

ISLAMIC EDUCATIONAL POLICIES IN THE PHILIPPINES: ITS EVOLUTION AND CURRENT PROBLEMS

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ABSTRACT

Islamic education aims to develop both the intellectual as well as the spiritual aspects of man. However, despite the considerable number of Bangsamoro (i.e., Muslim Filipinos) in this country, said the system is not observed in the Philippines since this is a secular nation whose educational system is copied from the West. Being patterned from the European style, our public-school system gives emphasis only on the human knowledge, while the Islamic (i.e., Madrasah) learning system concentrates on the divine aspect. Since these two systems of knowledge are taught separately, the present educational system in the country is not much effective in meeting the needs of the Muslims. In addressing this educational challenge, the Philippine government has initiated various programs and policies sanctioned by the following laws, such as: (i) the Letter of Instruction No. 1221 of 31 March 1982; (ii) the Letter of Instruction No. 17-A, (iii) the Muslim Mindanao Autonomy Act No. 14, (iv) the DepED Order No. 51 of 28 August 2004, (v) the DepED Order No. 40 of 19 May 2011, and (vi) the different provisions of the Peace Agreements between the Bangsamororebels and the Philippine government. However, despite these legal issuances and programs, still the Islamic education of the Muslims in the Philippines has been hampered by financial, administrative and structural problems.

Keywords: *islamic education, secular education, balanced education, madrasah/madaaris, bangsamoro/moro people*

INTRODUCTION

As viewed in any perspective, education is designed to totally develop the human potentials. This is congruent with the balanced nature of education in the Islamic faith which seeks to perfect the secular as well as the spiritual potentialities of man. In Islam, education is so wide and comprehensive as "it encompasses all sciences, either secular and religious." In elaborating this point, Kazeem and Balogun (2013) passionately whispered that in Islam "education aims at the balanced growth of the total personality of man through the training of man's spirit, intellect, rational self, feelings and bodily senses. The training imparted to a Muslim must be such that faith is infused into the whole of his personality and creates in him an emotional attachment to Islam and enables him to follow the Qur'an and the Sunna and be governed by Islamic system of values..." This supposition made Afzalur (2000) conclude that "if education is divorced from religion and moral values, it will lead to the disintegration and destruction of the social fabric of society." In short, from the Islamic perspective, education has dual purpose: to develop both what is secular and what is religious in man.

This standpoint seems collaborative with the notion that Islam views knowledge as both divine and juristic. This was lauded in the writings of Hassan (1989) where he opined that the source of knowledge in Islam falls into two (2) categories. First is Divine Revelation and the second one is the human intellect. The former is believed to be obligatory for every Muslim while the latter is compulsory only for some members of the community who are either Muslims or not. As can be recalled, the glory of Islamic civilization in the past was achieved when both categories of knowledge were integrated and pursued through a highly creative and inquisitive fashion.

Thus, separating education from its religious component shall result to various social ills. As confirmed by Afzalur (2000), "the secularist nature of our educational curriculum has succeeded in producing various corrupt practices such as inflation of contracts, fraud, falsification of accounts, examination malpractice, bribery, embezzlement of public funds, perversion of justice, collusion with multi-national companies to dupe the state, collusion of law enforcement agents with criminals, election rigging, etc." This is the reason why Islam warns that "education without religion is a clever devil."

In this most trying time, the highly challenging task of the whole Muslim world, in general, and the Bangsamoro (i.e., Muslims in the Philippines), in particular is to restore this integrative system of education in a dynamic and progressive environment where religious scholars and secular educated intellectuals must be willing to step forward to complement each other. The religious scholars who are grounded in divine knowledge always need to be exposed to scientific knowledge of the contemporary world while the secular educated intellectuals need to have a strong foundation in religious upbringing and spiritual discipline so that when they enter into the world of service they can be paragons of utmost honesty and commitment to public service.

In recognizing this complementary role of education and religion in the Muslim society, the Islamic educational system prescribes the integration of divine/religious knowledge and human/secular knowledge. However, this is not practiced in the Philippines because our public-school system gives emphasis only on the human knowledge, while the Islamic (i.e., Madrasah) learning system concentrates on the divine aspect. Since these two systems of knowledge are taught separately, the

present educational system in the country is not much effective in meeting the needs of the Muslims.

In particular, among the Bangsamoro-dominated areas in Mindanao, the educational system is exclusively dichotomized into spiritual and secular. The former is learned in the Madrasah while the latter in the Philippine public educational institutions. As practiced, those who studied in the Madrasah are well-versed of the Arabic language, but they cannot understand the English language which is the medium of instruction used in Philippine public schools. Because these two educational systems are practiced exclusively, only the graduates of the secular system are useful to the society, while those from the Madrasah are either jobless or underpaid who are mostly employed only in small privately-run Madaris (plural for Madrasah). As a result, only very few of the Muslim youth are interested in studying in the Arabic schools which are so degrading among us Muslims since the knowledge of the Qur'an is compulsory among all its believers.

