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by Umi Izzati

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Chapter 3
Leading and Managing Schools in Indonesia: Historical, Political and Socio-cultural Forces

Bambang Sumintono, Rais Hidayat, Yuyun Elizabeth Patras, Joko Sriyanto and Umi Anugerah Izzati

Abstract The leadership practices in Indonesia has evolved significantly over time. This reflects the spirit of different eras and the adoption of various leadership theories. More specifically, government systems and socio-political situations have played a major role in helping to shape Indonesia's education sector. These forces also influence school leadership, in particular, how school principals lead and manage their schools in Indonesia. The colonial era, which had a different purpose to schooling, provided the foundations needed for Indonesia's independence. There were significant developments in the 1970s when Indonesia's New Order government expanded the scope of the education sector. This, however, had little impact on school leadership practices. It was only in the 2000s when the education system began to decentralize and this brought about a corresponding change in school leadership practices. This new approach introduces standard requirements, systematic training, and appointment by district government for principals, albeit not without challenges.

Introduction

Indonesia has witnessed many waves of change in school leadership in the past decades. These changes are mainly due to the growing demands and complexities on the role and responsibilities of the school leaders. Indonesia's geographical composition and size (in terms of its physical size and its population), and its historical past have also contributed to these changes. In fact, Indonesia has more than two hundred

B. Sumintono (✉)
Faculty of Education, Institute of Educational Leadership, Universiti Malaya, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia
e-mail: bambang@um.edu.my

R. Hidayat · Y. E. Patras
Universitas Pakuan, Bogor, Indonesia

J. Sriyanto
Universitas Negeri Yogyakarta, Yogyakarta, Indonesia

U. A. Izzati
Universitas Negeri Surabaya, Surabaya, Indonesia

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and ten thousand schools, with a total enrolment of fifty million students, who are taught by three million educators. Most of these are public schools focusing on primary education (MoEC, 2015). Indonesia also has a long history of colonialization, and only gained independence in 1945. Notably, modern schooling in Indonesia grew tremendously during the Dutch colonization. Post-colonial Indonesia is said to have developed over three different eras, namely, the Old Order (1945–1965), the New Order (1966–1998) and the Reform Era (1999–). Each of these periods has its unique approach on education and schooling along with its corresponding school leadership practices. In this chapter, several ideas and issues pertaining to leading and managing schools in Indonesia will be critically discussed—beginning with the early development in the 1880s to the current time. These developments essentially highlight how historical, political and socio-cultural factors can substantially influence school leadership practices in Indonesia.

Earlier Developments

Formal schooling was first established by the Dutch during their colonial government rule in the 1880s. During those times, the public school system was set exclusively for the Europeans where the Dutch language was used (Djajadiningrat, n.d.). However, after some years, others such as the Eastern foreigners and local people (known as *pribumi*) could also join in the public school system. This rapid expansion of the school system took place since 1901, when the Netherland government implemented the Ethical Policy (*etische politiek*) to improve the social-economic situation of the marginalised indigenous population (van der Veur, 1969). As a result of this policy, students' enrolment rose significantly, with more local students being registered (Nasution, 1967; van der Kroef, 1957).

During the colonial era, the complicated school system was designed to benefit the colonial government. Interestingly, at the time, the public schools functioned more like elite schools that received great support from the government. Most of the teachers who taught the primary and secondary levels were Dutch nationals, with some of them from the Netherlands (Tahalele, 1971; van der Veur, 1969). For most of the local Indonesians, they would enroll in schools situated in the villages that were funded by the native princes for three years (Bray & Thomas, 1998). Others would were registered in private schools that were operated by *Muhammadiyah* (a modern Islamic organization), or *Taman Siswa* (or "garden of pupil"—an education foundation) (Poerbakawatja, 1970).

