

ISLAMIC EDUCATION: OPPORTUNITIES AND CHALLENGES IN SECULAR PHILIPPINE STATE

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Abstract: *Philippines is a secular state which mandates by its constitution the observation of separation of church and state. Religious freedom and tolerance are ensured within this secular principle; and Filipino can enrich themselves with Islamic knowledge and values, and reinforce their Islamic education. Along this secular state, the roles of Madrasah education have played vital contribution for the spread of Islam and Islamic moral values enhancements of the Filipino Muslims. There are auspicious opportunities for Muslims under this secular government in respect and recognition of their beliefs, customs, traditions and religion. Among those indubitable opportunities are the creation of Muslim autonomy known as Autonomous Region In Muslim Mindanao which still under the framework of the Philippines constitution, the implementation of sizeable portion of the Shariah Law known as Code of Muslim Personal Laws of the Philippines, the creation of National Commission on Muslim Filipinos which is aimed to serve the needs of the Muslim minorities, and the establishment of Mindanao State University for cultural integration of the people of Mindanao. Unfortunately, along these great opportunities, Islamic education in the Philippines is still under the zenith of deterioration and backwardness. Islamic institutions only serve to strengthen the moral and spiritual needs of the Filipino Muslims. It does not produce quality and competitive graduates embraced with compounding skills and earthly knowledge who are capable of facing the challenge of globalization and national employment demand. Hence, this study is conducted to provide compounding inputs for local Muslim leaders, ulama and madrasah institutions to come up necessary policies and remedies for the present declining Islamic education in the Philippines. It discusses the opportunities and challenges of Islamic Education in the Philippines in general. Qualitative research method is used; and data are gathered from relevant studies, works and personal interviews. This research concludes that Islamic education in the Philippines has been remained stagnant and backward. Opportunities given to Muslims under this secular state are not utilized optimally for Islamic education advancement.*

Keywords: Islamic education, secular state, Philippines, opportunities, challenges, minority Muslims.

Background Of The Study

Philippines is known as Christian country with only around 7 percent Muslim minorities. The minority Muslim groups are concentrated in Southern Philippines and they have their own cultural identity, historical background and Islamic religion struggle

that led them to be named Moros. Before the arrival of the Spaniards, they were not only harmoniously unified in one religion and nation but they also maintained their political and educational system. They had their own political, economic and educational system that were inheritably Islamic in nature as commemoration of Islamic history of the Philippines. The educational system of the Muslims was of the same with informal madrasah model brought by foreign Muslim preachers in the country. This served to enrich Muslims to learn more about doctrine and foundations of Islam. It strengthened their religious values, Islamic culture and Identity as well. After Independence of the Philippines, various secular schools had been established along with madrasah schools which exist through the support of the Muslim communities. The Madrasahs could not constructively compete with government and private secular institutions, simply because these Madrasahs were occasionally supported by local communities and continued at the clemency of volunteers. By this, Madrasah institutions are continuously deteriorating and only serve as an institution for Arabic Language and Basic Islamic studies. They cannot compete with non-Madrasah education in various aspects such as job opportunities for graduates, quality of education, number of enrollees and educational facilities. Madrasah schools are looked inferior and backward. Parents usually send their children to Madrasah until elementary level only with an intention that what is necessary is for their children is to learn basic Qur'an reading and Arabic Language. They believe that Madrasah only serves as foundation for basic Islamic values and Arabic Language and it will not give good job opportunities and future life for their children if ever they graduated from Madrasah. Hence, the question is why Islamic education schools are not competitive compared with catholic schools under the secular state? Despite of various opportunities of the Muslims under this secular state, Islamic education remains stagnant and backward. It cannot cater socio-economic progress for Muslims ; and it cannot serve the needs of the Filipino Muslims at this present time. Hence, it is quite interesting to try to expound the opportunities and challenges of the Islamic education in the Philippines. This paper will illustrate and expound the historical development, opportunities and challenges of Islamic education in secular state of the Philippines.

