MONASH University

Education in post-conflict and post-tsunami Aceh:
An ethnographic case study on meunasah's ECE
in Aceh, Indonesia

Riki Taufiki

Master of Education (Educational Sociology), Sultan Idris Education University,
Perak, Malaysia

Bachelor of Education, Universitas Syiah Kuala, Aceh, Indonesia

A thesis submitted for the degree of *Doctor of Philosophy* at

Monash University in 2020

Faculty of Education

Copyright Notice

Notice 1

Notice 2

Abstract

This study focused on how a rural community in North Aceh, established a community-initiated early childhood education in their *meunasah*. For centuries, *meunasah* has been used by locals as a house of worship, a centre for community activities, a cultural centre, and a centre for traditional Islamic teaching for children. In recent years, as Aceh emerged from the post-conflict and post-disaster period, the educational role of *meunasah*, which is a prominent feature of villages in Aceh, also includes early childhood education (ECE) services. In particular, this study aimed to answer the following questions: Why are *meunasah* stakeholders and community members invested in the development of early years' education in post-conflict and post-tsunami Aceh?; What is the role of *meunasah* in the development of the ECE initiative?; What is the nature of teachers' experience and community aspirations in *meunasah*'s ECE? The thesis addresses these questions through an ethnographic case study in Gampong Blang, a village in North Aceh Regency, one of the regencies of the Aceh Province in Indonesia.

In theorising the role of *meunasah* stakeholders, community members, and educators in promoting its early years' education initiative, Paulo Freire's notions of conscientisation inform this research. I also incorporate the concepts of Attas's Islamic education to better understand a deeply religious community and an education institution situated in a context in which religion is integral to the lives of its members. This study conducted as an ethnographic case study involved an exploration of village stakeholders, community members and educator's stories and aspirations of their village, their *meunasah* and its ECE initiatives. The data gathering methods employed in my research include observations, interviews and document analysis. These methods allowed the generation of data from the participants, namely the village stakeholders, community members and educators.

The research findings showed that this rural community in North Aceh is one that still upholds its traditional values and system while embracing gradual changes, and hoping that their approach to ECE will nurture children with the concept of a 'balanced human'. The community perceived that education should aim to balance *ilmu* (knowledge) and *adab* (good etiquette, behaviour, manners and morals,) consistent with Al-Attas' conception of education that is about holistically educating the human being. This study also illustrates the compatibility of Freire's ideas within deeply-religious communities like Aceh, which is well known for its strong Islamic tradition and local values. Freire asserts that critical consciousness must be developed through the efforts of the people, the authentic unity of action and reflection.

Al-Attas' concept of *adab* also emphasises that individuals with *adab* must be conscious of their obligation to themselves, their family and society. In this research, Al Attas' concept of *adab* is characterised by the villagers' drive to be responsible community members cognisant of communal issues, such as the need for ECE access in the village. The research findings revealed this as a catalyst in the heightening of communal consciousness among the community members in Gampong Blang.

This study also highlighted the importance of the role of local women's pressure groups developing consciousness of the global discourse and agenda in early childhood in the local context. The study also underscores the potential and significance of the educational role of *meunasah* in Gampong Blang in providing access to ECE in the rural areas of Aceh, especially when *meunasah* is a ubiquitous presence in all villages in Aceh. The study found that the role of *meunasah* in the early stage of this education initiative is pivotal as an incubator that enables the ECE initiative to start and develop despite its minimal resources. Furthermore, the *Meunasah* in Gampong Blang functions as a site for decision-making in village meetings as well as a place for the community to raise both collective and individual consciousness on pressing issues.

The research findings also indicate that to improve access and to raise the quality ECE services would require increasing ECE investments among different stakeholders, including the central government (relevant ministries), regency allocation and private sectors. There is also a need for policy-makers to consider the local context in mandating that educators implement government policies on ECE. Often policies aimed at improving the quality of ECE fail to take into account that not all existing ECE centres have the resources required. Arguably, there is a need to reconceptualise the notions of early childhood shaped by on-the-ground realities at the local level as well as the socio-economic disparities existing in the various areas in Indonesia. Given this, the ECE narrative should reflect local contexts and take into account local demands and issues. Finally, the study also demonstrates that there is an urgent need to increase government spending on ECE.

Declaration

This thesis contains no material which has been accepted for the award of any other degree or diploma at any university or equivalent institution and that, to the best of my knowledge and belief, this thesis contains no material previously published or written by another person, except where due reference is made in the text of the thesis.

Signature:

Riki Taufiki

Date: 1 December 2019

Acknowledgements

Yusuf and Professor Amir Hasan Dawi, who personally provided a lot of assistance and motivation for continuing this PhD study.

Table of Contents

List of Figures and Tables

Glossary

The following terms below in italics are from Indonesian, Acehnese (Ac) and Arabic (Ar).

ADD (Alokasi Dana Desa)	Village Allocation Fund
Azan	Muslim's call to daily prayer
amah (Ac.)	Local's unit of measurement for paddy field, approximately 1,600 m2
asar (Ar.)	Afternoon prayer
Bilee (Ac.)	Assistant to the Imam in managing meunasah
BKB (Bina Keluarga Balita	A government service that provides parenting education for a family with early aged children
dayah (Ac.)	Traditional Islamic boarding school, known as pesantren in other parts of Indonesia
ECE	Early Childhood Education.
	Indonesia, provide the services for children aged from 0 to 6 years. Its formal structure consists of Taman kanak-kanak (Kindergarten) and Raudhatul Anfal (Islamic Kindergarten).
gunca (Ac.)	Local's unit of measurement for grain equal to 175 kilos.
gupang (Ac.)	Local's unit of measurement for a paddy field, approximately 800 m2.
gotong-royong	Voluntary communal work.
insya' (Ar.)	Evening prayer
Islamic Kindergarten	Originally called Raudhatul Anfal (RA) in Indonesia. RA becomes the formal form of ECE program under the Ministry of Religious Affairs (MoRA), designed for children aged 4 to 6 years. It is similar to regular kindergarten, except it puts more focus on Islamic values in its teaching and learning process.
KB	The abbreviation for Kelompok Bermain or Play Group
khandury (Ac.)	Feast ritual.
labi-labi (Ac.)	Local's public minivan
ma'grib (Ar.)	Dawn prayer.

majority world	The term "majority world" refers to and is utilised in preference to the terms "developing world" and "Third world". The term also references the fact that the majority of the world's population lives in these countries.
meudagang (Ac.)	A journey to study at dayah.
meunasah (Ac.)	A traditional Islamic educational institution established in every village in Aceh Province, Indonesia also serving as a house of worship, a centre for community activities and education centre for children.
minority world	The term utilised in preference to the terms "developed world". The term also refers to the fact that the minority of the world's population lives in these countries.
Posyandu (Pos Pelayanan Terpadu)	Integrated Health Post. Posyandu is a comprehensive health care service for early-aged children (aged 0 to 6 years) provided by the Ministry of Social Affairs.
TPQ (Taman Pendidikan Al-Quran)	Al-Quran Learning Centre. TPQ is a place where children learn to read the Quran and also get the opportunities to play with other children of their peer group. The concept is basically similar to playgroup. However, it emphasises the ability to read the Quran and teaching Islamic values.
subuh (Ar.)	Sunrise prayer.
takziah (Ar.)	Religious gathering to pray for the deceased, known as tahlilan in others part of Indonesia
ulama (Ar.)	Islamic scholar.
zakat (Ar.)	Religious tithe
zuhur (Ar.)	Mid-day prayer.

Chapter 1: Introduction

1.1   Background of the Research

This study is an inquiry into the early childhood education (ECE) initiatives in *meunasah*, a traditional Islamic educational institution, a socio-cultural centre, and an integral feature of villages in the Aceh Province of Indonesia. The research aimed to explore how a rural community in North Aceh, established community-initiated ECE in their *meunasah* during Aceh's post-conflict and post-tsunami era. Moreover, investigations also focused on the driving forces behind such ECE initiatives and future community aspirations for ECE in *meunasah*.

In the Aceh province, *meunasah* is not only an educational institution it has also emerged as a socio-cultural and political institution that is central to the lives of the Acehnese rural communities (Badruzzaman, 2002; Wahid, 2015). For centuries, locals used *meunasah* as a house of worship, a centre for community activities, a cultural centre, a chamber for dispute resolution and an entry for traditional Islamic teaching of children (Alfian, 1999; Badruzzaman, 2002; Sabirin, 2014; Wahid, 2013). However, in recent years as Aceh endured a dynamic post-conflict and post-disaster period (2005 onwards) (Shah & Cardozo, 2014), the Acehnese and others reconfigured and transformed the educational role and function of *meunasah* (Feener, 2014).

During Aceh's conflict years (i.e. 1976-2005), traditional Islamic teaching of children in many *meunasahs* ceased or was redesigned for adult Islamic education instead (Srimulyani, 2013; Wahid, 2013). *Meunasahs* that continue to employ the traditional Islamic teaching provide basic religious instruction, teaching children to memorise and recite the Qur'an as well as teaching fundamental Islamic beliefs and practices (Feener, 2014). However, this condition changed in the post-tsunami and post-conflict era (i.e. 2005-recent time). Recent decentralisation

policies and the special autonomy granted to the province vested broader authority to villages to manage their own budgets. Most villages though chose not re-establish their traditional Islamic teaching of children in *meunasahs*. Instead, based on my involvement in the Nisam District of Aceh and observations in other districts in North Aceh Regency prior to this study, many *meunasahs* chose to establish modern ECE, including playgroups, Islamic pre-school, and Taman Pendidikan Al-Quran (TPQ). Such privately run learning centres mostly receive funding through the village budget, alternately though at times they may receive government funding allocated from a special independent budget.

Since the end of the conflict and tsunami focus, the Acehnese people have harboured high expectations of peace and aspirations to move forward from the period of oppression to a period of liberation. To achieve this purpose, people put their hope in education. As part of the post-conflict peace settlement, education came to occupy a critical role to improve the redistribution of entitlements and opportunities traditionally held by a privileged few (Barron, Rahman, & Nugroho, 2013). The Aceh educational strategy plan introduced in 2008 aimed at making education play a transformative role in Acehnese society by redressing past inequities caused by conflict and building a peaceful future for the province (Bailey, 2009). In light of this plan, the Acehnese see education as an instrument to shift them from an oppressed past towards a more equitable and brighter future. Such thoughts resonated with the words of Freire (1972a) who suggested that the past can be an instructive tool for an oppressed people in their progress "looking at the past, for example, becomes a means of understanding more clearly what and who they are so that they can more wisely build the future" (p. 84).

In the context of Freire's words, my research also aimed at portraying how the once deeply oppressed people from a district in North Aceh attempted to work towards a better future for their children through ECE. To this end, my study looked at how the people in this community developed their critical consciousness through their *meunasah* and shifted from

oppressive educational conditions to a more humanised and liberating one. For years and through my own lived experience, I have witnessed many children in my district, having no access to ECE. It was only through the *meunasah* that the community found the means to improve the lives of their children by providing its own ECE.

In the last two years, I have also witnessed a consistent trend developing in North Aceh villages where the village authority and elders chose to provide the support and budget for the establishment of ECE in *meunasah*. The village cleric (*Imam*) also supported the change to traditional religious teaching and engaging the village youth volunteers to educate the children in the *meunasah*. I believe that this type of bottom-up initiative has the potential to enhance ECE services in rural Aceh and should be part of the' future policy framework. Considering its potential impact, I argue that there is a need for a study that specifically examines the role of *meunasah* in providing ECE and the potential and importance of the broader educational role it plays in rural Aceh.

1.2   Rationale and Personal Motivation

The rationale for advocating more ECE has its basis in a range of considerations, including my personal experiences with ECE and the various benefits ECE offers children and society in general. In some developing countries around the world, access to ECE services is not always equal. Poor children, especially in rural communities, are least likely to receive these services (UNESCO, 2005; OECD, 2015). My personal motivation stems from my early childhood experiences. In the mid-1990s most of the children in my village in North Aceh Regency did not have access to ECE. However, at that time, my family made a very bold decision that would have a lifelong effect on my situation. I was sent to my grandfather's house in the city for one year, where I had the chance to enrol in a kindergarten located in the city approximately 15 kilometres away from my parents' home in the village.

Kindergarten was the first place where I learned about and engaged with human diversity. The fact that the children I was with were different and varied in terms of ethnicity, language and religion did not limit or restrict my interactions with them. As children, we naturally played together and learnt from each other. These childhood experiences came to shape my life values and how I viewed the world. Researchers have indeed suggested that early childhood institutions establish social and emotional development through learning to cooperate, making friends, and developing relationships (Dunn, 2004; Hyson, 2004; Raver, 2002).

Research on brain development also signalled that appropriate stimulation in the early years enhanced potential brain capacity. The first five years of life is a crucial stage that can have a distinct bearing over a lifetime (Grantham-McGregor et al., 2007; Yoshikagawa et al., 2013). Studies from neuroscience indicate that in the early years of development, the brain rapidly and carefully designs its structure and the way it functions. As such, these cognitive developments may affect the health, behaviour, and learning outcomes in future years of an individual's life (Amer, Hyson, & Chang, 2013; Grantham-McGregor et al., 2007; Irwin, Siddiqi, & Hertzman, 2007; Winter, 2010; Yoshikagawa et al., 2013). Early intervention also contributes to the development of better citizenship and social cohesion which, in turn, positively impacts health and other social benefits (Lynch, Geller, & Schmindt, 2004). Moreover, some researchers believe that the best investment in human capital results from governments making investments in education in the early years of childhood (Amer et al., 2013; Heckman, 2006).

Scholars have also argued for the importance of ECE in foregrounding democracy and creating sustainable and equal society (Dahlberg & Moss, 2005; Moss, 2017). For example, according to Moss (2017), the creation of such a society could only be achieved by allowing alternative voices and stories from across the world to emerge. Stories such as a community's experimentation in education in which ECE is not driven solely by a neoliberal agenda premised on high returns on investment. My research tells one such story set in rural North Aceh; it is a

story of a community's willingness to change, its tenacity, and its hope for a better future for its children. Through this study, I explore and share the story of a community that despite suffering decades of conflict, never stopped believing in the importance of education.

To better understand the context of my research site, a depiction of the historical context of Aceh province together with recent socio-economic conditions of the North Aceh Regency are instructive.

1.3   Research Context: Post-Conflict and Post-Tsunami Aceh

Aceh is an autonomous (*otonomi khusus)* province within Indonesia, located at the northern tip of Sumatra Island. Aceh province occupies an area of 56,667 square kilometres. According to Statistics Indonesia, the province has a population of 4,791,924 people, with approximately 98 per cent of the population identifying as Muslims (Statistics Indonesia, 2017). Following special autonomy accorded to Aceh in 2001, it is the only province in the country with a special right to enforce Sharia law, albeit in a limited manner (discussed further in the next section). To better understand the research context, it is essential to gain an understanding of the post-conflict and post-tsunami dynamics re-shaping the social fabric of the Aceh province.

Aceh possesses a complicated history riddled by war, conflict, turbulence, and tragedy. The series of wars and conflicts began with 'the holy war' against the Dutch Colonial powers between 1873 and 1914, resulting in the death of about 100,000 Acehnese (Veer, 1985). Then, in 1945, a civil war claimed the lives of thousands of Acehnese followed by the Islamic state rebellion that occurred between 1953 and 1963. The most recent conflict was the GAM rebellion between 1976 and 2005. Numerous scholars (Alfian, 1999; Aspinall, 2009; Myrttinen, 2012; Sujatmiko, 2012) argued that the latest conflict, driven by grievances attributed to economic injustice, ethnonationalism and human rights developed into the cause behind the longest and bloodiest conflict in post-independent Indonesia, in which an estimated 12,000 to 35,000 lost their lives.

In 2004, a mega natural disaster in the shape of the tsunami hit the region. This tragedy of unprecedented proportions killed more than 221,000 people (about 5 per cent of the entire population) and left more than 500,000 displaced (Thorburn & Rochelle, 2014). A disaster of such magnitude suddenly shifted the Acehnese and Indonesian psyche, which then saw the end to decades of conflict in Aceh. The tsunami disaster seemed to have transformed the Acehnese into being more contemplative, religious, and compassionate (Sujatmiko, 2012). This shift and a new mindset, coupled with intense international pressure, encouraged the warring parties to end hostilities forging a peaceful settlement in 2005.

The following excerpt from Terence Bigalke, a historian and senior fellow at East-West Centre involved in the tsunami relief effort in Aceh provided some insight into the degree of change in the everyday lives of Acehnese after peace:

> What is my dominant image in Aceh? It is of Acehnese celebrating the return of life toward normalcy: streams of students walking on the streets near campus, tents being replaced by more permanent housing, shops, open-air markets and cafes flourishing again. It is of traffic jams returning to the main thoroughfares of Banda Aceh, and of people travelling freely again on roads throughout the region. It is the first harvest of rice in fields destroyed in December 2004, and people remarrying and starting new families. (Bigalke, 2006)

After peace negotiations between the Free Aceh Movement or *Gerakan Aceh Merdeka* (GAM) and the Indonesian government in 2005, Aceh moved into the post-conflict era. The Acehnese expected that the peace would eradicate social injustices that had left the province lagging behind other parts of the country in terms of social and economic development. Hence, education came to occupy a critical role in helping the provincial government to meet its people's expectations (Shah & Cardozo, 2014). The people of Aceh now strive towards a better life using education as a tool to achieve it. Numerous studies illustrate that conflict-affected

societies often hold education in high regard (Save the Children, 2013; Shah & Cardozo, 2014; Winthrop & Kirk, 2008). One of the government's first educational policies after the tsunami disaster was to utilise education as an instrument of transformative change in Acehnese society by redressing past inequities caused by conflict and working to build a peaceful future for the province (Bailey, 2009). Today, it has opened itself to the modernisation of its traditional educational institutions by transforming the old role of the *meunasah* to provide modern early years education.

Riddell (2006), reiterated Aceh's recognition as '*the gate to the holy land*' due to its role in propagating Islam in the past. As peace flourishes in Aceh, so have the attempts to enforce more Sharia-based regulations in the region. The 2001 special autonomy agreement with the Indonesian central government aimed at quelling the separatist influence and reducing the tensions with the Acehnese allowed Aceh to implement Sharia law (Feener, 2011; Kloos, 2014). However, the Acehnese separatist group (GAM) sturdily dismissed the imposition of Sharia law and the institution of the Sharia court as it felt that these did not reflect the Acehnese way of understanding Islam (Kingsbury, 2006). According to Kingsbury (2006), while Islam underpins the Acehnese separatist movement and is fundamental in its political agenda, it did not have an Islamically determined agenda. The distinction between both contexts refers to differences between a state or a society imbued with Islamic values and a state or a society determined by Sharia law. The Aceh separatists, widely supported in Aceh from 1976 to 2005 saw Islam as the moral basis from which society or state derives its social codes.

1.4   Recent Socio-Economic Developments in North Aceh

Figure 1. Map of North Aceh within Indonesia.

Following conflict and the tsunami disaster in 2004, North Aceh embarked on a new economic trajectory with the regency also entering the post oil and gas boom era which left it with no choice but to diversify its sources of revenue (RPDB North Aceh, 2017). In this attempt, North Aceh regency dealt with various issues, including socio-economic challenges such as the quality of its human resources (poverty and education access) (Shah & Cardozo, 2014; Naylor, 2014) and corruption issues (Hassan, 2015; Kurniawati, 2018). The local government has endeavoured to take full advantage of the era of peace in the region to change the socio-economic conditions of its people gradually.

North Aceh Regency is one of the regencies of Aceh, located on the east coast of Aceh Province. The region is historically well known as the initial area where Islam first arrived in the Indonesian archipelago in the thirteenth century (Hall, 2017; Siegel, 1969). The Islamic Sultanate of Samudra Pasai, located in the North Aceh region, was regarded as a significant international maritime port in Southeast Asia in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. Based on

several surviving contemporary maritime sojourner accounts, such as Marco Polo's and Ibn Batutah's, Chinese dynastic records, and *Hikayat Raja-Raja Pasai* (chronicle of the rulers of Samudra Pasai) Islam first came to the area sometime between Marco Polo's 1292 visit and 1297. The conversion of people in the area to Islam was beneficial to Samudra Pasai as it became the north Sumatra intermediary stopover that hosted Middle East Muslim travellers and China-linked sojourners. Ibn Battuta acknowledged Samudra Pasai's emergence as a major international commercial centre in his mid-fourteenth century account. He noted that Pasai exported goods such as coco-palms, areca-palms, Indian aloes, camphor, bamboo, tree incense, cloves, nutmeg and mace (Hall, 2017).

Samudra Pasai's role as an economic and political hub in the region in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries was also associated with an influx of foreigners, especially Muslim traders and scholars. It was this era that introduced religious institutions, and scholarly activities were encouraged. After becoming a major commercial hub in the fourteenth century, the kingdom of Samudra Pasai became incorporated into the Aceh Sultanate in the sixteenth-century (Hall, 2017). From this period, Samudra Pasai became the vassal of the Aceh Kingdom (1556-1904) until the period from 1873 to 1912 when resistance against the Dutch occupation occurred (Said, 1985; Alfian, 1999). After Indonesian independence in 1945, the Samudra Pasai area was renamed as North Aceh Regency and became one of the regencies in Aceh Province.

Three decades after Indonesian independence in 1945, North Aceh became the heartland of the Acehnese conflict which took place between 1976 and 2005. The excessive exploitation of natural resources in North Aceh, along with human rights abuses, fueled Acehnese discontentment with the central government and this became one of the significant factors that led to the rebellion by the Free Aceh Movement (GAM) (Kingsbury, 2006; Myrttinen, 2012). During the conflict between Indonesian government forces and the pro-independence GAM, between 10,000 and 30,000 people were killed, including many civilians (Stange & Patock,

2010). The conflict also caused economic stagnation and fractured the social fabric of Acehnese society (Stange & Patock, 2010) though the end of the armed conflict, in 2005, boosted the expectations of Acehnese for a better life and calmer future.

The regency is the most populous in Aceh with a total population of 529,751 consisting of 268.357 males and 273.521 females with a growth rate of 2.48 per cent per annum. The total area of 3.296,86 km2 has put the regency's population density rate at 164 per km2 (RDPB/Regional Development Planning Board North Aceh, 2017). There are four districts (*kecamatan*) in North Aceh, each of which consists of villages (*gampong*), and each village consisting of hamlets (*duson*).

Table 1

Area and Population in North Aceh, 2011

No.	District	Area (Km²)	Population
1.	Sawang	384,65	34,521
2.	Nisam	114,74	17,235
3.	Nisam Antara	84,38	12,277
4.	Bandar Baro	42,35	7,415
5.	Kuta Makmur	151,32	22,028
6.	Simpang Kramat	79,78	8,824
7.	Syamtalira Bayu	77,53	19,046
8..	Geureudong Pase	269,28	4,550
9.	Meurah Mulia	202,57	17,881
10.	Matang Kuli	56,94	16803
11.	Paya Bakong	418,32	12,875
12.	Pirak Timu	67,70	7,520
13.	Cot Girek	189,00	18,762
14.	Tanah Jambo Aye	162,98	40,472

15.	Langkahan	150,52	21,221
16.	Seunuddon	100,63	23,476
17.	Baktiya	158,67	33,514
18.	Baktiya Barat	83,08	17,334
19.	Lhoksukon	243,00	45,472
20.	Tanah Luas	30,64	22,601
21.	Nibong	44,91	9,247
22.	Samudera	43,28	25,099
23.	Syamtalira Aron	28,13	16,833
24.	Tanah Pasir	20,38	8,431
25.	Lapang	19,27	8,075
26.	Muara Batu	33,34	25,179
27.	Dewantara	39,47	44,876
Total		3,296,86	529,751

Sources: Statistics Indonesia Aceh (2017) & RDPB North Aceh, (2017).

North Aceh was well known for its abundant natural resources such as oil and natural gas. Since 1969, Exxon Mobil operated the Arun gas field in North Aceh, regarded as one of the world's largest sources of liquefied natural gas (LNG). During its peak, reports indicated the mega-company extracted more than USD 40 billion from its operations from 1995 to 2005 alone (Walton, Atheraya, & Gersham, 2005). In turn, the Indonesian central government accrued an annual revenue of 2 billion USD until the early 2000s; at the time, its oil exports made up about 20 per cent of Indonesia's total exports (Renner, 2006; Walton et al., 2005). The Exxon's Arun project also prompted the establishment of several other government-owned enterprises in North Aceh, such as fertiliser and petrochemical companies, whose operations depended on Arun LNG. However, after 2005, the booming oil and gas era gradually slowed down and as productions dwindled Exxon Mobil moved their operations out of north Aceh. Today, what remains of the

natural resources in North Aceh is managed by Pertamina (an Indonesian government-owned enterprise) ("Exxon Mobil," 2011).

As the oil and gas boom was approaching its end, the government of North Aceh attempted to diversify and switch to other sources of revenues. According to the 2012-2032 North Aceh regional spatial development masterplan (*Rancangan Tata Ruang Wilayah)* (RDPB North Aceh, 2017), these alternative sources of revenue and development are agriculture, fishery and mining:

1. Agriculture

Rice is the primary commodity in North Aceh explaining why the rice fields are ubiquitous all over the regency covering a total area of 46,901 hectares. Meanwhile, plantation zoning located in the inland area covers a total area of 162,672 hectares. Livestock also occupies the inland region throughout the regency. The most common livestock bred in North Aceh include oxen, buffaloes, goats, ducks, and chickens.

2. Fisheries

Fisheries are the primary source of income of people living in the coastal areas. The total existing water area in the regency is about 16,712 hectares.

3. Mining

Exxon Mobil exploited natural gas and oil resources since the early 1970s through its subsidiary name Arun LNG. However, as production decreased in the last decades, its operation has been acquired by Pertamina through its subsidiary, Perta Arun Gas. Gas mine installation passes several districts covering an area of approximately 498 hectares. Apart from oil and natural gas, other mining operation including metallic minerals, rock mining, coal mining and geothermal energy potential.

In the last ten years after the peace agreement, Aceh's special autonomy and special budget allocation allowed Aceh's to reach a regional budget of Rp100 trillion (7.5 billion USD); half of it consists of the special autonomy budget of 42 trillion IDRs (3 billion USD). North Aceh received almost 1 billion USD annually, the highest in the province. However, the resultant poor management yielded minimal impact on the welfare of the population (Andriani & Juliansyah, 2015, 2018). Data from Statistics Indonesia showed that the economic growth of Aceh was only 1.65 per cent in 2014, far below the average national growth rate of 5.02 per cent. Furthermore, the level of unemployment reached 9 per cent, well above the national average of 5.9 per cent.

The special autonomy budget remains in place until 2028; from then on, Aceh will no longer receive a massive amount of funding. The budget is also threatened by corruption because of the lack of transparency and accountability of the local administration surrounding its use (Kurniawati, 2018). Some high-profile graft cases in the province which occurred in North Aceh, are indeed testament to this. For instance, in 2014, the former Regent of North Aceh was detained after being implicated in a graft case. According to the regency attorney, the incident led to 220 billion IDR (17 million USD) in state losses ("Ilyas Pase", 2015). According to Aryos Nivada, from Syiah Kuala University, the political elite plundered the autonomy budget since its inception in 2008. In the case of the North Aceh Regent's corruption, it was just the tip of the iceberg of the prevalent instances of fraud in the regency that has influenced its bureaucratic system (Hasan, 2015).

Furthermore, poverty remains one of the main economic challenges North Aceh needs to address. In 2011, the number of North Aceh residents living below the poverty level stood at 124,660, or 22.89 per cent of the total population a rate much higher than the national (12.50 per cent) and Aceh (19.60 per cent) poverty rates (RPDB North Aceh, 2017). Clearly, poverty alleviation should be a priority of the North Aceh Government in the future through the

provision of infrastructure, economic, education, and healthcare programs. In the education sector, following the peace period (2005 onward) the literacy rate of the population aged ten and above in Aceh in 2010 was at 98.12 per cent, higher than that of 2007 which stood at 94.72 per cent. There is no concerning gap in literacy between men and women in Aceh. In 2010, men's literacy rate was 98.17 per cent, while women's literacy rate was 98.07 per cent (RPDB North Aceh, 2017).

Despite this, North Aceh is still faced with considerable challenges to improve the quality of its human resources. For instance, data from Statistics Indonesia indicate the existence of a school dropout problem in North Aceh. The statistics suggested that 25.84 per cent of the population aged ten or above did not complete or dropped out of elementary school in 2010. North Aceh is also falling behind the average provincial level when it comes to educational attainment. In 2010 records showed that the population aged ten years and above who have not completed or have dropped out from elementary school in North Aceh was at 25.84 per cent (Aceh 21.68 per cent). There was 26.18 per cent of elementary school graduates in North Aceh, while Aceh had 31.65 per cent. Furthermore, the percentage of junior high school graduates in North Aceh was at 19.62 per cent (Aceh 21.11 per cent), while the number of senior high school graduates was at 18.45 per cent (Aceh 23.1 per cent). At higher education level, the region had 2.5 per cent of diploma-level graduates (Aceh 3.40 per cent), 1.91 per cent of undergraduates (Aceh 4.29 per cent) and 0.03 per cent of postgraduates (Aceh 0.23 per cent) (Statistics Indonesia Aceh, 2017).
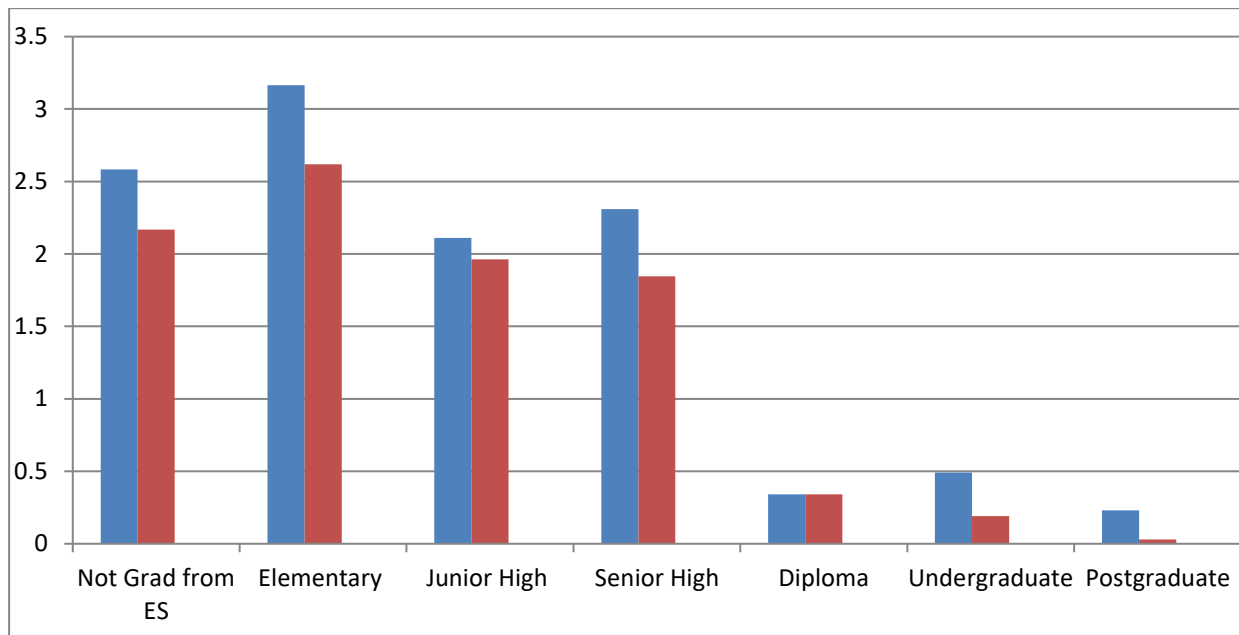
Figure 2. Education levels in Aceh (Blue) and North Aceh (Red) in 2010. (Source: Statistics Indonesia Aceh, 2017)

In my view, to improve the educational condition in North Aceh, policymakers also need to address the issue of teacher quality which is an obstacle to the improvement of education standards. For instance, statistics indicate that 51.22 per cent of teachers in North Aceh are non-civil servant teachers (part-time and volunteer). This group of teachers account for 93.28 per cent of teachers in ECE, 48.58 per cent of teachers in elementary schools, 45.16 per cent of teachers in junior high schools and 51.52 per cent of teachers in senior high schools (Statistic Indonesia North Aceh, 2017).

1.5   Indonesia's Education System

The education system in Indonesia continues to reflect aspects of its rich ethnic diversity and religious heritage. However, unfortunately, it also mirrors the endless contestation around national identity and the disparities of access and infrastructure among regions. Nonetheless, the Indonesian education system aims to accommodate the needs of its growing and diverse population and to address the socio-economic and geographic disparities among its various regions (Octarra & Hendriati, 2018; OECD, 2015). Indonesian has an extensive, diverse

15

education system. With more than an estimated 60 million students and approximately four million teachers in about 340,000 educational institutions, it is the fourth largest education system in the world (behind only the People's Republic of China, India and the United States) (MoEC, 2014; OECD, 2015). Two ministries are responsible for managing the education system 84 per cent of schools are under the Ministry of Education and Culture (MoEC), and the remaining 16 per cent are under the Ministry of Religious Affairs (MORA) (MoEC, 2014; OECD, 2015).

Indonesia recognises three modes education — formal, non-formal and informal. Within the formal system, children start schooling at the age of seven years old. The formal education system consists of six years of primary education (*Sekolah Dasar*/SD), three years of lower secondary education (*Sekolah Menengah Pertama*/SMP), three years of upper secondary education (*Sekolah Menengah Umum*/SMU) and four years of higher education. Students pursued upper secondary schooling in both general (SMU) and vocational (*Sekolah Menengah Kejuruan*/SMK) education. Higher education consists of Bachelor's degree courses (Strata-1/S1) offered as four-year programs in universities. Higher education also includes post-graduate (Strata-2/S2) and doctoral (Strata-3/S3) degrees (OECD, 2015; UNESCO, 2011). Alongside the formal secular education system is formal religious schooling. Islamic primary schools (*Madrasah Ibtidaiyah*/MI), Islamic lower secondary school *(Madrasah Tsanawiyah* /MTs), and Islamic upper secondary school (*Madrasah Aliyah*/MA) offered religious education. Higher education in Islamic universities in Indonesia also has a set of accredited non-formal education programmes known as the Package A Learning Programme (*Kejar Paket A*), a non-formal programme equivalent to primary education, Package B Learning Programme (*Kejar Paket B*) for lower secondary education, and Package C Learning Programme (*Kejar Paket C*) for upper secondary education. Informal education includes all other types of schooling provided by family and community (OECD, 2015; UNESCO, 2011).

Within the Indonesian national education system, ECE occupies a unique position. Law No. 20/2003 National Education System Act (NESA) (2003) described ECE as a phase prior to primary education organised through formal, non-formal and informal modes. The types of ECE consist of kindergarten and Islamic kindergarten (for children 4-6 years), playgroups (for children aged 2-4 years), childcare (priority age between 0-6 years), and Satuan Paud Sejenis (SPS) or other forms of ECE such as community-based health service, Sunday school and Al-Quran learning centre (children 0-6 years old) (NESA), 2003). The formal education pathway includes Kindergarten and Islamic kindergarten, while non-formal Education includes playgroups, child care, and other forms of ECE.

Meanwhile, Aceh Province's right of special autonomy extends to several aspects, including to a degree, the education sector. Even though special autonomy exists, Aceh remains part of the national education system as described in the next sub-section.

1.5.1   Aceh's education system. The current education system in Aceh is an integral part of the Indonesian National Education System. It adopts a similar system of schooling to the rest of the country. However, the province legislation, namely the Law on the Governing of Aceh (LoGA), allowed for the mainstreaming of Islamic values into both religious and secular schools (Law No. 11/2006 The Governing of Aceh, 2006). More specifically, the LoGA mandates that all Muslim students, both in public and religious schools in Aceh, must acquire a basic understanding of Islam (Shah & Cardozo, 2014). The daily routines in schools illustrate the mainstreaming of Islamic values. For example, all students in both public and religious schools begin lessons with Qur'anic prayers; the Qur'an and the Islamic dress code is obligatory for all Muslim students (Naylor, 2013).

Aceh's education system bureaucracy comprises national and local ministries, departments, and councils in which stakeholders have complex and multifarious influence and authority (Sumintono 2009; Wenger, 2014). As depicted in figure 3, the Aceh education system

ranges from the macro-level (national), meso-level (province) to the micro-level (local). According to Naylor, Stumpel, and Wenger (2014), at the macro-level are Ministry of Education and Culture (MoEC) and Ministry of Religious Affairs (MoRA) two national-based departments in charge of managing the education system including mandating the nationally designed curriculum. The MoEC has jurisdiction over all conventional public schools, while MoRA is in charge of religious schools (madrassa). The provincial Department of Education (DOE) and the Department of Religious Affairs (DOR) form the meso-level with the head of the DOR in the province appointed by the MoRA and the head of DOE appointed by the Governor of the Aceh Province. At the micro-level, are the state school and madrassa.
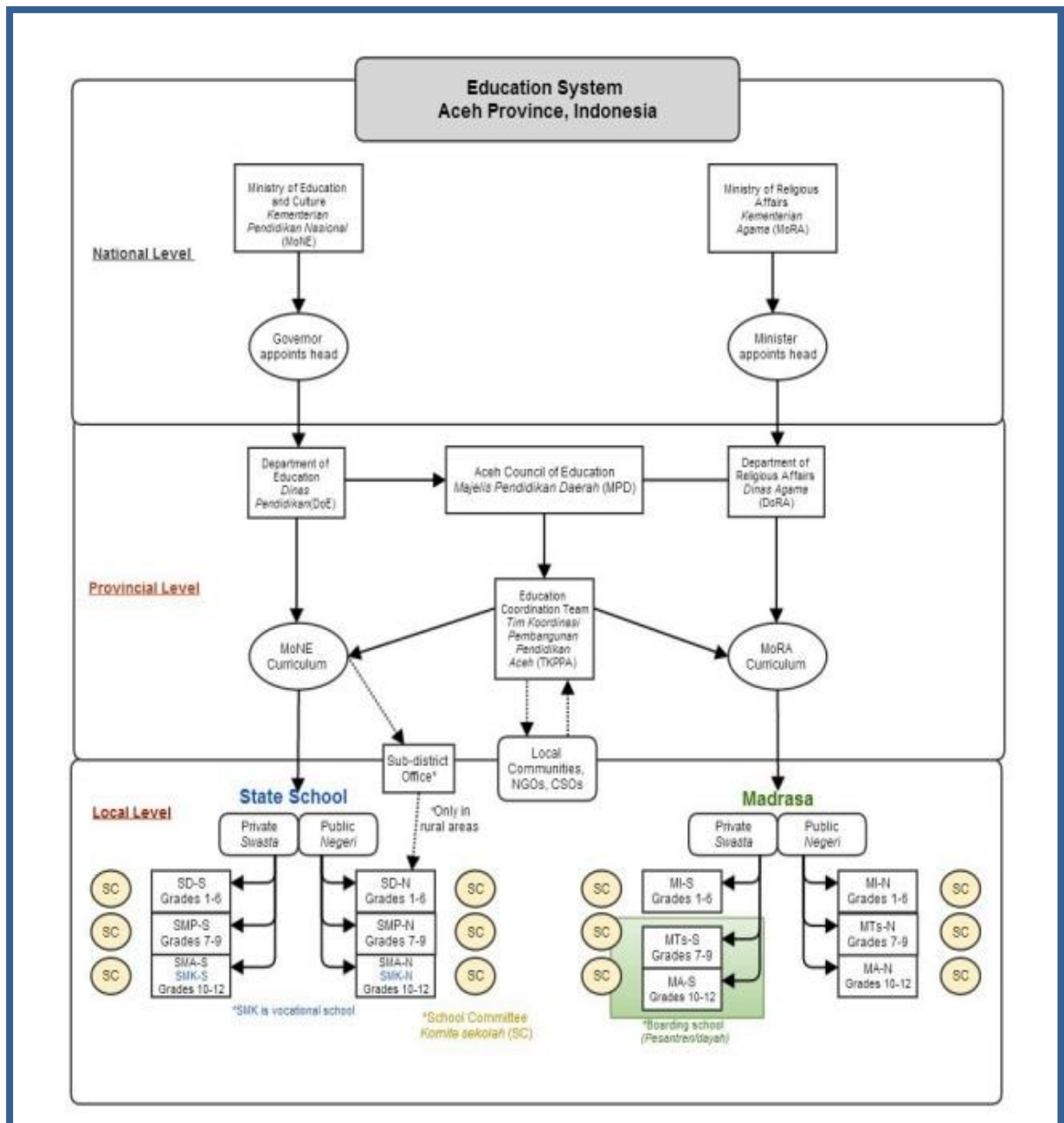
Figure 3. Aceh's education system within Indonesia Source: Naylor, Stumpel & Wenger, 2013 in Naylor 2014).

1.6   Early Childhood Education Development

ECE has received more interest in recent decades from many countries and international organizations. This growing awareness led to various actions and initiatives on ECE across the globe. Improving accessibility to early years education for marginalised and disadvantaged

communities is now implicit in the universal agenda for education. The global discourses on education consider education as not only the means to economic advancement but also as a universal human right (Dahlberg & Moss, 2005; Newberry, 2010; Octarra & Hendriati, 2018). The United Nations emphasised ECE as one of the means to end poverty in the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). Improving access to ECE has also been considered as one of the means to achieving the Education for All (EFA) goals (UNESCO, 2000). The EFA is a global commitment to provide quality primary education for people of all ages across the world.

In March of 1990, the United Nations agencies and the World Bank declared education as a fundamental right for all children, youths and adults recognising it as a means to enable them to contribute to socio-economic development. In the following year, the UN and World Bank established the International Consultative Forum on Education for All (ICEFA) to supervise the development of the Education for All (EFA) initiative. In April 2000, 164 governments and international agencies, including the United Nations Development Program (UNDP), the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO), the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), and the World Bank, pledged to work together to achieve the EFA goals by 2015 through the Dakar Framework for Action (UNESCO, 2000; World Bank, 2007). Indonesia is one of the participant countries in the UN MDGs and EFA and has been attempting to improve its ECE services. Moreover, since the 2000s, ECE gained much attention from the government as more global initiatives, aid and loans poured into Indonesia from international agencies such as the World Bank, UNICEF, and UNESCO to develop ECE in the country (World Bank, 2007, 2012).

In Indonesia, driven by political transformation in the post new order era (i.e. from 1998 onwards) the government undertook educational reform to increase the quality of human capital and to reduce disparities. Furthermore, encouraged by the growing global recognition of the importance of ECE, the Indonesian government established the early childhood directorate

within the Ministry of Education and Culture in 2001. The intent was advocating for ECE and facilitating the establishment of more ECE institutions throughout the country, with the main priority being in rural areas (MoEC, 2010; UNESCO, 2011).

In 2003, the next pivotal move came. The year saw the amendment of the 1989 Education Act and the introduction of act number 20 in 2003 on the National Education System (NESA) the first bill to directly mention the phrase 'early childhood education' ('*pendidikan anak usia dini*') (NESA, 2003). A year later, adhering to the act, the Ministry of Education and Culture's Strategic Plan (Law No. 25/2004 National Development Planning System (RENSTRA), 2004), issued a number of policy documents around ECE, including national standards and a national curriculum. However, this movement soon faced challenges. According to the OECD (2015), the first issue was Indonesia's geographic disparities, not only in terms of the rural and urban areas but also the fact that Indonesia is a massive archipelago consisting of more than 17,000 islands.

Between 2009-2010 the Gross Enrollment Ratio (GER) showed that 53.7 per cent of young Indonesian children had access to ECE (MoEC, 2010). When compared to other countries in South East Asia, Indonesia lagged. For example, Indonesia exceeded Cambodia's GER of only 20 per cent but fell well behind Thailand's GER of 95 per cent. Nonetheless, it is an exceptional fact that Indonesia has managed to increase the participation rate of children in ECE from 15 per cent in 2000 to 53.7 per cent just a decade later (UNESCO, 2011).

The private providers have played significant roles in the Indonesian ECE sector. UNESCO's report highlighted that the contribution of the private sector constitutes more than 90 per cent of total investment in ECE before 2005 (UNESCO, 2005), even though the number gradually decreased due to the rise of government spending in ECE after the NESA act. The private sector's extensive involvement certainly helped to boost the ECE enrolment ratio, and it has also meant that private providers have a strong sense of autonomy and independence in the management and the content of its ECE services. OECD (2015) study showed that within the

Indonesian education system, private schools play a significant role in the provision of primary, lower secondary and upper senior secondary education, making up 7 per cent, 56 per cent, and 67 per cent respectively. In terms of ECE, the percentage is even more staggering with only 4 per cent of early age children enrolled in public kindergartens while the rest of the children are in the kindergartens run by the private sector or in community-based institutions.

In realising that the country has potential as a regional economic powerhouse, the Indonesian government has high hopes for education as the solution to future challenges and expectations. In 2045, the projection for the Indonesian population is 353 million people resulting in an abundant working-age population by 2020 (Formen & Hardjono, 2013). Such projected developments create a demographic dividend or a situation where a nation enjoys economic growth as the working-age population is much larger than the non-working-age population.

In 2011, the Indonesian government set a long-term national goal by launching vision 2045. In 2045, Indonesia will celebrate its one-century of independence from colonialization. In light of this, The government's target is to make Indonesia a developed economy, an advanced democracy, and a thriving civilisation by 2045 (Formen & Hardjono, 2013). In achieving the 2045 vision, Indonesian government recognises the critical role that education, including ECE, will play (Formen & Hardjono, 2013; Formen & Nuttal, 2014). In recognition of the importance of ECE in the fulfilment of its vision, Indonesian's Department of Education introduced the framework for the development of ECE in Indonesia from 2011 to 2025.

1.7 ECE Characteristic and Curriculum in Indonesia

In an attempt to transform the education system in Indonesia, the government enacted Law No. 20 the Year 2003 on the National Education System (NESA), underscoring the importance of ECE for the future of the children in Indonesia. According to NESA (2003), the curriculum should aim to guide educators and education stakeholders in facilitating quality

education programs to support the achievement of educational goals. When the Indonesian government set in place future planning to create competent human capital through its education system, this developmental vision launched by President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono (2004-2014) became a guiding principle in the development of ECE policy culminating in promulgating the 2011-2025 ECE framework (Formen & Hardjono, 2013). It aimed at creating quality human resources by 2015, reliable human resources by 2025, globally competent human resources by 2035, and comprehensively intelligent human resources by 2045 (Directorate General of ECE, 2011). The framework also stipulated that ECE development in Indonesia will form the foundation for improving human capital.

The ECE curriculum intends to develop the full potential of children extending their capacity to achieve success at the next level of education and in life. Moreover, the curriculum serves as a guide in preparing future human resources following the progress of knowledge, technology, and national development (Directorate General of ECE, 2015a). However, the curriculum is not static; it may adapt to challenges or interests of the nation. According to 2011-2025 ECE framework and 2013 Curriculum Guidebook, the curriculum aimed to have a broader range and scope. The curriculum designated to prepare children for the future, in a world continually changing, must also be responsive exemplifying that it appreciates current conditions and understands expectations for the future (Directorate General of ECE, 2015a).

The 2013 ECE curriculum development required a robust regulatory framework consisting of laws and regulations that supported ECE and the development of young children. The 2013 legal framework consists of the constitution of the Republic Indonesia of 1945 article 1-5, Law of Republic of Indonesia Number 23 of 2002 on Child Protection and Law of Republic of Indonesia Number 20 of 2003 on the National Education System (NESA) and Ministry of Education Regulation 137 of 2014 on curriculum 2013 for ECE (Directorate General of ECE, 2015b).

The Constitution of the Republic of Indonesia of 1945, article 31 states that:

1. Each citizen has the right to an education.

2. Each citizen is obliged to receive elementary education, and the government has the duty to fund this.

3. The government has the duty to organize organise and implement a national education system, to be regulated by law, that aims at enhancing religious, as well as moral excellence with a view to enhance the life of the national.

4. The government shall give priority to the education budget by allocating at least twenty per cent of the state's as well as of the regional budgets to meet the requirements of implementing national education.

5. The government should advance science and technology along with upholding religious values and national unity in high esteem with a view to promoting civility as well as the well-being of humanity.

Law of Republic of Indonesia Number 23 of 2002 on Child Protection is among the law that entails a constitutional mandate. Article 4 and 9 states,

Article 4

Every child shall be entitled to freely live, grow, develop and participate in society in accordance with his/her dignity as a human being, and to be protected against violence and discrimination.

Article 9

(1) Every child shall have the right to an education and training in the context of his or her personal and intellectual development based upon his interests and talents.

Furthermore, the National Education System (NESA) and the Ministry of Education Regulation 137 of 2014 relating to the 2013 curriculum provided guidelines on the implementation of the ECE curriculum.

The 2013 Curriculum guidebook on ECE in Indonesia is provided for children from birth to six years old (0-6) to help with their physical and spiritual development. ECE services in Indonesia cover a broad area that includes parenting, preschool education and nutrition (Directorate General of ECE, 2015). According to NESA 2003, ECE may follow formal, non-formal and informal pathways. For instance, kindergartens (*Taman-Kanak-kanak*/TK) and Islamic kindergartens (*Raudhatul Anfal*/RA) represent formal types of ECE. In contrast, non-formal types consist of playgroups (*Kelompok Bermain*/KB), daycare (*Taman Penitipan Anak* /TPA) and other forms of ECE (Satuan PAUD sejenis) such as Qur'an Learning Centres (*Taman Pendidikan Al-Qur'an*/TPQ). Informal ECE and development comprise any service provided by the family and community (NESA, 2003; Ministry of Education Regulation 137, 2014). Table 2 illustrates the types and characteristics of ECE in Indonesia.

Table 2

ECE Institutions and their Characteristics in Indonesia (NESA, 2003)

Type/Model	Target	Focus & Form	Affiliated Agencies
Taman Kanak-kanak/TK (Kindergarten)	4-6 years old	Formal Part of Schooling	Ministry of Education
Raudatul Anfal /RA (Islamic Kindergarten)	4-6 years old	Formal Part of Schooling	Ministry of Religious Affairs
Kelompok Bermain/ KB (Play Group)	2-4 years old	Non formal Systematic, outside the school system	Ministry of Education
Taman Penitipan Anak /TPA (Childcare)	3 Month-6 years old	Non formal Child care	Ministry of Social& Ministry of Education
Satuan Paud Sejenis /SPS Another form of ECE	0-6 years old & Mother	Consists of: • Taman Pendidikan Al Qur'an/TPQ • (Al-Qur'an Learning Centre) • Sunday School (for Christians) • Posyandu (community-based health services) • Bina Keluarga Balita (community services for family with children under 5 years old)	Ministry of Religious Affairs Ministry of Health Ministry of Women's Empowerment and Child Protection

ECE services in Indonesia are specific in their implementation because each service has its own particular characteristics. Despite this, all ECE services have the same goal, which is to develop the potential of children which includes the development of religious, cognitive, linguistic, social-emotional aspects in order to prepare children for further education (Directorate General of ECE, 2015a, 2015b).

Several characteristics emerge from the 2013 curriculum. These include holistic-integrative services, thematic learning, parent's involvement and geographical diversity. First, the curriculum aims to implement a holistic-integrative service by integrating education, nutrition, health, care, protection and child welfare. In this respect, the 2013 curriculum aims to optimise children development by stimulating various aspects of child development such as spiritual, cognitive and, social-emotional, in a balanced manner.

Second, the curriculum employs thematic learning to provide educational stimulus (Directorate General of ECE, 2015a, 2015b). Through thematic learning, the curriculum aims to introduce content such as religious and moral values, nature, life, people, culture, and symbols utilising integrated and contextual activities in harmony with the scope of development. These themes develop into sub-themes by taking into account the availability of resources and the level of development. According to the policy documents (Directorate General of ECE, 2015a, 2015b), a scientific approach and habituation facilitate thematic learning in a conducive environment. The themes in the 2013 curriculum are not centralised but are chosen and determined by ECE units according to the conditions and available resources. The themes developed should consider principles such as that of interest in order to engage children, simplicity, and flexibility. Moreover, play activities should create freedom for children to explore and develop ideas.

Third, the ECE curriculum design aims to empower parents as it recognises them as partners in the teaching and learning process (Directorate General of ECE, 2015a, 2015b) as such ECE units should facilitate parental involvement in various activities. Additionally, the ECE curriculum encourages the involvement of other adults, present in the child's environment, highlighting that educators are not the sole learning facilitators for children, and, that classrooms are not the sole place for children to learn. Opportunities for children's learning occur in various settings; in fact, anywhere they may explore objects, plants, people, places, or events. As

children learn from various resources, including the environment, teaching and learning in ECE place more value on the process rather than the outcome.

Fourth, the curriculum developed in relation to the principle of diversity. The framework of educational development in each region accords with regional characteristics (Directorate General of ECE, 2015a, 2015b). The curriculum, functioning as the heart of education, required contextual development and implementation to respond to both the children's and region's needs now and in the future. The national curriculum as stipulated in the Ministry of Education and Culture of the Republic of Indonesia regulation number 137 of 2014 can transform into an operational curriculum based on regional conditions and particularities (Ministry of Education Regulation Number 137 in 2014).

1.8   Research Problem and Purpose

Meunasah and *dayah* are two prominent Islamic education institutions in Aceh. However, most of the contemporary studies on traditional religious education in Aceh focused on *dayah* (Amiruddin, 2005; Armia; 2014; Bustamam-Ahmad, 2014; Dhuhri, 2014; Mashuri, 2013; Mohammad, 2001). In light of this, my research will focus on *meunasah,* given that it is an integral and ubiquitous institution across rural areas with the potential to impact Aceh's current educational landscape significantly despite having been understudied. Most of the previous research on *meunasah* focused on the non-educational aspects of *meunasah*. For instance, a study by Sabirin (2014) explored the "local wisdom" of *meunasah*, while Wahid (2013, 2015) researched the role of *meunasah* in empowering women in rural areas. Although studies carried out by Srimulyani (2013) and Solichin (2015) focused on both *dayah* and are *meunasah,* these mainly based their research on literature and document analysis about the institutions. Furthermore, a study by Feener (2013) following the conflict and the tsunami disaster in the form of a field study briefly depicted the current condition of *meunasah* as part of his broader research regarding Sharia law in Aceh.

