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THE TRANSFORMATION OF MUSLIM
EDUCATION IN THE PHILIPPINES:
A REVISIT

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SPECIAL ISSUE FROM THE DEPARTMENT OF FUNDAMENTAL AND INTER-DISCIPLINARY STUDIES (FIDS), AHAS KIRKHS, IN COLLABORATION WITH AL-HIKMAH: INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF ISLAMIC STUDIES AND HUMAN SCIENCE

Selected Papers from annual symposium on Scholarship Advancement Programme (SAP) on the 5th of August 2021.

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FOREWORD: A SPECIAL ISSUE FROM THE DEPARTMENT OF FUNDAMENTAL AND INTER-DISCIPLINARY STUDIES (FIDS), AHAS KIRKHS, IN COLLABORATION WITH AL-HIKMAH: INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF ISLAMIC STUDIES AND HUMAN SCIENCES

Following the directive from the AHAS Kulliyah of IRKHS, the Department of Fundamental and Inter-Disciplinary Studies held its annual symposium on Scholarship Advancement Programme (SAP) on the 5th of August 2021. The one-day programme was an intervention to advance the development of scholarship among academics in AHAS KIRKHS. Its focus was to accelerate knowledge generation and dissemination by providing a conducive avenue for all academics to write, present, and publish their scholarly work in an academic journal. Since 2019, papers presented at the SAP symposiums have been published individually by staff at the FIDS. In 2022, FIDS has taken the initiative to publish selected papers as a special issue in collaboration with the Journal of Al-Hikmah.

This special issue contains eleven articles, nine in English and two in Arabic, which were presented at SAP 2021. This collection of SAP papers comes under the themes of Islam, Philosophy and Spiritual development. Most if not all articles selected for publication go in tandem with the scope and requirement of Al-Hikmah Journal. Among the areas touched by the authors are on Islamic religious teaching and learning activities, and Islamic movement in the region.

We hope this special issue would provide a kind of poignant magnetism that would touch the readers' interest as most of the papers highlighted the supremacy of knowledge and the significance of the role of spirituality. The concept of papers emerged from the thought that different scholars from diverse Asian countries would offer their respective experiences, historical facts and cultural heritage that would provide the highest level of satisfaction to the readers.



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The Transformation of Muslim Education in the Philippines: A Revisit

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Abstract

Given the influence of secularism in interpreting social facts, the present study highlights the relevance of recognising cultural convergence as the ultimate panacea to the decades of unresolved conflicts amongst various cultural groups in the Philippines. The study underlines that the surviving epistemological foundation between two opposing cultures of knowledge must be taken as the point of reference in resolving historical injustices done to the Muslim communities. The transformation of Muslim education through government policy interventions and meaningful collaborations with Muslim leaders and scholars may provide a holistic framework for enhancing social and knowledge integration, particularly in the Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (BARMM). As such, the present study does not intend to provide a comprehensive revision of historical accounts about Islam in the Philippines; instead, it proposes an alternative approach in writing a history of Muslim education by embracing the universal principles that shape human culture and civilisation. Framed from the national agenda for social integration via education, the study views the prominence of systematic narration of the past events that captured the characteristics of Muslim communities, whose system of life and governance is based on advanced culture and civilisation is shaped by tawhidic worldview. In addition, the study maintains that drifting away from humanities and civilisational studies, which aims to restore values, ethics, morality, and vitality to a system of knowledge, will certainly result in losing the essence of education. Therefore, historians of education need to get up to speed to educate and inform people of the values necessary for understanding the existence of others. The methodology of the study is qualitative. It relies on primary and secondary sources on the history of Muslim education in the Philippines, government documents regarding policies in addressing the problem of Muslims in the Philippines, unpublished works, and interviews in addition to library research. The study recommends that historians of education should embrace the true principle of cultural convergence. Such profound recognition of 'others' and 'us' via the history of education may be achieved through inclusivity and open-minded outlooks, which recognises that BARMM is plural and a diverse community that is mutually connected with the universal teachings of Islam as religion, which encompasses culture, and civilisation.

Keywords: Muslim education, government policies, integration of knowledge, peace, politics

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Abstrak

Memandangkan pengaruh sekularisme dalam mentafsir fakta sosial, kajian ini menyerlahkan kerelevanan mengiktiraf penumpuan budaya sebagai penawar muktamad terhadap dekad konflik yang tidak dapat diselesaikan di kalangan pelbagai kumpulan budaya di Filipina. Kajian itu menggariskan bahawa asas epistemologi yang masih ada di antara dua budaya ilmu yang bertentangan mesti diambil kira sebagai titik rujukan dalam menyelesaikan ketidakadilan sejarah yang dilakukan kepada masyarakat Islam. Transformasi pendidikan Muslim melalui campur tangan dasar kerajaan dan kerjasama yang bermakna dengan pemimpin dan cendekiawan Islam mungkin menyediakan kerangka kerja holistik untuk meningkatkan integrasi sosial dan ilmu pengetahuan, khususnya di Wilayah Autonomi Bangsamoro di Mindanao Muslim (BARMM). Oleh yang demikian, kajian ini tidak berhasrat untuk menyediakan semakan menyeluruh mengenai akaun sejarah tentang Islam di Filipina; Sebaliknya, ia mencadangkan pendekatan alternatif dalam menulis sejarah pendidikan Islam dengan menghayati prinsip universal yang membentuk budaya dan tamadun manusia. Dirangka daripada agenda nasional untuk integrasi sosial melalui pendidikan, kajian itu melihat penonjolan penceritaan sistematik tentang peristiwa-peristiwa masa lalu yang menangkap ciri-ciri masyarakat Islam, yang sistem kehidupan dan pemerintahannya berasaskan budaya dan tamadun maju yang dibentuk oleh pandangan hidup tauhid. Di samping itu, kajian itu menegaskan bahawa menyimpang jauh daripada pengajian kemanusiaan dan ketamadunan, yang bertujuan mengembalikan nilai, etika, moral, dan kecergasan kepada sistem ilmu, sudah tentu akan mengakibatkan hilangnya intipati pendidikan. Oleh itu, ahli sejarah pendidikan perlu bangkit untuk mendidik dan memaklumkan orang ramai tentang nilai-nilai yang diperlukan untuk memahami kewujudan orang lain. Metodologi kajian ini berdasarkan pad kajian kualitatif. Kajian ini bergantung pada sumber primer dan sekunder mengenai sejarah pendidikan Islam di Filipina, dokumen kerajaan berkenaan dasar dalam menangani masalah umat Islam di Filipina, karya yang tidak diterbitkan, dan temu bual di samping penyelidikan perpustakaan. Kajian itu mengesyorkan bahawa ahli sejarah pendidikan harus menerima prinsip sebenar penumpuan budaya. Pengiktirafan yang mendalam terhadap 'orang lain' dan 'kita' melalui sejarah pendidikan boleh dicapai melalui inklusiviti dan pandangan terbuka, yang mengiktiraf bahawa BARMM adalah masyarakat majmuk dan pelbagai yang saling berkaitan dengan ajaran universal Islam sebagai agama, yang merangkumi budaya, dan tamadun.

Kata kunci: Pendidikan Islam, dasar kerajaan, integrasi ilmu, keamanan, politik

Introduction

In the last few decades, both majority and minority Muslim societies have experienced in a varied level the influence of Western thoughts and philosophy in their present education system. This can be attributed to the prevalence of the anthropocentric approach in understanding the concept of knowledge and education, which has systematically contributed towards eroding the *tawhidic* paradigm that shaped the history of Muslim education in the Philippines. Contemporary historians of education have

rightly described the root causes of the crises that modern man has succumbed knowingly or unknowingly. Looking at Islam's historical lens, the gradual detachment of man from his primordial nature and ethical origin was brought forth by nontheistic, rationalist, and ethical conduct that is devoid of the conception of God and religious tradition. The mental framework, the mental attitude, the totality of concepts, the ultimate foundation of all human conduct, the scientific, philosophical, and technological activities developed by Islamic scientific tradition which are derived from the Qur'an and Sunnah has been devalued in the given time and space. Contemporary science has discarded the truth. The object of truth has no importance to many graduates whose worldview and belief are devoid of the true vision of reality derived from the Divine source (Wan Mohd Nor Wan Daud, 1998).

