

The Models for Muslim Students Life Skills Development: A Case Study of Islamic Private Schools in Pattani Province

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Abstract

This qualitative study aimed to investigate the development of life skills, conditional factors relating to Muslim youth life skills development within three different sizes of Islamic private schools in Pattani Province. The samples of the study were 16 school administrators, teachers, school counselors, religious leaders, community leaders, students and alumni per each school, and three experts. The data were collected through an in-depth interview, focus group, and observation. This study revealed that in terms of school administration. 1) The three schools were administrated differently. Regarding the content of learning and teaching management, 2) the schools integrated religious subjects with the academic ones. There was also the integration of the life skills development with the subject content. On the contrary to these, there was somehow different approach of the integration. The main features of learning promotion activities were similar, which mostly the project-based learning (PBL), teamwork learning, self-learning, reflective learning, and activity-based learning were utilized. Furthermore, the study also demonstrated that the main common features of the community relations activities were hands-on learning, community-based learning, participatory learning, and social support. Within three schools' co-factors/conditions consisted of kinship organizational culture, role model teachers, and relationship and learning from within the school peer groups. In the meanwhile, the outside three schools' co-factors/conditions included the relationship and learning from outside of the school peer groups. Therefore, this study recommended that the schools should encourage their students to employ the Islamic teachings within the schools, and also should boost them to translate the teachings into their families, communities, societies, and other related organizations.

Keywords: Life Skill, Muslim Youth, Islamic Private Schools

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Introduction

The Muslim youth in the three southern border provinces of Thailand, i.e., Pattani, Yala and Narathiwat, where the majority of the people are Muslims, have spent their time on something that is not congruent with their religion, Islam. They hardly ever realise what the future will hold. In the same vein, they do not even realise what their duties are. In addition to these issues, they are likely to ignore their religious teachings, and they live their lives according to their desire (Mahama, 2008, p.3). Furthermore, due to some trends, they strive to conduct themselves and emulate the trends which give rise to some inappropriate behaviour that they may not know if the trends abide by their religious teachings or not (Amatayakul, 2009, p.14). Most of the Muslim youth do not live their lives according to what the societies in the provinces have expected. They also seem not to practice according to their religious teachings. For instance, they feel comfortable to mingle with someone of the opposite gender or even to have sexual intercourse. Furthermore, they also experienced drug addiction, gambling, and quarrel, and violent behaviour (Laeheem and Baka, 2010, p.27, and Nakornthap et al., 2007).

The above-mentioned problems regarding the youth in the three deep south provinces indicated that the problems have increased. Moreover, they recently have come to term with violent situation that has happened since January 2004. The unrest has a considerable direct and indirect effect on the Muslim youth. That is to say, some of them died due to the violence, some

were seriously injured, and handicapped. In addition, a few number of them became suspects, were prosecuted, were imprisoned, were separated from their family, were perceived that they dissent from the state, and were orphaned by the unrest situation.

Based on the problems found, it can be seen that the aftermath of the violence does not only affect their quality of life, but also impinge upon their happiness as well as cheerfulness. Another study concerning the youth in the three southern border provinces maintains that the death of their family members, the unrest occurred, having no income, fear and distrust, induction into insurgent group, and mistrust are disastrous for the Muslim youth (Nakornthap et al., 2007).

Under the above circumstances, it can be reflected that the problems regarding the youth in the three southern border provinces are the matters that need to be concerned about. Thus, the youth need to have immunity to being aware of the problems. In addition, the youth may need to be cultivated life skills so that they could confidently encounter the social problems. Consequently, this immunity can be a strong foundation for them to have the bright future. This is in association with what World Health Organisation (1994, p.17) has revealed that life skills should be promoted as the skills play a vital role for children and youth to help them solve social problems since the youth is vulnerable to experience mental and physical problems, such as drug addiction, smoking, pregnancy, and other illegal acts, etc.