The governance of education system during this period was very centralized. In fact, all matters concerning the schools (such as curriculum, type of textbooks, teachers' requirements, number of schools, type of schools, and appointment of teachers) were all determined by the central government (Nasution, 1967). This would mean that teachers and parents at that time had very little contributions to the educational policy decisions. Principals in the public schools during this period were all Dutch nationals, and there were different requirements for principals' selection for primary

and secondary schools. For primary schools, the principal should possess a teaching certificate, and accumulated at least ten years of teaching experience. For secondary schools, principals must obtain a Bachelor degree in any field of study (Tahalele, 1971). Principals were then appointed based on their strengths in teaching and learning, particularly on specific content areas and pedagogical skills. Unfortunately, there was no formal training or development on school administration for these principals. School inspectors played the significant role of selecting principals. They assess the personalities of teachers and write reports (also known as an *inspectie rapport*) based on whether "the candidate met the conditions of capacity, honesty, and loyalty" (Nasution, 1967). This report influences the decision of the appointment of principals in schools.

An event that has a significant impact on education in Indonesia was World War II under the Japanese occupation (1942–1945), the separated education system which differentiates people by race set up by the Dutch was abolished. This caused students who were local native people (or *pribumi*) to be excluded from the system. It was during this time that the local school system rapidly expanded, with the number of enrolled students rose significantly. To make matters worse, Dutch teachers were either imprisoned by the Japanese or had to flee the country for safety. This resulted in a severe shortage of teachers. Consequently, almost all teachers who were teaching in primary schools became secondary school teachers. Students in the primary schools were taught by people who could only read and write (Poerbakawatja, 1970). Principals were then either Japanese officers or local experienced teachers. Interestingly, allowing local teachers to take up principalship in schools gave locals the opportunities to manage the local schooling system. Bahasa Indonesia was used as the national language, and potentials in each area are utilized to support education by the *pribumi* (Sumintono & Subekti, 2015).

In 1955, ten years after independence, the total number for student enrollment reached ten million. This was five times more than the period during the Japanese occupation (Jalal & Musthafa, 2001). To keep up with the populous situation, the Indonesian government provided the infrastructure for schooling and appointed many new teachers to meet this demand. Due to limited resources, sporadic teacher training was implemented in many different places to improve the quality of teaching qualifications (Mooney, 1962; Sumintono & Subekti, 2015).

The new Republic then drew up education laws based on the state ideology of Pancasila comprising five principles: belief in the one and only God; just and civilized humanity; a unified Indonesia; democracy, led by the wisdom of the representatives of the people; and social justice for all Indonesians. These laws also incorporated egalitarian principles that led to a compulsory primary school system funded by the state, placing emphasis on nation-building, and making Bahasa Indonesia as the main language for instruction. Continuing from the colonial era, the establishment of the schools' central governance was to celebrate multiculturalism, yet having common identity and aspirations (Lee, 1995; Poerbakawatja, 1970). Furthermore, the school superior officers' assessment reports continued to be used as inputs for the selection of principals—a legacy retained from the colonial era. Primary school principals were males, and generally about nine years older than the rest of the

teachers, who possessed similar education level and socio-economic background (Beeby, 1979). There was also no formal training and development for the principals in the public school system. However, in the early 1960s, some locals who had studied abroad returned to the country and helped transform the education system. They argued that school principals should provide guidance and supervision to teachers in addition to their work in school administration (Tahalele, 1971). The establishment of several teacher colleges in the larger cities brought some improvements to the system as principals from secondary school were able to participate in-service courses on educational leadership.

While there were some notable improvements during the times of the Old Order, principals in the public schools constantly faced challenges. This period was generally characterized by political (e.g., local rebellions) and economic instability (e.g. high inflation and food rations). As such, schools could not receive support from the government during the years between 1955 and 1965 (Feith, 1963). Instead, schools have to turn to parents and community for support. A Parent–Teacher Association was then formed with the purpose to "pay a major share of the upkeep of schools including the allowance of teachers" (Lee, 1995, p. 171). This required principals to collect money from the parents on a regular basis. However, this became untenable in 2005 when concerns about transparency and accountability of funds were raised (Sumintono, 2006). It is thus not surprising that rumors started to surface about teachers wanting to become principals in public schools in order to benefit rather than wanting to contribute to education as leaders.

