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**Decentralization, Identity Construction, and  
Conflict: Education under Aceh's Special  
Autonomy**

A dissertation presented in fulfilment of the requirements for  
the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Development Studies

Massey University

Palmerston North

New Zealand

Amaliah Fitriah

2017

## **Abstract**

This study contributes to the existing literature on decentralization by exploring the relationship between decentralization, identity construction and conflict in the context of decentralization reform in Indonesia. Using the concept of bottom-up autonomy as its theoretical lens, this study explores the impact of political decentralization on the autonomy of Aceh and examines the notion that autonomy can contribute to peaceful management of intra-state conflict. The study involves research into education stakeholders in the two districts of Aceh and uses the qualitative methods of pairwise ranking, semi-structured interviews, observation, and document analysis.

More specifically, the impact of decentralization on the autonomy of Aceh is investigated through perceived changes in three areas of education: the curriculum, the structure, and the financing of education. The results demonstrate that the autonomy agreed between Aceh and the Indonesian government has contributed to extensive bottom-up autonomy for Aceh by accommodating the distinct identity of the Acehnese and by providing a political framework for local empowerment. Through providing frameworks for the accommodation of local identity and for local empowerment, the form of bottom-up autonomy resulting from political decentralization has offered negotiated avenues for managing intra-state conflict peacefully. These frameworks have hopefully created common ground for both parties to sustain peace.

However, this study also revealed that there is potential for internal discontent within Aceh society as a result of perceived unequal access to resources. This study does not, therefore, emphatically conclude that political decentralization necessarily reduces conflict. Instead, this research suggests that political decentralization which results in extensive bottom-up autonomy may be a tool for promoting a more peaceful management of conflict between regions and the central state than would otherwise be possible.

## **Acknowledgements**

I would like to extend my heartfelt thanks to all those who have taken the time to participate in and to support this study. Firstly, I am extremely grateful to both my PhD supervisors, Dr Gerard Prinsen and Associate Professor Bethan Greener, who consistently challenged my limitations and extended the boundaries of my knowledge. Their expertise, guidance, and patience have continuously inspired and motivated me throughout my PhD journey. Thanks would never be enough to show how grateful I am to them.

Equally great thanks go to the participants of this study in Aceh, Indonesia, who have offered me their time, wisdom, insight and hospitality. Without their cooperation and trust, this thesis would never have been realised. My deep gratitude goes to the Head of the Education Office of the Province of Aceh, the Head of Education Office of Banda Aceh, the Head of Education Office of Bireuen, the Head of Bireuen BPPD, the Head of Bireuen Education Council, and the Director of ICAIOS (The International Centre for Aceh and Indian Ocean Studies), for their assistance and their warm welcome towards me and the idea of this research. I am also indebted to my research assistant, Fendra, who showed me many aspects of Acehnese life that enriched my understanding of the cultural and sociological background of Aceh and the Acehnese.

Special thanks also goes to NZAID and the Massey University Graduate Research Fund who made this research possible through their financial contribution. I am also grateful to participants at the 2015 Asia and Education Conference (University of Otago, Dunedin, New Zealand, 11-13 December), for adding their valuable comments to the findings of this thesis.

Finally, I would like to express my love and gratitude to my family who have always had faith in me and supported me in many ways. My parents who always encourage me to reach beyond my boundaries, and send their best prayers to me. My beloved husband Rudi whose affection and encouragement has kept me positive and determined, and my wonderful children Naja and Zahra, who are

always there for me and provide me with ongoing love and support. They have been a long-lasting source of energy during this intellectual endeavour.

## Table of Contents

Abstract.....	i
Acknowledgements .....	ii
List of Tables .....	ix
List of Figures .....	x
List of Acronyms.....	xi
List of Acehnese/Indonesian Terms .....	xiii
CHAPTER 1 .....	1
INTRODUCTION.....	1
1.1. Indonesian Decentralization Reform, Regional Grievances and the Resurgence of Local Identities.....	1
1.2. Thesis Aims and Research Questions .....	2
1.3. Significance of the Research and Contribution to Knowledge .....	3
1.4. The Case: Aceh .....	6
1.5. Research Approach.....	9
1.6. Structure of the Thesis .....	10
CHAPTER 2 .....	14
DECENTRALIZATION, AUTONOMY, IDENTITY AND CONFLICT: PUTTING THE STUDY IN CONTEXT.....	14
2.1. Introduction.....	14
2.2. Decentralization: Theory and Practice.....	15
2.2.1. <i>The Evolution of Decentralization</i> .....	15
2.2.2. <i>The Definition and Types of Decentralization</i> .....	17
2.2.3. <i>Political Decentralization</i> .....	19
2.2.4. <i>Motives to Decentralize: Identity Discourse and Economic Discourse</i> .....	21
2.3. Decentralization: Managing or Stimulating Conflict?.....	27
2.4. The Concept of Local Autonomy.....	35
2.5. Conclusion.....	42

CHAPTER 3.....	44
INDONESIAN DECENTRALIZATION MOVEMENT AND ACEH SPECIAL AUTONOMY	
.....	44
3.1. Introduction .....	44
3.2. Indonesian Decentralization Reform .....	44
3.2.1. <i>Decentralization, Regional Grievances and Identity Politics</i> .....	49
3.3. Aceh’s Struggle for Autonomy and Recognition of Identity .....	52
3.3.1. <i>The Recent Special Autonomy and the Implementation of Islamic Sharia</i> .....	58
3.3.2. <i>The New Local Political Landscape and GAM’s Political Influence</i> .....	63
3.4. Conclusion .....	65
 CHAPTER 4.....	 68
EDUCATION IN ACEH AND THE ROLE OF <i>ULAMA</i> .....	68
4.1. Introduction .....	68
4.2. The History of Education in Aceh .....	68
4.2.1. <i>The Pre-colonial and Colonial Period</i> .....	70
4.2.2. <i>The Period of Religious Reformism (1920s-1940s)</i> .....	75
4.2.3. <i>The Period of Revolution and Independence (1945-1990s)</i> .....	79
4.3. Aceh’s Contemporary Education System.....	81
4.3.1. <i>Sekolah (Public School)</i> .....	82
4.3.2. <i>Dayah</i> .....	82
4.3.3. <i>Madrasa</i> .....	84
4.4. The Role of <i>Ulama</i> in Aceh’s education .....	85
4.4.1. <i>Relations with the state</i> .....	87
4.4.2. <i>Fragmented authority of Ulama</i> .....	89
4.5. Conclusion .....	90
 CHAPTER 5.....	 93
RESEARCH STRATEGY AND FIELDWORK .....	93
5.1. Introduction .....	93
5.2. Epistemological Foundation.....	93
5.2.1. <i>Positionality and Reflexivity</i> .....	94

5.3. Qualitative Approach .....	106
5.3.1. <i>Evaluating Qualitative Research</i> .....	107
5.4. Doing Fieldwork.....	109
5.4.1. <i>Establishing Relationships</i> .....	109
5.4.2. <i>Research Ethics</i> .....	111
5.4.3. <i>Research Sites and Settings, and Participants</i> .....	115
5.4.4. <i>Data Collection Methods and Procedures</i> .....	119
5.5. Data Analysis.....	130
5.6. Research Limitations .....	132
5.7. Conclusion.....	134
CHAPTER 6 .....	137
SPECIAL AUTONOMY AND ISLAMIC <i>SHARIA</i> : CONVERGING ISLAMIC AND SECULAR-STATE CURRICULUM.....	137
6.1. Introduction.....	137
6.2. The Development of Education under the Special Autonomy .....	138
6.3. The Policy .....	140
6.4. Islamic <i>Sharia</i> and the Promotion of the Islamic Education Curriculum ....	142
6.4.1. <i>Islamic Education Curriculum in Public Schools</i> .....	147
6.4.2. <i>Secular Knowledge in the Curriculum of <i>Dayah</i></i> .....	154
6.5. The Curricula of History and Acehese Language.....	161
6.6. Changes in Curriculum: From Dichotomy to Convergent Education System .....	167
6.7. Curriculum as Representation of Local Identity .....	169
6.8. Conclusion.....	170
CHAPTER 7 .....	173
SPECIAL AUTONOMY: INTEGRATING INDIGENEOUS ISLAMIC EDUCATION ( <i>DAYAH</i> ) INTO THE STATE SYSTEM.....	173
7.1. Introduction.....	173
7.2. The Structure of Education Governance under Decentralization .....	174
7.3. The BPPD: The New Structure of Education in Aceh.....	176
7.4. Government Funding to <i>Dayah</i> and Perceived Inequality.....	178



7.4.1. <i>Funding Mechanism</i> .....	182
7.4.2. <i>Accessibility of the Fund: Who Gets the Benefit?</i> .....	187
7.5. Changing Relations between <i>Dayah</i> and the Government of Aceh.....	191
7.5.1. <i>Perceptions of the BPPD and Government Funding: Cooperation versus Legitimacy</i> .....	193
7.5.2. <i>Funding and Dayah Self Reliance: from Community Support to Government Support?</i> .....	198
7.5.3. <i>Towards Greater Involvement of the Ulama in Education</i> .....	204
7.6. Conclusion .....	211
 CHAPTER 8.....	 214
AUTONOMY AND THE POLITICS OF FINANCING EDUCATION .....	214
8.1. Introduction .....	214
8.2. Funding System for Education under Special Autonomy.....	215
8.3. The Special Autonomy Fund and its Allocation to Educational Resources .	221
8.4. Changes in Local Political Structure and Access to Educational Resources	223
8.4.1. <i>District Autonomy in Policy for Financing Education</i> .....	225
8.4.2. <i>Local Political Contestation in the Annual Budgeting Process</i> .....	229
8.4.3. <i>The Informal Decision-making Process and the Emergence of Neo-Patrimonialism</i> .....	237
8.5. Perceived Unequal Access to Resources and its Potential for Social Discontent within Aceh Society .....	243
8.6. Conclusion.....	246
 CHAPTER 9.....	 250
DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION .....	250
POLITICAL DECENTRALIZATION, AUTONOMY, IDENTITY, AND CONFLICT .....	250
9.1. Introduction .....	250
9.2. Political Decentralization and the Extent of Autonomy.....	251
9.2.1. <i>Earlier Years' Top-down Versus Recent Bottom-up Autonomy</i> .....	253
9.2.2. <i>Political Decentralization, District Autonomy and Local Empowerment</i>	256
9.3. Identity Discourse in the Implementation of Decentralization .....	262
9.3.1. <i>Education as the Arena of Identity Contestation</i> .....	263

9.3.2. <i>Can Decentralization Mitigate Problems Stemming from Multiple Identities within a Country?</i> .....	265
9.4. Can Political Decentralization Provide Positive Options for Mitigating Intra-State Conflict? .....	269
9.5. New Challenges: Local Political Contestation, Neo-patrimonialism, and Internal Discontent .....	277
9.6. Summary .....	282
9.7. Final Thoughts .....	284
9.7.1. <i>Contribution to Knowledge</i> .....	284
9.7.2. <i>Recommendation for Future Research</i> .....	286
9.7.3. <i>Possible Implications for Policy</i> .....	286
References.....	289
Appendices .....	299
Appendix 1: Information Sheet .....	299
Appendix 2: Consent Form.....	302
Appendix 3: Interview Guides .....	303
Appendix 4: Observation Guide .....	308
Endnote: Interview Quotes in Bahasa.....	309

## List of Tables

Table 1: Bottom-up Approach to Autonomy.....	41
Table 2: The History of Aceh-Jakarta Relations (Aceh's Autonomy).....	60
Table 3: Contemporary Education Institutions in Aceh .....	85
Table 4: Group blueprints of the PWRs.....	118
Table 5: Sites, Participants, and Sample Size .....	119
Table 6: Result of PWRs: Top-three ranking of the most important issues in education in the context of autonomy.....	139
Table 7: Analysis of five ranking issues on education in the context of autonomy .....	140
Table 8: Three categories of <i>dayah</i> in terms of curriculum .....	144
Table 9: Changes in the curricula of public education and <i>dayah</i> education after the implementation of special autonomy and Islamic <i>sharia</i> .....	146
Table 10: Changes in the public education curriculum showing the variation in two districts.....	154
Table 11: The number of <i>dayah</i> and schools, and percentage of students attending each type of institution, in the Province of Aceh.....	181
Table 12: Type, accreditation criteria and block grant of <i>dayah</i> .....	183
Table 13: Additional revenue sharing for Aceh after the implementation of special autonomy.....	217
Table 14: The Allocation of School Operational Fund in two districts .....	227
Table 15: The variation of educational policies in the two districts.....	228
Table 16: The composition of district House of Representatives seats in Banda Aceh and Bireuen in the 2009 and 2014 elections.....	232
Table 17: The extent of the recent autonomy in Aceh's education .....	255

## List of Figures

Figure 1: Interview with a teungku (religious teacher), and an ulama (a leader of dayah).....	101
Figure 2: Local research assistant as an intermediary .....	105
Figure 3: Map of Aceh, Indonesia.....	116
Figure 4: Procedure in PWRs.....	122
Figure 5: Observation scheme as a strategy to collect data.....	128
Figure 6: A streamlined codes-to-theory model for qualitative inquiry .....	131
Figure 7: Process of data analysis.....	132
Figure 8: Different types of dayah .....	144
Figure 9: The recent development of Aceh's education within the context of special autonomy .....	167
Figure 10: Curriculum as a representation of local identity .....	169
Figure 11: Decentralized Education Sector Governance and Management .....	175
Figure 12: Provincial budget expenditure, education sector (APBA) 2013 .....	179
Figure 13: Budget allocation to dayah 2013.....	182
Figure 14: The trend of BPPD budget allocation .....	185
Figure 15: Results on the effect of autonomy on the education structure of Aceh.....	210
Figure 16: The flows of funds from central government to regional government .....	216
Figure 17: Education Budget Allocations from the Special Autonomy Fund and the Oil and Gas Fund.....	219
Figure 18: Composition of Aceh's revenues 2007-2013.....	220
Figure 19: Changes in Local Political Structure and Access to Educational Resources .....	224
Figure 20: Political decentralization, the extent of autonomy achieved, and the potential of managing conflict in the case of Aceh's special autonomy .....	252

## List of Acronyms

- BOS – *Biaya Operasional Sekolah* (School Operational Fund)
- BPPD – *Badan Pembinaan Pendidikan Dayah* (Dayah Education Board)
- DBO – *Dana Bantuan Operasional* (Operational Fund)
- DEO – District Education Office
- DI/TII – *Darul Islam/Tentara Islam Indonesia* (Abode of Islam)
- DoRA – Department of Religious Affairs
- DoEC – Department of Education and Culture
- DPRA – *Dewan Perwakilan Rakyat Aceh* (Aceh’s People Representative Council)
- EC – Education Council (*Majelis Pendidikan Daerah/MPD*)
- EO – Education Office
- EU – European Union
- GAF – General Allocation Fund
- GAM – *Gerakan Aceh Merdeka* (Free Aceh Movement)
- HUDA – *Himpunan Ulama Dayah Aceh* (the Association of Dayah Ulama of Aceh)
- IAIN – *Institut Agama Islam Negeri* (State Institute of Islamic Studies)
- ICMI – *Ikatan Cendekiawan Muslim Indonesia* (the Association of Indonesian Muslim Scholars)
- KPA – *Komisi Peralihan Aceh* (The Aceh Transition Committee)
- LCC – Local Content Curriculum
- LoGA – the Law on Governing Aceh
- MAA – *Majelis Adat Aceh* (the Council of Aceh Custom)
- MoEC – Ministry of Education and Culture
- MoRA – Ministry of Religious Affairs
- MoU – Memorandum of Understanding
- MUI – *Majelis Ulama Indonesia* (Indonesian Ulama Council)

MPR – *Majelis Permusyawaratan Rakyat* (People’s Representative Assembly)

MPU – *Majelis Permusyawaratan Ulama* (Ulama Representative Council)

MUNA – *Majelis Ulama Nanggroe Aceh Darussalam* (the Ulama Council of Nanggroe Aceh Darussalam)

NII – *Negara Islam Indonesia* (Islamic State of Indonesia)

OGF – Oil and Gas Fund

PA – *Partai Aceh* (Aceh Party)

PAD – *Pendapatan Asli Daerah* (Local revenue generated)

PEO – Provincial Education Office

PNA – *Partai Nasional Aceh* (Aceh National Party)

PPP – *Partai Persatuan Pembangunan* (Development Unity Party)

PUSA – *Persatuan Ulama Seluruh Aceh* (All Aceh Ulama Association)

PWR – Pairwise Ranking

SC – School Committee

SPAF – Specific Allocation Fund

SPF – Special Autonomy Fund

## **List of Acehnese/Indonesian Terms**

*Balai Pengajian* – preschool where students study to read and recite the Qur’an

*Bahasa* – Indonesian Official Language

*Dayah* – Aceh Traditional Islamic Boarding School

*Diniyah* Programme – The programme initiated by Banda Aceh District Education Office to introduce the addition of Islamic education curriculum in public schools

*Ulama* – Muslim/religious Scholar

*Teungku* – Teacher of Islamic religious subjects

*Santri* – Students of *dayah*

*Madrassa* – Modern Islamic Schools

*Qanun* – Arabic term for regional or local regulation (bylaw) intended for the implementation of the Law on Special Autonomy for the Privileged Province of Aceh as the Nanggroe Aceh Darussalam

*Kitab Kuning* – Classical texts of Islamic studies (literally ‘Yellow Book’)

*Tadris* – the teaching method of reciting the Qur’an

*Adat* – Traditional norms and culture

*Dinas* – Government local offices

*Uleebalang* – the chieftain who controlled goods in and out of Aceh in nineteenth century Aceh society

*Pesantren* - The term used for Islamic boarding school in Java

*Ustadz* - Teacher of Islamic religious subjects





## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

#### 1.1. Indonesian Decentralization Reform, Regional Grievances and the Resurgence of Local Identities

Decentralization reform took place in almost all developing countries in the 1990s. Indonesia was one of these countries, promoting a decentralization policy reform following its economic crisis and the collapse of the New Order authoritarian regime. From economic perspectives, the advocates of decentralization believed that decentralization was the remedy for the crisis and blamed centralization as the source of the problem. From political perspectives, the advocates of decentralization argued that the new political ideology of democracy coupled with decentralization brought power and responsibility closer to the people (Kristiansen & Pratikno, 2006). However, the strongest driver of decentralization was a fear the country might disintegrate due to regional dissatisfaction with the central government causing sections of the country to strive for independence (Aspinall & Berger, 2001; Hofman & Kaiser, 2004). In 2001, the transitional government under President Habibie promulgated the decentralization policy known as '*Otonomi Daerah*' (regional autonomy) and started formulating policies that would address regional grievances. *Otonomi Daerah* was believed to be a way to overcome problematic relations between regions and the central government.

Such decentralization, accompanied by flourishing local democracy, has, however, opened new spaces for reframing local identities and reassessing loyalty to the state. In many places in Indonesia, as the country promoted its decentralization policy local communities started to embark on the revitalisation of their local identities. Notions such as 'cultural identity', 'identity politics', 'civic loyalties', and

'citizenship' began to proliferate in academic discussion and literature (Bjork, 2003; Diprose, 2009; Erb, Beni, & Anggal, 2005; Faucher, 2006).

The resurgence of regional identities due to regional autonomy has placed the implementation of decentralization under question. This is a challenge faced by Indonesia, or indeed any other country in the process of carrying out decentralization policy, especially those with a history of conflict and threat of disintegration. Can decentralization and its institutional mechanisms facilitate the recognition of multiple identities and resolve conflict over nationalism and territory? This question has been the main driver of this thesis, to see whether decentralization can contribute to addressing problems stemming from the development of distinct identities and intra-state conflict.

The primary purpose of this thesis is, therefore, to explore whether the changes in the way the central government deals with regions can possibly act as a solution for managing multiple identities within the country, and hence help to manage local-central conflict.

## **1.2. Thesis Aims and Research Questions**

The purpose of this study is to explore the impact of political decentralization on the autonomy of Aceh, particularly in relation to identity discourse and conflict, focussing on education under the recent Aceh's special autonomy.<sup>1</sup> Further, this study also seeks to understand whether the autonomy achieved as a result of this

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<sup>1</sup> This study uses the term 'recent Special Autonomy' to describe the implementation of autonomy constituted in the Law on Governing Aceh (LoGA) of the 2006, which is the embodiment of the Helsinki agreement of the 2005. This term is used to differentiate the recent autonomy from the previous attempts at special autonomy, which was promulgated in the two previous autonomy laws, the Law No. 44/1999 on the "Specialty of the Province of Aceh Special Region" and the Law No. 18/2001 on "Aceh Special Autonomy". However, it is important to note that the 2006 Special Autonomy is a continuation of the previous autonomy granted to Aceh. The special autonomy in Aceh should be seen as the continuation of responses to Aceh's struggle for autonomy since Indonesian independence (See Chapter 3).

political decentralization can contribute to the peaceful management of conflict. There are two research questions to be answered in this thesis:

1. How has decentralization affected the autonomy of Aceh in governing its education policies and practices?
2. How has decentralization affected the issues stemming from distinct Acehnese identities and thus contributed to the management of conflict between Aceh and the central government?

This research is significant for a number of reasons – not least its contribution to the literature on decentralization and conflict.

### **1.3. Significance of the Research and Contribution to Knowledge**

Many countries have embraced decentralization as a strategy to promote local development through devolving authority and power to lower administrative tiers. However, the rationale for devolution varies and countries implement different devolution arrangements for geographical, economic, administrative, cultural and historical reasons. While governments adopt decentralization policies for numerous political and economic reasons, scholars have continuously theorised about the relationship between decentralization, identity and conflict. This is found particularly in communities that consider themselves culturally distinctive. Among these communities, grievances against the central government become the major drivers of separatist movements or secession. In relation to this, scholars are still debating whether decentralization can act as a solution for conflict or, on the contrary, whether it may result in fuelling conflict.

In this regard, it is argued political decentralization is a form of decentralization that might be a solution for the state facing separation demands. Conventionally, political decentralization is believed to reduce ethnic conflict and secessionism by bringing the government closer to the people, increasing opportunities for citizens

to influence policy and participate in government, and ultimately giving groups control over their political, social, and economic affairs through self-government (Brancati, 2006; Kaufmann, 1996). Decentralization stands as a successful strategy in accommodating intra-state national diversity (Guibernau, 2006). It provides a framework for inter-ethnic bargaining, turning conflicts into manageable disputes (Ghai, 2002 cited in Baldacchino, 2010). Ultimately, it is argued that political decentralization provides the level of political autonomy needed to restrain ethnic nationalism (Brown, 2009).

Different from administrative or fiscal decentralization, which focusses on economic efficiency or effective service delivery, political decentralization requires the central government to devolve a certain degree of political power to the *decentralized* or autonomous regions. By giving regions the right to self-government, political decentralization is argued to bring meaningful autonomy to regions. As such, political decentralization might help address grievances arising from political, ethnic, religious and cultural groups who express concern over their perceived lack of political representation and their discontent with the allocation of resources (Guinjoan & Rodon, 2014). This issue is highlighted when dealing with the secessionist demands of national or historical minorities whose identities are strong and who view themselves as culturally distinctive from the national majority or from the central state. In this regard, identity discourse is argued to be the main motive for decentralization or demands for autonomy. It is therefore crucial to see whether political decentralization can actually resolve the problems related to multiple identities existing within a state.

Some other scholars, however, raise concerns that the possibility of decentralization might foster the ongoing conflict, or trigger new forms of local or horizontal conflict. Decentralization might help to maintain peace in some countries or regions, but it might have just the opposite effect, or be less successful, in others (Bakke, 2015; Brancati, 2006). A few scholars suggest that instead of reducing conflicts and secessionism, decentralization intensifies conflict by reinforcing ethnic-based identities, producing legislation that discriminates against

certain groups, and providing resources to regional movements (Brancati, 2006, p. 652).

The success of decentralization, as a peaceful way of accommodating diversities within a state and resolving conflict in multi-ethnic societies, thus depends on certain conditions (McGarry & O'Leary, 2009). One of those conditions is how decentralization affects power relations between groups and classes at the local level (Diprose, 2009). In addition, the success of the implementation of political decentralization in managing intra-state conflict has been argued to be more likely to be sustained if accompanied by democratization of the central state (Brancati, 2008).

What the above tells us is that some research has been conducted on the effect of decentralization on reducing or increasing secessionism (Bakke, 2015; Brancati, 2006, 2008; Guibernau, 2006, 2012), and the efficacy of decentralization as a stabilisation strategy in post-conflict society (Edwards, Yilmaz, & Boex, 2015; Suberu, 2009). Nevertheless, little research has incorporated the concept of bottom-up autonomy to assess the effect of decentralization on conflict dynamic.

This Development Studies thesis aims to fill this gap by exploring the impact of decentralization on the autonomy of Aceh, using bottom-up autonomy as a theoretical lens. It is argued that the extent of autonomy resulting from political decentralization can contribute to a more peaceful management of conflict. By linking political decentralization as a mechanism and autonomy as the result of decentralization, this study contributes to the existing literature on the relationship between political decentralization and the resultant autonomy, and its effects on identity construction and intra-state conflict in the context of decentralization reform in Indonesia.

The province of Aceh can act as a relevant case to examine the impact of decentralization on the dynamics of intra-state conflict, taking into account the history of conflict between Aceh and Jakarta. Special autonomy for Aceh is set as the background for this study. It is a form of political decentralization through the

devolution of political authority, responsibilities and public resources to local governments. It is also important to take into consideration how identity contestation has become an integral part of the conflict in Aceh. In particular, this thesis presents arguments on how education has continuously been an arena of identity contestation and reflection on loyalty to the nation state under the new context of decentralization. Considering education as a significant arena for identity contestation, this thesis therefore focusses on the exploration of education under Aceh's special autonomy in order to better understand the relationship between decentralization, identity construction and conflict.

#### **1.4. The Case: Aceh**

Aceh, on the island of Sumatra, is Indonesia's westernmost province. Aceh is a special region in Indonesia, acknowledged for its distinctive role in Indonesia's revolution. That is, Aceh was one of the regions that consistently supported the Indonesian struggle for independence and voluntarily joined the republic at its independence as one of its provinces. However, the historical relationship between Aceh and the central government after the formation of the republic has been characterised by a long conflict involving military action and armed combat between the Indonesian army and Aceh rebels (Aspinall & Berger, 2001; Barron & Clark, 2006; Hillman, 2012). The contemporary conflict began with the formation of *Gerakan Aceh Merdeka*/GAM (Free Aceh Movement) in 1976; however, its roots can be traced back to the rebellion of *Darul Islam* (Abode of Islam) in the 1950s and early 1960s (Miller, 2009). Most sources claim that the dynamics of conflict in Aceh involve the interplay of historical, cultural and economic factors.

Historically, Aceh was an independent entity different from the other Dutch colonised territories, which later formed the Republic of Indonesia. Compared to the rest of Indonesia, Aceh experienced a long period of independence and had a different colonial relationship with the Dutch during Indonesia's struggle for

independence (Reid, 2006 cited in Barron & Clark, 2006, p. 3). It was only after Dutch forces attempted to colonise Aceh in 1873 that motivated Acehnese elites sought stronger ties with other parts of the Dutch East Indies (Aspinall & Berger, 2001). When Java-based nationalists declared independence from the Dutch in 1945, Aceh agreed to join the new Indonesia.

However, from GAM's perspective, the incorporation of Aceh to Indonesia was seen as an illegal transfer of sovereignty from the old Dutch colonialist to a Javanese colonialist government (Di Tiro, 1984 cited in Miller, 2009, p. 3). This perspective, however, was questioned by many other Indonesians and foreign commentators. They argue that the Acehnese contribution to the Indonesian struggle for independence was likely to be voluntary – with the famous Acehnese purchase of the first airplane for the new republic put forward as a piece of evidence for this claim (Shah & Lopes Cardozo, 2014, p. 3).

Socially and culturally, Acehnese identify themselves as different to other Indonesian regions, with Islam and other cultures from the Middle East and South Asia having shaped the distinct Acehnese identity (Hillman, 2012). The formation of the Aceh identity has also been strongly influenced by Aceh's strategic location within international trade routes. The region has been a destination for migration for centuries because of its geographical position in international trade and its valuable agricultural products (Schröter, 2010a, p. 4). This distinct Acehnese identity was particularly shaped and reshaped during the period of GAM in 1976-2005. Acehnese nationalists attempted to reconstruct a distinct Acehnese national identity by referring to Acehnese cultural homogeneity. They contended that the Acehnese culture was fundamentally different from the Indonesian culture and fundamentally incompatible: being Acehnese and being Indonesian thus became a mutually exclusive commitment (Schröter, 2010b, p. 169). As GAM leader Hasan di Tiro put it "The way to our national salvation is the recreation of Acehnese historic consciousness as a people, a culture, a religion" (Aspinall & Berger, 2001, p. 1017).

This construction of a singular Acehnese identity based on ethnicity, language, culture, history and geography was used by GAM as a justification for its claim to territorial sovereignty (Miller, 2009, p. 3). This cultural homogeneity is based on a sense of unity that derives from Acehnese suffering, oppression, and resistance during the war against Dutch colonial rule and continued into post-colonial times under the banner of the Free Aceh Movement. These experiences have given rise to a sense of community which has, in the decades since Indonesia's independence, served as the basis for a collective action that has been asserted against the central government in Jakarta (Schröter, 2010b, p. 170). The struggle for secession and autonomy has also been based on this sense of unity and historical homogeneity.

In terms of the economic aspect, existing literature explains that natural resource extraction by Jakarta was one of the sources of Aceh's grievances (See for examples Barron & Clark, 2006; Brown, 2005; Hillman, 2012; McGibbon, 2004). It was only after the discovery of vast natural gas and oil resources in the province in the early 1970s that calls for independence, rather than autonomy, emerged (Aspinall & Berger, 2001, pp. 1016-1017). Economic grievances were driven by the perception that the benefits of resource exploitation accrued only to the Jakarta elite, with little return to Aceh. These emergent spatial horizontal inequalities were given more explicitly ethnic overtones as Jakarta, partly in response to unrest in the province, encouraged massive Javanese migration to Aceh. Aceh's economic grievances against the national government were thus brought home into the province itself, as the Javanese took up strong positions in the local economy (Brown & Langer, 2010). Miller (2009, p. 3) contends that, while the historical 'differentness' between Acehnese and other Indonesians must be acknowledged, it is more likely that the exploitation of Aceh's resources by the Indonesian state was the root cause of the contemporary conflict.

These historical, social-cultural and economic settings shaped Aceh's identity and distinguish Aceh from the rest of Indonesia. These settings are also considered to be major factors contributing to grievances that led to the secessionist movement



and local-central conflict. Unlike other regions, which have typically demanded more autonomy, since its formation in 1976 GAM had always demanded independence, which led to an historical three-decade-long conflict with the central government. Networks of Acehnese students under the umbrella organization SIRA (Aceh Referendum Information Centre), and religious and human rights organizations throughout the province openly called for a vote on independence in a mass rally in August 1999. This mirrored East Timor's mounting demands for an internationally monitored plebiscite on independence that proved that secession from Indonesia was achievable. "Even GAM announced that it was prepared to abandon its armed struggle if Jakarta granted Aceh an East Timor-style referendum" (Miller, 2004, p. 339). This is an important difference showing that the threat of secession indeed exists in Aceh.

After more than three decades of conflict, an agreement on 'special autonomy' was concluded between Aceh and the Indonesian government in 2005 as a concession to end the long historical conflict between the province and the national government. GAM finally gave up its struggle for independence after being granted the right to form a political party as part of the peace deal. By granting special autonomy to Aceh, the central government hoped to end secessionism and thus stop armed conflict with the nationalist movement. The extent to which this special autonomy can peacefully manage conflict as it relates to the distinct identity construction of Acehnese is explored in this thesis by means of a constructivist approach.

## **1.5. Research Approach**

This research is situated within a constructivist paradigm that assumes reality is socially constructed (Petty, Thomson, & Stew, 2012a). Individuals develop their own subjective meanings of their experiences where meanings are varied and multiple (Berg, 2009, p. 30). Knowledge of this reality involves understanding the

multiple views of people in a particular situation. Thus, researchers acknowledge that their own experiences and subjectivity may influence their interpretation and this becomes part of the research process, known as reflexivity (See for examples England, 1994; Petty et al., 2012a; Rose, 1997; Sultana, 2007). The positionality of this particular researcher is examined later in the thesis, especially in Chapter Five, the main methodology chapter.

This constructivist paradigm gives direction to the utilisation of qualitative research for this study. Qualitative research aims to demonstrate a greater depth of understanding by applying qualitative procedures. Instead of investigating the breadth, this study focusses on greater depth of understanding of the phenomenon under study. The complexity and uniqueness of local practices in responding to the implementation of Aceh's special autonomy require an in-depth investigation in order to understand the impact of decentralization on the autonomy of Aceh. Special emphasis is put on the broad context of the conflict between Aceh and the central government. To ensure the validity of qualitative research, triangulation is used as a form of convergent validation. For this reason, this thesis employs different research methods to answer the research questions. These methods are: pairwise ranking, semi-structured individual interview, observation, and document analysis.

## **1.6. Structure of the Thesis**

Chapter One introduces the study. It outlines the overall aim of the thesis and research questions and demonstrates the significance of the thesis. The overall approach of the research has also been discussed.

Chapter Two explores the discursive field around decentralization, identity construction and conflict. It reviews the literature on decentralization policies and practices, the motives behind the implementation of decentralization, the link between decentralization and conflict, and discusses the concept of autonomy as a

potential conceptual framework for understanding the findings of this study. In particular, attention is paid to political decentralization as a type of decentralization that can potentially contribute to mitigate intra-state conflict. Special attention is also given to identity discourse, as this is recognised as the major motive for decentralization when autonomy is demanded from the bottom-up actor, not imposed from above, as demonstrated with regard to historical minorities such as those in Quebec in Canada, Scotland in England, and Catalonia and the Basque regions in Spain.

Chapter Three describes the context of this study, that is, the history of local-central relations between Aceh and the Indonesian government since Indonesia's independence. It particularly investigates two main milestones in the history of local-central relations: The Indonesian decentralization reform since the late 1990s and Aceh's struggle for autonomy since Indonesian independence until the implementation of special autonomy in 1999. With regard to Indonesian decentralization, specific emphasis is given to the potential threat of resurgence of local identities and national disintegration brought about by the implementation of decentralization. In terms of Aceh's special autonomy, the chapter focusses on the history of conflict driven by Aceh's grievances as a result of centralization of the state during the New Order authoritarian regime and the abandonment of regional demands for autonomy. The recent special autonomy implemented in Aceh is considered to launch a new era in local-central relations as it provides Aceh with greater authority in diverse areas, and provides a new political framework for local political participation.

The history of education in Aceh is then examined in Chapter Four. This chapter illustrates how education has become an arena of identity contestation between Aceh and the Indonesian government over the notion of secular versus religious education. The chapter also outlines the importance of religion and religious agency in Aceh society, including Aceh's education system. Changes in Aceh's education after the implementation of special autonomy might be better

understood in conjunction with the history of education development and the history of local-central relations.

Chapter Five presents the methodological approach of the research and the fieldwork experience. Qualitative research methods, which incorporate four different methods – pairwise ranking, semi-structured interview, observation, and document analysis – were considered to be the most effective means for accommodating the multiple views of the research participants and in order to help reveal the multiple realities of the subject under study. By triangulating four different methods, the nuance from different voices can be better captured, expressed and verified. Situating the research within the epistemological stance of constructivism, this chapter also gives further detail about the positionality and reflexivity of the researcher to help the reader evaluate the validity of the research.

Chapters Six, Seven, and Eight present the main findings of the thesis. They are mainly devoted to answering the first research question of the thesis, that is, “How has decentralization affected the autonomy of Aceh in governing its education policies and practices”? These three chapters then set the ground for a better understanding of the impacts of decentralization on the autonomy of Aceh. Chapter Six thus explores changes in the development of the curriculum in Aceh after the implementation of special autonomy. Through the exploration of curriculum development in Aceh after the implementation of Aceh’s special autonomy, the thesis addresses issues related to the extent of Aceh’s autonomy, and how autonomy has accommodated Acehnese distinct identity. Chapter Seven articulates findings related to the establishment of the new structure of education in Aceh, the *Dayah* Education Board (BPPD), as a result of the implementation of Aceh’s special autonomy. It explores the changes in Aceh’s education structure and provides explanations of issues related to contestation between secular and religious education, and issues related to the accommodation of the distinct Acehnese identity in education. Finally, Chapter Eight investigates the effects of the Special Autonomy Fund and Oil and Gas Fund on access to educational resources. Particular attention is given to the distribution of the fund and to how education

stakeholders have perceived the allocation of these resources with respect to their interests.

A discussion of the impact of decentralization on the autonomy of Aceh, the accommodation of distinct Acehnese identity in education, and the potential of autonomy to contribute to the peaceful management of conflict between Aceh and the central government is then articulated in Chapter Nine. Thus, the chapter is devoted to answering both the first and second research questions in this thesis. It contributes to understanding of the issues around decentralization, identity construction, and conflict. Lastly, the chapter concludes the study by stating the final reflection of the researcher; speaks to the theoretical implications of the study; outlines recommendations for future research; and closes with implications of the study for policy and practice

## CHAPTER 2

### DECENTRALIZATION, AUTONOMY, IDENTITY AND CONFLICT: PUTTING THE STUDY IN CONTEXT

#### 2.1. Introduction

Decentralization has gained prominence in development literature. However, there is ongoing debate about the benefits and limitations of decentralization to local people. With regard to its impact upon conflict, the literature suggests that the impact of decentralization on conflict dynamics is uncertain and variable. The purpose of this chapter is to explore some of these debates, focussing on the arguments around the advantages and disadvantages of decentralization in managing intra-state conflict. This provides a theoretical background and a context out of which the introduction of special autonomy in Aceh can be explained, given that special autonomy is part of a broader set of decentralization reforms undertaken by the Indonesian state since the 1990s.

The chapter commences with a review of decentralization policies, starting with a review of the evolution of decentralization. The next section elaborates on the types and forms of decentralization and discusses how they have been implemented in different cases. It highlights political decentralization as a form of decentralization that under some circumstances can contribute to the peaceful management of intra-state conflict. The chapter goes on to discuss the different motives that drive a country's decision to embrace decentralization. The specific emphasis on identity discourse within political decentralization is explored, and is compared to economic discourse, which does not feature as prominently in the political type of decentralization. The chapter continues with an exploration of the impact of decentralization on conflict dynamics. Finally, the concept of autonomy is discussed, as understood from different perspectives, concentrating on the two main approaches to autonomy: the top-down and bottom-up approaches. Using the bottom-up approach to autonomy, the thesis investigates the extent to which

autonomy resulting from political decentralization has occurred in Aceh and the ways in which it has been achieved.

## **2.2. Decentralization: Theory and Practice**

### *2.2.1. The Evolution of Decentralization*

The theory and practice of decentralization has evolved over many decades, and has been transformed by different political, economic and social influences. During the 1970s and 1980s, attempts at decentralization tended to focus on the de-concentration of hierarchical government structures and bureaucracies in order to improve public service delivery by giving local administrative units more responsibility (Cheema & Rondinelli, 2007, p. 6). This mode of decentralization did not necessarily distribute political power among the lower tiers of government. In this sense, decentralization was merely an administrative reform, concerned only with the way decentralization could contribute to local and regional development, and, more specifically, how decentralization could improve the provision and maintenance of public services and infrastructure in developing countries (Rondinelli, MacCullough, & Johnson, 1989). According to Schonwalder (1997, p. 757) this type of decentralization is a pragmatic approach to decentralization and is viewed as a policy tool that can be used by the state, or an international organization, to promote development projects. Thus, this type of decentralization puts more emphasis on practical aspects such as technical, spatial and administrative matters.

In the wake of the wave of democratization that swept many developing countries at the beginning of the 1990s, the concept of decentralization soon broadened to include political power-sharing and democratization. This democratization wave brought about a new form of decentralization, known as 'democratic decentralization', which combined devolution with democracy at the local level (Blair, 2000, p. 21; Gaventa & Valderrama, 1999, p. 5). Since then, the rationale and

objectives of decentralization have continued to expand, coming to encompass not only the transfer of power, authority, and responsibility within government, but also the sharing of authority and resources for shaping public policy within society (Cheema & Rondinelli, 2007, p. 6). Democratic decentralization is considered as a vehicle for political reforms and democratization, shifting the focus from merely the redistribution of state power to a broader objective involving the government-citizen relationship (Brinkerhoff, Brinkerhoff, & McNulty, 2007; Schonwalder, 1997). Therefore, democratic decentralization is basically political decentralization. This democratic decentralization has inspired both aid-recipient governments and donors to support democracy at the local, as well as at the national, level. Over the course of the 1990s, for instance, the United Nations Development Programme assisted over 250 decentralization activities in various countries (Blair, 2000, p. 22).

It is estimated that by the end of the 1990s, 80% of developing countries had been experimenting with some form of decentralization, and that 76% of countries in the world had undergone political decentralization (Gaventa & Valderrama, 1999, p. 5; Work, 2002, p. 9). Indonesia was one of the countries swept up in this wave of political decentralization. The democratization movement brought political reform in Indonesia, triggered by an economic crisis in 1997 and by the collapse of the authoritarian Suharto regime in 1998. Paralleled with this democratization movement, there was a call by local leaders for more control over political and economic affairs after decades of centralization. All of these factors affected the country's decision to pursue the path of decentralization initially undertaken by the transitional government. At first, the focus of decentralization was to overcome the economic crisis. It was believed that a strong centralising government resulted in inefficient management of the country's economy. However, the fear that Indonesia could still fall apart as a result of internal conflict encouraged the People's Consultative Assembly (Majelis Permusyawaratan Rakyat/MPR) to implement full regional autonomy, fairer revenue sharing, and fiscal balance in 1998 (Mokhsen, 2003). As countries implement different types of decentralization



for different reasons, it is therefore important to understand the definition as well as the types of decentralization commonly employed in the literature.

### *2.2.2. The Definition and Types of Decentralization*

Despite the term 'decentralization' being used differently in different contexts as described above, the existing literature tends to show general agreement when defining and describing typologies of decentralization. Rondinelli, a scholar often cited in the decentralization literature, defines decentralization as:

The transfer or delegation of legal and political authority to plan, make decisions and manage public functions from the central government and its agencies to field organizations of those agencies, subordinate units of government, semiautonomous public corporations, area wide or regional development authorities; functional authorities, autonomous local governments, or nongovernmental organizations (Rondinelli, 1981, p. 137).

As noted above, however, in practice there are different types and forms of decentralization. There are three main types and three major forms of decentralization identified in the literature.

Cheema and Rondinelli (2007, p. 6) divide decentralization into three broad types: political, administrative and fiscal decentralization. Political decentralization usually refers to the transfer of political power and authority to lower levels of government. Administrative decentralization aims at transferring decision-making authority, resources and responsibility for delivery of public services from central government to other levels of government agencies, and field offices of central government line agencies. Fiscal decentralization refers to the reallocation of resources to subnational levels of government.

In terms of the degree of discretion transferred, there are three major forms of decentralization: *devolution*, *delegation*, and *deconcentration* (Rondinelli, 1981; Rondinelli & Cheema, 2007; Work, 2002). Deconcentration – the lowest degree of a

transfer of power – is the transfer of authority and responsibility to lower levels within a central government ministry or agency. Delegation – a medium degree of a transfer of power – is a change of mandate and authority to other government units that are not always necessarily branches or local offices of the delegating authority. Devolution is the shifting or full transfer of responsibility, decision-making power, resources and revenue generation down to lower levels of a hierarchy that is fully autonomous and independent of the devolving authority, or out to independent public *organizations*. Work (2002, p. 12) asserts that “units that are devolved are usually recognised as independent legal entities and ideally elected”. Therefore, devolution is often considered as a form of political decentralization, the ‘true form’ or ‘strongest form’ of decentralization, whereas deconcentration and delegation are regarded as weaker or moderate forms of administrative decentralization.

An understanding of the different types of decentralization is important, as it can help to examine the extent of the decentralization which has occurred in Aceh, whereas exploration of the forms of decentralization might help to understand the degree of transfer of power which has emerged in the case of Aceh’s special autonomy. In practice, however, it is almost impossible to make a clear delineation of forms of decentralization; all governmental systems are likely to have elements of devolution, deconcentration, and delegation.

As illustrated by Work (2002, pp. 11-15) and Litvack, Ahmad, and Bird (1998, p. 1), many countries are likely to have a combination of these forms, ranging from a focus on deconcentration and delegation with limited power devolution, to a much stronger focus on greater devolution of political, financial, and administrative authority to directly elected local governments. Tanzania and Ghana, for example, used decentralization as an approach to promote rural and urban development, but emphasised deconcentration, rather than devolution of power. In contrast, Nigeria and Uganda’s decentralization reforms devolved responsibilities and power to local governments. Other countries such as Columbia, Brazil, Philippines and South Africa implemented elements of political decentralization to deepen

democracy. Countries in Eastern Europe such as Lithuania, Estonia and Latvia have undergone administrative decentralization, but not political decentralization, as part of their transition to market economies. In more centralized countries of East Asia, decentralization was implemented merely to improve delivery of local services to large populations. The challenge of ethnic and geographic diversity in South Asia, as well as ethnic tensions in countries such as Bosnia and Herzegovina, inclined governments to promote asymmetrical federations to maintain central power or avoid the fragmentation of the state.

This study purposefully uses political decentralization as the term that can best explain the type of decentralization in Aceh. This term is chosen because the main motive behind the implementation of Aceh's special autonomy is to end conflict and secessionism. Previous attempts at granting autonomy in Indonesia demonstrated that the sharing of resources and authority without a significant devolution of political power does not potentially help to end conflict and secession. In a conflict setting, when the motive for decentralization is mainly a political reason, even if accompanied by economic motive, political decentralisation is the most appropriate term to use.

### *2.2.3. Political Decentralization*

Rondinelli (1982) defines political decentralization as the devolution of political authority, responsibilities and public resources to local governments. In contrast to administrative and fiscal decentralization, which merely focus on the devolution of administrative responsibilities, political decentralization puts more emphasis on the devolution of political power.

The main characteristic of political decentralization is a vertical division of power among multiple levels of government. This division of power, as noted by Brancati, should include independent decision-making authority of every tier of government to legislate on certain matters, as the main element of political decentralization

(Brancati, 2006, p. 655). For instance, issues that affect a country as a whole, or issues that subunits of a state cannot provide for individually, come under the jurisdiction of the central government. These issues usually include matters such as defence, foreign affairs, currency, and immigration. However, issues that are tailored to the specific needs of different localities come under the control of the subnational governments. These issues can vary widely such as health, education, transportation, natural resources and customs. Therefore, “the extent of political decentralization within countries is determined by the number and the significance of issues over which subnational legislatures have control” (Brancati, 2008, pp. 6-7).

The aim of such political decentralization is to allow for lower levels of government to hold substantial power in the expectation of increasing government accountability. Thus, the outcomes of political decentralization arguably hinge on the availability of local democratic institutions to ensure that the local citizens could exercise control over local government affairs (Blair, 2000; Richard C Crook & Manor, 1998). Political decentralization therefore requires a constitutional, legal and regulatory framework to ensure accountability and transparency (Work, 2002). In this regard, local elections are considered to be the greatest important political institution and the most direct mechanism in guaranteeing local accountability, thus ensuring that the local government is democratic (Blair, 2000; Sujarwoto, 2012). Brancati (2008, p. 7), therefore, argues that political decentralization is more likely to be sustained in the more established democracies rather than in non-democratic countries. This view is based on an argument that one-party states and absolute leaders in non-democracies tend to erode the decision-making authority of the regional legislatures; yet, as Brancati also noted, there is a possibility that such erosion has also happened in democratic countries.

The following section now moves to discuss two differing arguments within the decentralization literature concerning the motives behind a country’s decision to pursue a decentralization policy or motives for regions to demand autonomy or

separation from the central state: the identity discourse and the economic discourse. Chapter 9 of this thesis further develops an understanding of how these discourses were applied and their interplay in practice in the case of Aceh.

#### *2.2.4. Motives to Decentralize: Identity Discourse and Economic Discourse*

Special autonomy in Aceh was introduced in the context of conflict between Aceh and the Indonesian government. Hence, it is crucial to understand the motives behind the implementation of autonomy in Aceh. This section reviews some of the debates around motives for decentralization with a specific focus on motives that relate to the conflict's setting. Therefore, among the different motives presented here, this thesis utilises two different motives in the decentralization literature, the identity and economic discourse, to see if these discourses can explain the motives that drove the introduction of Aceh's special autonomy.

Decentralization is occurring worldwide for different reasons, but the rationales for decentralization or demands for autonomy to which scholars have mainly paid attention can be divided into political- and economic-based reasons (See for examples Litvack et al., 1998, p. 5; Parks & Elcock, 2000). The economic rationale derives from economic and market-oriented perspectives of efficiency. Decentralization is viewed as a mechanism to efficiently deliver public services. The economic rationale also drives functional regionalism, which is the demand for regional autonomy arising from the functional needs of regions such as public service delivery, economic regeneration, or tourism development. The political rationale behind decentralization originates from perspectives on democracy which include the notion that decentralization brings people closer to government. These rationales also include the notion that decentralization is a way to accommodate pressure for regional autonomy, to increase the legitimacy and sustainability of heterogeneous national states. The political rationale is also popular in cultural regionalism, which exists in regions with distinct cultures and identities, whose demands for autonomy or independence are based on a coherent

identity argument. For this reason, the political rationale is also known as an identity motive.

Within the context of conflict in Aceh, this study highlights two specific motivations for decentralization: *the identity discourse* and *the economic discourse*. The notion of identity discourse belongs to political decentralization or cultural regionalism. Meanwhile, economic discourse is closer to functional regionalism. The identity and economic discourses are considered important in this thesis to investigate whether the case of special autonomy in Aceh was driven by political motives (identity discourse) or merely economic motives. In analysing these two discourses, the works of Rodriguez-Pose and Sandall (2008) and Guinjoan and Rodon (2014) are particularly relevant. Both studies explored different motivations for decentralization within different contexts and country cases.

According to Rodriguez-Pose and Sandall (2008), in a comparative study of the motives behind decentralization across five countries (China, India, Spain, the United Kingdom, and the United States), motives to decentralize depended on which actor is driving the decentralization process. That is, in the case of bottom-up decentralization, in which decentralization is demanded by regional actors, identity discourse tends to be the major driver for decentralization or demands for autonomy. However, identity does not appear to be a significant motive when decentralization is promoted by actors at the top (i.e. either by the central government or by international organizations). Instead, economic arguments are promoted as the main reasons for decentralization.

Historically, identity discourse has dominated claims about the motivations for decentralization (Guinjoan & Rodon, 2014; Rodriguez-Pose & Sandall, 2008), especially in territories where grievances against the central government are the major drivers of separatist movements or secessionism. In these cases, calls for political decentralization and demands for autonomy have mainly been based on cultural, ethnic, linguistic, and religious arguments (Knight, 1982). Cases in point include Quebec in Canada, Catalonia and the Basque Country in Spain, and Scotland

and Wales in Britain, where autonomy or independence claims are considered as mechanisms to recognize regional cultural identities.

The logic behind identity discourse in the demand for autonomy is related to the recognition of heterogeneity within a country, and the right of communities to govern themselves in order to protect and promote their distinctive collective identity (Loughlin, 2000, p. 10). When nation-building is predicated on homogeneity from the national level to sub-national level, it stifles the expression of the local identity. Regions and localities therefore become vulnerable to losing their uniqueness (Massey, 1999). Consequently, localities resist this homogenisation through their struggles to preserve their identity vis-à-vis that of the nation state. Regions and localities struggle against attempts to integrate them into a culturally, politically, and socially homogenous emerging world order (Rodríguez-Pose & Gill, 2005, p. 407). Arguably then, identity discourse in demands for higher levels of self-government had a stronger effect among historical autonomous communities with a strong regional identity, compared to other locales (Guinjoan & Rodon, 2014, p. 37).

Once regional identity was threatened as a result of the homogenisation by the supra power, either the state or the global power, political decentralization is seen as a potential solution. Devolution and institutions designed to meet the specific needs of the regions can facilitate the recognition of multiple identities and resolve conflict over nationalism and territory (Keating, 1998, p. 188). Above all, decentralization that derives from bottom-up initiatives can result in meaningful autonomy, which performs as a mechanism for localities to reflect their identity (Loughlin, 2000; Pratchett, 2004). Chapter 3 of this thesis elaborates on this relationship between autonomy and identity discourse in the case of Aceh.

More recently, economic discourses have emerged as major motives for decentralization, complementing the literature devoted to identity discourse. The proponents of decentralization have increasingly advocated the significance of this economic discourse as a justification for decentralization, arguing that decentralization is a solution to the problem of economic *organization* (Rodríguez-

Pose & Sandall, 2008). Decentralization is seen as a means to adapt easily to changes in the economic environment as a consequence of globalization. Rather than avoiding economic globalization, there is a tendency for regions to adapt and accept the new economic environment so as to establish their role within this changing environment. As Rodríguez-Pose and Gill (2005, pp. 407-408) put it “twenty years ago, devolution was seen as a way to avoid homogenization and economic change ..., today it is a method to achieve it”. Different from identity discourse, which presents decentralization as an end in itself, in economic discourse decentralization is a means to achieve the economic dividends of decentralization. Decentralization is an alternative to economic inefficiency, macroeconomic instability, and ineffective governance. Thus, it is often associated with the neoliberal economic project.

The expansion of the economic discourse, accompanying the identity discourse, has been apparent in some countries' cases. In Spain, for example, as Rodríguez-Pose and Sandall argue (2008), during the 1970s and 1980s regions and nationalities with distinct cultural and historical identities, such as Catalonia and the Basque Country, framed their demands for autonomy mainly on a cultural basis. They insisted that a distinct culture existed which made Spain a heterogeneous country, and devolution was seen as a solution for regions with strong political identities seeking separation from the central state. Entering the twentieth century, however, the nationalist discourse in the Basque Country started to embrace an economic discourse to justify their claims for more autonomy and self-determination. The Basque parliamentary parties began to apply a modern approach, emphasising economic arguments to appeal for changes in their institutions and relationship with the central government.

Another case that illustrates the emergence of economic discourse is Scotland in the 1970s. According to Parks and Elcock (2000, p. 88), since the discovery of North Sea oil in the 1970s, the Scottish National Party (SNP) expanded its identity discourse for more autonomy from London with an economic discourse. Nationalists intended to gain widespread support in the community by pointing to



the material advantage or the prospect of tangible gain, such as the discovery of North Sea Oil off the Scottish coast. More recently, following the 2014 independence referendum in which the No vote won narrowly, an analysis of the vote (Mullen, 2014, p. 633) showed that it seems that the Scottish did not vote solely according to their perception on identity, yet the likely consequences of independence versus the status quo were influential. Voting intentions appeared to strongly correlate with perceptions of the strength or weakness of the Scottish economy after independence. However, identity has always been on the agenda of the nationalist movement in Scotland: Keating (2001, p. 229) argues that a revitalisation of the indigenous culture of Scotland in the 1980s, coinciding with a revived nationalist movement, linking culture back to the nationalist movement.

The development of nationalism and nationalist movements in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries might help in understanding the emergence of economic discourse. According to Guibernau (2012, p. 151), a significant number of 'democratic nationalisms' as opposed to 'romantic nationalisms' have emerged in a number of stateless nations such as Catalonia, Quebec and Scotland. While 'romantic nationalism' provided justification for nationalists to make a claim for sovereignty or autonomy based on cultural arguments such as identity, language and religion, democratic nationalism extends beyond the claims of minority languages and cultures, to make a claim for political autonomy.

Keating (2001) uses the term 'modern nationalism' to describe this new nationalism. He (pp. 263-264) argues that this new nationalism is not merely based on ethnic sentiments, rather it is a combination of ethnic and civic conceptions of nationalism. This nationalism, however, is not only the mere product of changes in political and economic environments. It is the product of a nation-building strategy within the existing states; it draws on historical identities and traditions. In other words, the new modern nationalism is the continuation of the past nationalism, using the old nationalism as an instrument in building the future. Therefore, the nationalist movements are indeed rooted in historical experience, yet each has reshaped its strategy in accordance with contemporary

reality. These historical communities have become modern, liberal and democratic and share the same values as their host state. Their nationalisms have been transformed as a response to the changes in the capacity and legitimacy of the host states and the emergence of new challenges brought about by globalization, as well as the existence of multiple identities.

Despite the increasing importance of economic considerations, this thesis contends that cultural justification seems to have always been a prerequisite for the demand for autonomy or self-determination. “Regions can no longer sell their functional needs without having some sort of cultural justification for seeking autonomy for the territorial entity they represent” (Parks & Elcock, 2000, p. 97). This argument corresponds with Rodriguez-Pose and Sandall’s (2008, p. 54) view on the dominance of identity discourse in the claim for regional autonomy if demanded by bottom-up actors. Conversely, identity motives rarely exist if the process of decentralization is driven by the state or international organizations; instead, functional and economic reasons dominate the initiatives.

In this sense, identity discourse appears to have a more historic basis, while economic arguments are more contemporary and, potentially, more temporary. The emergence of economic arguments is more likely to be co-existent with the elements of identity discourse. Identity discourse is still used to strengthen economic arguments and vice versa. Regionalism may fail if it lacks the cultural elements needed to accelerate popular support. This argument can explain the case of Aceh, where the demand for autonomy was promoted by the bottom-up actors and had been based mainly on distinct identity arguments as narrated by the nationalist movement. This can be seen in Chapter 3 of this thesis.

The relative influences of identity and economic discourse, and the way that they interact, have varied over time and seem to continue to do so. It is hard to claim the universality of the transition from identity to economic discourse and vice versa, because of the overlapping nature of both discourses in practice. There may have been a time when regions demanded autonomy solely on the basis of identity discourse, but it is more likely that identity and economic discourses coincide in

the struggle for autonomy (Rodriguez-Pose & Sandall, 2008, p. 59). The success of demands for regional autonomy could stem from the combination of identity and economic reasons. As Parks & Elcock (2000, pp. 87-88) note, even in cases of cultural regionalism, where demands for autonomy stem from people's wish to protect and develop their identities, regions still need to consider and respond to functional factors, such as the economy, in order to enhance the credibility of their regional claims. Conversely, when the argument for autonomy has a functional basis, regions may come under pressure to provide evidence of cultural cohesion in order to boost their case for regional autonomy.

Despite the advocacy of decentralization being driven by a wide range of motives as discussed above, the results of decentralization have been relatively mixed. Questions have been raised about the impact of decentralization on conflict dynamics. In view of the history of conflict behind the implementation of Aceh's special autonomy, the following section elaborates upon the literature on the impact of decentralization on conflict dynamics, particularly as it relates to identity discourse. This links the results of decentralization to the rationales set out in support of decentralization.

### **2.3. Decentralization: Managing or Stimulating Conflict?**

Major debates in the development literature revolve around development gains resulting from decentralization, the success of decentralization as a strategy for improving service delivery, and bringing decision making closer to the people. Some scholars point out the benefits of decentralization, such as reducing poverty, bringing people closer to the government, improving service delivery, the flowering of democracy and the enhancing of community participation (Goldfrank, 2002; Hofman & Kaiser, 2006; Kristiansen & Pratikno, 2006), while other scholars are more sceptical about the contribution of decentralization to local development: that is, economic growth, service delivery, poverty reduction and democratization

(Richard C. Crook, 2003; Schonwalder, 1997). Thus, while there are some benefits from decentralization, the “empirical relationship between decentralization and various development variables have more often than not been negative” (Rondinelli & Cheema, 2007, p. 8).

In addition to these debates, decentralization has recently gained popularity as a post-conflict strategy in the context of multi-ethnic and diverse societies. Salient to this notion is the fact that development gains can hardly be achieved within a setting of conflict. Decentralization, or political autonomy, has been considered as a response to managing the claims of diverse groups in large multi-ethnic and multi-cultural states (Bakke, 2015; Brown, 2009; Diprose, 2009), particularly with regard to the issue of national minorities or nations without states<sup>2</sup> within large states, such as Quebec in Canada, Scotland and Wales in the United Kingdom, and the Basque Country and Catalonia in Spain. Political decentralization, which grants minority groups a degree of self-rule, was viewed as one of the policy prescriptions for states facing self-determination demands (Bakke, 2015; Brancati, 2006).

The literature on decentralization and conflict, however, demonstrates that there are differing arguments about the efficacy of decentralization as a means of conflict reduction, whether decentralization can act as a solution for conflict or, on the contrary, fuels the conflict. Findings from studies on the relationship between the devolution of power and its efficacy in managing conflict have been variable. On the one hand, there are scholars who argue that devolution does not foster secessionism (Ghai, cited in Baldacchino, 2010; Guibernau, 2006; Ichijo, 2012), instead, various devolution models adopted by the state contribute to a desire for greater autonomy rather than to separatism. In particular, decentralization has been argued to be an effective stabilization strategy for the post-conflict setting, such as in the case of some African countries (Edwards et al., 2015; Suberu, 2009). Conversely, others claim that devolution may have resulted in new forms of

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<sup>2</sup> Guibernau (1999) defines nation without state as national minorities endowed with a strong sense of identity based upon the belief in a common ethnic origin and a shared sense of ethno history.

conflict among different groups in the regions, although it might reduce local-central conflict (Brancati, 2006; Diprose, 2009).

Some studies showed that various devolution models implemented in the country's case might help to deter secessionism or reduce conflict. In her study of 'National identity, devolution, and secession in Canada, Britain and Spain', Guibernau (2006) argued that devolution does not tend to foster secessionism; instead devolution has prevented secessionism and weakened pro-independence movements. For example, as Guibernau noted (2006, p. 62), in Catalonia and the Basque Country, pro-independence nationalist movements are in support of maintaining some kind of partnership with Spain and membership of the European Union (EU). They demand greater autonomy rather than the symmetrical decentralization known as 'coffee for everyone'. The pro-independence movement in Quebec choose 'sovereignty and partnership' with Canada in which the status of Quebec as a distinct identity is accommodated within the Canadian Federation.

In the case of Scotland, it is not clear whether devolution has helped maintain the union or supported separation. In the 2014 Independence Referendum, the Scots voted to remain in the United Kingdom by 55.3% to 44.7%. Before the referendum, the three largest unionist parties (Conservative, Labour, and Liberal Democrat) promised to the Scottish electorate that in the event of a No vote, there would be a further devolution of power to Scotland. Although the SNP wished to end the union, it did, however, give support for further devolution more than did those unionist parties (Mullen, 2014). This support for devolution may or may not guarantee the existence of the union. As Mullen (2014, p. 639) argues, "...relations between the people and territories of the islands are never finally settled and are subject to periodic negotiation".

In the African context, some forms of decentralization have proved to be crucial to maintaining the stability of the post-conflict state (Edwards et al., 2015; Suberu, 2009). With regard to Nigeria's experience of federalism in a comparative African context, Suberu (2009) argues that the post-Biafra Nigerian state has effectively prevented a recurrence of the nation-level violence of the Biafra era. It was

achieved through the institutionalisation of central power-sharing features through the 'Federal Character Commission' and resource revenue arrangements. Suberu contends that despite its lack of rooted democracy and the presence of widespread corruption, Nigeria's experience offers a potential model of decentralization for other multi-ethnic countries in Africa. A similar argument was made by Edwards, et al. (2015) in analysing decentralization as a post-conflict strategy in Sierra Leone. They conclude that decentralization has been effective as a post-conflict stabilisation strategy in satisfying the desire for more equitable political representation, and peaceful elections have strengthened democratic norms.

There are various arguments in support of decentralization, as a means to reduce ethnic conflict and secession. Political decentralization, in particular, is often regarded as an answer to help address grievances arising among political, ethnic, religious and cultural groups who express concern over their perceived lack of political representation and their discontent with the allocation of resources (Brancati, 2006, p. 652; Guinjoan & Rodon, 2014). The main common claim by advocates of decentralization is that political decentralization is supposed to reduce ethnic conflict and secessionism by bringing the government closer to the people, increasing opportunities for citizens to influence policy and participate in government, and ultimately giving groups control over their political, social, and economic affairs through self-government (Brancati, 2006, p. 655; Diprose, 2009, p. 108; Kaufmann, 1996, p. 139).<sup>3</sup> This links back to the arguments put forward in identity and economic discourse discussed above, that decentralization is a means for people to gain control over economic issues, as well as to express their identity politics.

Ultimately, granting autonomy is viewed as an alternative solution to secessionism, based on claims that autonomy helps to accommodate sub-national identities,

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<sup>3</sup> Kaufmann (1996) noted that in the context of ethnic wars such as in Bosnia, Croatia, Rwanda, Burundi, Angola, Sudan, Turkey, Azerbaijan, Georgia, Chechnya, Tajikistan, Kashmir, Myanmar, Sri Lanka and many other places, conflict can end in only three ways: with complete victory of one side; by temporary suppression of the conflict by third party military occupation; or by self-governance of separate communities.

endorses a more democratic order, provides a framework for inter-ethnic bargaining, and grants communities control over their politics. As Ghai (2002, as cited in Baldacchino, 2010) points out, granting some level of autonomy may help achieve self-determination without the disruption or breaking up of sovereignty. This can be obtained by diffusing political conflict through providing alternative sites of power and patronage at the sub-national level.

It [autonomy] helps to accommodate sub-national identities, within a national identity, providing a basis for protection of regional cultures and languages. It can lay the foundations for a more pluralistic and democratic order, the development of regional political parties, and a new set of checks and balances. It provides a framework for inter-ethnic bargaining and so converts conflicts into disputes that are susceptible to formal processes. In some ways, it gives political weight to a community which it would not otherwise enjoy ... Autonomy is both a way to recognize diversity and to involve all groups in the central state mechanism ... it is an extremely flexible instrument, capable of responding to different configurations of ethnic relations. (Ghai, 2002, p. 44-45 cited in Baldacchino, 2010)

The tendency of minority groups to fight the central state and to demand independence might be compensated for by enabling them to have greater access to, and influence on, politics. For example, if the source of conflict is the abandonment of local culture, decentralization can deter conflict by granting minorities control over issues such as education, language, religious practices, and custom. When economic grievances foster secessionism, then decentralization can reduce demands for independence by granting regions autonomy to legislate the allocation of resources within their regions. As such, the decentralization implemented should answer specific needs demanded by regions in order to ensure that decentralization can be a means to mitigate conflict.

Moreover, decentralization potentially provides opportunities for regional elites to exercise various degrees of power and prestige. The benefits gained by the elites could, in turn, raise their own profiles. Consequently, other cases have suggested

that this tends to weaken calls for independence. Rather than demanding independence, devolution has encouraged regional movements to shift instead into demanding of more and more autonomy. “There is a certain ‘comfort’ arising from devolution, which tends to turn secessionist aims into never-ending demands for greater power and recognition” (Guibernau, 2006, p. 71).

Within debates over the impact of decentralization on regional grievances and separatist movements, it is specifically argued that regional autonomy has long been entangled with the identity discourse (Diprose, 2009; Soule, Leith, & Steven, 2012). Guibernau (2006, pp. 66-70) suggests that devolution has strengthened regional identities, without weakening national identities. The establishment of devolved institutions tends to foster, or strengthen, a sense of regional identity by promoting culture, language, regional art and selected meaningful landscapes. However, Guibernau argues, rather than acting to split both identities, the devolution of power to regional authorities has a tendency to promote the emergence of a dual identity: regional and national. For example, in Spain devolution has not resulted in the weakening of Spanish identity. On the contrary, devolution has made it possible for regions such as Catalonia and the Basque Country to identify more with the modern and democratic Spanish state compared to previous years when they regarded Spain as an oppressive, limiting and alien state. Similarly, Ichijo (2012) argues that the current devolutionary settlement in Scotland has contributed to legitimating and formalising the unionist stance on Scottish identity.

Notwithstanding the arguments in support of decentralization, other scholars argue that decentralization is more successful at reducing conflict and secessionism in some countries than others. Decentralization may help preserve peace in one country, or in one region. However, it may have just the opposite effect in a country or region with different ethnic and economic characteristics (Bakke, 2015). A study of thirty democracies by Brancati (2006, p. 651) indicated that the growth of regional parties as a result of decentralization indirectly increased ethnic conflict and secessionism. Brancati argues that decentralization



has failed to reduce ethnic conflict, and instead, it may have intensified it in particular countries. There are several arguments that explain this growing conflict (Brancati, 2008, p. 11). First, regional parties have reinforced ethnic and regional identities that intensify conflict and secessionism. Second, regional parties can produce legislation that favours certain groups and discriminates against others which leads to conflict. This discriminatory legislation may, in turn, foster conflict between minority and majority groups within the region. For example, the adoption of *sharia* in Northern Nigeria has fuelled conflict between Christians and Muslims. Finally, decentralization tends to supply groups with resources, such as legislatures, media and militia forces, which they can use to engage in ethnic conflict and secessionism.

Others argue that decentralization can result in the shifting of political contestation from the central to the regional-local level. A study of the impact of decentralization on conflict dynamics in Central Sulawesi Indonesia (Diprose, 2009) illustrates that decentralization relieved centre-periphery tensions around long-standing grievances towards nationalist agendas in Indonesia. Nonetheless, a new kind of tension with regard to inter-group dissatisfaction and horizontal inequalities at the local level might emerge as a result of significant structural and institutional change in local politics. Decentralization could potentially kindle local tensions by stimulating changes in population demographics through sub-national splitting of administrative units; providing for local autonomy and local participation in decision making through direct elections; and creating incentives for local elites to compete for power and resources by mobilising sensitive identities such as religion (Diprose, 2009, p. 130). Diprose notes, however, that these changes will not necessarily lead to violent conflicts.

Considering the complexities of the perspectives discussed above, it is implausible to claim that decentralization arrangements, in general, increase or decrease the risk of secessionism. It is believed that decentralization covers a broad spectrum of institutional arrangements, and that the influence of devolved structures is likely to interact with other sociological or economic influences (Brown, 2009). For

instance, in the case of federations, McGarry & O'Leary (2009, pp. 20-21) suggest that the success of federalism as a peaceful way of resolving conflict in multi-ethnic societies, depends on certain conditions. These include 'authentic' democratic federalism, the demographic ethno-national composition of the federation, the size and number of federal units, mutually agreed resource management regimes, and concessional practice, particularly at the level of federal government. Diprose (2009) argues that decentralization, as a strategy of accommodating diversities within a state, can either ameliorate or exacerbate violent conflict at the local level, depending upon how decentralization affects power relations between groups and classes at the local level. A more contextual approach is hence required that asks which different forms of federalism and regional autonomy have proved effective in preventing ethnic mobilisation and conflict (Brown, 2009, p. 2).

