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Exploring the Guiding Philosophy of the School Administrators in BARMM, Southern Philippines: Responses from the Field

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ABSTRACT

This study aimed at investigating the educational philosophies as applied in the elementary school districts in the Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (BARMM), Philippines. Specifically, this paper explored the mission and vision of the school administrators; the application of which western philosophies in the school districts; and the integration of some Islamic practices in the context of the Muslim region. This also included the current administrative programs to achieve the school vision and the needed policy reforms to address some recurring challenges facing the elementary school now-a-days. Meanwhile, in spite of the guiding philosophies embedded in elementary schools, majority of the school administrators have integrated some Islamic philosophies into the context of administering the school. It was also found to have some major programs and policy reforms to improve the school organizational operation.

1. Introduction

The world today is swiftly moving in a faster rate. Time and again, education needs to conform to the fast technological explosion so as to keep pace the changing demands of time in the educational landscape. In the Philippines, education has been influenced by the influx of western philosophies brought about by the different waves of colonization from foreign invaders particularly the coming in of Americans in the country. However, in the Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (BARMM), which is located in the Southern part of the Philippines, majority of its population are Muslims. These Muslims were considered to be the

first civilized Groups to exist in the country before the advent of foreign colonizers in the Philippine shore. Hence, before the introduction of western education there exist the so called Madrasa Education System based on pure Islamic philosophy. Hence, conflict existed on how these two philosophies are being applied by the school administrators in the basic education particularly in the Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao. This study aims at providing analysis how western and Islamic philosophy are being applied by the school administrators in the elementary schools in the BARMM areas specifically in the Division of Sulu,



Province of Sulu, Philippines.

Three centuries of colonization and subjugation by the west in all field of knowledge, and imposition of western education system in the Muslim lands has been the main cause for losing direction by the Muslim ummah. The ummah has since long lost its traditions and now is blind follower of western education system. However, there does exist a number of Muslim educationists who feel that more than just a make-up has to be done for the designing and development of a truly dynamic Islamic education system. As a matter of fact, the educationists have to define the theory of Islamic education with clear cut objectives and methodologies.

A study by Sakili asserts that an educational system does not exist in a vacuum. It has its own background.¹ It is brought into existence to meet the needs of fundamental nature or of temporary or of local nature of an existing society or a newly emerging society. Thus, every ideology has its own objectives, and the education system of a nation embracing an ideology is mainly developed with the view to achieve those ideological objectives. As such it is odd to observe that the Islamic countries are adhering to an education system which is designed by the west to achieve its own secular objectives.

Education is the living knowledge, information and skills during the course of life, whilst education system is a platform which had been standardized and used as a reference by teachers to teach their students in communicative, informative and insightful way. In fact, education system acts as an indicator, which monitors the teaching to carry out within a policy that operates to fulfill the specific goal, which is to achieve and enable students to perform at an expected level within a specific span of time. Thus, the efficiency of educational system becomes the focus in the national development, as education turn to be the catalysis for eternal progress in order to

produce the valuable and visionary individual.²

Vision and mission of the school administrators

The Department of education in the Philippines in line with the statement of the Law in the Philippine Constitution established its vision which states that we are people organization committed to a culture of excellence in public service. Believing that the most important resource of our country is its people, we make the task of educating the Filipino children our singular mission. We assist the Filipino children to discover their full potentials in a child-centered and value-driven teaching-learning environment and thereby, enable them to create their own destiny in global community.³

We prepare them to become responsible citizens and enlightened leaders who love their country and proud to be Filipinos. We provide school systems where teachers and principals achieve the desired learning outcome not only because they are empowered, competent and accountable, but because they care. School administrator exercise visionary leadership responsive to emerging learning needs of the nation, ensure adequate resources, promote appropriate technology, create and sustain a conducive climate to enhance learning. Whereas the family, the community and other institutions actively support our efforts. We affirm the right of Filipino children especially the fess advantaged to benefit from such a system. This is our vision. With God's help, we dedicate all our talents and energies to its realization.⁴