Expansion of Education

In 1967, there was a change in government when the second Indonesian President Suharto came to power, with his regime termed as the New Order. The education sector began to take shape during the first eight years of office. This period also saw an increase in oil revenue, which contributed to expenditure on education. Just within a five-year period from 1974 to 1978, the budget for education rose by almost 12-fold—thus enabling the (i) construction for thousands of new schools, with one school built in each village (Duflo, 2004), (ii) recruitment of thousands of new teachers (Raihani & Sumintono, 2010), and (iii) development of in-service training programs for teachers (Nielsen, 2003; Soedijarto, Moleong, Suryadi, & Machmud, 1980). These changes were so rapid that compelled Beeby (1979) to conclude that "the improvement in the finances of the Education Department was even more dramatic than the rise in the price of oil" (p. 2). As a result, the participation rate rose to universal education level (more than 90%) at primary schooling in less than ten years.

In this era, ideas about principalship begin to change. For instance, according to Tahalele (1971), good principalship should go beyond sound teaching and learning practices, and the ability to supervise teachers. He argued that principals need to be mindful on "staff relationship, personnel administration and professional development" (p. 19). Due to these concerns, Tahalele (1971) designed in-service and

preparation training for principals during. It is also interesting to note that these new demands on principals were not unique. In fact, such demands were also relevant in other parts of the world. Indonesia was trying to mirror the educational leadership and school management ideas from other countries and apply the findings uncovered by relevant research on these areas to their educational system.

It is also worth noting that the structure for principalship in both public primary and secondary schools were different. In most of the public secondary schools, aspirant principals first had to have a stint as vice-principals to gain sufficient experience. They were initially selected for the positions of vice-principal by their respective principals based on the good rapport and at times due to close working relationship. Since the appointment did not have clear formal structures, teachers competed with one another to get their principals' attention to be vice-principals. Public primary schools, on the other hand, did not have any vice-principal in its hierarchical structure. Schools are essentially small with one class per level for the six grades, and a staff strength of less than 12 teachers.

Nevertheless, there was no formal training required for primary school principals during the nascent stages of implementing the New Order of governance. In fact, their job specification was also unclear (Beeby, 1979). The situation in secondary schools was different. Although the secondary principal was usually a subject specialist, there was no clear definition of the principal's role. This change when in the 1980s, the central government who had the authority to appoint the principal in every public school in Indonesia introduced a one-week voluntary preparation training for the development of principal candidates (Suminto, Sheyoputri, Jiang, Misbach & Jumintono, 2015). As candidates were considered civil servants, the content of their training was mostly related to public administration and management. It included sharing from the education province office, public organization and regulation, official correspondence, public finance report, file and folder system, and the *Pancasila* upgrading training.

The content of principals' preparation training was slightly different from what Tahalele (1971) had suggested. Nielsen (2003) argued that the New Order emphasized economic stability, growth, and efficiency in governing the nation, which resulted in a tremendous impact on the education system. To this extent, Nielsen termed this as *bureaucratic authoritarian state.* Taking principals' preparation training as an example, it was conducted in a similar way as any other public training institution for civil servants. The training was measured by its quantitative achievements such as the number of teacher participation, and the utilization of allocated funds. Education bureaucrats from top to lower level have "tended to resort to "goal displacement": substituting goals that can be reached for those that cannot" (Nielsen, 2003, p. 403). It was thus not surprising that the training included irrelevant content to the development of principal's professionalism. These training had inevitably resulted in greater centralization and a more authoritarian approach in the New Order. One of the side effects of this was government influence at the school level, where public school principals became the main gatekeeper in maintaining state control. Siswanto (2003) illustrated that principals in public schools tend to follow the instructions from their superiors, which prevented them from initiating different ideas. These restricted the