To sum up, there are two diverging points of view concerning the impact of decentralization on conflict dynamics. On the one hand, scholars such as Guibernau (2006, 2012), Ghai (cited in Baldacchino, 2010), Ichijo (2012), Edwards et al., (2015), and Suberu (2009) claim that devolution arrangements have contributed to preventing a relapse into conflict, and have weakened secessionist movements. The structures created by devolution lay the foundation for increased association with the central state, rather than disruption of sovereignty. When regions are given power, have their identities recognised, and share in resources, regional elites tend to continue to support autonomy rather than demand separation. On the other hand, Bakke (2015), Brancati (2006, 2008) and Diprose (2009) note that the success of decentralization in managing conflict has varied among countries under different circumstances. The new structures and institutions created by devolution might result in new forms of tension and conflict among different groups within the regions. While the potential for conflict between the centre and regions tends to decrease, decentralization has, at times, resulted in intergroup tensions within local society due to policies, power, and resource allocation that favour certain groups or segments.

Considering both arguments, this chapter argues that decentralization might be successful in reducing secessionism and tension between sub-national and national government. An extensive degree of devolution based on mutual trust and recognition, combined with a substantial transfer of resources, might contribute to a successful strategy in the accommodation of regions within a democratic state. Although a certain degree of tension between central and regional institutions may be inevitable, given their complex relationship, there is always a possibility of resolving differences through negotiation rather than conflict. However, there is also a chance that the tension will move to become a local problem within the region itself as a result of changes in the political and institutional structures resulting from the devolution of power. By granting power to local elites, autonomy might end the demands for secession yet bring about another form of inter-group conflict or tensions at the local level.

While the cases discussed in the literature are generally concerned either with the motive or with the results of decentralization, this thesis offers an exploration of the continuity between the two, that is the extent to which decentralization has affected conflict dynamics in relation to identity discourse. It seeks to know how identity has been consistently articulated after the implementation of autonomy, as a continuation of history and struggle for autonomy. Finally, it investigates whether the gains from autonomy correlate with the aims of the separatist struggle prior to the peace settlement. Therefore, an understanding of the concept of autonomy itself is pertinent to an examination of the extent of autonomy in Aceh. This is explored in the following section.

#### **2.4. The Concept of Local Autonomy**

The concept of autonomy has been used widely in an effort to explain the dynamics of local-central relations. In many countries, movements seeking autonomy have been driven by calls for self-determination and self-government vis-à-vis a central state. Calls for autonomy are mainly underpinned by distinctive characteristics of

localities or regions compared to those of the central state. For example, Scotland retained a separate judicial system, a very different educational system in schools and universities, and a separate Church, with its own variety of Protestantism, compared to England (Soule et al., 2012, p. 2). In some cases, struggles over autonomy are dealt with by central governments quite harshly, including repression, civil war, even ethnic cleansing (Agranoff, 2004, p. 27). This was the case in the conflict between Aceh and the central government before the 2005 peace agreement (see chapter 3). In this regard, decentralization, or the transfer of power 'downward' to political authorities at the subnational government level, is considered to be a peaceful means by which autonomy is developed.

In terms of the degree of power held by autonomous regions, Connor suggests that the magnitude of autonomy can range from limited local options to complete control over everything other than foreign policy (1994, p. 83). Agranoff (2004, p. 26) suggests, "autonomy normally encompasses measures of self-rule, where constituent units contain elected governments that have meaningful measures of authority over local matters, in decision and execution". Similarly, Loughlin (2000, p. 10) points out that autonomy comprises the right of communities (linguistic, territorial, cultural, or religious) to govern themselves, so that their distinctive features are protected and promoted.

There are two main approaches to local autonomy: namely top-down and bottom-up. The top-down approach defines local autonomy in terms of a grant of power to local government from higher tiers of the state (Lake, 1994, p. 425). It assumes that autonomy is something granted either actively or passively from the upper level in limited amounts. The focus of a top-down approach is on the actions of local actors and the efficacy of those actions; in this sense autonomy is regarded as a means for achieving political or economic purposes. Top-down approaches are related to the afore-mentioned economic discourse of decentralization, where autonomy is viewed merely as a means to enhance the ability of local government to provide public goods and services, and to hold the local government to account.

On the other hand, the bottom-up approach conceptualises local autonomy as a reflection of localities in building a sense of place through political and social interaction. It is based on the argument that autonomy is not a commodity owned in varying amounts by local government, rather it is a relational construct created and expressed within the on-going process of social interaction that defines the local in relation to broader social and political entities (Brown, 1992 cited in Lake, 1994, p. 426). This bottom-up approach relates to the identity discourse of decentralization, where autonomy comprises the right of communities to govern themselves in order to protect and promote their distinctive collective identity (Guinjoan & Rodon, 2014; Knight, 1982; Loughlin, 2000; Rodriguez-Pose & Sandall, 2008).

This bottom-up autonomy is, to some extent, similar to the idea of 'co-operative' or 'voluntary' federalism (See for examples Guibernau, 2006; McGarry & O'Leary, 2009). The idea of this concept of voluntary power-sharing is that the initiative for the power-sharing arrangement comes from below (the autonomous regions) and autonomy is based on a voluntary agreement between regions and the central state, not imposed from above. Consequently, bottom-up autonomy is an important means that groups use to improve their status within the existing boundaries of a state as an alternative to secession. Autonomy is regarded as a political alternative to various forms of conflict and violence (Agranoff, 2004; Ghai cited in Baldacchino, 2010).

This understanding of autonomy then links back to the argument on the effects of decentralization on conflict dynamics as explained in the previous section, whether decentralization can act as a 'remedy' for conflict or secessionism, or can in fact promote conflict. It is argued that autonomy tends to be more successful if it is generated from below (bottom-up approach) (Parks & Elcock, 2000, pp. 100-101). As Dent (2004, p. 20) also notes:

Even though the conclusion may be similar to what would happen if the uniformity was imposed from above, the perceived situation is a very different one, and satisfies the ardent desire of minority groups resident in a particular area to feel that they control 'their own land'.

Another way of theorising autonomy is by utilising the principles of power as developed by Clark. Clark distinguishes two dimensions of local autonomy: the 'power of initiation' and the 'power of immunity' (Clark, 1984). Autonomy in terms of the power of initiation is the power of localities to legislate and regulate the behaviour of residents (Clark, 1984, p. 195). Local autonomy, in this sense, is an active effort by a community to initiate action on its own behalf, and for its own purposes, in any circumstances. This definition is similar to Wolman and Goldsmith's argument that local autonomy is "the ability of local governments to have an independent impact on the well-being of their citizens" (Wolman & Goldsmith, 1990, p. 3). On the other hand, the power of immunity "is essentially the power of localities to act without fear of the oversight authority of higher tiers of the state" (Clark, 1984, p. 198). The act of local government, therefore, is circumscribed within the limits imposed by their power of initiation.

Based on Clark's principles of power, Pratchett further categorizes local autonomy into three approaches as they relate to local democracy, which are local autonomy as *freedom from*, *freedom to*, and *reflection of local identity* (Pratchett, 2004, p. 363). The 'freedom from' approach defines autonomy as a freedom from higher authority. This definition closely relates to Clark's concept of 'immunity'. It is based on a constitutional and legal understanding of local-central relations, and focusses on the extent of power delegated from central to local government. Thus, it is largely a top-down form of local autonomy.

On the other hand, the 'freedom to' approach concentrates on the ability of local authorities to affect the well-being of their localities, taking into account economic and political variables. This approach is derived from Wolman and Smith's

conception of the power of initiation, and emphasises the impact and consequences of autonomy for localities. Clark's notion of 'initiation' fits this definition, highlighting an active right and obligation of local authorities to fulfil the interests of their citizens (1984). They argue that local autonomy is much more than the traditional concern for the ability of local government to act vis-à-vis higher authorities, rather:

...we ask a much different and, to our minds, more fundamental question: do local governments in urban areas have autonomy in the sense that their presence and activities have independent impacts on anything important?  
(Wolman & Goldsmith, 1990, p. 3)

Pratchett's third approach sees autonomy as a reflection of local identity, where local autonomy is conceptualized as being a bottom-up phenomenon in which localities reflect and develop a sense of place through political and social interaction. The definition of local autonomy is not based on particular legal or other constraints, rather, it is broadly defined as the capacity to determine and express local identity through political activity (Pratchett, p. 366). This is, arguably, autonomy in its fullest meaning, as it is also argued in the identity discourse of decentralization that the end of this autonomy is to achieve political status for regions or localities within their existing boundaries (Agranoff, 2004). Autonomy provides a framework for accommodating the uniqueness of regions and localities among different tiers of government (Rodríguez-Pose & Gill, 2005, p. 407). In other words, local autonomy is about understanding the power relations between localities and their broader environment (Defilippis, 1999; Pratchett, 2004). As argued by Pratchett (2004, p. 367), 'Local autonomy under this definition is not simply about the discretion of local government, but is also about the wider social and political relations that occur within a community'.

In this regard, it is worthwhile noting Brown's (cited in Lake, 1994, p. 257) conception of power and autonomy. He refutes the idea of autonomy using power as 'a discrete exchangeable commodity that gets transferred between social objects' or as a 'delegated right or duty from the sovereign state'. Instead, Brown

argues that autonomy should be understood as a relational concept of power. Power 'is not what a social object "holds", it is how that object is linked to other social objects in enabling or constraining ways' (Brown, 1992 cited in Lake, 1994, p. 428). In this sense, autonomy is an expression of power, it is not a static thing granted or possessed by individuals, states, or localities, but it is instead a relational construct. It is understood as a negotiated space between regions and central government, as Keating (2001, p. 64) posits:

Autonomy is no longer a question of establishing a state, or using it to pursue a strategy of economic autarky. Rather it involves the creation of a national project, mobilisation around it and an ability to engage in policy making in a complex and interdependent world.

The purpose of this thesis is to explore the effects of decentralization on the autonomy of Aceh within the context of conflict between Aceh and the central government. Historically, this conflict has been mainly portrayed in terms of identity contestation between Aceh and Indonesia (Chapter 3). Therefore, the study employs autonomy in terms of a bottom-up approach, seeing that demands for autonomy have been identity-based, in which autonomy is initiated from below, not imposed from above. Autonomy is defined as the capacity of localities to determine and express their identity through political activities with the aim of achieving a distinct political status within the existing boundaries. The emphasis on identity discourse does not necessarily downplay the role of economic discourse. Instead, it is more likely that identity and economic discourse overlap in the struggle for autonomy, yet in bottom-up autonomy, identity discourse remains the stronger driver of the demands for autonomy.

The bottom-up form of autonomy is typically an extensive form of autonomy, in which autonomy is not understood merely in terms of a commodity owned in varying amounts by localities but rather as a relational construct, created and expressed within the on-going process of social interaction that defines the local in relation to broader social and political entities. Local autonomy, in this sense, is



measured by the right of communities to self-government in order to protect and promote their distinctive collective identity. Hence, autonomy is a negotiated space between regions and central government. Based on the literature and understanding of autonomy as a bottom-up approach, the concept of bottom-up autonomy can be summarised in the following table (Table 1).

**Table 1: Bottom-up Approach to Autonomy**

<b>Concept of autonomy</b>	<b>Definitions</b> (Defilippis, 1999; Guinjoan & Rodon, 2014; Keating, 2001; Knight, 1982; Loughlin, 2000; Pratchett, 2004; Rodriguez-Pose & Sandall, 2008)	<b>Principles</b> (Agranoff, 2004; Connor, 1994; Loughlin, 2000)
Bottom-up autonomy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Extensive meaningful autonomy</li> <li>• Negotiated space between regions and the central government</li> <li>• Right to self-govern to protect and promote distinctive collective identity</li> <li>• Power relations between localities and their supra power</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Generated from below, not imposed from above</li> <li>• Self-rule (Self-govern)</li> <li>• Elected local governments</li> <li>• Meaningful authority in decision and execution over local matters</li> <li>• From very limited local options to complete control over everything other than foreign policy</li> </ul>

## 2.5. Conclusion

This chapter reviews the literature around the policy of decentralization and the concept of autonomy. With regard to the policy of decentralization, it outlines the worldwide decentralization movement that swept developing countries in the 1990s as well as the key literature with regard to a typology of, and degrees of, decentralization. The chapter also discusses competing arguments between identity and economic discourses concerning the motives for decentralization, highlighting identity discourse as often being the most salient motive in the implementation of decentralization when decentralization is demanded by bottom-up actors.

In terms of the type and forms of decentralization, this chapter features political decentralization as the most comprehensive form of decentralization. Rather than mere devolution of administrative responsibilities, political decentralization is characterised by the devolution of political authority, responsibilities and public resources to local governments. The special autonomy of Aceh and Indonesian decentralization, in general, is considered mainly as an example of political decentralization. Therefore, this thesis is particularly interested in the type of political decentralization to help understand the implementation of Aceh's special autonomy.

The relationship between decentralization and conflict dynamics is further examined, highlighting the potential of decentralization for managing conflict in the context of multicultural societies. This is done by focussing on two principal schools of thought regarding the relative efficacy of decentralization for the peaceful management of intrastate conflict: one that advocates decentralization as a strategy for reducing conflict, and the other that highlights the inefficiency of decentralization in managing conflict. These differing arguments regarding the efficacy of decentralization in reducing the potential of conflict are worth noting to examine possible explanations for the case of Aceh: that is, whether political

decentralization in Aceh could be a possible mechanism for mitigating intra-state conflict.

In relation to the concept of autonomy, it is clear that decentralization can be a means for achieving meaningful local autonomy. Meaningful local autonomy for the purposes of this thesis is understood in terms of bottom-up autonomy, whereby autonomy is perceived as a voluntary initiative between regions and the central state to share powers between the two sides to achieve their common goals. In the concept of bottom-up autonomy, autonomy is understood as not being granted from the upper level of government to subnational governments, but is a relational and negotiated construct. This concept will be employed in the context of Aceh, where autonomy is not seen only as something that has been granted by the central state, but rather as a negotiating space between central and local that has been exercised over time. Autonomy is perceived in this study as a form of power relations between Aceh and central government that continues to be negotiated and constructed.

To investigate the impact of decentralization on the autonomy of Aceh under the conflict setting, I argue that the bottom-up approach is a highly relevant theoretical lens. The literature suggests that the main motive that drove the conflict between Aceh and the central government were the nationalist claim over the notion of distinct Acehnese identity. This historical account is reviewed in the following Chapter 3. Since identity is considered to be the main motive that drove separatist demand, bottom-up autonomy is deemed to be the best analytical tool to explain the impact of decentralization on the autonomy of Aceh. Bottom-up autonomy incorporates two major elements of autonomy: the right of communities to govern themselves and the right of communities to protect and promote their distinctive collective identity. By linking political decentralization as the *mechanism* and bottom-up autonomy as the *result* of decentralization, it is expected that the potential of decentralization to manage local-central relations, particularly in the conflict setting, can be better understood.

## CHAPTER 3

### INDONESIAN DECENTRALIZATION MOVEMENT AND ACEH SPECIAL AUTONOMY

#### 3.1. Introduction

This chapter examines the history of local-central relations between Aceh and the central government, focussing on decentralization reform in Indonesia and the designation of Aceh's special autonomy. The core argument of this chapter is that identity construction has been a critical factor in defining the relationship between Aceh and the Indonesian government.

To provide a context, the topic is tracked in a flow of history of local-central relations; from the time of revolution, the New Order regime, to the recent Aceh's special autonomy under Indonesia's decentralization reform. The context of the decentralization movement that swept the country will be discussed first. It focusses on the notion of identity politics under the implementation of decentralization in Indonesia. It examines the potential threat of the resurgence of local identities and national disintegration brought about by the implementation of decentralization. The next section thoroughly investigates the special autonomy achieved by Aceh. It highlights the construction of Acehnese identity over time, putting the importance of Islamic cultural identity at the centre of the Acehnese sense of identity, including the recent implementation of Islamic *sharia* in Aceh.

#### 3.2. Indonesian Decentralization Reform

The changing pattern of relationship between central and local governments has been a unique characteristic of the Indonesian political system throughout history, being part of a series of reforms that have switched policy between centralization

and decentralization. This has not necessarily meant a steady and maturing evolution in the country's political development (Erb, Sulistiyanto, & Faucher, 2005, p. 8) as can be seen in the following description.

Since Dutch colonial times, Indonesia has experienced various degrees of centralized and decentralized political systems. Decentralization was implemented in 1903, 1905 and 1922 by the Dutch colonial government in the form of incorporation of regions throughout Indonesia. However, full control of government and administrative institutions still remained under the governor-general in Batavia (now Jakarta). When Japan took over Indonesia in 1942, it governed in a centralized way to fulfil its goals in exploiting the country's rich natural resources and mobilising support against the Allies in World War II (Jaya & Dick, 2001). After independence there was an ongoing debate as to whether Indonesia should take the form of a unitary system or a federal system in managing local-central relations. Considering its diverse geographic society, the Republic's first president, Soekarno, preferred a unitary system in order to maintain the country's unity. The first Basic Law on Regional Government was enacted in 1948, which still maintained a fairly centralized approach (Jaya & Dick, 2001).

In 1950, for the first time in its history, Indonesia experimented with decentralization in the form of parliamentary democracy. The Indonesian government decided to replace the Constitution of 1945 with the Constitution of 1950, which marked the era of 'parliamentary democracy'. This decision was made as the government faced a contradiction between the need to satisfy the regions on the one hand, and the desire to establish itself as a stable and strong government on the other hand. Within this parliamentary democracy, the Constitution of 1950 called for the division of Indonesia into large and small regions, each with the right to govern its own affairs, thus ensuring the largest possible measure of autonomy for the regions (Bjork, 2003).

Indonesia's experiment with parliamentary democracy, however, was short-lived, due to political instability and worsening economic conditions. In response to

rising political pressure, the central government enacted the Law No. 1/1957 which allowed much greater autonomy to the regions, including electing their own regional leadership and managing their own money. "It was in this period that decentralization was rejuvenated" (Pratikno, 2005, p. 3). However, the intense ideological conflicts among major political parties, combined with regional rebellions, made it impossible for the Law to continue to be implemented (Pratikno, 2005). Ultimately, under this continuing unrest, in 1959, President Soekarno declared a state emergency by enacting the Presidential Decree that marked the end of the parliamentary period in Indonesia. The decree mandated the replacement of the 1950 Constitution with the 1945 Constitution, which meant a return to a very centralist political system with the so-called Guided Democracy. Guided democracy was intended as a governing principle involving heavy use of presidential powers and a strong move toward centralization. Therefore, this event marked a fundamental shift in the trajectory of centre-local relations in Indonesia (Bjork, 2003, p. 191).

After a violent military coup and its aftermath in 1965, Suharto took over power from Soekarno. Suharto's New Order government continued the legacy of Soekarno's centralization system in an attempt to create stability and unite a fragmented populace through centralization of the system. Suharto imposed heavy centralization and intensified presidential power through *Pancasila* Democracy.<sup>4</sup> In addition, Suharto restricted regional autonomy, using economic and political stability as his reason for legitimising centralization (Liddle, 1992, p. 449). Under Suharto, concerns about national cohesion and the consolidation of Indonesian political power led to the reinforcement of top-down authority frameworks that continued until the end of the century (Bjork, 2003).

The fear of disintegration had driven both Soekarno's and Suharto's regimes to prefer a centralization policy in governing the nation, rather than seeking to promote regionalism. As a result, for four decades the regions had neither

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<sup>4</sup> Pancasila Democracy is a term used by Suharto's New Order regime to describe a form of democracy guided by five principles of national ideology Pancasila. (For a comprehensive assessment on the Indonesia's transition to democracy, see Bhakti, 2004; Liddle, 1992)

influence over national policies nor the power to control their own affairs (Aspinall & Fealy, 2003). Towards the end of the twentieth century, Indonesia was more centralized than at any other time in Indonesian history (Bjork, 2003). This state of centralization continued until 1998, when Suharto's authoritarian regime lost its political credibility following the economic crisis that hit Indonesia in 1997.

Following the economic crisis in 1997 Indonesia underwent significant changes in its political and economic structures. The transitional government under the new President, Habibie, was soon challenged by the democratic movement that swept the country after the collapse of Suharto's regime. Habibie tried to accommodate the demands for democratization by reforming the Indonesian political structure. This accommodation was manifested in the freedom of the press, the lifting of restrictions on parties, and the reduced military involvement in politics. The most salient impetus during this critical transitional period was a strong call by local leaders for more regional control over political and economic affairs. This pressure from the regions was a result of long-standing grievances over the centralization of the system imposed by government under Soekarno and Suharto.

In response to this call for greater regional autonomy, decentralization was chosen as a strategy for the country to resolve regional grievances that challenged integration within Indonesian state unity, as well as to overcome the economic crisis. In 1999, the government of Indonesia promulgated a decentralization reform policy. This reform was also a part of the democratic decentralization movement that took place in nearly all developing countries in the 1990s. The Decentralization Law No. 22/1999 transferred the authority of the central government to the district/municipality level, bypassing the provincial level, in many fields, including education, health, public works, culture and the environment. Foreign policy, defence and security, finance, the legal system, and religious affairs remained with the central government. Meanwhile, the provinces are the central government representative which retained deconcentrated central tasks. Their roles are minimized, restricted largely to inter-district functions and governance, and management of deconcentrated central government functions.

Thus, the law consequently abolished the hierarchical relationship between provinces and districts (Usman, 2001). The law gives local government greater autonomy over most of the functions that affect people directly.

Subsequently, Law 25/1999 on fiscal decentralization was enacted. It allowed the central government to increase the pool of resources transferred to sub-national governments. In 2004, Law No. 32/2004 allowed for local direct elections, where all the sub-national governments were elected through a democratic election process. Since 2005, heads of regional government (governors, regents and mayors) have been directly elected by popular election. Considering this major reform, Hofman & Kaiser (2004, p. 2) argue that it transformed the country from one of the most centralized systems in the world to one of the most decentralized ones.

The economy and politics are the two major reasons given for these recent decentralization reform efforts in Indonesia (Kristiansen & Pratikno, 2006). From the economic perspective, decentralization was believed to be the remedy for the crisis and centralization was blamed as the source of the problem. From the political perspective, the advocates of decentralization argued that the new political ideology of democracy with decentralization brought power and responsibility closer to the people. However, the strongest driver for political decentralization was the fear of the disintegration of the country due to regional dissatisfaction, with the central government causing sections of the country to strive for independence (Aspinall & Berger, 2001; Hofman & Kaiser, 2004). Decentralization was seen as a solution for the long-standing grievances existing in the regions against a centralized government administration. Thus, decentralization was considered as a way forward for a better local-central relationship.



### 3.2.1. Decentralization, Regional Grievances and Identity Politics

The previous section shows that the struggle for autonomy in Indonesian regions was mainly driven by discontent with the centralized system that dominated during Soekarno's and Suharto's government. This discontent was fuelled by economic and political marginalization by the centre and the perceptions that government policy favoured Java. Complaints of ethnic privileging and about the centralized system have existed since the time of the Dutch colonial authority. The centralization system was a legacy of colonial forms of indirect rule which gave privileges to particular ethnic groups (Javanese) (Diprose, 2009).

With regard to this discontent, some scholars argue that the secessionist and ethno-nationalist movements during the New Order regime were in response to Indonesian state-building and nation-making (Aspinall & Berger, 2001; Faucher, 2006; McGibbon, 2004). As a multi-ethnic and multicultural country, and given the fear of disintegration, Indonesia's history of local-central relations was characterised by a policy of uniformity. This policy reflected the evolution of Indonesian nationalism, where uniformity was prioritized above diversity as the basis for restructuring the country. To realize this nationalism, Suharto employed an oppressive approach in which New Order's cultural and political hegemony was mandated through legislation, tight control and the use of force, for instance by the co-opting of soldiers, teachers and other government officials (Aspinall & Berger, 2001, p. 1004). As a result, this cultural hegemony of the New Order is argued to have abandoned local cultures and identities (Bjork, 2003; Diprose, 2009).

In addition, Indonesian politics were characterised by a strongly articulated civic nationalist discourse, both as a tool for political mobilisation in Soekarno's era and, later, as a legitimation for military rule and oppression during the New Order regime (Faucher, 2006). This discourse was spread by utilizing policies and legislation that emphasized the importance of acting as loyal *Pancasila* citizens, that loyalty to national unity is something that cannot be negotiated. The largest and main captive audience available to New Order leaders was located in the

nation's schools (Bjork, 2003, p. 192). Schools, therefore, became the major effective media for the government's propaganda on civic loyalty to the nation and the restriction of identity politics. This civic nationalist discourse was accompanied by the government's attempt to steadily narrow the limits of politically accepted cultural expression through the manipulation of local rituals and customs (Bjork, 2003). Consequently, identity politics became a matter that was regarded with suspicion by the central government, and therefore the political activities of the regions were very limited. As a consequence, the development of the Indonesian state since the 1950s involved the strategy of centralized political institutions that resulted in the consolidation of central state authority and a reduction in the autonomy of the regions (McGibbon, 2004, p. 2). This resulted in the regions trying to separate from the central government, as found in Aceh and Papua.

Following the implementation of decentralization policy in 1999, extensive powers have been devolved to regional governments. One consequence of decentralization is that novel forms of politics, based on local identity, started to emerge, accompanied by a flourishing local democracy (Aspinall & Fealy, 2003, p. 1). Since then, identity politics became the major issue discussed in association with the implementation of decentralization (See for examples Aspinall & Fealy, 2003; Erb, Sulistiyanto, et al., 2005; Robinson, 2011; Schulte Nordholt & Klinken, 2007). A resurgence of traditional practices and identity discourse has been associated with the politics of decentralization. For example, a study in Riau Archipelago Indonesia shows that the implementation of regional autonomy does not necessarily result in more autonomy. In the case of Riau Archipelago, Faucher argues that decentralization has not led to autonomy in education in terms of accommodating local identity into the curriculum (Faucher, 2007). Faucher claims that, due to the limited space provided by the national curriculum, very little attention has been paid to the local identity content in the school curriculum such as local history. This has been worsened by the scarcity of any textbooks dealing with local history. As a result, the school curriculum is, to a large extent, focussed on the unity of the nation state, and neglects local identity content. Therefore, Faucher (2007, p. 274) contends that education still remains an arena where unconditional allegiance

towards the national ideology *Pancasila* is unquestionable. Education continues to strengthen and protect civic sentiments towards the unity of the nation.

The implementation of regional autonomy has gained broad support from the regions, especially since it is combined with the democratization of the country, which has opened new spaces for reflection on loyalty to the nation state and reassessment of previously taken-for-granted identity configurations (Faucher, 2006). However, regions with long histories of conflict with the central government view decentralization with greater suspicion. Decentralization was seen by these regions as being designed to undermine the strength of the ethnic sentiments of regions (McGibbon, 2004, p. 9). The laws were criticized as containing a political agenda aimed at dividing the ethnic unity of provinces, as the law transferred administrative control to the local or district level, bypassing provinces. Addressing this suspicion and the threat of secession from potential provinces with such problematic local-central relations, the central government offered asymmetrical decentralization.

Asymmetrical decentralization is a state in which all regions have constitutionally guaranteed autonomy, but in which at least one region enjoys a different, usually enhanced, level of autonomy than do the rest. Asymmetry is also used to describe cases where at least one part of a state enjoys autonomy, but the rest does not (McGarry, 2007, p. 105). It is a situation in which the sub-national government is treated differently with regard to regulation, financing, and/or the delivery of public services (Wehner, 2000, p. 255). McGarry and Wehner also note that in practice, various forms of asymmetry have been applied to adjust decentralized government to fit particular circumstances (McGarry, 2007; Wehner, 2000).

Asymmetrical devolution models are mainly chosen for managing relationships with particular national identities existing within a country. For example, Canada implemented asymmetrical devolution for Quebec to accommodate Quebec as a distinct society within Canada through the mechanism of 'sovereignty and partnership' (Guibernau, 2006). The United Kingdom implemented an

asymmetrical devolution model by granting different degrees of autonomy to Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland. The most remarkable example of asymmetrical decentralization applied in Indonesia is, however, arguably the special autonomy given to Aceh and West Papua. The special autonomy arrangement was agreed between the two parties – Jakarta and each of the two provinces – because of special circumstances where these provinces had a long historical conflict with the national government. The next section reviews the rationale for the implementation of special autonomy for Aceh. It argues that the construction of Acehnese identity is one of the significant elements that define the relationship between Aceh and the central government.

### **3.3. Aceh's Struggle for Autonomy and Recognition of Identity**

Many scholars highlight the conflict of central-local relations in Aceh in terms of the perception of the 'unique' Acehnese identity compared to Indonesian national identity (Aspinall, 2013; Hillman, 2012; Miller, 2009; Morris, 1983; Schröter, 2010b). This identity, defined in terms of ethnicity, culture, and history, holds that Aceh is a distinct nation from Indonesia, although it has been argued that there is little evidence of a modern Acehnese or nationalist identity at the time of the Dutch War in the late nineteenth century (Aspinall, 2009b).

At the centre of this construction of identity is the importance of seeing Islam as part of Acehnese cultural identity and its place in relation to Indonesian nation building. For a long time, Islam has been the idealised vision of the Acehnese community with its determination to apply Islamic faith and doctrine. Since the earliest time of the Aceh Islamic Kingdom in Southeast Asia, Acehnese identity has been defined mainly in Islamic terms (Aspinall, 2013, p. 54). During the insurgency against the Dutch, Islamic values promoted by *ulama* fuelled the revolt. This legacy of resistance against the Dutch had left Aceh with constructed memories that produced a shared common consciousness based on Islamic and ethnic patriotism.

Therefore, it is important to note this distinctive characteristic of Aceh at the time Aceh joined the Republic during the revolution and when it entered Indonesian independence. As Benda (1970, p. 204) puts it “Under the banner of distinctly Islamic local and ethnic patriotism, Aceh thus entered independent Indonesia as a virtually autonomous *imperium in imperio*”.

The history of Aceh’s struggle clearly asserts that, during the period of Dutch colonial rule, Aceh continuously supported the Indonesian struggle against the Dutch. Compared to other Indonesian regions, Aceh experienced a longer period of independence. It was only after the Dutch forces attempted to colonise Aceh in 1873 that Acehnese elites were motivated to seek stronger ties with other parts of the Dutch East Indies (Aspinall & Berger, 2001). Acehnese began to view other parts of the East Indies as potential allies against their common enemy, the Dutch. The period throughout the 1930s and 1940s saw many Acehnese strengthening their resolve to become independent from the Dutch by forming alliances and collaborating with their counterparts in other parts of Indonesia (Reid, 1979). Thus, they framed their resistance in view of an overarching Indonesian identity (Aspinall, 2007, p. 958).

At the time of the Indonesian independence revolution (1945-1949), Acehnese continued to stand for their Indonesian colleagues in Java with the ideal of this unity in their minds. As Morris (1983, p. 116) argues, “during the revolution Acehnese leaders thought in Acehnese, Islamic, and Indonesian terms with little awareness of the possibility of conflicts among the three”. The common narrative used to claim evidence of this support was that Acehnese had voluntarily donated large quantities of gold to the Soekarno government, allowing Indonesia to purchase two airplanes.

Soon after Indonesia’s independence, the Acehnese elite asked for more autonomy under the new republic by proposing that Aceh be granted special region status (*Daerah Istimewa*). Acehnese leaders were not making separatist demands, but did

want a guarantee that their autonomy would be protected within the Indonesian state, particularly to allow for local control of education and the implementation of Islamic law (Sjamsuddin 1985 in McGibbon, 2004, p. 6). Instead of granting such autonomy, Jakarta made Aceh part of the larger Province of North Sumatra.

The abolition of Aceh's status as a separate region, together with the marginalization of local leaders, contributed to Aceh's involvement with the *Darul Islam* (DI/TII or Abode of Islam) movement in 1953. Aceh aimed to secure its independence by joining DI/TII's struggle to establish an Indonesian Islamic state (Aspinall, 2007; Hillman, 2012, p. 152). It was argued that the primary idea of religious identity was the main motive behind the Acehnese elite's decision to join DI/TII (Aspinall, 2013; Morris, 1983). During the revolution, Acehnese leaders viewed Indonesia as their religious counterpart in defeating the Dutch. They had considered both Acehnese and Indonesian identities were aligned, as both were constituted on an Islamic basis. However, disappointed with the central government's rejection of the Jakarta Charter<sup>5</sup>, and later with the rejection of the implementation of Islamic *sharia* in Aceh, the *ulama* Aceh declared Aceh involvement with the DI/TII.

In 1957, a cease-fire between the Indonesian government and the representatives of *Darul Islam* was achieved, with both sides agreeing to advance Islam. Yet one point remained contentious during the negotiation between the two sides: the ideological foundation of the Indonesian state (Morris, 1983, p. 224). The question regarding the role of Islam within state and society made the Acehnese elite demand regional status in the Indonesian state. However, the government disagreed with this proposal. As a compromise, the central government designated Aceh as a 'Special Region' (*Daerah Istimewa*). The *Daerah Istimewa* formula allowed for 'extensive' autonomy in the fields of religion, education and customary

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<sup>5</sup> The Jakarta Charter is a pre-independence document drafted in 1945 which includes the phrase "with the obligation for adherents of Islam to practice Islamic law". Islamic leaders had proposed the Jakarta Charter as the preamble to the Republic's constitution. Yet this proposal was rejected under the influence of secular nationalist leaders.

law. This led to the eventual peaceful resolution of the *Darul Islam* revolt (Aspinall & Berger, 2001, p. 1016).

Against the background of the past rebellion and the designation of special region status for Aceh, Indonesia kept producing the project of 'soft' identity construction. This project emphasized the compatibility of Acehese identity with a greater Indonesian nation while, at the same time, celebrating its uniqueness, stressing the special nature of Aceh within the Indonesian nation and the continuous support Acehese had made to Indonesian independence (Aspinall, 2007). In the formal negotiation in 1959, the Acehese leaders attempted to tie the *Daerah Istimewa* proposal to the requirement that Muslims practise Islamic law (*sharia*) as stated in the Jakarta Charter, which, previously, was not realised by the government. In response, the central government indicated that Aceh could pursue policies relating to Islamic law within the provided framework of autonomy, without agreeing to the matter related to the Jakarta Charter, which required an amendment to the constitution (Morris, 1983, pp. 233-235). Following this negotiation, Aceh was declared to be a special region in 1959.

Nevertheless, as a result of growing authoritarianism and centralization during Soekarno's guided democracy, and continuing with the formation of Suharto's military-backed New Order, the promise of autonomy was not realized. In 1974, autonomy was unilaterally withdrawn by the central government through Law No. 5/1974 on "the Principles of Regional Government Administration" (Barron & Clark, 2006; McGibbon, 2004). This law gave autonomy only in terms of "administrative and development affairs" but not "politics, defence, and security" (Miller, 2006, p. 297). It is argued that the law was used by the New Order to define the theoretical extent of Acehese autonomy which, in practice, laid the ground for tightening central control over the regional administration (Kell, 1995, p. 32). This broken promise was described by Kell (1995, p. 52), "Today, the province still formally retains that autonomy, yet in reality it is subject to the

extreme centralization of state power that has characterised the New Order Regime.”

Kell further argues that the emptiness of the ‘special region’ promise was underscored by the central government’s refusal to accept many local initiatives to express Aceh’s distinctiveness, especially in the areas of education and religion (1995, p. 31). For instance, in 1990 the governor of Aceh, Ibrahim Hasan, proposed a regulation that Quran reading should be compulsory for all Muslim primary school’s pupils, but this proposal was turned down by Jakarta. Similar results also happened in the case of the controversial national ban on girls wearing *hijab* (scarf) in public school. The district office of the Department of Education in North Aceh decided not to forbid the use of hijab, given that Aceh’s special region meant that the province still had autonomy in education matters. Nevertheless, the Department of Education in Jakarta insisted that the central regulation on banning the wearing of hijab was to be applied nationwide without exception. Thus, Aceh remained ‘special’ in name only, a title that the central government granted out of respect for its participation in the independence movement. There was no concrete indication that New Order was in fact interested in, or supportive of, the idea of ‘Islamisation’ in Aceh, or any other Indonesian region (1995, p. 31).

The discovery of oil and gas resources in the late 1960s, and Jakarta’s control over the extraction of these resources, generated a new kind of grievance. This grievance was manifested in insurgency in 1976 with the Free Aceh Movement (GAM), led by Hasan di Tiro, a former ambassador of the DI/TII movement. Unlike the *Darul Islam* insurgency, which sought to establish an autonomous Aceh province within an Islamic Indonesian state, GAM declared Aceh as an independent state. Initially, this movement was small and insignificant, and Jakarta continued its military operation to combat the rebels to a point of blocking the rebels from spreading their networks and influence. However, by the time of the collapse of the Suharto regime in the late 1990s, GAM had started to gain support from the Acehnese. GAM took the opportunity of the political transition period to expand its operation and to broaden popular support for an independent Aceh. Thus, by the



time of the democratic reform in 1999, GAM had become a considerable force to fight the central government (Hillman, 2012, p. 153).

Although many scholars portrayed GAM's insurgency in the framework of grievances as a result of natural resource extraction by the central government, Aspinall (Aspinall, 2007, 2013) claims that this recent conflict was initially the continuation of the previous grievances related to identity issues. He points out, "Frustration that the central government had not made good its post-*Darul Islam* promises to allow implementation of Islamic law in Aceh was part of the renewed atmosphere of disillusionment that set the scene for the formation of GAM in the 1970s" (Aspinall, 2013, p. 54). Natural resource extraction led to additional grievances and laid a basis for conflict only if accompanied by identity motives. Without an appropriate identity-based collective action frame, resource extraction would not necessarily have resulted in rebellion (Aspinall, 2007).

However, during GAM's insurgency, the role of Islam in the construction of Acehnese identity had been replaced by an ethno-nationalist discourse. Rather than highlighting Islamic identity, GAM extolled a nationalist discourse, emphasising the construction of a distinctive identity of Acehnese in terms of ethnicity, language, culture, and geography (Miller, 2010). Aspinall (2013, p. 54) noted that, over the years, a more secular-nationalist discourse had gradually replaced the Islamic elements of GAM's platform, emphasising Aceh's ethno-nationalism based on Aceh's past glories and Indonesian oppression. This transformation was illustrated by GAM's refusal of the implementation of Islamic Law. GAM claimed that the implementation of the law was not the central aspiration of the Acehnese people, but rather it was a central government strategy to gain popular sympathy among the Acehnese and hence to weaken the independence movement (Ichwan, 2011). GAM suspected the central government's intention to implement Islamic *sharia* was an Indonesian tactic at dividing Acehnese society and discrediting GAM's cause in the eyes of the international community, by portraying the rebels as Muslim 'fundamentalists' or 'terrorists' (Miller, 2010, p. 46).

### 3.3.1. *The Recent Special Autonomy and the Implementation of Islamic Sharia*

#### *The Helsinki Agreement, and the Law on Governing of Aceh (LoGA)*

As a response to the rapidly growing independence movement in Aceh after the collapse of the Suharto authoritarian regime in 1998, President Habibie passed Law No. 44 of 1999 on the “Specialty of the Province of Aceh Special Region”. The Law (Article 3:2) stipulated that the “speciality” means: to implement Islamic law (Islamic *sharia*) in all aspects of life; to implement traditional norms and culture (*adat*) based on Islam; to implement education, including elements of Islamic *sharia*, and to restore the role of the religious leader (*ulama*) in policy making by creating an independent *ulama* council (State Secretariat, 1999). By enabling Aceh to adopt *sharia* law and placing authority in the hands of the *ulama*, Jakarta believed that it could reduce the dominance of GAM (McGibbon, 2004, p. vii).

Subsequently, as part of a series of decentralization reforms, in 2001 the central government passed Law 18/2001 on Aceh Special Autonomy. The law granted the province of Aceh control over its natural resources, with revenue sharing different from the general arrangement for other provinces. This law also set out the principles of broader powers of self-governance in areas including religion and provincial legislation. Therefore, it enabled the local legislative body to develop new local legislation and new institutions by which Islamic *sharia* would be implemented. Nonetheless, despite these political reforms carried out by the central government, armed conflict continued until a tsunami struck the province in 2004.

Despite the continuing armed conflict with GAM, the democratic governments after Suharto started to consider political options for dealing with the ‘Aceh problem’. Starting in 2002, a series of negotiations had been held between the two parties. Triggered by the tsunami in 2004 and the following international pressure, both parties finally agreed to end the conflict (Miller, 2009; Morfit, 2007). In 2005, with

the help of the former Finnish Prime Minister, Martti Ahtisaari, a new round of negotiations was held. GAM finally indicated its willingness to negotiate an end to its armed struggle for independence, in return for greater autonomy and the right for GAM to compete in the local election. Following the Helsinki agreement, in 2006, Indonesia's national legislature passed the Law for the Governing of Aceh (LoGA), which formed the basis for the special autonomy for Aceh.

Unlike the previous 'special region' status, which merely dealt with various symbolic issues, the Helsinki MoU covers two main principles. First, it includes the principle of expanded autonomy that grants Aceh's provincial government greater authority in diverse areas, from a greater share of natural resource revenues than other provinces to the implementation of Islamic law. Second, the MoU and the subsequent Law of Governing Aceh (LoGA) provide a new political framework that allows GAM's political participation through Aceh's local elections (provincial and district). The right for Acehnese to establish local political parties and contest elections was an important point that GAM demanded during the negotiations. Accordingly, the Helsinki MoU, together with the LoGA, provides a framework that is intended to open up political participation in Aceh, especially in order to allow former members of GAM to contest elections (Aspinall, 2013, p. 61). The LoGA 2006 allows Aceh to form local political parties, a distinct Acehnese right that does not exist in other provinces, and for their members to compete for seats in the district and provincial legislature<sup>6</sup>. In this sense, the law has granted Aceh the power of self-governance.

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<sup>6</sup> Aceh is the only province in Indonesia that is allowed to form local political parties. However, the law restricted the local parties to local (provincial and district/municipality) legislative elections; they would not be able to contest seats in the national parliament. Local political parties are not allowed in other Indonesian provinces due to legal provisions requiring registered political parties to have branches in a large proportion of provinces and districts across the country. Only national parties that have branches in a majority of the country's provinces and districts could compete in the national election. However, the law restricted the local parties to local (provincial and district/municipality) legislative elections; they would not be able to contest seats in the national parliament (Aspinall, 2013, p. 61; Hillman, 2012, p. 155).

A summary of the history of Aceh-Jakarta relations is presented in the following table.

**Table 2: The History of Aceh-Jakarta Relations (Aceh's Autonomy)**

Period	State of relationship / Form of Autonomy	Description
Dec 1949	Separate Aceh Province dissolved from North Sumatra Province based on a Decree signed by the Indonesian Prime Minister Syafruddin Prawiranegara.	This decree was seen as violating the previous decision that Sumatra was only divided into three regions: North, South and Central Sumatra.
1950	Aceh was reincorporated into North Sumatra Province.	This decision resulted in Acehnese resentment towards Jakarta.
1953	Aceh joined <i>Darul Islam</i> (DI/TII) rebellion with the purpose to establish an Indonesian Islamic Federation of States.	The rebellion was led by Aceh's most prominent <i>ulama</i> <i>Teungku M. Daud Bereueh</i> .
1957	President Sukarno decided to establish the Province of Aceh separately from the North Sumatra Province to end the <i>Darul Islam</i> rebellion.	
1959	Aceh first won <b>special region (<i>Daerah Istimewa</i>) status</b> .	President Sukarno agreed on principle to grant the province <i>special autonomy over its religious, educational and customary law affairs</i> .
1962	Jakarta agreed to allow Aceh to enforce Islamic law for Muslims within its territory.	As a result the <i>Darul Islam</i> movement was gradually subsided.
Early 1970s	Acehnese discontent resurfaced as a response to the increasing centralisation of power of the New Order regime under Suharto. It resulted in the growth of the Free Aceh Movement (GAM).	The New Order under Suharto did not accommodate Acehnese political aspiration to restore Islam as their main socio-political forces, and the extraction of Aceh's resources by central government fuelled grievances among Acehnese.
1974	Special region status was unilaterally withdrawn by the central government through the Law No. 5 on "the Principles of Regional Government Administration".	This law only gave autonomy in terms of "administrative and development affairs" but not "politics, defence, and security".
1999	Jakarta passed the Decentralization Laws: Law No. 22 of 1999 on "Regional Government" and Law No. 25 of 1999 on "Fiscal Balance between the Central Governments and the Regions"	This development was part of the Indonesian political reforms after the collapse of New Order regime in 1998 following economic crisis in 1997.
1999	President Habibie passed on the <b>Law No. 44 of 1999</b> on the "Specialty of the Province of Aceh Special Region". ,	Law No. 44 of 1999 was based on the 1959 <i>Daerah Istimewa</i> formula which granted Aceh autonomy

		over its religious, cultural and educational affairs.
2001	<p>Law No. 18 of 2001 on “<b>Special Autonomy for the Special Province of Nanggroe Aceh Darussalam</b>” enacted on 9 August, 2001. The law provides an alternative to secession by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- granting the province unprecedented powers of self-governance;</li> <li>- granting the province the control over its natural resources with revenue sharing different from general arrangement (Law 25/1999);</li> <li>- Establishing Wali Nanggroe as a (non-political) institution to unify the people of Aceh and provide guidance on traditional norms and culture.</li> </ul>	The law changed Aceh name to Nanggroe Aceh Darussalam (NAD).
2005	<p>Helsinki Agreement</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Implementation of Islamic sharia</li> <li>- Greater share of natural resource revenues</li> <li>- New political framework for self-governing</li> <li>- Direct Local election</li> <li>- Local political parties</li> </ul>	

Source: (Author, modified from Barron & Clark, 2006; Hillman, 2012; McGibbon, 2004; Miller, 2006)

### *The Implementation of Islamic Sharia*

In addition to economic concessions – in the form of the Special Autonomy Fund and Oil and Gas Fund – and political concessions as described above, Aceh is the only Indonesian province permitted to implement Islamic *sharia* (law) in its entirety. The province has been granted broad authority to establish *sharia* courts, to implement *sharia* legislation, and to have its own *sharia* enforcement mechanism, including *sharia* police. It has been argued that since its implementation, *sharia* discourse has been performing a function as a ‘master signifier’ in Aceh (Ichwan, 2007, p. 193). Consequently, every aspect of Aceh’s

society such as politics, law, the economy, and education must be defined by reference to the *sharia*. This discourse was referred to by Acehnese, and by Moslems in general, as ‘Comprehensive *Sharia*’ (*Kaffah*).

The advocates of Islamic *sharia* argue that Islamic *sharia*, as an instrument of ‘social engineering’, is capable of bringing about social change in Aceh. Therefore, the implementation of Islamic *sharia* should not be seen merely in terms of formal regulations and institutions produced; rather, it is essentially an ideal component by which the transformation of Acehnese society should be directed. “The role of *Sharī‘a* emphasized here as a means of heightening awareness (*kesadaran*) and providing broadly conceived ‘benefit’ (*kemaslahatan*) for society clearly points to the way in which developments in Aceh have had effects well beyond the limits of blackletter law and the particular policy enactments of formal state institutions” (Feener, 2012, p. 298). This new vision of Islam embedded in Aceh’s transformation has been based on modern thinking rather than conservative-traditional idealism. It is one that is “future oriented social transformation, insisting on the need to move beyond ‘traditional’ understanding toward a vision of Islam that actively engaged with modern development in fields including education, economic and medicine” (Feener, 2012, p. 286). Therefore, Feener (2012, p. 284) argues that unlike the previous historical record, when the central government responded inadequately to attempts to introduce Islamic law, this contemporary Islamic law was considered as providing a more aligned and convergent understanding between the Islamic vision of the Acehnese and Indonesians.

However, the opponents of Islamic *sharia* viewed ‘shariatization’ in Aceh as appearing to have been a top-down, political-elite-driven project to seek sympathy from Acehnese Muslims, while, at the same time, delegitimizing the Free Aceh Movement (GAM) (Ichwan, 2011, p. 184). They have criticized the formal regulations and institutions produced to deal with the implementation of Islamic *sharia*, claiming these have been primarily concerned with morality, rather than

addressing Aceh's substantial social and economic problems. In addition, Islamic law enforcement in Aceh was considered to discriminate against already marginalized societal elements, mostly women and the poor (Miller, 2010).

The tsunami that struck Aceh in 2004 added a new context to the implementation of Islamic *sharia*. There was a shared common experience among the Acehnese community of reflecting the disaster in a more religious way (Miller, 2010). The acceptance of the implementation of *sharia* has advanced rapidly since then. The post-tsunami reconstruction and rebuilding of Aceh hence focussed on religion as a major component of social change. Religious aspects were embedded into specific policies and strategies used to address the reconstruction of post-tsunami Aceh (Feener, 2012; Miller, 2010). This has resulted in an increase in the role played by Islamic institutions and leadership, and, consequently, *ulama* were more engaged and employed as the agents of change to promote a new social vision of Islam in Aceh (Feener, 2012, p. 284). Nevertheless, Miller (2010, p. 30) argues that while the role of Islamic law in rebuilding Aceh was acknowledged, it has, so far, reinforced unequal power hierarchies, rather than promoting the formation of a more egalitarian Acehnese society.

### *3.3.2. The New Local Political Landscape and GAM's Political Influence*

The new political structure introduced after the signing of the MoU affected local politics in Aceh. Under the new political arrangement, GAM-affiliated candidates were enabled to compete for the first time in provincial and district level executive elections through the establishment of local political parties. GAM supporters used this opportunity to form *Partai Aceh* (Aceh Party, PA) as their electoral vehicle for provincial and district legislative elections. "These political arrangements have been crucial because they allowed GAM to transform itself from an armed separatist movement into a political movement that seeks to achieve its goals by competing for power peacefully" (Aspinall, 2013, pp. 61-62). Therefore, several

scholars considered the LoGA was giving Aceh meaningful autonomy within the Indonesian state (Miller, 2009).

As a result of this new political arrangement, in the 2006 and 2009 elections, a GAM candidate won the governor's seat and, by late 2007, GAM-approved candidates had been elected as either mayors or regents in ten of the nineteen districts/cities in Aceh (Aspinall, 2009a, p. 9). More importantly, the PA party representing the former Free Aceh Movement (GAM) and founded by the rebels' exiled leaders and some senior ex-combatants, has since dominated the local legislative elections. In the first provincial legislative election in 2009, the Aceh Party won 46.91 per cent of the vote, which translated into 33 seats in the 69-seat legislature. At the district level, more than a third of all seats across 23 districts and municipal Houses of Representatives were won by the PA. The PA dominated in the densely populated North, West, and East Aceh, where the ethnic composition of the regions are homogeneously Acehnese and the regions were known to be a strong base of GAM's struggle. Meanwhile, ethnically diverse regions in the Northwest, Centre and South of the province were either divided or supported Indonesian national parties. Interestingly, in the capital city of Banda Aceh, and also in Sabang Island, the Democrat Party gained more seats than PA in both provincial and district elections.

Overall, the election results showed a significant victory for the PA, which dominated the elections to a degree not gained before by any political party in Indonesia since the country's return to democracy in 1999 (Hillman, 2012, p. 159). Therefore, since the signing of the Helsinki Agreement, GAM political actors have entered the arena of the local political economy and its political influence continues to increase significantly (Aspinall, 2009a; Hillman, 2012). Hillman (2012, p. 163) describes the influence of GAM in the political economic structure in the post-tsunami and peace agreement context as follows,

After fighting for years in the mountains, political power for GAM elites meant an opportunity to take their turn in the sun. With large funding



available for post-tsunami reconstruction, ex-combatants, especially regional commanders, turned their attention to the lucrative construction business, setting up front companies and using intimidation to win contracts. While some ex-combatants owned legitimate businesses, many used political power to secure monopolies over trade in goods and services.

Examining the contemporary political economic structure in Aceh, Aspinall (2009a) suggests that there has been a dramatic transformation of former leaders and members of GAM into business people. However, he claimed that rather than play a role as independent economic actors, the majority of GAM players have been absorbed into an existing neo-patrimonial system, the legacy of Suharto's authoritarian regime, which has persisted in the new democratic system. GAM has become a component within a set of already well-established neo-patrimonial political and economic arrangements. They attempt to guarantee their interest by using their connections with *dinas* (local offices) staff, members of contracting committees, and district House of Representative members.

### **3.4. Conclusion**

This chapter provides the background for this study, the history of local-central relations between Aceh and the Indonesian government. Understanding the history of local-central relations is important to help answer the two research questions in this study. "How has decentralization affected the autonomy of Aceh in governing its education policies and practices?" and "How has decentralization affected the issues stemming from distinct Acehnese identities and thus contributed to the management of conflict between Aceh and the central government?" Two main milestones in the history of local-central relations have been highlighted in this chapter: the Indonesian decentralization reform since the late 1990s and Aceh's struggle for autonomy from Indonesian independence (1945) until the implementation of special autonomy in 1999.

The struggle for autonomy was a long and challenging journey for Aceh, and included two rebellion movements: the Darul Islam movement (DI/TII movement 1953-1962) and the GAM movement (1976-2005). The struggle began when Aceh joined the Republic in the proclamation of Indonesian independence in 1945. The decision to join the Republic was made by the Acehnese elite in the hope that Aceh could maintain the autonomy it had enjoyed for a long period before the Dutch invasion in 1837. However, the growing authoritarianism and centralization during Soekarno's guided democracy, continuing with the formation of Suharto's military-backed New Order, had made this autonomy difficult to achieve. The fear of disintegration of this geographically diverse country drove both Soekarno and Suharto to choose centralization over regionalism.

Many scholars depict the Acehnese struggle for independence from the central state in terms of the perception of the 'unique' Acehnese identity compared to Indonesian national identity, with Islam and ethnic nationalism at the centre of this distinct Acehnese identity. However, this distinct identity had a limited place in the Indonesian nation-building process, where the central government promoted Indonesian nationalism through the policy of uniformity, emphasising national cohesion and consolidation above diversity as the basis for restructuring the country.

To realise this Indonesian nationalism, Suharto articulated a strong civic nationalist discourse by utilizing policies and enacting laws that emphasized the importance of acting as loyal *Pancasila* citizens through the reinforcement of top-down authority frameworks. As a result, the cultural and political hegemony of Suharto's New Order abandoned local cultures and identities. Likewise, identity politics was viewed suspiciously by the central government, and thus the political activities of the regions were very much limited. This centralization of the system, combined with the limited autonomy of the regions in expressing their local cultures and identities, stimulated regional grievances. In some parts of Indonesia, such as in Aceh and Papua, these grievances were manifested in some forms of secessionism.

Arguably, the recent decentralization reform and special autonomy implemented in Aceh has raised new challenges as well as opportunities in terms of the management of local-central conflict and the accommodation of distinct Acehnese identity. On the one hand, decentralization and the special autonomy are considered as launching a new era in local-central relations, as it provides Aceh with greater authority in diverse areas, and provides a new political framework for local political participation. For this reason, the special autonomy designated for Aceh was considered as a strategy to accommodate Acehnese distinct identity in order to integrate Aceh into the Indonesian nation-state. On the other hand, there is a threat of the resurgence of local identities and national disintegration brought about by the implementation of decentralization. In this respect, the historical evidence suggests that the education sector is a place where identity construction is highly concentrated and contested. Schools have become the largest and major captive spaces available to promote civic loyalty to the nation and the restriction of identity politics. Therefore, the next chapter (Chapter 4) examines the history of education in Aceh, focussing on examining the notion of education as an arena of identity contestation between Aceh and the Indonesian government. Focussing on education, this study explores the recent implementation of Aceh's special autonomy and its possible effects on the resolution of long-standing conflict between Aceh and the central government.

## CHAPTER 4

### EDUCATION IN ACEH AND THE ROLE OF *ULAMA*

#### 4.1. Introduction

This chapter describes the development of education in Aceh over time and the importance of the role of *ulama* in Aceh's education and, more generally, in Acehnese society. The description of Aceh's education is crucial for understanding the effect of special autonomy on education in Aceh. The chapter is divided into three main parts. Each part discusses a different theme of education in Aceh. The first section describes the history of education in Aceh, emphasising the importance of religious agency and the existence of a dichotomy between religious and secular education. The second section discusses the *organization* of education institutions in Aceh. The last section reviews the role of *ulama* in education in Aceh.

#### 4.2. The History of Education in Aceh

Religion and religious agency is deeply rooted in the *organization* of Acehnese society, and this includes the institutions of the education system. Historically, religious organizations have played an important role in educating the community, with significant contributions from their thinkers, leaders, and intellectuals (Azra, 2002). Indigenous Islamic education institutions, the *dayah*, laid the basis for teaching morality in Acehnese society since Aceh's first encounter with Islam in the thirteenth century (Al-Musanna, 2009, p. 5; Basri, 2010, p. 188). These institutions are generally led by charismatic *ulama* who become role models for the students. The role of these Islamic institutions was considered to be crucial in bringing civilization and reform to Aceh during Islam's golden years. They were regarded as potent forces in building and protecting the community and, at the same time,

brought reform in Islamic thinking. Later on, when the Dutch introduced modern schooling in Aceh in the early twentieth century, ulama responded to this challenge by introducing a new type of religious school that combined the Western education system with the religious system. This school is known as *madrassa*. However, *dayah* was still maintained as a form of Aceh indigenous education institution.

During the Dutch colonial period, the majority of Acehnese chose to send their children to religious schools – *dayah* or *madrassa* – rather than to the public schools run by the Dutch. They believed that the schools run by the Dutch did not have curricula that were in line with Islamic teachings, and they considered those who studied there to be infidels (Basri, 2010, p. 192). Hence, Islamic schools and other Islamic institutions became symbols of resistance against the infidel colonisers, with the *ulama* as agents of revolt. History has shown that Aceh's rebellion was the longest and greatest intransigent insurgency faced by the Dutch against their colonial rule (Basri, 2010, p. 189).

The recent development of education in Aceh, however, suggests that this socio-religious system of education has been replaced by a modern education system as a result of economic modernisation (Nazzamuddin, Agussabti, & Mahmud, 2010, p. 88). A recent study shows that, of children enrolled in education institutions in Aceh, between 15% and 20% of the population are enrolled in *madrassa*, between 3% and 5% of children in Aceh attend *dayah*, and the rest attend public schools (Shah & Lopes Cardozo, 2014, p. 7). Education is considered a means to gain economic leverage that ensures one's future.

This development has affected the role religious schools used to play in Aceh's society, as they are now being displaced by public schools (Nazzamuddin et al., 2010, p. 89). In this regard, *dayah* have been criticised for over-emphasising the teaching of Islamic texts at the expense of modern, functional learning. Accordingly, some *dayah* have responded to this criticism by incorporating modern, secular subjects into their curricula. These integrated institutions are known as integrated *dayah* (*dayah terpadu*). Nazzamuddin et al. (2010, p. 89) argue that this decline in the dominant role played by the traditional religious

education system, and the corresponding shift in favour of modern education institutions, has influenced the values, behaviour and traditions of Acehese society. The resulting inequality between the rich and poor concerning who has access to education, and to what type, is extensive.

To understand the evolution of Aceh's education system, the following section reviews the development of education in Aceh in the three different periods: the pre-colonial and colonial period, the period of religious reform (1920s-1940s), and the period of revolution and independence (1945-1990s).

#### *4.2.1. The Pre-colonial and Colonial Period*

Aceh's education system was regarded as reaching its peak when Aceh's Darussalam kingdom reached its political apex in the early seventeenth century under Iskandar Muda (1607-1636) (Siegel, 2000). During this time, education in Aceh was characterised by the dominant role of the *dayah* and its *ulama* as the main educator, as well as its leadership role in Aceh society. *Dayah* is the oldest form of existing learning institution, both in Aceh, and throughout the Muslim Southeast Asia Region (Husin, 2013, p. 50). As such, Aceh became a recognizable centre of Islamic teaching in Southeast Asia. By the time the Dutch arrived in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, every area in the Sultanate of Aceh had a *dayah* associated with *ulama*. This age of glorious education is perfectly described by Siegel (p. 121), "Famous ulama arose, men of letters, philosophers of the deepest contemplation. Everywhere there were schools, from the most elementary to the highest".

During this pre-colonial period, education was characterised by the integration of Islamic and secular teaching. In fact, there was no distinction between secular and religious education at that time. Both modes of education were treated as a unity rooted in *qur'an* and *hadits* (Dhuhri, 2014). The historical evidence for this can be found in *dayah* Cot Kala, which is believed to be the first and the oldest Islamic

education institution in Southeast Asia. Both Islamic and secular knowledge can be found in the *Dayah* Cot Kala curriculum, as can be seen from the subjects taught, for instance *fiqh* (Islamic law), *tauhid* (unity of God), *tasawuf* (mysticism), *akhlaq* (ethics), geography, history, and Arabic. The teaching of secular education is also evident in the Jami'ah Baitur-Rahman, the first university founded in Aceh (MoEC, 1984, pp. 16-17).

The Dutch colonial government introduced formal, secular schooling to Indonesia in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century as an important part of its ethical policy (*ethische politiek*)<sup>7</sup> (Cribb, 1993, pp. 46-47). In ethical policy, education was considered as a moral obligation of the colonizers to its subjects in the Indies. From that time on, public schools in Indonesia mushroomed, with a complicated and segregated education system (Sumintono & Raihani, 2010, p. 183). In the first instance, the Dutch government established schools for educating the elite class of society. By educating the children of noble families, the Dutch sought to build and maintain aristocratic allegiance to the colonial government.

Until the early twentieth century, education in Aceh was still dominated by *dayah*, which were seen by the Dutch to be hotbeds of anti-colonial activity. During the Aceh War (1873-1913), *dayah* not only functioned as educational institutions, but also as potent symbols of resistance against the infidel colonizers, with *ulama* as agents of revolt. Other than functioning as learning centres, the *dayah* also operated as a base for political resistance against Dutch invasion, given that many *dayah* founders or leaders were, at the same time, also resistance fighters and revolutionary leaders against the colonising power. *Dayah* played a significant role in keeping the spirit of *jihaad* (struggle) alive among Acehnese, mainly through the reading of *Hikayat Perang Sabil* (Graf, Schröter, & Wieringa, 2010). *Dayah* had become a place for teaching 'hatred and scorn for the kafir' (Reid, 1979, p. 21).

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<sup>7</sup> Ethical policy is the Dutch policy to fulfil their perceived responsibility to improve the social and economic situation of the indigenous populations in its colonies. The policy was first acknowledged in Queen Wilhelmina's speech at the opening of the Netherlands parliament in 1901. However, the actual implementation of the policy did not occur until about 1905 in Aceh. (For a more comprehensive description of the ethical policy, see Cribb, 1993)

Hence, the Dutch government made an exceptional effort to replace *dayah* with a public, secular school system.

This was the first time that the Dutch government had introduced an extensive school system in Aceh. At the elementary level the government provided *Hollandsch Inlandsche Scholen* (HIS) and *Meer Uitgebreid Lager Onderwijs* (MULO) for junior high school. The Dutch also established *Hollandsch Chinese Scholen* (HCS) for Chinese, *Hollandsch Ambonese Scholen* (HAS) for Ambonese and *Europeesche Lagere Scholen* (ELS) for descendants of Europeans. As for commoners or ordinary villagers (*pribumi*), the Dutch built a simple three-year *volkschool* (popular school), designed to teach reading and writing in Romanised Malay (Reid, 1979). In Aceh, HIS and MULO were initially established for the sons of *uleebalang*<sup>8</sup>, as, from the Dutch point of view, they were the future rulers with whom the Dutch government would cooperate. They were taught in the Dutch ways, using the language, outlook and bureaucratic practice of the ruling power (Reid, 1979, p. 21). As for the rest of the Aceh people, the Dutch initiated the first *volkschool* in Aceh in 1907 (MoEC, 1984, p. 5).

As mentioned earlier, this Dutch-sponsored school was initially perceived by Acehnese as a place where the Dutch intended to train villagers to become a *kafir* (infidel), and hence Acehnese resisted this school. To overcome this resistance, the Dutch separated theology from public knowledge as a strategy to restrict the communities from undertaking political activity while they undertook their religious duty (Basri, 2010, p. 189). This strategy, to separate religious life from political activities, was based on the ideology of 'association', which was promoted by Christiaan Snouck Hurgronje, a Dutch Advisor on Arabian and Native Affairs. He suggested that the colonial government adopt the strategy, which emphasised the association of Islamic culture with Western culture. In Aceh, this strategy was

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<sup>8</sup> *Uleebalang* is the chieftain who controlled goods in and out of Aceh in nineteenth century Aceh society. The position of *uleebalang* was important as the locus of power in nineteenth century Acehnese society. As the power of sultans weakened, the Dutch saw *uleebalang* as potential allies during their colonisation of Aceh. (For the explanation of the nineteenth century Acehnese society see Morris, 1983; Siegel, 2000)



accomplished through separation of secular knowledge from religious knowledge as it was promoted in *dayah*.

This strategy of 'association' had been known since the instigation of the ethical policy and was considered by Snouck as the answer to the problem of Islam (Bloembergen & Jackson, 2006). The strategy of association aims to tightly associate colonies with their colonisers by providing the colonies with benefits from the culture of colonisers while, at the same time, respecting the local culture. In this regard, Snouck recommended that the Dutch administration develop an Islamic policy that treated Islam as having two parts: Islam as a religion and Islam as a political and social movement (Benda, 1958, pp. 342-343). Toward the former, Snouck advised tolerance, or a policy of neutrality toward religious life. However, toward Islamic political and social movements he insisted on using a firm, even military approach to restore Dutch authority. According to Snouck, the ultimate defeat of Indonesian Islam was to be achieved by the association of Indonesians with Dutch culture. "A modern Indonesia by definition could be neither an Islamic Indonesia nor an Indonesia ruled by *adat* (customs), it would have to be a Westernised Indonesia" (Benda, 1958, p. 344). His advice on this political reorientation, together with improved military tactics, eventually led to the conclusion of the Aceh War and suppression of the insurgency.

In relation to this association, education was considered to be a critical mechanism to spread Western civilisation (Benda, 1958; Cribb, 1993). Hence, Western education had to be made available to ever larger numbers of Indonesians. It was expected that the provision of a Western-style education to Islamic subjects in the Dutch colony would result in their becoming associated with the Dutch culture (Bloembergen & Jackson, 2006, pp. 46-47) and that, through sharing a common culture, both would come to share a common political allegiance. Despite the claim that teaching the native partners was the moral responsibility of the colonisers, the expansion of secular education through public schooling was also intended to separate theology from public knowledge in order to weaken the independence

movement.<sup>9</sup> Ultimately, Western education was considered the best possible means of reducing and defeating the influence of Islam in Indonesia (Benda, 1958, p. 344).

In addition to this association, in 1905 the Dutch central government issued a new regulation called the *Guru Ordinance*, which was first applied in Java and Madura to control Islamic teaching. According to the 1905 statute religious teachers had to be registered in order to get a teaching licence before they could give religious instruction (Abdullah, 2009; Kahin, 2005). This ordinance aimed to limit the movement of religious teachers, who were identified as the main challengers of the Dutch government. It applied to both school religious teachers and Islamic priests. Furthermore, the 1915 *staatsblad* No. 550 stated that religious teachers must keep lists of their pupils, and that the regents, or other chiefs, could control religious schools (Abdullah, 2009, p. 131).

This ordinance was renewed in 1925 by replacing the word “licence” with the softer “informing the authority” in order to be registered as religious teachers. However, although official permission was no longer required, teachers still required a registration letter from the local authority to be permitted to teach. Both letters were issued by the district office or the regent’s office. It is argued that there was no real difference between getting a licence and getting a registration letter. Indeed, this new ordinance did not differentiate between ‘teaching’ and ‘preaching’, which further impeded the dissemination of Islamic knowledge and propaganda (Abdullah, 2009, p. 132). In 1927, this ordinance started to be implemented in Aceh, East Sumatra, Riau, Palembang, Tapanuli, Minahasa and Lombok.

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<sup>9</sup> There are debates over the real intention of this association strategy. Although Snouck intended that the aim of association should be to associate local culture to Western culture – to Westernise the local culture – in order to build common ground for mutual respect and understanding between the Dutch and their local partners, the practice of association itself showed different realities. There was distortion in the way the association was interpreted in Dutch colonial thinking in the course of time. Instead of embracing this association fully, the Dutch tended to use this term pragmatically to promote their colonial policy (See Bloembergen & Jackson, 2006; Cribb, 1993).

Both the strategy of association and the Guru Ordinance impacted the education system in Aceh, particularly *dayah* education. As a result of the Dutch policy on education, a distinction between secular and religious education was made for the first time, and two separate education systems were developed. On the one hand, *dayah* maintained its religious teaching, but at the same time was banned from teaching secular knowledge. On the other hand, the Dutch government introduced formal public schools for Acehnese to learn secular knowledge.

According to Benda (1958), the rising challenge of Western schools to their Muslim counterparts in the 1900s provided evidence of the decreasing influence of Islamic cultural education in Indonesia. By the late 1920s the existence of the *volkschool* had begun to challenge the dominance of *dayah* education in Aceh. Regardless of strong refusals in the beginning, by the 1930s the Dutch schools were starting to be accepted by the majority of Acehnese. By 1935, over 33,000 Acehnese were attending these schools willingly, compared to only 15,000 in 1919 (Reid, 1979). This time marked the diminishing role of *dayah*, as well as the beginning of separation between religious and secular education in Aceh.

#### *4.2.2. The Period of Religious Reformism (1920s-1940s)*

During the Aceh war (1873-1913), the role of *dayah* continued to diminish as many *dayah* were either burned or closed down. Many of the leading *ulamas* and their students were killed during the insurgency against the Dutch. As a result, the traditional *dayah* education never completely recovered from the Aceh war. The failure of the *dayah* system to recover left its surviving leaders isolated (Morris, 1983, p. 78).

At the beginning of the 1920s, the waning of *dayah* and the development of Western education had opened a new consciousness among a few reformist *ulama* regarding the traditional methods and strategy of teaching in *dayah* that had been

practised for centuries (Reid, 1979; Siegel, 2000). A few prominent *ulama* responded to this challenge by establishing *madrassa*, a more modern Islamic school compared to *dayah*. In part, *madrassa* were modelled on the Islamic religious school of West Sumatra, which were basically a fusion of the content of religious education provided at *dayah* and the teaching methods used in the modern school.

At the beginning of the introduction of *madrassa* in the 1920s, there was not much difference between the teaching at *dayah* and *madrassa*. In fact, many of the *ulama* who founded *madrassa* were themselves a product of the *dayah* and many of them still taught in *dayah*. Later, in the 1930s, however, the *madrassa* started to develop a broader syllabus and more modern methods such as grades, comprehensive textbooks, and classrooms furnished with desks, chairs and blackboards.<sup>10</sup> In addition, *madrassa* also relied on the assistance of alumni from more modern schools in West Sumatra and Java, as well as a few graduates from Egypt and Mecca (Reid, 1979, p. 23). In terms of subject taught in *madrassa*, initially the subjects were all religious; in the next stage, *madrassa* not only modernised their organization and teaching methods, but also began to include the secular curriculum in the Islamic education system. By the outbreak of World War II, half the subjects taught in *madrassa* were secular (Siegel, 2000, p. 96).

