

# Islamic Education and the Development of Madrasah Schools in the Philippines

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## Abstract

This study aims to explore Islamic education in the Philippines, from the history, developments and its current situations. This paper focuses on Islamic education in the Philippines, with its management and curriculum. Content analysis was used as a study approach in this article by the researcher. Document analysis were collected and analyzed from related studies such as articles, journals and published research. Based on these studies, the current situation has been evaluated. The findings of the research will be related to the discussions about the role of Islamic education in formation and preservation of Muslim identity in Christian-majority countries. The findings will also inform ongoing madrasa educational development and reform, their status in the Philippines, and their curriculum. According to the findings, as with other Muslim minority communities exposed to Western colonial rule, the Islamic education were exposed in political maneuvering by a series of colonial and postcolonial nations. Islamic education in Philippines has been a story about struggle against colonial and post-colonial attempts to incorporate Muslims into a western idea of modernity. Understanding the significance and importance of Islamic education in Philippines is a necessary component of delivering a holistic and integrated system of education that Muslims in the Philippines require in order to effectively perform the duty that Islam has assigned to them.

**Keywords:** Religious Education, Islamic Education, Philippines, Muslim Filipino, Bangsamoro

# Filipinler’de İslami Eğitim ve Medrese Okullarının Gelişimi

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## Özet

Bu çalışma, Filipinler’deki İslami eğitimin tarihini, gelişmelerini ve mevcut durumunu incelemeyi amaçlamaktadır. Filipinler’de İslami eğitimin yönetimi ve müfredatı bu çalışmanın odak noktasıdır. Bu çalışmada araştırmacı tarafından bir yaklaşım olarak içerik analizi kullanılmıştır. Belge-Doküman analizi, makaleler, dergiler ve yayınlanmış araştırmalar gibi ilgili çalışmalardan toplanmış ve analiz edilmiştir (referans alınarak derlenmiştir.). Bu çalışmalardan (referanslardan) yola çıkılarak mevcut durum değerlendirilmiştir. Araştırmanın bulguları, Hristiyan çoğunluklu ülkelerde Müslüman kimliğinin oluşumunda ve korunmasında İslami eğitimin rolüne ilişkin tartışmalarla ilişkilendirilecektir. Bulgular ayrıca Filipinler’deki devam eden medrese eğitiminin gelişimi, reformu ve eğitim içeriği hakkında bilgi verecektir. Bulgulara göre, Batı sömürge yönetimine maruz kalan diğer Müslüman azınlık topluluklarında olduğu gibi, İslami eğitim, bir dizi sömürge ve sömürge sonrası ulus tarafından siyasi manevralara maruz kalmıştır. Filipinler’de İslami eğitim, Müslümanları batı zihniyetine entegre etmeye yönelik sömürgeci ve sömürge sonrası girişimlere karşı direnişin bir anlatısı olmuştur. Filipinler’de İslami eğitimin önemini anlamak, Filipinler’deki Müslümanların dini mesuliyetlerini etkin bir şekilde yerine getirmek için ihtiyaç duydukları bütünsel ve entegre bir eğitim sistemi sunmanın gerekli bir bileşendir.

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** Din Eğitimi, İslami Eğitim, Filipinler, Müslüman Filipinli, Bangsamoro

## **INTRODUCTION**

Islamic education is important for Muslims overall, but it is especially vital for Muslims who live as a minority in non-Muslim majority countries. Islamic education in these non-Muslim majority settings not only provides Muslims with the valuable information about their religion, but it also helps forming and maintaining their Muslim identity. The Islamic education can help Muslim people in non-Muslim nation survive in a society that is both materially and spiritually just, tranquil, successful, and peaceful. Everyone has the right to pursue knowledge and scientific investigation, regardless of background, gender identity, creed, or religion. It fosters growth in the areas of science, religion, creativity, intellect and language, and it combines all of these qualities into a comprehensive educational system that strives for excellence and goodness. The ultimate objective is to achieve total devotion to God as the Creator at the level of the individual, the community, and humanity as a whole. As the Philippines is predominantly Catholic Christian country, it is generally considered that one of the government's primary concerns right now is to satisfy the crucial needs of Muslim Filipinos for Islamic education that accurately reflects their ambitions, cultures, identities, and interests in the Muslim Filipino community. The article discussed Islamic education in the Philippines where Muslims live as a minority. In the Philippines there are four different kinds of madaris (plural for madrasah) education. These include traditional madaris, integrated madaris, tahdiriyyah, and Arabic Language and Islamic Values Education (ALIVE). Nevertheless, in addition to the four Islamic education institutions already mentioned, there are other types of institutions that provide Islamic education, such as Toril, a boarding school that focuses on memorizing, reciting, and understanding the Qur'an. There are also several universities-in the Philippines that-offers higher education-in Islamic studies degrees under social sciences department.