There is also a growing body of studies in Islamic Early Childhood Education services in Indonesia, mainly on Java Island (Indriyani, 2015; Mufida, 2014; Salahuddin, 2013; Santi & Sukadi, 2014;). For example, research by Salahuddin (2015) described the potential of the Qur'an Learning Centre (TPQ) and the efforts to improve its services while research by Santi and Sukadi, (2014) and Indriyani (2015) focused on the use of various interactive multimedia to facilitate teaching and learning process in TPQ. Other research by Mufida (2015) described the phases of the implementation of the ECE curriculum in a TPQ. All these studies conducted on TPQ transpired in several provinces in Java Island, including East Java, Central Java, and Jakarta. However, given that Indonesia is a diverse and multicultural country, the contexts and socio-cultural background of these studies are dissimilar to the context of Aceh. The Aceh province is the only province in Indonesia granted the autonomy to enforce Sharia-based regulations. Furthermore, *meunasah* provides various types of ECE, not only TPQ but including Islamic kindergarten, playgroups and another form of ECE such as the Integrated Health Service Post for children (*Posyandu*) and the Parenting Education Program (BKB).

Moreover, Aceh recently emerged from a long-standing armed conflict and disaster that shaped the present condition of education in the province. Estimates indicate that more than 600 schools were destroyed or damaged as a result of the conflict, leaving about 55,000 children falling behind in their educational attainment and forcing teachers to move to urban areas (Bailey, 2009; Shah & Cardozo, 2014). The issue of educational disparities prevalent across Indonesia compounded this situation. For instance, there are significant inequalities in the distribution of services in education, health, and nutrition between districts, socioeconomic backgrounds and rural-urban areas in Indonesia (OECD, 2006). Indicatively, children from rural areas and low-income families face severe educational disadvantage before they begin their primary education, due to lower rates of participation in ECE services. As such, poverty and

inequality threaten the well-being of young children in terms of their safety, health, and access to education (Penn, 2005).

Similarly to many others in conflict-affected areas embarking upon life in the post-conflict era, the people of Aceh are pinning their hopes on education as a means to address the past inequalities and injustice issues caused by the conflict (Bailey, 2009). Studies by Schweinhart et al. (2005), Campbell et al. (2002), Save the Children (2003), and Reynolds et al. (2001) suggest that ECE interventions reduce social inequalities ensuring that the disadvantaged children have access to better health, nutrition, and education services.

1.9 Significance of the Research and Research Questions

This study is part of an attempt to urge the policy-makers to accelerate policymaking and make more investment in ECE. The rise of awareness among villagers to organise early years education in *meunasahs* is an initiative and an effort that still requires more support from policymakers. Most *meunasahs* still rely heavily on their village budget and government aid. However, both sources of funding are unsustainable as government policy on village budgets tends to vary according to the governing regime making government aid an unreliable funding instrument. These issues make early years education in *meunasah* somewhat fragile in term of its sustainability. Hence, ECE in *meunasahs* requires bolder and firmer local government policies.

This research on the role of *meunasah* is also timely, given the current demand for expanding ECE service in rural areas and the provision of empowering private ECE in providing quality support in early childhood. *Meunasah*, as the established and ubiquitous institution in rural areas, provides a reasonable alternative for the expansion of early year education in rural Aceh. My study also aims to understand why the villagers in these conflict-affected regions utilise their *meunasah* to promote ECE, what factors raised their critical consciousness, how they manage the *meunasah* and what their future aspirations are toward ECE implementation in *meunasah*. Furthermore, considering the role of *meunasah* as a deeply rooted religious,

educational institution, this research also aims to explore the nature of teaching in *meunasah*'s ECE.

This research project has a theoretical significance in that it contributes to the expanding of Freire's critical consciousness ideas on how a society oppressed for decades tried to improve the future of its younger generation through early years education. Moreover, my study also examines how the *meunasah* tries to instil moral and religious values in children through Al-Attas' *ta'dib* concept. I believe this research has the potential to fill the gap in the literature on the new conditions and dynamics in traditional Islamic education institutions in Aceh, specifically on the role of *meunasah* in early years education in rural Aceh.

This study conducted as an ethnographic case study (Creswell, 2014; Merriam, 1998) focused on how a rural community in North Aceh, established a community-initiated ECE in their *meunasah* following the period of conflict and a tsunami. My inquiries explored the driving forces behind the initiatives and future aspirations of the community for their ECE in *meunasah*. In particular, I expected my study to answer the following questions:

1. Why are *meunasah* stakeholders and community members invested in the development of ECE in post-conflict and post-tsunami Aceh?

2. What is the role of *meunasah* in the development of ECE initiative?

3. What is the nature of teachers' experience and community aspirations in *meunasah*'s ECE?

1.10   Summary

In this first chapter, I presented the background of the research, rationale and personal motivation for the research, research context of North Aceh and the education policy context in Indonesia and Aceh and the ECE context in Indonesia. I also explicated the research problem, the

purpose of the research, the significance of the research and research questions. The next chapter

provides the review of literature which is related to the research.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

2.1   Introduction

This study is a part of an attempt to advocate for early childhood education in post-conflict and post-Tsunami Aceh, Indonesia. Hence, this chapter will highlight the importance of ECE and its benefits to the society covered in the literature. It also discusses the critical role of community in ECE development and some relevant experience around the world. The chapter then describes the recent development of ECE in Indonesia.

The chapter also reviews the relevant literature on Acehnese matrifocality and family structures and the educational role of *meunasah* in Aceh throughout history. The Acehnese community structure, including its matrifocality, significantly influenced the development of ECE in *meunasah*.

2.2   The Importance of Early Childhood Education

There is a need for advocating early childhood education in Aceh as the province embarks into a post-conflict and post Tsunami era. The people of Aceh have high expectations toward the peace to redress long-standing grievances around social injustices as well as the lack of social and economic development (Shah & Cardozo, 2013). In keeping with this aspiration, education in Aceh is designed to serve a transformative role in Acehnese society by redressing inequalities caused by conflicts, and redistributing access to education as well as contributing to a peaceful and democratic future for the province (Bailey, 2009; Barron et al., 2013; Shah & Cardozo, 2013). In this regard, ECE can play an important role to create a more democratic and equal society (Dahlberg & Moss, 2005; Moss, 2017). ECE has come to be highly regarded among the keys to a cohesive and equitable society (Lynch, 2004). ECE also allows people to access a chance at a better life. It may affect their health, behaviour, and learning outcomes in

future years, which in turn can bring socio-economic benefits (Amer et al., 2013; Grantham-McGregor et al. 2007; Heckman, 2006; Irwin et al., 2007; Winter, 2010; Yoshikagawa et al., 2013). Consequently, this sub-section highlights the importance of early childhood education and how its perceived benefits relate to its conceptualisation.

Research on brain development suggests that the first five years of life is a crucial stage that will set the conditions for a lifetime. Appropriate stimulation in the early years enhances brain capacity potential (Grantham-McGregor et al., 2007). Winter (2010) concluded that studies from neuroscience suggest in the early years of its development, the brain rapidly and carefully designs its structure and the way it functions. The central nervous system, brain cells, and neural pathways establish the foundation for a child's future trajectories.

Researchers argue that brain cells that represent lifelong potential develop during the early years of life. Children's early environment and social interaction have a vital impact on the way their brains develop. ECE provides stimulation in the form of responsive and caring environments that allow young children to explore their world, learn, play and interact with others (Irwin et al., 2007). The study by Irwin et al. (2007) also concludes that stimulation that creates positive connections in brain cells in young lives can help children in learning and acquiring knowledge by contributing to their physical, social and emotional developments.

Yoshikagawa et al. (2013) also suggested that the foundations of brain architecture and its lifelong potential on children's development occur in a child's early years in a process that is sensitive to external influence. Early experiences at home, ECE centres, and communities interact with genes to shape the brain's architecture. This growth of neuronal systems in the early years supports the development of early skills, such as cognitive and social skills required for schooling. The study by Yoshikagawa et al. (2013) summarised how ECE improves the development of cognitive skills such as early language, literacy, and mathematics and achievement outcomes in later schooling. Additionally, it suggested that ECE also contributes to

improving social skills (empathy, prosocial), and executive function skills (the control of attention and behaviour). Hence, Yoshikagawa et al. (2013) argued that early investment in ECE is more effective and beneficial than investment later in life.

Heckman (2006) argued that the best return on any investment in human capital is when governments make investments in the early years, rather than interventions when children are older. In his perspective, social and economic inequalities at an early age link to social disadvantage in the future. ECE is a tool to reduce social and economic inequalities in the community as it provides opportunities for poor children to have an equitable start in life (Heckman, 2006; Heckman & Masterov, 2007).

There is also a suggestion that early intervention can contribute to social cohesion and other social benefits, taking into account the impacts on health, greater self-sufficiency later in life, prevention of child-related crime and other social benefits (Lynch, 2004). In Ravens (2010), there is also an argument that drop-out reduction in primary education alone is sufficient reason for the need to invest in ECE programs. Irwin et al. (2007) add that children's experience in ECE influences their learning ability, school success, social skills, and health.

A policy study in Indonesia supported by the World Bank suggested that investing in children's early years creates an opportunity to improve personal, community, and societal outcomes (Denboba, Amer, & Wodon, 2015). Furthermore, the study explained that ECE provides an opportunity for children to learn and have healthy lives through access to essential services in education, health and nutrition (Denboba et al., 2015). According to this policy study, investment in ECE yields better returns than interventions later in life.

In another policy study sponsored by the World Bank in Indonesia, Jung and Amer (2014) assessed the ECE impacts on early achievement gaps by measuring children's enrolment and development outcomes. This longitudinal study on the early years of children across nine

districts in Indonesia found that early intervention through ECE pilot projects in rural areas (sponsored by the World Bank and the Dutch Government) reduced the achievement gap between richer and poorer children in many aspects. It suggested that well-designed and quality ECE services in pilot villages reduced early achievement gaps in social competence, communication, and general knowledge. Jung and Amer (2014) therefore concluded that early intervention through ECE improved health and education outcomes, as well as reduced inequality in early childhood.

Research by an Indonesian academic Aceng Lukmanul Hakim, on the impact of ECE on school readiness and children's achievement in Tanggerang City, Indonesia, concluded that ECE experience helps improve children's school readiness and their achievement at primary school (Hakim, 2011). His study indicated that children who experience early childhood education perform better in cognitive and psychomotor skills as well as behaviour domains.

Research in the minority world has suggested that well-designed and quality ECE programs have a lifelong influence well beyond school years. A study by Lynch (2004), for instance, views the benefits from quality ECE as having a broader impact in life, including: "higher employment rates as adults, higher earnings as adults, lower welfare dependency" (2004, p. 4). However, policymakers in Indonesia chose to set more measured and steady goals for ECE interventions.

A study by the Indonesian National Development Planning Agencies (NDPA) on ECE strategy in Indonesia (NDPA, 2013), described the benefit of ECE programs as being able to improve the capacity of children to learn and develop themselves. The NPDA report viewed ECE as a means to change children's development trajectory, particularly later in school. Indonesians perceive ECE as key to children's school readiness, contributing to a reduction in the school drop-out rate and adding to the chances of grade retention. ECE allows children to

build the characteristics needed for school readiness, such as confidence, good peer relationships, good language and communication skills and attentive capacity (NDPA, 2013).

Another significant aspect of the global ECE narratives promoted by international donors in Indonesia is the term quality ECE. As previously underscored in this sub-section, the optimal benefits of ECE programs are only attainable through quality ECE. According to Dahlberg, Moss and Pence (2007), the current mainstream concept of quality in ECE needs critical reflection. The concept of quality should consider local context, values, and subjectivity, as well as various other perspectives amid increasing standardisation and regulation (Dahlberg et al., 2006; Penn, 2011). According to Freire, education must be approached in a broader context as a process of community empowerment through knowledge. Humanist education is more than teaching contents without social meanings: it takes into account the human condition. Education is a human activity inserted into human reality (Freire, 1972a, 1973).

There is a demonstrated need for an alternative to a dominant discourse on early childhood education. The mainstream discourse assigns early childhood education with the task to attain school readiness as defined by a set of pre-determined outcomes. In a broader context, it exemplifies a means to fix issues in society, such as inequalities and economic injustice. However, ECE effort alone would not be able to solve these issues without also addressing the structural issues behind inequality and economic injustice.

The currently applied ECE narrative based on standard policy from both governments and international agencies also needs to recognise that there may be alternative narratives or perspectives in understandings of ECE. My study on ECE in *meunasah* allows the exploration of an alternative perspective on ECE. I argue that the Islamic tradition of teaching and learning in *meunasah* illustrates the Islamic education concept of Al Attas, called *ta'dib*. Through the incorporation of the Islamic tradition values, Al-Attas conceived the meaning of education not only educating the citizen but also holistically educating the human being (Al-Attas, 1997; Wan

37

Daud, 1998). For this community in Aceh, education is viewed as a mean to create a balance between *ilmu* (knowledge) and *adab* (good behaviour, good manners, morals, humanness). Quality education, including ECE, is understood as an avenue to create a good and balanced human being (*insan kamil* or universal human).

Embracing the standardised quality is inevitable in the current stage of ECE development, particularly in some majority world countries, although it should be carefully defined and reviewed (Dahlberg et al., 2007). There is also a need to acknowledge that alternative perspectives may exist. According to Dahlberg et al. (2007), ECE should instigate a common space where children and adults encounter a platform for dialogue in which everyone can discuss and share meanings. In such a condition, ECE will emerge with many benefits. ECE will offer many potential possibilities: from the social, cultural, linguistic, and aesthetic to the ethical outcomes. It can also play a role in understanding the complexity and value of foregrounding democratic practice.

Another pivotal aspect in the success of ECE initiatives is community support. Partnerships between educators, parents and community are among the keys of a sustainable ECE program.

2.3   The Important Role of Community in ECE development

Community participation in education initiatives is pivotal to determining its future success. In the background paper prepared for the Education for All (EFA) global monitoring report, Kamel (2006) points out that in ECE programs the wellbeing of young children depends as much on their parents or caregivers as on the social settings in which they grow up. Hence, she intimates that community participation is one of the main factors ensuring the success of ECE initiatives.

There is a need for a partnership between schools, families and communities throughout the education process. A number of scholars (Davies & Johnson, 1996; Epstein, 1995; Epstein & Sanders, 1998; Sanders & Epstein, 2005; Swick 2003) stress the importance of cooperation between educational institutions, families, and communities. This partnership is necessary to ensure more effective learning and development and to achieve more positive outcomes for young children (Davies & Johnson, 1996; Epstein & Sanders, 1998; Sanders & Epstein, 2005).

Mitchell and Furness (2015) conclude that community participation allows community members to engage in developing ECE programs and sees them as essential to ensure a learning centre that is responsive to its community as well as the parents' needs and expectations. Community participation should accommodate the needs and vision of families and work together in supporting the appropriate education services (Magrab, 1999). The study also acknowledges the importance of schools to reflect the socio-cultural backgrounds of participants in the setting. Neuman and Celano (2001) suggested that individual social environment or physical characteristics of communities are an inseparable part of children's learning and development. Social interactions and activities carry a cultural meaning that shapes children's experiences as they observe and participate in the setting.

The desire to create more effective learning institutions has generated more research on the practices supporting the partnerships of school, family and community in the education of young people. High drop-out rates and low achievement in poor and marginalised communities attribute to this growing awareness (Epstein, 1995; Epstein & Sanders, 2005). Epstein also noted the ways for establishing community and educational institutions, how they work in partnerships, and differ in each country. Epstein (1995) identified several models of school, family, and community partnerships described as,

- *Parenting help* established home environments supportive of children's academic-related activities, allowing schools to understand families conditions

- *Volunteering* supported school functions and student activities

- *Decision-making*, in the form of parent participation in the management of the school

- *Collaborating with community*, by accumulating community resources to support schools, students, and their families

- *Communicating* by establishing effective channels of communication in relation to school programs and children's progress.

Swick (2003) noted that communication processes are one of the keys in developing a constructive relationship among parents, early childhood educators and community. Swick (2003) explicated that in building a foundation for strong, dynamic relationships between all the ECE stakeholders requires trust, honesty, a sense of purpose, and a sense of spirituality, among other things. Mitchell and Furness (2015) add that sustainable communication between educators, parents and community allows productive engagement in which they can understand, learn and offer the best solutions for each other's concerns. Chan and Ritchie (2016) also suggested the need for a more equal and dynamic engagement between educators and parents achieved by establishing a genuine and open dialogical relationship between teachers and parents.

Communication among stakeholders creates a collaborative relationship between families and educators. Epstein and Sanders (2005) point out that partnerships among stakeholders link to the processes and outcomes of educational change and school

improvement. Mutual respect in the relationship should not reduce the opportunity to hold discussions to raise concerns from either side. School stakeholders (educators, families and community) must have opportunities for a dialogue that considers local context and issues.

According to McNaughton and Hughes (2011), to create a sustainable, meaningful and realistic relationship between parents and families requires all stakeholders to considers material and cultural realities of the site. As in some countries, educators face poor working conditions resulting in underpaid work, time-constraints and inadequate relationships with parents or inadequate preparedness in forming such relationships resulting in them feeling burdened with the immense task to solve society's problems in through ECE.

Drawing on the Freirean principle, emphasised the process of dialogue with the local people for examining the existential reality and life experience, understanding the problems for which solutions need to be sought and accommodating facts, culture and local views (Freire, 1972a, 1972). In my research that looks at the role of *meunasah* in ECE initiative, the role of *meunasah* has always been to facilitate dialogue among community members (Wahid, 2013). The culture of discussion and debate is one of the characteristics of *meunasah*. The traditional administrative system in rural Aceh (discussed in Chapter 5) encourages discussion of issues and ideas. *Meunasah* provides a natural venue to develop collaboration through discussions and dialogues between educators, parents and community.

In Indonesia, a report sponsored by the Indonesian National Development Planning Agencies (NDPA) and some international agencies on Early Childhood Development Strategy Study in Indonesia also promotes the importance of effective communication and trust-building in ECE projects. The study suggests the importance of establishing communication and building trust with community members and village stakeholders to develop a sustainable ECE program (NDPA, 2013)

The NDPA (2013) study also highlighted that community involvement is essential to sustaining ECE, particularly when external support is only temporary. This study also explained why community-driven programs tend to be more sustainable and viable than institutionally-driven programs due to the sense of community ownership. In turn, the community's involvement makes them more willing to continuously support and even contribute their resources to the ECE initiative.

In Aceh, a study by Fang and Yusof (2014) aimed to highlight the ECE initiatives as part of Tsunami relief program after the disaster, underscoring the importance of putting a community-driven ECE program into the context. Among its findings, the study highlighted the issue of community involvement in some ECEs established as part of post-Tsunami aid projects. It found that the implementation of ECE activities was unsustainable without parents' and community engagement. Educators admitted to facing challenges in the lack of involvement from parents and communities in the ECE. Issues arose due to a lack of a sense of belonging and a widely-accepted idea that the program already received sufficient support from international donors.

My study will contribute to exploring the development of community-initiated ECE in some rural areas (mostly conflict-affected areas), such as Gampong Blang, after the introduction of village budget policy in 2014. It is essential to look at the community engagement in the community-driven ECE development in Aceh, as the previous study highlighted the community engagement in institutionally-driven ECE initiatives in tsunami-affected areas during the disaster relief period. Research that highlights the nature of community engagement in ECE programs in Aceh is a noteworthy lesson for the future of ECE development in the province.

2.4   Relevant Experience on ECE Initiative

The current study highlights the importance of community participation in developing ECE, the involvement of female educators in ECE in a rural setting, and the establishment of ECE that respects the local context, specifically Islamic values. This sub-section highlights a relevant study in rural Pakistan on the benefits of involving female youth in ECE programs and also experience from East Africa on ECE situated in an Islamic setting.

In Pakistan, a study by Yousafzai et al. (2018) in partnership with the National Commission for Human Development of Pakistan explores a youth-led early childhood education program in rural Pakistan. It looks at the ECE intervention for young children delivered by female youth (18–24 years) trained and deployed to various rural areas in Pakistan and its impact on children's school readiness. The program encourages young people to be ECE educators through teaching experience while providing teachers for ECE in rural areas. Yousafzai et al. (2018) examined whether an ECE in this type of intervention in rural areas can increase children's participation in ECE and improve children's school readiness.

The study also found that the intervention increases children's participation in ECE and improves children's school readiness. Children that were affected by the program showed better school readiness, particularly in early academic skills such as basic literacy and math as well as in socioemotional skills (Yousafzai et al., 2018). Furthermore, Yousafzai et al. (2018) suggested that female youth have the potential to facilitate transformation in rural communities in Pakistan through effective ECE projects while at the same time becoming beneficiaries. Such youth engagement also benefits areas with a shortage of ECE educators as well as female youth with limited economic opportunities in Pakistan.

In several East African countries, namely Kenya, Tanzania, and Uganda, a regional initiative in the form of the Madrasah Early Childhood Development Program began in the

1980s. From its beginning in Kenya in 1986, the Madrassa Resource Centres (MRC) program funded mainly by international philanthropic agencies, Aga Khan Foundation was expanded to Tanzania in 1990 and Uganda in 1993 (Mwaura & Marfo, 2011; Mwaura, Sylva, & Malmberg, 2008). The madrassa ECE developed as an attempt to allow disadvantaged Muslim communities in East Africa to access ECE service.

According to Mwaura and Marfo (2011), the *madrassa* ECE aims to improve the well-being of young children by providing ECE programs to increase children's school readiness as well provide them with fundamental Islamic values. The madrassa ECE design is based on local context to meet the specific needs of the local Muslim communities for education that equips children with academic skills for later schooling while also incorporating cultural and religious values. Mwaura and Marfo (2011) describe that, on the one hand, these marginalised African Muslim communities held the perception that the national education system lacked emphasis on a moral and spiritual dimension, mostly focusing on academic skills. On the other hand, the African Muslims perceived the established traditional Islamic education as better at religious and cultural aspect but lacking in the provision of the academic skills and competencies required by children for later schooling. Hence, establishing the *madrassa* ECE aimed at meeting the community's expectation of a balanced education with an emphasis on both essential academic competencies and Islamic values. According to Mwaura and Marfo (2011) in ensuring the sustainability of *madrassa* ECE across East Africa, the MRC developed community partnerships and capacity building that involved community members, educators and parents. The communities own and operate the schools and are in charge of their development and management.

While many aspects of ECE initiatives in Pakistan and East Africa resemble the situation in rural Aceh, making these previous experiences a valuable lesson, there is also an important aspect that is unique to the initiative in rural North Aceh. That initiative benefits from the

44

government's new policy that allows villages to receive and manage their own budgets allowing it to develop organically as a bottom-up initiative without the involvement of both government agencies and international donor in its early establishment.

This rural community initiative in North Aceh and its hope for assistance from the government and incorporated with NGOs in developing their ECE will be discussed in Chapter 7, specifically looking at community aspirations for ECE. Moreover, it is also essential to understand the particularity of Acehnese community structure as it plays a significant role in the development of ECE initiatives in rural areas.

2.5 Matrifocality and Gender Agency in Aceh

According to Freire, humans are conscious of their historicity; they are aware of living in a particular time and location constituted by a multiplicity of life's dimensions, such as gender, race, religion, politics, culture and economics (Lankshear, 1993). In the case of this research, it is important to highlight previous literature on the matrifocality in the Acehnese community. The Acehnese have a long history of matrifocality that shapes their community structure, including the different ways of bringing up children within the family and the role of women in education.

Snouck Hurgronje, a Dutch orientalist and colonial government adviser, conducted ethnographic research on Aceh between 1892–1894 by living and participating in the daily life of the Acehnese. The ethnographic report submitted to the Dutch Colonial government in 1893 contributed to the colonial government policymaking in Aceh in the shape of the different approach the Dutch colonial government took towards Muslim clerics and local aristocrats (McFate, 2019). Hurgrony's research was later firstly published in 1906, entitled 'The Acehnese'. His ethnographic study unveiled the social fabric of Acehnese society from the economic activities, mysticism, family structure to rituals and celebrations (Hurgronye, 1959). Hurgronye (1959) argued that although Islam is deeply rooted in the life of Acehnese, Islamic

law and practice in Aceh had adjusted according to local customs. He pointed out that the social family structure of the Aceh community in the early twentieth century looked unusual in comparison to other commonly patrilineal Muslim societies. He also found that there were strong matrilineal features in the community. For instance, he observed that the women owned property and productive assets a situation leading to many men working in their wife's rice fields. Also, Acehnese women acquired and ran the household, often raising their children in the homes of their family. Acehnese matrifocality also manifested in the shape of women's residential clusters, that is, houses or groups of houses where sisters, sometimes maternal aunts, and female cousins and, occasionally, sisters in law, live in close contact with their children.

Further ethnographical works on Aceh also indicated women's relative power within the household. The research by American anthropologist, James Siegel (1969) on the Pidie regency during the mid-1960s looked at the evolution of Islam in Aceh, in particular the attempts by reformist *ulama* (religious scholars) to modernise society through education. In his work, Siegel provided descriptions of political and economic developments at the time, focusing on the structure of the Acehnese family and how they mobilised themselves as a society

In his research, Siegel also highlighted the gender relations in Acehnese society that were shaped by Islamic values but at the same time also influenced by the matrifocal structure of the society. According to Siegel, Islamic teachings emphasised the dominant role of the man in the household. In contrast, in the Acehnese matrifocal system, the position of men is described as 'guest' in the home generally owned by the woman (Siegel, 1969). His observations echo those of Hurgronje's who found that men appeared alienated in their household and that it was this marginalisation within the family structure that prompted many men to migrate. Siegel (1969) writes:

> One reason for the powerlessness of men could be their prolonged absence. It is true that
> women must make many decisions when men are gone, but even when men are home,

they have no power .... When their money is gone, wives urge them to return to the East (out-migration). (p. 177)

A decade later, Chandra Jayawardena (1977) in his fieldwork in Aceh Besar and Bireuen regency, continued this line of understanding as he described the relation of matrilineal heritage of houses and fields, with the traditions of out-migration among men. According to Jayawerdana's interpretation, the Acehnese strong matrilineal features are a consequence of women's ownership of the house and land, and the inheritance practices of passing down these assets from the women to their daughters. However, Jayawardena (1977) also stressed that fathers had the responsibility as the primary breadwinner (often by going on migration) and had to provide for the household.

Jacqueline Siapno conducted a research project in Aceh in the early 2000s and provided insights into gender agency in Aceh, particularly the interplay of indigenous matrifocality, Islamic values and state violence. She challenged the argument that all Acehnese women were victims subordinated by Islamic patriarchy. However, Siapno also noted a growing attempt at Islamic purification to promote a male-dominated society, mainly in the urban area in Aceh that was strongly opposed to the idea of women holding prominent positions in traditional Acehnese society (Siapno, 2002). Her work has contributed to a more nuanced understanding of the politics of gender, Islam and the state violence in Aceh.

Eka Srimulyani, an Acehnese scholar, attempted to explain the reasons behind the challenges of Acehnese matrifocality. In her work, Srimulyani (2010) highlighted several factors including the state promoted gender ideology called *ibuism,* particularly during the new order era (1965-1998), social change in the urban area and the formalisation of Sharia law in Aceh. Srimulyani (2010) found that the new order regime homogenous gender policy tended to disregard local gender practices of the different ethnic groups in the country. The state promoted a top-down policy through the state apparatus to shape gender roles in which the woman's role in

the household was limited to that of wife and mother. Women were seen as dependent on their husbands and needed to play a supportive role in their husbands' career. This state gender ideology strongly contradicts the notion of Acehnese matrifocality which views women as independent and always playing an active role in economic activities.

Furthermore, Srimulyani (2010) argued that the combination of the state *ibuism* policy, modernity and social changes also contributed to the shifting of some matrifocality practices in the community. Though matrifocal traditions are still deeply rooted and practised in rural areas, there is a shift from matrifocality in urban areas (Srimulyani, 2010). A growing trend among some middle-class families in urban areas is to neglect matriarchal practices for patriarchal family structures and to separate themselves from matrilineal family structures.

In addition, the implementation of state Sharia law in the early 2000s arguably limited women's mobility outside the house. Some of the state Sharia regulations restrict social interactions and boundaries to some extent between men and women. For instance, one regulation forbids women to be in the presence of other men in private without the company of her immediate relatives. Before this state Sharia regulation, Islamic values adopted by the Acehnese community never sought to limit the mobility of women in public spaces or to prevent them from playing a prominent role in the household (Srimulyani, 2010). Thus, the Sharia injunction caused public resentment given that the Acehnese society based on Islamic values and local traditions never imposed any forms of segregation of women in the community.

In relation to the state Sharia and gender issue, another Indonesia researcher, Dina Afrianty (2010) studied the responses of local women's NGOs to the formalisation of Islamic law in Aceh. In her work, she argues that although the enactment of the state Sharia has created some restrictions on women's mobility and freedom, it has not prevented them from being involved in public discourse. Afrianty (2010) also highlights how women in Aceh joined local women's NGOs to challenge the regulations that they perceived as gender bias. Collaborating

with other elements of civil society, the local NGO's participated in discussions with policy-makers on gender-related state Sharia regulations. They actively promoted policy changes and reforms to regulations.

Consistent with Afrianty's finding, Kusujiarti, Miano, Pryor, and Ryan (2015) stressed that for many women in Aceh, the intersection between Islam and women's organisations is an influential factor in the development of their agency as the rise of awareness around women's issues, encouraged more activism among women. In their fieldwork in 2012, they explored how global feminism discourses, local matrifocal traditions, and Sharia regulations in Aceh influence women's identities (Kusujiarti et al., 2015). The researchers also examined the conceptions about Muslim women as victims of their religion. They found that this conception is not evidenced in Aceh, as local matrifocality continues to empower women in their everyday lives. Kusujiarti et al. (2015) write,

> Acehnese women employ agency and power through a multitude of ways, fluidly combining aspects of tradition and modernity that are often, and wrongly, presented as divergent concepts. Women assert their rights and redefine new ground for gender relations in all levels of Acehnese society, from the household to the government. Through culture, historical precedence, collective action, and individual and political agency, women in Aceh negotiate power and agency, while constructing a dynamic Acehnese identity. (p. 179)

I conducted my study in a rural North Aceh, an area characterised by strong matrifocal traits pointed out by other scholars, for example, Afrianty (2010, Hurgronye (1959), Jayawerdana (1977), Siapno (2002), Siegel (1969) and Srimulyani (2010) aa well. The latest studies on gender agency in Aceh (Afrianty, 2010; Siapno, 2002; Srimulyani, 2010) also raised concerns on the shift in matrifocality, particularly in urban contexts. In extending their

scholarship, my study contributes to the growing literature on the latest developments for matrifocality, particularly in rural Aceh.

Moreover, my study employed different theoretical lens from previous studies which were conducted by various international and national scholars (for example, Afrianty, 2010; Hurgronye, 1906; Jayawerdana, 1977; Kusujiarti, 2015; Siapno, 2001; Siegel, 1969) and a work by an Acehnese scholar (Srimulyani, 2010). As mentioned earlier, previous research examined various aspects of Acehnese society. For instance, Hurgronye, (1959) and Siegel (1969) explored family structure and matrifocality in the context of the dynamics of politics and Islam in Acehnese society. Meanwhile, studies by Jayawerdana (1977), Siapno (2002), Srimulyani (2010), Afrianty (2010), Kusujiarti et al. (2015) centred around the Acehnese family structure, gender agency and local matrifocality. My study differs in that it focused on community ECE initiatives in rural Aceh. Moreover, the matrifocal features of the community, inevitably lead to the women in the village playing a significant role in the development of the ECE initiative in *meunasah.* While some recent studies (Afrianty, 2010; Kusujiarti, 2015) looked at women's activism in politics, my study explored women's activism in education, particularly ECE. The findings gathered in this study also aimed to lend a more local perspective to the study of the dynamics of Acehnese society, providing an alternative narrative to the Western notion of 'oppressed Muslim women'.

2.6   Literature on the Educational Role of *meunasah*

As this study focused on the community-initiated ECE in *meunasah*, it is pertinent to examine the literature on the educational role of *meunasah* in Acehnese society. In order to better understand the significant role of *meunasahs* in shaping education in Aceh, it is essential to have an understanding of its long history in providing traditional Islamic education in the region.

The *meunasah* has been an ever-present institution in Acehnese rural areas. Since the period of the Aceh kingdom, the Acehnese rural civilisation developed around the *meunasah*. The *meunasah* has also been significant in the transmission of values—spiritual, societal to cultural values—from the older to the younger generation, (Wahid, 2013). According to some local Aceh scholars (Hasbullah, 2001; Hasyimi, 1978), the integration of conventional and religious knowledge in religious institutions marked the 'golden era' of the Aceh Kingdom in the seventeenth century enabled by the presence of Muslim scholars from the Middle East and South Asia. In this period, Islamic educational institutions in Aceh divided into *meunasah* at the elementary level, *dayah* at the secondary level, *zawiyah* at the higher education level. The Acehnese literature from the early eighteenth century described the role of *meunasah* in providing education to children. The following excerpt offers an insight into the teaching-learning activities at an Acehnese's *meunasah* in that era:

> The teungku (teacher) had six hundred pupils, and all were abuzz with activity. Some were reciting the Qurʾan, and others reading the *Masaʾilal* (basic Islamic text) Some were studying the *Ajurrūmiyya* (basic Arabic grammar), while others were translating the *Al-Fatiha* (a Qur'anic verse). Some were reading Jawoe (Malay) texts, and others were engaged in a discussion. In the Western pavilion, they were studying [Arabic] grammar and in the Eastern pavilion, spelling. In the upstream pavilion, they were studying *Tasawuf* (Sufism) from the subtle wisdom found in the *Ḥikam* and the *Iḥya*. Everyone studied according to his capacity; some from Arabic works, others from texts in Malay. The teungku was the supervisor and headmaster, and there was a waki (a tutor) in each pavilion who would look over the shoulders of students to examine their work. (Drewes 1979 as cited in Feener, 2014, p. 63)

During this period the *meunasah* was associated with the comprehensive elementary study of Islamic education through the use of texts in both Arabic and Malay, including primary-

level instruction in Qur'anic recitation, basic Islamic jurisprudence, basic Arabic language, and basic Sufism. However, this role seemed to decline in later centuries.

Little information about the *meunasah* was available until the late nineteenth century when Hurgronje's ethnographic work (1892-1894) revealed the significant drawbacks of Acehnese educational institutions. Hurgronje described how the educational role of *meunasah* had dimmed during that period. His book also provided an insightful description of the children teaching and learning process in *meunasah.* The process was administrated by the village clerics and assisted by their senior students. The *meunasah's* educators received their 'salary' annually from pupils' families in the form of Zakat (an obligatory financial contribution made by Muslims to the needy based on a percentage of their wealth) for their work in educating children and taking care of the *meunasah* (Hurgronye, 1959).

After this period, the educational role of *meunasah* reduced to Qur'an teaching and basic religious education for children while remaining regarded as the very first place where children in villages experience an institutionalised educational environment. Other significant fieldwork on Acehnese society by Siegel (1969), conducted during the beginning of the last Acehnese conflict in the mid-1970s, rarely mentioned the educational role of *meunasah*, since its localised role was merely teaching the Qur'an. According to Srimulyani (2007), before Indonesian independence in 1945, this type of traditional Islamic learning education occurred commonly across the country. Even today, the teaching of the Qur'an remains regarded as the most typical model of Islamic elementary education (Hefner, 2009).

Furthermore, Srimulyani, in her studies on Muslim women and traditional Islamic education (2007, 2013) argues that the traditional Islamic educational institution, particularly *dayah* still maintains a significant role, particularly in rural areas. However, since, the 1990s, the role of *meunasah* in providing Islamic teaching for children has gradually been reducing and this could be attributed to the diminishing role of *meunasah* as an educational institution. Since the

1990s, the traditional education of children provided by *meunasah* has gradually changed and even ceased in some places (Srimulyani, 2007, 2013).

This re-envisioning of the forms and methods of Islamic teaching in *meunasah* is not an instant but rather a discursive process. A number of local and national factors could have contributed to this situation. On the one hand, at the local level, are factors such as the lack of security during the Aceh conflict (1976-2005) and the changing function of Islamic teaching in some *meunasahs*. The lack of security during the conflict period resulted in the gradual relocation of Islamic education from *meunasah* to Imams or religious teachers' residences, especially with evening classes (Srimulayni, 2013). Additionally, in some *meunasahs*, basic Islamic teaching was practically non-existent or had been redesigned for adult Islamic teaching, including Islamic teaching on Fridays for women (Wahid, 2013). Nevertheless, Feener (2014) argued that most *meunasahs* that continued to provide the traditional Islamic education provided basic Islamic education only with children taught to memorise and recite the Qur'an as well as Islamic beliefs and practices.

On the other hand, at the national level, factors include, the region-wide influence of a new Al-Qur'an teaching model that replaced the traditional teaching method in some *meunasah*. Following this, most *meunasah* established the Al-Qur'an Learning Center (referred to as TPQ) that mostly also occurred in urban areas. The traditional model commonly adopted in traditional Islamic teaching is where students surround the Imam or teacher in a circle, listening to his instruction (Dhofier, 1999). However, the TPQ is considered a more modern form of ECE affiliated with the Indonesian Ministry of Religious Affairs that employs a curriculum and teaching plan in its approach.

Following the recent decentralisation policies and the initiation of special autonomy, villages had broader authority to manage their own budget. As a result, most villages re-established their traditional Islamic education of children in *meunasahs*. Though, based on my

involvement in the Nisam District and a series of observations in other districts in North Aceh Regency, many *meunasahs* chose to establish modern ECE, ranging from playgroups, Islamic Kindergarten, to TPQ. These privately run learning centres are mostly funded through the village budget, though at times they receive government funding through the special autonomy budget. In this research, I focused on how a rural community in Gampong Blang, North Aceh, initiated ECE in their *meunasah* and explored the driving force behind their numerous initiatives.

Furthermore, after reviewing the literature on Acehnese matrifocality and the educational role of *meunasah*, it is crucial to discuss previous works relevant to my study, including previous ethnographic studies on Indonesian ECE and ECE in Aceh.

2.7   Relevant Studies

An ethnographic study in an ECE in Indonesia was conducted by Vina Adriany, between May and December 2010 in a kindergarten aimed for middle-class children in Bandung, West Java, Indonesia (Adriany, 2013). An ethnographic study in ECE in Indonesia conducted by Adriany (2013) explored how child-centred discourses were practised and negotiated in the kindergarten and how children and teachers negotiate their power relations and positioned themselves within existing gender discourses. In her research Andriany (2013) found that the child=centred discourses shape educators' beliefs that children's gender construction was an outcome of socialisation. Within the child-centred discourse, educators positioned themselves as powerless to challenge existing gender discourse. As the consequences of this perceived powerlessness, the educators were unable to expand children's construction of gender discourses. This ethnographic work has been the foundation for Adriany's latest works on ECE (Adriany, 2018a; 2018b Adriany & Saefulllah, 2015; Adriany & Solehuddin, 2017).

Yulindrasari (2017) conducted another ethnographic study on ECE in Bandung, West Java and Yogyakarta between October and December 2014. The research inquired into how male

teachers negotiate gender narratives and navigate social expectations and gender identity as a man working in a female-dominated occupation. The study highlights the expectations for the male teachers for conformity with what perceived as ideals masculinity. However, ECE has provided space for men to renegotiate these hegemonic ideals masculinity, at least in the workplace.

The Aceh government and Sultan Idris Education University conducted a collaborative study on the development of ECE after the tsunami in Aceh between 2012 and 2013. The mixed method study aimed at highlighting the ECE initiatives which involved international donor agencies in tsunami relief program in Aceh (Fang & Yusof, 2014).

The study showed that the community appreciated the establishment of new ECE centres and the renovation of the existing ECE centres funded by international donor agencies. Furthermore, the study also highlighted the issue of community involvement in some ECE established as part of post-tsunami aid projects. Researchers found that educators involved in the programs agreed on the utmost importance of support from the community from leaders, teachers and parents. Findings also showed that the implementation of ECE activities was unsustainable without the participation of parents and the community. One reason for this was the perception of parents and the community that the program was a special project initiated by donors requiring only minimal community involvement in its early stages.

The studies by Andriany (2013) and Yulindasari (2017) made significant contributions to ethnographic research on ECE in Indonesia in that these studies offered in-depth understanding of ECE development in an urban setting in Java. My ethnographic case study investigated Aceh province's particularities, such as matrifocality (prevalent in Sumatra only) together with its moderated Islamic beliefs shaped by local traditions and values. My ethnographic study also explored ECE development in a rural setting. Moreover, the research by Fang and Yusof (2014) lay the groundwork for the understanding of ECE development in post-conflict and post-tsunami

in Aceh. Their findings highlighted issues faced by educators in ECE established by international donors as part of the tsunami relief program. Furthermore, educators' primary concern about ECE was the lack of community and parents' participation. My research extends these understandings by further exploring ECE development in rural North Aceh. In such areas, most forms of ECE were established in *meunasah* and were initiated and by community members. Moreover, my study contributes further to the literature on ECE development in Aceh. It also provided a lens to compare the nature of the community engagement between the development of ECE in the tsunami affected areas post disaster (as highlighted in previous studies) and the development of community-initiated ECE in some rural areas (mostly conflict-affected areas).

2.8   Indonesian ECE: Global Discourses and Local Context

ECE in Indonesia emerged during the Dutch colonial period with the introduction of preschool education that was influenced by Froebelian and Montessori approaches (Thomas, 1988, 1992). In 1922, Ki Hadjar Dewantara, as part of his resistance movement, established the first national kindergarten called 'Taman Siswa'. Child-centred principles, as well as local and religious values, influenced Dewantara's ECE initiative. However, according to Newberry (2010), Dewantara adjusted and modified the approach in accordance with the local context also inserting anti-colonial spirit into the institution, aimed at instilling consciousness about the national independence movement at an early age. However, some Indonesian scholars in the area (for example, Adriany, 2018a, 2019; Formen & Hardjono, 2013; Octarra & Hendriati, 2019) argued that in recent years, ECE practices in Indonesia remain influenced by European thinking, principles and practices, such as Piaget's theory of child development.

ECE has been receiving more interest and attention in recent decades from many countries and international organisations. This growing awareness has seen the formulation of ECE agendas and initiatives across the globe. Improving the accessibility of early years education for marginalised and disadvantaged communities has become part of the universal

agenda for education. The global discourses on education consider education not only as a means for economic advancement but also a universal human right (Dahlberg & Moss, 2005). According to Newberry (2010), an anthropologist who studied the non-governmental governance of families in Indonesia after the new order regime (1998 onwards), international donor agencies also played a role in bolstering Indonesian policy-makers' conviction around the importance of human capital in ECE through aid and loans.

Several factors shaped recent developments of ECE in Indonesia, including support from international agencies, national goals and framework on ECE, and decentralisation policies placing more autonomy in the hands of local governments (OECD, 2015; World Bank, 2007). As mentioned earlier, ECE in Indonesia received more attention from policymakers after the country ratified EFA, participated in the UN MDGs and received significant investment (loans and aid) from international agencies such as the World Bank and UNESCO (World Bank, 2007, 2012). International agencies working with ECE in Indonesia stressed the role of ECE as an investment in creating human capital, which in response will yield a higher return to the country (Tomlinson & Andina, 2015; World Bank, 2012). Such discourses emphasised the link between ECE and the economic development of a country (Heckman, 2006; Heckman & Masterov, 2007; World Bank, 2006). Some Indonesian academics (for example, Adriany, 2018a, 2019; Formen & Hardjono, 2013; Octarra & Hendriati, 2019) believe that the global discourse on ECE promoted by international agencies also bolstered the human capital discourse in Indonesia's ECE policies and practices.

The human capital approach has also resulted in the standardisation of ECE in the country. Several recent ECE policy frameworks in Indonesia, including the 2011–2025 ECE framework aimed at meeting international standards of ECE. Such ECE initiatives focus on expanding ECE services and accessibility as well as setting standards for educators and facilities (Directorate General of ECE, 2015a). This approach aimed to deliver predetermined outcomes

through early intervention (Denboba et al., 2015). Penn (2002, 2005) and Moss (2014) consider that the standard guidelines for ECE based on studies in some Anglo-American countries have a different conceptualisation of ECE from the rest of the world. Penn (2002, 2005, 2011) added that international donor agencies had not addressed inequality issues. Instead, they tend to impose a global agenda of ECE in the local context of the developing country.

There is also a concern from local scholars (Adriany, 2018a, 2018b; Adriany & Saefulllah, 2015; Octarra & Hendriati, 2019) that human capital approaches underpinning specific standardised policies may result in over-regulation of ECE and force conformity on educators. All ECE institutions are obliged to follow a national standard which covers standards of developmental goals, standards of ECE teachers and professionals, standards of content, process, and assessment, and standards of facilities, infrastructure, management and finance. Although the standards aim to improve ECE quality, in fact, not all existing ECE centres have the resources to fully meet the standards (Directorate General of ECE, 2015b; OECD, 2015). Another concern raised by Yulindasari and Ujianti (2017), suggested that the new policies on ECE overlooked the disadvantaged conditions and unequal playing field of ECE teachers.

There is arguably a need for all stakeholders in Indonesia to engage more cautiously with international agencies' commitment to Indonesia's ECE (Adriany, 2018a, 2018b; Octarra & Hendriati, 2019). Developing countries have historically received aid and loans provided by global institutions such as the World Bank (Penn, 2002, 2011). Some recipient countries perceive donor agencies as tending to push the countries to commit to specific economic and educational reforms (Adriany, 2018a, 2018b; Adriany & Saefulllah, 2015; Octarra & Hendriati, 2019). Given this, it is essential that the authorities that govern ECE seek a different conceptualisation of childhood at the local level and recognize the existent socio-economic disparities among areas in Indonesia (such as the urban-rural disparity). ECE narratives should also reflect local contexts, and associated practices should meet local demands. As Indonesia

experiences rapid economic development, the country also needs to address inequality issues (OECD, 2015). For example, Adriany and Saefullah (2015) in their study on similar issues in ECE, found that with the growing number of expensive kindergartens in urban areas, many children in rural areas are still facing difficulty to access quality ECE.

I also note that religion and spirituality intersect Indonesia's agenda for the future. The Indonesian education framework, as stipulated in NESA indicates a strong emphasis on spirituality and religious norms seen as a necessity for Indonesia's future generations (NESA, 2003). The framework also sees the formalisation of students' right to religious education with the national curriculum, incorporating religious education to some extent based on the promulgation of Law No. 20 of 2003. The National Education System (NESA) integrated religious education as a compulsory part of the curriculum at every educational level.

The global perception of the diminishing role of religion in education does not seem to apply to the case in Indonesia as the country has witnessed the strengthening of religious institutions (Schonhardt, 2011). The government's emphasis on the necessity of spiritual and religious education for future Indonesian generations is one that is also shared by Indonesians generally. Supporting evidence shows that the Qur'an learning centres (TPQ) still contribute the highest percentage, 25.66 per cent, to the ECE gross participation rate (MoEC, 2010). This fact is hardly surprising given Indonesia's status as the world's largest Muslim nation (Pew Research Center, 2015). As such, a majority of its population are more likely to choose Islamic-based schools/education centres for their children over other alternatives. TPQ is a place where children learn to read the Qur'an and also get opportunities to play with other children in their peer group. This approach is similar to conventional playgroups; the difference is that TPQs emphasise the importance of learning to read the Qur'an and understanding Islamic values. It can be argued that this set of beliefs along with the human capital narrative espoused by

policymakers lay the foundation for the emergent human capital and character-building discourses in ECE developments in Indonesia.

As mentioned in the previous chapter, Indonesia provides ECE services through both public and private streams. According to NDPA (2013) study, in 2010 the participation rate for children five years of age was around 57 per cent, participation for children four years of age was 35 per cent, and three years of age was 11 per cent. There are still disparity issues in terms of access to ECE in Indonesia. Participation rates differ considerably by region and wealth (70 per cent for the richest 20 per cent of households, and 45 per cent for poorest 20 per cent of households). In some areas, there are various types of ECE providers, while in other communities, children remain without access to any types of ECE. The NDPA study also highlighted the complexity of the financing for both formal and informal ECE. Public investment has contributed to the expansion of ECE access with most of the centres heavily dependent on transfers from the national budget. Many educators also need to commit to voluntary work or be paid below minimum wage to enable the ECE centre to operate (NDPA, 2013).

My research focus is on a rural community that initiated ECE in North Aceh, which in part has been fostered by recent decentralisation policies that place more authority in the hands of local government. This development offers more alternatives for Indonesian ECE as the community initiated ECE will allow incorporation of more local context and values into the ECE discourses. This development is also crucial in the realisation of the aspirations of rural communities to have access to ECE. Allowing communal bottom-up initiatives such as the community initiative in rural Aceh to develop ECE in their *meunasah* in order to flourish is among ways to realise this aspiration.

2.9   Summary

In this chapter, I discussed the importance of ECE for children and society and the importance of community involvement in the sustainability of ECE programs. It also discusses

some relevant experience in several countries in the majority world. I highlighted the recent

development of ECE in Indonesia, specifically how ECE in Indonesia has been a site for local

and global discourses. Human capital discourses on ECE promoted by the International donor

agencies have also influenced Indonesia's policy-makers to view ECE as an economic

investment for the country. In addition, the long-term goals of ECE in Indonesia also

acknowledge religious education as part of the attempt to promote a character building discourse.

However, recent decentralisation policy providing more autonomy to local government across

the country energised local communities at the village level across Indonesia to adjust the ECE

centres with the local context and insert more local values in the process. This development

could potentially strengthen local discourses in the context of Indonesian ECE.

I also outlined the literature on Acehnese family structures and matrifocal features as well

as the educational role of *meunasah* in Aceh. Examining relevant literature on these two

elements of Acehnese social fabric is pivotal to understand better the core of this research on the

community initiative on ECE in *meunasah*. Recent development also makes the role of

meunasah even more central, as the institution plays the leading role in ensuring the continuity

of local traditions and practices while being an avenue to facilitate positive change in this new

era, such as the establishment of ECE in the village.

Chapter 3: Theoretical and Conceptual Framework

3.1   Introduction

In this chapter, I outline the dynamic relationship between education and society in post-conflict Aceh through the lens of Attas's Islamic education concepts and Paulo Freire's critical discourse analysis. In particular, I put forward Attas's Islamic concepts to better understand a deeply religious society in Aceh and its Islamic education institution. Moreover, I will also look at the use of the theoretical lens of Paulo Freire in theorising the dynamics within the community, especially about the role of *meunasah* in promoting ECE initiatives. The following section discusses the key ideas associated with Al-Attas and Paulo Freire that are used in my research and illustrates how the work of both theorists can complement each other within one framework and can be applied to understand the context in which education operates in Aceh.

3.2   Naguib Al-Attas

3.2.1   The relevance of Al-Attas' Islamic education philosophy to my study. Al-Attas' work is pertinent in the theoretical framing of my study because of its relevance from both the conceptual and contextual aspects. Al-Attas' philosophy and methodology of education have had an impact on the Islamisation of the mind, body, and soul and the personal and collective life of Muslims as well as others, including the spiritual and physical non-human environment (Al-Attas, 1997, 1989). He is one of the proponents and theorists in the Islamisation of knowledge and one of the few contemporary scholars who is thoroughly rooted in the traditional Islamic sciences.

The Islamic education concept of Al-Attas, called *ta'dib*, reflects the influence of Islamic traditions in teaching and learning in *meunasah*. Islamic traditional view of the role of education sees it as a means to create a balance between *ilmu* (knowledge) and *adab* (good behaviour,

etiquette and morals). He conceived education as a means of not only educating the citizen but also holistically educating the human being (Al-Attas, 1997; Wan Daud, 1998) a concept closely couched within traditional Islamic education philosophy in Aceh. The core of traditional Islamic education in Aceh is based on classical traditions and emphasises the balance between *adab* and knowledge. The perceived imbalance occurs when an individual has sufficient knowledge but lacks the *adab* or, vice versa has the *adab* but lacks the knowledge. In this philosophy, knowledge alone is insufficient to build a sound and balanced individual as *adab* is also of great value and importance. The basis of this concept relates to what the Islamic Prophet Muhammad said, "I have not been sent as a Messenger, except to perfect character (*Akhlaq*)". These principles fit well with the Al-Attas' perspective of *ta'dib*.

In the Aceh context, even though ECE in the village is not a form of traditional Islamic education institution per se, it is situated within a deeply religious setting of *meunasah*. According to Feener (2013), the rapid social change in Aceh following the post-disaster and post-conflict restructuration has energised recent attempts of the state/province to implement Islamic based laws that have underpinned the broader context of society, including areas such as education.

According to Al-Attas, the process of education in Islam covers every aspect of life, which includes the spiritual, intellectual, individual and social dimensions. Education through the approach of *ta'dīb* aims to bring forth the full potential of a human being through the actualisation of good natural disposition, namely the soul (*rūḥ*) the desires (*nafs*) the intellect (*aql*) and the heart (*qalb*). It outlines the perfection of the individual as the aim of education. Islamic education also involves concepts of the Qur'an and Hadiths (the reported words and deeds of Prophet Muhammad) which provide the foundations of the knowledge of principles and practice of Islam, Islamic jurisprudence knowledge (*'ulum al-shar'iyyah*) and Islamic ethics and morals (Al-Attas, 1997, 2003).

In the case of Aceh, it is the only province with the autonomy to implement Islamic-based regulation to an extent. The implementation of Sharia has also reached the education sector by the implementation of the LoGA (2006). The law elucidates that, although Aceh Education System is an integrated part of the National Education System, it has the liberty to take into account Islamic values based on the holy Qur'an and Hadiths. In addition, the law mandates that every Muslim is obligated to acquire basic Islamic knowledge, such as reading the Qur'an and follow basic Islamic practices (LoGA, 2006). The national curriculum forms the basis for the teaching and learning processes in ECE in *meunasah*. However, the additional emphasis on basic Islamic knowledge is an integral part of the education process.

3.2.2   Al-Attas' Islamic education philosophy. Syed Muhammad al Naquib al-Attas is a prominent contemporary Muslim philosopher and thinker from Malaysia. He is highly versed in theology, philosophy, metaphysics, history, and literature (Wan Daud, 1998) and is the author of 27 scholarly works on various aspects of Islamic thought and civilisation. His significant contributions include the integration of classical Islamic education with contemporary higher education in the Muslim world and devising an Islamic university for the contemporary era (Wan Daud, 1998).

Al-Attas recognises the importance of empirical and rational knowledge as well as that of intuition and spiritual awareness (Al-Attas, 1985). According to al-Attas, his approach of drawing on Islamic intellectual and formal tradition aims to restore order and justice not only to the human self but also to society (Al-Attas, 1989). The classical Islamic theological and mystical position on the 'worldly' or 'scientific' is complex; this so-called secular knowledge was part and parcel of the scholarly life of the classical Muslim scholars (Lettinck, 2011). In drawing on the diverse and rich traditions of classical Islamic scholarship, Al-Attas recognised empirical and rational knowledge as well as imaginary and analogous knowledge. He also draws on the widely accepted Islamic definition of the human being as having a range of

interdependent faculties incorporating the '*aql* (intellect), *nutq* (reason), *nafs* (desires), *qalb* (heart), and *ruh* (soul). For al-Attas, these provide an interdependent and holistic understanding of the human being.

