

Pre-Service Teachers' Perception on the Viability of the Proposed Teacher Education Curriculum in Islamic Studies

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Abstract

This study determines the acceptability of the proposed curricula for Bachelor of Secondary Education (BSEd) and Bachelor of Elementary Education (BEEd) courses major in Islamic Studies. A questionnaire composed of open-ended questions was administered to the pre-service teachers of the Teacher Education unit of the Mindanao State University in Southern Philippines. From 250 distributed questionnaires, 164 were retrieved and analyzed using simple descriptive statistics. Findings showed that majority of the pre-service teachers strongly favored for the immediate implementation of the proposed curriculum. The study did give some recommendations.

Keywords: Islamic Studies, Curriculum, Teacher Education Institution

Introduction

The Moro Problem or the Secession Movement in Mindanao also referred to as the Recurring Rebellion in Southern Philippines is one of the adverse effects of the colonization of the Philippines which started in 1521 and which gave birth to the secular education that systematically suppressed or replaced the traditional *pandita* and *madrasah* educational systems. The national government took a serious look into this problem and created a congressional committee on Mindanao affairs to research and recommend solutions. One of the major recommendations of the committee was to establish an institution of higher education in Muslim Mindanao. Thus, Mindanao State University (MSU) came into being.

Mindanao State University (MSU) of the Philippines was originally set-up under Republic Act 1837 in 1961. Foremost among its mandates are the attainment of the following objectives: (i) to perform the traditional tasks of instruction, research and extension; (ii) to provide the professional and technical manpower needs of the Mindanao, Sulu and Palawan

(MINSUPALA) region; (iii) to facilitate the economic development of the area; (iv) to facilitate the integration of the Muslims into the national body politics; and (v) to service the needs of surrounding communities.

Formal classes opened in 1962 with 282 students, 19 faculty members and staff, and three core pioneering colleges: Community Development, Liberal Arts, and Education. For several years of its existence, MSU continues to make its mark in the academe through dedicated pursuits of quality education. The University made it possible for the Muslims and other minorities in the Southern Philippines especially the underprivileged constituents of the society to have greater access to education. This has been done through the expansion of the University into seven autonomous campuses in the strategic areas in Mindanao, namely: (i) MSU Marawi City; (ii) MSU Iligan Institute of Technology in Iligan City; (iii) MSU College of Technology and Oceanography in Bongao, Tawi-Tawi; (iv) MSU General Santos; (v) MSU Maguindanao; (vi) MSU Sulu; (vii) MSU Naawan in Misamis Oriental.

In addition, there are three tertiary agriculture and trade schools formerly supervised by the Commission on Higher Education (CHED) which were merged and now supervised by MSU, namely: (i) Lanao National College of Arts and Trade (LNCAT) in Marawi City; (ii) Lanao National Agricultural College in Sultan Naga Dimaporo (SND) in Lanao del Norte; and (iii) Maigo School of Arts and Trade (MSAT) in Maigo, Lanao del Norte. This time those three supervised schools are named MSU LNCAT, MSU LNAC, and MSU MSAT.

In 2005, some faculty members of the College of Education were tasked by the Technical Panel for Teacher Education to assist in the preparation of Teacher Education curriculum with specialization in Islamic Studies. After conducting initial surveys, a tentative listing of subjects required for the proposed Bachelor of Secondary Education (BSEd) and Bachelor of Elementary Education (BEEd) major in Islamic Studies was produced. Table 1 reflects the list of major courses with the corresponding course title, course description, number of units, and pre-requisites.