The ALIVE (Arabic Language and Islamic Values Education) is a program overseen by Department of Education and is created for Filipino Muslim students, it is implemented in Integrated madaris and all public schools in the entire Philippines, with at least fifteen Muslim students in one classroom. This initiative serves as a manual for organizing, instructing, and evaluating Islamic Studies in public primary schools and private Madaris (Solaiman S, 2017: 39). Arabic languages are taught three times a week for 40 minutes, while Islamic Values Education is taught twice a week for 40 minutes. Which means, Arabic language and Islamic values is given 3 hours and 20 minutes per week<sup>1</sup>. In contrast, to the RBEC (Refined Basic Education Curriculum) subjects<sup>2</sup>, such as Mathematics, English, and Science, require 50 minutes of class time every day. Because these areas are discussed in greater depth than those covered in the ALIVE program. The Tahdiriyyah is a preschool program, overseen by BARMM government which serves Moro children from aged 5 and younger, it concentrates on the traditional madaris and Integrated madaris in particular to the Bangsamoro region.

The scope of the article is the history and the contemporary situation of Islamic education in the Philippines. The focuses will be in Islamic education in traditional madaris and the integrated madaris education institutions in the Philippines. The traditional madaris are those that are not governed or overseen by the government; integrated madaris are those that have a government permit. The findings will be relevant for the discussions on madrasah education as well as the role of Islamic education in forming and maintaining Muslim identity in non-Muslim settings.

In this research, the term "Traditional Madrasah" is referring to a particular kind of unsupervised madrasah by the government, however, permitted to fend for itself. It is usually established by private persons or groups to offer Islamic instruction to the youth of the Muslim community. They adhere to a variety of standards for the implementation of the pedagogy, curriculum and assessment. These different standards are frequently connected to where the madrasah teachers have completed their undergraduate Islamic religious education. Furthermore, traditional madrasah is also operated differently throughout Southeast Asia, such as Indonesia, Malaysia and Brunei, although there are some commonalities in terms of teacher qualifications and curriculum content. The focuses of this institution are more on spiritual aspects. "Integrated Madaris" here is refers to Islamic schools that accredited and recognized by Department of Education in the Philippines. Since it is governed by the government, it gives its graduates a lot of opportunities.

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<sup>1</sup> Policy Guidelines on Madrasah Education in the K to 12 Basic Education Program - TeacherPH

<sup>2</sup> [Grade 1 to 10 Subjects | Department of Education \(deped.gov.ph\)](https://www.deped.gov.ph/grade-1-to-10-subjects/)

This topic was chosen primarily, because in the debate about how to strengthen and advance Islamic education for the current Bangsamoro administration, this research with its two distinct concentrations—traditional madaris and integrated madaris—is a very timely topic in examining widely factors. It is important to put an extra effort to understand the differences between the traditional madaris and integrated madaris systems. This research, therefore, explains the reasons behind this two institutions difference, in terms of curricula, system, and state, and why the traditional still remain traditional. Many Muslim parents still hope that their children will receive an Islamic education that is representative of their culture and customs, along with the skills that will guarantee that Islamic teachings and identity are upheld and strengthened.

This is a qualitative, literature-based study. Official documents and various publication are gathered and content-analyzed to present history and contemporary Islamic education in the Philippines. After this introduction, the article briefly presents the history of Islam in the Philippines, followed by the history of Islamic education. Then Islamic education in the contemporary Philippines explored: traditional madaris (plural of madrasah), which are private Islamic schools that operate outside the Philippine educational system; integrated madaris, which are also private Islamic schools but accredited by the government. The importance of Islamic education to Muslims in the Philippines and current problems are also discussed.

### **Islam in the Philippines**

The advent of Islam in the Philippines can be traced back to the 14th century, when Arab traders passing through Indonesia and Malaysia traded with the locals. Sulu was the Philippines trading hub, connecting Indonesia, China and Malaysia at that time. It was reported that the people of the Philippines welcomed Islam and it became the majority religion in the Philippines until the invasion of the Spanish colonialists in 1521 AD (Skowronek, 1998:47). Currently, Philippines is predominantly Catholic country because of four centuries occupation, colonization and Christianization of Spaniards (Gutiérrez, 2007:709; see also Bonifacio, 2018:41; Pangalangan, 2010:539) According to the latest census of Philippines Statistics Authority (PSA), Muslims in the Philippines nowadays is account for about 5% of the total population (census of the Philippine, 2021)<sup>3</sup>, which shows that policies of the colonialists led to a dramatic shift in the country's religious composition.

The Muslims of the Philippines has been known as Moros or Bangsamoro (literally, “Moro Nation” (Setiawan, 2020:3). The Moro struggle began with the Spanish occupation, which lasted from 1565 to 1898 (Banlaoi, 2009:168-171), and was followed by the American occupation. As a result of the Peace Treaty signed by Spain and the United States (USA) in 1898, the whole of the Philippines came under American administration and continued until 1946, when the independence of the Philippines was gained (Gowing, 2021:48-55). The American rule aimed to integrate the Moro Muslims and their lands into a single Philippine statehood, although the Americans recognized that the Moro people were culturally and religiously different from the Catholic Christian majority of the Philippines (Buendia, 2006:1-2).