The introduction of secular subjects, which previously had not been accepted in *dayah*, represented a reorientation of the religious education system in Aceh (Morris, 1983, p. 278). This was justified by the claim that the secular knowledge given in *madrassa* was a remedy for the deficiencies of the education system the Dutch had deemed appropriate for Acehnese commoners. As such, it was intended to compete with Western education as well as with other modern education institutions from Java and West Sumatra. The Acehnese also believed this reformation as a way of providing religiously educated youths with the skills and knowledge for earning a living in a changed world.

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<sup>10</sup> The teaching using modern methods was a new development in Aceh's education at that time. Previously, *dayah* employed a more traditional method, which was characterised by students circling the *ulama* sitting on the floor in the *balai* (porch) as they listened to the *ulama* and repeated the lesson.

This reformist movement marked its peak with the establishment of PUSA<sup>11</sup> (*Persatuan Ulama Seluruh Aceh*-All Aceh Ulama Association) in 1939-1942 led by Daud Beureu'eh, Noer el Ibrahimy, *Teungku* Abdul Rahman, and Ismail Jakoeb and T.M. Amien. One of the biggest contributions of PUSA to education in Aceh was its initiative to standardize the curriculum for all *madrasa* in Aceh in order to narrow the gap between Western colonial education and *madrasa* education. The new standardized curriculum included both secular and religious subjects to be taught in all *madrasa*, with roughly 30 percent of the courses to be allocated to secular subjects (Latif, 1992, p. 74). Reformers argued that the inclusion of secular education was not only permissible in the *madrasa* curriculum, but in fact it was the responsibility of all Muslims to study such subjects (Latif, 1992, p. 31). Further, due to the lack of teachers to teach the new curriculum, PUSA also established the *Normal Islam Instituut* (NII - Islamic Normal Institute) as a teacher training school. The NII adopted a number of features modelled on the Dutch system. The aim of PUSA leaders was therefore to imitate the Dutch school system but, at the same time, to maintain elements of Aceh's traditional *dayah* system.

In addition to this reform of the curriculum, PUSA also had a remarkable footprint in other spheres of religious practice and reformism. PUSA suggested that women could be accommodated in Islamic schools both as students and as teachers. PUSA put women in a respectable position in society by giving them a chance to access education as much as their male counterparts. In the religious sphere, PUSA members also encouraged women to practice Islam on the same basis as men, for instance in reciting *Qur'an* loudly – something which was traditionally unacceptable for women. Moreover, PUSA also endorsed breaking down barriers between cultures. For the first time, Western languages were introduced in Islamic schools as a result of PUSA initiatives.

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<sup>11</sup> Initially PUSA was founded as an educational organization; however, later PUSA became involved in a broader religious and political movement. In the birth of the DI/TII movement, PUSA was the main actor behind the movement with the involvement of Daud Beureu'uh, the PUSA leader (See Reid, 1979; Siegel, 2000).

The establishment of PUSA indicated a growing self-consciousness among Acehnese, led by the *ulama*, as to the condition of their society under colonization. Therefore, PUSA was not only considered to be an agent of educational reform, but more remarkably to be an architect of socio-religious reform in Aceh, to realize the vision of an Islamic society (Morris, 1983; Siegel, 2000). This period of the reformation movement was generally referred to as '*zaman kesadaran*' (the age of awareness) or '*zaman kemajuan*' (the age of progress) (Siegel, 2000, p. 120). Reid pictures this period as the 'religious revival' (1979, pp. 22-25); it is described by Morris as the period of 'Islamic reformism' (1983, p. 76). Tgk. Muhammad Daud Beureu'eh, a famous *ulama*, orator and the first PUSA leader elected in the first congress, was considered as the *ulama* who deserved the title of "father of the self-awareness of the Acehnese People" (Morris, 1983, p. 90).

Although this reformation was supported by *ulamas*, or at least introduced without their opposition, a few conservative *dayah ulama* kept their distance from this idea of Islamic reform (Reid, 1979, p. 26). A group of highly conservative *ulama* rejected the idea of integrating a secular curriculum into Islamic education. Further, they refused to ratify the proposal that women could be taught by male teachers (Latif, 1992, p. 30). Nevertheless, Siegal (2000, p. 97) argued that the resistance towards these schools by a few traditional *ulama* was considered marginal, as compared to the resistance by *ulama* in other social areas such as the purification of religious activity from ritual feasts. Furthermore, Reid contended that by 1941 "...there was some truth in the claim that PUSA was coming to represent 'the voice of people of Aceh'" (Reid, 1979, p. 26). By the time of the first congress of PUSA in 1940, thousands attended the congress, and PUSA branches had sprung up throughout North Aceh, Pidie and Aceh Besar.

#### 4.2.3. *The Period of Revolution and Independence (1945-1990s)*

After Indonesian independence in 1945, PUSA leaders 'nationalised' their *madrassa* to become part of the state system of education under the Department of Religious Affairs (DoRA). Consequently, the financial responsibility for *madrassa* fell under that Department. Initially, *madrassa* were named *Sekolah Rakjat Islam* (Islamic people's school) and, later in the 1960s, they were renamed *Madrassa Ibtidaiyah Negeri* (MIN) and have continued under this title until the present day. At this time PUSA and the central government were still on good terms, with President Soekarno promising to give Aceh special status in managing its affairs.

In 1953 PUSA became involved in the *Darul Islam* movement (DI/TII) to establish the Indonesian Islamic State under the leadership of *Teungku* Daud Beure'uh. The revolt was a result of the central government breaking its promise to give Aceh autonomy (refer to chapter 3). As a consequence, the development of *madrassa* deteriorated as many *ulama* took part in the conflict with the central government (Dhuhri, 2014). Meanwhile, while the *ulama* of traditional *dayah* were not involved, support for the movement still continued to grow.

To overcome the DI/TII movement, in 1959 the central government offered the *Daerah Istimewa* (special region) formula to Aceh with the promise of 'extensive' autonomy in religion and education. In responding to this *Daerah Istimewa* formula, during the 1960s Aceh's Islamic leaders made two proposals to the central government. The first proposal was for legislation by the regional representative assembly to give some substance to the implementation of elements of Islamic Law. The second was a plan for the integration of two distinct streams, religious and secular, of primary education (Morris, 1983, p. 272).

In terms of the legislation, in November 1968 the regional representative council passed Regional Regulation No. 6/1968 on the implementation of the elements of Islamic *sharia* in Aceh. This law required approval from the central government

within six months after the regulation was passed. However, it was neither approved nor rejected by the central government, thus the issue was never fully resolved. The administration of governor of Aceh A. Muzakkir Walad said that Jakarta did not want to hear anymore about the issue of Islamic law (Morris, 1983, p. 276). By the mid 1970s, there was no longer a public forum available for the advocates of Islamic law to express their demands.

For the second proposal – the integration of religious and secular primary education – the position of *madrasa* in relation to public schooling was the centre of attention. Over the years the number of private *madrasa*, other than MINs, had increased with the support of community funding, yet the DoRA provided small subsidies for these schools. By the 1970s, however, the number of primary public schools under the Department of Education and Culture (DoEC) had surpassed the number of *madrasa* in terms of numbers of schools, pupils and amount of funding (Morris, 1983, p. 279). In the early 1970s, the number of public primary schools had reached over 800, while there were more than 200 MINs. In terms of curriculum, 68% of the subjects taught in *madrasa* were secular, with the remaining subjects being religious. However, only eight percent of the curriculum of primary public schools provided for religious instruction.

According to Morris (1983), this dualism of education, with *madrasa* under the DoRA and public schools under the DoEC, raised major concerns among Aceh religious leaders over the emergence of distinct leadership groups based on two different streams of education. To overcome this dualism, Acehnese leaders began to design a plan for integration of the two groups of schools. However, this attempt also could not be realised because the management and governance of *madrasa* and public schools fell under the authority of central government ministries.

Consequently, attention then switched to the integration of curriculum only. There was a consensus to provide a reasonable comparable curriculum between religious and secular education for pupils in both types of school so that dualism would be



overcome. Two proposals were prepared by two respective teams for the curriculum changes to each stream. As a result, the committee for *madrasa* recommended 70% general instruction and 30% religious instruction. Meanwhile, the public school committee advocated 75% of general instruction and 25% religious instruction. This integrated curriculum was viewed as a distinctly Aceh proposal, a reflection of Islamic principles and a natural consequence of the *Daerah Istimewa* formula promised by the central government (Morris, 1983).

Nevertheless, there was no clear official response from the central government regarding this proposal. Both the DoRa and DoEC paid little attention to it, especially since, at the implementation level, it had consequences for staffing and funding. In fact, the DoEC resisted approving such a drastic change to the public school curriculum in favour of Islam. Unresolved matters in terms of promoting the integrated education curriculum under the mechanism of the *Daerah Istimewa* formula triggered disappointment among Acehnese leaders (Miller, 2006), in the sense that autonomy in religion and education for Aceh had reached a deadlock (Morris, 1983, p. 281).

### **4.3. Aceh's Contemporary Education System**

After decades of centralized government administration, during which nearly all the state functions, including education, were managed from Jakarta, the late 1990s saw a fundamental change as Indonesia embarked on a major programme of decentralization. The implementation of decentralization over the past decade has directly shaped education governance and management in the Indonesian education system of today. Decentralization Law No. 22/1999 on local government provided a framework and direction that aimed to give greater autonomy to provincial and district authorities in terms of governance, management and delivery of services. Education was one of the public services that became subject to major changes, including the sharing of responsibilities between central and

local government. For Aceh, a special arrangement under special autonomy has meant greater autonomy compared to other provinces, as can be seen from the implementation of Islamic *sharia* (Chapter 3 section 3.4.1.).

There are now three different types of education institutions available in the education system in Aceh. Those institutions are *dayah* (traditional Islamic boarding school), *sekolah* (public school), and *madrassa* (modern Islamic school) (Basri, 2010, pp. 190-191).

#### 4.3.1. *Sekolah (Public School)*

After independence, the public schools operated by the state fell under the control of the Department of National Education (now Ministry of Education and Culture (MoEC)). In 1984, the government introduced a policy calling for six years of compulsory education. In 1994, the length of compulsory education was increased to nine years, an amendment that remains in place today. Basic education covers nine years of education in total, including six years of primary school and three years of junior secondary school. After completing six years of primary education, children move up to junior secondary school; some students can continue for a further three years, for which they attend senior secondary education. For senior secondary education, within both the Islamic and non-Islamic systems, students can choose to attend either more academically oriented schools or vocational schools. At the tertiary level, there are a number of different types of institutions, including public, private and Islamic universities, and training institutions.

#### 4.3.2. *Dayah*

*Dayah* is the indigenous and traditional form of educational institution in Aceh led by *ulama*. *Dayah* is a boarding institution where young men gather to study *Kitab Kuning* (classical religious texts, literally 'Yellow Book') under a renowned scholar.

*Dayah* also accommodate women, usually with the leadership of the wife of the *ulama*. The teaching classes of male and female students are usually separated (Morris, 1983).

The system of *dayah* education is not structured as found in a formal schooling system. There is no set period of study as the number of years spent in *dayah* depends on the student's perseverance and the *ulama*'s acknowledgement that the student has completed his studies. At *dayah*, all lessons are delivered in Arabic and the textbooks are in Arabic. The following are some special characteristics of *dayah* (Dhuhri, 2014; Suyanta, 2012): students usually gather circling the *ulama* or *teungku* in order to learn a lesson, and the teaching takes place on a porch rather than in a classroom; students stay in barracks within the *dayah* environment; and generally *dayah* are owned by an individual (the *ulama*) and supported by community funding; *dayah* are rarely supported by government funding.

Three types of *dayah* are known in Aceh: *dayah salafi*, which operates an (almost) fully religious curriculum based on the study of the "Yellow Book", also called traditional *dayah*; *modern dayah*; and integrated *dayah*. Modern and integrated *dayah* are highly similar and are hardly distinguished. They both based on partly religious, and partly secular, or state, curricula. This integrated and modern *dayah* system was developed in 1985, based on the combination of the *dayah* education system with modern public education. Some *dayah* also delivered general knowledge such as agriculture, trade and economics (Saifullah et al., 2013).

The difference between integrated and traditional *dayah* systems is found in the curriculum and the teaching method. The traditional *dayah* is limited to the study of the "Yellow Book", whereas pupils in the integrated *dayah* study not only the "Yellow Book" but also other, secular, knowledge. Unlike traditional *dayah* that apply traditional methods – students gathering around *teungku*, no classroom system, no grade system – modern or integrated *dayah* follow the system of formal schooling. In these schools, classroom activities are conducted primarily in Arabic and English. This modern and integrated *dayah* comprises only 10% of the total number of *dayah* in Aceh.

### 4.3.3. *Madrasa*

The *dayah* was in fact the only indigenous educational institution until the introduction of the modern school (*sekolah*) by the Dutch in the early twentieth century. This introduction of a Western educational system forced the *ulama* to review and modernise *dayah* education. The combination of the two systems is manifested in the adoption of the *madrassa* system, which is a system of modern Islamic schooling, in contrast to the *sekolah*, which are considered to be religiously neutral learning institutions (Husin, 2013, p. 50). The creation of *madrassa* was an attempt to advance a new generation of educated Muslims who qualified both in religious and secular knowledge in order to meet the needs at that time.

According to the MoEC report (2013, p. 8), the first Law on Education (Law No. 4 of 1950) only regulated general education and religious teaching in schools. Islamic education, in the form of *pesantren*<sup>12</sup> and *madrassa*, was neither mentioned nor recognised. Marginalization of Islamic education was reinforced in 1972 by Presidential Instruction No. 34, which, in effect, placed Islamic education outside the state school system. In 1975, there was a move to integrate Islamic schools into the state school system with the signing of a joint decree on the Increase of Madrasa Education Quality between MoEC, MoRA and the Ministry of Home Affairs (MoHA). This, in effect, equalized Islamic and state school at primary and secondary levels and enabled students from Islamic schools to enter non-Islamic schools and vice versa.

In terms of curriculum, Law No. 8 of 1989 specified that 70% of the curriculum in *madrassa* would comprise the national secular curriculum with 30% of the curriculum reserved to religious education. This composition has been maintained to date. The *madrassa* follows the modern school system as set out by the Indonesian Department of Religious Affairs (now Ministry of Religious Affairs

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<sup>12</sup> *Pesantren* is the term used for Islamic boarding schools in Java, similar to *dayah* in Aceh. Although the terms *pesantren* and *dayah* are often used interchangeably, in the context of Aceh society *dayah* has a deeper meaning as it not only represents an Islamic education institution, it also represents the history of Aceh's struggle against the 'infidel' colonisers. Therefore, this thesis distinguishes the use of these two terms and prefers using the term *dayah* for indigenous Acehnese Islamic education institutions.

(MoRA)). Like the public school, the *madrasa* education system divides schools into several levels, namely kindergarten, six years of primary school, three years of middle school and three years of high school.

**Table 3: Contemporary Education Institutions in Aceh**

Public School	Madrasa	Dayah	
		Salafi	Terpadu/modern
Under MoEC (decentralized)	Under MoRA (centralized)	Independent (Private)	Private/Under MoEC/Under MoRA
Formal	Formal	Non-formal	Formal
Follow the structure of school system	Follow the structure of school system	Not following the structure of school system	Combination of <i>dayah</i> system and school system
National curriculum	National curriculum plus Islamic curriculum	Limited to the study of the “Yellow Book”	Study of “Yellow Book” and national curriculum

#### 4.4. The Role of *Ulama* in Aceh’s education

In order to understand the role of *ulama*<sup>13</sup> in education, it is critical to assess the agency of *ulama* in society. Historically, *ulama* have played a significant role in Aceh society as an agent for negotiating society with the state. In fact, it is argued that it is impossible to discuss the history of Aceh without mentioning the significant role of *ulama* within Aceh society. Arguably, the agency<sup>14</sup> of *ulama* in Aceh society has appeared to act as a balancing power between state and society (Ahmad, 2012, p. 2). Studies on the role of *ulama* in Aceh society suggest that their

<sup>13</sup> The word *ulama* can be translated as “religious scholars”. In the context of Aceh, the recognition of a person as *ulama* is more of a community acknowledgement than an official confirmation (Morris, 1983, p. 42). The title *ulama* is also addressed to leaders in religious boarding schools (*dayah*) (Kloos, p. 9). In nineteenth-century Aceh, *ulama* were addressed by the title of ‘*teungku*’, but nowadays the meaning of ‘*teungku*’ has gradually been transformed. *Teungku* is now more used for teachers of Islamic religious subjects similar to ‘*ustadz*’ in other parts of Indonesia and considered to be at a lower hierarchical level than *ulama*. For example, a *dayah* is usually led by an *ulama* and he is assisted by *teungku*, whose main duty is to teach and give religious instruction to *santri* (*dayah* students). The responsibility of *teungku* is considered minimal compared to that of *ulama*. The prominent *ulama* in Aceh are commonly called by many titles such as ‘*Abu*’, ‘*Abuya*’ or ‘*Waled*’ which are similar to title of ‘*Kyai*’ in *Pesantren* in Java (*observation and interviews*).

<sup>14</sup> The term agency used in this study refers to the ‘capacity of act’.

agency has been subjected to political development in Aceh (Ahmad & Amiruddin, 2013; Nirzalin, 2012). Therefore, the agency of *ulama* is not considered as static, but it is subject to change depending on the political circumstances surrounding the *ulama*.

Discussing the authority of *ulama* in today's Acehnese society is not an easy task. Many authors have argued that the authority of *ulama* in Aceh society should be seen in its divided nature, that is, both their religious authority within the traditional space such as religious counselling, education and traditional ritual service, and their political authority. In terms of their traditional space, the authority of *ulama* remains unchanged. Their presence is still perceived as the symbol of Acehnese culture. Nevertheless, in terms of the political space performed by the *ulama*, it is claimed that their authority has been marginalized (Ahmad, 2012; Kloos, 2013; Nirzalin, 2012).

During the colonial period, *ulama* represented an agent of revolt against the Dutch. According to Reid "the war was gradually transformed into a genuinely popular cause under *ulama* inspiration, rather than a defence of one district after another by the woefully divided traditional chiefs" (Reid, 1969, p. 252). *Ulama* emerged from their *dayah* to head the *Perang Sabil* (holy war) against the infidel invaders. The very powerful weapon of the *ulama* was an epic poem, the *Hikayat Perang Sabil*, which recounted the fantastic rewards awaiting the faithful in paradise should they fall in the holy war against the infidels (Morris, 1983, p. 58). *Ulama* continued to direct organized guerrilla warfare until about 1910. The importance of the role of *ulama* reached its peak during the reformation in the 1930s when *ulama* PUSA acted as an agent of transformation in Aceh society, especially in the education realm. After independence, the role of *ulama* in Aceh as an agent of change and defender of society continued. However, there has been a crucial transformation in the relationship between *ulama* and the state since about the middle of the twentieth century, which consequently affected *ulama's* agency as defender of society.

#### 4.4.1. Relations with the state

Over the last half of the twentieth century and into the new millennium, the role of *ulama* has transformed from an agent of change, where *ulama* were considered as an independent authority and defender of society, into a more fragmented political force (McGibbon, 2006). From the 1960s, Acehnese *ulama*, like other religious leaders in Indonesia, lost much of their agency under the New Order (Miller, 2010, p. 32). In Aceh, *ulama* who joined the state-sponsored Indonesian *Ulama* Council (*Majelis Ulama Indonesia/MUI*) had been co-opted into the Indonesian military campaign against GAM. Other rural-based *ulama*, who did not join the MUI were either arrested, or restricted to an education role in their *dayah*. These rural-based or traditional *dayah ulama* are represented by Association of *Dayah Ulama* in Aceh (HUDA), which was established in 1999.

It has been argued that, since *ulama* have been absorbed into the state, they have disappointed their followers (Kell, 1995; McGibbon, 2006; Morris, 1983). According to Kell, by entering the state bureaucracy and the modern sector of the economy, the *ulama* “are no longer a cohesive and independent class powerful enough to confront political and ideological foes” (Kell, 1995, pp. 47-50). Education is one of the largest important realms in which the state has tried to control religious affairs. In the context of Aceh, education was traditionally the domain of the *ulama*, scholars of religious law.

The role of *ulama* in education was challenged when modernist *ulama* at the *madrasa* gave up their institutional independence in the 1950s. At that time, *madrasa* were made part of the state system of education, and many of their children were recruited into the state bureaucracy (Morris, 1983, p. 278). Later on, during the New Order period, *dayah ulama* followed the path to state dependence of these modernist *ulama* of the *madrasa*, as they were increasingly co-opted, bought or intimidated into political stagnation (Kloos, pp. 140-141). Rodd McGibbon also noted that when the New Order collapsed in 1998, the *ulama* had already given up their historical role as “agents of change”. Instead, they had

become a “fragmented and deeply conservative political force” (McGibbon, 2006, pp. 328-329).

After the collapse of the New Order regime in 1998, the central government attempted to restore the role of *ulama* in Aceh society by adding a new element to Law No. 44/1999, namely the creation of an independent *ulama* council with the power to make recommendations for local legislation. This was part of Jakarta’s political approach to diminish GAM’s influence, as the central government assumed that the continuous conflict in Aceh was the result of the government’s failure to implement its promise to grant Aceh special autonomy, including in religion and in relation to the role of *ulama*. As McGibbon noted, the Indonesian government in Jakarta generally viewed the restoration of the *ulama*’s predominant role in Aceh society as eventually diminishing GAM’s influence (McGibbon, 2006).

However, a study by Nirzalin (2012) on the role of *ulama* in Aceh’s political structure post-New Order indicates that the adoption of Islamic *sharia* by the government of Aceh did not necessarily restore the political authority of *dayah ulama*. This study suggested that *ulama* have, instead, continued to be marginalized, as they failed to use the opportunity provided by the transition in Aceh’s political structure after the implementation of Islamic *sharia*. Furthermore, Nirzalin (2012, p. 211) argues that since the intention of the implementation of Islamic *sharia* is to provide a political formula to help reduce conflict, its implementation is therefore fully controlled by the state, bureaucratically managed and modified for the benefit of the ruling power elite. As a result, the political authority of *ulama* in Aceh in the post-New Order era remained as much in crisis as in the previous era.



#### 4.4.2. *Fragmented authority of Ulama*

During the New Order regime, the agency of *ulama* was divided between the supporting the state, represented by state *ulama* in the hegemonic position in the MUI and the state political party Golkar; and *ulama* outside the state circle, represented by *ulama* belonged to the PPP party (Ahmad & Amiruddin, 2013, p. 74).<sup>15</sup> At the time of conflict in Aceh between 1976 and 2005, the agency of *ulama* had been fragmented between those *ulama* who defended integration with Indonesia, mainly the MUI-based *ulama*, and the supporters of the Free Aceh Movement (GAM) who were represented by *ulama* gathered in MUNA (the *Ulama* Council of Nanggroe Aceh Darussalam). The rural-based *dayah ulama*, represented by HUDA, chose to support the referendum initiated by the university students to determine Aceh's future, that is, either to stay with Indonesia, or to become independent (Ahmad & Amiruddin, 2013, p. 75; Miller, 2010). However, the largest part of *ulama* preferred to be neutral, in the sense that they limited their involvement in any kind of activities that could be related to politics.

Fragmentation continued in the post-conflict era. Although the implementation of sharia law opens possibilities for a renewed political role, the provincial government has not been very interested in granting power to the *ulama* (Ichwan, 2007). In addition, the *ulama's* influence has been hindered by differences among them in terms of social, theological and political views. *Ulama* in post-conflict Aceh have largely been fragmented into three major groups: the authority of *ulama* as

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<sup>15</sup> After the 1971 election, the New Order government (1966 – 1998) sponsored fusion of nine political parties into three political parties: *Golkar* (*Golongan Karya*, Functional Group), the Islamic party PPP (*Partai Persatuan Pembangunan*, Development Unity Party), and PDI (*Partai Democracy Indonesia*, Indonesian Democracy Party). Golkar is the government's party, an electoral vehicle used by the New Order regime to deny a parliamentary majority to other parties. The majority of its members are bureaucrats who served Suharto's government. In the Assembly, the Golkar delegations have never taken an autonomous initiative, but instead serve as the sponsors and defenders of the government's policies (Liddle, 1985, p. 72). PPP is the result of the fusion of four Islamic parties in 1973. After the fusion, the PPP was not allowed to adopt an Islamic name, and it was forced to drop its Islamic ballot symbol (the Ka'bah shrine in Mecca) in favour of an at best quasi-religious star (taken from the state *Pancasila* emblem). In 1984, all political parties were required to make *Pancasila* their "sole foundation" (*asas tunggal*), and consequently PPP was pressured to open its membership to non-Muslims to make it entitled to be considered an open party (Liddle, 1996).

state agency, which is represented by the members of the State *Ulama* Council (MPU, the replacement of MUI), and the *ulama* as a representation of grass-roots organization, which is represented by HUDA and MUNA (Ahmad & Amiruddin, 2013, p. 74). The members of MPU are the *ulama* who are considered to be close to the government; these also include the professors from the Islamic State University. Meanwhile, the grassroots *ulama* are mainly *ulama* from *dayah*, who are considered to be representative of the specific 'traditional' space in Aceh society (Kloos, p. 9). While MUNA continued to be affiliated with GAM, the *ulama* under HUDA considered themselves to be independent *ulama* with no affiliation to either the state or to GAM.

#### **4.5. Conclusion**

The first research question for this thesis is "How has decentralization affected the autonomy of Aceh in governing its education policies and practices?" Hence, the examination of the history and the contemporary development of education in Aceh is necessary. The role of education, as an arena of identity contestation, has been apparent in the course of the history of Aceh, with Islam as the main element of Acehnese identity. From Aceh's early times until today, religion and religious agency have been embedded in Acehnese social, cultural and political structures, including within the education system. The importance of religious education in Aceh society is reflected in the role of *dayah* and *ulama* in education. Throughout the colonial period, the role of *dayah* and their *ulama* has continuously been significant. During the Aceh War (1873-1913), *dayah* were not only seen as institutions that educate people, but more importantly, they were viewed as a basis for struggle and independence movements.

Before the colonial period, education in Aceh was characterised by an integrated system that incorporated both secular and religious education, without segregation between these two streams of education, as it was found in the

traditional *dayah*. However, Dutch colonisation challenged this integration. In order to depoliticise Acehnese and eventually weaken their resistance, the Dutch separated theology from public knowledge as a strategy to restrict communities' political activity, while the communities kept undertaking their religious duty. As a result, the role of *dayah* started to decline and the notion of dichotomy between religious and secular education started to appear. Since then, Aceh has been struggling to establish an education system that can resolve the dichotomy between religious and secular expectations of education.

The legacy of colonial politics in Aceh's education remained after Indonesia's independence, with debates over religious and secular education continuing to be at the centre of education discourse in Aceh. This dualism of two different streams of education raised concerns among Aceh's educational leaders. To overcome this dualism, Acehnese leaders used the 'special region' status promised by the central government in 1959 to propose the integration of the two streams of education. The first proposal made was to integrate the two different education institutions – *madrassa* under DoRA and public schools under DoEC. The second proposal was to provide a reasonably comparable curriculum between religious and secular education for pupils in both schools. However, the central government did not respond adequately to either of these proposals. In fact, the central government resisted approving the drastic change of adding more Islamic content to the curriculum of the public school. In this sense, the autonomy of Aceh in religion and education, as promised by the central government, had not been achieved. This is one of the sources of grievance among the Acehnese towards the central government.

Further, after independence in 1945, the role of *ulama* and their Islamic institutions started to decline, as the *ulama* gave up their autonomy when *madrassa* were made part of the state education system. This was accompanied by the modernisation movement, which consequently affected *dayah* and *madrassa*, as they were replaced by the modern education provided in public schools. *Dayah* were criticised for over-emphasising the teaching of Islamic texts at the expense of

modern, functional learning. The declining role of Islamic education institutions and their *ulama* has, therefore, resulted in continuing grievances among Acehnese who valued the integration of Islamic principles into Aceh's education system.

The implementation of the recent decentralization policy in 1999 has directly shaped education governance and management in Indonesia. The decentralization law provides a framework and direction to give greater autonomy to provincial and district authorities in governing and managing their education. In addition, the peace agreement between Aceh and the central government in 2005, and the resultant special autonomy of Aceh, has given the construction of Islamic identity in Aceh's education system a new context (Chapter 3). The implementation of Islamic *sharia* – as the mandate of the special autonomy – constitutes a distinct strategic context, where provincial and district education policies and practices are shaped and practised. It is therefore crucial and interesting to see whether this new, changing context affects the construction of Acehnese identity and the contestation between Aceh and Jakarta over the right to manage Aceh's distinctive education.

Chapters 6 to 8 of the thesis present findings regarding the extent of the autonomy of Aceh in governing its education, as well as findings related to identity construction in the recent development of education in Aceh. These findings are elaborated in three specific areas: the curriculum (Chapter 6), the structure (Chapter 7) and the financing (Chapter 8) of education in Aceh's contemporary education system. Eventually, looking at the case of education in Aceh, whether the autonomy agreed for Aceh can provide a framework for the accommodation of Acehnese identity, and hence stimulate the peaceful management of intra-state conflict, is further explored in the discussion chapter (Chapter 9). Before that, Chapter 5, immediately following, reviews the methodology utilised in this study.

## CHAPTER 5

### RESEARCH STRATEGY AND FIELDWORK

#### 5.1. Introduction

This chapter presents the epistemological foundation underpinning this research, and describes the research methodology and strategy applied. It is divided into five sections. The first section discusses the epistemological position supporting this research. The second section explores the qualitative approach applied and some of the methodological challenges encountered. The third section describes the actual experiences and practices of planning and carrying out the fieldwork. The fourth section elaborates on data analysis. The chapter concludes with an explanation of the limitations of the research.

#### 5.2. Epistemological Foundation

The study focusses on Aceh's education under the special autonomy that Aceh acquired, considering that education has been an arena of identity contestation in the course of the history of conflict between Aceh and Jakarta. I believe that the notions of *identity* and *conflict* are socially constructed, hence, this research draws on the constructivist epistemological stance.

This epistemological stance implies the belief that reality is socially constructed. Constructivism believes that objective truth does not exist, but rather that truth and meaning are created by the subject's interaction with the social world. Meaning is not automatically present in objects or social situations, yet subjects construct their own meaning in different ways, even in relation to the same phenomenon (Gray, 2004, p. 17). For this reason, constructivism does not view

realities as single; instead, meanings are varied and multiple as individuals develop the subjective meanings of their experiences (Berg, 2009, p. 30).

As meanings are varied and people develop their own understanding of their social world, research is an activity that is naturally intersubjective or dialogic. This means that both the researcher and the people being researched outline and discuss their own different meaning through sharing, as researchers immerse themselves in the participant's social world through a real or constructed dialogue using the insider's view. Dialogue means that the researcher is not detached from the researched, rather she/he is a visible and integral part of the research setting: thus the researcher is an instrument in his/her research (England, 1994).

Constructivism assumes that all knowledge is produced in specific circumstances, hence knowledge is positioned, or situated, and cannot claim universality (Rose, 1997, p. 308). Seeing knowledge as partial, situated and context-dependent, the researcher should not pretend to be ultimately knowledgeable on the phenomenon or reality of the researched. Nevertheless, although knowledge cannot be assumed to be generalized, it may be transferrable to, or recognisable in, other situations: for knowledge generated from the research is co-constructed by the participants and researcher (Petty et al., 2012a, p. 270).

Having taken this epistemological stance, I should situate myself and my interpretations of the data by reflexively examining my positionality. I acknowledge that my own experiences and subjectivity might influence my interpretation, and this becomes part of the research process.

### *5.2.1. Positionality and Reflexivity*

As noted above, social research is built on the dialogical nature in which the researcher herself is the instrument of the research. As such, I am aware of the possible bias and subjectivity that could have an effect on the results of the study.

Thus, in order to manage the risk of exploitative research, or the relations of domination and control, the principle of reflexivity should guide the whole process of research. Reflexivity is defined as self-critical, self-conscious introspection by the researcher in seeing the 'self' as researcher (England, 1994; Rose, 1997; Sultana, 2007). Thus, reflexivity is a way of being ethical and accountable in the process of data collection and the interpretation of data that the researcher should perform. Reflexivity in research requires reflection on self, process, and representation, as well as critically examining power relations and politics in the research process (Sultana, 2007, p. 376). In being reflexive, I try to make explicit the values and biases I bring to the study within the write-up of this thesis to help enable the reader to contextualise the study.

There are four specific issues I want to raise concerning my positionality and reflexivity during the fieldwork. Those issues are related to the notions of insider-outsider, power relations, misrepresentation and misinterpretation, and the issues surrounding the employment of a local research assistant. Careful consideration of these issues is not only crucial to improving the rigour of my data and analysis, but also to reflecting my understanding with regard to ethics in doing research.

### *Insider-Outsider*

The first day back in Indonesia, I was overwhelmed with what I was expecting ahead on my research journey in Aceh. It is true that I returned to my home country, my own culture. Yet what constitutes the 'field' versus 'home' is somewhat problematic as I consider myself as a Javanese doing research in Aceh, rather than an Indonesian researcher conducting research in one of the Indonesian provinces. While some similarities such as nationality, religion, gender, and occupation might associate me with my participants, some differences were unavoidable. I was conscious that the history of a long-term conflict with the 'Javanese' central government has been embedded on Acehnese perception of Javanese as the 'oppressor' or 'coloniser'. As a result, despite being a Moslem like

the majority of Acehnese, I could not claim that my participants would understand my background and my position, and conversely.

In particular, I am aware of my ethnicity (Javanese, or a person from Java island), as well as my privilege of being a Western-educated woman; thus, as Lal (1996) noted the “native” can be the “other” through class privilege. Even so, at a further stage of the research, I discovered that shared commonalities between me and the research participants – such as nationality, religion, and occupation – enabled me to bridge these gaps, and these commonalities were become more accepted over time. As I tried to blend as much as I could in some of the local activities, the gaps between myself and my respondents were narrowed. I knew that I would never fully become the ‘insider’ or in a fully equal relationship; nonetheless, sharing the same identity and interests helped us to find common ground for the beginning of a fruitful discussion.

In addressing the differences between myself and my respondents, at all times I had to negotiate my positionality as I was simultaneously an insider (an Indonesian, a Muslim), outsider (a Javanese, a non-Acehnese), both and neither (Mullings, 1999): I was somewhere ‘in between’. Sometimes, I needed to cross the borders, negotiating the various settings and subjectivities I simultaneously dealt with. I realised my multiple ‘self’: my status, characteristics, values, gender, and history – my positionality – may affect the results of the research (Bailey, 2007, pp. 6-7; England, 1994, p. 84; Rose, 1997, p. 308). Such positioning in multiple settings meant that research ethics had to be negotiated in practice, on a continual basis.

In this regard, rather than seeing similarities and differences as interruptions to the research, I chose to treat the relations that are involved in the research process through a category of sameness, by dissolving boundaries. This relationship is conceptualised as ‘relational fieldwork’ (Schenk, 2013) or building rapport through sameness (Valentine, 2002).<sup>16</sup> For instance, there was a time during my

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<sup>16</sup> The conception of ‘relational fieldwork’ was partly drawn from a critic by Kobayashi (cited in Schenk, 2013) who views the dilemma of reflexivity as it produces binaries: insider-outsider, Western-non



interview with the *dayah ulama* that I was more comfortable to address myself as a Muslim woman coming from the Sunni<sup>17</sup>, the same Islamic theological school highly practised in *dayah*. This way, I would be able to relate myself to my participant, and vice versa. On the other hand, on a few interview occasions with policy makers or government officials, I preferred to acknowledge myself as a government official. By sharing the same occupation, or religious belief, I was hoping to build greater trust and understanding between the participants and myself. However, I also realised that, “Such fluidity and openness in the research process is not always easy to enact or maintain, especially when inserted into multiple scales of power relations and institutional affiliations, time/budget constraints, and distances (physical, emotional, philosophical, political)” (Sultana, 2007, p. 380).

Aceh is a place where culture, customs and values play a significant role in every aspect of society, including education, the focus of this research. The culture is much influenced by the history of Acehese struggle with the central government, and the stronghold of Islam. Aceh was one of the first areas to be Islamised in Eastern Asia during the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, and since 2002 Aceh has implemented *sharia* law. In addition, the 2004 earthquake and the tsunami that followed added another specific context to Aceh’s social cultural background. The influx of international aid agencies, together with a set of global Western culture, flowed to Aceh. The combined effects of reconstruction efforts after the tsunami, the implementation of *sharia* law, and political and armed conflict created a problematic co-presence of different values and cultures (Western and non-Western, Acehese and non-Acehese) which affected relations between the researched and the researcher (Schenk, 2013). Thus, the presence of foreign or non-Acehese researchers has created some resistance by Acehese, who perceive

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Western, ‘them’ and ‘us’, which in turn created untrusted relationships between the researched and the researcher.

<sup>17</sup> The majority of Acehese practise the creed (*aqidah*) according to the theological school of Sunni. The formal interpretation of sharia promoted in Aceh is in line with the normative conception of Sunni orthodoxy. According to *Qanun* No. 11/2002 (Article 4, 5, and 6) other theological schools than Sunni are not allowed to exist in Aceh.

their values being endangered by outsiders' influence. Therefore, it is crucial to consider some of these important historical points in understanding my relationship with the respondents and my interpretation of the data.

Gender relations were another main concern with regard to my positionality. That is, I was a female doing research in a patriarchal field context. Acehese society is a patriarchal society, and religion plays a very important role in social life. The implementation of Islamic law has been regarded as affecting the lives of Acehese women in many ways, as the law seeks to control their behaviour, sexuality and morality (Ichwan, 2007, pp. 208-2010).<sup>18</sup> Recently, within the post-conflict and post-tsunami era, discourses on gender equality and gender mainstreaming have entered the public sphere in Aceh, partly as a consequence of foreign development programmes. Responding to this discourse, some segments of Acehese society have strongly criticised the gender equity and equality promoted by both government and non-government *organizations* as damaging Acehese values.

Therefore, doing research in an 'other' culture also means that I have to respect local rules and wisdom concerning gender relations. Consequently, respecting other values, or showing empathy, is imperative as a way to cross boundaries when doing cross-cultural research (Schenk, 2013). I tried to be culturally sensitive so I could deal with issues concerning gender relations accordingly. As much as possible, I approached the participants according to norms and traditions applied on the site, such as in the way I dressed and behaved. For example, I wore the *hijab* (head cover) at any time it was necessary for me to do so. In fact, the way to dress followed different norms within and outside *dayah*. *Dayah* applied a

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<sup>18</sup> One of the significant impacts of the implementation of sharia on women in Aceh has been the formal obligation for women to wear *hijab* (head cover). *Hijab* should cover all parts of women's bodies considered to be shameful (*aurat*), thus women who cover their *aurat* are considered to be good and respectable women. Likewise, women who do not wear the appropriate *hijab*, will be persecuted by the *wilayatul hisbah* (sharia police). Nevertheless, unlike in some other countries which also enforce Islamic law, the implementation of sharia in Aceh does not restrict women to household activities. Their rights and freedoms to education, work, political involvement, and participation in public life are guaranteed. This is in light of the Aceh's long history of women's involvement in the public sphere represented by Acehese women rulers (*Sultana*) and heroines (Ichwan, 2007) .

stricter regulation on how to dress around its area, compared to outside the *dayah*. Moreover, the conventional norm of dressing in an Islamic way was different between districts, such as Banda Aceh and Bireuen. I could be more flexible in wearing Islamic dress in Banda Aceh, while in Bireuen, a more traditional Islamic dress was necessary.

In addition, matters related to man-woman relationships needed to be dealt with very carefully. Consideration of gender relations was an important factor in determining whether, or how, an interview took place, whether the place was neutral or whether or not it was a male place. For instance, as much as possible, during interviews with a setting of male dominance, such as in *dayah* where all students of the *dayah* were male, I required myself to be accompanied by a male research assistant. There were a few occasions, however, when I lacked that sensitivity. One day I made an appointment to meet a *teungku* in one of the *dayah* in Bireuen for an interview and the *teungku* invited us to visit the *dayah* for the interview. It was a big *dayah* for male *santri*, so the area was restricted to males. The *teungku* welcomed me and asked me to enter one of the rooms in the dormitory area. After the interview finished, I found out that in the front of the room where the interview was taken place there was signpost saying “women are not allowed to enter this area”. This experience alarmed and guided me on my next research phase to be much more careful in choosing the interview site, especially when conducting interviews with male participants. Asking the locals about their convention and wisdom proved to be the best way to act appropriately. However, many times interviewing male participants in a non-neutral place was unavoidable, especially for an interview with *dayah ulama*.

### *Power Relations*

In the context of cross-cultural research, it is often assumed that the researcher is ‘the holder’ of power, given his/her role as the person asking the questions (Mullings, 1999, p. 339). In such settings, power asymmetries have dominated the

debate in regard to positionality, that is, the privilege of being researchers related to their social status and ability to produce knowledge (England, 1994, p. 80; Schenk, 2013, p. 346). Even in cases in which the researcher has come from the same background, that is, the same country, such considerations still exist; while access and relational aspects may not hinder the fieldwork in this case, differences in class and educational status remain notable points of dissimilarity and might influence the power relations in the research process (Sultana, 2007, p. 375).

However, as Mullings (1999, p. 338) argues, this is not always the case, as there are other situations where a researcher is not in a position of relative power. This might happen when the informants become gatekeepers who control a researcher's access to people or information, or when informants are members of elite or exclusive groups. In this situation, the researcher is in a difficult situation, as the relations of power that are encountered are significantly different from those encountered with other, non-elite, groups. In regard to these issues, during the fieldwork I found that my position and relationship with my participants shifted. My participants and I did not occupy fixed positions of power throughout the research.

The largest part of the research was conducted in school settings and government offices in the two districts of Aceh. As such, the majority of my respondents came from 'education' backgrounds, which were considered as a more knowledgeable segment of society in the Aceh-Indonesian context. In fact, the officials I interviewed were among the higher strata in society. I realised that my own background as a central government official of the Ministry of Education and Culture might affect the power relationship between the respondents and myself. They might think that I am more knowledgeable about education than they are, yet I consistently position myself as a non-knowledgeable person regarding education in Aceh. I might know a little about education in general, nevertheless I know less with regard to the context of Aceh. Hence, in terms of knowledge we – my respondents and myself – had a more or less balanced relationship.

However, there were other times when I encountered difficult situations. Especially with my gender position being that of a woman, I found it challenging to gain access to spaces that are considered exclusively male domains such as gaining access to *dayah ulama* or *teungku*. Therefore, it is noteworthy to emphasise the dynamism of the encounter between the researcher and the researched and the shifting nature of the power relations that arise.



**Figure 1: Interview with a teungku (religious teacher), and an ulama (a leader of dayah)**

Maintaining a balanced relationship between the researcher and the researched was paramount. For instance, during one discussion with teachers they treated me particularly respectfully as they considered my level of education to be higher than theirs. I tried to counter this by acknowledging my limited knowledge about Aceh, insisting that they (the teachers) were more knowledgeable than I. On other occasions during interviews with a few high-ranking officials, the reverse situation happened. I felt I had no control over how I might gain their support for my research. In this situation, I was more comfortable in introducing myself as a government official from the central ministry. Yet, acknowledging my 'other' positionality did not mean that I could control their decision about participation. I

always made clear in the beginning that their participation in this research was voluntary and was not related to their job as government officials. Likewise, there would not be any consequences from their participation in the research in terms of rewards or punishment from the central ministries. In fact, since the implementation of decentralization policy, local government officials are not accountable to the central ministry; instead, they are accountable to the local government. Since that is the case, there is no hierarchical authority from the central government down to the local government official.

Building symmetrical relationships in the fieldwork through an informal approach also proved to be effective in facilitating trust within that relationship. Sameness, or commonalities, can be a precondition for trust. It is easier for respondents who identify similarities with a researcher to share their stories, rather than respondents who identify difference. Addressing the relationships between researcher and researched in the categories of sameness and difference (Rose, 1997), or building reciprocal relationships (Bailey, 2007, p. 73) was considered one of the strategies to build rapport in the research.

In my experience, sameness was built through sharing individual stories, values and cultural practices between the participants and myself. One of the moments that accelerated my relationship with the participants in Banda Aceh was during the biggest celebration for Muslims, Eid Al-Adha. At that time, I had already built good relations with a few participants in Banda Aceh District Educational Office (DEO). One of the participants, an official of the DEO, asked me to join her to visit the head of DEO, so I decided to go there. Involving myself in their celebration, and sharing stories with them, made our relationship more balanced and symmetrical. The official even became a friend of mine and since then has kept contact with me. The next phase of the fieldwork became smoother as the relationship was settled. I interviewed the head of DEO twice and we met in a few other educational workshops and seminars I attended during my fieldwork. Building rapport is, thus,

a negotiated process, “there is always a moment of connection or rapport” (Valentine, 2002, p. 123).

Relational research can also generate potential power biases, not only in terms of who the gatekeepers of the knowledge are, but in terms of what facts are selected and which ones are excluded (Banks & Scheyvens, 2014). In describing her fieldwork in Aceh, for example, Missbach noted the issue of misrepresentation and misinterpretation as it relates to power relations between the researched and the researcher (Missbach, 2011, pp. 380-381). Misrepresentation and misinterpretation might happen when the researcher does not represent and interpret data according to the voice of the participants.

This meant that I should be aware of my positionality not only in terms of engaging with my participants but also with regard to constructing the meaning of the research. Unequal power relations and replicated distortion about the ‘other’ remain big challenges for a Western-based researcher conducting research in third-world countries. Although I share the same nationality and religious identity as participants in the research, as a Javanese researcher I might understand the social reality in Aceh differently than would a person viewing that reality from an Acehnese perspective. Therefore, it was imperative that my making sense of the meanings or theory should be generated from the co-construction of my study by the participants and myself. As Mullings suggested “to acquire information that faithfully represents the real world, researchers must often seek ‘positional spaces’, that is, areas where the situated knowledge of both parties in the interview encounter, engender a level of trust and co-operation” (Mullings, 1999, p. 340).

In order to acquire this ‘positional space’, the fieldwork started by conducting Pairwise Rankings (PWRs) with the aim of building a common understanding between my participants and myself regarding the issues and changes in education after the implementation of special autonomy in Aceh. The search for a common understanding could help to reveal that what is important to me might not always

be important to my participants. PWRs helped to bridge understanding between myself and the participants regarding matters that were important to both. Regardless of the frameworks and guidelines I had previously prepared, the direction of my research changed slightly as the findings from the PWRs directed my research into more locally critical issues that I had not thought of before. Further, employing a local research assistant also helped me to acquire this positional space.

#### *Local Research Assistant*

To help mitigate the problem of misinterpretation and misrepresentation of the data, I used a local research assistant as a strategy to help me to better understand the cultural and social context of the research, which consequently enriched my interpretation of the data. The research assistant was also effective in helping to create trust and to facilitate the creation of a gender-balanced team. His background, gender and engagement with this research project played a significant role in the successful outcome of the fieldwork. That he is a faithful Muslim who speaks very good Acehnese featured most prominently in gaining sympathy with respondents, finding similarities and enabling trust to be built. In particular, during the interviews with *dayah ulama*, his engagement was crucial, since he shared many similarities with the *ulama* as a male Acehnese Muslim. More importantly, the alienation and awkward feeling of a non-Acehnese woman researcher interviewing *dayah ulama* gradually faded away with his presence. James Clifford (1997, p. 23) refers to research assistants with strong language and cultural competence in the field as 'cosmopolitan intermediaries'.

I ensured that this assistant was well informed about the research topic before his engagement. The research assistant was also asked to sign a confidentiality agreement before taking part in any of the research processes to ensure that he would not disclose any information from the data collection. In order to avoid any harm either to the research assistant or to the participants, I employed an assistant from outside the community in which I conducted the research.





*A male local research assistant (picture-in the middle), with strong language and cultural competence in the field, played a significant role as an 'intermediary' in this research. He helped me to understand the cultural and social context of the research better. This research assistant was also effective in helping to create trust and to facilitate a gender-balanced team composition.*

**Figure 2: Local research assistant as an intermediary**

Using a local assistant also contributed to a more comprehensive and representative interpretation of the data gathered. After each of the interviews, we reviewed the whole process. In that review we shared our understanding of issues and information and settled any misinterpretations that we might have had. On some occasions we ended with disagreements on particular matters, yet largely, differing opinions were settled when we gained more data to back up or weaken the specific arguments we had. Different positionalities, as a result of a cross-cultural collaboration and a gender-balanced team of researchers, can help to balance differences arising from different backgrounds. For this reason, I believe that my fieldwork was a two-way exchange and a contested field of strategic negotiations, rather than merely a one-sided encounter in which informants had no influence on the results of the research (Missbach, 2011, p. 381).

### 5.3. Qualitative Approach

The constructivist paradigm drove the methodological approach in this research, and helped give direction to the utilisation of qualitative research for this study. Researchers who draw on the constructivist paradigm believe that social phenomena must be understood in the social context in which they are constructed and reproduced through their activities. Epistemologically, knowledge of this reality involves understanding the multiple views of people in a particular situation (Petty et al., 2012a, p. 270).

Qualitative research refers to the what, how, when, and where of a thing – its essence and ambience (Berg, 2009, p. 3). The purpose of qualitative research is not to measure but to demonstrate a greater depth of understanding by applying qualitative procedures. “It aims at a holistic understanding of complex realities and processes where even the questions and hypotheses emerge cumulatively as the investigation progresses” (Mayoux, 2006, p. 118). Instead of searching for ‘objectivity’, qualitative research aims to understand differing and often competing ‘subjectivities’ in terms of very different accounts of ‘facts’, different meanings and different perceptions (Mayoux, 2006, p. 118).

In understanding the effects of special autonomy on education in Aceh, this research recorded multiple accounts from different views and perspectives. For example, in investigating government funding to *dayah* (Chapter 7), multiple views were encountered. Some *ulama* perceived the funding as increased government attention to Islamic education. However, other *ulama* understood the funding as government’s effort to control *dayah* and reduce the autonomy of *dayah*. In analysing these different accounts, I tried to make sense of these realities and discover why these differences arose.

In qualitative research, different sampling methods are combined, depending on the particular dimension of the issue being considered: different purposive sampling techniques, identification of key informants who possess the particular

knowledge sought, and also 'random encounters' to cross-check information and/or highlight yet more differing perspectives on the problem (Mayoux, 2006).

### *5.3.1. Evaluating Qualitative Research*

I follow the view that the different epistemological assumptions of qualitative research require different criteria from those of quantitative research in evaluating the quality of the research. In the light of this view, I present some of the strategies I used to address some of the methodological challenges in ensuring the quality and usefulness of my qualitative research.

First, in terms of transferability, this study does not seek to achieve statistical representativeness, yet it still possibly provides theoretical representativeness. Theoretical representativeness means that theoretical insight and conceptualisation derived from this study may be applied elsewhere. Theoretical representativeness may be achieved by presenting the characteristic of the sample so that the credibility and transferability of the findings to other appropriate settings may be assessed (Johnson & Waterfield, 2004). Therefore, in this study the sample characteristic is presented in section 5.4.3. The sample is divided into different categories within different characteristics regarding their roles and interests in education.

Second, to enhance the reliability and credibility of the research, this research applies triangulation as a form of convergent validation. Triangulation can be categorised into four different forms: data triangulation, investigator triangulation, triangulation of theories, and methodological triangulation (Flick, Kardoff, Steinke, & Jenner, 2004, p. 178). Using multiple methods for data collection is one type of triangulation in this study. This study applies mixed methods of data collection including Pairwise Rankings, semi-structured individual interviews, observation, and document analysis. By doing this, the results of different methods are

constantly verified through triangulation in order to corroborate the data. The results from one method can help to verify, contradict or complement the results from other methods.

Another form of triangulation used in this study is data triangulation. Gathering and analysing data from multiple sources enabled me to gain a fuller perspective on the situation under investigation. For example, the participants in this study included three different groups of education stakeholders: officials, members of school committees, and the *dayah* (see Table 5). The different perspectives provided by participants from these different backgrounds allowed me to gain a more comprehensive understanding of the complexity of the issues. This, for instance, can be seen on the diverse ideas on curriculum changes (Chapter 6).

There are limitations, however, in validating the respondents' views as respondents were busy, as well as the researcher having to work with limited time and budget (Bailey, 2007; Johnson & Waterfield, 2004). Therefore, I decided to check the information gathered with a few respondents whom I considered to be key informants. I had meetings or informal encounters with these key informants a couple of times to confirm information and ask for missing information on unresolved issues. For example, regarding the policy on education financing, respondents provided different data on the amount of the School Operational Fund. I followed up this issue by attending an education conference also attended by many of my respondents, so that I could confirm this matter with a few of them.

Triangulation was not used simply to check the conclusions from one data source against another, but to make sense of the data. Although I used different types of triangulation in my research, I disagreed with rejecting data or conclusions merely because the inconsistencies were identified in the data produced. Rather, I chose to analyse those inconsistencies as another source of insight into why different participants gave different perspectives, or why different types of data led to different conclusions. Inconsistency is not necessarily a failure of the research in itself; the differences happened because 'real' life research situations are inevitably

complex. In fact, a key strength of triangulation in my study was the possibility of uncovering this complexity and of understanding different views. The contradictions and differences within the data collected stimulated me to further analysis of the material.

#### **5.4. Doing Fieldwork**

In this section, I address the research design that guided me through conducting the fieldwork, as well as the procedure applied for fieldwork and data collection. Data collection was conducted for a period of four months, from August 2014 until December 2014. I last updated the data gathered from the fieldwork in December 2016 when the discussion chapter was finalised through additional communication with participants and other informants.

##### *5.4.1. Establishing Relationships*

Entering fieldwork is one of the highly critical steps of doing research, as it affects the likelihood of whether or not the fieldwork will succeed. Therefore, I tried to make sure that I established contact with participants while I was still in New Zealand, before fieldwork was conducted. My first contact was my Acehnese friend, who also happened to be my guide and research assistant in the following fieldwork. I considered that gaining access through my Acehnese friend was easier, trustworthy and, not too costly. I also identified some of the government offices, their addresses and possible personal contacts. The District Education Offices (DEOs) and the *Dayah* Education Boards (BPPDs) later became my entry point, the gatekeepers, of the research. Through the DEOs and the BPPDs, I gained access to the schools and *dayah* to be involved in the pairwise ranking exercise.

I also found that the personal networking I undertook during the beginning of my stay in Aceh proved to be the best strategy for reaching out to my respondents. In particular, the networks built during my previous work within the Ministry of

Education and Culture, as well as personal networks I gained through my research assistant, were of prime importance. To some extent, accessing the participants through personal connections rather than through the formal authorities contributed to confidence on the participants' side to take part in the research.

The first weeks of fieldwork were spent dealing with gaining formal permission from the local authorities in Banda Aceh. The protocol of getting permission for doing research in Aceh, as in other provinces, required me to provide a formal letter from my institution. Therefore, I asked my employer in the Ministry of Education and Culture to provide me with this letter. However, the letter only helped me to proceed with the permission. It was not the intention of this letter to pursue people to engage with this research.

After I gained access to some of my key informants in Banda Aceh, I started to identify and visit schools for the Pairwise Rankings. The headmasters in each school were my entry point for conducting the Pairwise Rankings. They were very welcoming and allowed open access for me to conduct research in their schools. For the interviews, from each school I selected headmasters, teachers who were responsible for curriculum development, the teacher who was responsible for Islamic curriculum, and parents who were active in the School Committees. However, not all of them were easily accessible, especially parents. Parents were mostly reluctant to be interviewed, as they felt unsure about giving the 'right answer' regarding the research topic. In this circumstance, then, I decided to approach parents through my personal networks, rather than through school authorities, so that parents would not feel obliged to participate in interviews. The snow-balling process proved to be useful in my case, although it was also time-consuming.

Another time-consuming practice was translation. Acehnese speak two languages, Indonesian (*Bahasa*) and Acehnese. However, often, especially in daily conversation, they prefer to speak in the Acehnese language. In fact, Acehnese are very proud of their language. Therefore, I drew on support from my local research

assistant, as I do not speak Acehnese. With help from the research assistant, it was expected that I could build a relationship with research participants more easily.

#### *5.4.2. Research Ethics*

All required procedures, both within the Institute of Development Studies and Massey University Ethics Committee, were followed. The ethical aspects of the field research were discussed with supervisors and the ethics committee at Massey University prior to fieldwork in May 2013. Referring to the Massey University Code of Ethical Conduct, some specific ethical issues were discussed in depth, such as recruitment and access to participants, obtaining informed consent, privacy and confidentiality, potential harm to participants/researcher/university, handling information/data, use of information, promising access to information, conflicting roles, use of research assistants and cultural/gender issues. The research design was approved via the 'Low Risk Notification' process of Massey's Human Ethics Committee.

Being ethical requires the researcher to take into account the participants' needs and concerns. The research process must ensure the participants' dignity, privacy and safety are protected and must 'give back' to them in some ways (Banks & Scheyvens, 2014). However, although carefully prepared, fieldwork can often pose ethical issues that cannot be predicted. Therefore, this section records some of the ethical issues encountered during the fieldwork, particularly related to accessing the participants, the role of gatekeeper, and the notion of reciprocity, and how I dealt with these issues.

In terms of accessing the participants and proceeding with interviews, an information sheet was provided, both in English and in Bahasa, considering that the participants did not speak English. The English version was initially prepared for the procedure at Massey ethical committees, while the Bahasa version was the translation of the English and was provided for the participants. A consent form was also made available, keeping in mind that, at times, a verbal approach and

verbal agreements could also be appropriate in an Indonesian cultural context. At the time of fieldwork, where possible I provided the information sheet and consent form together, while introducing myself as researcher and explaining what the research was about and for what purposes. I also allocated plenty of time for potential respondents to ask questions and to take some time before deciding whether or not to participate. This procedure applied to both individual interviews and Pairwise Rankings.

At the beginning of every individual interview and pairwise ranking, I spelled out the voluntary, anonymous and confidential character of the research. I ensured that the participants understood their right to refuse to participate, and their right to withdraw from participation at any stage of the research. Mainly, the potential respondents agreed to participate and signed the consent form; only a few participants refused to sign the form and preferred to give verbal consent. In fact, participants who refused to participate usually gave a polite answer such as 'I have other commitments' or were more direct, such as saying, 'I think I am not the right person to be asked about this matter'; or often they referred to another person whom they thought would be more appropriate for the research. For instance, a woman parent refused to be interviewed, giving the reason that she was too busy dealing with her household responsibilities. In this sense, there was always an opportunity for invited respondents to decline the invitation to participate in the research.

The second area of ethical questions relates to the role of gatekeepers in the research. This study required formal approval from different layers of gatekeepers – provincial, district and school level. First approval was gained from the provincial authorities, which are the Provincial Education Office (PEO) and the provincial Dayah Education Development Bodies (BPPD). The next layer of gatekeepers are the District Education Offices (DEOs) and the District BPPDs. The last gatekeepers are the school, mainly the headmasters.



Concerns were raised regarding the possibility that the gatekeepers can influence the direction of the research by directing the researcher to speak only to certain people or visit certain 'star' projects that are known to perform well (Banks & Scheyvens, 2014, p. 172). Hence, gatekeeping controls sometimes conflict with the needs and rights of the researcher and/or the researched. However, the role of gatekeepers in providing the resources for this research did not influence the sampling process and procedures because I had already prepared a sampling scheme. Indeed, all the heads of DEOs and their staff helped provide the information required, such as the location of schools, logistical advice, and contact persons from each school. Nevertheless, I was the one to decide which schools were selected, based on the sampling scheme prepared for this study, which required schools in urban areas and rural areas in each district.

Moreover, I considered that consulting with various gatekeepers was helpful in terms of building relationships and trust, and found their role significant in facilitating communication among different layers of participants. Generally, participants at the district level were confident in engaging with the research since I provided them with permission letters from the provincial authorities; especially since they knew that I had previously interviewed some of the key informants at the provincial level.

There were two main concerns I also want to raise with regard to reciprocity and local benefits from the research. First, how the research process I conducted benefited local people. Second, whether providing gifts and practical assistance was considered to be unethical in the context of Aceh or in the Indonesian context in general. I am aware that my fieldwork involved around 80 participants, both in the interviews and pairwise ranking exercises, without giving back much to them.

Initially, before the fieldwork, I had already thought through some of the options as to how to give back to the participants and the small communities involved in the research. However, it was only during the course of fieldwork that I realised that I

could give something back that I had not thought of before, even though it was only a small contribution. Pairwise ranking was particularly helpful in facilitating the sharing of knowledge between the participants and me, and also between me and my local research assistant. I remembered many of my participants had become curious about how I had come to this stage of my PhD study abroad. Many of them had become interested in knowing more about the scholarship process and whether they or their children could pursue post-graduate studies abroad. Considering the curiosity of my participants, I usually wrapped up the pairwise ranking exercises by explaining the scholarship procedure, eligibility, and the important links to be explored. On other occasions, as the largest part of my participants in the PWRs are teachers, they asked me whether the pairwise ranking methods I used could be applicable to their classroom research. The exercise ended up by my explaining the possible use of these methods and how they might utilise them for their own research. As a result, often, the duration of the PWRs I conducted went beyond the time planned, yet the time the participants and I took was worthwhile. In addition, on the last two PWRs I also gave my research assistant the role of facilitator of the PWRs, after I had trained him in the use of the tools. I cannot say that this is necessarily an empowering process; nevertheless, some inspiration came out of the communication between myself and my respondents, and between myself and my research assistant, that could be beneficial for both of us. I believe I contributed in this way to the participants in the study and perhaps to the community; there was a genuine sense of exchange.

With regard to providing gifts, while it is generally seen as unethical to give gifts to participants, small souvenirs for participating in research is common in Aceh's cultural context. As such, "Being prepared to give or contribute not only is a matter of personal ethics, but also is in keeping with the prevalent social rules" (Lammers, 2007, p. 77). Asking advice from the local adviser after arrival was deemed to be more appropriate as culture and customs can be different across Indonesia. My research assistant had considerable advice regarding this matter, and had become my main cultural advisor during the fieldwork. Taking this into consideration, I

provided small souvenirs and refreshment for participants involved in the PWRs to show my appreciation for their time and contribution. At the final stage of my fieldwork, I compiled the videos we (I and my research assistant) made during the fieldwork and made them into a movie capturing the PWRs exercise, some interviews, and participant schools' profiles. I prepared this as my goodbye present for every school, *dayah*, and institution that participated in this research project. They were the participants of this study and the next section will elaborate on who these participants were and the sampling procedure.

#### *5.4.3. Research Sites and Settings, and Participants*

##### *Research Sites and Settings*

Ethnicity and religion are the prevalent aspects of local identity in Aceh and play a very important role in social life, including education (see Chapter 4). Therefore, to understand the effects of decentralization on the autonomy of Aceh, as it relates to identity and conflict, this study selected districts with a strong Acehnese local identity. Acehnese people make up 70% of the total population of the province, and are spread chiefly along the northeast coastal areas. These people are different from those in the highland districts in terms of culture, languages and histories. The coastal areas are mainly inhabited by Acehnese and speak the Acehnese language, whereas the great majority of residents in highland districts are not ethnically and linguistically Acehnese (Ehrentraut, 2010, p. 27).

From the 23 districts/municipalities in Aceh Province, Bireuen and Banda Aceh were selected as sites for the study. Both districts are located in 'coastal areas' and considered to be concentrations of strong Acehnese identity in terms of ethnicity and language and strong support for GAM (Ehrentraut, 2010, p. 12). After GAM took power in Aceh local politics through the local election, the penetration of GAM in these areas is still strong, indicated by GAM's political victory in the largest part

of these areas. In contrast, local GAM candidates lost in many of the central and south-eastern districts, where ethnic non-Acehnese formed the majority of the population. Bireuen was particularly important for the Free Aceh Movement (GAM) of the early 1990s, as the base area of GAM's supporters (McCarthy, 2007, p. 321). In addition, Bireuen is also known as 'santri city', which literally means the 'students' city' as the city had the largest number of *dayah* in Aceh.



Figure 3: Map of Aceh, Indonesia

### *Research Participants and Sample Size*

In qualitative research, the sampling strategy does not seek to achieve statistical representativeness, but instead reflects the diversity within the study population and the underlying theoretical framework (Johnson & Waterfield, 2004, p. 124). The sample size is determined by the specific purpose and context of the research, and aims to generate depth rather than breadth. Since this study is situated in the specific context of special autonomy, and focusses on its effects on education, purposive sampling strategy was chosen to ensure the data provides a range of perspectives. Purposive sampling seeks out 'information-rich cases', its relevance to the research aims (Johnson & Waterfield, 2004, p. 124), and variation to deepen understanding (Petty, Thomson, & Stew, 2012b, p. 380).

In each district, Banda Aceh and Bireuen, four schools were selected for conducting PWRs, making a total of eight schools. These schools consisted of two public schools and two *dayah* in each district, and they represented schools/*dayah* in urban and rural areas in the districts.<sup>19</sup> These eight schools were accessed through the gatekeepers in this study, the DEO and the BPPDs. In each school, between five and eight members of School Committee participated in the PWR conducted. They were mainly teachers; a few parents who were also members of School Committees attended the PWRs. The group blueprints for PWRs are as shown in Table 4.

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<sup>19</sup> In the research design, I differentiated the sites selected into urban and rural settings as I expected there would be significant distinction in the findings in terms of urban-rural setting. However, the findings showed that there are no significant differences in the development of education in Aceh between urban and rural settings. Instead, differences can be found concerning the district settings. Each district had implemented education policies differently as can be seen in Chapter 6, 7, and 8 of this thesis.

**Table 4: Group blueprints of the PWRs**

School Committees	Districts			
	Banda Aceh		Bireuen	
Public Schools	Group 1	Group 2	Group 5	Group 6
<i>Dayah</i>	Group 3	Group 4	Group 7	Group 8
<b>Total</b>	<b>8 Groups</b>			

It is important in this study to note the difference between public schools and *dayah* in the context of education in Aceh. In the Indonesian education system, public education is part of the national education system and is provided for by both the state and private sector. Provincial and District EOs are responsible for managing public schools. Meanwhile, *dayah* education is Aceh's indigenous education institution, which is based on an Islamic boarding school system and is mainly funded through a community contribution. This type of education falls under the category of 'non-formal education' in the national education system. Some *dayah*, however, have also provided public schools or *madrassa* within the *dayah* (see Chapter 6 on Findings on Curriculum). Since the implementation of special autonomy, the Government of Aceh has established the BPPD to be responsible for the modernisation of *dayah*.

For the individual interviews, samples were selected from the education stakeholders within Banda Aceh and Bireuen districts (Table 5). These education stakeholders consist of: officials of the Education Councils (ECs), officials of the Provincial Education Offices (PEO) and the District Education Offices (DEOs), officials of the BPPD; School Committee members (parents and teachers); and *dayah* communities (*ulama*, director and *teungku*). The sample size was 32, made up of eleven government officials at both district and provincial levels, one provincial legislative member, eleven members of School Committees, and nine members of *dayah* communities.

The selection of different groups of participants involved the consideration of their roles and interests in local education, which could affect their views. For example, given their different roles and interests the views of parents and teachers might differ from those of officials. Hence, the information gathered from different sources could verify each other's views and represent the complexities of perspectives, and consequently help the validity of the research's findings.

**Table 5: Sites, Participants, and Sample Size**

Sites	Participants (education stakeholders in Aceh)	Sample Size
<b><i>Provincial Level (key informants)</i></b>		
<i>2 officials</i> <i>1 legislative member</i>	Head of Provincial Education Office (PEO)	1
	Member of Provincial Education Council (EC)	1
	Provincial Legislative member	1
<b><i>District Level: Bireuen, Banda Aceh</i></b>		
<i>9 officials</i>	Member of the District Education Council (EC)	1
	Officials of the District Educational Offices (DEOs)	4
	Officials of <i>Dayah</i> Education Board (BPPD)	4
<i>11 SCs' members</i>	Schools Committees/SCs (teachers, parents)	11
<i>9 Dayah Communities</i>	<i>Dayah</i> Communities ( <i>Ulama</i> , Director, <i>teungku</i> )	9
<b>Total</b>		<b>32</b>

#### 5.4.4. Data Collection Methods and Procedures

One of the debated issues in qualitative research is the identification of issues to be investigated. The very openness and flexibility of qualitative methods may create problems of lack of focus (Mayoux, 2006, p. 119). In order to address this issue, this research applies an integrated methodology built upon the complementarities among different methods. Complementary methods are believed to enable researchers to consolidate strengths, and to cross-check and triangulate any information that is central to the particular research questions concerned (Desai & Potter, 2006, p. 123). Thus, a more nuanced approach can be achieved as each

method has its own strengths and weaknesses. Given this, the current study integrates four different research methods, as discussed in the following research procedures.

### *Pairwise Rankings (PWRs)*

The data collection procedure began by conducting Pairwise Rankings (PWRs), aimed at screening the issues of importance to be researched. A PWR is an analytical tool to generate basic information, which leads to more direct questioning. The idea in using pairwise ranking was to identify from the beginning of the fieldwork the most important issues in education in the context of autonomy, to establish a focus in this study. PWRs helped to identify the main problems and issues community members considered important. The ranking made through PWRs enabled the priorities of different individuals to be compared easily.

PWRs were held before the individual interviews in each school visited, in order to get the sense of what was actually perceived as an important issue by respondents before getting more in-depth data from the individual interviews. PWRs had proved to be very helpful in mapping issues regarding education, what issues the education stakeholders in Aceh considered to be important and what other issues were regarded as being less important.

Pairwise Rankings were held successfully with the help of a teacher I had previously approached. Conducting Pairwise Rankings needs to be prepared for carefully because it requires the participation of teachers who have responsibilities at school during the day. Thus, I let the schools decide the date and time for the PWRs, and all the schools agreed to conduct the PWRs on Saturday. In Aceh, and in many other parts of Indonesia, public schools are run for a half-day on Saturday. The other half-day is usually used by some schools in the afternoon for extra-curricular or other activities.

