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Policy Research on Access to Quality Basic Education for Muslim Learners

FINAL REPORT

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Acronyms and Abbreviations

ADB	Asian Development Bank
ASCEND	Assistance for Comprehensive Education Development of Mindanao
ALIVE	Arabic Language and Islamic Values Education
ARMM	Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao
ATEP	Accelerated Teacher Education Project
AUSAID	Australian Agency for International Development
BALS	Bureau of Alternative Learning Systems
BEAM	Basic Education Assistance for Mindanao
BEIS	Basic Education Information System
BESRA	Basic Education Sector Reform Agenda
CHED	Commission on Higher Education
CMEP	Comprehensive Mindanao Education Program
CAII	Creative Associates International Inc.
DepED	Department of Education
DepED-ARMM	Department of Education-Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao
ESC	Educational Service Contracting
EFA	Education For All
ELSA	Education and Livelihood Skills Alliance
EDCOM	Congressional Education Commission
EQuALLS	Education Quality and Access for Learning and Livelihood Skills
EO	Executive Order
GOP	Government of the Philippines
FAPE	Fund for Assistance to Private Education
FLEMMS	Functional Literacy Education and Mass Media Survey
GASTPE	Government Assistance to Students and Teachers in Private Schools
IM	Instructional Manager
LGU	Local Government Unit

LSB	Local School Board
MMAA	Muslim Mindanao Autonomous Act
MILF	Moro Islamic Liberation Front
MNLF	Moro National Liberation Front
NFE A&E	Nonformal Education Accreditation and Equivalency
NGO	Non-government Organizations
NPSBE	National Program of Support for Basic Education
OSCY	Out-of-School Children and Youth
PCER	Philippine Commission on Educational Reform
PHDR	Philippine Human Development Report
PTCA	Parents Teachers Community Association
RBEC	Revised Basic Education Curriculum
RBEDP	Regional Basic Education Development Plan
SEF	Special Education Fund
SBM	School-based Management
SEAMEO INNOTECH	Southeast Asian Ministers of Education Organization Regional Center for Educational Innovation and Technology
SEDIP	Secondary Education Development Improvement Project
SEDP	Secondary Education Development Project
SY	School Year
TESDA	Technical Education and Skills Development Authority
TFS	Tuition Fee Supplement
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
WICS	World Islamic Call Society

Glossary

For the purpose of this study, the following terms or phrases shall mean or be understood as follows:

Alternative learning system: A parallel learning system of the DepED Bureau of Alternative Learning System that provides viable alternative to existing formal education instruction. It encompasses both formal and informal sources of knowledge and skills (Section 4 [a], RA 9155)

Completion rate: The percentage of the first year entrants in a level of education who complete or finish the level in accordance with the required number of years of study.

DepED order/memorandum: Administrative policies or issuances from the national, regional, division, or district offices of the DepED in the form of orders, memoranda, directives, or circulars.

Dropout rate: Refers to the proportion of pupils/students who leave school during the year as well as those who can complete the grade/year level but fail to enroll in the next grade/year level the following school/year to the total number of pupils/students enrolled during the previous school year.

Legislated policies: Laws or policies enacted by Congress or by the Regional Legislative Assembly in the case of the ARMM.

Madrasah: The Arabic word for “school.” It is a place for learning Islamic values and the Arabic language. Plural is madaris.

Nonformal Education Accreditation and Equivalency: It refers to an alternative means of certification of learning to those Filipinos aged 15 years and above who are unable to avail of the formal school system or who have dropped out of formal elementary or secondary schools. (DepED Memo Order No. 344, s. 2000)

Non-legislated policies: Administrative policies emanating from the Executive Branch of the government in the form of executive orders (EOs), administrative orders, or presidential declarations.

Participation rate: The ratio between the enrolment in the school range to the total population of that age range.

Teacher-pupil/student ratio: Refers to the proportion of the enrolment at a certain level in a given school year to the number of authorized nationally paid positions for teachers at the same level in school year.

Executive Summary

Background and Rationale

The Philippine Constitution upholds the right of all Filipinos to quality basic education and mandates “a complete, adequate, and integrated system of education, relevant to the needs of the people and the society.” It encourages nonformal, informal, and indigenous learning systems as well as self-learning, independent, and out-of-school-youth study programs, particularly those that respond to community needs.

Despite the importance placed on education in the country, a high percentage of children and youth especially in Mindanao stay out of school or enroll in school only to later drop out before completing elementary or secondary education. The Department of Education (DepED) reported that of 100 children who entered Grade 1 in June 1995, no more than 66 graduated from Grade 6. Of the 66 elementary school graduates, only 58 entered high school and only 43 of the original 100 cohort completed secondary education.

The limited access to quality basic education is reflected in the very poor participation, cohort survival and completion rates of learners. The study confirmed that children and youth in Mindanao are the least likely to go to school and stay in school. In School Year 2003-2004, the national participation rate at the elementary level was reported at 82.6%, with the lowest rate in the ARMM region at 64.6%. The situation was worse at the secondary level where the national participation rate was reported at only 57.4%. Again, the ARMM region posted the lowest rate at 33.1%.

As a result, the children and youth in the Mindanao regions attained very low levels of functional literacy and generally lagged behind those from their counterparts in other regions of the country. Only half (53.6%) of the 6 to 24 year olds in the ARMM region were reported to be in school. Of the four Mindanao regions with a significant Muslim population, the regions of Western Mindanao and ARMM had the highest percentages of out-of-school children and youth at 18.7% and 17.5%, respectively.

The very poor education performance indicators described in the report reflect the tremendous challenges to the formal school system on improving equity, expanding access and promoting the quality of basic education for all our children and youth especially in Mindanao. Clearly there is an urgent need to review present education

policies and practices and examine how programs, projects and services for Muslim children and youth in school and out of school can best be implemented to reform and save a system that has failed. It is estimated that at least 10% of the school population in Mindanao are Muslims. (National Statistics Office, 2005)

Objectives of the Study

The objectives of the study were to better understand and help resolve the overall dismal state of basic education in Mindanao particularly in the ARMM region. This policy research was funded by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) Education Quality and Access for Learning and Livelihood Skills (EQuALLS) Project and is part of the broader strategy of the Education and Livelihood Skills (ELSA) Alliance. The study examined the access barriers to quality basic education as experienced by the Muslim learners themselves.

The research was conducted to provide answers to the following questions:

1. What laws were recently enacted by the Philippine government that concern access to quality basic education by Muslim learners in Mindanao?
2. What do Muslim learners, parents, teachers, and educational administrators perceive as the access barriers to quality basic education in Mindanao?
3. What strategies proved most effective in providing Muslim learners their basic educational needs? Can these strategies be mainstreamed and brought to scale?
4. What educational policy reforms were recently promulgated by the DepED and the DepED-ARMM to improve Muslim learners' access to quality basic education?

Research Design

The study used the descriptive research method to review relevant policy documents. To identify access barriers to basic education, focused group discussions and key informant interviews were conducted with officials from the DepED and DepED-ARMM, school principals, teachers, parents, and students. Included among the participants were school-going and out-of-school Muslim children and youth, department heads, community leaders and representatives of non-government organizations based in Mindanao. Valuable information on alternative learning was

obtained from experiences in nonformal and informal education programs. School leavers and school returnees were also interviewed to get firsthand account of personal experiences and reasons for dropping out of school. Forums with respected Muslim educators were held to validate the identified access barriers. The Muslim educators kindly offered various policy recommendations most of which were adopted in this report.

The policy review and focused group discussions were enhanced by case studies of exemplary educational programs that are innovative, relevant and community-based. Best practices were examined to obtain a qualitative assessment of the factors that facilitated Muslim learners' access to basic education. The school-based and non-school-based education programs taken as cases for the study were those of the J. Marquez School of Peace (SOP), the Notre Dame Village Elementary School, the Notre Dame Foundation for Charitable Activities Inc.-Women in Enterprise Development (NDFCAI-WED, and the Madrasah Pahamuddin Al-Islamie (MPAI).

The data generated from multiple sources through interviews, observations, and literature reviews were analyzed using the constant comparative method. Issues in access barriers and policy matters were processed and identified by cataloguing, classifying, and conducting dialogues. Several meetings were held with senior officials of the DepED and DepED-ARMM, Muslim scholars, social scientists, and selected university officials of institutions of higher learning in Mindanao. Finally, the data collected were evaluated, summarized and presented for final assessment at a series of round-table forums and technical consultations conducted from March 2006 to January 2007.

Significance of the Study

This policy research was written mainly to provide technical assistance and guidance to education policy makers, legislators, school administrators, and teachers who seek a more informed understanding of the challenges in providing quality basic education to children and youth in Mindanao. It presents possibilities and opportunities by which our Muslim learners may acquire appropriate knowledge, skills and values through a system of education that includes both the formal school system and the alternative learning system. Alternative options that will give the Muslim learners choices when seeking to obtain basic education through strategies that are most suitable to their needs and culture were examined in the study.

For ELSA, as an implementing organization of the USAID EQuALLS Project, this policy research will help define a policy agenda and identify the program thrusts to more effectively and efficiently resolve the access barriers to quality basic education for Muslim learners in Mindanao.

Summary of Findings

The major findings of the policy research are grouped into three areas: 1) trends in access to quality basic education for Muslim learners; 2) access barriers to quality basic education for Muslim learners; and 3) recommended policy and program priorities derived from the case studies.

1. Trends in Access to Quality Basic Education for Muslim Learners

A broad review of the legislated and non-legislated policies as well as other initiatives in basic education promulgated at the legislative and executive levels of government including at pertinent department levels helped identify some policy gaps and indicate potential areas of improvement or reform. They include the following:

Broadening Policy and Program Support for Access to Basic Education

The Philippines has promulgated a significant number of laws, declarations, resolutions, policies, proclamations, orders and other issuances that promote quality basic education for all. Included are those that give education the highest budgetary support and expand educational opportunities especially to children and youth in the most impoverished regions of the country such as in the ARMM region. At the national level reform programs have been developed to encourage Filipino children and youth, including Muslim learners, to avail of basic education services offered free for the elementary and secondary levels and compulsory only for the elementary level.

The Free Secondary Education Act, the Equitable Access Act, and the Government Assistance to Students and Teachers in Private Education (GASTPE) Act all provide a structural support strategy and financial assistance to students and teachers. Unfortunately the advantages to be derived from the implementation of these important legislations have yet to reach a significant number of Muslim children and youth and their Muslim mentors.

But the lack of systematic information on the extent by which Muslim learners may have benefited from the implementation of national and regional policies had limited this study. The DepED may find it worthwhile giving more attention to disaggregating data concerning Muslim children and youth in school and out of school. The DepED Basic Education Information Service data will better guide policy makers

and program implementers on what will be most responsive to the needs of Muslim learners if data about Muslim learners can be more accurately derived.

Enhancing the Alternative Learning System for Out-of-School Children and Youth

A very recent development is the promulgation in August 2001 (R.A. 9155) of the Alternative Learning System that provides opportunities for out-of-school children and youth to become functionally literate through education programs that may be delivered outside the formal school system. Today the Alternative Learning System is increasingly being recognized as comparable and equivalent to the formal education system. Choices are available for the Muslim learners to complete quality basic education in any manner responsive to their needs and their aspirations. Knowledge, skills and values acquired from nonformal and informal education are now measurable and may be assigned some equivalent academic credits.

The renaming by Executive Order No. 283 of the former DepED Bureau of Nonformal Education as the DepED Bureau of Alternative Learning System is significant for authorizing the staff bureau with a mandate to promote quality basic education for out-of-school-children-and youth through alternative systems of delivery. Policies have been promulgated that enabled the DepED BALS to make available to the marginalized sectors of the Filipino society basic education programs on an “any time, any where and in any way” basis. The DepED Bureau of Alternative Learning System is now implementing programs, projects and services designed to reintegrate back to the formal school system a vast number of school-age children and youth who are out-of-school. For the older cohort of learners the pathways are towards livelihood and life skills development. “Bridging” courses towards post-secondary and/or tertiary education programs are also available.

Donor agencies like the USAID through EQuALLS and the AUSAID through BEAM have helped the DepED and DepED ARMM implement strategies to further improve the quality and expand the reach of the nonformal learning system for Muslim out-of-school children and youth in Mindanao. Nonetheless the challenge remains for the DepED and DepED ARMM to share greater responsibilities such as: (1) institutionalizing and mainstreaming ALS strategies that have been proven effective and efficient; (2) bringing the benefits of the DepED NFE A&E program to more Muslim out-of-school youth and children by enhancing its relevance and responsiveness to the context and culture of Muslim learners; and (3) bringing forward the ALS program to include some portfolio assessment and equivalency matrix of learnings gained through the informal system of education.

