

# Madrasah Teachers' Journey with Muslim Learners

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**Abstract:** This study deals with the narrative accounts of the Asatidz or Madrasah Teachers teaching Arabic Language and Islamic Values Education (ALIVE), to preserve and in-still the culture, customs, traditions and interests of Muslim learners. The ALIVE classes are in Mandaue City Central School, Division of Mandaue City. Traced are the lived experiences of the eight Asatidz teaching Kindergarten, Grades one and two, Grades three and four, and Grades five and six. As they journey together the Asatidz realized their responsibilities in helping the Muslim children acquire the necessary competencies and in preserving their values and Islamic faith. They had also encountered the problem of absenteeism but had initiated parent conferences, done visitations and remedial classes for the children. Inclusion of sports activities was recommended.

**Keywords:** Madrasah, Asatidz, Teachers' Journey, ALIVE Arabic Language and Islamic Values Education.

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

### Rationale:

In Asia and some parts of the world where in Muslim children together with their parents lived and study with the Muslim educational system called Madrasah. For instance, Mandaue City Central School, Division of Mandaue City spearheaded the Madrasah education program through the organization of ALIVE classes attended by Muslim learners and handled by the Asatidz or Muslim teachers. The eight teachers were exclusively hired based on qualifications standards and contract of service. The Asatidz were responsible for upgrading basic education in teaching the Arabic language and Islamic values which were vital in the propagation of Muslim culture tradition, and their Islamic faith. Only few studied about the Madrasah education program, this is the reason

## 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

In the study of Husin(2009) from Indonesia states that Madrasah evolved from Pesantren model of education. While pesantrens were the comparative model of the colonial Dutch model of education, madrasahs are hybrid model of the two. There are three basic forms of madrasah schools in Indonesia. The first are madrasah that incorporate general subjects into their curricula, the second are madrasah diniyahs that teach only Islam and Arabic, and the third are pesantrens, which could be either of the first two types but offer boarding for students who want to live under the guidance of *kiais* (instructors). Approximately 15 percent of all children of school age are enrolled in this religious school system. In 2002, about 5.7 million children were enrolled in the three levels of the 37,362 madrasahs of the first type. This first type of madrasah has been formally recognized as part of the regular school system under a series of laws enacted between 1945 and 2000. Numerous community-organized madrasah diniyahs also serve a large number of children, but no reliable enrollment rates are on record for this type of school. In 2002, about 2.7 million children were enrolled in 11,312 *pesantrens*. (Indonesia Education Sector Review, 2004)

In other study the researchers reviewed the study of “ British Policy and Reform of Madrasah Education in Bengal” narrates that During the middle age madrasah education was considered to be the essence of education of Muslims of

Bengal and this education was inextricably related with their religion.. During the whole British period the subject of probable future of madrasah education in reconstruction of education system of Bengal, even of India, was a much discussed issue. In fact regarding this education reform argument and counter arguments continued among the Government, Muslim society or intellectuals of other communities and political personalities in such a manner which had not been experienced for other reform work of the Government. Because of this contemporary intellectuals and Abul Hossain (1897-1938), Professor of Dhaka University at its founding time (1921), designated the problem of Muslim education as national problem of India [ Abul Hossain, Bangali Mosalmaner Sikhsha Samssa (The Education Problems of Bengali Muslims), Dhaka : Modern Lebrary, 1928, p 23]. So, the government and Muslim society attributed importance most to the reform of madrasah education for the progress of education of this country. Besides, as there was no significant progress in reformation and modernisation of madrasah education the rise of modern educated middle class in the Muslim society of Bengal was delayed. Specially, in comparison to their neighbouring Hindu society they lagged behind by 60/70 years in socio-economic context. (Al-masum, 2009)

Bustaman Ahmad (2014) states that the researcher would like to approach this issue by examining socio-cultural of Islamic education in Southeast Asia. Historically, the tradition has been based on Muslim society at grass root level. The word of madrasah in Southeast Asia has long history, which called as dayah in Aceh, surau in Minangkabau, pesantren in Java, pondok in Malaysia, and pho no in Southern Thailand. The role of madrasah, then has similarities with the tradition of pesantren, even in some Muslim countries like Indonesia scholars still can differentiate between pesantren and madrasah. It is said that —... if pesantren was expected to produce ‘ulama’, madrasah was hope to produce Muslim ...or in the end to produce intelligentsia and even intellectual ‘ulama’.|The similarities between pesantren and madrasah can be understood as: In classical Islam the madrasah was the institution of learning par excellence, in that it was devoted primarily to the study of Islamic law, queen of the Islamic sciences. The masjid, from which it developed continued to be used for teaching.