In the Philippines, the pre-service preparation for the primary and secondary educational sectors is a vital function and responsibility that has been assigned to higher education institutions. All efforts to improve the quality of education are dependent on the service of the teachers who are properly prepared to undertake the various important roles and functions inherent in the teaching profession (CMO 30, Series, 2004). With this guideline, any curricular program offering like the proposed Islamic Studies, and probably revisions are patterned to the curriculum design that features various components corresponding to the basic and specialized knowledge and skills that will be needed by a practicing professional teacher. These components are: (i) General education courses, (ii) professional education courses, and (iii) specialization/content courses. The curriculum is also designed so that the curricular components are integrated. That is, the curriculum emphasizes the interweaving of foundational, theoretical, methodological, and experiential knowledge in the various learning experiences in the curriculum.

The general education courses made use of the CHED Memorandum No. 59 series 1996 as the recommended track for the prescribed number of units (63) for the teacher education programs (Section 9, CMO 30 series 2004). The professional education courses represent the

component that aims to develop the range of knowledge and skills in the practice of teaching profession such as theory and concepts, methods and strategies, field study, and a cluster of special topics courses, with 54 units for the BEd and 51 units for the BSEd (Section 10, CMO 30 series 2004). In the specialization courses for the BSEd, all students have to complete 60 units of content courses in one of the following areas of specialization: Mathematics; Physical Sciences; Natural Sciences; English; Filipino; Social Studies; Values Education; Technology and Livelihood Education (TLE); Music, Arts, Physical and Health Education (MAPHE); and Islamic Studies; and 57 units for BEd (Section 16, CMO 30 series 2004). Table 2 reflects the listing of the curriculum outline for BSEd and BEd with the specific number of units for each component (ELC Handbook, 2010).

In reference to the above-mentioned specializations covered in the CMO 30 series 2004, College of Education (CED) at MSU main campus offered eight (8) BSEd curricular programs with specializations on Biology, Chemistry, English, Filipino, History, Mathematics, Physics, and TLE, excluding the three subjects on Values Education, MAPHE and Islamic Studies; and two specializations in BEd Early Childhood Education (ECED) and General Education (Gen Ed). However, there is a clamor for the college to open program that would continue the Accelerated Teacher Education Program (ATEP).

The introduction of ATEP was another challenge to the University as it responds to the challenges of the 21st century knowledge workforce. It evolved as a response to one of the goals enunciated in the Road Map to Madrasah Education crafted by then Undersecretary of the Department of Education (DepEd) Manaros Boransing when he was the senior consultant of DepEd-ARMM. Dr. Mahid Mutilan then vice governor of ARMM and at the same time DepEd-ARMM Secretary, issued Order No. 1 creating Project Madrasah Education (PME). The goals of PME are to: (i) develop and unify curricular offerings of private madaris in the ARMM; (ii) design the Arabic language and Islamic values subjects for public schools; and (iii) develop a model of Integrated Madrasah Curriculum to be piloted in the region (BEAM ATEP Executive Summary, 2007).

After a series of planning, workshops and consultations with concerned organizations here and abroad, the Madrasah curriculum was launched in 2005, then ARMM Regional Secretary Mutilan issued a memorandum order for its implementation following the national mandate DepEd Order No. 51 issued in 2005 implementing the standard curriculum for elementary public schools and private madaris. In the said order, Arabic language and Islamic values become add-on subject in public schools along with the learning areas of the Revised Basic Education Curriculum (RBEC).

On January 2006, ATEP was introduced to MSU Marawi campus through the initiative of Noor Mohammad Saada as part of the advocacy of the Basic Education Assistance for Mindanao (BEAM) Project funded by the Australian Government. In response, the MSU President issued Special Order No. 70, series of 2005 and reinforced by Special Order No. 595 series of 2006 for the implementation of the ATEP by the MSU College of Education (CED) with the partnership of the King Faisal Center for Islamic, Arabic and Asian Studies (KFCIAAS).