Islamization And Christianization Of The Philippines

Philippines was once under Muslim domicile before the coming of Spaniards but unfortunately at this present it is known as Christian state in Asia. The Population of the Philippine is dominated by Christians who are of Catholic and Protestant followers. the rest are Muslim minorities and Buddhists. The Islamization of the Philippines was treasured moment that curved into the history of the Philippines. It gave patriotic and Islamic resistance for the Philippine Muslims against Spanish and American colonizers. According to historians, the coming of Islam in Mindanao and Sulu is a complex inquiry that cannot be directed by a single answer. After the death of the prophet Muhammad (S.A.W), Islam expanded all over Middle East, North Africa, Spain, and Central Asia, Eastern Europe until Southeast Asia and then Mindanao and Sulu of the Philippines. This expansion was through missionary endeavors or military victories. But in the case of the Philippines, Islam arrived in the Philippines Island with trade route. This trade route was originated from Arabian land going through Central Asia, India and China, then Southeast Asia. But to conclude which group, traders, missionaries, crusaders, that really brought Islam in the Island is still arguable. The nearly possible factor for the

Islamization of the Philippines was through the missionary activities of Arab traders and teachers or sufis who came along the trade routes. Cesar Majul explained that the coming of Islam to the Philippines was due to the involvement of the Philippines in the international trade in 9th Century which expanded from Morocco to China. This trade was composed of various Muslim traders with various nationalities but dominated by Arab merchants. During fourteenth century there was already group of foreign Muslims settlers in Sulu who were probably traders. They married local women and until died in Sulu. After the middle of 14th century, Muslim missionaries who became the cause of the conversions of Malay land came. They were probably Muslim Sufis. Subsequently, another Muslims from other Malay lands came and promoted the adoption of Islamic political institutions particularly the Sultanate. Hence, the Islamization of the Philippines was part of the Islamization of Malaysia and Indonesia.

According to Russell, Spaniards failed in converting Muslim Sultanates to Christianity; and hostility and war with Muslims throughout 300 year colonial rule was the consequence of the Muslim patriotism to denounce the new religion brought by Spaniards. In fact, without the intervention of Spanish colonizers, Philippines would likely have been a Muslim country.¹ After Spaniards, American colonizers came and succeeded in controlling the Philippine Muslims by overwhelming force. They eventually established colonial occupation and reduced the political authority of current prevailing leadership system of the Muslims, the sultanate system, and established the colonial education system. After Philippines' Independence in 1946, the U.S. colonial policy of integration had continued and promoted the nationalism value as part of the education system. Unfortunately this value of nationalism promoted by colonial education was much closer to the majority faith which is Christianity; and Muslims observed that it as treachery to let them slowly apart from Islam.² Most of the teachers sent by Americans were Protestant Christian; and the control of public educations by the American Protestants during American colonial period really gave a positive impact on the Protestant Christianization in the country.³ Susan Russell explains how Spanish Christian missionaries successfully converted Filipinos into Roman Catholicism through the following ways:

- a. First attempt done by Spanish missionaries was through mass baptism of the large numbers of Filipinos.
- b. Secondly, forced reallocation of the Filipinos lived in scattered areas into centralized and large vicinity. The purpose of this was to control simply the movement and actions of a large number of Filipinos.
- c. Thirdly, Spanish clergy attitude towards abused Filipinos and giving them chances to promote the Filipinos priests and returning the land they had claimed to the Philippine landless farmers.

¹ <http://www.seasite.niu.edu/crossroads/russell/christianity.htm>

²Robert W. Hefner. ed., Making Modern Muslims: The Politics of Islamic Education in Southeast Asia. (University of Hawaii;I Press 2009) 208

³Jack Miller. "Religion in the Philippines" <http://asiasociety.org/countries/religions-philosophies/religion-philippines> (Accessed: July 2, 2012).