The department of education's mission

The school administrators of the Department of education carried with them the mission which states that to provide quality basic education that is equitably accessible to all and lay the foundation for life-long learning and service for the common good. In a focus group discussion conducted by this



researcher in the office of the supervisor of Jolo II district showed the following results: Mr. Alamia (2011) principal of Bakud elementary school reacted during the FGD on the mission and vision of the school administrator. He said as school head, my primordial aspiration is to see at least 90 percent of our graduate become successful in their chosen field of studies and eventually become productive citizen of our country. Mr. Ahmad (2011) principal of Tanjung elementary school responded that as school head my vision is to provide quality education to every learner through conducive learning environment, adequate and functional resources. Mr. Mahamud (2011) principal of Jati elementary school said in the same FGD that as school head my vision is to develop the academic community to be functionally literate and God fearing. Mrs. Andan (2011) principal of Kasanyangan elementary school in the FGD said that as school head my vision is to develop competent teachers and productive pupils that can compete globally and become responsible citizen of the country. Mrs. Sangkula (2011) principal of Lawm Alat elementary school in the same FGD stressed that as school head my vision is to provide competent and dedicated teachers in order to produce academically competitive and production of pupils to attain quality education. The responses of the elementary school principals in the FGD conducted in the office of the district supervisor as they shared their visions and missions relative to the vision and mission of the Department of education as mentioned earlier. The principals are following the advocated mission and vision of the Philippine educational system. As the saying goes, these principals are good leaders since they are good followers. The mission and vision of the Department of Education are their inspiration as leader of their schools.

Guiding philosophy of the school administrators

In view of discussing the historical perspective of

the Philippine educational system, it was patterned in the Western philosophical tradition began in ancient Greece, and philosophy of education began with it.^{5,6} The major historical figures developed philosophical views of education that were embedded in their broader metaphysical, epistemological, ethical, and political theories. Socratic method of questioning began a tradition in which reasoning and the search for reasons that might justify beliefs, judgments, and actions was fundamental.^{7,8} Such questioning in turn eventually gave rise to the view that education should encourage in all students and persons, to the greatest extent possible, the pursuit of the life of reason. This view of the central place of reason in education has been shared by most of the major figures in the history of philosophy of education, despite the otherwise substantial differences in their other philosophical views.^{9,10}

Socrates' student Plato endorsed that view and held that a fundamental task of education is that of helping students to value reason and to be reasonable, which for him involved valuing wisdom above pleasure, honor, and other less-worthy pursuits. In his dialogue Republic he set out a vision of education in which different groups of students would receive different sorts of education, depending on their abilities, interests, and stations in life. Millennia later, the American pragmatist philosopher John Dewey (1859-1952) argued that education should be tailored to the individual child, though he rejected Plato's hierarchical sorting of students into categories. Plato's student Aristotle also took the highest aim of education to be the fostering of good judgment or wisdom, but he was more optimistic than Plato about the ability of the typical student to achieve it. He also emphasized the fostering of moral virtue and the development of character; his emphasis on virtue and his insistence that virtues develop in the context of community-guided practices are reflected in contemporary interest in "virtue



theory” in ethics and communitarianism in political philosophy.¹¹

Dewey emphasized the educational centrality of experience and held that experience is genuinely educational only when it leads to growth. But the idea that the aim of education is growth proved to be a problematic and controversial one, and even the meaning of the slogan is unclear. Dewey also emphasized the importance of the student's own interests in determining appropriate educational activities and ends in view; in this respect he is usually seen as a proponent of child-centered education, though he also stressed the importance of students' understanding of traditional subject matter. While these Deweyian themes are strongly reminiscent of Rousseau, Dewey placed them in a far more sophisticated about philosophically contentious context. He emphasized the central importance of education for the health of democratic social and political institutions, and he developed his educational and political views from a foundation of systematic metaphysics and epistemology. Indeed, the philosophical foundation of the Philippine education grow with the doctrines introduces by the Western people. The content of the seminar or workshop presented to the school administrators elsewhere in the Philippines are decoded in the advocacy of the philosophies of Dewey.

Integration of Islamic philosophy in education

School principals in the BARMM areas shared their guiding philosophy in the Focus Group discussion implies forcible adoption of the philosophy of the west they are intended to make reforms towards Islamic philosophy, Most of them emphasized the needs of molding the youth through Islamic knowledge and hereafter. None of them mentioned the western philosophy but they are strongly supportive of teaching the pupils in line with the ALIVE Programs. They reasoned out that the

means of solving the problems of graft and corruption, kidnapping, and absenteeism is through sincere cultivation of taqwa, Iman and ibadah.