However, to the credit of the national government, it has been trying itself very hard to address the above-mentioned educational gap prevailing among the Muslims in the Philippines. However, its efforts have been blocked by a lot of factors. Accordingly, the strongest factor is the constitutional provisions which prohibit the intervention of the state to the religious activities of the citizens. The present Constitution is explicit in its Article II, Section 6 that "The separation of Church and State shall be inviolable." Moreover, in order to reinforce further this wall of separation between these two institutions, the supreme law warns that "No public money or property shall be appropriated, applied, paid, or employed, directly or indirectly, for the use, benefit, or support of any sect, church, denomination, sectarian institution, or system of religion, or of any priest, preacher, minister, other religious teacher, or dignitary as such, except when such priest, preacher, minister, or dignitary is assigned to the armed forces, or to any penal institution, or government orphanage or leprosarium." (Article VI, Section 29, Paragraph 2). Said provisions of the law have been the consistent justifications why the Islamic schools in the country have been left unattended for quite sometimes by the government. This reluctant attitude of our national leaders to the religious education of the Moros was aggravated further by the irresponsible pronouncement of some national officials that Madrasahs are the bastion of terrorism in the Philippines.

Quite expectedly, observers of the peace process in Mindanao have this common developing suspicion that the above constitutional injunctions have fueled, to some extent, the peace and order crisis in the region. While the Muslims are enjoined by their belief to live fully within the ambit of Islam, but the highest law of their country does not allow the appropriation of public funds to support the full acquisition of the Muslims on their knowledge of the Qur'an taught in the Madrasahs.

Bearing this burning educational challenge in mind and despite the above-mentioned constitutional restrictions, the national government in the guise of public

interest has introduced several educational policies in its attempts to address the educational predicament of the Muslims. The most remarkable move was done by President Marcos when he issued on 31 March 1982 the Letter of Instruction No.1221 obliging the government educational agencies to "formulate and adopt a program for the development of the Madrasah schools, at least for the improvement of their teaching staff and instructional facilities, but priority must be given, whenever possible, to their progressive integration as a sector in the national educational system, with enhanced curricula . . .". However, said noble mission was met by surprising failures due to the following reasons: "1) Difficulty in adding Arabic and Islamic studies in the curriculum; 2) There is no model for accredited madaaris; 3) There were few madaaris that sought for accreditation; 4) Lack of coordination among madrasah operators; and 5) There are only a few qualified teachers with sufficient training to teach in madrasah."

Recently, this vision was operationalized through the issuance of the DepED Order No. 51, Series of 2004, entitled "Standards Curriculum for Elementary Public Schools and Private MADARIS". In diagnosing the educational problems besetting the Moro people, the Order postulates that "The crucial issue that confronts most Muslim educators is the unification of curriculum amongst the Madaaris. There is no uniformity in the curricular offerings. Public schools do not include Arabic language and Islamic values, making the Muslims ignorant of their religion and the language of the Holy Qur-an. Private Madaris do not follow the Philippine education curriculum, thereby turning students into virtual foreigners in their own country." As such, it stressed the necessity that "The Significant role of Islamic education through the Madaaris in providing access to education must be recognized." In line with this, The Department of Education facilitated the formulation of a standard and viable curriculum for the public schools and for the private Madaaris in Muslim communities, whose Curriculum aim to: (1) establish a smooth transfer of students from public to private Madrasah or vice versa; (2) unify the long history of dichotomy among Muslims; and (3) promote the Filipino national identity and at the same time preserve the Muslims' cultural heritage.

Said DepED issuance was amended by DepED Order No. 40, Series of 2011 recommending "a thorough review and refinement of the curriculum, including textbooks, teachers' manual, and other learning materials." Thereunto, this introduced the so-called "Refined Elementary Madrasah Curriculum (REMC)" with two models: (1) The REMC for Public Schools coined as Arabic Language and Islamic Values Education (ALIVE); and (2) The Refined Standard Madrasah Curriculum (RSMC) for Private Madaaris.

Moreover, aside from these various initiatives from the executive agencies of the government, peace efforts in Mindanao have already incorporated in their agenda the educational quest of the Muslims for the integration of Islamic values to their western education. In fact, this incessant urge for an Islamically-compliant curricular

offering in the Moro areas has become a consistent ingredient of all peace efforts in the region since the Marcos presidency. The first attempt was initiated in the Tripoli Agreement of December 23, 1976 which incorporated in its Third Stipulation, Sub-section 4 that "Authorities of the autonomy in the South of the Philippines shall have the right to set up schools, colleges and universities . . ." This joint affirmation of both Parties was qualified further by the Presidential Degree No. 1618 of July 25, 1979 propounding that such educational institutions must be for the "preservation and development of customs, traditions, languages and cultural indigenous to the Autonomous Region."

Being the first enabling law of the constitutional provision on Muslim autonomy under the 1987 Constitution, Republic Act No. 6734 fulfilled the realization of an integrated schools in the Southern Philippines by commanding in its Article XV, Section 1 that "The Autonomous Region shall establish, maintain and support a complete and integrated system of quality education and adopt an educational framework that is meaningful, relevant and responsive to the needs, ideals and aspirations of the people in the Region." Even more emphatic in complying with the ideal Islamic educational system is the Section 2, Paragraph 1 of said law mandating that "Education in the Autonomous Region shall be committed to the total spiritual, intellectual, social, cultural, scientific and physical development of man, thus making him a God-fearing, peace-loving, and work-oriented citizen of the nation."

This vision was even more strengthened in the 1996 Final Peace Agreement between the Government of the Republic of the Philippines (GRP) and the Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF). Stipulations No. 102 and 103 of said Agreement respectively specify: "The teachings of Islamic Values . . . shall be incorporated in Good Manners and Right Conduct in appropriate grade levels including the tertiary level subject to agreed norms, academic freedom, and legal limitations" and that "Muslim culture, mores, customs and traditions which are mainly based on Islam . . . shall be reserved for the regular public and special schools in the Autonomous Region . . ."

