

Proper Education for the Muslim Filipino Children from Muslim Parents' Perspective

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This paper presented the findings of an intrinsic single case study about the desired education of Muslim Filipino parents for their children in a public school. Muslim Filipinos, being a minority group, face challenges in providing relevant and appropriate education for their children. The study aimed to find out the kind of education perceived by Muslim parents to be proper to their children. Ten Muslim Filipino parents from a public school implementing the Arabic Language and Islamic Values Education (ALIVE) Program in Cainta, Rizal were interviewed. Their responses were coded to generate themes that characterized their idea of proper Muslim education. The study found that Muslim Filipino parents expressed their desire for a holistic education that would prepare their children to become productive citizens and at the same time good Muslims. The process of educating Muslim Filipino children to become good Muslims required attaining knowledge about their Muslim identity. They also needed to be challenged to live responsibly and ethically with the Quran as criterion for living. Moreover, the study provided affirmation for the implementation of the ALIVE program as instrument of inclusive education for Muslim Filipino children. The findings provided invaluable inputs for educational administrators in developing improvement plans, programs, and projects related to inclusive education like Muslim education. Since the study showed their concern with their children's education, parents need to assume a more active role in the educative process. With the recognition of the peculiar educational needs of Muslim Filipino children, teachers need continuing training on exemplary teaching practices that recognize and affirm diversity of learners.

Keywords: *ALIVE program, holistic education, inclusive education, Islamization of education, Madrasah, Muslim Filipino children, Muslim Filipino parents*

Introduction

The United Nations upholds education as an inherent and inalienable right of every human being (United Nations, 1948; 1959). Education is offered as a means to achieve the full development of the human person, promote understanding and tolerance among nations, and maintain world peace. The UN documents recognize the right of parents to choose the kind of education for their children (United Nations, 1948; 1959). However, in choosing the kind of education for their children, the option is quite limited for Muslim parents. Izama (2014) noted that Muslim parents would not want their children to be in schools where they may be discriminated against or not allowed to practice their religion. Legal restrictions and ostracism would deny Muslims the opportunity to fulfill their religious duties. Muslim parents particularly were worried about their children either getting Westernized and corrupted by Western values or being exposed to deviant Islamic teachings (Abbas, 2003; Daun & Arjmand, 2005; Ijaz & Abbas, 2010; Mokhtar, 2010).

In the context of Muslim Filipinos, confounding the limited choice of many parents in educating their children was the precarious peace situation in Mindanao, the home of the majority of Muslim Filipinos (SEAMEO INNOTECH, 2007). This had driven them to migrate to other parts of the Philippines where they lived as a minority and vulnerable to prejudice. They could not practice their way of life. Their children did not receive education on Islam. Their children were sometimes discriminated against because of their beliefs and traditions (SEAMEO INNOTECH, 2007). Thus, there is a pressing need to look into the kind of education Muslim Filipino parents provide their children. The purpose of this study is to explore the perceptions of Muslim Filipino parents who migrated to Manila for their children's education.

The central question of this study is: How do Muslim Filipino parents perceive the kind of formal education proper to their children?

Specifically, the study addressed the following

sub-questions:

1. How do parents describe a relevant formal education for their children?
2. How do parents perceive a relevant Islamic education for their children?

In this paper, it was argued that Muslim Filipino parents desired a holistic education that would make their children responsible and productive Muslim Filipinos. It was further argued that understanding the Muslim Filipino parents' view of an education proper to their children was essential in managing the Arabic Language and Islamic Values Education (ALIVE) program. The ALIVE program being implemented in the public schools offered additional subjects on Arabic Language and Islamic Values in the regular basic education curriculum (DepEd, 2017a). While the study explored the kind of education Muslim parents desired for their children, it did not include the discussion on the government's provision of Islamic Education to Muslim Filipinos through ALIVE.

Review of Literature

Coping with Limited Choice for Education.