The ALS programs now being implemented with assistance by USAID EQuALLS, AUSAID BEAM, and other donors are models that may be brought to scale by the DepED and DepED-ARMM to benefit more out-of-school Muslim learners. Policies promoting alternative systems as opportunities for reintegration into the formal school system or towards the pursuit of livelihood and life skills have likewise been put in place. The next step is for the DepED and the DepED-ARMM to ensure that the organizational structures for the alternative learning system are in place and that adequate funds are provided for mainstreaming and sustaining these initiatives. Otherwise the gains established will be put at great risk.

Preparing Pathways for the Madrasah Education System

DepED Order No. 51, s. 2004 and DepED-ARMM Executive Order No. 13, s. 2004 established the pathways to promote access to quality basic education for Muslim learners. Arabic Language and Islamic Values are subjects now offered in public schools that have Muslim students. At the same time the teaching of English, Mathematics, Science and *Makabayan* as secular subjects in the private madaris are encouraged to enrich the traditional madrasah curriculum. The model curricula proposed for the public schools and the private madaris are envisaged to encourage “portability and transferability” of the courses of study, promote the national Filipino identity and preserve the cultural heritage of the Muslims. The DepED and DepED-ARMM have jointly endorsed the programs.

The present leadership of the DepED and DepED-ARMM have demonstrated their commitment to help realize for the Muslim learners an educational system that is truly authentic and appropriate. The spirit of cooperation and the desire to work in collaboration with each other have remained strong and stable. Yet there are perceptions that the policy and program framework of the reform strategy for Muslim learners continue to be very variable and fragile.

The DepED has established an office tasked to direct national efforts towards providing quality basic education for Muslim learners. Unfortunately the office operates mostly outside the mainstream bureaucracy and largely on the basis of the informal rather than formal organization structures. To be truly effective the office must be genuinely empowered with a more official mandate for achieving program outcomes and managing the critical alliance-building with the DepED-ARMM and other program partners.

Focusing Priorities on “Education For All” Programs

The DepED has promulgated policies and implemented programs in support of the ideals of universal access to quality basic education. Policies relating to the expansion of educational infrastructure, development and procurement of textbooks and instructional materials, regulation of school fees and contributions, improvement in the management of student financial assistance, relevant curriculum design, development of teacher education and teacher remuneration standards and promotion of alternative options have been developed and observed over the years.

In recent years, technical assistance focusing on providing access to quality basic education as well as capacity-building for key stakeholders have been provided through donor-assisted projects, most notably the EQuALLS Project funded by the USAID and the BEAM Project funded by the AUSAID.

The World Bank also addressed the concerns for equity, efficiency, and quality of elementary education through its Third Elementary Education Projects (1990–1992; 1996–1998) and, in 2006, through the National Program of Support for Basic Education (NPSBE). The NPSBE was designed to strategically support the implementation of DepED’s Basic Education Sector Reform Agenda (BESRA) over a five-year period that became effective in 2006.

It is to the credit of the donor agencies that the DepED-ARMM was included as a significant project beneficiary. Regrettably both the national EFA and the BESRA plans are inadequate for defining mostly the priorities of the DepED to the exclusion of the DepED-ARMM.

Increasing Budgetary Support for Basic Education

The national budget for basic education has been steadily increasing even if it continues to be insufficient to meet the basic requirements of the DepED and DepED-ARMM. More and more the local government units’ special education and other funds are being more meaningfully mobilized to finance the implementation of school and schools division improvement plans. In the case of the DepED-ARMM there are parallel efforts to mobilize local resources to augment the national budget support and help provide for the requirements of the region’s basic education programs. But suggestions have been offered for the DepED-ARMM to further improve the financial management system for greater reliability and usefulness to decision-makers as well as for more transparency and accountability.

The program of DepED to engage the participation of business, industry and other stakeholders in mobilizing resources for basic education such as in the “Adopt-a-School Program” has been extremely successful. The national business community responded by organizing the Philippine Business for Education forum and launching a “57 to 75” plan (i.e., increasing the average score in the National Achievement Test from the present 57% to 75%) that has been widely adopted as a corporate social responsibility goal of members of the League of Corporate Foundations. The goal that remains to be more vigorously pursued by the League is to further expand corporate initiatives and embrace an affirmative action agenda that will truly benefit the Muslim learners in Mindanao.

2. Access Barriers to Basic Education by Muslim Learners

Based on the responses of education stakeholders, five major access barriers to basic education were identified:

Lack of Educational Infrastructure

The classroom shortage in Mindanao in SY 2003–2004 reached 5,318, with the highest shortage in the ARMM region of 1,029 classrooms. According to the respondent-stakeholders, the inadequacy of school facilities and resources was a major reason why pupils and students lacked the motivation to attend school. As a result learning was deterred resulting in the eventual dropping out from school of the learner. The key findings on educational infrastructure include:

- Lack of classrooms
- Lack of prescribed textbooks
- Lack of teachers
- Lack of infrastructure to support the Alternative Learning System
- Lack of infrastructure to support reform initiatives for madrasah education

Lack of Access to Education by Poor Muslim Learners Due to Poverty

Poverty is the second major reason for the very low participation, cohort survival and completion rates of Muslim learners. In Year 2000, the poverty incidence was highest for the ARMM region where 57% of the families were considered poor. Central Mindanao had a poverty incidence of 48.4%, Northern Mindanao, 32.9% and Southern Mindanao, 31.1%. The poverty incidence in these regions has remained unchanged for several years now.

Many parents lamented their not being able to pay for the “hidden costs” of education. Even if elementary and secondary education programs were offered free of tuition and other school fees, the poor families could not pay for the other costs such as expenses for school projects and other classroom activities. Providing for the family’s food, clothing, shelter and other basic requirements for survival was the highest priority.

Due to extreme poverty Muslim children and youth often have no choice but to drop out of school in order to take care of their siblings while their parents earn a living or they themselves go out to earn a living for the family. The DepED’s school feeding program is one solution that reduces absenteeism especially among children from very poor families. School attendance improved for selected schoolchildren in some ARMM provinces who received scholarship grants from the Philippine Business for Social Progress and Petron Foundation, both members of the ELSA Alliance to buy books, bags and other essential school requirements. The challenge is in expanding school feeding and financial assistance beyond the ELSA project beneficiary schools. At the same time the strategy of ELSA requiring parents and other community members to provide some counterpart either in the form of cash, in kind or in service is a good strategy to observe.

Unstable Peace and Order Situation

Continuing conflicts between the government forces and armed groups or other lawless elements or fights among clans (*rido*) often resulted in many disruptions and displacements. Classes were suspended. School buildings used as places for evacuation were often destroyed and left in shambles. Communities were displaced from their lands and sources of income. As a result families were further pushed to extreme poverty. The unanticipated influx of transferees and evacuees led to the overcrowding of classrooms and the overloading of teachers in the schools receiving them. Consequently, the quality of instruction was compromised and students were quickly discouraged from attending class.

Years ago, the DepED implemented an educational program specifically designed for children and youth in situations of armed conflict that helped them cope with emergency situations and continue with schooling. Unfortunately the program was not sustained. The alternative models of learning offer many options. But there is very little “buy-in” for these alternative options from the local communities. The DepED and DepED-ARMM must undertake social mobilization and advocacy strategies and conduct a continuous information and education campaign about the benefits to be derived by the Muslim children and youth in school and out of school from alternative education programs.

Lack of Support from Parents

Several out-of-school children and youth cited extreme poverty and illiteracy as the reasons why their parents could not provide them support for their education. They lamented being forced to drop out of school in order to help earn a living for the family.

The study revealed an unfounded perception expressed by many respondents that parents who were unschooled were therefore also “uneducated” and could not guide nor help their children with schoolwork. Unfortunately this thinking may be unintentionally promoted by the DepED and the DepED-ARMM whose education programs are mostly school programs. Knowledge, skills and values can be acquired by children and youth not only from the formal school system but also from nonformal and informal sources of education. This is the reason why most educators acknowledge that “Education for All” is not synonymous with “Schooling for All.”

The development of schools as centers of learning for communities was recently espoused by the UNESCO to help “reconnect” schools to their respective communities by encouraging community members to share their experiences in some trade, craft or other skills with schoolchildren.

Cultural Issues and Biases

The Muslim students, scholars and educators who responded to the study observed that teachers in many public schools in Mindanao had very little knowledge and understanding of the culture and beliefs of Muslims. As a result, many teachers were often insensitive to the customs and traditions observed by the Muslim learners in school. In some way, this cultural insensitivity contributed to promoting among the non-Muslim learners in class a similar bias against their Muslim classmates. Consequently the Muslim learners were discouraged from attending school and later dropped out of school.

School administrators and teachers in public schools in Mindanao especially in the Muslim communities must be provided by the DepED and DepED-ARMM with orientation and training programs for them to become respectful of cultural diversities including the Muslim culture.

Other Issues and Challenges

▪ ***Use of Regional Lingua Franca or the Vernacular in Primary Grades***

The study noted the difficulty of Muslim learners in school and out-of-school to understand lessons taught to them in Filipino and English. It was noted that most Muslim learners use the regional *lingua franca* or the vernacular at home. Unlike in other regions of the country most homes in the ARMM region have no easy access to national radio and television programs that provide broadcasts in Filipino and English. National newspapers in Filipino and English are likewise not available. Hence the regional *lingua franca* is the main dialect at home and in the local community. UNESCO has been advocating the use of the mother tongue language as the medium of instruction especially in the primary grades. A “bridging” program to help the young learner switch from the mother tongue language to Filipino and English has been strongly recommended.

▪ ***Alternative Learning System A&E Examination Issues***

The Alternative Learning System opened opportunities for Muslim out-of-school children and youth to be reintegrated back to the formal school system and complete an elementary or secondary education. The DepED Nonformal Education Accreditation & Equivalency (NFE A&E) program has been more successful for a younger cohort of out-of-school children and youth with some levels of basic and functional literacy who would like to continue further education and training. Unfortunately the older cohort of OSCY, including Muslim learners, performed very poorly in the A&E tests organized by the DepED Bureau of Alternative Learning System.

Further examination and analysis of the test results conducted for the older cohort of Muslim learners revealed some interesting findings, namely: (1) The Muslim learners who failed the A&E tests were nonetheless pleased with acquiring some competencies and gaining self-esteem and self-confidence; and (2) many did not really consider going back to the formal school system but were interested in obtaining some short courses in basic life and livelihood skills.

The respondents to the study suggested that the DepED ALS programs should be expanded to provide a wider range of options for the OSCY including basic and functional literacy, life and livelihood skills, special-interest programs and competency-based technical-vocational training. They also recommended that the DepED BALS develop a more contextually appropriate ALS program and NFE A&E tests for the Muslim learners.

▪ ***Technical-Vocational Education***

It appeared clear during the discussions and interviews with parent-respondents and with some out-of-school children and youth that they do not appreciate the relevance of secondary education. It was considered a waste of time and family resources to send a child through high school who will graduate with a diploma but without the necessary competencies to earn a living.

The recent initiatives of the DepED to strengthen the technical-vocational subjects in secondary education are bold steps in the right direction. The goal is to provide high school graduates with the right skills for the right jobs and small business opportunities available in the community while at the same opening learning pathways for post-secondary and tertiary education programs.

3. Recommended Policy Priorities from the Case Studies

Some best practices on providing quality basic education to Muslim learners are found in the formal school system, alternative learning system, and the madrasah system of learning. A qualitative analysis of the three models of study revealed certain factors that contributed to improving the holding power of the institutions. As a result there was improved participation and retention of Muslim learners. The cases of study proved that partnerships between the school and community-based organizations that are based on respect for cultural diversity truly promote an environment that encourages Muslim learners to complete basic education.

▪ ***Promoting Peace Paradigm and Quality Education for Muslim Learners***

In the case of the J. Marquez School of Peace in Cotabato City, the integration of a Peace Education Program, including the provision of opportunities for dialogue and interaction among students, teachers, and parents on cultural diversity issues as well as teacher training on cultural sensitivity, proved very encouraging for Muslim learners. The School of Peace helped promote interfaith activities that counterbalanced some cultural biases and discrimination.

The Notre Dame Village Elementary School, which showcased accessible education programs for Muslim learners, was another model that helped pupils displaced from conflict-affected areas. The school promoted quality basic education and developed programs appropriate to a learning environment that is multi-cultural.

- ***Promoting Muslim Learners' Access to Basic Education through the Alternative Learning System (ALS)***

Alternative learning options, including functional literacy and accreditation and equivalency programs, were conducted by the Notre Dame Foundation for Charitable Activities Inc.-Women in Enterprise Development. The programs proved effective as a strategy to help many Muslim out-of-school children and youth complete a basic education course. Through the ALS programs many Muslim learners qualified for the DepED's Philippine Education Placement Test (PEPT), some of whom were promoted to higher grade and year levels.