In the guise of perfecting further the Muslim educational system in the Mindanao autonomous region, Republic Act No. 9054, Article XIV, Section 2, Paragraph (a) vividly proffered that "The regional educational subsystem shall perpetuate Filipino and Islamic values and ideals, aspirations, and orientations. It shall develop the total spiritual, intellectual, social, cultural, scientific, and physical aspects of the people of the autonomous region to make them god-fearing, productive, patriotic citizens, and conscious of their Filipino and Islamic values and cultural heritage."

Finally pursuant to the Framework Agreement on the Bangsamoro (FAB) signed between the Government of the Philippines (GPH) and the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) on 15 October 2012, the original draft of the so-called Bangsamoro Basic Law (BBL) submitted to the Office of the President of the Philippines on 22 April 2014 envisioned for an educational system for the Bangsamoro

people that is "complete and integrated system of quality education and adopt an educational framework that is relevant, and responsive to the needs, ideals, and aspirations of the Bangsamoro."

In realizing this highly ambitious educational aspiration of the Moro people, the proposed Bangsamoro Government has crafted various administrative structures including the establishment of the Bangsamoro Ministry of Education (hereinafter called BMED), which is the intended leading educational agency of the new autonomous region. This proposed office "envisions a globally competitive, culturally responsive and corruption-free educational system" that is designed to produce "God-fearing learners, proud of their identity and whose competence and values enable them to realize their full potentials and contribute meaningfully in building the Bangsamoro."

Moreover, in its curricular offerings, the Ministry outlines a Basic Education Curriculum Foci from early childhood to secondary levels, to wit: (1) Acquired and revealed knowledge and the principle that man in God's vicegerent on earth; (2) Promotion of core values towards integrity and unity in diversity; (3) Development of core transferable skills; (4) Environment sustainability, peace building and disaster risk reduction; (5) Responsible Ummatic citizens; (6) Pedagogic skills; and, (7) Time is life.

Quite obviously, the greatest hurdle in the success of this educational proposal lies on two factors: the practicality of its implementation and the acceptability of its target clients – the Bangsamoro people.

Concept of Education in Islam

One of the most classical exposition on the concept of education in Islam was done by Professor Naquib al-Attas in his keynote address delivered at the "First World Conference on Muslim Education" held in Mecca, Saudi Arabia in March 1977. Before he finally arrived at his complete definition of the concept, he first put a tentative guiding definition of education as "something progressively instilled into man." In this definition, the three fundamental elements of education are unveiled, viz: (1) the content (i.e., something), (2) the process (i.e., progressively installed) and (3) the recipient (i.e., man).

With reference to the content, the author equated it into the wisdom of the knowledge we acquired in studying. In clarifying this point, he made a very astonishing remark by saying "the teaching and learning of skills alone, however scientific, and no matter if what is taught and learned is encompassed in the general concept 'knowledge', does not necessarily constitute education. There is a 'something' in knowledge which if it is not inculcated will not make its teaching and learning and assimilation an education." Thus, the author stressed that knowledge as referring to meaning consists of "recognition of the proper places of things in the order of creation, such that it leads to the recognition of the proper place of God in the order of being and existence." From this definition, knowledge as a content of education consists of two domains of application: the ontological

and the theological aspects. The first refers to the man and the world of empirical things, while the second includes the religious and ethical aspects of human existence.

In like manner, the above definition also disclosed the process of education in Islam. But the author warned that for knowledge to be a proper object of education, it must encompass not only its recognition but also of its acknowledgment. Says the author, "Recognition alone without acknowledgment is mere arrogance; for it is the Haq of recognition to be acknowledged. Acknowledgment alone without recognition is mere ignorance; for it is the Haq of acknowledgment to actualize recognition. Either one by itself is *bātil*, for in Islam there is no worthwhile knowledge without action accompanying it, nor worthwhile action without knowledge guiding it." This synthesis provides the overarching purpose of education to reconcile the theory with the practice. After which, the prescribed a complete definition of the content of education in Islam as: "recognition and acknowledgment of the proper places of things in the order of creation, such that it leads to the recognition and acknowledgment of the proper place of God in the order of being and existence."

The above definition of knowledge captures the two levels of educational philosophy in Islam consisting of the epistemological and ontological references. The former deals with faith issues while the latter life issues. This twin goal of Islamic education was elucidated more by Dr. Sobhi Rayan (2012) who postulated the theoretical skeleton of education from the perspective of the Muslim faith by providing a wide-ranging dimension of knowledge in Islam. Says he:

"The Islamic Education is seeking to achieve the distinct role of the human being which is reform and construction of human life. This Islamic concept of life is based on the fundamental concepts as individual, society and the world, and education works to find a balanced relationship and equitable between the parties to this equation which are based on a relationship characterized by a mutual integration, so one party cannot survive without the other parties. This relationship is based on ethical authority, which is the religion or the Holy Quran which represents the source of Islamic education that derives their universal values from it, so the task of education to link every human activity or behavior with ideal moral value. Therefore, Islamic education is interested in all activities of the individual at the physical, mental, psychological, spiritual, and try to find a balance between these forces that comprise the human being."

This narrative, which highlights the balanced nature of Islamic knowledge, was a response to the criticism of the western writers that Islamic education is only for the development of the soul. The forerunner of them is Halstead (2004) who was quoted saying that "Independence of thought and personal autonomy do not enter into the Muslim thinking about education, which is more concerned with the progressive initiation of pupils into the received truths of the faith."