Therefore, the life skills development can be guideline for the youth to cope with tension and pressure, to live their lives strongly and to adapt themselves for various situations appropriately. Besides, the skills development enables them to solve the social problems as well. The life skills development will also be beneficial for societies as every individual should be responsible for social advancement. Especially, the youth may need to have the skills to behave themselves both inside and outside their families appropriately such as, the skills of tying up relationship between their family members, getting along with other people in societies, communication, conflict problem-solving, and so on. For one thing, supposing that the Muslim youth possess these skills, they may have self-esteem, self-assertiveness, and responsibility both for themselves and for the societies. Consequently, they could live their live happily.

It is known that the Islamic private schools are of paramount importance for the youth development that emphasises on the Muslim youth life skills based on the Islamic teachings rested on the expectations of the societies in the three provinces (Baka and Laeheem, 2008). Therefore, it is obligatory for the schools to develop the life skills of the Muslim youth who are experiencing several risky problems amidst materialistic advancement and globalisation, even in the places where people are religious.

Based on those mentioned reasons, this study aims to explore the model of the Muslim youth life skills development in the Islamic private

schools in Pattani where there are the highest number of schools, students, and teachers in the three southern border provinces (Regional Education Office No. 12, 2012). The schools in Mueang District of Pattani are selected to be the case of this study. The researcher decided to choose the selected schools where there are good life skills development, the schools are being accepted by the communities and related-agencies, and the schools have been awarded in recognition of their achievement in developing Muslim youth life skills by many local, provincial, and national organisations. In addition, the students have proper life skills. There are three different sizes of the schools chosen to be a case study of this study – small-, medium- and large-sized schools – in order to examine related factors in the life skills development in the three different sizes of the Islamic private schools.

Literature Reviews

Each theory plays an important role in the Muslim youth life skills development, which should properly be integrated. Namely, the *concept of Islamic integration education* (Narongraksakhet, 2008) disclosed that there is an integration between the Islamic studies and the academic ones, as Islam is the religion that does not separate between the two. Thus, the modern educational system of the Islamic private schools should be systematically created, in which there is the integration between the Islamic studies and the academic ones. Additionally, Langputeh (2010) proposed the *concept of SON* (Self, Organization and Network) *strategy development*. This concept emphasizes that the development of

Muslim youth must be rested on the aspect of self, organization and network. Therefore, their development can only be possible when these three dominant aspects be considered covered in the schools. Moreover, another concept is *the 3I* (International, Islamisation and Integration) *model development* (IIUM, 2002). This concept shows that the Muslim life skills development in the three provinces should not only be considered the specific context, which means the context of three provinces, but should also consider other contexts such as Islamic and international ones.

Another significant concept is the *Whole School Approach* (Department of General Education, 2002). This concept enables to achieve the expected life skills development goals. It also facilitates that every step of the development can be accomplished. This accomplishment depends on collaboration from every sector, including school administration, learning and teaching management, organising learning promotion activities, and organising community relations activities. Accordingly, the researcher uses the concept of systematic development as the main concept in order to design this study, as this concept systematically focuses on the youth life skills development, which covers every element of the development of each school as well as the collaboration from all stakeholders.

Research Methodology

This qualitative case study constitutes data collection from secondary and primary sources. In terms of the secondary resource data collection, the researcher studied the related documents in order to get the concepts relating

the models of the development of the Muslim youth life skills. Concerning the primary resource data collection, the study used an in-depth interview, focus group, and observation. The data were verified by research experts. Furthermore, this is a purposive research area selection, from which three Islamic private schools located in Pattani were selected as the case study, which were one large-sized, one medium-sized, and one small-sized schools. The criteria used to select the schools are as follows: 1) the schools have been accepted by individuals and agencies who involve in the development of the Muslim youth life skills, 2) the schools receive awards regarding the development of the youth life skills, and 3) evolutionary benchmark regarding life skills which is in line with Office for National Education Standards and Quality Assessment is at a good level. The unit of analysis was the Islamic private schools, in which there were three levels of the individuals who involved in the development of the Muslim youth life skills. Firstly, as far as the school level was concerned, it included three school administrators and four teachers per school. Secondly, at the community level, it included three school counselors, nine religious leaders, and three community leaders per school. Thirdly, at student level, it included three students as well as three alumni per school.