It is indeed a perturbing experience for every intellectual historian who embraces the universal principles of truth: which define the essential nature of human beings, to have witnessed how the current education system has widened the cultural gaps among people in the given time and space. Through the unbiased narration of the historical past, it projects what constitutes humanities that would foster a particular knowledge system that is responsible for cultivating a sense of open-heartedness and compassionate outlook for every learner. It is through education that fosters intercultural awareness and knowledge of 'other' that truly enrich and improve a particular society (Thomas, 2018).

It is clear in the traditional approach of colonial histories that knowledge and education should be modelled from the metropolis to the colonies, which implicitly assumed the universality of the Western canon of knowledge and values. Advocates of the Integrative approach turned their attention to the entangled and mutual relationship between cultural groups to fill the historical vacuum as an instrument for realising social integration via education (Osman Bakar, 2011). The *tawhidic* epistemology, which serves as the foundation of Muslim education, deserves a viable space to conceptualise what constitutes a humanistic education for all. Islam transcends artificial geographical boundaries and thus promotes the universal dimension of education and its local importance (Schriewer & Martinez, 2004). Filling up the historical void has been recently highlighted by policymakers and scholars due to its relevance to the discourse of sustainable peace and development. Muslim leaders and intellectuals have responded positively to the Commission Higher Education (CHED)

demand towards mainstreaming Muslim education (Gamon & Tagoranao, 2019). Perhaps, through meaningful convergence of historical realities, it could resolve the conflict between the secular perspective of liberal individualism and citizenship and the Ummatic notion of Education.

Reflecting from the voluminous literature written by scholars, a remarkable position of Islamic education and its impact on the social fabric has been highlighted with great emphasis. There is no doubt that the given historical accounts about Islamic culture and knowledge system reflected in the government policies have contributed towards a systemic reformulation of the Muslim educational system in which the principle of social integration had patterned via education. In addition, one may acknowledge that due to many observers' erroneous knowledge, particularly the western media - about Muslim education and its history, it was inevitable that Muslim educational institutions have been allegedly linked with radicalism and violent extremism in the country for several reasons (Milligan, 2004). Considering the potential repercussion of such a view (i.e. the unfavourable narrative for cultural diversity), certainly, it may result in further augmentation of the historical chasm between Muslim and Christian communities if the government decides to leave such a condition unresolved. Muslim communities were made to understand that no concrete reform would occur outside from the ambit of secularisation and democracy. As the state's philosophy of education is patterned by secularism, it is quite often to encounter a sceptical view about the future contribution of Muslim education towards the revitalisation of the Philippine education system (Gamon & Tagoranao, 2019). Because of the different perspectives about the position of Muslim education in a secular state, the blueprint for the rejuvenation of the Muslims' education system will be obstructed by the exclusivist perspective of reform. The researchers from the Philippines maintained the urgency for the quest for common ethical wisdom of Islam and Christianity as the basis of reform of the national education system. Through a meaningful convergence of the best cultural and intellectual practices of the majority and minority societies, there would be a gradual recognition of the Islamic knowledge system and its relevance towards the national social integration agenda (Gamon & Tagoranao, 2019). Such a move should not be seen as dichotomous modes of existence but as a seamless continuum in the history of education in the Philippines (Gamon & Tagoranao, 2019, Milligan, 2004). Although this is a great leap towards the realisation of integration of

knowledge within the context of secular states, the intercultural discourse must open its doors to be spearheaded by Muslim institutions of higher learning to build bridges and channels of academic, scientific, and technical cooperation with other systems and educational institutions at the national level. Therefore, the philosophy of integration of knowledge should serve the interest of the country and beyond.

The Position of Muslim Education in a non-Muslim Country

Over the past decades, Muslim communities in the Philippines have witnessed the impact of an erroneous concept of Muslim education. Given the present socio-economic and political condition in the Philippines, the Muslim institutions of higher learning like the Mindanao State University, the University of Philippines Institute of Islamic Studies, Diliman, and others are expected to play a crucial role towards the revitalisation of the national education system. There has been an assumption that through a proper formulation and implementation of the content and methodology of Muslim education, its role in bridging the gap between Muslim and non-Muslim communities throughout the Malay-archipelago can be realised soon (Hassan, 2011).

This intellectual effort could be regarded as an epistemological device or apparatus to lessen, if not, eradicate the tension caused by those ideas and worldviews, which have been infiltrating into the national system social system. The Philippines national philosophy of education would often insist on using the word “Us and You” to mean solidarity rather than differences. This effort may be regarded as an advocacy or a commitment to recognise the basic differences and commonalities of a plural society. One of its immediate upshots would be the recognition of the importance of peaceful co-existence as reflected in some governmental policies for sustainable peace and development (Bakar, 2011).

In today’s increasingly interdependent and multi-religious world, it is vitally important to rediscover the true pathway of practical spiritual wisdom of the great ideas of the past civilisations that had been instrumental in ‘humanising’ human education (Rijalul Alam, 2016). The unity of matter and spirit, which has been eroded and neglected in the education of modern man, can only be appreciated from the root and essence of the sacred knowledge (Nasr, 1989) that man claims as to the foundation of his identity. When human intelligence has reached the stage of regarding the spirit as having precedence over the material manifestation of life, the

statement says, “our loyalties must become ecumenical rather than sectional. Hence, the present education system must develop an overriding loyalty to mankind to preserve the best in their societies (King, Jr., 2021). Thus, reclaiming the lost substance of sacred knowledge within the wave of modernism and globalisation is a challenging intellectual effort. However, a group of intellectuals voiced their paramount concern in awakening the intellect and reason through the channel of religious tradition. It is a fact that Modern Western civilisation has jeopardised its metaphysical foundation that has given birth to the emergence of capitalist or neo-liberal values, individualism, relativism, materialism, sensationalism, the obsession with security, the expansion of appetites and desires into needs and rights, and the idea of productivity as an end. These life perspectives do not guarantee to humanise the modern man and bring him into real happiness or satisfaction. It is certainly ironic that the modern West, which now threatens to swallow up all other cultural traditions and worldviews, is deeply divided and insecure, despite its enormous wealth and power; fear, stimulated by the media and certain interest groups, is causing people to lose faith in the possibility of a free and peaceful multi-ethnic, multi-cultural, and multi-religious society. If we seek to bolt the doors and close all the windows, it is obvious that the knocking will only grow louder. Peace cannot be preserved through war because, as Wendell Berry writes, “One cannot reduce terror by holding over the world on the threat of what one most fears (Berry, 2021,).”

Considering the present condition of Muslim education in the Philippines, one may see the urgency to revive the intellectual and religious tradition of true Filipino communities. However, superficial understanding of other cultures, literature, and worldviews is always a danger in a plural society. Therefore, it is the role of the scholars and reformers to create a friendly dialogue, suggesting a common understanding of vocabularies that are commonly used by people whose spiritual, ethical, and political orientations are distinct from others. Although the direction towards commonality amidst diversity is indeed a challenging pursuit, government policies via legal and education reform should lead to long-standing co-existence between the majority and minority.

One of the misconceptions attributed to Islam is its incompatibility with other religions. In addition, Muslims are generally blamed for their little knowledge of, or respect for, religions other than their own. Muslims

are viewed as less efficient in responding to the challenges of globalisation, thus reducing the universality of Islam into a political movement that promotes a political ideology that normally contradicts the secular system. Worse still, Muslim institutions of learning have been portrayed by irresponsible media as bandits of western civilisation (Alghamdi, 2015).