principals from being creative and innovative in leading and managing their schools. Darmaningtyas (2005) commented that this situation was managed structurally in every district in Indonesia, where principals were part of *Kelompok Kerja Kepala Sekolah* (K3S), a principals' working group. Darmaningtyas (2005) mentioned that one of the priorities of K3S is to manage teachers who were critical to government policy. This is not surprising as Hofstede (1983) found that the Indonesia people exhibit high power distance cultural work values—i.e., they value hierarchical relations. Furthermore, some decisions on education policy were orchestrated and finalized in the K3S meeting. With this bad reputation, K3S was subsequently changed to *Musyawarah Kepala Sekolah* (principals' forum) (Darmaningtyas, 2005).

Several researchers have raised some key observations during the New Order era. The study by Beeby (1979) which involved thirty-three principals from three different provinces in Indonesia, found that only four principals mentioned about new teaching methods. Beeby concluded that "principals played a fairly effective part in maintaining standards within accepted practices, but few could be regarded as agents of change except in minor matters" (p. 92). In relation to training and professional development in the early part of the era, Beeby (1979) wrote that the principal "has had no special training for his job, and apart from the mass reporting of a routine statistical kind that he is called upon to do, he is rather vague on the role of his position" (p. 93). This situation was the product for the fast expansion of school system, which may be related to the lack of qualification by the principals. This would indicate that their abilities were limited and had to rely on their own experiences.

The study by Supriadi (1999) found severe wide-ranging irregularities. The New Order government had stipulated regulation on the educational personnel, where it stated that principals had to be recruited from the pool of teachers after their completion of the special training. However, there was no implementation of such "special training" until eighteen years later. One possible reason was that the government preferred to remain status quo when developing school leaders. Without the distinctive preparation for school principals, they would not have the insights on the changes that occurred beyond Indonesia's education system (Danim, 2002). The relationship between the school principal and their teachers mirrored those practices performed by the central government which inclined towards feudalism and authority. In view of these, the principals were not able to anticipate many of the problems related to education (Danim, 2002).

The research study done about the PEQIP (Primary Education Quality Improvement Project), which was supported by the World Bank (van der Werf, Creemers, de Jong, & Klaver, 2000) discovered that the quality at primary schooling depended mainly on the quality of principal's leadership. According to van der Werf et al. (2000), "the principals of the PEQIP schools focused too much on administrative tasks (keeping records of student results, financial tasks) rather than on educational leadership tasks" (p. 352). School leaders relied too much on routine works, which led to reduction in students' achievement. Good school leaders need to resolve management related problems such as high absentee rate for teachers and students, the

inefficient usage of instructional time, and the issues with underqualified or unmotivated teachers that could surface in PEQIP schools (van der Werf et al., 2000).

In another research study focusing on the secondary schooling, it was found that schools with strong reputation for quality are held in high regard by society, and success is attributed to good school leadership (Supriadi, 1999). The characteristics of such schools included students' passion towards study, teachers' motivation on improving their teaching skills, having higher academic achievement, and having an orderly and friendly school climate (Supriadi, 1999). The findings from this study on effective principals are consistent with international research on educational effectiveness that emphasis on student success. Providing further support, Dikmenjur's (1997) study on vocational schools at secondary level revealed that a rigorous selection of school principals would result in significant changes in school activities, which could, in turn, improve its performance such as students' academic achievement. Clearly, this is evidence that school leadership is important in-spite of strong influence from the state.

Recent Trends

In 1997, Indonesia's economic stability was greatly affected by the Asian financial crisis. In the following year, Suharto resigned as President after 31 years in office and marked the end of the New Order administration. The Suharto's New Order era was subsequently replaced by the Reform Order. The passing of two new laws relating to regional autonomy by the parliament brought significant developments and change to the government system. Since 2001, instead of having a centralized and bureaucratic system in the colonial era, many decisions in the public sectors (including education) can now be made at the district level. These developments were described to be "one of the most radical decentralization programmes attempted anywhere in the world" (Aspinall & Fealy, 2003, p. 3).