Muslim parents desired their children to be positive participants in and contributors to society while at the same time maintaining their faith (Abdullah, Abdalla, & Jorgensen, 2015). However, Niyozov and Memon (2011) observed that the exponential rise of Muslim populations in the West, the 9/11 attack, cases of Islamophobia, and racism severely affected the way Muslim parents approach the education of their children. Daun and Arjmand (2005), studying the European education systems and Muslims' demand for education, found that with low quality education received from public schools, Muslim parents turned to private schools, even Christian schools, where discipline would be stricter, and quality of education was perceived to be higher. In Finland, despite having a law requiring religious instruction in schools when parents demanded for it, Muslim parents would not send their children to state schools due to the lack of teachers to teach Islamic education (Fuess, 2007). In Netherlands, Shadid and van Koningsveld (2006) cited the factors

that compelled the parents to decide not to send their children to Muslim schools. They reported that many teachers from Muslim schools were found to be deficient in pedagogical qualities. They noted the lack of curriculum and effective teaching method. They also observed the lack of congruence between the religious knowledge children received at home and the content of the classes in Muslim schools. In Singapore, Steiner (2011) observed that the performance of Malay Muslim pupils was below the performance of students from two other ethnicities, Chinese and Indians. But, Muslim parents still would send their children to Madrasah to acquire an Islamic education. However, they felt that the Madrasah was not adequately preparing their children for the workforce. Thus, they still would send their boys to secular schools to prepare them for work which was considered essential to the rapid economic and social development of Singapore.

Attitude in Education. In 2003, Abbas studied how religio-cultural norms and values affected the educational attitudes, perspectives, and experience of young South Asian women in the city of Birmingham, UK. He found that parents actively supported their daughters' education. Ijaz and Abbas (2010) did an ethnographic study on the impact of inter-generational change on the attitudes of working class South Asian Muslim parents on the education of their daughters. They challenged the prevailing stereotype of a Muslim woman being passive, dominated, and oppressed by patriarchal family values that would fit her only for marriage. Their findings also showed that Muslim parents strongly valued education for their daughters. Moreover, Muslim parents expected their children to have Islamic moral training which might not be available in secular schools (Izama, 2014; Mokhtar, 2010; Sikand, 2009). Haddad, Senzai & Smith (as cited in Niyozov and Memon, 2011) stated that concerns about the curriculum of public schools like having inaccurate information about Islam in textbooks, the promotion of "un-Islamic" lifestyle choices in sex education and within school environments, and sentiments of Islamophobia prevented Muslim parents to have their children enrolled in public schools. In

Thailand, Tuntivivat (2016) studied the relationship between education and violence in the Thai Malay Muslims of Southern Thailand. He argued that cultural violence and structural violence led to direct violence. He noted that imposing Buddhist practices in public schools just to have a uniform Thai identity posed a threat to Islamic values of Muslim students. This kind of public education contributed to the structural violence since Buddhist cultural norms were ingrained in the curriculum. In 1982, the Thai Government allowed *pondoks* (private Islamic schools) to register in the education system. This prompted many Thai Malay Muslim parents to transfer their children to these schools. According to Tuntivivat, this phenomenon of transferring to *pondoks* led to more segregation between Thai Buddhist and Thai Malay Muslim students. And even when the quality of education in *pondoks* was much lower than public schools, Thai Malay Muslim parents still would send their children to these private Islamic schools. Tuntivivat claimed that ethno-religious background and poverty influenced Thai Malay Muslim children to attend ill-equipped *pondoks* within their community. He concluded that this action of sending children to low quality schools resulted to a vicious cycle of poverty which in turn created resentment and in turn resulted in the retaliation against the Thai Government.

Preference for Madrasah. Given a choice, Muslim parents would send their children to a Muslim school (Madrasah in Arabic language) to receive an appropriate Muslim education (Ijaz & Abbas, 2010; Mokhtar, 2010; Sikand, 2009). For centuries, Madaris (plural of Madrasah) were the place of learning and literacy for Muslims (Dangor, 2005; Mokhtar, 2010). In the Madrasah, Muslims were taught the Quran (Tafsir), Islamic theology (Tauhid), Islamic jurisprudence or law (Fiqh), Arabic language (Nahu), and traditions and sayings of the Prophet Muhammad (Hadith) (Mokhtar, 2010; Sabki & Hardaker, 2013; Sikand, 2009; Thobani, 2007). In Islam, education was aimed at forming a God-conscious and righteous Muslim who lived in conformity with the Divine decree or destiny (Alavi, 2008; Dangor, 2005; Kazmi, 2009; Sikand, 2009). Marshallsay (2012) noted the favorable situation