There is only one question posed for this PWR: “What do you think are the most important education issues in the context of autonomy?” Each participant was

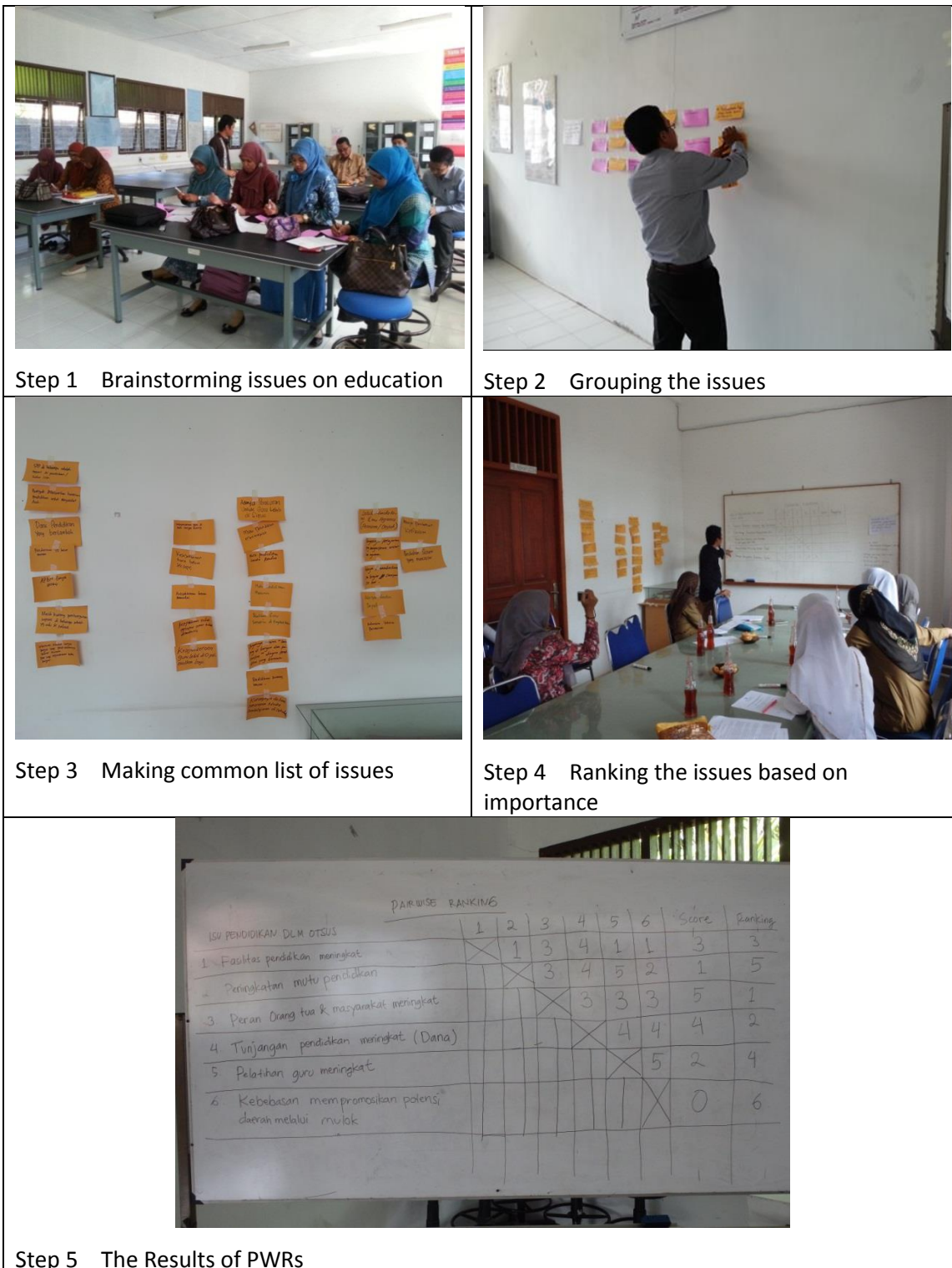


given three cards and asked to write their answers, one on each card, in order to brainstorm issues on education. After that, they were asked to group the answers. The facilitator helped groups to remove duplications; what was left was one common list of options. The exercise continued with the ranking by listing the issue based on importance, descending from the most important issue at the top of the list to the least important at the bottom of the list. The results are rankings of educational issues after the implementation of special autonomy which the participants considered to be important (see Figure 4). With participants' permission, all of the discussion was recorded.

From the eight PWRs conducted, I acted as the facilitator for the six PWRs, and my assistant helped me with recording, taking pictures, and preparing logistically for the PWRs. During the last two PWRs, I trusted my research assistant to play the role of facilitator after I had trained him on the use of the tools and made sure he understood all the procedures and the objective of the PWRs. At this stage, my research assistant and I changed roles; he took the role of the facilitator and I was the observer. Yet, if a PWR session did not run smoothly, I would explain further about how it should be done. I could see some benefits of exchanging roles with my assistant, as I could observe the benefits as well as the limitations of this method. One of the benefits of my research assistant taking the role of facilitator was that the participants spoke more freely to him, as he is Acehnese. Thus, the communication barriers between us – the researchers – and the participants tended to decrease.

These exercises were not only useful in understanding the big picture of education issues in Aceh after the implementation of special autonomy, but also proved to be a critical stage of the whole research process. The PWR exercise provided room for me to familiarise myself with the structures and actors of education in Aceh, understanding better the relationship among education stakeholders in Aceh. The discussions during the PWRs offered a bridge for me to understand my participants thoroughly through listening to their discussion, their position on the structure of education in their locality, their relationship with other actors, and

how they articulated their concerns in relation to issues of education after autonomy.



**Figure 4: Procedure in PWRs**

The knowledge and description of education issues gained from these PWRs then guided the next stage of the research process, the semi-structured individual interviews. The ranking made through the PWRs gave direction on what issues needed to be focussed on and explored during the individual interviews. PWRs also gave access to interviewing some of the key informants for this research. The relationship between a few of participants and their knowledge of other potential participants helped the researcher to allocate potential interviewees for the next phase of the research. At the data analysis stage of this study, the findings from PWRs were triangulated with the findings from interviews, observation and document analysis.

### *Semi-structured individual interviews*

The next research procedure involved conducting interviews with key informants and other participants. In-depth individual interviews were conducted to collect in-depth experiences, ideas, intentions and knowledge of participants through their responses to some specific research questions. The purpose was to gain rich information from a detailed insight into the research issues from the perspective of the study participants (Hennink, Bailey, & Hutter, 2010, p. 109). This insight reflects the insider's perspective, which is a characteristic of qualitative research (Hennink et al., 2010, p. 109; Liamputtong, 2009, p. 43). The participants are able to freely express their worldviews yet, at the same time, the researcher can remain focussed on the research topic. Thus, the interview allows the researcher to make sense of multiple meanings and interpretations of a specific action, occasion, location, or cultural practice (Liamputtong, 2009, p. 43).

Semi-structured interviews were selected as they provide a flexible structure for the interview process and, at the same time, allow the researcher and the interviewees to explore themes as they come up. This flexibility and sensitivity to the existing social context are characteristics of qualitative methodology, as opposed to the standardised or structured processes (Mason, 2002). Such flexibility works well in qualitative research, for it gives some space for the

researcher to accommodate new issues or concerns regarding the research topic during the fieldwork. For instance, the importance of *dayah* education in the new structure of education in Aceh is one of the themes that had not been specifically prepared for in the research framework. Nevertheless, the importance of this theme emerged during the fieldwork, indicated by participants who frequently mentioned *dayah* education as a specific feature of education in Aceh, and which gained increasing importance after the implementation of special autonomy and Islamic *sharia*. As a result, I decided to include and continue to probe at this theme in the next phase of the interviews.

The interview guide was developed for this study based on the categorisation of themes or concepts derived from the theoretical framework (see Annex 1, interview guide). The interview methods can be described as a ‘meaning making’ partnership between the interviewers and the respondents, or a conversation with a purpose, also known as the knowledge-producing conversation (Hennink et al., 2010, p. 109). Semi-structured interviews use “a thematic or topic-centred approach where a research has a number of themes or issues they wish to cover, or a set of starting points for a discussion rather than a formal question and answer format” (Mason, 2002, p. 62).

The four main themes prepared for the interviews were those of the curriculum, the management, the education financing, and the structure of education in Aceh. Nevertheless, these themes changed slightly after incorporating the findings from the PWRs conducted prior to the interviews. The PWRs revealed that the participants did not consider management to be an important issue in education after special autonomy was received. Although this issue continued to be explored during the fieldwork, the data also indicated that the changes in management seem to be insignificant. Hence, I decided to exclude this theme in the presentation of findings.

Individual interviews were conducted in settings natural to the respondents and were recorded with the respondent’s permission. All interviews were conducted in Bahasa. The participants knew that I am from Jakarta, and hence they considered it

reasonable to speak in Bahasa rather than Acehese. However, Acehese like to express their opinions or ideas with proverbs, especially when they describe their history and rich culture. In this case, I asked them to explain the meaning of the proverb in Bahasa, or otherwise I asked for assistance from my research assistant to explain its meaning. During interviews, my research assistant accompanied me to help explain to me the Acehese language or other difficult words I encountered. For the purpose of this thesis, all the interviews were later transcribed first in 'word' format in Bahasa, and during the data analysis this transcription was translated into English by the researcher herself. Both the Bahasa transcription and the translation were kept on the secured file under the code 'raw data'.

### *Document analysis*

Document analysis usually refers to collecting and analysing written documents that may take the form of textbooks, articles, notes, minutes of meetings, policy documents, archives, and so forth. Rather than treating this activity as separate from the 'real' fieldwork, I consider the use of written texts to be an extension of the field, as well as a field location themselves (McLennan & Prinsen, 2014). In this study, document analysis focussed on documents produced regarding Aceh's special autonomy and Aceh's education policy. These documents include government documents that are publicly accessible, such as the Helsinki Agreement, Law No. 18/2001 on Aceh Special Autonomy, the Law on Governing Aceh (LoGA), and the Law on Local Education, as well as government documents that fall under the category of 'restricted' and which require permission to access the documents.

In terms of access and permission, while public documents present less ethical consideration, as they have been made available and accessible publicly on the internet, this is not the case for restricted government documents. This is particularly the case with documents on the local government budget plan that I accessed for this study. I found that accessing restricted documents was quite

challenging and time-consuming. It required official permission and certain formal procedures that involved different tiers within the local offices. I started with gaining permission from the Head of the Provincial Education Office. I would then bring this official permission to the Head of the Planning Division within the office to access the documents needed. It so happened that I had to visit the Head of the Planning Division a number of times before he granted access to the documents. Similar procedures and challenges were also found at the district level.

In addition, special attention was given to ordinary local documents such as local newspapers, district government instruction letters to schools, the minutes from school meetings, the minutes from education council meetings, and other similar documents, particularly on aspects of education before and after the special autonomy. The articles from local newspapers I used for this study were mainly accessed through the newspapers' official websites and were retrieved before, during, and after the actual fieldwork. Documents produced by the Education Offices, the BPPDs or Education Councils were generally accessible by approaching the Head of those offices, as well as officials who were also the participants of this study. For instance, regarding Islamic education policy in Bireuen, the DEO did not regulate specific policy to be implemented by the schools. However, the DEO wrote instruction letters to the schools to prepare the syllabi for *Islamic Character Education* to be implemented at schools. Without tracing this record and approaching the Head of the DEO, it was almost impossible for me to access this document. Likewise, accessing a school's minutes of meetings requires the permission of the headmaster.

In interpreting and analysing the written documents, I had to bear in mind that those documents are not the data in themselves. Instead, they need to be interpreted and analysed in relation to the context and purpose of those written records. In other words, I need to constantly ask questions. Who wrote the documents? For what purposes were those documents written? And who were the intended audience? For example, with regard to funding policy to *dayah* (Chapter

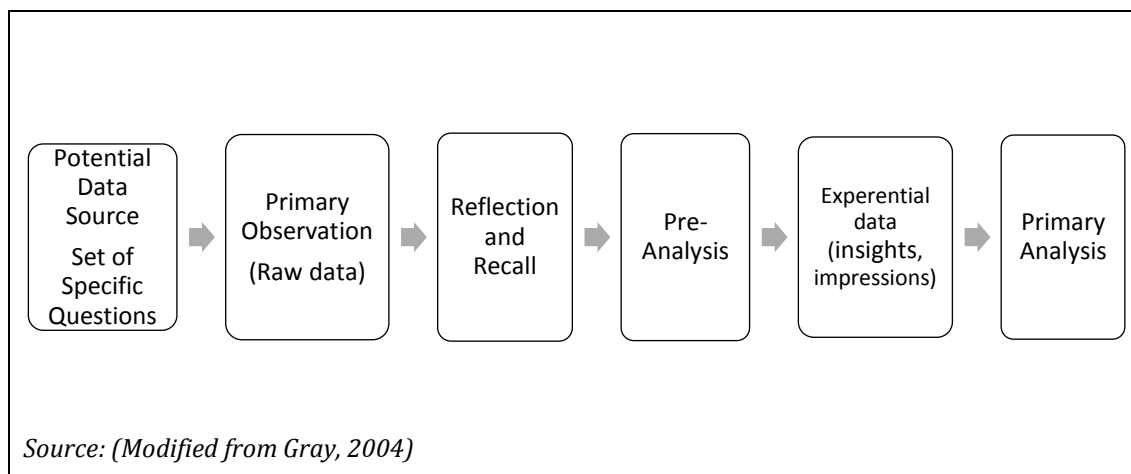
7), I critically examined the documents on the *dayah* accreditation system. Questions such as, “Who is eligible to access the fund?”, “What is the mechanism to access the fund?”, “Why are *dayah* divided into different categories in order to access the fund?” guided me through the analysis of the accreditation document. Therefore, document analysis is not only about what is written in the records, but also what has possibly been omitted from the report and why. This also means “being aware of the political purpose of the repository and of the values, etiquette and choice of words at the time in which the records were created” (McLennan & Prinsen, 2014, p. 83).

### *Observation*

In this study, the observation method served as a complement to the main methods outlined above (interviews and Pairwise Rankings). This study used field observation to bring an understanding of the reality of education in Aceh within the context of special autonomy. Field observation offers the advantage of investigating social life in its natural setting. Direct observation in the field lets researchers observe subtle communications and other events that might not be anticipated or measured by other methods (Babbie, 2013, p. 327). Field observation is a powerful, but also difficult, data-gathering tool. In field observation the observer can play several roles, from that of the complete participant (participant observation) to that of the complete observer (Angrosino & De Perez, 2000; Babbie, 2013). My intention was to enact the role of a complete observer, as opposed to a participant observer. While participant observation allows a highly subjective stance, the complete observer removes any interactions with those being observed (Angrosino & De Perez, 2000, p. 676). Choosing to become a complete observer would situate me in a more neutral position by setting a fair distance between myself and each group.

Nevertheless, even in a complete observation setting, the presence of a researcher in a study site can change behaviours in ways that would not have occurred in the

absence of a researcher. Hence, the choice of this method does confront the researcher with the challenge of commitment and preparedness to ensure that an accurate account of events is recorded (Sandelowski, 2000). Moreover, the researcher also needs to be aware of the possibility of observer bias. For this reason, emphasis is placed on observational methods, as one important manual in the fieldwork procedure. Therefore, I followed the observation scheme as described in the following Figure 5.



**Figure 5: Observation scheme as a strategy to collect data**

First, I prepared a list of potential data sources and set of specific questions for each part of the data set. Guided by the questions prepared, this was followed by the observation of people, their surroundings, behaviours and conversations. This observation was recorded in the field notes, which were dated and for which the time of occurrence was noted. This was raw data without explanation or analysis: for example, I would record the exact quotation of the conversation as it happened without any interpretation. The next stage was reflection and recall, where I basically jotted down all the notes and some recollections during the process of observation and the writing up of field notes. Some objects or events seemed to be not important at the time of observation, yet when they recurred, their importance was recalled. Subsequently, pre-analysis of the data was carried out, when themes and insights started to emerge. The following stage was experiential data, which were the researcher's impressions and personal feelings. These were written in the



form of a diary and these notes were often useful as a source of analytic insight at a later stage of this study. At this stage, it was important to make a distinction between the observational notes and the analytical notes (Babbie, 2013; Gray, 2004). The last stage was the primary analysis, which brought together the observation process and gave meaning to the data. Although this observation scheme is described as a linear process, in reality some of the stages occurred concurrently.

One of the potential data sources for observation in this research was a provincial education coordination meeting. The question I prepared for observing this meeting concerned the allocation of the Special Autonomy Fund to the education sector of the districts. So, the observation schemes jotted down the notes that recorded information concerning who was coming to the meeting, the institutions they represented, the mechanism for allocating the fund, and the identity of the beneficiaries of the fund. Data from this observation was very helpful in understanding the mechanism and challenges in distributing educational resources.

Similar observation schemes were also prepared to observe education in sites such as schools and *dayah*. One of the questions prepared regarded the changes in the Islamic education curriculum after the implementation of Aceh's special autonomy. Thus, the observation schemes looked for information such as: who the teachers for the programmes are, who designed the curriculum, changes to the number of hours allocated for the subject Islamic education, the number of subjects or contents added to the curriculum, how the structure of the curriculum was established, and where the funding was from. Therefore, the objects of observation involved classroom teaching, the syllabi prepared by the teacher and the curriculum policies of the schools.

Observations thus helped provide a more nuanced understanding concerning the practice of education in Aceh. For example, observation was crucial for understanding what kind of Islamic education programmes or curricula were run by the public schools. In the *dayah* setting, observation gave me more

understanding on the different types of *dayah* that existed in Aceh's education system. I also learned more about what kind of relationship had been built between *ulama* and officials during my observation in a *dayah* in Bireuen.

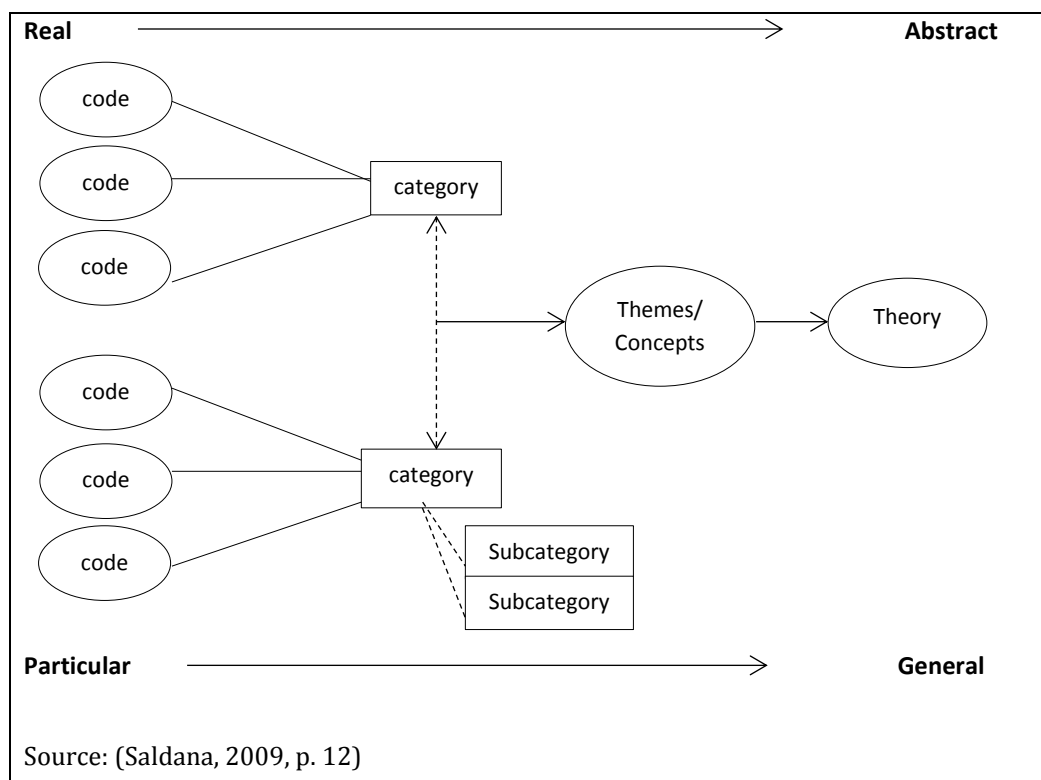
## 5.5. Data Analysis

Qualitative research uses inductive reasoning strategies. The researcher inductively builds pattern, themes, and categories from the data, to increasing levels of abstraction (Petty et al., 2012a, p. 270). This reasoning strategy leads to a detailed description of phenomena of interest or theory. The analysis of the data occurs immediately the fieldwork starts, while the experience and associated feelings are fresh.

In analysing the data, I used thematic analysis, where I initially read, reread and reflected on field notes and transcripts. After I was familiar with the text as a whole and had gained an initial understanding of the data, I started to code sentences, phrases, paragraphs or lines. This process is usually known as initial or open coding, during which every line of data is read and the researcher gives codes to whatever might be useful for analysis (Bailey, 2007). Codes are then compared across the whole data set to identify variations, similarities, patterns and relationships. Later, these codes are classified into a smaller number of categories that extract the key issues identified. This stage is referred to as focussed, or axial coding, when the researcher reduces the data by identifying and combining the initial coded data into categories (Bailey, 2007). For example, in understanding the allocation of educational resources to *dayah* (Chapter 7), data which initially coded as mechanism of funding, channel to funding, and political connection were categorised under the major headings 'Accessibility of funding to *dayah*'. When the major categories were compared with each other and consolidated in various ways, I began to transcend the 'reality' of my data and progressed toward the thematic, conceptual, and theoretical. In this study, for instance, the theme 'the

politics of financing education’ was constructed from the categories of ‘accessibility of funding’ and ‘unequal distribution of resources’.

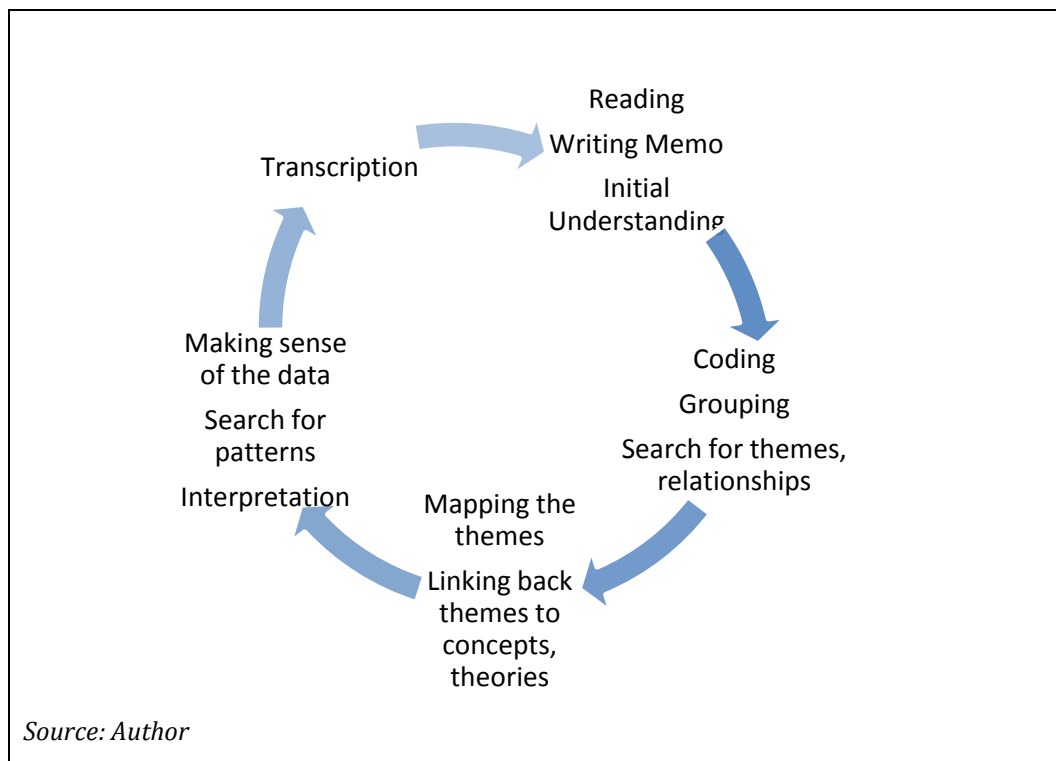
The processes from code to theory are simplified in Figure 6; the actual process was much more complex and messy than illustrated. It is important to note that the researcher does not code for theme: rather, the theme is an outcome of coding, categorisation, and analytic reflection, not something that is, in itself, coded (Saldana, 2009, p. 13).



**Figure 6: A streamlined codes-to-theory model for qualitative inquiry**

During this process I was continuously writing my reflections and ideas related to sections of data to abstract from the data and deepen analysis. When the ideas became more focussed, the connection and relationships between themes were then identified to create a thematic map. Finally, I re-examined the data in relation to a smaller number of central concepts that had been previously developed. Central to this process is the notion that the process is cyclical rather than linear,

in that it moves constantly between reading, note-taking and analysing, as ideas emerge and evolve (Petty et al., 2012b, p. 381).



**Figure 7: Process of data analysis**

## 5.6. Research Limitations

This research has limitations in terms of generalisability; in fact, generalisation is not the aim of this research. First, this research focusses solely on Aceh's special autonomy; therefore, generalisations in terms of the global situation are not possible. However, the theoretical insight and conceptualisation derived from this study may be applied to other regions with the same context and characteristics as Aceh. In this regard, this study can possibly provide theoretical representativeness. This study has used references from other countries' cases that have similarities to Aceh such as the Basque Country and Catalonia in Spain, Wales and Scotland in the United Kingdom, and Quebec in Canada. It is possible that this study on Aceh can also be referred to in future studies concerning historical communities.

To achieve this theoretical representativeness, however, future studies must consider the characteristics of the sample, the methods used, and the context of the regions under study. This research identified Aceh in its relation with the central state, considering its historical account as a region with distinct cultural identity and history of conflict with the central state. These regions were also known as historical communities or as a s a state (see Chapter 2). Thus, this study may be transferred to regions or communities with similar historical accounts and context as found in Aceh. Second, this research was limited to explore the governance of education under the implementation of autonomy. However, the research design can be partially employed for other cases such as health or public work; taking into account the research methods, the characteristic of samples, and the context of the study. For instance, some findings on the allocation of education resources and its effects on access to resources might also be applicable to cases in other sectors.

In terms of methods and methodology, this study initially set out to listen to the voices of education stakeholders concerning the impact of decentralization on the autonomy of Aceh in governing its education. Indeed, the study has been successful in gaining rich data from these education stakeholders. In the research design prepared prior to fieldwork, this study did not anticipate the significance of interviewing political actors. However, throughout the fieldwork, the researcher realised the importance of incorporating the voices of local political actors in these matters, and considered their voices to be significant in this study. Therefore, the researcher decided to include members of provincial and district parliaments in the research design at the last stage of the fieldwork. However, from five parliament members invited for the interviews, only one member from the Aceh Party (the GAM's party) was available to be interviewed. Owing to the time constraint of the fieldwork, the study ended up with only one legislator interviewed among 31 other interviewees. If future studies are to be conducted, it is recommended that the researchers consider involving more political actors in their study.

## 5.7. Conclusion

This chapter has presented the conceptual underpinnings of this research as well as the strategy for doing fieldwork. Having an epistemological stance of constructivism, I acknowledge that my subjectivity might influence the research process, therefore I should situate myself and my interpretations of my data by reflexively examining my positionality. I carefully considered issues related to insider-outsider, power relations, misrepresentation and misinterpretation, and the local research assistant. I was also aware that I had to work in a way whereby ethical considerations were continuously taken into account.

Situated within this epistemological stance, this research subscribed to a qualitative approach, rejecting the notion of a single, objective truth, seeing this as the best choice to answer the research question posed in this study by exploring the impact of decentralization on the autonomy of Aceh in education as perceived by the education stakeholders. Doing qualitative research is an activity that is naturally inter-subjective or dialogic. Hence, meanings are socially constructed. As such, I am an instrument in my research. Constructivism assumes that knowledge is partial, situated and contextualised; therefore, the researcher should not pretend to be ultimately knowledgeable on the phenomenon or reality of the researched. Nevertheless, although knowledge cannot be assumed to be generalised, it may be transferrable to other situations.

One of the challenges of qualitative research is to ensure the rigour of the qualitative research. Thus, the strategies and procedure to ensure the quality of research is paramount in qualitative research. To enhance the reliability and credibility of the research, I applied methodological triangulation as well as data triangulation. In terms of methodological triangulation, this study utilised mixed methods of data collection including Pairwise Rankings, semi-structured individual interviews, observation, and document analysis.

To answer the main research question in this study, namely, “How has decentralization affected the autonomy of Aceh in governing its education policies and practices?”, Pairwise Rankings were chosen as a strategy to initially identify the most important issues in education in the context of autonomy, to search for a focus in this study. In this sense, PWRs were a screening tool for identifying the issues of importance to be researched. Other methods – individual interviews, document analysis, and observation – were then employed to deepen and complement understanding of the issues related to the impacts of decentralization on the autonomy of Aceh in the education arena. By employing different methods, the results from one method could help to verify, contradict or complement the results from other methods. Complementary methods are believed to enable researchers to consolidate strengths, cross-check and triangulate any information that is central to the particular research questions concerned, and thus, a more nuanced approach can be achieved.

In addition to methodological triangulation, this research also used data triangulation through gathering and analysing data from multiple sources. For this reason, the study engaged participants from different groups of education stakeholders in Aceh. This enabled me to gain a comprehensive understanding of the complex situation under investigation, from different perspectives. The extent to which these triangulations are employed and feed into the analysis of the data (findings) can be examined in the next three findings chapters (Chapters 6, 7, and 8).

In undertaking data analysis, this research involved a cyclical procedure that moved constantly between reading, note-taking and analysing as ideas emerged and evolved. It started with the transcription of the data (interviews, PWRs, and documents) and the reading of and familiarisation with the data (texts, documents). It continued with coding and classifying the code into a smaller number of categories. These categories were then transcended into themes and the connection and relationships between themes were identified to create a thematic

map. Lastly, I re-examined the data in relation to a smaller number of central ideas, theories or concepts that I had previously developed or newly found. After applying strategies to ensure the quality of research and the data analysis procedure, the last section of this chapter shows to what extent the theoretical representation and the transferability of this research can be achieved.



## CHAPTER 6

### SPECIAL AUTONOMY AND ISLAMIC *SHARIA*: CONVERGING ISLAMIC AND SECULAR-STATE CURRICULUM

#### 6.1. Introduction

This chapter presents findings on the changes brought about for education by the special autonomy in Aceh in the context of Indonesian decentralization, and provides answers to the first research question: “How has decentralization affected the autonomy of Aceh in governing its education policies and practices?” To explore the changes, the researcher conducted Pairwise Rankings (PWRs) with eight School Committees (SCs). The result shows that the implementation of Islamic *sharia*, within the context of the special autonomy and decentralization, had created an opportunity for significant changes in education. The result of these PWRs was subsequently used as a basis for a more in-depth investigation through individual interviews and observations.

Three areas of change are presented in this thesis, as they relate to the research question, namely: the *curriculum*; the *structure of education*; and the *financing of education*. This chapter focusses on the findings concerning curriculum changes, while the following two chapters cover structure and financing. It begins with an analysis of the result of the PRWs, together with a review of related policies. The implementation of the Islamic curriculum, following the introduction of Islamic *sharia* in Aceh, is then described. The next section elaborates on changes in the curriculum in the two fields of education: public education, and *dayah* education. The last section presents the trends towards a more- convergent curriculum.

## 6.2. The Development of Education under the Special Autonomy

The result of PWRs shows that the respondents perceived changes in different areas of education. One question was posted for the PWRs: “What do you think are the most important education issues in the context of autonomy?” Each participant was given an opportunity to write their answers on cards. The groups then listed the issues together, and ranked them by priority according to what they believed were the most important issues. The top-three list of education issues from eight PWRs is presented in Table 6. The table shows that five major issues, indicated by colours, dominated the discussion during the PWRs exercise: Islamic education, education financing, quality of education, localised curriculum, and education management. Further analysis of the PWRs shows that two issues appear most frequently: Islamic education and education financing; each of these issues comprised 29% of the total issues (Table 7). However, in terms of ranking, Islamic education was ranked slightly higher by participants (Table 7).

The individual interviews with *ulama*, officials, and SC members show that, in fact, Islamic education and education financing are the most apparent issues, while respondents rarely mentioned other issues or knew little about them. Within Islamic education itself, individual interviews and observations reveal that changes have emerged in terms of the curriculum and the structure of education. Therefore, this thesis focusses on these three areas of education: the curriculum, structure, and financing.

**Table 6: Result of PWRs: Top-three ranking of the most important issues in education in the context of autonomy**

Ranking	Banda Aceh				Bireuen				
	School 1	School 2	School 3	School 4	School 5	School 6	School 7	School 8	
1.	Increase in the content of Islamic education (IE)	Increase in the content of Islamic education (IE)	Increased involvement of the parents and communities in management (M)	Increase in the education budget (But the allocation has not been distributed equally) (F)	Increase in the content of Islamic education (IE)	Increase in the education budget (but the allocation has not been clear) (F)	More attention to content of Islamic education (IE)	Increase in the education budget (more equally distributed). (F)	IE = 4 F = 3 M = 1
2.	Introduction of Aceh culture through local content curriculum (LC)	Increase in the welfare of teachers (budget) (F)	An increase in the education budget (consequently improves the facilities for education) (F)	The quality of education is gradually improving. (Q)	The flow of information becomes less clear (M)	Teacher training has not improved yet (Q)	Improvement in the training of teachers (Q)	Islamic education has gained a clearer direction (IE)	IE = 1 F = 2 Q = 3 LC = 1 M = 1
3	Improvement in the quality of teachers as a result of teacher training (Q)	School has been given more space to develop curriculum based on Aceh's special nature. (LC)	Improvement in teacher quality which eventually improves the quality of education (Q)	The increase in Islamic education (IE)	Increase in the education budget (but has not been distributed equally and has not necessarily impacted on the quality of teacher) (F)	The development of local-content curriculum which is based on Islamic education principles. (IE)	Increase in the education budget (F)	Tendency towards better quality of education indicated by improvement in teacher training (Q)	IE = 2 F = 2 Q = 3 LC = 1
<b>Total of issues 24</b>	<i>Issues indicated by different colours</i> <b>IE (Islamic Education) = 7</b> <b>F (Financing) = 7</b> <b>Q (Quality) = 6</b> LC (Localized Curriculum: Language, history, customs) = 2 <b>M (Management) = 2</b>								

**Table 7: Analysis of five ranking issues on education in the context of autonomy**

Issues	Rank			Frequency	%
	1	2	3		
Islamic Education	4	1	2	7	29
Education Financing	3	2	2	7	29
Quality of Education	-	3	3	6	25
Localized Curriculum	-	1	1	2	8
Management	1	1	-	2	8
<b>Total</b>				<b>24</b>	<b>99 (rounding error)</b>

### 6.3. The Policy

One of the elements of Aceh’s ‘special characteristics’, mandated by Law No. 44/1999 (article 3:2) on the ‘Special Characteristics of the Province of Aceh Special Region’, is the implementation of Islamic *sharia*. The Law stated the meaning of ‘special characteristic’ is: “to implement Islamic *sharia* in all aspects of life; to implement traditional norms and culture (*adat*) based on Islam; to implement education including elements of Islamic *sharia*; and to restore the role of the religious leader (*ulama*) in policy making by creating an independent *ulama* council” (State Secretariat, 1999, p. 2). This specific socio-political Islamic orientation constitutes a distinct strategic context, where provincial and district education policies and practices are shaped and practised. Accordingly, the implementation of Islamic *sharia* affected education affairs in the form of Islamic values being integrated into education.

When the peace agreement was reached between the Free Aceh Movement (GAM) and the central government in 2005, which entitled Aceh to special autonomy status, the implementation of education based on Islamic *sharia* was, once again, strengthened by the Law on Governing Aceh (LoGA/2006). It stipulated that the education system in Aceh should remain part of the national education system, but can take into account Islamic-based values (based on the *Qur'an* and *Hadiths*), as well as the social and cultural values of Aceh. The LoGA (article 216:1,2) states, “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, justice, and in high respect of human rights, Islamic values, culture and pluralism”.

In addition, article 220 of the LoGA mentions some of the special characteristics of education in Aceh, which are the existence of *dayah* education, the increased function of the Local Education Council (MPD), and the establishment of a core curriculum for Aceh (Ministry of Law and Human Rights, 2006). Accordingly, the subsequent Local Bylaw, *Qanun*<sup>20</sup> No. 5/2008 article 15.2 mandated “the government of the province of Aceh together with the district governments to implement the special characteristics of Aceh in education and integrate local content, based on Islamic *sharia*, into the curriculum” (Regional Secretariat of Aceh Province, 2008). Referring to these laws and regulations, the speciality of Aceh’s education is understood in terms of the integration of Islamic *sharia* into Aceh’s education. Therefore, both the provincial and districts’ governments are responsible for developing the core curriculum of Aceh as based on the Islamic *sharia*.

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<sup>20</sup> *Qanun* is the Arabic term for regional or local regulation (bylaw) intended for the implementation of the Law on Special Autonomy for the Privileged Province of Aceh as the Nanggroe Aceh Darussalam.

#### **6.4. Islamic Sharia and the Promotion of the Islamic Education Curriculum**

How has the curriculum in Aceh been developed in order to address Aceh's special characteristics, as declared by the special autonomy law? In order to answer this question three subjects of curricula have been observed in this research: Islamic education, history, and the Acehese language. These three subjects are considered by the researcher to represent Aceh's special characteristics, as discussed in the historical and cultural narrative on Acehese identity (Chapter 3). The individual interviews and observations show that while changes in the curriculum in the area of Islamic education were apparent, changes in the curriculum with regard to the Acehese language and local history appear not to be very evident. Although changes in the curriculum for Acehese language and history are not as noticeable as those for language, a few findings are presented in section 6.5.

From the eight PWRs conducted, four PWRs placed Islamic education on the first rank (green colour), which indicates the importance of this issue compared to other issues (Table 7). In a more qualitative sense, SC members perceive that education in Aceh has undergone change regarding the implementation of Islamic curriculum as illustrated in the following quotes:

*In my view, the most important issue for education in this era of autonomy is the implementation of Islamic education, as we can see here in Banda Aceh, by the addition of four hours religious teaching in addition to three hours teaching on the national curricula (PWR 1)*

*After autonomy, we can harmonize the curriculum at school with the characteristics of Aceh, based on Islamic values (PWR 2)*

*Every subject that is taught in schools can be modified now by adding Islamic values (PWR2)*

*In Banda Aceh, if you graduate from elementary school and intend to enrol in the junior high school, you have to attach a Qur'anic lesson certificate. Otherwise, you will not be accepted (PWR2)*

*Autonomy gave us an opportunity to develop Islamic education, as it is required by the implementation of Islamic sharia (PWR 5)*

*In Bireuen, we are allowed to develop syllabi with an Islamic character curriculum in the Local Content Curriculum (PWR 6)*

*Here in Bireuen, we have an Islamic local content called 'tadris'<sup>21</sup> which is compulsory for elementary schools, but not for the secondary level (PWR 8)*

The individual interviews and observations suggest that changes in the Islamic curriculum can be found in two different types of education: the public school and the *dayah*.<sup>22</sup> Thus, it is important to note that this study focussed on these two different types of education in Aceh. Public schools are part of the national education system and are provided by both the state and private sectors. Provincial Education Office (PEO) and District Educational Offices (DEOs) have responsibility for managing public schools. Meanwhile, *dayah* education is mainly funded through community contributions and it falls under the category of 'non-formal education' within the national education system.

In terms of curriculum, public schools implement the state national curriculum, whereas *dayah* develop their own curriculum, which is mainly the teaching of the Islamic traditional text (*Kitab Kuning*). There are three forms of *dayah* in Aceh, namely *salafi dayah* (traditional *dayah*), *dayah terpadu* (integrated *dayah*) and *modern dayah*. *Salafi dayah* focus solely on the teaching of the religious curriculum, which is based on the study of the classical text '*Kitab Kuning*' (literally 'yellow books'), while modern *dayah* or integrated *dayah* combine the religious curriculum with the secular or 'state' curriculum.<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> *Tadris* is the teaching method of reciting the *Qur'an*.

<sup>22</sup> There is a third type of education, *madrassa*. The curriculum of *madrassa* consists of 70% religious curriculum and 30% secular curriculum. This study excluded *madrassa*, as it falls under the responsibility of the MoRA, which is not decentralized and thus *madrassa* still maintain vertical coordination to the central government. Some preliminary observations show that nothing has changed regarding the curriculum of *madrassa*, as it follows the central regulations. In this sense, the recent practice of education in *madrassa* in Aceh is similar to education before autonomy. In fact, there are no differences between the curriculum of *madrassa* in Aceh and in other regions of Indonesia, as they are under the same authority and regulation.

<sup>23</sup> In practice, the majority of respondents do not make a distinction between modern and integrated *dayah*. The two types of *dayah* were considered to have similar characteristics (see Chapter 4, section 4.3.).



**Figure 8: Different types of dayah**

**Table 8: Three categories of *dayah* in terms of curriculum**

Type	Curriculum
<i>Salafi</i> (traditional)	Focus only on <i>dayah</i> curriculum, which is the teaching of traditional religious text ( <i>Kitab Kuning</i> or <i>Turas</i> ). Example: <i>Dayah</i> Babussalam in Bireuen.
<i>Terpadu</i> (integrated)	Focus on the teaching of <i>dayah</i> curriculum ( <i>salafi</i> curriculum) and formal school curriculum separately. It is basically <i>salafi dayah</i> plus formal school. Usually, the morning session is for formal school and the afternoon session is for <i>dayah</i> . Examples: <i>Dayah</i> Darul Ulum in Banda Aceh and <i>Dayah</i> Ummul Ayman in Bireuen.
Modern (Modern)	Integrating <i>dayah</i> and formal school curriculum (a mixed curriculum). Generally, this type of <i>dayah</i> reduces the content of <i>salafi</i> curriculum. Examples: <i>Dayah</i> Insyafuddin in Banda Aceh and <i>Dayah</i> Azzahra in Bireuen.

Source: The Head of Regent Decree on Dayah Education System of Bireuen No. 16/2003, interviews and observation.



This study finds that both public and *dayah* education are in the process of developing their curricula in a new direction, towards more convergence between both streams of curricula (Table 9). On the one hand, there is a tendency toward the 'islamisation' of curricula in public schools. The term 'islamisation' in this thesis refers to attempts to add, or enhance, the teaching of the religious curriculum in the public schools. These attempts are demonstrated by a popular expression, '*menyantrikan sekolah*', which means to make public schools more Islamic (*interviews 6, 8, and 17*).

*Initially, there was an idea to model dayah boarding for public schools in Banda Aceh, yet it appeared to be much too expensive. Then, it was decided to apply the more applicable programme, which is like bringing dayah to the public schools. So, the Banda Aceh government recruited teungku dayah to teach in public schools. (Teungku, diniyah teacher, Banda Aceh, Interview 5)<sup>i</sup>*

On the other hand, in the *dayah* education field, the current trend shows that there is a 'modernisation'/'secularisation'<sup>24</sup> of the *dayah's* curriculum. This modernisation is realised through the integration of the secular state curriculum, or some forms of secular knowledge into the *dayah* curriculum. More notably, the integration of public schools into the *dayah* was found in the integrated *dayah*. This modernisation is illustrated by a common phrase '*menyekolahkan santri*' or 'to teach *dayah santri*<sup>25</sup> secular knowledge'. This expression indicates an effort to familiarise *santri* with secular knowledge.

*That's why we have the motto 'menyekolahkan santri' [to add secular subjects to dayah], not the other way around. It means that the focus is the dayah, not*

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<sup>24</sup> In this study, the term 'modernisation' is used to describe the overall recent development in *dayah* education. This includes the secularisation of the curriculum of *dayah*, the modernisation of the teaching methods in *dayah*, the modernisation of the management of *dayah*, and the physical development of the facilities and infrastructure of *dayah*. This term is chosen because it was widely used by the majority of respondents during the fieldwork. Specifically, for the development in the area of the curriculum in *dayah*, the term 'secularisation' is used interchangeably with the term 'modernisation' considering that the secularisation of the curriculum is part of the modernisation of *dayah*.

<sup>25</sup> *Santri* is a word particularly used to describe students who study the religious texts at the *dayah* or *pesantren*.

*the school. We avoid taking the domain of others [the public school]. So, we maintain our specialisation – our domain – which is to study religious instruction. Secular knowledge is merely a complementary subject. (ulama, Bireuen, Interview 11)<sup>ii</sup>*

**Table 9: Changes in the curricula of public education and *dayah* education after the implementation of special autonomy and Islamic *sharia***

CHANGES/NO CHANGES				
Subjects	PUBLIC SCHOOL		DAYAH	
	<i>Before</i>	<i>After</i>	<i>Before</i>	<i>After</i>
Islamic Education	National curriculum	National curriculum & local Islamic curriculum  +Add Islamic subject  +Add hours for Islamic subjects	<i>Dayah</i> curriculum	<i>Dayah</i> curriculum & national curriculum or secular knowledge  +Add secular subject
Language	No Changes	No Changes	No Changes	No Changes
History	No Changes	No Changes	No Changes	No Changes

It is important to note, however, that these changes are still in the early stages of their progress, and not all changes are obvious yet. Many variations of changes were found in the schools and *dayah*. However, the observations and interviews suggest that the major trend is that changes in the curriculum of public schools and *dayah* are indeed in progress. The next section elaborates on the changes happened in each field: public school and *dayah* education. Following that, an investigation of the rationale behind this recent development of curriculum in both fields is given.

#### 6.4.1. Islamic Education Curriculum in Public Schools

The enactment of Islamic *sharia* means that Islam needs to be integrated into every aspect of public affairs in Aceh, including education. Therefore, Aceh's special autonomy has become a basis for the institutionalisation of religion into the state system. In relation to education, *Qanun* (bylaw) no. 5/2008 article 15.2 authorises the provincial and district governments of Aceh to provide supplementary local content, which is based on Islamic *sharia*. This required the government of Aceh to establish an Aceh core curriculum based on Islamic *sharia*.

Surprisingly, eight years after special autonomy was implemented, the Aceh Provincial Government has not yet stipulated a local act concerning the Islamic education curriculum as a basis for designing and implementing a core curriculum for Aceh. According to the head of the Aceh Provincial Education Office (PEO), and a member of Aceh Provincial Education Council (*Majelis Pendidikan Daerah/MPD*), a joint team of PEOs and MPD members are still in the drafting process of Aceh's Islamic curriculum (*Interview 1, Interview 3*).

Both the head of the PEO and the member of the MPD, who is also an active member of Aceh's curriculum team, noted that the concept of Aceh's curriculum is basically the national curriculum plus the Islamic curriculum. Therefore, Aceh's curriculum team has designated five Islamic subjects to be integrated into the national curriculum. The Islamic subjects, developed by the curriculum team for Aceh core curriculum, are *Fiqh* (Islamic law), *Aqidah-akhlak* (ethics), *Qur'an-hadith* (the sayings of the prophet Muhammad), *Sejarah Islam* (the History of Islam), and Arabic. These subjects imitate the subjects taught in the *madrasa*.<sup>26</sup> In order to add these five subjects into the national curriculum, the addition of another three

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<sup>26</sup> *Madrasa* is an Islamic formal school under the MoRA. It is different from *dayah*, as *madrasa* involves formal education, while *dayah* are considered a form of non-formal education. Yet, as a part of the *dayah* reformation, more *dayah* have now combined their education with either public schools under the DEO, or Islamic formal schools under the MoRA. Since religious affairs is one matter which is not decetralized, the curriculum of *madrasa* in Aceh remains relatively unchanged. The curriculum of *madrasa* is uniform in all Indonesian provinces.

hours for the religious curriculum is required, in addition to the three hours that were already allocated in the national curriculum. However, at the time the fieldwork was conducted, the core curriculum of Aceh had not been implemented and was still in the preparation phase. According to the head of PEO, it is expected that by 2016 the Aceh curriculum will be implemented after the legislation procedure in the DPRA (Aceh House of Representative).

The MPD member admitted that in order to design the curriculum for Aceh, the curriculum team referred to the *madrasa's* curriculum (*interview 3*). Interviews with *ulama*, teachers and officials of BPPD also indicate that there is a growing belief that the public school system in Aceh should model the boarding school system as practised in *dayah*. They consider the Islamic boarding school is the preferred education model for Aceh (*interview 6, 8, 9, 11, and 17*). Hence, it appears that the intention in designing the Aceh curriculum is to narrow the gap between the curriculum of the public schools and the curriculum of the Islamic schools, providing a more convergent curriculum. This integration is intended to align Islamic education with public education and vice versa: a two-way process. In this sense, this development will result in the convergence of both curricula, the integration of Islamic teaching into the public school curriculum and, conversely, the integration of the secular curriculum into *dayah*. The indication of this convergence is noted by a *dayah ulama* in Bireuen:

*Now in Aceh we cannot really distinguish between secular and Islamic schools. The subjects taught in both public and Islamic schools are almost similar. The only thing that remains different is the Islamic boarding school. (ulama, Bireuen, Interview 11)<sup>iii</sup>*

A statement from the former head of the BPPD of the Aceh province in 2012 also reflects this convergence:

*On the one hand, we [the Government] will improve the aspect of religious education in public schools, in order to make it similar to dayah or madrasa. On the other hand, the secular subjects will also be added to the curricula of*

*all dayah in Aceh. (Interview with the Head of the BPPD of the Aceh Province, as cited in Bongkar News, 2012)*

The development of the *dayah* curriculum is discussed more thoroughly in the next section.

In fact, before Law No. 44/1999 was enacted, MPD had developed four new local content areas to be added to the national curriculum as a response to government regulation on the Local Content Curriculum (LCC). Those content areas were: a) reading and writing Arabic b) Acehnese language c) nature and the environment in Aceh, and d) the character and customs of Aceh (MPD, 1993, p. 4). However, these were not compulsory, and schools were given the flexibility to choose what content would be taught, depending on the characteristics of the school, as well as the availability of resources and teachers in the area.

A few attempts had also been made by the district government, and social or religious *organizations*, to endorse the integration of the Islamic curriculum into the national curriculum. For instance, the annual meeting of the Association of All *Dayah Ulama* of Aceh (HUDA)<sup>27</sup> recommended the implementation of aspects of Islamic education. Those aspects are the ability to read the *Qur'an* before students can enrol in an elementary school; the addition of a specified number of hours of religious education to the national curriculum; the integration of Islamic values into the teaching of secular subjects; and increased funding allocated to *dayah* as compared to public education (Zulkhairi, 2014, p. 7). Nevertheless, interviews with the secretary of HUDA (interview 6), who is also the head of a *dayah* in Aceh Besar, confirmed that not even one of those recommendations had been accommodated by the provincial government of Aceh in the formal regulations. As a result, instead of one uniform practice, several variations of the implementation of the Islamic curriculum were apparent.

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<sup>27</sup> HUDA, which consists of traditional *ulama dayah* from all over Aceh, is one of the leading *ulama* organizations. The voice of *ulama* HUDA is considered influential among the Acehnese.

Regardless of the incomplete nature of the development of the core curriculum of Aceh, some attempts have been made to integrate Islamic content into the national curriculum. For example, the ability to read the *Qur'an* has been set as one of the requirements for enrolment at elementary school in Bireuen and Banda Aceh. A student cannot enrol in elementary school unless he/she has graduated from *Balai Pengajian*, or preschool, where students study to read and recite the *Qur'an* (Interview 11; PWR 3). This development indicates that there is an effort from the education community<sup>28</sup> in Aceh to endorse the alignment of Islamic and secular education. The Head of PEO contended that although the policy for the Aceh curriculum was not ready, a few initiatives from local government have been apparent:

*The provincial government has not yet finished the core curriculum for Aceh; our team is still preparing it. Yet, many districts have started implementing the Islamic curriculum, for example, the diniyah programme in Banda Aceh. In Pidie, they start school in the morning by reciting the Qur'an. In Aceh Besar, the district government designed the programme for reciting of the Qur'an after the maghrib prayer by involving the community. So, we the provincial government will provide the standard, and the district government has the autonomy to implement the programme that suits them (Head of PEO, Interview 1)<sup>iv</sup>*

The initiatives to integrate Islamic content into the national curriculum include the enhancement of religious teaching, such as the addition of hours and subjects of the religious curriculum to the public school curriculum in Aceh. Variations in attempts to integrate the Islamic curriculum into the national curriculum can be seen in Banda Aceh and Bireuen as follows.

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<sup>28</sup> In this study, the term education community refers to the respondents interviewed during the fieldwork, which include government officials in education sectors, members of School Committees (teachers and parents), *dayah ulama* and *teungku*.

## *Banda Aceh*

While the provincial government has not enacted a local act concerning Islamic education curricula, and the core curriculum of Aceh's education system remains unfinished, at the district level the local government has initiated a few variations of curricula for Islamic education. For instance, in Banda Aceh the DEO has initiated the *diniyah* programme, which is a programme to introduce a new Islamic education curriculum in public schools. This programme is compulsory for all public schools in Banda Aceh, and requires them to add four hours of Islamic education curriculum each week, in addition to the three hours of religious education prescribed by the national curriculum.

To implement this programme, the Banda Aceh DEO has developed five additional religious subjects, to be taught within those four additional hours. In designing this curriculum, the DEO involved all community segments, including religious experts from the Islamic State University, *teungku dayah*, and officials from the District Office of Islamic *Sharia* (*interview with Banda Aceh DEO*). The DEO also recruited *teungku dayah* (religious teachers from *dayah*) to teach the additional Islamic subjects. All expenses related to this programme, including the salary for the *diniyah* teacher, are covered by the district education budget, and do not necessarily require parental contribution. Furthermore, in order to encourage all students in Banda Aceh to participate in this programme, the DEO has issued a certificate of attainment for this programme at each level. This certificate is required alongside the school certificate of attainment, before the student can continue to a higher level of education. All these changes indicate the commitment of the Banda Aceh Government to the implementation of Islamic education at public schools in Banda Aceh.

The *diniyah* programme indicates the significant changes in the direction of education in Banda Aceh. First, this programme illustrates that, to some extent, public schools in Banda Aceh have accommodated Islamic education in their

curriculum. It has shown the trend of convergence between secular and Islamic education. This can be seen from the integration of five Islamic subjects into the school's curriculum, which models the curriculum of *madrassa*. Second, the implementation of the *diniyah* program indicates, to some extent, that the dichotomy between religious and secular education, which has been an ongoing debate in the discourse on Aceh's education (see Chapter 4), has reduced. Third, the involvement of the *teungku dayah* in the *diniyah* programme shows that the boundaries between religious and secular education have been, or are being, carefully negotiated. Hence, the boundaries between secular and religious education are becoming more blurred. One of the teachers of the *diniyah* programme stated that the idea of this programme is to present *dayah* in the public schools, not only by adding subjects similar to those in *dayah*, but also by recruiting *teungku dayah* to teach in this programme (*interview 5*).

### *Bireuen*

The change of curriculum in public education in Bireuen is not very evident, unlike in Banda Aceh. In fact, while there is an effort from the DEO to endorse the strengthening of the Islamic education curriculum, this effort seems to be limited to the endorsement and not necessarily to the enforcement, of an implemented programme, such as has been found in Banda Aceh. For example, the Bireuen local government has stipulated a local act concerning the 'Islamic character curriculum'. This local act is implemented by the Bireuen DEO through locally-designed subject matter, in the form of tailoring Islamic values and principles at school activities such as reciting the *Qur'an*, memorising the *Qur'an*, and prayer practice.

At the practical level, this study found that every school in Bireuen responded to this local act in various ways, because it is not compulsory. The variation in implementing this programme is also likely to be related to funding. Unlike the Banda Aceh Government, which allocated a specific budget for the *diniyah* programme, the Bireuen district government did not provide a budget specifically



for the implementation of this local Act. As a result, the implementation of this local Act is as not as evident as the *diniyah* program in Banda Aceh.

Observation of the two schools in Bireuen shows that there is no uniformity in realising Bireuen's programme of locally-designed subject matter. The first school, which is located at the centre of Bireuen, had already implemented the syllabus for the Islamic character education, although that implementation was limited to certain grades. However, in the second school, which is located in a suburban area of Bireuen, that syllabus had not been implemented at all, as stated by a teacher in this school:

*There is an instruction from the DEO that we [the school] are allowed to employ additional religious teachers for the syllabus of Islamic character designed by the DEO, yet we are not given any direction on how to pay these additional teachers. So, it is an instruction only, without any clear direction as to how to implement this instruction in relation to the availability of funding. That's why every school implements this programme differently (Teacher, Bireuen, PWR 6)<sup>v</sup>*

Rather than following the regulation on the Islamic character curriculum, this school preferred to utilise the freedom given by the Local Content Curriculum (LCC) by adding an hour for a *Qur'an* lesson after school. Nevertheless, this lesson was considered to be extra-curricular, rather than a compulsory activity, so students could choose whether or not to attend the lesson. Since the DEO did not provide the teachers for the additional Islamic lesson, this school employed a teacher who was already available at the school.

The findings have so far illustrated that local policies in response to the proposal for strengthening religious education in public schools are varied (see Table 10). These differences suggest that autonomy can possibly give significant opportunities for local governments to develop and manage their own education based on local needs and considerations. Regardless of these differences, the

initiatives made by both local governments, that is, DEOs, have demonstrated the accommodation of Islamic education in public school curricula.

**Table 10: Changes in the public education curriculum showing the variation in two districts**

<b>Changes</b>	<b>Banda Aceh</b>	<b>Bireuen</b>
<i>Programme/ Local Act</i>	Curriculum of <i>Diniyah</i> Programme (compulsory)	Local Act for 'Islamic Character Curriculum' (not compulsory)
<i>Subject (s)</i>	Adding five Islamic subjects	Developing a syllabus for tailoring Islamic values (content) into classroom teaching  Adding Islamic content in the LCC (depends on school's choices)
<i>Hours</i>	Additional hours for Islamic curriculum	No extra hours
<i>Teachers</i>	Employing new religious teachers additional to the school's teacher	No new religious teachers recruited
<i>Funding</i>	Extra funding from the district education budget for developing the Islamic education curriculum	No extra funding
<i>Certificate</i>	Issued certificate of attainment	No certificate

#### 6.4.2. Secular Knowledge in the Curriculum of *Dayah*

Interestingly, the accommodation of the Islamic education curriculum in public schools is accompanied by a reverse occurrence in *dayah*. This study revealed that there is a tendency towards the secularisation of the *dayah* curriculum, with some interviewees noting that this was done to make the *dayah* more competitive with public schools. This secularisation is indicated by an attempt by the BPPD to integrate the teaching of secular knowledge into the *dayah* curriculum.

The BPPD is a new technical body operating under the provincial government that is responsible for modernising and improving the curriculum and management of *dayah*. The establishment of the BPPD demonstrates the Aceh Government's efforts to modernise *dayah*. The *dayah ulama*, the officials of the provincial BPPD, and the

head of Bireuen District BPPD interviewed in this study, said that one of the BPPD's missions is to modernise *dayah*, transforming *dayah* from institutions which purely teach Islamic texts, into modern education institutions which integrate Islamic teaching with secular knowledge. The interview with the head of Bireuen's BPPD shows that the objective of this modernisation is to reform and modernise the teaching and management of *salafi* (traditional) *dayah*.

The *dayah*'s curriculum has remained unchanged for centuries. Therefore, one of the BPPD's attempts to modernise *dayah* is by standardising the core curriculum of *dayah* (interview 17).<sup>29</sup> Some of the officials of the BPPD explained that there is a complexity in understanding the curriculum in *dayah*. Every *dayah* uses different types of yellow books (classical religious text), which makes it difficult to standardise the curriculum. In order to standardise these various curricula, the provincial BPPD has provided a standardised curriculum for all *dayah* in Aceh, which includes the main subjects and the additional subjects. The main subjects are all the same for all *dayah* in Aceh, while *dayah* may choose additional subjects reflecting local needs, such as English, computer skills, or information technology. Besides standardising the core curriculum, the BPPD also encouraged *salafi dayah* to integrate the secular curriculum into the *dayah* curriculum, either by adding the secular subjects or materials into the *dayah* curriculum or by delivering formal schools within *dayah*.

The history of education in Aceh demonstrates that before colonial times, the *dayah* curriculum did not differentiate between a secular and religious curriculum. However, the colonial politics during the Dutch invasion (1873-1940s) limited the teaching of secular knowledge in *dayah* and encouraged *dayah* to focus on the teaching of Islamic lessons only. At this time, the teaching of secular knowledge in *dayah* was regarded by the colonial power as the source of Acehese resistance.<sup>30</sup>

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<sup>29</sup> The *dayah*'s curriculum examined in this section refers to the curriculum of *salafi dayah*, which teaches only the Yellow Book.

<sup>30</sup> The history of education in Aceh, particularly the role of *dayah* and their *ulama* in Aceh's society, was reviewed in Chapter 4 of this thesis.

Therefore, the effort made by the government to modernise the *dayah* curriculum is considered as an act of revitalisation or reconstruction, rather than modernisation, as it restores the nature of the *dayah* curriculum, which combines both curricula (*interview 8, 16, and 17*).

*Since Dutch colonial times the education in dayah has been constructed to merely focus on the teaching of Kitab Kuning. For more than a century now dayah were trapped in this system, whereas originally dayah used an integrated system, which taught both secular and Islamic subjects. So, this is the time for dayah to revitalise – not to modernise – because it basically restores the dayah system which had existed earlier (Head of District BPPD, Bireuen, Interview 17)<sup>vi</sup>*

In the past, *dayah* were reluctant to teach secular subjects, which they regarded as *kafir* (infidel),

*...Previously, if we talked about matters relating to formal education [schools] in the dayah environment, the ulama would get mad. They are hostile towards the school people. A few ulama indoctrinate people, saying that school is 'haram' [forbidden], because that school is teaching secularity. There was a common expression from the elders in the old days 'what is school for, to make us kafir?' For example, in the past, if we go to a dayah to give training on secular knowledge or skills [not related to religious teaching] they would not accept it. But now, they are more welcoming, as I can see from their acceptance of journalistic training we provided last time. Nevertheless, from the numbers of dayah we invited, a few still refused to come. They think that if they participate in this kind of training, they will not have enough time for studying the Qur'an. To them, there is 'no way' for secular knowledge. The focus is only on Kitab Kuning [Classical texts of Islamic studies]. (Official of BPPD, Bireuen, Interview 16)<sup>vii</sup>*

The views of a few prominent *ulama* indicated modernisation had swept through *dayah*, as stated by a *dayah ulama* in Aceh Besar,

*The prominent ulama of Bireuen have modernised their thinking. According to them, dayah have to transform themselves in order to respond to the changing environment. For example, we have to utilise modern technology such as television, computers and radios in order to improve our methods of teaching. Yet we still need to maintain our traditional methods as well (Dayah ulama, Aceh Besar, Interview 6)<sup>viii</sup>*

Respondents have different opinions with regard to the integration of secular lessons into *dayah*. Some of them admitted the importance of integrating secular subjects into a *dayah's* curriculum; others still emphasised the importance of continuing the curriculum of *salafi dayah* as the unique characteristic of Aceh. Those who support the promotion of secular education in *dayah* based their justification mainly on the idea of providing religiously educated youths with secular skills and the knowledge necessary for earning a living in a changed world while, at the same time, maintaining their religiosity. The demand for modern/integrated *dayah* has thus been increasing over time. The following quotes show respondents' views on the recent development of the *dayah* curriculum,

*That's why, here in this dayah, I develop secular lessons as well as lifeskills, such as farming, so that the students here can compete with other students from public schools. (Dayah ulama, Bireuen, Interview 11)<sup>ix</sup>*

*In the future, it is expected that dayah would be able to align with other formal education institutions and produce something. The community demand for integrated dayah is quite high now because the integrated dayah follow the structure of formal education. The community prefer to send their children to a place where they can study the Qur'an and at the same time study general knowledge. (Head of BPPD, Bireuen, Interview 17)<sup>x</sup>*

However, this argument was challenged by others. For example, the head of *dayah* (the secretary of HUDA) who sees the importance of maintaining the existence of *salafi dayah* contended that,

*There is an opinion that if dayah are not integrated, or modernised, the community are not interested in sending their children there. I totally disagree with this view; I can show that in North Aceh and in East Aceh, the salafi dayah are still in high demand. It depends on the charisma of the ulama. (Dayah ulama, Aceh Besar, Interview 6)<sup>xi</sup>*

Nevertheless, he does not necessarily reject the idea of integrating secular subjects into *dayah*; in fact, this *ulama* delivered a public school in his *dayah*.

*In my opinion: Go ahead. If salafi dayah want to transform to modern [integrated] dayah, I don't think this is a matter of whether it is good or bad. But, it would be better if some of the salafi dayah remain with their old tradition. Why do I say this? Because salafi dayah are a balancing factor in Aceh's education [between secular and Islamic education] (Dayah ulama, Aceh Besar, Interview 6)<sup>xii</sup>*

In addition to this change in curriculum, the BPPD also encouraged the 'formalisation' of the institution of *dayah*, which is an attempt to transform the institution of *dayah* from non-formal to formal education. Previously, *dayah* were classified as 'non-formal' education within the national education system. Since the enactment of the Qanun No. 5/2008 on Aceh Education, both *salafi dayah* and integrated *dayah* were allowed to choose to deliver either formal or non-formal education (article 32:2). The intention of this formalisation of *dayah* is to classify *dayah* equally with other public education, as part of the Aceh education system. Consequently, the *dayah* system needs to be standardised, based on the school's grade system.

It appears that the effort of BPPD to re-introduce and initiate a curriculum of secular education for *dayah* has resulted in the gradual acceptance of the integration of secular knowledge into the *dayah's* curriculum. The observation showed a few variations in practice in the response to this modernisation of the *dayah* curriculum. *First*, there are *salafi dayah* that maintain their traditional

curriculum, which focusses only on the teaching of the traditional religious text, because they believe that the traditional *salafi dayah* is unique to Aceh. Thus, if they change forms to modern, or integrated *dayah*, Aceh will lose its unique character, and Islamic education will be marginalized.

*We have to maintain the tradition of teaching Kitab Kuning, because modern dayah teach kitab kuning less than salafi dayah do. So, I think it is all right to encourage dayah to be modernised, but we still have to maintain salafi dayah. Otherwise, Aceh will lose its tradition of dayah as Aceh's unique characteristic. (Dayah ulama, Aceh Besar, Interview 6)<sup>xiii</sup>*

Responding to the concern that the modernisation of *dayah* will marginalize the Islamic curriculum in *dayah*, the head of BPPD Bireuen contended:

*If we are only concerned about the teaching of Kitab Kuning, we will be left behind. People have started using modern methods for learning - the internet for instance. So, it's time for us to catch up with them. Dayah also need to improve their teaching, including secular lessons (Head of BPPD, Bireuen, Interview 17)*

This thinking has led to the *second* variation of *dayah*. These are *salafi dayah* that have started to introduce secular knowledge into their *dayah* tradition, but still maintain the strong tradition of *dayah* education. For instance, a pure *salafi dayah*, led by the prominent *ulama* in Bireuen, has included a few secular lessons in their *dayah* teaching while, at the same time, still maintaining the tradition of *salafi dayah* (interview 30). Finally, there are *salafi dayah* that have become fully modern, or integrated *dayah*, and such a transformation of these few *salafi dayah* means they have integrated public schools into their *dayah*. These forms of *dayah* treat religious and secular knowledge as equally important. For example, one of the biggest *salafi dayah* in Bireuen has been transformed into an integrated *dayah* by combining *dayah* with formal schooling.

The number of *salafi dayah* in Aceh still exceeds the number of modern *dayah*; 90% of *dayah* are still *salafi dayah*. In 2014, the number of *dayah* in Aceh had reached 1,031, consisting of 927 *salafi dayah* and 104 modern *dayah* (source: BPPD survey 2014). The objective of the BPPD is therefore to reform these *salafi dayah* into modern *dayah*.

*Our objective is to make all the leading dayah in Bireuen become integrated dayah. By doing so, it is expected that, in the future, the smaller dayah will, in turn, follow these leading dayahs' step, so that the whole reformation of dayah could happen under the leadership of these prominent dayah and their ulama. (Head of BPPD, Bireuen, Interview 17)<sup>xiv</sup>*

An increase in the number of modern or integrated *dayah* has been apparent. For example, in Bireuen, 16 out of 55 have become modern *dayah* (*Profile of Accredited Dayah, Bireuen BPPD, 2013*).<sup>31</sup>

Another indication of *dayah's* acceptance of secular knowledge is the involvement of *dayah* in many programmes initiated by the BPPD. For instance, many *dayah santri* have participated in some training held by the BPPD, such as journalism, information and communication technology, and in management. This contrasts dramatically with the previous period when *dayah* were very hesitant to participate in any secular programmes, because they believed it diminished their focus on studying religious text (interview 8, 16, 17, and 22).

It is important to note that many *dayah* have taken the form of either modern or integrated *dayah* since their establishment, such as the two *dayah* visited in Banda Aceh. They are not an evolution of *salafi dayah*. A few *salafi dayah* had been transformed into integrated *dayah*, even before the implementation of autonomy.

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<sup>31</sup> Bireuen is well known as '*kota santri*' or 'the student city' because the number of *dayah* in Bireuen is the highest compared with other districts in Aceh. The word '*santri*' refers to students who particularly learn Islamic texts in the *dayah*. *Ulama dayah* from Bireuen are also regarded as the highly influential *ulama* in Aceh. Thus, Bireuen has become a reference point for studying *dayah* in Aceh.



Nevertheless, the establishment of the BPPD made this transformation more institutionalised, especially with the financial support BPPD provided for *dayah*. The integration of *dayah* into the state system through further formalisation is explored in the next chapter (Chapter 7), dealing with the effects of autonomy on the structure of education in Aceh.

The findings in this section suggest that the implementation of special autonomy has brought to the fore debates concerning the importance of revitalising *dayah* in Aceh society. This revitalisation has been realised through the special arrangement under that autonomy, allowing the *dayah* curriculum to adopt the secular curriculum and permitting the modernisation of the *dayah* system in order to gain equality with formal schools. Interestingly, the development of the *dayah* curriculum happened to converge with the development of the public schools' curriculum. Section 6.6. discusses how this convergence might take place.

### **6.5. The Curricula of History and Acehnese Language**

In the area of the Acehnese language and local history curricula, the findings suggest different results from the findings on the curriculum for Islamic education. Interestingly, there is hardly any change in the areas of Acehnese language and history curricula (See Table 9). This study, therefore, contends that although the national curriculum gives some space for the localised curriculum through the Local Content Curriculum (LCC) within the decentralized framework, it appears that the Aceh provincial government has not utilised this freedom to modify the curricula of Acehnese language or local history.

*The curriculum of local history is not yet available. We are in the process of preparing it; the deadline we [the PEO] set for this curriculum is 2015 (Head of PEO, Interview 1)<sup>xv</sup>*

*We have not yet provided the curriculum of local history. The local content only includes Acehnese language, Acehnese art and culture, and Acehnese culinary skills. But all these subjects are only supplementary, so schools can choose what is appropriate for them (Head of Banda Aceh DEO, interview 2)<sup>xvi</sup>*

*There is not yet any direction from above [the government of the Aceh Province] for the teaching Aceh local history. The curriculum has only just started to be developed; in fact, local history and Acehnese language is very important (Teacher, PWR 2)*

In the Ministry of National Education and Culture (MoNE) Regulation No. 79 of 2014 concerning the Local Content of Curriculum 2013 or LCC, the central government has given space for all the provinces in Indonesia to establish locally designed curriculum relevant to the needs of the local community and the world of work. The regulation allowed schools to integrate preferred local content into other subjects already in place, or develop new local subjects. Schools were given two hours per week for this additional local content.