Research Findings

The results of this study revealed that the overall features of the development of the Muslim youth were similar. However, there was somehow different in some details. To illustrate these, the *objectives of the Muslim youth*

development of each school were corresponding, which aimed at developing their life skills to be in line with the Islamic teachings so that they could be able to live their lives in the societies happily. Then, the study showed that the three schools also shared the same *key concepts of developing the Muslim youth life skills*, which were the Whole School Approach. This indicated that the schools developed their students congruent with the Islamic teaching as well as the long-life learning (learning from the cradles to the graves).

In contrast to what has been mentioned above, the study found that the process of the Muslim youth life skills development in the aspect of the school *administration* of the three schools was different. This difference can be clarified that the *large-sized school* had the principles of 1) systematic development, 2) the principles of dividing responsibilities, and 3) having share visions and objectives. Nonetheless, the *medium-sized school* possessed 1) specific working principles, 2) participatory administration, and 3) being a learning organisation. Meanwhile, the *small-sized school* administration owned 1) the unity of administration, and 2) being good membership of the organisation. *Learning and teaching management* of the three schools are similar. That is to say, the schools focused on the content and the method. As far as the content is concerned, there is an integration of religious subjects with the academic ones. In the same vein, the life skills are integrated with the subject content. Meanwhile, concerning the method, the schools focused on learners-centeredness as well

as creating a good atmosphere. In relation to these, the differences were that the large-sized school tended to utilise psychology in teaching and learning, using modern technologies, and hands-on learning. In the meantime, as far as the medium-sized was concerned, the study showed that the school encouraged its teachers to find out and create the new teaching approaches and it also boosted its teachers to use the peer group learning approach. Moreover, the study disclosed that the three schools shared the same features of the *learning promotion activities and the community relations activities*. Namely, there were five features of the learning promotion activities: 1) project-based learning, 2) teamwork learning, 3) self-learning, 4) reflective learning, and 5) activity-based learning. Furthermore, the study also demonstrated that the main common features of the community relations activities were 1) hands-on learning, 2) community-based approach learning, 3) participatory learning, and 4) social support.

The inside three schools' co-factors/ conditions of the *large-sized school* consisted of kinship organisational culture, a role-model teacher, home-like atmosphere school, the school atmosphere conducive to learning, learning from non-Muslim teachers, and relationship and learning from within the school peer groups. In the meanwhile, the outside three schools' co-factors/ conditions included the relationship and learning from outside of the school peer groups, the cooperation between the schools and the guidance, the cooperation of the people in the community, networking with the outside

organisation, and the strength of the alumni network. The inside *medium-sized school* factors/conditions related to the development of the Muslim youth life skills were kinship organizational culture, student monitoring system, a good example of the administrators, a role model teacher, relationship and peer groups learning, and relationship and seniors and juniors learning. In addition, there were also outside school factors/ conditions. They were the basic knowledge of the youth from Tadeeka (Mosque-based Islamic Educational Centre), relationship and the outside school peer groups learning, family nurture, the cooperation between the school and the community, and the collaboration of the school director with the community leaders, and the religious leaders. Moreover, the inside *small-sized school* factors/ conditions related to the development of the Muslim youth life skills were the strict rules and regulations of the school, through students care, kinship organisational culture, a role model teacher, and relationship and peer groups learning, and relationship and seniors and juniors learning. Furthermore, there were outside school factors/conditions. They were relationship and the outside school peer groups learning, the cooperation between the school and the parents, the cooperation between the school and the community, and networking with other organisations. Eventually, there are three similar inside school co-factors/ conditions of the three schools. These consist of kinship organisational culture, a role model teacher, and relationship and peer groups learning. On the other hand,

there is only one similar outside school co-factor/ condition, that is relationship and the outside school peer groups learning.