- d. Fourthly, the adaptation of Christianity to the local animism practices. Spanish missionaries respected firstly the present rituals of Filipinos such as ritual offerings, harvest rites and others.⁴

After colonial periods and Philippines got its independence, Philippines become a Christian state in Asia and Muslims are only confined to some areas in Mindanao. According to 2007 census data, Roman Catholic population is spread all over with 81 total from the total population of the Philippines, protestant Christians have a total 7.3% and Muslims only 5.1 percent and the rest are from least minority from Iglesia ni Kristo, Aglipayan, and Buddhists.⁵

Evolution Of Islamic Education In The Philippines

The Islamic education in Muslim history instituted from the time of the first revelation related to the importance of learning and education to the Prophet Muhammad (S.A.W) when he was in Gari Hera Cave doing religious rituals and contemplation. The first revelation was "Read: in the name of your lord who created. Created man from a clot of Read: and your lord is most bounteous...." (Qur'an: 96). Subsequently, as a prophet who was sent to guide the people and teach them the oneness of Allah, Prophet Muhammad (Peace be upon him) taught Muslims everything regarding religions. In fact the entire life of the Prophet peace be upon him from prophethood before his death was dedication to education. He educated the Muslim Ummah for various teachings. (Al-Qarni 2008,168). Prophet Muhammad (S.A.W) used to invite his companions in assembly called "Majlis" "to discuss to them the Qur'anic injunctions and the tenets of Islam. This kind of educational school became continued during the succeeding centuries. Usually this assembly was held at his masjid (mosque) and hence the mosque was not only venue of this majlis in Muslim educational history but it also played an important role as centers of learning.⁶ The formal evolution of madrasah as higher learning in Islamic society occurred under the patronage of the Vizier Nizam Al Mulk around the year 1064⁷. The new madrasah established by Nizamul Mulk had two types of education offered: scholastic theology to produce spiritual leaders and earthly knowledge to produce government servants who will be appointed in various countries and the regions of the Islamic empire. Subsequently, there were various madrasahs established by him all over the empire not only focusing on Islamic knowledge but also secular education also imparted such as philosophy, public administration, and other related sciences.⁸ When Islam arrived in the Philippines as the upshot of the Islamization of some regions in Southeast Asia such as Malaysia and Indonesia, some Islamic education system also had been transmitted into Mindanao such as the madrasah education.

⁴Susan Russell."Christianity in the Philippines", <http://www.seasite.niu.edu/crossroads/russell/christianity.htm> (Accessed: July 2,2012)

⁵ Paul Pangalangan." Religion and the Secular State: National Report for the Philippines"

⁶ Munir Ahmad, "Muslim Education Prior to the Establishment of Madrasah", *IJU_Islamabad* 21. No. 4 (1987) under "Setting"[http:// www.jstor.org/stable/20839857](http://www.jstor.org/stable/20839857) , (Accessed: July 20, 2013)

⁷ Charles Michel Stanton. Higher Learning in Islam: The Classical Period A.D 700-1300. (USA: Rowman And Littlefield Publishers, 1990) , 37

⁸ Uzma Anzar, "Islamic Education: Brief History of Madrasah with Comments on Curricula and Current Pedagogical Practices", (March 2003) 2-3 under "Setting" www.uvm.edu/~envpprog/madrassah/madrassah-history.pdf (Accessed: July 20,2013)

Islamic education in the Philippines is known sometimes as *Imadrasah* education because it confines its teachings with religious tenets and Islamic foundations and values. The establishment of *Madrasah* education in the Philippines began from the time of the arrival of Islam in Sulu in 13th century. After Sulu Islamization in the country, there was the formation of Qur'anic schools for young children to learn, read and recite the Holy Qur'an. Consequently, these Qur'anic schools went into more formal institution known as *Madrasah* where related religious subjects were taught such as theology, Arabic, jurisprudence and history. Due to the increasing number of Muslim population and demand for religious institutions, *Madrasah* for elementary, secondary and even colleges were opened. When colonial era came into the country and introduced the establishment of secular schools (non-*Madrasah* schools), *Madrasah* education underwent decline due to the lack of capacity to compete with those schools established and funded by government. (Abu bakar, 2001).