Background of Islamic Education of Singapore were insightfully narrated that Among the ethnic groups, the Malays are the most homogenous with 99.6% who are Muslims. Muslim children in Singapore can choose to receive full-time education at a secular national school or at a madrasah (Islamic religious school). Currently, about 4% of Muslim students receive full-time education at madrasahs in Singapore. Furthermore, Historically, madrasahs were built by Muslim philanthropists to provide Islamic education for Muslim children and the first madrasah was established at the beginning of the 20th century. Each madrasah has its management committee whose members are appointed by Ministry of Education (MOE) in consultation with Majlis Ugama Islam (MUIS). MUIS or the Islamic Religious Council of Singapore was officially established in 1968 as a statutory body to advise the President of Singapore on all matters relating to Islam in Singapore. MUIS is the highest bureaucracy in charge of Muslim matters in Singapore. Under the Administration of Muslim Law Act (AMLA), administrative jurisdiction over the madrasahs in Singapore was transferred from MOE to MUIS in 1996. Although madrasahs are not under the jurisdiction of MOE, it is still subject to the provisions of the Education Act as they are registered as private schools with MOE.

The Traditional Madrasah System of Nigeria: The traditional system of Arabic Islamic education otherwise known as the madrasah system, in Nigeria covers four categories which can be divided into three main phase, The first phase began at an early age of about five when the young Muslim children are sent down to the piazza schools managed by some mallams (i.e. teachers). The pupil, according to Gbadamosi, could be in this long but crucial stage for about four to seven years. In such a setting, a single mallam could have as many as forty pupils some of whom might attend the schools regularly. In some of the schools, the teachers were not paid as there are no school fees or special levies. This indeed was the case in the informal setting where the Arabic teachers normally had their own vocations such as farming, weaving e.t.c., to support themselves. The researcher further opines that even where there they were professional teachers and clerics, they drew no salaries from the conduct of these schools relying only on the various gifts and alms which the parents of their wards might send them from time to time. (Gbadamosi, 1978)

In India, one school-educated and three madrasah-educated men – all Sheikhs and from relatively wealthy households – aged between 20 and 34 in 2000 had entered religious employment as maulvīs (teachers in madrasahs) and one school-educated man taught Urdu on a temporary contract in a Government-aided school. Begawala maulvīs had social links to the Daru'l 'Ulūm seminary in Deoband; they groomed students for the entrance examinations at Daru'l 'Ulūm and three men had attended this seminary. Zamir's brother Afroz was planning to follow such a career. He had received Hindi education up to Class 8 and Urdu-based education at a madrasah close to Bijnor. In 2002, this co-educational institution had roughly twenty teachers and 400 students. In addition to studying the Qu'rān Sharīf, Urdu, Farsi and Arabic, its pupils

could follow the standard UP School Board curriculum, including Hindi and English, at a primary and lower secondary school next door run by the same management. After showing aptitude for religious education, Afroz and his younger brother moved first to Begawala madrasah and then to a boarding madrasah in Delhi, where they followed a strict training, paying no fees. In 2001, while preparing for the Deoband seminary examinations, Afroz told us that some school-educated Muslim young men teased peers like him who had left mainstream school to train as clerics by stroking long imaginary beards and calling out ‘Mullah! Mullah!’ Afroz saw nothing shameful about having mainstream qualifications yet still wanting to do religious work, which he perceived as a way of becoming reasonably prosperous, pursuing opportunities to live and travel outside Bijnor district, and obtaining peace of mind (sukūn). (Jeffrey, 2008)

With various intercontinental studies about madrasah this motivated the researchers to conduct a study in the Philippines.

#### Statement of objectives:

The study aims to uncover the Madrasah educational system and shed lights on: (1.) to narrate the Madrasah teachers journey or lived experiences as ALIVE teacher (2.) To identify the different themes based on the journey of the Asatidz and lastly (3.) To formulate module or action plan based on the narrative accounts of the Asatidz.

### 3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study is qualitative in nature which utilized phenomenology as its approach. According to *Rockwell and Giles* (2009), phenomenology is a reason inquiry which aim to discover inherent essences of appearances and intuition of the felt sense. According to *Giorgi* (1985), phenomenology starts by describing a situation experienced in daily life and the social world.

The data were sourced from the eight informants using an interview guide. The interview guide contained nine questions and answered by all the informants. They were personally interviewed to verify their answers. The answered questionnaires used and their responses which were written down by the researchers were all burned for secrecy and confidentiality after finalization of the gathered data.

### 4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Madrasah education in the Division of Mandaue City are handled by seven asatidz. The following are their narrative accounts in their desire to strengthen Muslim culture, customs, traditions, and interests in helping the Muslim learners learn the Arabic language and Islamic values.