Discussion

The objectives of the Muslim youth life skills development of the three Islamic schools in Pattani were apparent, which aimed to cultivate the youth to acquire the life skills and to know their duties. Also, these aimed at making them responsible for their duties relating to the performance of Islamic practice so that they could live their lives according to the Islamic teachings. In addition, they were encouraged to behave and could live their lives amidst the variety of cultures. More importantly, the main objective of the development was that the students could live their lives in line with the Islamic teachings and could reside in the society happily. This objective corresponded to the 1st International ASEAN Muslim Research Organisation Network (AMRON, 2011) revealing that there were two main duties of the Islamic private schools. These were building up a good individual who is intellectual and knowledgeable, and has leadership, and managing education according to the philosophy of Islamic studies, which leads a student to practice good manners. The AMRON also named the schools as the platform for the students to practise several things where Islamic studies were the main tool to building up and training the youth so that they could be able to cope with the real life. This was congruent with the very interesting results of the CPR-Project in 2007-2009 showing that education management should focus on building up the balanced growth in human personalities through

the trainings of spirit, thought, rationale, feelings, and senses. Additionally, the educational management should place an emphasis on every aspect of human development.

The concept of the Muslim youth development within the Islamic private schools was based on the Whole School Approach. This successfully played a key role in developing the Muslim youth life skills within the schools as it encouraged every related sector to fully take part in developing the Muslim youth life skills so that the expected outcomes can be attained. Finally, this concept covered every element of the life skills development. Another important concept is long-life learning (learning from the cradles to the graves). This concept place the importance in exposing the youth to having the essence of their life skills. This means that the self-centeredness in learning enables an individual to be equipped with essential characteristics in order to live his/her life effectively, which gives rise to the long-life development. The self-centeredness in learning is not intended to discard the academic knowledge, but focusing too much on the academic knowledge may lead to discarding 'being humans'. More importantly, focusing on 'being humans' may not be likely to discard the academic knowledge because the humans tend to seek for knowledge which is beneficial for them to live their lives with others and nature peacefully (Wasi, 2000).

The administration of the Islamic private schools pertinent to the Muslim youth development consisted of the principles of systematic development, having shared visions

and objectives, and the participatory administration. Because the development of the Muslim youth life skills was significant and complicated, the school administration should be systemic, in which everyone should have the same understanding of the objectives. The development also required every sector's cooperation both the inside and the outside organisations in brainstorming in a bid to come up with the life skills development model that is congruent with the three southern border provinces context. This concept is supported by a study conducted by Waesoh (2006). This study was about the tendency of the administration of the Islamic private schools, which revealed that the main missions of administrating the schools in the deep south provinces were: 1) systematic administration should be put in place, emphasising on cultivating students with morality, participatory developing curriculums which can be suitable for the students and their way of life, and 2) school personnel should be encouraged to have an understanding about a student-centeredness curriculum, should have adequate teachers, and the administrators should have leadership who can be able to administrate effectively.

The Islamic private schools have managed teaching and learning based on the Islamic studies curriculum. This has developed the model of the Muslim youth life skills development in which the Islamic teachings are employed as the teachings place importance in motivating students to be fond of learning, to be curious, and to be a good example in the life skills development for their

families as well as societies. The teachings also educate them to attach importance in serving their societies and to have a good inside into their way of lives, which may lead them to realising the value as well as the happiness of their lives in this world corresponding to the needs of the societies. This concept of the teachings is called the Islamic studies integration, which has been influenced by Islamisation (Narongrasakhet, 2008). He goes on to insist that the revolution of Islamic institutes in the three southern border provinces of Thailand into integrating every field of knowledge is considered as considerable change of the Islamic educational system.

Learning and teaching management relating to the development of the life skills can be classified into two parts; the content and the methods of teaching. In relation to the content, there is an integration of the religious subjects with the academic ones, and the integration of the life skills with the content subjects. As far as the methods are concerned, they focus on learner-centeredness, creating a good teaching and learning atmosphere, and using media as well as modern technologies. These concur with the 3I model theory which is designed the youth to encounter the era of globalisation. This 3I Model can be explained as follows: the first 'I' stands for 'International', which aims to make administrators, teachers and students have global thinking. This means that they need to be able to have foreign language skills and need to have information technology skills. The second 'I' is Islamisation. This means that they need to live their lives according to every aspect of the Islamic teachings

such as, their thinking and behaviour, especially Islamisation of knowledge. The last 'I' stands for 'Integration'. This means that integrating every field of knowledge into their everyday lives.