During the American periods, learning institutions, bridges, roads and hospitals were initially built. Certainly, Muslims never were heartedly magnetized by this development. Muslims were diffident to send their children to the schools established by Americans with conviction that the real purpose of this program was to draw them away from Islam and to control them. With this religious conviction and Islamic patriotism of the Muslims in the Philippines, it led them to strengthen *Madrasah* education as an alternative schools for Government schools. (Diamond 1984, 26). The education system of the Muslims in the Philippines when American came was made of a number of community schools which was called "Pandita School". Pandita is word in the Philippine Muslim language that refers to someone who possesses religious knowledge. Guru was the usual name for these schools. When Colonizers observe these schools, they provided supports until gradually controlled the schools. Usually prior to 1950s, religious education held at house of local guru.⁹

Lingga explained that after the Philippines Independence in 1946 from America, Mindanao and Sulu became part of the new nation state; and ties with the Muslim world gradually shifted to Arab countries. This was started when Muslims students from Mindanao Island were admitted to study at Al-Azhar University in Cairo Egypt. Many Muslims students got scholarship from Arab countries to pursue their Islamic studies in Middle East universities and after they finished their studies and went home, they are paid as missionaries and established *Madrasahs*, and Qur'anic schools. They reinforced the development of *madrasah* education and the propagation of Islam in the country. (2004, 5). Islamic schools like the local definition of *Madrasah* did not exist in the Philippines until 1950s. Two reasons of that contributed to its emergence.

1. The first was religious collaboration of Muslims in the Philippines with Islamic centers of the Middle East countries like Al-Azhar University. In 1950s, the Government of Egypt began sending missionaries from Al Azhar University to teach Islamic religious education in Muslim communities in the Philippines and providing scholarship study .

⁹ Robert W. Hefner. ed., *Making Modern Muslims: The Politics of Islamic Education in Southeast Asia*. (University of Hawaii; I Press 2009) 208-209

2. Secondly, the economic development of Muslim communities in the Philippines after postwar. The economic boom of the Muslims in the Philippines was the result of the reparation payments by Americans and the immigration of Christians to the Muslim areas that improved their economy. The rich Muslims invested in establishment of mosques and Madrasah.¹⁰

The undersecretary for Muslim Affairs of the Department of Education of the Philippines defines and illustrates Madrasah in the Philippines as “Muslim private schools with core emphasis on Islamic studies and Arabic Literacy. It is a privately operated school which relies on the support of the local community or foreign donors, particularly from Islamic or Muslim countries. “. He further added that Madrasahs (madaris) are the oldest and recognized educational institution in Mindanao that serves be the single most important factor in the conservation of the Islamic faith and culture in the Archipelago.¹¹ Moreover, Madrasah institutions in the Philippines are normally divided into many types according to description and standard curriculum. These are follows:

- a. Weekend Madrasah:** This is the oldest and basic kind of Madrasah in the country from the Arrival of Islam until now. It is called weekend Madrasah because usually the classes are held on Saturdays and Sundays only or two days only for a week. There is no standard curriculum and sometimes it is non-graded school and it is open for all ages. The teachers are not required to have bachelor degree at least they are graduates from Madrasah or Imam of the Masjid. These Madrasah are not registered formally and have no accreditation from the Department of Education of the Philippines and the no specific financial supports.
- b. Formal Private Madrasah:** This kind of Madrasahs offers order of educational levels. It runs like a regular secular school where students are required to undergo ladders of education from Ibtida (elementary) to Sanawi (High School) until Kuliah (Bachelor degree) and its students are required to abide Madrasah rules. The subjects are in Arabic language and confined to religious subjects but sometimes with minor subjects on mathematics, science and history. The teachers are required to be at least bachelor degree in Islamic studies. This kind of madrasah has no national accreditation standard.
- c. Standard Private Madrasah:** This is a new, modified and harmonized type of Madrasah in the Philippines that become component of the Philippines Education System and get recognition and accreditation from the government. The creation is through the Department of Education Order no. 51.s. 2004 prescribing the standard Curriculum for Elementary Public Schools and Private Madaris. This mandate requires all Madrasah institutions in the country to adopt and implement this government curriculum standard in order to get recognition and accreditation.¹²

¹⁰ Ibid 120

¹¹ Madrasah Education. <http://depedaliveprogram.weebly.com/index.html>. (Accessed: July 11 ,2013).