But it was only a short-lived program where the unit had once catered for three consecutive years (2007-2009). So, since MSU is located in the strategic area within

Autonomous Region for Muslim Mindanao (ARMM) surrounded by Muslim communities, and in fulfillment to the University's foremost mandate, that is, to provide professional and manpower needs of the MINSUPALA region, CED pursued with the proposal of BSEd and BEEd programs major in Islamic Studies that would cater on the enhancement of the teaching competencies of the Muslim teachers who would be teaching the new Muslim generation. Importantly, finishing the Islamic Studies course would qualify the teachers to take the Licensure Examination for Teachers (LET), unlike those Arabic teachers whose degrees are obtained from Madaris, are barred to take the LET without taking first the professional education subjects from Teacher Education institutions per requirement of the Philippine Regulation Commission (PRC).

In the MSU System, there are stringent requirements to be accomplished by the proponent unit before a curricular program is finally approved by the Board of Regent. Aside from the various forms to be filled out, the rationale indicating the dire need of the unit, the descriptions of different subjects, and a survey as to its viability or acceptability of the clientele must be done. Like this particular proposal, it lingers its approval due to lack of study on its acceptability, thus, this study is deemed undergone. Table 3 shows how specializations in Islamic Studies should be taken by the students during a particular semester.

Statement of the Study

While there was a positive commendation from the committee of the technical panel for teacher education, it is imperative to consider the perceptions of the students being one of the stakeholders in curriculum matters. It is therefore the aim of this paper to determine the viability of the proposed BEEd and BSEd curriculum major in Islamic Studies from the perspectives of the Muslim pre-service teachers from the College of Education.

Research Question

What is the perception of the Muslim pre-service teachers on the proposed BEEd and BSEd curriculum major in Islamic Studies?

Extended Questions

What is the opinion of the Muslim pre-service teachers on the proposed BEEd and BSEd curriculum major in Islamic Studies?

1. If given a chance, would the Muslim pre-service teachers take up the Islamic Studies curriculum instead of their current degree or course?
2. Will they recommend the proposed Islamic Studies curriculum to their family and friends?
3. What is their opinion about the importance of the Islamic Studies curriculum?

Method

Respondents of this study were the pre-service teachers of the MSU College of Education purposively sampled from 1,435 populations for the second semester, Academic Year 2012-2013. It is purposive because the Muslim students were the target respondents and optional for the Christian population. Out of this total population, 1,199 are Muslim students (130 male and 1,305 female). Two hundred fifty pre-service teachers were given the open-ended questionnaires but the number of returned accomplished questionnaires was only 164 (Table

4). The respondents expressed their opinions in an essay format using the language or dialects they were most comfortable with.

Results and Discussion

Four questions were asked to the pre-service teachers about the proposed Islamic Studies curriculum. Findings are presented in a semi-narrative form related to the questions included in the questionnaire (a) opinion on the proposed teacher education curriculum in Islamic Studies (b) whether to take the Islamic Studies curriculum instead of their current degree or course (c) whether to recommend the proposed Islamic curriculum to their family and friends and (d) the importance of the said curriculum. Responses for item one disclose that the respondents have positive opinions about the proposed teacher education curriculum in Islamic Studies. As one respondent said,

It is a good idea to offer Islamic Studies curriculum because it will help Muslim students to gain more knowledge about Islam and for non-Muslims to know about Islam.

Gaining more knowledge about Islam denotes that the respondents as future teachers are aware not only of the comprehensive implications of teaching as a noble profession but of the centrality of Islam in their future profession. Perhaps, the respondents who are Muslims were that Islam, as a way of life, at least in this country, is a misunderstood religion not only to non-Muslims but to secular-minded Muslims as well. The best way to erase doubts and misunderstanding therefore is to know it more by integrating Islamic courses into the curriculum. Also, the education being taught in the Philippines is a secular one and the only hope for Muslim students to know more about their religion is to offer it as an alternative choice for enrolment under a government university like MSU.