To their point of views, it is the manner of doing ones duties and responsibilities in the field of work for public services with the belief of doing for Allah's sake so that there is great hope of gaining rewards from Allah. On the other hand, it certain administrators are not doing the duties and responsibilities in the belief as ordained in Islam there might be punishment not only in this world but eternally in the hereafter. A supervisor in Jolo II district, stressed further in the FGD, the clarification between taqwa and iman. *Taqwa* is a manner of doing things as if Allah is present giving rewards for good deeds and punishment for bad deeds, while *iman* is the belief of doing things while Allah and His Malaikah are witnessing and even listing down all the accomplished works so that in the day of judgment there will be justice.^{12,13}

In addition, as supervisor of Jolo III district have strong conviction with the help of the Almighty Allah and in line with the law, I am in this position to provide adequate and functional facilities highly competent and dedicated school heads, teaching personnel and supportive community to produce literate pupils. The most important function of the supervisory officials is the educational leadership. The leadership can encourage each member of the group to make his best contribution to establish group thinking and action in the foundation of *taqwa*, *iman* and *ibadah*.

Leadership in the way of Islam is a motivation from the Almighty Allah as mentioned in [Al-Baqarah: 30:7], Behold, the Lord said to the angels: "I will create a vicegerent on earth" They said. "Wilt Thou place therein one who will make mischief therein and shed blood? whilst we do celebrate Thy praises and glorify Thy holy (name)?" He said: "I know what ye know not." The leaders in education institutions is a



vice gerent in his school. In the book of Hadith Rasulullah (SAW) said: Verily, the leader among you is the vicegerent of Allah on that community; he shall protect the rights of the wronged among the populace. If the leader judges justly he will receive the reward of Allah and the people should be grateful for it. While if the leader judges unjustly, he is sure to receive the wrath from Allah and the people must be enduring and patient.¹³

The Muslim leaders (administrators and supervisors) are instructed by the Almighty Allah to guide the pupils and introduce reform in [Al-Hajj: 449], the Almighty Allah revealed "Those Muslim rulers who, if we give them power in the land, (they) order for *iqamat as-salat* (prayers); to pay *zakat* and they enjoy *al-ma'ruf* (belief in Oneness of Allah and all that Islam prescribes one to do), and forbid *al-munkar* (disbelief, polytheism and all that Islam has forbidden). And with Allah rests the end of (all) matters (of creatures). In [An-Nisa: 118], the Almighty Allah revealed "Verily! Allah commands that you should render back the trusts upon whom they are due; and that when you judge between men, you judge with justice. Verily, how excellent is the teaching which He (Allah) gives you Truly, Allah is All-Hearing, All-Seeing. Inju (2012) encourages the Muslim leaders in the community of which the administrators, supervisors, principals, and other school heads are included in this sermon. He said O! Muslims. Whoever of you becomes the leader has to learn and put to practice the qualities and requirements of Allah and the way the other prophets lead their people specially the Sunnah of the Prophet Muhammad (SAW). Other models are the leadership of the Companions (*sahaba*), from Abu Bakr As Siddiq, Omar Ibn al-Khattab Al Farouk, Uthman ibn Affan Dhun Norain, and Ali ibn Abi Thalib.

Given a little chance to exercise the qualities of the leaders of Islam, it is now a high time to inculcate in the educational system in the BARMM the highest

philosophical foundation of education for humanity the Islamic philosophy and practice. The administrators, supervisors, principals and other school heads should provide task orientation program and human resources to establish the Islamic philosophy as a core of teaching learning processes that would lead the Muslim children perform their duties and responsibilities as they grow old in line with the teaching of Islam as the perfect religion of Allah. The way to salvation of humankind in this world and especially in the future life in the hereafter is Islam. Therefore, the guiding philosophy of the educational system in this world should be the Islamic philosophy.

Current programs/actions towards attaining the vision

Recently the Department of Education are launching the program of teachers training qualifying the Arabic teachers to teach in the public elementary schools in the provinces of the BARMM. The program was hosted by the College of Education of MSU-Sulu lasted for two semesters with rigid training in lesson planning integration to other discipline, and the techniques, methods and strategies of teaching. This program was supported financially by the BEAM and USAID. The program is centered on the teaching of Arabic language and values education to cater the secular education with Islamic philosophy. This program is a direction towards attaining the vision of the Department of education to make the task of educating the Filipino child as a singular mission and assist them to discover full potential in a child-centered and value-driven teaching-learning environment enables them to create their own destiny in global community.

The Department of Education of the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao integrate in every pupil the learning of the core language of the Qur'an (Arabic) and mold the children in the way of Islamic



values to enhance complete success in the worldly life and the life after death. It is always a dream of every Muslim community to integrate the teaching in the Qur'an and Sunnah to the life of individual Muslim to promote justice, equalities, and love for the pleasure of Allah. Indeed, these endeavors nearly harvest the fruit of success, that one day the people of Sulu will educationally become competitive, resourceful and achieved the total being in the way of Islam.

