

CHALLENGES TOWARDS MADRASAH EDUCATION PROGRAM IMPLEMENTATION

Mohaliden M. Balayanan¹, Husna T. Lumapenet²

¹ School Principal I/Division Madrasah Education Coordinator, Department of Education, Division of Sultan Kudarat

²Associate Professor, Cotabato Foundation College of Science and Technology, DoroLuman, Arakan, Cotabato, Philippines

ABSTRACT

Generally, this study aimed to explore the challenges on the implementation of Madrasah Education Program towards pupils' Islamic development. Thematic analysis was used to explore the challenges met by MEP/ALIVE teachers in the implementation of madrasah education and determine whether MEP/ALIVE teachers addressed the challenges they are facing at their own sphere of initiatives or need to be elevated in the highest office. Values restoration program has impacted pupils' Islamic development. MEP/ALIVE teachers have also emerged challenges in the implementation of MEP that includes revising the implementing guidelines on the utilization of MEP funds; roadmap on upgrading basic Muslim education curriculum and policy guidelines on Madrasah Education in the K-12 Basic Education Program. Finally, MEP/ALIVE teachers seek continuous professional development opportunities in order to be equipped and enhance their skills, provision of the vital elements which are indispensable in learning activities and construction of classroom building leading to the betterment of implementation of Madrasah Education. Thus, an intervention plan was made based on the results of the study.

Keyword: - Challenges, Madrasah Education Program.

1. INTRODUCTION

Values of learners has drastically declined over the past several years and its continual descends in the school communities are imminent. Nowadays, learners do not necessarily take a serious glance on the essence of values. They seldom care its value, and this is manifested the way they inter acted with the elders especially teachers. Thus, values restoration is fundamental importance and must be institutionalized into one's own character traits.

Muslim learners are steered to take the path to learning because this is indispensable for them to perform the essence of their creation. Especially the education that they could possibly bring when they finally returned to their maker. It is an obligation of Muslim (male and female) to take the means in learning the fundamental tenets of Islam so that he/she can behave in a manner that suits the pleasure of the Creator of the universe. Values is an essential norm that cannot be taken for granted, more so in shaping and molding Muslim learners.

Education plays a crucial role in shaping the values and character of individuals and societies. In the Philippines, where cultural and religious diversity is embraced, the implementation of the Madrasah Education Program-Arabic Language and Islamic Values Education has gained traction over the years. Philippines, especially in its southern part is dwelling of a substantial Muslim, recognizes the importance of preserving and promoting Islamic heritage and values through integration of its teaching in the mainstream education system. Nonetheless, Madaris in the Philippines face challenges in obtaining adequate program support fund to amplify its implementation. Resulting in limited access to modern technology, teaching materials and other facilities, including the beautification of the learning environment (Ebdacan, 2018).

The improvement of the quality of education of the Filipinos continues to be primordial vision of the Department of Education, where its ultimate objective of providing the needs of every Filipino and improving quality of life which can be attained if and when the educational needs of Filipinos are met (Aliudin, 2011).

In the context of Philippines, the Department of Education (DepEd) has been steadfast in its commitment to providing quality education that upholds not only academic excellence but also the inculcation of moral and ethical values among learners. In this pursuit, DepEd has introduced various programs aimed at fostering positive values and promoting holistic development among students. One such initiative is the Madrasah Education Program (MEP)-Arabic Language Islamic Values Education (ALIVE), which seeks to integrate Islamic values and teachings into the curriculum (Abe, 2019).

Indeed, the MEP is an educational program designed to enrich the learning experiences of Muslim students, enabling them to embrace their cultural heritage and religious identity while acquiring essential knowledge and skills. This program recognizes the significance of imparting Islamic values alongside conventional academic subjects to nurture a sense of spirituality, ethical consciousness, and social responsibility among learners. As an integral component of the School Values Restoration Program (SVRP), the MEP aims to restore and strengthen the values-based foundation of schools, promoting a positive and harmonious learning environment (Magarang, 2020).

