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Issues in Muslim Education

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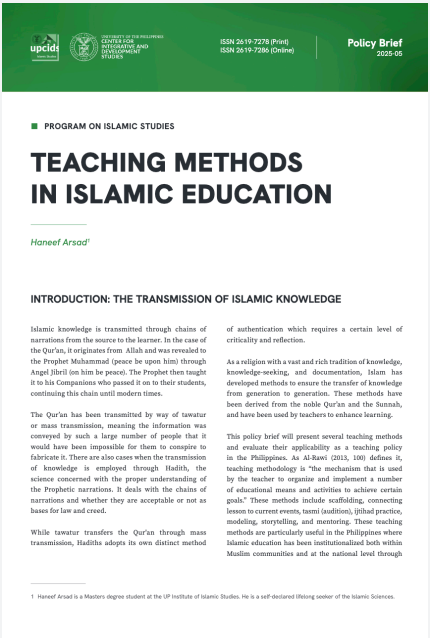

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Policy Brief
2025-05

PROGRAM ON ISLAMIC STUDIES

TEACHING METHODS IN ISLAMIC EDUCATION

Haneef Arsad[1]

INTRODUCTION: THE TRANSMISSION OF ISLAMIC KNOWLEDGE

Islamic knowledge is transmitted through chains of narrations from the source to the learner. In the case of the Qur'an, it originates from Allah and was revealed to the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) through Angel Jibril (on him be peace). The Prophet then taught it to his Companions who passed it on to their students, continuing this chain until modern times.

The Qur'an has been transmitted by way of tawatur or mass transmission, meaning the information was conveyed by such a large number of people that it would have been impossible for them to conspire to fabricate it. There are also cases when the transmission of knowledge is employed through Hadith, the science concerned with the proper understanding of the Prophetic narrations. It deals with the chains of narrations and whether they are acceptable or not as bases for law and creed.

While tawatur transfers the Qur'an through mass transmission, Hadiths adopts its own distinct method of authentication which requires a certain level of criticality and reflection.

As a religion with a vast and rich tradition of knowledge, knowledge-seeking, and documentation, Islam has developed methods to ensure the transfer of knowledge from generation to generation. These methods have been derived from the noble Qur'an and the Sunnah, and have been used by teachers to enhance learning.

This policy brief will present several teaching methods and evaluate their applicability as a teaching policy in the Philippines. As Al-Rawi (2013, 100) defines it, teaching methodology is "the mechanism that is used by the teacher to organize and implement a number of educational means and activities to achieve certain goals." These methods include scaffolding, connecting lesson to current events, tasmi (audition), ijtihad practice, modeling, storytelling, and mentoring. These teaching methods are particularly useful in the Philippines where Islamic education has been institutionalized both within Muslim communities and at the national level through

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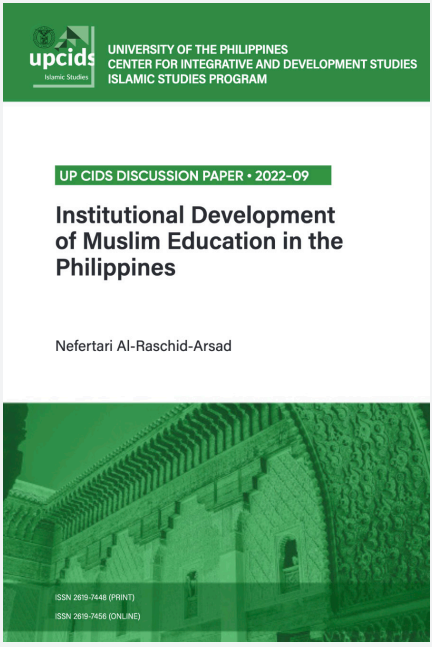
Teaching Methods in Islamic Education



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ISSUES IN MUSLIM EDUCATION

Neferti Arsad

INTRODUCTION

Islamic education in the Philippines has assumed many forms, each serving a particular need or purpose. The Philippines' Madrasah Education Program (MEP) under the Department of Education (DepEd) is implemented in public schools to chiefly resolve what the government perceives as the educational dichotomy between state schooling and the *madrasah* system in Muslim communities, which is assumed to have disadvantaged Muslim learners. The *madrasah* in an ever-expanding number of Muslim communities, is a continuing initiative to educate constituents on Islam and produce practicing Muslims and strong believers who would uphold the faith across generations. Integrated schools established by private Muslim individuals and institutions strive to strengthen connections between *madaris* (plural of *madrasah*) and Philippine education by mainstreaming students to the latter while ensuring that they are equally educated in the former. The three forms mentioned above were the focus of the UP CIDS-Islamic Studies Program project, "Issues in Muslim Education." The project aimed to continually dialogue with stakeholders in these schools to determine salient issues they encountered in their respective institutions. It also sought to address needed soft skills or capacities that would enable stakeholders to better address these issues. The project team relied on stakeholder information and some professional judgment to design capacity-building interventions for them. The project proceeded at a micro-scale, working with a limited number of stakeholders at the school level. The underpinning philosophy here was that there was greater facility for interventions to be carried out while their impacts were more easily observable within shorter time periods. Overall, identified issues could be classified under the overarching concepts of curriculum and understanding learner behaviors.

