Islamic School in Contemporary Indonesia
Developing A New Concept
Nurlena Rifai

Islamic School in Contemporary Indonesia

Untuk
Papustaka an FITR

[Signature]
For my late father : Abdul Aziz
For my mother : Siti Zubaidah
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GLOSSARY & ACRONYMS

AAIS: Al Azhar Islamic School

Abangan: Sociological term used to denote an Indonesian cultural group of Central Java. According to Clifford Geertz, the abangan are superficial Muslims who follow religious practices popular before the arrival of Islam and consisting of Old Javanese, Hindu, and Buddhist forms. Most of them nominally identify themselves as Muslim.

Ablution: Cleaning of some part of the body (face, hand, head, ear and feet) with water before praying.

ADIA: Akademi Dinas Ilmu Agama (The Official Academy of Religious Knowledge)

Al-Irshad: Union for Reform and Guidance

Bandongan: A method of teaching that motivates students to learn independently. The kyai or teacher reads a book (usually in Arabic), translates, and explains it generally in front of students. The students take notes and are allowed to ask questions and more detailed explanation from the kyai or teacher.

Bhinneka Tunggal Ika: Indonesia's national slogan (Unity in Diversity)

Da'wah: Islamic term from Arabic, denoting the activity of renewing the faith of individuals and groups of people who already profess the religion by generally propagating the faith.

Depag: Departemen Agama (Ministry of Religious Affairs, MORA)

Depdiknas: Departemen Pendidikan Nasional (Ministry of National Education, MONE)

IAIN: Institut Agama Islam Negeri (State Institute of Islamic Studies)

IKIP: Institut Ilmu Keguruan dan Ilmu Pendidikan (Institute for Teachers' Training and Education)

Imam-khatib: Leader of prayer and preacher.

IPB: Institut Pertanian Bogor (Bogor Institute of Agriculture)

ITB: Institut Teknologi Bandung (Bandung Institute of Technology)

Jilbab or hijab: a dress worn by women and equipped with long sleeves and skirt and a covering their hair.

JIS: Jakarta International School
Kitab Ilmu: Any book written by a classical or medieval Islamic scholar used in pesantren teaching.

KNPI: Komite Nasional Pembela Indonesia (The National Committee of Indonesian Youth)

Kiai: A religious leader (Indonesian Islam). A pesantren is usually led by a kiai, but not every kiai leads a pesantren.

Madrasah: (Arabic) literally means school. In Indonesia, it is an Islamic school with the 'Western' methodologies of instruction and organization often adding a small or larger percentage of 'secular' knowledge.

Madrasah Diniyah: Islamic school that concentrates on teaching religion.

Madrasah Irudiah: Elementary level Islamic school.

Madrasah Tsanawiyah: Junior secondary level Islamic school.

Madrasah Aliyah: Senior Secondary level Islamic school.

Masyumi: Indonesian acronym for Majelis Syurut Muslimin Indonesia (the Consultative Council for Indonesian Muslims). The primary Muslim political party of the 1950s, it was outlawed in 1960 for the association of its leadership with an armed uprising against the Soekarno government.

Muhammadiyah: (Arabic, the Way of Muhammad) is a reformist Muslim organization and one of the most important Muslim organizations involved in educational activities.

NU: Nahdlatul Ulama, the largest traditionalist Muslim organization.

UI: Universitas Indonesia (University of Indonesia).

UUSP: Undang-undang Sistem Pendidikan Nasional (National Education System Act; NESA).

Orde Baru: (New Order) is the official Indonesian designation for the period beginning in 1965 with an alleged Communist coup and ending with the downfall in 1998 of Soeharto, who was president throughout the entire period.


Pan-Islamism: Spirit of world-wide Islamic union.

PKS: Partai Keadilan Sejahtera (Social Justice Party)

PPP: Partai Persatuan Pembangunan (United Development Party)

Pengajian: Studying/learning (the word pengajian or ngaji is used to express the process of learning and reading the Quran and other Islamic knowledge).

Penghulu: Religious officials entrusted with the performance of marriages as well as their dissolution and the calculation of inheritance, etc.

Porsyarkaun Ulama: Union of Religious Scholars

Pesantren: Traditional religious boarding school or traditional Islamic educational institution originally popular in Java, although now found all over Indonesia. There is a similar institution in West Sumatra known as the Surau (where its main function is actually as a place for prayer) and in Aceh known as rongkang.

Priyayi: Aristocrat

PTAIN: Perguruan Tinggi Agama Islam Negeri (The State Higher Education of Islamic Studies)

SI: Sarekat Islam (Islamic Union)

Sekolah: School

Sekolah Negeri: Public School

SMU: Sekolah Menengah Umum (general high school/senior secondary school)

SMUN: Sekolah Menengah Umum Negeri (public general high school/senior secondary school)

SMUI Al Azhar: Sekolah Menengah Umum Islam Al Azhar (Islamic High School of Al Azhar)

Sorogan: A method of teaching that urges/invites student to learn and understand thoughts and concepts in details. Sorogan helps students to understand the lesson more deeply than is achieved through bandongan.

SPG: Sekolah Pendidikan Guru (School of Teacher Training) equivalent with SMU level.

SPMB: Sistem Penerimaan Mahasiswa Baru (The Acceptance System of New University Students)

Tadarrus: Group recitation of the Quran in turn.
Tawhid: The theological concept of the unity of God

UIIN: Universitas Islam Negeri (State Islamic University)

Ulama: Muslim scholars

Umniat or ummah: Muslim community

UU SPN: Undang-undang Sistem Pendidikan Nasional (National Educational System Act, NESPA)

YPI Al Azhar: Yayasan Pesantren Islam Al Azhar (the Foundation of Al Azhar Islamic Boarding School).