Furthermore, Khan (2009) agrees with the above-mentioned theories that the Islamic studies can be integrated with the life skills development, in which Al-Qur'an and Al-Hadith are utilised. These can make the development productive. Hayisa-ma-ae, et al, (2009), whose study was about the integration of teaching and learning with the process of the Islamisation in secondary schools in Malaysia, go on to add that schools should attach importance in making policies, philosophies, and educational goals that are congruent with Islamic educational system aiming to produce balanced personalities of individuals. In addition, they go on to stress that the process of the integration of Islamic knowledge with general knowledge through Islamisation of knowledge.

Learning promotion activities of the three Islamic private schools share five similar characteristics that are: the project-based learning, the teamwork learning, a variety of activity-based learning, self-learning, and self-reflective learning. These similar characteristics correspond to the study conducted by Beraheng (2010) addressing that the main element of the process of learning management in Islam consists of the curriculum that covers and balances between effective learning activities, proper materials and media, effective teaching process, and constant assessment. Therefore, it can be hypothesised that there is no best learning process in the

Islamic point of view, but this means that a variety of learning management should be focused, which should be appropriate for the students and should not break the Islamic principles. These sympathise with the concept of learning management in the 21st century which emphasises that the educational management should equip teachers and students with happiness in teaching as well as learning respectively in order to attain the ultimate goal of the educational management, having a good life. Apart from this, the educational management is to urge the students on long-life learning.

The Muslim youth life skills development within the Islamic private schools through community relation activities constitutes four characteristics: hands-on activities, learning from communities, participatory learning, and community social support. These characteristics concur with Jehmama, et al. (2011) who found that a community provides a process which is designed to involve youth in doing good as well as participating in Islamic important holidays activities which are intended to equip the people in the community with being a role model for the youth. Cheleng (2014) supports these that in relation to the community relations, on an appropriate occasion, the community should be provided with an opportunity to engage in schools' activities. In the same vein, the schools should encourage their students to take part in community relations activities such as, participating in reaching out to people in the community, delivering Khutbah (Friday Islamic

sermon), Islamic funeral prayer, and a community clean-up.

Recommendations

Therefore, this study recommended that the schools should not only encourage their students to employ the Islamic teachings within the schools, but also should boost the students to translate the teachings into their families, communities, societies by means of creating a role model school, family, community and society. Moreover, the schools should tie up a good relationship amongst the members in the schools, families, communities and societies, create understanding of their duties, and encourage them to be a role model for the Muslim youth to learn so that the youth possesses good life skills which lead them to living with others happily both in the present and in the future.

Developing youth sustainably in the societies should not only focus on bettering their quality of life or equipping them with knowledge, but also should equip them with abilities to have sustainable way of life. More importantly, presently Muslim youth in the three deep south provinces is experiencing several risky problems. Hence, the related agencies who involve with the youth life skills development should factor in paying extraordinary attention to the development which serves them as a tool to live their lives happily. For one thing, if they happen to go through problems in their lives, they may be able to apply the life skills learned and may be able to come up with appropriate solutions to the problems. In a consequence, the youth can be able to think of something creative in order to

collectively develop the societies and the nation in the future.

The schools should collaborate with universities as well as public sectors in the provinces to coach and monitor the process of the youth life skills development through putting an emphasis on discussing and debating on the results of the youth life skills development within the Islamic private schools. The schools may need to organise a platform for all parties to discuss the lessons learned. Furthermore, the schools' administrators should be in charge of the Muslim youth development closely. Eventually, they should exchange the lessons learned from the development with their team members so that the model of the Muslim youth development can effectively be enhanced.

Finally, the related agencies in the provinces should be united in order to work together. In relation to this, there should have an agency that is responsible for the Muslim youth skills development. For instance, the Office of Educational Service Area or the Office of the Private Education Commission may organise a project which aims to choose a school to be an example for the Muslim youth life skills development so that it can be the place where every school in the provinces use it as the study visit place. This study visit can motivate other schools to realise and to seriously commence bettering the model of the Muslim youth life skills development.

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