DEFINING CURRICULUM

The United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) Curriculum Report Card (2000) defines curriculum as

> "interaction between students and teachers that is designed to achieve specific educational goals.. (10) "

This definition is a distinct departure from previous understandings of curriculum as a mere document or plan of study indicating that its meanings

have evolved over time. The table below organizes Print's (1993) cross-referencing of curriculum definitions through the decades.[1]

DEFINITIONS OF CURRICULUM	
Ralph Tyler (1949)	"All of the learning of students which is planned by and directed by the school to attain its educational goals."
D.K. Wheeler (1967)	"By 'curriculum' we mean the planned experiences offered to the learner under the guidance of the school."
E. Eisner (1979)	"The curriculum of a school, or a course, or a classroom can be conceived of as a series of planned events that are intended to have educational consequences for one or more students."
G. Saylor, W. Alexander & A.J. Lewis (1981)	"We define curriculum as a plan for providing sets of learning opportunities for persons to be educated."
M. Skilbeck (1984)	"The learning experiences of students, in so far as they are expressed or anticipated in goals and objectives, plans and designs for learning and the implementation of the plans and designs in school environments."
A. Glathorn (1987)	"The curriculum is the plans made for guiding learning in schools, usually represented in retrievable documents of several levels of generality, and the actualisation of those plans in the classroom, as experienced by the learners and as recorded by an observer; those experiences take place in a learning environment which also influences what is learned."
J. Wiles and J. Bondi (1989)	"... the curriculum (is) a goal or set of values, which are activated through a development process culminating in classroom experiences for students. The degree to which those experiences are a true representation of the envisioned goal or goals is a direct function of the effectiveness of the curriculum development efforts."
M. Print (1993)	"Curriculum is defined as all the planned learning opportunities offered to learners by the educational institution and the experiences learners encounter when the curriculum is implemented." Planned learning opportunities and the experiences encountered during curriculum implementation

■ Adapted from Print (1993)

1 Sourced from Arsad (2016). Module 1, Course package on Principles and Processes of Curriculum Development, UPOU Faculty of Education [Add bibliography entry]

Curriculum is often erroneously interchanged with the syllabus, which refers to details and guidelines of a course (objectives, learning materials, schedule of activities, etc.). The latter serves as a document containing crucial details for learner performance within the parameters of a specific course.

The UNICEF definition clarifies that curriculum takes on succeeding forms in a process where teachers, learners, and resources interact dynamically, with varying outcomes for learners as ultimate end users. These forms I refer to are the planned, implemented and achieved curriculum.

The planned curriculum is a document detailing the four elements of intent, content, learning activities and assessment, and evaluation. The planned curriculum is closest to several curriculum definitions featured above. Curriculum intent comes in the form of statements of what educators expect their learners to achieve in terms of knowledge, skills, and attitudes. Termed "competencies," their achievement usually occurs within a range of lower-order to higher-order skills.

Curriculum content refers to the units of knowledge that learners need to learn. These units are the concepts, skills and values that learners encounter through direct instruction, resources, and other activities planned for by the teacher. While there are several proposals from educators on content selection principles, a concise overview of the five-point guideline was provided by Ornstein and Hunkins (1998). These five points are enumerated below:

1. **Significance** is the value attributed to content in relation to learners. This value will be relative given the diversity of learner background, perspectives, and styles and the society in which they move.

2. **Utility** refers to the practical worth of content. Its worthiness considers the different contexts of learners, community, and greater society.

3. **Validity** is the quality which ensures that knowledge is authentic and reliable, derived from trustworthy sources.

4. **Learnability** is the quality that ensures learner age, developmental level, and readiness are well considered to offer them appropriate content.

5. **Feasibility** realistically considers school resources, infrastructure, and other elements that affect curriculum implementation.