¹² *Ibid.* Usually the Department of Education under the Office of Madaris Education categorizes Madrasahs in the country into 3 types as mentioned. The remaining two kinds are given by the author of this paper.

- d. Special Qur'an Memorization Madrasah:** This type of Madrasah is designed and established for Qur'an Memorization purposes. The only subject is Qur'an Memorization although in some cases religious subjects are included, and the class schedules are usually conducted in the masjid for specific time.
- e. Toril Madrasah :** This Madrasah is another type of formal Madrasah where its students are required to read, and memorize the Qur'an and study some religious subjects including Arabic Language,; and normally the students are required to stay at toril dormitory until they finished their prescribed study period which is usually 2 or 3 years.

Secular State And Opportunities Of Islamic Education

Secularism is one of the hot issues when religion is the subject matter of the discussion. One of the religions that are not in favor of the secularism is Islam. Islam deprecates the principle of secularism because Islam is the totalitarian religion which promotes the balance of life in hereafter and in this world. The word "secular" is derived from the Latin "saeculum" which means this age or the present time. This present time refers to events in this world. Thus, the concept of secular can be understood as the condition of the world at this particular time or period.¹³ Despite of its importance in the Philippines, there is no common deal agreement on what really secularism really is. The word secular can be used for many couples of ways which lead to different views and meaning for some people. As a doctrine, secularism is explained as philosophy which builds its ethics without connection to religious tenets.¹⁴ Furthermore, for the case of the Philippines secular principle, this state ideology was adopted as part of the colonization of the Philippines. The secular doctrine of the Philippines which holds the separation of church and state was adopted by the country from United States of America until it was included to its constitution. In 1899, the Malolos Constitution was adopted by the Philippines Revolutionary Government, Freedom and equality of all religions as well the principle of separation of church and state was included as provision recognizing this right.¹⁵ Article II, section 6 of the present constitution of the country states that "the separation of church and state shall be inviolable"¹⁶ This abridges what is known as freedom of religion and establishment. This clearest term indicates the unfringeable secular ideology of the Philippines that acknowledges the disconnection of church affairs and government activities. It is further explained in the Bill of Rights, section 5 of the Philippines constitution that "No law shall be made respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof. The free exercise and enjoyment of religious profession and worship, without discrimination or preference, shall forever be allowed. No religious test shall be required for the exercise of civil or political rights"¹⁷.

¹³ Syed Muhammad Naquib. *Islam and Secularism*. (Malaysia: Perpustakaan Negara Malaysia: 1978) 16

¹⁴ <http://atheism.about.com/od/secularismseparation/tp/SecularismHistoryPhilosophy.htm>

¹⁵ Ibarra M. Gutierrez III., " Decontextualized Principles and the Myth of the Secular State", 1

¹⁶ The Constitution of the Philippines 197. National Book Store, Manila. 2

¹⁷ Ibid 4

Free religion exercise here can be understood as a guarantee against state interference in and restraining of any religious practice of any Filipino citizen. Religion establishment in other hand is the prohibition of providing sanction from the government to any religious belief of individual.¹⁸ But this constitutional ideological experiment has brought different results because it was applied to the country that is controlled by Roman Catholic. Certainly, it also faced a challenge from some competing groups in the Philippines like of the Muslims in Southern Mindanao and some other Christian groups.¹⁹ While obviously mandated the observance of the general principles of the separation of church and religion, free exercise and non-establishment of religion, it implicitly seems that there are zones of exceptions and contradictions which give sharp challenges and promising opportunities for the individual particularly the religion groups.²⁰ Paragraph 2 of the section 29 of the Article VI of the present constitution of the Philippines provides:

“No public money or property shall be appropriated, applied, paid, or employed, directly or indirectly, for the use, benefit, or support of any sect, church, denomination, sectarian institution, or system of religion, or of any priest, preacher, minister, or other religious teacher, or dignitary as such, except when such priest, preacher, minister, or dignitary is assigned to the armed forces, or to any penal institution, or government orphanage or leprosarium.”²¹