The NDFCAI-WED started a program in cooperation with local government units that was crucial in scaling up and sustaining the ALS access intervention. The NDFCAI-WED experience clearly demonstrated that the alternative learning system may be a viable option for reaching out to Muslim children and youth, particularly those in remote, conflict-affected, and often school-less barangays.

- ***Promoting Better Pathways for Standardized Madrasah Model***

Access to basic education may also be effectively provided through the madrasah system of learning. The Madrasah Pahamuddin Al-Islamie in Pigcawayan, North Cotabato provided a good example of implementing Arabic Language and Islamic Values Education (ALIVE) for Madrasah learners. In addition, English, Science, Math, and *Makabayan* were offered to enhance the curriculum. The madrasah was operated with assistance provided by the community, some donors and other generous citizens.

Policy Recommendations

To ensure that every Muslim learner in Mindanao will have the opportunity to benefit from free basic education of a quality prescribed by the DepED and the DepED-ARMM, the following specific recommendations are put forward:

1. Improve education-financing schemes in most-deprived provinces in Mindanao

The DepED and the DepED-ARMM should actively pursue various strategies and modes in improving educational infrastructure in Mindanao, most especially in the ARMM region. It must look for better options and strategies to expand its school-building programs. Some of these strategies may include seeking assistance from the local school boards for a bigger budget on educational infrastructure. Another may be seeking partners from the private sector such as in the “Adopt-a-School Program.” The establishment of more community learning centers for the alternative learning system programs must likewise be promoted.

2. Increase access of Muslim learners to government financial assistance programs

The GASTPE Law provided a means for poor children to access secondary level education in the nearest private high school. This program has to be expanded to benefit Muslim learners considering the severe concerns of access that confront children and youth in Mindanao. Moreover a study should be made to determine how much benefits were received by the Muslim children and youth from the GASTPE program since its implementation many decades ago. There is no report either of any scholarships or tuition fee subsidies provided to Muslim learners and their teachers. For Muslim learners in Mindanao it was recommended that some amendment to the present GASTPE Law be introduced in order to expand the program to include the elementary level and consider the alternative learning programs as eligible for subsidies.

3. Increase access of Muslim learners to school feeding programs

A school feeding policy should be established as a strategy to encourage children to come to school, particularly in the ARMM Region. Most families in the ARMM region are very poor and are most likely to send their children to school even without breakfast. A school feeding program will be an incentive for the children to come to school and stay long enough to complete an elementary

education. Children who are hungry will not benefit from any learning in school and will most likely drop out. There is also an economic loss on money invested in his/her education. The DepED reported that poverty is the principal reason why pupils drop out between Grade 1 and Grade 3.

4. Strengthen the Madrasah Education System

The madrasah system of learning is a recognized program of education in Muslim Mindanao that is operated as a private school. The relevant component affecting the madrasah system of learning in the recently promulgated “Enriched Curriculum Framework for Public Elementary Schools and Standard Curriculum for Private Madaris” by the DepED is the promotion of English, Math, Science and *Makabayan* as enrichment subjects. The DepED and DepED-ARMM through various department orders and/or memoranda issued to the field have committed to build the institutional capability of the madrasah system and bring the madrasah system standard of instruction to a level comparable with the public schools.

But there are serious concerns regarding the qualifications of madrasah teachers or *ustadz*. Many have recommended that a program to professionalize madrasah teachers be implemented. The program shall include required pre-service education and training to qualify and pass the Licensure Exams for Teachers or LET. Some educators have also recommended that a regional university be designated to specialize in the training, research, and development of the madrasah system and to serve as a center of excellence in madrasah education. The university should also assist in conducting teacher training for the madrasah teachers to enable them to teach RBEC subjects.

With some assistance from donor agencies such as the USAID in EQuALLS and the AUSAID in BEAM both the DepED and DepED-ARMM have been encouraged to begin the process of accrediting the madrasah system of learning.

5. Strengthen the alternative learning system to provide greater flexibility of learning options for Muslim learners

The study revealed that Muslim learners are unable to attend formal school and complete a basic education program mainly because of the lack of educational infrastructure, extreme poverty, and displacement due to conflict. In the ARMM region a large number of pupils are in multi-grade schools as they reside in barangays with very small pupil population. The population of out-of-school children and youth has been increasing tremendously. The alternative learning

system is a strategy that can reach out to Muslim learners who are unable to meet the rigid requirements of the school system.

Muslim learners can benefit from interventions that include basic and functional literacy, life and livelihood skills, special-interest programs and some short-term vocational/technical and livelihood skills courses. The DepED NFE A&E program is another program that prepares the OSCY for elementary or secondary level certification and reentry into the formal school system.

In many regions in Mindanao, the DepED and the DepED-ARMM through division-level alternative learning system coordinators and mobile teachers are currently implementing a range of ALS programs. However, the reach of these interventions has been limited due to very limited financial resources. Non-government organizations, often with external funding sources, have been able to serve large numbers of OSCY but the cost-effectiveness and sustainability of the interventions pose a constraint to their institutionalization. Thus, efforts should be made to enhance the collaboration between these organizations and the DepED and the DepED-ARMM. Linkages with LGU leaders also need to be strengthened to ensure continued local funding for ALS programs, particularly for the construction of community learning centers and the provision of skills training to OSCY to enhance their opportunities for employment/self-employment. There is an urgent need, however, to strengthen the capacities of existing and prospective alternative learning system service providers as a prelude to expanding the reach and upscaling the implementation of ALS programs. The possibilities offered by radio and television broadcasts as alternative delivery technologies for ALS programs also warrant further exploration.

Alternative delivery modalities, or the use of non-traditional or non-conventional systems of implementing the formal education programs, should also be pursued as an option for expanding the access of Muslim learners to quality basic education. By using approaches such as open learning and home study that are supported by self-learning programmed modules, learners who drop out or are at risk of dropping out are given the opportunity to continue learning. Some alternative delivery programs that have been implemented on a pilot basis in the Muslim are SEAMEO INNOTECH's Instructional Management by Parents, Community and Teachers (IMPACT); DepED's Effective and Affordable Secondary Education (EASE); and Open High School System (OHSS). These programs have shown initial successes in bringing back and keeping children in school. A careful assessment of their sustainability and cost-effectiveness needs to be undertaken for possible scale-up.

In more urbanized areas, education has moved from a "brick and mortar" to a "click and portals" experience. Undoubtedly, teaching using CD-ROMS, PCs and

the Internet will decongest a lot of classrooms and will enable students to go beyond classroom-based instruction. However, such a system may not be practical in poorer communities, especially in ARMM, where barangays unreached by external funding are also often the same areas without electricity, computer hardware or Internet access. Thus, a well-planned distance education program that takes into consideration these limitations may be able to offer basic education to remote and marginalized areas of Mindanao. A system of accreditation and student subsidy for open learners should also be established for greater access to education.

Attached is a Policy Reform Matrix which summarizes the major findings and recommendations of this research study.

Policy Reform Matrix on Access to Quality Basic Education for Muslim Learners

Policy Issues	Findings	Policy Recommendations
LACK OF EDUCATIONAL INFRASTRUCTURE	▪ Lack of classrooms ▪ Inadequate school facilities and educational resource ▪ Some classrooms have 1:86 ratio ▪ There are inadequate school resources such as science laboratories, computers, and instructional guides especially in ARMM. Pupils and students have to travel some distance to reach a nearby school, especially in the most depressed areas of Mindanao. ▪ There is an absence of single-sex toilets in some public schools, ALS Learning Centers, and madaris especially in the ARMM. ▪ Some madrasah and alternative learning system classrooms are makeshift building not conducive to teaching and learning. There are no textbooks and limited copies of ALS modules and teaching guides.	▪ The DepEd should actively pursue various strategies and modes in implementing its school-building programs by strengthening networking with local school boards and partnering with the private sector for the Adopt-a-School Program and in developing community-learning centers. ▪ There is a need to review the implementation of Roxas Law (RA 7880) which provided for all legislative districts a minimum and continuing level of educational development through a rationalized and equitable allocation of the DepEd budget. ▪ Ensure a safe and healthy learning environment by providing the basic educational infrastructure, including toilets. ▪ There should be policies promoting the establishment of community learning centers and ensuring the availability of resource materials for the alternative pathways of education.
EXTREME POVERTY	▪ Majority of Muslim learners drop out because they have no funds to support their education even in public schools where education is free.	▪ Ensure that student financial assistance programs such as the GASTPE reach Muslim learners in Mindanao. There should also be a Fund for Assistance in Madrasah Education (FAME) to provide for the development and scholarship of madrasah students.

Policy Issues	Findings	Policy Recommendations
	- High poverty incidence in the region, especially in ARMM, resulted in students dropping out. Learning has been difficult because pupils are hungry. - The lack of quality learning among so many poor children is certainly due, to an important extent, to extreme poverty in the region. - Children work and leave schools. They have no money to pay for incidental school expenses. - Hunger and malnutrition create physical barriers to learning.	- It is recommended that a more sustainable “School Lunch Program” issued through a DepEd Order be introduced especially in provinces with the highest poverty incidence. - Develop skills and livelihood education and training program for parents who are jobless. - There is a need to have an expanded scholarship program and other material assistance to families in extreme poverty. - There is a need to have DepEd policy and programs to support school feeding programs, particularly in lower grades in primary schools.
CULTURAL ISSUES AND BIASES	- Textbooks are not culturally-sensitive. There is an observation that textbooks in Philippine history focus on Christian values and neglect the history and contributions of Islam. - There are also RBEC textbooks with pictures of pigs/pork in lessons in nutrition and mathematics. Some pictures in RBEC textbooks are offensive to Muslim values. - Some Muslim students shared that they decided to drop out of the school because they feel discriminated against. There are school activities and policies which do not match their beliefs and traditions. - Some teachers have no or very low level of awareness on Islamic values and beliefs.	- Develop the capacity of DepEd and DepEd ARMM to indigenize textbooks and other teaching materials. - DepEd should also ensure that a Muslim scholar/expert be represented in the RBEC textbook development and review committee. - Review implementation of DepEd Order 53 s. 2001 on “Strengthening and Protecting the Religious Rights of Students” to ensure that the plight of Filipino Muslim students are understood. - There should be an investment on teacher training for teachers to gain an understanding of Islamic values and issues relevant to Education for International Understanding.

Policy Issues	Findings	Policy Recommendations
PEACE AND ORDER SITUATION	- Peace and order problems disrupt classes and force schoolchildren to drop out of school. Classrooms are used for refuge and evacuation centers in times of conflicts. - There are good peace education models such as the J. Marquez School of Peace, which promote UNESCO's fourth pillar of learning, "learning to live together".	- Need to reinforce DepEd policy on schools as Zones of Peace. (DepEd Order No. 44 s. 2005). - Replicate the programs and activities of the School of Peace identified as a best practice in this study, where "learning to live together" is practiced and maintained.
LACK OF SUPPORT FROM PARENTS	Parents require their children to stop studying to help them in their job and find work to meet the basic needs of the family and their low level of education.	- Provide adult literacy programs to help parents appreciate the value of education. - Expand the range of alternative delivery modalities such as "in-school off-school" programs, which allow students who cannot attend school everyday due to extreme poverty to continue their basic education.

OTHER ISSUES AND CHALLENGES

Policy Issues	Findings	Policy Recommendations
LANGUAGE OF INSTRUCTION	Muslim learners find it difficult to understand subjects not taught in their first language.	Need to reinforce first language policy recommendations on the use of the regional lingua franca or the vernacular, especially in primary schools and lower elementary ALS equivalency programs.
ALTERNATIVE LEARNING SYSTEM	Passing rate of A&E Test by Muslim learners is very low.	- Improve screening of A&E test registrants so that only those adequately prepared to take the A&E exams do so. - It is also recommended that a review of the Secondary A&E cut-off score be done by DepEd-BALS.

Policy Issues	Findings	Policy Recommendations
	▪ Many OSCY have learning goals other than securing equivalency certification or returning to formal school. ▪ Limited reach and presence of DepED ALS personnel in Mindanao. ALS programs are operated by a limited number of providers. ▪ Muslim examinees are required to submit IDs, birth certificates and 2x2 copies of photo where the hair and face are not covered. ▪ Lack of Muslim NGOs with sufficient institutional capacity and competence to manage ALS learning programs. ▪ A&E Exam is held only once a year with very limited number of testing centers. Some centers are too remote for test takers. ▪ The quality of many ALS programs in Mindanao is poor brought about by the lack of learning materials, substandard learning environment and poorly trained Instructional Managers.	▪ Expand the use of the full range of available ALS options including basic and functional literacy, livelihood and life skills special interest programs and competency-based vocational skills training programs in Mindanao to respond to different learning goals and needs of OSCY. ▪ Increase the number of DepED ALS Mobile Teacher items. Ensure ALS district coordinators are freed from teaching responsibilities so that they can work fulltime on ALS matters. ▪ Explore possibilities for expanding the use of community-based radio to support/extend delivery of ALS programs. ▪ DepEd-BALS should respect cultural sensitivities by relaxing some of the documentary requirements for Muslim A&E takers. ▪ There is a need for substantial investment in institutional capacity building to strengthen Muslim NGOs as prospective ALS service providers. ▪ There should be more regular (i.e. quarterly) A&E Tests and possibly develop a policy for accepting walk-in examinees in the designated testing centers. ▪ Improve the ALS delivery system, including the quality of ALS instruction; administrative and financial management systems of service providers; and adequacy of community learning centers through targeted training and capacity building interventions.