Learning activities are the means by which curriculum developers and teachers guide learners towards achieving target learning outcomes or desired behaviors typically stated in the curriculum intent. For this to happen, learning activities must be carefully selected and prepared for. Planning for learning activities consider school resources and infrastructure, and in many instances, teacher capability. It must be emphasized that the primary consideration is always the learner. One of the more known strategies in educational technology for optimizing learner engagement is Dale's "Cone of Experiences." The Cone classified different learning activities according to the percentage of correspondent lesson retention in learners. The Cone has since been built on to match equivalent learning outcomes to the learning activities that Dale rated.[2]

Assessment and evaluation are both tools to determine learner progress, though each have distinct methodologies. Assessment pertains to "the wide variety of methods or tools that educators use to evaluate, measure, and document the academic readiness, learning progress, skill acquisition, or educational needs of students" (https://www.edglossary.org/assessment/). Evaluation is "the process of judging the quality of student learning on the basis of established performance standards, and assigning a value to represent that quality." (https://www.dcp.edu.gov.on.ca/en/assessment-evaluation/evaluation).

ISSUES IN MUSLIM EDUCATION

The project draws on insights from previous CIDS-ISP engagements concerning the Muslim education sector, and repeated consultations with its stakeholders as part of the 2024 CIDS-ISP project activities. These engagements were in the form of individual and group interviews along with focus group and round table discussions. The underlying premise was that for interventions to be authentic and responsive, they had to be founded on open communication and feedback.

2 See Wiham and Meihenry (1960) model on Edgar Dale [Add bibliography entry]

The training-workshop content responded to needs expressed by stakeholders during the consultations. These stakeholders were administrators and school teachers of an integrated madrasah, traditional madrasah and the MEP respectively. The roundtable discussion focused on determining the impact of the seminar-workshop in their philosophy or actions in the teaching-learning process. It was necessary to discern which component of the interventions made positive impacts on educators' theory and praxis of learning.

Curriculum

Through interactions with Muslim education stakeholders, it was determined that education and equity were underlying causes of curriculum issues.

Content and Learning Activities

Muslim educators in the public schools expressed the most concern about the material being taught in school. These concerns were concentrated primarily on content, and secondarily learning activities that represented worldviews and values that were incompatible with Islam or did not address nor recognize the contexts of Muslim learners. Department of Education Order no. 51 s. 2004 is a directive exclusively for Muslim education which cites the preservation of Muslim cultural heritage alongside the promotion of Filipino national identity as one of its chief aims. This order has since been amended by DepEd Order no. 40, s. 2011 though the primary goals remain unchanged. While Muslim aspirations towards "authentic and appropriate" education have been acknowledged in the said order, an incongruence in the implementation process, particularly impacting the knowledge and values being taught, still remains.

Educational Inclusion and Equity

During the interviews, it was noted that the Arabic Language and Islamic Values Education (ALIVE) subject of the MEP remained an optional subject in public schools and did not carry credit as a regular subject nor weight in the computation of honors. Per teacher experience in Zamboanga City, the ALIVE subject was also assigned time slots during either lunch break or after the last period when most other students were free from schoolwork and going home. The ALIVE teacher felt that the schedules were prejudicial to

the subject, claiming that taking away lunch and leisure times from children would negatively dispose them to learning the Arabic Language and Islamic values. According to him, the ALIVE teachers were hard put to call children into their classes for this reason. He strongly expressed the hope that this state of affairs would change.

The above issues are seen as actions that denigrated the ALIVE subject, rendering it unequal to other subjects and compromising its relevance to Muslim learners. ALIVE's current status is opposite to the importance Muslims give to learning the Islamic sciences—the knowledge of which are essential to spiritual and moral growth.

Based on ALIVE teacher testimonies, it was apparent that the DepEd's implementation of the ALIVE program in public school locales could only be addressed systemically, hopefully informed by open dialogue between DepEd Division personnel and their stakeholders. If that were not enough, representation at the national level could be attempted.

It does not help that the form of curriculum integration that DepEd has always used for ALIVE and Indigenous People (IP) education is an additive approach known as the "mix, stir, and serve" modality. This method is the mere addition of new content to the standard curriculum content, in contrast to the preferred integrative approach which recognizes and acts to address a diversity of knowledge foundations and contexts (Scott 1994). Banks (1997) similarly defines the additive approach as adding new concepts and themes to the curriculum without effecting any change in its original structure. This denotes an inflexibility in the curriculum, where learning areas simply exist as discrete elements without having any connections with each other. Scott (1994) does acknowledge that the approach is indicative of a shift in the way curriculum is framed. It also serves the purpose of initiating further conversations about curriculum.

Scott (1994) and Banks (1997) speak from the vantage point of multicultural education. Multicultural education is "a reform movement, which involves transforming variables in the school environment so that all students have an equal opportunity to learn" (Banks 1997, 4). An earlier definition by Sleeter and Grant (1988) views multicultural education as proactively engaging issues of race, culture, language, social class, gender, and disability in the school

and classroom. Should Scott's observation on the current additive approach be the case about Muslim and IP education in the Philippines, stakeholders should expect developments, particularly better educational reform actions, potentially including a shift to the multicultural education paradigm in this sector. Additionally, teacher training programs that are more suited to the context of Muslim education and the needs and capacities of ALIVE teachers could be crafted. A significant number of ALIVE teachers come from foreign Islamic institutions. Their respective expertise is in the Islamic sciences which is the main basis for their hiring into the ALIVE program. While their educational background is a definite advantage in higher education, the Madrasah Education Program is offered in basic education. Therefore, ALIVE teachers with this educational background need training in pedagogy, as well as educational planning and instructional design appropriate for young learners.

