1*], **Fatimah Az Zahra Mughni**[2], **Nur Asyiqin Zohkarnain**[2], **M. Sonata Dena Sadewa**[1]

[1]Universitas Islam Indonesia, Indonesia
[2]Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia, Malaysia
*email: *kurniawan.dwi.saputra@uii.ac.id*

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ABSTRACT

Despite having identical demographic composition with the Muslim majority of the citizen, Islam in Indonesia and Malaysia has different expressions. Islam in Indonesia is more varied and open, while Islam in Malaysia is more centralized and formal. These different expressions must be influenced by the differences of Islamic education in the two countries. This study intends to examine the Islamic education system in Indonesia and Malaysia by describing the history of its development. By referring to library sources, this study conducted a qualitative analysis with the help of Michel Foucault's genealogical theory. With this theory, the author reveals the changes that have occurred throughout the history of Islamic education in Indonesia and Malaysia. This study found that Islamic education in Indonesia and Malaysia departed from the same origin: traditional Islamic learning. Differences begin to emerge when the British government accommodated Islamic education in the vernacular education system in Malaysia, while the Dutch marginalized Islamic education in Indonesia. The Malaysian government further integrated Islamic education into the national education system, while the Indonesian government recognized Islamic education in an independent form outside of state management. As a result, Islamic education in Indonesia has developed adaptively to the temporal challenges by producing diverse forms of education, while Islamic education in Malaysia is stagnating because of the politization. Government policy also influenced this adaptive character where the strict approach of the Dutch colonial government required Islamic boarding schools in Indonesia to be more independent and creative.
*Keywords*: Islamic Education; Indonesia; Malaysia; History.

ABSTRAK

Meski memiliki komposisi demografik yang identic dengan keberadaan mayoritas Muslim, eskpresi Islam di Indonesia dan Malaysia memiliki corak yang berbeda. Islam di Indonesia lebih bervariasi dan terbuka, sementara Islam di Malaysia lebih tersentralisasi dan formal. Ekspresi yang berbeda tersebut pasti mendapatkan pengaruh dari perbedaan pendidikan Islam di kedua negara. Penelitian ini bermaksud meneliti sistem pendidikan Islam di Indonesia dan Malaysia melalui penggambaran sejarah perkembangannya. Dengan merujuk kepada sumber-sumber pustaka, penelitian ini melakukan analisis kualitatif dengan bantuan kerangka teori genealogi Michel Foucault. Dengan teori tersebut, penulis menyibak perubahan-perubahan yang terjadi

sepanjang sejarah pendidikan Islam di Indonesia dan Malaysia. Penelitian ini menemukan bahwa pendidikan Islam di Indonesia dan Malaysia berangkat dari permulaan yang sama, yaitu pembelajaran Islam tradisional. Perbedaan kemudian mencuat ketika pemerintahan Inggris mengakomodir pendidikan Islam dalam sistem pendidikan vernakular di Malaysia, sementara Belanda memarjinalkan pendidikan Islam di Indonesia. Pemerintah Malaysia selanjutnya mengintegrasikan pendidikan Islam ke dalam sistem pendidikan nasional, sementara pemerintah Indonesia mengakui pendidikan Islam dalam bentuknya yang independent di luar manajemen negara. Akibatnya, pendidikan Islam di Indonesia telah berkembang secara adaptif terhadap tantangan zaman dengan menghasilkan keragaman bentuk-bentuk pendidikan, sementara pendidikan Islam di Malaysia mengalami stagnasi karena politisasi. Kebijakan pemerintah juga turut mempengaruhi karakter adaptif tersebut di mana pendekatan yang keras dari pemerintah kolonial Belanda menuntut institusi pondok di Indonesia untuk lebih mandiri dan kreatif.
Kata-kata Kunci: Pendidikan Islam; Indonesia; Malaysia; Sejarah.