A Glimpse on the Historical Development of Muslim Education in the Philippines

Like other societies, Muslims in the Philippines have a distinctive pattern of transmitting cultural values and norms to their young and potential members, which are shaped and patterned from the *tawhidic* paradigm. Some people have used the instrumentality of education as the central nerve of a community's existence not only to preserve their cultural values but also to impose such on others. The imposition of alien cultures and values and its impact is still apparent in most Muslim societies. It has directly or indirectly influenced the writings of Muslim intellectuals, particularly in the field of education. This is obvious in their emphasis on the development and importance of society, politics, and law at the expense of nurturing the body and soul of the society. Western theories and philosophies challenged the characteristics of an ideal society and the foundation of education as envisaged by Islam. Not to exaggerate the social realities that Muslim communities are now experiencing, some writers observed that Muslims had enslaved their bodies and soul to their respective colonial masters. Before the emergence of Islamic revivalism in the Muslim world, the basic structures of Islamic education have been constantly revised and changed following the popular trends and changes coming from the West.

We have witnessed the plight of the Muslims in the Philippines who have been struggling on how could the flame of faith, the light of spiritual life, and faithfulness to the teaching of Islam can be preserved in environments that are grounded with secular philosophy of life. Muslim intellectuals in the Philippines have shown their unwavering aspirations and concerns towards transforming Muslim education as an instrument to save the Muslim Filipino communities from the disorder of Western education. However, most Muslim Filipinos have regarded the ongoing process of globalisation and its manifestations in the Philippine education system as a new form of colonialism. As a result, Muslim Filipinos, particularly those who lived in non-Muslim areas, were gradually assimilated into

secular education, challenging the foundation of Moro identity.

The Philippines is unique in that it is a known Catholic nation in Asia with hundreds of mosques and *madaris* (Muslim religious schools). The mosque and the *madrasah* (singular of *madaris*) are the traditional Islamic institutions that antedated the Western secular educational institutions in the country. The *madrasah* system was introduced by the Arab missionaries, teachers, and traders before the coming of the Spaniards, and this has been developed by Muslim individuals or by the Muslim communities to teach and propagate the basic principles of the Islamic faith and Muslim culture in all parts of the country (Hassoubah, 1983). It operates without the government's support due to the state policy of separation of church and state, and thus, the courses offered by it are not credited in schools, whether public and private. Rather, it is as a step towards understanding and fulfilling the needs of Muslims in the Philippines and the *madrasah's* contribution to the educational development of Muslim youths. The government reconsiders its policy by developing Muslims' educational system through the establishment of Islamic institutions of higher learning and the implementation of related laws, providing the Arabic language teaching both in private and public schools and the accreditation and integration of *madaris* to the national educational system. The government's development policy towards Muslims is based on the Constitution of the Philippines, which specifically provides that: "The state shall consider the customs, beliefs, and interests of national cultural communities in the formulation and implementation of state policies (Philippine Constitution, Section II, Article XV)." The Education Act 1982 (Batas Pambansa 232) recognises the need to promote the right of the cultural communities to relevant education and make them participate increasingly in national development (Philippine Constitution). Section 3, paragraph 8 of this Act states: "The State shall promote the right of the national cultural communities in the exercise of their right to develop themselves within the context of their cultures, traditions, interest, beliefs and recognises education as an instrument for their maximum participation in national development and in ensuring their involvement in achieving national unity."

As a touchstone for its state policies in recognising the need to consider the Islamic education of the Muslims and their culture as part of the Filipino culture, the government established the following programs: the Commission on National Integration, the Mindanao State University, the Institute of Islamic Studies under the University of the Philippines, the

MSU-*Shariah* Centre, the King Faisal Centre for Arabic and Islamic Studies, the Code of Muslim Personal Laws (P.D. 1083), and the creation of *Shariah* courts as part of the national judiciary system. In addition to these, the government recognised the institution of the *Shariah* Law, Bachelor of Laws offered by the MSU College of Law, and the Islamic Jurisprudence course offered in other state universities. The establishment of these institutions is based on the philosophy and aims of Philippine education as mentioned in the Constitution. All educational institutions shall be under the supervision of and subject to regulation by the state (Philippine Constitution, Sec. 8 of article XV).

Among other steps taken by the government to promote Islamic education for the Muslims is the issuance of Letter of Instruction (LOI) No. 71-A, which allows and authorises the use of Arabic as a medium of instruction in schools and areas in the Philippines where the use thereof has permits. In addition, the LOI-1221 allows the accreditation and integration of the *madrasah* in the Philippine educational system.

The most notable development issued by the government for Muslim education in the south is the power vested in the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (ARMM) as stipulated in section 1 of Article XIV of R.A. 9054 as the Expanded ARMM law. It says that “the regional government shall establish, maintain, and support a complete and integrated system of quality education as a top priority and adopt an educational framework that is meaningful, relevant and responsive to the needs, ideals and aspirations of the people in the region.” With this, the Muslim Mindanao Act No. 14 provides for the accreditation of *madaris* in the regional system of education so that such schools be supported to make them part of national educational standards. In addition to this, other regional laws were implemented, seminars and conferences organised taskforce, and councils were created to accommodate and strengthen the *madaris* in recognition of their contribution to the Muslim youths, the Muslim *Ummah*, and the nation.

There were queries raised on the government's sincerity in establishing these programs, considering their long-delayed implementation. Some of these programs had been issued and technically in effect for many years without any administrative machinery to enforce them. Various researches have been carried out on Muslim education in Mindanao. Studies

revealed that only minimal improvement had been done in almost two decades despite the government's concerted efforts in introducing educational programs in Muslim Mindanao. Why? What were the reasons?

MUSLIM EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS AND MINDANAO CONFLICT

Like many Muslim minorities in non-Islamic states, Muslims in the Philippines have had a long history of asserting rights for recognition of Islamic education and cultural values. The problems of Islamic education started when the Spaniards used the schools “as instruments for colonisation and subjugation as well as to proselytise.” With an advanced civilisation brought to them by Islam, the Muslims did not fall in the hands of the Spaniards. During the Spanish rule, not a single type of Western school was established in the Muslim communities by the Spaniards. The Muslim problem had plagued the Spaniards for well over three hundred years, dissipated the energy of the American invaders, and took away the needed resources of the Philippines’ government for close to a hundred years (Lacar, 1988). Because of this problem, integrating Muslims into the national body politic became a serious problem.

It sounds unfair to consider that the failure of the Muslims to excel in Western or secular education was “backwardness” in all aspects. The Christian government officers took advantage of the Muslim's “backwardness” in secular education by grabbing the Muslim ancestral lands in Cotabato to resettle thousands of settlers drawn from pardoned criminals and ex-communists who had surrendered to the government. The government did not inform many Muslims who were not educated in obtaining titles to their lands. They lived in the place, and considered the land they were farming on as theirs by right of birth and priority of occupancy—suddenly found themselves landless, dispossessed, and pushed into the mountainous areas to eke out a subsistence and harbour ill-feelings that would someday erupt in the barrels of the MNLF guns (Lacar, 1988). Aside from robbing the Muslims’ lands and making them an oppressed minority in their community, the programs and development given by the government to the Christian settlers were not extended to the Muslims. The government faithfully provided educational, health, and agricultural programs to Christian

squatters and did nothing to the Muslim settlers. A Christian Filipino author emphasised the insincerity or lack of foresight of the government for Muslim education in the past. Lacar (1988) pointed out that

“Another area of neglect committed by the Philippine government is failing to provide the Moros with educational opportunities and structures consistent with their Islamic culture and tradition. While in the case of (Christian) settlers (in Cotabato), provision for their educational needs were amply given, the children of the Moros were not given as much attention. Moreover, the schools' curriculums were patterned, understandably, upon the needs and concerns of the Christian settlers. Yet the government expected these schools to be the primary vehicle for integrating the Moros for the mainstream of Philippine culture (p.304).”

