

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Various legal documents such as the 1987 Constitution and Education Act of 1982 affirm the Philippine government commitment to provide quality education regardless of class, ethnicity, gender, and religion. In 2000, the Philippines together with 163 governments in the world reaffirmed this commitment by supporting the Education For All (EFA) agenda. Despite these global and national commitments, the Philippines has not fully accomplished the task of providing access to quality education. Aside from the poor, other groups in society fail to receive quality and relevant education from the state. These groups include the members of the Indigenous Peoples (IPs) with around 1.19 million learners enrolled in public schools and the offspring of Muslim Filipinos. The IPs most of them still reside in their respective indigenous communities still struggle to have a culturally-appropriate and responsive curriculum. The closest thing the Department of Education (DepEd) has come up with was the Indigenous Peoples Education Curriculum Framework released in 2015. The framework from the words of the Department of Education “aims to provide guidance to schools and other education programs as they engage with indigenous communities in contextualizing the K to 12 Curriculum based on their respective educational and social contexts”. (DepEd Order No.62, s.2011)

The Muslim Filipinos who comprised 5 % of the Philippines’ total population is similarly a minority group. (McKenna, 1998; Buendia, 2005) Most of them are based on the island of Mindanao and in major cities they migrated into in the past decades. Aside from their small number, their marginalization comes from the religion or in a broader context, the culture they

embraced 500 years ago, one that is different from what the majority inherited from the Philippines' Spanish colonizers. Stark argues that political frictions and economic deprivation are not immediate results of domination policy carry out by the majority, instead they arise from the cultural differences and conflicting "imagined communities" which were usually never considered. (Stark, 2003) The "otherness" of Muslim Filipinos in the eyes of Western colonizers during colonization and up to this day in the eyes of their Christian Filipino brethren has brought huge impact on Christian-Muslim relations in the country. Ruled by the majority Christian Filipinos since independence, the Muslim Filipinos had suffered massive marginalization under their leadership in the form of land takeover, administrative oversight, and cultural prejudices. (Tuazon, 2008) All these decades-long marginalization led to the formation of Muslim Filipino armed secessionist groups such as Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF) and Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF). (Stark, 2003; Che Man, 1987)

In 1996, with the hope of ending decades-long armed conflict, the government of the Philippines signed a peace agreement with Muslim secessionist groups headed by the MNLF. The agreement, though intended to bring peace and development in Mindanao also underscored the important role of education in achieving such goals, specifically highlighting the role of education that not only teaches the usual secular lessons but one that also keeps alive Islamic ideals, aspirations, and values. As the schools, whether public, private, or special is the propagating conduit of values of the people, the agreement likewise ensures the autonomy of this regional education system. This assurance testifies to the national government's recognition of this kind of education as a vital component of the Philippine education system. (1996 Peace Agreement)

The kind of education that propagates Islamic ideals, aspirations, and values is found in *Madrasah*, the school for the study of Islamic religion and thought especially of the Qur'an. Its beginnings can be traced back to the Islamization of the island of Sulu in southern Philippines in the late 13th century. Back then madrasah-like school known as *maktab* taught kids reading and reciting the Qur'an. (Majul, 2010; McKenna 2009; Abubakar, 2011) Maktab later evolved into madrasah characterized by a more formal structure teaching Theology, Arabic language, Jurisprudence, and History. Modern-day madrasah eventually offered elementary, secondary and collegiate levels.

Unlike DepEd recognized schools, most *madaris* (plural form of madrasah) are run independently and voluntarily by a family or organization. Since they are not under the Dep Ed, there is no standardized curriculum. Moreover, in most cases, education is given for free as a form of service to the locality. (Abu Bakar, 2011) Despite the “informalities”, madrasah has a special place in Islamic communities. Same with the secular view towards schools, madrasah is both an institution of learning and a symbol of Islamic faith. (Daguino, 2004)

Despite the significant role of madrasah education in the lives of Muslim Filipinos, it failed to receive significant attention from both the national and local governments in the Philippines although various legal backings have been given to it by the past governments. Many studies show the lamentable conditions of the madaris and the inability of their students to meet the competencies prescribed in mainstream educational system. As these madaris have limited funds and rely only on private donations and support, they often have no adequate learning

materials and are sometimes housed in dilapidated classrooms that enormously affect the quality of education offered. (Lacar et al., 1986) Traditionally, madrasah education in the country has no standardized curriculum but always, the study of Arabic language and Islamic Studies are emphasized. As learners schooled in madaris do not possess the same competences as those from traditional school system, this adds up to the marginalization of Muslims in the workforce and society. The same holds true not only to graduates of Philippine madaris but to graduates of madrasah education in other parts of Southeast Asia as well.