for Muslims in Malaysia whose official state religion was Islam. In Malaysia, Islam was the only religion taught in public schools. Muslim students were required to take five hours of Islamic education each week. They used government-approved textbooks to study the fundamentals of Islam. They took government standardized examinations to validate their mastery of Islamic teachings. In Indonesia, considered as the world's most populous Muslim country, a modernized Islamic system of education provided students with Islamic and secular subjects. Islamic schools (madrasah, pesantren, and sekolah Islam) were considered as acceptable choice and served not only to produce Muslim scholars, but also to participate in nation building. Islamic schools were considered as vital instruments to promote democracy, civic values, and good governance in Indonesia (Kersten, C., 2011; Marshallsay, Z., 2012; OECD/Asian Development Bank, 2015). In the Philippines, the Department of Education (DepEd) ventured into providing appropriate education to the indigenous peoples including the Muslim Filipinos. The Arabic Language and Islamic Values Education (ALIVE) program was part of the Islamization of education experiments in the world. Islamization of education according to Dangor (2005) involved integrating Islamic disciplines in the curriculum by offering an Islamic standpoint on issues in the syllabi and tracing, where possible, secularized disciplines within the Islamic world view. Sikand (2009) looked into the forms of Islamization in India, combining traditional Islamic knowledge and the "modern or secular world." Dangor (2005) noted that developing "Islamized syllabi" in the Islamization project in the United States continued slowly and might not reach definitive completion because of the lack of consensus on the project. However, in the Philippines, the ALIVE program received positive results despite challenges in its implementation (Milligan, 2008; RDCFEI, 2014).

Madrasah in the Philippine Public School System. The 1987 Philippine Constitution recognized the right to education of every Filipino citizen. It mandated the State to protect and promote the right for quality and accessible education to all Filipinos including Muslim Filipinos.

The Constitution directed all educational institutions to develop responsible and productive citizens imbued with love for country and humanity, respect for human rights, moral character, and ethical and spiritual values (1987 Constitution, Art. XIV, Sec. 3 (2)). In the process of rearing the children that included educating them, the government should provide support to the parents (1987 Constitution, Art. II, Sec. 12). Thus, to support Muslim Filipino parents in providing Islamic education to their children, the government through the Department of Education (DepEd) offered the Arabic Language and Islamic Values Education (ALIVE) program in the public schools. The ALIVE program would be implemented in public schools with 15 or more Muslim Filipino children enrolled (DepEd, 2017a). This program offered subjects on Arabic Language and Islamic Values in addition to the regular basic education curriculum. In the program, Arabic Language would be taught thrice a week for 40 minutes. Islamic Values Education was taught twice a week for 40 minutes. However, if ALIVE program was not offered in a public school, Muslim Filipino parents were compelled to send their children to weekend private Madrasah to obtain Islamic education (Fabris, 2010; Milligan, 2008; Moulton, Silverstone, Anzar & Khan, 2008; RDFCEI, 2014; SEAMEO INNOTECH, 2007); and if the ALIVE program was perceived to be insufficient, they still would enroll their children to private Madrasah and spend their tuition (De Sosa, 2008; Milligan, 2008; RDFCEI, 2014; SEAMEO INNOTECH, 2007). Apart from getting Islamic education, Muslim Filipino parents also desired quality education that would enable their children to achieve social and economic mobility (Fabris, 2010; McKenna & Abdula, 2009; Milligan, 2008; RDFCEI, 2014). They considered education as a means to take them out of poverty (RDFCEI, 2014). Milligan (2008) noted that the Department of Education (DepEd) continued to implement the ALIVE program despite enormous challenges like severe material poverty, inadequate funding, corruption, continuing violence in the areas, and other problems. After five years of implementation, RDFCEI (2014) reviewed the policy and implementation of ALIVE. It found that while there were so many things to be considered for

successfully implementing the program, the Muslim parents acknowledged the need for ALIVE as means to achieve Islamic education.

Methodology

This study was qualitative in nature using an intrinsic single case study (Burke Johnson & Christensen, 2014, p. 425). Yin (2014, p. 52) proposed the use of single-case study to capture the circumstances and conditions of common, everyday situation and observe and analyze the phenomenon perceived to be inaccessible to social science inquiry, i.e., in this study, Muslim education (Madrash) in the public-school system. With social constructivism as lens, the case of an elementary school in Cainta, Rizal which implemented the ALIVE program was looked into. Specifically, the study probed into the way Muslim Filipino parents in this school constructed reality and ascribed meaning to a social or human problem (Creswell, 2014), which was educating Muslim Filipino children. It explored how they created meanings about the aims, contents, and processes of educating their children.