Yayasan Shifa Budi: The Foundation of Shifa Budi
Chapter 1
Islamic Education in Indonesia: Why and How this Study was Created

1. Introduction

This thesis seeks to explore the phenomenon of elite Islamic schools emerging in contemporary Indonesia. This study presents the evolution and expansion of Islamic education, which has radically transformed the educational landscape in Indonesia from the 1970s until recently. A review of past studies demonstrates that the modern period 1970-2000 has received little critical examination. This study attempts to address this gap, as the period under study shows a dramatic shift in educational thinking. An evaluative case study approach and ethnographic techniques are utilized to portray the unique educational characteristics and culture of a particular elite Islamic school, i.e., Al Azhar Islamic School.

2. Background of the Study

Over the past two decades, elite Islamic schools have come to form an important component of the Islamicization effort in Indonesia. Since the 1990s, many of these institutions have been recognized as leaders in Islamic education. This new type of school
was enthusiastically embraced from the start by the Muslim community, especially the middle and upper classes. It was not long before the schools acquired a reputation for "excellence", due to their stringent admission standards, highly qualified teachers, and extensive and outstanding educational facilities such as modern libraries, laboratories, workshops, computers, mosques, and sports facilities. They offer a greater variety of subjects and longer hours of instruction compared to other schools, as well as a curriculum which balances secular and religious subjects. Furthermore, these institutions have been producing students who compete well academically with students in other types of Islamic schools, such as madrasahs and pesantrens. Some of them could even be considered to be on equal footing with top schools in the general public school system administered by the Departemen Pendidikan Nasional (Ministry of National Education, MONE) and other private schools, especially Catholic and Protestant ones (Azra, 2000).

There are several reasons why the Indonesian Muslim middle and upper classes have embraced the elite Islamic schools. First of all, few among them have been satisfied with the general public school system which pays less attention to religious education. Nor have they ever shown interest in other Islamic schools (madrasah and pesantren), due to these schools' neglect of secular subjects; a failing that has been remedied by elite Islamic schools. Secondly, the Muslim community judges a school's quality by the academic achievement of its students and their acceptance into preferred schools at the next level. Both of these factors are considered important indicators of the quality of the school, and the elite Islamic schools have fared relatively well in these two areas. Thirdly, the emergence of the elite Islamic schools is a response to increased competition in the wake of globalization. Muslim parents worry that children who study in general public schools cannot compete with the graduates of private schools, Catholic and Protestant ones especially, which are purported to have a far superior academic tradition compared to Muslim schools. The fourth reason is the concern felt within the Muslim community over the negative impact of globalization, especially the promotion of new lifestyles and mores of behaviour that contradict religious values, such as permissiveness, violence, drug and alcohol use, and a redefining of sexual mores. These factors have challenged the Muslim community to establish elite Islamic schools and motivated Muslim parents to enroll their children in such schools (Azra, 2000; Fachmudin, 1998).
The emergence of elite Islamic schools is, therefore, partly a search for an alternative and partly an effort to provide high quality education. The fact remains, however, that these schools are expensive. Thus, only certain people can afford them, whereas in fact, the majority of Muslim families are still poor. The dilemma is how elite Islamic school organizers can offer good facilities and quality education without imposing too great a financial burden on parents— all of whom have a right to expect that their children will receive a good education. Access to these schools is thus a key concern.

3. Purpose of the Study

The aim of the study is to understand why elite Islamic schools have emerged in Indonesia and how these schools have created an environment that achieves a balance between academic performance, personal behavior, and religious concerns. This study intends to examine the historical, socio-economic, and political factors that have influenced the emergence of elite Islamic schools in Indonesia. By exploring their strengths and weaknesses from an educational perspective, my study can assist in the improvement of the Islamic educational system in Indonesia. Moreover, based on its findings, the study will propose that a new paradigm of Islamic school be considered by the Muslim community in order to meet the needs of parents and to face global competition. Indeed, the moral and academic development of elite Islamic schools will have a broad impact on the future, not only of the Indonesian Muslim community, but also that of Indonesia as a whole.

4. Focus of the Study

This study revolves around three major related questions:

1) How did the elite Islamic schools evolve and expand?
2) What events contributed to the evolution and expansion of these schools?
3) How do these schools work in terms of organization and leadership, curriculum and instruction, teaching-learning methods, and parents' and students' relations with teachers?

These research questions are based on the following assumption about educational change in contemporary Indonesia. Indonesian Muslims are seeking alternative education methods which balance secular and religious concerns, while providing an atmosphere conducive to academic excellence. Furthermore, many Indonesians seek to counter the encroaching
values associated with globalization, while at the same time teaching the skills required to compete in the world market.

I interweave historical analysis with treatment of the theories, policies and practices of school reform, around a central focus on improving the Islamic education system. I am interested in exploring how understandings of the practice and development of school reform in the West can be used in relation to Islamic school reform in Indonesia. I also look at the culture of the school, its essential features, its general character, and the values that define its curricular goals and institutional structures. In addition, this study will provide insight into the underlying model of development for elite Islamic schools in Indonesia, and will discuss the implications for educational improvement and quality.