Policy Issues	Findings	Policy Recommendations
TECHNICAL-VOCATIONAL EDUCATION AND TRAINING	▪ Lack of budgetary support for ALS program to meet the needs of the huge population of Muslim OSCY. ▪ Many out-of-school youth felt the need for technical-vocational education that will enable them to have meaningful jobs.	▪ There is a need for massive expansion of the budgetary support for ALS programs to increase their reach in addressing the basic education needs of Muslim OSCY. ▪ Vocational and technical education at the secondary level should be explored as a component of ALS programs.
MADRASAH SYSTEM	▪ Lack of appropriate textbooks, teaching guides, and other materials to support the implementation of the Standard Madrasah Curriculum. ▪ Lack of equivalency between madrasah education and formal education which discourages Muslim learners from transferring to public schools when necessary. ▪ The DepEd National Road Map to Upgrade Muslim Education provides a comprehensive framework for improving access to quality education by Muslim learners.	▪ Fast-track the production of madrasah textbook and teaching guides for Grades 3-6. These materials must be reviewed by DepEd-ARMM and madrasah stakeholders to ensure that they are culturally sensitive and contextually relevant. Materials must be reproduced and distributed equitably to madaris. ▪ Make madrasah education more relevant by encouraging madrasah administrators to adopt the new Standard Madrasah Curriculum. It should follow the spiritual requirement of their faith and the requirements for the interdependent society. ▪ For the Road Map to succeed, it needs to be adequately resourced and, moreover, be fully owned and internalized by Muslim stakeholders, especially by DepEd-ARMM. This requires additional advocacy and consultation to build a constituency of supporters and champions for the Road Map provisions among ARMM education stakeholders.

Policy Issues	Findings	Policy Recommendations
GOVERNANCE ISSUES	▪ Lack of qualified madrasah teachers or ustadz. ▪ Few Mindanao universities have teacher education programs to develop specialists in Islamic Values and Studies and Arabic language. ▪ Inadequate number of teachers in ARMM partly due to the lack of teacher items. There is also delayed payment or non-payment of salaries and benefits due to governance and management problems in ARMM. ▪ LSBs particularly in ARMM are perceived as contributing very minimally to the development of the educational infrastructure of ARMM.	▪ Improve the quality of instruction in madaris through measures designed to professionalize madrasah teachers. This requires investment in capacity building programs designed to improve pedagogical skills and content mastery of RBEC and ALIVE subjects. ▪ There is a need to encourage higher education institutions to develop teacher education programs and training programs for ALIVE teachers. ▪ Advocacy of the passage of amendments to MMAA No. 14 and introduction of governance systems in DepEd-ARMM which will protect the rights and benefits of ARMM teachers. ▪ Need to actively support and sustain LSBs as an important element of basic education governance through advocacy and capacity-building programs and implementation of Local Government Code provisions related to LSBs.

CHAPTER 1

Introduction

Background and Rationale

Access to quality basic education is a universal concern. The government and all sectors of the society are expected to work together in ensuring that school-age children, regardless of religion, race, or political affiliation, are provided equal opportunity for basic education.

The Philippine Constitution upholds the right of all Filipinos to quality basic education and mandates “a complete, adequate, and integrated system of education, relevant to the needs of the people and the society.” It encourages nonformal, informal, and indigenous learning systems as well as self-learning, independent, and out-of-school-youth study programs, particularly those that respond to community needs.

Despite the importance placed on education in the country, a high percentage of children and youth especially in Mindanao stay out of school or enroll in school only to later drop out before completing elementary or secondary education. The Department of Education (DepED) reported that of 100 children who entered Grade 1 in June 1995 no more than 66 graduated from Grade 6. Of the 66 elementary school graduates, only 58 entered high school and only 43 of the original 100 cohort completed secondary education. What is more alarming is that among those who complete elementary schooling, only seven (7) graduates score at least 75% in achievement tests in English, Science and Math, which is the standard for mastery of required competencies.

Years of deprived access to quality education in Mindanao have resulted in a vicious cycle of limited economic opportunities and further deprivation of other basic services such as water supply and health care provision. Continuing conflict has aggravated the situation, displacing populations and resulting in disruptions in schooling and economic activities. The armed conflict also resulted to the recruitment of children as combatants, putting their future and lives at risk (Edilon, 2005). The overall consequence of these adverse conditions is widespread poverty in the island.

¹ Department of Education, *Draft Education for All Plan*. (Pasig City: Department of Education, 2004).

The Philippine Human Development Report (2005) indicated that Mindanao is still suffering from extreme poverty and continuing conflict. Maguindanao, North Cotabato, Basilan, Lanao Del Norte, Davao del Sur, South Cotabato, Sultan Kudarat, Sulu, and Zamboanga del Sur are provinces in Mindanao which are considered poor and have the highest number of armed encounters from 1986 to 2004 (C. Bautista, 2005).

▪ ***Education Indicators***

Statistical reports have consistently indicated the alarming findings about the educational status of Filipinos. Consider the following realities:

- ⇒ 1 of 10 Filipinos age 6 years to 24 and over has no formal education
- ⇒ 1 of 6 Filipinos is not functionally literate (6-9 million)
- ⇒ 1 of 3 persons aged 6 to 24 is out of school due to high cost of education
- ⇒ 1 of every 3 entrants to Grade 1 drops out and fails to complete elementary schools
- ⇒ 3 out of 10 of the poor cannot compute or lack numerical skills

Basic education statistics (2005) revealed that Mindanao performed worst in cohort survival, dropout, and participation rates. In particular, the cohort survival rates (CSR) at the elementary level in SY 2000-2001 and 2002-2003 remain low, with the ARMM registering the lowest CSR at 47.49%. This is followed by Region XII at 53.29%; CARAGA at 56.66%; Region X at 67.06%; Region XI at 69.61%; and Region IX at 61.11%. On the other hand, dropout rates declined from 7.67 % in SY 2000 to 2001 to 7.34% in SY 2002 to 2003.

Figures 1 and 2 show the participation rates² in elementary and secondary schools in the Mindanao regions. Compared to the national ratio of 82.6%, Figure 1 shows that the ARMM performed worst among the regions, getting the lowest elementary enrolment ratio nationwide (64.6%). This situation is also reflected in the secondary level wherein school children in Mindanao lagged behind other regions of the country. Again, the ARMM posted the lowest rate at only 33.1%, while the rest of Mindanao are as follows: Region IX - 45.6 %; Region XI - 50.1%; CARAGA - 50.5%, Region X - 50.8%; and Region XII - 55%. Compared with the national participation rate of 57.4%, these figures indicate that children in Mindanao are less likely to go to school than those in other regions.

²The participation rate or net enrolment rate is the ratio of enrolment for the age group corresponding to the official school age of a certain level to the total population of the official age of the said level.

Figure 1. Participation Rate in Philippine Elementary Schools by Region (2003)

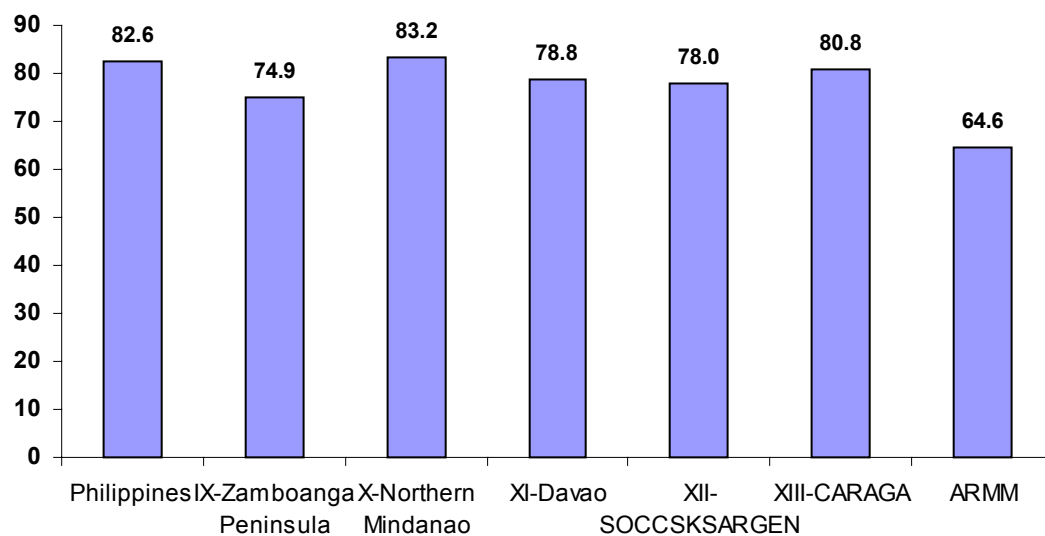
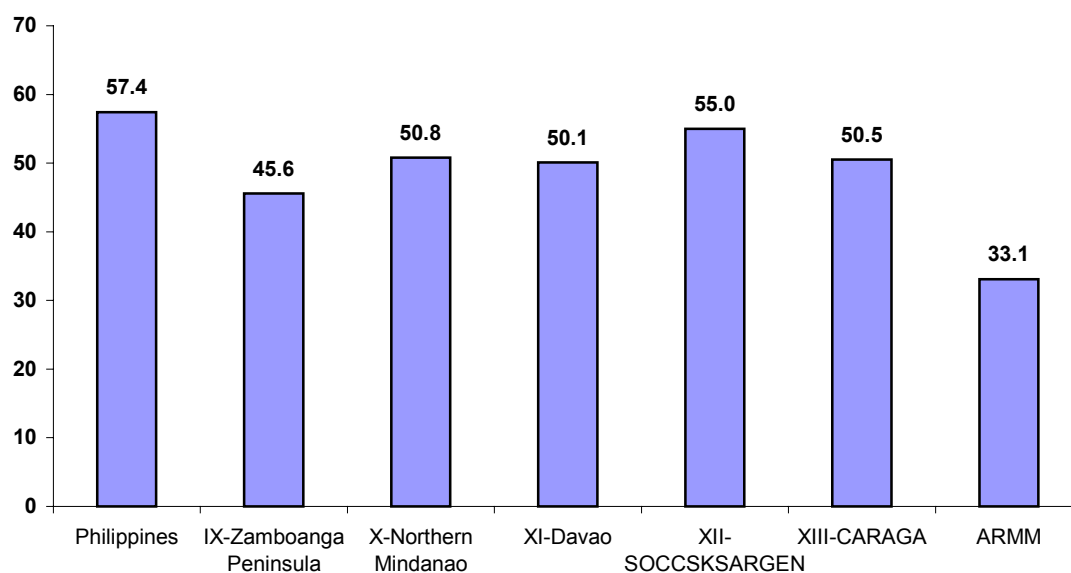


Figure 2. Participation Rate in Philippine Secondary Schools by Region (2003)



Source: DepED Fact Sheet, Basic Education Statistics (as of August 2006)

▪ **Literacy Rate³**

The 2003 Functional Literacy, Education and Mass Media Survey (FLEMMS) revealed that one out of 10 Filipinos could not read or write. The survey further showed that Mindanao performed worst in the country in terms simple and functional literacy. ARMM again posted the lowest basic literacy rate of 65.5%. Other Mindanao regions had higher basic literacy rates, to wit: Region XII with 87.3%, Region X with 91.8%, Region IX with 88.9 %; and CARAGA with 92.1%.

The 2003 FLEMMS also showed that of the country's 57.6 million population aged 10 to 64, 48.4 million or 84.1% are functionally literate. ARMM registered the lowest functional literacy rate (62.9%), while the other regions from Mindanao posted the following rates: Region IX, 74.8%; Region X, 83.7%; Region XI, 77.8%; Region XII, 77.1%; and CARAGA, 81.1%. The data further showed that only half (53.6%) of the 6 to 24 year olds in ARMM are in school. Of the four Mindanao regions with a significant Muslim population, Western Mindanao (18.7%) and ARMM (17.5%) posted the highest percentages of out-of-school youth in the country.

A significant number of Filipino children are out of the school system. Based on the 2003 FLEMMS, 11.6 million children and youth aged 6 to 24 years were not attending school. About half of them or 5.6 million belong to the age group of 15 to 21 years old. The situation gets worse if one looks at the education status of the poor and disadvantaged children. Among non-poor Filipinos, 45.3% were high school graduate or even higher. Only 14.3% among rural poor Filipinos achieved that level of educational attainment. This concurs with the Philippine Human Development Report (2005) that in the most poorest provinces of Mindanao, only 37.9% of adults had at least six years of basic education compared with the national average of 84.1%.