The study was conducted in an elementary school with ALIVE classes in the municipality of Cainta that has a growing Muslim community. Permission to conduct the study was sought from the school principal and the ALIVE teacher (Ustadzah) who referred the first three participants for this study. The first three participants referred the other seven Muslim Filipino parents to participate in the study. They were oriented on the purpose of the study and their approval was solicited before conducting the interview.

Ten parents were purposefully selected to provide qualitative data on Muslim education proper to Muslim Filipino children. The relatively limited sample size suggested that generalizations relevant to all Muslim Filipino parents were not warranted. However, the focused nature of this study and the in-depth qualitative design encouraged further study on Muslim education. For this study, qualitative data were collected from each participant to investigate on the perception and practice of educating the Muslim Filipino children. All the participants were mothers. One was a Balik Islam or a convert to Islam with a Maranao husband from Marawi City. In terms of educational qualifications, six of them received some form of Islamic education through attendance in weekend Madrasah and five had a college degree. In terms of ethnolinguistic grouping, four are Maranao, four Tausug, and two Maguindanaon. Table 1 shows the profile of the participants.

Table 1
Profile of the Participants

Code	Gender	Age	Educational Qualification	Province in Mindanao	Ethnolinguistic Group	Attended Madrasah
MFP 1	Female	34	College	Marawi	Maranao	Yes
MFP 2	Female	37	College	Marawi	Maranao	Yes
MFP 3	Female	54	High School	Zamboanga	Tausug	Yes
MFP 4	Female	42	College	Davao	Maguindanao	Yes
MFP 5	Female	39	High School	Zamboanga	Tausug	No
MFP 6	Female	40	College un- dergrad	None (Balik Islam)	Maranao (Husband)	No
MFP 7	Female	26	Elementary	South Cotabato	Maguindanao	No
MFP 8	Female	27	College	South Cotabato	Tausug	Yes
MFP 9	Female	31	College	Marawi	Maranao	Yes
MFP 10	Female	45	Elementary	Zamboanga	Tausug	No

Data in this study were gathered from July to September 2017 through face to face interview using a semi structured interview guide. The interview guide was adapted from RDFCEI Muslim Education Initiatives Review (MEIR) study done in 2014. This was validated by experts on Muslim education, curriculum, and school administration. All participants were interviewed at least twice at different occasions. Each interview lasted for 20 to 60 minutes.

Before data analysis, the interviews were transcribed verbatim using qualitative techniques (Creswell, 2014). First, the interviews were transcribed, coded, and then developed into themes. Interview transcripts, codes, and themes were checked for validity through member checks (Miles, Huberman, & Saldaña, 2014). Member checking involved interviewing again the ten participants to check whether the findings of the study validated their views and experiences about proper education of their children. The process confirmed the authenticity and validity of data. Initially, the themes were based on the literature: Knowledge of Islam, Islamic Morality and Spirituality, and Islamic Way of Life. Literature reviewed for this study was used to confirm or negate the findings which included the themes generated. Creswell (2014) stated that the literature review could serve as basis for comparing and contrasting findings of the qualitative study.

Results and Discussion

The responses of the participants in the interview guide to answer the central and specific research questions were coded and organized into themes. Knowledge of Islam, Islamic Morality and Spirituality, and Islamic Way of Life were initially used as themes. However, in the process of coding the data from interviews, other themes emerged. The themes used for data analysis were: 1) Becoming a Good Muslim as Purpose of Education; 2) Learning Arabic to Read and Understand Quran; 3) Training on Islamic Morality and Spirituality; 4) Effects of the Public-School Madrasah (ALIVE Program); 5) Attaining Holistic Education.

Educating to become a good Muslim surfaced to be the central concept regarded by Muslim Filipino parents to be the purpose of education. All participants verbalized the need for their children to be a good Muslim. In the process of forming a good Muslim, Muslim Filipino children must acquire knowledge of Islam, be able to read and understand the Quran, and practice Islamic morality and spirituality. Educating a good Muslim also involved providing knowledge, skills, and attitudes necessary for higher education and employment. The participants also provided a positive view of the ALIVE program in providing Islamic education proper to Muslim Filipino children. In general, a holistic education is what the Muslim Filipino parents desire for their children.