This observation confirmed the irrelevant curriculum preferred by the government's experts and the government's intention of producing educated Christians and not educated Muslim Filipinos. The former government Christian administrators never had the sympathy and were often hostile to the Muslims' aspirations to have Islamic values that they cherished to be passed on to their children. Aside from an irrelevant curriculum, the government had neglected the number of schools, the educational facilities, and the educational quality of Muslims. Therefore, it is not surprising that Muslim parents refused to send their children to public schools and perceived Christian Filipinos' ways as “backwardness.” It is not a wonder, then, that some Muslims refused to be identified as Filipinos in the past, and they considered the Philippine government as *gobierno a sarwang a tao* (foreign government).

The problems of Muslims in the Philippines could be multi-faceted and complex. However, Muslims' “backwardness” in secular education became the central source of the conflict. The Congressional Committee of 1954 reported that more than any other factor involved which had given rise to the so-called Moro problem is the educational phase, for if the Muslims had been prepared and their ignorance which is the root cause of their problem had been wiped out by education and an educational policy calculated to erase and do away with all barriers between the Christian and

the Muslims of the country, little, if any at all, would be such problems as economic, social, and political which now face the government (Madale, 1981).

The problem with the government was that the Christian officers assumed that their educational policy would be sound and acceptable to the Muslims without considering their Islamic culture and values. It was only in 1973 that the government seriously considered finding a solution to Mindanao's problems through the development of Islamic education. The government realised that using force can fail, while education may succeed in appeasing the Muslims.

Many people believe that education is the most effective way of maintaining peace and order in Mindanao by all standards and criteria. According to a Muslim educator, No one can stop a bullet once fired from a gun. But good education, certainly, can stop the man holding the gun from ever pulling the trigger that fires the bullet. Ignorance makes a man reckless. He feels he has nothing to live for; he has nothing to hope for. Ignorance is the twin brother of poverty. The ignorant man has not much in worldly possession or intangible values which are in his interest to defend (Macaray, 1984). Islamic education always changes Muslims for the better. Therefore, heightened awareness for education among Muslims will lead to the development of Muslim youths, the Muslim society, and the nation.

GOVERNMENT POLICIES FOR THE TRANSFORMATION OF MUSLIM EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS

As a result of the deterioration of the internal security situation in the Muslim areas, particularly after Kamlun's revolt in 1954, the Philippine Congress appointed Muslim congress members headed by Domocao Alonto Sr. to investigate the problems of the Moros and the situation in the south (Yegar, 2002). It was found out that Muslims neither identified themselves as Filipinos nor as a part of the national body. They instead considered Islam as the foundation of their identity. Thus, the committee recommended embarking on an educational and economic program that had resulted in the establishment of the National Integration (CNI) in 1957. This shows that the government's development policy towards Muslims in the Philippines concentrates on integrating them through education. Despite

the changeable politics in the Philippines, the Islamic education of Muslim minorities continues to improve. Its change and growth can be seen in the educational programs implemented by the government in Muslim Mindanao since early 1970. With these developments, Islamic institutes of higher learning have been established, and with them, a steady growth of Islamic consciousness. The government has accredited some *madaris*, *Shari'ah* law has been offered in other government universities, and Islamic studies and Arabic language have been taught in public and private schools in certain regions. For the government, the success of the Islamic educational projects would forge national solidarity and heightened the Islamic sophistication of the Muslims, as some scholars believed that Islam could be used as an instrument for modernising its followers. On the other hand, the Muslims generally believed that their bloody struggle against the government brought some development to Islamic education in the Philippines.

The development of Islamic education in the Philippines became an important instrument in solving the so-called Muslim problems in the Philippines. It helps to ease the tensions that mark the nagging Muslim-government relation, which has already accounted for the loss of thousands of lives and property, millions of pesos, and psychological chasms among the people. The government was aware of the situation, and to face the problem, the state embarked on the following programs as a touchstone of its policy of integration:

Commission on National Integration

The first educational program created by the government was through the Commission on National Integration (CNI). This Commission was created under Republic Act No. 1888 (amended by R.A. No. 3858) on June 22, 1957, purposely “to accelerate the progress of Muslims politically, economically, and to promote their incorporation into the nation’s government and social systems (Majul, 1978, p.32).” This Commission operation largely awarded scholarships to deserving Muslim Filipino students and other cultural minority groups. The young Muslims who were educated through this government scholarship program became politically conscious of the positions of Muslim communities. Some of them became motivated and formed religious organisations and foundations (e.g. *waqf*) that strengthened their Islamic religious and cultural awareness to attain a common Islamic identity. Asani pointed out that “... a great change occurred

in the Moro world outlook, a consequence unintended in the creation of the CNI. equivocation and ambivalence gave way to a commitment to more defined goals (Ansani, 1985, p. 304-305).”

The CNI was abolished in 1975 for failure to achieve its main objective, “the Moro integration into the mainstream of national body-politic.” The reasons for its failure are: First, the government’s paternalistic approach towards the cultural minorities reaffirmed rather than alleviated the cultural minorities from their disadvantaged position (Bauzon, 1991). Second, the authorities failed to follow an effective strategy to solve the critical problem of the inter-group relationship between the Muslims and Christian Filipinos. One of the Muslim Filipino leaders pointed out that:

To identify the causes of Muslim strategic goals and follow up the changes thereon, it is necessary to project the correct image of the Muslims in the Philippines. It is worthwhile to consider the stereotype of the Muslims in the minds of many Christian Filipinos: The Moro is illiterate, and so his mind is closed; he is loaded with hostility and therefore forbidding (Mastura, 1984, p.146).

Third, the policy of integration caused genocidal effects on the Muslims. According to Peter G. Gowing and Robert D McAmis, “The policy of the Philippine Government towards Muslim Filipinos is integration, not genocide, but certain features of the integration policy are genocidal in their effects...they (Muslims) fear the philosophy behind the integration policy because it is a philosophy of assimilation...(which was) resisted by the Muslim Filipinos precisely because it threatens psychological genocide, which in many ways is more difficult to contemplate than physical genocide (Gowing & McAmis, n.d., p. vii-viii)” In the words of Luis Q. Lacar, the CNI failed because “the solution it offered was clearly off the mark. (Lacar, 1998, p.303).” As to its purpose in granting scholarships, many people believed that it was a failure because of “low percentage of grantees who completed their studies.

Mindanao State University (MSU)

The Mindanao State University was the first state university established by the government to provide higher education for Mindanao residents in

a Muslim area. Under Republic Act No. 1387 established the Mindanao State University in Marawi City on September 1, 1961. The MSU Charter clearly emphasised that the need for the establishment of the university as an institution of learning in the southern part of the Philippines is to implement the policy of the government in the intensification of the education of the Filipino youth, especially among Muslims and others belonging to the national minorities (The Charter of Mindanao State University). Accordingly, the MSU was established with the following goals: 1) To perform the traditional functions of a University such as instruction, research, and extension services; 2) to help accelerate the program of integration among the peoples of Southern Philippines, particularly the Muslims and other cultural minorities; and 3) to provide professional human resources skills and technical know-how for the economic development of the Mindanao, Sulu, and Palawan (MINSUPALA) regions (Hassoubah, n.d, p.47). Among these goals, hastening the Muslim's integration into the national body-politic was the most important point for its establishment.