Al-Attas promotes the concept of integrating conventional science and religious teaching in an educational institution. His Islamic education concept, which is based primarily on moral, spiritual and character building, is the main reason why I have employed his concepts as a theoretical lens of analysis in my study. There are continuing efforts to integrate secular and religious sciences in Islamic education institutions in Indonesia and to diminish the dichotomy between science and religion, particularly in a religious, educational institution. Moreover, the current curriculum of ECE in Aceh and the rest of the country also emphasises the moral and spiritual development of children, which is the primary focus of Al-Attas' education concept.

Al-Attas argues that Islamic knowledge has a liberating dimension which is the purpose of Islamic knowledge, especially in the context of liberating humanity from westernising forms of knowledge (Al-Attas, 1985, 1997). Al-Attas offers alternatives concepts and aims for the de-westernization of knowledge and methodology. According to Al-Attas, the nature of modern science is perceived as not being neutral and creates confusion instead of peace and justice (Al-Attas, 1997). He believes that the problems come from the fact that philosophy and science neglect the spiritual dimension of reality (Al Attas, 1985, 1989).

3.2.3 The purpose of education.

According to Al-Attas, to create a balanced individual (*insan kamil* or universal human), it is necessary to employ an educational paradigm based on notions of integrated education. Al-Attas attempted to integrate science into the Islamic educational system, combining the teaching of religious science alongside conventional science in classrooms (Al-Attas, 1989). The macro educational orientation of Al-Attas is to create an integrated educational system that is value-imbued with moral and religious teachings as is

evident in his conception of *ta'dib* where he includes the concept of science and charity (Al-Attas, 1985, 1997). The outcome of such an education is students' application of knowledge in the world based on culture, ethics and religious teachings. In other words, Islamic values and teachings form the basis for the use of science and technology.

According to Al-Attas, education should serve to nurture a profound sense of morality and justice in individuals and emphasise the value of humans as spiritual beings (Al-Attas, 1985, 1997). Al-Attas advocates the redefinition of Islamic education concept by proposing the concept of *ta'dib* as the most suitable definition for education in Islam. Apart from the *ta'dib* concept, the most common definitions of education among Muslim scholars are *tarbiyah* and *ta'alim*. However, Al-Attas argued that *ta'dib* is an overarching way of interpreting education in the Islamic sense, given that it includes elements of *tarbiyah* and *ta'lim* within its definition (Al-Attas, 1997). Al-Attas suggests that *ta'dib* is a more comprehensive approach that encourages both knowledge and action. Moreover, *ta'dib* also emphasises the ethical and social aspects of education.

Al-Attas' *ta'dib* concept achieved acceptance in Indonesia. Azzumardi Azra, a prominent scholar, argued that as the current education system places more emphasis on cognitive intelligence than on character-building, Al-Attas perspective offers a form of reconstruction of Islamic education (Ridjaluddin, 2009). Azra argued

> In this case, I agree with Prof. Naquib Al-Attas: that it is better that we use the term ta'dib in Islamic education than tarbiyah, because ta'dib includes the process of enculturation and acculturation. Ta'dib not only includes the intellectualization process but also relates to etiquette, morals, and so on. An education system that employs the ta'dib paradigm will create a truly civilized and humane (berakhlak) individuals. (Azra as cited in Ridjaluddin, 2009, p. 103)

According to Al-Attas (1997), the dual dimensions of human beings, namely the physical aspect (*fard kifayah)* and the spiritual state (*fard 'ain*) should form the basis of the curriculum. In

the Indonesian context, the national curriculum incorporated religious education to some extent. By the promulgation of Law No. 20 of 2003 on National Education System (NESA), religious education is a compulsory part of the curriculum at every educational level.

In my research, I highlight how Al-Attas' concept of *ta'dib* influences the teaching and learning process in *meunasah's* ECE. In particular, how teachers try to instil good moral values in children, as well as the concept of 'good people' they want to achieve through *meunasah's* ECE. I utilised the Al-Attas lens to observe, understand and analyse the nature of the teachers' practices in *meunasah* in employing the *ta'dib* concept in their pedagogy.

As an institution situated in a deeply Islamic context, an attempt to re-envision ECE services cannot neglect its original values. Traditional Islamic education in Acehnese society, such as *dayah* and *meunasah,* are vastly influential in rural areas in Aceh. These are places teaching the fundamental pillars of the Islamic faith. The traditional Islamic education also aims to develop a deep consciousness of life and death in order to foster spiritual consciousness. The notion of creating 'good' individuals entails the development of the full potential of human beings through the positive actualisation of the soul, desire, intellect and heart (Al-Attas, 1989, 2003).

3.2.4   Ta'dib and Adab. *Ta'dib* education, which is rooted in the Qur'an, insists in a balanced state between two basic human requirements, namely: reasoning (*aqliyah*), spirituality or faith (*ruhiyah*). An education system that employs *ta'dib* paradigm will create a genuinely civilised, humane and morals human being (Ridjaluddin, 2009). Education based on *ta'dib* paradigm emphasises the process of character development and acquiring moral and social manner and attitude within the society and rooting for the social principles such as justice (Al-Attas, 1979).

Al-Attas identified the need for regeneration of *adab* through *ta'dīb* (holistic education). Al-Attas uses the word *adab*, an Arabic word, in both the ontological and pedagogical sense; this

use differs from the common meaning of the term, which is etiquette (Wan Daud, 1998). For Al-Attas, the purpose of education is achieving a sense of *adab* in our being, knowing intuitively through our tradition how to be authentic in the modern world.

Concepts such as religion (*deen*), human (*insan*), knowledge (*ilm* and *ma'rifah*), wisdom (*hikmah*), justice ('*adl*), and right action ('*amal*) are essential elements to be incorporated into the education system, from the lower to the higher level. According to Al-Attas, newly independent Muslim nation states tend to imitate the colonial powers which conceived education as educating the citizen as opposed to holistically educating the human being (Al-Attas, 1997; Wan Daud, 1998). Al-Attas identifies *adab* as the core concept of education in Islam and the purpose of seeking knowledge; thus, the purpose of seeking knowledge in Islam is to develop the individual.

3.3   Paulo Freire

3.3.1   The relevance of Paulo Freire's ideas to this study. Given my research context, I utilised Paulo Freire's perspectives as another theoretical lens to explore the role of *meunasah* in initiating, negotiating and managing early years' education in Aceh. Freire's work is a relevant frame for my study for several reasons.

First, researchers regard Paulo Freire as one of the most influential twentieth-century education philosophers and critical theorists. Freire's work extends into various educational fields from adult education to the early childhood sector (Robert, 2016). Indonesia utilised Freirean approaches in multiple educational contexts, including with specific groups such as NGO activists, university students and street children. Indonesian Society for Social Transformation (INSIST), an NGO, has been applying Freire's educational philosophy and methodology in its informal education programs for the peasants and street children in Bandung, West Java (Topatimasang, Dilts, Fakih, & Danandjaya, 1986; Fakih, Topatimasang, & Rahardjo, 2010).

Second, scholars recognise Freire as the standard-bearer and founding figure of critical pedagogy. His work inspired scholars around the world who applied it beyond the education discipline, namely in sociology, anthropology, political science, philosophy, theology, cultural studies, indigenous studies, peace studies and other fields (Giroux 2010; Mayo, 2004; McLaren, 1998, 2003; Roberts, 2010, 2016). My research also intersects with and engages other disciplines such as peace studies (my study will take place in an area that just entered into peace period) and Islamic philosophy of education.

Third, Freire's theory has been informed and enriched by his vast and varied experiences in various cultural contexts (Spaaij & Jeanes, 2013). Hence, his works apply to different circumstances in many parts of the world. His ideas and analyses have become more relevant, given the prevalent inequalities in the world (Schugurensky, 2011; Spaaij & Jeanes, 2013). Penn (2005) argued that we currently live in an unequal world, where the rich become richer, and the poor become poorer, leaving the children suffering from this inequality.

Fourth, Freire's ideas have a grounding in both formal and informal educational settings. For Freire, pedagogy is a cultural practice that takes place not only in schools but any educational and cultural space, including community education and social movements (Freire & Shor, 1987; Spaaij & Jeanes, 2013). Paulo Freire's discourse has applications in a variety of contemporary institutional and non-institutional educational settings (Mayo, 2004; Spaaij & Jeanes, 2013). I conducted my research in *meunasah,* which are both an educational and cultural space for children in Aceh villages. Moreover, this study is also part of my attempt to advocate for early years' education in *meunasahs* in the context of the social transformation of rural areas.

Fifth, a significant portion of Freire's theory is based on his experiences in Brazil and other Latin American and African countries (Robert, 2016) which differentiates Freire's work from many other western-based (North-America and Europe) theorists. Freirean pedagogy can better represent the context of developing and emerging countries in Asia, especially in terms of

their socio-economic and political circumstances. Moreover, the context of Brazil is also similar to Indonesia in terms of religiosity; Brazil is well known as the country with the largest Catholic population in the world, while Indonesia is the country with the largest Muslim population in the world (Pew Research Center, 2015). My research took place in a religious, educational institution setting in one of Indonesia's most conservative provinces Aceh.

3.3.2 Pedagogy of the oppressed, hope and humanistic education,

Freire's early and primary focus was the development of a pedagogy of the oppressed though not limited to his seminal book of that name (Freire, 1972a) but reflecting his entire life's struggle as an educator and philosopher. Freire was critical of Brazilian education at the time, which he dubbed as 'banking education,' in which education had become a medium of oppression by the authority (status quo) of marginalised people. The status quo (oppressor) intentionally uses education to oppress people by making them powerless, backward and ignorant (Freire, 1972a).

In *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, Freire (1972a) describes "banking education" as a one-sided process categorising the teacher as subject and the students as objects. Meanwhile, knowledge is seen as something belonging to the teachers and constituted by teachers' point of view of the world'. Education compares to a transaction where teachers deposit knowledge in their students rather than a medium to generate critical reflection in teachers and students. He describes this system as follows:

> Education thus becomes an act of depositing, in which the students are the depositories, and the teacher is the depositor. Instead of communicating, the teacher issues communique and makes deposits which the students patiently receive, memorize, and repeat. This is the 'banking' concept of education, in which the scope of action allowed to the students extends only as far as receiving, filing, and storing the deposit. (Freire, 1972a, p. 80)

According to Freire (1972a), this kind of education reflects the continuity of oppression of marginalised or poor people by the oppressor (ruling elites) to strengthen the status quo. Thus, in order to replace the oppressor, Freire offers an alternative concept called "Liberatory Education". Contrary to the 'banking education', liberatory education is meant to humanise education.

Liberatory education employs a problem-posing method in which teachers and students are critical co-investigators. Working with the teacher to problematise their world, students "come to see the world not as a static reality, but as a reality in process" (Freire, 1972a, p. 66). "Looking at the past", for example, becomes "a means of understanding more clearly what and who they are so that they can more wisely build the future" (Freire, 1972a, p. 84).

Problem-posing education allows conscientisation which regards teachers and students as subjects in a collaborative relationship, unified by the same objective. When teachers and students collaborate, dialogue becomes a critical element in education. The task of the dialogical teacher is to "represent" that universe to the people from whom he first received it and "re-present" it not as a lecture, but as a problem (Freire, 1972a, p. 109).

Conscientisation allows people to achieve critical consciousness, which is the ultimate layer of consciousness. Freire (1972b, 1973) categorises consciousness into three layers, namely magical, naive, and critical consciousness which he distinguishes through the way people perceive their existential reality. Magical consciousness leads to irrationality and resists facts, while naïve consciousness perceives itself in control of facts and overlays itself in reality. Critical consciousness represents facts empirically and integrates with reality (Freire, 1972b, 1973). These levels are determined by the capacity to distinguish between the given or natural and what is socially constructed or culturally determines the levels of people's consciousness (Freire, 1972b, 1973).

Paulo Freire also advocates pedagogy of hope as an integral part of human existence. In essence, it reflects the very human dimension of all mental feelings, and it creates the possibility of leading a better human life. Hope is acknowledged and accepted as a significant core theme for education. Freire designed his pedagogy to stimulate and guide the cognitive-affective and behavioural dimensions through transformative hope. The discourse of conscientisation is the discourse of transformative hope of those willing to be involved in "the taking of history into their hands" (Freire, 1994, 2007, p. 176; Webb, 2013). For Freire, education is always a political process. He believes that hope is a liberatory need to be driven by fundamental visions of the future with the courage to dream and take responsibility (Freire, 1994; Webb, 2013).

Paulo Freire is also a proponent of the idea of liberation and humanistic education. He describes liberation as a fundamental social, cultural, political and economic transformation intended to develop critical and collective consciousness of the social justice issues and to empower individuals to struggle for change (Freire, 1972a). According to Freire, education should provide the opportunity for the oppressed to repossess their humanity and overcome their oppressive condition. Freire argued that to allow this process to happen, the oppressed should take a role in their own liberation (Freire, 1972a).

Humanist education allows freedom for critical thinking as it is in line with human nature. Humanistic education is more than a process of transfer of knowledge. Education must be approached in a broader context as a process of community empowerment through knowledge Humanistic education is more than teaching content without social meanings as it takes into account the human condition. Education is a human activity that is part of human reality, so humanistic education not only accepts and believes in human existence but in its capability to change its destiny and transform reality (Freire, 1972a, 1973).

3.3.3 Consciousness. Freire's concept of consciousness, which acknowledges the interrelation between the social world and people's consciousness, can be considered as the

framework to explain the raised awareness and initiatives of Aceh villagers toward ECED as a tool of social elevation. Socio-economic and socio-cultural contexts contribute to the shaping of people's consciousness and in turn, people's consciousness in shaping the social world (Freire, 1972b). Furthermore, the capacity to distinguish between the given or natural and the socially or culturally constructed determines the levels of people's consciousness, whether it be magical, naive, or critical (Freire, 1972b, 1973).

Magical consciousness or an uncritical consciousness is where people view their life conditions as having been designed, determined and, given a type of consciousness characterised by fear of change and conformity. In this type of consciousness, people associate their condition with destiny without taking into account the socio-historical problems, socio-economic contradictions, and socio-political oppression in society. People in the magical consciousness spectrum see their socio-cultural condition as fate and oppression as a normal condition, so that transformation of life is not necessary. Freire (1973) called this type of consciousness fatalism. "Magic consciousness is characterized by fatalism, which leads men to fold their arms, resigned to the impossibility of resisting the power of facts" (p. 44).

On the other hand, naïve consciousness is a semi-transitive consciousness, where people begin to question and start dialogues. In this stage of consciousness, people emerge from their silence and strive to understand their social conditions; people tend to look for simple explanations or oversimplify the condition to themselves. This tendency makes them vulnerable to manipulation by the oppressor. However, naïve consciousness is necessary as an early stage of consciousness as it paves the way toward critical consciousness where people gain a comprehensive understanding of their society and transform their social being.

The height of consciousness is critical consciousness where people perceive their existential reality critically through detailed analysis. They no longer simplify their reality or strive to understand the why of their socially constructed life condition or how oppression is

structured. In this stage of consciousness, people pose problems and seek solutions to change their life condition. They move from a fatalistic point of view to an optimistic stage, gain their self-confidence and become open to transformation. Freire (1985) writes that one of the critical points in conscientization is to provoke recognition of the world, not as a "given" world, but as a world dynamically "in the making" (Freire, 1985, p. 106). However, persons only achieve critical consciousness via conscientisation.

According to Freire (1976), "conscientization represents the development of the awakening of critical awareness" (p. 19). In critical consciousness, "one must be a subject of conscious beings, gain critical insertion and demythologize their reality" (Freire, 1972b, p. 75). Hence, in the process of demystifying the oppressor and oppressive conditions, people must engage with the political institution because society is socially constructed and politically intervened. Hence, people must participate in making history. People achieve conscientisation by denouncing dehumanising reality and injustice within structures together with announcing a just and non-oppressive reality. "There is no annunciation without denunciation, just as every denunciation generates annunciation" (Freire, 1972b, p. 41). Freire also emphasised that critical consciousness cannot be imposed but must be born out of the creative efforts of the people (Freire, 1972b). He added (Freire, 1972b, 1985) that it cannot generate from intellectual effort alone but needs the authentic unity of action and reflection.

Through consciousness, Freire attempted to change the social conditions of the oppressed society. Critical consciousness comprises three characteristics. First, the consciousness or perception of issues that need resolution within a community. Second, the understanding of structural relationships around which conditions, such as inequality, occur and third, the initiative of collective action for transformation agenda. In the Freirean critical education paradigm, the essence of education or training is to raise critical consciousness. The liberation process entails a critical attitude towards unjust reality, resistance and optimism. Education is an

arena of struggle to free human beings of unfair and unjust reality or liberation from oppression. (Muarif, 2005; Sanaky, 2015; Fakih et al., 2010).

3.3.4   Framing this study through Freire's critical discourse lens.
Freire's work offers a framework that challenges the status quo and offers marginalised groups the opportunity to enhance their agency. Throughout his life, Freire remained 'indignant' at the forms of oppression experienced by millions of Brazilians and tried to play his part to change this state of affairs, through education (Freire, 1994; Robert, 2016). In the context of Aceh, the province emerging from a period of conflict into one of peace in 2005, after three decades of turmoil, deep-seated discontentment towards the central government stemming from socio-economic injustices triggered the armed conflict between the Free Aceh Movement (widely supported by the population at that time) and the Indonesian central government (Stange & Patock, 2010). Embedded in many Acehnese's psyches was the notion that the government systematically marginalised them in all aspects of life while exploiting Aceh's abundant natural resources (Age, 2006; Otto, 2013) also criticising the distribution of access and opportunity, including in education (Shaw, 2008).

My research specifically attempted to answer questions such as why *meunasah* stakeholders became invested in the development of early years' education in post-conflict and post-tsunami Aceh and how the current post-conflict developments affect *meunasah* and its ECE. Freire's work offers a conceptual and ethical framework that not only challenges the status quo but also articulates a language of possibility. Moreover, it is a framework that brings together education and politics for humanisation as an alternative to domination and oppression (Robert, 2016). Freire himself was deeply troubled by social injustices and attempted to build a better, less discriminatory and more humanising world (Roberts & Freeman-Moir, 2013).

According to Freire, liberation is a process of struggle that often lasts for a long time and strives against enormous challenges. This view became particularly evident in the contexts in

which Freire worked, with widespread poverty and malnutrition, squalid housing, minimal access to health care, high rates of illiteracy, and political corruption (Freire, 1972a, 1972b, 1994) a situation similar to the condition in Aceh province. The long-standing social injustices had left the province lagging behind other parts of the country in terms of social and economic development (Shah & Cardozo, 2014). What is also notable is that values such as liberation, humanism and consciousness, which are key in Freire's works, are also values which are central in Islamic teachings and are therefore not alien. Although Freire's theoretical framework was not developed specifically for the Islamic context, his concepts such as humanisation and liberation are consistent with the monotheistic and transcendental perspective of Islam and Islamic education.

Al-Attas purposed the combination of the sciences, such as social science and religious science as a framework that does not isolate religion from contemporary science in the education process (Al-Attas, 1997).

3.3.5   Freire's concepts of humanism and liberation from Islamic perspectives. In the Islamic context, even though human beings should dedicate themselves to God, the primary purpose of a human being is for the benefit of humanity. Islam views humanisation as pivotal for empowering society in the current de-humanised world (Al-Attas, 1993; Syariati, 1996; Roqib, 2011). Driven by the values of monotheism and faith, it tries to resist the establishment of the world that increasingly undertakes the pathway of materialism. These values also justify religious piety and worship as a form of resistance to the materialistic world. Islam has a concept of humanism which is the core value of Islam. It posits that in every human, there is the value of humanism incorporating the principles of humanity such as justice and equality (Al-Attas, 1993; Roqib, 2011; Syariati, 1996).

Liberty is an integral part of civilisation characterised by freedom. In terms of freedom, Islamic values recognise individual freedom but specify that social responsibility should guide

the actualisation of individual rights so that they will not collide with the rights of other people (Sanaky, 2005; Achmadi, 2010; Roqib, 2011). Society should draw on the spirit of liberation in the theological context to encourage social responsibility and to liberate people from poverty, exploitation by the oppressive and unjust structure, and advocacy towards a more equitable social system. In the early days of Islam, Prophet Muhammad's resistance against the oppressor in Mecca demonstrated that the struggle for justice and liberty inspired Islamic ideology. Among the main reasons that attracted a significant part of society in the Arabian Peninsula to Islam was because they believed in Muhammad's mission to liberate society from oppression and social injustices. Islam champions the cause to help the poor and marginalised in society and seeks to liberate the oppressed to achieve social justice (Ali, 2017; Engineer, 1987; Prasetyo, 1999; Sanaky, 2005; Syariati, 1996).

Similarly, Freire is known for his work in using education as a means to empower the poor. This kind of commitment to the poor in education has direct implications for policies on the use of educational budgets that prioritise community empowerment. The rural community in North Aceh has been moving forward with its initiative on ECE as a means of change, attempting to empower themselves, by providing a better the future of their children. Such actions align with Islamic ethics which prescribe that the onus is on human beings to change their condition as God will only change the condition of a people if they first endeavour to do so themselves.

3.4   Conceptual Frameworks
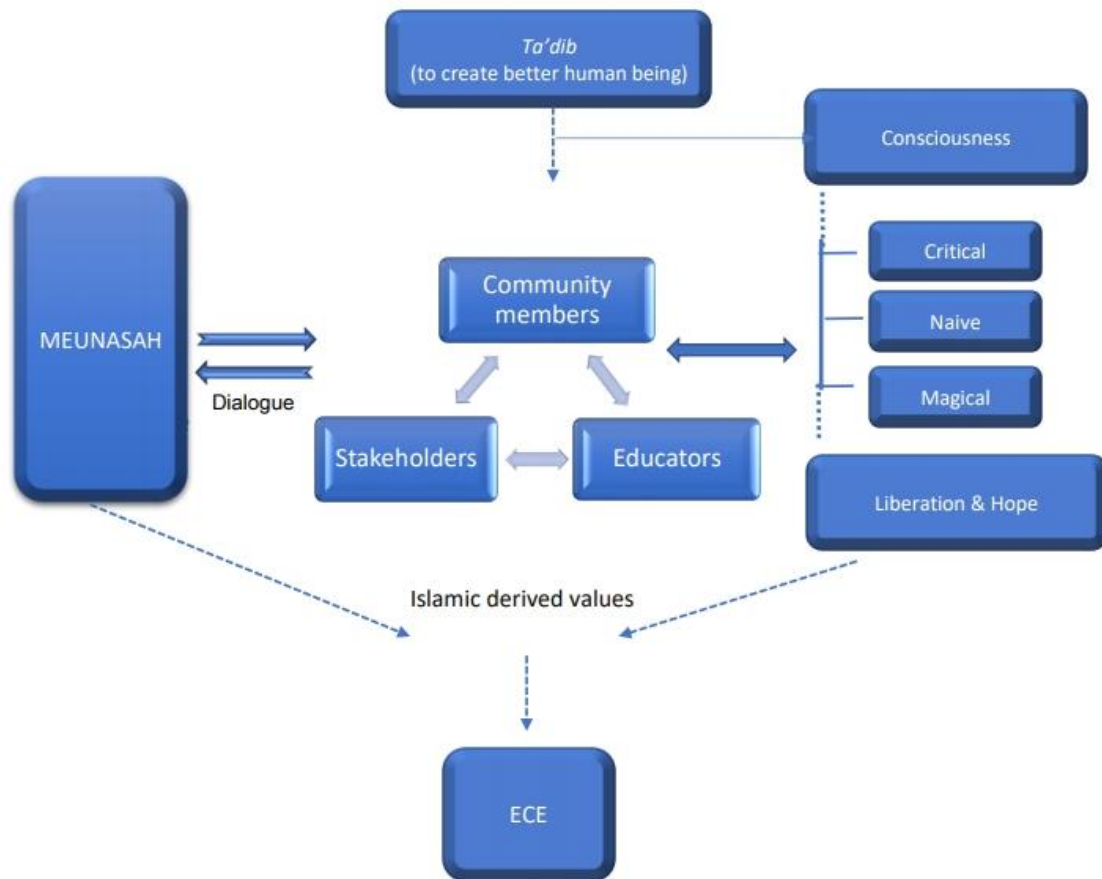
Figure 4. Conceptual framework.

Figure 4 represents the conceptual framework that guides my study and illustrates how the community operates around its *meunasah* in establishing, investing in and managing ECE in their village. The framework employs Freire's notions of consciousness and Al- Attas's notions of *ta'dib*. The community members, stakeholders and educators work together in initiating, disseminating and making decisions regarding the ECE in their village. They raise awareness and consciousness about ECE for the rest of the community while continually trying to realise community aspirations of ECE. This same process leads to a series of dialogues in the village *meunasah* that results in the village consensus to establish and to support ECE in the village.

The framework also suggests that the role of *meunasah* goes well beyond serving as the meeting hall to facilitate dialogues from regular meetings, dissemination programs, to decision making meetings, as it also provides the site for ECE classrooms. Moreover, the educators, who are also members of the village community, are in charge of the day-to-day teaching and learning process. In this process, educators incorporate Islamic values of education (represented by the *ta'dib* concept) as well as the community's aspirations and hopes. More broadly, the figure presents an insight into the establishment of ECE in Aceh. Throughout the process, the villagers develop their consciousness and hope for education as a tool to better the future of the community while taking into account the importance of maintaining their Islamic roots and goal of an education aimed to create good human beings.

Al-Attas' Islamic education perspective advocates for the integration of spiritual and moral education in Islamic educational institutions by incorporating concepts from the Qur'an and Hadiths, knowledge of principles and practice of Islam, religious knowledge, and Islamic ethics in their Islamic education (Al-Attas, 1997). The last decade in Aceh witnessed social transformation attempts to build a society based on moral and legal Islamic norms in Aceh (Feener, 2014). Islam has not always driven the political agenda of the many political change agents in Aceh, including the separatist movement (1976-2005), and the Free Aceh Movement (the former separatist movement that is the ruling political party in Aceh). Instead, the movements did not aim for an Islamically determined society but aspired to a society or state with a moral basis derived from Islamic values (Kingsbury, 2006).

Using Freire's (1972b, 1973), concepts of consciousness figure 4 shows that the villagers embarked on the process of gaining consciousness before it could lead them to establish and support ECE in their village. Utilising Freire's concept of consciousness, my study aimed to demonstrate how the Acehnese villagers gained such consciousness and tried to change the

future of their children by establishing ECE in their *meunasahs*. Specifically, figure 4 illustrates

how the different concepts used in the study helped me to answer the questions:

- Why the *meunasah* stakeholders established ECE?

- How the *meunasah* influences community aspirations towards ECE?

- How a village in Aceh achieves its multi-faceted aspirations to support early
  years' education?

One consciousness may differ from the other—magical, naïve, or critical—however,

Freire argued that every individual has valuable experience, knowledge and opinions. He

espouses an optimistic view of human beings, regardless of how naïve they are, believing that

humans demonstrate the capacity to look critically at their world through dialogical encounters

with others. In fact, he considers dialogue as an existential necessity (Freire, 1972a). According

to Freire, dialogue is the means to elevate people from a naïve to a critical perception of reality.

Dialogue involves a horizontal relationship between people that creates a critical attitude,

nurtured by love, humility, hope, faith and trust (Freire, 1973).

It is essential to consider the local context, tradition and knowledge in education to avoid

cultural impositions in the teaching and learning process. Among the characteristics of cultural

imposition is the propensity to view local knowledge as inferior. In contrast, outsider knowledge

is considered as superior, thus attaining a status that requires its imposition on the local context.

Freire criticised this way of engagement and instead proposed a culture of dialogue (Freire,

1972b, 1973). The community in my research site regularly engaged in dialogue in *meunasah*

before they made any significant decisions on ECE initiatives and support. In these encounters,

the villagers utilised *meunasah* as the site for sharing knowledge and later used the *meunasah* for

empowering its community. Dialogue is a process of humanisation, hence is a catalyst for the

development of a democratic community.

3.4.1   Framing Al-Attas and Freire concepts in this study. Al-Attas' conceptual framework, encourages the good in human beings and the belief in the human capacity to transform, while also offering a theoretical framework to construct a pedagogy of hope. Hence, Islamic perspectives and Freire thoughts share similar important goals, those of liberation and social justice. In my study, I argue that in the community where I researched, Al-Attas' Islamic concepts are among the catalysts behind the community's critical consciousness which drive their transformative actions.

Islam, highly emphasises the critical religious mechanisms towards transformation and Muslims have to question to determine the problematic factors. Muslims are considered without true faith until they have won the battles and struggles within themselves and their surrounding social circumstances. The idea that authentic religious morals informed such transformations is central to the notion of true faith. Islam promotes caring for others, primarily, the poor or *dhu'afa* and the oppressed or *mustadz'afn.* It encourages solidarity through transformative actions based on liberalisation and humanisation (Engineer, 1987; Abdurrahman, 2005; Roqib, 2011; Ali, 2017).

Critical consciousness developed through the efforts of the people extolls the authentic unity of action and reflection (Freire,1972b, 1973). Al-Attas' *adab* concept emphasises that a good Muslim must fulfil his responsibilities towards his family and the rest of society. A good individual (*insan adabi*) is one who is conscious of the relationship with him or herself and society (Al-Attas, 1985, 1997). I contend that Al Attas' concept of *ta'dib* and *adab* represents the influence of Islamic traditions in *meunasah*. Furthermore, the drive to be a responsible community member who is conscious of community issues, such as the need for ECE access in the village, was among the catalysts behind the heightened consciousness among the community members in Gampong Blang.

Meunasah inspires the process of consciousness-raising not only through its Islamic values but through being the site for dialogue, community engagement and community action.

M*eunasah* traditionally regarded as a chamber for dispute resolution, a socio-cultural centre, and a political institution are deeply rooted in Acehnese rural communities (Badruzzaman, 2002; Wahid, 2015). Therefore, for the villagers, *meunasah* is also a place that facilitates a process of collective consciousness development of the community. *Meunasah* underpinned by Al-Attas' concepts make demonstrable contributions towards critical counciousness and the pedagogy of hope.

Freire's approach to liberate the oppressed requires critical capacities in human beings. Freire argued that to allow the process of social transformation, the oppressed should take a role in their own liberation (Freire, 1972a). Similarly, in Islam, human beings possess autonomy and full responsibility for their own fate. Islamic values emphasise that humans are conscious beings who have free will and humanistic values which empower them to understand social reality and undertake social responsibility (Al-Attas, 2013; Engineer, 1987; Syariati, 1996). The Qur'an stresses that humans can make a change and create better conditions by constant efforts and that there will be no change without hope and action. "Verily, God will not change the condition of a people as long as they do not change their state themselves" (The Qur'an, chapter 13, verse 11).

The verse suggests that the fate of humans is in their own hands and is a matter of choice and struggle. As Freire (1972a) writes "people have to see the world not as a static reality, but as a reality in process or in transformation that can be made and remade, constructed and reconstructed" (p. 72).

3.5   Summary

In this chapter, I introduced Al-Attas' and Freire's theoretical framework utilised in my research to explore a rural community and its community initiatives through ECE in the profoundly religious Aceh province. I employed Al-Attas' and Freire's conceptual tools to analyse the role of *meunasah* in an Acehnese rural community and its influence on early years education following the period of conflict and a tsunami.

I presented justifications for how Al-Attas' and Freire's works are relevant to this study. I also highlighted their educational philosophy and concepts, in particular, Al-Attas' *ta'dib* and Freire's consciousness. I also elucidate the proposed conceptual framework, drawing on their concepts and the context of the research site. Al-Attas' Islamic viewpoint is a suitable lens with which to view the religious community in Aceh and how its education institution like *meunasah* and its educators operate. Moreover, through Freire's concept of *consciousness,* I frame how the Acehnese villagers through their consciousness drive change for the future of their children by establishing ECE in their *meunasahs*.

In this chapter, I have also illustrated the compatibility of Freire's ideas on social responsibility with Islamic values and how Al-Attas' and Freire's perspectives can be put together as a framework. Freire's ideas, such as humanism, liberation and consciousness, are not alien to or neglected in, Islam. As such, an attempt to re-envision *meunasah* as an institution that established modern ECE should also embrace its original values derived from Islamic tradition. In the next chapter, I describe how I operationalised Al-Attas and Freire's concepts in my research methodology.

Chapter 4: Research Methodology

4.1   Introduction

I based my selection of research methodology on the research questions, assumptions, and values that I bring to this study (Johnson & Christensen, 2004). In this chapter, I begin with the explication of my research approach, the selected ethnographic case study research design, the research participants, and ethical considerations that are salient to my study. I follow with my discussion of the process in which I obtained access to the village, gained approval from the villagers, my role as a researcher, data generation methods, data analysis process, and validity and rigour of the research.

4.2   Research Approach and Paradigm

The study employed a qualitative ethnographic case study with an interpretive paradigm. Hesse-Biber and Leavy (2010) suggested that a qualitative approach is suited to studies that aim to understand the meaning of a particular subject and to listen to the subjective experience of others that make sense of them. The selected qualitative interpretive paradigm aligned with the aim of this study and the nature of the research questions which are to provide an in-depth understanding of a rural community in North Aceh and the role of its *meunasahs* in early years education.

The interpretive research strategy also assists in my exploration and analysis of human discourses and values in real-life situations. Interpretivist paradigms posit that reality is socially constructed (Denzin & Lincoln, 2018). This paradigm aims to understand human experience as people construct meaning based on their interactions with their surroundings (Guba & Lincoln, 1985). An interpretive paradigm provides the opportunity to understand multiple and diverse perspectives (Ary et al., 2010). In this research, I explored how ECE in *meunasah* draw several

discourses, such as traditional Islamic discourse and national curriculum discourse into its early childhood education. I also explore to what extent the local, national and global aspirations of early childhood education affect the *meunasah's* stakeholders and what early years education in the village means to the community.

The researcher's set of beliefs, feelings and framing in relation to the world guided the interpretative research (Denzin & Lincoln, 2018). Hence, these paradigms and views allow an intimate collaboration between perception and reason, to enable the researcher to better understand the participants' actions (Baxter, 2008). Participants subjectivity is an inevitable part of my research journey in understanding how the community in Gampong Blang developed their consciousness on the importance of ECE in *meunasah,* as they constructed their reality through the process of human and social interaction.

4.3   Ethnographic Research Design

Ethnography had its origin in the field of anthropology in the nineteenth century in which anthropologists correlated their research questions regarding race, language, religion and culture (Creswell, 2014; Jeffrey & Troman, 2004). Ethnography means to write (or represent) culture (Parthasarathy, 2008) or "writing about groups of people" (Creswell, 2014, p. 466). According to Malinowski (2002), ethnographers seek "to grasp the native's point of view"; rather than studying people, ethnography is described as "learning from people" (p. 25).

The ethnographer immerses him or herself in the day-to-day lives of people while observing and interviewing the participants to generate local knowledge (Creswell, 2013). Ethnographers seek patterns, understandings, and meanings while attempting to describe local relationships. They make sense of a setting and a case about the entire social setting and all social relationships as well as contextualising them in broader contexts such as government policies (Lazaridou, 2015; Parthasarathy, 2008). Ethnography is a common qualitative research procedure aiming to describe, analyse, and interpret shared patterns of behaviour, beliefs, and

language among members of a culture-sharing group. Ethnography is employed when a study aims to provide an understanding of a group or a larger issue (Creswell, 2014). For my study, I immersed myself in everyday life in a district in North Aceh in order to closely observe how the community work together, how the community structures and values shape the fabric of the community, and to what extent these have influenced early years education initiatives in *meunasah.*

Ethnographers work on a relatively small subject intensively analysing the meaning of language and human actions extensively. Bishop (1999) described ethnography as follows, "Ethnographies generate hypotheses, focus on context, are written up using thick description, require participant observation, and use multiple measures for data collection" (p. 18).

My study covered several areas of focus, the first being the village, including observations of the village environment surrounding the *meunasah*, the portrayal of the social fabric of the community, interaction and consensus-building in the community, and their future aspirations on education, particularly ECE. The next area of focus was the *meunasah,* which included the *meunasah's* stakeholders, the role of *meunasah* in the community and the recent changes in *meunasah*. The last area of focus is the ECE centre in relation to *meunasah* and educators, including the educators' practices, interactions, histories, beliefs, and experiences. It also included their relationships with parents and how these build their aspiration towards ECE.

4.4   Ethnographic Case Study

A case study applied in educational contexts on "the culture of a school, a group of students, or classroom behavior". can be classified as an ethnographic case study (Merriam, 1998, p. 34). Butvilas and Zygmantas (2011) argued that ethnographic case studies not only provide a thick description of a unit (a school, a program, an institution, a teacher, a student, or a classroom) but also work towards understanding its particularities. Creswell (2014) described the

ethnographic case study as "case analysis of a person, event, activity, or process set within a cultural perspective" (p. 468).

My study used an ethnographic approach. The term ethnographic refers to a systematic inquiry conducted in a shorter period but with the similar features and methodology used by an anthropologist in a (full) ethnography (Heath, 1983). According to Creswell (2013), the researcher chooses an ethnographic research design when attempting to gain knowledge and understanding of a particular culture-sharing group. A case study research design provides an in-depth understanding of a phenomenon within a particular research setting (Merriam, 2009). This study is ethnographic because it looks at the role of stakeholders and community members and the influence of *meunasah* on early years education in a rural area as a sociocultural process. It is a case study because it is an intensive and holistic description and analysis of a single functioning unit of early years education institution in *meunasah* that circumscribes the investigation.

Geertz pioneered the development of ethnography with the emphasis on "thick descriptions" (Casson, 2010; Geertz, 1973, p. 3; Gibson-Graham, 2014). A thick description requires describing the activity in its context, and being aware of the levels of interpretation of the data (Nesbitt, 2002), and aims not for reproduction of reality, but for a representation of it (Casson, 2010; Geertz, 1973). Geertz (1973) writes that research aims "not to capture primitive facts in faraway places and carry them home like a mask, but rather to reduce puzzlement and discover the informal logic of actual life" (p. 16).

A qualitative ethnographic case study requires rich descriptions to take its reader to the described setting. As Wolcott (1990) asserted,

> description is the foundation upon which qualitative research is built.… Here you become the storyteller, inviting the reader to see through your eyes what you have seen…Start by presenting a straightforward description of the setting and events. No footnotes, no

intrusive analysis—just the facts, carefully presented and interestingly related at an

appropriate level of detail. (p. 28*)*

Therefore the role of the ethnographer is to analyze the web of cultural structures,

knowledge and meaning (Seale, 2004). Geertz also suggested that the link with theory is

essential because a continuous dialectical tacking between local detail and global structures will

bring them into simultaneous view (Geertz, 1974). He also argued that "small facts speak to

large issues, winks to epistemology, or sheep raids to revolution because they are made to"

(Geertz, 1973, p. 23). I anticipate my research to reflect Geertz's emphasis on thick description,

within the context of educational research in *meunasah*.

4.5   Research Setting and Participants
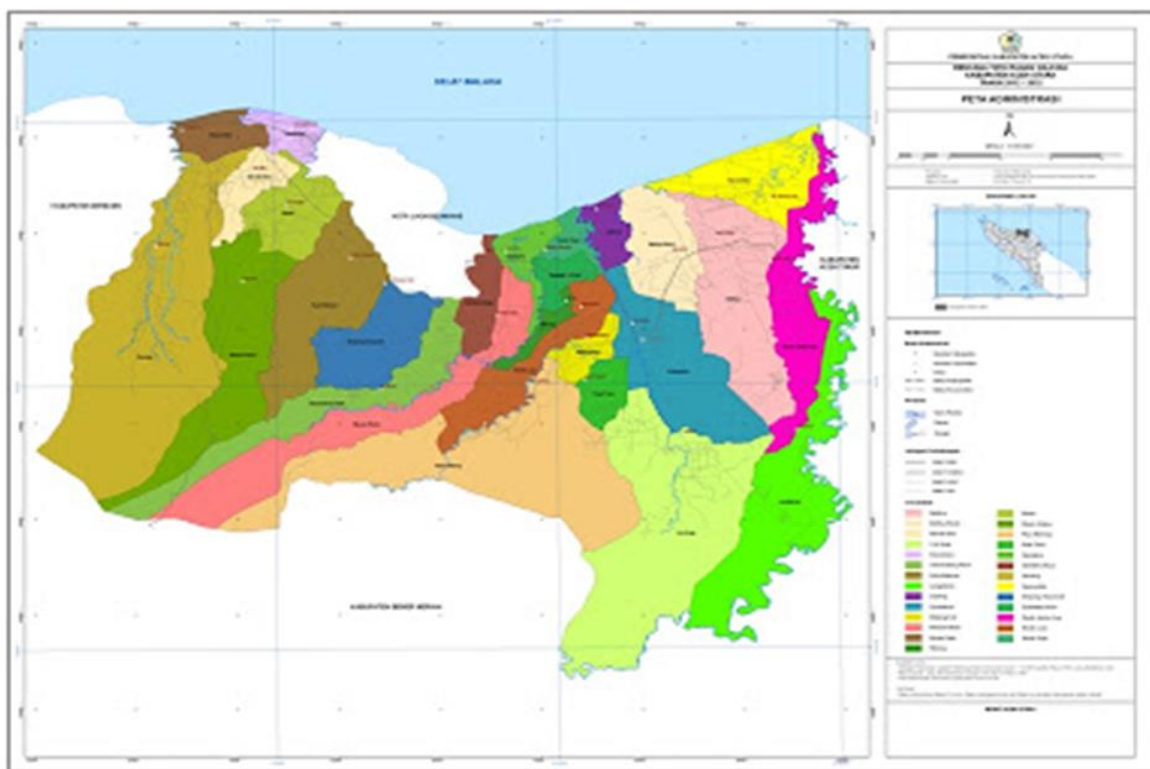
Figure 5. Map of North Aceh and its districts

This location for my study was a district in North Aceh Regency, one of the regencies of

Aceh, geographically located on the east coast of Aceh Province and occupying an area of

3,236.86 square kilometres. According to the 2010 census, the Regency had a population of 529,751 (*Badan Koordinasi Penanaman Modal* or BKPM, 2016) making it the most populous in the province. The region is historically well known as the area where Islam first entered the Indonesian archipelago in the thirteenth century (Siegel, 1969). Moreover, North Aceh was the heartland of the Acehnese conflict (1976-2005) with the regency widely considered as the stronghold of GAM. The conflict caused economic stagnation and fractured social fabric in the area (Stange & Patock, 2010). Aceh province's context of post-conflict, post-tsunami and Sharia law makes it a unique context in comparison to the rest of Indonesia. Therefore, my research sheds light into such an intriguing context by exploring how the area that was once devastated by conflict attempted to move forward by redistributing education access and opportunities, particularly on early years education institution in their *meunasah*.

4.5.1   Gampong Blang: First encounter. The town of Krueng Gekueh is famous for its port, one of the largest in Aceh. Situated in the industrial zone of North Aceh, the port establishment was prompted by the oil and gas exploration boom era in the 1970s to cater to the needs of companies in the area. Today, following the gas and oil boom coming to an end, only one major fertiliser company still operates in the town (there were several companies in the early 1990s, namely AAF/fertiliser, PIM/fertiliser, KKA/pulp and Paper) (Barron et al., 2013). Some parts of town where AAF and KKA facilities previously existed a decade ago are virtual ghost towns. Nevertheless, the port town is still significant for neighbouring districts, such as Nisam, since it provides the lifeline of supplies for its neighbours.

Gampong Blang is one of the villages located about ten kilometres southwards from Krueng Gekueh and about 25 kilometres eastward of Lhoksuemawe (the biggest city in North coast of Aceh). The main road connecting villages in Nisam District is called Nisam Road. It connects villages in Nisam to Krueng Geukueh. Krueng Gekueh serves as a hub for goods transported from the city of Medan (the largest port city in Sumatra, located in the nearby

province of North Sumatra). From Krueng Gekueh, most of the goods are transported to villages in Nisam by small trucks, utes and motorbikes. The route is also important for the movement of people between the two districts. In the morning, many high school students from Nisam also ride their motorbikes through Nisam road to school in Krueng Gekueh (although Nisam already has two high schools, some prefer to go to Krueng Gekueh). Meanwhile, a stream of government employees rides from Krueng Gekueh and its nearby areas to Nisam. Most are teachers and government staff at Nisam district government offices.

There is no public transport from the town to Gampong Blang, as the last public minivans (*labi-labi*) stopped their operations about a decade ago. Limited options for visitors to the region exist—rent a car in the nearby city or find an RBT (motorbike for rent, along with its driver, though this mode of transportation, is also on the brink of extinction). Since 2005when the conflict ended, more and more people in Nisam have bought their own motorbikes, and a small number of them also own a car. Dozens of motorbikes and car showrooms have opened in Krueng Gekueh since 2005; the showrooms offer generous credit-schemes with a low down payment, so more people can afford to buy their own vehicles. This development forced public transport operating in Nisam-Krueng Gekueh route to end their operations.

Figure 6. The road to Gampong Blang

During my fieldwork, I mostly stayed in Krueng Gekueh at my grandmother's house. I lived there when I was a child so that I could enrol in an ECE centre in the town as none was available in my village. I returned to the town because of its proximity to my research site. Every morning, I rode along Nisam road to Gampong Blang on my motorbike. The paved road was newly constructed, following a series of protests by the local community. It is a hilly road flanked by paddy fields. The change that came with peace is quite dramatic. I still remember how 12 years ago, people in Lhoksumawe would casually tease those who come from Nisam (as it was the stronghold of the Free Aceh Movement), as if they were from a different country. The joke was that they would need a passport to go to Nisam. Nowadays, motorists, cyclists and youths from the city fill the Nisam road, particularly on the weekends, to try to enjoy the natural scenery and fresh air. Dozens of new shops, most of which are coffee shops opened as the newly paved road was completed.

Indeed, a coffee shop is the first place I visited in Gampong Blang. As in any other part of Aceh, the coffee shop is multifunctional. It is a place where people meet, socialise, talk about

business, find entertainment. It is also a place where politicians disseminate their program or listen to the complaints and aspirations of people in the area. Coffee shops in rural areas such as Gampong Blang are places where most male members of the community come for breakfast usually returning in the afternoon for a lunch break from working in the paddy fields or farm. In the evening, a third visit often occurs to find entertainment, from watching football matches on television to accessing the internet to merely talking about their day with their fellow villagers. The village chief of Gampong Blang jokingly told me that the coffee shops in his village were the second most important place after *meunasah*.

4.5.2   Participants. I chose the participants using purposeful sampling (Creswell, 2014). Obtaining access to the research area could have been difficult. Hence, it was essential to identify the gatekeepers (Oliver, 2003). Initially, I approached the key stakeholders of the designated village; the village chief, village secretary and Imam regarded as formal and informal leaders of the village. Thus, I identified them as the gatekeepers, and their consent to conduct the study was essential.

Table 3

Research Participants

Research questions	Research participants	Number of research participants (Approximately)	Method of data generation	Theoretical concepts
1. Why are meunasah stakeholders invested in the development of early years education in post-conflict and post-tsunami Aceh?	Stakeholders: Village Chief Meunsasah Imam Village elders Youth leaders	10 Participants	Interview Observation Document Analysis	Al-Attas Adab Concept and Freire's Consciousness
2. How does the meunasah influence community aspirations towards early years education in Aceh?	Community members, including parents with early years child	12 Participants	Interview Observation	Freire's Consciousness
3. What is the nature of the teaching practices in meunasah early years education?	Teachers, Principals	5 Participants	Document Analysis Observation Interview	Al-Attas' Adab Concept

To maintain anonymity and confidentiality while assuring the validity and rigour of this research, I used acronyms to represent participants with the following references code:

- SH1: Village Chief of Gampong Blang

- SH2: Village Secretary of Gampong Blang

- SH3: Village Treasurer of Gampong Blang

- SH4: Village Imam of Gampong Blang

- SH5: Head of Gampong Blang council of elders

- SH6: Member of Gampong Blang council of elders

- SH7: Member of Gampong Blang council of elders

- SH8: Member of Gampong Blang council of elders

- SH9: Head of Village Youth of Gampong Blang

- SH10: Village Youth Secretary of Gampong Blang

- CMP1: Community member with a child at ECE

- CMP2: Community member with a child at ECE

- CMP3: Community member with a child at ECE

- CMP4: Community member with a child at ECE

- CMP5: Community member with granddaughters at ECE

- CM6: Community member with a nephew at ECE

- CM7: Community member with early year age children

- CM8: Community member with early year age children

- CM9: Community member

- CM10: Community member

- CM11: Community member

- CM12: Community member

- E1: Principal of the ECE in *meunasah*

- E2: Teacher 1 of the ECE in *meunasah*

- E3: Teacher 2 of the ECE in *meunasah*

- E4: Teacher 3 of the ECE in *meunasah*

- E5: Teacher 4 of the ECE in *meunasah*

4.6   Gaining Access to the Research Site and My Role as Researcher

My first direct encounter with a village stakeholder occurred in one of the village coffee shops located near *meunasah*. I talked to the village secretary via phone several months before my study about the possibility of my visit to the village and my intention to discuss my proposed research with him. The stakeholders and villagers welcomed me. After introducing myself and my research, and they asked many questions. Some were related to my study, but many were not. Many villagers appeared to be surprised when I told them I was specializing n the areas of ECE. Some even asked again to make sure that they had heard it correctly. I later recognised that such responses were due to the fact that, in the regency, ECE is an area almost exclusively filled by women, from teachers and principals to policy-makers in the local department of education.

In my first meeting with the villagers, I received many questions (this continued for several days in my first week in the village). Some villagers asked whether my ultimate purpose to be in the village was somehow politically motivated, or if it was part of my attempt to be known so that it would help me run for local parliament in the future. Another question was whether I came with an aid program or if I would contribute to building new ECE classes. I addressed all the questions, showing them the letter from the district office, permitting me to conduct the research. I also reassured them that I did not harbour any ulterior political motive, nor was I there as an aid worker. However, such questions from the villagers persisted for several days.

Figure 7. Village stakeholders with the researcher (Photo provided by the shop owner).

In the first three days in the village, I visited the *meunasah*, all five coffee shops in the village and the village office. Some people repeatedly asked me questions about my motive or my political intentions. On the fourth day, they all changed. There were no more questions about political motives. Instead, people started to ask different questions, such as questions about Australia. The older generation mostly asked me about Islam and Muslims in Australia while the youths were interested in job opportunities. The change made me wonder, was this the sign that the villagers had entirely accepted me? I found the answer by the next day. I talked to two of the village youths that I had come to know in the last few days. They spent several years in Malaysia on economic migration and have now returned to the villages. The other young men in the village seemed to look up to them. I asked them about the changing attitude of the villagers. They smiled at me, and one of them then responded:

> *On Wednesday evening (the conversation happened on a Friday morning), we talked*
> *about you in… (he called the name of a coffee shop owner) shop. People gave their*
> *opinions about you; I would say mostly positive. Based on that, we concluded that you*
> *are not here for political reasons, and your research is not problematic. (CM2)*

I probed him further wanting to learn how they came to this conclusion, to which he replied:

All politicians or those who aspire to become one would normally come to villages, with aid (money, fertiliser, rice seeds etc.) and all of them would always be very generous. They would treat all the customers in every coffee shop they visit. But you, as far we are concerned, you never treated anybody with coffee or cigarettes or being overly generous. (CM2)

Astonished, I replied, "Of course, I don't have that kind of money. I am just a student researcher". I then asked him whether that was the reason why people were more accepting to me. He continued

Yes, and the village chief and secretary had also said they believe you had good intentions, and we all should be supportive of you. Not just because you have papers (The latter from district office), but you come for ECE, what harm would it do?. (CM2)

The villagers had their way of judging strangers who come to their village; I had assumed that by them receiving me on the first day meant that they had entirely accepted me until I learnt that they had only done so after observing and assessing me.

As the researcher, I became one of the primary instruments in generating and analysing data. Hence, it was inevitable that my researcher's personal biases or worldview influenced the whole research process (Merriam, 1998). Having acknowledged this, I had a unique position in this research as I am a local Acehnese who is familiar with the traditional religious institution even though my current base is an Australian university. Subedi (2006) uses the term 'halfie' researcher to describe this kind of positioning. The term 'halfie' researcher identifies researchers with mixed national or cultural identity categorised by migration or overseas education. 'Halfie' approaches to research contribute to our understanding regarding the complexities of negotiating insider as well as outsider identities in the fieldwork. Therefore, as a researcher, I needed to be

transparent with the participants, to have sensitivity and be a good communicator and listener (Merriam, 1998; Subedi, 2006).

However, being a' halfie' researcher with similar cultural backgrounds does not instantly make a researcher an insider with more knowledge about the context. Subedi (2006) argued

Sharing the same ethnic background as the participants does not necessarily make the researcher more knowledgeable about the meanings of the participants' feelings, values, and practices.' In other words, for 'halfie' researchers, the process of gaining legitimacy or trust as insiders' may include demonstrating their language competence, knowledge of community histories or experiences, and, most importantly, commitment to meaningfully assisting towards a community's needs. (p. 579)

As Subedi (2006) puts forward, being a halfie researchers like myself with similar cultural backgrounds with the participants does not instantly make me an insider. In my case, it also included having to prove to the villagers that I was a genuine researcher with no ulterior motives and that I was researching a non-sensitive topic. After the first week, the villagers finally opened themselves to me. Most of the villager gradually considered me as an insider of their village. I subsequently began the data generation process in the village.

4.7   Ethical Considerations

Ethnographic research in education settings has substantial risks (Stake, 1995). It is vital to work with the people participating, viewing them as participants rather than subjects, and focusing on the individual's contribution to the study to mitigate any harmful effects for them (Oliver, 2003). Monash University assessed and granted ethics approval for my research involving human subjects through Monash University Human Research Ethics Committee (MUHERC) (see Appendix 1). The ethics in conducting research is required to protect the university, researcher and participants from harmful effects, coercion in participant recruitment

and misuse of data. The need for ethics approval also concerns privacy issues aimed at protecting the confidentiality of participants and ensuring the research occurred according to strict regulations.

All research participants have a right to anonymity and confidentiality, and this has to be taken very seriously (Oliver, 2003). I provided participants with an information summary of my research and consent form as approved by the university. The document included a brief overview of the study, assurances of confidentiality and anonymity, and acknowledgment, signed by the interviewee (see Appendix 3).

Obtaining access to an education institution situated within a traditional religious context can be difficult, especially if the researcher is perceived as an outsider or shows a lack of appreciation and understanding of the local customs and values. I had a unique position in this context as a 'halfie' researcher, and so it is crucial to identify a gatekeeper (Oliver, 2003) who would be sympathetic to the research. As the researcher, I had a responsibility towards the gatekeeper in recognising the necessity for building a positive relationship between him and the participants.

