RESPONSE OF MUSLIM MINORITY TOWARDS THE IMPLEMENTATION OF ARABIC LANGUAGE AND ISLAMIC VALUE EDUCATION PROGRAM IN PUBLIC SCHOOLS IN THE PHILIPPINES

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Abstract

Purpose of the Study: This research aims to identify the response level of Muslim minority towards the implementation of Arabic Language and Islamic Values Education Program in the Philippines. The main problems of Islamic educational system which was regarded as an effective element of Islamization was discouraged and narrowed down to give way to secularized educational system in the country and also, how to preserve Islam in a country where they are a minority but where, nevertheless, the fundamental law of the land provides for a secular government.

Methodology: In this study, quantitative methodology research was applied and the data were analyzed using Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) for Windows version 21 with a total number of respondents as of 272 people.

Main Findings: The results showed that the total average means a score of the response of Muslim minority towards the implementation of Arabic Language and Islamic Values Education Program was at a moderate level with a value of 3.03. However, majority of the respondents agreed that implementation of Arabic Language and Islamic Value Education program is one of the inward-looking tendencies or deepening process of Islamization in the country.

Implications: The impact of Arabic Language and Islamic Values Education may educate the children to keep them away from any extremism and radicalism acts.

Keywords: *Muslim Minority, Implementation, Arabic Language and Islamic Value Education, Philippines.*

INTRODUCTION

In the context of Islamization in the Philippines, the *madrasah* plays a vital instrument. *Madrasah* is a Muslim school that teaches Arabic and Islamic studies, especially *Qur'ānic* reading and Arabic language. It is looked up to not only as an institution of learning but also a symbol of Islam. It is regarded as a proper place to acquire knowledge in Arabic language and Islamic religious teachings (Rodriguez, 1993).

In the late 13th or early 14th century, Islamic education localized in the Southern of Philippines together with Islam itself. It spread throughout the Southern Island of Mindanao and Sulu Archipelago for more than two hundred years after (Majul, 1999). Feedback to the Muslims' long struggle for educational equity, remain only at the stage of policy statements (Milligan, 2003). For the moment, the feedback against Muslim Filipino's great struggle for educational equity remains at the policy statements level (Nefertari, 2007). Poverty, inadequate funding and bureaucratic lethargy were the main challenges faced in the efforts of reforming Philippine education.

The principle behind the integration via education was a great threat to national unity within the diversity of Philippine communities. As consequences of Muslim secessionist movement in Mindanao, this threat became a national security level of concern. The inconsiderateness and absolute prejudice towards Muslims in the Philippines have led the integration policy to assimilation, secularism, and subordination of the Muslim minority to the Christian majority. The effort of Islamizing the public schools that serve Muslim students became an intense shift from condescending Islam to honoring it by placing a comparable curriculum as in the majority Filipino Muslim schools. It is likely to develop self-esteem and personality of Muslim children (Marlon, 2017).

Islamization policy does not probably address the bias and curricular silence towards Muslim Filipinos within the education of the Christian majority. Jeffrey Ayala Milligan (2004) claimed that the integration policy would be possibly effective to strengthen Islamic identity among Filipino Muslim school children and to eradicate the gulf between Filipino Christians and Muslims.

In fact, the Islamization of public education in the Philippines is a way of reducing the gap between mosque and Philippines states to create freedom in which further viable educational alternatives expressed from Muslim voices to assimilate the past educational practices that have created a conflict in the country. This makes it a great experience of providing education to minority Muslim within other diverse communities.

In order to mainstream Islamic education in the Philippine educational sector, the Philippine government through the Department of Education, issued Department Order 51 in 2004 to purposely integrate Arabic language and Islamic Values (ALIVE) in many public schools within the country. Since 2004, many public schools are offering Arabic language and

Islamic values after conducting a comprehensive mapping of public schools with substantial number of Muslim students. As the Department Order is implemented since 2004, many public school teachers are trained and equipped to be able to teach Arabic language education in their classrooms. Many Arabic teachers who passed the Licensure Examinations for Teachers have begun working with the Department of Education and the formal educational sector. However, there are policy gaps that have to be fully addressed to make a positive impact on both the desire of the state to integrate Islamic education and the expectations of many Muslim students (Wendell Glenn Cagape, 2007).