According to some historians, this policy of integration amounted to illegal annexation of the Moros and their territories (Lingga, 2004:7-8). The Moros, on the other hand, have gradually accepted this situation, welcoming indigenous people and Christian settlers from northern territories to Moro lands in the southern part of the Philippines. The main problem after the independence, however, has been the government and administrative policy, which has resulted in Moros being marginalized. When the Jabidah massacre occurred on March 18, 1968, it was a crucial flashpoint that inflamed the Moro struggle against the Philippine government (Curaming, 2017:78-87).

From the 1970s onwards, the Moro people's demand for self-determination has increased, as they experienced othering and marginalization. The Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF) was founded in 1972 by Moro revolutionary politician Nur Misuari, with the goal of achieving full independence for the Moros. Salamat Hashim, a former vice chairman of the MNLF, created the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) in 1977. The MILF, too, aimed at achieving full independence through armed revolution, but with an Islamic approach and the creation of an Islamic society, as opposed to the MNLF's secular orientation (Kapahi & Tañada, 2018:3-7).

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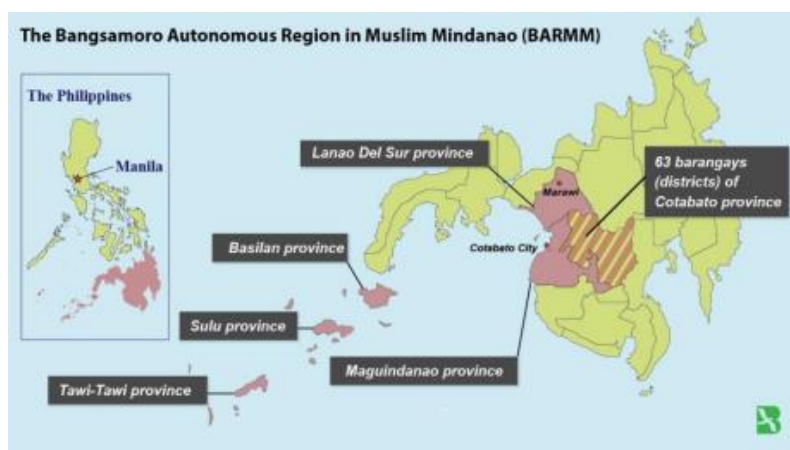
<sup>3</sup> Philippine Statistics Authority | Republic of the Philippines (psa.gov.ph)

After the years of conflict and peace talks, on July 26, 2018, “the Organic Law for the Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao” (also known as the Bangsamoro Organic Law) was enacted by the President Duterte’s administration with the MILF to establish the Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (BARMM)<sup>4</sup>.

As mentioned above, the term “Bangsamoro” means “Moro Nation” which refers to all of Mindanao's Filipino Muslim ethnolinguistic communities. The Bangsamoro people or the Moros are divided into thirteen ethnolinguistic groups, which means that they have a wide range of cultural and linguistic backgrounds, but because of the shared history which is marked by the resistance towards foreign colonial powers, and then the Philippine governments, they created a collective identity distinct from the Filipinos (Kapahi & Tañada, 2018:1-2) and they have a strong Islamic identity.

The Image 1 shows the area under the BARMM region. According to the 2020 Census, the population of the BARMM is about 5 million. Given that the population of the Philippines is about 110 million, the population of the BARMM account for less than 5% of the population<sup>5</sup>, but this does not include the Moros living outside the BARMM and “the Balik Islam”. The Moros have traditionally lived in Mindanao Island and adjacent islands. Currently, the BARMM includes only some parts of Mindanao Island: Lanao Del Sur, Maguindanao, and Cotabato City, plus the adjacent islands of Basilan, Sulu and Tawi-Tawi (Sakili, 2012:7-8).

**Image 1. The Map of the Philippines and BARMM location**



Source: [Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao • BARMM Official Website](https://www.barmm.gov.ph/)

In the Philippines, there are Muslims who do not live in Bangsamoro region, or they are not part of the Moro people. Moreover, this is also a trend known as the “Balik Islam”, which is a loose agglomeration of former Christians in the Philippines who think that the Philippines was a Muslim country prior to Western colonization and that all Filipinos must “revert” to their native faith (Borer et al., 2009:191-192). The Balik-Islam (Return to Islam) reverts have no historical or ethnic connections to the Bangsamoro, and they are a distinct group of Muslims (Acac, 2020: 4). It is reported that there are about 200,000 Muslim converts (Adiong, 2008: 3).