Table 1 shows that in Zamboanga del Norte, only 33.2% of the adults finished six years of basic education. In the island provinces of Basilan and Sulu, the average percentages of adults who finished basic education were 39.7% and 39.1%, respectively; while in Maguindanao, about 39.7% of the adults finished six years of basic education (Edilon, 2005). It should be noted that these levels have not changed significantly compared with those cited in the Third Elementary Education Project (TEEP)⁴ report in 1996. For those who graduated from elementary schools and proceeded to high school, data shows that Mindanao again had the lowest percentage of population who reached or graduated from high school. ARMM posted 21.4%; Region IX, 25.4%; Region X, 30%; Region XI, 30.1%; and CARAGA, the highest at 30.7% (Edilon, 2005).

³ Basic or simple literacy is the ability of a person to read and write with understanding a simple message in any language while functional literacy refers to a significantly higher level of literacy, which includes not only reading and writing skills but also numeracy skills. (FLEMMS, 2003)

⁴ The Third Elementary Education Project (TEEP) was funded by the World Bank to improve access to education in elementary levels in 1996-2006.

The very poor education performance indicators described above reflect the tremendous challenges to the formal school system on improving equity, expanding access, and promoting the quality of basic education for all our children and youth especially in Mindanao. It is estimated that at least 10% of the school population in Mindanao are Muslims (National Statistics Office, 2005). Clearly there is an urgent need to review present education policies and practices and examine how programs, projects, and services for Muslim children and youth in-school and out-of-school can best be implemented to reform and save a failing and weak system.

Table 1. Percentage of Adults with Six Years of Basic Education in Selected Provinces in Mindanao (2003)

Mindanao Province	Percentage of Adults with Six Years of Basic Education
Zamboanga del Norte	33.2
Basilan	39.7
Sulu	39.1
Maguindanao	39.7
Average	37.9

Source: Philippine Human Development Report, 2005

Over the years, the Philippine education sector has been the subject of several studies on how to improve access to basic education. In fact, the Philippine education⁵ sector has been cited as the most extensively studied sector of any country in the world. The last decade has witnessed a number of research teams commissioned by the Philippine government to define areas for reform, and to design implementing strategies toward achieving accessible quality education for all.

Table 2 provides the summary of significant studies and major reform initiatives in Philippine basic education.

⁵ Former Secretary of Education Bro. Andrew Gonzales, FSC, stated this finding in his study on “*Educational Surveys in the Philippines: Revisited*” during the Centennial Congress on Higher Education, May 28 to 29, 1998.

Table 2. Significant Studies and Major Reform Initiatives in Philippine Basic Education

Year	Title	Description
1987-2006	TEEP	The Third Elementary Education Project (TEEP) provided interventions in resources to improve access to elementary education by communities and schools in 26 poor provinces.
1990	EDCOM	The Congressional Commission on Education (EDCOM) reviewed the state of education in the Philippines. The study revealed the inadequacy of basic educational facilities, including the lack of qualified teachers especially for special education groups.
1988-1995	SEDP	The Secondary Education Development Program (SEDP) provided for the improvement of secondary education's quality and efficiency and enhanced access and equity through the provision of classrooms, equipment, and in-service training.
2000-2007	SEDIP	The Secondary Education Development and Improvement Program (SEDIP) was launched in 2000 mainly to: 1) increase student achievement rate; 2) increase participation rate; and 3) disseminate decentralization functions and responsibilities at each level of DepED and for divisions/schools.
1998-1999	ADB-World Bank Philippine Education Sector Study	The Asian Development Bank (ADB), in collaboration with the World Bank (WB) and the Philippine Government conducted a comprehensive Philippine Education Sector Study (PESS). The project covered basic and higher education with the following components: (1) for basic education: improved monitoring (MIS and assessment) and greater equity by improved targeting of funds and lower dropout in primary schools, and (2) for higher education: more efficient resource utilization (funding formulae), greater equity through expanded scholarships and loans, and better quality through faculty and institutional development.
1998-1999	PCER	The Presidential Commission on Educational Reform (PCER) provided a solid basis for reform in Philippine education. PCER addressed basic education equity problems to include the protection of the budget for basic education and reducing the number of dropouts in the lower primary grades.

The Congressional Commission on Education or EDCOM (1990) conducted a review of access and equity programs in the country with the following indicators: number of schools, enrolment, number of teachers, participation rate, cohort survival rates, dropout rate, admission requirements, madaris, and special education. The EDCOM also studied the situation of madaris, Muslim schools for Islamic and Arabic Instruction. It reported that majority of the madaris (61%) were located in ARMM while the rest (39%) were outside the region. It further detailed the madaris curriculum, which focused mainly on Islamic instruction and the teaching of the Arabic language.

The Secondary Education Development Program (1988 to 1995) supported by the Asian Development Bank expanded the physical capacities of the public school system to parallel the Free Secondary Education Program by creating 216,000 additional spaces in 675 schools across the country; and accommodated about 24% of the substantial enrolment growth in public secondary schools. The project achieved significant gains in improving physical facilities, equipment, and textbooks in secondary education.

To improve equity of access to quality secondary education in the Social Reform Agenda (SRA) provinces, the Secondary Education Development and Improvement Program (SEDIP) was launched in 2000. It has three components: 1) Improving Teaching and Learning Processes; 2) Improving Access to Secondary Education; and 3) Facilitating Decentralized Secondary Education.

To reduce inequity and geographical disparity in access to and the quality and efficiency of public secondary education (Years 1 to 4), a loan and technical assistance program to the Philippines for the SEDIP was made. The project assisted poverty-affected provinces with low enrolment and completion and low student achievement levels as well as provinces with low minimum basic needs indicators and low community participation. The project established new schools in underserved areas to address dropouts due to the lack of schools or the long distances to reach them.

In collaboration with the World Bank, the ADB completed a comprehensive Philippine education sector study (PESS) from 1998 to 1999. The PESS recommended improvements in the following areas: (1) removal of administrative bottlenecks for timely payment of the Government Assistance to Students and Teachers in Private Education (GASTPE); (2) raising the limit for the Education Service Contracting (ESC) scheme so that more poor students can attend better private schools, and (3) introduction of more effective means of testing to ensure that subsidies are provided to households that are in real financial need.

Other Researches and Access Projects funded by International Funding Agencies

- ***USAID EQuALLS***

The USAID EQuALLS Project reviewed national and regional legislation to examine ways to improve access to and the quality of basic education in ARMM (CAIL, 2006). The study analyzed the management of educational policy implementations by the DepED-ARMM, specifically policies affecting the effectiveness of teachers and administrators within the formal school system. The review concluded that ARMM was well equipped with legislative and policy frameworks that empower it to operate autonomously. The study suggested key reform thrusts, primarily to increase efficiency by improving the structure of the DepED-ARMM, as well as decentralizing the DepED-ARMM school management system. It further recommends improving learning outcomes by upgrading the quality of basic education teachers; strengthening school-based management system and community partnerships; improving the textbook delivery system; installing transparency and accountability mechanisms in the personnel management system; and improving education-financing schemes and management.

- ***Basic Education Assistance for Mindanao (BEAM)***

The Basic Education Assistance for Mindanao is a DepED project funded by the Government of the Philippines (GoP) and the Government of Australia (GoA) through an AUD\$36 million grant from the AusAID. Its goal is to improve the quality of and access to basic education in Mindanao by improving the quality of instruction in all schools in Region XI, XII and the ARMM.

BEAM also strengthened the *madrasah* (Arabic for “school”) education system by providing assistance to 22 private madaris in gaining recognition and accreditation from the DepED, developing and implementing intensive English and teaching methodology training programs for madrasah teachers, and assisting remote and disadvantaged communities through functional literacy and other ALS programs.

- ***World Bank’s National Program of Support for Basic Education (NPSBE)***

The World Bank addressed equity, efficiency, and quality in elementary education through its Elementary Education Projects (1990-1992; 1996-1998) and recently, through the National Program of Support for Basic Education (NPSBE, 2006). The NPSBE project, with a US \$200 Million loan, is designed to strategically support the implementation of the Basic Education Sector Reform Agenda (BESRA) over a

five-year period. BESRA encompasses universal access and success for children in basic education schooling with community support, enabling effective school-based provision for universal and functional literacy through alternative learning schemes.

The significant studies and major reform programs have indicated that there are enough studies conducted to determine the access issues at the national level. However, an in-depth study on the provision of accessible basic education programs for Muslim learners have been minimally explored. Many of the studies and intervention programs conducted addressed the quality of educational delivery and services through expansion of educational infrastructure, teacher upgrading, textbook development and classroom expansion. As of now, the gap in providing evidence-based information on the real concern of Muslim learners on accessing basic education may be by and large reflected in this policy study.

Objectives of the Study

The overall dismal state of education in Mindanao, particularly in ARMM, is a critical concern. The region lags behind in educational participation and literacy rates. It has the highest dropout rate and least number of adults who complete basic education. To address this situation, this policy research, funded by the USAID EQuALLS Project, examined the issue of access to basic education for Muslim learners in Mindanao. This research is part of the broader strategy of the Education and Livelihood Skills Alliance to provide quality and accessible education especially in the poor and conflict-affected areas of Mindanao. The research was conducted to provide answers to the following questions:

1. What laws were recently enacted by the Philippine government that concern access to quality basic education by Muslim learners in Mindanao?
2. What do Muslim learners, parents, teachers, and educational administrators perceive as the access barriers to quality basic education in Mindanao?
3. What strategies proved most effective in providing Muslim learners their basic educational needs? Can these strategies be mainstreamed and brought to scale?
4. What educational policy reforms were recently promulgated by the DepED and the DepED-ARMM to improve Muslim learners' access to quality basic education?

To accomplish these objectives, the report has been divided into the following sections:

- Chapter 1: Provides a background of the study; focusing on the rationale, objectives, research methodology, sampling selection, scope, and significance of the study.
- Chapter 2: Provides a review of the major national and regional laws, and DepED policies and guidelines that affect access to basic education.
- Chapter 3: Provides a discussion of identified access barriers to basic education as perceived by the key informants and respondents of the study.
- Chapter 4: Provides case studies of educational providers that have contributed to expanding access to education for Muslim learners in the formal school, alternative learning system, and the madrasah system of learning.
- Chapter 5: Provides a summary of the significant findings contained in the report and a discussion of the policy recommendations to widen access to basic education for Muslim learners.

Sample Selection and Data Collection

In order to ascertain issues affecting access to education for Muslim learners, the following provided key inputs by serving as the respondents of the study: officials from the DepED and the DepED-ARMM, school principals, teachers, parents, students, out-of-school children and youth (OSCY), adult learners, department heads, community leaders, and non-government organizations providing formal, alternative learning system, and madrasah education to Muslim learners.

School leavers and returnees were also interviewed to obtain firsthand information on their personal reasons for dropping out of formal school systems. The key respondents were mostly from Region XII, representing about 64% of the total number of respondents. About 16% were from ARMM, 9% from Region X, 7% from Region XI, and 4% from Region IX.

The sampling selection consisted of two stages. The first stage involved a purposive selection of Muslim communities from each of the following regions: Region IX, X, XI, XII, and ARMM. The sites selected for the study were Datu Piang and Parang in Maguindanao; Midsayap and Cotabato; Cagayan de Oro City, Marawi City, Koronadal City, Davao City, Tacurong City, General Santos City, Kidapawan City, Cotabato City, and Zamboanga City; Bongao, Tawi-Tawi; and Isabela City in Basilan. These sites were purposely selected for their large Muslim population.

The second stage⁶ involved the purposive selection of participants for the focused group discussions⁶ in the selected sites. Teachers from public and private elementary and high schools, alternative learning system coordinators, instructional managers (IMs), parents, community leaders, and students were selected as participants in the focused group discussions. *(See Annex 1 for the list of key persons interviewed and key informants of the study.)* A total of 540 respondents were interviewed using focused group discussion techniques. Table 3 presents the distribution of respondents by region and by type.