1. INTRODUCTION

Although located in the same region, Indonesia and Malaysia have quite different expressions of Islam. Graphic 1 demonstrates that Indonesia has a far higher percentage of Muslims than Malaysia. However, Malaysia's official constitution incorporates Islam more fully than Indonesia's, which cites the more liberal Pancasila as its ideological foundation (Hamayotsu, 2002).
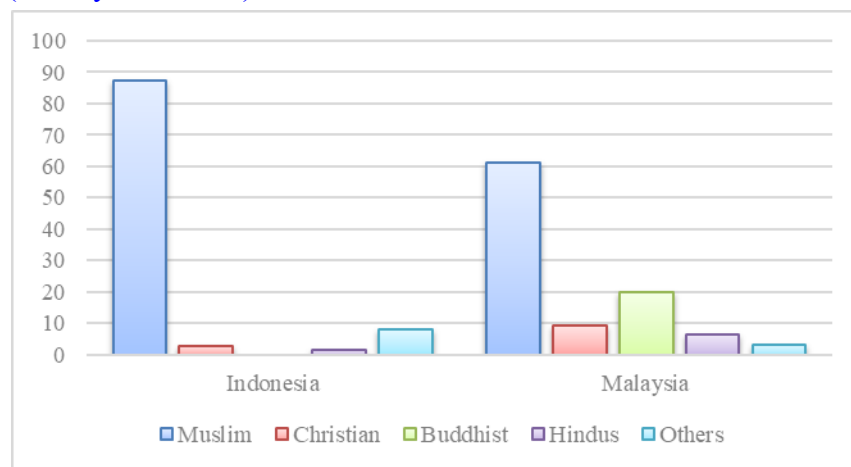
Graphic 1. The percentage of religious affiliation in Indonesia and Malaysia.
Reference: Britannica.com.

It is apparent that this distinction has an impact on how laws are implemented because the constitution represents state fundamental norms. With the exception of Aceh, where Syariah qanun is being implemented, and a few restricted local laws in Indonesia, Malaysia generally has a more formalized implementation of Islamic law. It is in the Malaysian legal system that Islamic law coexists with the civil judiciary (Berenschot, Nordholt, & Bakker, 2017). The difference in state regulation is also manifested in the dynamics of Islamic education. In Malaysia, Islamic education is more centralized and organized by the government and more ideologically coherent

(Tayeb, 2018). However, the ideological and managerial complexities in Indonesia allow the emergence of a more tolerant Islamic discourse. For example, while discussing interfaith marriage is permissible in an Indonesian Islamic boarding school, Malaysian Muslims would condemn it (Tayeb, 2018).

Apart from different legal basis, the disparity of Islamic education in Indonesia and Malaysia could be traced back to the history of Islamic emergence and spreading in both countries. Looking at the early history of the emergence of Islam in the archipelago, generally, there is no significant difference between Indonesia and Malaysia. However, there are differences between Indonesia and Malaysia in terms of the dynamics of the development of Islam. Both in Indonesia and in Malaysia, Islamic education initially began from teachers' homes, which were gradually encircled by student huts. These huts were called pondok, from Arabic word funduq which means hostel (Ishak & Abdullah, 2013). In the pondok, students learn from Kyai or Tok Guru mainly on fiqh (Islamic jurisprudence), kalam (theology), tasawuf (Sufism), and Arabic grammar (Mas'ud, Fuad, & Zaini, 2019). They sit in a semi-circle and listen to the teacher explaining the lesson from religious manuscripts (Ishak & Abdullah, 2013). The earliest of these manuscripts, which are written by Nuruddin al-Raniri, are written in Malay or Javanese (Hamisi & Fahm, 2017).

Departing from initial similarity, it is thought-provoking that the form of Islamic Education in Indonesia and Malaysia diverges towards different models and produce different expression of Islam in society. Studies on this unique difference have mainly focused on the modern-governmental policy and neglected the history of Islamic emergence and development in both countries. The elaboration of Islamic history in Indonesia and Malaysia now becomes relevant more than ever. Despite being historically regarded as the bastion for moderate Islam, some experts today are alarmed that Islam in southeast Asia is growing more conservative and intolerant (Saat, 2018). Addressing Islamic education through historical mapping will benefit in understanding the development of Islam in both countries.

Azyumardi Azra wrote a masterpiece on the history of Islam in Southeast Asian archipelago entitled The Origin of Islamic Reformism in Southeast Asia (2004). In his book, Azra elaborates on the Islamic teaching transmission from Arabia to archipelago through chains of relationship (isnad or silsilah). Claiming that this 17th-18th century transmission was a reform regarding different religious practices that were available beforehand, Azra meticulously illustrates the development in which Indonesian Islam varies with what he calls the "new isnad". This subtle elaboration, however, neglects the dynamics that occurs outside of Indonesia.