### **History of Islamic Education in the Philippines**

In the late 13th or early 14th century, Islamic education emerged in the southern Philippines along with Islam, through Arab missionaries. It extended to Mindanao's southern islands and the Sulu Archipelago over the next two centuries (Guleng et al., 2017:2). Prior to the colonial period, the madrasah system is locally known as “Pandita”. From that time until now, volunteerism has been the basis of these madrasah system (Abu Bakar, 2011:76). The Pandita schools were mostly institutionalized in Mindanao and Sulu. “Pandita”, is Sanskrit term meaning “learned man” and similar to Arabic “alim”, a term applied to those who had distinguished themselves by attaining greater knowledge of Islam, regardless of social background (Milligan, 2017:781). The teachers at these schools are referred to by a various name,

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.officialgazette.gov.ph/downloads/2018/07jul/20180727-RA-11054-RRD.pdf>

<sup>5</sup> <https://psa.gov.ph/population-and-housing/node/166426>

including pandita, guro, khatib,-imam, or-Bilal (Institute of Autonomy and Governance: 34). But according to Lantong (2018) the usual term used to refer to teachers of this type of school was “guru” a Sanskrit word, which means “teacher”.

In Pandita school, learning started in small tutorial sessions held at the mosque or at the Pandita's place (Milligan, 2017:781-795). Students lived with or visited the teacher on a regular basis, with the assistance of more wealthy Moro families who wished their children to be taught about Islamic beliefs. It taught students passages from the Qur'an, Arabic writing, and a little arithmetic (Lantong, 2018:68) . When Americans invaded the Philippines in 1898, they disbanded the Pandita system and replaced it with a western secular school. They offered a curriculum that was designed to colonize, westernize, and secularize Muslims (Lantong, 2018:68). It encompassed the teaching of democratic values, the training of functioning citizens, and the people's rights and obligations. The medium of instruction was English. The Americans compelled every child under the age of seven to enroll in school and provided them with free school supplies (Lantong, 2018:63). These policies have been maintained by the Philippine governments (Milligan, 2008: 369-370). This partly led to a rift in Muslim population between those who have received Western education and those who have received traditional education, as in other Muslim societies. Besides this, a new type of modern Muslim educational institution, namely madrasa emerged among the Moro Muslims in the Philippines during the American rule. The madrasa schools provided not only religious education but also various science and social subjects to their students, and they were mainly opened and financially supported by the wealthy Muslim people and Islamic associations. After independence, the number of madrasa schools with the levels of primary, secondary and higher education increased gradually in the Philippines by attracting some foreign Muslim teachers coming from various Muslim countries (Göksoy, 1996: 87-88)

In the early 1950s, an Indian Muslim scholar, Maulana Abdul Aleem Siddique Al-Qaderi, made a visit to Manila. Among the impacts of this visit was the Islamic reawakening of some prominent Muslim families and leaders. Some of the economically well-off Muslim families revived the Pandita system of education, it was then transformed into a madrasah, a community-based operated Islamic school, with a concentration on the Islam, Qur'an, and moral instruction. To run this madrasah, the managements invited foreign Muslim scholars as teachers and professors (Lantong, 2018:68-69). From that onwards, there had been the establishment of several major madaris in the Philippines.

### **Islamic Education in Contemporary Philippines**

There have always been Islamic education in the Philippines, since the late 13th and early 14th century (Guleng et al., 2017:2). However, the educational quality in Islamic education institutions has been parochial and relatively weak (Lantong, 2018:68), due to colonialism and the policies of the Philippine governments. Nevertheless, in recent decades, there have been attempts to remedy the situation. In fact, Islamic education has also been one of the important topics discussed in the peace talks between Moros and the Philippine governments. Currently, both the Constitution and the Bangsamoro Organic Law have articles which allow and regulate Islamic education in the Philippines.

The 1987 Constitution reads that:

“The State recognizes and promotes the rights of indigenous cultural communities within the framework of national unity and development” (Article no. 2, section 22)

“The state shall encourage non-formal, informal, and indigenous learning systems, as well as self-learning, independent, and out-of-school study programs particularly those that respond to community needs” (Article no. 14, section 2 (4))

“Further, 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 their rights in the formulation of national plans and policies” (Article no. 14 section 17).

All these articles guarantee, among others, Islamic education, at least in theory. Yet the Constitution also states that “no public money or property shall be appropriate, indirectly or directly, by means of support in any sect or church” (Article 6, section 29 (2)), declaring the separation of church and government. The implication of this article is that government funds cannot be used for religious purposes of any kind, whether Islamic or other religions. Given such a context of government financial assistance, the madrasahs need to be self-reliant (Abu Bakar, 2011:80), and it resulted to thinning development of Islamic education in the Philippines.

However, given the aim of the Department of Education's school administrators to provide quality basic education that is equitably accessible to everyone and to create the foundation for life-long learning and service to the public good (Madjid, 2022:194-198) and with the aim of government to prioritize education, among other things, in order to create nationalism and patriotism, the Department of Education administrators work together with the national government in designing and implementing educational reform initiatives for Muslim pupils, through integrating the madrasa education system, and incorporating Arabic Language and Islamic Values (ALIVE) course subjects into numerous public schools around the country since 2002 (Guleng et al., 2017:2-3). Through these programs, the government recognizes the rights of Muslim Filipino children to legally receive Islamic education in government schools, in line with the national aims of providing quality education to every citizen of the Philippines. Yet, there are still madaris which are not part of this integration, which will be discussed below.