5. Situating the Researcher

I come to this research with my own experiences; not only was I born in Indonesia, but I also lived there and was educated for some years in that nation's Islamic educational institutions. The first twelve years of my schooling -- including six years at the elementary level and six years at the secondary level -- constitute my direct experience in the field of education under the New Order governments. During these formative years I studied in a madrasah (Islamic school). My higher educational experience -- I graduated from the State Institute for Islamic Studies in Jakarta, Indonesia -- coincided with the second decade of the New Order government (1975-1985). Since that time I have had the opportunity to witness the debate between government leaders, Muslim leaders and the Muslim community over establishing a new policy on Islamic education. And at the same time there has been an increasing development of elite Islamic schools, especially in the cities and urban areas of Indonesia and growing enthusiasm on the part of parents from the middle and upper-classes to send their children to such Islamic schools. As a lecturer who teaches prospective teachers in Islamic schools and general schools, I am in a unique position to understand the management of such schools and their problems. Finally, I am a mother of two children, both of whom studied at one of those Islamic schools at the junior and secondary levels. Why did I decide to send them to an Islamic school? One of the principal reasons was because they had spent a large part of their school life being educated in a Montreal elementary school. This happened because I came to Montreal, for the first time, in July 1991 to do a Masters degree at the Institute of Islamic studies. Being far from my family,
my husband and children, was emotionally very difficult for me. Therefore, my husband and I decided to move our family to Montreal in 1992. In Montreal, my children went to St. Patrick School which was, at that time, under the administration of the Catholic Montreal School Board. My husband, in turn, began his Master's program at Concordia University in the Department of Religion in 1993. While my husband and I remained parents who were actively involved in their children's education and upbringing, our own coursework and thesis writing kept us busy. This meant that we had less time to devote to matters such as the children's religious education and the development of formal linguistic skills in Bahasa Indonesia. In July 1997, when both my husband and I had finished our degrees, our family left Montreal to return to Indonesia. I went back to my previous teaching position at the Faculty of Education, State Islamic University while my husband started to work at the University of Paramadina, Jakarta. I had a difficult time finding a good school for my children -- my son was going to Grade 6 and my daughter, Grade 4. Safe and reliable transportation, as well as a supportive social and academic environment in school were some of my main concerns. One Islamic private school would not accept my son into Grade 6 directly. The principal said, "Your son will face difficulties because in Grade 6, students will take the national examinations and your son doesn't know the contents of subjects in the Indonesian curriculum; he cannot even speak Indonesian." He was afraid that my son would fail the exam. The principal asked me to send my son to Grade 5 instead. Finally, I sent my children to a public school which accepted them without any reservations. After 2 years of living with my mother, I moved to my own house, 7 kilometers away from my mother and sent my children to an Islamic school located right in our neighborhood.

So basically, the choice I made to send my two children there was based on two reasons. The first was due to concerns about their safety. To ease my worries, it made sense to enroll my son and daughter in the Islamic school since it was situated just beside our home. The second reason was linked to their primary school experience in Montreal. Their schooling there had not provided them with religious values specific to the Indonesian culture. Placing them in an Islamic school was an effort on my part to inculcate these values in my children while offering them, at the same time, a high quality academic environment. The experience of interacting with an Islamic school as a parent has given me some insight in terms of how a Muslim society manages its school and the school satisfies the needs of students and parents specifically.
My educational background, I believe, also helps me in terms of the Islamic point of view to which this thesis must necessarily refer. My ability to deal with educational issues from an Islamic point of view is due to my long period of study in the field of Islam. This has consisted of more than ten years of learning in Indonesia and at the Institute of Islamic Studies at McGill University, where I received my M.A. My master’s thesis deals with the political participation of Muslim women since the colonial period into the New Order periods. I investigated the reasons for the relatively limited participation of women in politics. I found that there are several factors which account for these low ratios. First, there are socio-cultural values which confine women to the domestic domain. Politics is traditionally viewed as a male field and is considered to be a dirty and violent world which is unfit for women who are pure and delicate. Secondly, there are religious (Islamic) interpretations which enhance this traditional view of women. Women are allowed to participate in social and political activities as long as they fulfill their family duties. Thirdly, there is a lower rate of education and a lack of professionalism among women. Finally, there is the current political system and culture in Indonesia. Women are obliged to adopt the political doctrines of their husbands if the latter are part of the bureaucratic policy. This makes it difficult for women to develop their political agendas freely and independently (Rifai, 1993).

Those experiences bring me to investigate the discourse on how Indonesian society deals with modernity, globalization, culture and identity, tradition and religion, social movement, and gender issues. I bring also another dimension of understanding to the study of this area. These years of experience and observation have allowed me to explore the nature and problems of Islamic education and present a critical examination of the strengths and weaknesses of the elite Islamic schools in my country, Indonesia.

6. Orientation to the Study

My thesis is an effort to understand, from historical and contemporary perspectives, an interesting phenomenon occurring in Indonesia today. In the past, many wealthy Muslims of both the middle and upper classes sent their children to Catholic or Protestant schools, which have had a far superior academic tradition since the early of the 20th century — the time of Dutch colonialism. However, now Muslim parents from the middle and upper classes tend to send their children to elite Islamic schools to receive quality education. It is
interesting in this light that, now that the economic situation of the Muslim community has improved, many of its members have chosen to assert their religious values by sending their children to Islamic schools.

Basically, there are two systems of schooling in Indonesia: general and religious. The general system provides secular instruction for the most part, although it may provide religious education for as many as 1-2 hours a week. This system is administered by the Ministry of National Education and includes all state schools run by the department and all private denominational and non-denominational schools of a similar nature. Most of the denominational schools are run by Christian Missionary groups or by the Muhammadiyah, and are grouped into the category of general schooling since their main function is to provide secular knowledge. The religious system includes all Islamic schools, both state and private, as well as schools for religious teacher training such as the Christian Religious Teacher Training School in Java and the Hindu Religious Teacher Training School in Bali. The religious schooling system is supervised and administered by the Departemen Agama (Ministry of Religious Affairs, MORA) (Mudzhar, 1981).

Significant differences exist among the Islamic schools in Indonesia today. One group of Islamic schools has imitated the model of the sekolah negeri (public school) and is administratively and academically under the supervision of the Ministry of National Education. Like the public schools, these Islamic schools offer six years of primary education at the sekolah dasar (elementary school level), three years of junior secondary education at the sekolah menengah pertama (junior secondary school level), and three years of senior secondary education at the sekolah menengah umum (senior secondary school level). All Islamic schools of this type are private and are financially supported by their own school foundations (Azra, 2000).