Surprisingly, despite the freedom provided by the LCC, or the space given by Aceh's special autonomy, neither local education authorities nor education stakeholders in Aceh have given very much attention to the development of the curricula of Acehnese language and local history. These two curricula were not available in Aceh's schools when this study was conducted. This is particularly surprising since these two curriculum areas are, in fact, regarded as an important element for the expression of Acehnese identity, as found during the discussions with the school committees. The importance of both curricula in terms of representing Acehnese identity can be seen in the following statements:

*It is very critical that the Acehnese language and local history are taught at schools, because Aceh used to be glorious in the old times. What's wrong if the children of Aceh are aware of their history so that it may inspire and motivate them? (Teacher, PWR 2)<sup>xvii</sup>*

*It is very important to include Aceh's local identity in the curriculum. By doing that, the children will be aware of the history of Aceh and how Islam developed in Aceh. If we do not incorporate this [the history] in the curriculum, Aceh's culture will vanish, while at the same time people are very quick to absorb foreign culture (Teacher, PWR 6)<sup>xviii</sup>*

*That's why I always advise incorporating the Acehnese language in the local content curriculum, because through the language [Acehnese] we represent the image of Aceh. (Parent, School Committee's member School 1, Interview 7)<sup>xix</sup>*

In fact, there was also a concern raised regarding the challenge to the existence of the Acehnese language,

*But here [Bireuen], if we teach in the Acehnese language, a lot of students will not understand. They have started to lose their language; because there was a common assumption before that you would be humiliated if you used the Acehnese language. So this is really a step back (Head of Bireuen's Education Council, Interview 13)<sup>xx</sup>*

This concern appeared to be a typical problem in the urban areas. Conversely, the teachers in the rural area showed adverse concerns,

*There is an obstacle in communicating with the students, because these children were born during the conflict, a time when the use of the Bahasa [Indonesian language] was banned [by GAM]. They had difficulties in speaking Bahasa. Now, they speak both languages, but they still face difficulties. (Headmaster School 6, Bireuen, Interview 26)<sup>xxi</sup>*

*In Kampong, nearly a hundred percent of students at school speak Acehnese. This is a disaster; how are they going to answer the test in the national exam in Bahasa? On the contrary, in the urban areas, the classroom's instructions are mainly delivered in Bahasa, so that many students cannot speak Acehnese (Head of Bireuen's Education Council, Interview 13)<sup>xxii</sup>*

Despite this attention to the need to preserve the Acehnese language and local history, this study revealed that education authorities in Aceh have not developed these two curricula. Instead of using the opportunities given by autonomy to strengthen the Acehnese identity through the language and history curricula, the education authorities in Aceh are more likely to prefer other subjects, particularly subjects related to Islamic education. Some elementary schools in Banda Aceh have included the Acehnese language curriculum in their local content curriculum (interview with the head of PEO and the head of Banda Aceh DEO). However, none of the secondary schools I visited taught the Acehnese language, as this subject is not compulsory in either elementary or secondary school. A teacher in Banda Aceh explained,

*Acehnese language is only taught in SD [elementary schools], but not in SMP and SMA [secondary schools], because they [the students of SMP and SMA] are assumed to already be masters [of the language] (Teacher, PWR 2)<sup>xxiii</sup>*

It is also interesting to see the use of Acehnese language as the medium of instruction and daily conversation in the four *dayah* visited in this study. Indonesia's constitution UUD 1945 article 36 stated, "the state official language is Indonesian language". Accordingly, Law No. 24/2009 on Bahasa article 29 (1) stated that the "It is mandatory to use Indonesian Language as the language of instruction in national education". This means that all the schools in the national education system are obliged to use Bahasa as their language of instruction.

In Aceh, however, for a long time it had been very common to use the Acehnese language, together with Bahasa, as the media of instruction, particularly in the *dayah*. According to a few interviews with *dayah teungku* and *ulama*, during the conflict the Acehnese language was used more often than *Bahasa*, especially in *dayah*, because the use of *Bahasa* was banned by GAM. Nevertheless, the observations and interviews showed that in the four *dayah* visited (two modern/integrated *dayah* and two *salafi dayah*) they used *Bahasa* as their formal language of instruction. One of the modern *dayah* even banned the use of Acehnese

language within the *dayah*. It only allows *Bahasa*, English or Arabic for daily conversation.<sup>32</sup>

The reason for this occurrence was explained by the headmasters and teachers in these *dayah*. According to them, since many of the students in these *dayah* also come from other parts of Aceh where Acehnese is not spoken, they prefer *Bahasa*, which can be understood by all the students. In fact, the *santri* of the two modern *dayah* were also from other Indonesian regions, and even from abroad.

*The languages we use here are Acehnese and Bahasa, but more often Bahasa, because the students come from all over Aceh; not all of them can speak Acehnese (Teungku salafi dayah, Bireuen, Interview 30)<sup>xxiv</sup>*

*Here, the students are obliged to use Arabic and English. First-year students are allowed to use Bahasa, because the majority of the students here come from the centre of Aceh and they do not speak Acehnese. In fact, here the use of Acehnese language in daily conversation is banned; students who speak Acehnese can be punished. (Headmaster School 8, modern dayah, Interview 28)<sup>xxv</sup>*

There were similar findings regarding the local history curriculum. While more than half of teachers consider local history is important, they have not started teaching it. Only one school from the eight schools I visited already included a little local history content in the history lesson, but not as a separate subject or curriculum. One of the history teachers explained,

*With autonomy given to schools to develop their syllabus, we can develop it [the syllabus] based on the characteristics of our region. For example, within this special autonomy, we teachers are able to include our local history. But, we are still confused about how to include local history in the history subject,*

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<sup>32</sup> In fact, the use of foreign languages, particularly English and Arabic, is very common in the Islamic boarding school outside Aceh, which is called *pesantren*. The use of foreign languages has been encouraged in the *pesantren* to practise the mastery of those languages.

*because there is no training for that. I do not know if the regulation for that [local history curriculum] has been endorsed or not. (Teacher, PWR 6)<sup>xxvi</sup>*

Another critical issue highlighted during the interviews regarding the curriculum of local history and Acehese language is the availability of textbooks. Textbooks that deal with Acehese language and local history are scarce.

*The problem we are facing now is that we do not have textbooks for the local history subject. We have to prepare these textbooks (Head of PEO, Interview 1)<sup>xxvii</sup>*

*Only very few lessons already include Acehese identity, and the textbooks for local history and Acehese language have not been developed. So, that money [the Special Autonomy Fund] has not been used for this matter [local history textbooks]. So far, it is merely a discourse [about the curriculum for Acehese language and local history] (Head of Education Council, Bireuen, Interview 13)<sup>xxviii</sup>*

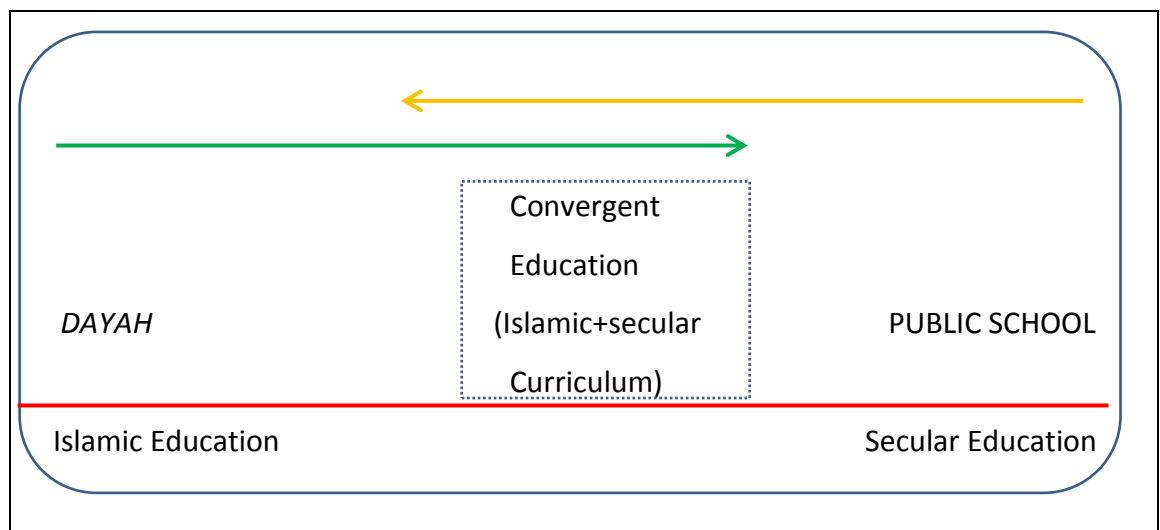
It is hard for me to discuss why the local education authorities in Aceh have not progressed the curriculum for Acehese language and local history – particularly in view of the fact that special autonomy has been designated to Aceh, including the area of education. Consequently, a sufficient amount of money has been allocated through the Special Autonomy Fund.

This research did not find sufficient data to fully answer this question. However, a lack of attention from local government seems to be the possible explanation. The head of PEO claimed that the government has promoted the importance of introducing language and local history into the education curricula. However, he acknowledged that there is limited government financial support in terms of providing teaching materials, as well as supplying teachers with the relevant qualifications (*interview 1*). The head of the PEO, and the member of the MPD, further explained that the Aceh curriculum team had considered including local history and the Acehese language in the new curriculum, which was still being

prepared. Nevertheless, it appears that the curriculum team are placing much more emphasis on the Islamic curriculum, and only intend to briefly mention the curriculum of history and Acehese language (*interview 1, interview 3*). At the time of writing this finding, the curriculum team is still at the stage of designing the core curriculum for Aceh and the draft of their work has not been published.

### 6.6. Changes in Curriculum: From Dichotomy to Convergent Education System

After the implementation of special autonomy and Islamic *sharia*, the directions of the curriculum in the two streams of education in Aceh, *dayah* and public schools, have changed towards a greater convergence between the streams (Figure 9). In this respect, this study suggests that Aceh’s education has progressed towards a convergence between Islamic and secular curricula. Given the background of the implementation of Islamic *sharia*, education in Aceh has shown a degree of negotiation between the Islamic and secular education systems, rather than a linear development towards a more greatly Islamised education.



**Figure 9: The recent development of Aceh’s education within the context of special autonomy**

The rationale behind this recent development can be traced from the historical evidence of the contestation between Islamic and secular education in Aceh, reviewed in Chapter 4. Historically, Aceh's education system was characterised by the integration of religious and secular education, as can be found in literature on Aceh education. A dichotomy that distinguished between religious and secular education that first appeared during the period of Dutch colonialism (see section 4.2) continued to develop after the independence of the Republic.

Recent developments in education, however, illustrate the tendency and willingness to switch back to a more integrated education system, as illustrated in Figure 9. This attempt to promote an integrated education system in Aceh is also manifested in the LoGA (article 216:1), which stipulates that "every Acehnese is entitled to a good quality education which is harmonised with Islamic values, science and technology development" (Ministry of Law and Human Rights, 2006). Similar statements can also be found in other formal documents at the local district level. For instance, in Bireuen, there is a Regent Decree on *Dayah* Education System and Local Act on Islamic Character Curriculum. In Banda Aceh, there is a Mayoral Decree on the *Diniyah* programme. All these documents emphasise the importance of integrating Islamic and secular education.

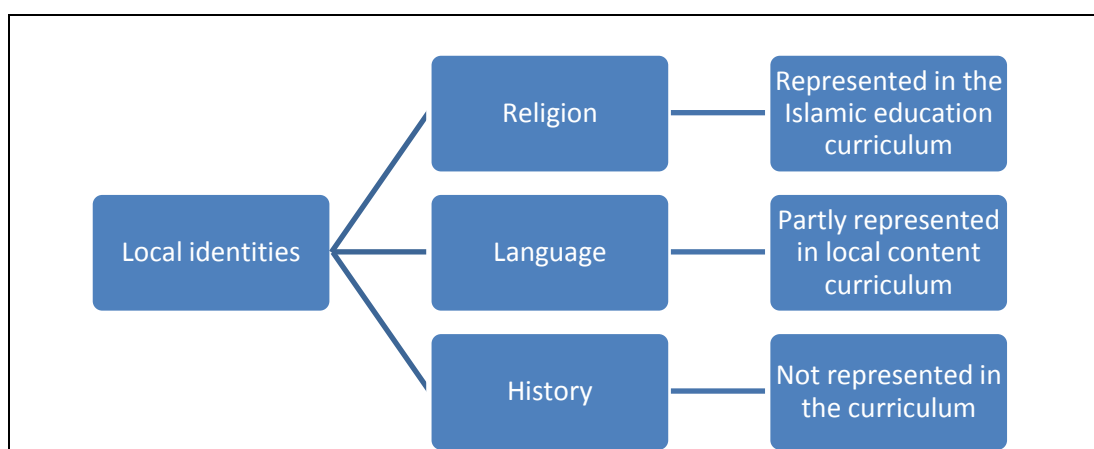
Therefore, in relation to recent developments in education in Aceh, this study suggests that autonomy has provided avenues for the Acehnese to reinterpret their educational ideals as they relate to Islamic *sharia*. These opportunities have manifested themselves through the development of curricula which integrate Islamic and secular curricula. Although Islamic *sharia* has been implemented since the enactment of the Autonomy Law No. 44/1999, it was only after the peace agreement achieved in 2005 that the institutionalisation of Islamic *sharia* in education took place, through the development of an Islamic curriculum and the establishment of the BPPD. The emergence of these institutional frameworks enables Aceh's education to progress towards a more integrated education system.



## 6.7. Curriculum as Representation of Local Identity

The evidence gathered from this study suggests that recognition of the unique character of Aceh has already taken place in the education arena. The accommodation of an Islamic education curriculum in public schools indicates this recognition of Acehese cultural identity. This accommodation is intended to make education more relevant to the Acehese identity, as stated in the Law of Government of Aceh (2006) and in line with the Islamic *sharia*. The previous Law on Aceh Special Autonomy (1999) mandates three areas to be given autonomy: religion, education and customs. The recent LoGA (2006) has given more space for Aceh to recognise its cultural identities in education. This has been manifested through the integration between Islamic and secular education.

Nevertheless, although Aceh has increased opportunities to develop its own version of education, the modification of the curricula to recognise their cultural identity has hardly been seen in the areas of the Acehese language and local history curricula. Only a little progress in the areas of language and history was evident (section 6.5). Likewise, the space that has been given by autonomy, through the LoGA and the local regulation for education (*Qanun*), has been used exclusively by the provincial and district governments for enhancing religious education and, to some extent, less attention has been given to the curricula of Acehese language and local history.



**Figure 10: Curriculum as a representation of local identity**

For a long time, Islamic values have been embedded in the structure of Acehese society (Chapter 4). As also observed in this study, for Acehese, the most important element of Acehese identity in the context of autonomy and post conflict is to express Aceh's Islamic character in its institutions. However, rather than accepting Islamic values as a factor that differentiates Aceh from other regions in Indonesia, the views of Acehese suggest that Islam has values that link the Acehese with all other Indonesians.

Instead of being exclusive, education in Aceh is now perceived as being more open to common values. This is manifested not only in the convergence of Islamic and secular curricula, but also in the use of *Bahasa* in *dayah*. While the discourse on the importance of Acehese language and history is apparent, the preference of *dayah* to use *Bahasa* over Acehese language suggests a different reality. This study puts forward an argument that the development of curricula in Aceh does not necessarily detach Aceh from Indonesia; rather, it has maintained an association between Aceh and the Indonesian state.

## **6.8. Conclusion**

This chapter has contributed to answering the first research question in this study: "How has decentralization affected the autonomy of Aceh in governing its education policies and practices?" The fieldwork revealed that after the implementation of Aceh's special autonomy the education stakeholders in Aceh perceived changes in education, primarily in the three areas of the curriculum, the structure of education, and education financing. This chapter focusses on findings in the first area of change, the curriculum. Three curricula have been investigated during this research: Islamic education; local history; and Acehese language. These three curricula were selected as they were considered to represent Aceh's special characteristics, as discussed in the historical and cultural discourse on Acehese identity in Chapter 4. This discourse presented the distinct identity of

the Acehnese in terms of ethnicity, language, culture, history and religion, as a justification for Aceh's claim to territorial sovereignty.

This study found that special autonomy has provided a framework for the accommodation of the distinct Acehnese identity in the development of curriculum in the Aceh education system. The implementation of Islamic *sharia* has made this accommodation possible through the government's regulations and laws that institutionalise religion in education. This accommodation is evident in the adoption of Islamic education in the curriculum of public schools. The findings show that the curriculum of Islamic education in public schools has changed significantly, as indicated by the additional subjects, contents and hours of the curriculum. However, the observations show there were local variations in implementing this Islamic curriculum; each district implemented the curriculum differently. These different policies and implementations indicate the increased autonomy of the local authorities, in this case the DEOs. Despite these local variations, the development of the Islamic education curriculum in public schools has been strengthened.

Concerning the curriculum of *dayah*, on the contrary, special autonomy has created opportunities for the modernisation of *dayah* education. Modernisation of *dayah* refers to a transformation of *dayah* from institutions that purely teach the traditional Islamic text (*kitab kuning*), into modern educational institutions that integrate Islamic teaching with secular knowledge. This modernisation was carried out by the BPPD, considering *dayah* as the representation of distinct Acehnese characteristics in education.

Reflecting on the development of curriculum in both *dayah* and public schools, this thesis argues that despite the implementation of Islamic *sharia* the trend of curriculum change in Aceh has shown a tendency toward a more convergent, rather than a linear, development. Instead of developing towards more Islamised education, the trend has shown the tendency towards a greater integration

between Islamic and secular education. On the one hand, there is a tendency toward the 'islamisation' of public schools, which is an attempt to add or enhance the teaching of a religious curriculum in public schools. On the other hand, in the *dayah* education field, there is a 'modernisation' movement, which is an effort to familiarise *santri* with secular knowledge. This integration suggests that, although special autonomy has promoted the Islamic curriculum, it is not necessarily counterproductive to the goal of more inclusive education. Rather, Aceh's education has become more open to the interpretation of education as both representing Islamic values and, at the same time, accepting the notion of a modern interpretation of religion which emphasises the need for secular knowledge.

Indeed, special autonomy has given a new opportunity for the Acehnese to reinterpret their education ideals by making identity an important part of Acehnese education. However, while changes in the area of the Islamic education curriculum were apparent, changes in the Acehnese language and local history curricula were less evident. Despite sufficient attention from education stakeholders concerning the need to preserve and develop Acehnese local characteristics, little advantage has been taken of the opportunities provided by Aceh's special autonomy in terms of developing the curriculum of local history and Acehnese language. The opportunity that has been given by autonomy through the LoGA and the local act on education (*Qanun*), seems to be used exclusively by the provincial and district governments for enhancing religious education, to some extent neglecting the curricula of Acehnese language and local history.

## CHAPTER 7

### SPECIAL AUTONOMY: INTEGRATING INDIGENEOUS ISLAMIC EDUCATION (*DAYAH*) INTO THE STATE SYSTEM

#### 7.1. Introduction

This chapter presents findings on changes in the structure of education due to the implementation of autonomy. It provides further answers to the first research question in this thesis: “How has decentralization affected the autonomy of Aceh in governing its education policies and practices?” The findings were built on the result of the pairwise rankings (PWRs) with eight School Committees (SCs), individual interviews, and observations. The PWRs showed that respondents perceived that changes had occurred mainly in relation to Islamic education (see Table 7). These changes were further explored by asking questions around which actors were and are involved in the provision of education in Aceh, and what specific frameworks or mechanisms emerged after the receiving of autonomy. Identifiable changes can be seen, both in terms of the shape of the curriculum (findings in Chapter 6), and with regard to new structures that have been put into place to provide that education.

This chapter focusses on the changes in the structure of education in Aceh as they relate to special autonomy, specifically with regard to the establishment of the BPPD (*Dayah* Education Development Body). Firstly, it reviews the structure of the education governance under decentralization, followed by a review of the establishment of the BPPD. The next section discusses the government funding allocated to *dayah* through the BPPD. The final section presents findings on the changed relations between *dayah* and the government of Aceh. This includes three aspects: the response of the *dayah* community (*ulama*, director and *teungku*)<sup>33</sup>

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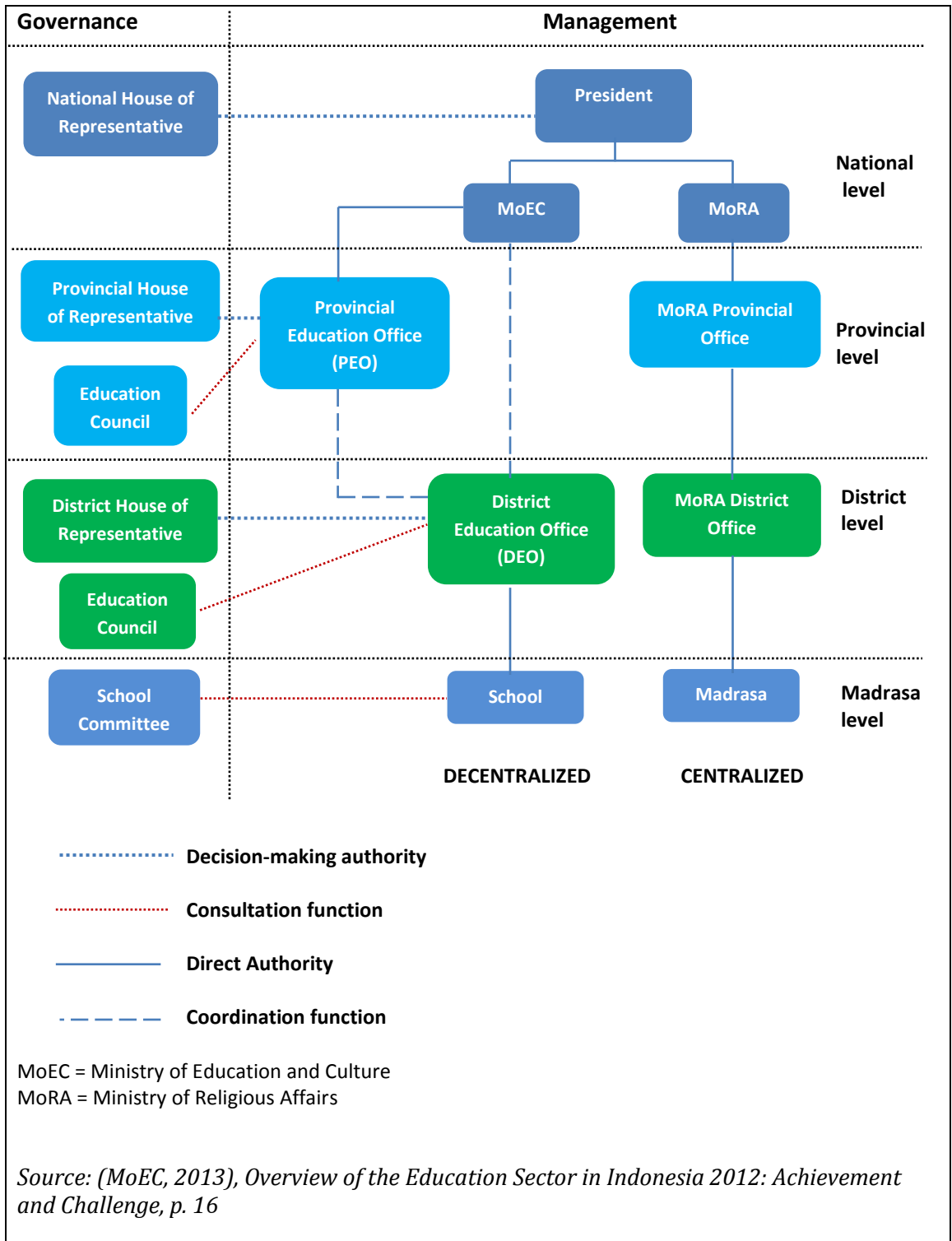
<sup>33</sup> In modern *dayah*, which already implement modern management, *dayah* are usually headed by a director, who is not necessarily an *ulama*; while *salafi dayah* are mainly led by an *ulama*.

towards the establishment of the BPPD; the implication of government funding for the notion of *dayah* self-reliance; and, finally, the role of *ulama* in education, considering here whether or not the role of *ulama* changed after the autonomy law was brought into being.

## **7.2. The Structure of Education Governance under Decentralization**

Before discussing changes in the structure of education in Aceh, it is important to understand the division of authorities among different tiers of government under Indonesian decentralization. In the context of Indonesian decentralization, the term 'regional government' refers to provinces and districts/municipalities. District/municipality governments are the third tier of government hierarchy below the central and the provincial level. Districts and municipalities are technically the same level of government. Their distinctions are based on whether the government administration is located in a rural area (district) or an urban area (municipality). Generally, the district has a larger area than the municipality, and the municipality rarely has agricultural economic activities. The head of district is called regent and mayor is the head of municipality. Provinces, districts, and municipalities have their own local governments and parliamentary bodies.

The Indonesian Decentralization Law (Law No. 22/1999) regulates the transfer of the authority from the central government to the district/municipality level; whereas, the provinces are the central government's representatives in the regions and have retained deconcentrated central tasks (Usman, 2001). According to this principle of division of authority among different tiers of government, the management of education under decentralization is summarised in the following diagram.



**Figure 11: Decentralized Education Sector Governance and Management**

### 7.3. The BPPD: The New Structure of Education in Aceh

The Special Autonomy Law (Law No. 44/1999) granted Aceh autonomy over religious, cultural and educational affairs, with a mandate to implement Islamic *sharia*. The implementation of Islamic *sharia* means that Islam has to be integrated in every aspect of public affairs in Aceh through the institutionalisation of religion into the state system. Consequently, autonomy has opened new spaces for this institutionalisation through the establishment of new bodies to administer matters related to the everyday life of the Acehnese. The asymmetrical arrangement for Aceh gives the Government of Aceh the right to establish new technical offices, and new bodies or institutions, which are unique to Aceh.<sup>34</sup> The creation of these institutions corresponds to an effort to preserve historical and cultural identities of the province. For example, since autonomy was implemented, the Government of Aceh has established the Office of Islamic *Sharia* (*Dinas Syariat Islam*) and the Council of Aceh Customs (*Majelis Adat Aceh/MAA*). BPPD is the technical body established to answer the demand for Aceh special characteristic in education and religion.

The recent importance of Islamic education in Aceh has been indicated by the increased government attention to *dayah*, that is, the Islamic indigenous education institutions in Aceh. The framework provided by special autonomy enables the Acehnese Government to realise its commitment to this unique form of education in Aceh through the very establishment of the BPPD, an institution initiated to improve education in *dayah*. It was only after the Helsinki Peace Agreement in 2005 that the mandate of Law 44/1999 article 8:3, which authorised the provincial government to develop and govern “Islamic Education Institutions” (State Secretariat, 1999), was implemented. In 2008, three years after the Helsinki

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<sup>34</sup> In many other countries which have applied a form of asymmetrical arrangement, the constitutions of either devolved or unique institutions are common. These institutions have aimed mainly at accommodating local or regional identities such as culture and language; for instance, the Royal Commission on Bilingualism and Multiculturalism in Canada.



Agreement, the Government of Aceh established the *Dayah* Educational Development Body, or the BPPD, to manage *dayah*.

The establishment of the BPPD indicates the recognition of *dayah* as being an important part of Aceh's education system, as well as representative of Aceh's identity, both in religion and in education. Previously, the *dayah* system was classified under the category of 'non-formal education'. *Dayah* has now been formally acknowledged to be part of the formal education system of Aceh in the Law on Governing Aceh (LoGA No. 11/2006), equal to its counterpart public education and, hence, *dayah* are entitled to government funding. *Qanun* No. 5/2008 on Aceh Education (Regional Secretariat of Aceh Province, 2008), stipulated that *dayah* may choose to administer either formal, or non-formal education, in order to be classified as equal to other public education, as part of the Aceh education system (article 32:2). Some participants (*interview 5, 8, 16, 17, and 22*) mentioned that the rationale for the development of *dayah*, promoted through the establishment of the BPPD, is that the Government considered *dayah* to be lagging behind public education.

The establishment of the BPPD also marked a significant change in the structure of education in Aceh. Previously, matters related to *dayah* were managed by a small division in the Provincial Education Office (PEO). *Qanun* No. 5/2007 on the "organizational structure of the local offices, local technical bodies and local institutions of the province of Nanggroe Aceh" (Regional Secretariat of Aceh Province, 2007) legislated the establishment of a new body to be responsible for education development in *dayah*. The BPPD is the new local technical institution (SKPD/*Satuan Kerja Perangkat Daerah*) under the provincial secretariat responsible for the provision of *dayah* education (Regional Secretariat of Aceh Province, 2007).<sup>35</sup> In the years following the establishment of the provincial BPPD, six out of 23 district governments have also established district BPPDs. The

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<sup>35</sup> Interestingly, despite the BPPD being a new body under the provincial government it is, however, staffed by officials transferred from other government offices such as from the local offices of education, agriculture, or communication.

establishment of district BPPDs reflects the commitment of those local governments to the development of *dayah*. The existence of these district BPPDs also assists the provincial government in channelling funds to *dayah*.

As *dayah* have been accommodated in the formal education system in Aceh for the first time, the Aceh Province stipulated development of *dayah* education as one of the priority programmes in the education sector's development programme. According to the Mid-term and Long-term Development Plan 2012-2017 of the Province of Aceh, the aim of the *dayah* development programme is to improve the quality of education in *dayah* (Regional Secretariat of Aceh Province, 2012, p. 100). The areas to be improved in the development of *dayah* are: infrastructure, the management of *dayah*, the empowerment of *santri*, and the quality of the *teungku* (Regional Secretariat of Aceh Province, 2012, p. 226). In order to implement this programme, the Government of Aceh has allocated resources to support the development of *dayah*, as discussed in the following sub-section.

#### **7.4. Government Funding to *Dayah* and Perceived Inequality**

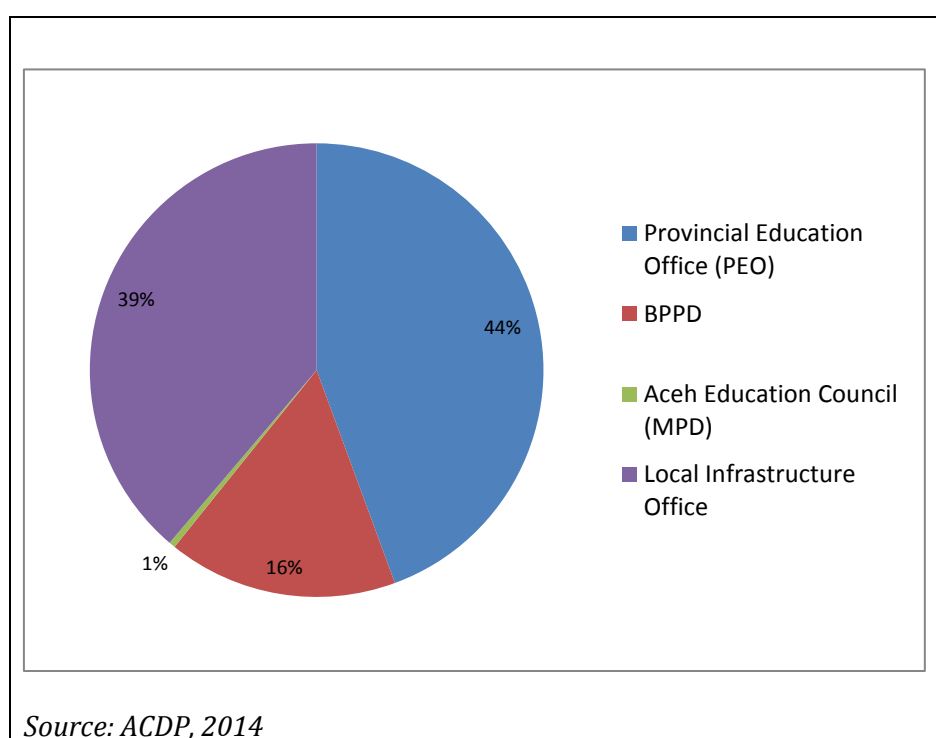
After the implementation of decentralization, the sources of revenue for regional government derived from local revenue, the Equalization Fund<sup>36</sup>, and selected other legitimate revenues. In addition to this, under the special autonomy, Aceh also received substantial additional funding in the form of Special Autonomy Funds (SAF) transferred from the central government budget and additional shared revenues from oil and gas (OGF). From 2008, the special autonomy fund has been transferred to Aceh for a period of twenty years, until 2027. As a result, the Special Autonomy Fund has become the biggest contributor to Aceh's public revenue since then. The provision of the Special Autonomy Fund to the public revenue had

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<sup>36</sup> The Equalisation Fund is the transfer of funds from the central government to regional government to help finance local budgets. For a comprehensive discussion on the financial arrangements between central, provincial, and district governments under the decentralization scheme, including the allocation of the Special Autonomy Fund, and its effect on the politics of financing education, see Chapter 8.

reached 62 percent of the provincial budget and 25 percent of district budget in the year 2010 (Universitas Syiah Kuala, 2011, p. 1).

Increased financial capacity has enabled the province to allocate resources to *dayah* education. Since 2008 the provincial government has given the BPPD a budget to implement *dayah* development programmes. In 2013, from a total provincial education budget of 1.2 trillion rupiahs, 16% has been allocated to BPPD, compared to the fund allocated to the public education sector under the PEO, which is 44% (See Figure 12).



**Figure 12: Provincial budget expenditure, education sector (APBA) 2013**

As resources have become more available, a number of interests have begun to come into conflict as they seek to access these resources through different institutions. In the education sector, the education budget, which was previously distributed only via the District Education Offices (DEO), is now being distributed via multiple channels, including the BPPD. Several interviews revealed that BPPD officials and *ulama* perceived that the funding policy favoured public education more than *dayah* education. Some *dayah ulama, teungku* and members of the BPPD

considered the percentage of funding to *dayah* was too small compared to funding for public education (*interview 8, interview 11, and interview 22*). However, several officials of the DEO considered funding for *dayah* had met the principle of equality.

*Based on the Law of the Government of Aceh (LoGA), the proportion of education is 20 percent of the provincial budget (APBA). Dayah does not receive that much of a percentage, far below the proportion for public education. Hence, this is affecting the quality of dayah. We only receive around 10 to 15 percent, not even reaching 20 percent. So, our programmes are constrained by this limited budget (Head of programme and budget division, Provincial BPPD, Interview 22)<sup>xxix</sup>*

*As far as I know, the Aceh provincial budget for education is one trillion, but the allocation for dayah is very small. In my opinion, at least 30% of that budget should be allocated to dayah. Since 2008, we have never received that much. The budget [for the BPPD] has never increased; the amount has always fluctuated. This [the amount received] is based on our lobby to the provincial budget team (Official, Provincial BPPD, interview 8)<sup>xxx</sup>*

*Regarding the establishment of the BPPD, I feel that there is more progress for dayah now, indeed, such that the 'cake sharing' [allocation of resources] for dayah is much better now. Although I think it is still not proportional compared to other institutions [public schools]. We received less than those [public schools] (Ulama, interview 11)<sup>xxxi</sup>*

However, given the fact that the number of schools under the PEO is four times larger than the number of *dayah*, this amount seems to be proportional (see Table 11). In 2014, the number of schools in Aceh was 4,904, four times greater compared to the 1,031 *dayah* in the same year. The percentage of children enrolled in education institutions in Aceh showed that between 15% and 20% of the population were enrolled in *madrassa*, an additional 3% to 5% of children in Aceh attended *dayah*, and the rest attended public schools (Shah & Lopes Cardozo, 2014, p. 7).

**Table 11: The number of *dayah* and schools, and percentage of students attending each type of institution, in the Province of Aceh**

	Number (%)	% Students
<b>Schools</b>	4,904 (69%)	75
<b><i>Dayah</i></b>	1,031 (14%)	5
<b><i>Madrasa</i><sup>37</sup></b>	1,211 (17%)	20
<b>Total</b>	<b>7,146 (100%)</b>	<b>100</b>

Source: Author, modified from Aceh in Figures, Bappeda, 2013; *Dayah* survey, BPPD, 2014 (not published)

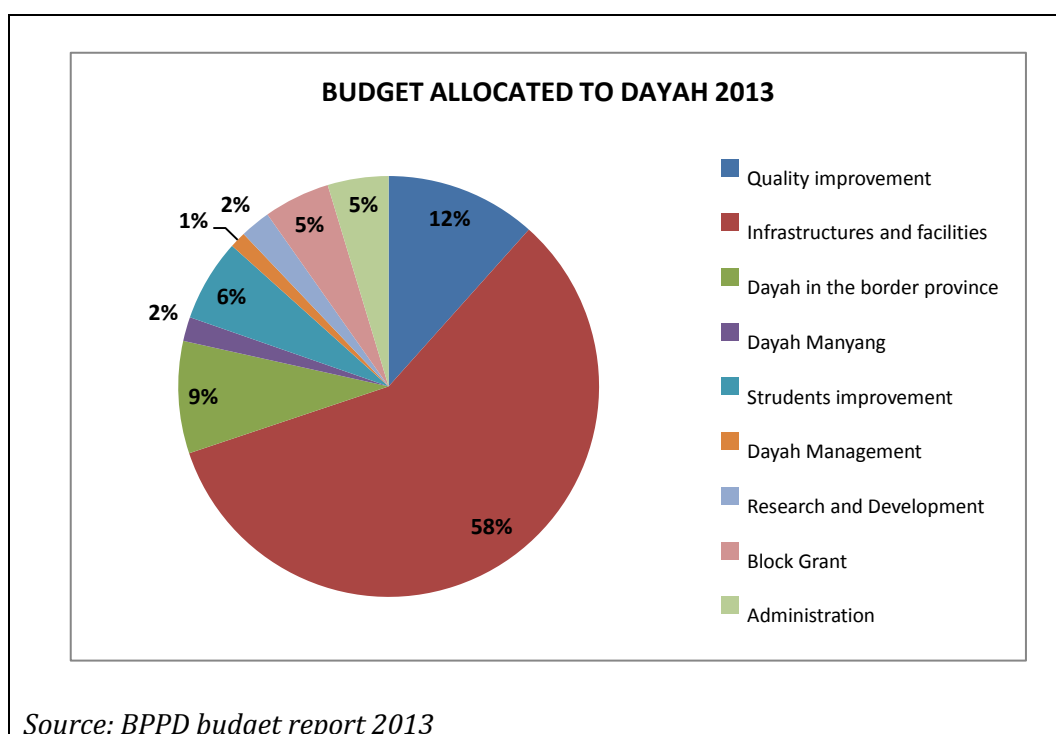
In brief, the establishment of the BPPD and the funding to *dayah* signals a new focus on *dayah* education. There was no specific fund allocated to *dayah* development before the establishment of the BPPD. This funding showed the government's intention to develop *dayah* in order to make *dayah* as qualified as public education. The disbursement of Special Autonomy and Oil and Gas Fund revenue, which began in 2008, influences the financial capability of the province, enabling the provincial government to allocate specific funds to *dayah*. Nevertheless, many *dayah* stakeholders who participated in this research considered this funding was still inadequate compared to funding for public education. To understand how this funding is distributed among *dayah* in Aceh, the following section outlines the mechanisms of the disbursement of funding.

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<sup>37</sup> *Madrasa* fall under the responsibility of the Ministry of Religious Affairs (MoRA), which is not decentralized, and thus *madrasa* are not eligible for the special autonomy fund.

### 7.4.1. Funding Mechanism

There are many different kinds of funding to *dayah*, including: block grants; infrastructure and facilities funds; funding for quality improvement and student improvement; and funding for *dayah* in the border provinces (Figure 13).<sup>38</sup> The graph shows that funding for infrastructure and facilities is the biggest expenditure from the total funding, at 58%. Meanwhile, the block grant makes up only 5% of the total funding.



Source: BPPD budget report 2013

**Figure 13: Budget allocation to dayah 2013**

In 2011, as the BPPD budget was limited, the BPPD set up a *dayah* accreditation system for the allocation of block grants. The system aimed to ensure the eligibility of *dayah* to access block grants and hence encouraged compliance. Five hundred

<sup>38</sup>It is important to note that the platform of funding to *dayah* is different from that of public schools. While public schools are eligible to access some of the funding based on per capita student, as well as other funding, such as infrastructure and facilities funds, funding to *dayah* is predominantly in the form of a block grant, an infrastructure fund, as well as an incentive for *teungkus*. In addition, funding to schools is a routine budget, whereas funding to *dayah* is based on need assessment. Integrated *dayah* which are integrating public schools into the *dayah* are also eligible to access funding allocated to public schools under the PEO.

and seventeen *dayah* had been accredited out of a total of 1200 *dayah* in 2011 (Regional Secretariat of Aceh Province, 2012). These accredited *dayah* were classified into four different types (A to D) based on size, availability of facilities, the number of *santri* who stayed in *dayah* (boarding), and administrative requirements. All *dayah* that had been accredited were entitled to get block grants proportionally based on their types; the bigger the size and number of *santri*, the greater the funding (see Table 12). Those *dayah* that had not met the requirements and thus were not accredited fell under the category of *balai pengajian* or ‘school for reciting *Qur’an*’.<sup>39</sup> The BPPD also allocated block grants for these *balai pengajian*; however, the amount was less than that of accredited *dayah*, and not all the *balai pengajian* gained access to the block grant (*interview 22*).

**Table 12: Type, accreditation criteria and block grant of *dayah***

TYPE	CRITERIA		FUNDING (Million Rupiahs)
	<i>Salafi Dayah</i>	<i>Integrated/Modern Dayah</i>	
A	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Having adequate facilities and infrastructure</li> <li>- No. of students between 100 and 150</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Having adequate facilities and infrastructure</li> <li>- No. of students between 150 and 200</li> </ul>	200 million
B	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Infrastructure and facilities still not fully equipped</li> <li>- No. of students between 75 and 100</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Infrastructure and facilities still not fully equipped</li> <li>- No. of students between 100 and 150</li> </ul>	150 million
C	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Facilities and infrastructure are still lacking.</li> <li>- No. of students between 25 and 75</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Facilities and infrastructure are still lacking.</li> <li>- No. of students between 50 and 100</li> </ul>	130 million
D	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Facilities and infrastructure are still lacking.</li> <li>- No. of students less than 25</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Facilities and infrastructure are still lacking.</li> <li>- No. of students less than 50</li> </ul>	100 million

*Source: Author, modified from BPPD Survey 2011 & 2014 (not published)*

<sup>39</sup> *Balai pengajian* is a form of informal education institution where children gather to recite *Qur’an* led by a *teungku*. These institutions are widespread in Aceh, and usually every village in Aceh has one *Balai pengajian*. *Balai pengajian* is different from *dayah*; while *dayah* is a formal institution and has a standard curriculum and a grade system, *Balai pengajian* does not have a standard curriculum and a grade system.

It seems that the division between *dayah* and *balai pengajian* through the accreditation process is not merely a matter of a limited budget; it also depicts the government effort to control *dayah* through the accreditation and funding process. This process seems to influence local politics in the sense that the mechanism might be used as a means for the government to control *dayah*. Through the BPPD funding to *dayah*, the government has power to determine which *dayah* are eligible or not eligible to access funding. Accordingly, there is some discontent expressed about this accreditation system, especially from *balai pengajian* that have failed to be accredited as *dayah* and, hence, are not necessarily eligible to access the fund.

In order to address this discontent, the BPPD decided to conduct a new survey in 2014. The new survey shows that the number of *dayah* registered and accredited in 2014 had reached 1,031 *dayah*, a twofold increase compared to the results of a 2011 survey, which showed 517 accredited *dayah* (source: BPPD survey 2014, not published).<sup>40</sup> The most plausible explanation is that the government might have determined some of the *balai pengajian* to qualify as *dayah* in response to their discontent. By doing this, the government seems to have reinforced its control over *dayah*.

As a result of this new accreditation, more *dayah* were now to be funded, while the amount of funding did not increase. Consequently, the accreditation system could also potentially divide *dayah*. In 2014, a number of local newspapers reported that a few established *dayah* were disappointed about the delivery of funding (AJNN, 2014; Medan Bisnis Daily, 2011; Serambi Indonesia, 2014). It appeared that these *dayah* were disappointed with the changed status of some *balai pengajian* to *dayah*. They claimed that some of those *balai pengajian* had their status changed only in order to get the funding.

*We are disappointed with the changed status of some dayah [in order to accommodate more dayah to be funded]. It has disadvantaged the accredited*

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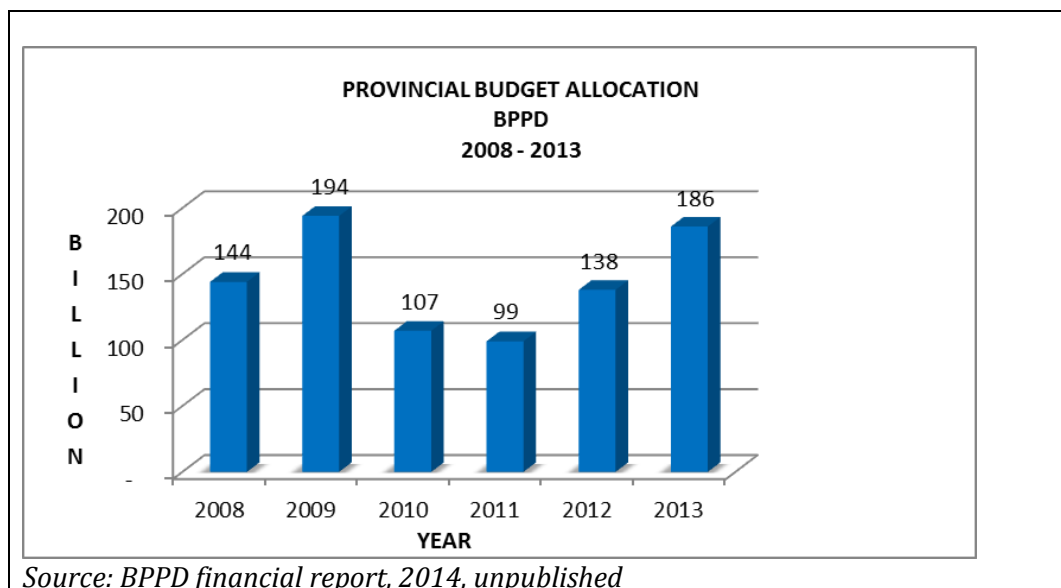
<sup>40</sup> When the researcher asked for the latest survey data from the BPPD, the official who prepared the data was still working on the final report, but finally managed to give the latest data to the researcher. However, he mentioned that the data might be changed as it was not yet finalised.



*dayah, since the distribution of funding is not based on the previous type of dayah [that was already stipulated on the 2011-accreditation], we [dayah ulama] have reported these changes to the office of dayah Pidie (BPPD). (Interview with an ulama in Pidie District as cited in Serambi Indonesia, 2014)*

While accommodating more *dayah* through the accreditation system may increase the legitimacy of government and enhance the Government's control over *dayah*, this could also risk the capability of the BPPD to fund the *dayah*, as resources are limited. Although the budget increased twice between the years 2011 and 2013, the overall allocation to *dayah* between the years 2008 to 2013 shows a fluctuating trend, rather than a steady increase (Figure 14). An official of the provincial BPPD explained this fluctuating budget,

*The budget allocation for BPPD since 2008 has never increased significantly, but more accurately has fluctuated. The amount of budget the BPPD gained depended on lobbying with the budgeting team. This is, I think, very weird. There is additional funding from the Special Autonomy and Oil and Gas Fund, but the total amount never increased significantly. (Official, provincial BPPD, Interview 8)<sup>xxxii</sup>*



**Figure 14: The trend of BPPD budget allocation**

In spite of this unstable nature of the budget, it appears that the cake still needs to be cut into more pieces as the number of *dayah* grows. Consequently, *dayah* may receive less than they received previously. This situation might eventually increase the disappointment within *dayah* with the BPPD. This issue is explored further in the discussion on *dayah* self-reliance in section 7.3.2.

The mechanism for obtaining money from the infrastructure and facilities fund seems to be more unstructured than the accreditation system for block grants. While all accredited *dayah* are automatically eligible for the block grant, not all *dayah* are able to access the infrastructure and facilities fund, as it requires *dayah* to apply to the BPPD to access the fund. According to an official of the BPPD (*interview 22*), the procedure requires *dayah* to provide administrative documents<sup>41</sup> to ensure the accountability of the fund. The decision on the eligibility and the amount of the fund is made by the BPPD's verification team, based on their judgement after considering whether all the requirements have been met, together with a field visit. This is the area where patronage politics might happen, where political obedience is rewarded, or opposition is penalised. Besides, other practices such as collusion and cronyism could result from this non-transparent mechanism. This can be seen in the following section 7.4.2.

Another way in which the BPPD attempts to improve the workings of the *dayah* is by allocating incentives for the *teungku dayah*. According to an official of the BPPD (*interview 8*), the incentive offered to *teungku* has been based on the type of *dayah*.<sup>42</sup> He insisted, however, that this is not a salary per se, but only a bonus considering the small amount of the incentive. He also explained that, in practice, this money is customarily shared with other *teungku* who do not receive the incentive that year in those *dayah*. For example, if the number of *teungku* in a *dayah* is 15 and that *dayah* is granted incentive for five *teungku*, then the total

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<sup>41</sup> The administrative documents required in order to propose a budget to BPPD include the Deed of Establishment and the institution's bank account number.

<sup>42</sup> The BPPD allocated incentives for five *teungku* in type D *dayah*, ten *teungku* in type C, fifteen *teungku* in type B and twenty *teungku* in type A. The incentive per person is three million rupiahs a year, which is considered very small compared to a teacher's salary in public schools, which can reach three million in a month.

amount of the incentive for those five *teungku* will be divided equally among the 15 *teungku*.

#### *7.4.2. Accessibility of the Fund: Who Gets the Benefit?*

In terms of the accessibility and distribution of funding to *dayah*, this research encountered issues of neo-patrimonialism. As discussed in the previous section, although the block grant mechanism is quite structured (as funding is allocated based on the type of *dayah*), this is not the case for infrastructure and facilities funding. Indeed, the BPPD seems to lack clear and structured guidelines for funding infrastructure and facilities.

*So, based on a dayah's proposal to us, we [the BPPD] then establish a verification team. This team is responsible for verifying the proposal in the field [dayah]. Then, the team will assess what is needed by the dayah and which areas are considered the priorities for the development of that dayah. The process starts with the dayah making a proposal, not to the BPPD, but to the governor's office. From the governor's office, those proposals are then forwarded to the BPPD, and then the BPPD verifies the proposal in the field. (Official, provincial BPPD, interview 22)<sup>xxxiii</sup>*

*We base our assessment on the priority needs of the dayah. For example, a big dayah with a large number of santri, but a lack of buildings or rooms, will be prioritised. In order to make sure this fund goes to the right beneficiaries, we verify directly in the field. (Official, provincial BPPD, interview 8)<sup>xxxiv</sup>*

*The mechanism for funding infrastructure is: first, teungku [ulama] decide what infrastructure they need. Then they will propose to us, or sometimes we just go there [to the dayah] to do the survey directly. (Head of BPPD Bireuen, interview 17)<sup>xxxv</sup>*

Moreover, there is an issue regarding the channels through which the disbursement of funding is delivered. On the one hand, autonomy has allowed districts to establish new institutions based on local characteristics and needs. On the other hand, different institutions appearing at the local level may result in difficulties for the provincial government in coordinating with these different institutions. For instance, from 23 districts in Aceh, only six districts had already established local BPPDs, whereas an education office is present in each district.<sup>43</sup> For those districts with established local BPPDs, the procedure for disbursement of funding was through those bodies. For other districts, the procedure becomes more complicated, as it is not clear which channel should be utilised by the provincial BPPD. As a result, the provincial BPPD makes use of a range of channels that are available in the locality, mainly through Islamic *sharia* offices or other local offices.

*Although the BPPD has been established at the provincial level, not all districts have established a local BPPD; whereas an Education Office is available in all districts. Perhaps they [the regents or mayors] think that dayah is not important. This is one of the issues regarding autonomy. Autonomy has affected the distribution channels of authorities at different levels of government, between province and districts. Consequently, we [provincial BPPD] have difficulty in coordinating our policy, including distributing funds. (Official, provincial BPPD, interview 8)<sup>xxxvi</sup>*

Owing to different channelling of funds, there is no uniformity in the mechanism of distributing the fund at district level, which might affect the accessibility of the fund.

*For the seventeen districts which have not established a local BPPD, the provincial BPPD coordinated with many different local offices, for example with the dayah division under the District Education Office (DEO). Yet, not all*

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<sup>43</sup> This might happen because the BPPD is a new creation of the provincial government, while other offices such as the DEOs are more settled, as they are the legacy of the centralised system before special autonomy was implemented.

*DEOs have a dayah division. In such cases, we [the BPPD] do not know where to communicate about dayah. It is difficult for us to communicate with the districts if local BPPDs have not been established in those districts. Perhaps those districts do not have sufficient funds to establish local BPPDs (Official of BPPD, Banda Aceh, interview 8)<sup>xxxvii</sup>*

The non-existence of the local BPPDs in more than half of the districts may also affect decisions by the district governments as to whether or not to allocate additional funding to *dayah*, or to top up the provincial budget. For example, in Bireuen, where local BPPD had been established, the district government allocated five percent of its educational budget to the Bireuen BPPD (*interview 12, interview 17*). In Banda Aceh, however, the BPPD had not been established; thus the district government does not specifically allocate any budget for *dayah* (*interview 2*).

*The budget in the provincial BPPD cannot support all the dayah in Aceh. The district governments need to top up the budget; this is what seems to be lacking. Now, there are only six district BPPDs; the other seventeen districts have not established a local BPPD. This means that only six districts have budgeted from the Special Autonomy Fund for dayah in their authorities. For the rest of the districts, it is not clear which institutions are dealing with dayah. Consequently, the budget from the Special Autonomy Fund in those districts has not been allocated to dayah (Interview 8, official of Provincial BPPD, Banda Aceh)<sup>xxxviii</sup>*

This study found that due to this unstructured mechanism in allocating the infrastructure and facilities fund, a risk of neo-patrimonialism arose. For instance, it is easier for *dayah* with good political connections to access more resources. This is especially observable in the distribution of the infrastructure and facilities fund, where political connections might be used to make a proposal, or even perhaps a proposal was not needed at all when a political connection was present.

*Two years ago, we did not submit a proposal, instead the BPPD came here and asked us about the items we needed. Our dayah is very famous, so the proposal is not required anymore. (Ulama, Bireuen, Interview 11)<sup>xxxix</sup>*

*If we just keep quiet, appearing not clever enough to approach them [the politicians or government people], then we will hardly gain anything from the fund. In fact, the government has a lot of money, but if we do not approach them, they will not know that we are in need. (Teungku, Aceh Besar, Interview 31)<sup>xl</sup>*

Hence, in order to access the fund, the *dayah ulama* or *teungku* needs to connect with 'orang politik' (politicians).

*...if you do not have political connections, don't dream of getting money from the fund. (Teungku, Aceh Besar, Interview 31).*

In fact, the complex relationship between politics and funding for *dayah* is likely to be the biggest challenge in the distribution of funds. Since the implementation of special autonomy, the government of Aceh has received a sufficient amount of funding from the Special Autonomy Fund and Oil and Gas Fund. As a result, more institutions are now established to deal with this allocation of resources, including the BPPD.

*This is the irony about autonomy; what is important for the province is not always important for the districts. Districts have more freedom now to establish or not establish any particular technical body; it depends on the commitment of the regents. As a result, the institutions established are not necessarily synergic with those at the provincial level (Official, provincial BPPD, interview 8)*

Accordingly, many conflicting interests have sought to access this fund. A director of a *dayah* in Banda Aceh, who used to work for the governor's office, suggested that there is much politics going on around funding to *dayah*:

*People in the Governor's Office, ex-GAM combatants, they have all tried to access the resources available, and have distributed the resources to their cronies. This is what happened, and it resulted in the fund being mistargeted, as we can see in the distribution of resources to the dayah (Director dayah, Banda Aceh, Interview 4)*

The accounts presented above show that the accessibility and channelling of funding to *dayah* are problematic. While the mechanism of distributing block grants was already established, the procedure for the facilities and infrastructure fund appeared to be more unstructured. This may give rise to opportunities to utilise spaces provided by political connections in order to gain privilege in accessing the fund. The use of political connections and its consequences on the accessibility of educational resources is relevant not only to the case of funding for *dayah*. These issues were also encountered in regard to education financing in general (see Chapter 8).

### **7.5. Changing Relations between *Dayah* and the Government of Aceh**

This study finds that there is a changing perception from *ulama* and the *dayah* community towards the Government of Aceh, as a consequence of the establishment of the BPPD and of government funding to *dayah*. This is evidenced by the support from *ulamas* for the establishment of BPPD, and their acceptance of government funding. A trend towards more engagement of *dayah* with the government is apparent. Nevertheless, it is important to note that perspectives about these changes vary, both within the *dayah* community itself and between the representatives of *dayah* and of the government.

Historically, *dayah* were independent entities that did not rely on support from other parties, including the government (see chapter 4). Indeed, this feature of self-reliance distinguished *dayah* from other education institutions (Dhuhri, 2014; Suyanta, 2012). The notion of the self-reliance of *dayah* is represented by the

centrality of principles such as non-profit, altruism, modesty and solidarity. The highly notable characteristic of this form of *dayah* autonomy is to be found in the traditional financially independent status of *dayah*. The *dayah*'s main revenues typically came from its own businesses, such as agriculture, trading, small-to-medium scale businesses and community donations (Suyanta, 2012). Therefore, the Government of Aceh has never had a clear financial basis to claim the right to regulate *dayah* education.

*As you can see, are there any education institutions that can be sustained nowadays without government support? Schools would be closed without government funding. Only dayah can survive without government support (lama, Aceh Besar, Interview 6)*

*Unlike formal education institutions, we dayah have more freedom and autonomy in developing our curriculum. We do not need to follow government instructions. That is why our curriculum is quite stable compared to the government's curriculum, which always changes. (Ulama, Aceh Besar, Interview 6)<sup>xli</sup>*

Another traditional distinguishing feature of *dayah* was the nature of teaching and learning in *dayah*, which has been based on voluntarism. Unlike teachers in public schools, *teungku dayah* have traditionally taught voluntarily, with no expectation of a salary from the government or the institution they serviced. Sometimes they got rewards from parents, or the surrounding community, but this was not in any way a regular arrangement. In most occasions, *teungku dayah* needed to take on additional jobs in order to meet their financial needs. Respondents' views can explain this *dayah* culture:

*In dayah culture, the act of requesting donations such as making a proposal for funding, is considered as humiliating and does not align with Islamic values. That's why dayah were very reluctant to ask for financial support from outside its community (Teungku, Banda Aceh, Interview 5)<sup>xlii</sup>*



*Historically, dayah are self-reliant; the teachers teach in the spirit of voluntarism. Thus, we never see dayah teungku protesting just because they did not get their salary. However, we often see teachers protesting when they have not received their salary. They [teungku] believe that if they demand a salary, it will ruin their sincerity (Provincial BPPD official, Interview 8)<sup>xliii</sup>*

These traditional notions of self-reliance for *dayah*, and the nature of the relationship of *dayah* with the Government, have been challenged. *Dayah* self-reliance seems to be displaced by funding to the *dayah* deployed through the BPPD, as investigated in the next section.

#### *7.5.1. Perceptions of the BPPD and Government Funding: Cooperation versus Legitimacy*

The response of *dayah ulama* to the establishment of the BPPD varied between those *ulama* who fully supported it and those who were more cautious. *Ulama* and *teungku* who favoured the establishment of the BPPD based their stance mainly on the argument that it indicated the government's increased attention to, and therefore support of, *dayah*, especially with regard to funding. *Ulama* or *teungku* who viewed the establishment of BPPD more cautiously, were alarmed that the *dayah* culture of self-reliance and community-based support may be affected by government interference. Of eight *ulama* and *teungku* who were interviewed, five supported the establishment of BPPD, while the other three treated the establishment of the BPPD with caution. None essentially opposed it. This section is about the views of *ulama* who supported the BPPD. The perspectives of those *ulama* who were more cautious about the BPPD and its funding are presented in the next section on *dayah* self-reliance.

*Ulama* and *teungku* who supported the BPPD perceived the establishment of the BPPD and the government funding allocated through the BPPD as a sign of increased government support for Islamic education, especially in *dayah*. Words

such as 'attention', 'collaboration', 'cooperation' and 'empowerment' were used in interviews, reflecting awareness of increased government attention:

*Since the establishment of the BPPD, we [dayah] are now receiving sufficient funding from government, whereas before it was very limited. This indicates greater attention to dayah. (Director of dayah, Bireuen, Interview 15)<sup>xliv</sup>*

*After the special autonomy, I feel that the government attention to dayah is getting better. Although in terms of funding, such as incentive for teungku, it is still not meeting our needs. (Teungku, Aceh Besar, Interview 31)<sup>xlv</sup>*

*The BPPD was established to manage dayah, which spread all over Aceh. These dayah were considered as lagging behind their counterpart in public education, in terms of management and curriculum. They are not as developed as public schools. With the establishment of the BPPD, it is hoped that those dayah will be more empowered. (Teungku, Banda Aceh, Interview 5)<sup>xlvi</sup>*

These interviews showed that *dayah* communities (*ulama*, director and *teungku*) generally focus on the benefits emerging from the funding allocated by the BPPD and hence they are encouraged to work more closely with the BPPD, and participate in the programme designed by the BPPD. Indications of increased engagement with the government were expressed by these *ulama* and *teungku* as follows:

*Nowadays, the attention from the government is so much better compared to before [the establishment of the BPPD]. It [the government's attention] can be seen from the government's financial support as well as the synergy among institutions [the BPPD, other local government offices and central government ministries]. It is easier now to cooperate among different stakeholders [institutions]. This is what is important now. If we are only fighting each other [refers to the previous conflict between GAM and the central government],*

*when is our chance to make progress? (Dayah ulama, Bireuen, Interview 11)<sup>xlvii</sup>*

*There have been so many changes after special autonomy was introduced. The government is paying much better attention. For example, development is very obvious in the area of building infrastructure. There are also many programmes that have been delivered to empower santri, such as management training, computer training, lifeskill training and journalistic training. This could happen because of the funding from the provincial BPPD. There is not much funding from the local BPPD, as it has just been established. (Teungku, Bireuen, interview 30)<sup>xlviii</sup>*

It seems that *dayah* reliance on community support has switched to a reliance on government support, particularly where community funding is limited.

*The community donations are not liquid funds; we have to shout in order to collect that money. So, it is better to take the money that has already been collected by the government. (Ulama, Bireuen, interview 11)<sup>xlix</sup>*

*For a long time, dayah has relied on community support, which makes dayah development run slowly. Hence, when the government paid more attention to dayah by establishing the BPPD, ulama became more confident in establishing dayah. Previously, they [the ulama] were worried about the funding for dayah, but they are now feeling motivated to establish dayah (Director dayah, Bireuen, Interview 15)<sup>l</sup>*

*There is, of course, community funding, but it is very limited as the community is still receiving welfare after experiencing conflict. The donations from parents are also limited, and they are mainly used for operational costs, such as paying the electricity, accommodation and meals for santri. (Teungku, Bireuen, interview 30)*

This reliance on the government's support does not necessarily mean that the community support to *dayah* is no longer needed, yet *dayah* now seem to be more

inclined towards accepting the government's money, which is more stable and less effort needs to be made to access the resources.

Additionally, the BPPD is a unique Acehese initiative, which is accommodated under the special autonomy scheme, unlike other local offices (*dinas*), which used to be under the central government before being decentralized.<sup>44</sup> This makes engagement easier. The head of the Bireuen BPPD noted that it is easier for the *ulama* to work with the BPPD, rather than with other *dinas*:

*Previously, dayah in Bireuen were very exclusive. They were very reluctant to accept any support from the government. Nevertheless, two years after the establishment of the Bireuen BPPD, they started to change their perception. Those dayah seemed to prefer working with us [BPPD] rather than "dinas" [local government offices]. They are still suspicious of those local offices. They considered those dinas as the representation of the central government. (Head of district BPPD, Bireuen, Interview 17)<sup>li</sup>*

The interviews with BPPD officials showed a different perspective regarding funding, although it is not necessarily contradictory to the *ulamas'* viewpoint. Despite using similar terms as those used by the *ulamas*, such as empowerment, collaboration, reformation and quality improvement, from the officials' point of

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<sup>44</sup> During the centralised regime, government ministries had branches in every province and district. Those branches have now become local offices under the local governments (provinces and districts). When the conflict between the Free Aceh Movement and the central government broke out, the government officials who worked for these offices used to be the target of hostility by GAM, as they were seen as the agent of the central government. Public schools under the MoEC also often became targets of GAM's operations. Some teachers told this story during the interviews. The researcher asked those teachers how they felt about the Aceh situation now after the peace agreement and the implementation of special autonomy. Generally, they responded by saying that the situation is now much better than before (referring to the conflict), and then the story about how miserable the conflict had been would flow. As one of the principals at Banda Aceh said, "Before, during the conflict, schools were burnt, teachers and principals were shot. I remember, we teachers as government officials, were very afraid to wear our uniforms. We were in a dilemma; on the one hand, we had to wear the uniform as stated in the regulations, but on the other hand, if we wore the uniform, we would become targets (of the GAM's operations). Often, on the way to school, teachers put their uniforms in a bag and only wore them when they arrived at school. This was a very inconvenient situation for us. We teachers are happy now, it is safe to wear our uniform and do our job." (Principal, Banda Aceh, interview 20)

view these terms could signify different meanings. Interviews with these officials illustrate that in engaging with *ulama*, the BPPD seems to seek legitimation from the *ulama*<sup>^</sup>, as they might be useful for carrying government messages. The aim is to overcome cultural resistance to asking for government assistance amongst those *ulama* who value self-reliance and *dayah* autonomy. Alternatively, the purpose of funding prominent *dayah* may also be an attempt to elicit public support for the government through *ulama* support, as can be inferred from these quotes,

*So, our targets are those waled [prominent ulama]. The other ulama will follow these leading ulama. As a result the reformation of education in dayah will be realised, driven by these famous ulama (Head of BPPD Bireuen, interview 17)<sup>iii</sup>*

*After the establishment of the BPPD, some changes have been apparent. For example, dayah are now more welcome to many programmes the government offered. Before, many dayah refused to receive government funding, such as for building classrooms. They refused funding because they had the perception that dayah development should rely on community support, not on government funding. They were afraid that government funding would result in government interference. Some dayah are still refuse government support, but their numbers are much smaller. (BPPD Official, Bireuen, interview 16)<sup>liii</sup>*

A view from a *teungku* in regard to *dayah*'s relationship with the government, and how *dayah* have become a commodity of local politics, might help to explain this situation:

*...I still cannot believe that Zaini Abdullah and Muzakir Manaf [Governor and Vice Governor of Aceh] have left dayah [referring to the decrease of government's budget for dayah in 2013]. We still remember their political promises to increase the welfare of dayah in Aceh. On many occasions, the Vice Governor promised to pay serious attention to dayah. We do not need their political promises. The red report from the last period should be a lesson*

*learned [for the Governor and Vice Governor] to stop making promises without real effort to realise them. It is still fresh in our mind, their promises during the political campaign, to place ulama in the forefront of the development of Aceh (Diliput News, 2012) <sup>liv</sup>*

Thus far, much of this information about government funding and its influences on *dayah* is somewhat conflicted. Whether one sees the establishment of the BPPD and the provision of government funding as an indication of government attention and support, or if one sees it as a means to seek legitimation for the government, is very dependent upon the lenses through which one is viewing the situation. However, despite all these conflicting perceptions of the government's support to *dayah*, the study has shown that some indications of greater engagement of *dayah* and their *ulama* with the government of Aceh have emerged.

#### *7.5.2. Funding and Dayah Self Reliance: from Community Support to Government Support?*

Under special autonomy, *Qanun* No. 5/2008 (Regional Secretariat of Aceh Province, 2008) has recognized *dayah* as formal education institutions within the education system of Aceh. Accordingly, *dayah* are entitled to government funding, as are any other formal education institutions. In section 7.4.2 of this chapter, it was found that the number of accredited *dayah* has gone up twofold, from 517 in 2011 to 1,031 in 2014. This increase may indicate that more *dayah* are now trying to be registered and accredited in order to access government funds. Alternatively, there is also a possibility that there are more initiatives to establish *new dayah* as a result of government funding. These indications suggest that funding to *dayah* has had unintended consequences in terms of increasing demands on government funding. This emerging phenomenon has raised concerns among *ulamas* and the BPPD itself, as revealed in the interviews,

*Since the BPPD distributed funding to dayah, there is a phenomenon of the mushrooming of dayah. Many small dayah have appeared, as they want money from the government. In fact, not all of those dayah actually exist; some of them are just balai pengajian with only a few santri (Director of dayah, Banda Aceh, Interview 4)<sup>lv</sup>*

*New dayah suddenly appear when they know that there is a block grant for dayah. Actually, they are not dayah, they are only balai pengajian without santri who stay there. Once, during a verification of funding to dayah, the BPPD found that there were manipulations of the data on the number of santri in some dayah, in order to get more funding. (Teungku, Banda Aceh, Interview 9)<sup>lvi</sup>*

The mushrooming of new *dayah* has raised concerns within Aceh society, as reported by an online local newspaper (AJNN, 2014). According to the report, a legislative member in the Abdyia district demanded the local BPPD conduct a new verification to regulate new *dayah*. Some of these new *dayah* were considered not to meet the requirements of a *dayah*. The politician quoted in the report said that the government should be more selective in allocating funds in order to reach the right object.

Another issue with regard to the self-reliance of *dayah* is related to teacher incentives and the culture of voluntarism. Not many respondents expressed their concern about this topic because they thought it is a sensitive issue. Yet, a director of a *dayah* in Banda Aceh contended that the incentives allocated to *teungku* may influence their culture of voluntarism.

*Previously, teungku dayah taught voluntarily based on the belief that teaching should be altruistic. Now, they have been influenced by the money distributed by the BPPD. They have started to think of rewards for teaching, as they know some funding is available for them. We [dayah] are indeed in a difficult situation: with or without money seems to be difficult for us. (Director of Dayah, Banda Aceh, Interview 4)<sup>lvii</sup>*

Nevertheless, this view has been opposed by an official, who noted:

*So far, I have not seen any changes in the culture of voluntarism in the teaching in dayah, because they [teungku] are not expecting [the incentives]. Traditionally, teungku who are teaching in dayah are the senior santri. While they learn in dayah, they help the ulama to teach their juniors. In fact, teungku who come from outside the dayah community are very rare (BPPD official, Bireuen, Interview 16)<sup>lviii</sup>*

A few interviews illustrated that, to some extent, the availability of funding has created *dayah* reliance on government support. A member of the Aceh Education Council (MPD), and a provincial legislative member voiced their concerns regarding this matter. The resources made available by special autonomy have resulted in an unexpected consequence, which is the increased demand on government money.