Ethical considerations also applied in writing and reporting on my research. These include honest reporting, data sharing with participants, avoiding duplication, and plagiarism (Cresswell, 2014).

4.8   Method to Generate Data

In ethnographic research, data generation is a more fluid and multi-layered process. The process may change both researchers' and participants' understanding of the issues or topic. Hence, it requires a higher degree of reflexivity. The researcher not only reflects on the life of the interviewee but also exemplifies self-narration (Casson, 2010; Nesbitt, 2004). The methods to generate data will not follow a straight linear path but will be developed through consistent

reference to the developments in the field and the theoretical framework. In light of this, I utilised three techniques for data generation: interviews, observations, and document analysis.

4.8.1 Interviews. I employed interviews in this research to gain unique participant perspectives on the topic. As a data generation method, interviews give more flexibility to the interviewer and allow the interviewer to explore the perceptions of the respondent and to probe new or idiosyncratic ideas as presented by the respondent (Seidman, 2006). My interview questions in this research were open-ended and guided by my interest in particular topics or subtopics (see Appendix 4).

The interview in this research was conducted in a semi-structured and informal manner. However, semi-structured interviews exemplify a data generation method that involves "high preparation, high risk, high gain, and high analysis process" (Seale, 2004, p. 186) enabling the researcher to focus on a specific topic, and yet also allows for flexibility. In such interviews, the relationship between interviewer and interviewee is equitable, neither having complete control over the conversation, which can be a risk for both parties. However, the disadvantages of this type of interview are that it is time-consuming and that varied outcomes lead to more challenging coding.

The unscheduled informal interviews also took place during the research in which I was able to have broader conversations while at the same time able to ask more specific questions (Agar, 1980). According to Burgess (1984), researchers gain many insights through informal conversations with participants. Informal interviews can also reinforce or challenge data generated in more formal interviews. In fact, in my very first meeting with the villagers, I had already had a significant number of informal conversations in which I had received many questions. During that first meeting, I managed to ask some important questions and received some interesting and unexpected answers. In this initial informal meeting, I learnt that the villagers were unequivocally supportive of ECE in *meunasah*. However, it appeared to me that

only stakeholders had a comprehensive understanding of the process and challenges in its establishment.

As *meunasah* and village stakeholders, the village chief, Imam and elders the first interviewed in this research. These interviews aimed to explore why villagers established early years education in *meunasah* and to what extent village stakeholders supported early years education in *meunasah*. However, as my research progressed, I continually had more informal interviews with the stakeholders. The next participants interviewed were the community members (regular villagers who do not have children enrolled in ECE in *meunasah*) and parents. I expected these interviews would address questions on how *meunasahs* influenced early years education in the village. Last, were the interviews with the educators revealing their perceptions, beliefs, and challenges in early years' education.

The semi-structured and informal interviews were conducted continuously during the period of research. The unscheduled informal interview took place in various locations and at different times. Meanwhile, I scheduled the semi-structured interviews days before. On several occasions, I had semi-structured interviews followed by informal interviews with participants.

The crucial part of any research method is the recording and transcribing of data. The interviewer has several options in recording the interview, including taking notes during the interview, post-interview notes taking and audio recording or video recording the whole process. I decided that the most effective method was audio recording as it generated a large amount of material and therefore allowed me to write up the information immediately after the interview. A few participants refused a recorded interview, so I made some brief notes during the interview and wrote full notes immediately after. Only recorded and subsequently transcribed data from interviews became relevant for research purposes.

4.8.2 Observations. The observations commenced as soon as I received permission and consent from stakeholders. A series of observations of activities were carried out in *meunasah*,

particularly, activities related to the ECE in *meunasah*. Observations also portrayed the everyday activity in *meunasah* and the nature of teaching and learning in the ECE. Observations of the participants, participants' activities and their physical settings were conducted (Angrosino, 2005). Given that the use of observations in ethnographic research immerse the researcher in the world of the people they wish to study (Taylor & Bogdan, 1998; Wolcott, 2008), I immersed myself into the daily life and routines of the village, the community and *meunasah* education in order to gain more complete understandings.

The level of my involvement in the observations differed from time to time. In some situations, I had the opportunity to participate in the events, such as village ritual feasts and communal prayers in *meunasah,* when the villagers invited me to participate. However, in other activities such as the teaching and learning process in the classroom and village meetings, I remained a passive observer as I was not a village member. This range of possible roles from active participant to the passive observer is called "participant/observer continuum" (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007, p. 127).

During my time at the research site, I made some observations on the village, villagers' activities, *meunasah*, stakeholders, ECE activities, parents, teachers and recorded them as field-notes. My reflective journals compiled during my times of reflection wandering around every corner of the village facilitated my attempts to better "understand a way of life from the point of view of its participants" (Punch, 2005, p. 149). Reflective notes recorded included my feelings, reactions and reflections on what had been observed and experienced. These field-notes contained a researcher's insights and interpretations, around what was happening at the site and the meanings of the events observed (Patton, 2002). These notes were important in better understanding the community, their way of life and the meanings attached to their actions.

I was able to witness the importance of Acehnese culture and Islamic faith in the everyday life of the villagers. I witnessed several significant celebrations in the Islamic calendar

and Acehnese culture such as the *maulid* (celebration of prophet Muhammad's birthday) and

khandury blang (post-harvest feast). My observations (along with interviews and documents),

allowed me to understand the socio-economic conditions of the villagers. I noted that even

though the village budget program existed, many villagers still needed to embark on economic

migration. At one point, some villagers invited me into their homes, sharing meals and stories

with me and discussing their perspectives on how they valued their children's education and

seeing it as a vital means to make a long term change to their family situation. Observations have

been a rich source of data in my research.

    4.8.3   Document analysis. Personal documents, public records, and official documents

are common types of documents gathered in a qualitative study (Merriam, 2009). I mainly

focused on trying to acquire access to official documents, including the village budget, ECE

curriculum documents and guidelines from government and sample worksheets from students.

These documents were analysed throughout the study to corroborate findings from interviews

and observations. The documents provided better understanding of particular issues such as the

funding or financial condition of the ECE and the curriculum employed in ECE. The generation

and analysis of documents were an on-going part of my study, and they were a useful way to

learn about several aspects that I was initially unfamiliar with, such as the ECE guidelines and

curriculum used. However, the documents needed to be complemented by other sources of data

from interviews and observation in order to gain a comprehensive picture of the situation. Table

4 explains the detailed stages of data generation.

Table 4

Research Phases

Research phases	
Phase One **Prior to data collection**	**Researcher Role:** • Obtain written consent from the district office to conduct research in the area. • Obtain permission from village authority to conduct the research and involve the villagers • Approach the designated meunasah stakeholders (the gatekeeper) for their consent and approval • Distribute consent form to prospective participants **Participant Role:** • Check the transcriptions and affirm accuracy and consent • Feedback and reflections • Researcher Role • Arrange a time for interviews • Design observation guide • Commence the observation of the village, meunasah and its early year's education institution • Obtain related documents
Phase Two **Data Collection**	**Type of the Data generated:** • Semi-structured interview and informal interview with stakeholders, community members, parents and educator • Audio Recording • Notes **Observations of the village, meunasah's surrounding area and classrooms:** • Fieldnotes • Reflective notes/Journals **Document analysis:** • Village administrative documents related to ECE Village budget documents • ECE administrative documents • ECE curriculum documents

	Researcher Role:
Phase Three **Analysis** **(done concurrently with** **data generation)**	• Managing and organizing data
	• Translating and transcribing the data
	• Reading the entire data generated while keep referencing back to the research questions
	• Code the data
	• Conceptualise the data with Al-Attas adab and Freire's consciousness concepts
	• Early stage of writing (Analysis completed during and after data generation process)

4.9   Data Analysis

Data analysis is one of the most fundamental stages of qualitative research as it involves a complex and dynamic process of reasoning, interpreting and theorising also characterised by an intuitive and reflective approach in making sense of the data (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007; Merriam, 2009). It is an intuitive process with inductive reasoning because it does not aim to confirm or test the consistency of the data with the researcher's previous assumptions or hypotheses. Instead, it is a creative process of finding and developing categories and themes from the data (McMillan & Schumacher, 1993; Merriam, 1998; Thomas, 2006).

The process of data analysis included the following: managing or organising the data, reading all of the texts (transcription, field notes, documents), describing the case based on its context, establishing themes, using direct interpretations and presenting an in-depth picture of the case (Creswell, 2013). In an ethnographic case study, the analysis is an on-going process. Data interpretation occurred throughout the process of data generation and analysis. It is also essential to read the entire text to make sense of the whole data. In my study, I read transcripts of interviews and field notes before proceeding with unique and individual pieces of data. I then re-read the data and took note of phrases, ideas, and key concepts related to the research questions. I analysed the data and kept referring to the theoretical concepts of critical consciousness, as well as *ta'dib* and *adab* and the research questions.

The data from the interview were transcribed verbatim by the researcher. I translated the audio-recorded interview from Acehnese into Indonesian. While most participants used Acehnese language, other participants switched between Indonesian and Acehnese in their responses. I later transcribed the data into English based upon the translated version. I organized all the data obtained in my study (interview transcripts, observation field notes, and documentation) into word document files on my computer. I read all the data and explored data to distinguish the entire text-based focus area of the research. The file folders created a convenient way to access the data as I continually returned to the data throughout the analysis process. During analysis in interpretive research, the researcher attempts to interpret the data and gain an in-depth understanding of the study. Throughout the process, the researcher needs to continually refine his or her interpretations (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007; Merriam, 2009). The analysis process begins with repeatedly reading the interview data and observation field notes. This process allows the researcher to identify initial patterns and categories of the data. The next process is coding the data which includes labelling text to form descriptions and broad themes (Creswell, 2014).

Coding is one way to capture the patterns (Seale, 2004) and often described as noticing related phenomena, collecting examples of those phenomena, and analysing those phenomena to find commonalities, differences and patterns (Merriam, 2009; Wolcott, 2009). My coding of the data provided a framework to view participants' perspectives on *meunasah's* ECE an aspect of data analysis aimed at finding patterns in the data, before starting the interpretation. Bernard (2006) explains the process of data analysis as "the search for patterns in data and for ideas that help explain why those patterns are there in the first place" (p. 452).

I approached the coding process by generating the initial code to allow for the discovery of codes without any restrictions facilitating the discovery of meaning through open-mindedness and curiosity. I began the open coding process by immersing myself in the data by repeatedly

listening to the audio recording and reading the interview transcripts, observation field notes and documentation from the field. During this process, I highlighted text data with colours, added text, and labelled various emerging concepts by inserting codes to describe the segments. The coding process enabled me to group similarly coded data into categories. Subsequently, I merged categories derived from the coding process to establish relations between different conceptual themes. In these steps, categories emerged to create patterns.

According to McMillan and Schumacher (1993), in an inductive analysis, data can be categorised based on themes, patterns, and the interconnections among categories. To sort and select from the full range of themes identified and categorised, I scrutinised relationships between categories and the themes' relevance to the research problem. I also referred to the literature review regularly to keep the focus on the issues.

Utilising the theoretical framework identified and analysed these themes. The theoretical lens also guided the search for in-depth data. The data viewed through the lens of Al-Attas' *adab* and Freire's consciousness and the resulting themes from my analyses provided insights to the research questions.

Table 5

Sample of Coding

Coding	Stakeholders	Notes
Meunasah as the site of decision making	• The idea came from the ladies but to turn it into a concrete program we (stakeholder) have to put it as an agenda in the village meeting in meunasah…(SH1) • Yes, people have debated on all issues, mostly in technicality…in our budget plan, we proposed the amount to be allocated o education and then we brought it to meunasah to be discussed…(SH9) • After discussion in meunasah budget is agreed, then we can carry on with the working plan…(SH2)	The policymaking process in the village is conducted through deliberation in meunasah to reach a consensus.
The selection of Meunasah as ECE site	• Our budget is limited so we can not afford to build a dedicated building for ECE for now…(SH3) • We already have two storage rooms, and there are meunasah toilets nearby, so we make do with what we have…(SH2) • Adult religious study takes place in the hall. • In the past, when I was young, we learn juzamma (Qur'anic study for children and beginners) here (the hall and veranda). But ECE needed classrooms and a playground, so we used the meunasah compound…(SH4)	Meunasah is chosen as the most convenient option to conduct ECE due to the village's limited budget. It has also has been historically used as the village education centre.

4.10 Validity and Rigour

Data generated from multiple sources ensure the rigour of the data (Creswell, 2013).

According to Merriam (2009), the various sources, methods, theories and instruments ensure and

enhance the validity and reliability of a study. According to Butvilas and Zygmantas (2011),

The validity of a case study is mainly supported by several sources of data collection and analysis, based on different theoretical perspectives. Reliability will be obtained through data analysis, which is carried out by analytical generalization – a theory used for comparing the empirical results. (p. 41)

In this research, the sources of data are varied, ranging from observation fieldnotes, interview recordings and official documents obtained from teachers, parents and village stakeholders. According to Merriam (1998), the researcher also utilises several strategies to enhance the validity of the research, including member checks (showing the tentative interpretations to the participant), long-term observations, peer examination and researcher biases.

External validity is often the primary concern in qualitative research, in particular with the issues on whether the findings of one study might be generalised in other similar situations (Merriam, 2009). It may not be possible to generalise findings of an ethnographic case study about the role of *meunasah* in early years education in one particular district. However, qualitative researchers believe that human thoughts and actions are not entirely idiosyncratic (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007). As such, providing detailed descriptions of the study's context, methods, and findings can help the readers compare the insights to their situation and conclude whether there are similarities of the parallel situation and useful knowledge to be derived.

4.11 Summary

In this chapter, I discussed my research approach and paradigm, research design, ethical considerations, methods of data generation, data analysis and rigour while justifying this research as a qualitative ethnographic case study that draws on interpretive views of looking at reality. Additionally, this study sought in-depth understandings of particular issues and phenomena. The chapter also details my field trip to Aceh province and my first encounter with

villagers. It explicates the process of obtaining access to the site and mitigating ethical issues and

my role as an ethnographic researcher in the study. The following chapter discusses the findings.

Chapter Five: Continuity

5.1   Introduction

This chapter presents the ethnographic findings of the research site, Gampong Blang (a pseudonym) a village in North Aceh Regency, Aceh, Indonesia. It is an agricultural community in North Aceh lowland that attempted to build a better future without neglecting the continuity of its cultural ideas and particularities. This chapter discusses the community structures, values and family institution in the village and their aspirations toward education. I utilise Al-Attas' *adab* and Freire's consciousness' concepts to frame the findings.

Socio-economic and socio-cultural contexts contribute to the shaping of people's consciousness, and in turn, people's consciousness shapes the social world (Freire, 1972b). It is essential to take into account the social fabric of Gampong Blang to understand how the community established, supported and managed early years education in *meunasah*. A descriptive analysis of Gampong Blang community helped in the understanding of the establishment of ECE in *meunasah* and its ECE situated within the broader social context and established through the villagers' initiatives.

5.2   Community Structures

Freire (1972a) argues that humans, as subjects, are rooted in historical struggles. In his discussion of   Freire, Lankshear (1993) explains that for Freire, humans are "beings of the praxis' who live authentically only when engaged in inquiry and creative transformation of the world" (p. 95). Freire (1972a) further explained that human beings have the distinctive character and capacity to think and engage in the historical world purposively. Reflective capacity enables humans to disassociate themselves from the world and to give meaning to it. Thus, human beings can operate in the world through action and reflection for a purpose. Since humans have the

capacity to reflect, they discover the contradictions inherent in reality and how to transform it through their thought to create history and the future.

Freire (1972a, 1972b, 1985) develops the structure of consciousness in which he argues that the social world shapes people's consciousness and in turn, this shapes the world. This consciousness is visible through the way people approach their existential reality, whether it is magical, naïve, or critical. People that possess critical consciousness understand their social problem thoroughly. This understanding leads them to denounce unjust structures and announce a non-oppressive reality. They are conscious that the human condition is socially constructed and politically mediated. This realisation inspires them to engage and shape and change their social reality.

In Gampong Blang, the continuity of their traditional administrative system and socio-economic structure preserved by conscious engagement and historical struggle reflects the villagers' way of life. Gampong Blang is governed based on the Aceh traditional administrative system. A collective leadership of three institutions administers the village traditional administrative system. The village chief (*geuchik*), the Imam of *meunasah* and the elders comprise the council of four elders (*tuha peut*) and the council of eight elders (*tuha lapan*). The village chief wields executive powers in the village. The village secretary and a few heads of division (*kaur*) such as the development division (*kaur pembangunan*), budgeting division (*kaur perencanaan*) and administrative division (*kaur tata usaha*) assist the chief. The council of elders serves as the legislative power in the village taking part in any decision-making process affecting the community; all policy implementation requires their approval. The unique feature of this elders' council is that its membership is a mix of older and younger people. The *tuha peut* membership, for example, must consist of other members, namely young men, women representatives, intellectuals and entrepreneurs. The *tuha lapan* also need to have representatives from *adat* figures (experts on local traditions and customs) and *ulama* or Muslim scholars.

The third power broker in the village is Imam *meunasah*, who is also democratically elected by the people. Imam *meunasah* has complete authority over the *meunasah* compound. Assisted by the *bilee* (Imam's assistant) the Imam is in charge of the day to day running of *meunasah*, leading the daily communal prayers, managing *zakat* and charity distribution and provides religious lessons to the villagers. The Imam's authority is also recognised beyond the *meunasah* as he is the leading figure in village rituals. To a certain degree, the Imam has a combination of executive powers (mainly concerning *meunasah*) and some judicial powers as they provide counsel on the day to day practice of religion or in solving disputes between people.

The traditional administrative system described above dates back to the seventeenth century Aceh kingdom, which began with the reign of Sultan Iskandar Muda (1609-1636) (Siegel, 1969). I argue that this traditional administrative system in Acehnese society resembles a form of democracy, as the basic fundamental of a democracy is the separation of powers (executive, legislative and judicative) usually referred to as *trias-politica* (Asshiddiqie, 2006). The separation of powers into different areas of responsibility ensures political balance and democracy in the village. This system of Acehnese *trias-politica* means that no individual or group dominates the political process and decision-making process in the village. All decisions on village affairs must be discussed and debated in the village meetings or *musyawarah* where all community members speak freely. Significant sections of Acehnese saw Islam as fundamental to its socio-political agenda but did not have an Islamic determined agenda (Kingsbury, 2006, 2007). The distinction between both contexts refers to differences between a state or a society imbued with the values of Islam as opposed to determined by Sharia.

This political system, however, was seriously contested by the central Indonesian government during the New Order Regime (1966-1998) and the martial law period (2003-2004). The new order government gradually replaced this system with a more hierarchical Javanese model (Kingsbury, 2006). The new order regime went on to abolish the elder's council, replacing

it with a national institution. For example, the organisation of the village community (LMD) frequently received instruction from the district level government. The role of the Imam reduced to leading the daily prayers in *meunasah* and working under the village chief such as in assisting the chief in religious matters. Even though the Acehnese society has no choice but to accommodate the changes imposed by the regime at the time, the people resisted by creating the shadow administration based on their traditional model. This move made the government-initiated institution function only as a symbolic institution while the real power stays in the traditional Acehnese *trias-politica*. The move allowed people to avoid the harsh consequence from the authoritarian government at that time, while at the same time, they could maintain their system that had proven to serve the people better. Nowadays, as democracy is thriving again in the country, Aceh has been granted autonomy to manage its own affairs (Aspinall, 2009). However, even before acknowledging the central government, the community showed their persistence in maintaining the continuity of their local government system. According to Freire (1972a, 1972b), a people or community with critical consciousness will be able to understand their social problems thoroughly and take action against the unjust structures and create a non-oppressive reality. In maintaining the continuity of their community structure, the people in Gampong Blang were consciously engaged in constructing their social reality by political participation.

Gampong Blang also maintained the continuity of traditional socioeconomic institutions. The villagers continued to elect a *kejruen blang*, a person in charge of matters related to paddy fields, such as when to start sowing, water distribution and to resolve disputes between farmers. The Acehnese socioeconomic activities tightly embedded with traditional *adat* institutions such us: *kejreun blang*, dealing with rice farming, *petua seneubok* in charge of field sowing, *pawang uteun* for matters related to forestry and *mugee* for trading or marketing matters. The positions in this institution were elected among the local people for a certain period based on merit and

expertise. The elected people could appoint aides, paying their salary through a small portion of the revenue from the economic activities (such as fisheries, rice cultivation or forestry). Nowadays, these institutions have become largely dysfunctional in the urban areas as they have been pushed aside by modernisation and central government-initiated institutions that gradually replaced their role (Nazamuddin, Agussabti, & Mahmud, 2010). Out of all such traditional institutions, only *kejreun blang* is relevant to Gampong Blang, as the village consists mainly of paddy fields and has no shore or forest. *Kejruen blang* is not under the supervision of the village chief, although *kejruen blang* is required to work closely and collaboratively with the village chief. *Kejreun* does not receive any funds from the village budget but receives income in the form of grain that is set aside during cultivation. This *adat* institution is still present in some rural areas. However, before peace in 2005, the central government systematically tried to push aside such traditional institution by introducing state-initiated institution such as farmers group (*kelompok Tani*).

People in Gampong Blang also continue to preserve their traditional socioeconomic system called *mawah* and *gala*. *Mawah* is a traditional profit-sharing model in which a person gives up their rights over a particular asset such as lands or cattle to another person to work on the owner's assets for an agreed percentage of the profits. On the other hand, *gala* is a system of borrowing in which a person puts up his assets such as land or goods as collaterals. The fact that villagers still maintain the traditional economic model is quite surprising as most of the semi-urban or urban areas completely erased this economic model (Nazamuddin et al., 2010). The villagers made some adjustments to the model, such as allowing people from outside the village to be involved in *mawah*, but the system remains largely the same as decades ago. Moreover, the preservation of the *gala* indicates the people's perseverance in maintaining their socioeconomic model despite the penetration of venture and bank capital, reaching even the most remote areas

in Aceh. The teaching of Islam is put forward as a reason for this perseverance, as stated by one village elder:

> *Nowadays, banks offer various type of loans, mostly for consumption purposes. The loanee's businesses are growing in Krueng Gekueh (the nearby town about 10 km from Gampong Blang) and Keude Amplaih (Capital town of the District), so they make it easier to get 'kredit' (loan). However, it comes with high interest rates that often make people default, resulting in their assets being seized. Just weeks ago, I witnessed a debt collector re-possess a motorbike forcefully. Sometimes people don't completely understand how the loan agreement works but agree to it regardless and end up losing their shop, land and even their home. Such interest rate based loans and loan sharks are forbidden in Islam being that taking of riba (interests on loans with unjustified increments that must be paid above the total amount of loan) is considered a sinful act. (SH7)*

From this religious perspective, it is understandable why villagers hesitate to take loans from banks. They are mainly concerned with the possibility of being involved in *riba* activity or interest-based loan agreements, something forbidden in Islam. On the contrary, *mawah* and *gala* are very simple and easy to understand systems, excluding imposed interest rates, so entirely in accordance with Islamic values.

In Gampong Blang, the majority of the residents (aged 15 above) work in agriculture, mostly as paddy field (*sawah*) owners, tenants or labourers (in 2018 Gampong Blang had a population of around 610 people with 77 on out-migration). A significant number of the youth population in the village (around 20) were working as construction labourers or in the paddy field (such as operating the threshing machine and tractor) during the cultivation periods. A smaller portion of the population, about 15 people were traders, whereas ten people were working for the government (such as teachers) and six people were self-employed. However, all

the traders, government workers and self-employed also owned paddy fields. Some of the people

who work as a paddy field grower also had livestock, mainly cows, and their own plantation.

Villagers who were traders or government employees were usually slightly better off in their

finance due to their multiple sources of income in addition to their income as paddy field owners.

However, income inequalities were not significant enough to create social classes within the

community.

The traditional division among the villagers customarily had its basis on social status and

land or paddy field ownership. However, after Indonesia's independence in 1945, during the

social revolution, Aceh abolished this practice. The social revolution led to the abolishment of

the feudal system based on land procession in the Northern part of Sumatra Island, including

Aceh (Reid, 2005). However, this change in the social structure did not result in major

transformation of the socio-economic model of the society, particularly in rural areas; it merely

created smaller scale landowners.

The traditionally agrarian characters and cultures of rural North Aceh due to its fertile

land direct the tendencies of its people toward agriculture. People still try to maintain a balance

between communal needs and individual needs in their largely agricultural-based economy.

Communality and solidarity are ubiquitous characteristics of the villagers that often manifest in

communal responsibilities. Participation in *gotong-royong* (communal work) where community

members work voluntarily help each other remains in practice in the village. According to a

member of the village council, people help each other in almost all aspects of life. If a villager

wishes to hold a ceremony or event, the villagers mobilise themselves to work without any

financial incentive.

Villagers reciprocate this kind of *gotong-royong* when another villager needs a labour

force. The *gotong-royong* solidarity was evident during wedding ceremonies in the village. In the

ceremonies, all the community members undertook almost all tasks until the ceremony

completed. The women would help with food preparations, the men with cooking, and the youth took most responsibility for setting up the place, serving the guests and cleaning the dishes. In the traditional *gotong-royong* culture, all villagers perform tasks though almost nobody gets paid. In fact, villagers even contributed money to the hosts of such events a week before they took place.

The culture of *gotong-royong* in the village that still prevails in most aspects of the villagers' daily lives was among the main factors that significantly eased the burden of establishing ECE in the village. Community members showed their dedication and commitment based on their specific capacities, as described by the principal:

> *Due to the limited resources in our first years, most of the tasks were conducted through gotong-royong (communal voluntary work) The builders worked in converting the storage, while some craftsmen contributed the table for children, and the village youth painted the classroom. (EC1)*

The initial engagement of the community members and stakeholders since introducing the process of dialogues in *meunasah* worked well and became characteristic of the ECE initiatives in the village. The community felt that the lack of ECE in the village was a problem that required solutions. With their limited resources, the community managed to put in optimal work and manifest their proud values of communality by working in *gotong-royong*.

5.2.1   Community structure and the development of community consciousness. The unique fundamentals of the community, as described above, laid the foundation for the development of bottom-up ECE initiatives in the village. Freire emphasises that critical consciousness cannot be imposed but must be born out of the creative efforts of the people. It also cannot be generated by intellectual effort alone but needs the authentic unity of action and reflection (Freire, 1973). Human beings are capable not only of knowing the world but also living through action and reflection for a common purpose. Through the capacity to reflect,

118

people discover the contradictions in reality and seek to find ways to change reality so that they can make history and create a better future. Humans will be able to transcend and develop beyond their limited conditions by working together to transform their situations (Freire, 1972b, 1976). People's perseverance in maintaining the village's traditional supra-structure enables the initiatives from a group of village women (to be introduced later in this chapter) to be discussed by community members and village stakeholders in community meetings in *meunasah*. The ideas were put forward in *meunasah* and examined by community members and stakeholders who represent the *trias-politica* of the village. Ideas were only developed into policies and allocated with budgets after meetings in meunasah approved them. Meetings discussed not only ECE but also other issues regarding education in the village. The village chief recalled the process:

> *In education matters, some proposals came from various groups of villagers, including funding for adults Islamic education in meunasah, Qur'anic teaching for children and the establishment of ECE. All the groups wanted their programs to be discussed in meunasah so that they could subsequently receive funding from the village budget. Admittedly, the ECE initiators are among the most aggressive pressure groups. However, the village stakeholders also acknowledge the importance of ECE in this village; hence we put the idea to meunasah to be discussed. (SH1)*

The involvement of all segments of the village strengthened the community's commitment and participation in setting up the ECE project. The participatory planning process helped increase the community's knowledge of ECE as a potential program that could benefit their children. Drawing on Freirean principles, on examining the existential reality and life experience of local people, understanding the problems which require solutions and accommodating facts, culture and views of local people researchers should emphasise the process of dialogue (Freire, 1972a, 1972b).

The process of dialogue and consciousness development in Gampong Blang occurred in similar patterns. The process also resembled the education and literacy programs in rural areas in other parts of Indonesia, drawing on Freire's philosophies (Toepatimasang et al., 1986; Fakih et al., 2010). However, there is a significant distinction from experience in other parts of Indonesia, which was the presence of facilitators or activists during the process. In the case of Gampong Blang, involving all the other segments of the community compensated for the absence of facilitators. The community structure in the local *trias-politica* allowed for considering various perspectives. The community members with varied expertise discussed the initiative and then arrived at a consensus, developing a plan of action. All segments of society contributed to the process. The village chief and his team contributed with their knowledge of bureaucracy and administrative processes, while educators in the village provided educational perspectives. Religious and *adat* leaders would contribute with their expertise on local values young people with their ideas about new development outside the village and parents with their eagerness to enrol their children. Participation of community members and formal role of stakeholders further enhanced the sustainability of new ECE. *Meunasah* meetings helped communities develop sustainability plans for their ECE, where everybody was encouraged to be involved. The use of a village structure also made project implementation more robust. The entire process in Gampong Blang, albeit not entirely in the intellectual domain, but in praxis, may be regarded as the growth of consciousness raising that can produce demands for action.

According to Freire (1972a, 1973), humans as subjects are rooted in historical struggle. The Acehnese historical events shaped this current era in which the people went all the way to ensure the continuity of their traditional administrative system by denouncing the oppressive top-down policy. Uniquely, this kind of consciousness is allowed by the very system they tried to preserve. The traditional administrative system in Acehnese society allows the community members to have a substantial amount of dialogue with one another with every opinion treated as

equally important, and every segment of the society represented and heard. People worked collectively for the greater good of the community and were encouraged to engage themselves in debates or dialogues and get involved in local politics. Through this constant engagement, people can often change the way they see their world and their ability to improve their community. The Acehnese *trias-politica* model also ensures a balance between administrative, legal and religious influences. All stakeholders elected by the people have direct responsibility to the community. Their expertise in the valuable areas is respected, but dialogue is always encouraged. This indigenous supra-structure of the village is the foreground for the community to develop their consciousness.

The continuity in many aspects of the villagers' lives enabling the development of community initiatives in ECE may result from the Acehnese religious-traditional beliefs of cosmic forces imbued in everything—from the mountains to the rice fields. The ritual of *pesijuek* reflects the religious-traditional belief system. To better understand the intertwined relationship between Islam and the local traditions shaping the Acehnese community, the next sub-section illustrates and discusses the community values in the rural community of Gampong Blang.

5.3   Community Values

This section provides insights into the ways values and norms shape the individual's and communal thought and behaviour within the Acehnese social system, in particular how values shape the thought and practice of the community in Gampong Blang. Acehnese society is influenced by Islam which plays a significant role in their culture. Aceh is historically the first region in Indonesia to embrace Islam and hence its dubbing as the 'Verandah of Mecca' (*Serambi Mekkah*). Devout Islamic society and adherence to Islamic laws characterise the region (Milallos, 2007). However, Aceh, as with other parts of the country, is also strong in cultural diversity that contains rich local traditions and customs commonly referred to as *adat*.

Al-Attas, through his concept of *adab*, also argued that people must possess *adab* in an inclusive sense, encompassing spiritual piety and material life. Good human beings with *adab*, are sincerely conscious of their obligations towards their faith and religion (worship) and fulfil responsibilities to themselves, their family and society. Therefore, a good person must adhere to the integration of spiritual and ethical ways in the pursuit of material needs (Al-Attas, 1985, 1997).

Every culture is unique in its religious values and its intrinsic individuality. Islam also has the concept of universalism which allows it to converge and fuse with various civilisations and cultures. Islam also aims for universal brotherhood, equality and social justice by refusing discrimination based on ethnicity and nationality. It puts forward the value of piety that goes beyond simple ritual piety, but also entails piety manifested in the social context. (Achmadi, 2010; Al-Attas, 1997; Roqib, 2011)

The rituals are also an indication and expression of ritual piety with social piety still practised by the community of Gampong Blang. Ritual piety was demonstrated mainly by the older generation of villagers. For instance, I observed that the daily routines of some village elders in Gampong Blang centred around the *Meunasah's Imam* (SH4) and his friend, a member of the village elder council (SH6) and their peer group. The Imam, the village elder member and their group were particularly diligent in their daily obligatory prayers (*shalat*). These daily prayers are the main religious ritual in a Muslim's everyday life. They are performed five times a day at dawn (*subuh*), noon (*zhuhur*), afternoon (*Asar*), sunset (*maghrib*) and night (*isya'*).

Every morning, as the sound of Azan (call for prayer) emanated from *meunasah,* the group would gather in *meunasah* for dawn prayer. After the dawn prayer, the Imam and the village elder would then usually head to the coffee shop for breakfast and converse with other community members. They would then return home briefly to get ready for the day. Most of the time they travelled together on the Imam's bike. The Imam and his friend usually worked in their

paddy fields until lunchtime. Next, they would return home briefly for lunch and then head to *meunasah* for noon prayer. After that, they will resume work on the paddy field until afternoon prayer time. Most of the time, they would not return to *meunasah* for afternoon prayers but rather prayed near the paddy field. They would then only return home just before nightfall to rush to the *meunasah* for sunset prayer. After sunset prayers, they would typically remain in *meunasah* to complete the evening prayer. While waiting for evening prayer to commence, they would converse with fellow villagers (typically with the elders). After the completion of the day's last obligatory prayer, they would either have a cup of coffee at a coffee shop or head back home. This routine only changes on Fridays when Islam, commands that for Friday noon prayer Muslims must pray in a congregation explaining why many villagers work less on Fridays so that they can head to the mosque on time. For many older generation villagers, such a routine is typical.

Villagers expressed social piety in their sense of communality and solidarity. The rural community is a deeply communal society bound by communal responsibilities as seen through rituals in the village. During my time in the village, I was invited to various ritual feasts*(khandury)*, from wedding ceremonies to communal meals after harvest (*khandury blang*), to the celebration of Prophet Muhammad's birthday (*maulid* as well as to funerals. The traditional funeral rites in the community are particularly interesting and arguably differ from traditional Muslim funeral rites. In such communities, funeral rites last for seven days with prayers for the departed (*takziah*) conducted over seven nights and ending with a feast on the last night. *Takziah*, or known as *tahlilan*, on Java island, is a religious gathering where villagers recite prayers and Qur'anic verses for the deceased. All the recitations in *takziah* are in Arabic, and an Imam typically leads the prayer for the deceased and prays for divine blessings for the mourning family. It lasts for at least an hour every night until the seventh day. The villagers would also invite groups from neighbouring villages for *takziah* and provide them with a feast.

Very diverse and heterogeneous societies embrace Islam across the world, and this diversity allows for the dialectical process between Islamic values and local contexts to occur. Such contextualisation of Islam allows for the proper religious understanding in those communities (Al-Attas, 1997; Roqib, 2011; Ali, 2017). Islamic civilisation did not develop in a vacuum or isolated from the local environment. Islamic philosophy encourages Muslims to engage in diversity and allow acculturation, as seen in the Acehnese society. The Qur'an explained:

> O mankind! We created you from a single (pair) of a male and a female and made you into nations and tribes, that you may know each other (not that you may despise each other). Verily the most honoured of you in the sight of Allah is (he who is) the most righteous of you. And Allah has full knowledge and is well acquainted (with all things). (Qur'an, chapter 49, verse 13)

The Acehnese life philosophy called '*Adat bak po teemeurehom, Hukom bak Syiah Kuala*' is the foundation of the view of life, attitudes and values in Acehnese society. This philosophy, derived from the seventeenth-century Acehnese Kingdom, subscribes that authority over *adat* rests with the rulers and authority over law rests with ulama. *Adat* constitutes norms, codes of behaviour and guidance passed down over generations and traditional institutions serve as a moral compass and law for the people. For Acehnese, *adat* must be compatible with Islam and, therefore, all traditional laws in *adat* are primarily in accordance with Islam. This intertwining between Islam and local customs, therefore, creates a conception of values in Acehnese society which are consistent with both *adat* and Islam. This practice is also embodied by another fundamental Acehnese philosophy called '*hukom ngeun adat lage zat ngeun sifeut*' which means that law and tradition are akin to the soul and body (Bashri, 2010; Nazamuddin et al., 2010).

As mentioned in earlier sub-sections, some of these *adat* institutions are related to socio-economic activities of Acehnese but are not limited only to that area. *Meunasah* itself acts as an institution that fulfils both religious and *adat* roles. This study shows the deep intertwining between *adat* and Islam in Acehnese rural community. The term *adat* derives from Arabic encompassing a mixture of culture, traditions and traditional law (Benda-Beckmann, 2013). In most parts of Southeast Asia, *adat* refers to ethnic-based structures of moral values, traditional customs and legal institutions, related to family, kinship, ritual, communal responsibility and conflict resolution (Kloos, 2012). As the consequence of Acehnese adherence to Islamic laws, Islam and *adat* are an integral aspect of the society and *adat* is often considered as part of local religious traditions (Srimulyani, 2010).

Although this intertwining of Islam and *adat* has also created continuity and harmony within the society, sometimes it resulted in some contestation around rituals and a complex legal plurality in the society. *Takziah* during the traditional funeral procession is among the rituals contested by other Muslim groups (typically based in urban areas). They consider the ritual as having no Islamic basis but as being rooted in the pre-Islamic era (Animism, Hinduism and Buddhism precede Islam in the Indonesian archipelago) (Abubakar, 2012; Beatty, 2000). Similar contestation also occurred around the ritual of *peusijuek*. As mentioned earlier, most of the villagers' socio-economic activities involve but not limited only to socio-economic activities. *Peusijuek*, derived from Aceh language, literally means ''to cool down'' or 'cooling down'(Dhuhri, 2008, p. 642). Besides socio-economic activities, *peusijuek* is a procession carried out as part of most activities in the life of the Acehnese, such as wedding ceremonies, moving into a new house, migrating or going on the pilgrimage to Mecca, signing the end of hostility or reconciliation, graduation or promotion to a new job (Dhuhri, 2008).

I contend that amalgamating Islam and local culture in rituals like *takziah* and *peusijuek* indicates successful acculturation between Islam and *adat,* resulting in the continuity of the rural

Acehnese's harmonious lives. The local culture within the community does not automatically disappear with the presence of Islam. Instead, some of these local cultural features continue to be practised by a society influenced by Islamic elements (Abubakar, 2011; Alfian, 1977; Dhuhri, 2008;).

This ritual of *pesijuek* involves sprinkling water mixed with foliage and rice. The ceremony is commonly carried out by the Imam or elders during which they recite prayers throughout the procession. The ritual is one of the most visible mixtures of local traditions and religion. Villages perform it with utmost humility in order to seek blessings from God. However, a section of Muslims with more puritanical interpretation dispute it despite its practice in most rural areas of Aceh, including Gampong Blang. I observed that almost all socioeconomic activities began with *pesijuek*. For instance, the opening of a grocery shop in the village began with *peusijuek*. A villager's new car used for commercial activities also began its service with the *pesijuek* ritual, just as *pesijuek* was also performed as part of *khandury blang* and before the start of rice field planting. The Imam of Gampong Blang reiterated the importance of the ritual:

> *Through pesijuek, we seek the blessing of God in all our life endeavours. It consists of prayers and blessings. Some say the act of sprinkling water originated from Hinduism; it symbolizes the cooling-down. However, nowadays, we recite the verses from the Qur'an and offer salutations for the prophet and seek blessings for the specific purpose so that we have humility and chivalrous behaviour and not lust and greed. (SH4)*

Peusijuek that has been preserved and practised by Acehnese society also reflects the continued harmony between religion and local traditions. *Peusijuek* rituals demonstrate how Islam and local traditions are manifest in Islamic acculturation that creates a harmonious balance of values and practices within Acehnese society. In the case of *peusijuek*, society added prayers from the Qur'an and religious leaders such as the *meunasah* Imam performed most of the *peusijuek*. Such a process gives birth to the acculturation between local cultures and Islam,

which in turn creates local religious traditions in Acehnese society. The value system based on *adat* is in synergy with Islamic values, and this synergy shapes the pattern of social relations among individuals and between individuals and traditional institutions within the Acehnese society. According to Al-Attas (1997) through the actualisation of good natural disposition consisting of the soul (ruh) the desires (*nafs*), the intellect (*aql*) and the heart (*qalb*), the perfection of an individual is achieved (*insan kaamil*). A good human being will then be able to create a good and just society.

5.3.1 Community values and consciousness. According to Al-Attas, *adab* as a

paradigm should emphasise the process of character development and the acquiring of moral and social manners from within society and for championing social principles (Al-Attas, 1997, 2013). The influence of Islamic teaching can be put forward in understanding the actions of the community in Gampong Blang. The Acehnese derive their values from both Islamic teaching and their unique history and social reality that manifest in local traditions (*adat*).

Islam emphasises the importance of education in the process of personal development and seeking knowledge is a sacred duty and an obligation for every Muslim. As the Qur'an explains in various verses: "Read! In the name the Lord" (Qur'an, chapter 96, verse 1). "God will exalt those who believe among you, and those who have been granted knowledge to high ranks" (Qur'an, chapter 58, verse 11). "And say: My Lord, increase me in knowledge" (Qur'an, chapter 20, verse 114).

Human beings must possess a sense of piety while continually striving to improve all aspects of their lives (Al-Attas, 1995, 1999). The community in Gampong Blang acknowledges the importance of education in Islam. As stated by one of the village stakeholders, "*The first verse of Qur'an to be revealed is the verse called Iqra, which means to read, so we need to learn throughout our life, and we need to honour people with knowledge*" (SH6). The village Imam also explained

We need to be life-long learners and to seek knowledge throughout our life. Seeking knowledge is a religious obligation to be conducted continuously, as we have always heard, a famous Muslim proverb said that says: ''seek knowledge from the cradle to the grave''. (SH4)

The village community's encouragement for young people to pursue an education in *dayah* and university and put into action through their provision of education initiatives in the village for adults and children illustrates their commitment. As stated by the village secretary:

Many of our young people are in Islamic boarding schools, and more and more young people enrol in university. We in Gampong Blang are also very eager to support education in the village from 'pengajian' (religious lessons) for our adult population to the ECE in meunasah for our children. (SH03)

This value embedded within the Acehnese rural community is arguably one of the factors that contribute to the Acehnese high regard for and interest in education. Despite the tsunami disaster in 2004, armed conflict between 1976-2005, local political turmoil (after 2005), and reconfigurations of the social fabric within the society, one tangible contradiction remains a source of optimism (Naylor, 2014). Although Aceh is one of the most impoverished regions of Indonesia with the economic growth rate of only 1.65 per cent in 2014, far below the national average growth rate of 5.02 per cent. (World Bank, 2009; Statistic Indonesia Aceh, 2017), the literacy and school enrollment rates are consistently higher than most other regions, and the national average rate (Naylor, 2014; Statistics Indonesia 2017). Participation in primary school reached 99.36 per cent in 2012, 94.34 per cent in secondary school, and 74.59 per cent in high school, higher than the national average. The respective participation rates put Aceh at second, sixth and fourth places out of the 33 provinces in Indonesia (Statistic Indonesia Aceh, 2017). Indeed, there are more factors behind this optimism about education, such as hope for a better

future (discussed further in Chapter 7). However, I consider the Islamic teaching on the importance of education as one of the reasons.

Furthermore, through the incorporation of the tradition and values within the Acehnese community, education must also serve to create a balance between *ilmu* (knowledge) and *adab* (good behaviour, good etiquette and morals) (Al-Attas, 1997; Wan Daud, 1998). Al-Attas believe that *adab* must be possessed in the inclusive sense, encompassing the spiritual and material life. As described previously, Islam also emphasises the need for social piety in which Muslims must take responsibility for their community issues. The Imam in Gampong Blang explained that their worship and preparation for the afterlife does not mean that an individual can neglect their responsibilities towards their family and community. He explained

> *Islam is a religion that seeks to balance life in this world and the afterlife. It guides us at every step of life, from the cradle to the grave. It guides our rituals and our muamallah (trade/ the way to earn a living). It must go hand in hand. (SH4)*

A good human being with *adab* must be conscious of their obligations to themselves, their family and society. Al-Attas' *adab* concept emphasises that a good individual (*insan adabi*) is one who is conscious of the relationship between himself and his society (Al-Attas, 1985, 1997). The village youth chief stressed,

> *As Muslims, we need to balance 'hablumminallah' (relationship with God or religious matters) and 'hablumminnas' (relationship with other people or social responsibilities) as we have learnt. I think we cannot only pray in meunasah but neglect our responsibilities as community members. We need to contribute to the community and develop our village as well. (SH9)*

I argue that Al-Attas concepts of *ta'dib* and *adab* represent the influence of Islamic traditions in *meunasah.* The drive to be a responsible community member who is conscious of the community issues, such as the lack of ECE access in the village, is one of the catalysts that

raised critical consciousness among the community members in Gampong Blang. Critical consciousness must develop through the efforts of the people, the authentic unity of action and reflection (Freire, 1972b, 1973). Islam, as a religion, is based on solidarity and fights against oppression (Al-Attas, 1985; Engineer, 1987; Syariati, 1996). Muslims enact Islamic faith in the act of improving social conditions through collective engagement as an *umat* (derived from the word 'ummah' in Arabic meaning Muslim community). The Gampong Blang community attempted to improve their condition, particularly the future of the children, by establishing an ECE centre in their village as stated by one of the community members *"This (ECE) is for the future of our children, we need it…"* (CM6). The village ECE centre originated through the collective engagement of the entire community, as described earlier in this chapter.

Furthermore, as previously mentioned, the community structure, namely the traditional administrative system in Gampong Blang, lays a foundation for the development of consciousness of the people. Moreover, embedded values within the community also play a role as a catalyst that raises people's awareness of the need for action. The amalgamation of concepts underpinning Islam and local traditions, such as the importance of education, the expression of social piety, and the solidarity of the villagers to improve their condition are arguably the catalysts for the flourishing of the community's consciousness that led to the ECE initiative in the village.

This chapter has shown that the community's values and its everyday life are closely associated with Islam and *adat*, which are inseparable and compatible. However, during my study, I also encountered part of the Acehnese tradition that, to a degree, seems to be contradictory to Islam. Aceh has Islamic values that are commonly associated with patriarchal traditions. However, the local matrifocality practices illustrate a contradiction to elements of *adat*. Mernissi (1993) explained that Islamic societies in some parts of Indonesia tend to be unusual in terms of the political power of women when compared to Middle Eastern or other

Muslim societies. The subsequent section of this chapter examines the matrifocality of the Acehnese rural community, including the community in Gampong Blang. The principles of matrifocality have also affected how women are positioned in the community, socio-gender relations within the community and children's upbringing in the family. This discussion is vital because it aids the understanding of how a group of village women became the main driving force behind the establishment of ECE in Gampong Blang.

5.4   The Acehnese Family and Gender Roles

According to Freire, humans are conscious of their historicity; they are aware of living in a particular time and location constituted by a multiplicity of life's dimensions, such as gender, race, religion, politics, culture and economics (Lankshear, 1993). Freire (1972b, 1973) as a proponent of revolutionary education movement for Brazilians, always took into account the context of the society at that time. His educational proposal is essentially concerned with the real context of human conditions. It was necessary to have a form of education that enabled people to reflect on their responsibility and their role in the cultural climate to accomplish this goal (Freire, 1973). In the context of this research, Acehnese society has a particularity in the ways its community operates. The Acehnese have a long history of matrifocality in their community, a trait that shapes their value structures, the ways of bringing-up children within the family and the role of women in education. In the case of Gampong Blang where the matrifocality is still evident, women acquire prominent roles along with village stakeholders in fostering ECE initiatives in the village.

Aceh, a stronghold of Islam, is also known for its matrifocal society in contrast to favouring patriarchal and patrilineal traditional Islamic values (Mernissi, 1993). Within the Acehnese community, Islam and matrifocality seem to be inconsistent, and some scholars have highlighted the incompatibility of the two social systems. However, the Acehnese community believe that their daily practices of Islam and matrifocality traditions are not contradictory. In

Gampong Blang, for instance, most people reject the division between Islam and *adat*. They typically explained that Islam and *adat* are inseparable and are in harmony with each other, seeing them as complementary.

It is interesting to observe that the matrifocal traditions of Aceh seem to be in contrast to conventional Islamic values. For instance, Islam in Middle Eastern countries aligns with patrilineal and patriarchal communities in which the power and control over the household, property, and land belong to males (Ahmed, 1992; HRW, 2016; Mernissi, 1993). The realities of such Middle Eastern societies are clearly different from the realities of particular regions in Southeast Asia like Aceh. According to Blackwood (2010), who conducted her study in a rural part of Sumatra Island, such areas provide an important avenue for rethinking gender and power in Muslim society because of the prevalence of women's landholding, control of finance, and control of agricultural resources. However, a concern arises around the formalisation of Sharia law in 2002 as a catalyst for greater public expression of Islam and Islamic values. Scholars (for example, Kloos, 2013; Srimulyani, 2010) argued that this policy might gradually erode the matrifocality of Acehnese women. (The effect of state Sharia implementation in Aceh is discussed in the next chapter).

This study showed that one of the prevalent features of Gampong Blang residential area is cluster housing. Almost half of the houses in the village take the form of cluster houses in an extended family enclosure. Clusters originate around the family house of females or where women's parents will divide their land and build a house for their daughter. Due to this practice, women in the village possess great independence since they live in the place where they were born, surrounded by their own family and friends. There is also a tradition in parents gift their paddy field or land (for building a new house) to their daughter after she is married. Such practices mean that most of the women work in the rice fields (their own or rented) and earn their own incomes. These conditions have made women more independent of their husbands and

given them greater bargaining power within the family. Such conditions also allow them to take on the responsibility of caring for the family when their husbands are away on economic migration for extended periods (*rantau)*. One of the women in the village described her experiences:

> *I cultivate our paddy field and take care of our household. When he can, my husband will remit some money from Malaysia, but it's not regular, even though I know he's working really hard on the streets (referring to Malayasia) and life is difficult for him. When things did not go smoothly over there, there were times when I had to pay for his return ticket. It is not easy, but I manage…. Of course, the children miss their father, but its more honourable for him to try to do something regardless of the difficulties, rather than remain in the village and do nothing. My son is in primary school, and my daughter is in PAUD (ECE). I try my best to fulfil their needs, their needs before my own, but I don't want them to be spoiled when they grow up, so the task of disciplining them falls on me. (CM8)*

In Acehnese tradition, a bride's parents give their newly married daughter land to build a new house and create the matrifocal residence system (Siegel, 1969; Srimulyani, 2010). Ownership of the house provides women with stability and power within the marital relationship. The traditions of *rantau* (economic migration, mainly involving men leaving the village to work) strengthen the position of Acehnese women as the centre of the family and village. Although economic migration is not an obligatory practice, if a husband cannot find work in the village, he is expected to go on *rantau*. As their wives already own a house and work outside the home, they are not financially dependent on their husbands. These traditions place women in a strong social position with cultural authority at the local level. The Acehnese expression for wife is '*njang po rumoh*', meaning the one who owns the house.

5.4.1 Rantau and matrifocality. The Acehnese have a particular term for migration, *meudagang*. It refers to those who leave their village for study at *dayah* and *rantau* (economic migration). Almost all of the children under 15 who live in the village receive some form of religious education as part of formal schooling (held at night after *sunset* or dawn prayers). Though since the conflict this no longer takes place in *meunasah* (some villagers say since the mid-1990s) but in the homes of the religious teacher for elementary level religious education, and at a mosque in the neighbouring village for the secondary level (these two institutions are discussed further in the next chapter). For those who aspire to continue their Islamic studies to a higher level, they enrol in *dayah*. A journey for higher Islamic studies in *dayah* is a part of temporary migration from the village that might last between seven to 12 years. In Acehnese society, such a journey is not economically driven, but a long-established tradition where an *ulama* or Islamic scholar only becomes recognised after he or she has studied Islam outside his or her own village. The journey called *meudagang* originally means to travel from one place to another but was later referred to as studying in a *dayah* (Hurgronje, 1959). According to the village elders, less than half of those who go on *meudagang* return to the village after graduating from *dayah*. Most of those who choose not to return to their village do so because they married. In most parts of Aceh, newly married men must live with their wives' parents' until they build their own house.

This custom is one reason for the economic migration or *rantau* in Gampong Blang. Men also have an obligation to pay for the wedding ceremony and a significant amount of dowry. Moreover, after moving to their wife's home, husbands must provide the financial needs of their wives and contribute to the household expenses of their wife's family. The inability to meet those obligations may make the men live uncomfortably with their in-laws and affect their dignity as the husband. As such, this social reality prompts men to go on *rantau* to enable them to fulfil the family's financial needs and to move out of their in-laws' home as soon as possible.

Even those who can earn enough money in the village admit that it is not easy to stay in their in-laws' house. Some said they 'have a very little space' in the house.

Meanwhile, women in the village possess a fair deal of independence and earn their own incomes due to their ownership of properties and their active role in cultivating the rice field. These conditions have endowed women with a great deal of bargaining power within the family. Furthermore, this allows them to take responsibility for caring for the family when the husband is on *rantau*. In Gampong Blang, the average age of people who go on *rantau* has become younger in recent years (after conflict). The village chief stated that two-thirds of those who go on *rantau* were unmarried youths, while the rest were married men. The economic conditions in the village, the financial costs of marriage and the reluctance of most of the younger generation to be farmers are among the reasons for the increasing number of young people who go on *rantau*.

However, according to the village secretary, only four people could afford to build a new house or purchase a paddy field in the village (with money they earned during *rantau*) within the last five years indicating that remittance made an insignificant economic impact in the village. According to some village youths who had been on *rantau*, the money they earned was only enough to pay for their wedding. Several women whose husbands were on *rantau* also admitted that the remittance sent to them was enough to fulfil only the basic needs of their family in the village and support their children's education.

Previous scholars Jayawardena (1977) and Siegel (1969) also noted the phenomenon of *rantau* in Acehnese rural communities. In the late 1960s, the hardship in earning sufficient income in their region forced men from the rural area of Pidie Regency (a regency bordering North Aceh to the west) to go on *rantau*. Most of them were married men who travelled to the paper plantation area in the eastern part of Aceh, particularly those who could not find a job in rice cultivation (Siegel, 1969). Jayawardena (1977) noted the relatively similar phenomena in

Aceh Besar Regency (a regency bordering Pidie to the West). During the late 1970s, people sojourned away from the village to find job opportunities. Since the paper plantation in Aceh collapsed, people who go on *rantau* are mostly those who have enough money to start their journey and enough education to support their job-searching mission.