The extent to which any reform in Arab countries affected Islam in Southeast Asia could be read in Hasyim and Langgulung's discussion about Islamic Education curriculum (Noraini Hashim & Langgulung, 2008). Although it compares Islamic

education in Indonesia and Malaysia through a historical lens, its focus on just modern history ignores the significance of the pre-modern report.

Another difference between Islamic education in Indonesia and Malaysia is elaborated in Tayeb's book, Islamic Education in Malaysia and Indonesia: Shaping Minds, Saving Souls (Tayeb, 2018). In this comparative work, Tayeb refers the differences to the ideological factors, the process of Islamization, and the relationship among state's apparatuses in these two nations. Although Tayeb takes into account the important part of Islamic history that explains the nuanced differences between Islam in Indonesia and Malaysia and the process of institutional Islamization by the state, however, the fact that he neglects the more distant early Islamic history distinguishes this research from Tayeb's.

According to Tayeb's thesis on state Islamization, each state takes a particular way to incorporating Islam into its national ideology. Hamayotsu discusses this issue to give the insight on how the Muslim postcolonial states build their national identity (Hamayotsu, 2002). While Islam is seen as an integral aspect of Malay national identity in Malaysia, Pancasila as Indonesia's official state ideology locates Islam in the same level as other religions.

In Mohd Nor and Wan Othman, elaboration about Islamic education history in Malaysia goes further than Tayeb and Hasyim & Langgulung's work by including pre-independence situation. Under the monarchy's sovereign rule, Islamic education is promoted through the government's appreciation of religious science and scholars (Nor & Othman, 2011). The research about Islamic education history in Indonesia and Malaysia is rarely conducted by using Foucaultian genealogy frameworks. However, there are several important studies that have been able to use the genealogy, either in the broadest sense of the word or in a limited way to explore the history of Islamic education in Indonesia and Malaysia

For instance, as seen above, Azra (2004) explains the spread of Islamic doctrines from Arabia to Southeast Asia through personal connection. This research, however, primarily employs a historical perspective that is unrelated to a critical assessment of contemporary practices. Another Azra's work (2015) uses the term genealogy to capture the transformation of Islamic education in Indonesia from its traditional form to the rise of Islamic high education institutions. The use of the term is understood in its literal meaning. It differs from Foucault's genealogy in that it doesn't demonstrate how these modern institutions arise from particular conflicts and struggles (Garland, 2014).

Another documented attempt to do genealogy is in the work of Suyadi and Sutrisno (2018). This study has exhibited the typical of Foucault's genealogy, which is to depict some historical discontinuities and link them to ideological divergence. However, this effort does not provide adequate criticism to show the controversial conflicts behind historical practices.

Consequently, there is still plenty of room for research on this topic given the existing expansion of Islamic education history with critical evaluation. As the previous literatures show us, the works on this field are either descriptive historiography or insufficient genealogy. The delimitation of this study is to scrutiny Islamic education in Indonesia and Malaysia because it aims to analyze the different Islamic education forms in two neighboring Islamic majority countries with quite different Islamic expressions.

2. METHOD

This study is designed to compare the history of Islamic education in Indonesia and Malaysia that explains the emergence of different expressions of Islam in those two nations. The subject of this study was the historical developments, from which the researcher figured out the ruptures amongst historical continuity of Islamic education in Indonesia and Malaysia. The approach of the study was a qualitative strategy in which the research tried to explore and understand the meaning of a social problem (Creswell, 2009). In this case, the problem is the history of Islamic Education in Indonesia and Malaysia. As library research, this study analyzed documents related to the topic.

Data collection in chart 1 was conducted through recording textual resources from books, journal, reports and other electronic documents (Hamzah, 2019). The procedures of library research as stated by Kulthau in (Paturrochmah, 2020) is described as follow:

Chart 1. The research procedures.
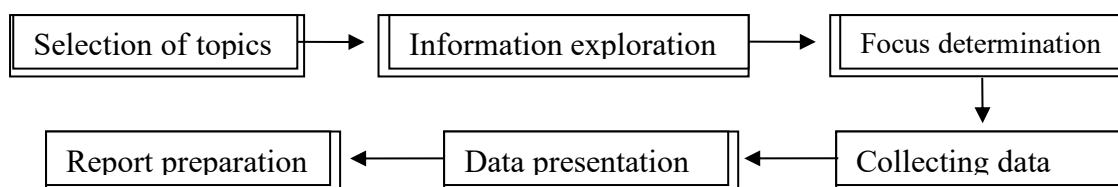
This is a library-based analytical study in which the researcher critically evaluates the available information about historical record in order to understand the explanation of different practices of Islamic education in Indonesia and Malaysia. The primary sources of this study were books and journals presenting the thorough development on Islamic education history in Indonesia or Malaysia, such as Genealogy of Indonesian Islamic Education: Role of Modernization in Muslim Society by Azyumardi Azra (Azra, 2015) and Islamic Education in Malaysia by Ahmad Fauzi Abdul Hamid (Hamid, 2018). The secondary sources were scientific reports that portray the general or partial nature of Islamic education in both nations. This approach is selected because in the initial, this research aims to look at general description of Islamic education in Indonesia and Malaysia before doing comparison and genealogy.

The analysis on qualitative research consists of three reciprocal steps: data reduction, display, and conclusion (Hamzah, 2019). Based on those textual sources, the researcher interpreted through critical technique with the help of Foucault's genealogy to address the historical changes or ruptures. According to the field, this is typically library research.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The beginning of Islamic Education in both Indonesia and Malaysia departs from the same origin. From some important figures that began to teach religious knowledge in the houses or mosques, Islamic education develop into the construction of several huts around teacher's house to accommodate the growing number students who wanted to learn to the influential teacher. Those huts are commonly called pondok (from the Arabic word funduq) or called pesantren in Indonesia (Zarkasyi, 2015). According to (Nizam, 2022), the educational system in which the teacher figure is fundamental reflected the educational practices in Makkah and Madinah.

In Malaysia, the early presence of pondok was dated back to the reign of Malaccan Sultanate (1414-1511) (Hamid, 2018). According to (Roff, 2004), this form of pondok or boarding school came either from southern Sumatra or south east Thailand. Specific date for the emergence of Indonesian pesantren was not recorded but it is said that around the 15th century, Raden Fatah had already built a pesantren in the eastern part of Java (Margono, 2012). According to Mulkan as cited by (Herman, 2013), the origin of pesantren system of education was rooted in Indonesian culture long before the existence of Islamic kingdoms.

Substantially similar, traditional Islamic education institutions in Indonesia and Malaysia only vary in names. For example, the religious teacher in Java is labelled as kyai (a translation for Arabic word sayyid), while the Malaysian counterpart called them tuan guru or tok guru (a translation for Arabic word syekh) (Hamid, 2018). The table 1 below shows the nuanced variation of teacher's epithet and school's name in both Indonesia and Malaysia.

Table 1. The Variation of Religious Teacher's Epithet and School's Name in Indonesia and Malaysia.

	Indonesia	Malaysia
Teacher's epithet	*kyai, tuan guru, syekh* (Azra, 2015)	*tuan guru, tok guru*
School's name	*pondok, pesantren, dayah, rangkang, surau* (Margono, 2012)(Azra, 2015)	*pondok, madrasah* (Hamid, 2018)

The compatible model of education in both Indonesia and Malaysia is supported by the interconnected influence and mobility between Indonesian and Malaysian ulama in the initiation and the development of pondok. For example, it is mentioned by (Ab Rahim & Mohd Nor, 2020) that an ulama from Javanese descendant, Kyai Muhammad Ali Qoribun, start up the building of mosque and pondok with the help of local residents in Sijangkang, Selangor. In addition, the Malaccan Sultanate that support the very beginning of Islamic education embraced Islam upon marrying with the daughter of Sultan Pasai of Aceh (Hamid, 2018). On the other hand, some resources said that Syekh Jumadil Kubro, the forefather of Wali Songo (the nine saints), who are very influential in the spread of Islam in Jawa, was recorded to have been living in Kelantan, Malaysia. Moreover, citing Osman Bakar, Abdul Hamid (Hamid, 2018) explicitly stated that two of the Wali Songo (Sunan Bonang and Sunan Giri) learned in Pulau Apih pondok from Syekh Wali Lanang.