Becoming a Good Muslim as Purpose of Education

All ten participants agreed that education was a means to make their children good Muslims. MFP 9 claimed that an educated Muslim characterized a good Muslim. She said that an Islamic education would be necessary for children to grow up with fear of Allah. MFP 4 explained that the word Muslim means faithful to Allah, one who submits to Allah. She also said *'pag Muslim ka, dapat tapat ka kay Allah, lagi mo siyang aalalahanin. Kaya kami faithful kami sa pagdarasal, iba ibang oras sa isang araw'* (If you are a Muslim, you have to be faithful to Allah, you always remember him. That is the reason why we are faithful in saying our prayers, in different times of the day). MFP 3 stated that being faithful means *'yung hindi gumagawa ng masama'* (not doing anything bad). MFP 6, who happened to be a Balik Islam (convert), said *'pagiging faithful, na natatakot na ako gumawa ng masama'* (being faithful, that I fear of committing evil).

Learning Arabic to Read and Understand the Quran

The participants stressed the need for their children to learn to read Arabic. MFP 4 explained that learning Arabic is necessary in praying (reading and reciting the Quran). She said that attending the

ALIVE class is very important '*para matuto sila ng Arabic alphabet. Dahil importante ito sa pag dasal*' (for them to learn the Arabic alphabet because it is important in praying). It would be noted here that the Muslim prayers are recited in Arabic language and the Quran is written in Arabic. MFP 9 learned her Arabic by attending a private Madrasah in Marawi. Now living in Manila, she was very grateful that her children learned Arabic while attending a public elementary school. She said '*para sa akin po e napakalaking tulong po yung nabibigay nila (Asatidz, ALIVE teachers). Natututo po sila na magdasal, yung mga practices po natututunan nila. They learn how to read and write in Arabic. Sa buong linggo nag-aaral talaga sila at napapractice sila araw-araw*' (for me, the ALIVE teachers really is a great help. Our children learned the prayers and practices. They learn how to read and write in Arabic. In the entire week, they study and practice daily [reading in Arabic]). MFP 1 was not worried about her daughter memorizing the lessons in Arabic language. She said '*maganda na yung ganun para masanay sila sa ganun na paraan*' (it is good that way [memorizing] so it becomes a habit). MFP 2 shared how one of her children was recognized during graduation for ALIVE. She said, '*Last year yung isang anak ko siya yung 1st honor sa Arabic graduation nila. Kaya I'm proud talaga dun sa mga anak ko. Yung mga anak ko natuturuan talaga sila ng parents sa bahay kaya advanced sila e*' (Last year, one of my children got 1st honor in their Arabic (ALIVE) graduation. I am so proud of him. We really tutor our children [to learn Arabic] and that is why they are advanced [in their lessons]). MFP 10 only reached Grade 3 Madrasah. She acknowledged the advantage of knowing the Arabic language and religion, and the opportunity of teaching others what they learned. MFP 7 said that her son practiced reading Arabic at home and they even learned through him. MFP 6 related how happy she was about her son's progress in learning Arabic and Islamic values. She said '*mas madami pa siyang nalalaman sa Arabic at sa Islam. Nakakatulong naman po iyon [ALIVE] dahil natuto sila ng values at lalo na po yung Arabic. Yung anak ko nga mas marunong pang bumasa ng Arabic sakin, siya pa yung nagtuturo sa akin*' (My son knows more about Arabic and Islam

than I am. [ALIVE] helps since the children learn about values especially Arabic. My son can read Arabic better than I am and he even teaches me.). She felt sorry about reading Arabic without understanding.