Implementing the DepEd order No. 51 series of 2004 (Arabic Language and Islamic Values Education Program) is a good start for Filipino Muslims in claiming their rights which is never been attained before due to its unfinished conflict situation between Muslims and Christians society. However, this law should be respected by all citizens for the benefits of all residents irrespective of religion and races. It is the main reason for conducting this research with the aim of identifying the response among Muslim society towards the issue of implementation of Islamic educational program in the country.

RESEARCH METHOD

This research is a quantitative method which includes a survey and distribution of a set of questionnaire. A total of 272 respondents were targeted to represent Muslim societies in the Cordillera Administrative Region (CAR), northern part of the Philippines. The respondents were of those persons who actively involved in Islamic organization such as *madrasāt* (Islamic schools), Islamic da'wah organizations, *masājid*, Muslim leaders (*imām*), Muslim teachers (*asātidhah*) and Muslim preachers (al-*du'āt*). The respondents were selected through purposive sampling among those who are actively involved in spreading the Islamic religion in CAR. The location of the research focused in CAR, northern part of the Philippines whereby it consists of six provinces namely, Abra, Apayao, Benguet, Ifugao, Kalinga, and Mountain Province. However, after a survey made, it was noticed that Muslims society can be found only in Benguet (Baguio City, La Trinidad, Ambiong, Crystal Cave and Marcos Highway) and Mountain Province (Abatan). The remaining states are totally inhabited by hundred percents of Christian's populations. The rationale of the study in CAR is based on the increasing number of Muslims in the northern Philippines. The Islamic da'wah movement had now been actively engaged with the existence of Islamic organizations with the help of Arab countries. The main source of the data was gathered and collected from the answers given by respondents through the issuance of a set of questionnaires. The research was analyzed using Statistical Package for the Social Science (version 21).

RESEARCH FINDINGS

a. Demographic Studies

Respondents' demography in this research consists of gender, age, educational background, employment, marital status, position, and birth status. The significance of demographic studies lies in its contribution to help the author with better deal for the important details related to the respondents.

i. Gender

In terms of gender, the results showed that majority of the respondents comprised of 52.9 percent of the female while the male respondents were 47.1 percent. This group of respondents showed female were majority of 52.9 persons from total 272 respondents (Table 1). This common situation could also be seen in most Muslim organizations as females are more active and highly interested to voluntarily join the Islamic da'wah activities than the males. Most of the male Filipinos are the family breadwinners and this may prevent them to fully participate in such religious activities compared to females whom mostly consist of housewives or unemployed mothers.

Table 1: Distribution of respondent's gender

Category of Gender	Frequency (F)	Percentage (%)
Male	128	47.1%
Female	144	52.9%
Total	272	100%

Source: Questionnaires (2016)

ii. Age

The information of ages among the respondents in CAR was shown in Table 2. The respondents' ages were categorized under four categories, 18-25 years, 26-30 years, 31-40 years and 41 years and above. The results showed that of the total 272 respondents, the highest number was indicated by the respondents in the age of 18-25 years, which accounted for 192 persons (70.6%), followed by the group between the ages of 26-30 years of 32 persons (11.8%). The smallest number of respondents belonged to the ages of 41 years and above, which accounted for 23 persons (8.5%) followed by the ages between 31-40 years as 25 persons (9.2%). The study showed that those respondents in the group of ages between 18 to 25 years old as the highest number of respondents whom mostly join the Islamic organizations as a member in CAR. The ages of 18-25 years are the significant ages for young labors to be active in various posts such as in workplace position, religious memberships and family affairs.