The MSU is truly an academic institution of higher learning. It provides a special opportunity for young Muslims to pursue their secular education side-by-side with their Arabic and Islamic studies. Aside from this, The MSU introduced various programs designed to help solve the Muslims' problems, particularly on the social and economic aspects. To meet the educational needs of the Muslims, the MSU was officially transformed into a university system based on Executive Order No. 3. This Order reorganised the entire MSU system and added new colleges and or established six external units in all four political regions in Southern Philippines, namely: MSU- Iligan, MSU-General Santos, MSU-Maguindanao, MSU-Tawi-Tawi, MSU-Jolo, and MSU-Naawan. All the external units, except Iligan and Naawan, offer the baccalaureate program in Islamic Studies, leading to a major in Islamic law, jurisprudence, and Islamic history.

Furthermore, to ensure the University's commitment to preserving the Muslim Filipino culture, several research Centres were established and promoting research to preserve the rich culture of the Muslims. The rapid development of the University includes the establishment of the King Faisal Centre for Arabic and Islamic Studies, the College of Law with a permit to offer a *Shari'ah* course, and the *Shari'ah* Centre. The MSU College of Law successfully produced several civil and *Shari'ah* lawyers and judges to the *Shari'ah* courts.

King Faisal Centre for Islamic, Arabic, and Asian Studies

King Faisal Centre for Islamic, Arabic, and Asian Studies (KFCIAS), formerly known as the Institute of Asian and Islamic (Arabic) Studies, was established in 1973 as a separate academic unit of the Mindanao State University. KFCIAS was named after the late King Faisal of Saudi Arabia to recognise his visionary leadership in the Muslim world. This Centre was established primarily to promote Arabic, Islamic and Asian studies in the Muslim areas of Southern Philippines to hasten the social, cultural, and economic upliftment of the Muslims and other cultural minorities and facilitate their integration into the mainstream of the national body-politic.

The Centre seeks to emphasise Islam as part of the rich Philippine culture and as a complete way of life, which is consistent with the all-important scientific endeavour and technical competence. The Centre has the following objectives:

1. To develop and offer academic programs relevant to the social, economic, and cultural betterment of the Muslims and other cultural minorities;
2. To research Islamic law and culture both in the Philippines and abroad to broaden understanding of Muslim culture and way of life;
3. To do outreach community services in the form of *da'wah* work and functional literacy to take part in addressing illiteracy as a root cause of poverty in Muslim communities; and
4. To encourage the growing consciousness in Asia and the Middle East for regional cooperation.

The KFCIAS is offering a master's degree in Islamic Studies, major in Muslim Law for postgraduate studies. This program is open to graduates of a bachelor's degree in Islamic Studies and to holders of any baccalaureate degree who finished at least a secondary (*Thanawiyah*) diploma from any reputable *madrakah* in the Philippines or abroad, provided that the applicant must satisfy the requirements prescribed by the MSU Graduate School and that they can speak and write English. This program is designed to produce skilful graduates in Muslim law who can serve not only as judges of the *Shari'ah* courts but also as practitioners therein and as future scholars and researchers in Islamic law and jurisprudence to help mould a just and progressive Muslim society in the Muslim Mindanao.

For baccalaureate, the Centre offers the following courses: 1) Bachelor of Arts in Islamic Studies, major in Islamic History and Islamic Law and Jurisprudence; 2) Bachelor of Science in Teaching Arabic, and 3) Bachelor of Science in International Relations. Aside from these courses, there are extension projects conducted by the KFCIAS in promoting its goals and objectives as an Islamic educational institution of higher learning. Some of them are 1) Special Course on Islam for Professionals and Students; 2) Pre-School Program; 3) Special Course for Imams; 4) Special Course in *Bahasa* Malaysia, and 5) Special Qur'an Reading class for beginners and advanced Reading for students.

MSU-Shari'ah Centre

The Mindanao State University established the *Shari'ah* Centre through the Board of Regents (BOR) Resolution No. 210, in 1982, recognising the ongoing and growing interest and concern for Islamic Law in the Philippines. With the signing into law in 1977 of Presidential Decree No. 1083, otherwise known as the Philippines' Code of Muslim Personal Laws, it resulted into opening the College of Law at the Mindanao State University in 1981, which offers *Shari'ah* subjects, such as a bachelor's degree in *Shari'ah* and a master's program in Muslim Personal Laws by the MSU-King Faisal Centre for Islamic and Arabic Studies. The *Shari'ah* centre is intended to help in intensifying knowledge and understanding of Islamic law and Jurisprudence. The centre is also tasked to assist the College of Law and the King Faisal Centre in research, preparation, and development of teaching and reading materials for *Shariah* subjects. Similarly, the Centre is envisioned to serve as a support institution to the *Shari'ah* Courts to understand better the smooth implementation of the Code of Muslim Personal Laws. The Centre was established with the following objectives (MSU-Shari'ah Center's Information Brochure):

1. To help in intensifying knowledge and understanding of Islamic Law and Jurisprudence;
2. To assist the College of Law and the King Faisal Centre in the research and the preparation and development of teaching and reading materials;
3. To serve as a support institution to the *Shari'ah* Courts in the better understanding and implementation of the Code of Muslim Personal Laws;

4. To undertake researches on Islamic law, indigenous laws, and the relationship of these laws to Philippine laws;
5. To establish a library that will host a complete collection on *Shari'ah* and *Shari'ah*-related literature, and indigenous laws;
6. To establish linkages with various governments and private institutions and agencies in the Philippines with the principal aim of collating and reconciling *Shari'ah* principles and the Philippine Legal System;
7. To develop linkages with International Islamic Institutions, organisations, and foundations for possible assistance in the form of books and other facilities, exchange scholars and professors, research grants, and the like;
8. To come out with a journal and an information Bulletin;
9. To organise a data bank on *Shari'ah*, *Shari'ah* related matters, indigenous laws, and the relationship of these laws to the Philippine laws;
10. To assist the DECS-ARMM in the curriculum making to include *Shari'ah* as a major area of concern;
11. To assist/coordinate with the Office on Muslim Affairs in the conduct of the *Shari'ah* Bar Review classes;
12. Expand scholarship/ grant-in-aid programs to maximise access to quality education by its target clientele, especially the tribal communities;
13. Develop and implement income-generation subsidy programs or projects to augment state subsidy;
14. Pursue accreditation and regular evaluation both at the campus and institutional levels; and
15. Pursue the establishment of linkages with local and foreign institutions vigorously.

The major program conducted by the Centre is the *Shari'ah* education and the legal outreach program. Under this program, the *Shari'ah* Centre will sponsor activities such as training, long and short-term courses, lecture series, seminars, and conferences. It also serves to offer counselling and consultation services on *Shari'ah* legal matters. To achieve its goals and make it the leading *Shari'ah* research institution in the country, it created the *Shari'ah* research program to study the branches of the *Shari'ah* law, the *adat* laws, and their relevance to the Philippine laws and to annotate the cases decided by the Philippine *Shari'ah* courts. The publication

program of the Centre is designed for researches, studies, and proceedings conducted under the continuing *Shari'ah* Education and Legal Outreach, as well as the *Shari'ah* Research Programs. The most significant contribution of this program is the publication of the bi-annual Mindanao *Shari'ah* Journal, where research outputs on Islamic law and jurisprudence are published. Also, an occasional publication and distribution of the *Shari'ah* Information Bulletin provide articles and essays on Islamic laws and Islamic literature to disseminate Islamic knowledge to Muslim and non-Muslim students of the Mindanao State University.

The *Shari'ah* Centre has established a link with various governments' and private institutions and agencies, more particularly, with the Law Centre of the University of the Philippines, the Integrated Bar of the Philippines, the Supreme Court, the Philippine *Shari'ah* Courts, and the National Commission for Muslim Filipinos (formerly known as Office of Muslim Affairs), with the principal aim of starting the gigantic task of collating, shifting and reconciling *Shari'ah* principles and the Philippine legal system. Likewise, the Centre will keep developing its link with other international Islamic institutions, organisations, and foundations in South-east Asia and the Middle East.