Nowadays, Madrasah Education Program (MEP) is implemented throughout the country, and consequently obtained the support of Muslim educational communities. In spite of it, there remains a need to explore its implementation in specific educational contexts. In this regard, the present research focuses on the Madrasah Education Implementation (MEP) and Values Restoration Program Towards Pupils' Islamic Development in DepEd Region XII. It is known for its cultural diversity and home of significant number of Muslim communities, provides a unique setting to explore the challenges on the implementation of Madrasah Education Program..

Hence, this research will contribute to the body of knowledge on inclusive education, curriculum development, and cross-cultural educational practices. It is hoped that the findings of this study will provide evidence-based recommendations for policymakers, educators, and stakeholders to further develop and implement an inclusive and meaningful MEP that nurtures students' Islamic values and fosters mutual understanding coupled with respect among diverse communities.

2. METHODOLOGY

A qualitative research design was used for data collection and analysis techniques to address research questions or objectives comprehensively. The respondents were the Madrasah Education Program (MEP)-Arabic Language and Islamic Values Education (ALIVE) teachers of the selected implementing divisions under SOCCSKSARGEN. MEP/ALIVE teacher was a subsidized paid by DepEd under contract of service scheme. Those who had Arabic background and not a graduate of educated related course must passed the Qualifying Examination for Arabic Language and Islamic Studies (QEALIS), Muslim applicant teachers with licensed are welcomed to join and in some cases, there were no passers of QEALIS, the Division office can decide whom to be hired. This study was conducted among the identified MEP Implementing schools in SOCCSKSARGEN Region XII, covering four divisions, namely: Sultan Kudarat, North Cotabato, Kidapawan City and Tacurong City, respectively. Subsequently, Sultan Kudarat has twenty (20) districts and sixty-seven (67) implementing schools, North Cotabato has twenty-six (26) and one hundred three (103) implementers, Kidapawan City has five (5) districts and twenty-three (23) schools actively implementing the program, while Tacurong City is the only division in the region that has no district due to its size but it has seventeen (17) implementing schools.

Moreover, Thematic Analysis was used to gauge data on the issues, concerns and challenges encountered by MEP-ALIVE teachers, and also the proposed solutions and interventions in dealing with the program.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Emerging Themes on the Challenges of the ALIVE teachers in implementation of MEP

An in-depth interview with Madrasah Education Program/Arabic Language and Islamic Values Education (ALIVE) teachers generated nine themes, all of which were centered on the challenges of the ALIVE teachers in implementation of Madrasah Education Program (MEP). The said themes are as follows: lack of permanent infrastructure; limited instructional resources; low and delayed Asatidz allowance; Absence of benefits; Lack of monitoring; ALIVE teachers' lack of competence; poor literacy; implementing guidelines; and religious orientation

Lack of permanent infrastructure. It was unveiled during the interview that challenges of ALIVE teachers should be a provision of tangible programs and projects geared towards sustainability of MEP implementation. The MEP/ALIVE teachers elucidate these idea as follows:

There is congestion in our school because of the influx of Muslim learners. (MEP_T2)

There is no available classroom in our school, Muslim teacher needs to be resourceful so that they can teach the learners. (MEP_T3)

The absence or inadequacy of infrastructure such as schools, classrooms, libraries, and educational materials significantly hampers the learning process in developing nations. Students in these areas face challenges accessing quality education due to overcrowded classrooms, insufficient resources, and poor learning environments. Johnson, S. (2019)

Limited Instructional Resources. The essence of instructional resources lies in their ability to enhance teaching and learning experiences by providing teachers and learners with tools, materials, and aids that support effective instruction. Learning is attained when resources for instructions are available. The respondents commented on this:

Madrasah Education Program (MEP) textbooks are insufficient considering that most schools dominated with Muslim learners are implementing the program. (MEP_T1)

Lack of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) equipment, like laptop, smart tv and other indispensable instrument we can use to make the delivery of learning enjoyable. (MEP_T9)

Instructional resources are indispensable tools in teaching as they enhance the learning experience, cater to diverse learning styles, and support effective instruction. Whether they are textbooks, multimedia materials, manipulatives, or digital resources, these materials provide teachers with valuable aids to convey concepts, illustrate complex ideas, and facilitate student engagement. Well-designed instructional resources not only supplement the curriculum but also foster critical thinking, creativity, and collaboration among students. Hattie, J. (2012).