The madaris in Singapore used to be reputable in the region confronted similar issues regarding their relevance in a country with a highly competitive knowledge-based economy. The pressure to make its curricular offerings relevant to the needs of the times mounted in 2000, the year Compulsory Education was legislated. The law obliges every Singaporean learner to spend at least six years (Primary 1- Primary 6) in national schools. An act aimed to solidify learners' content knowledge and inculcate a sense of Singaporean identity. (Abu Bakar, 2009) The same issues on quality and relevance hit Thailand madaris as well. Known in the country as *pondok*, authorities and other education stockholders fear that the students do not get the kind of education necessary to pursue college education and enter the competitive job market. Worries such as these are not unfounded since national test scores reveal that madrasah students trail behind the national average. (Bush, 2008)

In the Philippines, one laudable effort made by the government to remedy issues of quality and relevance of the madaris was the issuance of the Department of Education Order No. 51, series of 2004 or the Standard Curriculum for Elementary Public Schools and Private

Madaris. This DepEd document shows the most recent national government's effort to affirm the crucial role of Islamic education in the formation of Muslim Filipino identity. The curriculum aims to do the following:

- Establish a smooth transfer of students from public to private madrasah or vice versa;
- Unify the long history of dichotomy among Muslims;
- Promote the Filipino national identity and at the same time preserve the Muslims' cultural heritage.

The first aim “establish a smooth transfer of students from public to private madrasah or vice versa” comes from the realities confronting madaris in the Philippines. First, the absence of common curriculum among madrasah schools, second, the madaris inability to produce competent learners who can meet the demands of a changing society, and lastly, the absence of Arabic language and Islamic Studies in public schools across the country where considerable number of Muslims are enrolled.

To address this, the said DepEd Order mainstreamed madrasah education in public elementary school system through the implementation of the Arabic Language and Islamic and Values Education or ALIVE. As one of the most important provisions of the Department Order No. 51, the order institutionalized the conduct of Islamic education in public elementary schools with at least 15 Muslim learners. This, made access to basic Islamic education for Muslim children possible. Meanwhile, in private madaris end, the DepEd Order mandates the inclusion of English, Science and Health, Math, Filipino, and MAKABAYAN (the other name for Social Studies) subjects to the current offering of madrasah institutions. They are also directed to obtain government recognition and accreditation to ensure their

school's competence and the quality of their graduates. In return, the government will give the accredited madaris financial subsidy, a move that will benefit both the school and learners.

The absence of Arabic language and Islamic Studies in public schools has been a major concern for many Muslim Filipinos whose children are enrolled in state-run public schools. Known for its secular mandate, public elementary schools offer the usual subjects focused on Filipino (in the school context, the study of Filipino language and Philippine Literature), English, Science, Math, and Social Studies. These subjects, albeit necessary are found to be lacking as far as Muslim Filipinos' perspective is concerned. Though Muslim parents hope their children to have employable skills, they also see the necessity of religious knowledge in their children. In order to have both, many parents whose children attend regular schools send their kids to madrasah classes on weekend. A set up unhealthy for young learners who end up preoccupied all days of the week without much of recreation or leisure time. (Abu Bakar, 2011) Through this curriculum, the DepEd hopes to offer a common curriculum for private madrasah so that their graduates can have the necessary competencies required to survive the real world and offers a form of Islamic education for Muslim children enrolled in public schools who at some point would wish to transfer to private-run madrasah.

In 2011, the Standard Madrasah Curriculum underwent a thorough review with the help of Southeast Asian Ministers of Education Organization Innotech (SEAMEO), Muslim experts in Arabic Language and Islamic Studies, and curriculum experts from the Department of

Education. The review brought about the Refined Elementary Madrasah Curriculum (REMC) for Public Schools, the curricular basis of ALIVE.