The Acehnese *rantau* may differ from one area to another and has changed over the years, just as I found in Gampong Blang. In this particular village, those who go on *rantau* are still predominantly men, although there are also some women on *rantau*. While Siegle (1969) noted that a majority on *rantau* in Pidie were married men, I found that, in Gampong Blang, unmarried youths dominated. The demographics of people on *rantau* is also different from what Jayawerdana found in Aceh Besar. In Gampong Blang, most people on *rantau* are those with little money or higher education background. Moreover, the condition that leads people to go on *rantau* remains the same; the lack of economic opportunity in the rural area forced people to do so. The consequence of most temporary migrants being married men is that the responsibility of raising children falls on the women.

In Acehnese society, women have always been active in the management of the household. Most of the responsibilities related to children's education fall to women, while men as fathers, traditionally had little interaction with their children. This situation strengthened the matrifocal structure of the family even more. In cases of divorce, the custody or the guardianship of the couple's children traditionally and culturally falls on the mothers or children's maternal families. According to Srimulyani (2010), Acehnese matrifocality and the less central roles of husband or father in the household links to the dwelling and the economic factors, given that it is the women who remain in the village and manage the finances of the household. Children also observe that it is their mother who feeds them, instructs them, and indulges their needs. They see their mothers as responsible and important figures who work hard, are respected in the village at

large, and take care of most family affairs. Children also feel that it is their mother's relatives who are close to them while their father's relatives are farther away.

5.4.2   Acehnese matrifocality: Past and present. Aceh's matrifocal family system is also defined by the paradox of gender relations becoming increasingly patriarchal over time. The consequence of this trend appears to be the diminishing social position of women which manifests through the shift in family structure away from matrifocal traditions, especially in the urban areas. Although rural areas still practise matrifocal traditions, there has been a decline in women's cultural authority, particularly in urban contexts. Siapno (2002) refers to normative Islam as a typically urban tradition rooted in modernist Muslim movements that display fervent attempts at purification. At the same time, these movement display fundamental opposition to the traditionally strong position of women in Acehnese society (Siapno, 2002). She distinguishes a 'traditionalist, syncretic and matrifocal' version of Islam observed in rural village life from and a modernist version of Islam with fervent attempts at purification dominant in the urban areas. Her observations indicated a more restricted lifestyle for urban women (for example, with regard to nudity, modesty, and mobility), while Acehnese women in rural areas were still thriving on matrifocality.

Acehnese women are known for having strong, firm and tenacious personalities. They fought for their families during wars and conflicts. During the GAM insurgency (1976-2005), the GAM established a military wing called *pasukan inong balee* (The Widow Regiment) which consisted of women whose husbands died in the Aceh conflict in order for the women to seek to revenge (Ganelli, Rabialdi, & Rika, 2010; Clave-Celic, 2014). Throughout history, Acehnese women occupied significant roles in shaping developments in Aceh. For instance, history shows that several Sultanah (queen) ruled Aceh, with Queen Nurillah (who passed away in 1380) and Queen Nahrasiyah (who passed away in 1428) commanding the Samudera Pasai Kingdom (predecessor of the Aceh Kingdom and the first Islamic Kingdom in Southeast Asia). Four

queens also ruled the Aceh Kingdom including Queen Safiatuddin (1641-1675), Queen Nurul

Naqiatuddin (1675-1678), Queen Inayat Zakiatuddin (1677-1688) and Queen Kamalat Shah

(1688-1699) (Takeshi, 1984; Suhaimi, 1993; Clave-Celic, 2014). In addition, in the early

sixteenth century, Aceh sent a Muslim woman to lead a war fleet against the colonial powers and

lead negotiations with the special envoy from European countries. Admiral Malahayati, as she

was known, was arguably one of the first female marine commanders in Asia (Suhaimi, 1993;

Salam, 1995; Haslinda, 2011; Clave-Celic, 2014). Moreover, Aceh had female war leaders in

their struggles against the Dutch (1873-1914), namely Cut Nyak Dien, Cut Meutia, and Pocut

Baren and the educational and war leader, Tengku Fakinah (Siegel, 1969; Ganelli et al., 2010).

The past glories of Acehnese women fighters have been an inspiration until today. Some

critics regard the current condition, however, as being a drawback for Acehnese women. Human

rights activists argue that Islamic Sharia regulations in Aceh are becoming increasingly sexist

with the Sharia police seen to be singling out women (Afrianty, 2015). For instance, the

regulation of punishing women for not wearing a veil and the district of West Aceh's regulation

that has banned women from wearing tight trousers. Rinawati, an activist from the Indonesian

Women's Commission in Aceh, contended that the male-dominant governments were hijacking

the Sharia to control women (Simanjuntak, 2015). The district head leads a growing political

propensity to issue such regulations

However, despite the growing concerns towards several Sharia-based regulations that are

considered gender-biased, in terms of education, Acehnese women hold equal rights within the

province. By acquiring higher education, Acehnese women continue to pursue their socio-

economic mobility or even political rights as in the case of a previous female leader of Aceh's

capital city. The government data, in terms of education access, indicate that the number of

women attending school outnumbers the men, as shown in Table 6.

Table 6

School Participation Rates in Aceh (Source: Statistic Indonesia Aceh, 2017).

School Level	2012		2013	
	Male	**Female**	**Male**	**Female**
Senior High School	69.88 per cent	79.26 per cent	71.98 per cent	77.29 per cent
Junior High School	93.61 per cent	95.18 per cent	94.04 per cent	96.30 per cent
Primary School	99.36 per cent	99.34 per cent	99.63 per cent	99.70 per cent

Also, a similar trend emerged in higher education level, where the number of female students in Aceh reached 72,018 students compared to 56,343 male students (Ministry of Research and Technology, 2016).

As explained above, the matrifocality of the rural Acehnese family system has resulted in the more prominent role of women in managing children's upbringing. This tradition also explains an event which occurred in my first direct encounter with the villagers where many villagers appeared to be surprised when I told them I was studying ECE. Such understandable responses arose since, in the regency's local department of education, the ECE educators and policymakers are almost exclusively women.

5.5   Women's Activism in the Village

Freire (1973, 1976) proposed the idea of liberation as a fundamental social, cultural, political and economic transformation intended to raise the critical and collective consciousness of social justice issues and to empower individuals for transformation. Likewise, transformative Islam promotes caring for the fate of others and stimulates solidarity actions. Transformation is the most humane way to change the history of human life through cultural action based on liberalisation and humanisation (Achmadi, 2010; Roqib, 2011). Transformative movements

should move towards a more participatory, flexible, and emancipatory society. My interview with the village chief revealed that this notion initiated the establishment of ECE in the village impelled by the pressure from the women. He explained

> *The women in the village nowadays vote for the same candidate unanimously, and, I would say that in the last election, I benefited from their votes. Naturally, after the election, they will demand some things (policies). They wanted more involvement in government programs (mainly the ones related to family welfare such as government aid to poor families). I can also tell you, the first to ask for ECE in meunasah was a women's group (the demand was subsequently discussed in the village meeting in meunasah). (SH1)*

I investigated this statement and found that a group of concerned female villagers proposed this early grassroots initiative. The female village activists group consisted of four principal members—a village religious teacher (the female representative in the village elders' council (SH8), a former school teacher (CMP12), a housewife who preferred to be referred to as a concerned mother (one of her children is studying at the *meunasah* ECE) (CMP1), and the current ECE principal (E1). This leading group, often joined by other women, was the first to start the discussion amongst themselves brought together by their concern for the children.

SH8 was born in Gampong Blang in 1950. She is a female religious teacher in *meunasah*, where she conducts her weekly Islamic teaching of women in the village. She also teaches the Qur'an reading to children at her house where her granddaughter and other volunteers assist. Her late husband was village chief, and because of her expertise in Islam and *adat,* the village regarded her as a stakeholder from a young age. Therefore, she is one of the figures in the village entrusted to perform *peusijuek* ritual beside the Imam. As a graduate of *dayah* (traditional Islamic school) and religious teacher with strong interpersonal skills and expertise in *adat* matters, her voice carries significant weight in the village. Such high regard explains her position

in the council of village elders. She is one of the first supporters of ECE in the village and explained:

> *It is time for our village to have an ECE. I teach children Qur'an and rituals in the afternoon, but they also need to go to ECE. Children need both education this day. They learn religious education, Qur'an and akhlak so that when they grow up, they will have a good moral compass and behaviour. But they will also need schooling to be able to survive the world today. Children need to acquire Islamic education so that when they grow up they don't exploit people (i.e. they have good character and don't take advantage of people) and they need to acquire conventional education so that they do not get fooled by other people (i.e. they have sufficient life skills and knowledge)….I myself could not do that (i.e. teach in ECE) I am just an old lady, but this younger generation with their university degrees will be able to do just that (i.e. run the ECE)…My role will be supporting them from the back, passing it forward (the ECE idea), sharing it with the villagers and voicing their concerns in meunasah. (SH8)*

CMP 12 was born in 1958 and was a school teacher. Her late husband and father were also teachers who came from a traditional family of teachers. She always had concerns about education in the village. She suggested the idea of visiting and having a conversation with all parents with early aged children to her group. The parents warmly received the idea. One of the parents even joined the group, making them a 'team of four'. The concerned parent who joined the group is CMP1. She was a born in 1983 and has two daughters (one enrolled in ECE in *meunasah*). She describes herself as a housewife, even though she works on the paddy field from time to time. She is a secondary school graduate but never went to ECE herself. According to her, ECE is a necessity today, and this is the reason Gampong Blang should have one:

> *It is so difficult because at the time we did not have an ECE, and the closest one was three kilometres away in another village. I do not own any vehicle, and there is no more*

labi-labi (used to be the only public transport in the district but ceased their operation years ago), and I can't afford to use RBT (motorbike taxis). As my children reach ECE age, I am afraid they will miss the opportunity. They will be left behind if they do not enrol in ECE, especially the children who need to be enrolled in ECE before primary school…..So, yes when I see ibuk (i.e. Madam which is the way people commonly address a teacher) and tengku (i.e. the religious teacher SH8) talk about the ideas, I become their very strong supporter and try to talk to the other mothers.(CMP1)

E1 was born in 1987 and is the current ECE principal and one of the most prominent 'ECE activists' in the village. She has a bachelor's degree in literature and is currently working on her second bachelor degree in Early Childhood Education. She was a contract teacher at a local primary school, before devoting all her time in ECE in Gampong Blang. She is also one of the religious teachers in SH8's Qur'anic learning centre. She was unanimously selected as the first principal by the villagers in a *meunasah* meeting given her early role in the ECE initiative. On her reasons for promoting ECE to other women and her experience in the endeavour, she explained:

I believe early years' education is a form of human right for children in my village. It should not be a privilege that can only be accessed by the children in the town or city. It's a basic need, and it's needed to enable them to be competitive in the future…But it is not true that our group and I are the main and only initiators. At the time, stakeholders like the village chief and village secretary have also considered the idea as some other villages had established their ECE after these villages received the village budget. We (the village women group, village chief and secretary) have been working together since the very beginning, and they have been very helpful especially because of my lack of experience in dealing with bureaucracy and administrative matters (such as getting a permit to establish an education institution). (E1)

This women's pressure group highlighted the importance of the local dimension of Muslim women in developing consciousness over global discourses and agendas such as ECE in the local context. Feener (2007) described that more global discourses or agenda should be translated into a local model acceptable to mainstream Muslims. Freire's ideas could explain this kind of cultural action towards a transformative project. His optimistic view of human beings outlines that regardless of their conditions, they demonstrate the capacity to look critically at their world through dialogical encounters with others. He believed that characteristically humans instinctively think and engage purposively in the historical world. Thus, human beings can operate in the world through action and reflection for a purpose (Freire, 1972a).

5.6   Summary

This chapter presented the findings on how the rural community in Gampong Blang, a rural community in North Aceh preserved the continuity of their community structures and values which in turn contributed in the development of ECE initiatives in the village. The village's traditional supra-structure and the strong matrifocal culture enabled the initiatives from a group of village women to be discussed by community members and village stakeholders in community meetings in meunasah. The group then worked alongside other community members and stakeholders who represent the trias-politica of the village to develop these ideas into policy in which the villagers subsequently decided to establish ECE in their meunasah.

Chapter 6: Change

6.1   Introduction

This chapter presents the findings on socio-economic and socio-cultural developments in Gampong Blang—how the villagers managed the new dynamics in their *meunasah* and, how these influenced the ECE in the village. The peace agreement in 2005 which ended the Aceh conflict and decentralisation policies by the current national government followed by the introduction of village allocation fund (ADD) have driven socio-economic change in the everyday lives of the villagers. Meanwhile, the socio-cultural lives of the villagers also changed after the tsunami in 2004. The attempts to implement more Sharia-based regulations were re-energised following this event. The recent developments have made the role of *meunasah* even more central to the villagers in Gampong Blang, as the institution became pivotal in ensuring the continuity of local traditions and practices. At the same time, *meunasah* became an avenue to facilitate positive change in this new era, such as the establishment of ECE in the village. To build a better future, people cannot neglect their experience. Instead, people should learn from the past so that they can move forward and build a better future. As Freire (1972a) suggested "Looking at the past, for example, becomes a means of understanding more clearly what and who they are so that they can more wisely build the future" (p. 84).

The villager harboured high expectations towards peace and hope to move forward from the oppressed situation to build a better future for the next generation. To achieve this purpose, the community not only focused to improve village infrastructure, but they also tried to empower its community members, including through the establishment of ECE in their *meunasah*. The *meunasah* facilitated the establishment of ECE as it served as the site of decision making throughout the process. Moreover, the *meunasah* served as an incubator that enabled the development of ECE since its early stage, despite the minimal resources available. I will

incorporate ideas from Freire and Al-Attas to interpret the socio-economic developments as well as socio-cultural changes and describe the processes of changes that were driving these aspirations.

6.2 Recent Socio-Economic Developments in Gampong Blang

Freire's work developed in response to the marginalisation of the Brazilian people. The people found themselves alienated from any experience of self-government and had few civil rights. The communities never had the option of presenting their authentic voice (O'Cadiz, Wong, & Torres, 1999). For Freire, the people must gain this voice by with the growth of new historical conditions that would provide the first attempts at dialogue (Gadotti & Torres, 2008; Torres, 1994).

The people in North Aceh has suffered from human rights abuses, such as forced relocation, extortion, tortures and extrajudicial killings during the conflict (1976-2005) (Al-Chaidar et al., 1999; Drexler, 2008; HRW, 2003; Robinson, 1998; Shaw, 2008). The conflict also caused economic stagnancy that worsened the socio-economic conditions and following the conflict many victims received no compensation (as mandated by the 2005 peace accord) (Hasan, 2015; Shaw, 2008; Stange & Patock; 2010). After the conflict and tsunami disaster, the community had to find their voice and initiate dialogue to address the long-standing social inequalities and redistribution of access to education and opportunity. Aceh is currently at a crossroads intersecting between the past historical, cultural, political, economic and social conditions and the new post-conflict and post-tsunami orders. The people of Aceh harbour immense hope that the new peace era will end their oppressive socio-economic conditions and propel the redistribution of access and opportunity for everybody.

These drastic changes and new expectations have also impacted the people in Gampong Blang in Nisam District. The lack of security during the armed conflict in the 1976-2005 period had isolated the Nisam district, and it became a place that received few visitors. However, The

tsunami disaster in 2004 ended the conflict, and the everyday lives of the people in the district changed dramatically although the tsunami did not directly hit the Nisam district. Gampong Blang is one of the villages in Nisam, located about ten kilometres southwards from Krueng Gekueh (the nearby port town provides most of goods and services for Nisam district) and about 25 kilometres eastward from Lhoksuemawe, which is the biggest city on the northern coast of Aceh.

The developments in the socio-economic sector after the conflict period in Gampong Blang appeared to move at a slower pace as the economy was still highly reliant on government public spending, as described by the village chief:

I have been to Malaysia. There the factories filled the side roads, even in relatively rural areas. I think it indicates there is a private sector moving (stimulating) the economy. However, over here, everybody depends on public spending by the government. Government staff, obviously such as teachers or district officials, traders and distributors, also depend on construction spending. Even our farmers depend on subsidized fertilizers and affordable seeds for their rice fields. (SH1)

The introduction of a new farming method began in Gampong Blang in recent decades leading to some mechanisation of the farming process. The use of hand tractors meant that farmers no longer needed to use buffalos to cultivate the soil, while the use of diesel-powered threshers replaced hand threshing. Harvesting has also been done entirely by hand until 2017 when the village introduced harvesting machines. This year, the harvesting machine assisted the manual labour of harvesting by hand. Ploughing was mainly performed by men, while women mainly did the planting. Harvesting, however, is a communal activity done altogether by both men and women. Meanwhile, it was usually the youths of the village who operated the hand tractor and diesel threshing. The wage of manual labourers in the paddy field is around 80,000 IDR per day (which is equivalent to eight Australian dollars), and there is no wage gap between

men and women. However, hand tractor and threshing machine operators received pay of at least 100,000 IDR (AUD 10) a day.

In the past, children used to work in the paddy fields with their parents though nowadays it is difficult to find teenagers working with their parents. Some teenagers who dropped out of school work as labourers or machine operators. I witnessed the introduction of harvesting machines that initially received mixed responses from the villagers. A harvesting machine is usually owned by a company in the city and moved to the rural areas during the harvest time. Landowners with extensive paddy fields were enthusiastic because the machines would significantly reduce the harvesting cost. Others also saw this as positive because they were finding it increasingly difficult to hire farm labourers in the village given that the younger generation became less interested in working in the rice fields. On the other hand, threshing machine and haulier operators, those more likely to lose their jobs were against the introduction of the machines. In the end, with the mediation of stakeholders, the villagers reached an agreement—they were free to choose whether they wanted to use the harvester or diesel threshing machine. The villagers required the harvesting machine owners from the city to contribute some money to the village.

In Gampong Blang, the majority of the villagers work in agriculture, mostly as paddy field (*sawah*) owners, tenants or labourers. A significant number of the youth population in the village work as construction labourers from time to time or labourers in the paddy fields, mainly as threshing machine and tractor operators during the cultivation periods. A smaller portion of the population is traders, working for the government and are self-employed. Some of the people who work as paddy field growers also own livestock, mainly cows and plantations. The previous study by Jayawerdana (1977) in rural Aceh Besar, suggested that the village economy rests mainly on the cultivation of rice, small plantations, raising of livestock and minor trade in local markets. Since that period, the changes appear to be slow in rural areas. The findings of this

research indicate that people in Gampong Blang mainly depend on similar economic activities even though farming methods have evolved, such as in the use of fertilisers, high-yield seeds, and mechanisation.

I attribute this condition to several factors. As I mentioned earlier, fertile lowlands suitable for agriculture make up most of North Aceh. Another factor seems to be the conception of the Acehnese's *adat* (traditions practised for generations) called '*pangulee hareukat megue*' that views farming as the primary source of livelihood. This conception is still prominent, particularly among the older generation. Another reason could be the prolonged conflict in the area that caused economic stagnation (Renner, 2006; Walton & Atheraya, 2005). However, the newly introduced Village Allocation Fund (ADD) program gradually provided a force for change in the village. Some villagers remarked that this new development has not fundamentally changed the village's mainly agriculture-based socioeconomic activities although they agree that it did make such activities more diversified.

In the last few years, the newly introduced Village Allocation Fund (ADD) program has created new jobs in the construction sector and gradually changed the village. It also has allowed the funding for community empowerment program such as the ECE program.

6.3 The Introduction of the Village Allocation Fund (ADD)

Freire showed his concern for the connections between education and socio-economic development. His works articulated his deep concerns for democracy and citizenship. However, he did not address the question of development from the perspective of the economist. Instead, he tried to rejuvenate the question of ethics in education and its implications for citizenship building from the perspective of the politician, scholar and activist (Gadotti & Torres, 2009; Torres, 1994). To improve the quality of life and well-being of rural communities and to implement participatory development in the rural community, the Indonesian government

introduced Law No. 32/2004 concerning Regional Administration (2004) in the village (village laws).

The law provides more autonomy to villages managing their governance and allows villages to accommodate the aspirations and interests of its communities better. The implementation of this participatory development model is part of the government attempts to reform the bureaucratic system to make it more accountable. Such policy based on the legal framework stipulated in Law No. 32/2004 concerning Regional Administration (2004) underpinned the importance of regional autonomy, democratisation, participation and decentralisation of authority in fostering the development of rural communities. In 2005, as a follow-up to previous regulatory frameworks, the government issued Government Regulation Number 72 Year 2005 on Villages (2005) regarding villages which mandated the central government to allocate Village Allocation Fund for villages across Indonesia. The fund provides villages with more autonomy so that they can grow based on their local diversity and community empowerment (Government Regulation Number 72 Year 2005 Villages, 2005).

The Ministry of Home Affairs Circular Number 140/640/SJ/2005 regarding the implementation of the village fund also provided a more detailed legal framework. Regency governments are required to allocate village funds in their budget each year as part of the balance funds (*dana perimbangan*) received by the regency government. It has to take into account several aspects such as a reasonable income for the village chief and apparatus, the village population, the poverty rate of the village, the total area of the village and the geographical obstacles of the village (MoHA, 2005). Furthermore, based on the regulation of the Interior Minister Number 37 in 2007 in article 20 paragraph 2, the allocation of village fund is divided into two components: 30 per cent of the fund for village operational costs (*belanja rutin*) and 70 per cent for community empowerment.

During President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono's (SBY) administration (2004-2009), the government implemented the village fund program through PNPM or the National Program for Community Empowerment. PNPM provides grants to rural communities for priority local projects. The communities were to be involved in project planning and implementation. The participating community would conduct discussions and deliberations at the village and district levels to determine the proposed high priority programs to be funded. The final decision on which program to fund would then be made at the inter-village consultation forum (*Musyawarah Antar Desa*) at the district level (World Bank, 2013).

Through this program, rural communities have built village infrastructures (roads, bridges, wells, irrigation systems), established community microcredit schemes, provided health services (health facilities equipment, supplementary food for children) and education (provided school uniforms and stationery, scholarships for poor students). The programs have improved infrastructure in rural Indonesian regions, created jobs for villagers and improved the health services for poor rural communities. A number of international donors also supported the program funding. Australia was the biggest donor, contributing to the PNPM program a total of AUD 215 million in aid packages. The aid was aimed mainly at supporting health and education services through PNPM and providing access to microfinance schemes, particularly for women to improve their financial condition (Australian Government. AusAID, 2010; World Bank, 2013)

The implementation of the village funds program has been dramatically changing during the current presidential administration (2014-2019). The government issued Government Regulation Number 60 Year 2014 Regarding Village Grants Originating from State Revenue and Expenditure Budget (2014) and Government Regulation Number 22 Year 2015 on the Village fund (2015). Villages gained more autonomy and no longer relied on districts to determine which projects received funding. During president Widodo's rule, the PNPM program was abolished and replaced by the village fund allocation program (*Alokasi Dana Desa*, henceforth referred to

as ADD). Though the villages also received regular funding every year through the PNPM program; villages competed with other villages for funding. Under PNPM the district determined high priority programs, and as a consequence, a village may not necessarily receive funding every year. The Gampong Blang village chief described the process and the changes as follows,

> *(During PNPM program), we held meetings at the village level, and we went to the district office for inter-village meetings, mediated by district. In these meetings, we proposed our programs, but the district has the final say on which program was to be carried out. Some villages received no program funding at all for three consecutive years, but luckily our village only missed out in one year (from 2009 to 2014). But now (during the ADD era) the changes are amazing, villages have the say, we determine what projects are to be done, we receive the funding every year so that we can plan better. Yes, we are still under the supervision of the district, but they only provide assistance for us, and they can't dictate the program. (SH1)*

The most significant difference between the programs is in the government budget policy. In 2015, the new government increased the village fund from 9.1 trillion IDR (AUD 901 million) in 2014 to 20.76 trillion IDR s IDR (AUD 2 billion) in 2015 for 72,944 villages across the country. In 2016, government allocation for the village fund went up by 125 per cent to a total of 46.9 trillion IDR (AUD 4.69 billion). According to the Ministry of Villages, Underdeveloped Regions and Transmigration, President Widodo instructed that the village budget be doubled in 2018, from 60 trillion IDR (AUD 6 billion) in 2017 to 120 trillion IDRs (AUD 12 billion) in 2018 (Jati, 2015; Mendes, 2017).

The allocation of a significant portion of the village budget to improve village infrastructure is common practice all around North Aceh. The introduction of the fund to improve village infrastructure has provided job opportunities in the construction sector. The funds were allocated to build village infrastructure such as village roads, drainage systems, and

housing for poor families. According to a village stakeholder (SH6) in Gampong Blang, all male members of the village aged above 15 and below 50 are eligible to work in these projects. The majority of those listed as eligible (around 80 per cent according to village chief) participated in construction labour in the last year (2017).

The Imam and the head of the village council admitted that since the program launched in Gampong Blang, many changes occurred. The program built village infrastructure such as water tunnels, village roads and waterways for paddy fields in the last few years. Though after the program's introduction, the Imam and head of the village council admitted that it brought challenges to the village leadership, particularly concerning the management of a fund increasing every year. The head of the village council stated that in the past, people elected a village chief based on his leadership, charisma, wit and communication skills. However, now, the village chief must also possess administrative skills and understand modern bureaucracy. The head of the village council also expressed concern regarding the nation's biggest problem, corruption. He hoped that village stakeholders and community members could work together to maintain transparency to prevent mismanagement and corruption. He was appalled by the issue and gave examples of the previous regent convicted of corruption. The village council head hoped that the future generations would break the cycle of corruption. He said that the education system must include more moral education and instil anti-corruption values into children and that was one of the reasons behind his support to allocate some of the village funds to education in the village (ECE and religious lessons for children).

Figure 8. The newly constructed road across the paddy field, funded through ADD.

The expansion of the labour market for construction in Gampong Blang, especially after the introduction of village funds, stimulated the socio-economic conditions in the village. However, it has not been able to keep the youths in the village from out-migration due to the village infrastructure projects only lasting around three to four months cumulatively each year, providing only temporary employment for villagers, when they were not cultivating their paddy fields. Some young people in Gampong Blang still found a great need for out-migration in order to improve their financial situation (this phenomenon of migration is also widespread across North Aceh). One of the youths who spent four years in Malaysia and was planning to return stated,

> *It is not easy being a migrant worker, especially without the proper documents or certificates (i.e. education and training certificates). The conditions are harsh, and the salary is not that good, but what can we do?. If I can earn at least 50.000 IDR (the equivalent of AUD5 - five Australian dollars) per day here, I would rather stay in the village. Yes, it is not much, but at least I have peace of mind, and I can be close to my family. (CM3)*

Some of the village youths admitted that they would prefer to work in the village since it was not easy to go on *rantau* without sufficient education, but they see no other options. Job opportunities in the village were not always available all year; they may have a job for one month during the harvest time or when a village infrastructure project takes place, but otherwise, they could be unemployed for months on end.

Gampong Blang received the ADD in 2015 with a total amount of around 380 million IDR (AUD 38,000) and increased to 550 million IDR (AUD 55,000) in the following year. In 2017, the allocation of ADD reached 900 million IDR (AUD 90,000). The budget consists of four main items, namely, sub-item governance and administration with a budget of 120 million IDR (AUD 12,000), village infrastructure with a budget of 540 million IDR (AUD 54.000), community empowerment with a budget of 70 Million IDR (AUD 70,000) and community development with a budget of 70 Million IDR (AUD 70,000). Within the sub-item community development, the village allocates 15 million IDR (AUD 1,500) for Islamic education (at primary levels and above) and 15 million IDR (AUD 1,500) for ECE in *meunasah*. Village infrastructure received more than half of the budget allocation.

According to the village chief (SH1) and village secretary (SH2), the proportion of village budget allocation may gradually change in the future. The village secretary pointed out that in the last year, most of the basic village infrastructure has been built—from roads to waterways to public toilets. According to him, more significant projects like main village roads and irrigation systems were the responsibility of the regency government or provincial government using the special autonomy budget. Small infrastructure projects in the village e continued to provide construction jobs for villagers. However, there would be an opportunity in the future to increase allocation for village developments and village empowerment programs that would mean more budget for Qur'an learning centres and ECE. The village chief also elaborated on the community plan:

There have been discussions on building a permanent classroom for ECE as one of the future infrastructure projects. I hope it will commence in one or two years, but that will be discussed in meunasah. Many ideas about the location, some suggest that the meunasah is already too overcrowded to fit a more permanent building. To build ECE classrooms on the new site is an alternative, but that would mean extra cost to purchase the land. I spoke with the village secretary and others, and we think we will need other sources of funding besides the village budget. We will try to find private donors, submit proposals to the regency government and also to some of our parliamentarians (each MP is allocated with billions of rupiah in the 'aspiration fund' that could be used to assist projects in their local parliamentary area). (SH1)

My conversation with other community members and stakeholders (SH3, SH9, CMP1, CM9) also highlighted different ideas around the possibility of a future site of ECE. Their suggestions included *meunasah* remaining in its current location and relocation. However, all agreed that currently, the budget for ECE urgently needed to increase (this is discussed further in the next chapter).

ADD has been an important economic change in the villagers' everyday lives as it substantially impacted their socio-cultural conditions. One of the reasons for social change is the newly-energised Sharia-regulation implementation attempts after the conflict and tsunami.

6.4　Sharia-Based Regulations and their Impact on People

Islam is fundamental in Acehnese society due to its history in early Islamic propagation in Indonesia. Indonesians often referred to the province as the Veranda of Mecca (*Serambi Mekkah*). To this day, there is a notion across Indonesia that the Acehnese are intensely religious and pious people (Ichwan, 2011; Feener, 2013; Kloos, 2015). As the post-conflict and post-tsunami dynamic has re-energised attempts to implement more Sharia-based laws in Aceh, the province portrayed in the light of its Sharia law implementation seems to be moving towards

rigid conservatism (HRW, 2010; Kloos, 2014; Newman, 2009;). Many raised the question of

Sharia law in Aceh being a catalyst for the Islamisation of the province and possibly the rest of

the country. I have also been pondering various questions as an Acehnese committed to deep

piety about whether I would feel compromised by supporting current efforts to implement Sharia

fully. However, this assumption tends to simplify the dynamics on how ordinary people in Aceh

negotiate state Sharia implementation in their everyday lives and the Acehnese's religious self-

consciousness and independent nature.

In the previous chapter, I highlighted the Acehnese community structures and values and

how they shaped the life of people in Gampong Blang. I showed that there is a deep intertwining

between *adat* and Islam in the Acehnese rural community. Moreover, in the Acehnese adherence

to Islamic laws, Islam and *adat* are inseparable forms in the society, as *adat* is often considered

an integral part of the local religious traditions (Srimulyani, 2010). However, the new dynamics

and changes after the tsunami marked by re-energised attempts to implement state Sharia have

created contestation and contention (Afrianty, 2015; Inayatillah, 2011; Kloos, 2014; Syihab,

2010).

The village's youths found their daily lives most affected by the post-conflict and post-

tsunami dynamics of Sharia implementation. However, to have a more holistic perspective, it is

pertinent to examine the discoures through the thoughts and practices of two groups of people in

the village. The first group comprised the *meunasah* Imam (SH4), his best friend, a member of

the village elders council (SH6) and their peers, consisting of the older generation in the village

who used to gather at *meunasah* during the evenings. The second group comprises the head of

the village youths (SH9), the youth secretary of the village (SH9) and their peers including the

young man who returned from migration in Malaysia (CM9) and a female university student

(CM10). This study shows that there is an age-based difference in the views held about how

Islam and state Sharia influenced the daily lives of people.

Al-Attas' adab concept emphasises that a Muslim must possess a sense of piety and continually strives to improve all aspects of his life. A good individual (*insan adabi*) is one who is conscious of his relationship with himself, his creator, society and environment. Hence a good individual will naturally be a good father or mother, a good son or daughter, a good wife or husband, a good neighbour and a good member of the community (Al-Attas, 1985, 1997). My observations show that the daily routine of some village elders in Gampong Blang centres around the group consisting of the *meunasah's Imam* (SH4), his friend, a member of the village elder council (SH6) and their peers. Their activity from dawn to evening resembles the typical daily life of a humble peasant in Indonesian rural areas centring around their paddy field and the community (Baetty, 2009; Hyung-Jun, 1996). However, for these people of Gampong Blang, besides the paddy field, their lives also centre around *meunasah*. The Imam, the village elder council members and their group performed their compulsory prayers (*shalat*) routinely in *meunasah* – from the dawn to the evening prayer. They were also involved in most of the village meetings and all the ritual ceremonies held in *meunasah* such as *zakat* gathering and distribution after harvest.

Their daily routine is a balance between worship and work. The Imam explained that their worship and preparation for the afterlife did not mean that an individual could neglect their worldly responsibilities towards their family. According to him, working or providing for the family is an integral part of the life of a good Muslim. He explained,

> *Islam is a religion that seeks to balance between life in this world and the afterlife. It guides the individual at every step of life from the cradle to the grave. It guides our rituals and our muamallah (trade/ the way to earn a living). It must go hand in hand. As mentioned by SH6 to worship we also need financial ability to pay shadaqah (charity), to pay zakat (religious tithe) or most importantly to perform Hadj (pilgrimage to Mecca is compulsory for Muslims who can afford it).(SH4)*

157

My conversations with the group in *meunasah* also shed light on the villagers' meanings of their daily lives. The elders' council member (SH6) explained to me that daily compulsory prayers is the main avenue to seek forgiveness from God and the more focused and concentrated one is in prayer (*khusyu)* the closer one is to God. A retired teacher who was also a village council member (SH7) explained that the daily prayers ritual connects to the afterlife, but is also vital for the worldly life as well. He explained that daily prayers performed with the highest degree of concentration and sincerity would significantly influence one's daily life. The perfect prayers, according to the elders, will eventually lead people to avoid doing bad things in life and help them to become a good person. The efforts towards prayers are regarded as wasted if the worshipper still commits sins or indulges in immoral behaviour. Hence, if an individual longs for his rituals to be accepted, then he must also behave according to the moral guidance of Islam and be a good person.

The participants' conceptualisations of their everyday lives as a balance between worship and work to earn a living are consistent with some earlier research on the community way of life in rural Aceh (Siegel, 1969). For example, the findings of Siegel (1969) showed how the life of villagers in Pidie (a neighbouring regency of North Aceh) circles between their rituals and their paddy fields or plantations. Bowen's (1993) research in the Aceh highlands also showed the interrelated concepts of rituals and daily lives of ordinary people in the area. In this regard, my research also shows that people have continually been self-conscious regarding their spiritual practices. Spiritual consciousness (*kesadaran beragama*) has always featured as part of Acehnese everyday life. The ordinary people in Aceh have always viewed religion and daily worldly life as a harmonious circle.

Meanwhile, for the second group that consists of youths in the village, life is more dynamic, especially in post-disaster post-tsunami Aceh. The ritual practices among the youth are less visible than in the older generation, particularly with the daily prayers in *meunasah*, even

though the youths were very active at organising the religious events in *meunasah* like *maulids* (as seen during my time in the village) or *samadiyah*. When questioned whether this condition was due to the lack of discipline among the younger generation, particularly with daily prayers, the youth leader explained that it had more to do with their active mobility when compared to the older generation. He explained,

> *Of course, we pray five times a day, but our daily routine is way more different. We do not confine it to the village. We go to town. We meet friends outside the village, go to sports events, and look for opportunities beyond the village to make some extra income. You must have seen during sunset prayers that the amount of young, and older people are almost equal. (SH9)*

Such mobility was particularly difficult during the conflict era (before 2005) as the military highly controlled people's mobility. The military routinely held checks on most of the roads such as the Banda Aceh-Medan highway (the main highway in the province), where they used to conduct thorough checks of both people and vehicles. There were also many cases of illegal road tax, where people were required to pay some money when they passed through military checkpoints (Aspinall, 2009). According to the villagers, the Nisam lane, which was only ten kilometres long (and the main road in the district), had more than seven army checkpoints before 2005 and drivers had to slow down for checks at any time. Moreover, travelling during the evening was almost non-existent, except in an emergency. After the conflict, people could freely travel across the province even to the most remote areas to conduct economic activities, go on holidays or meet people.

However, according to some youth, though the military presence significantly decreased, their everyday free movement is now influenced instead by Sharia law enforcement. Road checks by the state Sharia police (WH/*wilayatul hisbah*) replaced those conducted by the military. They admitted that WH is, however, nowhere near as intimidating as the military during

159

the conflict as the resources of WH are limited, and their road checks are less frequent. However, the presence of WH sometimes causes inconvenience to many locals (Feener, 2013; HRW, 2009; Kloos, 2014).

The main aspect that is being policed by the WH is in the area of relationships amongst unmarried men and women, sinful seclusion of people of the opposite sex (*khalwat*), gambling (*maisir*), and consumption of alcohol (*khamar*). These three areas are the first to be regulated in qanun (law) 2003 upon Sharia implementation. In addition to the above the law issued at the provincial level, some regency heads also issued local qanun, mainly pertaining to *khalwat* and the dress code for men and women. Qanun (Law), number 14 in 2003 on *khalwat*, in particular, is the most controversial one (HRW, 2010). Many in Aceh, including scholars, activists and most notably the Governor of Aceh, Irwandi Yusuf, insist that the *khalwat* law should only apply to adultery. HRW, however, noted that the WH officer interpreted the law to a more extensive range of behaviours. For instance, in some cases, the WH prohibited unmarried couples from merely talking or sitting next to each other.

Most of the young people in the village say that they have no objection to Islamic laws based on the Qur'an and Hadiths. However, their concern lies in the way such laws have been formulated, interpreted and implemented in Aceh. The implementation seems focused only on ordinary people but not the rich or influential people who easily avoid the consequences. A young man (CM9) told the story that occurred in Banda Aceh where the WH discovered a high ranking civil servant close to the mayor in Banda Aceh in an adulterous relationship in a beauty salon. Such an act openly violated the khalwat law. However, the man easily avoided the prosecution and even received a promotion.

The case caused a public uproar because not long after that, WH caught another civil servant in a similar case also released without charge. At the same time, WH prosecuted many ordinary people for similar offences. These discriminatory prosecutions demonstrate an abuse of

the law by the elite in society. As a mayor involved in several moral police crackdowns with WH but at the same time was protecting her civil servants from prosecution, her behaviour smacked of hypocrisy ("Syariat Islam," 2013).

A female university student (CM10) shared her insights and concern about the enforcement of Sharia-law, such as on dress code, and the perceived injustice. She said,

> *Sometimes, I hear stories about women (Acehnese) who wear hijab in Aceh but remove*
> *them in the bus as soon as they reach Medan (the Capital city of the neighbouring*
> *province of North Sumatra). Meanwhile, we know in Jakarta, when a woman wears*
> *Hijab, they wear them because of faith not because they are afraid of WH. Similar to*
> *most of the women in this village, we voluntarily wear hijab because of our faith but then*
> *they still police us (WH). I was in a neighbouring town when WH arrested an old woman,*
> *she wore a hijab, but they said she did not cover her ankles properly. I got really upset*
> *on how absurd it was and how they treated older people. I even heard people jeering at*
> *the nearby coffee shop and yelling at WH. They only target small people, how about*
> *those who travel in their private cars? They simply pass by without being checked. Don't*
> *you think they project the wrong image of Islam?, I learned since my childhood that*
> *Islam is the religion of justice, now where is justice? (CM10)*

All the participants were unequivocally supportive and had no objections on moral and ethical guidelines within Islam and suggested that they were aware of such norms. What some disagree with is the way the state Sharia carries out enforcement and its implementation through the state apparatus. According to the youth leader, the manner of his daily interactions with his peers, both males and females, is guided by local customs and *adab*:

> *There is no point in having a lot of knowledge but lacking in adab. Good character and*
> *behaviour are what people remember about us. The way we treat others through our*
> *interactions not only defines us as an individual but defines our religion. (SH9)*

161

It is important to note that his (SH9) interpretation of *adab* is restricted mostly to social etiquette, moral and proper behaviour. However, Al-Attas proposes a more comprehensive interpretation of *adab*. His sees *ta'dib* as the way to bring forth the full potential of human beings through the actualisation of good natural disposition, as mentioned previously (Al-Attas, 1985).

The central government in 1999 initiated implementation of Sharia law as an attempt to find a solution to Aceh's conflict. Later in 2001, the application of Sharia law in Aceh was broadened by allowing the Acehnese government to pass laws that would govern Muslims' religious lives, customs and education (Ichwan, 2011; Feener, 2013). These changes formed part of an autonomy deal offered by the then President Habibie's government. Also, the central government instituted Islamic courts, and Sharia police, the informal mechanisms of implementing Sharia law in Aceh. However, it only received an encouraging response from the public after the tsunami hit the province in 2004. The tsunami re-energised such attempts because it reinforced the religious idea of the end of times and the need for religious improvement to make people more pious. Some segments of society see Sharia as a tool of social engineering (Feener, 2013).

Since the peace agreement in 2005, it appeared that society dynamics have gravitated towards the Sharia. However, strong opposition to the current Sharia law in Aceh remains. Among the main objections to the imposition of the law is that the Sharia law regulations (Qanun) were framed, designed and determined by politicians, namely the legislative (local parliamentarians) and the executives (governor or chief of the regencies) entities with little role accorded to academics, Muslim clergy and civil society. More often than not, their part in the law-making process seems merely symbolic (Ramli, 2010). The implementation of Sharia-based regulations appears to heighten religious consciousness among the people even though the Acehnese already possess an acute sense of religious consciousness. According to Freire (1972a,

1973), consciousness cannot be enforced, 'imposed' or 'deposited', but must be born through participatory actions of the people. People learn through direct involvement in how to achieve a community objective and how to build social connections.

There have been lively discourses and debates within Acehnese society on the Sharia laws currently being implemented in Aceh. One of the issues pertains to the fact that the central government granted the current Sharia regulation to the province as part of its attempt to quell the separatist movement. Many Acehnese believe that they already have their own Sharia law, dating back to the time of the Acehnese kingdom in the sixteenth century. The Sharia law co-existed with the local culture and customs. Some local scholars further argue that the current Sharia regulation is part of a populist political agenda of local politicians given that some regency heads simply issue law without consulting Islamic scholars or civil society. For example, the law that forbids a man and woman to ride together issued by the mayor of Lhokseumawe. This law was met with public uproar and rejection. Another issue in public discourse is that people feel that the government has no business in instructing people how to practise their religion.

Amongst all the issues raised, the greatest one is the perceived discriminatory implementation of current Sharia-based regulations by the government. The widely held perception is that such implementation directly affects the poor, while the upper class rich and well-connected people of society, easily evade the strictures of Sharia law. The implementation in practice seems more discriminatory towards women (Inayatillah, 2010; Newman, 2009; Ramli, 2010; Simanjuntak, 2015; "Syariat Islam," 2013).

This development of state Sharia regulations also stands in stark contrast against Aceh's long history of matrifocality (as discussed in the previous chapter). Moreover, the Acehnese socio-political fabric has maintained the complex power balance within its society for centuries. In Aceh's rural villages, power is held collectively by the village chief (*geuchik*), the council of

eight elders and the Imam of *meunasah*, all of whom are democratically elected representatives of the people. These three bodies share authority working collaboratively in administrating the villages and maintaining their structures. In such an arrangement, no particular group dominates the political and decision-making processes in the village. However, such developments also raise implications for the education sector.

6.4.1   Education and the Sharia. The implementation of Sharia has implications for the education sector. LoGA (2006) elucidates that, although Aceh's education system is an integrated part of the national education system, the former is allowed to take into account Islamic values based on the Holy Qur'an and Hadiths. In addition, the law states that every Muslim is obligated to acquire basic Islamic knowledge, such as Qur'an reading and to perform basic religious rituals such as daily prayers (LoGA, 2006). This new development accords Islamic educational institutions with a crucial role (Feener, 2013, 2014). In particular, for the *meunasah*s, this would mean having the role of Qur'an teaching and basic religious education, as mentioned in LoGA (2006), something that has been a part of the traditional Islamic teaching provided in *meunasah.*

There is also concern around whether such changes could be counterproductive to the goals of education as being acceptable and available to all. In this regard, the regulation clearly states that Aceh's education has to serve all the citizens regardless of their background:

> All the citizens of Aceh have the right to quality and Islamic education in line with the development of science and technology that is implemented based on the principles of democracy and justice and in high respect of human rights, Islamic values, culture and pluralism. (LoGA, 2006, Articles 216.1 and 216.2)

The 2008 Qanun (Sharia regulation) on Education provides the opportunity for non-Muslim students to be taught the subject of religion in line with their faith:

Students at all levels of education in Aceh have the right to be taught the subject of religion in line with their faith and to have the subject taught by a teacher of the same religion. (Article 9)

This legal framework evidence the Acehnese respect for religious pluralism, and that the Qanun on Education has guaranteed non-Muslim students to be taught religion based on their faith. In Aceh province, the Islamic stream of education is also significantly exposed to 'secular' subjects. Many young people from pious, but poor families, choose Islamic education as the gateway to higher education in the humanities, natural and social sciences, medicine, law, and technical fields (Shah & Cardozo, 2014; Woodward et al., 2010).

The Islamic schooling system represented both education and Islam in Aceh province. In Aceh, between 15-20 per cent of the population is enrolled in madrasah that follows the national curriculum and is under the oversight of the Ministry of Religious Affairs (MoRA). There is also a significant number of children and youth in Aceh who attend Islamic boarding schools (known as *dayah* or *pesantren* in other parts of Indonesia) that do not follow the national curriculum. As such, there have been some concerns that such institutions can become the breeding ground for radicalization (Makruf, 2014). However, an alternative perspective on this issue is worthy of consideration. The religious education young people receive in *pesantren* does not automatically drive them towards extremism. On the contrary, it helps them to understand the danger of extremism and to be prepared to denounce it (Shah & Cardozo, 2014).

Pesantren is the preferred choice of parents because it is perceived to be of better quality and better suited to develop students' sense of self-discipline, study skills and desired Islamic values (Nilan, 2009; Woodward et al., 2010). Such similar findings were found by Shah and Cardozo (2014) in their study on *dayah* in the urban area of Banda Aceh. In contrast to suggestions about *pesantren*, particularly in the media, the Indonesian *pesantren* and *dayah* have

received acknowledgment for contributing to broader access to education for girls (Srimulyani, 2007).

According to Al-Attas (1979, 1997, 2003), an educational institution should reflect the human and its nature (*hakikat*) basing the curriculum on the dual nature of human beings, namely the physical aspect (*fard kifayah)* and the spiritual state (*fard 'ain*). An educational institution with the integrated system must consist of both conventional sciences and religious values. As described above, the influence and impact of the new Sharia-driven regulations in the area of education are generally received with less contestation and controversy by many segments of society. The influence of Islam in education received a more positive response as Acehnese society already imbued with values of Islam from which it derives most of its moral basis, and social codes (as described in the previous sub-section on community values) accepts its value. However, when a state tries to enforce Sharia-based regulation to create a society determined by Sharia, it faces contestation

The context or history and particularity of the setting in which the child lives embeds in a child's development. The nature of parenting and the behaviour and psychology of parents also reflect the customs. Furthermore, the physical and social setting and the context in which they emerged is "culturally embedded", shaping a child's development. (Penn, 2005, p. 46). The expectation for an educational process that also considers Islamic values has been the aspirations of community members and parents in Gampong Blang toward their ECE in *meunasah*. In response, educators have tried to implement character education based on religious morality in their daily practice in the *meunasah* ECE (will be highlighted further in the next chapter). Both socio-economic (such as the introduction of Village Fund) and socio-cultural change meant that the role of *meunasah* became more critical in terms of managing and facilitating changes that subsequently led to new aspirations in the shape of the establishment of an ECE centre in the village.

6.5   *Meunasah* in Gampong Blang

The process of developing critical consciousness occurs through community engagement, group dialogue, participatory action, and empowerment. The development of critical consciousness brings people together in the shape of their community dialogues, in which they explore the various issues that the community faces and how they as members of the community can participate in actions to improve the wellbeing of their community. Such dialogues are not only in the form of simple discussions where people share their personal opinions. Critical consciousness cannot be 'imposed' or 'deposited', but must develop through the creative efforts of the people. It also cannot be generated only by intellectual effort but needs praxis, the authentic unity of action and reflection (Freire,1972b, 1973). For rural Acehnese, *meunasah* is an avenue for a process of community consciousness development. Throughout history, *meunasah* has been a chamber for dispute resolution, a centre for traditional Islamic teaching for children, a socio-cultural centre and a political institution that is deeply rooted in Acehnese rural community (Badruzzaman, 2002; Sabirin, 2014; Wahid, 2013, 2015).

Meunasah in Gampong Blang is a compound situated at the centre of the village, near the village main street. It consists of the main building in the form of a stilt house (*rumah panggung*) with a large veranda on the side, an architectural form which is similar to an Acehnese traditional house. Moreover, there are also areas for ablution, public toilets, a public well, an additional hall and village storage room (both village storage and the additional hall are converted to ECE classrooms). The new storage room built under the *meunasah's* main building stores villagers' property such as kitchen appliances, chairs and tents. In the front yard of the *meunasah* is the newly-installed children's playground for the ECE students. The *meunasah* is surrounded by residential houses and to the front of the *meunasah* is the village street. On the opposite side of the street are the village office, village hall (also in the form of a stilt house, but much smaller in size compared to the *meunasah* main building), and a volleyball court.

Figure 9. Meunasah in Gampong Blang.

Figure 10. The hall of *meunasah*

Inside the main building is the multifunction hall used for daily communal prayer, adult religious lessons, religious ceremonies, and village meetings. The religious lessons in *meunasah* happen twice a week; one dedicated to women on Friday mornings and the other for men on Thursday evenings. The obligatory daily prayers for are performed five times a day: at dawn, noon, afternoon, sunset and evening. However, on the weekends, these prayers are performed at

168

the mosque. I attended all prayers at the *meunasah* Gampong Blang at least one day every week. The number of people praying at *meunasah* differs throughout the day—the dawn and evening prayers attract more people (sometimes more than 50 people). In comparison, by a very small number of people (less than 20 people most of the time) attend dawn prayers. Although Islam encourages congregational prayer, everyone is free to perform prayers individually anywhere, including in their own homes.

The primary stakeholder of *meunasah* is the Imam who is commonly called *imum meunasah* or *Tengku imum* by the villagers. A bilee assists him. The Imam is responsible for leading the daily communal prayer in the *meunasah,* arranging all related rituals during Ramadhan, overseeing the zakat distribution process in *meunasah*, and facilitating weekly religious lessons in *meunasah.* The Imam is also the central figure who oversees all the funeral rites, from the burial to leading the *takziah*. Moreover, along with the village chief, village secretary and village council, the Iman is regarded as one of the main village stakeholders. The *bilee* is tasked with performing the call to daily prayers (*adhan*). He is also the replacement for the Imam and is responsible for managing the *meunasah* inventory, such as tents, cooking utensils for the feast and chairs.

Gampong Blang's *meunasah* also hosts communal events such as the commemoration of *maulid* or the birthday of Prophet Muhammad. Such events, which include *zikir maulid* (children and youth singing and chanting religious chants about the life of prophet Muhammad) that last all day. For the feast, villagers prepare their best food for other villagers and guests from neighbouring villages. During the celebration night, they all gather in *meunasah* to listen to religious sermons, Qur'anic recitation and religious songs. One of the villagers whose house is located just behind the *meunasah* admitted that *maulid* month is the most lively period in the village, second only to Ramadhan (fasting month). She shared,

we villagers do not celebrate our birthdays, but we do our best to celebrate the birthday of the prophet, we provide the best food, like my mother who bred the chicken for one full year just to be cooked and served for the maulid feast. (CM 10)

Meunasah also serves as the place for gathering and distributing *zakat* (religious tithe, collected after every harvest and at the end of the fasting month of *Ramadhan*) in the form of grains. This year, the village meeting selected a team to collect, stock and distribute the *zakat* in *meunasah* under the supervision of the Imam. Since the storage room transformed into an ECE classroom, this year all the grain stocks were simply stockpiled on the *meunasah* veranda. The Imam's role is pivotal, in determining the recipients of the *zakat*. Typically he would consider the poor, widows and orphans, those in severe debt, and all of those who work on the *zakat* collection and distribution processes.

There is no regular village meeting as it is held only on the stakeholder's request. The most common meeting is the one held to discuss village development, mainly concerning the use of the village budget. In this meeting, villagers discuss the village infrastructure development, community empowerment program, early childhood education program and religious education for children program. The villagers also assemble in the *meunasah* if a conflict occurs among the community members. The village leaders and the community would try to solve issues categorised as cases of common law such as fights among teenagers, small disputes and minor theft cases. Other occasions also include gatherings to discuss the preparation of holy day celebrations and village youth meetings.

The story of a group of thieves in Gampong Blang illustrates the pivotal role of *meunasah* for the community. The story shows the deeply rooted trust of the community toward the *meunasah* institution, how Islam, *adat* and the national legal system intertwine within the community and how the *meunasah* assists in building consensus. During my time in the village, some people reported that thieves had stolen their crops and were targeting plantations (arcade

nuts, paper and palm) in Gampong Blang and the neighbouring village. After almost a month the thieves were finally caught by the neighbourhood watch group. The first to be arrested by the villagers is a local boy, aged around 15. After interrogation, he subsequently gave up names of his accomplices, three boys from a neighbouring village. The villagers also arrested these boys. The incident caused a ruckus in the village as the villagers argued about what to do with thieves, all of whom were under 18 years old. Should they be brought to the district police station or should they be held in the village since one of the thieves was a local village boy? The situation worsened as some of the villagers took matters into their own hands, throwing punches at the boys.

Amid the ruckus, the youth leader came and ordered fellow village youths to detain the boys in the village chief's office in *meunasah* compound while waiting for the police to take the thieves into their custody. The next day, one of the boys who originated from Gampong Blang was returned by the police to the village stakeholders so that they could resolve case according to *adat* law. The other three boys were returned to their respective villages by the police. After evening prayers, the village chief arranged a special gathering, a reconciliation meeting based on *adat,* at the *meunasah*. The village chief, his cabinets, the Imam, the council of elders, and district police representative attended the *meunasah* along with the boy's family. Village stakeholders and the police addressed the community, in turn, speaking about the chronology of the case, juvenile delinquency issues, and the need for cooperation between law enforcement institutions and the community. The Iman also shared religious and moral guidance with the audience. Eventually, they agreed upon a financial settlement as compensation from the boy's family to the plantation owners together with a signed letter of undertaking outlining that the boys will be handed to police for prosecution under formal law should they commit similar offences in the future. The reconciliation then ended with a public apology from the boy and his father who shook everyone's' hand in *meunasah* hall in apology for his son's actions.