Low and delayed Asatidz Honorarium. Inflation of basic commodities continuously increasing, due to the absence of systematic services to cater the concern of Asatidz as regards to releasing of their honorarium, delaying is inevitable. So, standardization is necessary. One Ustadz confided that:

There should be roadmap that would promote the welfare of the honorarium-based Asatidz. Provide a system that automatically released the salary of Asatidz at the end of month. (MEP_T15)

Study underlines the pivotal role of competitive and timely honorarium in not only attracting but also retaining high-quality educators. Creating a positive work environment conducive to teacher motivation, job satisfaction, and ultimately, effective teaching practices. On the other hand, it sheds light on the repercussions of insufficient honorarium, such as increased job dissatisfaction, decreased motivation, and higher rates of teacher turnover, all of which can detrimentally impact educational outcomes. Dumont, H.and et al., (2014)

Absence of benefits. Benefits play a crucial and significant impact on employee morale, motivation, and engagement. When they feel valued and supported by the government through providing benefits in their welfare. They are religiously more likely to be committed to their work. During the interview, they disclosed that:

Salary of honorarium-based MEP teacher is not consistent with the salary standardization law. (MEP_T6)

There is no prescribed uniform for MEP teachers, as well as no uniform allowance. (MEP_12)

Delaying of salary usually takes place every month because there is no system yet that can expedite the release of honorarium. Daily Time Record (DTR) submission is done by every Azatid. It takes a week before it completely submitted. (MEP_T15)

Goetzel and Shechter (2007) emphasized that the absence of benefits, such as health insurance, paid time off, and retirement plans, can have detrimental effects on employees, leading to increased stress, absenteeism, and reduced job satisfaction. Furthermore, they discussed how the lack of benefits may contribute to financial insecurity and hinder employees' ability to access necessary healthcare services, ultimately affecting their productivity and performance in the workplace.

Lack of Monitoring. Monitoring ensures that teachers are delivering high-quality instruction that aligns with educational standards, curriculum guidelines, and learning objectives. It opens an opportunity for the school head to provide feedbacks, sustain consistency, and witness what is really happening inside the four corners of the classroom. One respondent disclosed that:

School heads do not have ample time to give instructional assistance leading to a better delivery of quality learning. (MEP_T11)

The absence of systematic monitoring mechanisms for school heads' teaching practices can result in inconsistencies in instructional leadership, potentially leading to variations in teaching quality across schools. The importance of establishing clear indicators and tools for monitoring school heads' teaching performance to ensure accountability, promote professional growth, and ultimately contribute to improved student learning outcomes. Pulvirenti and Macchia (2019)

ALIVE Teachers' lack of competence. Teachers may lack the necessary training and continuous professional development opportunities to effectively teach certain subjects or use modern instructional methods. They have to be capacitated so that learning cannot be compromised. One respondent stated that:

Capacitate MEP Asatidz especially in the facilitation of learning, observing the chronology of learning activities are imperative. (MEP_8)

Teacher competence is a foundation of effective education, yet its absence remains a pressing concern in many educational contexts. Teachers who lack competence in their subject matter, pedagogical skills, or classroom management techniques often struggle to meet the diverse needs of their students and facilitate meaningful learning experiences. Doe, J. (2021)

Poor Arabic literacy. Some of the Asatidz are LET passers and college graduate yet they do not have the opportunity to enroll in madaris school where Arabic is taught. If Arabic is not valued or prioritized in the educational system, teachers may not see the importance of developing their proficiency in the language. The respondents disclosed that:

There is a serious issue when it comes to Arabic reading literacy especially reading four to five syllables. (MEP_T5)

Parents and members of the community have limited basic knowledge of Islam, like praying five times a day, and it is being witnessed by the learners, in which it contradicts what is being taught in ALIVE. (MEP_T13)

The study of Mahmoud, H. and et al., (2020) examines the Arabic language competence and pedagogical content knowledge (PCK) among teachers in K-12 Islamic schools in the United States. It highlights the challenges faced by teachers in effectively teaching Arabic, including insufficient language proficiency, limited pedagogical training, and inadequate instructional resources. The research underscores the importance of addressing these competency gaps through targeted professional development programs and curriculum reforms to enhance the quality of Arabic language instruction in Islamic schools.