Training on Islamic Morality and Spirituality

Muslim Filipino parents considered morality and spirituality as fundamental elements of education whether Islamic or what they called as 'ABC' education. MFP 5 noted how ALIVE helped her son learned to control his anger. She said, '*Kahit galit siya, nawawala sa isip nya kasi alam nya na masama at takot sya kay Allah*' (Even when he gets angry, it disappears from his mind since he knows that it is wrong to get angry and he fears Allah.). For MFP 7, a good education helped parents in forming their children to become good and obedient son or daughter. MFP 3 also said that through education character would develop or change ('*Maraming nadevelop sa ugali nung bata. Nagbago yung character*'). MFP 9 claimed that lack of education would lead to wayward life ('*napapasama at naliligaw ng landas*'). She added that if education was not given attention to, children would be more vulnerable to bad influences like fraternities and vices ('*Pag di na tuunan ng pansin ang pag-aaral nila, malaki ang chance na mapunta sila sa maling impluwensya, tulad ng pag babarkada, fraternity, bisyo.*'). MFP 2 appreciated her Madrasah experience and believed that it helped in character formation of children. She said '*Kasi yung character nila, na form dahil sa Madrasah, mas malalaman nya at di sya mapupunta sa maling landas; ngayung lumaki na sya madadala nya pa rin yun*' (Character is formed through Madrasah, one knows [what is good] and will never go astray and one brings [character] even when one grows up.). MFP 3 was proud of having successful children who graduated from college while remaining faithful to Islam. MFP 8 believed that providing education was a crucial parental obligation. She said that without education her children might lose their Muslim identity. But for MFP 10, education in Islam was also a preparation for the afterlife. She said '*Gusto ko marunong siya ng ABC at Arabic at maging mabuti sya para*

maganda buhay nya kay Allah' (I wanted my child to know ABC [Alphabet, referring to the public-school curriculum] and Arabic and for him to become good so his life would be better with Allah.). MFP 7 expressed her desire for Islamic values taught in the public school for her son to grow up knowing his religion and be able to read the Quran (*'Para matuto sila ng Islamic values para pag laki nila alam nila ang kanilang religion at para alam nila ang pag bigkas ng Quran'*).

Effects of the Public-School Madrasah (ALIVE Program)

Knowledge of Islamic religion, customs and traditions was considered as essential to educating Muslim Filipino children by many of the participants. MFP 9 thought of Islamic education as faith formation. She called it as literacy towards the practice of the faith. She said 'A true Muslim must know the faith of Islam. Knowing about the faith is the beginning of understanding who a Muslim truly is.' MFP1 said education on Islam was important *'para alam nila ang tradisyon ng Islam para hindi ito basta basta maalis sa isip nila.'* She considered ALIVE as a means to perpetuate the Islamic way of life among Muslim Filipino children. She said that by attending ALIVE *'mas lumalakas ang faith nila'* (their faith is strengthened). MFP 6 recognized the need to transmit what they learned from their ancestors about Islam (*'Mahalaga na matutunan din ng aming mga anak yung mga natutunan naming aral ng Islam sa aming mga ninuno'*). For MFP 8, ALIVE classes helped her son to learn about their religion. *'Sa akin po mas nakakatulong po iyon (ALIVE) kasi po mas natutulungan po yung anak ko na matuto about sa relihiyon namin, minsan nga po e nakikita ko ung anak ko na nagbabasa ng Koran. At tsaka kahit di ko na po iexplain yung relihiyon namin e natututunan po nila dito.* (For me, [ALIVE] greatly helps because my son learns about our religion, at one time I saw my son reading the Quran. And even without me explaining our religion, he learns it here [in ALIVE class].). MFP 2 said the same thing: *'Laking tulong po talaga sa pag aaral ng mga anak ko, kasi natututo po sila ng mga kagawian ng Islam, kahit di ako mag turo, at least natututo sila*

sa school' ([ALIVE] is truly a great help in my children's studies because they learned about the ways of Islam, even if I don't teach them, at least they learn in school.). MFP 5 shared that students learned about the history of their religion (*'natutunan nila yung history ng relihiyon namin'*). MFP 4 voiced the necessity of educating their children about their history and about Islamic Values (*'Kailangan talaga na ma-educate yung mga anak namin about sa history namin, sa Islamic Values'*). MFP 3 said that her husband was keen on providing Islamic education by sending their children to weekend Madrasah. She said that *'Gusto ng tatay nila at gusto rin namin na matutunan nila yung mga Arabic tsaka yung Muslim traditions, para po alam nila yung pinagmulan nila'* (Their father would like them to learn Arabic and the Muslim traditions, so they know their roots).