On another note, the ALIVE teachers expressed appreciation for this project because it was conceptualized considering Muslim culture, giving priority to the development of Islamic education. However, they noted that their training from DepEd did not quite fit their particular contexts and perspectives since the training program developers were not Muslims.

Insights on the challenges encountered with the additive approach to curriculum transformation were the basis for developing modules on curriculum integration and contextualization. It was posited that using conceptual integration of Islamic concepts across learning areas and vice-versa would be a good way to work within the current system. Curriculum contextualization on the other hand would allow Muslim educators to clarify or infuse the Islamic stance on concepts, ideas, and issues which students habitually encountered in the learning process. The training was designed to be interactive to allow authentic and real-time inputs from Muslims educators.

UNDERSTANDING LEARNER BEHAVIOR

In separate interviews with educators of a private Muslim integrated school, the MEP, and traditional madrasah respectively, a common challenge mentioned was managing learner behavior. Behavior typologies ranged from inattentiveness, disruptive movements, the inability to stay put, hurtful movements, and the incapacity to retain lessons. Educators surmised that

learners with these behaviors could possibly be children with special needs. They likewise admitted their incapability to deal with such children. The integrated school administrator shared one instance of a child who had a heavy hand with a tendency to physically hurt other students and become disruptive. The child's parents were advised to transfer their child to a school which had a special education program. Despite the parent's wishes for the child to remain in the integrated school because of its Islamic curriculum and school culture, they had to abide by the advice.

The aforementioned case prompted the school administrator to ask whether there were ways for the school to diagnose student applicants with special needs in order to make informed decisions with respect to a child's admission. The administrator similarly inquired if the DepEd had diagnostic tools they could request to not only screen student applicants, but also test current students with severe behavioral issues. Such tools would provide an official basis for both student admissions and for recommending students to transfer to schools with special education programs. He was concerned about turning down parents who wanted an Islamic education curriculum for their children and lamented the lack of special education support programs in their locale. Traditional madrasah teachers similarly expressed concerns about dealing with learner behavior which they did not quite understand.

Meanwhile, an MEP teacher working in the city outskirts was overwhelmed when the school principal gave her the additional assignment of teaching IP students, particularly those from the Sama Badjao ethnolinguistic group. Initially, she asked the project team leader to meet with Sama Badjao parents in her assigned community to orient them on the education system that their children were attending. She hoped that such a meeting would lead to the improved academic performance of her learners. She shared that the Sama Badjao children behaved differently in school and speculated whether they were learners with special needs. She likewise expressed the great wish to help them learn but admitted that she did not know how.

The MEP teacher's qualms were valid for several reasons. First, the extra assignment of the MEP teacher is not within her expertise. Second, in relation to the first point, the ALIVE program and IP education have different trajectories. Lastly, Sama Badjaos, like other many other indigenous groups, have a unique cultural makeup that may have disparities with the prevailing

school system. The Sama Badjao people are free-spirited people with close ties to the sea. Their lives go by the seasons and their timelines are dissonant with that of mass education systems.

The lack of access to culturally-responsive education has been recognized by the DepEd as a significant source of marginalization of Philippine IPs.[3] Alangui (2017, 184) sees the promise in DepEd Order no. 62, s. 2011 as a movement towards "an IP education that is responsive to their context, respects their identities, and promotes the value of their traditional knowledge, skills, and other aspects of their cultural heritage." An earlier study by Alangui (1997) in Kankana-ey communities in the Mountain Province, Philippines had articulated this standpoint, advocating for the restructuring of educational programs for indigenous peoples that critically consider the following:

1. Curriculum's possible inconsistency with community life;
2. Contents and modes of teaching in these communities may prove more effective;
3. Education programs sensitive to community life are more acceptable to the people

The earlier outputs from Muslim educators were the basis for crafting the mentoring component and the curriculum contextualization element of the training program. The mentoring component was designed to promulgate the concept of *tarbiyyah* or nurturing in general and special educational contexts. Incidentally, the lectures on the latter contexts were found to resonate strongly with the Muslim educator participants. The curriculum contextualization component detailed earlier talked of engaging concepts and ideas in terms of Islamic knowledge and values. In this instance, contextualization would be more generic, considering learner perspectives and situations, social and community contexts, etc.