In the Islamic faith, the guiding thinking principle in the search for knowledge is *Ijtihad* which is "an extreme

struggle in the research of truth about some matter, human or otherwise. This term used to signify struggle which involves extreme hard labor." This connotes that *Ijtihad* "is about freedom of thought, rational thinking and the quest for truth through an epistemology covering science, rationalism, human experience, critical thinking and so on." As a form of inquiry, *Ijtihad* can be equated as a spirit of inquiry and desire for all forms of knowledge, not just religious and juristic.

Because education in Islam sought to cultivate the total development of man, "it aspires to construct the human being toward achievement of the human values," and the role of education is the "reconciliation between theory and practice, saying or word and doing."

Written in a more precise term, the perfect aim of education in Islam was couched by Rayan after synthesizing the different perspectives of some authors. In highlighting the balanced nature of Islamic education, he retorted:

Islamic Education aims to make Balance between three levels: sense, mind and ethics, and promoting them by various Educational methods. The ego's progress is a continuous dynamic movement which assimilates the different aspects and stages, without negating any, the perceptive and the intellectual, thought and emotions, ideas and deeds are all integrated into the final aim of the ego. Also, we find the same approach in . . . balanced that it is a preoccupation with things divine and mystical experience leave room also for rational thinking, logical deduction and empirical observation. It is a duty of all educators to find ways and means by which these high values are practically achieved within the learning period of their students from their earliest age to the years of maturity.

Islamic education believes in harmony between Body and soul, and did not invest in one side and neglect the other. Body and soul are not separate things, while they continued, so Islam is not treated them as dialectic and dualism. Keeping soul and body is an Islamic Value; it means that every Muslim ought to keep them healthy, and to bring instruments and aims that achieve preserving value . . . intellectual, physical and moral education aiming at producing good human beings from the social point of view and achieving eternal happiness and self-realization . . . that physical education must precede the spiritual and intellectual education. True education must therefore, minister to the needs of the body no less than the aspirations of the soul.

Strongly grounded on the solid foundation of education in Islam is its aims and objectives written by various authors, both Muslim and non-Muslims. However, for the purpose of this paper, only two views are tackled hereunder.

Aims and Objectives of Islamic Education

With respect to the aim of education in Islam, two important passages are so instructive in this field. The first was the position commonly adhered to by the scholars who attended in the First World Conference on Muslim education organized by King Abdullah Abdalaziz

University, Saudi Arabia in 1977. In that occasion, the aim of education is "the creation of the good and righteous man who worships Allah in the true sense of the term, builds up the structure of his earthly life according to the Sharia and employs it to serve his faith."

The second narration on the aim of education was couched in a more detailed presentation by Ashraf and Husain amplifying, "Education should aim at the balanced growth of total personality of Man through the training of Man's spirit, intellect, the rational self, feelings and bodily senses. Education should therefore cater for the growth of man in all aspects: spiritual, intellectual, imaginative, physical, scientific, linguistic, both individually and collectively and motivate all these aspects towards goodness and the attainment of perfection. The ultimate aim of Muslim education lies in the realization of complete submission to Allah on the level of the individual, the community and humanity at large."

This elaboration suggests the total submission of all aspects of our life to Islam, be it spiritual, intellectual, rational or physical "in order to develop into a complete personality resulting in becoming a slave to the Almighty."

In considering education as a process that continuously nurtures the person, al-Attas propounds: "Education should aim at the balanced growth of the total personality of Man through the training of Man's spirit, intellect, rational self, feelings and bodily senses...such that faith is infused into the whole of his personality."

Evolution of Islamic Educational Policies and Programs in the Philippines

Islamic Education and its Types

Accordingly, the first form of education in the Moro territories in the Pre-Spanish time was a small household group known as maktab (literally means – 'library' or 'book center') where the teacher (guru), who was the religious leader in the village, taught a small group of children about the basics of Islam, like the reading and writing of the Arabic language. Later on, the task of the guru was taken over by the pandita (spiritual leader in the community). When this local teacher had the opportunity to earn a formal education in the Arab countries, the madrasah-type schooling was introduced. The term madrasah is the Arabic word for "school." This concept is used when referring to "Muslim private schools with a core emphasis on Islamic studies and Arabic literacy. It is a privately-operated school which relies on the support of the local community or foreign donors, particularly from Islamic or Muslim countries. The madaaris are the oldest educational institution in Mindanao and are recognized to be the single most important factor in the preservation of the Islamic faith and culture in the Philippines." As practiced in the Philippines, Madrasah has three general descriptive types. First is the traditional madrasah whose instruction is basically religious and informal. It is characterized by the following features: (a) classes are held on Saturdays and Sundays only or

days agreed upon by the teacher and the students/pupils; (b) it does not have a formal curriculum; (c) it is non-graded and may have multi-age grouping; and (d) it only requires its teachers to be graduates of a madrasah or to be an imam (Muslim religious leader).

Developmental or formal madrasah is the second type. This type exhibits a hierarchically structured educational system that functions like that of the formal education system. It operates in ladder form where its students go through pre-school (edadi) to high school (sanawi). Its curriculum integrates Islamic religious and cultural subjects with some secular subjects such as mathematics and sciences, but still uses Arabic as the medium of instruction. This system of education does not implement the standard curriculum of the Department of Education because is not recognized and accredited by said office. Thus, its students lack competitive skills required for employment and are not eligible for transfer to regular government schools

The third type is the Standard private madrasah. This type is the one recognized and accredited by the DepEd. Its curriculum has been harmonized, upgraded and modified to become a component of the Philippine education system through the issuance of DepED Order No. 51, s. 2004, prescribing the Standard Curriculum for Elementary Public Schools and Private Madaaris. By virtue of this law and as a requirement for their recognition and accreditation, all madrasah institutions in the country are required to adopt and implement said standard curriculum. In the public schools, the enriched curriculum is likewise prescribed mandating the offering of Arabic language and Islamic values for Muslim students throughout the country in areas where there is a Muslim population.