According to the villagers, *meunasah* resolved disputes between members of the community or crimes committed by juveniles even cases of adultery. In such cases, the police acknowledge that *adat* law in the village takes precedence. In cases involving disputes among community members, the police often suggest that *meunasah* resolve them. However, one can choose to go straight to the police in cases where they want the offender charged and prosecuted a civil court. I also inquired with stakeholders about the role of the Sharia court in Aceh. They explained that the Sharia court is limited to religious transgressions such as *khalwat* (seclusion), *maisir* (gambling) or *khamar* (alcohol abuse). Nevertheless, it also presides over family matters such as divorce, inheritance, and child guardianship. Sometimes people also view that the processes of cases presided over by *meunasah* is faster and more trustworthy. When I asked about adultery, regulated under khalwat laws, one of the village stakeholders explained:

> *That is a matter of choice for the people. If they choose to report to WH (Sharia police), we will proceed accordingly. Most of the time, such a case is solved in meunasah. I know that in the neighbouring village a couple was caught by their family committing adultery and they were handed over to meunasah and were then ordered to pay some money, I guess around 10 million IDR (AUD 1000) to that village. If they choose to report it to the Sharia-police, the matter it will be prolonged and the culprits may get detained and so on. You know sometimes people have some distrust in the state institutions such as the police or judge that are often seen to be a money pit while WH only prosecutes the small people and not the rich people. (SH07)*

My study also reveals another interesting aspect of the Acehnese rural community which shows it to be a legally pluralistic region that has witnessed throughout its history the influences of *adat*, Islam and the state (Salim, 2016). As shown in the case above, *adat* still has a significant role as a form of law within Acehnese society, mainly in rural areas. *Adat* and religious law act within the confines of Indonesian civil law. This civil law means that Indonesia, as a country, has

a secular legal framework; despite its existence, the government recognises the right of its citizens to use the religious and *adat* court. Traditions, religion, and the struggle between foreign and local state government create an interesting triangle of sources and inspiration for legal matters. Aceh presents an example of legal pluralism in Indonesia, while it has been a society which has a long history of resistance to external powers and civil authority imposed on it (Aspinall, 2009; Kingsbury, 2006).

The choice of how a society or individual navigates and chooses within this complex system has far-reaching repercussions for the world view of those living in a legally pluralistic society. Under this condition, identification processes are complex because each of the respective legal orders operates with different identity categories to which specific rights and obligations are attached (von Benda-Beckmann & von Benda-Beckmann, 2012). In the case of Acehnese individuals, their identity binds them with three sets of classifications and three sets of laws. They are affected by the *adat* by being Acehnese, Sharia law by being Muslim and the civil law of Indonesia as a citizen of that country. The people in Gampong Blang with their traditional *trias-political* system, their sense of self-conscious religious forms and *adat* have managed to navigate this complexity and reach consensus on many important issues, including education in their *meunasah.*

6.6   The Establishment of ECE in *Meunasah*

In the process of raising consciousness, dialogue is a means for people to learn about their reality, their limits and opportunities. People are encouraged to reflect on this fact and challenge and channel their feelings into action. As a process of developing critical consciousness, community members identify and join community initiatives that address community issues. People learn through direct involvement about how to work collectively and build social connections to achieve a community objective. It involves attending community meetings, participating in community events and work, and participating in local politics.

Through the involvement in consciousness-raising dialogues, people begin to change themselves, the environment around them, their oppressive conditions, and improve the conditions of their communities (Freire, 1972b, 1973, 1985).

Access to ECE is a fundamental issue for villagers in Gampong Blang. For decades, it was only available in the nearby town, making it difficult for villagers to access. There are significant inequalities in the distribution of services in education, health and nutrition between districts and socioeconomic background between rural and urban areas in Indonesia (OECD, 2006). Children from rural areas and low-income families have lower rates of participation in ECE services. This situation means these children start school later, complete fewer years of schooling, and have higher dropout rates (OECD, 2006). However, since 2016 the community has taken the initiative to find solutions for the issues. Through conversations, dialogues, meetings, consensus and communal actions, people in Gampong Blang have made changes through their *meunasah*.

Figure 11. Village storages converted into ECE classrooms

The most recent change in *meunasah* compound is related to the newly established ECE (it officially started teaching in July 2016). The villagers renovated the village's unused storage

room that used to be the village office before it moved to a new building in front of the

meunasah. They fixed the roof, cleaned, re-painted, and filled the rooms with furniture. The

villagers gradually installed playground equipment in the *meunasah* front yard. As outlined by

the village chief, *gotong-royong* facilitated some of the work renovating the rooms for ECE and

installing the playground equipment while the revised village budget funded the remaining

works. He also confirmed that as long as ECE continued operating in *meunasah,* the village

stakeholders would try to add more facilities. I asked the Imam whether any complaints arose

about the use of the front yard for the ECE facility. He responded,

> *No, no objections from the community or myself, it is meant for the children in ECE and*
>
> *can also be used by other children in the afternoons. We understand our limitations; we*
>
> *can't afford a designated land for ECE, so they can use meunasah as long as it is needed.*
>
> *(SH3)*

As described in the previous section, the ECE may get permanent classrooms in

meunasah, or it may move to another site in the future. However, the role of *meunasah* in the

early stage of this education initiative has been pivotal as an incubator that enables the ECE

initiative to start and develop despite its minimal resources. *Meunasah* has also been the site for

decision making through village meetings. The meetings were not dedicated specially for ECE,

as these meetings also involved other matters. Nevertheless, discussions on the topic of ECE

occurred in several village meetings in 2016, particularly during the meeting on the village

development budget allocation. The village treasury (SH3) explained,

> *We discussed the village budget in village meetings in meunasah several times a year, as*
>
> *the budget is transferred up to three times a year…regarding ECE it was discussed*
>
> *during a meeting on village development budget allocation. It was discussed thoroughly,*
>
> *how much money could be allocated in the current budget year and what the operational*

plans were and the timeframe….It can be said that during the meetings, no one was

dominant, as everyone could speak and contribute based on their expertise. (SH3)

Meunasah compound is under the direct responsibility of the Imam. Nevertheless, the

ECE appeared to be autonomous. I have witnessed the Imam oversee most of the activities that

took place in *meunasah,* such as *zakat* distribution and adult religious lessons. However, I rarely

saw him personally visit or get involved with the ECE in *meunasah.* I asked him about their

relationship, and the Imam admitted that indeed he and the other stakeholders allowed the use of

meunasah compound for ECE and supported its funding. However, he stated:

> *It is beyond my knowledge (competency) to suggest anything to the teachers; they know*
>
> *what they are doing. They studied in the university, I never went to university, I only went*
>
> *to traditional religious boarding school, and I am only a humble farmer. I was entrusted*
>
> *by the villagers to be the Imam of this meunasah; I believe many people are more*
>
> *competent than me for this position (Imam). So, concerning the school, I would not*
>
> *interfere with their affairs (teaching and learning process), but we will do our best to*
>
> *support the school (through funding), because it's for the good of our children in this*
>
> *village. (SH3)*

Meunasah, as an institution, served as a site for decision making during the establishment

of ECE. The Imam as the main stakeholder of *meunasah* showed his full support for the initiative

by allowing the use of the *meunasah* compound and encouraging the funding for ECE through

his role on the council of village elders.

6.7   Summary

In this chapter, I have addressed the current socio-economic developments in Gampong

Blang, North Aceh Regency. In particular, I examined the changes brought about in the village

by the village allocation fund (ADD), which have enabled the villagers to allocate money to

establish ECE in their *meunasah*. Moreover, I also explained the socio-cultural changes following the conflict and tsunami in Aceh, including how this event has re-energised attempts to implement more Sharia-based regulations. The recent developments make the role of *meunasah* even more central to the villagers in Gampong Blang. As an institution *meunasah*, is pivotal in ensuring the continuity of local traditions and practices while also being an avenue to facilitate positive change in this new era, such as the establishment of ECE in the village.

Chapter 7: Hope

7.1   Introduction

This chapter examines the way discourses coming from global post-conflict and post-disaster initiatives, national goals on ECE and Non-Government Organisations (NGOs), as well as local aspirations, influence the ECE in *meunasah*. As discussed in the previous chapter, the ECE in Gampong Blang was a bottom-up initiative from the community enabled by the substantial autonomy in the local system and village budget fund policy following conflict and disaster that occurred in the region. However, global efforts after the tsunami have also played a role in familiarising the ECE within the province, while the national government also introduced a new ECE framework. Furthermore, NGOs such as the Indonesian ECE teacher association or *Himpunan Pendidik dan Tenaga Kependidikan Anak Usia Dini Indonesia* (HIMAPAUDI) have also played a role in assisting educators across the country.

The tsunami that hit Aceh on 26 December 2004 left a devastating impact on the Acehnese community. However, it brought about changes and hope for a better future. With the disaster bringing an end to the prolonged armed conflict between the Acehnese rebel movement and the Indonesian central government, Aceh embarked on an era of peace. People had high hopes that peace would provide opportunities for building a better society (Bailey, 2009; Shah & Cardozo, 2014). Given that ECE has been acknowledged globally as an essential future investment for a community or a country (Amer et al., 2013; Heckman, 2006; Irwin et al., 2007), it naturally became a part of international post-tsunami reconstruction projects and national education goals. Education became the central instrument in fulfilling these hopes and expectations. As Freire (2007a) contended "without hope, there is no way we can even start thinking about education" (p. 87).

This chapter begins by highlighting global initiatives in ECE in Aceh after the tsunami, national goals and efforts on ECE. It then discusses the educators, the role of teacher associations, the way communities manage their ECE, and their aspirations toward the future of their ECE in *meunasah*.

7.2   Global initiatives in ECE in Aceh and their Impact

For almost 30 years (1976-2005), Aceh was embroiled in an armed conflict involving Acehnese separatists and the Indonesian military. In 2004, the province was further devastated by the most destructive catastrophe of the last hundred years in the form of the Indian Ocean earthquake that precipitated the tsunami. While it killed as many as 220,000 people, 500,000 were left homeless, 750,000 lost their source of income, and it destroyed much infrastructure in the area (Clarke, 2010; Fan, 2013; Thornburn, 2009). However, the people of Aceh never gave up hope amid the endless challenges in rebuilding a pathway for a better future. The communities' tenacity and resilience were such that they were no longer struggling for survival as they did during the conflict era but fighting for a better life through education. Numerous studies suggest that conflict-affected societies hold education in high regard (Save the Children, 2013; Shah & Cardozo, 2014; Winthrop & Kirk, 2008).

Freire emphasises the integration of love and hope as the driving force behind social change. He believes that hope must be rooted in practice, struggle and action. He describes hope as a need that should be rooted in practice. In-action and the lack of hope lead to hopelessness and inability to begin the struggle for change (Freire, 1994). From an Islamic perspective, human beings are encouraged never to lose hope and to avoid hopelessness. The Qur'an mentions the importance of maintaining hope and the necessity to work towards positive change in stating, "So, verily, with every difficulty, there is a relief: Verily with every difficulty, there is a relief. Therefore, when you are free (from your immediate tasks), still labour hard. And to your Lord turn (all) your attention" (The Qur'an, chapter 94, verses 5-7).

Muslims are expected to stay hopeful in every difficult situation, never to lose hope and believe that after every difficulty comes relief and that every challenging situation will change for the better. However, the Qur'an also stresses the need to work for change because change cannot come without hope and action. "Verily, God will not change the condition of a people as long as they do not change their state themselves" (The Qur'an, chapter 13, verses 11*).*

In Aceh, both religious and development narratives influence the concept of hope. After the tsunami, many Acehnese interpreted the natural disaster as a warning from God, a test of their faith and a sign that they should improve their religiosity in the present to ensure a better position in the afterlife (Kloos, 2011; Samuels, 2011). Moreover, the tsunami offered an opportunity to embark upon new pathways towards progress. After the tsunami, the Acehnese expressed their hopes for economic improvements that would lead to more jobs and prosperity. They had hopes that the international attention on Aceh, which came as the result of the tsunami, would guarantee lasting peace and improve the local economy. People placed their hope in education as part of the post-conflict peace settlement to improve the redistribution of entitlements and opportunities (Barron et al., 2013; Samuels, 2011).

This hope rewarded Aceh with encouraging responses from the international community who took a pivotal role in the tsunami and post-conflict reconstruction and rehabilitation efforts, providing generous international assistance. As many as 180 international non-government organizations (NGOs) registered in Banda Aceh (Telford et al., 2006). Indonesians themselves mobilised and collected huge amounts of humanitarian aid for tsunami survivors, and thousands of volunteers from all over the world came to Aceh (Masyrafah & McKeon, 2008). The international community sought not just to recreate what had been destroyed by the tsunami, but to make the communities better, stronger and more peaceful than before the disaster. The phrase 'Build Back Better' became the motto and aspiration implemented in the recovery efforts. The efforts aimed not only to rebuild assets directly affected by the disaster but also to build the

capacity of institutions and individuals; expanding access to services such as health and education, reducing poverty, and empowering civil society (Fan, 2013; UNDP, 2010). Through 'building back better,' governments and aid agencies tried to go beyond disaster relief and infrastructure reconstruction by aiming to bring about social and economic changes, as the government promoted discourses of both development and religious reforms in Aceh after the tsunami (Feener, 2013; Samuels, 2015). For instance, the Law on The Governing of Aceh (LoGA, 2006) suggested that Aceh's educational aspiration also takes into account Islamic values based on the Qur'an and Hadith (as described in the previous chapter).

Restoring educational services in the province became one of the priorities in the recovery efforts as children's education suffered from the disruption of services, community resettlement, and post-disaster trauma. The challenges facing the local community included the reconstruction of infrastructure and replacing teachers. More than 2,000 schools in Aceh were rebuilt replacing temporary educational facilities with permanent ones. A program commenced training more than 1000 temporary teachers to replace those who had lost their lives in the disaster. In a way, the mobilisation of aid after the disaster presented an opportunity to expand access and improve the quality of ECE (Save the Children, 2009).

Acknowledging the importance of ECE for children, many international NGOs that operated after the tsunami in Aceh prompted extensive international efforts to develop ECE policies and expand access to ECE services, especially for children living in poverty. As part of the initial response, aid organisations established many temporary ECE centres (UNESCO, 2005). ECE took on the role of a mechanism for restoring a sense of normalcy and promoting healing among young children (Chang & Young, 2010). During this period of reconstruction and rehabilitation, some NGOs, such as Plan International, American Red Cross and Save the Children became the few prominent organisations. They re-equipped centres, trained educators, and arranged awareness-raising activities to increase demand for quality ECE services. There

were also programs aimed at improving maternal and child health. The project received positive responses from parents and local government officials alike (Fang & Yusof, 2013). The NGOs worked to establish or re-establish permanent ECE centres to improve the quality and utilization of ECE.

While the international relief efforts focused on Aceh province as a whole, NGOs support and programs mainly concentrated on urban areas and areas that had been directly affected by the tsunami. The program did not reach the less-accessible rural areas, particularly those previously affected by the conflict (Save the Children, 2009). In these areas, an unintended but welcome effect was that the tsunami brought an end to the conflict in 2005. However, there were no concerted efforts by NGOs to support these hard-to-reach communities, who were also in significant need of similar intervention. Areas such as Nisam District though not directly affected by the tsunami, but was most affected by conflict. In retrospect, the ECE's principal recalled this period in the following statement:

> *Yes, I can say it did not reach our area at the time. The NGO did provide some aid for our community after the tsunami and conflict, but they did not target the ECE area. However, many of us (the principal and her friend at university) were at university at the time and had the opportunity to witness the importance of ECE for children. In that time, I remembered visiting children at a refugee camp where an NGO activist provided temporary ECE service in a tent for children. It was a significant experience for me and my friend. (E1)*

This experience of witnessing ECE projects initiated by foreign NGOs during the post-disaster and post-conflict reconstruction period, which peaked around 2005 to 2009, helped to promote the importance of ECE among the locals. The principal of Gampong Blang ECE admitted her personal experience of witnessing the NGO efforts in other areas (mainly coastal areas that were affected by the tsunami). While it was not the only factor, it had led her (and

other villagers) current actions in promoting ECE in the village. The village secretary also

pointed out that the experience in the tsunami-affected areas with ECE introduced during the

reconstruction period (2005-2009) also promoted the need to expand ECE to other areas in the

province. Though the ECE initiative in the villages did not receive any foreign aid as it was only

developed years after the tsunami when they gained access to the village budget in 2015.

However, he admitted that witnessing the development of ECE centres in other areas in the

region encouraged them to develop their own ECE in the village. He explained,

> *When more and more ECE centres were established, of course, this made it more*
>
> *familiar to people in Aceh, and the communities in other areas could learn from it or at*
>
> *least get inspired by it. People would think that it's a necessity to have ECE in our place.*
>
> *(SH2)*

The global initiatives after the tsunami were pivotal in many aspects of the development

of ECE in Aceh. The efforts helped to improve a significant amount of ECE infrastructure in the

affected areas and built teacher and volunteer capacities (Fang & Yusof, 2013). Moreover, some

of the conflict-affected areas, such as Gampong Blang, though not the target area of the

initiatives, also experienced indirect positive impacts including the raising of public awareness of

the important role of ECE for the community.

It is also important to note some of the differences in terms of community engagement

between the development of ECE in tsunami-affected areas during the disaster relief period,

mainly between 2005, and 2009, and the development of community-initiated ECE in rural areas

(mostly conflict-affected areas) such as Gampong Blang after the introduction of the village

budget policy in 2014. This phenomenon is one of the important lessons for the future of ECE

development in Aceh, particularly when linking this experience to my research findings on

community-initiated ECE. As described in the previous chapter, the ECE development in

Gampong Blang initiated by the community and stakeholders received overwhelming support

and engagement from the entire community despite the lack of resources. The global initiatives around ECE after the tsunami had achieved many of their goals, such as re-establishing ECE centres and implementing the educator training program. One of the biggest efforts being an American Red Cross-funded project in collaboration with the local Regency Health office in seven coastal districts that established and revitalised ECE services in 55 villages. However, the project faced a number of constraints, mainly related to the lack of sustainable support from the community (Fang & Yusof, 2013).

The phenomenon of community participation viewed through Freire's archeology of the various concepts of consciousness highlights that critical consciousness cannot be imposed but must be born out of the creative efforts of the people. It also cannot be generated by intellectual effort alone but needs the authentic unity of action and reflection. Hence, people have to participate in making history (Freire, 1973). In this case, an attempt to improve social conditions through education could only become a sustainable change through community critical consciousness, involving active and conscious participation of the community as seen in the case of Gampong Blang.

As the post-conflict and post-tsunami initiatives on ECE were taking place in Aceh province, the National government also launched a long term ECE framework as part of comprehensive efforts to meet future economic challenges.

7.3   ECE in Indonesia: Vision for Character-Building and the Role of Religion

The global discourse on ECE promoted by international agencies working in Indonesia, such as the UNESCO and the World Bank, viewed ECE as an instrument of economic development (Noble, 2005). This discourse supported the view that the best return on any investment in human capital is when governments make investments in the early years (Amer et al., 2013; Heckman, 2006; Heckman & Masterov, 2007; World Bank, 2006). The UN's

Millenium Development Goals (MDGs) also emphasised the importance of early childhood period and ECE services, particularly as a tool for reducing poverty and improving child health and primary school completion (UNESCO, 2007). Moreover, there is an emerging view of ECE, which sees ECE beyond the paradigm of human capital discourse. This alternative paradigm of ECE views ECE as a driving force for democracy and the creation of a more equitable society (Dahlberg & Moss, 2005). For instance, the deeply-religious community in Aceh held beliefs that education, including ECE, should not only prepare the future workforce but also create good human beings who are conscious of their social responsibilities.

The Indonesian government recognises the economic and societal role of ECE and its recognition has come in the shape of Indonesia's Department of Education's introduction of the framework for the development of ECE in Indonesia from 2011 to 2025. The 2011-2025 framework aimed to lay a foundation and provide direction for ECE development in Indonesia to achieve immediate goals of ECE service in Indonesia. The framework aspired to increase the availability of ECE, expand the affordability of ECE, improve the quality of ECE, provide equal access to ECE, and to ensure the right of all citizens to ECE service. The year 2011 became designated as a milestone in expanding ECE development in Indonesia. In achieving these targets, the framework also emphasised the need to strengthen the role of parents empowering local community (stakeholders) and creating integrated ECD Services (Directorate General of ECE, 2011).

According to Al-Attas, the structure of science should reflect the human and his nature (*hakikat*) (Al-Attas 1995). In Indonesia, the ECE 2011-2025 framework places a strong emphasis on spirituality and religious norms as being a necessity for the development of future Indonesian generations. The framework also highlighted that ECE development is a conscious effort and commitment to developing future Indonesian citizens with ten main attributes. Indonesia expects its future citizens to (1) be faithful, (2) be devoted to God, (3) be of noble character, (4) be

healthy, (5) be smart, (6) be honest, (7) be responsible, (8) be creative, (9) be self-confident, and (10) love their country. These ten attributes form the basic component of nation-building through investment in the human capital of the country (Directorate General of ECE, 2011).

The formalisation of students' right to religious education underpins Indonesian education. At the national level, the promulgation of Law No. 20/2003 National Education System Act (NESA) (2003) dictates that religious education is now a compulsory part of the curriculum at every educational level. Therefore, apart from being part of the discourse on nation-building (human development), ECE and ECE curriculum in Indonesia are also considered to be part of religious discourses in the country.

My research findings indicate that educators positively received this development. As described in the previous chapter, at the provincial level, the Aceh Government had issued regulations to promote religious values and the education of basic religious practices in schools. One of the educators in Gampong Blang ECE, E2 explained,

> *K-2013 (Curriculum 2013) also takes character development of children seriously; in our context, this could be done through the inculcation of local values but, more importantly, through religious values, or Islamic values. We know Aceh has Sharia law that has set expectations on us as educators. So, I think these two sets of expectations can work together well. (E2)*

Al-Attas explains that worship in Islam is merely not an outward act of religious faith through religious rituals such as performing the daily prayers, reciting the Qur'an and fasting. Worship, according to him must also incorporate all other acts of human endeavours such as pursuing knowledge related to human sustenance, universal justice and human rights that lead to a global brotherhood among all people and nations. Al-Attas (1979) asserted that the Islamic concept of education is inseparable from the nature of a human being:

A human according to Islam is composed of a soul and body. . . A human possesses

spiritual and rational organs of cognition such as the heart (qalb) and the intellect ('aql)

and faculties relating to the physical, intellectual and spiritual dimensions, experience and

consciousness.... Knowledge must guide him or her towards an ultimate exalted destiny

in the hereafter, which is determined by how he conducts himself in this world. (p. 143)

According to Al-Attas, the structure of science should reflect the human and his nature

(*hakikat*). As such, the curriculum should form its basis on the dual nature of human beings,

namely the physical (*fard kifayah)* and the spiritual aspect (*fard 'ain)*. An educational institution

with the integrative system should consist of both conventional and religious sciences. The

conventional science must include, among others, subjects such as humanities, applied sciences,

technology, comparative religion and linguistics. Meanwhile, the content of religious sciences

(*fard' ain*) must consist among others, the study of the Qur'an, *Hadith*, *shari'a* (jurisprudence),

theology, metaphysics and linguistics (Arabic) (Al-Attas, 1985, 1997).

The Indonesian context applied this integration to some extent. Through the

promulgation of Law No. 20/2003 National Education System Act (NESA) (2003), religious

subjects are a compulsory part of the curriculum at every educational level. However, there is a

fundamental difference between conventional schools and religious schools in terms of the time

allocated to such religious subjects and the number of religious subjects to be taught to students

(NESA), 2003). In regular schools, there are religious subjects that cover content on various

areas of religion. Meanwhile, in Islamic schools, there are many more subjects on religion and

morality, such as the study of the Qur'an, *Hadith*, Islamic jurisprudence, Islamic history and

Arabic). Each of these subjects has its own syllabus (NESA, 2003), and they make up the core

content for teaching at such religious educational institutions.

In Gampong Blang, ECE educators agreed that the new curriculum is an improvement on

the previous curriculum as it offered a more balanced focus on cognitive, affective, and

psychomotor development of children. Its emphasis on character building received positive reactions from community members and educators, as stated by one of the educators:

> *Many parents and community members are concerned about character education. People are aware that education should also accommodate the behavioural aspect of students, not only the cognitive aspect. The curriculum, I think, meets this expectation. In Islam, for example, we believe in the balance between knowledge and adab or good behaviour. (E2)*

The Islamic education concept of *ta'dib* advocated by Al Attas reflects this point of view as he conceives education in a holistic sense. That is, education should go beyond educating individuals in an academic sense to also educating the human being in an affective sense (Al-Attas, 1997; Wan Daud, 1998). Traditional Islamic education philosophy practised in Aceh reflects his conception of education. The core of traditional Islamic education in Aceh is based on classical traditions and emphasises the balance between *adab* and knowledge.

7.4   The Educators

Freire (2007) associates hope with love, humility, and perseverance. Hope is not a singular and comparable human experience as its characteristics and dynamics are multifarious. However, it can be understood as "a socially mediated human capacity with varying affective, cognitive and behavioural dimensions" (Webb, 2013, p. 398). Webb argued that this cognitive-affective and behavioural dimension of hope resonates with Freire's notion of conscientisation. According to Freire (1976) "conscientisation represents the development of the awakening of critical awareness" (p. 19). In critical consciousness, individuals are seen as "conscious beings who can gain critical insertions and demythologise their reality" (Freire, 1972b, p. 75). Although hope often goes against challenges and obstacles, Freire (1972b) believed in the transformative capacities of human beings to overcome obstacles and difficult situations. For Freire, the hope for progressive educators is manifest in the struggle against hardship which requires persistence

and patience (2007b). Freire suggested that waiting accompanied by hope should be understood as an active form of waiting characterised by perseverance and persistence to strive towards change rather than a passive form of waiting (Freire, 1972a, 1972b; Webb, 2013).

The ECE initiative in Gampong Blang is a process that starts with the grass-roots movement in the village. As described in the previous chapter, the initiative had a very humble beginning due to limited resources. According to the principal (E1), the challenges experienced by educators only strengthened their determination. Moreover, despite the constraints, they tried to maintain high hope in the children succeeding in the future and to do their best to facilitate teaching and learning. There were five educators delivering ECE programs in *meunasah* in Gampong Blang, and they had varied educational backgrounds and experiences.

E1, who was born in Gampong Blang in 1987, is the current ECE principal and one of the early proponents of ECE in the village. E1 graduated from a university in Bireun (a town situated 50 kilometres from the village) in 2010 with a bachelor's degree in literature, and she is pursuing a second bachelor's degree in ECE in the city of Lhokseumawe (about 30 kilometres from the village). She served as a contract teacher in a primary school in a nearby village from 2011 to 2015. E1 has been involved in the ECE initiative since the early phase, working along with other women in the village in advocating for ECE to the rest of the community and working closely with village stakeholders in the establishment of ECE. She was subsequently selected as the principal by the villagers in a village meeting in *meunasah.* She is also a member of HIMAPAUDI (ECE teacher association) and one of the organisation's teacher facilitators in the district. As part of her role in the ECE, she is also one of the religious studies teachers in the Qur'anic learning centre in the village.

E2 was born in Gampong Blang in 1990. She has a degree in counselling from the same university as E1. After graduation, she became a temporary teacher in a primary school and a volunteer in a kindergarten in the district capital (around four kilometres from Gampong Blang)

from 2012 to 2014. She was the first teacher to be recruited by E1 and assisted her in the ECE

establishment process. She is also an active member of HIMAPAUDI and participates in all its

events. To support herself, she also works in a tailor shop in a nearby village in the afternoons.

Reflecting on her experience with ECE, she explained,

> *I was asked by the principal to join (the ECE project) when I started. We already received full support from the village, but we have to register the school, and we need formal acknowledgment in the form of a permit from the Regional Department of Education. We were learning by doing. The stakeholders such as the village chief and village secretary helped a lot, particularly in sharing their experiences on how to deal with the bureaucratic system. We also got in touch with the ECE teacher association (HIMAPAUDI) so that we could learn from other centres about the process….It's still hard these days to make a living just from ECE, so I am working as a tailor at the market in the afternoons. My husband works as a driver, so by God's grace, it is enough for us to get by in this village. It's always enough when we are grateful...But I feel sad sometimes for our students; I hope someday we will have better facilities and better equipment for our students like other centres in the town. (E2)*

E3 was born in Gampong Blang in 1996. She is currently pursuing a bachelor's degree in

ECE at a local university along with her sister, E4, who is a year younger than her. They

graduated from secondary school in 2014. In 2015, they were invited by EI and E2 to be

involved in the local ECE. In the same year, they decided to pursue a degree in ECE. They are

also active members of HIMAPAUDI. E3 admitted that teaching at the ECE in Gampong Blang

is her and her sister's first occupation. For E4, it has been her dream since high school to be an

ECE teacher, and the fact that she can teach along with her sister made her very happy.

However, she reflected,

> *It is like a dream come true that we both could participate in the ECE. Not just any ECE but an ECE in our own village…Of course, it's full of struggle, we (E4 and E3) could go to university because of BIDIKMISI (government scholarship for children from poor family backgrounds). We're fully aware that we work in a newly-established ECE, so money is not really our first priority at the moment. What is more important for us is that the school can sustain itself in the long run. (E4)*

E5 was born in 1997 in Gampong Blang and graduated from secondary school in 2015. She has been volunteering at the *meunasah* ECE since 2017 and enrolled in the ECE faculty at a local university in the same year. She initially intended to work in ECE with her secondary school degree. However, persuaded by her fellow educators to pursue a degree in the same field as their occupations, she decided to enrol in a local university. She explained,

> *My fellow educators are so eager to pursue a degree in ECE. They believe it is a necessity to have great credibility and boost community's confidence in our ECE. Of course, after all, we need the sufficient competency to teach, and we need to upgrade our knowledge and skills. Especially for me, that's just the start to be involved in ECE. (E5)*

The principal admitted that the wellbeing of teachers is among her main concerns. The teacher honorarium in the ECE depends mainly on the village budget, which is allocated three times a year and could easily be delayed mainly due to administrative issues (SH2). The benefit sometimes comes irregularly and in a relatively small amount. The principal admitted,

> *Our teacher only received a monthly salary of IDR 200,000 or AUD 20 per month (E1, E2, E3 and E4). E5 has also volunteered with us since last semester, and she did not expect any salary. She just wanted to gain experience, but in the meeting, we decided to allocate RP 100, 000 or AUD10 per month for her. We hope it can help her a little bit as she is still studying at university. My colleague E2 works a second job, and E3 and E4*

also work casually in their family farm. As for myself, it is quite funny, I am much busier than my husband, and yet he is the main breadwinner in our household (he co-owns a coffee shop in the village and occasionally supplies building materials for village construction projects). It (i.e. the teacher salary) is not enough, I know. We could earn similar amounts of money by working for four days on the farm during harvest, but this is our job, and we love it. When we are in the classroom with our children or in training sessions with the association (HIMAPAUDI), we do not even remember about our financial situation, but when class is dismissed, we need to go to the market, and then I realise that life is not easy for our educators. I am only slightly better off because my husband contributes enough to our family, but it breaks my heart to think about my colleague. (E1)

Amid this situation, the teachers show their dedication and enthusiasm in providing the best experiences for their students. Stakeholders and parents acknowledge the teachers' dedication despite the very limited financial incentives. One parent stated that,

Our ECE is in a very positive condition; this can be attributed mainly to the teachers. They are amazing. Although they do not earn much, they are very disciplined. They are already in meunasah half an hour before the class starts every morning, waiting for the students. They care for our children. In one of the meetings I still remember ibuk (madam) said to us that they may not earn much but what they've done is more than just for money, it is for the future of our children. I am very proud of them (educators), but I could not help much. I am a farmer, my self with a small plot of land. The principal told us that all they need is our support. So, I try to attend every (ECE) meeting and listen to them (educators). That is how I show my respect for what they have done for our children. (CMP4)

Despite the constraints, the educators were highly motivated to further their study in early childhood. Even the principal was willing to pursue a second degree in ECE. Their pursuit of further education certainly put more responsibilities on them because educators were also responsible for the day-to-day operation of the ECE. Moreover, only E3 and E4 receive some form of government assistance, while E1 and E5 were financing their own study even though their income from ECE was not sufficient to cover the cost. Eagerness to improve the ECE's credibility and their desire to convince parents of the hope for a better future for their children sustained their motivation and perseverance in their endeavours.

The educators' endeavours towards the ECE despite the challenges highlight their patience and perseverance. They had the patience to keep doing the best for the children despite the very minimal financial incentives, as pointed out by one of the educators:

It was a difficult journey. Sometimes the village chief or secretary just donated their own money, or we just borrowed money from our friends or family, There was no village budget in 2014; it wasn't allocated until the next year. (E2)

Freire's definition of progressive educators seems to resemble the experiences of the educators in Gampong Blang, as the teachers were not waiting passively. Their patience transformed into "active waiting"(Freire, 1972a, p. 41, 1972b) by their constant efforts to improve the conditions of the ECE in Gampong Blang which included gaining more knowledge and skills in ECE. The educators' endeavours to build their capacities did not stop only at pursuing a degree in ECE; they also actively took part in various capacity-building programs.

7.4.1   Educators capacity-building. The experience following the tsunami and the conflict as well as the rapidly-changing educational system and curricula created a greater demand for educators in Aceh to improve their competence in ECE. The educators in Gampong Blang recognised the challenges of teaching and learning in ECE and realised the importance of acquiring adequate competence in ECE. To develop the required capacity to provide effective

teaching and learning activities, the *meunasah* educators worked together with their fellow ECE

educators in HIMAPAUDI, which has branches in most of regencies and districts in Indonesia.

The educators (except E5) were active members of the association. After receiving training at the

regency, the principals (E1) had a bigger role in HIMAPAUDI as an active teacher facilitator in

the district, and she would also coach teachers from other ECEs in the district.

HIMPAUDI was established in Jakarta in 2005 to unite early childhood educators,

improve the quality of educators, and advocate for welfare improvement and protection for ECE

educators. Currently, HIMPAUDI has many branches at province, regency and district levels.

The main goals of the organisation are to disseminate the importance of quality ECE to the

community across the country, build the capacity of ECE educators and expand the

organisational capacity building to all its branches (Listiyowati, 2017; Tedjawati, 2011). To

achieve these goals, HIMAPAUDI conducted seminars and workshops across the country aimed

mainly to guide the requirements needed to establish new ECE centres and to improve the

quality of ECE centres both in terms of the educators' capacity and ECE services management.

The association also conducts basic training programs for new educators, which includes

teaching and learning approaches based on the 2013 curriculum and online data management.

HIMPAUDI also tries to develop the ECE educator's profession by advocating for the opening

of more ECE programs in universities and constantly supporting the educators' struggle for a

better financial situation for themselves (Listiyowati, 2017; Tedjawati, 2011).

During my time in the village, I witnessed a HIMAPAUDI meeting at the Gampong

Blang ECE. Around 38 educators from all ECE in the district gathered in Gampong Blang in the

afternoon after teaching hours. Following an invitation, the village chief and village secretary

officially commenced the meeting. The village stakeholders left the meeting after half an hour,

while the educators stayed on for the next three hours. During the meeting, the educators

discussed the 2013 curriculum in detail, particularly the implementation of the curriculum in the

classroom. Educators shared their experiences and helped each other through productive

dialogues. The teacher also shared the experiences of some new educators who recently

established an ECE in their village. In the last half hour, they also discussed the welfare of ECE

teachers out of the 36 educators who attended the event, only two were government employees

who received regular income from the government (approximately AUD 250 plus AUD 200 in

remuneration), while the rest relied on the village budget or aids. The educators sat in a large

circle where they could freely voice their concerns or ideas. Everyone took notes, and one of the

educators mapped the issues and conclusion on the whiteboard. They agreed to pursue more

coordination between the Department of Education at regional and district levels and to voice

their aspirations for a regular teacher training program that was to be provided by the

government.

Drawing on Freire's (1972a) idea of conscientisation, some Indonesian social activists

with decades of experience working with the oppressed rural community such as Noer Fauzi,

Mansur Fakih and Roem Topatimasang argued that conscientisation in education must employ

the dialogical method. This dialogical method is a way to ensure that education takes place in a

democratic environment that stimulates healthy interactions as well as productive discussions,

rather than through an authority-dependency relationship. A mutual relationship is a basis for the

process of dialogue in conscientisation (Fakih et al., 1999; Fauzi, 2005; Fauzi & Ayu, 1999). can

Freire's idea and confidence in people's ability to alter their shortcomings and transform their

realities ascribes to such belief (Freire, 1972a). Through this idea, educators and facilitators

acknowledge that every individual has valuable experiences, knowledge and perspectives

through their interactions with their world and other people. According to one of the educators in

Gampong Blang's ECE, the educators conducted their meeting in the *meunasah* ECE in similar

ways to the HIMAPAUDI meeting previously described. While the principal may have more

knowledge, all educators had the opportunity to voice their opinions and respect for others at

every weekly Friday meeting. One of the educators explained,

Everybody can offer a solution for the issues we are dealing with. At the end, the most logical and reasonable solutions will be used, no matter whose idea it was. I think it's similar to the regular village meetings in meunasah...Yes, we may have more experience in teaching, and the younger teachers may ask the principal or me questions, but often, the other educators (E3, E4 and E5) have better ideas. Moreover, when it comes to data entry or administrative processes which are now mostly computerised and online, I have to ask the younger teacher (E4 and E5) so many questions). (E2)

Another educator (E3) also shared her experience,

In weekly meetings, we work together to find solutions to emerging issues. We are new, and our resources are limited. However, in terms of knowledge, we try to catch-up. I think we are doing quite well with the new curriculum. (E3)

Fauzi (2005) elaborated that the process of developing conscientisation through dialogue involves several actions. First, it involves developing cooperation and mutual understanding among facilitators or educators. Participants then identify structural contradictions and limitations that surround them and the situations that need transformation. The consciousness of limitations reflects in the capacity to understand the contradictions or shortcomings and capacity for actions in transforming the situations. Second, the process involves establishing a learning group of 20-30 people. The group works to implement conscientisation by voicing each member's concern over the previously identified problem. In this process, each participant can express their feelings and ideas. Questions can be raised, and the conclusions subsequently drawn should reflect the participants' voice (Fauzi, 2005; Fauzi & Ayu, 1999). The voices subsequently become the core of social analysis that would materialise into actions.
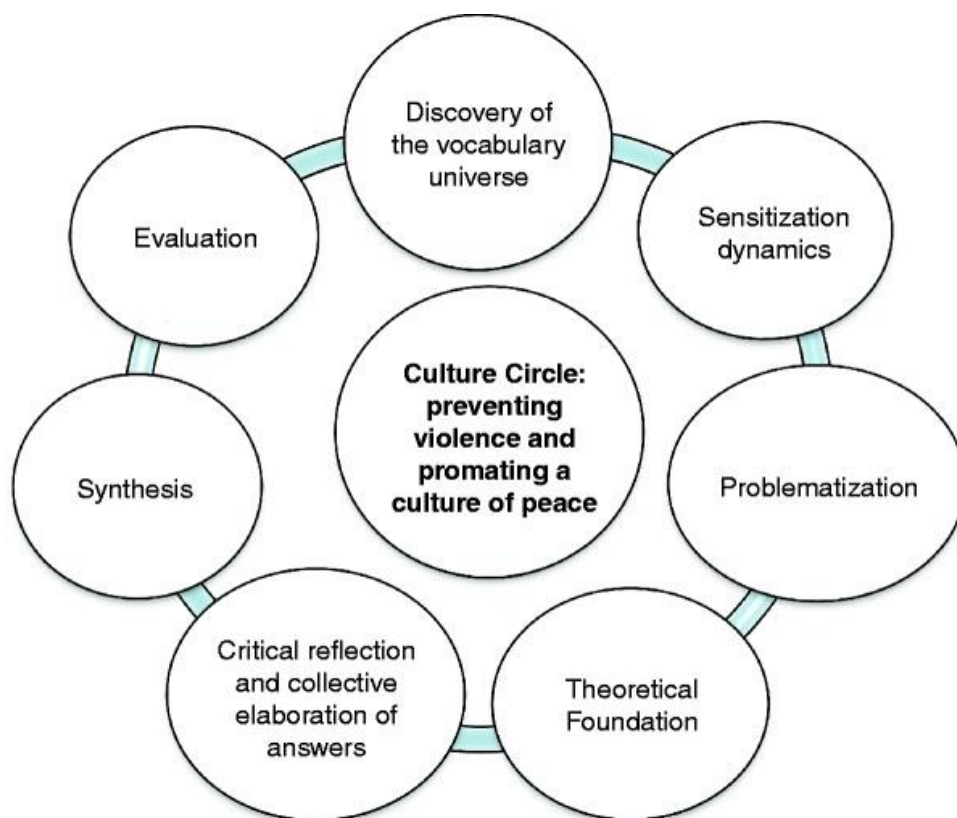
Figure 12. Phases of Paulo Freire's—Circle of Culture method, proposed by Monteiro and Vieira (2008) Source: Monteiro, Cavalcanti, Aquino, Silva, & Lima, 2015, p. 170.

The above group model inspired by Freire's 'circle of culture' model applied in adult education in South America (Freire, 1972a, 1985). The authors created the model to provide space and opportunities for dialogue in which participants can engage in problem-posing and problem-solving. It allows groups members to voice their concerns in a conducive and respectful environment. The process aimed at raising the consciousness of group members and re-constructing or transforming their reality.

However, based on what I witnessed in the HIMAPAUDI meeting in Gampong Blang and what I had gathered from teacher's stories about their weekly Friday meetings (I was not able to observe any of the meetings in person because they typically held them during the time for Friday prayer), the model that used in such contexts is not directly inspired by Freire's culture circle. Nevertheless, such meetings resemble it in many ways, including providing the

opportunity for everyone to express his or her voice in a friendly environment and the method used to reach a consensus based on all participants' voices. Interestingly, in such meetings, all participants sat in a circle. However, this arrangement is not unique to the educators because villagers in the *meunasah* meetings also sit in a large circle most of the time.

In terms of policy regarding capacity-building issues, the Ministry of Education and Culture Regulation Number 16 in 2007 on teachers' academic qualifications and competencies mandate a qualification requirement for ECE educators. The teachers in formal ECE centres must hold a minimum postsecondary degree in ECE or psychology. The degree can be either a D-4 (four-year diploma) or an S-1 (bachelor's degree) (MoEC, 2007). Ministry of Education and Culture Regulation Number 58 in 2009 on Early Child Education Standards requires that teacher assistants must have postsecondary training specialising in ECE. However, this can be either at D-2 (two-year diploma) level from an accredited training institution, or graduation from high school plus an ECE certificate from an accredited training institution (MoEC, 2009).

Educators have opportunities for professional development such as through ECE teacher associations and private education institutions which conduct teacher training programs. One type, of course, offers an upgrade to educators' academic qualifications. The Directorate of Teachers and Education Personnel runs a basic-level 48-hour course, an intermediate-level 64-hour course, and an advanced 80-hour course. These courses cover health, nutrition, cognitive development, social and emotional development, inclusive education, parenting, curriculum, and learning plans (World Bank, 2012; Denboba, 2015). The policy-makers believe that establishing qualifications and training requirements standards are essential to providing quality ECE services. However, due to capacity constraints, these training programs are not always available to all educators who may want to participate

According to the Directorate of ECE, there are 433,081 ECE educators (MoEC, 2012). Almost 15 per cent have a bachelor's degree or higher. Around 25 per cent have postsecondary schooling (not a full four-year degree), and for approximately 39 per cent of educators, the highest level of educational attainment is at secondary school level. About three per cent have completed only junior high school. Roughly five per cent of these educators have participated in in-service training in recent years. These figures indicate that compliance is far from universal and significant numbers of ECE facilities comply with service delivery and infrastructure standards (Denboba et al., 2015).

The ECE in Gampong Blang is not a formal institution which is fully funded by the government; it is a non-formal centre with various sources of funding, that includes the village budget, government assistance and donations. However, as explained earlier, most of the educators are currently pursuing a degree in ECE. All of the educators completed the basic 48 hours training. According to the educators, training programs organised irregularly and were only available to limited participants. Only the principal has completed all three training sessions: basic, intermediate and advanced. This standardisation requirement is also among the main concerns raised in HIMAPAUDI meetings in Gampong Blang. As the data generated suggest, the need to meet the educator's qualification standards is still a problem across the country.

The human capital approach that has influenced policy-makers thinking has resulted in the standardisation of ECE in the country. Several of the recent ECE policy frameworks in Indonesia, including the 2011–2025 ECE framework, have aimed at meeting international standards of ECE. ECE developments focused on expanding services and accessibility as well as setting qualification standards for educators and facilities (Directorate General of ECE, 2015). Penn (2002; 2010) and Moss (2014) argued that the standard guidelines for ECE form from

research in Anglo-American countries which have different conceptualisations of ECE from the developing countries in the south.

Furthermore, a number of local academics (Adriany, 2018a, 2018b; Adriany & Saefulllah, 2015; Octarra & Hendriati, 2019) are also concerned that the human capital approach subjected to standardised policies may result in over-regulation of ECE and force conformity from the educators. All forms of ECE institution are obliged to follow the national standards. These relate to the standard of developmental goals; the standard of ECE teachers and professionals; the standard of content, process, and assessment; and the standard of facilities, infrastructure, management, and finance. (Directorate General of ECE, 2015a, 2015b; OECD, 2015). These standards aimed at improving ECE quality but not all existing ECE centres, particularly those in rural areas, have the resources to meet all the standards as in the case in rural North Aceh. Hence, it is pertinent that the local policy framework on ECE needs to acknowledge different conceptualisations of childhood at the local level and also the socio-economic disparities among areas in Indonesia (such as urban-rural disparity). Furthermore, such a framework and conceptualisation should also reflect local contexts as well as meet local demands.

7.5   Educators, Stakeholders and Community Members Aspirations

According to Freire, the process of developing a critical consciousness of social reality requires reflection and action. Reflection involves a critical process in which humans uncover their actual issues or needs (their reality), while action is the process of changing reality (Freire, 1972a). He describes progressive educators as those who are willing to go through an inspirational process of education with a determination to move beyond dialogue and articulate their utopian dream. In transforming the dreams into actual possibilities and change, educators should announce their dream, galvanise support and base their hope and vision in viable goals (Freire et al. 1994). A grounded utopian dream or a "real utopia" (Moss, 2014, p. 36) is an

elaborate utopia that is informed by human potential, attainable goals, and feasible, achievable plans to drive social change. A real utopian dream managed contentiously is a constructive strength as it helps in reimagining other possibilities about the social and structural institution. It also leads people to an awareness that there is always an alternative way of achieving dreams (Dahlberg & Moss, 2005; Moss, 2014).

As mentioned in the previous chapter, a group of women in Gampong Blang consisting of among others, the current principal, (E1) a former teacher (CM12) and an Islamic teacher in the village (SH8) plays a crucial role in the early stages of ECE establishment. Once the group discussed their aspirations, they mobilised the community members and worked alongside village stakeholders in making their vision of having an ECE in the village a shared dream.

In 2015, as the community moved to take action and realise their dream of having an ECE, they had to deal with limited resources to turn their dreams into reality. The community then looked toward their *meunasah* an old, established traditional institution of which its educational role typically focuses on religious education (Alfian, 1999; Sabirin, 2014). The Imam (SH4) also explained that: "*...meunasahs have various functions. However, in terms of education, it normally provides religious education for children; these days it also provides adult Islamic teaching programs for both men and women*". The role of *meunasah*, as a traditional education institution, has been embedded within the Acehnese community for centuries (Badruzzaman, 2002; Wahid, 2013; Sabirin, 2014). Nevertheless, the community decided to reconfigure the role of their *meunasah* beyond its traditional function through the establishment of an ECE centre.

It was a pragmatic decision as *meunasah* is perhaps the only feasible option for the community to implement their ECE aspiration, as pointed out by the village secretary:

Why meunasah?.It has always been an educational site, although it normally functions as an Islamic teaching facility. But ECE is an important need for the children. We can't

afford to acquire a piece of land and build a new building, toilet and so on in a short

amount of time. We thought in the meeting, 'why not use the meunasah?'.In the future,

there is a possibility to build a specifically designated building if we can secure the

funding. (SH2)

While admitting the lack of funding, the stakeholders (SH1, SH2, SH4) had contemplated all the possibilities for the future such as whether to situate the new building within the *meunasah* compound or if the village would acquire a new site.

Nevertheless, even if they decided on moving the ECE centre in the future, *meunasah* has been an incubator that maintains the villagers' dream of having an ECE. The decision to choose *meunasah* highlights the community's ability to examine and act upon an alternative solution when confronted within the limitation of their reality. It is also an interesting choice, considering the traditional role of *meunasah* as a place that typically only provides Islamic education. The establishment of an ECE is also a form of social transformation of the village's century-old tradition of *meunasah* education.

Freire (1985; 1994) emphasised the need to reinvent his ideas for the different contexts in which they apply, or for reading the world in which the individuals concerned exist. It is also necessary to identify the shortcomings and potential of a particular site before taking action.

The consensus process that led to the establishment of an ECE centre resulted in a strong sense of belonging and heightened public aspirations toward ECE in *meunasah*. The first aspiration is related to the ECE teaching and learning process, and output. Two main points emerged within it, namely the need to incorporate character education into the teaching and learning process and issues of children's school readiness for primary school. The second aspiration is related to the overall improvement of the ECE centre. The villagers have expectations for more sustainable funding, facility improvement, teacher benefit and better coordination with related institutions.

In regard to the villagers' aspiration about what to expect from the ECE education or what experience the children should gain from an ECE centre, the community members, including parents and educators agreed on the need to accommodate more character education. The parents expected that ECE also emphasised children's behavioural developments or Islamic value-based character building. As reiterated by one of the parents (CMP4) wishing for a balanced education,

> *Children need to have both ilmu dunya (conventional knowledge) and ilmu agama (religious knowledge). The latter of course not too much for children, but just to get them familiarised with the basics…Children also need to play with their friends. When they are learning, they need to learn how to read and write at an early age, but they also should be familiar with akhlak (good behaviour). (CMP4)*

The Islamic approach in education encompasses different categories of knowledge, namely, revealed knowledge attained through religious sciences and acquired knowledge attained through the rational, intellectual and philosophical sciences. From an Islamic perspective, knowledge is holistic. Both types of knowledge contribute to the strengthening of faith. Islamic beliefs hold that human beings have the intellectual capacity to comprehend the truth without neglecting divine guidance (Al-Attas 1979). Al-Attas explained that the comprehensive and integrated approach to education in Islam aspired to balance human potential with "balanced growth of the personality…through training the 'human's' spirit, intellect, rational self, feelings and bodily senses…such that faith is infused into the whole of his personality" (Al-Attas 1979, p. 158).

The educators agree with the parents in that both expect to introduce children to character education based on Acehnese and Islamic values. Such an expectation is also in line with the 2013 curriculum guidelines that emphasise character development (as described earlier in this chapter) and provide room to accommodate diverse local values (Directorate General ECE,

2015). I saw firsthand how educators tried to fulfil this expectation through habituation in their

daily practices in the *meunasah* ECE.

I witnessed that every morning the educators would come early to greet the children and

parents at the gate, welcoming them with Islamic greetings and speaking gently to the parents.

Before the commencement of any class, everyone begins their day with prayers and saying

grace. They would typically start by singing hymns about the prophet, religious songs in

Acehnese or short verses from the Qur'an. Fridays are dedicated to accommodating more

religious subjects, such as the introduction of basic rituals of daily prayers through group

activities, or the introduction to the Arabic alphabet (*huruf hijaiyah*) through games and pictures

which is a part of basic Qur'anic teaching. The educators would also try to encourage good

behaviour through modelling. For instance, they address students with the term '*droeneh*' instead

of '*kah*'. The term *droeneh* is an Acehnese term used to address older people to show respect.

Meanwhile, the term *kah* is for addressing younger people or peers.

The emphasis on good behaviour is not only promoted through habituation but also

classroom activities, as shown in one of the learning segments that I observed. In one activity,

each student coloured family pictures. Educators then walked around, praising the children for

their work. As the educators walked around, they would also ask some of the students, how they

felt about having a family or friends, what they would feel if any of their family members or

friends fell sick, and what they would do to help them. Many children raised their hands to

answer the questions and then the class discussed how they could show their love to family and

friends. The teacher then gave an example of how to speak politely to parents and friends by

role-playing. The children then discussed good manners and things that children should not do

around family and friends. The session ended with practising how to be grateful for having

family and friends.

The expectation for more emphasis on character education is a common theme among both parents and educators. However, in terms of aspirations regarding educational outcomes, educators and parents slightly differed. Some parents, such as CMP1 hoped that children would be fully prepared for primary school after the completion of ECE by being able to have basic literacy and numeracy skills. CMP1 expressed the expectation of school readiness: "*We want our children to be able to read and count before enrolling in primary school; I am worried they will be in trouble if they cannot read well*" (*CMP1*). Other parents such as CMP5 shared a similar view, "*I think they should be able to write and read because other children may be able to do just that. So, he (her child) will be lagging behind if he doesn't learn it now (at ECE)*" (*CMP5*). Moreover, according to CMP 3,

> *I hope children will learn about manners and good behaviour…However, to be successful at grade 1 (Primary School), they need to know how to read, write, count and behave in class. I expect many parents nowadays to also prepare their children that way, I mean to know how to read, write and count so that they can be ahead in grade 1. (CMP3)*

Parents' conceptual understanding of school readiness mainly relates to behavioural and cognitive aspects. As mentioned above, some wanted the children to have a balance between the two aspects. Nevertheless, some parents were mainly concerned about the cognitive skills of their children, such as writing, reading and arithmetic skills. On the other hand, educators seem to have a broader understanding of ECE that goes beyond literacy skills. The educators believe in exploring other possibilities in the teaching and learning process, such as learning in nature. E1 argued that parents or educators should not force children to achieve certain cognitive skill targets. According to her,

> *I realised that some parents expect their children to be able to write, read and count, even if we (educators) have to force the children. I strongly disagree with that; children*

should not be forced to do anything. Of course, we will introduce the children to reading and writing activities. For example, we introduce the alphabet, and gradually, we also teach them to read syllables, using several play activities so that children can explore on their own. They should experience joyful learning, not a dictated one. We try to have constructive discussions with parents about these issues and try to raise awareness. (E1)

Heckman (2006) argued that school readiness should be viewed beyond cognitive ability and should take into account childrens' social skills. Mashburn and Pianta (2010) also offered a different perspective on school readiness, putting forth the notion of school-focused readiness, which they define as,

> School readiness is a function of an organized system of interactions and transactions among people (children, teachers, and parents) settings (home, school, and centre), and institutions (communities, neighborhoods, and governments). (Mashburn & Pianta, 2010, p. 151)

Educators with utopian thinking have an awareness that another alternative is possible "that early childhood education, for instance, could be taught and done differently" and in doing so they believe that they would move towards a better, more humane future (Moss, 2014, p. 35). Another educator (E2) stated that children should have the opportunity to learn from the environment, connect with the surroundings and other adults. She explained,

> *For instance, here in this village, we are an agricultural community. So, reflecting on that, we sometimes bring children to the surrounding areas such as the paddy field. Children would then name the new things they see around them, plants, animals, and so on. More interestingly, they now know that the cultivation of rice is a long process. So, when we went there this month, children saw farmers plough the land, while next month they would plant the paddy and so on…Children also got to meet people. For example, they met people who went fishing in the water-channel near the paddy field. Children*

206

then interacted and asked them some questions, like what they fished, how they did it, and

so on. (E2)

However, as stated earlier by the principal (E1), the educators and parents have tried to compromise around their differing expectations and aspirations through dialogue. This finding regarding the expectation of school readiness is consistent with the finding by Lara Fridani (2014) in which the researcher noticed that Indonesian parents consider academic skills such as reading, writing and basic arithmetic as the primary measurement of school readiness. Children underperforming in these cognitive areas were not considered ready for school. Her research also noted the need for both parents and educators in Indonesia to view school readiness as a multi-faceted notion that incorporates children's holistic development (Fridani, 2014).