The participants of the FGD responded to the inquiries about the programs or actions towards attaining their vision. Mrs. Sangkula (2011) said i am preparing improvement plan for our school with support of PTA, LGU, Parents, Barangay and other stakeholder to attain our vision. Mrs. Andan (2011) said as principal or administrator, I am responsible for the growth in teaching effectiveness of each individual teacher in the school. As principal I have set the rate of growth in the school, the teacher improves toward the direction of leadership. Mr. Ahmad (2011) said I am moving forward to strengthen the community through constant consultation with all the stakeholders. Mr. Alamia (2011) said that I am a staunch advocate of educational philosophy which postulating education can liberate our people from the bondage of ignorance and consequently alleviate poverty. All DepEd thrusts that will help attained the desired goals of education are being implemented. These school administrators are equipped with the feasible accessories to develop quality education. They are managing the school to the best of their abilities and assures for better plans to improve the children in their areas of responsibilities. These administrators, then needs the aid of the learned people in Islamic way of administrating the school for better life of the children, teachers, parents, community and globally. Their plans should be aided with the program that carries with it the Islamic philosophy.

Needed policy reforms

The ALIVE program of the BARMM is a partial reforms granted by the Philippine government to the Muslim areas in Mindanao. The agenda of policy reforms should meaningfully be addressed by the politicians and educators to enhance peaceful community. The reforms in curriculum design should be given due attention. Dansalan have found in his study of the Factors Associated with the Content and Method of Teaching Science Vis-à-vis Attitudes of Teachers towards Physics, that there is e tow/negligible significant correlation between teacher competency, Islamic faith and attitudes of teachers towards physics.⁶ This study has given evidence to the need of reforms in teaching science. The teachers are not committed to show basic knowledge of Islam while they are oblige to integrate the knowledge to reform the life of the pupils to the content of Islamic teaching. Sakili in his study of the Islamization of Higher Education Science Curriculum in Sulu found out that modern science is in harmony with Islamic concept theories and principles of biological, physical, and earth and space science were brought to the science of Islam after reinterpreted.¹ Again the agenda of reforms in science curriculum and to use Islamic knowledge in the context of Qur'an and Hadith conceptually aligned with the secular education. The major problem that confronts the reforms is the training of teachers in the Qur'anic text and the knowledge of a hadith which takes time, efforts and financial subsidies to address the program.

Manpower is in great demand to establish policy reforms. The school administrators, school officials, and school supervisors are main concern to carry out the reforms but sad experiences in the study of Ladjaanan of the Fulfillment of Islamic Obligations in the Context of Administrative Responsibility: An



Advocacy Approach verified that it requires reforms right in the core of the school officials.⁷ He found that only 26.7 percent of the school officials in the higher education on their own level have observed sincerely and correctly Islamic obligations, the majority 40 percent fall on the low satisfactory level in the discharge of their Islamic obligations and 33.3 percent were rated very low satisfactory in the discharge of their Islamic obligations. Yet, they are the most responsible persons in the arena of developing the educational system and curriculum reforms, but they are on this sad plight of serious problems. How much more a pupil in the elementary schools can be expected to do the required reforms if their own god fathers in the school system cannot discharge sincerely and correctly the Islamic way of life.

In the end, the educational reforms should start from the people who are holding the key positions in the school systems. The superintendent, presidents, chancellors, supervisors, deans, principals, head teachers, teachers are all liable to stand and carry the responsibilities of the educational reforms. They should hold their hands together and cooperatively react to the scene to make the policy reforms more meaningful, achievable and implemented in the school systems.

The reforms initiated by the Department of Education and Culture were mentioned in school administration and supervision. Gregorio mentioned that the major reform initiated by the Department of Education and Culture is the revision of our school curricula.⁵ The Department started the reform to update and enrich the school curricula to render education relevant to the aims and needs of the New Society. The Philippine school system is being restructured to meet the nation's manpower needs and cope with social and economic problems. The curricula in the three levels of our educational system have been revised or changed to make them work and

production-oriented. They now offer technical courses which emphasize specialization and short term training in certain skills. With the institution of manifold educational reform, the State has made it a policy to maintain the highest quality of education for national development.

The other reforms in Gregorio are Youth Civic Action Program intended for all levels of education.⁵ Activities or projects may be pursued during weekends or when the student is not attending academic classes during the regular school year and during the summer term. It has branched out from raising of vegetables and other crops to livestock, fish, handicraft, and other productive industries. Students are now engaged in the production of marketable articles for local and export markets. The direction of our school system is toward exposing our students in all levels of work-oriented courses relevant to socio-economic development. DepEd also drafted the rules and regulations of the provisions of the charter, making a study of the New Constitution part of the curricula of all schools. Another reform which is related to curriculum revision initiated by the DepEd is the college entrance to maintain the highest quality education for national development.