During this Reform Order era, several new education policies were drawn up, and the existing educational provisions across the country were consequently reshaped and redefined. These changes brought much progress to the education sector, which include: (i) the school's final examination, (ii) the school's operational support that would not differentiate students based on the type of schools they come from i.e. public or private school (Fitriah, Sumintono, Subekti, & Hassan, 2013), (iii) a new Teacher Law and teachers' certification program (Raihani & Sumintono, 2010), and (iv) an international standard school policy (Sumintono et al., 2014).

To develop the education sector further, the Ministry of Education has refocused its emphasis on designing and establishing educational policies. For instance, to address the disparities among districts that have rich natural resources and those that do not the central government enacted regulation number 65 in 2005, on the minimum service standard for educational provision. The intention of this regulation is to close the gaps among districts and maintain national unity. Furthermore, additional regulations were released by the central government to install five hundred new dis-

trict governments across Indonesia, and at the same time, all the district governments are made aware of the direction for developing the education sector, and to apply the Ministry's standard in their respective areas. Some of these regulations comprise the implementation of national education standard, compulsory education, and funding of education.

To provide further autonomy to the district governments, they were given the capacity to decide selection and training and appointment of public school principals since 2001. However, only a few districts have collaborated with the provincial governments, local universities or other institutions, on the selection process for the appointment of the principals. Interestingly, despite affording the district governments with power and resources, they still gravitate to previous practices (Sumintono, 2006). This could be due to limited capacity and the lack of educational management experience. This is understandable considering they were under the centralized educational system for years, which in many ways limited the flow of their initiative and creativity.

In 2005, a new development took place in the political scene that influenced the education sector, which has to do with the introduction of an elected mayor in every regent or city. It was reported that the position of the principal was depended on the working relationship with the elected mayor (Sumintono et al., 2012). The appointments of the public schools' principals were dependent on their personal connections and individual influences with certain key persons at the district level.

In response to this and prevent favoritism of certain school leaders, the Ministry of National Education (MoNE) enacted specific regulations such as decree number 13 which states clearly the requisites of becoming a principal in 2007. Apart from having regular requisites such as an undergraduate degree, and having at least five years of teaching experience, a principal candidate must possess five other competencies. These include being competent in terms of personality, managerial, entrepreneurship, social and supervision. Unfortunately, although the requirements are set by the central government, it is still up to the district government to determine the competency of the candidates at the district level.

Following the change in 2007, there was another significant development on the selection and preparation of the principals. The Ministry of Education issued the regulation number 6 in 2009, explaining the establishment of a national agency called *Lembaga Pengembangan dan Pemberdayaan Kepala Sekolah* (LP2KS) or the "Agency for School Principal Empowerment and Development" (LP2KS, 2016). This new agency is a national institution that provides training and certification for future public and private school principals across all levels of education in Indonesia. Essentially, the focus is to improve on the competencies of the principals according to the new regulations.

Participants attending the principal training in LP2KS need to complete two parts of the course, namely: (i) a face-to-face session with at least a hundred hours of training, and (ii) three months of on-the-job learning (OJL) (Hendarman, 2015). Teachers can nominate themselves for this training, and the selection process will be done at district level. Selected teachers will then join the first part of the training by attending a course that is termed as the "Development of Principals Managerial Skills".

The syllabus for this course covers (i) student management, (ii) human resource management, (iii) curriculum development, (iv) school development planning, (v) monitoring and evaluation, and (vi) information and communication technology in school. This 1-week course involving 70 teaching hours was held in the office of LP2KS, in Solo, Central Java.