A second type of Islamic school is the madrasah. While madrasah, in Arabic, literally means “school”, in Indonesia this term refers to a specific type of Islamic school. In the Indonesian archipelago, madrasahs have been spreading since the early decades of the twentieth century. In the beginning, they focused exclusively on the study of the Arabic language and Islamic subjects such as Quranic exegesis, the Islamic tradition, Islamic law, Islamic history, and other disciplines. Gradually, over time, the madrasah has adopted some of the characteristics of the modern educational system, incorporating secular subjects such as math, geography and physics into its curriculum. The madrasah can be a state or
privately funded school, yet all of them are supervised by the Ministry of Religious Affairs. The madrasah offers three levels of education: madrasah thridarrah (primary, six years); madrasah tuzananirah (junior, three years); and madrasah adiyyah (senior, three years) (Azra, 2000).

The National Education Act of 1989 mandated the Islamic schools to follow the educational system of the public schools. Consequently, they had to incorporate the Ministry of Education's national curriculum. Thus, at the basic level, there is little difference between the two educational systems. However, the Islamic school system places a far greater emphasis on religious subjects, devoting a larger number of classroom hours to their instruction. Hence the difference between them is that the Islamic schools give special attention to religious subjects. The general public schools also offer religious subjects, which are in fact obligatory in the national education system from pre-school until university; however, in these schools instruction in religious subjects is limited to only two hours a week (Azra, 2000).

Of the two kinds of Islamic school, this study will explore and examine the elite Islamic schools, focusing on Al Azhar Islamic School (AAIS) which are funded by private foundations and yet fall under the supervision of the Ministry of National Education. According to the statistic of the general senior secondary school 2001-2002, the province of DKI Jakarta (the capital city/Jakarta special district of Indonesia) has 116 public schools with 109,934 students and 368 private schools (Islam, Christian/Catholic, and non-denominational) with 104,045 students (see, the Center for Educational Data and Information, Ministry of National Education, 2002). The Ministry of National Education established certain criteria for excellent schools, i.e., they must have outstanding academic achievement as indicated by the results of the national examination and non-academic performance, good facilities and resources, strong discipline, and they must be safe. Based on these criteria, Setiardarna and associates designated some schools, public and private, as "excellent schools." 21 out of 116 public schools and 19 out of 368 private schools were given this title. These excellent schools consist of 11 Christian/Catholic schools with 6,040 (9.51%) students, 4 Islamic schools (914 students, 0.8%), and 1 non-denominational school (772 students, 0.7%) (Setiardarna, 2003). This data shows that elite Islamic schools only cover a small percentage of urban society in Jakarta, perhaps, because these Islamic schools emerged in the late of 1980s while Catholic/Christian schools had been built since the
colonial period in the beginning of the 20th century (Van Niel, 1960). However, elite Islamic schools have a good reputation among Islamic schools, such as madrasah and pesantren, even compared to public or Catholic schools (Azra, 2000).

7. Type of Study

The aim of this thesis is to understanding the phenomenon of Indonesia’s elite Islamic schools I have approached this task through three interrelated streams of inquiry. My work began with extensive field visits to eight Islamic high schools in Jakarta that represent the diversity of Islamic secondary education. One of the eight Islamic schools that I visited was particularly important in helping me to see and understand the organization and character of an Islamic school through the eyes, voices, and actions of its participants — teachers, principals, students, and parents. These field observations constitute the major data source for the descriptive portion of my research, presented in chapters three and four.

The second major strand of my research involved extensive analysis of educational practitioners and government officials’ perspectives on elite Islamic schools and their problems. These analyses form the core of chapter five, which examines the limits and strengths of elite Islamic schools as an alternative education. Together with the data gathered from Al Azhar Islamic School, these interviews also help me to generalize my field observations to several Islamic schools as a whole.

Through these two empirical efforts, I identified a desire to redefine the concept of the Islamic school of the future in three areas, i.e. pedagogy, school organization and leadership, and connections to the broader community. Each of these features contributes in important ways to school functioning. These findings will be presented in chapter six as a contribution to developing elite Islamic schools.

In search of a more complete explanation, I found it necessary to initiate a third stream of inquiry to explore the social and intellectual history of the development of Islamic education and the significant role played by a new middle class of highly educated Muslims in the rise of a new type of Islamic modern school in Indonesia. The history of Islamic education provides essential background for understanding the nature, the administration, and the lessons of Islamic schools for educational reform. Making up this history is a rich set of experiences, ideas, and symbols, which together constitute a tradition that both explains much about the dramatic changes in Islamic schools and continues to shape school
life today. This examination forms the core of chapter two, which looks at the sources of inspiration for the Islamic school’s vision of excellence and learning organization.

These lines of inquiry are applied to the study of the elite Islamic school in contemporary Indonesia, and particularly of the Islamic High School of Al-Azhar — the pioneer of elite Islamic schools that emerged in 1970s-1990s. In the field, ethnographic techniques were employed, consisting of school observation, interviews with the school community, educational practitioners, and government officials. The purpose of these techniques was to cover all school activities and hear the voices of the school community, practitioners and policy makers, whatever their status.

The research is based on two major yet different sources of empirical material. First, I have generated a primary source of data by conducting, transcribing, and analyzing 21 interviews with members of school communities, educational practitioners, and policy makers or government officials from both the Ministries of National Education and Religious Affairs. Second, I employ secondary sources, i.e., written official records produced by the school itself and other sources related to the study. The scope of this study encompassed two aims. The first was to engage with the broader contexts and effects of government policies and community involvement in improving the Islamic education system in general, while the second was to examine how particular subjects (organization and leadership, teaching and learning, curriculum and teacher development) introduced by elite Islamic schools to the Muslim community had evolved since their establishment. This set of data is particularly indicative of the more enduring transformations that elite Islamic schools have effected within the classroom and society.