3 See DepEd (Department of Education). 2011. "Order no. 62, series of 2011: Adopting the National Indigenous Peoples (IP) Education Policy Framework." [date of order DD MM, YYYY]. Link/URL

INTERVENTIONS

Implemented interventions for the project were a training/workshop featuring modules covering curriculum integration, contextualization, and mentoring, under which was an important component on understanding learner behavior.

CURRICULUM INTEGRATION

Beane (1995, 616) defines curriculum integration as "a way of thinking about what schools are for, about the sources of curriculum, and about the uses of knowledge," with its primary focus being the "search for self- and social meaning." The relativity of meaning here predisposes curriculum to be broad and relevant. Pring (1971, 170) posits that curriculum integration approaches commonly disapproved of "curriculum fragmentation, subject barriers, and the compartmentalization or pigeonholing of knowledge with its accompanying specialization and frequent irrelevance to real problems."

In a more technical vein, curriculum integration fosters connections within and across learning areas in an inclusive educational environment. During the training, two types of integration were discussed: integration through literature and conceptual integration. Miller (1995) argued that integrating subject matter strengthens teaching because interconnections naturally occur in real life. Loepp (1999, 22) expressed a parallel view stating that "The assumption is that most real-world problems are multidisciplinary in nature and that the current curriculum (discipline-centered) is unable to engage students in real world situations" Loepp (1999) further observed that curriculum integration more commonly occurs in the elementary grades than in high school and college. His review of educational literature indicates that interdisciplinary connections at the elementary level were built around themes; while the higher educational levels employed problems to foster integration.

Integration through Literature

Pre-workshop interviews with early grades educators in higher education revealed that thematic integration in the early grades is commonly sought with the use of literature. This approach was employed during the training, using a selection on *Darul Hajar* or the *Imam's Rock Palace* in Yemen, famed for its extraordinary architecture. The selection was deployed to different subject teachers in elementary and high school. The teachers were initially asked to identify concepts and ideas in the selection and suggest the learning areas which these intersected. They were later asked to propose lessons in their respective learning area which could use the selection as springboard. The workshop outputs surfaced an interesting spectrum of interconnected concepts. Arabic teachers chose to focus on the term Imam, Arabic for leader. They proposed an integrated lesson that would include writing of the word in Arabic, reinforcing its rules and the practice of Arabic scriptwriting; the lesson would be further extended by delving into the concept of Imam, its layered meanings, and a discussion on an Imam's community functions. Lastly, examples of great Imams in Islam and their stories would complete the lesson, allowing students an in-depth appreciation of intersecting concepts that cover Arabic language, writing, history, and a bit of jurisprudence. *Araling Panlipunan* (Social Studies) teachers easily acknowledged the social and historical elements in the selection, which was about a renowned Yemeni leader whose palace was a testament to the country's history. Science and mathematics teachers used the selection as a springboard for discussion on physics concepts such as the optical illusion of the palace's seamless blending with the natural landscape along with lessons on trajectories and acceleration. Meanwhile, math was involved in the planning and production of an unusual design of architecture.

Conceptual Integration

The preceding exercise illustrated the naturally occurring connections between concepts spanning across disciplines. This was further reinforced by a lecture-workshop on conceptual integration. An Islamic Studies lesson for the early grades was presented using an example that many will categorize as belonging to the natural sciences. Perhaps it is not known that in Islam, Muslims are encouraged to observe and learn from the natural environment because everything in and about it are termed in the Qur'an as *ayatullah*,

which means "signs of Allah." The wisdom derived from the intricate workings of creation has been studied,[4] and this provided the impetus for this training activity.

The lesson took off from the study of a mangrove ecosystem to exemplify Allah's attribute as the Creator or *Al Khaliq*. Correspondent to this is the Qur'anic declaration that it is easy for Allah to create—all He needs to say is Be, and it is (*kun fa yakun*). These beliefs are underscored as the mangrove ecosystem lesson unfolded concepts on this tree as the nursery and shelter of marine life; how species from this marine nursery feed into an ever-expanding food chain; the role of mangroves in preserving coastal ecosystems and protecting shores from disasters. While clear connections are established between Islamic principles and scientific concepts in this lesson, many other connections were possible. The ensuing group activity allowed teacher participants to explore those connections, with the activity prompt: "How else can a lesson on the mangrove tree integrate with other learning areas?"

The group exercises on curriculum integration were opportunities to transcend knowledge compartmentalization imposed by the subject-based curriculum design prevalent in Philippine education. Imagining knowledge intersections beyond what Pring (1971) calls "subject barriers" is a creative process with infinite possibilities.

Beyond bridging the disciplinal divide, the featured connections between Islam and science responded to the age-old debate about the unbridgeable chasm between faith and science. For Muslims, the oft-stated collisions between creationism and evolutionary theories, God-centrism and human-centrism, and reason and revelation are not issues because the Qur'an has firmly-established key principles that leave no doubt as to what Muslims should believe in. At the same time, Muslims are instructed to seek knowledge not only from the Divine Scripture and Prophetic traditions, but also from other creations.