The second part of the training lasts for three months, which is equivalent to two hundred hours of OJL in two schools—one of the schools is the candidate's own school, and the other another school in his/her district. In this part of the training, participants will be asked to prepare an action plan for school improvement and the officials from education district office will supervise these activities. The last phase of the training will last for three days amounting to thirty hours in the office of LP2KS. The objective of this training segment is for the candidate to complete a portfolio of activities that are undertaken during the OJL, and to present the portfolio to a panel at LP2KS. The total duration for this principal training program is 300 h.

When candidates successfully complete all the training and assessment components in LP2KS, they will be awarded a principal registration number known as *nombor unik kepala sekolah* (NUKS). With this number, it allows candidates to be eligible for the appointment of principal in a public school (i.e., at either primary or secondary level). The mayor of each regent or city is tasked to give the final approval on the appointment of school principal (LP2KS, 2016). With this certification process in place, the central government will only provide education assistance to the district governments if the mayor had appointed principals who have NUKS registrations in their public schools.

Although this new principal training program has just been implemented in recent years, the feedback gathered from the programme participants is promising (Sumintono et al., 2015). Candidates who were enrolled in the LP2KS training have expressed that the training in LP2KS is much better in contrast to other principal's training conducted by the district government. Candidates appreciated the varieties of training approaches, the content of the training, and the teaching methods which are completely different from their earlier training. As the awareness on the importance of NUKS increases, the district governments started to appoint more principals who possess NUKS at the primary school level (LP2KS, 2016). To assess the effectiveness of this policy, more studies are needed on the development of NUKS and LP2KS.

While the changes discussed earlier have helped improve school leadership and the education system in general, principals' management skills is still somewhat lacking. Several researchers had portrayed the educational leadership situation in different ways. Bjork (2005) examined different areas in the education sector of East Java including the curriculum, and the decision-making and management. In his study, he unveiled that school principals were perceived to have not enough capacity in terms of expertise and experience to handle the challenges and opportunities of autonomy. Bjork's (2005) findings are consistent with what Mr. Fadjar had voiced in 2002, who was then the Minister of National Education. He commented that "the Indonesian government did not educate school leaders to be independent in many aspects of school administration" (Sofo, Fitzgerald, & Jawas, 2012, p. 503).

Two studies conducted in two different regions of Sumatra—one in Lampung (Hariri, Monypenny & Prideaux, 2012) and the other in Padang (Damanik, 2014) revealed some interesting findings. Taking an example in Lampung, the teacher's job satisfaction improves if the principal's style in decision-making is less coercive and bureaucratic (Hariri et al., 2012). In addition, the leadership behaviors of principals and its influence on elements of the school climate were also deemed to be important for school improvement—that is, teacher's self-efficacy in the context of education reform (Damanik, 2014). Interestingly, another study was done in Malang, Java. Jazas (2014) discovered four areas for improvement, namely curriculum, teachers' professionalism, learning facilities, and students' learning outcomes. She highlighted that instructional leadership has actually supported the practices of managing, promoting, improving and assessing instruction by the school principal. However, perceptions about teaching and learning between principals and teachers are found to be different, and they do not necessarily lead to increased frequency of practices that influence instructional improvement. These three studies suggest that the principalship in Indonesia has moved slightly from school management to educational leadership.

Interest in research on Indonesian school leadership continued to grow. An insightful qualitative study was conducted with three principals from Yogyakarta, who were perceived to be successful in leading their schools (Raihani, 2007). This research has concluded with some unique findings. One such example is the discovery that all the participants embraced "Islamic and cultural beliefs and values that underpinned their leadership … which were articulated in the school leadership and strategies" (p. 481). This is one aspect of principal professionalism that was never revealed in any previous studies on school leadership. A national survey about principalship in Indonesia was conducted by Analytical and Capacity Development Partnership (ACDP, 2013) to explore principals' competency. 4070 principals from different parts of Indonesia participated in the study involving principals responding to a self-rating questionnaire based on the competency standards instrument. Similarly, their teachers and supervisors rated the principals with the same instrument. All the participating principals were not trained on their competencies by LP2KS. As such, the study revealed that the principals' self-ratings for all except personality and social competencies were generally lower than those ratings provided by their teachers and supervisors. The competencies that were perceived to be weak are supervision, teaching and learning purposes, and using information and communication technology (ICT) for management (ACDP, 2013). This could indicate that the principals have not really mastered the skills as an instructional leader in guiding the teachers. This is an interesting finding that needs deliberate thoughts as these competencies could impact schools' achievement directly. Another interesting discovery is the highlight of managerial competency that was perceived to be the most important by the principals (ACDP, 2013). They perceived that the managerial competency is a core function to manage their schools effectively.