The last two aims: unify the long history of dichotomy among Muslims and promote the Filipino national identity and at the same time preserve the Muslims' cultural heritage are of special interest to Religious Education, Citizenship Education, and Social Studies experts/teachers/enthusiasts for the last two aims seemingly are not part of Religious Education but fall under Citizenship Education.

A relatively new discourse, the complementary relationship of Religious Education and Citizenship Education has been studied in many parts of the globe but has not yet yielded a sophisticated relational theoretical framework. Studies conducted in Europe and Southeast Asia are available although discussion on theoretical grounding is still few and needs to be explored further. In spite of this limitation, scholars who wrote on the subject are convinced that Religious Education and Citizenship Education need not contradict each other but can even work complementarily towards developing active and responsible citizenry.

The Philippine government armed only with the hope to optimize the said complementary relationship, implemented the Standard Curriculum for Elementary Public Schools and Private Madaris in 2005. This author argues that the said curriculum if the notion of ideal curriculum is concerned is not solely a religious education curriculum but intends to integrate citizenship education. But since there is still limitation in the theoretical framework, and instructional system, this author also argues that the curriculum is an experiment on the part of the Philippine

government thru the DepEd to utilize religious education in imparting citizenship education acceptable for Muslim Filipinos. As this is an experiment, it is interesting to find out where has this experiment gone to? Is it a success or a disappointment?

a. Statement of the Problem

About 56.5 % of Muslim Filipinos live in the Autonomous Region of Muslim Mindanao (ARMM), 39.3% are in other Mindanao regions while 1.5% and 2.7% are in Metro Manila and other parts of the country respectively (Ogena, 2012). But due to peace and order and poverty issues on the island, many had migrated to other provinces across the country. In

Metro Manila alone, assumed by many to be a place of greener pasture, there are about 120,000 Muslim Filipinos trying to make a living. (Kinneman, 2008) Some of these are school children who had no choice but to go to regular schools. The need of these children to have even the basic kind of Islamic education is the reason for the inclusion of ALIVE in public schools.

Started in School Year 2005-2006, the teaching of Arabic Language and Islamic Values Education (ALIVE) in public elementary schools has been going on for 14 years now with more than 1,000 participating elementary schools all over the country as of 2014. (Atkins et al., 2014) A decade since it was first implemented, only a handful of academic studies have been conducted on the program. With the absence of thorough studies about ALIVE, the program cannot be explained and understood by concerned stakeholders who are not only confined to Muslim Filipino communities and DepEd but which include peace advocates, educators, policy-makers, religious groups, and foreign donors. As fourteen years of implementation is more than enough to institutionalize the program, the author sees now as the most opportune time to evaluate the said program.

Program evaluation as some academics and experts pointed out is an applied research. Unlike other researches, program evaluation does not involve lofty intellectual exercises and neither attempt to form theories nor to seriously add up to the body of social science knowledge. Instead, program evaluation primarily seeks solution to practical problems which can be most beneficial for the service recipients. Evaluation involves “a systematic collection of information about the activities, characteristics and outcomes of a program”. It is conducted to aid those who make administrative decisions concerning the program and to inform other stakeholders.

In the Philippines as with most countries in the world, education services are one of the most sought after social services of the people due to its pivotal role in total human development. Among Muslim rebels in Mindanao who decided to return to the folds of the law, the frequent request is the reconstruction and rehabilitation of the damaged madaris. (Majul, 1986) Hence, the evaluation of educational services such as instruction, training, and program is necessary. Evaluation is very important for it finds out if the objectives of the program are met, identifies problems encountered in its implementation, and offers recommendations or interventions to improve the program. (Memon, 1989) Program can be defined as an “organized collection of activities designed to reach certain objectives”. Here, organized collection refers to “a series of planned actions that are designed to solve some problems”. In other words program is “intervention or services that are expected to have some kind of impact upon the program participants. In the case of this dissertation study, the program is the Arabic Language and Islamic Values Education (ALIVE) being conducted in selected public elementary schools.

Meanwhile, the main intervention or service the program delivers is the teaching of the Arabic language and Islamic values to pupils. As teaching is the main intervention or service that makes this program, the study focuses on instructional system and learning milieu from which the ALIVE program operates. The former consists of teachers, teacher quality, and instructional materials while the latter, consists of the community and the support it provides to the program.