The above provision of the Philippines’ constitution proscribes the use of government money for religious activities but fortunately, it is not total prohibition but rather provides a certain case where government can hand over its financial support for religious activities of the government religious professionals. This is an indication that secular principle of the Philippines is contrary to what is true secular state and not truly restricted the exercise of religious intervention including Islamic education. Another provision in the Philippines constitution that gives wide opportunity for religious groups in the Philippines including the Muslim minority is the grant of tax exemption to religious organizations. Paragraph 3 of the section 28, Article VI expresses that²² “Charitable institutions, churches and parsonages or convents appurtenant thereto, mosques, non-profit cemeteries, and all lands, buildings, and improvements, actually, directly, and exclusively used for religious, charitable, or educational purposes shall be exempt from taxation.”²³ This is a great opportunity for Muslim minorities to strengthen their Islamic religious institutions like madrasah schools. Some Muslims are not aware of

¹⁸ Ibarra M. Gutierrez III., “ Decontextualized Principles and the Myth of the Secular State”, 1

¹⁹ Raul Pangalangan. Transplanted Constitutionalism: The Philippine Debate on the Secular State and the Rule of Law. (a Paper presented at International Center for Law and Religion Studies, Brigham Young University Law School, Hanoi, Vietnam, (September 2005). 2

²⁰ Ibarra M. Gutierrez III. Decontextualized Principles and the Myth of the Secular State.

²¹ The Constitution of the Republic of the Philippines 1987. National Book Store. 15

²³ Ibid 15

the various opportunities along the secular state of the Philippines that allow them to be competitive and exercise their religious enhancement and activities. Establishment of Islamic religious foundations and charitable institutions that would uplift the socio-economic status of the Muslims in the Philippines is viable and open in this secular state.

Despite of the separation of church and state principle of the Philippines, Organic Act 6734 creating Muslim autonomy seems very favorable for the Muslim minorities enrich themselves with Islamic freedom and education and improve their socio-economic as well as political system. Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (ARMM) is mandated to advance various policies and regulations that would enhance the Muslim socio economic aspects including the strengthening of the Islamic education. Another auspicious advantage of the Muslims in the Philippines while under the secular government and majority roman catholic followers is the creation of the special Islamic Law for Muslims that enable them to apply and implement Shariah Law on their localities and empower and control over their lives and to have ordered way of life. Presidential Degree no. 1083 known as the code of Muslim Personal Laws of the Philippines was assigned on February 4, 1977 as part of invaluable endeavor to repress the long-aged violence between Christians and Muslims in the country. Areas of marriage, divorce, and inheritance were the major parts of this Muslim code.²⁴ This code as mentioned in its preamble is aimed to consider the customs, traditions, beliefs and interests of the national cultural communities in the implementation of its policies.²⁵ According to Majul (1977) The establishment and recognition of the Code of Muslim Personal Laws of the country gives the Muslims an opportunity that sizeable portion of the aspects of the Islamic Law related to family law has now become part of the national laws of the Philippines. Only the Philippines which dominated by catholic Christians has given such concession. (385). Besides, Republic Act (R.A) 9997 otherwise known as National Commission on Muslim Filipinos (NCMF) was also established to reinforce the importance of the active participation of the Muslim Filipinos in national building with due respect of their beliefs, customs, traditions and institutions and aspirations demand of Muslims.²⁶ NCMF has nine commissioners including executive secretary. This commission will cover local and national *concerns* of the Muslim Filipinos including the implementations of some necessary programs such as economic, educational, cultural, and infrastructural programs for Muslim Filipino communities'.²⁷ Certainly, other opportunities are the creation of the Mindanao State University for cultural integration in Mindanao and the freedom to establish any religious education institutions in the country. If the catholic religious groups in the Philippines can establish various educational institutions that promote Christianity and provides basic and quality education for Filipinos , why Muslims cannot able to take this chance of religion tolerance to establish also competitive Islamic education institutions that serve the need of the Filipinos particularly the Muslim Filipinos?