### **Traditional Madrassah Education**

In the Philippines, traditional madrasah is administered and run by a family or organization, unlike Department of Education certified schools. A family, individual, community or organization can own and run a traditional madrasah. According to recent research, almost 60% of traditional madaris are owned by individuals and families, the rest is owned by organizations or belong to the community (Institute of Autonomy and Governance: 56). However, the establishment of these madaris have not been for profit, education has usually been provided free of charge as a sort of community service.

According to Abdulkarim & Suud (2020), the number of madaris in the country has been estimated to be in the thousands. Prior to the creation of BARMM, research shows that, a total of 1,850 madaris in ARMM areas account for a total of 83%, while non-ARMM areas account for 17%. Maguindanao has the most, with 643 madaris 34.8%, followed by Lanao del Sur with 444 madaris 24%. Basilan has 112 madaris 11%, and Sulu has 138 madaris 11%, respectively 7.5% from small barangays in the region (Institute of Autonomy and Governance: 107).

Usually, the madaris takes up 2.5 hectares of donated land and builds one of 2-15 classroom-with enough facilities to conduct instruction and learning. Learning environments are provided through traditional instructional methods, and madaris do not spend much in new educational technology that support enhanced learning, mostly due to the lack of funding (Cagape, 2008:10).

Most of the Islamic teachers on these madaris are graduated abroad. Saudi Arabia has a graduation rate of 43.3% (Institute of Autonomy and Governance: 115). These are the common Islamic teachers who teach in traditional madaris. Their credentials from abroad are not credited by the Department of Education in the Philippines. Because these madaris do not follow the Department of Education's official curriculum, and are not integrated madaris.

The main reason why most of the students in traditional madaris continued their study abroad, there is no available madrasah in the Philippines that provide Islamic degree programs in higher level aside from those given by the University of the Philippines, Mindanao State Universities and other State Universities such as Cotabato State University. All these baccalaureate and graduate degrees necessitate qualifications that can only be achieved through education that supervised by the government, as a result, high school graduates of the traditional madaris frequently enroll at foreign Islamic universities for higher studies.

Due to disparities in the educational backgrounds of the founders and advisers, differences in teachers training orientation, lack of communication among madrasah, dialogue between different ethnolinguistic groups, and government neutrality, curricula differed. The curricula focused heavily on Arabic languages and Islamic Sciences, and lacked areas or subjects such as Filipino, technical and vocational training, therefore they used Arabic as a medium of instructions.

Unlike regular school managed by the government, these madaris generally run two days a week, Friday-Saturday or Saturday-Sunday are the most common school days. Since the vast majority of students enrolled in madrasah also attend in government schools, which have classes on weekdays, such as Monday to Friday. As a result, children are totally occupied with schooling every day of the week and have little leisure time, but at the same time it allows them to acquire their religion as well as necessary skills for their social life.

They offer a sequential learning and hierarchically structured instruction that is like formal schooling offered by the government. It takes 16 years to complete the education, with 4-4-4 educational system

consists of four (4) years of Ibtidai (elementary), four (4) years of Mutawassit (intermediate), four (4) years of Thanawi (high school), and four (4) years of Kulliyah (college) (Cagape, 2008:7). It functions similarly to a regular school, with pupils progressing from madrasah ibtida'i (primary school) to madrasah kulliyah (higher level).

However, there is no set of curricula, as they are not under the control of the Department of Education. These madaris have adopted curricula from Arab countries. It's worth mentioning that the madrasah's curriculum generally mirrors that of the country from where its teachers graduated. The majority of the madaris that use international models have professors who are Saudi Arabian graduates. Given this situation, students who studied in Saudi Arabia were able to obtain textbooks and teaching materials while studying abroad, which they then used when they returned to their madrasah in the Philippines or formed their own madrasah (Institute of Autonomy and Governance: 60).

In Table 1 below, the offered subjects of most traditional madaris in the Philippines, which is based on Arab countries curricula, is shown. Children are expected to master the fundamentals of each subject areas beginning in elementary school, and then progressing to the intermediate level, which students are expected to be able to investigate, learn how to perform what they have learned, and practice, the high school is the advanced level, also can be called preparation for higher level.

Kulliyah (College level) usually offers four degrees programs: Tarbiyyah (education), Shariah (Islamic law), Da'wah (Islamic propagation), and Usuluddin (Fundamentals of religion), by following the model of the highest-level religious education in Middle Eastern Arab countries. Among these degrees that offered, 56.4% of madaris offered Tarbiyyah as major, followed by Shari'ah with 43.6%, Da'wah that has 38.5%, and Usuluddin with 12.8% (Institute of Autonomy and Governance: 58). The concentration of these offered courses included all of the subjects taught at the college level.