This study will answer the following questions:

1. Why did the Philippine government decide to implement Arabic Language and Islamic Values Education? How does the Philippines' historical, political, and social context affect the birth and implementation of Arabic Language and Islamic Values Education (ALIVE) program?
2. Does the ALIVE being conducted in the 5 participating schools meet the standards of quality Islamic education in terms of the following:
 - a. instructional materials used
 - b. lessons in the program
 - c. teacher quality
3. In what ways the institutional support given to ALIVE in terms of funding/budget allocation, facilities, and school acceptance affect its success or failure in the schools?
4. How do the ALIVE Asatidz face the challenges being confronted by the program in terms of implementation?
5. What is the possible evaluation model that can be used for ALIVE?

b. Objectives of the Study

Recent studies on the implementation of the Arabic Language and Islamic Values Education (ALIVE) is few. Through this study, the author hopes to achieve the following:

1. Explain how the Philippines' historical, political, and social context influence the birth and implementation of Arabic Language and Islamic Values Education (ALIVE) program;

2. Document the conduct of ALIVE in five (5) elementary schools in the cities of Baguio, Manila, and Sta. Rosa;
3. Provide illuminative evaluation of ALIVE focusing on its instructional system and learning milieu (school support);
4. Cite recommendations that can improve the implementation of the program; and
5. Provide an illuminative evaluation-based model for evaluating ALIVE.

c. Significance of the Study

The Arabic Language and Islamic Values Education (ALIVE) program in itself is a very important undertaking not only on the part of Muslim Filipinos but most especially on the part of the Philippine government. As a people who adhere to a belief system with a distinct notion about knowledge and its importance, the presence of ALIVE in the public school system is a clear manifestation that the Philippine government recognizes Islamic conception of education, a kind of education that is tied not only to the livelihood but also to the everyday life of people on earth and to the life after. The inclusion of the ALIVE as a special curriculum for Muslim Filipinos makes both secular and religious knowledge accessible to them, enabling them to fulfill an important teaching of Prophet Muhammad that every Muslim must attain knowledge. (Juma, no date)

On the part of the government, evaluation of ALIVE is significant because the program has aims that are crucial to the role of the state as a provider of relevant social services and as the main social institution (through schools) that shape social identity of the people. Looking at the aims of ALIVE, the curriculum/program “aims to promote or impart national identity” to Muslim Filipinos, a mammoth task in the world where education has been proven to be not the only solution for social ills but nevertheless views as such by the government.

If ALIVE has this enormous task on hand, evaluation of the program is deemed crucial in ensuring that this task is accomplished efficiently and effectively. To date there is a limited number of program evaluation focused on ALIVE published both in the Philippines and abroad. Though it is now a 14 year old program, there is still a limited number of researches that address the implementation of the program. Through this study, the Department of Education, administrators, policy-makers, Muslim Filipinos, and other stakeholders can be informed about the ways ALIVE is implemented in different schools and cities. Knowing about the program implementation informs them if the objectives of the program are accomplished especially in the case of ALIVE which is not only a simple educational program but one that inherently involves socio-political aspects of Christian and Muslim relations. A thorough study of ALIVE will also identify the strengths and weaknesses of the program. Moreover, although, education alone can never be a panacea for the ills of the past, education can play an important role in aggravating or easing social conflicts. Therefore, a close study of the role of educational policy and its relationship to ethno-religious conflict is pertinent to knowing and reacting to them. (Milligan, 2005)

The ALIVE program caters to the Muslim Filipino population, a minority group in the Philippines with a long documented history of marginalization and in many instances of relative deprivation. Islam arrived in the Philippines in 14th century. (Majul, 2010) Its founding made the island of Sulu a principal trading port and the first state in the country to have a centralized political administration reflective of its advanced status as a geopolitical entity in the south of the archipelago. In the 16th century, the era of intense Spanish colonization in the Philippines and Latin America, the Spanish rulers tried to overrule the Muslim Filipinos both by peaceful