Table 2: Distribution of respondent's ages

Category of Ages	Frequency (F)	Percentage (%)
18-25	192	70.6%
26-30	32	11.8%
31-40	25	9.2%
41 above	23	8.5%
Total	272	100%

Source: Questionnaires (2016)

iii. Educational Background

The findings related to the educational background were listed in Table 3. The respondents come in various levels of academic qualifications. In majority, 208 persons (76.5%) were in undergraduate levels, followed by 58 persons (21.3%) reached the stage of high school, while 5 persons (1.8%) were in elementary levels and one respondent (0.4%) was in postgraduate level. It means 76.5% of the respondents were highly educated people and most of them have been recognized as important members in such Islamic organizations. Having first degree in academic qualification with related social experiences is often sufficient for a person to be assigned as an eligible Muslim leader in most of Islamic organisations in Cordillera.

Table 3: Distribution of the respondent's educational background

Level of Educational Background	Frequency (F)	Percentage (%)
Elementary	5	1.8%
High School	58	21.3%
Undergrauate	208	76.5%
Postgraduate	1	.4%
Total	272	100%

Source: Questionnaires (2016)

iv. Employment

Based on the answers given by the respondents related to employment as in Table 4, majority of the respondents, a total of 152 persons (55.9%) were students, followed by self-employed workers with total of 60 persons (22.1%), while 48 persons (17.6%) were private-sector workers and 12 persons (4.4%) were government staff. The reason behind the abundance of students' membership in Islamic organisations in CAR is closely dealt with the opportunity and time factor. Students are physically able to have various memberships either in college or within their community in residential areas as they are apparently well equipped with time and knowledge. Students also play as potential contributors to keep an organization actively involved in a way of developing Muslim populations in certain areas.

Table 4: Distribution of respondent's employment

Category of Employment	Frequency (F)	Percentage (%)
Government	12	4.4%
Private	48	17.6%
Self-employed	60	22.1%
Student	152	55.9%
Total	272	100%

Source: Questionnaires (2016)

v. Marital Status

The results in Table 5 shows that the majority of respondents were single of 184 persons (67.6%), 82 persons (30.1%) were married and 6 respondents (2.2%) were widow/ widower. There was a significant difference in total number between married and single respondents. Rationally, a single person is physically able to give full commitment and mentally able to hold responsibility in such organisations as they are not busy with various problems such as earning a living to support their family and arranging family matters.

vi. Position

In terms of hold position, it shows that majority of the respondents with a total of 225 persons (82.7%) were members of the Islamic organization, 11 persons (4.0%) were Imam, 8 persons were Vice President and Secretary (2.9%), followed by Treasurer with 7 persons, 6 persons were President and Program Coordinator (2.2%), while the remaining respondent with only one person (0.4%) held a position as a School Principal.

Table 5: Distribution of the respondent's marital status

Category of Marital Status	Frequency (F)	Percentage (%)
Married	82	30.1
Single	184	67.6
Widow/Widower	6	2.2
Total	272	100%

Source: Questionnaires (2016)

Table 6: Distribution of respondent's position

Category of Position	Frequency (F)	Percentage (%)
President	6	2.2%
Vice President	8	2.9%
Secretary	8	2.9%
Treasurer	7	2.6%
Imam	11	4.0%
Program Coordinator	6	2.2%
School Principal	1	.4%
Member	225	82.7%
Total	272	100%

Source: Questionnaires (2016)

This section discusses the findings of descriptive means values. A Likert scale from 1 to 5 was used in the instruments. In determining the level of the mean value for each variable, the author has categorized the mean scores into 5 levels as shown in table 7.

Table 7: Interpretation of 5 levels of average scores

Average Scores	Interpretation
1.00 to 1.89	Extremely low
1.90 to 2.69	Low
2.70 to 3.49	Moderate
3.5 to 4.29	High
4.3 to 5.00	Extremely High

Source: Department of Planning and Research Educational Policy (2006)