The nature of this research is exploratory with an emphasis on comprehension of the process studied. The initial research proposal, the type of access to the sources of information, the uses of current theory and the construction of new knowledge are consistent with a narrative qualitative inquiry (Czarniawaska, 1998), “which has allowed me to make connections among lived experiences, larger social and cultural structures, and the here and now. It has also provided me with a way of thinking historically, interactionally and structurally” (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994, p. xii). In effect, as my intention is not to explain but to explore, understand and interpret the selected reality, I have sought connections among different aspects of that reality, such as the past with the present and the
future (historical connections), individuals with collectives (interactions), structures with subjects, and parts with the totality (structural connections).

8. Theoretical Framework of the Study

Since this study focuses on an elite Islamic school, it assumes that the school has certain characteristics that differentiate it from other schools. Adopting the literal meaning of the word 'character', as given in the Concise Oxford Dictionary, I can formulate a simple definition for the purpose of the present study. The character of a school may be defined as those features that distinguish it, at least in certain respects, from other schools. In studying the features of some schools, we need to have a clear understanding of their general organization. Considering the school as an organization, we can identify its three most important dimensions: (1) the ideology that determines the aims and objectives; (2) the individuals who provide leadership, viz., chairman of foundation, principal, administrative staff, etc.; and (3) the institutional bodies, viz., government (Ministries of National Education and Religious Affairs), school foundations, parent-teacher associations. In other words, to examine the character of a school, we have to study it from an organizational point of view.

One of the findings revealed in the literature on successful schools (for recent examples, see Bryk and Driscoll, 1988; Darling-Hammond, 1997; and Meier, 1995) is that schools that resemble institutions have central zones of values and beliefs that take on sacred characteristics. As repositories of values, these central zones are sources of identity for parents, teachers, and students, thereby making their school lives more meaningful. Meaningfulness leads to an elevated level of commitment to the school, greater effort, closer bonds with everyone, and a more intensive academic engagement for the student. Schools with this kind of character have unique cultures. They know who they are and are able to develop a common understanding of their purpose. They celebrate their uniqueness as a powerful way to achieve their goals (cited in Sergiovanni, 2000).

Culture is generally thought of as the normative glue that holds a particular school together. With shared visions, values, and beliefs at its heart, culture serves as a compass setting, steering people in a common direction. It provides norms that govern the way people interact with each other. It provides a framework for deciding what does or does not make sense. Culture, as Schein (2004) points out, is "the result of a complex group learning
process that is only partially influenced by leader behaviour" (p. 11). As Schein (p. 17) goes on to write:

As a pattern of shared basic assumptions that was always learned by a group as it solved its problems of external adaptation and internal integration, that has worked well enough to be considered valid, and therefore, to be taught to new members as the correct way to perceive, think, and feel in relation to those problems (italics in original).

Similarly, Prosser (1999) mentions that culture is "a way of constructing reality and different cultures are simply alternative constructions of reality." In the past metaphors such as ‘climate’, ‘ethos’, ‘tone’, ‘atmosphere’, and character have been used to orientate our thinking about schools (p. xii). In practice, the operational definition of culture is seen

As a system of related sub-systems, which in turn organises the relationships among cultural patterns. Classical sub-systems used by social scientists include organizing communication, resource allocation, social interaction, reproduction and ideology" (italics in original). Whilst on such extensive sub-systems, the emphasis is placed on values, beliefs, norms of behaviour, social structure, social system, social groups, status, roles, control systems, rituals, and traditions (italics in original). (Prosser, 1999, p. xii)

He further mentions that "school culture is not only the particular patterns of perceptions and related to behaviour, but also the system of relationships between these relationships" (Prosser, 1999, p. xii). In practice, therefore, “school culture is often viewed as either a totality and therefore a summation of behaviours or as a system of dynamically related sub-cultures” (Prosser, 1999, p. xii).

School effectiveness is used to analyze elite Islamic schools in Indonesia today. School effectiveness is broadly defined by Sergiovanni (2000) as a school’s ability to achieve a higher level of thoughtfulness among its students, to foster relationships characterized by caring and civility, and to record increases in the quality of student performance on both conventional and alternative levels of assessment. As a research paradigm, according to Harris and Bennett (2001), school effectiveness is premised upon the measurement of outcomes and quantifying differences between schools. It is organizationally rather than process based and differs from school improvement in its concentration upon a very limited range of outcomes. In broader terms, the effectiveness research tradition is concerned with the extent to which schools differ from another (p. 8). In the UK, for example, the study found that “effective schools were characterized by the degree of academic emphasis, teacher actions in lessons, the availability of incentives and
rewards, good conditions for pupils, and the extent to which children are able to take responsibility" (Harris and Bennett, 2001, p. 9).

9. Education in an Islamic Perspective

This section will describe the meaning and objectives of education within an Islamic point of view; it is an attempt to 'colour in' some of the background for the interviews that I describe in chapter 4. Participants did not necessarily expand on all aspects of religion when I interviewed them, thus, I attempt here as an 'insider' in terms of understanding something of the cultural context, to draw attention to this background so that the outsider reader will also have a deeper understanding of the educational situation.