The reconstruction of education in other part of Islamic worlds influences the dynamics of Islamic education in the archipelago. In Malaysia, it was the graduates of middle eastern schools who work on the systematic change in Islamic education from traditionally halaqah learning model (umumi pondok) into the more structured learning with the adaptation of western education system (nizami madrasah) (Hamid, 2018). The same adjustment also happened in Indonesia. However, it is noteworthy that the new Islamic educational institution in Indonesia, aside from the middle eastern influence, also drew inspiration from the renamed Hindu ashram in Tagore's work, as well as the Indian subcontinent's Muslim counterpart (Saputra & Krismono, 2021). Thenceforward, the Islamic education institution in Indonesia vary into pondok salaf (traditional model) and pondok modern (modern model) (Zarkasyi, 2015). The table 2 indicates the different form of Islamic Education in both Indonesia and Malaysia.

Table 2. The Comparison Between Malaysian and Indonesian Islamic Educational Institution.

	Malaysia	Indonesia
Traditional Model	*Umumi*	*Pondok Salaf*
Developed Model	*Nizhami*	*Pondok Modern*

In general, there is no substantial difference between *pondok umumi* in Malaysia and *pondok salaf* in Indonesia. They are both representing the traditional method of learning where the teacher will read and explain the text (*kitab kuning*) with the students circling around him in cross-legged position (Nizam, 2022). In Malaysia, this method is called "*tadah kitab*" or "*buka kitab*" (Roff, 2004) while in Java, there are more variations on this learning method, whether it is individual (*bandongan*), collective (*wetonan*), or specific learning for new students who need individual assistance (Zarkasyi, 2015).

Significant difference occurs between the Malaysian *nizhami* and Indonesian *pondok* modern. *Nizhami* system is a more structured where learning is managed in classes, levels, subjects and specific time (Nizam, 2022). The more structured learning in Malaysian Islamic education as seen in *nizhami pondok* model is the impact of the direction shift of Islamic education from that of Makkah to Cairo. Beside the *nizhami* system, by the influence of those so-called *kaum muda* (young people), the Islamic education in Malaysia begun to change shape from traditional *pondok* to *madrasah* system (Hamid, 2010b).

The identical change also happened in Indonesia as many *surau* transformed into schools or *madrasah* (Azra, 2015). However, the most significant development of Islamic education in Indonesia is the emergence of *pondok modern*. In addition to the change in learning structures just as in *nizhami pondok, pondok modern* adapted a more holistic system of education that reformulate the nature of curriculum and even the educational institution. In short, pondok modern in Indonesia is a merge of traditional *pondok* content and spirit with the system and management of *madrasah* (Zarkasyi, 2015).

From the quite similar beginning, the subsequent phase of development marks the part ways of Islamic Education in Indonesia and Malaysia. It is the different nuance of colonial policy that shapes the early divergence. However, while both the British in Malaysia and the Dutch in Indonesia noticed the unbreakable relationship between people and Islam, their colonial policies on the subject of Islamic Education diverge. In Malaysia, the British accommodate some parts of Islamic Education materials into Malay vernacular school (Hamid, 2018). On the contrary, the Dutch apply a more hostile approach toward Islamic education in anticipation of religious motivated rebellion (Sus, 2013).

The policy taken by both colonial administrations, the British and the Dutch, set a beginning of the dichotomic policy in education that separates Islamic education from general education. In Malaysia, in respecting the Islamic education, the British includes the vernacular schools with Islamic materials to promote its school to be attended by more citizen (Ishak & Abdullah, 2013). However, this strategy should not be interpreted as a clear support for Islamic education, as the British undermined Islamic materials over time and stopped funding Islamic topics with public money (Hamid, 2010b). This policy also resulted in the division of schooling system into two, the morning class for secular subjects and *sekolah petang* (afternoon class) for Islamic materials (Ishak & Abdullah, 2013).

On the other hand, the Dutch administration does not provide the religious education in its school and even views pondok as the source of potential rebellion. This view is understood from the initiation of basic school for pribumi (local people) to teach them Latin reading and writing in order to obey the government rule (Amin, 2019).

Thus, the Dutch views the existence of the Islamic educational system as inadequate and detrimental to the colonial government. Moreover, the Dutch issued certain policies that depicted negative attitude toward Islamic education such as learning permission requirement and closing unlicensed Islamic schools (Amin, 2019).

Surprisingly, the colonization of the Dutch in Indonesia does not lead to the decline of Islamic education. As explained by (Azra, 2015), Islamic education adapts certain aspect of western education during that time. These adaptations are manifested for example by the reconstruction of learning method, institutional management, and the inclusion of certain secular materials into Islamic Education curriculum.