Pre-colonial Period

It is claimed by scholars that the Islamic education in the islands came in coincidence with the arrival and growth of Islam brought about by Arab and Malay missionaries and traders in the 13th century who settled in Sulu and its surrounding islands. The first missionary was a certain Tuan Mashaika who arrived in Sulu and introduced Islam to the local inhabitants. (Abubakar, 1983) At this time, Islam was taught informally inside the house of the guru (teacher). Moreover, lessons were limited only to the reading and writing Arabic as a means of reading the Qur'an. Sometimes classes were also done in the masjid or mosque whenever the house of the teacher cannot accommodate anymore the growing number of the learners.

In the second half of the 14th century, another missionary by the name of Karim-ul-Makhdum arrived who reinforced the religious activities already growing in the Islamic community in Sulu. Not long after, Makhdum was followed by a Sumatran Muslim nobleman, Rajah Baguinda, who introduced to the

Sulu islands the first formal system of leadership. He spread further the teachings of Islam (Hassoubah, cited in Alonto, 1986).

Towards the beginning of 15th century, Sayyid Abū Bakr also known as Sharif-ul Hashim, landed on Jolo island. Although he was an Arab missionary, Abu Bakr came to Sulu not merely to do religious activities, he consolidated political power by introducing to the local natives the concept of sultanate as a political system and making himself as the first sultan. The construction of mosques and the establishment of madaaris was done during his reign as local chieftain for 3 decades.

With respect to the un-Islamized and largely indigenous communities in the North, the educational system in the villages was characterized by the following: (1) education was informal, unstructured, and devoid of methods. Children were provided more vocational training and fewer academics by their parents and in houses of tribal tutors; (2) Being an informal system of learning, ideas and facts were acquired through suggestion, observation, example and imitation; and, (3) absence of the organized system of education.

In short, in the pre-Spanish Philippines, the system of learning adopted both in the Islamized and the non-Islamized communities shared common features. On their educational aims, it was directed for survival, conformity and enculturation. Their teaching methods consisted of show-and-tell, observation, trial and error, and imitation. And, the types of their learning were informal education, practical as well theoretical training.

Spanish Period

The State of Islamic education in the Islands had undergone a tedious trial during the Spanish regime. Before the Moro-Spanish intramurals, education of the Muslims in Mindanao, which was purely religious, was conducted freely in the different villages by the pandita who served as teachers as well as the advisers of the local leaders. Disturbances on Islamic education started when the Spanish authorities, upon the advice of the friars, used the schools "as instruments for colonization and subjugation as well as to proselytize." However, the Muslims did not fall into the hands of the Spaniards due to their already advanced system of life established centuries ahead of the coming of Christianity. Commenting on this account, Tan (1982) related that "even before the coming of the Spaniards the Muslims had already developed their own civilization, whose laws, social organization, government, alphabet, system of education, navigational skills, trade, industry, and commerce setting them apart from the rest of the Philippines." Furthermore, Gamon (2014) accounted that "During Spanish rule, not a single Western type of school was established in the Muslim communities by the Spaniards. The pandita schools which later became

the madaaris became the dominant educational institution in the Muslim areas." Because the Spaniards were so uncomfortable to Islam coupled with their dismal failure to subjugate the Moros, they resorted to the following strategies: (1) destruction of the Qur'an and other Arabic manuscripts they had found in the Philippines, (2) use of the Christian Filipinos to spread terror in Muslim areas, (3) attributing evil descriptions to the Moros, such as barbarous born of violence, and (4) poisoning the minds of the Christian Filipinos against the Muslim Filipinos.

Some of the specific characteristics of the Spanish-imposed educational system to the Indios were as follows: (a) formal and organized learning, (b) religion-oriented, (c) Spanish missionaries as tutors, (d) teaching centered on Christian doctrines, prayers, and sacred songs, (e) curriculum was the 3Rs (reading, writing and religion), (f) teaching of catechism to the natives, compulsory learning of the Spanish language, and (h) education was opened only for the elite which was totally controlled by the friars. After the Education Decree of 1863 was enacted, the Spanish-devised curriculum was widely adopted in the archipelago. Said law prescribed the following subjects in the three grade levels (i.e., entrada, asenso and termino), viz: Christian doctrine, Values, History, Reading and writing in Spanish, Mathematics, Agriculture, Etiquette, Singing, World geography, and Spanish history.

American Period

During the American regime, Islamic education in the Philippine islands was placed at the crossroads of survival because its influence, prestige and importance were challenged by the new system of education copied from the west. The public educational system handled by the Americans appeared to be more popular, practical and beneficial from the perspective of the Moros, especially when it comes to employment opportunities. Immediately, upon their arrival in the Philippine soil, the American educators opened up public schools to all qualified children in concomitant to with their pacification campaign against the Muslims. However, due to years of animosity between the Moro people and the previous Spanish colonizers, Moro families, especially the noble ones, refused to send their children to schools not until after they had realized that their English literacy became the sole qualification for holding public office. This general feeling of resentment against the American educational system was especially intriguing the Maranaos. In detailing the Maranao attitude vis-à-vis the new American educational policy, Isidro (1968) narrated:

" . . . it was a common knowledge that during the early part of the American regime in the country, the Maranaos were very reluctant to send their children to public schools run by Americans and other

Christian teachers. The Maranao dates, when forced to send their school-aged children to school, kept their sons and daughters at home and sent their tenants' children instead. The dates' children were sent to the local Madrasah. To those who received a public education first were the farmers' children and those coming from the non-influential families. Later on, the educated ones rose to prominence after schooling. Some of them became superintendents and supervisors of public schools in Mindanao when the country regained independence in 1946.