MFP 5 observed that her son became more obedient while attending the ALIVE class in school. She said *'naging mas mabait po siya, pero mabait naman po talaga siya'* (He becomes a better person, but he is actually a good son.). MFP 7, the youngest participant in this study, was not able to attend any Madrasah due to war and violence during her childhood years. She noted that *'Nakita ko sa kanya na may takot sya kay Allah...ngayon faithful na sya tsaka lagi na sya nagsosorry'* (I observed that my son has "fear of Allah"...he is now faithful and always says sorry [whenever he commits mistakes]). MFP 10 recognized the help which the ALIVE program brought to her as a parent. She was not able to provide her children with education on Islam since she herself was not able to receive one. She said, *'Kaya nga po napakalaking tulong po nung pag-aaral nun (ALIVE) ... plus yung pagtuturo nung ano (ALIVE) lalong lumakas yung faith nila'* (Studying ALIVE is a great help...by teaching the ALIVE...their faith becomes stronger.). MFP 6 said *'Nagpapasalamat talaga ako dahil mas madaming natutunan ang mga bata sa Arabic. Minsan sila pa ang nagpapaalala tsaka nagtuturo sa amin ng kailangan namin gawin pag magdadasal'* (I am truly grateful [about ALIVE] since my children are able to learn more about Arabic. Sometimes they remind and teach us what

to do when praying.).

Attaining Holistic Education

While the participants expressed the need for their children to gain knowledge on Islam and formation on becoming a good Muslim, they also dreamed of seeing their children succeed in life. They equated success in life with getting a college degree and gaining employment. MFP 6 wanted an education with Islamic education and “English” academic education. She called it as “back-to-back education”. MFP 9 mentioned about literacy towards a successful life. She said that with good education her children could get into college and receive a degree of their choice. She herself was a college graduate from a university in Manila and managed her own shop in Greenhills, San Juan City. Aside from receiving ALIVE education in the public school, she enrolled her children to the nearby masjid (mosque, place of worship) to learn Arabic and Islamic faith. She found nothing wrong with her children getting education in private universities. MFP 2 shared the same ideas with MFP 9 on educating her children. She said their children needed a three-in-one education consisting of academic subjects, Islamic values, and Arabic language. She asserted that after graduation her children could choose any degree and would not have a problem in college (*‘Pag-alis nya dito prepared sya dun. Walang problema sa college pwede na syang pumili kung anong kurso niya, kung gusto niyang mag-Arabic.’*). MFP 3, 5, and 10, aside from desiring for an Islamic and regular (secular) education, would like to have an education that would make their children as peace loving individuals. MFP 3 said that Islam actually means peace and education should lead them towards keeping and promoting peace. She recounted the ordeals experienced by her family during the intermittent wars in Mindanao. And even when her family had already migrated in Rizal, they still experienced being suspected of instigating violence in the community. She hoped that with ALIVE her children could learn to become true to Islam, to peace. MFP 8 stressed that being a good Muslim does not only include imparting knowledge about Islamic faith and practices, but also calls for

putting this knowledge into action in the profession.

Elements of Educating a Good Muslim Filipino Children

The themes that emerged from the interviews characterized the perceived elements of a formal education proper to Muslim Filipino children. In particular, these elements were reflected in the ALIVE program, a holistic education desired by Muslim Filipino parents for their children. The ALIVE program met the needs for quality basic education and relevant Islamic education. According to Ijaz and Abbas (2010), this would be like having the best of both worlds: receiving Western education but at the same time maintaining the conventional religio-cultural values. This education would facilitate the making of a good Muslim, conscious of his/her Muslim identity and living a responsible and ethical life according to Islamic faith wherever he/she lives. McCreery, Jones and Holmes (2007) emphasized Islam as a way of life, trying to do what the Prophet did. Kazmi (2009) argued that being a Muslim would be both an objective fact by virtue of birth or affiliation and at the same time an existential challenge, i.e., consciously living a life guided by the Quran. He cited the Quran as the criterion of a Muslim by which to set the course through the vicissitudes of his/her historical journey (p. 25). It should be noted that Islamic values conform with the DepEd Values Education curriculum. Findings from this study supported the views of McCreery, et al. (2007) and Kazmi (2009) about Islam as an existential reality. Muslim Filipino parents wanted their children to become good Muslims and wanted a holistic education to realize it. Figure 1 shows the requisites of educating a good Muslim as gathered from this study. In the formation of a Muslim identity, Muslim Filipino children must receive knowledge of their faith, history and tradition and the facility to read the Quran in Arabic language. Moreover, since being a Muslim goes beyond identity by birth (fact), they must be provided with opportunities to practice being Muslims in daily life and later in their chosen profession (challenge).