The life after independence affects the fundamental dynamics of Islamic education in Indonesia and Malaysia. The implementation of Razak Report of 1956 in Malaysia made the Islamic materials as compulsory subjects in any schools with more than 15 Muslim students (Ishak & Abdullah, 2013). This reform that is supported later by the adoption of The Education Act of 1961 could be the explanation of the centralization of Islamic education in Malaysia. Hence, it was the moment when Islamic education was accommodated into Malaysia national education system. On the other hand, it set the decline of madrasah as they lack teachers and sufficient facilities (Ishak & Abdullah, 2013). In addition, the excessive administrative centralization and strict control over learning content play important roles in the stagnation of Islamic education in Malaysia (Hamid, 2018). This policy could not be separated from the chauvinist Malay politics in which the ruling government justify it as the form of patriotism (Hamid, 2010a).

While Malaysia politically integrates Islamic education into national education system, right after independence, Indonesian government also puts a serious effort to accommodate the Islamic education. However, the conservation of previous Islamic institutions is the strategy to do so. The implementation of this strategy is the installation of madrasah education and leveling it into elementary madrasah, secondary madrasah and high madrasah (Kosim, 2007).

"…madrasas *and pesantrens which are essentially a means and source of education and intelligence for the common people that are ingrained and rooted in Indonesian society in general, should also receive real attention and assistance in the form of guidance and material assistance from the government."* (Kosim, 2007).

At that time, madrasah was the only institution that was accommodated into national education system. However, this policy also affects the transformation of pondok salaf to adopt madrasah system, curriculum and organization which was initiated by Tebuireng pesantren (Azra, 2015). Despite the systemic change, the insistence to conserve traditional aspects of Islamic education is fundamental to this development. Even the spirit of Indonesian pondok modern is to maintain Islamic traditional values in education with modern system (Zarkasyi, 2015). Modernization in

pesantren does not mean changing pesantren value to be work-oriented, but is designed to maintain the tradition of Islamic orthodoxy through turats (Mujahid, 2021).

The contemporary development of Islamic education institution also reflects the adaptability of Indonesian Islamic education through the ages. For example, according to Athaillah and Wulan, nowadays, pesantren develops its educational model to accommodate the need of entrepreneurship and technology (Athoillah & Wulan, 2019). In responding to contemporary issues, Islamic education in Indonesia have addressed the need for inclusive education, such as the recognition for autistic children Islamic education in Pesantren Anak Shaleh, Ponorogo (Katni, Sumarni, & Muslim, 2022). In addition, during the Covid-19, some modes of learning and activities in Pesantren are reconfigured in adaptation with health protocol (Putera, Wijayanti, & Niyonsaba, 2021).

This transformation and the will to change behind it were among factors influencing the persistence and development of pondok/pesantren in Indonesia. Even in Aceh, which is often seen as embodying exclusive Islam due to its application of sharia, pesantren are evolved into different configurations and respecting the value of tolerance (Rahman, 2022). On the contrary, despite the same setting during the beginning of 20th century with the emergence of madrasah and schools, pondok in Malaysia did not respond to the new challenges and began to lose its ground (Tayeb, 2020).

4. CONCLUSION

Despite the initial similarity in teacher-centered learning education, Islamic education in Indonesia fluidly transform and adapt into different shapes in accordance with the periodical challenges and configurations. First, it adopted the madrasah system of learning structure, then transforms into pondok modern with more adjustment on the management and organization. This fluidity is the aspect that the Malaysian counterpart lacks and hence explains its stagnancy. Moreover, the government policy also affects this subtle difference. The more hostile approach of the Dutch toward Indonesian Muslims than the British toward Malay encourage Indonesian Muslim to be more independent in managing pondok. It is important, however, to note the cultural appreciation of Indonesian government to conserve local education system, madrasah, to be installed into national education system.

This research has shown how different political approaches and governmental policies could affect the dynamics of Islamic education. However, further studies are required to capture the more recent development. This research does not cover the impact of Malaysian latest political landscape in which the more inclusive Pakatan Harapan coalition win the election and now is in charge in Malaysian government. It also does not scrutiny the effect of Indonesian new law on Pesantren education on Islamic education in Indonesia.

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