Institute of Islamic Studies – University of the Philippines

The Institute of Islamic Studies was created as an integral part of the Philippine Centre for Advanced Studies (PCAS), through, Presidential Degree 342 on Nov. 22, 1973. However, with the abolition of the Centre by Executive order No. 543 issued by the President of the Philippines, on July 9, 1979, the Institute was re-established as a separate unit of the University of the Philippines.

The Institute was established to provide a platform for university students, both Muslims and non-Muslims, to participate actively in national development. More specifically, it intends to create deeper understanding and better rapport between Muslims of the Philippines and the rest of the University of the Philippines' national community. Moreover, it aims to shed light on certain portions of Philippine history and place in proper perspective the role of the Islamic cultural heritage in shaping the Philippines and neighbouring Southeast Asian countries. It is envisioned that the Institute will serve as a meeting place for scholars interested in

Islamic history and culture from Asia and other parts of the world (UP-Institute of Islamic Studies, Information Brochure).

The Institute of Islamic Studies provides both graduate and undergraduate courses on Islamic studies. By its regulations, an applicant for admission should have at least a bachelor's degree, and it is preferable if he is competent in Arabic. Students who have no background in Arabic and Islamic studies shall take the Elementary and Intermediary Arabic and undergraduate courses in Islamic studies.

To meet the Institute's objectives and to realise the government's desire to see its Muslim constituents integrated with the national body-politic through education, the Institute renders the following services (UP-Institute of Islamic Studies, Information Brochure):

1. Conduct of lecture series whenever necessary on Islamic history, law, and religion, including contemporary events affecting the lives of Muslim Filipinos;
2. The undertaking of commissioned researches regarding Muslim communities, Islamic heritage, and compilation of the said data;
3. Translation of documents from English or Tagalog to a local ethnic language, viz-a-viz, Tausug, Maranao, Maguindanao, Sama and Yakan;
4. Publication of IIS Newsletter (*Sahiyfah*), journal and occasional papers/monographs; and
5. Extension services on areas of Faculty competence.

Presidential Decree (P.D.) 1083

The government's aim for developing Islamic education in the Philippines was to recognise the Muslim Personal laws as part of the national laws. Its promulgation has a positive and far-reaching contribution to Islamic education in the Philippines. According to Majul, "the formal recognition of (Muslim) laws coupled with the gradual evolution of a system of Islamic jurisprudence in the Philippines will go a long way in the Islamic education of the Muslim masses (Majul, 1976, p. 15). The establishment of the MSU College of Law was greatly inspired by implementing the Muslim Code in the Philippines. It was organised to meet the workforce needs of the *Shari'ah* bench and the bar by producing more qualified *Shari'ah* lawyers

and judges. Aside from MSU College of Law, which offers 12 courses on Islamic law, the Western Mindanao State in Zamboanga City is now offering Islamic Jurisprudence in response to implementing the P.D. 1083.

Letter of Instruction No. 71-A (LOI-71-A)

In 1973, the government changed its policy towards Muslims education by implementing the LOI, 71-A. This law provides that because Arabic is now becoming one of the languages often used in international conventions and is at present spoken by millions of people in the Middle East and other parts of the world, including a sizeable number of Filipinos, especially in predominantly Muslim-populated areas in Mindanao, and as mentioned in the Constitution of the Philippines Arabic is one of the languages to be translated, therefore, the President allowed and authorised the use of it as a medium of instruction in schools and or in areas in the country where the use thereof so permits. Furthermore, it was supplemented by Department Order No. 25, s. 1973, which provides guidelines for the implementation of LOI 71-A. The President issued both laws in 1973. In addition, LOI No. 897 was issued to teach the Arabic language in areas predominantly populated by Muslims. However, LOI, 71-A and Department Order No. 25 were effectively implemented until 1980 because of certain problems that needed to be overcome, such as the lack of qualified and trained teachers, instructional materials, and funds (Hassoubah, 1983, p. 25).

The Region XII Director of the Ministry of Education and Culture issued the Regional Memorandum No. 19 in 1980, which provides for the Arabic language teaching in the secondary schools in Region XII, both public and private schools effective in the school year 1980-1981. The Arabic language is also required in elementary schools in areas predominantly populated by Muslims. The Arabic course was offered as an elective subject, but the Muslim high school students are obliged to take it while the Christian students are encouraged. The schools are requested to take teachers who are good at Arabic and who can also teach other subjects. The new school curriculum had been revised to add Arabic as a subject to English and other Filipino languages.

To have qualified teachers to teach Arabic in public schools by LOI, 71-A, the Ministry of Education and the Mindanao State University

asked King Faisal Centre to provide intensive training for public school teachers, who already had an elementary knowledge of Arabic.

Letter of Instruction No. 1221

The Philippine government authorised the development, accreditation, and integration of *madrasah* as an institution of learning through LOI, No. 1221. It was the first law issued by the Philippine government for the gradual integration of the *madrasah* into the national educational system. This law was issued on March 31, 1982, directing the Prime Minister, members of the cabinet, Minister of Education, Culture, and Sports to formulate and adopt a program or develop the *madrasah* and facilitate its integration as a sector of the national educational system. The implementation of LOI 1221 is based on Article XV, Section 8 (1) of the Philippine Constitution, which provides that the government shall establish and maintain a complete, adequate, and integrated system of education relevant to the goals of national development. In line with this, the government allowed and authorised the accreditation and integration of Islamic religious schools into the national educational system as an instrument for Muslim's maximum participation in nation-building to achieve the national development goals and unity.

The LOI 1221 has three salient features (Rodriguez, 1992, p.110-111): First, the LOI intends that the *madrasah* retain its Islamic identity. This means that the Arabic language and Islam as religion should be retained in the *madrasah* curriculum. Second, the LOI intends that the teaching staff of the *madrasah* is improved. Third, the *madrasah* will be part of the national educational system, and as such, it should align itself with the system. The realignment should initially focus on curricular revision, so the *madrasah* could attain that maximum educational goal.

To achieve the objectives of LOI NO. 1221 and to meet the desire of the Philippine Government to accommodate the *madrasah* into the national educational system, policy conferences dealing with *madaris* were conducted in different parts of Muslim Mindanao. The first policy conference was held in Zamboanga City from May 24-26, 1982. This conference was called for with the following objectives ((Bruno, 1982):

1. To identify the issues related to the development of the *madaris*.
2. To prepare a set of policy and program recommendations on developing the *madaris* to be submitted to the appropriate government and non-government agencies.
3. To better understand and closer relationship among the 'ulama' and other religious leaders and heads of government and non-government groups.

The second policy conference was held in Zamboanga City from April 15-28, 1985, with a guiding theme, "*Madrasah* Curriculum Development." Aside from the policy conferences, the government conducted some seminar workshops to meet the goals and objectives of LOI No. 1221. In addition, various task forces were created at every conference to find out the main problems encountered by the *madaris* and make a recommendation on how to improve their curriculums to meet the requirements imposed by the Ministry of Education.

The then-President Gloria Macapagal Arroyo issued Executive Order No. 283, which created the *Madrasah* Development Coordinating Committee (MDCC). This Committee shall be responsible for effectively managing available financial assistance to the *madrasah* system from local, bilateral and multilateral, institutions, including activities related thereto. The Committee shall have the following functions (Executive Order No. 283):

1. Identify possible sources of and receive financial assistance for *madrasah* development;
2. Promulgate standard procedures for the judicious management/ use/ distribution/ disposition of these assistance opportunities;
3. Endorse noteworthy proposals for funding to relevant local/bilateral/multilateral institutions;
4. Coordinate *madrasah*-related researches, studies, and programs/projects undertaken by the government, or private individuals/institutions;
5. Fast track and monitor the implementation of government education programs in Mindanao vis-vis the Comprehensive Mindanao Education Program and or the *Edukasyon para sa Kapayapaan at Kaunlaran sa Mindanao* program; and

6. Submit a quarterly report of its activities and accomplishments to the President, the MDCC, and the Advisory Council.

The government created the Advisory Council to perform oversight functions over the *Madrasah* Development Coordinating Committee, composed of representatives from national and regional offices appointed by the President.