²⁴ Gregory M. Chiarella. Source of Law, Source of Authority: The Failure of the Philippines' Code of Muslim Personal Laws. Pacific Rim Law and Policy Journal Association. 2012

²⁵ Code of Muslim Personal Laws of the Philippines. Preamble

²⁶ <http://www.ncmf.gov.ph/about-ncmf.html>

²⁷ Ibid

Challenges Of The Islamic Education In The Philippines

Islamic schools as an educational institutions established under the collective efforts of the Muslim communities have been run under risk and survival because of having no enough support from the secular government. Certainly, Madrasahs in the Philippines have been looked as religious institutions only serving the spiritual and moral needs of the Muslims. Parents send their children to the Madrasah with conviction that Madrasah is a good institution that nourishes the moral values of their children. After having finished elementary level in Madrasah, parents gradually withdraw their children from Madrasah because they think that madrasah will not give their children good education and will not lead their children to brighter future career and successful life. Despite of this perception towards madrasah, there are various challenges faced by Madrasah schools in the Philippines such as follows:

a. Curriculum Standard Accreditation

Almost of the Madrasah schools in the Philippines have no government accreditations. Islamic schools have been running under the supervision of the Muslim communities or local leaders. The absence of national accreditation in all Madrasah educations in the Philippines is obstacle for higher degree. Most of the subjects in Madrasahs are religious subjects without further inclusion of the scientific subjects such as mathematics, economics, politics, sociology, English Language and computer. Since only religious subjects that governed into the curriculum of Madrasah, the government cannot able to grant accreditation for those educational institutions that cannot reach the government standard requirements.

b. Absence of standard curriculum

Madrasah schools in the Philippines are running under various curriculums. There is no specific standard curriculum for some madrasahs only few madrasahs that have standard curriculum. Hence, it seems that subjects taught are not progressive but repeatable and the knowledge acquired by the students in Madrasah is limited. In this case, the Madrasah schools are observed as poor schools serving only the Muslim students to learn how to read the Qur'an and write Arabic Language. Introducing modern subjects into the Madrasahs is looked as providing Madrasah students with substantial real world benefit and reforming the Madrasah curriculum is regarded as essential in dealing with a central problem for many Madrasah students.²⁸

c. Financial constraints

Madrasah schools usually run under the support of the communities or local leaders. The government is not responsible for providing necessary funds for Islamic education due to the secular principle of the Philippines Government. Philippine Government is constitutionally prohibited from intervening in religious affairs of the civil sector by providing them with necessary funding. This factor seems very challengeable to the

²⁸ Farish A. Noor, Yoginder Sikand & Martin van Bruinessen, ed. *The Madrasa in Asia : Political Activism and Transnational Linkage.* (amsterdam universit y press, 2007)

Madrasah schools because Muslim communities are economically and financially deprived minorities. This is also the reason why Madrasah schools are not able to accommodate the idea of integration of social sciences into Madrasah curriculum because including those modern subjects into Madrasah subjects requires huge amount of money to be given for new recruited teachers.

d. Lack of quality of human resources

The Quality of education offered in Madrasah system at present time does not give much scope for the students to develop as modern human beings. (Mehdy 2003, 56). The reason of the gradual decline of Madrasah schools is due to the absence of qualified teachers who in some ways can contribute to the fast growing improvement of Madrasah.. High school Madrasah graduates are mostly teachers in Islamic schools in local communities. It is of great importance to stress that science education coupled with modern technology will be used in Madrasahs' properly; it would make the Madrasah education meaningful. Islam is comprehensive religion . Muslims are allowed to have plenty of relevant information and knowledge about modern education so that they can adjust themselves with any challenges and confrontations. They should be contributors to the other societies not liability for others (Ahmad Wani 2012, 243).