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4 For example, see Maurice Bucaille's *The Bible, the Qu'ran and Science: The Holy Scriptures Examined in the Light of Modern Knowledge*, January 30, 2003 and earlier publications; see also Harun Yahya publications (See https://archive.org/details/HARUN_YAHYA/24%20Hours%20Of%20Muslim/) [Please add complete information of the cited sources]

Egypt's Dar Al-Ifta[5] states:

> The divine revelation comes from the world of command and the universe comes from the world of creation and whatever comes from God does not contradict each other. Therefore, God says in the Quran, "Unquestionably, to Him belongs both creation and command; blessed is Allah, Lord of the worlds. (Qur'an 7:45)
>
> For this reason knowledge in Islam has two sources: divine revelation and universe. Islam admits that science does not know the final word as God says, "but over every possessor of knowledge is one [more] knowing." (Qur'an 12:76)

Many scholars have pointed out that Muslims of today have not maximized their explorations of science, tending to confine themselves to theology—a stark contrast to the Islamic world's dominance in the frontiers of knowledge during its Golden Age. This, however, does not negate the above fact, and should prove a stronger impetus to emerge from this hiatus.

Exemplifying connections between Islam and the rational sciences is especially significant today when even secular scientists admit to a dilemma in their pursuit of knowledge. In a 2008 Harvard Gazette feature on an annual lecture discussing science's relationship to Islam,[6] Howard Smith,[7] senior astrophysicist at the Harvard-Smithsonian Center for Astrophysics admitted to uncertainty about their comprehension of discoveries in their field:

> "We discovered dark matter and dark energy …. Our discomfort has grown because we still have no idea what they really are. I think we

5 Egypt's Dar Al-Ifta (www.dar-alfta.org) is one of the first pioneering foundations to issue fatwas (religious verdicts) throughout the Islamic world. It was founded and affiliated with the Ministry of Justice in 1895 by the high command of Khedive Abbas Helmi. The organization began as one of the divisions of the Egyptian Ministry of Justice. See [insert the information of the website here following the footnoted citation convention of the CMS 17th edition]

6 Colleen Walsh, "Where science and religion meet, from an Islamic perspective," Harvard News Office, May 8, 2008, [provide link]

7 Author of "Let There Be Light: Modern Cosmology and Kabbalah: A New Conversation Between Science and Religion," New World Library, 2006 [Please add complete information (author and publication place for this footnote) and bibliography entry]

> scientists are being admirably honest in admitting that we do not know as much as we thought, and this lesson of humility is one that science can offer to theologians."

Smith further made a general appeal to both sides of the divide to rise above it and learn from each other:

> "This is the call of modern science to spiritual seekers, open yourself up to the wonders of the universe as revealed by science and to the insights that relay that sense of awe … This is also the call of religion to the scientists … open up to the possibilities of wonder, love, and to the ethical responsibility of living in a quantum multiverse that, behold, is very good."

These statements underscore the need for educational systems to review their institutional beliefs about knowledge and ask which kinds of knowledge are privileged and why. Moreover, institutions must further question which knowledge is transmitted in schools and in what manner they are conveyed.

CURRICULUM CONTEXTUALIZATION

During the training, curriculum contextualization was operationally defined as framing or looking at a concept, idea, theory, issue, or topic of concern from a particular perspective. The lecture extended earlier discussions on curriculum integration. It was likewise another means to address the additive approach of the Philippine curriculum with regards to Muslim and IP education. Curriculum contextualization has elements of the transformation approach in Banks' (1998) phases of multicultural curriculum integration. Banks describes this approach:

> "The curriculum is transformed. The structure of the curriculum is changed to enable students to view concepts, issues, events, and themes from the perspectives of diverse racial and cultural groups. 'Tough' topics and themes are not avoided. These issues are central to the entire curriculum, not just one week or unit."

While the training content did not extend this far, the workshop prompted teacher participants to collaboratively contextualize socially-resonant ideas

within Muslim perspectives. These ideas were Charles Darwin's theory of evolution, the concept of democracy, women in society, and food quality. The workshop generated context-specific views and counter-narratives that could serve as material for later instructional planning or classroom discourse. The theory of evolution was countered by the Islamic view of human dignity, the distinct favor bestowed on Adam upon his creation, man's infinitely good nature and God-bestowed faculties, accountability for one's will and actions, and responsibility for all creation as trustee on earth.