Conclusion

In this chapter, we have provided a historical description of the key eras of education change in Indonesia, which have substantial influence on the quality of education and schooling as a whole, including school leadership. The political, social and cultural influences within and across these eras have undoubtedly shape both the past and current situation of school leadership in Indonesia. Notwithstanding the challenges that the past present to the current, schools continue to be in the best position to lead schools in improving student learning outcomes. The era of greater autonomy has great potential to enable school and district level improvements. Nevertheless what remains as real challenges are the unevenness of principals' mastery on competency standards, professional development of principals, and the political influence on the appointments of the principals (Salmita, 2013).

In Indonesia, the recruitment system for principals can be rather interesting. It has evolved from the reliance on school inspector's report to the fulfillment of competency standard in recent times. The colonial era style of school principal selection is preserved in the Independence era mainly because of limited experience and perceived fit to the socio-political situation of the nation. Even though leadership studies show that school principals would not be able to function effectively without proper training and development (e.g., Tahalele, 1971), the principals in Indonesia may have to rely on their own limited resolve to manage schools (Beeby, 1979). In the New Order era, public school principals have been known to even engage in extra work in the midst of being active state apparatus to government policies. It is thus understandable that the continual development of leadership competences may not take center stage in the principals' career life. This is quite unlike other neighboring countries. For example, established leadership development centers for their principals can be found at the Institut Aminuddin Baki in Malaysia and National Institute of Education Management in Vietnam (P. Hallinger, personal communication). The centers have systematically introduced instructional leadership as part of the curriculum for the principals' training and development.

Nevertheless, there has been the attempt by the education ministry to regulate principal competency requirement—the result of the "steering" instead of "rowing" role performed by the Ministry of Education. This move is actually an extension on the Teacher Law that requires educators to fulfill the teachers' competency framework in order to be qualified for teaching (Raihani & Sumintono, 2010). It is also encouraging to know the ACDP (2013) report finds school principals perceived school management as their priority. This finding illuminates how Indonesian principals lead their schools. However, the main emphasis is on school management and administration, rather than leadership or development (Lee & Hallinger, 2012). This shows little change since the Old order era to recent times (Beeby, 1979; Nasution, 1967; van der Werf et al., 2000). The need to be competent in school management is consistent with Jones and Hagul (2001)—stating that "school principals have little authority in running the school or in resource allocation, nor are they usually trained to manage or lead a school well" (Jones & Hagul, 2001, p. 214). It makes much sense then that

relying on school management and practicing certain leadership style is inevitable—specifically, autocratic leadership style (Bjork, 2005; Sofo et al., 2012). It seems obvious that much time is still required to see changes in schools even as a result of the LP2KS training (Sumintono et al., 2015).

Finally, the issue of political influence on the principals' appointments. The recent study by Sumintono et al. (2015) underscored some serious issues regarding principalship in terms of the political influences on the appointments of the principals. One of these concerns involves the decision to remove principals from their positions due to micro-political influences. As a case in point, a new mayor who is elected by the people may try to appease the people by removing principals and appointing others that are favored by the people. This would certainly affect the professionalism and morale of educators in their particular districts.