THE RESPONSE OF MUSLIM MINORITY TOWARDS ARABIC LANGUAGE AND ISLAMIC VALUE EDUCATION PROGRAMS IN THE PHILIPPINES

Based on Table 8, the results showed that the total average mean score was at moderate level with a value of 3.03. The highest mean score was at 3.12 which refers to the item, 'Implementation of Arabic Language and Islamic Value Education program is one of the inward-looking tendencies or deepening process of Islamization'. Based on the findings, 90 persons (33.1%) were unsure, 75 persons (27.6%) disagreed, 58 persons (21.3%) agreed with the statements, 37 persons (13.6%) strongly agreed and 12 persons (4.4%) strongly disagreed on the item. Meanwhile, the results also found out that the lowest mean score was at with the value of 2.93 in which the item refers to, 'Implementation of ALIVE program is enough to make the Muslim children knowledgeable of their religion'. According to the findings, 90 persons (33.1%) disagreed to the item, 88 persons (32.4%) were unsure, 62 persons (22.8%) agreed, 18 persons (6.6%) strongly agreed and 14 persons (5.1%) were strongly disagreed with the item.

As been issued in the Department Order 51, the Philippine government through the Department of Education (DepEd) has purposely integrated the Arabic language and Islamic Values (ALIVE) in most public schools within the country in order to keep Islamic education in line with other national education in the Philippine educational sector. This government policy is in consonance with the national objectives of providing the quality, affordability, and accessibility of Islamic education in public sector as many of *madāris* are operating beyond the government supervision and regulation. However, based on the results, it seems that majority of the respondents were unsure and more disagreed with the government program of mainstreaming *madrasah* education as deeping process of Islamization. It showed that ALIVE program has not yet been successfully implemented in all stages of public education sector. Public *madāris* in Cordillera usually offers basic education at primary level and none of them offer the college-level education. Thus, there is limitation in *madrasah* curriculum which has less Islamic integrated knowledge such as Islamic faith, hadith, Shariah Laws, etc.

Madrasah education in Cordillera is a community-based program, which means the opening of *madrasah* is achieved through the community initiative and mostly funded by the local Religious Islamic Association. Only very few revealed the opening *madrasah* that is in compliance with Department of Education Order 51 of 2004. This makes the operational

methods have not been standardized and might be different for every *madrasah* in Cordillera. The ALIVE programs have been taught within the community in CAR based on respective culture and condition. Hence, the madrasah education through the ALIVE programs has not yet workable to Islamize the Philippine educational sector and it requires a lot of efforts to re-designed the curriculum, re-engineering the infrastructures and develop the instructional supervision.

Table 8: Mean value, frequency, percentage, and level of Islamization from the educational aspect

No.	Description	SD	D	NS	A	SA	Mean	Interpretation
B1	Implementation of Arabic Language and Islamic Values Education (ALIVE) in government school is another way for building peace and friendship relation between Muslim and Christian	24 8.8%	46 16.9%	104 38.2%	79 29.0%	19 7.0%	3.08	Moderate
B2	Implementation of ALIVE in public schools leads to preservation and advancement of Islamic culture and tradition in the Philippines	10 3.7%	93 34.2%	90 33.1%	50 18.4%	29 10.7%	2.98	Moderate
B3	Implementation of ALIVE in public school is applicable to the government educational policy of the Philippines, that is right of every child in education	15 5.5%	76 27.9%	89 32.7%	70 25.7%	22 8.1%	3.03	Moderate
B4	Implementation of ALIVE program is enough to make the Muslim children knowledgeable of their religion	14 5.1%	90 33.1%	88 32.4%	62 22.8%	18 6.6%	2.93	Moderate
B5	Implementation of ALIVE program is one of the inward-looking tendencies, or the deepening process of Islamization	12 4.4%	75 27.6%	90 33.1%	58 21.3%	37 13.6%	3.12	Moderate
	Total Average Mean						3.03	Moderate

Source: Questionnaires (2016)

DISCUSSION

The using of the Arabic language in the Philippines was largely limited to the *madāris* (Islamic school) before (Ahmad Mohammad Hassoubah, 1981). Peter G. Gowing (1979) claims that by the 16th century or possibly even before the end of the 15th, some of the new Muslims in the Philippines became literate in Arabic and Arabic script was adopted as the writing system of their literature and pre-Islamic genealogies. It means that Arabic has been added as a new vocabulary to their native language.