The second aspiration is related to the need for the improvement of the ECE service in the village. Villagers identified certain specific expectations to show improvement in the quality of the ECE service. Unlike the first aspiration, achieved internally, to improve the condition of the ECE required the involvement and interventions of multiple parties, mainly the government. The main aspiration of stakeholders, community members, parents and educators is for ECE to get better funding. Other expectations include better educators' welfare and infrastructure improvement and more coordination with policymakers.

Receiving better funding for ECE in *meunasah* is a dream of the whole community in Gampong Blang. Stakeholders, community members, parents and educators acknowledge the need for better funding for ECE. Currently, the main funding (until February 2018) comes from the village as the ECE in *meunasah* received 15 Million IDR IDR (AUD1,500) from village budget. The village chief (SH 1) explained,

> *I think we should plan for the future. We need to sustain our ECE, but sadly it will be*
>
> *hard to only rely on the village budget. This is current government policy (village*
>
> *allocation fund), but what happens if the government changes, would they continue with*

this policy? In the last meeting, we concluded that we need to find other sources of

funding and the principals have explained that even private ECE like the one in our

village can receive government funding of which the amount may be allocated based on

the number of students. So, everyone in our ECE is working to meet the administrative

requirements in order to qualify for the allocation. (SH1)

As stated by the village chief, there have been some developments on funding as the ECE expected to receive their first BOP allocation (ECE operational funding) from the Ministry of Education (expected in mid-2018 /the current research was concluded around February 2018). The amount of BOP depends on the number of students. Each child's allocation amounts to IDR 600,000 or AUD 60 per year. The ECE in Gampong Blang which at the time had 30 children would receive around IDR 18,000,000 or AUD 1800 annually. All ECE education centres, both formal and non-formal that meet the criteria and have completed the online database forms may receive the said funding. However, the ECE can only utilise BOP for student-related operational expenses such as books, learning materials, and subsidies for children from lower-income families. Use for other purposes such as educators' salary or honorarium is not permitted (Directorate General of ECE, 2011; Denboba, 2015).

Figure 13. "Water on the floor", a classroom was leaked during the raining season.

Figure 14. The meunasah's ECE yards

The expectations for better funding were directly related to better educator's welfare,

another one of the villagers' hopes for the ECE. Stakeholders became aware of the possibility of

the ECE centre, receiving a BOP budget allocation in the current year. However, as this fund was

not available for educators' payments, financial incentives still relied on the village budget. SH2 explained,

> *Hopefully, we will receive BOP allocation this year as the principal and teachers have worked hard to meet all the requirements needed to qualify for the fund. However, it may only partially solve our issue because BOP is only for operational cost and children-related spending. As you know, our teachers receive a very small salary, way too small. We still need to work hard to find another source of funding. (SH2)*

At the time, the total annual honorarium for all educators was equal to IDR 11,400,000 or AUD 1,140 allocated from the village budget. Better welfare for teachers was the current concern of all segments of the community. Most community members and parents hoped for government support for teachers' incentives as well as other sources such as NGO assistance. One of the parents (CMP1) stated '*Our teachers need better incentives because it will increase their motivation. I hope the government can make them government employees*'. The educators also hoped for better financial support to allow them to put more focus on ECE and have financial security from their work in ECE. An educator (E2) stated,

> *We hope that the government would give a little attention to teachers like us so that we can do better at teaching, have more time to prepare for the class and apply the curriculum as it all takes time. However, currently, we need to be realistic and try to earn a living (work a second job) while teaching. We hope that they (the government) could pay more attention to us. Some of us, especially the younger teachers, have to explain to their family that teaching at ECE is a rational choice because their family and many others saw that they had uncertain prospects with the school and that they currently made very little money from the job. We do not hope for much, just a decent income so that we can dedicate more time for the students. (E2)*

The villagers also dreamt about better facilities for the ECE. Stakeholders expected better classrooms that would be especially dedicated to the children, while some parents also expect additional classrooms and toilets. Educators were also worried that the limited capacity of the ECE could become a constraint in the future for enrolling more children, as they expected that more students in Gampong Blang and the nearby villages would enrol to the ECE in the coming years.

7.6   Summary

This chapter addressed the global initiative on ECE in Aceh after the tsunami and discussed the national efforts on ECE as well as the role of NGOs. Moreover, the chapter examined how these discourses influence the ECE in the village. It also expounded how the villagers' and educators' hopes resonated with the notion of conscientisation. The chapter examined the notion of hope of a 'balanced' future generation through the concept of *ta'dib*. The chapter described the role of HIMAPAUDI or teacher association in assisting educators to navigate the challenges in ECE. It then addressed the way the villagers managed their ECE amid limited resources and elaborated on the challenges faced by educators and their efforts to improve their capacity as well as the villagers'aspirations of ECE in *meunasah*.

Chapter 8: Summary, Recommendations and Conclusion

8.1   Introduction

This final chapter presents an overview of my research and a summary of the main findings. It also provides recommendations to support community ECE in *meunasah*. In addition, it highlights my study's contributions to knowledge and the limitations of the research. I suggest directions for future research on ECE initiative in *meunasah*. As Moss (2017) argued for the need to allow more alternative voices and stories on ECE from across the world to emerge, my study casts light on a village community's efforts to provide ECE access for their children. It underscores their tenacity, driven by the hope for a better future for their children. I argue that the ECE initiative in *meunasah* will have a vital role in the future in providing access to ECE for children in rural Aceh. As shown in this research, establishing and managing ECE is a challenging endeavour that requires determination of the whole community—stakeholders, community members, parents as well as educators. The effort of Gampong Blang villagers to establish ECE in their *meunasah* highlights what the processes and practices look like in this particular context. However, the aspirations of villagers for a sustainable ECE service in their village requires more support from policymakers, NGOs and academics at local universities.

8.2   Overview of the Research

This ethnographic case study (Creswell, 2014; Merriam, 1998) focused on how a rural community in Gampong Blang, North Aceh, established a community-initiated ECE in their *meunasah*. For centuries, *meunasah* has been used by locals as a house of worship, a centre for community activities, a cultural centre, an assembly for dispute resolution and a centre for traditional Islamic education of children (Alfian, 1999; Badruzzaman, 2002; Sabirin, 2014; Wahid, 2013). It has also emerged as a socio-cultural and political institution that is deeply

rooted in Acehnese rural communities (Badruzzaman, 2002; Wahid, 2015). In recent years, as Aceh emerged from the post-conflict and post-disaster period, the educational role of *meunasah*, a common feature of villages in Aceh, also includes the provision of ECE service for children.

My research explored the driving force behind the ECE initiative and the community's aspirations for their ECE in *meunasah*. In particular, it addressed the following research questions:

1. Why are *meunasah* stakeholders and community members invested in the development of ECE in post-conflict and post-tsunami Aceh?

2. What is the role of *meunasah* in the development of ECE initiative?

3. What are the nature of teachers' experiences and community aspirations in *meunasah*'s ECE?

I addressed these questions through an ethnographic case study in Gampong Blang (a pseudonym), a village in North Aceh Regency, one of the regencies of Aceh Province in Indonesia. In theorising the role of *meunasah* stakeholders, community members and educators in promoting early years education initiative, the theoretical lens of Paulo Freire's notions of consciousness informed this research. I also put forward Al-Attas' concepts of Islamic education to better understand an educational institution situated in the deeply rooted religious setting of Aceh. This approach was respectful of the context in its exploration of village stakeholders, community members and educators' stories and aspirations for their village, their *meunasah* and their ECE. The data generation methods employed in the research include observations, interviews and document analysis. These methods allowed the generation of data from the participants, namely the village stakeholders, community members and educators.

In this ethnographic case study, as the researcher, I was an integral part of the data generation. As the researcher, my role had to be transparent throughout the process. As an Acehnese who comes from a rural area and speaks fluent Acehnese, many of the participants viewed me as an insider. However, my position as researcher also situated me as an outsider. Subedi (2006) uses the term 'halfie' researcher to describe this kind of positioning.

The data analysis included the following activities: managing and organising the data, reading all of the texts (transcriptions, field notes and documents), describing the case based on its context, establishing themes, using direct interpretation, and presenting an in-depth picture of the case (Creswell, 2013). I approached the coding process by generating initial codes to allow the discovery of codes without any restrictions in order to allow the discovery of meanings through open-mindedness and curiosity. Categories derived from the coding process merged to establish relationships between different conceptual themes. The theoretical framework identified and analysed these themes. The theoretical lens also guided the search for in-depth data. The data viewed through the lens of Al-Attas' notion of *adab* and Freire's notions of consciousness resulted in themes from my analyses, providing insight into the questions of interest in this research.

I drew the findings from the analysis of data from interviews and informal conversations with stakeholders, community members, parents and educators as well as my observations of various activities in the village. Moreover, I supported my findings with relevant documents. My research findings have been divided into three chapters representing three main themes—continuity, change and hope. The next section summarises the main findings.

8.3   Summary of the Key Findings

8.3.1   Continuity. The first analysis chapter discussed the continuity of the community. The findings highlight the socio-cultural background of the village, the role of the family in

children upbringing, the local matrifocality and the activism of women as they work within traditional systems to support ECE initiatives in the village. I adopted Al-Attas' concept of *ta'dib* in explaining the community structure and values. A descriptive analysis of Gampong Blang community sheds light on the pre-conditions that enabled the establishment of ECE in *meunasah* in which the ECE is situated within a social context and established through the villagers' initiatives. Meanwhile, Freire's ideas of consciousness have been employed to understand the role and influence of the traditional system of village governance, *meunasah* stakeholders and community members in establishing and supporting ECE in *meunasah*.

This continuity in many aspects of the villagers'lives enabled the development of community initiatives in ECE. In Gampong Blang, the villagers' way of life is reflected through the continuity of their traditional administrative system and socio-economic structure preserved by conscious engagement and historical struggle. Gampong Blang is governed based on collective leadership of three institutions which administer the village traditional administrative system a system reflecting the balance of power among its power broker, namely, the village chief and his administration, the community council and the Imam. The unique fundamentals of the community lay a foundation for the development of bottom-up ECE initiatives in the village. I contend that Al Attas' concepts of *ta'dib* and *adab* represent the influence of Islamic traditions in *meunasah.* The drive to be a responsible community member who is conscious of community issues, such as the lack of ECE access in the village, was among the catalysts that raised the critical consciousness among the community members in Gampong Blang.

In Gampong Blang, the involvement of all segments of the community compensated for the absence of facilitators. The community structure in the local *trias-politica* allowed for consideration of various perspectives. The community members with diverse expertise discussed the initiative and then arrived at a consensus and a plan of action. All segments of society contributed to the process. The village chief and his team contributed through their knowledge of

bureaucracy and administrative processes. The educators in the village provided educational perspectives and the religious leader, and *adat* leader contributed with their expertise in local values. The young people of the village influenced with their ideas about new developments outside the village, and the parents with their eagerness to enrol their children.

The village's traditional supra-structure and the strong matrifocal culture within Acehnese people enabled the initiatives from a group of village women to be discussed by community members and village stakeholders in community meetings in *meunasah*. The ideas were put forward in *meunasah* and examined by community members and stakeholders who represent the *trias-politica* of the village. The idea subsequently developed into policy and was allocated with a budget after approving the initiatives in meetings in *meunasah*. A group of concerned female villagers initially proposed this grassroots program. This group often joined by other women, started the discussion. Initially, the female members of the community came together through their common concerns about the children in the village. One of these concerns arose from no ECE service in the village resulting in the village children enrolling in ECE in the district capital or other villages a situation that added to the difficulty for parents and children. The other pressing concern was the need for ECE to prepare the children to be ready for primary school education.

8.3.2   Change. The second chapter explored change in the community that allowed the development of ECE. It illustrated the current socio-economic developments in the research site, Gampong Blang, North Aceh Regency. Moreover, the chapter explained the changes in the village brought about by the village allocation fund (ADD). These changes included how villagers were able to allocate money to establish ECE in their *meunasah*, following the funding. The chapter also examined the role of village stakeholders within the community and discussed the changing role of *meunasah* in the village and the role of the families in the community and larger society.

Meanwhile, the socio-cultural lives of the villagers changed after the tsunami in 2004, leading to the re-energisation of attempts at implementing more Sharia-based regulations. These recent developments make the role of *meunasah* even more central to the villagers in Gampong Blang. As an institution, it has been pivotal in ensuring the continuity of local traditions and practices and as an avenue to facilitate positive change in this new era, such as the establishment of ECE in the village.

Through the process of consciousness–raising, the community in Gampong Blang were involved and worked collectively to achieve a community objective. This objective involved attending community meetings, participating in community events and work, and participating in local politics. Through a series of meetings and dialogues in *meunasah*, the community became more cognisant of their reality, limitations and opportunities. The villagers then participated in community initiatives to address the community issues, in this case, the lack of access to ECE. Access to ECE was an important issue for the villagers in Gampong Blang. For decades, it was only available in the nearby town, which was difficult for the villagers to access. Through conversations, dialogues, meetings, consensus building and communal action, people in Gampong Blang decided to make changes through their *meunasah*. In 2016, the community launched the ECE initiative in *meunasah* to address the issue.

The changes in the *meunasah* compound allowed for the establishment of the ECE (it officially started operations in July 2016). The villagers renovated the village storage room and an unused room that was the village office before it moved to a new building in front of *meunasah*. The villagers conducted the work of renovating the rooms for ECE and installing the playground equipment in *gotong-royong,* (voluntary communal work) with some of the works funded by the village, from the revised village budget. The decision to choose *meunasah* highlights the ability of the community to find alternative solutions when confronted with a difficult reality. Considering that the traditional role of *meunasah* was for the purpose of Islamic

education, this choice is noteworthy. The establishment of an ECE centre illustrates the social transformation of the village's century-old tradition of *meunasah* education.

8.3.3 Hope. The third analysis chapter discussed the global initiatives on ECE in Aceh

after the tsunami, the national initiatives on ECE and the role of NGOs. It also examined how these discourses and educators' practices and hopes for ECE in the village actively influenced the ECE. The chapter also showed how such hopes resonated with the notion of conscientisation of the educators. Moreover, the chapter examined the hope for a 'balanced' future generation through the concept of *ta'dib*. The chapter also described the way the community managed their ECE amid the limited resources, the challenges facing educators and their efforts to improve their capacity as well as their aspirations for ECE in *meunasah*.

The findings presented in the chapter also underscored the challenges faced by the community and their aspirations for the ECE in *meunasah*. The ECE initiative in Gampong Blang was a process that began with a grassroots movement with limited resources. Despite the constraints, the educators tried to maintain high hopes in that the village's children would succeed in the future through their ECE education in *meunasah*. The educators showed patience in working to provide the best for the children despite the very minimal financial incentives. Freire's definition of progressive educators seems to resemble the experiences of the educators in Gampong Blang, as the teachers avoided waiting passively. Their patience transformed into "active waiting" by their constant efforts to improve the conditions of the ECE in Gampong Blang which included gaining more knowledge and skills in ECE (Freire, 1972b, p. 64). The educators' endeavours to build their capacities did not stop at only pursuing a degree in ECE. They also actively took part in various capacity-building programs such as programs provided by HIMAPAUDI (ECE teacher association). The whole village harboured aspirations for the ECE in *meunasah*. The first aspiration is related to ECE teaching and learning process and outcomes. These are specifically related to the common concern for the need to incorporate character

education into the teaching and learning process and the development of the children's readiness for primary school. The second aspiration is related to the improvement of the ECE centre. These include goals of more sustainable funding, facility improvement, increased teacher welfare and better coordination with related institutions.

8.4   Recommendations

The education system in Indonesia is broad and decentralised, with regency governments also playing a prominent role. While the Ministry of Education and Culture and the Ministry of Religious Affairs are responsible for setting policies and managing the system, central and regency governments are responsible for developing and managing teachers. The funding system for the education sector is complex, involving multiple sources and transfers across various levels of government. Despite efforts to simplify budgets, schools still receive funds from various budget sources. Some budgets come directly from the central government and some from local governments (mainly regency governments) (NDPA, 2013). A similar situation also occurs in ECE sectors. In acknowledging these facts, promoting interventions to improve the ECE service, particularly in rural areas, is vital

8.4.1   Expanding educational opportunities. One intervention is to expand
educational opportunities for ECE educators. There is a need to ensure that ECE educators have the opportunities to pursue relevant education and training, particularly at nonformal centres. Education for educators needs to be more financially accessible. There is also the need to improve budget allocation to boost educators' welfare, particularly involving raising the salaries of service providers such as ECE personnel. Other incentives for both educators and the centres should also be considered, such as providing grants for ECE teacher associations and utilising private education providers to expand educational opportunities.

8.4.2   Strengthening communication between sectors. Furthermore, communication
between sectors should be strengthened through the establishment of a district-level or regency

level anchor to coordinate ECE service in the area. It could also be a forum for information sharing on enhancing coordination, developing capacity, guiding the establishment of ECE services and assisting centres in accessing funding from the relevant government institutions and private sectors.

8.4.3   Increasing the ECE budget. Increasing the education budget on ECE is another recommendation. To ensure that all children attend ECE, the government should consider allocating a higher percentage of its education budget to ECE. As highlighted in this research, without assistance from policymakers and NGOs, ECE services will rely heavily on the village budget which is limited and can affect the long term sustainability of the provision of ECE in the future. An issue identified in this study is that the allocation through the DOP or ECE operational budget from the Ministry of Education cannot be utilised for improving educators' welfare or wages. This research has also shown that to improve access to better the quality of ECE services would require increasing ECE investments among different stakeholders, including central government (relevant ministries), regency allocation and private sectors. There is also a need to promote transparency and efficiency by ensuring funds go where they are most needed and strengthening supervision by related institutions.

8.5   Contributions to Knowledge

8.5.1   Theoretical contribution. My study demonstrates conceptualising ECE within diversity and subjectivity. ECE in this particular community is not just about children's learning outcomes or school readiness, but it is also about how a particular community understands human development. In this case, a community in a rural region of Aceh that still upholds its traditional values and system while embracing gradual changes with the hope that the ECE will develop children into a balanced human'. The community perceived that education should aim towards balancing *ilmu* (knowledge) and *adab* (good behaviour, good etiquette and morals)

resonating with Al-Attas' conception of education as being an enterprise developing individuals holistically (Al-Attas, 1997; Wan Daud, 1998).

This study also illustrates the compatibility of Freire's ideas within a deeply-religious community, like Aceh, which is well known for its strong Islamic traditions and local values. Freire's ideas of humanism and liberation are not alien to Islam and Acehnese traditions, as Islam also preaches universal brotherhood, humanism and social justice (Achmadi, 2010; Al-Attas, 1993; Engineer, 1987; Roqib, 2011; Syariati, 1996;). According to Freire (1972b; 1973), critical consciousness must be developed through the efforts of the people, the authentic unity of action and reflection Al-Attas' *adab* concept emphasises that a good Muslim must fulfil his responsibility towards his family and the rest of society. Good individuals (*insan adabi*) are those who are conscious of their relationships between themselves and society (Al-Attas, 1995; 1999). He believes that an individual must possess *adab* in an inclusive sense, becoming genuinely conscious of his obligation to himself, his family and society. In this research, I argue that the drive and dedication shown by the villagers to be responsible community members who are also conscious of community issues, such as the need for ECE access in the village represents Al-Attas' concepts of *ta'dib* and *adab*. Their actions were the catalyst that raised consciousness among the community members in Gampong Blang.

8.5.2   Policy contribution. This study identified the need for more funding and programs to help improve educators' capacity. It includes improving educators' access to education and training, professional development, as well as their welfare and income. Professional development through training enhances teachers' knowledge and skills in teaching and increases their ability to practise quality pedagogy ultimately contributing to children's learning and developmental outcomes as well as enhancing their sense of accountability to the school and families (Brown, 2009; Dickinson & Caswell, 2007;). Currently, the Directorate of Teachers and Education Personnel provides a basic-level 48-hour course, an intermediate-level

64-hour course, and an advanced 80-hour course, all of which offer courses to upgrade educators' academic qualifications. However, due to capacity constraints, these training programs were not available to all educators in this study who wanted to participate. Apart from the lack of accessibility, these courses also need to cover holistic approaches of ECE health, nutrition, cognitive development, social and emotional development, inclusive education, parenting, curriculum, and lesson planning.

However, policy-makers also need to consider the local context in implementing standardised policies for ECE and educators. All forms of ECE institutions are obliged to follow the national standards which cover: the standard of developmental goals; the standard of ECE teachers and professionals; the standard of content, process, and assessment; and the standard of facilities, infrastructure, management, and finance (Directorate General of ECE, 2015). Although these standards are drivers to improve the ECE quality, in fact, not all existing ECE centres have the resources to meet all the standards. There is arguably a necessity to acknowledge the need for different conceptualisations of childhood at the local level and the socio-economic disparities that exist among the various areas in Indonesia. The ECE narrative should also reflect local contexts and practices should meet local demands.

8.5.3   Practice contribution. This study highlights the opportunities to improve access to ECE through the village allocation fund. The village fund policy provides an opportunity for villages to access resources for community development programs. The village fund, utilised according to the principles of transparency, accountability and effectiveness, could improve not only infrastructure in rural areas but also community development, including access to ECE. Along with the regency government's investment village fund, it provides broader opportunities for children in rural areas to receive ECE services. My research demonstrates how village stakeholders and community members supported the use of village budget for early years education in *meunasah*.

My study also underscores the potential and significance of the educational role of *meunasah*, especially in providing access to early years education in the rural areas of Aceh. In the case of Gampong Blang, the role of *meunasah* in the early stage of this education initiative was pivotal as an incubator that enabled the ECE initiative to start and develop despite the minimal resources. *Meunasah* in Gampong Blang has also been the site for decision-making through village meetings and an avenue for the community to raise their consciousness on various issues. *Meunasah* across rural Aceh has the potential to expand access to ECE, by replicating the Gampong Blang ECE project in other villages in the rural areas of Aceh.

Feener (2007) argues that more global discourses or agenda should be translated into a local model acceptable to mainstream Muslims. In this study, the role of women pressure groups, as shown highlights the importance of the local dimension in developing consciousness on the global discourse and agenda such as early childhood into the local context. In the case of Gampong Blang, this was in the shape of the Muslim women in the village.

8.6   Future Research and Challenges

Future studies can look into a broader spectrum of ECE in the various regencies in Aceh in order to gain more understandings from different contexts. There is also a need to view the developments of ECE expansion in rural and relatively poor areas with caution. As many centres rely heavily on government funds, it would be insightful and interesting to examine how other centres deal with the issues of funding and sustainability. There is also a need for a future study that looks into the impacts of ECE on rural area communities. To eradicate the socio-economic disparity between and the rural and urban areas, the government has supported ECE in the rural areas. Community mobilisation has become a way to enable this program, with communities running ECE centres using any available resources. The question for the future is whether the way ECE has expanded to reduce future economic inequality is a straightforward journey.

The intention to provide rural children access to ECE should not perpetuate the view that educators and volunteers (mainly women) are cheap labour. So, initiatives in rural areas should not impoverish teachers by providing insufficient income compounded by little time available to work at other jobs reducing income availability even more. Policymakers should move beyond the common adage that sincere and dedicated educators' hard work will 'find their reward in heaven'; this is not a justification for the minimal financial incentives they receive.

Future research should carefully examine the impact of the current model of ECE investment in rural and relatively poor communities. More research is needed to inform a comprehensive policy that can tackle the many dimensions of inequality

8.7   Conclusion

The fact that Aceh is currently at a crossroads of history, culture, politics, economics and social conditions in the new post-conflict and post-tsunami orders has made this study of villagers' initiatives in ECE timely. The role of education has to be reconsidered and relocated into a new framework that legitimises existing and new social configurations (Shah & Cardozo, 2014). Moreover, although they have suffered decades of civil conflict and disaster, the Acehnese people are still one of the most enthusiastic communities when it comes to education.

Following tsunami disaster in 2005, armed conflict between 1976-2005, local political turmoil (after 2005), and reconfigurations of the social fabric within the society, Aceh is one of the most impoverished regions of Indonesia with an economic growth rate of only 1.65 per cent in 2014, far below the national average growth rate of 5.02 per cent (Statistic Indonesia, 2017; UNDP, 2010). However, one tangible contradiction remains a source of optimism (Naylor, 2013). The literacy and school enrollment rates are consistently higher than most other regions, and those of the national average rate (Naylor, 2013; Statistics Indonesia, 2017) statistics on Aceh in 2012 indicated that the participation rate in primary schools was 99.36 per cent, the

participation rate in secondary schools was 94.34 per cent, with the participation rate in higher schooling at 74.59 per cent, higher than the national average.

This enthusiasm for education is palpable in Gampong Blang, where the community unequivocally supported and embraced the ECE initiative in their *meunasah*. Both global initiatives have arguably driven the transformation and reconfiguration of the educational role of meunasahs after the conflict and tsunami and national developments on ECE (national campaign for Early Childhood Education). Furthermore, the granting of special autonomy to the province in 2005 and the recent democratisation policies by the national government which allow villages to manage their own budget through the village allocation fund have been among the pre-conditions for the flourishing of ECE in rural Aceh. However, without the villagers' initiative and drive these pre-conditions may have been futile. Their initiative and awareness created a bottom-up action rather than an action forced on the villagers by the government. In the case of Gampong Blang, it was the activism of a group of women in the village together with the support of stakeholders that subsequently galvanised efforts from the whole community.

This study illustrated how the community rallied around their *meunasah* to realise their dream of having an ECE centre in their village. The village authority and elders provided support and budget for the early years education in *meunasah*; the Imam allowed the change to the traditional religious teaching in *meunasah* and the village youths worked to educate the children. The *meunasah* has been an incubator that has maintained the villagers' dream of having an ECE centre. Unfortunately, this bottom-up initiative would still require more attention and support from policy-makers in many aspects such as educators' welfare and training as well as sustainable sources of funding. Some villagers contemplated all the possibilities for the future, like whether the location for the new building would be within the *meunasah* compound or if the village would acquire a new site. Nevertheless, if the centre relocated in the future, the decision to choose *meunasah* highlights the ability of the community to examine and act upon an

alternative solution when confronted with the challenges of reality. Considering the traditional role of *meunasah* known as a place that typically only provided Islamic education, using it for ECE is indeed remarkable.

The establishment of an ECE centre in the village embodies the social transformation of the village's century-old tradition of *meunasah* education; it exemplifies the possibilities of hope for a better future. ECE expansions should not become an added burden to the rural community. Policymakers need to be critically aware that ECE expansions or achievements also require sensitivity to community needs and thinking beyond the 'quantity' of established centres. Consideration of the 'quality' of such programs and whether they are having an impact in easing inequalities in rural areas is paramount.

References

Abdurrahman, M. (2005). *Islam yang memihak* (Islam that is taking sides). Yogyakarta: LKiS.

Achmadi. (2010). *Ideologi-ideologi pendidikan Islam, paradigma humanisme teosentris* (The ideologies of Islamic education, the paradigm of theocentric humanism). Yogjakarta: Pustaka Pelajar,

Adriany, V. (2015). Gender in pre-school and child-centered ideologies: A story from an Indonesian kindergarten. In Brownhill, S., Warin, J., & Warnersson, I. (Eds.), *Men, masculinity and teaching in early childhood education: International perspectives on gender and care* (pp. 70-82). Oxon: Routledge.

Adriany, V. (2018a). The internationalisation of early childhood education: Case study from selected kindergartens in Bandung, Indonesia. *Policy Futures in Education, 16*(1), 92-107.

Adriany, V. (2018b). Neoliberalism and practices of early childhood education in Asia. *Policy Futures in Education, 16*(1), 3-10.

Adriany, V. (2019). Negotiating local and global discourse in kindergarten: Stories from Indonesia. *Journal of Pedagogy, 10*(1), 77-93.

Adriany, V., & Saefullah, K. (2015). Deconstructing human capital discourse in Early Childhood Education in Indonesia. In T. Lightfoot-Rueda, R. L. Peach, & N. Leask (Eds.), *Global perspectives on human capital in Early Childhood Education: Reconceptualizing theory, policy, and practice,* (pp. 159-179). New York: Palgrave Macmillan.

Afrianty, D. (2015). Local women's NGOs and the reform of Islamic law in Aceh: Case Study of MISPI. In R. M. Feener, D. Kloos, & A. Samuels, *Islam and the limits of the state*. (pp. 118-140). Leiden: Brill.

Agar. (1980). *The professional stranger*. London: Academic Press.

Age, L. (2006). Nasionalisme Aceh. In A. R. H. Ismail, A. Arifin & N. Zainun (Eds.), *Nasionalisme dan revolusi di Malaysia dan Indonesia* (pp. 243-263). Pulau Pinang: USM Press.

Ahmed, L. (1992). Women and gender in Islam: Historical roots of a modern debate. New Haven: Yale University Press.

Al-Attas, M. N. (1979). *Aims and objectives of Islamic education.* Jeddah: Hodder and Stoughton.

Al-Attas, M. N. (1985). Islam, secularism, and the philosophy of the future. London: Mansell.

Al-Attas, M. N. (1989). *Islam and the philosophy of science*. Kuala Lumpur: ISTAC.

Al-Attas, M. N. (1997). *The concept of education in Islam*. Kuala Lumpur: ABIM.

Al-Attas, M. N. (2003). Prologomena to the metaphysics of Islam and exposition of fundamental elements of the worldview of Islam. Kuala Lumpur: ISTAC.

Al-Attas, M. N. (2013). Islam: The concept of religion and the foundation of ethics and morality. Kuala Lumpur: IBFIM.

Al-Chaidar., Dinamika, Y., & Ahmed, S. M. (1999). *Aceh bersimbah darah: Mengungkap penerapan status daerah operasi militer (DOM) di Aceh, 1989-1998* (Aceh bloody conflict: Revealing the martial law (DOM) in Aceh, 1989-1998). Jakarta: Pustaka Al-Kautsar.

Alfian, I., T. (1999). *Wajah Aceh dalam lintasan sejarah* (Aceh through the course of history). Banda Aceh: Pusat Dokumentasi dan Informasi Aceh.

Alfian. I. T. (1977). *Segi-segi sosial budaya masyarakat Aceh* (Socio-cultural aspects of Acehnese society). Aceh. Jakarta: LP3ES.

Ali, M. (2017). Arus Pendidikan Islam transformatif di Indonesia: Sebuah penjajagan awal (Transformative Islamic education in Indonesia: An initial assessment). *Suhuf* , *29*(1), 1-14.

Amer, H., Hyson, M. & Chang, M. C. (2013). Early childhood education and development in poor villages of Indonesia: Strong foundations, later success. (World Bank Report) Washington, DC: World Bank.

Amiruddin, M. H. (2005). The response of the ulama dayah to the modernization of Islamic law in Aceh. Bangi: UKM Press

Andriyani, D., & Juliansyah, H. (2018). Analisis disparitas wilayah di provinsi Aceh: Telaah pada dana otonomi khusus.(Disparity analysis in Aceh province: Study on special autonomy budget). *Jurnal Ekonomi Regional Unimal*, *1*(3), 30-37.

Angrosino, M. V. (2005). Recontextualizing observation: Ethnography, pedagogy, and the prospects for a progressive political agenda. In N. K. Denzin & Y. S. Lincoln (Eds.). *The Sage handbook of qualitative research* (3rd ed., pp. 729-746). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publication.

Armia, N. (2014). Teungku dayah dan kekuasaan panoptik (The panoptical power of Tengku Dayah). *Substantia*, *16*(1), 13-34.

Ary, D., Cheser Jacobs, L., Razavieh, A., & Sorensen, C. (2010). *Introduction to research in education* (8th ed.). Belmont, CA: Wadsworth Cengage Learning.

Aspinall, E. (2009). *Islam and nation: Separatist rebellion in Aceh, Indonesia.* Stanford: Stanford University Press.

Asshiddiqie, J. (2006). *Perihal undang-undang* (Regarding the laws). Jakarta: Konstitusi Press.

Australian Government. AusAID. (2010). *Indonesia's National Program for Community Empowerment (PNPM): Brochure*. Retrieved from https://www.dfat.gov.au/sites/default/files/pnpm-brochure-pd.pdf

Badruzzaman, I. (2002). *Fungsi meunasah sebagai lembaga hukum adat di Aceh Besar* (Meunasah as an institution to uphold customary law in Aceh). (Master's thesis). Retrieved from http://repository.usu.ac.id

Bailey, B. (2009). *Independent completion report of the Communities and Education Program in Aceh (CEPA): Final Report*. Retrieved from https://www.dfat.gov.au/sites/default/files/ICR-CEPA-Final-Report.pdf

Barron, P., Rahman, E., & Nugroho, K. (2013). The contested corners of Asia, subnational conflict and international development: The case of Aceh, Indonesia. (Report). Jakarta: Asia Foundation.

Basri, H. (2010). Islam in Aceh: Institutions, scholarly traditions, and relations between ulama and umara, In A. Graf, S. Schroter, & E. Wieringa, (Eds.), *Aceh: History, politics and culture* (pp. 180-200). Singapore: ISEAS.

Baxter, P., & Jack, S. (2008). Qualitative case study methodology: Study design and implementation for novice researchers. *The Qualitative Report*, *13*(4), 544-559.

Beatty, A. (2000). Islamic and non-Islamic prayer in Java. In D. Parkin, & S. C. Headly, (Eds.), *Islamic prayer across the Indian ocean: Inside and outside the mosque.* (pp. 39–62). Richmond: Curzon Press.

Beatty, A. (2009). *A shadow falls: In the heart of Java*. London: Faber and Faber.

Benda-Beckmann, F. V. (2002). "Who is afraid of legal pluralism?" *Journal of Legal Pluralism and Unofficial Law, 47*, 37–82.

Bigalke, T. W (2006). *Aceh two years after: Physical and spiritual challenges remain*. (Insights report, East-West Center Honolulu). Retrieved from https:// www.eastwestcenter.org /stored /pdfs/Insights00101.pdf

Bishop, W. (1999). Ethnographic writing research: Writing it down, writing it up, and reading it. Portsmouth: Heinemann.

BKPM (Indonesia Investment Coordinating Board). (2016). *Profile of regency of North Aceh*. Retrieved from http://regionalinvestment.bkpm.go.id/newsipid/en/displayprofil. php?ia =1111

Blackwood, E. (2000). *Webs of power: Women, kin and community in a Sumatran village.* New York: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers. Inc.

Bogdan, R. & Biklen, S. K. (2007). Qualitative research for education: An introduction to theories and method. Boston: Allyn and Bacon.

Bowen, J. R. (1993). Muslims through discourse: Religion and ritual in Gayo society. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Brown, C. P. (2010). Balancing the readiness equation in early childhood education reform. *Journal of Early Childhood Research*, *8* (2), 133-160. Retrieved from https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/10.1177/1476718X09345504#articleCitationDownload Container. doi:10.1177/1476718X09345504

Burgess, R. G. (1984). In the field: An introduction to field research. London: Allen & Unwin

Bustamam-Ahmad, K. (2014). A current portrait of Islamic education in Aceh. *Islamika Indonesiana*, *1*(1), 1-16.

Butvilas, T., & Zygmantas, J. (2011). An ethnographic case study in educational research. *Acta Paedagogica Vilnensia*, *27*, 33–42.

Campbell, F. A., Ramey C. T., Pungello, E. P., Sparling, J., & Miller-Johnson, S. (2002). Early childhood education: Young adult outcomes from the abecedarian project. *Applied Developmental Science*, *6*(1), 42–57.

Casson, A. E. 2010). Perceptions of Catholicity in a plural society: An ethnographic case study of Catholic secondary schools in England. (Doctoral dissertation). Retrieved from http://go.warwick.ac.uk/wrap/35207

Chan, A., & Ritchie, J. (2016). Parents, participation, partnership: Problematising New Zealand early childhood education. *Contemporary Issues in Early Childhood*, *17*(3), 289–303. https://doi.org/10.1177/1463949116660954

Chang, J., & Young, P. (2010). *Capacity statement: Early childhood care and development* (Report). Retrieved from https:// *plan*. www.planusa.org/docs/ECCD.pdf

Clarke, M., Fanany, I., &. Kenny, S. (Eds.). (2010). *Post-disaster reconstruction: Lessons from Aceh.* London: Routledge.

Clave-Celic, E. (2014). Silenced fighters: An insight into women combatants' history in Aceh (17th-20th). *Archipel*, *87*, 273-306.

Creswell, J. W. (2013). Qualitative inquiry & research design: Choosing among five approaches. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

Creswell, J. W. (2014). Educational research: Planning, conducting and evaluating qualitative and quantitative research (5th ed.). Frenchs Forest, Sydney: Pearson Australia.

Dahlberg, G., & Moss, P. (2005). *Ethics and politics in early childhood education*. London: Routledge Falmer.

Dahlberg, G., Moss, P., & Pence, A. (2007). *Beyond quality in early childhood education and care: Language of evaluation* (3rd ed.). New York, NY: Falmer Press.

Davies, D., & Johnson, V. R. (1996). Crossing boundaries: Family, community, and school partnerships. *International Journal of Education Research, 25*(1), 1-105.

Denboba, A., Amer, H., & Wodon, Q. (2015). *Early childhood education and development in Indonesia: An assessment of policies using SABER.* (World Bank Report). Washington, DC: World Bank. doi:10.1596/978-1-4648-0646-9

Denzin, N. K., & Lincoln, Y. S. (2018). *The Sage handbook of qualitative research* (5th ed.). Los Angeles: Sage Publications.

Dhofier, Z. (1999). The Pesantren tradition: The role of the kyai in the maintenance of traditional Islam in Java. Arizona: Arizona State University Program.

Dhuhri, S. (2014). *Dayah: Menapaki jejak pendidikan warisan endatu* (Dayah education: Following in the footsteps of the earlier generations). Banda Aceh: Lhee Sagoe Press.

Dickinson, D. K., & Caswell, L. (2007). Building support for language and early literacy in preschool classrooms through in-service professional development: Effects of the Literacy Environment Enrichment Program. *Early Childhood Research Quarterly, 22*(2), 243-246.

Directorate General of Early Childhood Education. (2011). *Kerangka besar pembangunan PAUD Indonesia periode 2011–2025.* Jakarta: Ministry of Education.

Directorate General of Early Childhood Education. (2015a). *Kerangka dasar dan struktur kurikulum 2013: Pendidikan anak usia dini.* Jakarta: Ministry of Education.

Directorate General of Early Childhood Education. (2015b). *Kurikulum pendidikan anak usia dini: apa, mengapa dan bagaimana*. Jakarta: Ministry of Education.

Drexler, E. F. (2008). *Aceh, Indonesia: Securing the insecure state*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press.

Dunn, J. (2004). Children's friendships: The beginnings of intimacy. Oxford, UK: Blackwell.

Education Sector Analytical and Capacity Development Partnership (ACDP). (2014). *Country background report on the education sector in Indonesia* (Report ACDP-002). Jakarta: Ministry of Education and Culture (MoEC).

Engineer, A. A. (1987). The origin and development of Islam: An essay on its socio-economic growth. London: Sangam Books.

Epstein, J. L. (1995). School-family-community partnerships: Caring for the children we share. *Phi Delta Kappan*, *76*(9), 701-712.

Epstein, J. L., & Sanders, M. G. (1998). What we learn from international studies of school-family-community partnerships. *Childhood Education, 74*(6), 392-394.

Fakih, M., Topatimasang, R., & Rahardjo, T. (2010). *Pendidkan popular: Membangun kesadaran kritis* (Popular education: Building critical conciousness).Yogyakarta: Insist Press.

Fakih, M., Topatimasang, R., Abdullah, S., Fauzi, N., & Rahardjo, T. (1999). *Panduan pendidikan pendidikan politik untuk rakyat* (A guide for political education of people). Yogyakarta: Insist and Pact.

Fan, L. (2013). *Disaster as opportunity? Building back better in Aceh, Myanmar and Haiti*. (Humanitarian Policy Group Working Paper). London: Overseas Development Institute.

Fang, J. T. Y., & Yusof, Q. (2013). Rejuvenating the agenda for early childhood in Aceh after the tsunami. *International Journal of Early Childhood Education and Care*, *2*(1), 38-50.

Fauzi N., & Ayu (1999). *Laporan kegiatan kelas: Involvement 1999-2000*. Yogyakarta: Insist Press.

Fauzi N. (2005). *Memahami gerakan-gerakan rakyat dunia ketiga* (Understanding people's movements in developing world). Yogyakarta: Insist.

Feener, R. M. (2007). *Muslim legal thought in modern Indonesia*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.

Feener, R. M. (2013). Sharia and social engineering: The implementation of Islamic law in contemporary Aceh. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Feener, R. M. (2014). The implementation of Islamic law in contemporary Aceh, Indonesia. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Formen, A., & Hardjono. (2013, July). *Indonesia 2045 and early childhood sector: Implication and response*. Paper presented at the 14th PECERA Annual Conference in Seoul, South Korea.

Formen, A., & Nuttall, J. (2014). Tensions between discourses of development, religion, and human capital in early childhood education policy texts: The case of Indonesia. *IJEC*, *46*, 15–31. doi: 10.1007/s13158-013-0097-y

Freire, P. (1972a). *Pedagogy of the oppressed*. New York, NY: Penguin.

Freire, P. (1972b). *Cultural action for freedom*. Harmondsworth: Penguin.

Freire, P. (1973). *Education for critical consciousness*. New York, NY: Seabury Press.

Freire, P. (1976). *Education as the practice of freedom*. London, UK: Writers and Readers Publishing Cooperative.

Freire, P. (1985). The politics of education: Culture, power, and liberation. South Hadley, MA: Bergin & Garvey.

Freire, P. (1993). *Pedagogy of the city*. New York, NY: Continuum.

Freire, P. (1994). *Pedagogy of hope*. New York, NY: Continuum.

Freire, P. (2007). *Pedagogy of the heart*. New York, NY: Continuum.

Freire, P., & Shor. I. (1987). *A pedagogy for liberation*. Basingstoke: Macmillan.

Fridani, L. (2014). School readiness and transition to primary school: A study of teachers, parents and educational policymakers' perspectives and practices in the capital city of Indonesia. (Unpublished doctoral dissertation). Monash University, Melbourne, Australia.

Gadotti, M., & Torres, C. A. (2009). Paulo Freire: Education for development: Legacies: Paulo Freire. *Development and Change, 40*(6), 1255-1267.

Ganelli A, Rika, D., & Rabialdi. (2010). *Kepribadian perempuan Aceh yang Tangguh; Kemarin, hari ini dan esok* (The tenacity of Acehnese women; Yesterday, today and tomorrow). Medan: USU Press.

Geertz, C. (1973). *The interpretation of cultures*. New York, NY: Basic Books.

Geertz, C. (1974). From the native's point of view: On the nature of anthropological understanding. *Bulletin of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences, 28*(1), 26-45.

Gibson-Graham, J. K. (2014). Rethinking the economy with thick description and weak theory. *Current Anthropology*, *55*(supp.9), 1-18.

Giroux, H. A. (2010). *Rethinking education as the practice of freedom: Paulo Freire and the promise of critical pedagogy*. Retrieved from http://www.truth-out.org/archive/item/87456:rethinking-education-as-the-practice-of-freedom-paulo-freire-and-the-promise-of-critical pedagogy

Government Regulation Number 72 Year 2005 Villages, 72 Republic of Indonesia (2005).

Government Regulation Number 60 Year 2014 Regarding Village Grants Originating from State Revenue and Expenditure Budget, Republic of Indonesia (2014).

Government Regulation Number 22 Year 2015 on the Village fund, Republic of Indonesia (2015).

Grantham-McGregor, S., Cheung, Y. B., Cueto, S., Glewwe, P., Richter, L., & Strupp. B. (2007). Developmental potential in the first five years for children in developing countries. *The Lancet*, *369*(9555), 60–70.

Hakim, A. L. (2011). Pengaruh Pendidikan anak usia dini terhadap prestasi belajar siswa kelas 1 sekolah dasar di kabupaten dan kota Tangerang (The impact of ECE on children school achievement in primary schools in Tangerang districts and Tangerang City). *Jurnal Pendidikan dan Kebudayaan*, *17*(1), 109-122.

Hall, K. R. (2017). Maritime trade and societal transitions in the western Indonesian archipelago: Samudera-Pasai at the dawn of the European age (c. 1200-1500). *Asian Review of World Histories, 5*(1), 31-68. doi:10.12773/arwh2017.5.1.031

Hasan, L. (2005). *Asas-asas pendidikan Islam* (Islamic Education Principles). Jakarta: Al-Husna.

Hasan, N. (2015, August 4). Aceh struggles with economy, graft and reparations after decade of peace. *Benarnews*. Retrieved from http://www.benarnews.org/ english/news /Indonesian /aceh-anniversary-08142015180917.html

Hasbullah (2001). *Sejarah pertumbuhan dan perkembangan pendidikan Islam di Indonesia* (The history of and development of Islamic education in Indonesia). Jakarta: PT Gramedia Widiasarana Indonesia.

Hasjmy, A. (1978). *Bunga rampai revolusi dari tanah Aceh* (Miscellany of revolution from Aceh). Jakarta: CV. Bulan Bintang.

Haslinda, S. P. (2011). *Perempuan bercahya dalam lintasan sejarah Aceh* (The shinning women through the Aceh history). Jakarta: Yayasan Tun Sri Lanang.

Heath, S. B. (1983). Ways with words: Language, life and work in communities and classrooms. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Heckman, J. (2006). Skill formation and the economics of investing in disadvantaged children. *Science, 312*(5782), 1900–1902.

Heckman, J. J., & Masterov. D. V. (2007). The productivity argument for investing in young children. *Applied Economic Perspectives and Policy, 29*(3), 446–493.

Hefner, R, W. (2009). Introduction: The politics and cultures of Islamic education in South-East Asia. In Robert W. Hefner, (Ed.). *Making modern Muslims: The politics of Islamic education in Southeast Asia* (pp. 1-54). Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press.

Hesse-Biber, S. N., & Leavy, P. (2004). *Approaches to qualitative research: A reader on theory and practice*. New York, NY: Oxford University Press.

HRW/ Human Rights Watch (2003). *Aceh under martial law: Inside the secret war*. (HRW reports). Retrieved from https://www.hrw.org/reports/2003/indonesia1203/.

HRW/ Human Rights Watch. (2010). *Policing morality: Abuses in the application of Sharia in Aceh, Indonesia*. (HRW Reports). New York, NY: Human Rights Watch.

HRW/ Human Rights Watch. (2016). *Boxed in: Women and Saudi Arabia's male guardianship system*, (HRW Reports) Retrieved from https://www.refworld.org/ docid/578ce04d4.html

Hurgronje, C. S. (1959). *The Acehnese* (trans. A. W. S. O'Sullivan, 1 vol.). New York, NY: The Roland Press.

Hyson, M. C. (2004). The emotional development of young children: Building an emotion-centered curriculum. (2nd ed.). New York, NY: Teacher College Press.

Hyung-Jun, K. (1996). *Reformist Muslim in a Yogyakarta village: The Islamic transformations of contemporary socio-religious life* (Doctoral dissertation). Retrieved from https://press.anu.edu.au/publications/series/islam-southeast-asia/reformist-muslims-yogyakarta -village

Ichwan, M. N. (2011). Official ulema and the politics of re-Islamization: The majelis permusyawaratan ulama, shariatization and contested authority in post-new order Aceh. *Journal of Islamic Studies, 22*(2), 183–214.

Ilyas Pase Ditangkap di Sumut. (2015, April 14). *Serambi Indonesia*. Retrieved from http://aceh.tribunnews.com/2015/04/14/ilyas-pase-ditangkap-di-sumut.

Inayatillah, M. N. (2011). Women's marginalisation from public spaces: The case of Aceh. *Asian Women, 27*(4), 55-80.

Indonesian Review. (2015, February 2). Masalah dana otsus Aceh (The issues with Aceh's autonomy budget). *Indonesian Review*. Retrieved from http://indonesianreview.com/endri-ahmadi/masalah-dana-otsus-aceh

Indriyani, F. (2015). Rancangan pembelajaran ilmu tajwid berbasis multi-media untuk siswa tingkat dasar pada taman pendidikan al-Qur'an at-Taqwa (The design of multi-media based *Tajwid* learning for students at at-Taqwa TPQ). *Paradigma, 17*(2), 44-49.

Irwin, L. G., Siddiqi, A., & Hertzman, C. (2007). *Early child development: A powerful equalizer* (Final Report for the World Health Organization's Commission of the Social Determinants of Health, Human Early Learning Partnership). Vancouver, Canada. Retrieved from http://www.who.int/maternal_child_adolescent/documents/ecd_finalm30/en/

Ispranoto, T. (2017, April 28). Mendes: Tahun depan alokasi dana naik, tiap desa bisa dapat Rp. 2 M (Ministry of Village Affairs: Next year village fund increases to IDR2 billion per village). *detiknews.* Retrieved from https://news.detik.com/berita/d-3487085/mendes-tahun-depan-alokasi-dana-naik-tiap-desa-bisa-dapat-rp-2-m

Jayawardena, C. (1977). Acehnese marriage customs. *Indonesia, 23(April)*, 157-173. Retrieved from http://www.jstor.org/stable/3350889

Jeffrey, B., & Troman.G. (2004). Time for ethnography. *British Educational Research Journal*, *30*(4), 535-548.

Jung, H., & Amer, H. (2014). The impact of early childhood education on early achievement gaps: Evidence from the Indonesia early childhood education and development (ECED) project. (World Bank Impact Evaluation Series No. IE 119). Retrieved from http://documents.worldbank.org/curated/en/317381468038953682/The-impact-of-early-childhood-education-on-early-achievement-gaps-evidence-from-the-Indonesia-early-childhood-education-and-development-ECED-project

Kamel, H. (2006). *Early childhood care and education in emergency situations*. Paper commissioned for the EFA Global Monitoring Report 2007, Strong foundation: Early childhood care and education. Retrieved from https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000147469

Kingsbury, D. (2006). Peace in Aceh: A personal account of the Helsinki peace process. Jakarta. Equinox Publishing.

Kingsbury, D. (2007). The free Aceh movement: Islam and democratisation. *Journal of Contemporary Asia, 37*(2), 166–189.

Kloos, D. (2012). Piety, aspiration and everyday life in Muslim Southeast Asia. *Journal of the Humanities and Social Sciences of South East Asia and Oceania* (Bijdragen tot de Taal-, Land-, en Volkenkunde), *168*(2–3), 325–336.

Kloos, D. (2014). In the name of Syariah? Vigilante violence, territoriality, and moral authority in Aceh, Indonesia. *Indonesia*, *98*(October), 59-90. Retrieved from http://www.jstor.org/stable/10.5728/indonesia.98.0059

Kloos, D. (2015). Sinning and ethical improvement in contemporary Aceh. In Feener, R. M., Kloos, D., & Samuels, A. (Eds.), *Islam and the limit of state: Reconfigurations of practice, community and authority in contemporary Aceh*. (pp. 56–86). Leiden: Brill.

Kusujiarti, S., Miano, E. W., Pryor, A. L., & Ryan, B. R. (2015). Unveiling the mysteries of Aceh, Indonesia: Local and global intersections of women's agency. *Journal of International Women's Studies*, *16*(3), 186-202. Retrieved from https://vc.bridgew. edu/jiws/vol16/iss3/13

Jati, G. P. (2015, September 25). Pemerintah gandakan dana desa 2016 jadi Rp 46,9 Triliun (Government to double the amount of village fund in 2016 to IDR46.9 Trillion). *CNN Indonesia*. Retrieved from https://www.cnnindonesia.com /ekonomi/ 20150925153551-78-80965/pemerintah-gandakan-dana-desa-2016-jadi-rp-469-triliun

Kurniawati, E. (2018, July 12). Gubernur Aceh ditangkap, FITRA: Korupsi Aceh mirip Papua (The Governor of Aceh is arrested, FITRA: Corruption in Aceh resemble the case of Papua). *Tempo*. Retrieved from https://nasional.tempo.co/read/1104256/gubernur-aceh-ditangkap-fitra-korupsi-otsus-aceh-mirip-papua

Lankshear, C. (1993). Functional literacy from a Freirean point of view. In P. McLaren & P. Leonard (Eds.), *Paulo Freire: A critical encounter* (pp. 90-118). New York, NY: Routledge.

Law No. 20/2003 National Education System Act (NESA) (Undang-Undang Tentang Sistem Pendidikan Nasional) 20 Republic of Indonesia (2003) (enacted). Retrieved from http://www.flevin.com/id/lgso/translations/Laws/Law%20No.%2020%20of%202003%20on%20the%20National%20Education%20System%20(BKPM).pdf

Law No. 25/2004 National Development Planning System (RENSTRA), 25 Republic of Indonesia (2004) (enacted).

Law No. 32/2004 concerning Regional Administration, 32 Republic of Indonesia (2004) (enacted).

Law No. 11/2006 The Governing of Aceh (LoGA), 11 Republic of Indonesia. (2006) (enacted).

Law No. 6/2014 Village, State Gazette of the Republic of Indonesia No. 7 (2014) (enacted).

Lazaridou, A. (2015). Reinventing principal preparation in Illinois: A case study of policy change in a complex organization. In K. Beycioglu, & P. Pashiardis (Eds.), *Multidimensional perspectives on principal leadership effectiveness*, (pp. 18-38). USA: IGI Global.

Lincoln, Y. S., & Guba, E. G. (1985). *Naturalistic inquiry*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

Listiyowati. (2017). The role of HIMPAUDI in the development of PAUD educators' competence in Semarang City. *Belia*, *6*(11), 50-58.

Lynch, K. B., Geller, S. R., & Schmidt, M. G. (2004). Multi-year evaluation of the effectiveness of a resilience-based prevention program for young children. *The Journal of Primary Prevention, 24*(3), 335-353.