Republic Act 6734

Another significant step taken by the government that helped improve the status of Islamic education in the Philippines was the creation of the Autonomous Region of Muslim Mindanao (ARMM). It is a constitutional arrangement granting a degree of freedom to (the Muslim Filipinos) a racial, religious, linguistic, ethnic, tribal, or cultural group to manage its affairs... closely aligned with the principles of self-rule and self-determination (Macaraya, Sr., 1989). The powers vested in the Regional Assembly fulfil the Muslims' aspirations, demands, and expectations, particularly in shaping the educational policies of all schools in the Autonomous Region. The Organic Act provides:

The education in the Autonomous Region shall develop consciousness and appreciation of one's ethnic identity and shall provide a better understanding of each other's cultural heritage for the attainment of national unity and harmony (Sec. 2 (2), Art. XV, Organic Act.).

The Autonomous Region shall establish, maintain and support as a top priority a complete and integrated system of quality education and adopt an educational framework that is meaningful, relevant and responsive to the needs, ideal and aspirations of the people of the Region. (Sec. 1 of Republic Act No. 6734)

The Muslim Mindanao Autonomy Act No. 14 had been enacted as the Educational Act of the Autonomous Region of Muslim Mindanao. It states: "An act providing for a system education for the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao, creating a Regional Department of Education, Culture and Sports, appropriating funds, therefore, and for other purposes." Section 3 of this Act provides that the Regional Government shall

accredit the *madaris* and ensure their integration with the private schools into the regional system of education, which should be at par with the national standard. One of the aims and purposes of the regionally integrated education system is to promote and strengthen the *madaris* as an integral part of the regional education program. It means integrating the Arabic language and Islamic studies in the regional public schools to improve student proficiency and understanding of Islamic values and culture. With this, the Muslim Mindanao Autonomy Act No. 14- created the Bureau of *madaris* Education to formulate, adopt and evaluate plans, programs, educational standards, and curricular designs related to Islamic philosophy, sociology, economics, culture, moral values, and political science, and other related Islamic instructional materials (Tamano, 1995).

THE POLITICS OF DEVELOPING MUSLIM EDUCATION

Every step taken by the Philippine government in introducing a program for developing Islamic education in the country has had a hidden agenda in its implementation. Therefore, it is not surprising that people made several impressions on the effects of the government programs, particularly in their long-delayed implementation in Muslim Mindanao. However, looking at the government's sincerity, a conclusive evaluation of the success of these programs can hardly be made, considering the different responses of the people involved in them.

The Commission on National Integration (CNI) was created on June 22, 1957, to integrate the Muslim minority into the nation's Christian government and its social systems. It was created when the government could hardly implement peace and order in the Muslim areas. With this Commission, the Muslim political leaders under the government were assigned to fulfil the government's wished-for national integration. One of the main objectives of the CNI was to promote the education of Muslims through local and foreign universities by awarding scholarships to a few deserving Muslim students. The Commission used the scholarships to educate some young Muslims to be involved in the usual efforts to further the nation's well-being. However, the Commission's objective, which was

premised on integration to national body-politic, was rejected by the Muslim communities because of its tragic effect on their Islamic way of life. Thus, any government program aimed at Muslim integration to the national political order were met with stiff resistance.

The government adopted the same strategy in the establishment of the Mindanao State University in Marawi City. One of its goals was “to help accelerate the integration program among the people of Southern Philippines, particularly, the Muslims (Hassoubah, 1993, p.47).” Sensitive to what they considered an integration, which was assimilation, the Muslims were not too anxious to initially take advantage of whatever educational program the government had provided them. As observed by one author, “integration has long been rejected by the Muslims because they suspect it as the euphemistic equivalent of assimilation. A subtle form of ‘de-Muslimization or [de-Islamization]’ of the younger Muslims is a roundabout route towards the Christianization of malleable youth. The Philippine Government’s national culture is defined as the Christian culture, and therefore integration means assimilation of the Muslims into the Christian culture.” But despite the determination of the Muslims to resist the government policy on integration, Muslim educators worked hard enough in pushing the Muslim youths to take advantage of the new educational opportunities offered by the government.

The government established some of the Islamic institutions at the height of the Moro conflict. Some of these institutions were implemented to prove to the international community, particularly the OIC, that there was no “genocide” for the Muslim Filipinos as filed against the Philippine government at the United Nations. Billions of pesos were spent on infrastructure, educational and economic programs, and other developments in Muslim Mindanao. In its frantic effort to quell the disorder in the south, the government paid attention to some of the demands of the Muslims by implementing the Code of Muslim Personal Laws, which includes the official recognition of Muslim holidays, the creation of *Amanah* Bank to meet special needs of Muslims (recently, assigned to provide an amount for the accreditation of *Madrasah*), setting up the Islamic Institute in the University of the Philippines and the Mindanao State University to teach the Islamic and Arabic studies, regularising the Muslims pilgrimage to Mecca, establishing the Office of the Muslim Affairs (renamed as National Commission of Muslim Filipinos), and creating the ARMM with the jurisdiction to accredit the *madaris*. Other positive measures were taken when

the Libyan President donated some 250,000 Libyan pounds (over 4 million pesos) to aid the Muslim refugees and promised to support the cause of Muslims in Mindanao with money, arms, and volunteers (Gowing, n.d). Wary of possible intervention from Libya and other Muslim states, the government tried to establish some Islamic institutions in the country to show that the war in Philippine South was not religious. An example of this was the Golden Mosque which was constructed in the heart of downtown Manila when the Libyan President accepted the invitation of Imelda Marcos to come and visit the Philippines.

Among other reasons for the Philippine government to change its policy in the south can be attributed to the concern of the ASEAN members and the close attention from other Muslim states. It is a fact that religious sentiment from the Muslim world strongly strengthened the Muslim Filipinos' struggle. Despite the Philippines' propaganda that the Mindanao problem was in no sense a religious conflict, the "Islamic Conference Organization has never wavered in its moral support for justice for the Muslim Filipinos' cause, and it has sought to use its influence for a just solution to the Mindanao problem (Gowing, 1982, p. 19-20)." Aside from this, the Philippine government cannot ignore the fact that 80% of its oil requirements came from the Middle East, and that ensured that the concern with their Filipino Muslim brothers must be welcomed and respected. In response, the Philippine government played its part by emphasizing that the Muslim problem is simply a problem of national integration, an internal matter and not a religious issue, and "it seeks to mollify the Muslims by making some real, but not-too-costly (some of these projects were not accomplished for lack of enforcement) concessions to their Islamic sensitivities (Gowing, 1982, 21)." On the contrary, the government pointed out that its ultimate objective in launching a massive development was to uplift the education and the living conditions of the Muslims, who had been neglected, and who had suffered from the war.

Other than those reasons mentioned above, a clergyman from the Philippines' south pointed out the theoretical basis of the Philippine government strategy in neutralising the support of the Muslim world by legalising the position of the Muslim Filipinos within the context of *dar al-Islam*. In short, the government approved the Muslim's long demand for applying the Muslim personal laws was to undermine the implementation of jihad through Muslims' foreign aids to merely be as Muslims fighting for independence. According to Fr. Thomas O' Shaughnessy,

By the middle of the last century, Muslim jurists commonly held that a country did not become hostile territory (*dar al-Harb*) by the mere fact of non-Muslim conquest, but only when Muslims were impeded in the free observance of *Shari'ah* (O'Shaugnessy, 1984, p. 133).