*Since the establishment of Islamic sharia, in particular, things have become difficult now...what I mean is, now there are many dayah springing up because of government facilities [funding]. With only two or three 'bale' [classrooms or barracks], and then making proposals, finding political connections, the new dayah are able to propose a budget. Consequently, the proposals for funding pile up, while government money is limited. (Legislative member, interview 24)*

*...after government funding was made available to dayah, they [dayah and balai pengajian] thought, 'We have been teaching Acehnese children to recite Qur'an, so who is going to support us, if it is not the government?' The BPPD responded to this demand by setting the criteria [accreditation system] of dayah in order to decide which dayah are eligible for funding. The point is how to manage this limited government money so that it can fulfil the demand of the community. That is what happening now, because of special autonomy, many things are being demanded. Consequently, the focus is not on the quality of education itself. (MPD member, interview 3)<sup>lix</sup>*



The objective of the BPPD was initially to empower *dayah* that already existed. However, government funding appeared to foster the establishment of new smaller *dayah*. Hence, a standardised system was considered necessary in order to ensure the eligibility of the intended beneficiaries and to avoid the emergence of an excessive number of new, small *dayah* (*interview 2 and interview 22*).

*This is our weakness; we do not have regulations on standards to determine what dayah are eligible or not eligible to get the fund. That's why, from now on, we have started to regulate this by setting the accreditation for dayah. (BPPD official, Banda Aceh, interview 22)*

*In kampongs, dayah usually emerged from balai pengajian that had already existed in that community. Along with the implementation of Islamic sharia, many new dayah started springing up [from these balai pengajian]. Once there was a manipulation of the number of santri in dayah in order to get more funding. Now the distribution of funds seems to be tighter, the BPPD has set up a dayah accreditation system. (Head of DEO, Banda Aceh, interview 2)<sup>lx</sup>*

The limitations established in the accreditation system could leave the BPPD in a difficult situation, because demands on the government fund have been widespread. Restrictions put into place by the BPPD through the accreditation system might have broader consequences. Politically, using accreditation as a method of clarifying beneficiaries could well cause negative consequences for the BPPD and for the government of Aceh in general. There is a community expectation for the BPPD to continue funding *dayah* in Aceh. The effort of the BPPD to ensure a rigorous mechanism for distributing resources could result in prompting hostility or disappointment. This is especially so since it is not the normal culture of *dayah* to deal with formal administration and bookkeeping (*interview 8, interview 22*).<sup>45</sup> A view of the provincial legislative member describes the complexity of this situation,

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<sup>45</sup> For example, for a long time *dayah* have relied on community donations for their survival. In the culture of *dayah*, if someone willingly donated money it means that he/she doesn't want to know how

*In my opinion, the government should set up a classification system for dayah to ensure they are eligible for funding. That is how to be professional; there is no choice other than restriction. If this system applied, it would consequently limit the number of dayah to be funded, yet, funding becomes more optimal. I know if we implement this system, it seems that we are anti-dayah; this matter is very sensitive indeed. Actually, this is not a problem if the source of funding comes from a community initiative, but this is not the case, as the resource is government money. (Legislative member, interview 24)<sup>lxi</sup>*

An interview with a *teungku* in Banda Aceh shows how *dayah* responded to the administrative requirements set by BPPD to access the fund:

*We [dayah] feel annoyed with so many administrative requirements to be fulfilled, such as the Deed of Establishment and many things. To make it worse, we need to verify the data many times in order to access the fund. Yet, the funding [for infrastructure and facilities] to us is not routine, then why make it so complicated. Our dayah relied more on the parental contribution instead. We do not like dealing with these various requirements. So, if they give us [the fund], then we accept, but if they don't, we are just fine. (Teungku, Banda Aceh, interview 9)<sup>lxii</sup>*

The above accounts illustrate how the funding has attracted much interest from *dayah* – interest that appears to have shifted the reliance of *dayah* from community support to government support. With a limited number of resources and increasing demand for government money, there could be the potential for divided opinion within the *dayah* community itself regarding who is included and who is excluded from the system. At the end of the day, rather than *empowering dayah*, the funding from government might result in a risk of *more dependency* on that government funding.

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the money has been used nor about the bookkeeping. This has become the general convention because the community trust the *ulama* who are responsible for managing the community's fund.

A few *ulama* have seen this indication of *dayah* reliance on the government and, hence, they treat the BPPD and government funding with greater caution. The following accounts illustrate their reluctance as they see these new arrangements might eventually affect the autonomy of *dayah*. For them, Aceh's autonomy has meant more funds but, at the same time, it could also be perceived as more interference with (less autonomy for) *dayah*. Therefore, the BPPD could be just another form of outside interference.

*Charismatic ulama used to be reluctant to engage with the government, because they do not like to be dictated to. If they become involved in the government's scheme, such as government funding, they will be subject to the government. Accordingly, when the government asks for their obedience, they will feel reluctant to refuse (Teungku, Banda Aceh, interview 9)<sup>lxiii</sup>*

*The reluctance of the ulama to accept funding was perhaps because of their previous experiences. Once ulama build relations with the government, they are afraid that they will be trapped in the government's regulations (BPPD official, Bireuen, interview 16)<sup>lxiv</sup>*

*Although Aceh was granted special autonomy, as I see it, there are not many effects on education. As long as the government still interferes in education matters, special autonomy is just useless. A long time ago, madrasa in Aceh were already developed. They were very successful in producing Muslim intellectuals who mastered both religious education and sciences. This does not happen anymore, because of the central government interference [in education]. (Ulama, Aceh Besar, Interview 6)<sup>lxv</sup>*

These *ulamas* argued that the BPPD might not represent *dayah* voices as they lack an understanding of *dayah* needs, especially since the BPPD officials do not come from a *dayah* background.

*It seems that the officials in the BPPD do not have enough understanding about dayah. Many of them are government officials who come from different offices, like the office of agriculture, office of information and communication.*

*Thus, they are not aware of matters related to dayah, such as what the visions and missions of the dayah are. They are just like any other government officials. (Teungku, Banda Aceh, Interview 9)<sup>lxvi</sup>*

*Two years ago, someone from the BPPD came to preach to me about dayah curriculum. He had a university background and never studied in dayah. How come he told me what to do regarding the management and curriculum implemented in my dayah. Why can an outsider gave me instruction about what to do. (Ulama, Aceh Besar, Interview 6).*

Although these *ulamas* seemed to be cautious of the impact of government funding, none of them essentially rejected the BPPD. They were only concerned about the likelihood that the BPPD's approach might interfere with the *dayah's* authority. One of those *ulama* who strongly criticized the BPPD noted:

*In my opinion, the existence of the BPPD is good and needed; although some people think it is not important, but for me the existence of the BPPD is worth defending. What we need to do is to place people from a dayah background in the BPPD, instead of installing a bureaucrat who knows nothing about dayah. So, the BPPD will then understand more about dayah. However, I admit it is not easy to satisfy all dayah because there are so many dayah in Aceh. Some dayah might be happy, but some others not. Of course, the existence of the BPPD is important to endorse the development of dayah and to preserve the value of the dayah (Ulama, Aceh Besar, Interview 6)<sup>lxvii</sup>*

### *7.5.3. Towards Greater Involvement of the Ulama in Education*

This thesis does not focus on the role of *ulama* in Aceh society – this area has been researched by others and it is not related to the research questions examined in this study. Instead, the focus of this study is on the role of *ulama* in education. Consequently, when the term *ulama* is used in this thesis, it mainly refers to the

*dayah ulama*. However, it is impossible to discuss the role of *dayah ulama* without positioning it within the bigger picture of Aceh's social and political context. Therefore, the overall role of *ulama* in society was described briefly in Chapter 4 section 4.4.<sup>46</sup> Regarding the role of *ulama* in education, this study has revealed that autonomy has given more space for the involvement of local actors in education, although their involvement is still limited. This change can be seen in the role of *ulama* in the education sphere.

Before autonomy was received and Islamic *sharia* implemented, the role of *ulama* was restricted to the religious sphere, or to specific religious schools. Now, the role of *ulama* has extended to include engagement in the public education arena. This new space for *ulama* is demonstrated by the involvement of *teungku* from *dayah* in designing and formulating the curriculum for Islamic education in public schools in Banda Aceh.<sup>47</sup> The role of *teungku* is even more significant through their involvement in the recruitment for *guru diniyah* (teachers for the Islamic education programme in public schools), in selecting Islamic textbooks to be taught in public schools, and in setting the evaluation system for the *diniyah* programme as observed in Banda Aceh.

According to the head of the district education office of Banda Aceh, the district government invited *ulama* to participate in the process during the design process for the *diniyah* programme in Banda Aceh. *Ulama* from the Islamic State University, Ministry of Religious Affairs, and the Office of Islamic *sharia* participated in designing this programme (*interview 2*). Moreover, the largest part of the teachers recruited for this programme come from a *dayah* background. The increased role

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<sup>46</sup> Chapter 4 section 4.4. reviews the different authorities of *ulama* in the context of Aceh society. Traditionally, the authority of *ulama* in Aceh society should be seen in the divided nature of their authority, that is, between their religious authority within the traditional space such as religious counselling, education and traditional ritual service, and their political authority. In the contemporary society of post-conflict Aceh's, the agency of *ulama* is predominantly fragmented among three major groups of *ulama*: the authority of *ulama* as state agency, which is represented by the members of the State *Ulama* Council (MPU), the *ulama* as a representation of the grass roots organisation which is represented by *dayah ulama* (HUDA), and the *ulama* who are associated with GAM (MUNA).

<sup>47</sup> For a thorough examination of the involvement of *ulama* and *teungku* in designing the policy of Islamic education for public schools, see Chapter 6 on the findings on the curriculum changes after the implementation of Aceh's special autonomy.

of *ulama* in the public education arena is noted by a *teungku* who teaches for a *diniyah* programme in Banda Aceh:

*This programme is an attempt to listen to the voice of teungku [ulama] who are concerned about the improvement of religious education in public schools. Teungku have raised the issue that the long hours spent by children at school has left them no time for religious lessons and religious activities. This diniyah programme has addressed this concern. (Teungku, Banda Aceh, Interview 5)<sup>lxviii</sup>*

Nevertheless, it seems that only certain *ulama* have been involved in designing education policy such as the curriculum for Islamic education, while other *ulama*'s role in education is more likely to be limited to a practical one. The findings show that the Government prefers to ask for the participation of *ulama* from the MPU (state *ulama* council), rather than from the traditional *dayah ulama* or grass roots *ulama*.<sup>48</sup> It seems that the government intended to prove that *ulama*, in general, have been involved in policy making. In fact, this does not mean that all types of *ulama* have been represented. Some *ulama* from grass roots organizations think that they have not been included in this type of educational policy making. This was relayed by a *teungku*, who was also an active member of HUDA:<sup>49</sup>

*They [the government] did not involve all segments of ulama, they rarely asked for participation from traditional [grass roots] ulama. They prefer ulama that represent the government, such as ulama from the MPU and from the Islamic State University. I am not jealous, but I think it would be better if*

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<sup>48</sup> Traditional *ulama* are *ulama* who have traditional authority in Aceh society. They represent *ulama* from *dayah* and are usually based in rural areas. State *ulama* are *ulama* who represent the state. They gather in the State *Ulama* Council (MPU), and commonly come from a university background (see chapter 4 section 4.4.).

<sup>49</sup> HUDA was founded under tense circumstances in 1999, when the conflict between the GAM and the Indonesian military was reaching its peak. In Banda Aceh, large demonstrations were held to demand a referendum on independence. HUDA was a part of this movement, which was organised by the Aceh People's Congress (Kongres Rakyat Aceh, KRA). However, HUDA was forced to draw away from the public sphere, after both the government and the GAM expressed their distrust of traditionalist *ulama* reasserting themselves in local politics (McGibbon, 2006 cited in Kloos, p. 137).

*they [the government] also asked for the participation of the grass roots ulama. (Ulama, Aceh Besar, Interview 6)<sup>lxix</sup>*

To confirm the concerns of *dayah ulama*, the head of the Provincial Education Office acknowledged:

*Yes, we asked the ulama to be involved in the process of designing the new curriculum for Aceh. We invited ulama from the MPU and from the state universities (The Head of PEO, Interview 1)<sup>lxx</sup>*

For example, for the new *qanun* on education HUDA had submitted a draft to be discussed by the provincial legislature. However, according to the *teungku* who is an active member of HUDA, this draft has not been accepted.

*Yes, we [HUDA] had been asked to submit a draft to the provincial legislature. But, after we submitted, we did not hear anything from them [the legislature]. Now, unbeknownst to us, the qanun has been promulgated, so we have no more time to criticise it. (Ulama, Aceh Besar, Interview 6)<sup>lxxi</sup>*

The limited role of these traditional *ulama* in public policy making had also been raised as one of the recommendations for the government of Aceh in the 2013 annual meeting of HUDA. The *dayah ulama* raised their voices regarding the insufficient attention from the government on the bigger role of *ulama* in the Aceh political arena and in Acehese society in general (Zulkhairi, 2014).

In addition to the lack of government willingness to engage a wide range of *ulama* in the decision-making process, some *ulama* are also reluctant to be involved in politics. The interviews illustrate that in Acehese society, the involvement of *ulama* in politics can result in them being viewed negatively by their community, as politics in Aceh and in Indonesia generally, is seen as dirty and full of intrigue and conflicting interests. Once an *ulama* is involved in political activities, he may well lose support from his followers. This was demonstrated in views expressed by *ulama* themselves, as well as by other respondents. A member of the provincial BPPD who used to work with *ulama* in delivering funding therefore noted:

*Ulama from the salafi dayah are generally more respected in Aceh society, as they are known for their charisma and non-involvement in politics. Once ulama have become involved in politics, they will lose their charisma, especially when they become parliament members. People know how dirty parliament members are. (BPPD official, Banda Aceh, Interview 8)<sup>lxxii</sup>*

This view is similar to that of the *ulama dayah* in Aceh Besar who suggested that *ulama* are reluctant to be involved in politics:

*It is true that ulama are afraid of being involved in politics, as it will result in decreasing support from their followers. Why? Because politics are dirty. Ulama do not trust the political parties. Yet, in my opinion, there should be a representation of ulama in politics in order to fix this situation. We [ulama] should maintain our role as a balancing power (Ulama, Aceh Besar, Interview 6)<sup>lxxiii</sup>*

One of the respondents in this study regarded the reluctance of *ulama* to engage in political activities as a legacy of the New Order regime. During Suharto's New Order regime, the central government used to have *ulama* as their campaigners. This seems to have worsened the image of *ulama* in Aceh's society:

*During the New Order era, it was very common that ulama were involved in the political campaigns as vote-gatherers. Consequently, the image of ulama among Acehnese society slowly deteriorated, so the society stopped seeing them [the ulama] as role models. (Teungku, Banda Aceh, Interview 5)<sup>lxxiv</sup>*

Despite the limited involvement of traditional *dayah ulama* in decision-making policies, a trend toward an increased engagement of *dayah ulama* with the government in other areas has been apparent. The previous findings on the establishment of the BPPD and the changed perception of *dayah ulama* has shown that, to some extent, *dayah ulama* have engaged more with the government. In Bireuen, for example, this engagement is indicated by the cooperation of the three largest *dayah* (*dayah 5, dayah 6, dayah 7*) with the local BPPD. The three *dayah* are



led by the three most influential *ulama* in Bireuen, who were considered as referees on religious matters not only in Bireuen, but also across Aceh (Saifullah et al., 2013). For example, a respondent described one of those *ulama*, as below:

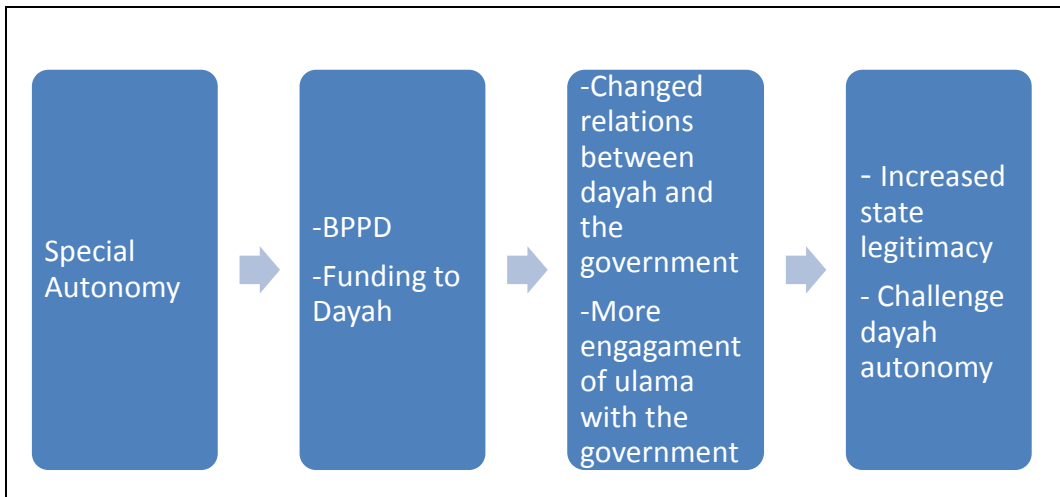
*When he [the ulama] gave a speech, many people flowed to the place to listen to his sermon. At the end, people would queue in order to get the opportunity to kiss his hand and ask for berkah [blessing]. (A teacher, Bireuen, Interview 32)<sup>lxxv</sup>*

The case of Bireuen suggests *ulama* seed the establishment of the BPPD as a new opportunity for *dayah* to improve their relationship with the government and other institutions, although a few *ulama* still view the BPPD with caution. According to a BPPD survey in 2011, Bireuen has the largest number of accredited *dayah*, 84 from a total of 517, compared to, for example, six such *dayah* in Banda Aceh (Regional Secretariat of Aceh Province, 2012). Therefore, the case of Bireuen might explain the conditions of *dayah* in Aceh in general.

This study so far has suggested that, in the context of post-conflict and special-autonomy Aceh, the role of *dayah ulama* as a neutral position between the government and society has been challenged. A slight movement towards collaboration with the government seems to be apparent. On the one hand, *ulama* need the community as a source of their political authority. On the other hand, the sources for their economic resources have switched from the community to the state, due to the funding from the BPPD. Therefore, to some extent, *ulama* have been absorbed into the institutional framework of education through their collaboration with the BPPD.

The findings in this section are summarised in Figure 14. It has been shown that the establishment of the BPPD and government funding to *dayah* has resulted in the accommodation of *dayah* and their *ulama* in the state system through this new structure of education. This engagement of *ulama* with the state system is not entirely a consequence of government funding. Rather, it is more likely a deliberate

attempt of the government of Aceh, that is, the BPPD, in order to control *dayah* and hence to help facilitate legitimation from the *ulama*. This attempt seems to be based on the consideration that, historically, *ulama* have a significant influence in Acehese society, and that the conflict has impacted on their resistance to state interference. The frameworks provided by Aceh’s special autonomy, the BPPD and government funding have made it easier for this attempt to be realised.



**Figure 15: Results on the effect of autonomy on the education structure of Aceh**

However, this study also suggests that there is a risk of political patronage resulting from this engagement. The establishment of the BPPD and government funding has influenced the local politics of education in Aceh in a reciprocal way; the government intended to deliver its resources to *dayah* at the cost of the *dayah*'s political obedience to the government. Therefore, the government funding might result in the unintended consequence of *dayah* reliance on the state, shifting *dayah* reliance from community support to government support. This will eventually affect the autonomy of *dayah*, as was the concern of a few *ulama*.

## 7.6. Conclusion

The findings in this chapter have contributed to answering the first research question in this study: "How has decentralization affected the autonomy of Aceh in governing its education policies and practices?" This study found that Aceh's special autonomy has contributed to changes in the local structure of education in Aceh. It has allowed for the constitution of the new structure of education in Aceh, the BPPD (*Dayah* Education Development Body). This study further argues that the establishment of the BPPD has affected the local politics of education, namely through *dayah* engagement with the government and the changed relations between *dayah (ulama)* and the government.

The recent emphasis on Islamic education in Aceh has been shown by the increased government attention to *dayah*, that is, the indigenous Islamic education institutions in Aceh. The framework provided by Aceh's special autonomy enabled the government of Aceh to establish a new institution, the BPPD, to support *dayah*. This shows recognition of *dayah* as an important part of Aceh's education infrastructure as well as *dayah* being a representation of Aceh's local identity, both in religion and in education. The establishment of the BPPD has enabled *dayah* to be integrated into the Aceh education system and acknowledged as a part of the formal education system. Consequently, for the first time, *dayah* qualified for government funding and are seen as equal to their counterparts in public education.

This study suggests that *dayah* perceived the new government funding as an indication of government attention to Islamic education. However, the politics of funding has shown that the government has also used the funding as a mechanism to exert a certain degree of influence or control over *dayah*. The investigation on the funding mechanism illustrates that the government seems to control *dayah* through the accreditation and funding process. Accordingly, there is a possibility that the accreditation system could divide *dayah*. When the government budget is

limited, while the demands for funding increased, inevitably *dayah* will compete to access resources.

Regardless of this problematic funding, this study reveals that the establishment of the BPPD and funding to *dayah* have laid a foundation for *dayah* engagement with the government. They have opened more space for the involvement of local actors who were previously excluded from the development of education in Aceh, *dayah* and its *ulama*. *Dayah*, which was traditionally independent and did not rely on support from the government, has now engaged more with the government. Although still in a limited way, *dayah ulama* have been connected much more to the structure of education through their involvement in the BPPD. Accordingly, this engagement has affected the relationship between *dayah* and the government, and thus between *ulama* and the government. Traditionally, *dayah* and their *ulama* were an independent entity and, to a certain extent, resistant towards the government. This relationship has started to change. On the one hand, *ulama* need the community as a source of their political authority; on the other hand, the source for their economic resources have switched from the community to the government.

It should be noted, however, that there is a possibility that this engagement might create a new form of political patronage between *ulama* and the government's apparatus. On the one hand, the *ulama (dayah)* can use the resources from the government to pursue their educational advancement, especially to compete with their counterpart in public education. However, the government of Aceh can or will use funding to sustain its legitimacy through support from the *ulama*. From the government's perspective, this engagement might be useful for overcoming cultural resistance amongst those *ulama* who value self-reliance and *dayah* autonomy. The engagement of *ulama* with the government might reduce the previous cultural resistance of *dayah* towards the state, and hence move relations between *ulama* and the government towards greater collaboration. Hence, the establishment of the BPPD and government funding have influenced the local

politics of education in Aceh in a reciprocal way; the government intends to deliver its resources to *dayah* at the cost of *dayah's* political obedience to the government. By delivering resources to *dayah* and involving *ulama* in the new structure of education, the government intends to gain political allegiance from the *dayah ulama*. On the *dayah's* side, the funding might result in the unintended consequence of the *dayah's* reliance on the state.

Although this political patronage is not necessarily detrimental, this has challenged the autonomy of *dayah* and the independence of *ulama* as an important part of Aceh society. Likewise, the relationship between *ulama* and the government has been complicated and challenging in the context of post-conflict and special-autonomy Aceh. The BPPD and funding to *dayah* might contribute to more engagement between *dayah* and the government. However, they also tend to increase the government's legitimacy at the expense of *dayah* autonomy. Therefore, it is still questionable whether this engagement could lead to *dayah* empowerment, or not. Indeed, *dayah* are now acknowledged more and incorporated into the state system, but their autonomy appears to be at risk.

## CHAPTER 8

### AUTONOMY AND THE POLITICS OF FINANCING EDUCATION

#### 8.1. Introduction

This chapter provides further answers to the first research question in this thesis; “How has decentralization affected the autonomy of Aceh in governing its education policies and practices?” It presents findings with regard to changes in the third area of education investigated, which is financing of education. The focus is on exploring how local stakeholders have perceived the increase in educational budgets due to the provision of both the Special Autonomy Fund and the Oil and Gas Fund, and how they believe these funds have affected their interests.<sup>50</sup>

Overviews of the financial arrangements between central, provincial, and district governments under the decentralization scheme, and the financial arrangements under special autonomy, are presented. The next section discusses participants’ perspectives on the provision of the Special Autonomy Fund and its effects on the allocation of educational resources. This is followed by an analysis of recent changes in local political structures in Aceh due to autonomy and their impacts on education funding policy. It investigates two main issues: 1) the increased influence of local politicians in decision making on funding policy at the local level, and 2) the importance of political connections/political networks in accessing educational resources. Finally, the section elaborates on the perceived unequal

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<sup>50</sup> This chapter does not intend to analyse the use and allocation of the Special Autonomy Fund and the Oil and Gas Fund and their impacts on educational communities as this area has been broadly researched and is outside the scope of this study. There are a number of studies on the use and allocation of Aceh’s Special Autonomy Fund. For example, the Government of Aceh through Public Expenditure Analysis and Capacity Strengthening Programme, supported by the World Bank and AusAid, has published periodic reports on Aceh Public Expenditure. Analysis included the allocation of the Special Autonomy Fund for specific sectors such as education, health, and poverty reduction (PECAPP, 2013; World Bank, 2006, 2008). The Ministry of Education and Culture also conducted a study on the use and allocation of the Special Autonomy Fund for the education sector (MoEC, 2014).

access to resources and the implications of that perception for the possibility of heightened social discontent within Aceh's society are elaborated upon.

## **8.2. Funding System for Education under Special Autonomy**

After the decentralized system was introduced in 2001, Aceh's fiscal resources increased dramatically. Like other regions in Indonesia, Aceh receives funds from intra-governmental transfers, known as the Equalization Fund, in addition to its local revenue. According to Law No. 33/2004 Article 5.2 (State Secretariat, 2004), the sources of revenue for regional government<sup>51</sup> after the implementation of fiscal decentralization, derive from local revenue, the Equalization Fund, and selected other legitimate revenues.<sup>52</sup> Therefore, in the context of Indonesian decentralization, the term 'revenue' in the local and regional budgeting system, refers to the combination of these three resources.

The Equalization Fund is the transfer of funds from the central government to regional government to help finance local budgets, and is intended to accord with the principles of fairness, proportionality, democracy, transparency and efficiency. The Equalization Fund consists of revenue-sharing funds between central and regional government, the General Allocation Fund (GAF)<sup>53</sup>, and the Specific

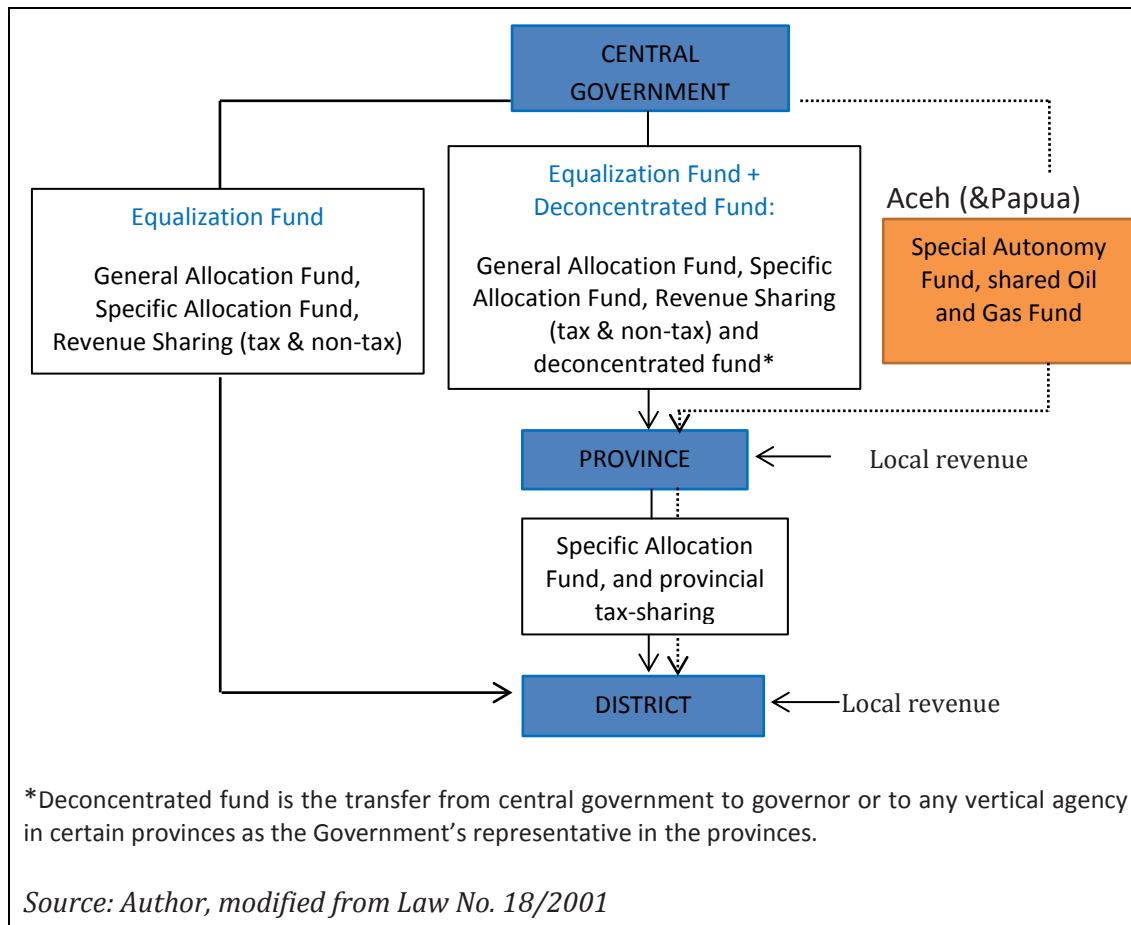
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<sup>51</sup> See Chapter 7 section 7.2. for the definition of 'regional governments' and the division of authorities among different tiers of government in the context of Indonesian decentralization.

<sup>52</sup> Other legitimate revenues are the opportunity for regions to gain revenues besides local revenues and equalization funds (Law No. 33/2004 article 3.4.). They consist of grants, emergency funds, adjustment funds from the central government, and other financial assistance from higher levels of government.

<sup>53</sup> The GAF (General Allocation Fund) is a discretionary block grant designed to equalize the fiscal capacities of regional governments. DAU is one of the central government's efforts to overcome fiscal inequality, balancing the potential and needs between region (horizontal dimension) and balancing resources and expenses between levels of government functions (vertical dimension). The GAF is transferred monthly and directly from the centre to regional governments (province and district). It is allocated based on a national formula that consists of fiscal gap and basic allocation. GAF is distributed to the regions in the proportion of 10 percent for province and 90 percent for district government of the total national aggregate (Government Regulation No. 55/2005). Approximately 80% of DAU are mainly used for routine expenditure by local governments for their employee salaries (Wibowo, Muljarjadi, & Rinaldi, 2011, p. 10; World Bank, 2006, p. 18).

Allocation Fund (SPAF)<sup>54</sup>. GAF is the largest of these three, followed by the revenue-sharing funds and the smallest is the SPAF (Toyamah & Usman, 2004; Wibowo et al., 2011; World Bank, 2008). In a wider policy context, these transfers give shape and meaning to the implementation of central government's decentralization policies to support decentralized governance and as an actualization of democratization and reform. The flow of transfers from central government to regional governments is shown in the following figure.



**Figure 16: The flows of funds from central government to regional government**

<sup>54</sup> SPAF (Specific Allocation Fund) is a conditional grant from the central government to specific regions (province and district) to finance specific sectors (not covered by the GAF's formula) in the regions that are in the domain of local affairs. It is predetermined by the central government in accordance with national priorities. The Specific Allocation Fund is transferred quarterly, based on project progress. In its implementation, SPAF is mainly used to close the gap between regions with priority public services in the field of education, health, infrastructure, marine and fisheries, agriculture, local government infrastructure, and the environment (Wibowo et al., 2011, p. 10; World Bank, 2006, p. 18).



In addition to the flow of these funds from central government to all regional governments in Indonesia, Aceh receives substantial additional fiscal transfers from the central government in the form of the Special Autonomy Fund and revenues from the Oil and Gas Fund as also shown in Figure 16. According to the Law of Governance of Aceh (LoGA) Article 181.3, Aceh is entitled to 70 percent of oil and 70 percent of gas shares, whereas other producing regions are entitled to 15 percent and 30 percent of oil and gas sharing respectively. Aceh is also entitled to receive the Special Autonomy Fund for 20 years (LoGA article 183.2) starting from 2008. From the first until the fifteenth year, the amount of the Special Autonomy Fund equals two percent of the national allocation of the General Allocation Fund, while from the sixteenth to the twentieth year, the sum will be equal to one percent of the national allocation of the General Allocation Fund.

Hence, in addition to a proportional allocation from the Equalization Fund, Aceh also benefits from the Special Autonomy Fund and Oil and Gas Fund, which is not available to any other provinces in Indonesia. Aceh's additional revenue sharing, as part of the special autonomy scheme, is illustrated in the following table.

**Table 13: Additional revenue sharing for Aceh after the implementation of special autonomy**

Revenue-sharing	Before special autonomy		After special autonomy	
	Central	Province	Central	Province
Oil	85	15	30	70
Gas	70	30	30	70
Special Autonomy Fund	Additional revenue from total GAF allocation, 2% for 15 years and 1% for following 5 years			

*Source: Aceh Public Expenditure Analysis 2006 (World Bank, 2006)*

Unlike the decentralization law (Law No. 22/1999), which transferred central government authority and responsibilities to district/municipal government, special autonomy was granted to Aceh at the provincial level (Law No. 18/2001). Therefore, the management of the Special Autonomy Fund, and Oil and Gas Fund, is centred at the provincial level, whereas other intra-governmental funds are

transferred to districts directly as shown in Figure 16. The provincial government is responsible for the administration, allocation, implementation, and monitoring of programmes funded from the Special Autonomy Fund.

The Special Autonomy Fund is transferred from the central government to the provincial government and is earmarked for provincial and district development programmes that are decided jointly between provincial and district/municipality governments (World Bank, 2008, p. 16). The funds are then allocated by the provincial government to district/municipality governments in the form of a joint programme. The joint provincial and district team decides a budget ceiling for each district/municipality government, which is the maximum budget each district/municipality government is eligible to propose to the province. District/municipality governments have to propose projects/programmes to the provincial government within budget limits determined by a weighted fiscal needs formula.<sup>55</sup>

According to *Qanun* No. 2/2008, the formula for allocating the Special Autonomy Fund is: 60 percent of the fund will be allocated to finance district government development programmes (e.g., education, health, and infrastructure). The remaining 40 percent will be used to finance provincial programmes, which could potentially be implemented in district governments as well.

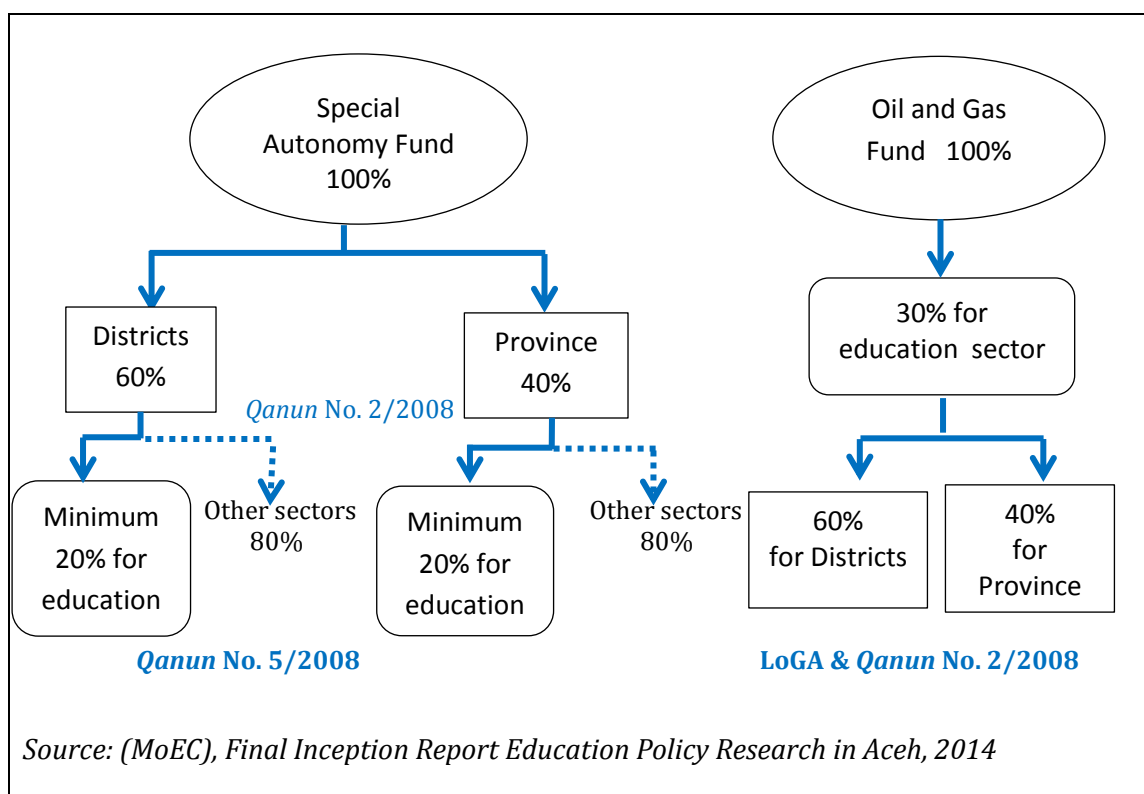
The sharing arrangements for additional revenue-sharing from oil and gas (between the provincial and district/municipality governments) differ from those of the Special Autonomy Fund. Revenue-sharing from oil and gas is also transferred from the central government to the provincial government. A minimum of 30 percent of this fund is set aside for education, and the remaining

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<sup>55</sup> A study by the World Bank found that there is a complexity and lack of guidance in the planning process for the Special Autonomy Fund and Oil and Gas Fund. The criteria for programmes/projects to be funded have not been clearly defined. The study also highlighted the potential of undermining the role of district/municipality governments in their decentralized functions and their diminishing ownership of the projects as the implementation arrangements become centralised in the province (these include functions that have been largely decentralized such as health and education) (World Bank, 2008, p. 16).

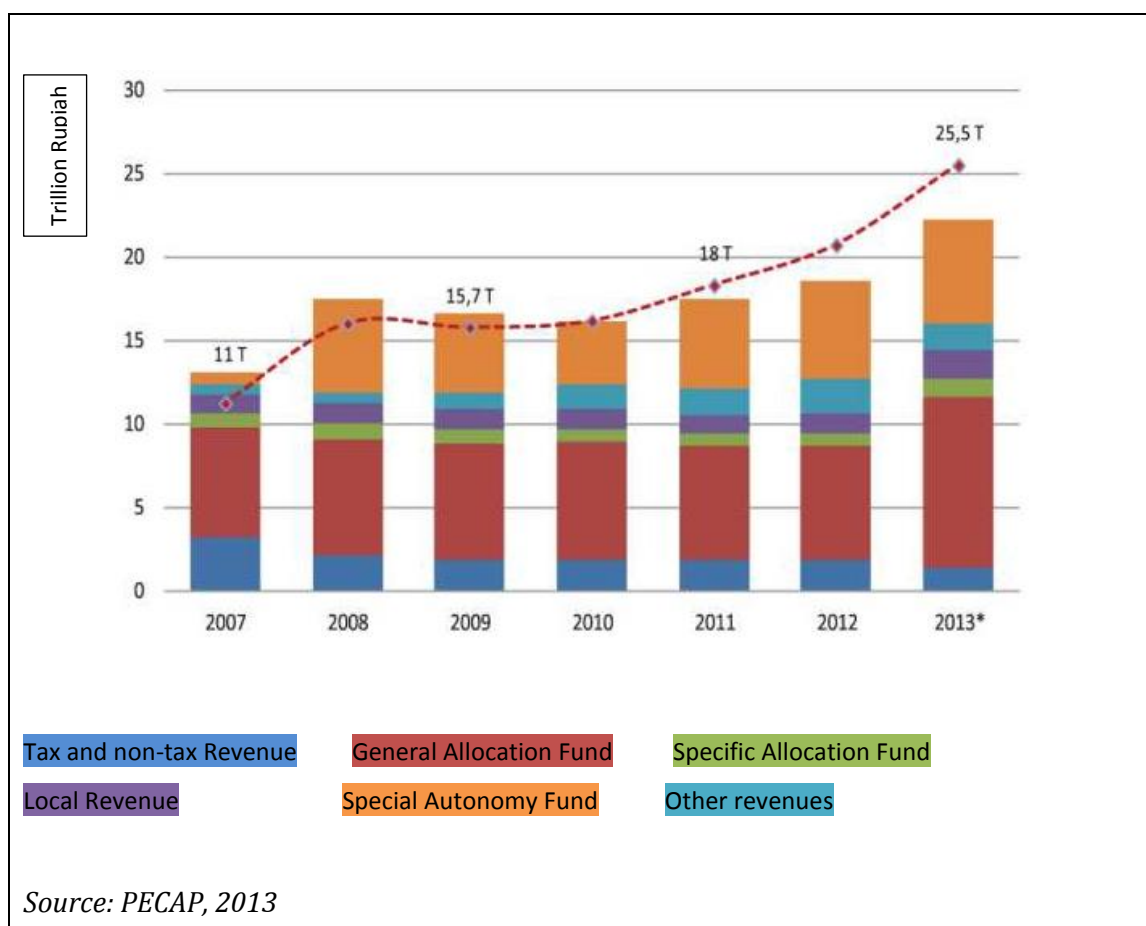
70 percent is allocated to finance joint development programmes managed by provincial and district/municipality governments.

With respect to the education sector, the allocation of the Special Autonomy Fund should be shared between provincial government and districts government following this formula: from the 60% of funds allocated to the district and 40% to the province, 20% of each must be allocated to the education sector. Meanwhile, from the Oil and Gas Fund revenues, 30% is allocated directly for education. From the 30% share of the Oil and Gas Fund allocated to education, 40% is programmed for provincial level activities and 60% for activities at the district level. Figure 17 shows the split between province and districts, and how much is allocated to education from the two sources of revenue.



**Figure 17: Education Budget Allocations from the Special Autonomy Fund and the Oil and Gas Fund**

The PECAPP (Aceh Public Expenditure Analysis and Capacity Strengthening Programme) estimates that Aceh will get approximately 100 trillion rupiahs (US\$ 100 million) from the Special Autonomy Fund by the end of 2027 (Luthfi, 2013). With declining oil and gas revenues, the Special Autonomy Fund is likely to become the second highest important source of Aceh's revenues after the General Allocation Fund (see Figure 18), similar to the importance of special autonomy funds in Papua (World Bank, 2006, p. xv). As a result, the allocation of the Special Autonomy Fund to Aceh has placed the province as the seventh richest province; without Special Autonomy Fund Aceh was the fifteenth, in per capita revenues among 34 provinces of Indonesia (Syiah Kuala University & Malikussaleh University, 2011).



**Figure 18: Composition of Aceh's revenues 2007-2013**

Owing to the large inflow of resources after decentralization and the granting of special autonomy, total regional expenditure in Aceh has also risen sharply for both provincial and district governments (World Bank, 2006, 2008). Concerning the education budget, Aceh's public expenditure for education tripled in 2013 compared to 2007 (6.2 billion rupiahs in 2013, compared to 2.1 billion rupiahs in 2007). Aceh is among the highest spenders on education, significantly more than the national average, ranking fifth among the 34 provinces in 2013 (MoEC, 2014; PECAPP, 2013).

According to LoGA, the Special Autonomy Fund is intended to fund the development and maintenance of infrastructure, economic empowerment, poverty eradication, and to finance the education, social, and health sectors. Further, the law outlines that the fund can also be used to increase the capacity of government officials and teachers, for scholarships, and other educational activities based on identified priorities. *Qanun* No. 5/2008 on the governance of education under special autonomy stipulated the allocations of the funds for the education sector, which include: increasing the capability of government officials and educators, granting scholarships for domestic or international education, and other educational activities in accordance with established priorities.

Some issues regarding the use and allocation of these educational resources were addressed by the participants in the interviews. The next section focusses on the perception of the participants on this issue as related to their own interests.

### **8.3. The Special Autonomy Fund and its Allocation to Educational Resources**

The result of the Pairwise Rankings (PWRs) conducted in this study showed that the respondents at the eight participating schools perceived that the increasing budget in education, due to the provisions of the Special Autonomy Fund and Oil and Gas Fund, was very important. It was the second highest rank of all education issues identified in the PWRs, second only to the establishment of Islamic

education (Table 7). Seven of eight PWRs mentioned education financing as the field where the participants perceived the effect of autonomy as being most apparent. Selected by 29% of participants, it was regarded as the second-highest important topic in the PWRs among other issues (Islamic education, quality of education, localised curriculum, and education management)

In more qualitative terms, the importance and the influence of special autonomy to education financing is illustrated by the following:

*If we hear about special autonomy, the perception automatically goes to the Special Autonomy Fund (PWR 2)<sup>lxxvi</sup>*

*As far as I can see, there is indeed an increase in the education fund. But the increase is not allocated for teachers' welfare; instead it is allocated for school operational costs (PWR 5)<sup>lxxvii</sup>*

*As far as I know, we received funding for purchasing in-focus and laptop. It is written in the financial report that the resource is from the Special Autonomy Fund (PWR 6)<sup>lxxviii</sup>*

*Education financing after special autonomy has changed so much. The amount of funding received by the school is much higher than before. (Interview 2, Head of Banda Aceh DEO)<sup>lxxix</sup>*

*The effect of special autonomy is indeed noticeable. In the last two years, we [the school] finally reached what we called Minimum Service Standard for education. Since the Special Autonomy Fund was disbursed, we have received funding twice already. (Headmaster School 5, Interview 14)<sup>lxxx</sup>*

*In terms of funding, it is much better now. There are many scholarships for students now; scholarships for orphan students, for poor students, and for students who are the victims of conflict. These allocations were funded from the Special Autonomy Fund. The Provincial Education Office is in charge in distributing this fund (PWR 3)<sup>lxxxi</sup>*

*With the availability of the Special Autonomy Fund, the orphanage and the poor are subsidised by the provincial government. Consequently, there should be no more reasons for students to drop out from school for financial reasons. (PWR 7)<sup>lxxxii</sup>*

*The Special Autonomy Fund has been very helpful for us. We can build facilities and infrastructure such as laboratories, libraries, and teaching*

*media. We can improve teachers' competencies as well; especially the teachers' competencies in Bireuen, which are still considered poor (Head of DEO, Bireuen, Interview 12)*<sup>lxxxiii</sup>

These quotes indicate the significance of the effects of the autonomy funds on education, especially in the areas of infrastructure building, improvement of facilities, scholarships and school operational costs. Nevertheless, the majority of participants were not able to differentiate among the different types of funding that they received. Only a few could clearly name the source of the fund, and the rest did not really pay attention to the source, as long as it was accessible. Hence, when talking about the fund, everyone talked about different kinds of funds.

Participants mainly noticed two different types of funds: the routine budget and discretionary funds. However, participants could not clearly distinguish these two types. The most interesting fund that the researcher noticed was the 'aspiration fund'<sup>56</sup>, the discretionary fund allocated to every member of the Provincial House of Representatives (DPRA) to be spent in their electoral areas based on the needs of their constituents. Although it is not earmarked specifically for education, its significance in financing education was noticed by almost all respondents.

#### **8.4. Changes in Local Political Structure and Access to Educational Resources**

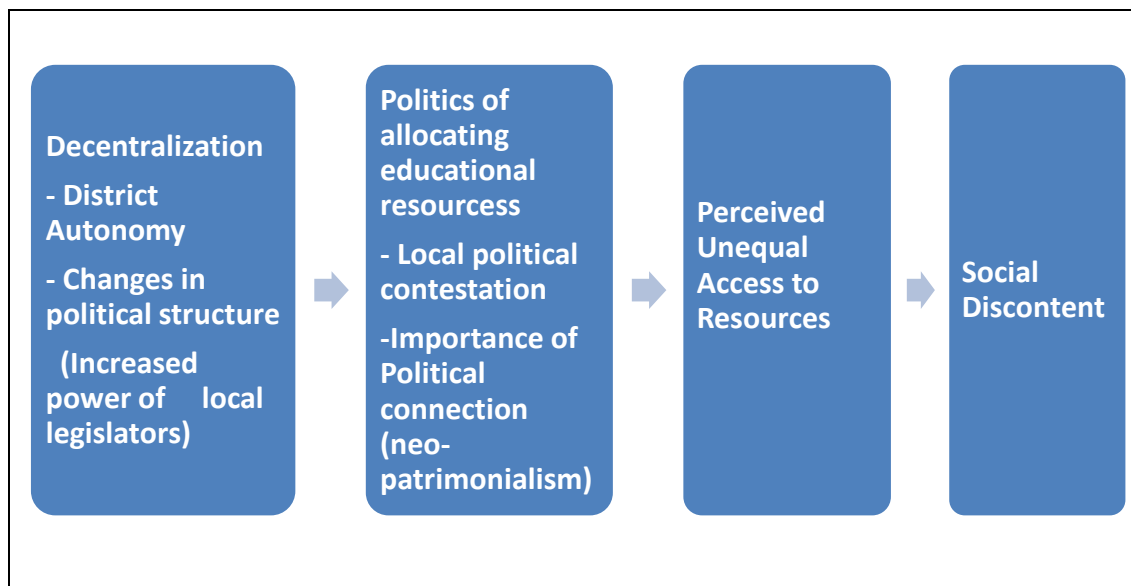
It was found that the recent changes in local political structures due to decentralization have affected the politics of allocating education resources. Despite the perceived improvements in education financing due to the provision of the Special Autonomy Fund, there are concerns regarding its accessibility and distribution. Many respondents perceived that recent changes in the local political

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<sup>56</sup> In Indonesia, the practice of allocating discretionary funds to be used members of the, national, provincial and district parliaments for their electoral regions was common. At the regional level (province and district), the practice of allocating aspiration funds tends to become a political deal between the head of the region (governor or regent/mayor) and the local legislature in the process of budget planning (See for examples Acehdaily, 2015; Prang, 2015; Serambi Indonesia, 2015). The term 'discretionary fund' is used through the rest of this chapter to refer to this 'aspiration fund'.

structure in Aceh have influenced the accessibility of the fund. Although educational resources are more available now, there were issues concerning unequal access to educational resources.

The introduction of decentralized mechanisms has provided room for increased power for local politicians; in this case, members of the local legislature. This has challenged the authority of the executive in financing education and, as a result, political contestation between executives and the legislature in the funding policy for education has emerged. Moreover, the increased influence of local legislators contributes to the perceived importance of making political connections to access education resources. This potentially promotes the practice of neo-patrimonialism in accessing education resources. Accordingly, respondents perceived unequal access to resources, which could possibly promote social discontent within Acehese society, as can be seen in this section. These changes in local political structure and its influence on access to education resources are illustrated in Figure 19.



**Figure 19: Changes in Local Political Structure and Access to Educational Resources**



This section elaborates on how local education stakeholders perceive the changes in local political structure have affected the accessibility of the education fund. It begins with a review of the effect of decentralization on district autonomy. It then continues with an assessment of local political contestation in the budgeting process, due to the increased power of district legislators. Finally, the section examines the informal decision-making process and the emergence of neo-patrimonialism.

#### *8.4.1. District Autonomy in Policy for Financing Education*

Since decentralization was implemented, regions (provinces and districts) have autonomy in planning, deciding and implementing funding for education and other sectors. As a result, districts have implemented education policies differently, as observed in Banda Aceh and Bireuen. For example, observations and interviews with education stakeholders in Banda Aceh and Bireuen showed that the two districts have taken different approaches to implementing the policy of Islamic education (see changes in curriculum, Chapter 6). While Banda Aceh paid more attention to the implementation of Islamic education curricula in public schools, Bireuen paid particular attention to the development of *dayah*.

In terms of financing education, the Banda Aceh District Education Office (DEO) has allocated a significant amount of the budget for promoting the Islamic education curriculum in the public schools through the *diniyah* programme. This budget was allocated for hiring new religious teachers and providing religious textbooks. According to the head of Banda Aceh DEO, this was made possible since the district had a sufficient budget to support the programme (interview 2). On the other hand, the Bireuen DEO did not allocate specific funds for promoting the Islamic education curriculum in public schools, as Banda Aceh did (interview 12, 13, 14, 25, 29). According to several officials of the DEO and a member of the Bireuen EC, Bireuen's education budget was lower than Banda Aceh's.

Nevertheless, despite this lower education budget, Bireuen has allocated 5% of its educational budget to *dayah*. In addition, Bireuen had also established a district BPPD, which is absent in Banda Aceh.

According to some interviewees, the fact that the number of *dayah* in Bireuen is much higher than in Banda Aceh appears to have made Bireuen prioritise funding to *dayah* (interview 11, 15, and 17). Conversely, Banda Aceh did not implement any specific programme, or allocated a specific amount of budget, for *dayah*. For instance, Banda Aceh has not established a district BPPD, as has Bireuen. According to its head of DEO, the absence of a district BPPD in Banda Aceh does not necessarily mean that the district government does not pay enough attention to *dayah*, but rather it is because Banda Aceh has a very small number of *dayah* (interview 2). In fact, he explained, the district government had allocated funding to *dayah* through the Office of Islamic *Sharia*. Nonetheless, there was no fixed percentage of budget for *dayah* education; the amount fluctuated from time to time.

*A BPPD has not been established in Banda Aceh. But there is a division for dayah education under the Office of Islamic Sharia. The allocation for dayah education was budgeted through this office. Nevertheless, the percentage of the budget fluctuated, unlike the budget allocated to dayah in Bireuen, which is fixed. Probably, because the number of dayah in Banda Aceh is much smaller than any other districts, Banda Aceh decided not to establish a BPPD. (Head of DEO, Banda Aceh, Interview 2)*

The different funding policy for education is also demonstrated by the distinct amount of School Operational Funds in the two districts, as presented in Table 14. There are three types of School Operational Funds allocated to schools: National School Operational Funds allocated from the central government (BOS APBN), Provincial School Operational Funds allocated from the Special Autonomy Fund of the provincial budget (DBO), and District School Operational Funds allocated from the district local budget (BOS APBK). While schools in the two districts gained both BOS APBN and DBO, Bireuen did not allocate BOS APBK as Banda Aceh did. This

means that schools in Bireuen gained a lesser amount of the School Operational Fund in total than schools in Banda Aceh.

**Table 14: The Allocation of School Operational Fund in two districts**

Sources of funding	Allocation per student per year of Public Senior High School (SMAN) (Indonesian Rupiah/Rp)	
	Banda Aceh	Bireuen
BOS APBN (School Operational Fund, central government expenditure)	1,000,000	1,000,000
DBO (Special Autonomy Fund, provincial government expenditure)	400,000	400,000
BOS APBK (School Operational Fund, district government expenditure)	500,000	-
<b>Total</b>	<b>1,900,000</b>	<b>1,400,000</b>

*Source: Author, modified from Banda Aceh and Bireuen District Education Offices' Annual Budget Plans*

In addressing these different funding policies between the two districts, the head of the Bireuen DEO and the head of the Bireuen Education Council pointed to the insufficient budget for education as one of the reasons for their lack of ability to afford some education programmes.

*In my opinion, Bireuen should follow Banda Aceh's initiative to create a programme such as diniyah. However, Bireuen has a limitation in terms of budget. Our local revenue is much lower than that of Banda Aceh (Head of Education Council, Bireuen, interview 13).*

*Bireuen is very different to Banda Aceh. Banda Aceh pays a lot of attention to improving the quality of education, and this becomes possible since it has a large amount of locally-owned resources, while Bireuen has lower local revenue; we [Bireuen] do not have revenue from mining resources. Bireuen's revenue does not even reach 20 million rupiahs a year. When the Special Autonomy Fund ends, for sure, we [Bireuen] will face problems. (Head of DEO, Bireuen, Interview 12)<sup>lxxxiv</sup>*

*In Bireuen, the schools received only BOS APBN and DBO, while in other districts they also have BOS APBK. Bireuen has not allocated a budget for BOS*

*APBK for quite a long time. This happened because of a deficit in our local district budget, since 2009. (Head of DEO, Bireuen, Interview 12) lxxxv*

These interviews illustrate that, despite equal allocation from the SAF, the disparity in local revenue earned by each district seems to be a possible factor that differentiates the ability of the district to finance its education. In fact, the variation of the amount of the School Operational Fund among and between districts is not specific to Aceh's case. Similar data is also found in other parts of Indonesia under the context of decentralization. For example, a SMERU study in 11 districts/municipalities samples (Java and outside Java) suggests that the variation among districts/municipalities in allocating school operational funds was apparent, with a tendency for the allocation in the city to be higher than that in the districts (Toyamah & Usman, 2004, p. 33). According to that study, the variation occurred because the allocation of funds after decentralization depended on the regional head's decision, as the authority of the education sector has been decentralized to the local governments.

In summary, the different approaches between Banda Aceh and Bireuen in implementing education policy are captured in the following table.

**Table 15: The variation of educational policies in the two districts**

<b>Policies</b>	<b>Banda Aceh</b>	<b>Bireuen</b>
Islamic education policies	Focus on developing Islamic curriculum for Public School ( <i>diniyah</i> programme)	Focus on the development of <i>dayah</i> education
	Has not established a district BPPD	Established district BPPD
	Allocating specific budget for additional religious teacher, and religious textbooks for public schools	Allocating specific budget for the development of <i>dayah</i> through the district BPPD
	PAD (Local revenue generated) is high	PAD (Local revenue generated) is low

The findings so far suggest that different policies in financing education may indicate the different financial ability of the districts to finance their education. However, more importantly, these differences reflect the increased autonomy of

the districts in governing their education, based on their own priorities and local needs.

#### *8.4.2. Local Political Contestation in the Annual Budgeting Process*

After the implementation of the decentralization policy in Indonesia, the district/provincial budget plan required a formalised local consultation process in the course of budget preparation and also required the approval of the regional councils. The budget plan is formulated by regional authorities and approved by regional councils (Dixon & Hakim, 2009, p. 121).<sup>57</sup> This new decision-making process has resulted in more power lying in the hands of members of the local legislature, as they have authority to determine which activities or programmes can be included, or excluded, in the budget plan.

In addition to this general context of decentralization in Indonesia, many respondents paid attention to the changes in the local political structure after the signing of the 2005 peace agreement (MoU Helsinki). The new political structure introduced after the signing of the MoU significantly affected local politics in Aceh.<sup>58</sup> For the first time, GAM (the Free Aceh Movement) candidates were able to compete in the provincial and district executive and legislative elections. Accordingly, in the 2006 and 2009 election for governor, a GAM candidate won. By

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<sup>57</sup> For example, at the district level, the annual plan starts with an initial discussion of the District Budget Draft. The budget is drafted based on the draft District Work Plan prepared by the district work unit, such as the DEO, which is responsible for the education budget. Finally, the District Work Plan should be deliberated on by the district council in order to be approved in the annual budget plan.

<sup>58</sup> For a comprehensive description of the changes in Aceh's political structure after the signing of the peace agreement, see Chapter 3 Section 3.3.2 on The New Local Political Landscape and GAM's Political Influence. In fact, the changes in the local political frameworks were not unique to Aceh. The collapse of Suharto's New Order regime amidst the Asian economic crisis, followed by the decentralization reform, has allowed for the emergence of a new local political framework. Under decentralization, power has been devolved from the central government to local and regional governments, opening opportunities for the increased involvement of the local legislatures. Thus, local elections and the regional House of Representatives have become important arenas of political contestation (See Hadiz, 2004)). Nevertheless, in Aceh, the important roles of the local House of Representatives (districts and provincial) and their politicians, became even more notable with the involvement of local political parties in the local elections, a privilege accorded Acehnese under their special autonomy status.

late 2007, GAM-approved candidates were elected as either mayors or regents in ten of the nineteen districts/cities in Aceh.

More importantly, the Law on Governing Aceh (LoGA) 2006 allowed Aceh to form local political parties to compete for seats in the district and provincial parliament, a distinct Acehnese right not seen in other provinces. As a result, the Aceh Party (PA), the party representing the former Free Aceh Movement (GAM) and founded by the GAM's exiled leaders and some senior ex-combatants, has since dominated the local elections to the legislature. GAM political actors under the banner of the Aceh Party have entered the arena of local political economy and their political influence has increased significantly.

As a result of this new political arrangement and the increased power of legislators, the budget planning process represents the power relations between members of the district legislature and the executives. The case in Bireuen and Banda Aceh indicates that the policy of financing education is not only a matter of the different financial capability of districts. It also reflects the political contestation between members of district legislatures and executives (in this case the bureaucrats from the DEOs and the BPPDs).

This form of political contestation was apparent, for instance, between the Bireuen DEO and the district councils in the annual budgeting process. The head of the DEO perceived that the DEO has to agree on the direction of politicians, that is, legislators, even though it did not agree with the local government priority programme: otherwise, the budget plan they proposed would not be authorised by the House.

*As a programme implementer, we [the DEO] realise that the influence of politics in education is very dominant, especially the influence of local legislators. The problem is that they [the legislators'] lack education qualifications, so it has become a burden on us to deal with them. It is difficult for us to run our programme, as we have to deal with so much political interference, and so many interests. For example, our main programme is to*

*train as many teachers as possible. Yet, this is not a priority for them [the legislators], they prefer to build schools and to improve the school facilities in kampongs. As a result, we cannot run the programme we previously planned a hundred percent and we have to switch the focus of the programme, as the fund is also limited. (Head of DEO, Bireuen, interview 12)*

He claimed that if the DEO disagrees with the politicians, it could in turn lead to a delay in the budget plan, and eventually hinder the budgeting process itself.

*...at the end [of the budgeting process], the district legislature members are the ones that have the right to authorise the budget. They can annul the programme that we proposed. For example, this year we [the DEO] want to enhance the teaching and learning [at schools] using Information and Communication Technology (ICT). However, they [the legislators] think that it [ICT] is not important. They said, 'in the old days we only studied in the balai [barrack], and now you see what we have achieved [as the legislators]'. Likewise, they turned down our proposals so many times. Some programmes are finally implemented, but not entirely. (Head of DEO, Bireuen, Interview 12)<sup>lxxxvi</sup>*

In this process, it appears that the district council, as the decision-making political body, has control over the executive, in this case the DEO.

The political contestation between the legislature and the executive seems to be more apparent in Bireuen than Banda Aceh. Possibly, the composition of political parties in the district councils can explain this finding. In Bireuen, politicians who were ex-GAM combatants from two local parties, the Aceh Party (PA) and the Aceh National Party (PNA)<sup>59</sup>, dominated the district House of Representative (see Table

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<sup>59</sup> The Aceh National Party (PNA) was established by Irwandi Yusuf, the former governor of Aceh (2006-2011) from ex-GAM members who split from the Aceh party as a result of internal friction within GAM. In the first legislative election in 2009, the Aceh National Party had not been established. Approaching the second election for governor after the Helsinki MoU, friction within the GAM elite became more apparent. The Aceh Party refused to nominate Irwandi for his second round of governor, and proposed the former GAM foreign and finance minister Zaini Abdullah. Later, Irwandi founded the PNA, which was also backed by some of GAM's prominent figures.

16); while in Banda Aceh, the composition of political parties sitting in the district council was more diverse.

**Table 16: The composition of district House of Representatives seats in Banda Aceh and Bireuen in the 2009 and 2014 elections**

Name of party	Numbers of Seats			
	Bireuen		Banda Aceh	
	2009	2014	2009	2014
Aceh Party (PA/GAM's official party)	25	13	6	4
Aceh National Party (PNA/ GAM affiliation)	-	5	-	-
Other Parties together	10	22	24	26
<b>Total</b>	<b>35</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>30</b>

Since the Aceh Party won the Bireuen legislative election in 2009 and 2014, members of Bireuen's legislature mainly came from GAM-affiliated politicians. In 2009, 25 of 35 legislature members were legislators from the Aceh party. Although the PA lost a significant number of votes in the 2014 election, its representation in the local council is still dominant. From 40 House of Representative members elected in 2014, 13 are from the Aceh Party, five from the Aceh National Party, and the remaining 22 are from a total of four national parties. This loss might have happened because the PA's electorate was divided, with a newly established party that was affiliated with GAM, the Aceh National Party (PNA), contesting the election.

Generally, PA and PNA members came from a background of having been ex-GAM combatants and some of them graduated from *dayah*, or had close relations with *dayah ulama*. Moreover, the regent of Bireuen also comes from the background of GAM and *dayah*. Accordingly, it seems that the funding for the policy of Islamic education in Bireuen is directed more towards improving *dayah* education through funding to the BPPD, rather than strengthening Islamic curricula at public schools through the DEO:



*In Bireuen, the regent has a vision and mission for Islamic sharia and dayah education. He lobbied the district House of Representative to allocate five percent of the education budget for dayah. The sources are from the district budget and Special Autonomy Fund. As a result, since the Bireuen BPPD was established in 2012, the development of dayah in Bireuen has progressed a lot compared to before 2012. (Head of BPPD, Bireuen, Interview 17)<sup>lxxxvii</sup>*

*The problem is, not all districts in Aceh have established a district BPPD, even Banda Aceh. In fact, there are a few dayah in Banda Aceh, although not as many as in other districts. I can see that Bireuen local government is more serious about dayah, because the head of its BPPD comes from dayah. (Ulama, Banda Aceh, Interview 6)<sup>lxxxviii</sup>*

While the BPPD seems to be happy with the funding policy for *dayah*, the interviews with the head of the DEO, and also teachers and headmasters, revealed tension around the decision-making policy for education. For instance, the head of the DEO perceived that since the former GAM combatants dominate the district legislature, the direction of education policy has been significantly affected. The influence of GAM politicians in Bireuen's local politics was expressed by the head of the DEO, as the implementer of education policies in Bireuen:

*In Bireuen, the majority of legislative members are ex-GAM combatants. They are very dominant in controlling the decision-making in the district House of Representatives. (Head of DEO, Bireuen, Interview 12)*

The influence of the GAM's figures outside the political arena was also noted by a few respondents,

*During the conflict, when there was gunfire, we had to stop [teaching] and lie prone. Now, Aceh is in a peaceful condition, we [Acehnese] are happy and we should maintain this situation. Especially here in Bireuen, we have many prominent GAM figures. They are very helpful; they said if we need any help, just go report to them. While during the conflict, many GAM combatants approached us to threaten us for money or other things. Now, these*

*combatants have been handled by these GAM figures. (Headmaster, Bireuen, Interview 26) <sup>lxxxix</sup>*

Interviews revealed that some education stakeholders were dissatisfied with the domination of GAM politicians in local politics, especially in relation to their lack of education and ability to govern. Mainly, participants considered members of the House of Representatives from GAM as having low education qualifications and being inexperienced in government.

*The recent period [2014, second election since the MoU] is much better. In the previous period [2009 election], more than a half of the Bireuen House of Representative members came from an ex-combatant background, with low educational qualifications. The majority of them only have the dayah qualification or a literacy certificate. This has resulted in a lack of capacities [of the legislators] in drafting regulations. As a result, the quality of legislation was very poor. (Head of DEO, Bireuen, Interview 12)*

*If I am well educated, I won't vote for the ex-GAM to be elected as legislature members. But, what can I say; the reality is most people have voted for them, the Aceh Party. I think their human resources need to be improved; otherwise, they will be defeated [in the next election]. In two or three rounds ahead, the support for them will be zero. It has been proven already, they lost fifty percent of their votes in one round [in the 2014 local election compared to the 2009 election], because they did not perform well. (Headmaster, Bireuen, Interview 14)*

These complaints about the lacklustre performance of the legislators appeared to be a common case throughout Aceh in general; it is not specific to Bireuen. A report published by the International Crisis Group on Pre-Election in Aceh noted (ICG, 2008, p. 3):

Many of the candidates, however, are the KPA<sup>60</sup> members with limited education and GAM loyalty as their major qualification. It will not be easy for them to examine budgets or exercise other oversight functions, and some, particularly at the district level, will be subject to pressure from local KPA members for money, contracts and other political favours.

As also noted by a *teungku* in Banda Aceh,

*If they [PA legislative members] do not perform well, they will see the consequences. As we can see now, they lost nearly a half of their votes. In the previous election [2009], PA gained 80% of the total seats in the provincial legislature, but in the subsequent election [2014] PA only gained 50%. This means that people have started to lose their faith in PA [GAM] because of their poor performance. It is very easy now to access information, so people know that they cannot be easily betrayed and deceived. They know who their true champions are, and who are the ones that only gave them lip service. (Teungku, Banda Aceh, Interview 9)<sup>xc</sup>*

This is a typical challenge for former rebels; they have limited experience in running government – negotiating different interests, setting policies and drawing up budgets (Hillman, 2012, p. 161). An ICG report on the performance of the Aceh Party, and the Aceh Provincial Assembly in general, revealed this lack of performance. The report shows that until 2011 the only legislation produced by the Assembly was the provincial budget, yet it was delayed for two months. This had made Aceh the last Indonesian province to get its Fiscal Year 2011 finances in order, and the province incurred a sizeable penalty as a result (ICG, 2011, p. 5).

In Banda Aceh, on the contrary, officials did not really pay attention to the influence of GAM members or other politicians. The interview with the Head of the

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<sup>60</sup> The KPA is Aceh Transition Committee, a civil organization established shortly after the signing of the 2005 peace accord to transform the military wing of the Free Aceh Movement (GAM) into a civilian organization. The leader of the KPA is the former commander of GAM. During its first year of establishment, the KPA played a significant role in facilitating former GAM combatants to support the peace process and helping them to reintegrate into civilian life (Uesugi, 2014, p. 43).

Banda Aceh DEO showed that tensions around the budgeting process between the executive and legislature seemed to be minimal in Banda Aceh, and the relationship between executive and legislature appeared to be more co-operative. This can be inferred from the statement by the Head of Banda Aceh's DEO that he had no difficulties in planning and implementing education programmes as long as the Banda Aceh Mayor supported the programme he proposed (interview 2). For example, concerning the budget for Islamic education, he explained:

*The budget for this diniyah programme has been allocated in the district budget plan. The Banda Aceh government is very committed to support this program by allocating the amount of budget as per our [DEO's] request. Hence, this programme will not put an extra burden on the parents, such as for the provision of the textbooks [for the diniyah programme] (Head of DEO, Banda Aceh, Interview 2)<sup>xci</sup>*

He further noted:

*In my opinion, this can happen thanks to autonomy. Before autonomy, everything was decided by the central government. We [the local governments] did not have independence to run our own programme. Indeed, as far as I have observed, autonomy in education is obvious in Banda Aceh. (Head of DEO, Banda Aceh, Interview 2)<sup>xcii</sup>*

This does not suggest that the influence of politicians in any education policies in Aceh could not be noticed at all. It might indicate, however, that the effect of this influence was not to a degree that undermined the policy-making process itself.

This is in contrast to the political circumstances surrounding the budgeting process in Bireuen, where the influence of politicians was remarkable. Officials in Bireuen highlighted the difficulties in planning and implementing programmes because of the strong interference from local politicians, as presented above. The less disruptive influence of politicians in Banda Aceh may have occurred because the composition of political parties in the Banda Aceh District Legislature is more diverse, without any political parties necessarily dominating the legislature. From

the total 30 members of the district House of Representatives, only four members are from the Aceh Party, and the other 26 members are from nine parties altogether, without any parties gaining more than five seats (see Table 16).