These are the reforms initiated by the national school system. In these reforms the DepEd the national government are looking at the possibilities that the pupils will be successful when many are equipped with worldly things, eating all good taste foods, extravagant transportation, luxurious home and enjoyable government positions. Islam doesn't reprimand a Muslim from gaining all those things, but the sad argument is that all of these things are only for this worldly pleasure, zero contribution to the life as prescribed in the teachings of the prophets of Islam. As a reminder in (Surah 102: Takathur: 1-5: 848), the mutual rivalry for piling up (the good things of this world) diverts you (from the more serious things), until ye visit the graves. But nay, ye soon



shall know (the reality). Again ye soon shall know. Nay, were ye to know with certainty of mind, (ye would beware!) ye shall see the hell fire! Again, ye shall it with certainty of sight! Then, shall ye be that day about the joy (ye indulged in!).¹²

The school administrators in the Muslim Areas in the BARMM should not sleep and stay ignorance in the context of educational system. They should strive to integrate the philosophy of Islam in the educational reform. It is now the time that BARMM must show the whole world and the entire humanity. They should start the self-reform program as the method that was established in Mecca way back the beginning when Mohammad (SAW) started to call the Quraish to Islam. He reforms himself, family members, friends and the entire people of Medina, Byzantium, Rome, Iraq and the entire world.

More so, educational reforms in the BARMM should be tackled by the Muslims who have earned doctoral degree in the international, national and local colleges and universities. Otherwise, the BARMM region is populated by the corrupt people, selfish, ignorance of Islam, partially covered by Sharia Islam, and Muslims only in name. The reminder from the Almighty Allah (SWT) in (Surah 3: Al-Imran: 101-105: 87-88), And how would ye deny faith while unto you are rehearsed the signs of Allah (SWT) and among the lives of the messengers.¹²

Whoever holds firmly to Allah will be shown a way that is straight. o ye who believe! fear Allah as He should be feared, and die not except in a state of Islam. And hold fast, All together, by the Rope which Allah (stretches out For you), and be not divided among yourselves, and remember with gratitude Allah's favor on you; For you were enemies and He joined your hearts in love, so that by His Grace, you became brethren; And you were on the brink of the pit of fire, And He saved you from it. Thus doth Allah make His signs clear to you; that ye may be guided. Let there arise out of you people a band inviting to all

that is good, enjoining what is right, and forbidding what is wrong: They are the ones to attain felicity. Be not like those who are divided amongst themselves and fall into disputations after receiving clear signs; for them is a dreadful penalty.

The Muslim professionals should reflect on the teaching of the Holy Quran and Rasulullah (SAW) so that their life in this world of cause will be guided to the right path Islam. The perfect religion, way of life, and protected by the Almighty Allah. In (Surah 2: Al-Baqarah:28: 7); The Almighty Allah revealed: how can you reject the faith in Allah.- seeing that ye were without life, and He gave your life; then will He cause you to die, and will again bring you to life; and again to Him will ye return.

In the same Surah: 44: 10): The Almighty Allah revealed; do you enjoin right conduct on the people, and forget (to practice it) yourselves, and yet ye study the Scripture? Will you not understand? Still in Surah 2: Al- Baqarah, 208: 44): The Most Merciful and Compassionate Allah revealed: O you who believe! Enter into Islam wholeheartedly; and follow not the footsteps of the evil one; For he is to you an avowed enemy. in verse 213: 45) in the same Surah: The Almighty Allah revealed: Mankind was one single nation, and Allah sent Messengers with glad tidings and warnings; and with them He sent The Book in truth, to judge between people In matters wherein they differed; but the people of the Book, after the clear signs came to them, did not differ among themselves, except through selfish contumacy. Allah by His grace guided the believers to the truth, concerning that wherein they differed for Allah guides whom. He will to a path that is straight.¹²

2. Conclusion

In the light of the findings, the following conclusions are hereby drawn: that in spite of the introduction of the western philosophies in the Department of Education in the BARRM, southern



part of the Philippines, many school administrators have integrated some Islamic Philosophies in the context of school administrative operation; Likewise, there were also some programs undertaken by the department to attain the school vision like teachers development program and pupils' intervention program. Moreover, there were also policy reforms initiated like curriculum redesigning and Youth Civic Action Program for the students.

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