Nevertheless, there have been slight differences in the political influence on school leadership since the New Order era where the local government has greater power than the central government on school matters. The shift is indicative of a kind of decentralized centralism. This is perhaps why the central government is insisting on the strict adherence to LP2KS—that is, to train the potential principals in Indonesia effectively, and only those with registered NUKS to be appointed as principals.

The work on improving schools through quality teachers and leaders in Indonesia still needs much work. By virtue of its land mass, many islands, and the several decades of historical legacies, the aspiration to attain a good balance between centralisation and decentralism is an uphill task. More research work, therefore, needs to be done. Already, the interest in understanding what is going on is increasing in terms of book publication about principalship (e.g., Asmani, 2012; Hendarman, 2015; Jelantik, 2015; Murniati, 2008; Supriadi, 2010; Suhardiman, 2012) compare to previous era that show limited sources (e.g. Tahalele, 1971; Wahjosumidjo, 1999). The way forward could be one of describing what has happened in the past and what is happening currently, and to what can be done in the future.

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Dr. Bambang Sumintono has been worked as a chemistry teacher for seven years in Lombok, Indonesia. He was completed his master degree in educational administration from Flinders University, in 2001; his doctoral study conducted at Victoria University of Wellington, New Zealand in 2007. From October 2008 to December 2013, he was worked as a lecturer at Faculty of Education, Universiti Teknologi Malaysia, Johor, Malaysia. Starting on May 2014, he has been working as a lecturer and researcher at Institute of Educational Leadership, Faculty of Education, Universiti Malaya. His research interest are in educational policy, educational leadership and Indonesian education development. He wrote two textbooks about application of Rasch modeling for social sciences research in Bahasa Indonesia. He can be contacted by email: bambang@um.edu.my, ordeceng@gmail.com.

Dr. Rais Hidayat has been worked as a journalist for three years and as a researcher for ten years in The Jakarta Post newspaper, Indonesia. He was completed his master degree in Educational Management from Universitas Pakuan Bogor, Indonesia in 2011; his doctoral study conducted at Universitas Negeri Jakarta in Educational Management in 2015. From February 2012 until now he work as a lecturer at Universitas Pakuan, Bogor, Indonesia. His research interest are in Educational Curriculum, Educational Leadership, Educational Management, and Educational Policy. Rais can be contacted by email: rais72rais@gmail.com.

Dr. Yuyun Elizabeth Patras is a lecturer at University of Pakuan in Bogor, Indonesia. She gained her Master degree in Educational Management from the University of Pakuan in 2009 and finished her Doctorate degree in Educational Management from Universitas Negeri Jakarta in 2015. Earlier in her career she spent 10 years as a primary teacher in West Java, Indonesia. Her research interest encompasses general Educational Management, Leadership and Policy as well as specific interest on the development of education and curriculum in Indonesia. Yuyun can be reached via email ibethibeth64@yahoo.com.

Mr. Joko Sriyanto completed his master degree in mechanical engineering from Gadjah Mada University, Yogyakarta, Indonesia in 2006. From August 2003 to December 2004, he was worked as a lecturer at Automotive Department, Politeknik PPKP Yogyakarta, Indonesia. Starting on January 2005, he has been working as a lecturer and researcher at Faculty of Engineering, Yogyakarta State University. His research interests are in automotive technology and educational leadership. He can be contacted by email: joko_sriyanto@uny.ac.id or jokosriyanto97@gmail.com.

Dr. Umi Anugerah Izzati has been worked as a lecturer for several years in private universities, before have tenure position at Psychology Department, Faculty of Education, Surabaya State University on January 2008. She was completed her undergraduate in psychology Surabaya University in 1998; her master degree in psychology profession from Airlangga University, in 2005; and doctoral study completed at Airlangga University, in Psychology in 2016. From 2003 to 2008, she was also worked as consultant psychology and management. Her research interest are in organization behavior, industry and organization psychology, educational leadership, education development and education psychology. She can be contacted by email: umianugerah@unesa.ac.id or umianugerah@gmail.com.

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