The political contestation between executives and legislatures, as seen in the local budgeting process, can be understood with reference to the major changes due to the decentralized budget mechanism. Before decentralization, the position of executives was relatively more powerful than that of the legislatures. Under Suharto's New Order Regime, parliament was marginalized as a largely rubber-stamp institution, both at the national and local levels. Legislators were called on only to formally approve the budget presented by the executive. Now that local legislators are elected directly, all major decisions need to be approved by the elected local council, which is the highest decision-making authority in a district/province for the development and implementation of plans and budget (Law No. 22/1999). Since then, legislators have begun to act with significant independence, challenging the power of the executive.

#### *8.4.3. The Informal Decision-making Process and the Emergence of Neo-Patrimonialism*

Alongside the formal process of budget planning, this study also revealed that the decision on budget allocation was not only executed based on formal procedures, but also through a political deal between the executive and legislature through lobbying and other informal processes. The informal process, where lobbying and networks becomes important, was evident in the following accounts:

*The budget allocated to the provincial BPPD fluctuated, and was never fixed. It depended on lobbying, including the funding allocated from the Special Autonomy Fund and Oil and Gas Fund. This is ridiculous. They [the provincial budget team under the governor's office] do not have a standard in allocating the fund. They should have set a ceiling for each allocation, for example, how*

*much could be allocated for dayah, and decide based on the proposal we made. Instead, allocation is based on lobbying, thus it fluctuates and is uncertain. (Official, Provincial BPPD, Interview 8) <sup>xciii</sup>*

*To speak frankly, nowadays the decision on the budget allocation depends on lobbying, and does not depend on needs assessment. This is absurd. We [the BPPD] have a short-term and long-term plan, but this budgeting plan will not be approved without lobbying the [provincial] legislature members. (Officials of the Provincial BPPD, Interview 22)<sup>xciv</sup>*

The use of an informal mechanism was particularly apparent concerning the allocation of the discretionary fund. In Aceh, each member of the provincial legislature receives an annual allocation of around 5 billion rupiahs (US\$ 376,150) to be spent on their constituents. This fund is called the ‘aspiration fund’. Some districts in Aceh also allocated this aspiration fund as part of their annual budget plan. This ‘aspiration fund’ was usually distributed to the beneficiaries through informal mechanisms such as those explained by a member of the provincial legislature:

*If we talk about a discretionary fund, the mechanism is, for example, if someone personally knows the governor or the vice governor, then they can apply for the fund. Similarly, it [the fund] can also be channelled through the members of the legislature: if someone knows the legislators then he/she can apply to them. After that, all the proposals will go through the process in the Biro Kesra [Bureau for Community Welfare]. The legislature and the Biro Kesra will finally make the decision regarding the proposal. (House of Representative member from PA, Interview 24)<sup>xcv</sup>*

Accordingly, as much as was possible, education stakeholders tried to build networks with the politicians, mainly members of the local legislature, in order to gain access to resources. Some education stakeholders (headmasters, teachers, parents and directors in school and *dayah*) interviewed in this study perceived that schools with better political connections with either legislators, bureaucrats in

the local offices, or GAM affiliations would have a better chance to access the funds, especially since GAM's politicians dominated in both the executive and legislative branches. The statements below encapsulate how connection, or political affiliation, influences the allocation and accessibility of educational resources.

*All of those funds can be obtained if we have access to power. The ones that have that power are the [district/provincial] members of the legislature. Through their 'aspirational fund', they allocate funding to matters that do not always relate to the learning process, and with the changes to the intended education results. (Director of Dayah, Banda Aceh, Interview 4)<sup>xcvi</sup>*

*If we are passive in approaching [the legislators], then we will get nothing. The government has abundant resources, but without approaching them, they would not know that we are in need. Indeed, it would be difficult [to access the fund] if you have no channel to power. We should not be greedy though, do not ask from different resources for one specific allocation. (Teungku, Banda Aceh, Interview 31)<sup>xcvii</sup>*

*It [access to the fund] depends on our connection with the members of the legislature. I do not know how much we [the dayah]] have received so far. If I am not mistaken, the channel [to access the fund] is through the BPPD. The sources are from the Special Autonomy Fund channelled through the 'aspirational fund'. (Teungku, Bireuen, Interview 32)<sup>xcviii</sup>*

*Do not dream of getting funding if a dayah has no access to the legislators. Although the dayah is big [with a large number of santri], if they [dayah ulama] do not have a channel to the legislators, they would not get access to resources. On the contrary, even though a dayah is small, and has just been established, as long as the ulama knows the legislators or has the same political affiliation, then it is easy to get funded. (Official of provincial BPPD, Interview 8)<sup>xcix</sup>*

Besides the importance of political connections in accessing the fund, these quotes also indicate that in the practice of financing education stakeholders perceive

discretionary funds as having as much importance as the routine budget. Mainly, the participants view the discretionary fund as a solution when the amount in the routine budget is limited and more difficult to access. While the routine budget needs applicants to undertake a formal process for the purposes of allocating the fund, for discretionary funds they do not need to go through a formal procedure to access the fund. For example, in 2008, the Bireuen district government allocated 4,117,600,000 rupiahs (309,768 US\$) for a block grant under the social welfare programme. From this budget ceiling, members of Bireuen's legislature proposed 2,960,000,000 rupiahs (222,736 US\$) should be allocated to the 'aspiration fund', and divided among the 35 members of the legislature. Concerning the accessibility and distribution of this 'aspiration fund', a Bireuen legislative member said that each legislator has a right to determine who is going to get access to the fund by writing a memo for the beneficiaries (As cited in GASAK, 2008). He contended that in order to access these funds, the potential beneficiaries were required to have a memo in hand to ensure that the funds were evenly distributed.

The perceived importance of discretionary funds also suggests that politicians considered investing in the education sector to gain benefits in terms of gaining political support from educational communities. As such, discretionary funds are assets for politicians. Facing electoral competition, politicians recognised the importance of delivering good results in some sectors in order to achieve legitimacy and continuing support for their election. Providing such funds to their local constituents is a means to buy the loyalty of their followers.

*For them [the politicians], it [the allocation of the discretionary fund] is an opportunity to recompense their constituents for the support they [the politicians] gained during the election. (Head of DEO, Bireuen, interview 12)*

*Some allocations from the discretionary fund for dayah are distributed through us [the Provincial BPPD]. However, they [the provincial legislature members] already decided the list of beneficiaries, we [dayah] have no power over that [decision on the beneficiaries]. In Aceh, members of the legislature*



*use the discretionary fund for their political benefit, in order to be re-elected.  
(Official, Provincial BPPD, Interview 8)<sup>c</sup>*

Accordingly, the practice of allocating funds through informal mechanisms and political networks has tended to create the practice of neo-patrimonialism.<sup>61</sup> On the one hand, members of society used their connection with local politicians as a 'problem-solving network', a pragmatic means to find solutions to their everyday concerns, for they have limited access to a formal source of assistance. On the other hand, the politicians used the aspiration fund, government money, as a vehicle for their political campaigning purposes. This neo-patrimonial network has potentially distorted the formal budget mechanism, as the formal and informal mechanisms have overlapped.

*Usually, the [provincial] legislature decides to allocate a certain amount of the budget for the discretionary fund in the Provincial Budgeting Board. Then, without our consent, this allocation is channelled through our [the BPPD] budget. For example, they decided to earmark the fund for building new dayah. This is contradictory to our policy, which is to prioritise building facilities in the dayah that are already established. Thus, building a new dayah does not align with our policy. This is our concern; they [legislators] distribute the fund to new dayah which are unlikely to be sustainable.  
(Official, Provincial BPPD, Interview 8)<sup>ci</sup>*

Furthermore, the process of lobbying and transaction between the executive and the legislature concerning the allocation of the aspirational fund has also resulted in delays to budget planning. This delay has been reported by some local newspapers, especially when there is disagreement between the two parties (See for examples Burhanudin, 2013; Prang, 2015; Serambi Indonesia, 2015). For example, in 2015, the government of Aceh delayed submitting its budgeting plan to

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<sup>61</sup> In a patrimonial state the ruler sought to win voluntary allegiance by satisfying the aspirations – especially the material interests – of his supporters through distribution of fiefs and benefits in exchange for tribute and loyalty (Crouch, 1979, p. 572).

be ratified by the Ministry of Finance because of disagreement between the governor of Aceh and the Provincial Parliament concerning the increased budget for the aspirational fund proposed by the parliament.

Meanwhile, in order to compensate for the deficit in the budget allocation to fulfil the quota for this discretionary fund, the local government needs to consider cutting the budget ceiling of the routine programmes that have been previously planned. This practice also occurred in other districts, as well as in the province (Saky, 2015; Z Hendri, 2015). This delay seems to undermine the formal allocation (quota) made for the education budget, and distorts the education programmes that have been stated in the policy document.

*For example, they [local legislators] allocated a certain sum in the discretionary fund for funding a mobile library in schools A, B, C in our [the DEO] budget. We [the DEO] were not able to use this allocation for other purposes or for other schools. The problem is, this allocation is not an extra budget, but it is deducted from our budget. Consequently, we [the DEO] had to put aside another programme that we had prepared, or at least we had to reduce the volume of that programme/activity. If we [the DEO] disagree with them, they [the legislators] will play with our budget, and this could result in our budget being delayed. (Head of DEO, Bireuen, Interview 12)<sup>cii</sup>*

In fact, delays in budget approval is a relatively common practice in Aceh. In 2015, the Ministry of Finance sent warning letters to the provincial and district governments of Aceh threatening to postpone the transfer of GAF (25 percent of monthly transfers) for delays in submitting their budgets to the Ministry of Finance. The local newspapers (Prang, 2015; Saky, 2015) blamed the political contestation between the executive and legislature regarding the allocation of the aspiration fund in the annual budgeting for the delay in the budgeting plan.

### **8.5. Perceived Unequal Access to Resources and its Potential for Social Discontent within Aceh Society**

It is clear that the respondents perceived an increased influence of politicians in education financing policy, both in the formal process of policy making and in informal mechanisms through the allocation of discretionary funds. Education stakeholders recognised the importance of making political connections with legislators in order to access the discretionary fund, as they have the authority to allocate it. Although the fund was mostly channelled through the development programmes within the specific district offices such as the office for education, health, and agriculture, decisions regarding the sectors and beneficiaries of the fund were in fact in the hands of the legislators. The role of the district's offices was limited to distributing the fund, without any authority to amend its allocation. Therefore, the education stakeholders tended to seek connection with these politicians, and this eventually contributed to a growth in neo-patrimonialism.

However, the role of local legislators in the formal budgeting process is not to directly allocate funds. Yet their role is even more significant, as they are the final authority for legitimatising the budget as proposed by the specific sectors, such as the DEO and the BPPD. As a result, there is potential for political contestation between the officials and the legislators, as both seek to control the resources for their own purposes. Politicians need resources to be allocated to their constituents to maintain their political allegiance, whereas executives try to defend the allocation of their budget as they have to compete with other institutions. For example, since the establishment of the BPPD, the education budget must be divided between the DEOs and the BPPDs; while previously, the DEO was the only institution responsible for distributing education resources. Thus, the two bodies appear to compete for a higher allocation for their budget. Here, the role of local legislators becomes crucial, as they are the final authority to decide the budget plan.

The increased influence of local politicians also affected the budgeting process itself in terms of the use of informal mechanisms. Besides the formal budgeting

process, the decision on budget allocation appeared to be influenced by other informal mechanisms such as lobbying. The findings showed that the use of informal mechanisms had consequently increased the practice of neo-patrimonialism, as stakeholders perceived the importance of making connections with politicians. This has eventually undermined the education policy itself and distorted the budget quota allocated for routine education programmes. While the neo-patrimonial network created by recent political arrangements has benefitted local society with political connections, this practice has eventually resulted in discontent among some other segments of society concerning who gets the benefits of the fund. This perceived unequal access to resources might heighten social discontent within Aceh society, as interpreted from the following accounts.

*This is a serious problem; huge amounts of funding were not distributed to the correct target. This funding includes the scholarship for master and doctoral degrees. The recruitment for the scholarship candidate was associated with political intrigue and connection. That is why many good people resigned from membership of the scholarship committee, including a good friend of mine. Perhaps this is my subjectivity, but I am responsible with my statement, as I have a basis for what I say (Dayah Director, Banda Aceh, Interview 4)<sup>ciii</sup>*

*They [the government, politicians] built new schools, but no students attended the schools. They are just fond of building infrastructure as they get kickback fees from that. On the other hand, many established schools did not receive enough attention. The students in those schools still study on the floor [no chairs]. Meanwhile, they also built a new bus terminal without any bus using the terminal. In the middle of the terminal, there is a praying room, but who is going to pray there? There is a toilet in the terminal, but nobody using that toilet. While here [in dayah] many people need toilets, but the toilets are very few. (Dayah ulama, Bireuen, Interview 11)<sup>civ</sup>*

*During the conflict, they [GAM combatants] fought in the forest with the support of the surrounding neighbourhood. Now, they have become the rulers,*

*but what they do is to enrich themselves. If they only enrich themselves without making any serious efforts for the [whole of] society, they will see the consequences. What I want to say is that the sweet fruits from autonomy have not yet been enjoyed by the majority of Acehnese; only a small segment of Acehnese benefited from autonomy. This is very disappointing. (Teungku, Banda Aceh, Interview 9)<sup>cv</sup>*

*The Aspirational Fund has not been distributed equally. In my opinion, it would be better if this fund was omitted, because the fund brought many problems. We all voted for these politicians as our representatives in the government; but why do some people gain the benefit, while others don't? What remains are just problems, so we feel like we don't want to vote for those politicians again in the future. (Headmaster 3, Banda Aceh, Interview 20)<sup>cvi</sup>*

This perceived unequal access to resources may over time contribute to divisions and tensions among Acehnese. This can be inferred from the common expression of 'their circle' or 'our circle' during the interviews, which refers to the political connections, or affiliations, to which people belong. These quotes are very powerful in describing this emerging tension in Aceh society.

*This is what happening in Aceh, since GAM dominated local politics after the signing of the Helsinki MoU. They [GAM] think that what we [Acehnese] have achieved now [special autonomy and peace agreement] is the result of their hard work. As such, only they and their circle have the right to enjoy the fruit of this peace. (Officials of the provincial BPPD, Banda Aceh, Interview 22)<sup>cvi</sup>*

*It becomes more difficult now to access those resources, if we do not belong to their [the GAM] circle, either their party [PA] or their affiliations. In my opinion, if politics become dominant and determine everything, things will get worse in the future. They think, this is our moment [GAM victory], so it is our [GAM's] right to enjoy the fruit. This can be seen in the assignment of*

*bureaucrats; the candidates for those positions are not recruited based on their capabilities, but instead based on their connections [with GAM]. This is the most important thing that needs to be resolved; otherwise, the system that is already established is at stake. (Headmaster 1, Banda Aceh, Interview 18)<sup>cviii</sup>*

*This autonomy is great. However, if Aceh does not have capable human resources to run this autonomy, for the benefit of all people in Aceh, it [the autonomy] will become the second bombs for Aceh [after the conflict with the central government]. If those that have been chosen as Acehnese leaders [the GAM] cannot perform well, or do not have good political will, then Aceh could be worse off than before. Previously Aceh was exploited by the central government, now Aceh has been exploited by its own leaders. If previously Aceh went to war with the central government, it is possible that in the future Acehnese will be involved in a war among themselves. (Teungku, Banda Aceh, Interview 9)<sup>cix</sup>*

## **8.6. Conclusion**

This chapter explores how financing education has affected the governing of education policies and practices as the autonomy of Aceh has increased. The findings in this chapter thus contribute to answering the first research question of this thesis: “How has decentralization affected the autonomy of Aceh in governing its education policies and practices?” Three specific findings with regard to changes in the area of financing education, due to the allocation of the Special Autonomy Fund (SAF) and the Oil and Gas Fund (OGF), are presented. Section 8.3. reviews the provision of the SAF and the OGF and their effects on the allocation of educational resources. Section 8.4 explores the influence of recent changes in the local political structure on access to educational resources. Section 8.5 investigates

the emerging tension within Aceh society as a result of perceived unequal access to resources.

First, the provision of the Special Autonomy Fund and the Oil and Gas Fund has increased the allocation for educational resources in Aceh. Aceh's public expenditure for education tripled in 2013 compared to 2007 as a result of the provision of the SAF and OGF to the education sector. Accordingly, Aceh is among the highest spenders on education, ranking fifth among the 34 provinces in 2013. One of the objectives of providing the autonomy funds is as a dividend for peace in Aceh, to compensate for Aceh's struggle for independence. The allocation of SAF and OGF is intended to benefit the Acehnese and redress some of the grievances expressed during the conflict with the central government.

Second, the increased autonomy of Aceh has been expressed in the changes to the local political structures, which, in turn, affects education policies and practices. There is evidence that the implementation of decentralization in Aceh has resulted in greater autonomy for the regions (province and districts) to govern their education. This can be seen from the involvement of local actors, legislators and bureaucrats, in decisions regarding matters related to public interests through a mechanism provided by decentralization. The case of the Islamic education policy in Banda Aceh and Bireuen suggests that the power for decision making has been devolved to the lower level in districts. The different approaches in funding policy for education between the two districts indicates that districts have a real authority to manage local matters. To some extent, this seems to suggest that real and meaningful local autonomy is occurring.

On the other hand, decentralization has also affected local political structures in terms of the relations between legislatures and executives. Law No. 22/1999 has promoted democratization by strengthening the position of the local parliament at the district level as the only body responsible for political decision making within its given territory. Arguably, the most significant new role for legislators is participation in a new consultative budget process, as shown in this study. Accordingly, decentralization had also potentially brought the contestation of

political power to the local level, as more power is in the hands of local politicians, in this case, legislators. This study has found that the funding policy for education reflects a local power structure. The politics of budget planning observed in this study shows the political contestation between legislators and executives. In addition, this study shows that, rather than using formal policy making, legislators have tended to endorse the informal political process through lobbying and other unofficial mechanisms, which has begun to distort the formal budgeting process. This political contestation, combined with informal process, has resulted in policy making being undermined, as shown by the delay in budget plans.

Additionally, the use of informal mechanisms has created a patrimonial network where access to resources has been determined through political networks and personal connections. This was apparent in the practice of allocating a discretionary fund – the ‘aspiration fund’ – to members of the legislature. Unlike the routine budget, which was disbursed through routine programmes, the allocation of this discretionary fund was the privilege of the legislators. This study revealed that there is a tendency for local legislators to allocate funds in a manner that is intertwined with their political interest. They have tended to allocate funds in order to gain support in the next election round. In the end, only people with access to the legislators were likely to benefit from the fund. As a result, the respondents perceived that the share from the Special Autonomy Fund in certain allocations was not equally distributed.

Third, in the case of funding policy for education in Banda Aceh and Bireuen this perceived unequal access to resources has resulted in conflicting arguments concerning whose interests had been fulfilled by the provision of the Special Autonomy Fund and the Oil and Gas Fund. Although a large amount of respondents in school and *dayah* (headmasters, teachers, *teungku*, *ulama*, and parents) perceived the increase in funding to education as being significant, and as affecting their interests, they thought that those with political connections with politicians and the GAM elites highly benefited under the new arrangement of special autonomy. Some respondents even perceived that the situation was worse than



before autonomy, in the sense that the division among different segments of society are more apparent now, as indicated by the terms 'our circle' or 'their circle'. These discontents are partly related to the recent changes in local political structure in Aceh, which allows GAM's Aceh Party and its affiliated politicians to dominate local political structures, executives and legislatures, both at the district and provincial levels. As a result, a number of respondents perceived that it is easier to access the fund if they have connections or political affiliations to GAM.

On balance, the case of Aceh's special autonomy showed that decentralization has resulted in meaningful autonomy for Aceh, where power is devolved to local authorities, as seen in the implementation of Islamic education policy and funding policy for education in Banda Aceh and Bireuen. However, the changes in local political structure after the granting of autonomy have created new political contestation among different segments of society, due to the perceived unequal access to resources. Indeed, Aceh's special autonomy has opened opportunities for the new elites, the ex-GAM combatants, to enter into contestation in the political arena. However, the emergence of new political elites in Aceh is likely to shift the struggle for peace in Aceh from conflict between Aceh and the central government to the potential of horizontal conflict to compete for resources. Thus, if this practice continues, Aceh may risk the creation of fragmentation of its society, rather than unification. This is contradictory to the real intention of the provision of the Special Autonomy Fund as a peace dividend for Aceh.

## CHAPTER 9

### DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

#### POLITICAL DECENTRALIZATION, AUTONOMY, IDENTITY, AND CONFLICT

*“After being granted the special autonomy fund, people stopped making noises about Acehese identity. They have become apathetic” (teacher, PWR 6)*

##### 9.1. Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is twofold. First, the overall findings are discussed in light of the first research question: “How has decentralization affected the autonomy of Aceh in governing its education policies and practices?” Second, the chapter demonstrates how the research contributes to the broader literature on the efficacy of decentralization on mitigating intra-state conflict. In this respect, it also speaks directly to the second research question in this study. This question is, “How has decentralization affected the issues stemming from distinct Acehese identities and thus contributed to the management of conflict between Aceh and the central government?”

The chapter begins by exploring the main findings with regard to the implementation of political decentralization and its impact on autonomy for Aceh (Section 9.2.). The importance of identity politics in decentralization discourse in Aceh and Indonesia in general is then examined (Section 9.3.). The third section discusses the potential of political decentralization, as manifested in the education arena, for mitigating long-lasting conflict between the government of Aceh and the central government of Jakarta (Section 9.4.). The likelihood of disputes among various stakeholders at a local level within Aceh, due to the institutional and structural changes after decentralization, is elaborated upon in the fourth section (Section 9.5.). Lastly, the discussion summary is presented in section 9.6. This

chapter concludes the thesis by demonstrating the contributions made by the research to the literature on decentralization, autonomy, identity construction and conflict; a recommendation for future research; and the possible implication for policy (Section 9.7.).

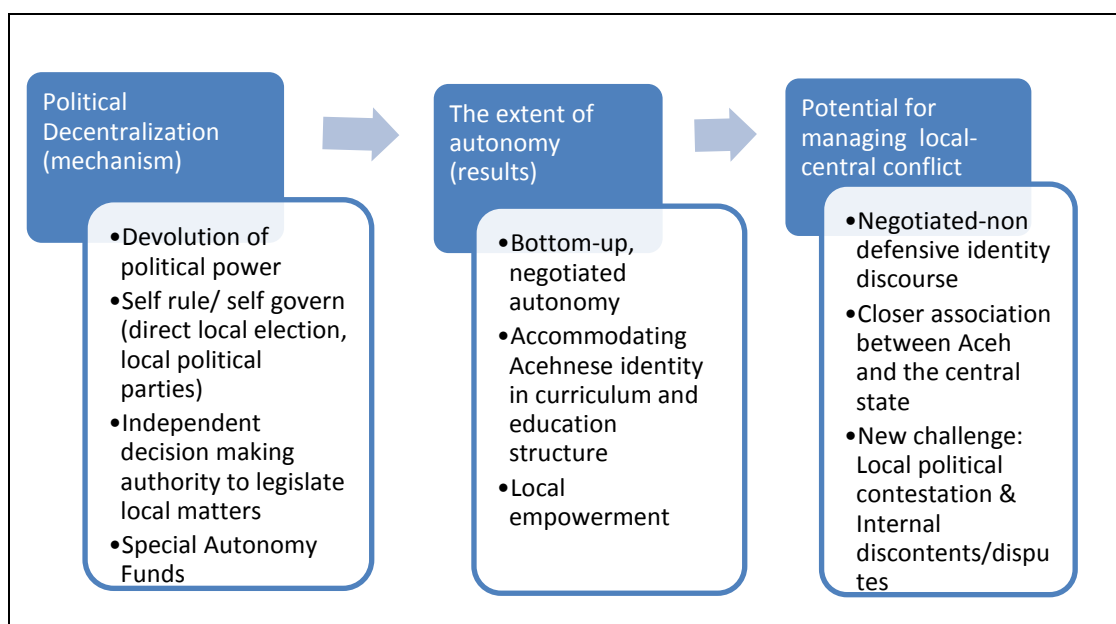
## **9.2. Political Decentralization and the Extent of Autonomy**

To answer the first research question, this study explored the impact of decentralization on the autonomy of Aceh in governing its education policies and practices in three areas of education: curriculum, structure, and finance. The main finding of this thesis is that the implementation of special autonomy has indeed resulted in increased autonomy for Aceh, as evidenced by the ability of Aceh to develop its own education system.

The overall results thus demonstrate that the implementation of political decentralization has resulted in an empowering bottom-up form of autonomy for Aceh. Such autonomy has been achieved by accommodating Acehnese identity and providing a political framework for local empowerment. This is demonstrated by the accommodation of the Islamic curriculum and the *dayah* education system, as representations of distinct Acehnese identity, into Aceh's education system. Interestingly, this accommodation has not led to a strongly Islamised education system in Aceh. Rather, this development has resulted in a hybrid education system; one which promotes a greater association and convergence between Aceh's Islamised and Indonesian secular systems. Autonomy has also provided the framework for increased local empowerment, as indicated by the districts' autonomy in decision-making authority to implement education policies according to local interests and needs.

This thesis further argues that this bottom-up autonomy, resulting from the implementation of political decentralization, has the potential to manage conflict by promoting a more modest identity discourse and, as such, bringing into being a

closer association between Aceh and the Indonesian state. The recent developments in Aceh's education indicate that autonomy has become a negotiated space, where matters which previously remained unresolved between Aceh and the central government, such as the accommodation of the Islamic curriculum, has now been settled in a compromise that could lead to greater stability and peace. Nevertheless, as more resources have been devolved to the province and districts of Aceh through the Special Autonomy Fund, autonomy has also increased the potential for local political contestation and internal disputes over resources. The overall results of the thesis are summarised in Figure 20.



**Figure 20: Political decentralization, the extent of autonomy achieved, and the potential of managing conflict in the case of Aceh's special autonomy**

The following sub-section thus explores the characteristics of the recent special autonomy for Aceh in discussing the extent of autonomy achieved. This thesis argues that the extent of autonomy achieved in Aceh has met the principle of a bottom-up approach. Unlike the previous attempts at autonomy implemented in Aceh, which were top-down initiatives and did not incorporate local actors, the recent form of Aceh's special autonomy is the product of negotiation and compromise between the two parties, and it accommodates local voices.

### 9.2.1. Earlier Years' Top-down Versus Recent Bottom-up Autonomy

In response to the demands of regions, autonomy is often offered as part of a political solution to various forms of conflict, in some cases through mechanisms of decentralization (Agranoff, 2004). Using the concept of bottom-up autonomy developed in the literature review (Table 1), this sub-section presents an investigation of Aceh's autonomy over time, focussing on the failure of past autonomy efforts granted to Aceh and the likelihood of success of the recent implementation of special autonomy.

In 1959, autonomy was first granted to Aceh in the form of 'special region' status, which gave Aceh special rights in religion, education, and custom. This was an attempt to overcome the first insurgency in Aceh after the independence of the Republic, the *Darul Islam* movement (Abode of Islam). This form of autonomy was very limited and defined by the central government, rather than negotiated between the two parties. As argued by Kell (1995, p. 52), Aceh became a special region in name only. In reality, it was still subject to the extreme centralization of Suharto's New Order regime. This autonomy failed to maintain peace in Aceh and conflict re-ignited, led by GAM, and grievances continued as GAM's independence movement grew in strength.

In 1999 and 2001, the central government once again granted autonomy in Aceh, this time in the form of 'special autonomy'. There were four spheres of privilege provided by this special autonomy status: religion or *sharia*, education, custom, and the role of *ulama*. However, GAM, which had become a more secular-nationalist movement by that time, refused the implementation of Islamic *sharia*, saying that it was only a strategy of the central government to gain support from Acehnese and thus to de-legitimise GAM's independence movement (Ichwan, 2011).

In order to counter the latest GAM insurgency, the democratic regime that ruled the country after the collapse of the New Order regime in 1998, started considering a new approach. Triggered by the tsunami of December 2004, and

with the help of the international community, this new political approach succeeded to bring the two parties into a series of negotiations that ended the conflict and reached an agreement, known as the Helsinki Agreement of 2005. The result is the new arrangement – special autonomy –, which grants Aceh an increased authority in diverse areas, from a greater share of natural resources revenue to the implementation of Islamic *sharia*.

The most remarkable provision of this recent special autonomy is the creation of a new political framework that allows GAM's political participation through Aceh's direct local elections and the right to establish local political parties, as stated in the Law of Governing Aceh (LoGA). In this sense, this new political framework has given Aceh a right to self-government. This is an important point that GAM demanded during the negotiations, and which was previously refused by the central government. When political decentralization has reached the extent of self-government, it can be argued that true and meaningful autonomy has been achieved (Agranoff, 2004; Loughlin, 2000). Therefore, in this thesis the Helsinki agreement and its embodiment in the LoGA are considered as having given Aceh meaningful autonomy, bottom-up autonomy, through political decentralization.

Differently from a top-down approach, which defines autonomy in terms of the power granted from central government to local government, a bottom-up approach views autonomy as a relational construct, created and expressed within the on-going process of social and political interaction between the local and its broader social and political entities (Brown, 1992 cited in Lake, 1994, p. 426). In this sense, autonomy is not a commodity owned in varying amounts by localities, and it is not something granted from the upper level to the lower level. Instead, it is the capacity to determine and express local interests, including recognition of identity, through political activity (Pratchett, 2004). It is the right of communities to govern themselves in order to protect and promote their distinctive collective identity (Guinjoan & Rodon, 2014; Knight, 1982; Loughlin, 2000; Rodriguez-Pose & Sandall, 2008). Therefore, autonomy is about understanding the power relations

between localities and their broader environment (Defilippis, 1999; Pratchett, 2004).

This thesis argues that the recent effort to achieve special autonomy in Aceh has, as evidenced in education, fulfilled the principle of bottom-up autonomy. This bottom-up autonomy differs from the previous autonomy in Aceh, as the current autonomy has been initiated, negotiated, and agreed between the two parties, rather than constituting a one-sided form of autonomy. The findings in the following table show that Aceh's special autonomy has met the principles of bottom-up autonomy.

**Table 17: The extent of the recent autonomy in Aceh's education**

Concepts	Authors	Principles	Features
Bottom-up autonomy	(Agranoff, 2004; Defilippis, 1999; Guinjoan & Rodon, 2014; Keating, 2001; Knight, 1982; Loughlin, 2000; Pratchett, 2004; Rodriguez-Pose & Sandall, 2008)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Generated from below, not imposed from above</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Helsinki agreement: Special autonomy was negotiated and agreed between GAM and Indonesian government, not imposed from above</li> </ul>
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Self-rule (self-govern)</li> </ul>	The LoGA: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Direct local election</li> <li>Local political parties</li> <li>Elected local governments</li> </ul>
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Independent authority in decision and execution over local matters</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Autonomy in decision making authority to legislate local matters (local education policies and practices)</li> </ul>
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Protect and promote distinctive identity (autonomy as reflection of identity)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Accommodation of distinct Acehnese identity in education:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The integration of Islamic and secular curriculum, and</li> <li>The integration of <i>dayah</i> education into the Aceh education system</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Negotiated space between regions and the central government (Power relations)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Negotiated space between Aceh and the central government:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The implementation of Islamic sharia,</li> <li>The integration of Islamic and secular curriculum, and</li> <li>The integration of <i>dayah</i> education into the state system.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>

One of the important elements of this bottom-up autonomy is how political decentralization has resulted in independent authority for districts in Aceh in decision making and execution over local matters, and how this can potentially affect local empowerment. The next section discusses this specific theme.

### *9.2.2. Political Decentralization, District Autonomy and Local Empowerment*

Some advocates of decentralization claim that political decentralization is supposed to reduce ethnic conflict and secessionism by bringing the government closer to the people, increasing opportunities for citizens to influence policy and participate in government, and ultimately giving groups control over their political, social, and economic affairs through self-government (Brancati, 2006, p. 655; Diprose, 2009, p. 108; Kaufmann, 1996, p. 139). The aims of such political decentralization are to strengthen local accountability, consolidate national integration, and deepen democracy through citizen participation. This section focusses on the investigation of political decentralization implemented in the case of Aceh's special autonomy in terms of promoting local empowerment.

#### *Institutional and Structural Changes after the Implementation of Decentralization*

Political decentralization is mainly characterised by the vertical division of power among multiple levels of government that have independent decision-making authority over at least one issue area (Brancati, 2006, p. 655). Independent decision making means the division of authority between different levels of government to legislate on certain matters. Usually the national level of government legislates on issues that affect a country as a whole, or issues that sub-units of a state cannot provide for individually. The sub-national governments tend to have control over a number of issues that are tailored to the specific needs and interests of different localities and can vary widely. Thus the extent of political



decentralization is determined by the number of issues over which sub-national legislatures have control (Brancati, 2008, pp. 6-7). Therefore, the degree of political decentralization is indicated by the independent authority of sub-national governments to legislate matters through regional or local law.

Indonesia represents a particularly interesting case in terms of the extent of political decentralization it has undertaken. The country has undergone a remarkable transformation in its government system since the implementation of decentralization. The Decentralization Law No. 22/1999 transfers the authority of the central government to the district/municipality level in many fields, including education, health, public works, culture and the environment. The only remaining authority in the hand of the central government are foreign policy, defence and security, finance, the legal system, and religious affairs. In addition, Law No. 25/1999 on fiscal decentralization allows the central government to increase the pool of resources transferred to sub-national governments. Thirty percent of total national expenditure has been devolved to all districts. Law No. 32/2004, enacted later in 2004, allows for local direct election, where all the sub-national governments are elected through democratic election. Arguably, the system has fulfilled the principle of power-sharing and the division of decision-making authorities between regions and the central government. Therefore, Indonesia's decentralization reform is mainly a case of political decentralization.

The implementation of political decentralization in Indonesia has stimulated a major restructuring of political accountability flows in this country, from upward accountability to downward accountability. It reduces the hierarchical relationship between central, provincial, and local government (district and municipality). Moreover, under the new election law, citizens have the freedom to elect their local leaders and parliaments through direct elections. In addition, for locally assigned responsibilities, the branches of ministries in the districts are placed under the jurisdiction of local governments, while previously the branches were under the central ministries. Likewise, local staff members are now accountable to local government, not to a central ministry. These are some of the major

characteristics of political decentralization in Indonesia. Therefore, it can be argued that Indonesian decentralization has transformed the country from one of the most centralized systems in the world to one of the most decentralized ones (Hofman & Kaiser, 2004, p. 2).

In terms of the success of the implementation of decentralization policy, the literature suggests that democracy at the local level will contribute to the success and legitimacy of local autonomy. Moreover, the benefits gained from local autonomy are unlikely to be achieved without democratization at the local level. Thus, the outcome of political decentralization mainly depends on the availability of local democratic institutions (Blair, 2000; Richard C Crook & Manor, 1998). These institutions function to ensure that the local citizens are able to exercise control over local government affairs. In this regard, local elections are political institutions which are considered the most direct mechanism for ensuring local accountability (Blair, 2000; Sujarwoto, 2012).

From here, in terms of the division of power among local government structures, the decentralization law has brought about significant change. Law No. 22/1999 has promoted democratization by strengthening the position of the elected council at the district level. The law clearly states that the district council is the only body responsible for political decision making within its given territory. Consequently, the council has the highest position in the new structure of local government concerning the execution of local matters.

Previously, under Suharto's New Order regime, parliaments – at both national and local level – were marginalized as largely 'rubber-stamp' institutions. Now local legislators are elected directly, and their accountabilities are therefore projected downward to their constituents. Hence, legislators have begun to act with significant independence from the executive and are exploring their new role as a major component of Indonesia's developing system of checks and balances. Parliaments at the local and national level have undergone extensive changes in

composition and become a repository of significant power. In addition, the 2004 reforms to the Indonesian election system established direct elections of local government leaders.<sup>62</sup> This electoral system is intended to establish a strong checks-and-balances system at the district level, where local leaders and legislators are accountable to the people. Therefore, it is thought to be more likely that local empowerment can be achieved within this democratic context.

### *Does Autonomy Necessarily Bring Empowerment to the Local People?*

This study found that decentralization has resulted in greater autonomy for Aceh in that the power of decision making has been devolved to local authorities. Under decentralized mechanisms, provinces and districts are able to decide their own education policies according to local interests, characteristics and capacities, as can be seen in the implementation of Islamic education policies in the two districts where the research took place: Banda Aceh and Bireuen. The findings in Chapter 6, 7, and 8 suggest that provincial and district councils have independent decision-making authority, indicated by their authority to legislate local matters through *qanun* (local bylaws). For example, in relation to education, *Qanun* no. 5/2008 article 15.2 authorises the provincial and district governments of Aceh to provide supplementary local content based on Islamic *sharia*. However, the districts carried out the implementation of this *qanun* quite differently, thus showing that autonomy has indeed increased at the district level. Autonomy of the districts can

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<sup>62</sup> Under Suharto's New Order regime, local government heads (governors, regents and mayors) were elected by the respective local assemblies (provinces and districts). Despite going through a formal electoral process in the local assemblies, operationally they were appointed by the central government. Local assemblies usually proposed three candidates for the position of local government head, with the final decision among those three lying in the hands of the central government. The President decided who were to become governors (the provincial level), while the Minister of Home Affairs chose the regents and mayors (the district level). In the first local election after the collapse of Suharto's regime in 1999, local assemblies gained substantive responsibility for electing and dismissing local government heads. This has resulted in more decentralized political decisions, but at the same time created problems of money politics, where candidates tried to win the election by buying votes from local assembly members (Choi, 2007). Since the implementation of the new laws on local government in 2004, for the first time local government heads are now elected directly by the people. One of the objectives of the new system of direct elections was to close the door to excessive money politics in local legislatures and introduce transparency and accountability to the electoral process (Mietzner, 2016).

also be seen from the different funding policies for Islamic education in Bireuan and Banda Aceh.

The different policies and implementations of Islamic education in the two districts observed demonstrate the increased autonomy of the district authorities, in this case the District Education Offices (DEOs), the District Dayah Education Development Bodies (BPPDs), and the District Councils. It shows that every district has independent decision-making authority concerning their local interests; this is one of the key indicators for political decentralization. In addition to this devolved authority, the position of district governments is stronger due to the abolition of their previous function as a de-concentrated agency. In fact, the Indonesian decentralization policy provides more autonomy at the district level than at the provincial level. Under the decentralization policy, district government is not subordinate to the provincial government. This new institutional arrangement of central and local relations has strengthened the political position of the district government.

Does district autonomy necessarily bring the decision-making power closer to people? That is, does the empowerment of local governments, as their autonomy increases, bring authorities closer to citizens and increase local government accountability to local citizens? The findings suggest that the institutional and structural changes undertaken as part of the implementation of decentralization have provided some mechanisms for citizens to influence policy and participate in government. This thesis shows that the special autonomy implemented in Aceh has provided mechanisms for local initiatives, as well as the involvement of local actors in the policy debates of and policy making for education, such as is evident in the *diniyah* programme in Banda Aceh (Chapter 6). Decentralization has lifted the profile of local politicians and local stakeholders in education as the main actors of education policy-making at the local level. Findings in Chapter 7 suggest that Aceh's special autonomy has provided avenues for local participation in education debates and policy making as evidenced by the increased role of *ulama* in Aceh's education system through their involvement in designing the Islamic education

curriculum and their role within the BPPD. Through their involvement in the BPPD and the funding policy for *dayah*, *ulama* who previously had minimal engagement with the state started to engage more in the education development in Aceh.

However, this thesis also demonstrates that some stakeholders' interests have been disproportionately represented within this new framework of autonomy. Chapter 8 provides evidence for this argument. It illustrates the emergence of neo-patrimonialism in the annual budgeting process, due to informal decision-making processes centred on lobbying and personal networks. Accordingly, this process has resulted in an unequal distribution of resources among education stakeholders. Chapter 7 provides evidence for the increased role of *ulama* and *ulama's* engagement with the government of Aceh. Nevertheless, it suggests that only *ulama* from the State Ulama Representative Council (MPU) or *ulama* from the Islamic State Universities had participated in the decision making for the implementation of an Islamic curriculum for public schools. Meanwhile, the involvement of the traditional *dayah ulama* or grass roots *ulama* was limited to more practical roles (see Chapter 7 Section 7.5.3.).

In this respect, this thesis puts forward the argument that bottom-up autonomy has indeed provided a framework for local empowerment. Yet, the extent to which this framework could lead to community empowerment is still questionable, considering that the community has been disproportionally represented. This argument seems to agree with other studies which suggest that community participation in the context of education decentralization in Indonesia has been limited to the role of beneficiary and supplier of educational resources, and that decentralization does not necessarily result in community empowerment (Fitriah, 2010; Fitriah, Sumintono, Subekti, & Hassan, 2013).

Having explained the extent of autonomy resulting from political decentralization in Aceh's education under special autonomy, the next question is how, if at all, political decentralization can contribute to providing positive options for problems stemming from Aceh's distinct identity, different from others in Indonesia. This then leads to another question on the impact of this particular form of political

decentralization, and the extent of the resulting autonomy, on the management of conflict between Aceh and the central government.

Before addressing the issue of conflict in its relation to decentralization, it is necessary to unpack some of the dynamics which could contribute to the likelihood of conflict. Therefore, the following sections discuss, first, the importance of education as an arena of identity contestation; and second, the issue of whether or not decentralization can mitigate problems derived from Aceh's unique identity. These issues are considered to be important because they have a bearing on the question about conflict within the context of decentralization. The issues around identity, education, and decentralization set the grounds for understanding why conflict may or may not occur.

### **9.3. Identity Discourse in the Implementation of Decentralization**

Literature on the motives behind a country's decision to decentralize suggests that, despite the emergence of economic motives, identity arguments remain important drivers for decentralization processes (or autonomy) among historical communities with a strong regional identity (Guinjoan & Rodon, 2014; Rodriguez-Pose & Sandall, 2008). Ethnic, cultural, linguistic and religious factors have been depicted as motives that drive decentralization or demands for autonomy (Knight, 1982). Thus, claims for self-government and autonomy are considered as mechanisms to recognize cultural identities (Loughlin, 2000).

Having a background as a multi-ethnic and multicultural country, and with the fear of Indonesia's central government about disintegration, decentralization presents a specific challenge to Indonesia in terms of efforts to preserve its national identity and in terms of maintaining national unity. In fact, the implementation of regional autonomy was introduced to overcome regional grievances and separatist movements. However, the implementation of decentralization policy has also

opened new spaces for novel forms of politics based on local identity (Aspinall & Fealy, 2003).

Decentralization has provided new opportunities for reflection on loyalty to the nation state and reassessment of previously taken-for-granted identity configurations (Faucher, 2006). Traditional practices and identity discourse have been revived in association with the politics of decentralization (See for examples Aspinall & Fealy, 2003; Erb, Sulistiyanto, et al., 2005; Robinson, 2011; Schulte Nordholt & Klinken, 2007). Therefore, questions have been raised regarding a contestation between loyalties to the unified single Indonesian identity and the diversity of regional identities (Diprose, 2009).

In this regard, education is viewed as an important arena for identity construction, and its role remains, or becomes even more, significant within the context of decentralization. In a study in Riau Archipelago, one of the Indonesian provinces, Faucher (2007) contended that education still remains the arena where unconditional allegiance towards the national ideology *Pancasila* cannot be questioned. Education continues to strengthen and protect civic sentiments about the unity of the nation. Can decentralization and the institutions designed to facilitate the recognition of multiple identities resolve conflict over nationalism and territory? This question is addressed in the following sections, starting with the case of education in Aceh.

### *9.3.1. Education as the Arena of Identity Contestation*

Education has played, and continues to play, an important role in identity construction in Aceh. It is argued that the nature of education in Aceh was fundamentally a legacy of conflict and an arena of continuous identity contestation during the colonial period, and has remained so during independence (Al-Musanna, 2009; Shah & Lopes Cardozo, 2014). This identity discourse on education was represented in the contestation between the notions of integration

and dichotomy between religious and secular education in the education system of Aceh (Chapter 4). This contestation was driven by Aceh's distinct identity construction as compared to other parts of Indonesia, being one which was centred on the idea of Islam and nationalism.

Historical evidence presented in Chapter 4 shows that Aceh has struggled to constitute its education system in its attempts to integrate secular and religious education. Dutch colonisation, and later the *national* identity project and *national* education system priorities imposed by the Indonesian state made this struggle difficult to realise. The abandonment of Acehnese aspirations to implement an integral Islamic education in a comprehensive manner by the central government is argued to have contributed to the ongoing conflict with the central government and led to the demand for secession (Miller, 2006).

In the contemporary post-conflict context following the implementation of special autonomy, this thesis suggests that the recent development of education in Aceh represents the continuation of this struggle to construct a distinct Acehnese identity. In this regard, this study claims that Aceh has seemed to win the contestation concerning dichotomy versus integration of secular and religious education. Aceh has utilised the opportunity provided by special autonomy to negotiate with the central government to implement integral Islamic education, which has long been demanded, and to accommodate *dayah* and *ulama* in its education system. For the first time after independence, Aceh has gained extensive autonomy in education by being given the right to manage and develop its education, which accommodates its distinct identity. Whether the mechanism provided by increased autonomy has actually addressed the problem of identity construction in Aceh, in relation to the Indonesian national identity, is discussed in the following section.



### *9.3.2. Can Decentralization Mitigate Problems Stemming from Multiple Identities within a Country?*

With regard to the resurgence of local identities in response to the implementation of decentralization, this thesis suggests that decentralization may stimulate the resurgence of regional identity, yet it is unlikely to be an identity that is in conflict with the national identity. The case of Aceh shows that the construction of the Acehnese identity in the post-conflict context can be negotiated within the framework of bottom-up autonomy. As discussed earlier (in Chapter 3), GAM used the aim of a reconstruction of identity based on ethnicity, religion, language, history and geography as a justification for its claim to territorial sovereignty during its time as an insurgency movement (Miller, 2009, p. 3). However, while the historical account supports this Acehnese identity discourse, development in the education sector since increased autonomy was agreed demonstrates that the implementation of Islamic *sharia* meant that identity has become exclusively based on Islam. To some extent, this downplays other aspects of the Acehnese identity such as language and history.

The findings on curriculum changes (Chapter 6) showed ‘Islamic identity’ was perceived as the most significant aspect of the curriculum by participants (Islamic identity in the education curriculum was ranked first in the pairwise ranking exercise conducted for this study). Interestingly, two other corresponding aspects of Aceh’s distinct identity – that is, language and history – have not been given a larger place in Aceh’s curriculum. This is important to note considering that language and history have been argued to constitute the main elements in the construction of Acehnese identity during the independence movement. Although it is not the focus of this thesis, my research seems to suggest that this is possibly because those who are constructing the narrative post autonomy have less interest in pursuing language and history and more interest in pursuing Islamisation to win support from the *ulama*.

The results of the changes in education structures (Chapter 7) also support the argument that the Acehnese identity discourse has been increasingly, or even

exclusively, defined in Islamic terms after the implementation of special autonomy and Islamic *sharia*. Changes in education structures after the implementation of special autonomy demonstrate that autonomy has provided a framework for the accommodation of Aceh's distinct Islamic education institution, the *dayah*, into the state's education system. Institutional arrangements provided by the special autonomy have allowed Aceh to establish a new structure of education, the BPPD, in order to recognise the distinct place *dayah* have in Aceh's education system. Nonetheless, these developments in education – in the areas of curriculum and in the structure of education – demonstrate that the implementation of special autonomy and the adoption of Islamic *sharia* did not turn Aceh's education system into an 'Islamised' system, but instead resulted in the integration of a religious and secular system.

The importance of Islamic identity in Aceh's recent education development is partly related to the history of Aceh's struggle for autonomy or independence. Since the Dutch colonial time until Aceh joined the Republic, the struggle was driven mainly by identity arguments, characterised by the idea of Islam and ethnic nationalism. During the Dutch period of colonisation, the role of Islamic identity in the Aceh struggle was depicted through the role of *ulama* and their *dayah* as agents of revolt. Later, after joining the Republic, the struggle to form a society based on Islamic values continued through demand for a special autonomous status within the Indonesian state. The perception of this unique Aceh identity has been argued as an essential element for explaining the conflict between Aceh and the Indonesian government (Hillman, 2012; Miller, 2009; Morris, 1983; Schröter, 2010b).

Aceh's grievances with the central state were driven by the centralization of the state power and a concurrent emphasis on the need for a homogenisation of culture in the process of nation building (Aspinall, 2002). This policy of uniformity imposed during the Soekarno and Suharto regimes through cultural hegemony resulted in pressure on local cultures and identities (Bjork, 2003; Diprose, 2009). This can be explained by arguments presented by Massey (1999) that regions and

localities become vulnerable and at risk of losing their uniqueness as a result of the homogenisation process. When nation-building processes are imposed through homogenisation from the national level to sub-national level, the legitimacy and vitality of local identity can be undermined. Consequently, localities may develop resistance to this homogenisation from above and start a struggle to retain their identity vis-à-vis that of the nation state. When regions lose their freedom to express their identity, grievances emerge, leading to attempts by the regions to separate from the central government, as found in the case of Aceh.

In investigating the construction of Acehnese identity, it is important to note that this identity was initially framed in terms of Islam. Islamic idealism had been the central aim of Aceh's struggle, as represented by *Darul Islam* (Abode of Islam) and GAM movements. The disappointment with the central government's centralized approach, and the effacing of Aceh's distinct identity, motivated Acehnese to separate from Indonesia. As Aspinall (2013, p. 54) noted,

Frustration that the central government had not made good its post-*Darul Islam* promises to allow implementation of Islamic law in Aceh was part of the renewed atmosphere of disillusionment that set the scene for the formation of GAM in the 1970s.

Later on, as argued by some such as Aspinall (2009b), however, Aceh's nationalism was transformed from Islamism to secular nationalism. The revolt, which was initially primarily Islamist (as represented by the *Darul Islam* movement), had evolved into one that was more secessionist and had secular political goals. In the twenty-first century, GAM's platform had been replaced by a more modern nationalist-secular discourse, based on historical claims and economic and political grievances towards an Indonesian approach. Aspinall (2009b) points out that, unlike Kashmir in India and Mindanao in the Philippines, where Muslim minorities sought to separate from the non-Muslim central state, religious differences did not reinforce the sense of separateness in Aceh. Both the separatist and the central state were majority Muslim. Accordingly, Islam had been depicted as a bond between Aceh and Indonesia, rather than a point of difference. As such, in order to

insist on identity differentiation, Acehese nationalists emphasised other factors derived from ethnicity and history. This marked the transition of Acehese nationalism from Islamism to ethno-nationalism.

Furthermore, since the mid-1970s the separatist conflict in Aceh was also depicted in terms of a resource conflict due to the importance of the natural gas industry. It was argued, however, that economic grievances laid a basis for conflict only if accompanied by the wider process of identity construction (Aspinall, 2007). Identity discourse had been there in the first place to give a foundation to this modern discourse. Theorists tend to argue that without an appropriate identity-based collective action frame, economic grievances will not necessarily result in rebellion. Moreover, as Aceh's gas and oil industry started to deflate in the 1990s, the economic discourse supporting Aceh's struggle for independence seemed to wither.

Highlighting identity discourse in the demand for autonomy does not necessarily mean undermining other factors such as economic interests. However, in the course of the history of Aceh, the identity discourse *consistently* remains the major driver for autonomy or independence, whereas economic discourse only appeared when oil and gas were found. Notwithstanding, as can be seen from other countries' cases, there is always the possibility of changes of motives, depending on the special circumstances of the regions under study. For instance, Scotland's nationalism has been depicted in terms of identity and economic discourse over time. In the 1970s, when North Sea oil was discovered, Scotland's demands for self-rule had mainly been driven by economic considerations, rather than on a cultural or ethnic identity basis (Parks & Elcock, 2000, p. 88). However, culture had been linked back to the nationalist movement after a revitalisation of indigenous culture coincided with a revived nationalist movement in the 1980s (Keating, 2001, p. 229). The motive for decentralization seems to switch back and forth according to the specific circumstances of the regions, as well as changes in the central state.

In summary, identity discourse remains the main motive for the recent autonomy in Aceh as demanded by the bottom-up actors. The changes to curriculum and education structure show that Islamic identity still dominates the major discourse of identity construction in Aceh's education. The construction of Acehnese identity has continuously been defined in Islamic terms by the education communities who participated in this study, despite the fact that Acehnese identity earlier in the 1990s was characterised more as a secular ethnic-based identity formation (ethnicity, history and language). Other identity signifiers, language and history, are perceived as less important by the same education communities. Regardless of this resurgence of local identity and its shifting emphases, this thesis suggests that political decentralization can potentially facilitate the recognition of this distinct Acehnese identity. Through newly developed institutions, special autonomy has provided a framework for accommodation of the Acehnese identity. This framework has allowed for the integration of both local and national identities, as manifested in Aceh's education.

How can this accommodation of local identity through the decentralization mechanism possibly contribute to mitigate intra-state conflict? The following section addresses this question. The construction of Acehnese identity, as can be seen in education, reflects the modern interpretation of the recent implementation of Islamic *sharia* as well as the shifting of Aceh's nationalism from ethno-historic into modern nationalism. This development, this thesis argues, will bring a closer association between Aceh and the Indonesian government.

#### **9.4. Can Political Decentralization Provide Positive Options for Mitigating Intra-State Conflict?**

With regard to education this thesis argues that the autonomy agreed in Aceh has brought a closer association between Aceh and the central state. Autonomy has created common ground for both parties that could help to sustain peace by encouraging compromises, so that both sides gain something. Aceh now has

acquired the agency and capability to negotiate with the central government, especially when compared to other Indonesian provinces. The fact that the implementation of Islamic *sharia*, and the establishment of the BPPD, is allowed only in Aceh, constitutes evidence of this local agency. Through the decentralized framework, both sides have created a hybrid and negotiated form of education for Aceh which accommodates Acehnese demands, yet also maintains some of the state's control over Aceh. This can be illustrated from the case of the implementation of the Islamic curriculum (chapter 6) and the funding to *dayah* (chapter 7), as discussed next.

The findings on curriculum changes show that the integration of an Islamic education curriculum with a secular curriculum does not necessarily contribute to the 'Islamisation' of the education system. Instead, there is an equal measure of the 'Islamisation' of public education on the one side, and secularisation (or modernisation) of *dayah* education on the other side. The result is therefore greater convergence of education development.

The findings on the changes in the new structure of education also support this argument. They suggest that the establishment of the BPPD, the funding to *dayah*, and the involvement of *ulama* in the education debates, do not necessarily lead to the replacement of the state education system with an 'Islamic' education system. Instead, they have contributed to the integration, to locally varying extents, of Islamic education (*dayah*) into the state education system. The result is a hybrid education system that integrates Aceh's distinct Islamic identities and the Indonesian education system.

This recent development of education in Aceh indicates that, despite the implementation of Islamic *sharia*, Aceh education has become more open to the interpretation of education representing Islamic values; yet more accepting of the notion of a modern interpretation of religion emphasising the need for secular knowledge. These developments in Aceh's education most probably correspond to the recent implementation of Islamic *sharia*, which combines Islamic idealism and modern thinking. According to Feener (2012), rather than valuing conservative-

traditional idealism, Aceh's recent implementation of Islamic *sharia* draws on a new vision of Islam embedded in the idea of Aceh's transformation based on modern thinking. The architects of Islamic *sharia* in Aceh promoted a vision of Islam that included,

...future-oriented social transformation, insisting on the need to move beyond 'traditional' understanding towards a vision of Islam that actively engaged with modern development in fields including education, economic and medicine (Feener, 2012, p. 286).

This vision of Islam constitutes a revivalist character that attempts to transform society through the implementation of an Islamic model believed to be complementary to modernising aspirations of discipline, strength, and economic prosperity (Feener, p. 306). In education, the realisation of this vision can be found in the LoGA article 216:1, 2 (Ministry of Law and Human Rights, 2006) which states:

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, justice, and in high respect of human rights, Islamic values, culture and pluralism.

This 'modern' vision of Islam embedded within the recent *sharia* movement allows for more alignment between Aceh and Indonesia. Unlike the previous historical record, where attempts to instil Islamic law were responded to inadequately by the central government (as presented in Chapter 3), the contemporary version of Islamic law has provided a convergence of understanding between the visions of Islam in Aceh and the vision of Islam among other Indonesian populations (Feener, 2012, p. 284).

This is apparent in the development of education in Aceh. The available evidence in this study suggests that autonomy in Aceh has provided a framework for the accommodation of Islamic identity of Aceh into the state education system.

However, this accommodation is unlikely to result in conflict between Acehese distinct identity and Indonesian national identity. Indeed, as this study has shown, the curriculum of Islamic education in public schools has been strengthened, yet this has been accompanied by a secularisation (modernisation) of the curriculum in Aceh's traditional Islamic schools (*dayah*). An *ulama* described the recent development of education in Aceh.

*Now in Aceh we cannot really distinguish between secular and Islamic schools. The subjects taught in both public and Islamic schools are very similar. (Ulama, Bireuen)*

What is particularly noteworthy is that instead of being exclusive, the reconstruction of Acehese identity in the school's and *dayah*'s curriculum seems to be able to coexist with Indonesian nationalism, which is the legacy of previous nation-building in Indonesian's schools in general. The preference of schools and *dayah* to use Indonesian instead of the Acehese language as the most viable option for the medium of instruction, also suggests a drive to maintain an association with the Indonesian state.

The recent development of identity discourse in Aceh's education can also be understood in its relation to the transformation of Acehese nationalism from ethno-historic nationalism into modern nationalism. According to Aspinall, this changing form of nationalism helped Aceh to prepare for peace (Aspinall, 2009b, p. 14). He further noted that during the years of Suharto's authoritarian regime, GAM leaders had propagated strict ethno-historic nationalism stressing ethnicity, cultural and historical differences in response to the centralization and coercive approach of the Indonesian state. After the democratic transition of 1998, the new pro-independence activists were immersed in a democratic discourse and depicted their struggle for independence in terms of human rights' violations and Indonesian injustice.

Keating's notion of 'new nationalism' or Guibernau's term 'democratic nationalism' (Guibernau, 2012; Keating, 2001) can explain this emerging nationalism.



According to Keating (2001, pp. 263-264), the 'new nationalism' present among the historical minorities has been transformed in response to the democratization that took place within the central state. This 'new nationalism' does not merely base itself on ethnic sentiment, but is a combination of ethnic and civic conceptions. This new nationalism is not a complete break with past nationalism, rather it is the continuation of the past, using the old ethno-historic nationalism as an instrument in confronting the past.

...these nationalisms are not the mere product of changes in the political and economic environment. They are the result of nation-building strategies, conducted within the shell of the existing state; and they draw on historical traditions and identities. Nation building has not been the work only of conscious nationalists. Much of it has been a response to policy problems and the search for pragmatic solutions to territorial or cultural questions (Keating, 2001, p. 263).

Arguably, this modern nationalism helped the growth of compromise between national minorities and the central state, as they share the same values of modern-democratic societies. This is illustrated in the case of Aceh as Aspinnall (2009b, p. 15) notes:

...But a bond that could be cancelled, could also be renegotiated. This reworking of the nationalist imagination facilitated compromise. If an authoritarian Indonesia gave rise to Acehese nationalism, a democratic Indonesia might be able to accommodate it.

Along similar lines, it has been argued that autonomy within a democratic system has provided frameworks for intra-state bargaining to adapt conflict into a more manageable form, hence avoiding separation from a central state (Guibernau, 2006; Ichijo, 2012; Keating, 2001). The case of Aceh suggests that political decentralization might help to address the regional grievances of political, ethnic,

religious and cultural groups concerning their political representation and their discontents (Bakke, 2015; Brown, 2009). By granting minority groups a degree of self-rule, political decentralization can facilitate policy for states facing demands for self-determination (Bakke, 2015).

The development of Aceh's education under special autonomy demonstrates how autonomy has provided a framework for further negotiations, compromises, and collaborations between Aceh and the Indonesian government. The accommodation of *dayah* in Aceh's education system (Chapter 7) suggests that autonomy has created a common ground for both parties to engage with each other and sustain peace. On the one hand, as the *ulama* accessed government funding for their *dayah*, they were likely to lose some of their control over the curriculum, teaching practices, and standards. Arguably, the *ulama* accepted some secularisation of the curriculum of *dayah*. Likewise, seeing an increasing role of the BPPD, the autonomy of their *dayah* tended to decrease in exchange for more resources from the state. On the other hand, the state loses some of its resources but gains more control over the *ulama* through the standardisation of *dayah* and secularisation of *dayah* curriculum promoted by the BPPD. Hence, through autonomy, both sides gain something they value by making compromises.

Autonomy helps to accommodate local identities and to recognise diversity, while, at the same time, it keeps national minorities within the central state mechanism. If autonomy is driven by the bottom-up agent, rather than imposed by the central state, it may result in a more moderate identity discourse (Rodriguez-Pose & Sandall, 2008). When Acehnese are given a right and power to control and construct their own education system that accommodates its distinct identity, it is unlikely that Acehnese will develop an education system dissociated from the national education system. Instead, Acehnese tend to use the opportunities given by autonomy to make their education distinctive, yet convergent with the national education system.

This finding is in favour of the argument by Ghai (2002, as cited in Baldacchino, 2010, p. 89) which states that autonomy helps to accommodate sub-national

identities and provides grounds for protection of regional cultures within the mechanism of the central state. Hence, autonomy is capable of responding to multiple identities without breaking away from the central government. “Devolution and institution designed to meet the specific needs of the regions can facilitate the recognition of multiple identities and resolve conflict over nationalism and territory” (Keating, 1998, p. 188). Ultimately, by providing a framework for inter-ethnic bargaining between local politics and the central governments, autonomy is capable of converting conflict into manageable disputes.

In addition, political decentralization gives minorities control over their own political, social and economic affairs, enabling them to have access to and influence on politics. Consequently, decentralization provides opportunities for regional elites to exercise various degrees of power and prestige. These political and economic gains arising from decentralization will, in turn, raise the profile of those political elites. Arguably, concessions gained by the regional elites tend to weaken their voices for full independence. Therefore, devolution tends to turn secessionist aims from sovereign statehood into never-ending demands for more autonomy from central government (Ghai, 2002 cited in Baldacchino, 2010; Guibernau, 2006).

*After being granted the special autonomy fund, people stopped making noises about Acehnese identity. They have become apathetic (Teacher, PWR 6)*

In relation to identity and conflict, the findings in this study differ from Brancati’s (Brancati, 2008) study, which argues that decentralization tends to promote ethnic conflict and secessionism by creating regional identities due to the electoral strength of regional parties. The case of Aceh suggests that, although the Aceh Party won the local election and dominated Aceh’s political landscape, its victory is unlikely to result in a stronger regional identity. At least with regard to Aceh’s education system, the study reveals that the Islamic identity has been revived, yet in a negotiated non-defensive way. Moreover, in terms of language and history, the findings provide confirmatory evidence that there are no significant changes in the way Aceh promoted its distinct history and language. Thus, it would seem that

decentralization in Aceh does not shape its regional identity as one that is necessarily in conflict with the nation or central government; hence, decentralization might reduce local-central conflict.

Equally important is the claim that political decentralization can succeed as an instrument to accommodate ethnic or other distinct entities within the state, and thus contribute to a peaceful resolution of conflict, if the regions are involved in a democratic transition taken by the central state to deal with separatism and independence movements (Blair, 2000; Richard C Crook & Manor, 1998; Guibernau, 2006; McGarry & O'Leary, 2009). This has been the case in Aceh, where a decentralization movement in general, and Aceh's special autonomy in particular, was implemented in the context of democratization that swept the country after the collapse of the Suharto regime. Within this context of democratisation the development of Acehnese nationalism seems to be more aligned with Indonesian nationalism, which can bring about a closer identification between Aceh and the central state. This is similar to the case in Spain, where many Catalans and Basques tend to identify with the Spanish state after the democratic transition, rather than before during the years of the Franco dictatorship, when Spain was regarded as an oppressive, limiting, and alien state (Guibernau, 2006).

The evidence presented in this study has so far supported the claim by advocates of decentralization concerning the efficacy of political decentralization in reducing local-central conflict. However, the following section considers some of the newly emerging challenges in the implementation of decentralization in Aceh. This is particularly evident with respect to localised political contestation, and the potential of internal discontent due to the structural and institutional changes under decentralization mechanisms. In this regard, it is particularly important to note that decentralization in Indonesia has generally contributed to the increased power of local legislators, which tends to heighten local political contestation. In Aceh, this dynamic has been further complicated by the perceived division between GAM and non-GAM circles within society in terms of disparate levels of access to resources.

## **9.5. New Challenges: Local Political Contestation, Neo-patrimonialism, and Internal Discontent**

One of the remarkable features of Aceh's recent special autonomy is the new political framework, which intends to open up political participation in Aceh, especially in order to allow former members of GAM to contest elections. The Helsinki MoU and the subsequent Law of Governing Aceh (LoGA) allows Aceh to form local political parties and for GAM's members to compete for seats in the district and provincial legislature through Aceh's local elections.<sup>63</sup> As a result of this new political framework, GAM political actors have entered the arena of the local political economy and the Aceh Party's political influence has increased significantly (Aspinall, 2009a; Hillman, 2012). By allowing GAM to compete in local political contestation, autonomy has given GAM control over the political, social, and economic affairs of Aceh, hence granting the right for the Acehnese to self-government. Devolution of authority and power to the sub-national level has indeed brought "...power to local political elites, giving national minorities significant influence at the sub-national level" (Brancati, 2008).

However, as power is devolved to province and districts, the arena for political contestation also shifts from central to local level. Accordingly, as illustrated in the findings presented in Chapters 7 and 8, decentralization has brought the struggle for power and resources to the local level. Decentralization in Indonesia has brought substantial resources to local governments. More than a third of the national budget has been transferred to local governments. As for Aceh, the central government provides substantial additional fiscal transfers in the form of the Special Autonomy Fund and the Oil and Gas Fund, partly in response to the grievances that emerged from the conflict with the central government. As a result, Aceh's fiscal resources have increased significantly. While revenue from the Oil and Gas Fund has started to decrease due to the depletion of both resources, the

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<sup>63</sup> In the 2006 and the 2011 governor elections, a GAM candidate won the governor seat, and by late 2007 GAM-approved candidates had been elected as either mayors or regents in ten of the nineteen districts/cities in Aceh (Aspinall, 2009a, p. 9). Moreover, the Aceh Party (PA) has won the majority of seats in more than half of the district legislative elections since the first local election was held.

Special Autonomy Fund has contributed the second largest proportion to Aceh's revenue after the General Allocation Fund. The allocation of the Special Autonomy Fund to Aceh has placed the province among the seven richest of Indonesia's provinces in per capita revenues (Syiah Kuala University & Malikussaleh University, 2011).<sup>64</sup>

With regard to this increase in resources and the emergence of local political contestation, this study suggests that more institutions have been established in order to access the resources available. This has resulted in conflicting interests, as evidenced in the case of the policy of financing education. Furthermore, the changed local political landscape since decentralization has also contributed to increased tensions among different groups in accessing education resources. Internal discontent due to perceived discrimination in accessing resources, as well as fierce local political contestation, have created new challenges to be taken into account by the district and provincial governments of Aceh, as well as the Indonesian government. As noted by a respondent:

*The special autonomy will become the second bomb for Aceh (after the conflict with the central government). If those that have been chosen as Acehnese leaders now (the GAM) cannot perform well, or do not have good political will, then Aceh could be worse off than before. Previously, Aceh was exploited by the central government, now Aceh is exploited by its own leaders. Likewise, if during the conflict Aceh went into war with the central government, it is possible that in the future Acehnese will be involved in a war amongst themselves. (Interview 9, Banda Aceh)*

As demonstrated in the case of funding to *dayah*, there is potential for conflict between the DEO and the BPPD concerning the allocation of the education budget. The BPPD officials and *ulama* thought that the funding policy favoured public education over *dayah*, considering the percentage of funding for *dayah* too small

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<sup>64</sup> For a comprehensive review of revenuesharing for Aceh after the implementation of special autonomy please refer to Chapter 8 Section 8.2.

compared to that of funding for public education. However, the officials of the DEO deemed that the policy had met the principle of equality, and they considered the proportions to be fair since the percentage of schools and students under the DEO was larger than that of *dayah*. Moreover, within the *dayah* communities themselves, there was a tendency towards divided opinions as a consequence of the accreditation system set by the government of Aceh. The increasing demands for government money, combined with the limited resources, appeared to split education stakeholders regarding who were included and excluded in the funding system.

Additionally, political contestation between executive and legislative sites of power has increased due to institutional and structural changes after decentralization. This thesis has found that the most significant new role for legislators is their participation in a new consultative budget process. The district council has now become the highest decision-making authority in a district for the development and implementation of plans and budget. Before decentralization was implemented, legislators were called on only to formally approve the budget presented by the executive. Parliamentary engagement now takes place at all stages of the budget process at national, provincial, and district levels. At the local level, all major decisions need to be approved by the elected district council, as such district councils hold local offices accountable to them.

The local budgeting process in Bireuen presented in this thesis (Chapter 8) illustrates this political contestation, mainly between the district council and the DEO. Previously, the DEO was the only institution responsible for distributing the education budget. It appears that since the establishment of the BPPD, the 'cake' of the education budget in Bireuen has become more divided, certainly when compared to Banda Aceh's. This is because the percentage of *dayah* in Bireuen was higher than in Banda Aceh. In this regard, the Bireuen council seemed to be more supportive towards the BPPD. For instance, while the Bireuen government did not allocate the School Operational Fund in the DEO's budget, the council agreed to allocate five percent of Bireuen's education budget for the development of *dayah*

under the BPPD's budget. This resulted in tension between the DEO and the district council in the process of annual budgeting in Bireuen.

In fact, after the implementation of decentralization, the political tension between executive and legislature at both national and local level in Indonesia has been strongly apparent (Pratikno, 2005, p. 31). Many disputes involving executives and legislatures have been reported. Political tension between the two bodies appears to have undermined the political process. For example, there are reports of delays in the legislation and budgeting process – something that was also evident in the budgeting process presented in this study.

The politics of budget plans observed in this study also showed that, next to formal policy making, legislators were likely to prefer informal political processes through lobbying and other unofficial mechanisms. In this informal process, decision making on funding appeared to be affected by political deals or negotiations, rather than formal mechanisms and selection criteria. These informal mechanisms, combined with the significant influence of local legislators, tended to provide opportunities for personal connections to play an important role in the distribution of educational resources. This can be described as a practice of neo-patrimonialism.