The Islamic view of education is different from that of Western societies. In the Islamic philosophy of education, wisdom occupies a significant position, for wisdom (hikmah) lends, in the light of revelation, to the knowledge of al-Hakim, God the All-Wise (Sharifi, 1979, 76-79). Suitably, Islam considers that a human being cannot attain his/her inner perfection only by obtaining acquired knowledge. "Education should aim at the balanced growth of the total personality of man through the training of man's spirit, intellect, the rational self, feelings and bodily senses... The ultimate aim of Muslim education lies in the realization of complete submission to Allah on the level of the individual, the community and humanity at large" (Ashraf, 1985, p. 4; cf. al-Attas, 1979, p. 158). "Believing as it does that the true aim of education is to produce men who have faith as well as knowledge, the one sustaining the other, Islam does not think that the pursuit of knowledge by itself without reference to the spiritual goal that man must try to attain, can do humanity much good" (Husain and Ashraf, 1979, 37-38).

The concept of education in Islam is derived from the Islamic concept of the human being. The Quran says that God put part of His own soul in humans, thereby making them more blessed than other living creatures (Quran: al-Hijr (15), 29; Al-Mu'minun (23), 12-14; Sad (38), 72). Therefore, in Islam, the human being is first of all seen as composed of soul and body. He/she is a spirit, yet at the same time, material. The material and the spirit should be integrated. The human being has spiritual and rational organs of cognition, namely, the heart and the intellect, and therefore is of a dual nature. Secondly, the human being is considered to be inherently forgetful and prone to falling into injustice and ignorance (Quran: al-Al'amab (33), 72). In this sense, education helps him/her to exert self-
control and behave correctly (Kitaji, 1990, p. 51). Thirdly, a human being’s most important gift is knowledge which pertains to spiritual as well as intelligible and tangible realities (al-Attas, 1977). Through the process of understanding and practicing knowledge, the human being can cultivate his/her personality and attain inner perfection (Quran: al-Balad (90), 8-9; al-An'am (6), 74-82).

Generally speaking, therefore, the human being is characterized in various ways in Islam. Firstly, he/she is characterized as being not only an earthly creature but also a spiritual being. Secondly, he/she is gifted with power with which he/she has to harmonize with the universe under the authority of God. Thirdly, he/she possesses intellectual power which preserves the universal truth through his/her experience, imagination and conceptualization. Fourthly, he/she is essentially free, although all activities are regulated in relation to God, the universe and society. For Muslims, the Prophet is the ideal human being who realized intellectual perfection which was completed by acquiring knowledge (Kitaji, 1990; cf. Husain and Asfraf, 1979).

Outside observers who are not familiar with Islam or Muslim society may wonder how Islamic schools can combine and synthesize seemingly contradictory essentials in its formulation of vision, mission and goals. We have to look at the Islamic world-view and Muslim history to understand this concurrence. The Quran, the Muslim Holy Book, is not a cosmological text or a universal history in the same sense that the Bible is. Therefore, Muslims have a different understanding of modernity than do Christians. In the Muslim world generally, including in Indonesia, modernization does not necessarily entail the disenchantment with the spiritual or the secularization of life in the sense that it often does in Western societies (Woodward, 2002). In the West, the students of natural science and religious authorities have been at loggerheads for most of the time during the last four hundreds years. Historically, the Western sciences grew up in an atmosphere of religious hostility and, as a result, developed an irrationally intolerant attitude towards all non-empirical knowledge including religion. Muslim society in its days of scientific advancement never experienced such a conflict and therefore never faced any threat from serious scientific pursuits to its religious beliefs. There has been no case in Muslim history comparable to the Church reaction against Galileo and Copernicus in the West (Ahmad, 1990).
The Islamic understanding of the relationship between religious and worldly affairs leaves room for a more principled compromise. The Quranic cosmogony is minimal. While the Quran states clearly that all that exists is the product of God's creative powers, there is no Islamic Book of Genesis. The Prophet Muhammad did not claim to be a scientific authority and even encouraged the quest for empirical knowledge of the natural world even "as far as to China." The Quran stresses natural causality, but also explains that, when it suits His purposes, Allah can suspend the laws of nature that he has established in order to bring humanity closer to Him (Rahman, 1980, p. 66; Cf. Qutb, 1977, p. 54). This perspective motivates an Islamic natural theology in which understanding nature is a way of coming to know Allah. In addition, for many Indonesian Muslims, the Sufi idea of interior (batin) and external (zahir) realities builds on this dualistic concept of causality, and has long exerted a powerful influence on Indonesian thought. Modernity can be accepted, and indeed embraced, as an element of the phenomenal world (zahir) without challenging the internal, mystical truths of the realm of batin. Thus the Quranic distinction between naturalistic and religious causality and the subsequent Sufi division of reality enables Indonesian Muslims in general to avoid conflict between religion and science that occurred in European thought (Woodward, 2002).

In Indonesia, Muslims, including Muslim schools, express their common faith according to one of three major inclinations: fundamentalist, traditionalist, and modernist. Members of each group embrace different ideas of what it means to be a Muslim and therefore the kinds of personal attributes, precepts, and behaviors children and adolescents ought to develop under the aegis of their schools. For example, at fundamentalist Muslim schools, students need to cover their head at school and in daily life. At traditionalist and modernist schools, the religious laws pertaining to daily life, are arguably less demanding and the relationship between religious and secular life is more tolerant. Thus, even within the same religion, the meaning of what it means to be religious has considerable variance and those differing views find their practical expression not only in how their adherents behave in general, but also what is emphasized in schools. For example, in traditional Islamic schools, it is estimated that about 70 percent of the time during the day is devoted to the study of religious texts, whereas in modernist Muslim schools, about 30 percent of the time is devoted to such materials. In fundamentalist schools, moreover, boys and girls are separated, while in traditionalist and modernist, the classes are mixed. Each group has a
different view of what God requires, even though each of the three groups honors the same God.