Responses for item two reveal that the respondents have four distinct perspectives: (i) to take up the Islamic Studies curriculum instead of their current degree or course; (ii) to take up the said curriculum after finishing their current degree or course; (iii) to take up the said curriculum if there is an assurance of employment; and (iv) to continue with their current degree or course. Examples of each of these perspectives are as follows:

I will surely enroll because it will bring me into the world of preaching which I intend to do in the future.

I will enroll after I finished my current degree in order for me to know more about my religion.

I will enroll as long as there is a job for me after I graduate.

I will continue with my current degree and I don't have any intention to pursue the degree on Islamic Studies because I have difficulty in understanding the Arabic language.

The above opinions are typical responses given by the respondents. However, among the 164 retrieved answers majority are inclined to favor the first perspective, followed by the

second, fourth and the third perspectives. The variations in these perspectives reflect the socio-cultural and economic landscape of the Philippines and Mindanao in particular. Teaching is and has always been a lucrative career choice of many Muslim women in Mindanao. The Meranao society and culture of which the majority of the respondents belonged encourages the women to enroll in teacher education curriculum as there is an assurance of employment. The presence of schools both public and private ensures the continuity of need for teachers. In addition, teaching itself is tailored-fit to women as schools are nearby to residential houses and safety and security problems are minimal.

Teaching is a female-dominated profession in the Philippines most especially among Muslims. The mother of a family, by virtue of her inherent intellectual and emotional make-up, necessitate her knowledge on Islam in order to imbibe Islamic values and precepts upon her children at the earliest critical formative years.

Responses for item three disclose that the 164 respondents will recommend the Islamic Studies curriculum to their family and friends. Their justifications are as follows:

I will recommend the said curriculum especially to freshmen students because it is the best curriculum.

I will recommend it to my family and friends for them to learn more about Islam.

I will surely recommend it especially to Muslim girls because nowadays most of them forgot their true identity as *Muslimah*.

The above responses are strong manifestations for the acceptability of the proposed Islamic Studies curriculum and therefore ensure its viability. As every curriculum promises something to its clientele, this Islamic Studies curriculum has its own share of goals and objectives which the respondents expect to acquire when they take up the curriculum. The responses are also reflective of the general belief of every Meranao-Muslim that the most desirable personality that can ensure successful life in this world and in the hereafter is one that is molded out of Islamic values, precepts and practices. This must be present in the mothers who are the first teachers of their respective children.

Responses for the last item show meaningful insights into how the respondents perceived the importance of the Islamic Studies curriculum. Their responses fall within the following:

The proposed teacher education curriculum in Islamic studies will fully enhance the teaching of Islam among the Muslim youth;

It will give opportunities for madrasah teachers to enroll in the said curriculum thereby facilitating the gradual adoption of effective teaching strategies into their actual teaching practices;

It will be an important mechanism for Muslim students who were trained in western education to be exposed to their own roots – their Islamic heritage and culture as well as the rules of Shariah;

It will give a vantage point for students who have interest and background in the madrasah to be licensed teachers recognized by the Commission on Higher Education (CHED) in the Philippines; and

It will serve as a wakeup call both for Muslim teachers and Muslim students who have been overly exposed to western lifestyle, technology and media.

The foregoing responses are also indicative of the new perceived sense of identity as Meranao-Muslim educators who are willing to harmonize conservative ways with the acceptable modern methods and technologies consistent with the universal characteristic of Islam. Meaning, the respondents believed that upholding Islamic tenets and precepts does not deny or contradict the blessings of objectives of modernization.

Recommendations

This study recommends conducting a follow up study with a bigger sample size in order to validate the findings of this study. To further expand the scope of this study, a qualitative study using a narrative inquiry in gathering data should be conducted. In this way, the pre-service teachers will be given the chance to narrate their views from their own lived experiences and individual realities.

After the passage of time, there is also a need to take a second look on the proposed curricula as presented in Table 1 as for contents, scope and relevancy. Also, the massive preparation of graduates to pass the Licensure Examination for Teachers (LET) shall be infused to ensure employment.

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