"When the public school educated Maranaos rose to power both in politics and education, they were convinced of the importance of public education established by the government. So, they started to enroll their children in public schools instead of Madrasah."

The popularity and attractiveness of the American schools were generally felt in some areas in the Moroland, like Cotabato and Zamboanga. In these places, it was accounted that the pandita school eventually declined and miserably deteriorated within a couple years. As can be recalled, in order to ensure the effectiveness of their education campaign, the Americans sought first for the attraction of the sons of the Moro dates by offering them scholarships and even giving them personal guardianship. The Moro leaders who were the first ones to grab this opportunity were former Senator Salipada K. Pendatun of Cotabato and former Congressman Rashid Lucman of Lanao. This growing popularity of the American secular education lasted until the Commonwealth government (Tamano, 2010).

As compared to the Spanish-style of education, the American educational system can be briefly summarized by looking at the three major components as aims (i.e., to teach democracy, and separation of church and state), types (i.e., formal, open for everyone, democratic), and methods (i.e., socialized recitation, participation, debate, and game/playing).

Japanese Period

The new educational policy of the Japanese imperial army had set foot in the islands when the Military Order No. 2 was released. It mandated the Philippine Executive Commission to create the Commission on Education, Health and Public Welfare. Pursuant thereto, schools were reopened in June 1942 with more than 300,000 students who attended different grade levels.

In order to achieve the educational thrust of the above Order, the Japanese-sponsored Constitution of the Philippines declares in its Article IX, Section 10 thereof that "All educational institutions shall be under the supervision of and subject to regulation by the State. The government shall establish and maintain a complete and adequate system of national education, and shall provide at least free public elementary instruction, and citizenship training to

adult citizens. All schools, colleges, and universities shall aim to develop moral character, personal and collective discipline, civic conscience, and vocational skill, secure social efficiency, and teach the duties of citizenship. Optional religious instruction shall be maintained in the public schools as now authorized by law. The State shall create scholarships in arts, science, and letters for specially gifted citizens."

As imposed in all the curricula nationwide, the Japanese-organized education of the Filipinos incorporated the so-called "Six Principles of the Japanese Republic" which became the Basic Principles of the Japanese Education in the country, to wit: (1) realization of a new order and promote friendly relations between Japan and the Philippines to the farthest extent; (2) foster a new Filipino culture, (3) endeavor to elevate the morals of the people, giving up over emphasis to materialism, (4) Diffusion of the Japanese language in the Philippines, (5) promotion of vocational education, and (6) to inspire people with the spirit to love their neighbor.

Filipino-run Republics

Under the Third Philippine Republic, some of the core general education policies of the government include the following: (1) complete and adequate system of national education, (2) the concept of academic freedom shall only be exercised in the universities established by the state, (3) religious instruction in the public schools were optional, and (4) the creation of scholarships in the arts, sciences and letters was for specially gifted citizens as well as those who possess certain level of capability for academic studies and are unable to afford the cost of college education.

With respect to the education of the Muslims in the Philippines, previous Philippine presidents have implemented various educational measures in addressing its growing challenges. During the Marcos, no less than the 1973 Constitution then existing provides in its Article XV, Section 8, Paragraph 1 that "... The State shall establish and maintain a complete, adequate, and integrated system of education relevant to goals of national development." This provision became the legal foundation of the enactment of the Letter of Instruction No. 1221 on 31 March 1982 which gave three specific directives to all concerned official of the government by ordering them to: (1) formulate and adopt a program for the development of the Madrasah schools, at least for the improvement of their teaching staff and instructional facilities, but priority must be given, whenever possible, to their progressive integration as a sector in the national educational system, with enhanced curricula, to the end that their graduates join the mainstream of Philippine Education, endowing them with the capabilities to contribute to the modernization of our communities within the framework of their Islamic faith; (2) strengthen the development of programs in Islamic

studies in state institutions of higher learning, especially in Mindanao, including the accelerated strengthening of programs Sharia; and, (3) establish and strengthen programs in the teaching and learning of the Arabic language which is vital to educational programs in Mindanao but is also a valuable field of study and professional education in higher education as a required or optional subject, whenever appropriate.

A year thereafter, such an avowed policy of the state was strengthened further by the issuance of the Letter of Instruction No. 17-A which was decreed by President Marcos specifically enjoining that "the Secretary of Education and Culture to allow and authorize the use of Arabic as a medium of instruction in schools and/or areas in the Philippines where the use thereof so permits."

The strong concern and interest for the development and improvement of the Islamic education of the Moros were even more evident in the provisions of the present constitution which ordain that "The State shall recognize, respect, and protect the rights of indigenous cultural communities to preserve and develop their cultures, traditions, and institutions. It shall consider these rights in the formulation of national plans and policies." As a response of the Autonomous Region in Mindanao to such educational programs of the national government, the Muslim Mindanao Autonomy Act No. 14 was legislated which provides in its Section 3 therein that "the Regional Government shall accredit the madaaris and shall ensure their integration together with the private schools into the regional system of education which should be at par with national standard. One of the aims and purposes of the regional integrated education system is to promote and strengthen the madaaris as an integral part of the regional education program. It means the integration of Arabic language and Islamic studies in the regional public schools to improve student proficiency and understanding on Islamic values and culture."