Mac Naughton, G., & Hughes, P. (2011). *Parents and professionals in early childhood settings*, Maidenhead: Open University Press.

Magrab, P. (1999). *The meaning of community.* In R. R. Roberts & P. R. Magrab (Eds), *Where children live: Solutions for serving young children and their families* (Advances in Applied Developmental Psychology, 17). Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Publishing Group.

Makruf, J. (2014). *Incubators for extremists? Radicalism and moderation in Indonesia's.* (CILIS Policy Paper). Melbourne Law School: University of Melbourne.

Malinowski, B. (2002). Argonauts of the Western Pacific: An account of native enterprise and adventure in the archipelagos of Melanesian New Guinea. London, UK: Routledge.

Marzuki, M. (2011). Tradisi peusijuek dalam masyarakat Aceh: Integritas nilai-nilai agama dan Budaya *(Peusijuek* tradition within Acehnese society: The integration of religious and cultural values). *El-Harakah, 13(2)*, 133-149. doi:10.18860/el.v0i0.458

Mashburn, A. J., & Pianta, R. J. (2010). Social relationships and school readiness. *Early Education and Development, 17*(1), 151-176.

Mashuri. (2013). Dinamika sistem pendidikan islam di Dayah (The dynamics of Islamic education in Aceh). *Jurnal Ilmiah Didaktika*, *8*(2), 259-270.

Masyrafah, H., &.McKeon, M. J. A. (2008). *Post tsunami aid effectiveness in Aceh: Proliferation and coordination in reconstruction*. (Working Paper at the Wolfensohn Center for Development). Retrieved from https://www.brookings.edu/research/post-tsunami-aid-effectiveness-in-aceh-proliferation-and-coordination-in-reconstruction/

Mayo, P. (2004). Liberating praxis: Paulo Freire's legacy for radical education and politics. Rotterdam: Sense.

McFate, M. (2019). Useful knowledge: Snouck *Hurgronje* and Islamic insurgency in Aceh. *Orbis, 63*(3), 416-439.

McLaren, P. (1998). Revolutionary pedagogy in post-revolutionary times: Rethinking the political economy of critical education. *Educational Theory*, *48*(4), 431–462.

McLaren, P. (2003). Life in schools: An introduction to critical pedagogy in the foundations of education. Boston, MA: Allyn & Bacon.

McMillan, J. H., & Schumacher, S. (1993). *Research in education: A conceptual introduction.* New York, NY: Harper Collins College Publishers.

Mernissi, F. (1993). *The forgotten queens of Islam*. Cambridge: Polity Press.

Merriam, S. B. (1998). Qualitative research and case study applications in education. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Merriam, S. B. (2009). Qualitative research: A guide to design and implementations. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Milallos, T. R. (2007). Muslim veil as politics: Political autonomy, women and Syariah Islam in Aceh. *Springer Science*, *1*(3), 289-301.

Ministry of Education and Culture (MoEC). (2007). *Regulation number 16 C.F.R. Teachers' competences and academic qualification standards* [Standar Kualifikasi Akademik dan Kompetensi Guru, 16 C.F.R. 2007]. Jakarta: MoEC.

Ministry of Education and Culture (MoEC). (2009). *Regulation number 58. Early childhood education standards* [Standar Pendidikan Anak Usia Dini, 2009].

Ministry of Education and Culture (MoEC). (2010). Angka partisipasi kasar (APK) PAUD (TK/RA/TPA/KB/SPS/TPQ) menurut provinsi 2009/2010. Jakarta: MoEC. Retrieved from http://www.psp.kemdiknas.go.id/uploads/Publikasi%20Pendidikan/apk%20-%20apm/apk_paud_prov_0910.pdf

Ministry of Education and Culture (MoEC). (2012). *Buku Data PAUDNI 2012* [Profile of the Directorate General ECE, Non-Formal and Informal Education]. Jakarta: MoEC.

Ministry of Home Affairs (MoHA). Circular Number 140/640/SJ/2005 on Implementation of Village Fund (2005).

Ministry of Research and Higher Education. (2016). *Pangkalan data pendidikan tinggi kementerian riset, Teknologi dan Pendidikan Tinggi* (Higher education database, Ministry of Research and Higher Education). Retrieved from http://forlap.ristekdikti.go.id/mahasiswa/homegraphjk

Mitchell, L., & Furness, J. (2015). *Importance of collaboration among parents, early years professionals and communities*. (Wilf Malcolm Institute of Education Research Paper commissioned for Goodstart). Hamilton: The University of Waikato.

Mohammad, A. R. (2001). The curriculum of Islamic studies in traditional and modern dayahs in Aceh: A comparative study. Yogyakarta: *Al-Jamia'h, 39*(1), 62-97.

Monteiro, E. M., Neto, W. B., de Lima, L. S., de Aquino, J. M., Gontijo, D. T., & Pereira, B. O. (2015). Culture circles in adolescent empowerment for the prevention of violence. *International Journal of Adolescence and Youth, 20*(2), 167–184. doi:10.1080/02673843.2014.992028

Moss, P. (2014). Transformative change and real utopias in early childhood education: A story of democracy, experimentation and potentiality. London, UK: Routledge.

Moss, P. (2017). Power and resistance in early childhood education: From dominant discourse to democratic experimentalism. *Journal of Pedagogy*, *8*(1), 11-32. doi:10.1515/jped-2017-0001

Muarif. (2005). *Wacana Pendidikan kritis: Menelenjangi problematika, meretas masa depan Pendidikan kita* (Critical education discourse: Addressing problems, paving the way for the future of our education). Yogyakarta: Ircisod.

Mufida, M. (2014). Implementasi kurikulum paud berbasis taman pendidikan al-Qur'an di PAUD TPQ AL-Amien Bancaan Salatiga (The implementation of TPQ based ECE curriculum in TPQ AL-Amien Bancaan Salatiga). *Belia*, *3*(2), 102-108.

Mustaqim, M. (2015). Paradigma Islam kritis: Studi pemikiran pembebasan Ali Ashgar dan kiri Islam Hasan Hanafi (Critical Islamic paradigms: Study of the liberation thinking of Ali Ashgar and Islamic left Hasan Hanafi). *Fikrah: Jurnal Ilmu Aqidah dan Studi Keagamaan, 3*(2), 305-324.

Mwaura, P. A. M., & Marfo, K. (2011). Bridging culture, research, and practice in early childhood development: The Madrasa resource centers in East Africa. *Child Development Perspectives, 5*(2), 134-139.

Mwaura, P. A. M., Sylva, K., & Malmberg, Lars-Erik. (2008). Evaluating the *Madrassa* preschool programme in East Africa: A quasi-experimental study. International *Journal of Early Education*, *16*(3), 237-255. doi:10.1080/09669760802357121.

Myrttinen, H. (2015). Guerrillas, gangsters and contractors: Integrating former combatants and its impact. In A. Schnabel, & V. Farr (Eds.), *SSR and development in post-conflict societies* (pp. 225-247). Geneva: Centre for the Democratic Control of Armed Forces.

National Development Planning Agency (NDPA). (2013). *Early childhood development strategy study in Indonesia* (Report). Jakarta: NDPA.

Naylor, C. E. (2014). Participation and its discontents: participatory education reforms in an age of globalization: A case study of Aceh, Indonesia. (Master's thesis). Retrieved from https://educationanddevelopment.files

Nazamuddin, A., & Mahmud, S. (2010). Economic modernization and its influence on the social system In Aceh. In A. Graf, S. Schroter, & E. Wieringa, (Eds.), *Aceh: History, politics and culture* (pp. 81-98). Singapore: ISEAS.

Nesbitt, E. (2004). Intercultural education: Ethnographic and religious approaches. Brighton: Sussex Academic Press.

Neuman, S. B., & Celano, D. (2001). Access to print in low- and middle-income communities: An ecological study of 4 neighbourhoods. *Reading Research Quarterly, 36*(1), 8-26.

Newberry, J. (2010) The global child and non-governmental governance of the family in post-Suharto Indonesia. *Economy and Society,* 39(3), 403–426.

Newman, S. J. (2009). Patrolling sexuality. *Inside Indonesia, 96*(April). Retrieved from https://www.insideindonesia.org/patrolling-sexuality

Nilan, P. (2009) The 'spirit of education' in Indonesian Pesantren. *British Journal of Sociology of Education*, *30*(2), 219-232. doi:10.1080/01425690802700321

O'Cadiz, M. P., Wong, P. L., & Torres, C. A. (1999.) Education and democracy: Paulo Freire, social movements and educational reform in Sao Paulo. Boulder: Westview Press.

Octarra, H. S., & Hendriati, A. (2018). Old, borrowed and renewed': A review of early childhood education policy in post-reform Indonesia. *Policy Futures in Education*, *16*(1), 80–91.

Oliver, P. (2003). *The student's guide to research ethics*. Maidenhead: Open University Press.

Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD). (2006). *Starting strong: Early childhood education and care*. Paris: OECD Publishing.

Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD). Asian Development Bank (ADB). (2015*), Education in Indonesia: Rising to the challenge*, Paris: OECD Publishing. Retrieved from https://dx.doi.org/10.1787/9789264230750-en

Otto, S. I. (2013). *Aceh pasca konflik: kontestasi tiga varian nasionalisme* (Post-conflict Aceh: Contestation between three variants of nationalism). Banda Aceh: Bandar Publishing.

Parthasarathy, B. (2008). The ethnographic case study approach*, Global Impact Study,* Retrieved from http://www.globalimpactstudy.org/2008/07/the-ethnographic-case-study-approach.

Patton, M. Q. (2002). *Qualitative research & evaluation methods.* Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

Penn, H. (2002). The World Bank's view of early childhood. *Childhood, 9*(1), 118–132.

Penn, H. (2005). Unequal childhoods: Young children's lives in poor countries. New York, NY: Routledge.

Penn, H. (2011). Travelling policies and global buzzwords: How international non-governmental organizations and charities spread the word about early childhood in the global south. *Childhood, 18*(1), 94–113.

Pew Research Center. (2015). *Ten countries with the largest Muslim populations, 2010-2015*. Retrieved from https://www.pewforum.org/2015/04/02/muslims/pf_15-04-02_projectionstables74/

Prasetyo, E. (1999). *Islam Kiri* (Leftist Islam). Yogyakarta: Insist Press & Pustaka Pelajar.

Punch, K. (2005). Introduction to social research quantitative and qualitative approaches (2nd ed.). London: Sage Publications.

Qanun 2008 on Education (Sharia regulation), Republic of Indonesia (2008) (enacted).

Ramli, A. (2010). *Merajam dalil syariat* (Whipping (dismantling) arguments for Sharia). Banda Aceh: Bandar Publishing.

Ravens, J. V. (2010). Expanding ECCE in Bangladesh: It can be done. Dhaka: UNESCO.

Raver, C. C. (2002). Emotions matter: Making the case for the role of young children's emotional development for early school readiness. *Social Policy Report*, *16*(3), 3-19.

Regional Development Planning Board (RDPB). (2017). *Rancangan pembangunan jangka menengah*/*regional development plan* (RPJM) North Aceh. Retrieved from http://bappeda.acehutara.go.id/index.php/2015-10-04-04-31-06/2015-10-04-05-03-50

Reid, A. (2005). An Indonesian frontier: Acehnese and other histories of Sumatra. Singapore: Singapore University Press.

Renner, M. (2006, April). Exxon Mobil in Aceh. *Global Policy Forum*. Retrieved from https://www.globalpolicy.org/component/content/article/97/32134.html

Reynolds, A. J., Temple, J. A., Robertson, D. L., & Mann, E. A. (2001). Long-term effects of an early childhood intervention on educational achievement and juvenile arrest: A 15-year follow-up of low-income children in public schools. *Journal of the American Medical Association*, *285*(18), 2339–2346.

Riddell, P. G. (2006). Aceh in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries: "Serambi Mekkah' and identity. In A. Reid (Ed.), *Veranda of violence: The background of the Aceh problem* (pp 38-51). Singapore: NUS Press.

Ridjaluddin. (2009). *Filsafat p pendidikan p Islam* (Islamic education philosophy). Jakarta: Uhamka.

Rinaldi, J. (2011, August 9). Exxon mobil lepas blok gas di Aceh (Exxon Mobil ends oil and gas operation in Aceh). *Tempo.co. Tempo.* Retrieved from https://bisnis.tempo.co/read/ 350890/exxonmobil-lepas-blok-gas-di-aceh

Roberts, P. (2010). Paulo Freire in the 21st century: Education, dialogue and transformation. Colorado: Paradigm Publishers.

Roberts, P. (2016). Paulo Freire and the politics of education: A response to Neumann. *Educational Philosophy and Theory*, *48*(6), 645-653.

Roberts, P., & Freeman-Moir, J. (2013). *Better worlds: Education, art, and utopia.* Lanham, MD: Lexington Books.

Robinson, G. (1998). Rawan is as rawan does: The origins of disorder in new order Aceh. *Indonesia, 66*(October), 127-157.

Roqib, M. (2011). *Prophetic education: Kontekstualisasi filsafat dan budaya profetik dalam pendidikan* (Contextualization philosophy and prophetic culture in education). Yogjakarta: Buku Litera.

Rabu. (2013, March 6). *Syariat Islam tidak diberlakukan terhadap pejabat* (When Sharia does not not apply for government officials). *Medan Bisnis Daily*. Retrieved from http://medanbisnisdaily.com/news/read/2013/03/06/16442/syariat_islam_tidak_diberlaku kan_terhadap_pejabat/

Sabirin. (2014). Meunasah dan ketahanan masyarakat gampong "kajian kritis terhadap power of local wisdom (*Meunasah* and resilience of the village community "critical study of the power of local wisdom). *Jip-International Multidisciplinary Journal*, *2*(2), 105-126.

Said, M. (1985). *Aceh sepanjang abad* (Aceh through the century). Medan: Waspada.

Salahudidin, R. (2013). *Kebijakan pengembangan pendidikan AL-Qur-an di Kabupaten Pasuruan* (Policies to develop TPQ in Pasuruan regency). *JKMP*, *1*(2), 203-222.

Salam, S. (1995). *Malahayati: Srikandi dari Aceh* (Malahayati: A warrior of Aceh). Jakarta: Gema Salam.

Salim, A. (2016). Contemporary Islamic law in Indonesia: Sharia and legal pluralism. *Journal of Church and State. 58*(3). doi:10.1093/jcs/csw032.

Samuels, A. (2015). Hikmah and narratives of change: How different temporalities shape the present and the future in Post-Tsunami Aceh. In Feener, R. M., Kloos, D., & Samuels A. (Eds.), *Islam and the limits of the state*: *Reconfigurations of practice, community and authority in contemporary Aceh* (pp. 24-55). Leiden: Brill.

Sanaky, H. A. H. (2015). *Pembaruan pendidikan Islam: Paradigma tipologi, dan pemetaan menuju masyarakat madani Indonesia* (Islamic education reform: Typology paradigm, and mapping towards Indonesian civil society). Jogjakarta: Kaukaba Dipantara.

Sanders, M., & Epstein, J. L. (2005). School-family-community partnership and education change: International perspectives. In A. Hargreaves, (Ed.), *Extending educational change: International handbook of educational change* (pp. 202-222). New York, NY: Springer-Verlag New York Inc.

Santi, I. T., & Sukadi. (2014). Pembuatan game pembelajaran pengenalan huruf hijaiyah di Taman Kanak-Kanak (TK) Az-Zalfa, Sidoharjo, Pacitan (Developing learning game for introducing hijaiyah letters in Az-Zalfa Kindergarten, Sidoharjo, Pacitan). *Journal Sentra Penelitian Engineering dan Edukasi, 6*(2), 7-11.

Save the Children. (2003). *What's the difference? An ECD impact study from Nepal* (Save the Children Report). Retrieved from http://www.unicef.org/media/files/Nepal_2003_ECD_Impact_Studty.pdf

Save the Children. (2009). *Four years later: Rebuilding lives after the tsunami* (Save the Children Report). Retrieved from www.savethechildren.org/atf/cf/%7B9def2ebe-10ae.../ar2005.pdf

Save the Children. (2013). *Attacks on education—The impact of conflict and grave violations on children's futures* (Save the Children Report). Retrieved from http://www.savethechildren. de/fileadmin/Dokumente.

Schonhardt, S. (2013, January 6). Indonesia envisions more religion in school. *The International Herald Tribune*. Retrieved from http://www.nytimes.com/2013/01/07/world/asia/in-indonesia-science-may-give-way-to-religion.html?_r=0

Schugurensky, D. (2011). *Paulo Freire*. London: Continuum.

Schweinhart, L. J., Montie, J., Xiang, Z., Barnett, W. S., Belfield, C. R., & Nores. M. (2005.) *Lifetime effects: The high/scope perry preschool study through to age 40.* Ypsilanti, MI: High/Scope Press.

Seale, C. (2004). *Social research methods: A reader* (Routledge Students' Series). UK: Routledge.

Shah, R., & Cardozo, M. L. (2014). Education and social change in post-conflict and post-disaster Aceh, Indonesia. *International Journal of Educational Development*, *38*(C), 2-12.

Shaw, R. (2008). Aceh's struggle for independence: Considering the role of Islam in a separatist. *Al-Nakhlah: Journal on Southwest Asia and Islamic Civilization*, *1*(14). 1-12.

Siapno, J. A. (2002). Gender, Islam, nationalism and the state in Aceh: The paradox of power, co-optation and resistance. Richmond: Curzon.

Siegel, J. T. (1969). *The rope of God*. California: California University Press.

Simanjuntak, H. (2015, May 6). Aceh women, activists slam latest Sharia-based regulations. *The Jakarta Post*. Retrieved from http://www.thejakartapost.com/news /2015/05/06/ aceh-women-activists-slam-latest-sharia-based-regulations.html

Solichin, M. (2015). Perkembangan pendidikan meunasah dan dayah di Aceh (The development of *dayah* and *meunasah'* education in Aceh). *Jurnal Manajemen dan Pendidikan Islam Dirasat*. *1*(1),124-151.

Spaaij, R., & Jeanes, R. (2013). Education for social change? A Freirean critique of sport for development and peace. *Physical Education and Sports Pedagogy*, *18*(4), 442-457, doi:10.1080/17408989.2012.690378.

Srimulyani, E. (2007). Muslim women and education in Indonesia: The Pondok Pesantren experience. *Asia Pacific Journal of Education*, *27*(1): 85-99. doi:10.1080/02188790 601145564.

Srimulyani, E. (2010). Islam, *Adat* and the state: Matrifocality in Aceh revisited. *Al-Jami'ah, 48*(2), 321-341.

Srimulyani, E. (2013). Islamic schooling in Aceh: Change, reform, and local context. *Studia Islamika*, *20*(2), 467-487.

Stake, R. E. (1995). *The art of case study*. London: Sage Publications.

Stange, G. A., & Patock, R. (2010), From rebels to rulers and legislators: The political transformation of the Free Aceh Movement (GAM) in Indonesia. *Journal of Current Southeast Asian Affairs*, *29*(1), 95-120.

Statistics Indonesia Aceh. (2017). *Aceh dalam angka 2017.* Retrieved from
https://aceh.bps.go.id/publication/2017/08/12/38a9bd5efbf19416f4a0d125/provinsi-aceh-
dalam-angka-2017.html

Statistics Indonesia North Aceh. (2017). *Aceh Utara dalam angka 2017*. Retrieved from
https://acehutarakab.bps.go.id/publication/2017/09/18.

Stumpel, L. (2014). *Rasulullah and responsibilities: Gender justice perception an and through
education in Banda Aceh*. (Master's thesis). Retrieved from https://education
anddevelopment.wordpress.com/master-theses-education-and-international-development/

Subedi, B. (2006) Theorizing a 'halfie' researcher's identity in transnational fieldwork.
International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education, *19*(5), 573-593,
doi:10.1080/09518390600886353.

Suhaimi, E. (1993). *Wanita Aceh dalam pemerintahan dan peperangan* (Acehnese women in
war and government). Banda Aceh: YPA. Hasjimy.

Sujatmiko, I. G. (2012). Conflict transformation and social reconciliation: The case of Aceh,
Indonesia. *Asian Social Science*, *8*(2), 104-111.

Swick, K. J. (2003). What parents seek in relations with early childhood family helpers. *Early
Childhood Education Journal, 31*(3), 217-220.

Syariati, A. (1996). *Humanisme Antara Islam dan Mazhab Barat* (Humanism: Between Islam
and Western philosophies). Bandung: Pustaka Hidayah.

Syihab. M. (2010). Penegakan Syariat: Etnografi Aksi Razia Santri Dayah di Aceh Utara (the
Sharia implementation: An ethnography on Dayah student's Sharia patrol in North
Aceh). In A. Salim, & A. Sila (Eds.), *Serambi mekkah yang berubah: Views from within*
(pp. 57–91). Tangerang: Pustaka Alvabet and Aceh Research Training Institute.

Takeshi, I (1984). *The world of the adat Aceh: A historical study of the sultanate of Aceh*.
(Doctoral dissertation). Retrieved from https://openresearch-repository. anu.edu.au
/handle/1885/10071

Taylor, S. J., & Bogdan, R. (1998). *Introduction to qualitative research methods: A guidebook
and resource* (3rd ed.). New Jersey: John Wiley & Sons.

Tedjawati, J. M. (2011). Peran HIMAPAUDI dalam pengembangan PAUD. (The role of HIMAPAUDI in developing ECE). *Jurnal Pendidikan dan kebudayaan*, *17*(1), 123-133.

Telford, J., Cosgrave, J., & Houghton, R. (2006). *Joint evaluation of the international response to the Indian Ocean tsunami* (Synthesis Report). London: TEC.

Thomas R. M. (1988). Dividing the labor: Indonesia's government/private early childhood education system. *Early Childhood Development and Care, 39*(1), 33–43.

Thomas, D. R. (2006). A general inductive approach for analyzing qualitative evaluation data. *American Journal of Evaluation, 27*(2), 237-246.

Thomas, R. M. (1992). Early childhood teacher education in Indonesia. *Early Child Development and Care, 78*(1), 85-94.

Thorburn C., & Rochelle, B. (2014) *The Acehnese Gampong ten years on: A post-post tsunami assessment*. (Disaster Response Unit of the Australian Embassy/DFAT Report). Retrieved from http://artsonline.monash.edu.au/wp-content/arts- files/ges/Acehnese-Gampong-Ten-Years-On.pdf

Tomlinson, H. B., & Andina, S. (2015). Parenting education in Indonesia: Review and recommendations to strengthen programmes and system. Washington: The World Bank.

Topatimasang, R., Dilts, R., Fakih, M., & Danandjaya, U. (1986). *Belajar dari pengalaman: panduan latihan pemandu pendidikan orang dewasa untuk pengembangan masyarakat* (Learning from experience: Guides for adult education facilitators in community development). Public. Jakarta: P3M.

Torres, C. A. (1994). Paulo Freire as Secretary of Education in the municipality of Sao Paulo. *Comparative Education Review*, *38*(2), 181-214.

United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). (2010). Sustaining building back better in post-tsunami and post-conflict Aceh, Indonesia.case-study for capacity is development knowledge fair. (Report). Retrieved from www.impactalliance.org/ev_en.php?ID=49360_ 201&ID2=DO_TOPIC

United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO). (2000). *The Dakar framework for action: Education for All: Meeting our collective commitments.* Paris: United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization.

United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO). (2005). *Policy review report: Early childhood care and education in Indonesia.* (Early Childhood and Family Policy Series, 10). Retrieved from http://www.unesdoc.unesco.org

United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) and International Bureau of Education (IBE). (2011). *World data on education: Indonesia* (7th ed). Geneva: UNESCO-IBE.

Veer, P. V. (1985. *Perang Aceh: Kisah kegagalan Snouck Hurgronje* (The Aceh war: The story of Snouck Hurgronje debacles). Jakarta: Grafiti Press.

Wahid, U. (2013). The function of *meunasah* in social cultural communication within Acehnese society, *Journal of Human Capital Development*, *6*(1), 151-167.

Wahid, U. (2015). *Meunasah*, power, and self-critics towards government and Aceh political elite on Aceh women's political struggle. *Journal of Asian Scientific Research*, *5*(8), 385-393.

Walton, A. A., Athreya, B., & Gersham, J. (2005). *Will the Bush administration's actions move Aceh toward peace or a continued descent into destruction?* (Institute for Policy Studies). Retrieved from https://ips-dc.org/will_the_bush_administrations_actions_move_aceh_toward_peace_or_a_continued_descent_into_destruction/

Walton, A. A., & Athreya, B. (2005, January 21). US ties and challenges to peace in Aceh. *Asia Times Online*, Retrieved from http://www.atimes.com/atimes/Southeast_Asia/GA21Ae01.html

Wan Daud, W. M. N. (1998). The educational philosophy and practice of Syed Muhammad Naguib al-Attas: An exposition of the original concept of Islamization. Kuala Lumpur: ISTAC.

Webb, D. (2010). Paulo Freire and 'the need for a kind of education in hope. *Cambridge Journal of Education*, 40(4), 327-339. doi: 10.1080/0305764X.2010.526591

Webb, D. (2013) Pedagogies of hope. *Studies in Philosophy and Education, 32*(4), 397-414. doi:10.1007/s11217-012-9336-1

Wenger, G. (2014). Policies, perceptions, and practices: Teaching the recent conflict in secondary school classes in post-conflict Banda Aceh, Indonesia. (Master's thesis). Retrieved from https://educationanddevelopment.files

Winter, P. (2010*). Engaging families in the early childhood development story: Neuroscience and early childhood development* (Summary of selected literature and key messages for parenting, MCEECDYA). Retrieved from http://www.scseec.edu.au/site/DefaultSite/filesystem/documents/Reports%20and%20publications/Publications/Early%20childhood%20education/Engaging%20Families%20in%20the%20ECD%20Story-Neuroscience%20and%20ECD.pdf

Winthrop, R., Kirk, J. (2008). Learning for a bright future: Schooling, armed conflict, and children's well-being. *Comparative Education Review*, *52*(4), 639–661.

Wolcott, H. F. (1990). Transforming qualitative data: Description, analysis, and interpretation. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

Woodward, M., Amin, A., & Rohmaniyah, I. (2010). *Lessons from Aceh terrorist de-radicalization*. (CSC Center Report 1001). Retrieved from https://csc.asu.edu/wp-content/uploads/pdf/124.pdf

World Bank (2012) *The Indonesia ECED project findings and policy recommendation* (Report). Retrieved from http://documents.worldbank.org/curated/en/ 330141468044650822/ pdf/ NonAsciiFileName0.pdf

World Bank. (2007). Implementation completion and results report on a loan in the amount of $21.5 million to the Republic of Indonesia for an early childhood development project (Human Development Sector Unit, East Asian and Pacific Region Report). Retrieved from http://documents.worldbank.org/curated/en/ 206791468268822458/ pdf /ICR 0000560 pdf

World Bank. (2009). Aceh growth diagnostic: Identifying the binding constraints to growth in a post-conflict and post-disaster environment. Jakarta: World Bank.

World Bank. (2013*). Indonesia: A nationwide community program (PNPM) peduli: Caring for the invisible*. Retrieved from http://www.worldbank.org/en/results /2013/04/04/ indonesia-a-nationwide-community-program-pnpm-peduli-caring-for-the-invisible

Yoshikawa, H., Weiland, C., Brooks-Gunn, J., Burchinal, M., Espinosa, L., Gormley, W. T., … & Zaslow, M. (2013). *Investing in our future: The evidence base on preschool education*. (Foundation for Child Development and Society for Research in Child Development Report). Retrieved from http://fcd-us.org/sites/default/files/Evidence%20Base%20on%20Preschool%20 Education% 20 FINAL.pdf

Yousafzai, A. K., Rasheed, M. A., Rizvi, A., Shaheen, F., Ponguta, L. A., & Reyes, C. R. (2018). Effectiveness of a youth-led early childhood care and education programme in rural Pakistan: A cluster-randomised controlled trial. *PloS one*, *13*(12), e0208335. doi:10.1371/journal.pone.0208335

Yulindasari, H. (2017). *Negotiating masculinities: The experience of male teachers in Indonesian early childhood education*. (Doctoral dissertation). The University of Melbourne, Melbourne, Australia.

Yulindasari, H., & Ujianti, P. R. (2017). "Trapped in the reform": Kindergarten teachers' experiences of teacher professionalisation in Buleleng, Indonesia. *Policy Futures in Education*, *16*(1), 66–79.

Appendices

Appendix 1: MUHREC Approval Certificate

MONASH University

Monash University Human Research Ethics Committee

Approval Certificate

This is to certify that the project below was considered by the Monash University Human Research Ethics Committee. The Committee was satisfied that the proposal meets the requirements of the *National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research* and has granted approval.

Project Number: 9001
Project Title: Education in Post Conflict and Post Tsunami Aceh: An Ethnographic Case Study on Meunasah Education in Aceh, Indonesia
Chief Investigator: Dr Jane Bone
Expiry Date: 25/09/2022

Terms of approval - failure to comply with the terms below is in breach of your approval and the *Australian Code for the Responsible Conduct of Research*.

1. The Chief Investigator is responsible for ensuring that permission letters are obtained, if relevant, before any data collection can occur at the specified organisation.
2. Approval is only valid whilst you hold a position at Monash University.
3. It is responsibility of the Chief Investigator to ensure that all investigators are aware of the terms of approval and to ensure the project is conducted as approved by MUHREC.
4. You should notify MUHREC immediately of any serious or unexpected adverse effects on participants or unforeseen events affecting the ethical acceptability of the project.
5. The Explanatory Statement must be on Monash letterhead and the Monash University complaints clause must include your project number.
6. Amendments to approved projects including changes to personnel must not commence without written approval from MHUREC.
7. Annual Report - continued approval of this project is dependent on the submission of an Annual Report.
8. Final Report - should be provided at the conclusion of the project. MUHREC should be notified if the project is discontinued before the expected completion date.
9. Monitoring - project may be subject to an audit or any other form of monitoring by MUHREC at any time.
10. Retention and storage of data - The Chief Investigator is responsible for the storage and retention of the original data pertaining to the project for a minimum period of five years.

Thank you for your assistance.

Professor Nip Thomson

Chair, MUHREC

CC: Dr Corine Rivalland, Mr Riki Taufiki

List of approved documents:

Document Type	File Name	Date	Version
Supporting Documentation	FOCUS Group questions (1)docx	22/08/2017	1
Supporting Documentation	Question (interviews)	22/08/2017	1
Consent Form	Consent_form_Riki Taufiki - Parents (3)	22/08/2017	3
Consent Form	Consent_form_Riki Taufiki - Stakeholders (3)	22/08/2017	3
Consent Form	Consent_form_Riki Taufiki_Teacher (3)	22/08/2017	3
Explanatory Statement	requestionfortomorrow	22/08/2017	4

Appendix 2: Permission Letter from District Office

PEMERINTAH KABUPATEN ACEH UTARA

KECAMATAN NISAM
Jalan Cot Mambong Km.08
Keudee Amplaih 24376

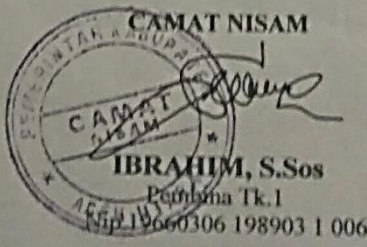|			
Nomor	:	194/	Keude Amplaih, 20 Oktober 2017
Lampiran	:	Satu Eksemplar	Kepada
Perihal	:	**Izin Penelitian**	Pihak- pihak yang berkenaan
			Di –
			Tempat

1. Sehubungan dengan Surat Monash University, Faculty Education, Penninsula Campus, Frankston, VIC, 3199, Australia perihal **surat permohonan izin melakukan penelitaian.**

Nama	:	Riki Taufiki
NIM	:	27542548
Semester	:	4 (Empat)
Fakultas	:	Pendidikan
Universitas	:	Monash

2. Pada prinsipnya dipihak kami mendukung sepenuhnya kegiatan penelitian tersebut dengan judul tesis **"Pendidikan pasca konflik dan tsunami: Sebuah studi kasus etnografi pada pendidikan meunasah di Aceh"** sejauh tidak bertentangan dengan peraturan perundang-undangan yang berlaku.

3. Demikian Surat Keterangan Izin Penelitian ini kami sampaikan, untuk dipergunakan seperlunya.

CAMAT NISAM

IBRAHIM, S.Sos
Penhma Tk.1
Nip 19660306 198903 1 006

Appendix 3: Explanatory Statement (Stakeholders, Parents/Community Members, Teachers) & Consent Form (Stakeholders Parents/Community Members, Teachers)

MONASH University

EXPLANATORY STATEMENT
(STAKEHOLDERS)

Project: Education in Post-Conflict and Post-Tsunami Aceh: An Ethnographic Case Study on *Meunasah* Education in Aceh, Indonesia

Chief Investigator's name:	Co-investigator's name:
Dr Jane Bone	Dr. Corine Rivalland
Department of Education	Department of Education
Email: jane.bone@monash.edu	Phone: +61 3 990 44546
Ph.: +61 3 990 44242	email: corine.rivalland@monash.edu

Student's name:
Riki Taufiki
Phone: 0451761107
email: riki.taufiki@monash.edu

You are invited to take part in this study. Please read this Explanatory Statement in full before deciding whether or not to participate in this research. If you would like further information regarding any aspect of this project, you are encouraged to contact the researchers via the phone numbers or email addresses listed above.

What does the research involve?

This project will explore and investigate early year education in *meunasah* to gain a more comprehensive understanding of how the community, teachers and parents think about the education of young children. This project may inform policymakers in the future.

Your involvement will consist of participating in a one-hour individual interview and a two-hour focus group discussion. During the interview and focus group, discussion notes and audio recordings will be collected.

Why were you chosen for this research?

You have been chosen to participate in the study because of your experience as a teacher and volunteer. And because your role is essential to the teaching-learning process in early years' education in the *meunasah.*

Consenting to participate in the project and withdrawing from the research

Participating in this study is voluntary, and participants are under no obligation to consent to participate. Be reassured that the purpose of gathering data in the study is to better understand your perspectives on early years education in meunasah, not to evaluate your understanding or to judge your knowledge. Therefore, there are no right or wrong answers. The questions that I will be asking during the interviews are not likely to cause inconvenience. You can also choose to withdraw from the research at any time without the need to explain further your decision. Should you choose to withdraw, all notes and audio recording from interviews will be deleted.

Possible benefits and risks to participants

Your participation in this project will allow the participants to share their experiences and knowledge on how they think about early years education in their community. These experiences may inspire other communities in rural Aceh.

There is no risk to you if you agree to join the research since the subject matter of this project is not sensitive or of a personal nature, and the main focus is in your role in early year education in *meunasah*.

Confidentiality

The information collected in the interviews will be treated as confidential and used only for research purposes. All the data is confidential and anonymous. Pseudonyms will be used instead of your real name in the reporting of research results. The audio recording will be transcribed verbatim by the researcher. The identity of the participants will be protected, and access to the information will be restricted to the researcher only. Therefore, personal and identifying information that you provide in the study will remain confidential. While maintaining confidentiality, we cannot guarantee that the people reading any publication will not be able to identify you or your location but will do our best to maintain anonymity.

In order that others can learn about the outcomes, the research will be published in an online or print-based academic journal and other publications and presented at conferences.

Storage of data

Storage of the data collected will adhere to Monash University regulations. The data in the form of hardware will be kept on university premises in a locked cupboard and data in the form of software will

be secured on password protected computer. All data will be terminated securely after a period of 5 years.

Results

The research will be published in the form of a doctoral thesis. If you would like a short report about the research, then you are most welcome to contact the researcher at riki.taufiki@monash.edu.

Complaints

If you would like to contact the researchers about any aspect of this study, please contact the Chief Investigator:	If you have a complaint concerning the manner in which this research is being conducted, you are welcome to contact:
Dr Jane Bone Faculty of Education, Monash University Email: jane.bone@monash.edu Ph.: +61 3 990 44242	Muliadi Yusuf Staff at PNPM Nisam District office, North Aceh. Email: Khairamuliadi047@gmail.com Ph +6285294152482

You can contact the University Ethics committee via email: muhrec@monash.edu

Or / MUHREC,
Room 111, Chancellery Building E, 24 Sports Walk,
Monash Clayton Campus,
Wellington Rd
Clayton VIC 3800, Australia

Thank you for your time.

Riki Taufiki

Monash University

E-mail: riki.taufiki@monash.edu

MONASH University

EXPLANATORY STATEMENT
(PARENTS/COMMUNITY MEMBERS)

Project: Education in Post-Conflict and Post-Tsunami Aceh: An Ethnographic Case Study on *Meunasah* Education in Aceh, Indonesia.

Chief Investigator's name:	**Co-investigator's name:**
Dr Jane Bone	Dr. Corine Rivalland
Department of Education	Department of Education
Email: jane.bone@monash.edu	Phone: +61 3 990 44546
Ph.: +61 3 990 44242	email: corine.rivalland@monash.edu

Student's name:
Riki Taufiki
Phone: 0451761107
email: riki.taufiki@monash.edu

You are invited to take part in this study. Please read this Explanatory Statement in full before deciding whether or not to participate in this research. If you would like further information regarding any aspect of this project, you are encouraged to contact the researchers via the phone numbers or email addresses listed above.

What does the research involve?
This project will explore and investigate early year education in *meunasah* to gain a more comprehensive understanding of how the community, teachers and parents think about the education of young children. This project may inform policymakers in the future.

Your involvement will consist of participating in a one-hour individual interview and a two-hour focus group discussion. During the interview and focus group, discussion notes and audio recordings will be collected.

Why were you chosen for this research?
You have been chosen to participate in the study because of your experience as a teacher and volunteer and because your role is essential to the teaching-learning process in early years' education in the *meunasah*.

Consenting to participate in the project and withdrawing from the research

Participating in this study is voluntary, and participants are under no obligation to consent to participate. Be reassured that the purpose of gathering data in the study is to better understand your perspectives on early years education in meunasah, not to evaluate your understanding or to judge your knowledge. Therefore, there are no right or wrong answers. The questions that you will be asked during the interviews are not likely to cause inconvenience. You can also choose to withdraw from the research at any time without the need to explain further your decision. Should you choose to withdraw, all notes and audio recording from interviews will be deleted.

Possible benefits and risks to participants

Your participation in this project will allow the participants to share their experiences and knowledge on how they think about early years education in their community. These experiences may inspire other communities in rural Aceh.

There is no risk to you if you agree to join the research since the subject matter of this project is not sensitive or of a personal nature, and the main focus is in your role in early year education in *meunasah*.

Confidentiality

The information collected in the interviews will be treated as confidential and used only for research purposes. All the data is confidential and anonymous. Pseudonyms will be used instead of your real name in the reporting of research results. The audio recording will be transcribed verbatim by the researcher. The identity of the participants will be protected, and access to the information will be restricted to the researcher only. Therefore, personal and identifying information that you provide in the study will remain confidential. While maintaining confidentiality, we cannot guarantee that the people reading any publication will not be able to identify you or your location but will do our best to maintain anonymity.

In order that others can learn about the outcomes, the research will be published in an online or print-based academic journal and other publications and presented at conferences.

Storage of data

Storage of the data collected will adhere to Monash University regulations. The data in the form of hardware will be kept on university premises in a locked cupboard and data in the form of software will be secured on password protected computer. All data will be terminated securely after a period of 5 years.

Results

The research will be published in the form of a doctoral thesis. If you would like a short report about the research, then you are most welcome to contact the researcher at riki.taufiki@monash.edu.

Complaints

If you would like to contact the researchers about any aspect of this study, please contact the Chief Investigator:	If you have a complaint concerning the manner in which this research is being conducted, you are welcome to contact:
Dr Jane Bone Faculty of Education, Monash University Email: jane.bone@monash.edu Ph.: +61 3 990 44242	Muliadi Yusuf Staff at PNPM Nisam District office, North Aceh. Email: Khairamuliadi047@gmail.com Ph +6285294152482

You can contact the University Ethics committee via email: muhrec@monash.edu

Or / MUHREC,
Room 111, Chancellery Building E, 24 Sports Walk,
Monash Clayton Campus,
Wellington Rd
Clayton VIC 3800, Australia

Thank you for your time.

Riki Taufiki

Monash University

E-mail: riki.taufiki@monash.edu

MONASH University

EXPLANATORY STATEMENT
(TEACHER and VOLUNTEER)

Project: Education in Post-Conflict and Post-Tsunami Aceh: An Ethnographic Case Study on *Meunasah* Education in Aceh, Indonesia

Chief Investigator's name:	**Co-investigator's name:**
Dr Jane Bone	Dr. Corine Rivalland
Department of Education	Department of Education
Email: jane.bone@monash.edu	Phone: +61 3 990 44546
Ph.: +61 3 990 44242	email: corine.rivalland@monash.edu

Student's name:
Riki Taufiki
Phone: 0451761107
email: riki.taufiki@monash.edu

You are invited to take part in this study. Please read this Explanatory Statement in full before deciding whether or not to participate in this research. If you would like further information regarding any aspect of this project, you are encouraged to contact the researchers via the phone numbers or email addresses listed above.

What does the research involve?

This project will explore and investigate early year education in *meunasah* to gain a more comprehensive understanding of how the community, teachers and parents think about the education of young children. This project may inform policymakers in the future.

Your involvement will consist of participating in a one-hour individual interview, a two-hour focus group discussion and classroom observations (3 days in a week for a total of 6 weeks). During the interview, focus group discussion and observation, notes and audio recordings will be collected (Young children will not be observed, photographed and video-recorded, by the researcher during observation).

Why were you chosen for this research?

You have been chosen to participate in the study because of your experience as a teacher and volunteer And because your role is essential to the teaching-learning process in early years' education in the *meunasah.*

Consenting to participate in the project and withdrawing from the research

Participating in this study is voluntary, and participants are under no obligation to consent to participate. Be reassured that the purpose of gathering data in the study is to better understand your perspectives on early years education in *meunasah*, not to evaluate your understanding or to judge your knowledge. Therefore, there are no right or wrong answers. The questions that will be asked during the interviews are not likely to cause inconvenience. You can also choose to withdraw from the research at any time without the need to explain further your decision. Should you choose to withdraw, all notes and audio recording from interviews will be deleted.

Possible benefits and risks to participants

Your participation in this project will allow the participants to share their experiences and knowledge on how they think about early years education in their community. These experiences may inspire other communities in rural Aceh.

There is no risk to you if you agree to join the research since the subject matter of this project is not sensitive or of a personal nature, and the main focus is in your role in early year education in *meunasah*.

Confidentiality

The information collected in the interviews will be treated as confidential and used only for research purposes. All the data is confidential and anonymous. Pseudonyms will be used instead of your real name in the reporting of research results. The audio recording will be transcribed verbatim by the researcher. The identity of the participants will be protected, and access to the information will be restricted to the researcher only. Therefore, personal and identifying information that you provide in the study will remain confidential. While maintaining confidentiality, we cannot guarantee that the people reading any publication will not be able to identify you or your location but will do our best to maintain anonymity.

In order that others can learn about the outcomes, the research will be published in an online or print-based academic journal and other publications and presented at conferences.

Storage of data

Storage of the data collected will adhere to Monash University regulations. The data in the form of hardware will be kept on university premises in a locked cupboard and data in the form of software will be secured on password protected computer. All data will be terminated securely after a period of 5 years.

Results

The research will be published in the form of a doctoral thesis. If you would like a short report about the research, then you are most welcome to contact the researcher at riki.taufiki@monash.edu.

Complaints

If you would like to contact the researchers about any aspect of this study, please contact the Chief Investigator:	If you have a complaint concerning the manner in which this research is being conducted, you are welcome to contact:
Dr Jane Bone Faculty of Education, Monash University Email: jane.bone@monash.edu Ph.: +61 3 990 44242	Muliadi Yusuf Staff at PNPM Nisam District office, North Aceh. Email: Khairamuliadi047@gmail.com Ph +6285294152482

You can contact the University Ethics committee via email: muhrec@monash.edu

Or / MUHREC,
Room 111, Chancellery Building E, 24 Sports Walk,
Monash Clayton Campus,
Wellington Rd
Clayton VIC 3800, Australia

Thank you for your time.

Riki Taufiki

Monash University

E-mail: riki.taufiki@monash.edu

MONASH University

CONSENT FORM
(STAKEHOLDERS)

Project: Education in Post-Conflict and Post-Tsunami Aceh: An Ethnographic Case Study of *Meunasah* Education in Aceh, Indonesia

Chief Investigator : Dr Jane Bone
Co-investigator : Dr Corine Rivalland
Student : Riki Taufiki

I have been asked to take part in the Monash University research project specified above. I have read and understood the Explanatory Statement, and I hereby consent to participate in this project.

I consent to the following:	Yes	No
I agree to take part in a one-hour interview that will be audiotaped.	☐	☐
I agree to take part in two hours focus group that will be audiotaped.	☐	☐
I agree that field notes will be taken during the interview and focus group.	☐	☐

I understand that any data that the researcher extracts from the interview can be used in reports, conferences, publications and other educational purposes. However, publications will not, under any circumstances, contain names or identifying characteristics.

I understand that any information I provide is confidential and that no information that could lead to the identification of any individual will be disclosed in any reports on the project, or to any other party.

Name of Participant _____

Participant Signature _____ Date _____

MONASH University

CONSENT FORM
(PARENTS/COMMUNITY MEMBERS))

Project: Education in Post-Conflict and Post-Tsunami Aceh: An Ethnographic Case Study of *Meunasah* Education in Aceh, Indonesia

Chief Investigator : Dr. Jane Bone
Co-investigator : Dr. Corine Rivalland
Student : Riki Taufiki

I have been asked to take part in the Monash University research project specified above. I have read and understood the Explanatory Statement, and I hereby consent to participate in this project.

I consent to the following:	Yes	No
I agree to take part in one hour interview that will be audio-taped.	☐	☐
I agree to take part in a two hours focus group that will be audio-taped.	☐	☐
I agree that field notes will be taken during the interview and focus group.	☐	☐

I understand that any data that the researcher extracts from the interview can be used in reports, conferences, publications and other educational purposes. However, publications will not, under any circumstances, contain names or identifying characteristics.

I understand that any information I provide is confidential and that no information that could lead to the identification of any individual will be disclosed in any reports on the project, or to any other party.

Name of Participant _____

Participant Signature _____ Date _____

MONASH University

CONSENT FORM
(TEACHER and VOLUNTEER)

Project: Education in Post-Conflict and Post-Tsunami Aceh: An Ethnographic Case Study of *Meunasah* **Education in Aceh, Indonesia**

Chief Investigator : Dr. Jane Bone
Co-investigator : Dr Corine Rivalland
Student : Riki Taufiki

I have been asked to take part in the Monash University research project specified above. I have read and understood the Explanatory Statement, and I hereby consent to participate in this project.

I consent to the following:	Yes	No
I agree to take part in one hour interview that will be audio-taped.	☐	☐
I agree to take part in a two hours focus group that will be audio-taped.	☐	☐
I agree to participate in classroom observation (3 days a week for 6 weeks)	☐	☐
I agree that field notes will be taken during the interview, focus group and observation.	☐	☐

I understand that any data that the researcher extracts from the interview can be used in reports, conferences, publications and other educational purposes. However, publications will not, under any circumstances, contain names or identifying characteristics.

I understand that any information I provide is confidential and that no information that could lead to the identification of any individual will be disclosed in any reports on the project, or to any other party.

Name of Participant

Participant Signature   Date

269

Appendix 4: Initial Semi-Structured Interview Questions – Stakeholder, Educators, Parents

Stakeholder

   a. Background and introduction
       Please introduce yourself (such as your roles in *meunasah* and village).

1. Could you please tell me about *meunasah* education and its main goals?

2. How the post-conflict and post-tsunami reconstruction affected *meunasah* education?

3. What are the factors that lead to the establishment of early years education in *meunasah*?

4. Why this community focus on early years education?

5. What role do stakeholders play in establishing early year education in *meunasah*?

6. What kinds of early years education provided in *meunasah*?

7. How do you encourage community member, especially parents, to enrol their children to early years education in *meunasah*?

8. What are the differences between early year education service provided in *meunasah* and other early year education institution?

9. How does stakeholder help educators to apply the *meunasah* Islamic philosophy in their practice?

10. What are the benefits of early years education to this community and particularly to the children?

11. How this community gain its awareness of the importance of early years education for children?

12. How did the conflict affect education in *meunasah*?

13. How do you encourage community involvement in early year education program in *meunasah*?

14. What supports have you received from the government to develop early year education in *meunasah*?

15. What is the support or policy from the government? Do you need to enable to improve the quality of early years education service in *meunasah*?

Educators

Background and introduction

Please introduce yourself (your teacher training how long it was, where did you receive this training, etc.)

1. Do educators have any role in the establishment of early years education in *meunasah*?
2. What are the differences between early year education service provided in *meunasah* and other early year education institution?
3. What specific teaching theories and philosophy do you draw upon in your daily classroom practice?
4. What kinds of guidelines provided by the government for early years education?
5. Can it be applied in *meunasah* early years education setting?
6. Please tell me about the tradition of Islamic education in *meunasah* and its main values?
7. How this long standing tradition influence the newly establish early year education in *meunasah*?
8. Please describe how you apply the Islamic philosophy in your daily practice?
9. What is the emphasis of Islamic teaching to the children?
10. Apart from Islamic philosophy; is there any other theory or philosophy applied in your classroom practice?
11. Do educators have any influence in the decision making process in *meunasah*, when it relates to early education service?
12. How the past conflict and peace affected this community and its early years education in *meunasah*?
13. In what ways do the recent conflict and tsunami influence your teaching?
14. What role do parents and community play in this early years education institution?
15. What aspects in *meunasah* that you find restrict and helpful to you in applying other theory or philosophy?

Parents

Background and Introduction

Please introduce yourself (name, occupation, how many children study at *meunasah*).

1. Why did you select the early years education in *meunasah* for your child?
2. Why did you enrol your children to early years education?
3. Do you have any knowledge about the process of the establishment of early year education in *meunasah*?
4. What is your view about the early year education in *meunasah*?
5. What are your expectations of your children attending early years education in *meunasah*?
6. What is your view about your child's experience in early years education in *meunasah*?
7. Which aspect of your child's development is most crucial to you?
8. What influence do you have regarding the policymaking?
9. What elements of early years education are you most satisfied with?
10. Is there anything the government could provide to improve the early years education in *meunasah*?
11. How do you support/ engage with early years education programs in your *meunasah*?
12. What is the perceived impact of recent conflict and tsunami on the current development early year education in *meunasah*?
13. How *meunasah* promote the early years education service to the parents?
14. How do you participate in early years education in *meunasah* programs with your children?
15. How do you expect from teachers with regard to your child's education in *meunasah*?

Appendix 5: Curriculum 2013 (example of Thematic Daily Learning Plan: Sub-theme: Plantations).

RENCANA PROGRAM PEMBELAJARAN HARIAN (RPPH)

TAMAN KANAK- KANAK PAUD (Usia 5-6 tahun)

Semester/Minggu ke/Hari ke : I / 15 / 1

Hari /tgl   : ….............

Kelompok usia   : B (5-6 Tahun)

Tema/sub tema   : Tanaman / jenis pohon (berkayu dan tidak berkayu)

KD : $1.1 - 2.3 - 2.9 - 3.2 - 4.2 - 3.3 - 4.3 - 3.11 - 4.11 - 3.15 - 4.15$

Materi   : - Macam – macam tananam jenis pohon (berkayu dan tidak berkayu)

-    Berkreasi dengan bahan alam

-    Gotong royong

-    Mengucap terimakasih

-    Koordinasi motorik halus

-    Mengulang kalimat

-    Perbedaan warna

Kegiatan main   : Kelompok dengan kegiatan pengaman

Alat dan bahan   : -   Balok

                                  - Daun nangka

                                  - Kartu kata

                                  - Papan titian

                                  - Krayon

Karakter   : Kreatif

1

Proses kegiatan

A. PEMBUKAAN:

1. Penerapan SOP pembukaan

2. Berdiskusi tentang tanaman jenis pohon (berkayu)

3. Berdiskusi tentang menyebutkan bagian – bagian tanaman

4. Berjalan di atas papan titian (dari kayu)

5. Mengenalkan kegiatan dan aturan yang digunakan bermain

B. INTI

1. Bermain dengan balok - balok

2. Menunjukkan bagian – bagian tanaman

3. Membuat topi dari daun nangka

4. Menghubungkan bagian – bagian tanaman dengan kata

C.RECALLING:

1. Merapikan alat-alat yang telah digunakan

2. Diskusi tentang perasaan diri selama melakukan kegiatan bermain

3. Bila ada perilaku yang kurang tepat harus didiskusikan bersama

4. Menceritakan dan menunjukkan hasil karyanya

5. Penguatan pengetahuan yang didapat anak

D. PENUTUP

1. Menanyakan perasaannya selama hari ini

2. Berdiskusi kegiatan apa saja yang sudah dimainkannya hari ini, mainan apa yang paling disukai

2

3. Bercerita pendek yang berisi pesan-pesan

4. Menginformasikan kegiatan untuk besuk

5. Penerapan SOP penutupan

E. RENCANA PENILAIAN

1. Sikap

a. Dapat mensyukuri tanaman sebagai makluk ciptaan Tuhan

b. Menggunakan kata sopan pada saat bertanya

2. Pengetahuan dan   ketrampilan

a. Dapat menyebutkan bagian – bagian tanaman

b. Dapat menyebutkan tanaman jenis pohon berkayu

c. Dapat membuat topi dari daun - daunan

d. Dapat bermain balok - balok

e. Dapat menghubungkan bagian – bagian tanaman dengan kata

3

Appendix 6: Confirmation of Translation Letter

MINISTRY OF RESEARCH, TECHNOLOGY AND HIGHER EDUCATION
SYIAH KUALA UNIVERSITY
LANGUAGE CENTER
Jalan Putroe Phang, Kampus Unsyiah, Darussalam, Banda Aceh 23111
Telepon +62 82166701636
Homepage: www.pusatbahasa.unsyiah.ac.id, E-mail : pusatbahasa@unsyiah.ac.id

To whom it may concern

This is to confirm that a research student of the Faculty of Education, Monash University, Australia, with the following details,

Name	: Riki Taufiki
Project title	: Education in Post-Conflict and Post-Tsunami Aceh: An Ethnographic Case Study on Meunasah Education in Aceh, Indonesia.
Contact	
Email	: riki.taufiki@monash.edu
Phone	: +61451761107

has requested the Language Centre of Syiah Kuala University, Indonesia to provide translation for his field work research documents which include Consent Form, Explanatory Statement, and Permission Letter.

Our centre will provide the service as requested by Mr Riki Taufiki.

Banda Aceh, 27 July 2017

On behalf of the Head of the Language Centre,

Secretary,

Faisal Mustafa, M.A.
NIP. 198307082012121002

276