Integration of ALIVE program results from gradual advocacy of the ALIVE program to the level of appreciation, understanding, and acceptance by the whole community excluding ethics, religion, and culture (Macapagal, 2002; Majul, 1978). The following activities brought to National Public Holiday such as '*ām al-jadīd* (New Year for the Islamic calendar which refer to 1st Muharram), *Maulid al-Rasūl* (birthday of Prophet Muhammad pbuh), Ramadan (month of fasting season), *ᶜeid al-Adhā*, *ᶜeid al-Fitri* and *Isra' wa al-Miᶜrāj* (Amil S. Flamiano 2015).

ALIVE program reflects the school year calendar that may led to the satisfaction of Muslim society. As it is stated in DepEd Order No. 11, (2006) regarding Muslim Holidays as follows:

1. Pursuant to Articles 169-172 of Presidential Decree No. 1083, "A Decree to Ordain and Promulgate a Code Recognizing the System of Filipino Muslim Laws, Codifying Muslim Personal Laws, and Providing for its Administration and for Other Purposes". The Department shall observe the following provision:

    1.1 Article 169 on official Muslim Holidays states that the following dates are hereby recognized as Legal Muslim Holidays:

        a. "Amun Jadid (New Year, which falls on the first day of the first lunar month of Muharram);

        b. Maulid-un-Nabi (birthday of the Prophet Muhammad, which falls on the twelfth day of the third lunar month of Rabi-ul-Awwal);

        c. Lailatul Isra Wal Mi'raj (Nocturnal Journey and Ascencion of the Prophet Muhammad), which fall on the twenty-seventh day of the seventh lunar month of Rajab);

        d. Id-ul-Fitr (Hari Raya Puasa, which falls on the first day of the tenth lunar month of Shawwal, commemorating the end of the fasting season); and

        e. Id-ul-Adha (Hari Raya Haji, which falls on the tenth day of the twelfth lunar month of Dhul-Hijja).

Second, Basic Education Curriculum Act of 2002 for formal basic education aims to (i) provide basic quality education that is equitably accessible to all, and to lay the foundation for lifelong learning and service to the common good (ii) empower learners to attain functional literacy and life skills so that they become self-developed persons who are *makabayan* (patriotic), *makatao* (mindful or humanity), *makakalikasan* (respectful of nature) and *maka-Diyos* (Godly); also (iii) develop in learners a reflective understanding and internalization of principles and values and their multiple intelligences. Also, ALIVE program is rationale for Muslim Basic Education and interest of the country to support quality education for Muslims because poor Muslims will be a problem to the government. The Muslims have become a problem because of the failure of education which in turn has caused them to lag behind other Filipinos in terms of access the equality in development (Mutilan, 2003).

In order to achieve the goal and ensure the interaction between Philippine and Islamic education will be enabled in a way that will cure educational dichotomy, empowering learners to be participative in the bigger society is essential. Four core values underpin the philosophical framework of the multicultural curriculum model developed by Bennett (2003). These are:

i. Acceptance and appreciation of cultural diversity. This principle advocates that coexistence among all people and beings is important. Learners will welcome diversity and seek commonalities among themselves. They will learn the value of understanding different perspectives in the process of working together towards the common good. The culture of open-minded inquiry and mutual respect will be propagated in the school setting. Contexts and situations of all learners will be taken into account to inform the scheme of education that best suits them contextual learning will be the norm.

ii. Respect for human dignity and universal human rights. This principle advocates the absence of prejudice or discrimination. Learners will appreciate that all human beings should be able to enjoy rights, privileges, and opportunities as equals. They will be trained to live and propagate this principle among themselves.

iii. Responsibility to the world community. People should be equally enabled to act on their situations and circumstances to improve their lives and the world they live in. Learners will be trained in positive social action to achieve gains not just for themselves but more importantly, for the community.

iv. Reverence for the earth. This principle stems from the belief in the interdependence of everything in the universe. It views the world and its inhabitants as one big community, connected and interdependent despite differing contexts, cultures, and persuasions. Learners will be trained in this perspective. They will learn that each and every being has a place in the universal web, contributing to and affected by the continual ebb and flow of life on earth. A collective consciousness will thus be developed in learners.