Table 3. Distribution of Respondents by Region and by Type

Region	Number of DepED Officials	Number of Teachers	Number of Students	Number of School Heads	Number of Parents	Total	%
IX	1	2	20	2	2	254	4
X	2	10	21	1	13	47	9
XI	1	12	0	10	16	39	7
XII	3	97	64	77	100	341	64
ARMM	5	14	60	4	7	90	16
Total	12	133	165	92	131	540	100

Research Design

The study used the descriptive research method to review policy documents as they relate to access to basic education for Muslim learners. It also used qualitative research methodology adopting Lincoln and Guba's (1985) emergent design case study approaches wherein the focus of inquiry was broadened by collecting additional data, consequent sampling of new people, and utilizing cases in natural settings. The study collected detailed information of four educational programs that provided accessible basic education programs for Muslim learners. The framework for documenting case studies includes three indicators: sustainability and quality of the programs; contribution

⁶ The Focus Group Discussion Guide is in Annex 3.

to accessible education for Muslim learners; and impact on overall development of learners. The education providers selected as case studies were:

1. Case Study on School-Based Education

- J. Marquez Elementary and High School or the “School of Peace” in Cotabato City
- Notre Dame Village Elementary School in Cotabato City

2. Case Study on Expanding Educational Opportunities through the Alternative Learning Systems

- Notre Dame Foundation of Charitable Activities Inc.-Women in Enterprise Development, Cotabato City

3. Case Study on Increasing Access to Education through the Madrasah System

- Madrasah Pahamuddin Al-Islamie in Pigcawayan, North Cotabato

Data Analysis and Procedure

The data were generated through multiple sources, including interviews, observations, and literature reviews. These were analyzed using a constant comparative method. After the access barrier and policy issues were identified, the findings were presented to Muslim education officials of the DepED and DepED-ARMM, Muslim scholars, social scientists, and selected university officials in Mindanao. Table 4 provides a summary of all the roundtable presentations, meetings, and consultation workshops conducted from July 2006 to January 2007.

For the case analysis, an examination of the experiences of the School of Peace, the Notre Dame Village Elementary School, the Notre Dame Foundation for Charitable Activities Inc. - Women in Enterprise Development, and the Madrasah Pahamuddin Al-Islamie, who are all known for providing accessible education to Muslim children, was conducted to identify facilitating factors that encourage Muslim children to study in formal schools, community learning centers, and madaris.

Table 4. Consultation Meetings and Workshops Conducted with DepED and DepED-ARMM Officials

Activity	Area/Site	Date	Number of Participants	Remarks
Research Report first draft consultation meeting	SEAMEO INNOTECH, Diliman, Quezon City	March 2006	12	DepED-ARMM directors and experts
Research Report case study consultation meeting	Cotabato City	September 2006	24	Case study respondents validation meeting
Research Report presentation to Mindanao DepED directors and Muslim scholars	Davao City	October 2006	15	Presentation to DepED regional directors and Muslim education experts
Research Report consultation meeting on madaris program	DepED	October 2006	1	Presentation to Usec Manaros Boransing DepED national
Research Report consultation meeting with ARMM officials	Regional ARMM office, Cotabato City	November 2006	6	Presentation to DepED-ARMM officials
Consultation Meeting with DepED-ARMM Secretary	Manila	April 4, 2007	1	Confirmation of access issues and policy options for ARMM
Total			59	

Scope and Limitations of the Study

The study reviewed national and ARMM laws, DepED policies, guidelines, and orders that relate to access to quality basic education, particularly those that affect Muslim learners in the country. The scope of the study is anchored on the provision of the Philippine Constitution that states that access to basic education does not make any distinction between public and private schools. Thus, the policy review included access to both the formal, nonformal or the alternative learning systems, and the madrasah education system.

However, the study was constrained by the absence of data on the population distribution of Muslim learners in the elementary and secondary levels in Mindanao. Segregation of data on the number of Muslim and non-Muslim pupils/students was neither a practice nor a requirement by the schools visited. This is also not included in the DepED's Basic Education Information Systems (BEIS). The unavailability of data on Muslim and non-Muslim learners made it difficult to conclude whether the intervention programs, such as those provided by the local and international funding agencies in predominantly Muslim communities in Mindanao, created changes in the targeted sector. The DepED should therefore classify pupils/students from Mindanao as Muslim and non-Muslim in future data collection to be able to develop appropriate intervention programs for the Muslim learners.

Significance of the Study

This policy research was undertaken mainly to provide technical assistance and guidance to education policy makers, legislators, school administrators, and teachers who seek a more informed understanding of the challenges in providing quality basic education to children and youth in Mindanao. It presents possibilities and opportunities from which Muslim learners may acquire appropriate knowledge, skills, and values through a system of education that includes both the formal school system and the alternative learning system. Also examined in the study were alternative options that will give choices to Muslim learners when seeking to obtain basic education through strategies that are most suitable to their needs and culture.

For ELSA, as an implementing organization of the USAID EQuALLS Project, this policy research will help define a policy agenda and identify the program thrusts to more effectively and efficiently resolve the access barriers to quality basic education for Muslim learners in Mindanao.

Overall, the study aims to influence legislators to amend or develop new policies that will aid Muslim learners from accessing the basic education services enjoyed by other non-Muslim regions.

CHAPTER 2

Trends in Access Policies from 1987 to 2007

The purpose of this chapter is to present an analysis of Philippine educational policies aimed at reducing inequities in Muslim learners' access to basic education. It presents a review of literature and studies in four areas:

- A. National laws governing access to basic education;
- B. Non-legislated policies on access to basic education;
- C. Access policies developed by the Philippine Department of Education;
- D. Implications of national education policies on access to basic education for Muslim learners.

A. National Laws Governing Access to Basic Education

The Philippine education system has a solid foundation of universal, secular, publicly and privately funded basic education. As stated in the 1987 Philippine Constitution, it is the right of every Filipino to have access to quality basic education. It also states that free and universal education at both elementary and secondary levels shall be provided to all Filipino schoolchildren.

The 1987 Constitution also mandated a complete and integrated system of education relevant to the needs of the Filipino people. The Constitution further requires support to scholarship programs, student loans, subsidies and other incentives especially to the poor and deserving students in both public and private schools. It also supports nonformal and indigenous learning as well as out-of-school study programs. As stipulated in the Philippine Constitution, educational support is also made available to adult learners, disabled and out-of-school youth for vocational and skills training. The constitutional framework on access to education is presented in Table 5.

⁷ The list of educational laws and policies from 1987 to 2007 is in Annex 2.

Table 5. Policy Framework on Access to Philippine Basic Education

Article	Statements from the Philippine Constitution
Art. XIV, Sec 1	<i>“Protect and promote the right of all citizens to quality education at all levels and shall take appropriate steps to make such education accessible to all”</i>
Art. XIV, Sec 2[1]	<i>“Establish and maintain and support a complete, adequate and integrated system of education relevant to the needs of the people and the society”</i>
Art. XIV, Sec 2[2]	<i>“Establish and maintain a free public education in the elementary and high school levels. Without limiting the natural right of parents to rear their children, elementary education is compulsory for all children of school age”</i>
Art. XIV, Sec 2[3]	<i>“Establish and maintain a system of scholarship grants, student loan programs, subsidies, and other incentives, which shall be available to deserving students in both public and private schools, especially to the underprivileged”</i>
Art. XIV, Sec 2[4]	<i>“Encourage non-formal, informal, and indigenous learning systems, as well as self-learning, independent and out-of-school study programs particularly those that respond to community needs.”</i>
Art. XIV, Sec 2 [5]	<i>“The State shall provide adult citizens, the disabled, the out-of-school youth with training in civics, vocational efficiency, and other skills.”</i>
Art. XIV, Sec 5 [5]	<i>“The State shall assign the highest budgetary priority to education and ensure that teaching will attract and retain its rightful share of the best available talents through adequate remuneration and other means of job satisfaction and fulfillment.”</i>

Since 1987, education has been given the priority in all budget allocations of the national government in accordance with the constitution. Over the years, the country has developed major educational laws that are significant in shaping the Philippine education system. A list of educational laws and their descriptions are presented in Table 6.

Table 6. Educational Laws Governing Access to Philippine Basic Education and their Salient Provisions

Year	Educational Laws and their Salient Provisions
1987	Philippine Constitution declaring that “everyone has the right to education and education should be made accessible to all”
1988	RA 6655 or the Free Secondary Education Act of 1988
1989	RA 8545 or GASTPE Law, which provides government assistance to students and teachers in private schools
1990	RA 6972 or an act establishing a day care center in every barangay, instituting the total development and protection of children
1991	Local Government Code of 1991 established Local School Boards (LSB) to assist in improving educational infrastructure, teacher training, and other projects of the school to enhance access to education
1994	RA 7880 or the Fair and Equitable Access to Education Act mandated fair and equitable access to infrastructure and tools necessary for quality education
1998	RA 8525 or the Adopt-A-School Policy that mandated the creation of partnerships among the business sector, foundations, private schools, civic organizations, individuals, and the DepED in providing assistance and services to public schools
2000	Early Childhood Care and Development (ECCD) Act or an act governing the establishment of a national system for early childhood education
2001	RA 9155 or the Governance of Basic Education Act, which provided a national policy on basic education for all and institutionalized the alternative learning system as a component of basic education

■ **Free Secondary Education Act or RA 6655**

This law provides for a system of free public secondary education, which commenced in School Year (SY) 1988 to 1989. It mandates that payment of tuition and other school fees shall not be required of students enrolled in secondary course offerings in national high schools; general comprehensive high schools; state colleges and universities; specialized schools; trade, technical, vocational, fishery, and agricultural schools; schools established, administered, maintained, and funded by LGUs, including city, provincial, municipal, and barangay high schools; and public high schools established by law.

Moreover, this law specifies that the graduates of public elementary schools in a municipality shall be given priority in admission when the present facilities in the same municipality cannot accommodate all enrollees.

■ **Local Government Code of 1991**

The Local Government Code of 1991 is an important legislation that assists the DepED in improving educational infrastructure. Sections 98 and 99 of this law provide for the creation of the Local School Board⁸ at the municipal and provincial levels to assist in improving the infrastructure of public schools within its area of jurisdiction. By virtue of the Local Government Code, the LSB is empowered to prioritize the construction, repair, and maintenance of school buildings and other facilities of public elementary and secondary schools. It is also mandated to assist in establishing and maintaining extension classes, and providing support for alternative learning system programs or nonformal education.

The creation of the LSB was intended to be a vital mechanism to enhance educational facilities and teacher-training programs for schools. For instance, it can help build a library or an additional school building or hire part-time teachers using its funds. The LSB also has the flexibility to support additional teachers, including ALS instructional managers and madrasah teachers. Studies have shown, however, that many LSBs, particularly in ARMM, are not active or operational.

■ **An Act Establishing the Day Care Centers or RA 6972**

RA 6972 declares the policy of the state to defend the right of children to assistance, including proper care and nutrition, and to provide them with special protection against all forms of neglect, abuse, cruelty, exploitation, and other conditions prejudicial to their development.

⁸The Local School Board was created under the Local Government Code of 1991 composed of government and non-government sector representatives and plays a major role in funding school-based projects.

This law provides that Filipino children up to six years of age deserve the best care and attention from their family and community. Toward this end, a day care center shall be established in every barangay with the total development and protection of children in mind.

■ **Adopt-a-School Policy (ASP) or RA 8525**

Another significant step geared toward improving access to education in the country was the Adopt-a-School Policy (ASP), which was enacted in 1998 through RA 8525. The policy enjoined partnerships among the business sector, foundations, private schools, civic organizations, individuals, and the DepED to provide much needed assistance and services to public schools. The ASP allowed private entities to assist a public school -- whether elementary, secondary, or tertiary and preferably those located in the 20 poorest provinces identified by the Philippine government -- in faculty development and teacher training, upgrading of existing facilities, provision of books, publications and other instructional materials, and modernization of instructional technologies. Table 7 shows that this policy has contributed to the development of school infrastructure, expanded teacher training, and the provision of instructional materials.

Table 7. Number of Beneficiary Schools Under the Adopt-a-School Program in Mindanao from January 2000 to December 2005

Region	Package 1: Infrastructure	Package 2: Teacher Training	Package 3: Basic School Supplies	Package 4: Computer and Science Labs	Package 5: Food and Nutrition
IX	54	49	13	x	x
X	58	70	24	x	x
11	21	47	11	3	x
12	37	34	40	1	x
CARAGA	13	79	23	3	x
ARMM	4	21	13	x	x

Source: DepED Adopt-a-School Program Secretariat, 2006

As provided for in the law, an incentive is provided to private entities by allowing a deduction of as much as 150% of the direct cost of assistance from the gross taxable income. It also provides additional incentives by giving the adopting company or entity a seat in the school board of the adopted district or municipality and allowing it to have its name embedded beneath the name of the school.

■ ***Fair and Equitable Access to Education Act or RA 7880***

To effect the equal distribution of capital outlay⁹, RA 7880 or the Fair and Equitable Access to Education Act was passed in 1994. This legislation provided all legislative districts a minimum and continuing level of educational development by establishing a rationalized and equitable allocation of the DepED budget for capital outlay. There are no studies or information as to what extent this law has influenced national government allocations or annual investments in educational infrastructure although it is clear that the educational infrastructure needs of the Mindanao regions have remained unmet in the past several years.