Meanwhile, the ideas associated with democracy were clarified. Democracy's given importance to human opinion and the right to free expression find connections in the Islamic concept of *shura* or consultation, a practice in community gatherings where issues at hand were deliberated on for decision-making. In the ensuing workshop interactions, a crucial difference between Western democracy and Islam was pointed out—what constitutes the majority. The current democratic form is known by its slogan, "Majority wins!" This is the extent to which individual human opinion counts. In Islam, the majority belongs to what God has prescribed in the Qur'an and what has been explicated in the prophetic traditions, or *Sunna*. Therefore, man's trusteeship over creation will always be tempered by Islam's sources of wisdom and law. There can be no arbitrariness of human will in making decisions for the general good. Decision-making guidelines are given in the Qur'an. This involves mutual consultation and counsel-seeking from the scholars and elders who are learned in the Qur'an and *Sunnah*, and other sources of law. This ensures that the appropriate understanding of a matter is arrived at and the Islamic principles that govern it are correct.

On the idea of women in society, the modern opinions on the female and misconceptions on Muslim women were taken up. Discussion points covered hijab and feminine modesty, women's rights, and polygamy. Food quality discussions involved issues of *halal* (permissible) and *thayyib* (good and wholesome).

As a culminating activity, participants brainstormed on the ways the concepts of leadership, the human body, Arabic language, and seeking knowledge may be integrated across learning areas and contextualized according to global and Islamic perspectives.

MENTORING

The mentoring module of the training had three components. The first was designed to direct teacher participants towards self-assessment employing reflective questions, followed by insights into Qur'anic principles on the innate goodness of human nature (Arabic, *fitrah*), reinforcing earlier workshop outputs on creation vis-à-vis evolution.

The self-assessment component was premised on the understanding that one's personal and professional philosophies about education largely determined one's teaching behavior. Reflective questions aimed at clarifying teacher's self-perceptions, positions about the learner, the learning environment, and one's preferred mentoring role. Teachers were additionally asked to reflect on whether such a reflexive activity was even important as a meta-cognition exercise.

The ensuing lecture addressed the nature and nurture dimensions of child development from the Islamic perspective. In educational psychology circles, there has long been a divide between these dimensions, though more recent researchers belie the need for such polarity between nature and nurture.[8] The split stemmed from the insistence of favoring one dimension over the other in determining how children developed in terms of physiology and behavior. Nature dimension advocates or "nativists" attributed human development to genetically-acquired qualities and other biological reasons. "Nurturists," on the other hand, consider determinant in the child development process the environment, experiences, and other external factors. McLeod (2024) diffuses the polarization, sharing the possibility for psychology researchers to see the two dimensions' actual interrelatedness: "Behavioral genetics has enabled psychology to quantify the relative contribution of nature and nurture concerning specific psychological traits."

8 See James Tabery, *Beyond Versus: The Struggle to Understand the Interaction of Nature and Nurture*, (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2014). [add bibliography entry]Saul Mcleod, "Nature vs. Nature Debate in Psychology," Simply Psychology, July 16, 2024, https://www.simplypsychology.org/naturevsnurture.html; Alice H. Eagly and Wendy Wood, "The Nature-Nurture Debates," Perspectives on Psychological Science, May 2013, https://www.researchgate.net/publication/258179755_The_Nature-Nurture_Debates

In Islam, human nature is innately pure and good, being Divinely-bestowed. It is the task of parents to nurture that purity and goodness and ensure that it is not corrupted. The Arabic word for nurturing is *tarbiyyah*, the trilateral root of which is *rabba*, which could mean "educate," "discipline," or "sustain." A mother is called *rabbatul bayt* or nurturer of the home, which implies that she secures those attributes in her home. The critical impacts of teaching, conditioning, and socialization on children fall within the guardianship of parents. Teachers share this responsibility in school. Nurturing goodness in school implies two mutually-inclusive definitions. These are morally good or ethical and good at learning or competent , adopted from Ciulla (1995:13 /2014: xvii).

Morally good encompasses character and the excellence of one's intentions, speech, and actions. This is exemplified in the prophetic saying, "The best of you are the best in character." Learning competence involves the same traits but with the added dimension of quality in learning behavior and outputs. Each meaning of good entailed multifaceted ways of nurturing in school settings. A correspondent framework composed of the following elements was shared for participant critiques: a safe and nurturing space, structure, good classroom management, constancy and consistency, differentiation (according to learner needs), and scaffolding.

