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## MADRASAH IN THE PHILIPPINES

### Origin of the Word *Madrasah*

*Madrasah* is an Arabic term for “school.” It is derived from the root word *dars*, which connotes a learning process carried through drill lesson. Also derived from the same root are: (1) *mudarras*, meaning a male teacher, while *mudarrasah* is a female teacher; and (2) *derrasah*, meaning studying or studied subject. (Ismael, 1995).

### Official Definition of *Madrasah*

Department of Education Undersecretary for Muslim Affairs, Dr. Manaros B. Boransing, gives the following definition and types of *madrasah* in the Philippines:

*Madrasah* (pl. *madaris*) generally refers to 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. The *madaris* are the oldest educational institution in Mindanao and are recognized to be the single most important factor in the preservation of the Islamic faith and culture in the Philippines.

There are three general descriptive types of *madrasah* in the Philippines.

1. **Traditional or weekend madrasah.** Instruction is basically religious. It is considered as non-formal education due to its characteristics: (a) classes are held on Saturdays and Sundays only or days agreed upon by the teacher and the students/pupils; (b) it does not have a formal curriculum; (c) it is non-graded and may have multi-age grouping; and (d) it only requires its teachers to be graduates of a *madrasah* or to be an *imam* (Muslim religious leader).
2. **Developmental or formal madrasah.** This type offers hierarchically structured education and sequential learning generally attuned with the formal education system. It operates like a regular school where the students go through *madrasah edadi* (pre-school), to *madrasah sanawi* (high school). The teachings concentrate on Islamic religious and cultural subjects and include some mathematics and sciences courses, with Arabic as the medium of instruction. Expectedly, the *madaris* students lack competitive skills required for employment and are not eligible for transfer to regular schools because the *madaris* do not implement the standard curriculum of the Department of Education. This type is not

recognized and accredited by the Department of Education.

3. **Standard private madrasah.** This type of madrasah has been harmonized, upgraded and modified to become a component of the Philippine education system through the issuance of DepED Order No. 51, s. 2004, prescribing the Standard Curriculum for Elementary Public Schools and Private Madaris. Henceforth, all madrasah institutions in the country shall be required to adopt and implement said standard curriculum to obtain government recognition and accreditation. In the public schools, the enriched curriculum is likewise prescribed mandating the offering of Arabic language and Islamic values for Muslim students throughout the country in areas where there is a Muslim population.

### History of Philippine Madrasah Education

The madrasah or Islamic education in the Philippines is believed to coincide with the growth and coming of Islam, which was brought by Arab missionaries and Malay adventurers who settled in Sulu and western Mindanao. Based on the Sulu Genealogy, in the 13th century, a certain Tuan Mashaika arrived in Sulu and introduced Islam to the inhabitants (Abubakar, 1983).

A later missionary by the name of Karim-ul-Makhdum arrived during the second half of the 14th century, and his religious activities reinforced the growing Islamic community in Sulu (Abubakar). Makhdum was followed a decade or so later by a Sumatran Muslim nobleman, Rajah Baguinda, who intuited himself into the local Sulu leadership and also furthered the spread of the teachings of Islam (Hassoubah, cited in Alonto, 1986).

In the beginning of 15th century, another Arab missionary, Sayyid Abū Bakr also known as Sharif-ul Hashim, landed in Jolo island. Abu Bakr consolidated political power by introducing the sultanate as a political system with himself becoming the first sultan. His 30-year reign saw the construction of mosques and the establishment of madaris (Abubakar).

Madrasah education was mostly done in the house of the *pandita* or *guro*, a Sanskrit word for “teacher.” Sometimes classes were also done in the *masjid* or mosque. Lessons were confined to the reading and writing of the Arabic language as the means of reading the Qur'an (Alonto).

### Philippine Madrasah Education Today

Today, madaris are scattered nationwide, with the majority found in Central and Western Mindanao. It is estimated that there are between 600 and 1,000 madaris in Mindanao with a total student population of between 60,000 and 100,000. Provinces with over 100 madaris each are Lanao del Sur, Basilan and Maguindano.

Aside from the madaris, the Department of Education (DepEd) has 459 public schools nationwide implementing madrasah. This number does not include the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (ARMM) with its own regional DepEd which is technically independent of the national DepEd.

The Philippine government through the DepEd has developed the Road Map for Upgrading Muslim Basic Education, a comprehensive program for the educational development of Filipino Muslims.

The Road map espouses the following principles:

- That Muslims, like all other Filipino citizens, shall have intellectual and educational capacity to participate actively in the social, economic and political endeavors of the country. A progressive Muslim will be a peace-loving and patriotic Filipino citizen who is able to compete in the job market locally and globally to upgrade his/her quality of life.
- That Muslims as Filipino citizens shall advance their educational status, from which the Philippine nation shall obtain political and economic gains and benefits that will ensure a steady flow of investment, not only in Mindanao but in the whole country.
- That Muslims as Filipino citizens shall ensure sustained and permanent peace through access to Islamic-friendly educational curriculum and quality basic education comparable to the rest of the Filipino people.
- That there shall be a strengthening of the present Madrasah educational system as vital component of the national education system.
- That the peace process shall be enhanced when Filipino Muslims are educated in Islamic-friendly quality basic education which will contribute to the eradication of separatist sentiments in the minds of present and future generations of Filipino Muslims.

The Road Map has the following seven program components:

- Development and institutionalization of madrasah education.
- Upgrading quality secular basic education in formal elementary and secondary schools serving Muslim students.
- Developing and implementing an alternative learning system for Filipino Muslim out-of-school youth.
- Developing and implementing appropriate livelihood skills education and training for present-day students of private madaris and out-of-school youth.
- Supporting government efforts to provide quality Early Childhood Care

and Development (ECCD) Program for Filipino Muslim preschool children.

- Creation of a Special Found for Assistance to Muslim Educational (FAME) by an Act of Congress.

The development and institutionalization of madrasah education as well as the standard curriculum for elementary public schools and private madaris was approved and prescribed by the Department of Education under DepED Order No. 51, s. 2004. The Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (ARMM) had adopted the national standard curriculum by virtue of ARMM RG Executive Order No. 13-A, s. 2004. With these issuances, the madrasah educational system has now been upgraded as a vital component of the national educational system, similar to the mainstream school system.

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