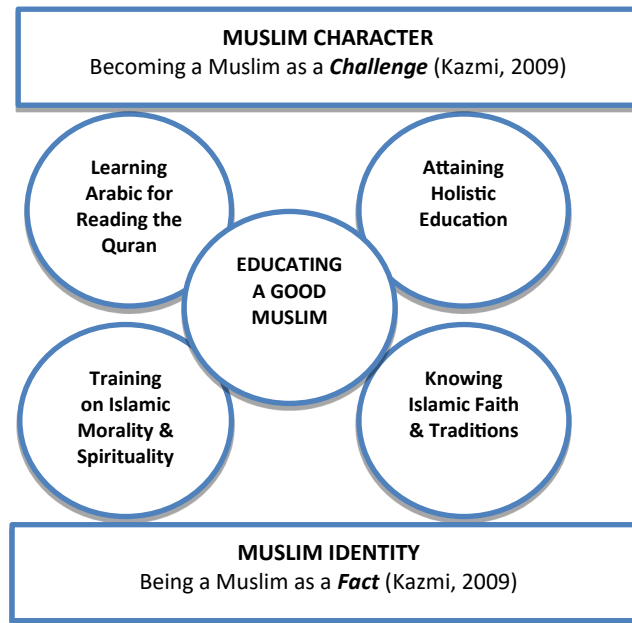


Figure 1. Elements of educating a good Muslim Filipino children.

The Islamization project or the secularization of Islamic education ultimately aimed at providing Muslims the opportunity to integrate into society as responsible and productive members. Sikand (2009) saw “modern” Madrasah as training students to become “good” Muslims and at the same time “good” doctors, lawyers, engineers, and so on. Daun and Arjmand (2005) found in their study that with the purpose of “assimilating” Muslim immigrants into the mainstream society, education became an effective tool. They found a more utilitarian view of integrating Muslims in mainstream society labor. Thus, educational systems in Europe were challenged to find an optimal balance between providing cognitive and technical skills for economic competitiveness and offering at least some religious instruction about morals and values (p. 405). Findings from this study highlighted the same contentions made by Sikand and that of Daun and Arjmand. Muslim Filipino parents desired a holistic education that was deemed functional, i.e., preparing their children to be responsible Muslims and productive Filipinos. Educating a good Muslim would enable them to

have gainful profession, work for peace and uplift their state of life in the community in particular and the country in general while drawing them near to Allah and his purposes (Alavi, 2008).

Conclusion

More than the pragmatic or utilitarian aim of preparing for productive citizenship, Muslim Filipino parents desired for an education that would make their children good Muslims. The participants positively considered the ALIVE program as a conduit of perpetuation of Muslim identity where children acquired knowledge on the Islamic faith and practices and learned the Arabic language for reading and understanding the Quran. For the Muslim Filipino parents, the ALIVE program promoted a positive way of instilling fear of Allah and becoming faithful to him. This brand of Islamization of education in the Philippines gained acceptance from Muslim Filipino parents.

Findings and conclusions of the study provide practical implications for educational

administrators, teachers, and parents. School administrators must develop evidence-based plans and strategies in providing quality and relevant education. The desire for holistic education expressed by Muslim Filipino parents would be an invaluable input to needs assessment and vision-mission review prior to crafting a School Improvement Plan (SIP). Strategies, programs, projects and activities addressing the provision of holistic education were aligned with inclusion and diversity themes stipulated in the K to 12 Basic Education Law (RA 10533). The findings of the study pointed to the need of strengthening the implementation of the ALIVE program. The ALIVE program was considered by the Muslim Filipino parents as an essential means to form their children into becoming good Muslims. To allay the fears of Muslim Filipino parents that their children would be discriminated against, school leaders should undertake programs that promote the culture of tolerance, multicultural understanding, and acceptance. It cannot be overemphasized the role of school leaders as culture builders and champions of inclusive education. They are expected to enable their teachers to model inclusive education. Teachers should be given continuing professional development on exemplary teaching practices that recognize and affirm diverse linguistic, cultural, socio-economic, and religious backgrounds to promote learner success (DepEd, 2017b). The school administrators should also harness the willingness of parents to take a more active role as partners in the educative process of their children. This would help realize DepEd's dream for parents to "actively engage and share responsibility for developing life-long learners."

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