Hence, ALIVE Program was already implemented for the benefits of Muslims learners. First, the integration of Islamic subjects into the secular curriculum is a good concept which opens a knowledgeable discussion. Second, the integrated Islamic knowledge has the potential to address Muslim children's educational needs. Third, the integrated school has activities like foundation week and saqada (charity) giving. Fourth, teachers are professionally qualified, thus a mode of teaching is better. Fifth, it will be able to educate basic Islamic knowledge for every Muslim child. Lastly, Arabic and Islamic studies are incorporated into the curriculum so at least it could address the needs of Muslim students who could not attend the weekend *madrasah*. Not only for that, non-Muslim pupils are allowed to attend ALIVE classes but with written consent from their parents (Nene Astudilla C. Godoy, et. al., 2008).

Not only for that, non-Muslim pupils are allowed to attend ALIVE classes with written consent from their parents (Nene Astudilla C. Godoy, et. al., 2008). ALIVE Program reflected in the DepEd orders and its culture particularly those dealing in public education. According to Cagape (n.d.), in order to institutionalize Islamic education as an active partner of long term sustainable development of the Filipino human capital, legislative act of the Philippine Congress is needed to affect the strengthening of *madrasah* education that promotes respect for human diversity, religious tolerance, peace and stability in the Philippines. Education, as it is widely ascribed by education pundits, ushers peace and envelopes fear and intimidation because the more educated a person is, the more inclined he will be towards sustaining the hope he has seen after years of war and distress. Van Vactor (1978) stated that the Philippine House of Representative and the Senate of the Philippines need to legislative laws that support the strengthening of existing program in the government schools especially *madãris* and provide government funds for the effective administration of these *madãris*.

In short, a school is a suitable place in teaching students with good things, especially involving human-God relations, fellow human beings, and human-environment relations. Islamic school should be even more to fully integrate the elements of knowledge and human behaviour in order to achieve success in both living world and hereafter. All these things need to be emphasized, especially in educating the children in schools to produce committed students to their religion and nation.

SUMMARY

Applicable to the government educational policy of the Philippines, it is the right of every child to attend education. All children as right holders must be given a quality of education opportunity irrespective of their race, color, religion or culture, like in Singapore, Islamic education applicable in preschool, primary, secondary, pre-university, diploma dan university with the assistance under the government Ministry of Education (Education Statistic Digest: Ministry of Education, 2013). In this reason, Department of Education implemented ALIVE program to make the Muslim children knowledgeable of their religion (especially Islamic values) and the language of the Holy Qur'an which is Arabic language.

The teaching of Arabic as a second language in the Muslim areas of the Philippines is impliedly recognized by the provision of the new Constitution of the Philippines (Article 15 Sec 3), also Philippine education is defined in the 1987 Constitution which shall protect and promote the right of all citizens to quality education at all levels and shall take appropriate steps to make such education accessible to all (Saligoin, 1997). The State shall establish, maintain and support a complete, adequate and integrated system of education relevant to the needs of people and society. The State shall encourage nonformal, informal, and indigenous learning systems, as well as self-learning, independent and out of school study programs particularly those that respond to community needs. The school shall inculcate patriotism and nationalism, foster love of humanity, respect for human rights, appreciation of the role of national heroes in the historical development of the country, teach the rights and duties of citizenship, strengthen ethical and spiritual values, develop moral character and personal discipline, encourage critical and creative thinking, broaden scientific and technological knowledge, and promote vocational efficiency (Tamano, 1969). Like in Singapore and Malaysia, *madrasah* plays an important role in developing the country in educating the children with religious manners and ethics (Mohd Roslan Mohd Nor, et. al., 2017).

The impact of Islamization through the educational aspect can be proved through the existence of *madrasah* (Islamic school), implementation of ALIVE program in every public school throughout the country. There are also, changing of national public holiday which involves Islamic holidays. Next, an equal basic education to the Muslim society as stated in Article XIV, Section 1, job opportunity for Muslims scholars and so on.

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