The government is well informed about the concept of *dar al-Islam* and *dar al-kufr/harb*, as exemplified in the works of Muslim jurists. The socio-political implication of these concepts is known to the government through the information delivered by some Muslim leaders on the positive outcome of the rampant practice of Islamic law in developing Islamic education in the country. Because of this, a few Islamic educational institutions were established by the government to demonstrate that the Muslims are within *dar al-Islam*, a friendly territory and not a hostile land or *dar al-Harb*. Furthermore, it shows that the Muslim jurists' views on *dar al-Islam* became the key elements in implementing the Code of Muslim personal laws and the development of Islamic education in the Philippines. If the Islamic law can be implemented, it is believed that it will remove the last vestiges of the claim that religious matter is the cause of the Mindanao conflict. At least one Christian Filipino scholar has studied this theory, and he wrote:

“But while the segment of *Ummah* having a minority status in a predominantly non-Muslim environment remains secure, the *jihad* may remain dormant unless the identity or survival of the minority Islamic community is placed in doubt. In this state of dormancy, it feels free to enter into peaceful relations with the non-Muslim country in which they reside.” The *Ummah* goes so far as to enjoin these members to obey the political authority and observe the laws of the non-Muslim country in which they reside. However, this admonition applies only when the non-Muslims' laws do not contradict Islamic law; in cases of conflict, the Muslims have no choice but to uphold their laws (Bauzon, 1991, p.66).”

This view is by the Abyssinian model that *jihad* and *hijrah* are not obligatory (Masud, 1989) because the freedom to express their identity by the

public observance of religious duties was guaranteed by the non-Muslim government.

Some people believed and viewed the development programs as ways “to heal the wounds” caused by the injustices of the national government and the Christian populace against the Muslims in the Philippines’ South. However, the national policymakers know how much the Muslims had been aggrieved by the failure of the government to provide them education by their Islamic culture and tradition. A Muslim educator pointed out, “it is in this field where there is a consensus among Muslims that they were treated with indifference, if not outright neglect by their government. As a result, they believe that inequities exist in educational resources and opportunities, particularly in terms of the availability of schools from the lowest to the highest levels (Macaray, 1989, p.104-105).” Perhaps, the resolutions made by Muslim leaders before the Philippines’ Senate to develop the neglected education of the Muslims has also helped to convince the government to change its educational policy towards the Muslim autonomous regions, particularly in the establishment of Islamic and Arabic institutions. It was a fair move by the government since in most neighboring countries like Singapore and Thailand, their respective governments allowed and authorised the teaching of Islamic and Arabic studies in certain schools and universities in areas predominantly occupied by Muslim minorities.

The government’s decision to create the ARMM is seen as a sign of a good response to satisfy the Muslims’ aspirations within the spirit of religious freedom and cultural diversity in the unitary state. The autonomy was a part of the seductive package of promises mentioned in the 1976 Tripoli Agreement between the Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF) and the Philippine Government. However, the long-promised implementation was only granted in November 1990. Lack of sincerity could be the reason for the long delay in establishing it, as clearly mentioned by Peter Gowing,

However, by the time negotiations on the details of implementing the Tripoli Agreement were begun in February 1977, it was obvious that the Philippine government was having second thoughts about some of the provisions as different sectors of the national society roundly criticised the agreement when parts of it were made public. The government then undertook to circumvent the spirit of

the agreement by insisting on interpretations of its provisions in ways the MNLF could only repudiate (Gowing, 1982, p.17).

The government offered a highly captivating and appealing model of development to the Muslims only at the time when confronted and pressured by the following events: First, when the OIC became seriously concerned with the Moro problem, particularly, in “recognising the right of the Muslims in Southern Philippines to present their problems to the concerned international *fora*, and to avail them all possible political supports in this respect, if the Government of the Philippines does not respect its commitment to resume negotiations with the view to draw up protocols for the implementation of the Tripoli agreement (Resolution No. 12 of the 10th Islamic Conference in Fez).” Second, when it won over the trust of the Muslim masses and their traditional leaders (Gowing, 1982); Third, when the government was striving to have a better image in the Muslim world and the ASEAN members, in order to lessen their sympathy to the Muslim movements and make them crippled by losing foreign aid; and fourth, when the integration of Muslim Filipinos to the Philippines’ national political life was focusing on the principle of “one nation, one ideology.”

Other people still believe that the Philippine Government develops Islamic education through the establishment of a few institutions and the implementation of some related laws, necessary, not for the realisation of the aspiration of the Muslim Filipinos but only to develop and enhance their education in Islamic and Arabic studies.

CONCLUSION

The current developments of Muslim education in the Philippines have undergone radical change in the last few decades. The integration of Muslim Education into the Philippine colonial state had been heavily shaped in accordance with the socio-economic and political landscape of the country. The agenda for reform of Muslim education has become a terrain of contention between the Philippine government and Muslim intellectuals. As part of the Philippine educational integration policy, the government grants no two systems under a unitary state. It is the sovereign right of the government to regulate the educational system affecting the majority and the cultural minority. On the part of the Muslims, the formation of Islamic education must be based on the set principles that are grounded with the

cultural values of Islam. And thus, the preservation, promotion, and control of Islamic education should be regarded as the responsibility of the Muslim scholars and leaders who can bring comprehensive transformations to education. The Muslim communities fear that if the reform of Muslim education is patterned from secularism, this will gradually result into crisis of Muslim identity, and thus, their aspiration for progress and development will remain unrealised (Alonto, 1976).

The Philippine government has adopted the secular approach of education as an instrument to integrate Muslims into the mainstream socio-political and educational system of the Philippines. However, several studies have shown the flawed strategies of the government towards the integration of Islamic and secular system of education (Rodriguez, 1992, Gamon & Tagoranao, 2018). It is apparent that the educational reform that has been so crafted by the government was meant to instil the value of “Filipinization” to the Muslim communities (Milligan, n.d). Such integration policy has been viewed by many policymakers as a tool to enhance cultural integration for the promotion of peace education, particularly in the newly established Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (BARMM). However, the Muslim intellectuals of the Philippine have clarified the main objective of Islamic education and its function, e.g. madrasah, were as an institution of learning par excellence. Yet, this had been forgotten in the Philippines’ history.

The Philippine Muslim intellectuals have defined ‘what is to be’ in the national educational system. They have alluded that due to the relativistic approach to education, -it has been capitalized by the Government as an ‘ideological state apparatus’ devised by the ruling elites to ensure that Muslims and other ethnic minorities conform to their ideas. This has eventually led to the birth of a minority vs. dominant group approach to education, in which the concept of ‘assimilation’, ‘absorption’ or ‘integration’ exhibits the superiority of the ideology and cultural standards of the dominant group over the minorities. What ‘ought to be’, as argued by the Philippine Muslim intellectuals, is the reflection of the dynamism of an education system in its method and approach in acquiring knowledge, social and technological advancement. It moulds the mind, intellect, soul and certainly, it harmonizes religious and social activities, ensuring every individual to be constantly attached with the rest of the community. Educators in the ARMM region have rightly observed that the gradual integration of Islamic thought and ideas into the BARMM philosophy of education was

made possible due to the innovative and proactive reinterpretation of the rights and duties of citizenship, and the cultures of the Muslims in which collaborative ideas of Muslim and non-Muslim intellectuals merged to place the so-called “black and gloomy” (Hassan, 2011) interpretation of Islam into the right perspective.

In bridging the gap between Muslims and Christians in the Philippines (Gamon & Tagoranao, 2018), the ideas of Muslim intellectuals were indeed instrumental in reducing the tensions between religious education and secular one. Smock said that intellectuals, “... religious leaders and organizations offer credibility as trusted institutions; a respected set of values; moral warrants to oppose injustice, [and a] unique leverage for promoting reconciliation among conflicting parties (Smok, 2008) p.2.” Thus their profound understanding of change and development must not be undermined due to their potential contribution to social transformation, peace, and sustainable development.

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