10. Islamic Education in Indonesia: Review of Past Studies

Studies that concentrate on Indonesian Islamic education in the modern era are plentiful in number, but they tend, for the most part, to be historical studies and analyses of educational policy. Mahmud Yumus (1960, 1992, 3rd ed.), the first Indonesian scholar to write on the history of Islamic education in Indonesia, presents a historical study of the subject for the period 1900-1957. He relates how the Muslim community gradually implemented and developed the system of Islamic education in the Muslim community. The author also surveys the types and institutions of Islamic teaching since the coming of Islam to Indonesia, the subjects taught, the methods used, the textbooks read, famous teachers, etc. The first part of his book deals with Sumatra, the second with Java, the third with the other islands, while the fourth deals with the unity in this great diversity which has been achieved by the work of the Ministry of Religious Affairs (Boland, 1982).

Yumus’s book is an indispensable reference for the study of the history of Islamic education in Indonesia, for it covers a broad period, from the coming of Islam and its early development in Indonesia to the end of the 1950s. However, it does have a number of shortcomings, not the least of which is its imbalanced focus on the period after the 19th century, while it offers only a glimpse of the preceding era. It also lacks a sound historical methodology in that it neglects such important elements as archives and Dutch documents and is limited to compiling lists of resources. Furthermore, it places undue emphasis on the history of Islamic education in the region of Minangkabau (168 pages of 420 pages). The reason for this was not personal bias, but lack of sufficient information on the history of Islamic education elsewhere in Indonesia. The book’s primary focus is religious, investigating as it does the rise and fall of Muslim influence in Indonesian history. The author assumes that Islamic educational methodology lies at the heart of success. By knowing the past, Muslims can fashion a bright future for the generations to come.

Mulyanto Sumardi’s Sejarah Singkat Pendidikan Islam di Indonesia 1945-1975 (A Short History of Islamic Education in Indonesia 1945-1975) builds upon and complements the work of Mahmud Yumus. In many respects the book’s discussion of the history of Islamic education overlaps with the latter, especially in its discussion of PTAIN (Perguruan
Tinggi Ilmu Agama Islam Negeri, The State of Islamic Higher Education) and ADJA
(Akademik Dinas Ilmu Agama, The Official Academy of Religious Knowledge) -- both of
them precursors of the IAIN (Institute Agama Islam Negeri, State Institute for Islamic
Studies) and the pondok pesantren. But as suggested by its title, the study does not cover the
period after 1975, a time when the Islamic educational system experienced significant
changes. Nor does the book issued by the Ministry of Religious Affairs and written by
Zuhairini et al., Sejarah Pendidikan Islam (A History of Islamic Education), discuss
developments after 1975. It is an ambitious work, devoting more than half of its attention
(125 of pages) to the history of education in the Middle East, especially in Mecca and
Medina, from the period of the Prophet Muhammad up to the golden age of Islam. In the
second half, the writers discuss the history of Islamic education in Indonesia, which in many
aspects only repeats and simplifies the work of Mahmud Yunus. The book offers no
significant new information. After discussing education in the colonial period, it simply
goes on to examine the ideological and constitutional basis of the Republic of Indonesia and
how this presents opportunities for the growth and development of an Islamic educational
system.

Taken together these three books offer a relatively complete description of the
history and development of Islamic education in Indonesia from its inception to the mid-
1970s. Despite several weaknesses, the books' strong points are the presentation of raw data
about the development of Islamic educational curriculum from one period to the next.
Unfortunately, an adequate analysis of the data, explaining the transitions and changes in the
content of Islamic education, is lacking overall.

Moreover, these books do not critically assess the strengths and weaknesses of the
developments and experiments that have marked the history of Islamic education. Furthermore,
they do not discuss the influences, impacts, and implications of these changes
on the development of Islam in Indonesia as a whole. For instance, none of them address the
impact of institutional change on Muslim society in the shift of Islamic education from the
surau in Minangkabau to modern Islamic schools. On the one hand, the emergence of
modern Islamic school, such as the Adabiah School in Padang seemingly produced more
successful students, who discarded the traditional look of the scholar and embraced modern
developments. On the other, the tendencies of the surau may themselves have contributed to
the decline of the role of the ulama (Muslim leader).
In this context, Steenbrink's study, *Pesantren, Madrasah and Sekolah* (1974) is a valuable historical survey of Islamic education. It presents a comprehensive historical analysis of the origins of the various systems of education in present-day Indonesia. Its first chapter offers an analysis of the origins of the two main systems of education still operating in Indonesia today: the Islamic educational system, which grew out of the traditional religious institutions, and the secular system of education, which currently operates along Western lines. Steenbrink sees the development of modern Indonesian Islamic education as an evolution from the *pesantren* (the traditional boarding-school for mainly religious instruction) to the *madrasah* (a religious school featuring 'Western' methodologies of instruction and organization, often adding a smaller or larger percentage of 'secular' knowledge) and finally to the *sekolah*: the 'secularized' school, offering a limited amount of religious instruction. After this historical survey, the book's second chapter discusses several aspects of the phenomenology of religion, among them the development of religious significance in the system and the content of Islamic education. According to Steenbrink, a process of 'secularization' is developing within the Islamic system of education: while the *madrasah* should be an 'integrated' school of both religious and secular sciences, it is in fact seen more and more as a pure religious school with some minor additions of 'secular' instruction for the sake of social advancement. In the third chapter, he presents a 'theologia specialis religionum', a concrete theology of (non-Christian) religions. His analysis of the recent trends in Islamic education in Indonesia leads him to conclude that Islam in social life plays a diminishing role in the Indonesian social sphere. However, this does not mean a collapse or fading away of Islam in order to make way for something else, e.g., Christianity.