■ ***ECCD Act or RA 8990***

RA 8990 promotes the right of children to survival, development, and special protection with full recognition of the nature of childhood and its special needs; and supports parents in their role as primary caregivers and as their children's first teachers. The law mandates the institutionalization of a National System for Early Childhood Care and Development that is comprehensive, integrated, and sustainable.

ECCD encourages multi-sectoral and inter-agency collaboration at the national and local levels among government units, service providers, families, and communities as well as among the public and private sectors, non-government organizations, professional associations, and academic institutions. It promotes the inclusion of children with special needs. The ECCD Act shall be anchored on complementary strategies for ECCD that include service delivery for children from conception to age six, educating parents and caregivers, encouraging the active involvement of parents and communities in ECCD programs, raising awareness about the importance of ECCD, and promoting community development efforts that improve the quality of life for young children and families.

⁹Capital outlay refers to the provision of the General Appropriations Act (GAA), particularly those pertaining to the budget of the DepED for elementary and secondary education for the acquisition and improvement of sites; the construction, replacement, rehabilitation and repair of buildings, classrooms, libraries, workshops, toilets, and other structures; and the provision of furniture, fixtures, and equipment such as but not limited to desks, chairs, laboratory and workshop implements, computers, books, and other basic and essential tools for learning whose beneficial use shall exceed one year.

■ **Organic Act of Muslim Mindanao or RA 6734**

The Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao was created through RA 6734 or the Organic Act of Muslim Mindanao. The ARMM was officially inaugurated on November 6, 1990 in Cotabato City. The Organic Act, in pursuance of a constitutional mandate, provide for an autonomous area in Muslim Mindanao. A plebiscite was held in the provinces of Basilan, Cotabato, Davao del Sur, Lanao del Norte, Lanao del Sur, Maguindanao, Palawan, South Cotabato, Sultan Kudarat, Sulu, Tawi-Tawi, Zamboanga del Norte and Zamboanga del Sur; and in the cities of Cotabato, Dapitan, Dipolog, General Santos, Iligan, Marawi, Pagadian, Puerto Princesa and Zamboanga to determine if the residents would want to be part of the ARMM. Of the areas where the plebiscites were held only Lanao del Sur, Maguindanao, Sulu and Tawi-Tawi voted favorably for inclusion in the new autonomous region.

The ARMM was officially inaugurated on November 6, 1990 in Cotabato City, which was designated as its provisional capital. In 2001 a new law was passed for the expansion of the ARMM to include the areas which initially rejected inclusion and the provinces which were carved from them; however, only Marawi City and Basilan, with the exception of Isabela City, opted to be integrated into the region. The region has been the traditional homeland of Muslim Filipinos since the 15th century. It is headed by a Regional Governor and a Regional Vice Governor who are elected like regular local executives. The region issues regional ordinances created by the Regional Assembly, composed of Assemblymen, also elected by direct vote.

■ **RA 9054**

Republic Act 9054 amending RA 6734 or the ARMM Organic Law provided support for achieving quality education in Mindanao. This law set out the provision of quality education as a top priority of the region. Section XIV under Education, Science, Technology, and the Arts, stated that *“The Regional Government shall establish, maintain, and support as a top priority a complete and integrated system of education and adopt an educational framework that is meaningful, relevant, and responsive to the needs, ideals and aspirations of the people in Muslim Mindanao.”*

Among the educational policies and principles the law emphasized were covered in Sections 1-27 of Article XIV. The law stated a plethora of programs to attempt to improve the quality and relevance of and access to educational programs for Muslim Mindanao. It should be noted that the 27 sections emphasized the teachings of Filipino and Islamic values, ideals, and aspirations. It indicated the development of madrasah education that requires the accreditation and integration of madaris into the educational system.

This system of accreditation shall form part of the major thrust of the regional education system in ARMM and the DepED shall provide a continuing system within

the organization to ensure the attainment of these objectives. Article IV of RA 9054 Section 2(3) states that *“the preparation, writing, revision, and printing of the textbooks for the use of schools in the autonomous region shall be the joint responsibility of the regional Government and the central government or national government.”* This gives ARMM the flexibility to localize the contents of its textbooks to reflect tri-people (Muslim, Christian and indigenous peoples) culture and values. Some of the educational legislations for the ARMM are shown in Table 8.

Table 8. ARMM Educational Legislation and their Salient Provisions

Year	ARMM Educational Legislation and their Salient Provisions
1992	Muslim Mindanao Autonomous Act (MMAA) No. 14 or “an act providing for a System of Education for the ARMM, creating a regional Department of Education, Culture and Sports, and Appropriating Funds Therefore and For other Purposes”. MMAA No. 14 mandated the Regional Education Department to formulate general education objectives and policies and adopt long-range education policies. It also empowers the department to propose and recommend measures on education for enactment into laws.
1992	MMAA No. 25, s. 1992 corresponds to the Local Government Code of 1991, which mandated the establishment of the Local School Board (LSB) in every province, city and/or municipality and mandated its composition. MMAA No 25 states that “The Department of Education, Culture and Sports, ARMM, shall consult the school board on the appointment of division superintendents, district supervisor, school principals, and other school officials”, as also stated in national Local Government Code. It also prioritizes the use of the School Education Fund (SEF) for the (1) construction and repair of school buildings and other facilities of public elementary and secondary schools; (2) establishment and maintenance of extension classes, where necessary; and (3) sports activities at the division, district, municipality and barangay levels.
2001	RA 9054 or the Expanded Organic Act for the ARMM, which clearly stated that it is the policy of the autonomous region to establish, maintain, and support a complete and integrated system of quality education that is meaningful, relevant and responsive to the needs, ideals, and aspirations of the people in Muslim Mindanao

As regards the leadership of the education sector, the Regional Secretary of the DepED-ARMM is mandated to complement the efforts of the national DepED Secretary, in line with the provisions of RA 9155 which states that *“The Regional*

Education Secretary for ARMM shall exercise similar governance authority over the divisions, districts, schools, and learning centers in the region as may be provided in the Organic Act without prejudice to the provisions of RA 9054.”

■ **Basic Education Governance Act or RA 9155**

The law emphasized the right of all citizens to quality basic education and the provision of free and compulsory education in the elementary level and free education in the secondary level. Such education shall also include alternative learning system programs for out-of-school youth and adult learners. This policy was intended to benefit the entire school-aged population regardless of creed, race, or religion. Section 13 of this law provides rules on governance in the ARMM, which mandates the Regional Education Secretary for ARMM the authority to exercise similar governance authority over the divisions, districts, schools, and learning centers in the region as may be provided in the Organic Act without prejudice to the provisions of RA 9054 or the Act to Strengthen and Expand the Organic Act for ARMM Amending for the Purpose RA 6734 or the Act Providing for ARMM.

B. Non-legislated Policies on Access to Basic Education

The following offers a brief discussion on non-legislated policies and orders governing access to basic education for Muslim learners. They are mostly drawn from an international mandate or an important thrust in the region as well as in the global community.

■ **Proclamation Number 614**

Aside from legislations to restructure and rename educational departments, the Executive Office also issued in April 21, 2004 Proclamation No. 614 entitled “Declaring Strong State Support to the United Nations (UN) Literacy Decade.” With this, the Philippines signified its commitment to expand and improve comprehensive early childhood care and education especially for the most vulnerable and disadvantaged children, as well as ensure that by 2015, children, particularly girls in difficult circumstances and those that belong to ethnic minorities, would have access to and complete free and compulsory education of good quality. It also commits to ensuring that the learning needs of all young people and adults will be met through equitable access to appropriate learning and life skills programs.

■ ***Education For All Plan of Action***

The country has instituted a holistic program of reforms under the Philippine Education for All Plan that aims to improve the quality of basic education for every Filipino by 2015. Among its universal goals and objectives are:

1. Universal coverage of out-of-school youth and adults in the provision of basic learning needs
2. Universal school participation and elimination of dropouts and repetition in the first three grades
3. Universal completion of the full cycle of basic education schooling with satisfactory achievement levels by all at every grade or year
4. Total community commitment to attaining basic education competencies for all

■ ***Mindanao Natin Program***

The Philippine government's "Mindanao Natin Program" is an attempt to expand access to and improve the quality of basic education. The program was launched to usher the rehabilitation of Muslim Mindanao, with special attention to conflict-affected areas, and provide a venue for concerned agencies to coordinate and consolidate the following access programs for the region:

1. Provision of educational facilities and rehabilitation and construction of school buildings
2. Development of madrasah education and education curriculum for indigenous peoples
3. Training for teachers
4. Conduct of literacy and nonformal education programs
5. Provision of information and communications technology equipment to schools as aid to education development
6. Distance learning and scholarship programs
7. Provision of peace literacy program

■ ***Comprehensive Mindanao Education Program***

In September 12, 1996, through Administrative Order 290, the government created a technical working group to develop the Comprehensive Mindanao Education Program (CMEP). The CMEP envisioned to provide for the more focused delivery of education services as a means to attain overall peace and socioeconomic development in Mindanao from 1997 to 2014. The CMEP provided a blueprint for education designed to promote peace and productivity and to serve as a tool for social transformation of Mindanao. Among the recommended strategies of the CMEP is the proposed accreditation, establishment, or creation of the Fund for Madrasah Education and the

office for Madrasah Education Council, which should be fully implemented to sustain the provision of madrasah education in the region and in the country. The CMEP was used as the framework for developing subsequent educational programs on madrasah education, the Philippine Road Map to Madrasah Education, and other new laws affecting education in Muslim Mindanao. However, through a presidential directive, the CMEP Project was terminated.¹⁰

■ **Executive Order 356**

EO 356 renamed the Bureau of Nonformal Education as the Bureau of Alternative Learning System. The order stipulates that alternative learning systems are parallel learning systems that provide a viable alternative to the existing formal education instruction, encompassing both nonformal and informal sources of knowledge and skills. EO 356 mandated the BALS to address the learning needs of marginalized groups especially those from deprived, depressed, and underserved communities. It also directed the BALS to ensure the expansion of educational opportunities for citizens of different interests, capabilities and demographic characteristics as well as to promote the accreditation and certification of alternative learning.

■ **Executive Order 483**

EO 483 directed the DepED, the Technical Education and Skills Development Authority (TESDA) and the Commission on Higher Education (CHED) to “... address the life skills educational requirements toward building a knowledge society...”¹¹ The EO mandated the establishment of a UNESCO Lifelong Learning Center for Sustainable Development in Asia and the Pacific. The education agencies of the Philippines—DepEd, CHED and TESDA—bonded together to support the development of the UNESCO Lifelong Learning Center to provide and assist the lifelong learners in the Southeast Asian region.

■ **DepED Road Map for Upgrading Muslim Education**

A Comprehensive Program for Upgrading Muslim Basic Education (2006) was prepared by the DepED with technical assistance from SEAMEO INNOTECH. The road map aims to strengthen the present madrasah educational system as a vital component of the national education system. The road map introduced seven program components, namely:

1. Development and institutionalization of madrasah education
2. Upgrading secular basic education in formal elementary and secondary schools serving Muslim children

¹⁰ Source: Letter of Secretary Gonzales to President Estrada dated December 10, 1998 on the CMEP.

¹¹ Executive Order No. 483 dated December 27, 2005

3. Developing and implementing an alternative learning system for Filipino Muslim out-of-school youth
4. Developing and implementing appropriate livelihood skills education and training for out-of-school youth and students of private madaris
5. Supporting government efforts to provide quality ECCD programs for Filipino Muslim preschool children
6. Creation of special fund for assistance to Muslim education by an act of Congress
7. Improvement of the nutritional status of Filipino Muslim learners in public schools

These major non-legislated policies and plans of reform aimed to improve the condition of Muslim learners, encouraging their full participation in the society and assisting them in getting basic education through appropriate policy support.

■ ***Regional Basic Education Development Plan in the ARMM***

Recently, the Asian Development Bank provided technical assistance to DepED-ARMM to help develop a Regional Basic Education Development Plan (RBEDP) for ARMM. The RBEDP, finalized in 2007, is a ten-year (2005-2015) basic education development plan that focuses on strategies for closing the education gap between ARMM and the rest of the country, within a decentralized context. This includes strategies for upgrading teacher education and formulation of empirical targets and estimates for resource requirements to achieve Education For All goals.

C. Access Policies of the Philippine Department of Education

The Philippine Department of Education sets education policies and requirements to improve the quality of and access to basic education in the country. Over the years, the DepED has issued policies, memoranda, and orders that cover improvement in educational infrastructure, textbook procurement, regulation of miscellaneous fees and school contribution, expansion of student financial assistance, curriculum review, and improvement in teacher status and remuneration. The following discussions provide a review of DepED policies and related issuances covering formal education, alternative learning systems, and madrasah education.