The increased power of local legislators in the budgeting process, particularly with regard to the discretionary fund, has contributed to the potential of political networks and connections to play significant roles in accessing the fund. According to some respondents (headmasters, teachers, directors of *dayah*, and members of school committees) there was a tendency among local legislators to intertwine the allocation of funds with their political interests, that is, to seek to gain support for the next election round (see Chapter 8, Section 8.4.4.). Therefore, these respondents thought it was important to make personal connections with politicians in order to access public funding. The public probably saw personal connections with local politicians as a pragmatic means to access resources. From their side, the politicians used the discretionary fund, derived from government money, as a vehicle for their political campaigning purpose.



On account of this local political contestation and the practice of neo-patrimonialism, several interviewees perceived that the incentives gained from special autonomy were problematic. There were conflicting arguments concerning whose interests had been served by the provision of the Special Autonomy Fund and the Oil and Gas Fund. This study therefore suggests that social discontent can emerge from a perception of discrimination in accessing public funds in general, and educational resources in particular. When social discontent is not dealt with appropriately, it may lead to conflict. There is other evidence that suggests that legislation that favours certain groups and discriminates against others might intensify inter-group conflict (Brancati, 2008). This may apply, not only in the context of discriminatory legislation, but also in relation to the unfair distribution of resources and the presence of unequal political opportunities that influence decision making.

On the basis of the evidence presented above, this study advances the argument that internal conflict *within* Aceh society may yet appear as a result of local political contestation and divided opinion regarding the allocation of resources. This supports Diprose's thesis, which suggests that decentralization may relieve centre-periphery tensions around long-standing grievances towards the central government. Nonetheless, a new kind of tension with regard to inter-group dissatisfaction and horizontal inequalities at the local level might emerge as a result of significant structural and institutional change in local politics (Diprose, 2009). The success of decentralization as a strategy of accommodating diversities within a state depends on how decentralization affects power relations between groups and classes at the local level.

Nevertheless, while decentralization moves the locus of politics to the sub-national level, it might isolate conflicts within the regions and prevent them from spreading throughout the entire country (Manor, 1998, p. 21). Decentralization might trigger local-scale conflict, yet it tends to reduce conflict between regions and the central government; thus, it could act to dampen secessionism. Although a certain degree of tension between central and regional institutions may be inevitable, as their

relationship is complex, there is always a possibility of resolving differences through negotiation rather than conflict.

## **9.6. Summary**

Set against a backdrop of significant conflict between Aceh and the central Indonesian government (Chapter 3), this thesis has investigated the impacts of decentralization on the autonomy of Aceh in governing one particular sector: education. Education was selected for this study because the nature of education in Aceh is fundamentally a legacy of conflict and an arena of continuous identity contestation in the course of the history of Aceh-Jakarta relations (Chapter 4). The aim of this study has been to explore the impact of political decentralization on the autonomy of Aceh, particularly in relation to identity discourse and conflict. This study has also sought to find out whether the autonomy achieved as a result of political decentralization can contribute to the peaceful resolution of conflict.

The findings on the curriculum and the structure of education suggest that instead of the 'Islamisation' of Aceh education, autonomy has promoted convergence between religious and secular education, forming a hybrid education system for Aceh. Arguably, this convergence has generated a negotiated-non defensive identity discourse in Aceh's education. Rather than promoting distinct identity construction, autonomy can also tend to integrate both local and national identities. When autonomy is implemented as a bottom-up approach, that is, when the regions decide what is best for their locality, rather than decisions being imposed from the upper level, there is the possibility that identity construction becomes more flexible. Furthermore, the political and economic concessions provided by the scheme of autonomy, as presented in this study, have tended to soften identity discourse because it leads to institutional arrangements in which local bodies, regional bodies, and central government bodies tend to associate and collaborate with each other, rather than distance themselves from each other.

From an examination of the experience of education in Aceh, this thesis has demonstrated that the notion of identity construction is still important in the recent decentralization discourse in Aceh. Decentralization is often considered as a means to pursue economic efficiency and effective good governance, but this is not the main motive behind the implementation of Aceh's special autonomy. Given the history of long conflict between Aceh and Jakarta, decentralization was introduced with the aim of ending conflict and building peace. However, this thesis also suggests that the use of bottom-up principles in the implementation of autonomy for Aceh has resulted in what could be called a 'negotiated non-defensive' identity discourse, compared to the distinctively strong identity discourse during the insurgency in Aceh. Indeed, a distinct Islamic Acehnese identity has been revived along with the implementation of special autonomy and the respected Islamic *sharia*. Nonetheless, the frameworks provided by political decentralization can facilitate the recognition of this distinct identity, without breaking up from the central state.

Overall, the findings from this thesis have shown that the implementation of political decentralization has resulted in greater autonomy for Aceh, where the power of decision making has been devolved to local authorities. Furthermore, this thesis found that the bottom-up autonomy resulting from political decentralization has allowed for the accommodation of a distinct Acehnese identity and provided a possible framework for local empowerment.

Based on this evidence, this thesis puts forward a claim that political decentralization that results in extensive bottom-up autonomy may consequently promote avenues for a more peaceful management of intra-state conflict. The bottom-up autonomy resulting from political decentralization has offered a place for negotiating and managing intra-state conflicts peacefully, through providing frameworks for the accommodation of local identity and for local empowerment. These frameworks have created common ground for both parties to sustain peace. Therefore, the autonomy agreed in Aceh has brought greater association with rather than opposition to the state. Nonetheless, the potential for internal

discontent within Aceh society due to the perceived unequal access to resources is yet another consequence of decentralization that needs to be taken into account by both the government of Aceh and the central government.

## 9.7. Final Thoughts

Political decentralization as an alternative solution to regional demands for secession demonstrates significant potential. Political decentralization can contribute to a more peaceful management of local-central conflict, and hence deter secessionism, because it allows for extensive bottom-up autonomy. Nonetheless, there is a danger that changes in local political structures and institutions brought about by the decentralization arrangements might trigger a new kind of tension with regard to inter-group dissatisfaction concerning the distribution of resources.

This thesis has contributed to the debates on decentralization, identity construction, and conflict by offering a new perspective on how political decentralization can be understood, not only in terms of the division of power and authority between the central government and regions but, more importantly, in terms of this type of decentralization impacts on the increased autonomy of the regions (provinces and districts). By linking political decentralization as the *mechanism* and autonomy as the *result* of decentralization, the potential of political decentralization in mitigating conflict – and in sowing seeds for more localised contestation – might be better understood.

### 9.7.1. Contribution to Knowledge

Prior research has yielded mixed findings as to whether decentralization can contribute to the peaceful resolution of intra-state conflict or, on the contrary,

whether it fuels intra-state conflict (Bakke, 2015; Brancati, 2006; Brown, 2009; Diprose, 2009; Edwards et al., 2015; Guibernau, 2006; McGarry & O'Leary, 2009; Suberu, 2009). This thesis advances theory in this subject by linking the practice/implementation of political decentralization and the concept of bottom-up autonomy to the debate. The idea is introduced that the efficacy of decentralization in managing intra-state conflict can be better understood by exploring the extent of autonomy achieved as a result of political decentralization. This study asserts that bottom-up autonomy, achieved through the mechanism of political decentralization, can facilitate negotiations and compromises between national minorities and the central state.

While this thesis might not fully resolve the debate, the results might help to revisit the concept of political decentralization. This thesis proposes a reconciliation by arguing that political decentralization should be defined not only in terms of the vertical division of power as suggested by Rondinelli (1982) and Brancati (2006, 2008), but, more importantly, by incorporating the concept of bottom-up autonomy to explore the result of political decentralization. In other words, the assessment of political decentralization will be more promising if it is combined with the exploration of the *extent* of autonomy resulting from decentralized mechanisms.

Notwithstanding the above, the democratic context of the central state is one of the important factors to be taken into account in assessing the success of an autonomy arrangement as presented in this thesis and as evident in other countries' cases (Blair, 2000; Brancati, 2008; Richard C Crook & Manor, 1998; Guibernau, 2006; McGarry & O'Leary, 2009). The democratization of the central state can be a facilitating framework for the success of autonomy in promoting stability and peace between regions and the central government. The democratization of the Indonesian state and the transition to modern nationalism of the nationalist movement (GAM) helped to achieve compromise between national minorities and the central state. "If an authoritarian Indonesia has given rise to Acehese

nationalism, a democratic Indonesia might be able to accommodate it” (Aspinall, 2009b, p. 15). In light of this argument, this study might be generalised with a caution concerning the context, the forms of decentralization implemented, and the specific circumstances of the cases under study.

### *9.7.2. Recommendation for Future Research*

Further studies on the impact of decentralization on other sectors that are also decentralized, such as health, agriculture or public works, are areas where research gains might be made, particularly with regard to local political dynamics after the implementation of decentralization. Future research, for example, is needed regarding the implication of increased local revenue due to decentralization on perceived inequality and social discontent within the region. Further investigation in other sectors than education is needed to see the dynamics within the implementation of political decentralization, and whether decentralization can continuously sustain peace in a conflict-prone society.

### *9.7.3. Possible Implications for Policy*

In terms of policy implications for the government of Aceh, this study contributes to the understanding of the relationship between *dayah* (*ulama*) as important elements in Aceh society, and the government of Aceh (province and districts). The changing post-conflict context and the implementation of special autonomy have implications for this relationship, bringing greater engagement between these two important actors. This engagement, however, is not a static order; it needs to continuously be negotiated among these actors and other actors in Aceh’s society. Nonetheless, despite the mutual influence of these two actors on the sphere of education, such as in the development of the curriculum, this thesis cautions that

this engagement might also potentially reduce *dayah*'s autonomy with regard to funding. Therefore, the government of Aceh needs to reconsider its policy of accommodating and funding *dayah*, by endorsing a policy that empowers *dayah* in this changing environment, without weakening their autonomy.

Finally, and most importantly, in terms of managing multiple identities within the context of a multiethnic state, bottom-up autonomy, instead of imposed top-down autonomy, has been proven to contribute to managing problems stemming from distinct Acehnese identity. The exploration of the impact of political decentralization on the autonomy of Aceh in governing its education system has showed that autonomy gained through the mechanism of political decentralization tends to improve the relationship between regions and the central government. This is because it provides a framework for negotiation and compromise. This thesis has demonstrated that, in response to the implementation of special autonomy and the accompanying Islamic *sharia*, education in Aceh has become a hybrid-negotiated form of education that accommodates Acehnese demands yet, at the same time, maintains some of the central government's control over Aceh.

This thesis thus suggests that there is a need for a change in the perspective of the central government in seeing local identity as a potential threat to national integration and identity construction. When differences are dealt with in an accommodative rather than repressive manner, relations between the centre and regions tend to be more manageable and, arguably, conflict tends to decrease. By giving the regions the right to express their identity through bottom-up autonomy, combined with the fair sharing of resources and a framework for political participation, more manageable central-local relations can be realised within a democratic state. On these grounds, the Indonesian government might consider implementing different decentralization arrangements as one of the alternatives to local-central arrangements, not only for the conflict regions or provinces, but also in other settings and for other purposes.

Indeed, many countries comprising multiple local identities – and Indonesia is such a country – are facing challenges in addressing the potential threats of

disintegration and resurgence of local identities derived from the implementation of decentralization. For such countries, a more accommodative approach to these threats is more likely to improve the relationship between regions and the central governments within democratic countries. Thus, the solution for the peaceful co-existence of multiple identities within the state lies not in resisting this heterogeneity by putting regional identity in juxtaposition with national identity; rather, the solution lies in providing the framework for accommodating local identities under the banner of bottom-up autonomy.



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## **Appendices**

### **Appendix 1: Information Sheet**



**MASSEY UNIVERSITY**  
COLLEGE OF HUMANITIES  
AND SOCIAL SCIENCES  
TE KURA PŪKENGĀ TANGATA

#### **Autonomy and its Effects on Locality: a Case Study of Education within Aceh's Special Autonomy Context**

### **INFORMATION SHEET**

#### **Introduction**

This study is being carried out by Amaliah Fitriah who is currently doing PhD research in Development Studies in the College of Humanities and Social Sciences. This project is being supported by an NZAID scholarship under the supervision of Dr Gerard Prinsen and Dr Bethan Greener.

#### **Project Description and Invitation**

This project aims to explore how autonomy has affected Aceh and local-central relations, especially looking at education in Aceh after the special autonomy. Special attention is given to roles and interactions of agents, structures, and sense of identity in the context of education in Aceh.

This is an important opportunity both for the researcher and also for the participants to investigate together whether autonomy has been really affecting local people or not. Hence, the researcher invites those who are interested to participate in this project.

#### **Participant Identification and Recruitment**

This study will be carried out in two districts in Aceh, Biruen and Aceh Besar. It primarily involves interviews and Focus Group Discussions. Participants are selected from educational communities consisting of School Committees (public and dayah schools), Educational Councils (ECs), Educational Offices (EOs) and Dayah Education Boards in each district. The field work requires the formal approval of local government authorities, in this study those authorities are provincial and district Educational Offices (EOs) acting as the gate keepers. From the district EOs, the researcher will ask for advice regarding the school list, their location and accessibility, as well as the best way to approach the schools.



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Letters to each group of participants will also be sought from EOs. FGD will be conducted with these four groups. From two selected primary schools in each district, interviews will be conducted with parents, teachers and principals. Interviews will also be conducted with member of ECs, Dayah Boards and officials from EOs based on observation during FGD.

### **Project Procedures**

To proceed with this project, the researcher will first send a letter to district EOs to ask for permission to conduct research. Then, an appointment with the officials from EOs will be made and followed up with interviewing the officials from the offices. The same procedure will be used for ECs and Dayah Councils. Information about the schools will be obtained both from EOs officials. Then, two schools in each district will be selected based on their locations as well as considering the type of schools, public and dayah school. Participants names will be obtained from schools, followed up by contacting them either by phone or by asking directly. Interviews will be conducted at the most suitable time for the participants and in a comfortable place of their preference.

This study will be carried out from September 2014 to January 2015.

### **Participant's Rights**

You are under no obligation to accept this invitation. If decide to participate, you have the right to:

- Decline to answer any particular questions
- Withdraw from the study
- Ask any questions about the study at any time during participation
- Provide information on the understanding that your name will not be used unless you give permission to the researcher
- Be given access to a summary of the project findings when it is concluded
- This interview will be recorded; you have the right to ask for the recorder to be turned off at any time during the interview



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**Project Contacts**

If there is a question regarding this project, please contact:

*Researcher*

Amaliah Fitriah  
Institute of Development Studies  
Massey University, Palmerston North  
New Zealand  
Phone : +643569099, ext. 85965  
E-mail : [A.Fitriah@massey.ac.nz](mailto:A.Fitriah@massey.ac.nz)

*Supervisors*

Dr Gerard Prinsen  
Phone : +643569099, ext. 83636  
E-mail : [G.Prinsen@massey.ac.nz](mailto:G.Prinsen@massey.ac.nz)

Dr Bethan Greener  
Phone : +643569099, ext. 83628  
E-mail : [B.Greener@massey.ac.nz](mailto:B.Greener@massey.ac.nz)

*“This project has been evaluated by peer review and judged to be low risk. Consequently, it has not been reviewed by one of the University’s Human Ethics Committees. The researcher named above is responsible for the ethical conduct of this research.*

*If you have any concerns about the conduct of this research that you wish to raise with someone other than the researcher(s), please contact Professor John O’Neill, Director, Research Ethics, telephone 06 350 5249, email [humanethics@massey.ac.nz](mailto:humanethics@massey.ac.nz)”.*

**Appendix 2: Consent Form**



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***Autonomy and its Effects on Locality: a Case Study of  
Education within Aceh's Special Autonomy Context***

**PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORM - INDIVIDUAL**

I have read the Information Sheet and have had the details of the study explained to me. My questions have been answered to my satisfaction, and I understand that I may ask further questions at any time.

I agree/do not agree to the interview being sound recorded. *(if applicable include this statement)*

I wish/do not wish to have my recordings returned to me. *(if applicable include this statement)*

I agree to participate in this study under the conditions set out in the Information Sheet.

**Signature:** ..... **Date:** .....

**Full Name - printed** .....

## Appendix 3: Interview Guides

### Interview with parents

Themes	Questions
<i>Opening</i>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Do you see any changes in Aceh education after the special autonomy?</li> <li>2. In what areas do you encounter the changes in education?</li> </ol>
<i>The effects of autonomy to management</i>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>3. Do you know that Aceh has more resources now since the special autonomy was implemented? and the allocation for education also increases?</li> <li>4. Do you see any changes regarding the educational resources for your children? ( do you pay more or less for your children's education, do your children get more or less benefits from school)</li> </ol>
<i>The effects of autonomy to curriculum</i>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>5. What about the curriculum for your children? Do you see some changes in the curriculum for your children? (number of subjects, content of subjects)</li> <li>6. What important aspect/values of Aceh do you think should be included in the curriculum, now that Aceh has the right to manage its own education?</li> </ol>
<i>Settings/Social Relations</i>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>7. Are you involved in any discussion or action related to your children's education (management, curriculum)?</li> <li>8. To whom do you talk regarding the education for your children? (persons, institutions, resources, curriculum)</li> <li>9. If you have any concerns regarding your children's education, what mechanism are you using to address your concerns?</li> <li>10. Do you attend or participate in any organisations/events related to your child's education?</li> <li>11. Who do you think should be responsible for better education in Aceh?</li> </ol>
<i>Sense of Identity</i>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>12. What do you think about education in Aceh after the autonomy relates to Aceh's characteristics/values?</li> <li>13. What is your expectation for education in Aceh in the future?</li> <li>14. How do you think you could engage more in education?</li> </ol>
<i>Local-Central Relations</i>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>15. What do you think about special autonomy as a whole?</li> <li>16. What do you think about the condition of Aceh in general after the autonomy? (the same, better, worse)</li> <li>17. How do you see the relationship between Aceh and Jakarta now after the autonomy? (the same, better, worse)</li> </ol>

## Interview with principals and teachers

Themes	Questions
<i>Opening</i>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Do you see any changes in Aceh education after the special autonomy?</li> <li>2. In what areas do you encounter the changes in education?</li> </ol>
<i>The effects of autonomy to management</i>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>3. What do you think about the resources for education? Do you see any changes regarding the educational resources allocated to your schools?</li> <li>4. Do you know that Aceh has more resources since the special autonomy was implemented, and its allocation for education increases?</li> <li>5. Do you know the structure and mechanism of resource allocation for education?</li> <li>6. Can you explain what institutions manage the education resources?</li> <li>7. Who made the decision regarding the allocation of education resources?</li> <li>8. Are you satisfied with the management of education, especially regarding the allocation of resources?</li> <li>9. Who do you think get the most benefits from the allocation of resources?</li> </ol>
<i>The effects of autonomy to curriculum</i>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>10. What about the curriculum in your school? Do you see some changes in the curriculum?</li> <li>11. What important aspect/values of Aceh do you think should be included in the curriculum, now Aceh has the right to manage its own education?</li> <li>12. Who made the decision in designing the curriculum?</li> <li>13. What mechanism was applied in designing the curriculum?</li> </ol>
<i>Settings/Social Relations</i>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>14. What are the specific roles of your institution regarding the educational management (resources) and curriculum?</li> <li>15. Can you explain the sharing of responsibility/authority between your institutions and other institutions (Education Councils/<i>Dayah</i> Councils/Educational Offices)?</li> <li>16. Who do you think should be responsible for better education in Aceh?</li> </ol>
<i>Sense of Identity</i>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>17. What do you think about education in Aceh after the autonomy relates to Aceh's characteristics/values?</li> <li>18. What is your expectation for education in Aceh in the future?</li> <li>19. How do you think you could engage more in education?</li> </ol>
<i>Local-Central Relations</i>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>20. What do you think about special autonomy as a whole?</li> <li>21. What do you think about the condition of Aceh in general after the autonomy? (the same, better, worse)</li> <li>22. How do you see the relationship between Aceh and Jakarta now after the autonomy? (the same, better, worse)</li> </ol>



**Interview with members of Education Councils (ECs), Dayah Education Boards (BPPDs) and Educational Offices (EOs)**

<b>Themes</b>	<b>Questions</b>	<b>Probing</b>
<i>Opening</i>	Age: Education: Ethnicity: Affiliation (organization, political party):  1. Do you see any changes in Aceh education after the special autonomy? Yes, No In what areas do you encounter the changes in education?	
<i>The effects of autonomy to management</i>	2. What do you think the effects of autonomy on the management of education?  3. Are you satisfied with the management of education (especially regarding the allocation of resources)?	Changes in the local education structure  Changes in the amount of resources for education (since autonomy was implemented and Aceh has more resources) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- How have resources been allocated or spent?</li> <li>- Who manage the resources?</li> <li>- Who made the decision?</li> <li>- Who gets the most benefits?</li> </ul>
<i>The effects of autonomy to curriculum</i>	4. What about the curriculum? Do you see some changes in the curriculum?  How is the teaching of Acehnese <i>history, customs, religion, and language</i> ?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- The number of subjects with local contents compared to number of subjects in the national curriculum</li> <li>- Time spent for religious education compared to secular education</li> <li>- number of teachers for religious education compared to secular subjects</li> <li>- Aceh characteristics (The implementation of curriculum based on Islamic shari'a as Aceh characteristic) (LoGA)</li> </ul>

	<p>Who made the decision in designing the curriculum? What mechanism was applied in designing the curriculum?</p> <p>5. What important aspect/values of Aceh do you think should be included in the curriculum, since Aceh has the right to manage its own education?</p>	- local contents
<i>Settings/Social Relations</i>	6. What are the specific roles of your institution regarding the educational management (resources) and curriculum?	The sharing of responsibility/authority/resources between your institutions and other institutions (Education Councils/Dayah Councils/Educational Offices)?
<i>Sense of Identity</i>	<p>7. What does this autonomy mean to you or your organizations?</p> <p>8. What does Aceh mean to you?</p>	<p>a. To protect Acehnese identity (identity discourse)</p> <p>b. To empower Aceh with economic resources (economic discourse)</p> <p>c. To empower Acehnese with control in decision making (governance discourse)</p> <p>a. Nothing (not having sense of place)</p> <p>b. A location or a province in Sumatra (knowledge on being located in a place)</p> <p>c. A feeling of togetherness and common destiny (Belonging to a place)</p> <p>d. Aceh is different from other places; it is unique (Attachment to a place)</p> <p>e. I will devote myself to Aceh (loyalty) (Identifying with the place)</p> <p>f. I will actively involve with community in Aceh, make changes within Aceh (involvement in a place)</p> <p>g. I will sacrifice myself for Aceh</p>

	<p>9. Do you think by being given the autonomy has changed/influenced your feeling about Aceh? In what ways?</p>	<p>a. My feeling about Aceh is getting stronger  b. My feeling about Aceh has not changed (same as before)  c. I have less feeling about Aceh</p>
<p><i>Local-Central Relations</i></p>	<p>10. What do you think about education in Aceh after the special autonomy? (better, worse, the same)</p> <p>11. Do you think by being given the autonomy has changed/influenced your perception towards Jakarta? In what ways? (more positive, negative, neutral)</p>	<p>What do you think about the condition of Aceh in general after the autonomy?</p> <p>how do you see autonomy as a common initiative between Aceh and Jakarta?</p>

## Appendix 4: Observation Guide

Object	Aspects	things to see	Key words
Education Councils (ECs)	<i>Settings</i>	How is the composition of this organisation?	scheme of domination
		How are the structure and mechanism at play?	procedures
Dayah Education Boards (BPPDs)	<i>Actors</i>	Who are on the board?	roles
		Who does make the decision?	relationship/networks
		How do they handle the matters regarding educational management and curriculum?	interests
Whose interests play?			
School Committees (SCs)	<i>Sense of Identity</i>	What are the members' opinions regarding autonomy?	values, perception
		How are the members' opinions concerning educational management and curriculum?	values, perception
		What values are the most important to them to be included in the curriculum in Aceh?	expectation past experiences
		How do they relate themselves to education in Aceh?	solidarity
		How do they think they can engage in education in Aceh?	collective action

## Endnote: Interview Quotes in Bahasa

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<sup>i</sup> Awalnya muncul ide *boarding school*, tapi kan biaya nya besar. Akhirnya muncul ide mudah, yaitu menghadirkan *dayah* di sekolah. Jadi merekrut guru-guru pesantren untuk mengajar di sekolah. Ini lah ide awal *diniyah* ini.

<sup>ii</sup> Maka kami punya motto “menyekolahkan *santri*”, bukan sebaliknya. Artinya yang utama pesantrennya, dan tambahannya adalah sekolahnya. Jangan sampai kami mengambil ranah orang lain. Jadi kita jaga spesialisasi kita, apa ranah kita. Ranah kita adalah belajar ilmu agama, ilmu umum hanyalah tambahan.

<sup>iii</sup> Sama juga, sekarang ini di aceh tidak terlalu beda lah pendidikan umum dengan pendidikan agama, sama lah sekarang anak Aliyah dengan anak SMA. Pelajaran pun sama, secara umum sama, tapi sekolah yang *boarding school* ya memang tetap beda.

<sup>iv</sup> Kebijakan provinsi baru pada tahap penyusunan kurikulumnya, belum selesai. Tim kurikulum dan MPD sedang menyiapkan kurikulumnya. Nah, jadi sebisa-bisanya, ada program *diniyah* di Banda Aceh. Model Pidie, mereka membuat program sendiri. Aceh besar membuat sendiri. Kalau di Pidie peningkatannya melalui sekolah memulai belajar dengan pelajaran agama dulu, ngaji sebentar. Kalau di Aceh besar lebih dilibatkan pada masyarakat. Mereka ada namanya programme Ba'da Magrib tapi terlepas dari kurikulum sekolah.

<sup>v</sup> Ada arahan dari dinas, apabila mau mengambil guru agama dari luar boleh, tapi tidak diberi arahan dana untuk membayar guru tersebut dari mana. Akhirnya kami memanfaatkan guru yang ada saja. Jadi instruksi sebatas instruksi saja, tidak disiapkan sarana pendukungnya. Jadi akhirnya penerapannya tergantung sekolah masing-masing.

<sup>vi</sup> *Dayah* tetap konsen dengan Kitab Kuning. Karena sejak 1 abad dijajah, jadi sudah terlanjur 100 th dijajah dengan kurikulum seperti itu. Jadi *dayah* hanya belajar kitab kuning, hafal yasin, seperti itu selama 1 abad dikawal oleh Belanda. Sejak 1783-1903, lebih dari 1 abad. Padahal sebelumnya tidak seperti itu. Sehingga orang yang tidak faham sejarah berfikir bahwa kurikulum *dayah* memang sudah seperti itu sejak dahulunya. Dilestarikan sampai sekarang. Makanya sampai sekarang masih banyak tengku *dayah* yang tidak mau berbicara pelajaran umum, matematik apa itu, fisika apa itu...itu saking kuatnya pengaruh politik Belanda terhadap *dayah*. Nah fungsi badan *dayah* yaitu untuk menerobos ini, mengembalikan *dayah* pada hakikat sebenarnya, bukan memodernkan sebenarnya, tapi mengembalikan.”

<sup>vii</sup> Kalo selama ini kita cerita tentang dunia pendidikan formal (sekolah) di lingkungan *dayah*, mereka akan marah. Terhadap orang-orang sekolah mereka memusuhi, malah sebelumnya ada beberapa pimpinan *dayah* yang memfatwakan ‘haram’ sekolah umum, karena sekuler dan segala macam. Bahkan ada ungkapan para orang tua kami dulu “untuk apa sekolah, jadi kafir nanti kita”. Itu sebenarnya awalnya muncul nya persepsi seperti ini dr *dayah*. Misalnya kami masuk ke *dayah* untuk membuat pelatihan yang sifatnya umum, kalo dulu saya yakin mereka tidak terima. Tapi sekarang mereka sudah mau terima, misalnya pelatihan jurnalistik yang kami buat, dari sekian banyak yang diundang, ternyata msh saja ada yang anti terhadap pelatihan seperti ini, meskipun jumlahnya sudah kecil sekali. Mereka berfikir untuk apa kita pelatihan jurnalistik, nanti kita tidak sempat mengaji dan segala macam. Nah ini lah, seolah-olah ilmu keduniaan ‘*no way*’, pokoknya fokus ke kitab klasik, itu prinsip mereka.

<sup>viii</sup> Sesepeh sesepeh *ulama* di Aceh pemikiran mereka sudah modern. Kita harus punya radio, televisi, harus menyampaikan dakwah lewat media. Meskipun cara-cara tradisional mesti tetap kita pertahankan.

<sup>ix</sup> Makanya sy ingin menegembangkan pendidikan umum ini, peternakan, pertanian spy anak2 langsung praktik.

<sup>x</sup> Bagaimana ke depan *dayah* bisa mensejajarkan diri dengan lembaga formal lainnya dan bisa menghasilkan sesuatu. Kalau *dayah* terpadu animo cukup tinggi, tapi salafi animo nya lebih tinggi dulu dibanding sekarang. Kalo terpadu memang membludak. Kayaknya agak sulit, karena permintaan pasar (masyarakat), mereka lebih senang mengirim anak ke tempat yang di situ ada pengajiannya, ada sekolah nya, jadi dua-duanya dapat. Misalnya, di Bireun ini *dayah-dayah* terpadu selalu penuh, dan gak tertampung. Sedangkan yang salafi peminatnya agak kurang. Karena *dayah* terpadu mengikuti jenjang

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formal, ada yang dari SD bisa masuk situ, jadi lebih mudah masuknya. Kalo salafi, tamatan MIN dan SD belum tentu bisa masuk, umumnya tamatan SMP atau SMA baru bisa masuk.”

<sup>xi</sup> Ada yang beranggapan tidak terpadu pesantren tidak diminati. Saya membantah itu, karena terbukti di aceh utara dan aceh timur *dayah* masih terus diminati, itu tergantung pada kharisma pimpinan *dayah* nya.

<sup>xii</sup> Saya fikir sila kan saja *dayah* salafi beralih ke modern, bukan bagus atau tidak nya. Tapi sebaiknya ada sebagian yang tetap mempertahankan tradisi lama. Kenapa saya bilang begitu. Karena *dayah* salafi ini sebagai penyeimbang

<sup>xiii</sup> Kita harus mempertahankan tradisi Kitab Kuning. Karena yang modern kalah memahami kitab kuningnya dari yang salafi. Kalau terus begini, nanti suatu saat identitas ke*dayahan* sebagai karakter Aceh hilang.

<sup>xiv</sup> Jadi target nya waled-waled yang besar itu saya integratifkan semua. Jadi yg kecil-kecil nanti tinggal mengikuti, sehingga pembaharuan pendidikan di *dayah* bisa terjadi dengan dimotori para waled besar di *dayah*.

<sup>xv</sup> Kurikulum sejarah belum ada, sedang disiapkan. Deadline 2015.

<sup>xvi</sup> Sejarah itu kita belum, karena muloknya baru bahasa Aceh, seni budaya Aceh, kuliner Aceh. Tapi ini sifatnya pilihan, sehingga yang diajarkan tergantung sekolah.

<sup>xvii</sup> Bahasa dan sejarah lokal ini penting diajarkan di sekolah. Karena Aceh kan pernah berjaya, apa salah nya kalau anak-anak Aceh mengetahui sejarah nya sehingga menginspirasi dan memotivasi anak-anak Aceh.

<sup>xviii</sup> Sangat penting memasukkan identitas lokal Aceh ke dalam kurikulum. Karena dengan demikian anak menjadi tahu bagaimana sejarah Aceh, bagaimana sejarah perkembangan Islam di Aceh. Kemudian kita gali keseniannya. Karena kalau tidak kebudayaan Aceh seperti hilang, sementara kebudayaan luar sangat cepat diserap.

<sup>xix</sup> Makanya saya selalu mengarahkan kalau boleh muatan lokal itu bahasa, kalau bisa, muatan lokal itu walaupun ada pilihan lain. Karena menurut saya itu melalui bahasa akan menunjukkan bagaimana citra Aceh itu sendiri. Orang Aceh itu sebenarnya dari sejarahnya itu bahasanya halus sekali.

<sup>xx</sup> Tapi di sini justru kalau kita mengajar dengan bahasa Aceh, banyak anak yang tidak mengerti. Mereka mulai kehilangan bahasanya. Dulu seperti ada anggapan umum, bahwa malu kalau bicara bahasa Aceh. Jadi ya seperti ini terjadi penurunan.

<sup>xxi</sup> Itu lah kendala nya dalam komunikasi. Karena orang-orang ini kan lahir dalam masa konflik, waktu Bahasa Indonesia masih dilarang, sehingga sulit berbahasa Indonesia mereka. Sekarang sudah mulai baik Bahasa Indonesia nya. Pengajaran di kelas pakai Bahasa Indonesia, cuma karena mereka masih kesulitan kadang campur Bahasa Aceh.

<sup>xxii</sup> Sebaliknya, kalau SD di kampung 100% bahasa daerah. Ini musibah juga, bisa-bisa mereka tidak bisa menjawab soal ujian dalam Bahasa Indonesia. Kalau di kota-kota sebaliknya, penyampaian pelajaran lebih sering hampir selalu Bahasa Indonesia, makanya banyak yang sudah tidak bisa Bahasa Aceh.

<sup>xxiii</sup> Bahasa Aceh hanya diajarkan di SD, tidak di SMP dan SMA karena dianggap sudah bisa.

<sup>xxiv</sup> Bahasa yang digunakan di sini Bahasa Aceh dan Bahasa Indonesia. Tapi lebih banyak Bahasa Indonesia, karena banyak drying datang jauh-jauh, tidak mengerti Bahasa Aceh. Misalnya dari Takengon mereka tidak bisa Bahasa Aceh. Jadi pengajaran dengan Bahasa Indonesia supaya bisa dimengerti semua *santri*.

<sup>xxv</sup> Yang diwajibkan adalah Bahasa Arab dan Inggris. Tahun-tahun pertama boleh Bahasa Indonesia, karena anak kami banyak drying dari takengon (Aceh Tengah), mereka tidak bisa Bahasa Aceh. Justru di sini gak boleh menggunakan Bahasa Aceh, kalau ketahuan berbahasa Aceh bisa dikenakan sangsi. Kalo Bahasa Indonesia anak-anak boleh menggunakan dengan guru umum, artinya guru sekolah pelajaran umum. Tapi kalo dengan guru-guru pesantren mereka harus berbahasa Arab dan Inggris.

<sup>xxvi</sup> Pengembangan silabus bisa kita sesuaikan dengan daerah kita. Misal, sejarah, dengan Otsus ini kami guru bisa memasukkan sejarah local Aceh. Sy tahu, krn sy sering sharing dg teman2 sejawat guru. Hanya, kami masih bingung bagaimana memasukkannya itu, karena belum ada penataran atau pelatihan untuk itu. Saya tidak tahu apakah sudah ada SK tentang ini atau belum.

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<sup>xxvii</sup> Cuma persoalannya sekarang terjadi untuk sejarah muatan lokal ini belum ada buku sendiri. Itulah yg harus disiapkan.

<sup>xxviii</sup> Masih sedikit sekali pengajaran yang terkait identitas Aceh. Bukunya pun belum ada yang disusun, sejarah, bahasa belum ada. Jadi uang itu belum ada digunakan untuk hal-hal yang seperti ini. Masih sebatas wacana.

<sup>xxix</sup> Sesuai dg UUPA, porsi untuk pendidikan itu kan 20%. Ini yang kita tidak mendapatkan sampai 20% itu, kita dapatkan tidak sampai segitu. Jauh timpang dengan pendidikan umum, sehingga ini kan mempengaruhi juga kualitas *dayah*. Kita tidak mendapatkan sampai 20% itu, paling hanya 10-15%. Jadi memang kendala kita di situlah, jadi terhambat program-program, karena alokasi anggaran sedikit. Itulah sumber dana kita kan ada yang namanya Otsus. Kita mendapatkannya dari Otsus ini besar. Ada juga MIGAS. Jd porsi kita dari OTSUS PROVINSI dan MIGAS, bukan yang kabupaten. Otsus migas ini juga bagian dari APBA, masuk ke APBA dulu baru dikeluarkan ke kami.

<sup>xxx</sup> Setahu saya APBA Aceh untuk pendidikan 1 trilyun, tapi knp dana untuk *dayah* sedikit sekali. Menurut saya, setidak minimal 30% lah dana dari dana pendidikan itu untuk *dayah*. Dari 2008 sampai sekarang Kita tidak pernah mendapat sebanyak itu. Tidak meningkat tetapi fluktuatif, naik turun. Itu semua tergantung lobby.

<sup>xxxi</sup> Terkait dg pendirian BPPD, Saya merasakan *dayah* ada kemajuan, ada banyak lah, pembagian kue (dana-anggaran-red) sudah lebih lumayan lah. Walau belum seperti lembaga lain. Memang masih jauh dibanding lembaga yang lainnya. Kita (*dayah*) menerima lebih sedikit.

<sup>xxxii</sup> Budget BPPD sejak 2008 sampai sekarang tidak meningkat, akan tetapi fluktuatif. Jumlah yang didapatkan BPPD tergantung lobby dengan tim anggaran. Ini lah yang aneh. Memang ada tambahan dari dana Otsus dan Migas. Tapi jumlahnya tidak pernah naik secara signifikan”

<sup>xxxiii</sup> Jadi sesuai dengan proposal yang mereka ajukan ke kami, kami membentuk tim verifikasi. Tim ini lah yang mengecek ke lapangan. Jadi mereka lihat apa yang dibutuhkan oleh *dayah* tersebut, skala prioritasnya apa dulu yang dibutuhkan *dayah* itu. Jadi memang mereka mesti mengajukan proposal dulu. Mengajukannya bukan ke Badan *Dayah*, menurut aturan yang berhak memberikan cuma gubernur, wagub dan sekda, tiga itu saja. Nah, nanti proposal-proposal itu diteruskan ke kami, kami yang turun ke lapangan untuk melakukan verifikasi.

<sup>xxxiv</sup> Selain honor kita bantu sarana prasarana, komputer, juga bangunan fisik meskipun belum merata. Yang jadi prioritas untuk pembangunan fisik sesuai kebutuhan, misal yang *santri* nya banyak, tetapi pemondokan nya kurang, kita verifikasi ke lapangan.

<sup>xxxv</sup> Jadi pertama pembangunan, itu mekanismenya *teungku* sendiri yang menentukan bangunan apa yang mereka butuhkan. Mereka mengajukan proposal, atau kadang-kadang kita langsung survey ke lapangan.

<sup>xxxvi</sup> Meskipun di tingkat provinsi sudah dibentuk BPPD, namun di tingkat daerah (kabupaten/kota) belum semua dibentuk kantor atau badan serupa. Misalnya Dinas Pendidikan ada di tingkat Provinsi dan kab/kota. Sedangkan *dayah* belum. Ini masalah dalam otonomi dimana setelah otonomi kan dibagi kewenangan, kewenangan provinsi dan kab/kota, daerah leluasa untuk membentuk atau tidak membentuk lembaga teknis tertentu, ini tergantung komitmen kepala daerah. Mungkin mereka menganggap *dayah* tidak penting. Sehingga kami mengalami kesulitan untuk berkoordinasi dengan daerah, termasuk dlm menyalurkan bantuan. Yang lebih ironis nya, dengan otonomi kab/kota ini apa yang dianggap penting oleh provinsi belum tentu dianggap penting oleh kab/kota. Nah, ini lah salah satu dampak otonomi, tiap kab/kota dpt membentuk lembaga teknis tapi tidak sinergi dengan yang ada di provinsi.

<sup>xxxvii</sup> Untuk 17 daerah yang belum punya badan *dayah*, kerjasamanya jadi tidak seragam, ada sebagian melalui bidang Pendidikan Luar Sekolah di Dinas Pendidikan Kab/kota, di bawah bidang ini ada kasubdit *dayah*. Nah kita bisa menempel di situ. Tapi ada kab/kota yang tidak ada Kasi *dayah* di dinas pendidikan, sehingga kami tidak tahu mesti komunikasi kemana. Jadi komunikasi dengan kabupaten kota sulit, mereka tidak menganggarkan dana untuk membentuk semacam kantor badan *dayah* tingkat kab/kota.

<sup>xxxviii</sup> Tapi kalo untuk mendukung satu provinsi kita tidak cukup dananya, harus didukung juga oleh pemerintah kab/kota, ini yang pincang. Saat ini kita baru punya kaki di 6 badan *dayah* kab/kota, yang 17 lagibelum punya.... Sekarang hanya ada 6 kab/kota yg ada dana Otsus dianggarkan di kita. Jadi ada di

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beberapa daerah yang kita tidak tahu lembaga apa yang mengurus *dayah*, jadi dana otsus daerahnya ada namun tidak diperuntukkan untuk *dayah*.

<sup>xxxix</sup> Alhamdulillah, sudah dua tahun ini tidak perlu mengajukan proposal. Mereka datang sendiri. Mereka biasanya kirim tim, tanya ke kita mau buat apa? Udah tahu orang itu kebutuhan kita apa. Karena *dayah* kita ini kan sudah dikenal, jadi gak usah diproposalin lagi lah. Karena *dayah* nya sudah besar, sudah punya nama. Mereka tinggal lihat website kita.

<sup>xl</sup> Kalau diam saja tidak pintar-pintar mendekati maka tidak ada (tidak dapat dana). Pemerintah kan banyak dana nya tapi kalau tidak kita dekati, mereka tidak tahu kebutuhan kita.

<sup>xli</sup> Di *dayah* kita lebih otonom dalam menyusun kurikulum sendiri, kita tidak ada urusan dengan pemerintah. Sejak dulu kami memang sudah otonom, kurikulum kita tidak berganti-ganti seperti pendidikan umum.

<sup>xlii</sup> *Dayah* itu pantang meminta-minta dana (mengajukan proposal) karena dalam Islam perbuatan tersebut dianggap tidak mulia (ungkapan tangan di atas lebih mulia dari tangan yang di bawah). Sehingga sekarang badan *dayah* ini yang harus proaktif, turun ke lapangan, melihat mana saja lembaga lembaga *dayah* yang memerlukan bantuan.

<sup>xliii</sup> Tapi *dayah* memang dalam sejarahnya adalah swadaya, jadi guru-gurunya mengajar dengan ikhlas. Contoh, tidak pernah guru *dayah* berdemo karena tidak mendapatkan gaji, tetapi kalau guru sekolah tidak mendapatkan gaji ada yang berdemo. Sering mereka beranggapan, ketika sudah kita gaji maka keikhlasan mereka berkurang.

<sup>xliv</sup> Kalau untuk *dayah*, itu baru memang ada bantuannya setelah, sebelum-sebelumnya ada tapi minim. Baru ada setelah dibentuknya badan *dayah*. Barulah di situ ada perhatian yang besar terhadap *dayah*. Itu yang saya rasakan.

<sup>xlv</sup> Selama Otsus terhadap *dayah* lebih baik perhatian pemerintah. Namun dari bantuan-bantuan, misalnya honor untuk dewan guru *dayah* masih kurang.

<sup>xlvi</sup> Badan *dayah* khusus untuk menangani *dayah-dayah* yang banyak di Aceh, yang selama ini manajemen dan kurikulum nya terpinggirkan, belum secanggih sekolah umum. Dengan adanya BPPD ini diharapkan *dayah-dayah* bisa diberdayakan. (*Teungku*, Banda Aceh, Interview 5)

<sup>xlvii</sup> Jadi perhatian pemerintah saat ini memang jauh lebih baik, meskipun belum maksimal, tetapi sudah cukup dibanding dulu. Peningkatan itu misalnya bisa dilihat dari segi finansial atau pendanaan, kemudian sinergi antar lembaga.

<sup>xlviii</sup> Banyak perbedaannya setelah Otsus. Misalnya dari segi pembangunan fisik, sangat terasa kemajuannya. Lainnya, perhatian pemerintah lebih banyak. Bantuan moril dan dukungan juga lebih terasa. Misalnya ada program-program pemberdayaan *santri*, pelatihan manajemen, lifeskill, computer, jurnalistik, dan lain lain. Banyaknya bantuan dari BPPD Provinsi, kalau BPPD Bireun baru terbentuk. Mulai ada BPPD langsung ada bantuan. Dana masyarakat memang ada, tetapi kan masyarakat juga belum sejahtera setelah konflik. Iuran *santri* hanya untuk operasional *dayah*, listrik, makan, dan lain lain.

<sup>xlix</sup> Itu kan yg belum terkumpul, harus teriak-teriak dulu untuk mengumpulkan. Kan lebih baik ambil saja yang sudah terkumpul di pemerintah itu.

<sup>l</sup> Kalau dulu itu *dayah* swadaya masyarakat, kalau swadaya masyarakat ya agak lambat. Jadi ketika, ada perhatian pemerintah Aceh terhadap kemajuan dan perkembangan *dayah* dengan dibentuknya badan *dayah*. Dan disini masyarakat yang tadinya ragu untuk mendirikan *dayah*, tokoh agama yang ragu, sudah coba membuka *dayah*. Nah dengan adanya perhatian pemerintah Aceh terhadap *dayah*, sekarang tokoh agama yang ragu-ragu untuk mendirikan sebuah *dayah*, mereka termotivasi.

<sup>li</sup> *Dayah* sebelum ada BPPD sangat eksklusif, bahkan mereka tidak mau menerima bantuan pemerintah. Setelah 2 tahun BPPD Bireun berdiri, mereka mulai merubah persepsinya terhadap pemerintah. Mereka lebih memilih berkerjasama dengan BPPD, dibanding dengan dinas. Karena mereka masih menaruh kecurigaan pada Dinas, yang sebelumnya merupakan kepanjangan tangan pemerintah pusat.

<sup>lii</sup> "Jadi target nya waled-waled yang besar itu saya integratikan semua. Jadi yang kecil-kecil nanti tinggal mengikuti, sehingga pembaharuan pendidikan di *dayah* bisa terjadi dengan dimotori para waled besar di *dayah*."

<sup>liii</sup> Setelah ada BPPD perubahan ini pelan-pelan mulai terlihat. Misalnya mereka sudah mulai menerima program-program yang ditawarkan oleh pemerintah, misalnya sebelumnya ada *dayah* yang tidak mau



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terima bantuan pembangunan ruang kelas dari pemerintah. Karena mereka umumnya menganggap bahwa *dayah* itu berasal dari masyarakat, dibangun dan dikembangkan dengan bantuan masyarakat tanpa melibatkan pemerintah. Mereka takut jika hal itu mendorong intervensi pemerintah. Sekarang masih ada seperti itu, tetapi jumlahnya sudah sangat kecil.

<sup>liv</sup> Rasa tidak percaya itu muncul mengingat Visi dan Misi Pemerintahan ZIKIR (dr. H. Zaini Abdullah & Muzakir Manaf) dalam janji politiknya menjanjikan kesejahteraan *Dayah-Dayah* di Aceh. Bahkan dalam berbagai kesempatan Wagub Muzakir Manaf sering menjanjikan akan lebih serius memperhatikan *dayah*. Kita berharap kejadian umbar-umbar janji manis cukup berlaku pada periode sebelumnya. Rapor merah periode sebelumnya diharapkan menjadi masukan berharga untuk tidak asal berjanji kalau tidak ada realisasi atau kerja nyata. Masih segar diingatan kita, janji kampanye ZIKIR yang menegaskan akan menempatkan *ulama* di garda depan pembangunan Aceh.

<sup>lv</sup> Tapi yang lebih banyak begini, dengan adanya dana badan *dayah* ini banyak bermunculan tengku-*teungku* tanggung, bukan yang *ulama* yang tiba tiba mendirikan lembaga lembaga pendidikan, tapi sebenarnya tidak eksis *dayah dayah* itu.

<sup>lvi</sup> Ada juga *dayah-dayah* incidental, yang baru saja bermunculan ketika tahu ada pendanaan tambahan untuk *dayah* melalui Badan *Dayah*. Balai-balai *pengajian* (rangkang) di kampung-kampung itu, yang tidak ada *santrinya* menginap. Mungkin itu tujuan badan *dayah* mengecek, takut salah sasaran. Pernah ketahuan, mengajukan dana, katanya *santrinya* ada 500 orang. Ternyata setelah dicek balai nya cuma ada dua, bagaimana mungkin menampung *santri* sebanyak itu.

<sup>lvii</sup> Kalau dulu *teungku* mengajar dengan kemauan sendiri, tidak perlu dikontrol. Sekarang, kalau tidak ada yang mengawasi tidak masuk. Sekarang mereka sudah mulai terpengaruh, ada honor atau tidak. Inilah akibat bahaya duit yang saya maksud. Jadi serba salah, ada duit susah, tidak ada duit susah.

<sup>lviii</sup> Selama ini belum ada perubahan budaya ikhlas mengajar di *dayah*, karena kan mereka tidak berharap. Selama ini yang mengajar di *dayah* kan *santri* senior, jadi tujuannya kan belajar, mengajar itu tambahan. Hanya sedikit *teungku* yang didatangkan dari luar *dayah*. Jadi *santri-santri* senior ini memang tujuannya tinggal di *dayah* untuk mendapatkan ilmu dari pimpinan *dayah*.

<sup>lix</sup> Waktu itu mereka menuntut, kami mengajarkan anak-anak membaca Qur'an, jadi siapa yang mau membantu kami selain pemerintah. Itu lah karena Otonomi Khusus semua-semua dituntut, akibatnya bukan kualitas yang diutamakan. Akhirnya mereka (BPPD) mencoba membuat kriteria untuk menyalurkan keadaan. Bagaimana uang pemerintah yang terbatas dapat memenuhi permintaan masyarakat.

<sup>lx</sup> Kalau di daerah lain kan *dayah-dayah* itu muncul nya dari balai-balai *pengajian* di masyarakat. Dengan adanya syariat Islam, ini makin banyak bermunculan. Makanya pernah kan ada salah data, manipulasi data terjadi pada awal-awalnya. Misal manipulasi jumlah *santri*, karena ingin mendapat dana lebih banyak. Sekarang sudah diperketat dengan adanya klasifikasi *dayah*.

<sup>lxi</sup> Apalagi sekarang dengan syariat Islam ini, salah juga...artinya banyak *dayah* yang tumbuh (bermunculan) karena ada fasilitas-fasilitas dari pemerintah. Jadi *dayah* tumbuh dimana-mana. Bukan karena kritis, tapi animo mendirikan meningkat. Cuma dengan 2-3 buah bale, tahu-tahu masukin proposal, cari koneksi politik, udah selesai. Dan ini jadinya bertumpuk (*dayah* yg mengajukan permohonan hibah), jadi berharap itu mau nya kan pemerintah itu buat grade untuk *dayah* (tingkatan atau standardisasi), Jadi bisa memberikan bantuan sesuai kondisi grade tersebut. Nah itu kalo kita mau profesional, tetapi harus dibatasi. Kalau begitu efeknya *dayah* memang menjadi sedikit, tapi optimal (berkualitas). Kalau kita bicara seperti ini seolah-olah kan kita anti *dayah*, jadi sensitif persoalan ini. Sebenarnya tidak masalah kalau murni inisiatif masyarakat, tapi ini kan tidak (mengharap bantuan pemerintah).

<sup>lxii</sup> Kami sempet jengkel, karena banyak sekali persyaratan yang kami harus penuhi. Akte pendirian, segala macam. Kalo tidak lengkap maka tidak bisa mendapatkan bantuan. Data ulang berkali-kali, kami kan tidak mendapat bantuan rutin dari mereka, kenapa terlalu rumit. Kami dana lebih banyak dari iuran *santri*. Makanya bantuan BPPD itu kami diberi tidak apa-apa, tidak juga tidak apa-apa. Apalagi kalau banyak syarat macam-macam. Kami tanpa bantuan pun Insya Allah tetap jalan. Jadi kami sekarang sudah tidak proaktif lagi, kalau ada kami ambil, kalau tidak kami sudah tidak mau mengajukan lagi.

<sup>lxiii</sup> Kalau *ulama* kharismatik tidak mau mereka masuk ke pemerintahan, mereka tidak mau didikte. Kalo masuk pemerintahan mereka terpaksa harus tunduk, mereka tidak suka seperti itu. Kalau intervensi

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mereka (pemerintah) kasih bantuan. Nah, giliran mereka (pemerintah) meminta sesuatu jadi mereka tidak enak lagi menolak.

<sup>lxiv</sup> Mungkin karena pengalaman masa lalu, jika berhubungan dengan pemerintah *ulama* takut akan masuk ke dalam regulasi pemerintah.

<sup>lxv</sup> Walaupun saya lihat Aceh diberi keistimewaan, tetapi tetap tidak seberapa berpengaruh, kecuali jika pusat benar-benar tidak campur tangan lagi dengan pendidikan Aceh seperti kurikulum dan sebagainya, kecuali urusan pendanaan. Mungkin itu baru bisa. Tapi kalau pusat tetap campur tangan, percuma saja namanya Otsus. Dulu MIN (Madrasah Ibtidaiyah Negeri) di Aceh luar biasa, yang dibangun oleh seseorang di Samalanga, berhasil menciptakan intelektual Islam yang agamis dan berilmu dunia. Bisa jadi bupati, gubernur, menjadi tokoh masyarakat. Sekarang sudah tidak begitu lagi, karena campur tangan pusat.

<sup>lxvi</sup> Seperti Badan *Dayah*, mungkin yang duduk di dalamnya belum banyak yang mengerti *dayah*. Yang duduk di sana kan PNS, mungkin mereka sebelumnya dari dinas penerangan, pertanian, jadi bukan konsentrasi *dayah*. Jadi orang-orang di sana belum tentu mengerti *dayah*, apa visi misi *dayah*. Mereka sama saja dengan dinas teknis lain yang berada di bawah Pemprov.

<sup>lxvii</sup> Saya melihat keberadaan badan *dayah* bagus dan perlu. Walaupun sebagian orang melihat tidak perlu ada, tetapi menurut saya justru perlu dipertahankan. Yang penting kita usahakan yang duduk di situ orang-orang yang pernah di pesantren sehingga dia mengerti. Ini yang duduk di situ tidak tahu bagaimana perkembangan *dayah*. Karena mereka birokrat. Padahal ada juga birokrat yang dari *dayah*, walaupun cuma sedikit. Cuma untuk memuaskan semua *dayah* memang sulit karena begitu banyak *dayah* di Aceh. Jadi ya ada yang senang ada yang tidak senang. Tapi saya rasa penting keberadaan BPPD, untuk kemajuan *dayah*, supaya nilai-nilai pesantren tidak hilang.

<sup>lxviii</sup> Program diniyah ini adalah bagian upaya untuk mendengarkan suara teungku (bukti suara teungku didengarkan). Kekhawatiran teungku karena pelajaran umum di sekolah yang panjang membuat anak-anak tidak punya waktu lagi belajar agama.

<sup>lxix</sup> Mereka tidak melibatkan semua elemen ulama, terutama yang dari ORMAS Islam, mereka cenderung melibatkan ulama yang merupakan perwakilan negara seperti MPU dan ulama dari PTN seperti dari UIN atau Syiah Kuala. Tapi tidak apa-apa juga, tetapi kalau yang ORMAS dilibatkan akan lebih bagus.

<sup>lxx</sup> Iya, teungku-teungku dilibatkan dalam penyusunan kurikulum. Ulama-ulama dari MPU dan dari PTN yang kami libatkan.

<sup>lxxi</sup> HUDA memasukkan draft untuk qanun ke DPR, tapi tidak ada satu pun yang diakomodir. Biasanya tanpa kita ketahui sudah diketok palu di DPR, sehingga kita sudah tidak sempat lagi mengkritisi.

<sup>lxxii</sup> Yang banyak dihormati justru ulama di pesantren salafiyah. Karena kharismanya lebih tinggi, karena mereka tidak terjun ke politik. Jika ulama sudah terjun ke politik, sudah hilang kharismanya, apalagi sudah menjadi anggota dewan. Ini sudah rahasia umum lah bagaimana anggota dewan itu, sehingga rakyat tidak respek lagi.

<sup>lxxiii</sup> Kalau ulama takut berpolitik karena takut kehilangan dukungan dari pengikutnya, itu benar. Karena apa? Karena politik itu kotor, tapi saya melihat, harus ada ulama yang berpolitik dan berusaha untuk merubah cara berpolitik yang tidak sehat.

<sup>lxxiv</sup> Ketika masa Orde Baru, teungku dibawa kemana-mana untuk kampanye. Sehingga lambat laun pamor teungku menurun, teungku tidak lagi menjadi panutan. Hilang kehormatannya.

<sup>lxxv</sup> Ketika ulama tersebut memberikan ceramah, orang berduyun-duyun datang untuk mendengar ceramahnya. Di akhir ceramah, orang-orang akan mengantri untuk mencium tangannya untuk mendapatkan berkah.

<sup>lxxvi</sup> Kalo orang mendengar Otsus ini memang persepsinya langsung pada dana.

<sup>lxxvii</sup> Saya melihat memang ada peningkatan dana pendidikan, tapi bukan untuk kesejahteraan guru. Melainkan untuk operasional sekolah.

<sup>lxxviii</sup> Yang saya tahu kami di sini mendapat bantuan infocus dan laptop. Di situ kan ditulis, bantuan sarana prasarana dari Otsus.

<sup>lxxix</sup> Pendanaan pendidikan setelah Otsus jauh berubah. Yang diterima sekolah juga jauh lebih banyak.

<sup>lxxx</sup> Memang terasa sekali dampaknya Otsus mba, 2 tahun terakhir ini kita baru merasakan apa yang namanya SPM (Standar Pelayanan Minimal) belum SNP. Sejak otsus kami sudah dapat 2 kali, tahun 2008 6 kelas dan 2012 kemarin 10 kelas.

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<sup>lxxxix</sup> Dari segi pendanaan untuk pendidikan sudah lumayan sebenarnya. Lumayan nya begini, sudah banyak beasiswa-beasiswa. Beasiswa yatim dan korban konflik memang dialokasikan dari dana Otsus. Ini yang menyalurkan dari Dinas Pendidikan, sumbernya dari Provinsi.

<sup>lxxxix</sup> Dengan adanya dana Otsus, anak-anak yatim piatu dan fakir miskin disubsidi. Ini dari provinsi untuk seluruh Aceh. Jadi sekarang tidak ada alasan untuk tidak sekolah. Dulu kan alasannya biaya, sekarang tidak lagi.

<sup>lxxxix</sup> Dengan adanya dana itu terbantu untuk memenuhi sarpras pendidikan, seperti pemenuhan laboratorium, perpustakaan, alat-alat peraga, jadi kami sangat terbantu dengan dana otsus ini. Kemudian yang lainnya kita bisa meningkatkan kompetensi guru yang untuk kab Bireun memang masih sangat rendah kompetensinya.

<sup>lxxxix</sup> Beda sekali di Banda Aceh yang perhatian terhadap mutu nya sudah sangat tinggi, mereka anggaran PAD nya besar, jadi sulit untuk sama. PAD Bireun kecil, tidak ada hasil tambang. Paling dari PBB, perijinan. Tidak sampai 20 milyar per tahun. Maka kalau Otsus habis kita tidak siap bisa susah.

<sup>lxxxix</sup> Jadi kami di Bireun cuma dapat BOS dan DBO, kalau di daerah tingkat 2 lain ada BOSDA. Bireun sudah lama tidak dapat, katanya sih defisit anggaran, itu sejak 2009.

<sup>lxxxix</sup> Iya, terakhir memang mereka yang ketuk palu, di DPR itu, mereka bisa saja membatalkan program kita. Misal kita ingin pembelajaran dengan ICT, mereka menganggap tidak penting itu. "kami dulu hanya belajar di bale, sekarang bisa seperti ini". Maka seringkali usulan program kita gagal-gagal terus. Harusnya kita sudah bisa mengICTkan di tahun 2013, tetapi mundur terus, bisa tetapi tidak seluruhnya seperti yang kita programkan."

<sup>lxxxix</sup> Kalau di Bireun karena memang bupati nya punya visi misi syariat Islam, visi misi pendidikan *dayah*, DPRD diharuskan untuk mengalokasikan 5% dari alokasi 20% dana sector pendidikan untuk *dayah* yang bersumber dari APBK dan Otsus. Sudah sejak 2012 saat berdirinya Badan *Dayah*. Sehingga bila dilihat dari perkembangan fisik *dayah*, sudah jauh lebih maju dibanding sebelum 2012.

<sup>lxxxix</sup> Tapi masalahnya kan tidak semua daerah membentuk badan *dayah* nya, di Banda Aceh saja belum ada. Itu saya tidak tahu, ya tergantung pemerintah daerah masing-masing. Padahal di Banda Aceh ada *dayah* walaupun gak sebanyak di tempat lain. Saya tidak pernah berhubungan dengan walikota. Kalau di Bireun memang serius, karena ketua Badan *Dayah* nya orang *dayah* juga sebelum nya."

<sup>lxxxix</sup> Sebelumnya kita ada yang sedang bertugas harus tiarap, berhenti, sembunyi, kontak senjata.

Sekarang damai, harus dipertahankan. Apalagi di sini banyak tokoh-tokoh GAM. Mereka sampai sekarang masih ada, mereka sekarang membantu, kalau ada apa-apa mereka bilang untuk laopr ke mereka. Kalau dulu kan banyak anggota GAM yang datang minta ini minta itu, sekarang sudah tidak ada lagi. Sudah dihandle sama tokoh GAM.

<sup>lxxxix</sup> Kalau manajemennya tidak diperhatikan. Ini sudah sangat kelihatan sekarang. Pemilu pertama GAM (partai Aceh) menguasai 80% suara di DPR tingkat provinsi, tapi pemilu selanjutnya turun hanya 50%. Hilang suara setengahnya. Artinya kepercayaan masyarakat Aceh dilihat dari kiprah mereka. Karena keterbukaan informasi, mereka faham bahwa mereka tidak bisa lagi dibohongi, dipermainkan. Mereka tahu mana yang benar-benar menolong mereka, mana yang hanya sekedar *lips service*.

<sup>lxxxix</sup> Jadi memang anggaran untuk ini memang sudah disiapkan, dalam arti berapa pun kebutuhan untuk program ini akan dipenuhi oleh Pemkot melalui APBK. Hal ini menunjukkan komitmen Pemkot, sehingga tidak membebaskan masyarakat sedikitpun untuk penerapan program ini di sekolah-sekolah. Sampai ke pengadaan kitab-kitab nya.

<sup>lxxxix</sup> Kalau menurut saya ini sangat terkait dengan otonomi, karena jika tidak ada otonomi semua yang kita lakukan sangat tergantung pusat. Kita tidak ada independensi untuk mengembangkan kurikulum kita sendiri. Kalau otonomi di bidang pendidikan kita di Banda Aceh sudah sangat menerapkan itu.

<sup>lxxxix</sup> Tidak meningkat tapi fluktuatif, naik turun. Itu semua tergantung lobby. Inilah yang aneh. Nanti ditambah, dana otsus kab/kota, di kita juga dananya (dititip). Kemudian dana migas kab/kota dan provinsi. Nah ini tidak pernah lewat dari 360 Milyar. Harusnya tim TAPA ada standard nya misal minimal standar badan *dayah* berapa, untuk bangun pesantren, dan lain lain. Lebih boleh, tapi jangan kurang. Ini naik turun terus, tidak ada standar nya. Anggaran sudah dijatah, bukan diajukan dana sesuai proposal. Ketika menyusun anggaran sudah dikasih plafon, baru kalau tidak cukup kita lobby lg.

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<sup>xciv</sup> Kalau boleh jujur, anggaran sekarang kan tergantung politik (lobby). Jadi tidak normal, tidak berdasarkan kebutuhan. Mana normal, misal kita kan punya Renstra dan RPJM yang memuat kebutuhan kita, nah ini tidak akan terpenuhi kalau tidak ada lobby.

<sup>xcv</sup> Kalau kita bicara uang aspirasi, misalnya ada orang yang kenal sama gubernur, sama wagub, dekat, maka mereka masukkan. Kan gitu. yang lewat dewan begitu juga, kenal dengan anggota dewan, masukkan lewat mereka. Setelah itu bawa deh ke Biro Kesra. Jadi melalui pendekatan anggota dewan ke Biro Kesra.

<sup>xcvi</sup> Hampir semua dana-dana itu bisa didapatkan kalau kita ada akses ke kuasa. Dan yang paling berperan adalah anggota DPR dengan dana-dana aspirasi mereka, mereka gunakan untuk hal-hal yang dampaknya kurang terhadap proses pembelajaran terhadap proses perubahan pendidikan.

<sup>xcvii</sup> Kalau diam saja tidak pintar-pintar mendekati maka tidak dapat. Pemerintah kan banyak dana nya tapi kalau tidak kita dekati tidak tahu mereka kalau kita butuh. Kita harus pandai2-pandaimendekati orang itu. Tapi jangan rakus, tidak bisa meminta dari beberapa sumber untuk satu alokasi. Jadi kalau tidak punya channel susah.

<sup>xcviii</sup> Itu tergantung kedekatan kita dengan anggota Dewannya. Selama ini belum tahu dapat tidak nya, kalau tidak salah disalurkan lewat BPPD juga. Sumber dana BPPD ada yang dari Otsus, Migas, aspirasi. Tapi Alhamdulillah, setelah ada BPPD keadaan sudah jauh lebih baik. (sedang dibangun masjid besar di *dayah* ini dari dana otsus).

<sup>xcix</sup> Karena walaupun *dayah* nya besar (banyak *santri* nya) kalau tidak ada hubungan sama anggota DPR ya tidak dikasih, tapi kalau misalnya dia *dayah* nya tidak besar, bahkan baru mau bangun, tetapi karena kenal atau satu aliran maka dapet dia. *Dayah-dayah* yang tidak punya akses ke DPR, jangan mimpilah. <sup>c</sup>BPPD lumayan banyak dititipi. Banyak dalam jumlah *dayah*, bukan jumlah uang. Jadi list *dayah* yang menerima bantuan itu sudah mereka tentukan, bukan dari kami. Apalagi di Aceh digunakan untuk kepentingan politik, supaya kepilih lagi. Itu bisa-bisa semua Balai Pengajian dikasih semua.

<sup>ci</sup> Biasanya anggota DPR itu titip di Banggar, melalui prosedur di tim TAPA, kemudian tiba-tiba sudah ada di DIPA kita alokasi untuk pembangunan *dayah* A misalnya. Padahal kita tidak mengajukan. Dan aturannya, kalau di kita (BPPD) adalah kita membantu membangun fasilitas yang belum ada di *dayah*, misalnya MCK atau bale. Tapi ternyata pas kita cek bantuan itu untuk tanah yang masih kosong, jadi murni untuk membangun *dayah* baru. Ini yang menyalahi aturan. Karena bukan kami yang mengajukan, jadi tidak mengerti aturannya seperti apa. Karena kalau bangun baru, semua orang juga mau membangun *dayah* baru. Nah ini yang tidak bagus. Karena mudahnya mendapat dana aspirasi untuk yang punya channel ke anggota DPR. Jadi mereka bukan membantu pembangunan *dayah-dayah* yang sudah ada, malah menyalurkan untuk pembangunan *dayah-dayah* baru yg belum tentu akan eksis terus.

<sup>cii</sup> Termasuk penyaluran dana aspirasi itu. Misal mereka ingin membantu buku, *mobile library* ke sekolah A, B, C ya itu dititip ke kita. Macam-macam. Yang repotnya titipan itu kan bukannya menambah pagu, tetapi menggunakan pagu yang sudah ada, jadi menggerus dana kita sehingga kita harus mngalahkan program lain atau kita kurangi volumenya. Kalau tidak disetujui dana aspirasi ini, bisa molor anggaran kita, dipermainkan.

<sup>ciii</sup> Ini berbahaya, dana yang besar yang ada di kita ini tidak terkucur ke tempat-tempat yang seharusnya. Termasuk juga, maaf, rekrutmen calon mahasiswa S2, S3 ke luar negeri. Rekrutmen-rekrutmen ini tidak terlepas dari intrik-intrik politik, ada koneksi-koneksi dan segala macam. Makanya banyak orang baik-baik mundur dari pengelola dana itu. Mungkin ini subjektifitas saya, tapi bisa saya pertanggungjawabkan, ada dalil nya saya bicara seperti ini.

<sup>civ</sup> Ini jangan bilang, banyak di sini ada sekolah dibangun, tapi tidak ada orang nya. Mereka senangnya membangun-bangun saja, karena ada fee nya di situ. Tapi sekolah yang sudah ada, banyak muridnya, belum diperhatikan. Masih ada yang belajar di lantai. Belum lagi terminal baru yang tidak ada mobilnya, pasar ikan yang tidak ada ikan nya. Di terminal mobil barang itu tidak ada mobilnya, ada sehari satu. Di tengah nya ada musholla nya siapa yang sholat? Kambing? WC nya ada, siapa yang buang air di situ? Tidak ada. Tapi sudah dibangun. Di sini yang buang airnya banyak, WC nya tidak ada.

<sup>cv</sup> Kalau mereka tidak benar-benar berbuat, hanya memperkaya diri sendiri. Kalau dulu mereka di hutan-hutan ada nasi bungkus dari tetangga, sekarang mereka sudah menjadi pejabat, hanya asyik gonta ganti

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mobil atau gonta ganti istri maka mereka akan merasakan akibatnya. Artinya saat ini buah manis otonomi belum dirasakan sampai ke bawah, hanya dirasakan oleh segelintir orang. Sangat disayangkan.

<sup>cvi</sup> Tidak merata. Itu kalau untuk pribadi saya, dana itu tidak harus ada. Bisa timbul masalah. Karena kita sama-sama memilih dia menjadi wail kita, kenapa yang lain dapat kita tidak. Akhirnya masalah, tahun depan tidak memilih dia lagi.

<sup>cvii</sup> Keadaan seperti ini sejak GAM berkuasa, setelah MoU Helsinki. Mereka merasa bahwa keadaan sekarang ini adalah hasil kerja keras mereka, jadi yang berhak menikmati ya hanya golongan mereka.

<sup>cviii</sup> Berarti, tergantung partainya atau kelompoknya, ini terasa juga agak susah untuk akses dana sekarang ini. Tidak gampang kita masuk. Kalau di Aceh misalnya dikuasai orang-orang GAM, nah itu juga kadang, dia sendiri juga susah kadang. Makanya kalau ini dikedepankan politik lebih utama kedepan, tidak pernah baik. Ganti. Ini masa kami. Bukan diukur kepada kemampuannya, diukur kepada keakrabannya. Ini yang paling diatasi, bukan takut kita dipecat, takutnya sistem sedang terbangun bagus, berubah.

<sup>cix</sup> Di satu sisi luar biasa, tetapi, jika Aceh tidak memiliki SDM yang mumpuni untuk mengelola otonomi ini dengan baik untuk kemaslahatan rakyat maka akan terjadi bom kedua. Jika orang Aceh yang sudah dipercaya menjadi pemimpin yang sekarang tidak mempunyai manajemen yang baik, atau tidak ada kemauan politik maka Aceh yang sekarang bisa jadi akan menjadi lebih buruk dari yang lalu. Kalau dulu Aceh dieksploitasi oleh pemerintah pusat, sekarang dieksploitasi oleh pemimpinnya sendiri. Kalau dulu Aceh berperang dengan pemerintah pusat, tidak menutup kemungkinan nanti Aceh berperang sesamanya.