Graduates of Madrasah from sanawi level (high Schools), have no opportunity to use their Madrasah diploma to pursue higher education in government or private universities in the Philippines and the only way for them to pursue Higher Islamic education is to study in Islamic universities of the Middle East countries. The absence of curriculum standard accreditation of Madrasah schools is the hindrance for this disqualification. Graduate of Madrasah or Islamic studies for whatever location are still not demandable in the Philippines. Umer Chapra emphasized that the ulama continued to use mosques as center of Madrasah. However, mosques and Madrasahs are not enough to fulfill the needed task of educating and reforming the people (2000, 241).

e. Poor educational facilities and Management

Islamic Institutions have been challenged with poor educational facilities and buildings. Limited classrooms have been built just to accommodate very few students. The class rooms are not conducive for learning. The buildings are not supposed to be building for education. Besides, madrasah institutions are poorly managed and administered. This is the factor of the gradually decline of the Madrasah due to the poor management and administration. Some local big families and political leaders give attention for Madrasah for certain cases particularly during election in order to get the sympathy of the Muslim voters.

f. Secular Principle of the Philippines

Secular principle adopted by the Philippines is propitious for Muslim Filipinos but in some ways, it is catastrophe and challenge. The affirmative advantage of this secular ideology is that it gives freedom to all citizens to exercise their religion freedom and to deepen themselves with spiritual enhancements. But the concrete downsides of this ideology for religious institutions is the prohibition of financial support from the government for religious activities Hence, the Madrasah schools should find ways to be financially self-independent. However, it is known that the economic conditions of the

Muslim communities in the Philippines are quite poor. Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao is considered poorest region in the country (Abu Bakar, 2001, 88).

Conclusion And Recommendations

Madrasah education system in the Philippines has played great roles for the spread of Islam in the country. It has developed Islamically the Filipino Muslim communities and shaped their Islamic cultural identity. It has strengthened their piety and Islamic awareness. Besides, the development of Islam in the Philippines through madrasah education has catered the Muslim minorities a sense of brotherhood and unity and enlightened their historical background. Islamic institutions began historically at the time of the arrival of Islam in the Philippines and it was gradually developed through the support of the Muslim local leaders, communities, ustadhs and ulamas who graduated from various Islamic universities, Muslim charitable institutions and Muslim preachers. Furthermore, the long and old aged continuous Moro struggles against colonizers and Philippines Government maltreatment towards Muslim minorities have awakened the Muslims to firmly uphold their Islamic identity through madrasah education.

Along the years of the long existence of the Islamic education in the Philippines, there have been an opportunities for the Islamic education in the Philippines to be competitive and productive. Among those opportunities are the creation of Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao, National Commission for Muslim Filipinos, Code of Muslim Personal Laws of the Philippines, and the establishment of the Mindanao State University for cultural integration purposes. The above opportunities can be an instrument for madrasah empowerment. Unfortunately, Due to negligence, Islamic education has been embattling with various challenges along the opportunities. Among those are the lack of accreditation from the government, lack of standard curriculum, financial constraints, human capital resource problem, poor management, and secular status of the Philippines. Despite of the opportunities and challenges of Islamic education, Philippines Government as secular state is not allowed indirectly to provide necessary funding for nay religious institutions including madrasahs. It is an obvious responsibility of the Muslim communities within this state of religion tolerance and freedom to maximize their efforts to empower and improve the Madrasah education. Therefore, opportunities have not been utilized optimally in order to address the challenges of the Madrasah education in the Philippines. Hence, this study recommends the followings:

- a. Madrasah education system in the Philippines needs imminent modification of its old traditional curriculum in order to be competitive and progressive and to get national government accreditation. The present curriculum is not tune to the current demand of the society and Muslim communities.
- b. Secular principle of the Philippines provides compounding upsides and downsides for Islamic education in the country; and Muslim Filipinos should maximize those opportunities to advance those challenges of Islamic education in the country.
- c. Madrasah schools should accommodate and integrate the other social sciences courses in their curriculum in order to produce productive and talent students who are well educated with both Islamic and modern education.

- d. The present study has demonstrated how Madrasah education in the country is declining in quality education and competitiveness. Muslim scholars, ulama, and Muslim leaders in the Philippines should have an urgent and strong panacea for this madrasah quandary. Absence of the concrete solutions will lead to the religious, moral and social crisis in the future.
- e. It is observed that the secular principle of the Philippines allows competition among religious groups in the Philippines, hence, Muslim Minorities should take this opportunity to empower themselves with various aspects of empowerments such as religious, economic, political and social aspects.

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