and violent means. Christian Filipinos were sent to Mindanao to assist in the “civilizing” and assimilation efforts of the Spanish colonizers but failed in epic proportions. Christian Filipinos instead of being brothers to Muslim Filipinos had imbibed their European masters’ bigotry of Islam. A phenomenon not unusual for newly independent territories where after the disappearance of direct foreign domination experienced new notions about independence and development but at the same time still operates within old internal structures. One of the internal old structures that have been maintained is the dichotomous characters and contradicting types of relations then present in colonial territory in the case of the Philippines, the dichotomized relations of Muslims and Christians. This phenomenon seminally expounded by Casanova as internal colonialism manifests in the oppression of some sectors over others. The oppression is viewed by the aggravated sectors as unendurable and worst than the acts of the previous colonizers. (Casanova, 1965) The American rule during the 20th century brought little changes in government policies towards Muslim Filipinos. Although the Americans launched a policy of attraction in 1913-1935 by constructing development projects and establishing institutions to win the hearts of the members of the sultanate, the “honeymoon” ended with the establishment of the Commonwealth government ran mostly by Christian Filipinos. The previous recognition of the sultanate and Muslim Filipinos’ relative autonomy to manage their affairs were stopped altogether (Stark, 2003).

Also in 1935, through the Quirino-Recto Colonization Act, Mindanao was legally opened for large-scale migration from non-Mindanao residents. The massive migration aimed to reverse the dominance of Muslim population in Mindanao. In 1936, a presidential decree declared all Muslim ancestral lands as public property thus stripping the Muslim Filipinos of their most important material possession. (Stark, 2003) This issue would later drive secessionist

aspirations on the island culminating into five decade-long armed conflict between the *Moros* (another term for Muslim Filipinos) and the Philippine government.

Following Gurr's approach to the study of political violence, his relative deprivation theory posits that collective political violence stems from a social psychological variable that comes in the form of relative deprivation. For Gurr, relative deprivation is the "perceived discrepancy between people's value expectations and their value capabilities. In the case of the Muslim Filipinos vis-à-vis the Philippine government, they have in mind "goods and conditions of life they want and feel they deserve". But unfortunately, these ideals are different from goods and conditions of life they possessed now. Adds to the discrepancy is the belief that they are supposed to have the ability to obtain them had equal opportunity been granted to them. (Gonzales-Intal, 1991)

A plethora of studies say that education is a huge part of peace building in Mindanao. In a study conducted by Australian Agency for International Development (AusAID), next to health services, education is the most desired government service people of the Autonomous Region of Muslim Mindanao (ARMM) wish to have. Right now, education is in a dismal state so severe that only one in ten students complete secondary education, a result of long history of meager funding from the central government coupled with corrupt and poor management on the part of local governments. (Deinla, 2017) The deprivation in terms of education experienced by the Muslim Filipinos in Mindanao still continues that is why the creation of ALIVE to meet to the needs of Muslim Filipinos enrolled in public schools across the Philippines is in a way an atonement of the government shortcoming.

The proper implementation of ALIVE is a serious challenge for the government. Having failed in providing quality and relevant education for Muslim Filipinos in Mindanao, does the long history of neglect and mismanagement also happening to ALIVE now? This question can only be answered by conducting a formal evaluation of the said program. Another pressing concern entrenched in the importance of evaluating ALIVE is the concept of inclusive education. In an official statement released on July 20, 2016, the Department of Education states that Madrasah Education Program (the ALIVE program in elementary schools) is one program that “focuses on the special needs of learners”. Through this, a “comprehensive and relevant educational opportunities within the context of their cultures, customs, traditions and interests” are afforded to the Muslim learners. The statement also claims that this program “further enhances the education system for the Muslim Filipino

learners and ensures that they will have access to quality education that is also in line with the Muslim cultural heritage”. If this is the case, the ALIVE program becomes a vital step towards inclusive education that necessitates serious attention from the field of evaluation study. (Department of Education website)

Since ALIVE is born out of highly politicized circumstances, the manner it should be evaluated must also consider the unique features of the program. The author agrees with others that the school’s culture or contexts affect evaluation and should therefore be considered alongside the program itself, its setting, and the norms of the audiences, decisionmakers, and other stakeholders. (Fitzpatrick, 2012) As this illuminative study inherently does not measure the efficiency nor the effectiveness of the program but illuminates ALIVE conduct in the public

schools, this study attempts to enumerate and explain relevant contexts that can be considered in formulating an ALIVE evaluation model.