To strengthen further this public concern for the integration of the Islamic education into the Philippine public school system, the Department Order No. 51 was issued by the DepED on 28 August 2004 which affirms that "For the Muslims of Mindanao and other parts of the country, the rightful and legitimate aspiration is to have an Islamic Education that is authentic and appropriate for the Bangsa Moro population. They aim to establish Islamic schools that would prepare generations of learned and intellectual Muslims imbued with Islamic values and spiritually prepared to serve the people and the country as a whole." This law prescribes the so-called "Standards Curriculum for Elementary Public Schools and Private MADAARIS" which aims to: (1) establish a smooth transfer of students from public to private Madrasah or vice versa; unify the long history of dichotomy among Muslims; and (3) promote the

Filipino national identity and at the same time preserve the Muslims' cultural heritage.

However, the curriculum established under DepED Order No. 51 was amended by the DepED Order No. 40 decreed on 19 May 2011 which prescribed instead the Refined Elementary Madrasah Curriculum (REMC) under two models: (a) the Arabic Language and Islamic Values Education (ALIVE) for Public Schools, and (b) the Refined Standard Madrasah Curriculum (RSMC) for Private Madaaris.

Commenting on the move to integrate the Madrasah curriculum into the public school system of the DepED, Gonsang (1996) was quoted saying that making Islam as an important component of the public education of the Muslims is a stepping-stone to the realization of what Daniel (1962) meant when he said: "Islam is not a religion in the commonly distorted meaning of the word, confining itself to the life of men. It is a complete way of life catering to all fields for all walks of life – individual and social, legal and cultural, national and international." Islam, as a complete code of life, is similar to the belief of Muthari (1981), as cited in Gonsang (1996), that ". . . knowledge and faith play various significant roles in constructing the future of the human beings. Knowledge shows them the way and establishes them to shape their future according to their own will. But faith guides them as to how they should build themselves and their future, that they may best serve themselves and their society."

From the recent developments on the integration of Islamic education to the Philippine public school system, the following problems were identified. First is the diversity of the Madaaris curricula due to the different educational background of the owner/founder, different training of the Asaatidz, lack of contact or communication with the operators, lack of religious dialogue among the various ethnolinguistic groups in Mindanao professing Islam as their religion. On the issue of instruction, Hassoubah (1972), as cited in Gonsang (1996), noted that about 90 percent of the locally-trained Ustadz do not possess competent teaching qualification. In this respect, it is important to be reminded of the requirements prescribed in the Republic Act No. 4670, otherwise known as The Magna Carta for Public School Teachers, which requires a formal appropriate degree before one is recruited to teach which degree must be taken from a recognized educational institution.

For the Madaaris students themselves, the common problem that crafted is their unstructured age level entry.

On the issue of physical facilities, it is found out by the study of Pahm (1982) that most Madrasah buildings appeared to be very temporary structures which were made up of nipa or cogon-roofed, with light wood posts, uncemented ground floor, and walled with sarangi up to neck level only. They were

built on lots verbally donated by the owners whose area-size seldom exceeds to half a hectare.

Current Issues/Problems Confronting Islamic Education in the Philippines

Available literature shows that there are already voluminous studies conducted in the Philippines showing various issues and concerns on the state of Muslim education in the country. The most comprehensive one was conducted by the team of Moro educators based at the University of Southern Mindanao, Kabacan, Cotabato entitled "Mapping of Conflict-Affected Communities and Schools in the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (ARMM)". Done last February to April 2010, said research indicated the following as the commonly experienced problems relative to Muslim education in the area under study, to wit: (1) challenge of Madrasah integration, (2) economic problem, (3) curricular differences, (4) insufficiency and uncontextualized learning materials, (5) limited physical facilities and human resources, (6) employment potentials, (7) qualification of teachers, (8) admission of students, (9) teaching-learning process, and (10) students' assessment performance.

In their attempt to rescue the alarming educational predicament of the Muslims, the authors recommended the following immediate needs and concerns: (1) development and introduction of Indigenized Basic Education Curriculum (IBEC), (2) development and introduction of Synchronized Islamic-based Development Education System (SIDES), (3) alternative learning system and vocational training, resource capacity, (4) expanding the local economy, (5) promotion of human rights and protection of vulnerable groups (children, women, aged, disabled), (6) peacebuilding programs in schools, (7) reparative care, (1) adequate infrastructure and facility support to schools, and (8) formulation of affirmative action for vulnerable groups.

The above findings of Dr. Sencil and his team were found analogous to the problems and concerns prevailing in the Islamic schools in the Philippines as revealed in the presentation of Ms. Janice Jansol. Among other things, she found out that Madrasah schools in different parts of the country are commonly experiencing the following, viz: (1) Limited financial support from the community and charitable institutions, (2) Insufficient textbooks and other reading materials, Lack of school facilities, (4) Unqualified teachers, and (5) Unequal opportunity of being employed as their counterparts who graduated in sectarian and non-sectarian schools. Consequently, she recommended to: (1) Increase DepEd subsidy to support the implementation of the national curriculum, teacher training and improvement of school infrastructure; (2) Hire qualified Muslim Filipinos who have strong knowledge in Islamic education as faculty to teach in schools and

universities where there are considerable number of Muslim students; and, (3) Develop and enhance Madrasah Curriculum that aims to integrate Muslim students into mainstream society and prepare them for an equal opportunity of being employed in our country.