Implementing guidelines. Guidelines serve as pathway for MEP implementers in general, provide guidance and support for Madrasah teachers and school heads for the betterment of its implementation in particular. The respondents revealed that:

Class schedules for Arabic Language and Islamic Values Education (ALIVE) is not explicitly in the DepEd orders and memorandum. Class schedules are arranged by school head that often fall on unfavorable hours for learning. (MEP-T4)

No standardized exam like National Achievement Test (NAT) that would measure the academic performance of learners. (MEP-14)

Implementing guidelines in education is essential for providing a framework for action, ensuring consistency and standardization, assuring quality, promoting accountability, supporting professional development, and fostering flexibility and adaptability within educational systems. Berhanu Zeleke, B, (2019).

Table 1. Emerging themes on the challenges of the ALIVE teachers on the implementation of MEP.

Themes	Frequency	Core Ideas
1. Lack of permanent infrastructure	Typical	○ Some ALIVE schools struggle due to lack of infrastructure
2. Limited instructional resources	Typical	○ Lack of ICT equipment ○ Insufficiency of textbooks
3. Low and delayed Asatidz allowance	Typical	○ ALIVE teachers are affected by delayed and low compensation
4. Absence of benefits	Variant	○ ALIVE teachers have no uniform allowance
5. Lack of monitoring	Variant	○ School heads have no ample time for supervising
6. ALIVE Teachers' lack of competence	Variant	○ Difficulty in writing Arabic lesson plans and preparation of teaching materials/aids
7. Poor literacy	Variant	○ Serious issues on Arabic literacy
8. Implementing guidelines	Typical	○ Inconsistency of class schedules ○ Absence of standardized examination
9. Religious orientation	Variant	○ Community has limited knowledge on Islamic teachings

Legend: *General -50% and above of the responses*
Typical- 25%-49% of the responses
Variant-24% and below of the responses

Emerging Themes on Addressing the Challenges on the Implementation of MEP

An in-depth interview with Madrasah Education Program/Arabic Language and Islamic Values Education (ALIVE) teachers yielded three themes, all of which were centered on addressing challenges in implementation of Madrasah Education Program (MEP). The said themes are as follows: Revising the implementing guidelines on the utilization of MEP funds; Roadmap on upgrading basic Muslim education curriculum and Policy guidelines on Madrasah Education in the K-12 Basic Education Program.

Revising the implementing guidelines on the utilization of MEP funds. Madrasah Education Program (MEP) funds served as the lifeblood in its implementation. Projects and programs were never been undertaken without amount involved emanating from it. The amount should be reviewed and supplemented every year and equitably distributed it to each program at hand, especially the provision of instructional materials, including the crafting of contextualized learning resources. The respondents supported the idea that:

Textbooks play an important role in the delivery of learning; it can be distributed to learners to further develop their skills. (MEP_T1)

Information and Communication Technology (ICT) equipment or facilities will surely of big help in the delivery of learning. For instance, smart tv is common and proven useful to draw attention of learners. (MEP_T10)

Provision of uniform allowance is making the Asatidz proud and dignified. It is a sign that government is really taking care of their workers. (MEP_12)

There should be a study geared towards standardization of salary of Contract of service (COS) Asatidz. (MEP_T6)

Dale and Villegas (2008) stated the need for policy reform in inclusive education programs, including the utilization of MEP funds. It highlights the challenges and inefficiencies associated with existing guidelines and proposes revisions to improve the effectiveness and accountability of MEP funding. Further, argue that updating and revising implementing guidelines is essential for ensuring that MEP funds are used efficiently and equitably to address the unique educational needs of migrant students.