**Table 1. Traditional Madrasah Curriculum**

<b>ELEMENTARY/ 1-4th grade</b>	<b>INTERMEDIATE/ 5-8th grade</b>	<b>HIGH SCHOOL/ 9-12th grade</b>	<b>COLLEGE/ 13-16th grade</b>
1. Fiqh 2. Tawhid 3. Hisab 4. Qawa'id 5. Qira'a 6. Sirah 7. Hifdul Qur'an 8. Tafsir 9. Hadith 10. Sharf 11. Mutaala'a 12. Imla	1. Fiqh 2. Tawhid 3. Hisab 4. Qawa'id 5. Qira'a 6. Sirah 7. Hifdul Qur'an 8. Tafsir 9. Hadith 10. Mutaala'a 11. Imla 12. Tarih 13. Nu-shuws	1. Usulul Fiqh 2. Tawhid 3. Hisab 4. Qawa'id 5. Qira'a 6. Sirah 7. Hifdul Qur'an 8. Tafsir 9. Hadith 10. Mutaala'a 11. Imla 12. Tarih 13. Farai'd 14. Insa'a 15. Ulumul Qur'an 16. Mustalahul Hadith 17. Balagha	1. Fiqh 2. Usulul Fiqh 3. Mustahul Hadith 4. Ulumul Qur'an 5. Usulul-Tafsir 6. Tafsir 7. Sirah 8. Fara'id 9. Tariq Al-Tahre 10. Aqeedah 11. Qawa'idul Lughah 12. Tarbiyah

**Source:** Mahad Al-Islami Shar'i, Cotabato City Philippines

### **Integrated Madrasah Education**

Aside from the traditional madrasah offering Islamic education, there is also another type of madrasah in the Philippines, that are accredited and recognized by Department of Education in the Philippines. These are called "Integrated Madaris" which are private and Islamic schools that have received government accreditation.

Integration of madrasah schools into the government educational system has actually been started since 1980's and it became a government policy from those years onwards. In 1982, the government took various decisions to integrate the madrasahs into the official education system with the aim to improve and develop the social and educational status of disadvantageous Moro Muslims. As a result of the joint efforts of the Ministry of Education, Culture and Sports with the Ministry of Muslim Affairs, those



madrasahs that fulfilled certain conditions and offered science and cultural courses in addition to their religious courses in their curriculums were officially recognized by the government and they even received financial support from the state (Göksoy, 1996: 88)

The integrated madaris system was officially established in 2005, when the Philippine government gave sanctioned the accreditation, integration and development of madrasah as a learning institution, with unified curriculum. Letter of Instruction (LOI, No. 1221) in 2005 is the Philippine government's first law aiming at gradually integrating madaris into the national educational system. This Letter is based on Article 15, Section 8 (1) of the 1973 Philippine Constitution, which states that the government must maintain an appropriate, complete and integrated system of education (Abdulkarim & Suud, 2020:8-16).

The Letter stipulates that the madrasah should maintain its Islamic identity and Arabic language, as well as Islam as a religion in its curriculum that adheres to national educational system. It recognizes the integration and accreditation of madaris into the Philippine education system. Because this madaris is run by the government, classes are held on a regular basis, Monday through Friday, just like they do in public schools. Furthermore, the government has also prescribed the curriculum that implemented in this madaris.

The DepEd order no. 51, s. 2004 known as the "Standard Curriculum for Elementary Public Schools and Private Madaris" has been amended by the DepEd order no. 40, s. 2011 with two approaches, the Refined Elementary Madrasah Curriculum (REMC) for public schools and the Refined Standard Madrasah Curriculum (RSMC) for all integrated madaris in the Philippines.

In Table 2 the Refined Standard Madrasah Curriculum used in all integrated madaris in the Philippines for Elementary, along with the K to 12 programs<sup>6</sup>, with precise time allotment. Moreover, for high school and senior high school, is the same applied curriculum from RSMC comprising K to 12 subjects, intended for high school and senior high school.

**Table 2. Refined Standard Madrasah Curriculum (RSMC) for Integrated Madaris**

Learning Areas	Grade1	Grade2	Grade3	Grade4	Grade5	Grade6	Frequency
Mother Tongue	50mnts.	50mnts.	50mnts.				Daily
English		90mnts.	90mnts.	60mnts.	60mnts.	60mnts.	Daily
Filipino	70mnts.	70mnts.	70mnts.	60mnts.	60mnts.	60mnts.	Daily
Science			40mnts.	60mnts.	60mnts.	60mnts.	Daily
Mathematics	70mnts.	70mnts.	70mnts.	60mnts.	60mnts.	60mnts.	Daily
Araling Panlipunan	40mnts.	40mnts.	40mnts.	40mnts.	40mnts.	40mnts.	Daily
MAPEH	40mnts.	40mnts.	40mnts.	40mnts.	40mnts.	40mnts.	Daily
Character Education	30mnts.	30mnts.	30mnts.	20mnts.	20mnts.	20mnts.	Daily
Arabic Language	40mnts.	40mnts.	40 mnts	40 mnts	40mnts.	40mnts.	Daily
Qur'an	30mnts.	30mnts.	30mnts.	30mnts.	30mnts.	30mnts.	Daily
Sirah & Hadith	40mnts.	40mnts.	40mnts.	40mnts.	40mnts.	40mnts.	3x a week
Aqidah & Fiqh	40mnts.	40mnts.	40mnts.	40mnts.	40mnts.	40mnts.	2x a week