Commenting on the opposing interests between the government and the Moro people relative to the agenda of reforming Islamic education in the Philippines, Mr. Alizaman Gamon (2016) made the following observation:

"The agenda of reform of Islamic education became a terrain of contention between the Philippine government and the Muslim intellectuals in particular. As part of the Philippine educational policy of integration, the government grants no two systems under a unitary state. It is the sovereign rights of the government to regulate educational system affecting the majority as well as the cultural minority. On the part of the Muslims, the formation of Islamic education must be dictated by set principles that are deeply grounded in the cultural values of Islam. And thus, the preservation, promotion and control of Islamic education should be regarded as the responsibility of the Muslim intellectuals who can bring comprehensive transformation to the field of education. It is the fear of the Muslim communities that if the reform of Islamic education is patterned from the socio-political and ideological foundations of secularism, they might experience loss of identity as Muslims, and their aspiration and version of progress and development will remain unrealized."

In like manner, to further strengthen its sinister design to assimilate and integrate the Muslims, the national policy-makers "had advocated a reform in education which is in accordance with the framework of secularism, i.e the dichotomy of sacred and secular education common to every civil society in the West. The secular approach to education has been mobilized by the government as an instrument to integrate the Muslims into the mainstream socio-political and educational system of the Philippines," emphasized by said author.

In order to arrest the impending effects of this perceived assimilationist policy of the government brought under the guise of educational reform, the author commented that instead of leaving everything to the mercy and dictate of the national authorities, it must first be recognized that "Muslims in the Philippines can be in better position to restore spiritual and moral dimensions of modern life while continuing to be faithful and co-existing harmoniously with the non-Muslims provided they are granted with a favorable environment that can substantiate the universality of Islam. Transforming Islamic education can be right instrument for the realization of this noble goal."

In the study of Dilangalen (2007) on the "Sustainability of the Madrasah Educational System in the Provinces of Cotabato and Maguindanao", he

unveiled that, among other things, the socio-demographic and economic characteristics of the asaaticz, as well as the level of adequacy of existing resource capabilities of the schools, have significant contribution to the level of sustainability of Madrasah educational system in terms of economic viability, ecological friendliness, social justice, and technological soundness. In the same study, he recommended that to make the Islamic education more imbibed to the life of the Muslims resource capabilities still need to be updated, financial preparation be enhanced, manpower capability of the asaaticz should be improved, and its curriculum be revised to make it holistic.

In the same vein of interest to further make the Madrasah schools effective and responsive to the needs of the Muslim Filipinos, Gonsang (1987) suggested the following proposal amplifying:

"the curricular offerings of the Madrasah should include among others vocational skills, like practical arts, woodworking, poultry raising, childcare, and home economics so that after finishing elementary grades, graduates would have the basic skills useful in livelihood. Asaatidz should be encouraged should be allowed to undergo or attend in-service training programs to upgrade their managerial skills and teaching competencies. They should be given opportunities to study abroad as scholars as part of the faculty development program."

On the specific issue of the Madrasah curriculum, the study of Musa (2008) on the "Formative Assessment of the Madrasah Curriculum in Pikit Districts, S.Y. 2007-2008," made a very striking findings that the curriculum implemented by the Madaaris in the area under study prepares the children to become productive and responsible citizens who understand their own culture, provides an education that is meaningful, relevant and culture-sensitive, promotes the Filipino national heritage and national identity, encourages the pupils to acquire the Islamic personality, prepares the intellectual Muslims imbued with Islamic values.

Finally, a more recent study on the implementation of the Refined Elementary Madrasah Curriculum in some selected Madaaris in Marawi City revealed the following challenges, viz:

(1) eligibility of the personnel supervising the implementation of the program at the local level, validation and monitoring mechanisms, (3) delayed release of financial grants from the national government, (4) proper application of the knowledge and educational strategies acquired by the Madrasah administrators in their workshops and seminars, (5) resources and networking of different Madaaris in reaching out assistance from the local government units and other community stakeholders, and (6) the management styles of said administrators on do they address the work-related grievances of the Arabic teachers.

In one of her interviews, the researcher quoted the response of one teacher who said that "during validation and inspection of the pilot Madaaris by the national agencies, they usually borrowed students from other Islamic schools just to satisfy the required number of students attending in every class.

CONCLUSION

As true to all other countries in the world having a minority Muslim population, the development and dynamics of Islamic education in the Philippines is beset by multifarious challenges. The most fundamental of which is the opposite views of the Islamic and the Western cultures on education as the former calls for the total development of a person both in his physical as well as spiritual life, while the latter concentrates only on the secular side.

On this note, the Moro people is not an exception to this impediment. In fact, their greatest challenge with respect to their Islamic education is how could their Islamic system of life be finally accommodated and made part of the broader Filipino culture which is largely patterned from the West. It is through this multiculturalist view of social coexistence where Islamic education in the country can be finally made an integral part of the national educational system. Consequently, this is the realization of the time-honored principle of unity in diversity, instead of unity inhomogeneity, where we Filipinos can truly experience the real dividends of peaceful and harmonious coexistence. After all, education is man's liberation from the shackles of ignorance, suspicion, and discrimination to the benedictions of enlightenment, accommodation and respect.

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