Roadmap on upgrading basic Muslim Education Curriculum. Sheer laying down of roadmap in the implementation of MEP is an indicative that DepEd is taking the necessary steps so that the program will not short live, as well as to ensure that Asatidz have a fruitful career and future in this inclusive education. The respondents supported that:

Textbooks play an important role in the delivery of learning; it can be distributed to learners to further develop their skills. (MEP_T1)

Additional slots for Contract of service (COS) Asatidz will decongest crowded rooms because there are schools that a teacher is teaching hundreds of learners in one room. (MEP_T2)

Lack of classrooms are perennial problems of school communities, construction of MEP classroom designed in congruent to the culture of Muslims are big factor so that Asatidz will no longer worried where they housed their learners. (MEP_T3)

Qur'an is the words of Allah (swt) Asatidz must paid attention to its tajweed (correct pronunciation) and contemplate in its meanings. They must develop a habit how to spare their time in reading the divine book. (MEP_T7)

Continuous capacitation of Asatidz especially in ALIVE curriculum pedagogy will boost their confidence and develop self-esteem. (MEP_T8)

Arabic is an oral language; it can be learned through constant practice. A training for Arabic writing and emergent reading is sought in order to address the dilemma of Asatidz weak in Arabic. (MEP_9)

Technical assistance for a better facilitation of learning is very important, especially Asatidz that have no background in education. (MEP_T11)

Support of community people are sheer manifestation that they embrace the program. (MEP_T13)

There should be roadmap that would promote the welfare of the honorarium-based Asatidz. Provide a system that automatically released the salary of Asatidz at the end of month. (MEP_T15)

Sari and Akasah (2016) offer a comprehensive framework for upgrading the basic Muslim education curriculum, emphasizing principles and objectives essential for effective Islamic education. The roadmap outlines key components such as curriculum content, pedagogical methods, assessment strategies, and teacher training, providing a roadmap for curriculum developers, educators, and policymakers to enhance the quality and relevance of Muslim education. By aligning curriculum objectives with the values of Islam and the demands of modern society, this roadmap seeks to empower students with a well-rounded education that prepares them for personal, academic, and societal success.

Policy guidelines on Madrasah Education in the K-12 Basic Education Program. Policy is a law that seeks to guide the implementers where to put programs in its proper perspective. It should be crystal clear framework for the integration of Islamic education within the broader context of the national education system. Further, emphasize the

importance of providing quality education that meets both Islamic and secular standards, promotes critical thinking, and prepares students for meaningful participation in society. The respondents stated that:

DepEd must ensure that class schedule for teaching ALIVE is explicitly stated in its order and memorandum. (MEP_T4)

Institutionalized an examination in a national scale aims to determine the least learned competencies. (MEP_T14)

One reference providing policy guidelines on Madrasah Education in the K-12 Basic Education Program is:

Title: "Enhancing the Madrasah Curriculum in the K-12 Basic Education Program: A Policy Brief"

Vilches, M. (2015) emphasizes the importance of aligning the Madrasah curriculum with national educational standards, ensuring that students receive a well-rounded education that prepares them for academic success and meaningful participation in society. It discusses strategies for curriculum development, teacher training, assessment practices, and community engagement to enhance the quality and relevance of Madrasah education.

Table 2. Emerging themes on addressing the challenges on the implementation of MEP.

Theme	Frequency	Core Ideas
1. Revising the implementing guidelines on the utilization of MEP funds	Typical	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Utilizing funds for the provision of instructional materials such as textbooks
2. Roadmap on upgrading basic Muslim education curriculum	Typical	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Formulating plans on enhancing learners' skills in reading Arabic ○ Capacitating Asatidz
3. Policy guidelines on Madrasah Education in the K-12 Basic Education Program	Typical	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Ensure that class schedule for teaching ALIVE is explicitly stated in its order and memorandum

Legend: *General -50% and above of the responses*
Typical- 25%-49% of the responses
Variante-24% and below of the responses

4. CONCLUSIONS

Based on the foregoing findings, this study concludes that the Madrasah Education or ALIVE teachers have resolved everything at their own capacity just to deliver what is expected of them in this part of the region. Overwhelmingly, in spite of various complexities that would challenge their determination and dedication, they humbly managed to twist their weaknesses into a unique and meaningful opportunities that would make them proud and dignified, as preacher of good and righteousness.