**Source:** Standard Curriculum for Elementary Public Schools and Private Madaris | Refined Elementary Madrasah Curriculum (REMC) - Schools / Universities 1160 (affordablecebu.com)

The madaris integration has benefited the Muslim community since it molds young Muslims to become more educated, they can readily find work in the labor market, participate actively in educational decisions, and, most importantly, their contributions are acknowledged. It helps Muslim student transition smoothly from private Madrasahs to public schools. In appropriate circumstances, it brings together Muslims students long-standing educational marginalization. The program meets the needs of graduates in terms of technical readiness and professionalism. It also incorporates ideals that reflect

<sup>6</sup> [DO\\_s2019\\_021.pdf \(deped.gov.ph\)](#)

country cultures, traditions and conventions. On the other hand, they are pursuing their social well-being, while also preserving their identity as Moro with rich in inherent and dynamic cultural heritage. However, it appears that, numerous madaris in entire Philippines are still not integrated. Despite the fact that the Department of Education does not recognize or accredit these madaris, the majority of them seek official accreditation. In Cagape (2008) study, 71% of the madaris in the Philippines have stated that they want to be integrated.

While there are some traditional madaris, on the other hand, wish to remain traditional, because of lack open communication, the traditional madaris administrator are unwilling to accept the government's push to integrate Islamic education through the Department of Education. Because many madaris are experiencing increased discomfort and unease-among Islamic teachers, their skill is not being properly recognized by the government. A Muslim teacher who received Islamic education abroad-is not guaranteed to be properly acknowledged by the Department of Education or the Commission on Higher Education, restricting their knowledge and power inside the madaris (Cagape, 2008:7-8).

Furthermore, some are opposed to the integration, because they believe that there is a diversion towards Christianization due to the term equivalent of assimilation, a subtle type of de-Islamization of the millennial population of Muslim Filipinos. It is influenced by the views and interpretations of the Philippine government, that national culture is defined by the Moro elders as Christian culture, and integration implies assimilation of Muslims into Christian society.

However, it is believed that integrated Islamic schools are thought to unquestionably increase the government's desire to adequately address the educational needs of its citizens, whether Christians or Muslims, but the vague area that causes disagreement among madaris operators is that rejecting-government recognition, standards, and monitoring, will not be able to integrate their schooling and students who graduate from their institutions cannot avail the education offered in public schools and in higher level of education in universities.

## Results and Discussion

In this part, it will discuss some of the issues and difficulties that Muslim Filipinos have faced in implementing Islamic education in the Philippines, and its current stand in Muslim Filipinos. Among the listed Islamic institutions, the Traditional madaris, Integrated madaris, the traditional madaris are the most plagued by issues and problems.

When it comes to the graduates of traditional madaris, they also have the lowest employment opportunities. As according to the recent research<sup>7</sup>, possible employment of graduates in madrasah is the lowest. They are not able to apply in any government institutions due to their lack of social skills and learning. Therefore, most of the madrasah graduates locally, went to Cotabato City, Marawi City, and Baguio City for further studies. They have chosen these places because they had higher education institutions that offer specialized programs, such as the Al-Ma'rif Institute in Baguio City, Jami'at al-Waqf in Marawi City and Jami'at Cotabato in Cotabato City. Almost all traditional madaris graduates end up in traditional madaris as well, as being Islamic teachers.

However, the new Bangsamoro government has proposed program in improving the Islamic education system in Philippines, specifically in Bangsamoro territories. Under Section 104 of the Bangsamoro Education Code (BEC), the Ministry of Basic, Higher and Technical Education (MBHTE) establishes and administers special qualifying tests for stable appointment to Mudarris (Islamic teachers) positions in the ministry through the Director-General Madaris Education (DGME). In coordination with the Civil Service Commission (CSC) for BARMM, the MBHTE will grant special licenses to those who pass the exam, with the caveat that the accorded eligibility will only qualify the appointee for permanent appointment to Mudarris (Islamic teacher) and will not be regarded a substitute for second level eligibility unless authorized by the national Civil Service Commission (CSC) office.