The second component, undertaken by Ms. Vi-Amor Dayrit, learning behavior specialist and concurrent lecturer at the UP College of Human Kinetics, focused its attention on the learner by providing research insights into child development. The prompt for this lecture, "Why Ahmad does not want to go to school," intended to underscore elements in school life that make it inhospitable to certain types of children. Particular attention was given to learner manners and actions that teachers could easily misconstrue as misbehavior, learning disability, or "specialness" with adverse experiences for both teacher and learner. The lecture first featured a set of primary reflexes—many from infancy, which when unresolved as a child developed, would result in physical and neural development challenges that negatively affect learning and classroom performance. The lecture allowed the teacher participants to

see the origins of behaviors which many of them had negatively interpreted. Exercise interventions per reflex practiced by Special Education (SPED) teachers were featured with the recommendation that these exercises may be tried in the classroom in aid of learners. A later section of the module featured Sensory Processing Disorder (SPD) which refers to conditions affecting brain processing of sensory information. Ms. Dayrit shared that contemporary research discovered three hidden senses in addition to the five commonly-known. These were the 1) proprioception which affected movement, 2) vestibular which affected balance, and 3) internal which affected interoception, or awareness of the body's internal sensations and cues. The lecture covered the signs and symptoms of SPDs and how to address them. Disorders, especially in the hidden senses, could be easily misunderstood, often mislabeled, and therefore not be appropriately addressed. The lecture garnered the most questions from teacher participants as they recognized one or more behaviors in school.

The third module component provided a concise overview on what impacted teaching and learning in the classroom, reinforcing concepts and ideas from the previous lectures. The three elements of learner, teacher, and learning environment were discussed. The learner element considers physiological, psychological, family, and social factors—all of which play an influence on how a learner behaves in school. The teacher element rests on several considerations: educational philosophy, understanding of children, subject expertise, commitment to learners' education, rapport and interaction with students, and the subsequent learning experiences teachers provide them. Lastly, the learning environment covers quality, safety, and conduciveness. Additionally it also takes note of the adequacy and appropriateness of equipment, supplies, and resources. The interaction of these elements greatly influences the teaching-learning process. The resulting discussion involved participants' identification of the elements at play in their varied encounters with learners in the school and classroom.

INSIGHTS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

"Issues in Muslim Education" was a fruitful undertaking for project team members. It allowed them to closely and repeatedly engage with stakeholders leading to more nuanced understandings of identified issues and the contexts within which these occured. Though certain takeaways were acknowledged by

Muslim educators, these were by no means enough to adequately respond to issues at hand. However, they are incremental steps towards good purposes, which we hope will be continued. The following are the recommendations based on the main points of the study:

For the DepEd, the agency needs to direct its policies for Muslim and IP education towards more inclusive forms that reflect multicultural education principles. This should be addressed by appropriate legislations and implementing mechanisms. The legislations should foremost acknowledge the Philippines' diversity with a multi-ethnic and multi-cultural population which accounts for the richness of its heritage and society. Proceeding from this, Philippine education should officially depart from its primarily monocultural knowledge philosophy and academic rationalist traditions, which are mainly colonial imports. The DepEd should then expand its curriculum to recognize the diverse knowledge traditions long embedded in the Philippine archipelago, nurtured and sustained by their respective communities for their strength and survival. To do this, there should be wide-scale research that will seek to answer among others, the following questions:

a. What knowledge and knowledge traditions are important to Muslims and Indigenous peoples?

b. What competencies and literacies do they need within their particular contexts?

c. What times, schedules and seasons are relevant to their lifestyles?

The accommodation of minorities' education within the national education system without genuinely inclusive engagement would only widen existing divides. Setting a national education framework of target learner competencies and literacies at assigned levels which Muslim and IP education systems could benchmark with, without compromising their knowledge traditions is worth exploring.

Furthermore, there should be stronger collaboration between government agencies such as the DepEd, the Commission on Higher Education (CHED), and the Technical Education and Skills Development Authority (TESDA) and the Muslim private education sector to enhance the latter's performance and participation in local and national education initiatives. Sufficient space

on the DepEd's role in inclusive Philippine education has been given in the previous recommendation. It is acknowledged that the Commission on Higher Education has two programs directly relevant to Muslim education. These are:

a. The continuing development of Policy Standards and Guidelines (PSGs) for a Bachelor's program in Islamic Studies, which provides official standards for higher education institutions offering such a degree;

b. The CHED equivalency program under which Muslims graduates from Islamic institutions abroad are able to apply for equivalency with Philippine university degree programs, the granting of which would enable them to pursue further studies or seek employment.

The first program is in process for major revisions on the academic program's PSGs to address content and viability issues which would hopefully be resolved. The equivalency program on the other hand, will stand to benefit more Muslims, especially those who studied under the local Madrasah systems. It is recommended that equivalency of these education systems be explored as well, so as to provide Philippine educational placement for its graduates.

TESDA, meanwhile, could collaborate with local Madaris to provide training methodology skills to Madaris teachers or work with them in their in-house Arabic language program. TESDA could also explore partnerships with local Madaris and integrated schools who may wish to add livelihood and technical skills to their curricular offerings. Collaborations between these agencies and the Muslim private education sector are anticipated to see robust strides in Muslim education development in the country.

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