The narrative accounts of the informants as follows:

Asatidz 1

*“I am teaching the Arabic language to kindergarten learners since 2006. My experiences in teaching the Muslim children was challenging and I felt so honored and inspired. They learned values and competencies through varied and desirable activities to enrich their way of life.*

*There were challenges that I had experienced. Absenteeism was always a problem since some of the children were selling in the public market to augment the income of their parents. To solve their problem, I suggest sports activities must be incorporated in the curriculum.”*

Asatidz 2

*“I am the Arabic language teacher of Grades and two since 2010. This opportunity challenged me to help the Muslim learners obtained the necessary education. I felt very proud and I tried my best to impact my skills so that the children can have a brighter future. The children were my inspiration and I see to it that they attain the knowledge that are taught to them.*

*I look forward that the absences of the children may be minimized through home visits and giving seminars to the parents on their parental obligations and parental styles in dealing with their children. A coordinated sports activities must be part of the school curriculum to encourage the children to attend classes.*

*I hope that our salary would be given increase to cope up the demands of our needs. “*

Asatidz 3

*“This is my seventh year of teaching Grades three and four Madrasah classes. I felt so happy and proud so that I can share and impart the knowledge and other competencies to the Muslim learners. How I wish that my contributions and efforts shared to them can improve their way of living now and in the near future. The children gave me the inspiration being their teacher.*

*How I wish our monthly compensation be increased to cope up the demands of the time. Earning a living is everybody’s concern, including our school children. Their parents forced them to absent during school days, and they were selling in the market and along the busy streets. To solve their problem, I scheduled home visits and market visits in places where I could meet the parents. I stressed to them the opportunities that their children acquire in going to school. Seminars for parents and introduction of sports activities in the schools are my recommendations to solve these problems.”*

Asatidz 4

*“I am newly hired teacher this school year, and assigned in Grades one and two particularly teaching Islamic values. The children understood the Islam religion and its teaching especially its five pillars. The Muslim children themselves gave me the inspiration since we belong to the same ethnic tribe having one faith and one belief.*

*The common problem that I encountered was absenteeism of the learners. I gave the parents a letter on how to solve their problem since they were busy vending in the market and others working in Cebu City. The suggestion was to drop their children in school every morning and fetch them in the afternoon after class hours. Holding parent conferences also solved the problem.*

*I considered teaching the profession for me. How I wish the government could give us bonus for the work that is well achieved.”*

Asatidz 5

*“This is now my third year assigned in Grades five and six teaching Islamic values in ALIVE classes. As an Asatidz teacher, I was not after the salary, but my primary purpose was to render the best services to the young learners inculcate Islamic values. The learners that I had kept on increasing due to the peace conditions in Marawi City. However, my passion for them was very strong to develop them as upright people that I can be proud of.*

*Despite of absences, I still care for them. I had to visit and talk to each one of them to continue their studies. “*

Asatidz 6

*“I was assigned only this school year as a Madrasah teacher incharge of Grades three and four learners. My work was challenging and I’m happy that I can share my knowledge about Islam.*

*The learners assigned to me were in two groups, the slow learners and the average learners. Since their development was different from one another, was the main reason of grouping them, although they learned in a gradual manner.”*

Asatidz 7

*“I was assigned to teach Grade five giving particular attention to the Arabic language. I am a regular/permanent teacher having passed the Licensure Examination for teachers, but I preferred to handle ALIVE classes, for I believed it is my obligation to educate the Muslim children.*

*After dismissal in the afternoon, we had remedial classes as a form of intervention especially to the slow learners. I always remind the parents to follow-up their children, and Madrasah is a special program of the Department of Education designed for them.”*

Asatidz 8

*“I was tasked to handle Kindergarten Madrasah learners, and the core was Islamic values and language. I found it enjoyable and meaningful to handle kindergarten learners because they were very eager to learn, much more we belong to the same faith and religion.*

*This school year, the learners increased because many transferred coming from Marawi City, but all were given consideration. The compensation given by the government to me was just enough.*

*Some learners could not attend regular classes. They were helping their parents vending in the public market. I usually met the parents and talk to them politely. To remediate the situation, an activity called musabagah must be realized to increase parents' confidence and their interest in sports. "*

Themes Derived From the Madrasah Teachers' Journey

**Theme 1** – Teaching is a commitment.

**Theme 2** – Teaching is a journey from the unknown to the known.

**Theme 3** – Teaching is passion without boundaries.

**Theme 4** – Teaching is character building.

**Theme 5** – Teachers are grace-filled for teaching is a mission.

## 5. FINDINGS AND CONCLUSION

The study revealed that the Asatidz or Madrasah teachers showed laudable expression of service catered to the Muslim learners. They are considered as ambassadors of goodwill in bridging the gap that separates from the unknown to the known, and in guiding the Muslim children to a better and bright future.

The Idea of Support System was developed by the researchers, stating that support is very essential in the success of the Madrasah Education Program for the development of the Muslim people as part of the society.

## 6. RECOMMENDATION

The researchers furthermore recommend to have a Support System Program for the Madrasah Education Program for the advancement and assistance of both learners and teachers.

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