The specific qualifying tests known as Qualifying Exam in Arabic Language and Islamic Studies (QEALIS) may waived for graduates with Latin honors in Arabic, traditional Madrasah graduates and Islamic studies from a recognized university or institution of higher learning. Mudarris (Muslim teacher) is not a profession regulated by the Philippines Professional Regulation Commission (PRC), and it is not covered by Republic Act No. 1080, which declares bar and board exams to be civil service exams. The Bangsamoro Organic Law mandates the construction of Mudarris (Muslim teacher) qualification

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<sup>7</sup> Research on traditional madaris in armm and adjacent regions n.d

criteria, and the MBHTE is in charge of establishing the standard, which must be accepted by the Civil Service Commission (CSC).

Upon having passed the Qualifying Exam in Arabic Language and Islamic Studies (QEALIS), aspiring Asatidz enroll in Language Enhancement and Pedagogy (LEaP), a training designed to help madrasah teachers improve their English skills and gain a better understanding of assessment, teaching and lesson planning (Sali & Marasigan 2020:204-205). Graduates of traditional madaris will be able to teach in any public school run by the Philippine government as ISAL (Islamic Studies and Arabic Language) teachers, if they will pass the exam.

Aside from the reality that policy initiatives for traditional madaris are limited, the provided policies are still infants (Cagape, 2008:1-3), and their effective implementation has faced additional challenges beyond the conventional obstacles of poverty and poor funding. Following the September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks on the United States, there has been a shift in attitudes, the traditional madrasah's independence in the Philippines has been called into question due to official ideas that the madrasah and extremism are linked, connecting to Muslim secessionist movement in Mindanao known as the Abu Sayyaf extremist group, this has become a national security risk in the eyes of Philippines government (Abu Bakar, 2011:79).

This has sparked a variety of reactions in the Philippines. On suspicion or used for terrorist activity, traditional madaris have been raided. The multiplicity of Philippine society presents a challenge to national unity, and driving reason resulted in thinning replies to Muslim Filipinos long quest for educational justice. But the Abu Sayyaf group's kidnapping activities were rejected by Moro's, believing that this was not Islamic teaching.

In the context of Philippine madaris integration to public education, it is extremely relevant, given the numerous assessments that have to go through, such as School site preparation, curriculum review and evaluation, beginning to boost enrolment, and training for Islamic teachers, will provide the administration with an opportunity to assess the consequences of extremism suspicions.

Another aspect, in most cases, curriculum that has been applied in this traditional madaris are based on the country that a teacher graduated, which is most of them are graduates from various Arab countries, putting the context of Islamic interpretations is in risk of being exaggerated. Their courses could promote either moderate or radical interpretations of what is considered Islamic in both practice and context.

Regardless of this risk, the Muslim Filipinos still have faith that the madrasah is an important tool in the process of Islamization in the Philippines, in which madrasah is a Muslim school that educates-Islamic knowledge. It is revered as a symbolic of Islam as well as a place of learning. It is thought to be an ideal location for learning Arabic and Islamic religious beliefs

Up to this point, the traditional madrasah has served as educator of Muslim Filipino youth as well as a source of religious beliefs and Islamic practices. The education delivered by traditional madaris has a high level of satisfaction among the parents of pupils who study there. When compared to kids in public schools, madrasah students had excellent behavior and attitudes. A student in a traditional madaris grows increasingly acquainted with the centuries-old Islamic ideas and traditions. They are more conscious of performing their faith in the community, which promotes religious tolerance among individuals of all faiths and advocates for moderate Islam.

## **CONCLUSION**

To conclude, as most experts have remarked, Islamic education in the Philippines is a story of struggle for the majority of Muslim Filipinos, from the time of colonialism to the current Philippine administration. It has remained insular, weak, and traditional to this day. It is luck of the government's assistance in order to flourish and mature, which is exactly what Muslim Filipinos require. Currently, most of Islamic education schools known as traditional madrasah system, is operated through volunteerism. It is run by a family, group or organization who has decided to give back to the community by providing this service for free. It is a self-contained system that cannot be able to formally register with the Department of Education. As a result, there's no such thing as a standardized or uniform curricula available. Despite these defects or weaknesses, the madrasah system slowly functioned and continues to operate, demonstrating the Muslim community's great desire for their children to get Islamic education.

So far, these Islamic institutions has played a role to serve as Islamic educator of young Filipino Muslims, as well as a source of religious practices and Islamic beliefs, despite the fact that it operates

slowly. It is hoped that Islamic education will result in a cultural paradigm that will transform Muslim societies in accordance with Islamic tradition, as well as give non-Muslims the impression that Islam is a religion of peace and a wholistic approach that encompasses positive development and social change. As a sort of recommendation, as is now done in several cities and municipalities in the Philippines (for instance, the Davao City Madrasah Comprehensive Development and Promotion Program), traditional madaris which does not want to be integrated should get some assistance from local government. That they can be used to cover the cost of personnel services, such as honoraria/allowances, fixed salaries for teachers and staff, maintenance expenses, other operating costs, capital costs, and professional development for madrasah employees and teachers.

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