Elizabeth II. Graves's historical study, entitled *The Minangkabau Response to Dutch Colonial Rule in the Nineteenth Century,* analyzes transitions of education, including Islamic education, in West Sumatra. According to her, the Dutch experiment in founding the 'people's schools' (volkschoolen, which were better known as 'sekolah-sekolah nagari' (nagari schools) in Minangkabau, was largely responsible for the transformation of the *surae*. Although in the early stages most of these schools relied upon the curriculum of the *surae*, in the later stages of development they adopted the Dutch educational system. This had an immediate impact on Minangkabau society. First, the presence of competing nagari schools was a heavy blow to the *surae* educational system, even though the nagari schools also enabled Minangkabau society to get a head start in modern education compared
to other communities in Indonesia. Secondly, many of the important voices in the intellectual and political discourse on the national awakening and independence movement were Minangkabauese from the negari school system.

The historical approach as represented by Steenhink (1974) and Graves (1981) needs to be highlighted, if we want to see not only the evolution of Islamic education but also the influence and impact of Islamic education on Islamic society and even Indonesian society as a whole. By doing so, we will be able to see more accurately the position and role of Islamic education in the development of Islam in Indonesia.

11. Overview of Chapters

This dissertation is organized into seven chapters. Chapter one serves as an introduction to the whole thesis. In this chapter, I explain the historical background of the study and its usefulness for improving the Islamic education system in Indonesia. I also define there the general theoretical and methodological framework of the dissertation, and the main research focus on the development of elite Islamic schools in Indonesia's urban centres from the 1970s to the 1990s. This chapter also contains a literature review of works on Indonesia’s Islamic education system, providing a conceptual mapping for further analysis. The review focuses on concerns about the Islamic education system in their respective local and national contexts and highlights some unresolved tensions of the Indonesian educational reform in recent years.

In Chapter two I examine the modernization of Islamic education in Indonesia and parts of the Muslim world since the mid-nineteenth century. My aim here is to show how the Muslim community dealt with modernity, the Middle East connection, Dutch colonial policy, and the New Order government’s policy in the process of creating Islamic schools and transforming them from traditional to modern institutions in the face of today’s competitive global markets. Since conventional histories of Islamic education tend toward a chronology of events and policy developments, I also focus on the current development of Islamic education and the significant role played in it by the new middle class of highly educated Muslims, but especially on the rise of the modern Islamic elite school in Indonesia.

In Chapter three I present the research design for the case study, which focuses on the Islamic High School of Al Azhar. I look at the research site, the methodology and the procedures used for data collection, analyses and interpretation. It also includes a brief
description of the participants and a history of the school and the educational programs and activities offered there.

Chapter four is based mainly on an analysis of interviews and information about the participants' perspectives and representations of Al Azhar School. I present the perspectives of administrators, teachers, students, and parents, involved in the educational program of Al Azhar. As regards their opinions, I focused on their level of satisfaction with the programs and activities provided by the school organizers; the debate on school uniforms for female students—is it an indication of religiosity or identity?; the caring attitude of teachers in always showing good behavior, passion, and intelligence; the close relations among teachers, students and parents; and the student’s own perceptions of school life and academic performance.

In Chapter five I identify the larger context for elite Islamic schools from the perspective of educational practitioners and government officials in both the Ministries of National Education and Religious Affairs. These findings are presented in two ways: first, I explore why the emergence of elite Islamic schools has been perceived as a viable alternative and an innovative option, especially among Islamic schools; and second, I examine representations of practitioners and officials about the limits and possibilities of elite Islamic schools for excellent and innovative education and try to identify why these schools need to effect changes to their vision, organization, pedagogical skills, community participation and networking in order to contribute to the development of the Islamic education system in Indonesia.

Chapter six is generally a discussion and analyses of the findings in chapter 4 and 5. The analyses are based on the perspectives of respondents—either within the school community, educational practitioners, government officials, and the researcher herself. Indeed, in this chapter I propose that future Islamic schools adopt a new structure and systematic reform in order to produce students, who are knowledgeable in secular as well as religious subjects and who, while preserving their national and religious identity, can compete with others in the global world and act as leaders in their own society.

In Chapter seven, the final chapter, I provide a summary and the conclusions of this thesis. It also offers my own evaluation of Indonesian education, some implications for further research, and a number of suggestions and recommendations for elite Islamic schools.
1 The New Order (Orde Baru) is the official Indonesian designation for the period beginning in 1965 with an alleged Communist coup and ending with the downfall in 1998 of Suharto, who was president throughout the entire period.

2 Mehmmediyati is one of the most important Muslim organizations involved in educational activities.

3 The preference for using the term ‘general’ to the term ‘secular’ is for the reason that there is no such a school of purely secular in character in Indonesia. In fact, in Indonesia the ‘general’ schooling system is called ‘sekolah umum’ which literally means ‘general schools’. Some writers, such as Delair Neer (1974) also prefer to use the term ‘general’ rather than ‘secular’.

4 The age of madrasah students normally range from 7 to 12 years old for Feidaiyah (primary) level, from 13-15 for Tajamiyah (junior) level, and from 16-18 for Akhyah (senior) level.

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Over the past two decades, elite Islamic schools have come to play an important component of the Islamicization effort in many Muslim societies. In the 1960s, many of these institutions have been recognized as leading in Islamic education. With the development of this new type of educational institution, the Ministry of Education, especially the Middle and Upper Classes, introduced some of the best minds in modern education to teach and direct the curricula. However, the new schools still lack academic literature on how to best develop the new educational system in the countries of the world, which is developing new schools. Currently, management and administration of these institutions have not been adequately addressed. In an excellent and comprehensive study, Mokhtari, S. M. G. (2002) suggests that the Islamic education system needs to promote the development of the organization and administrative processes. In this regard, it is necessary to see how other educational systems can be adapted to these institutions. Moreover, the study also notes that the institutions are not only for ideological, but also for social and educational purposes.