■ **Educational Infrastructure**

In SY 2004 to 2005, the classroom deficit in the country was 51,947 classrooms, of which 33% is in Mindanao. Based on a class size of 45, “shifting class sessions” were introduced through DepED Order 62 s. 2004, which was adopted starting SY 2005/2006. The policy directed elementary schools holding three or four shifts of classes to continue to do so. Schools on single shifts, including city division schools, non-city division schools with classroom pupil ratios of 66 and above, and block section schools shall continue to hold single-shift sessions.

The policy required all secondary schools to adopt double-shift sessions. It imposed a class size ranging from a minimum of 15 pupils/students to a maximum of 65. To implement this policy, all schools were required to assess the required resources, including classrooms and teachers, needed by the school to operate under the double-shift system.

■ **Textbooks and Teaching Materials**

The DepED issued policies on the selection of textbooks¹² and guidelines on the delivery, inspection, acceptance, and distribution of textbooks and teacher’s guides procured or to be procured.¹³ Based on DepED Memorandum Numbers 11 and 311, a team of evaluators shall be organized for the selection of textbooks and teacher’s manuals. The team shall be composed of master teachers or evaluators by discipline/subject area and curriculum experts who will ensure sectoral convergence as well as relevance and accuracy of content.

The DepED order indicated further that the department should oversee the textbook evaluation process through the help of accredited academicians, educators, education administrators, and textbook and curriculum specialists. However, there was no indication in the DepED policy specifying representation of Muslims in the evaluation committee.

The DepED ruled that the National Bids and Awards Committee (BAC) should do the purchase of textbooks at the regional level. Textbook procurement is done by zone under foreign-assisted projects, as follows:

- Zone 1- Northern and Central Luzon (Regions I, II, III, and CAR)
- Zone 2- Metro Manila and Southern Luzon (Regions IV-A, IV-B, V, and NCR)
- Zone 3- Visayas (Regions VI, VII, and VIII)
- Zone 4- Mindanao (Regions IX, X, XI, XII, XIII, and excluding ARMM)

¹² DepED Memorandum Number 11 s. 2002

¹³ DepED Memorandum Number 311 s. 2006

ARMM was excluded in the coverage of this textbook procurement policy because of its status as an autonomous region, with its own Department of Education. As such, the DepED-ARMM budget, including allocation for textbooks, was lumped with the annual ARMM regional budget approved in the General Appropriations Act. The lack of transparency and accountability in the regional budget management has resulted in the loss of textbook funds in the past several years which, in turn, accounts for the perennial and acute lack of textbooks in the region. To address this issue, the budget intended for textbooks in the ARMM has been transferred to the DepED budget starting SY 2005 to 2006. Thus, the procurement and distribution of textbooks in ARMM now follows the system applied to other regions. Under the present DepED procurement and distribution schedule (DepED Memo 311, s.2006), however, it will take until 2011 for DepED-ARMM to receive the textbooks for all Revised Basic Education Curriculum (RBEC) subject areas.

As to the allocation of textbooks, regional offices are directed to determine the over- or under-supply of textbook in schools prior to distribution and to allocate textbooks based on enrolment. DepED guidelines also emphasized that school textbooks should be free and that the target student-textbook ratio should be 1:1. There was also a ruling on the privatization of school textbook production. In a recent development, the DepED-ARMM instituted its own Instructional Materials Development Council to prepare contextualized textbooks for the use of the entire region, with financial support from the Australian government-funded BEAM Project.

■ School Fees, Contributions, School Rites, and Admission Policies

Section 20 of the Education Act of 1982 defines elementary education as the “first stage of compulsory, formal education primarily concerned with providing basic education, which is free.” The DepED in an effort to improve and develop quality education and the internal efficiency of the basic educational system, and to make it accessible to all citizens, issued Department Order 22 s. 2001. This policy, more popularly known as the Policies on Enrolment in Public Schools, required that no school fees and contributions should be collected during enrolment.

The DepED shall announce voluntary collections for Boy/Girl Scouts, Philippine National Red Cross (PNRC), and anti-TB campaign, after the institutions receiving these contributions shall have submitted their financial reports to DepED. Mindanao learners have benefited from the No School Fees Policy as reported by school principals, teachers, and the learners themselves. The same DepED Order Number 22 s. 2001 stated that in order to expand access to education for those who have no identification attesting the age of the enrollee like birth or baptismal certificates (common among Muslim learners), the parents may execute an affidavit that should be acceptable to the school. This order further stated that it should issue separate guidelines for the collection of PTCA, school publication, ID, and other

school fees which may be authorized for voluntary contributions on a specific date during the school year.

It also issued DepED Order Number 22 s. 2005 to reiterate to school authorities the constitutional mandate for free public education. As such, students of public elementary and secondary schools have the right to be admitted and enrolled without being compelled to pay any amount. It was further stated that payment of school contributions should not be made a requirement for the release of report cards, test results, or clearances for transfer to other schools. Furthermore, teachers are not allowed to collect these contributions on behalf of the school but shall assign a school personnel to collect such contributions. Significant improvements were achieved by this policy.

■ *Simple and Austere Practices in Schools*

The DepED responded to the need for simple and austere graduation rites to avoid unnecessary expenses on the part of the parents by issuing Department Order Number 10 s. 2001 and DepED Order Number 56 s. 2001. DepED Order Nos. 35 s. 2002 and 52 s. 2003 also clarified that educational field trips should not be made compulsory. These policies should benefit poor Muslim learners as they are a policy strategy that helps students from low socioeconomic backgrounds to remain in school. As such, giving tests based on field trips is strictly prohibited. The DepED instead encourages schools to give students who are not able to attend field trips the option to make up with additional work.

■ *Student Financial Assistance Programs*

As a result of the National Free Public Secondary Education Policy in 1988, there was a surge in the enrolment of students in public high schools. GASTPE or RA 8545 (amending RA 6728) was passed to help students who cannot be accommodated in public secondary schools due to overflow and to accommodate those who live in municipalities where there are no public high schools or where only private high schools are available.

The GASTPE Law declared that it is the policy of the state, in conformity with the mandate of the constitution, to promote and make quality education available to all Filipinos. The GASTPE Law has two components, namely, the Education Service Contracting (ESC) scheme, which allows a child to be enrolled in a private high school if there is no public high school in his/her area and the Tuition Fee Supplement (TFS) scheme, which assists students and their families in coping with the rising tuition fees in private secondary schools. In 1998, the GASTPE Law was amended to include subsidy for private school teachers' salaries and textbooks.

Under this program, the Fund for Assistance to Private Education (FAPE) was authorized to manage the DepED's scholarship and subsidy programs for private schools. ESC scholars or grantees who study in accredited schools are given PhP 2,500 and assured that grantees who drop out due to serious illnesses, accidents, calamities, and other valid reasons may be readmitted to the program the following year. If in case ESC grantees transfer to another school, he/she may still be admitted by the school program committee.

■ ***Teacher Professional Development***

Payment for personnel services was the single biggest item in the DepED's budget that increased over the years. The dramatic rise in personnel expenditure was due to adjustments in the salaries of public school teachers, which was implemented by the government pursuant to the Salary Standardization Law. The high salaries (by Asian standards) now limit the ability of the DepED to hire additional teachers and to further cope with the yearly increase in enrolment.

In order to improve the quality of education in the public school system and address the teacher factor, the DepED issued a policy to address the imbalance resulting from excess/shortage of teachers in particular localities. The DepED encouraged appointments made by Schools Division Superintendents to fill up principal and teacher items created in SY 2004/2005. DepED Order Number 45 s. 2004 stated that for secondary schools, the name of the division office where the appointee concerned shall be deployed should be indicated. A Special Order shall likewise be issued to the appointee, specifying his/her school assignment.

Then DepED Secretary Andrew Gonzales (2000) directed a review of the staffing pattern of the DepED because a lot of teaching positions were occupied by personnel performing administrative functions. This was attributed to the lack of position items for non-teaching staff. The directive discouraged the practice of employing teachers for non-teaching positions. It is not clear, however, whether this directive resulted in improvements in the deployment of teachers to communities where their services are most needed.

When DepED Order Number 51 was issued in 2004, the policy was not able to foresee that there are not enough qualified teachers to implement the Standard Madrasah Curriculum in public schools with large numbers of Muslim students. Undersecretary Manaros Boransing (2006) said that at present the country has limited teacher education institutions (TEIs) that can train madrasah teachers to handle the Arabic Language and Islamic Values Education (ALIVE) subjects in public schools and madaris. In the schools visited, madrasah teachers have been hired by the Parents, Teachers, and Community Association (PTCA) but most of them have not taken or passed the Licensure Examination for Teachers.

The problem of poor teacher competence in the subjects taught does not apply only to those who teach ALIVE but also to those handling the RBEC.¹⁴ Studies conducted in 2006 by the Creative Associates International Inc. (CAII) under the USAID EQuALLS Project found that a large percentage of ARMM elementary teachers have a low level of content mastery in Mathematics and weak English language reading and oral communication skills.

■ Curriculum and Instructional Practices

The DepED encourages all schools in the country to be culturally sensitive and to be aware of the religious rights of the students through DepED Order Number 53 s. 2001. This policy supports the constitutional guarantee on freedom of religion and non-discrimination on the basis of sex, faith, creed, or color. DepED encourages all schools to reevaluate their policies to ensure that these are sensitive enough to respect the plight of Muslim students who attend schools. The policy is very specific in allowing all Muslim students, specifically female Muslim schoolchildren, to use their veil or headdress (*hijab*) inside the school campus. Furthermore, in physical education classes, Muslim girls shall not be required to wear shorts and shall be allowed to wear appropriate clothing in accordance with their religious beliefs. The policy also indicates that Muslim students should not be required to participate in non-Muslim religious rites.

■ Madrasah Education¹⁵

Filipino Muslims have always aspired to have an educational system that is authentic and appropriate for the Bangsamoro¹⁶ population. The madrasah system of learning has been viewed as another education pathway that aptly responds to Moro aspiration. Muslims have founded and supported madaris with a solid foundation of Islamic values since the arrival of Islam in the Philippines in the thirteenth century¹⁷.

Madaris use a curriculum that focuses exclusively on the study of the Qur'an, related Islamic subjects, and the Arabic language (BEAM, 2006). They vary widely in size and quality, from several dozen full-time learning institutions where the basic course of study up to secondary level takes 12 years, to many hundreds of informal schools where students are taught for a few hours on weekends in makeshift classrooms. Majority of these madaris, especially in ARMM, serve poor communities where they

¹⁴Capacity Building Needs Assessment of the Department of Education in the Autonomous Region of Muslim Mindanao. CAII, 2006

¹⁵ *Madrasah* means school (plural *madaris*), which exists basically to teach Islamic faith for the moral and spiritual development of Muslim children. It is usually organized or managed by a guru or the community. Classes are headed by an *ustadz* (plural *ustadiz*) while the pupils are called *moritz*.

¹⁶ Bangsamoro refers to the Filipino Muslim people in general. It came from the Malay word *bangsa*, meaning nation and Moro, from a Spanish word *Moor*, meaning Arabs or Muslims.

¹⁷ Milligan, J.A. (2006). "Islamization of Education in the Southern Philippines", *Comparative Education Review*, 2006; 50 (3)

may be the only schools available to children and youth. As parents in Cotabato explained:

“Madrasah is the only school we can afford. It does not ask for fees or contributions.”

“I have three kids and my husband is just a laborer who receives only 70 pesos a day when work is available. I cannot send my kids to a public school even if it is free.”

BEAM (2006)¹⁸ cited that some of the Muslim Filipino children and youth, estimated at around 92,000, are enrolled in around 1,100 madaris. However, the concern is not simply having access to education, but having access to quality madrasah education. CMEP (2000) reported that madrasah graduates with weak foundations in English, Math and Science experienced learning difficulties when they moved into public high schools despite being highly motivated and intelligent.

To address the problem, the Office of Muslim Affairs of the DepED initiated the issuance of DepED Order Number 51 s. 2004, which introduced a standard curriculum for the subjects Arabic Language and Islamic Studies in madaris, and the teaching of secular subjects (English, Mathematics, Science and Makabayan) in those madaris that wish to be recognized by DepED. The DepED’s Standard Curriculum for privately operated madaris incorporated the regular education subjects of English, Math, Science, Filipino, and Civics into the traditional madrasah curriculum. The standard curriculum for both public schools and private madaris aims to:

1. Establish a smooth transfer of students from public to private madrasah or vice versa
2. Promote the Filipino national identity
3. Preserve the Muslims’ cultural heritage

In view of these objectives, all public schools and private madaris in Muslim communities were enjoined to implement this standard curriculum during the pilot year SY 2005/2006. SEAMEO INNOTECH with funding from the Third Elementary Education Project (TEEP), and the World Islamic Call Society (WICS) has supported the development of textbooks and teaching guides for Grades 1 to 6.¹⁹

Prior to the issuance of DepED Order No. 51, s. 2004 by the DepED Central Office, the ARMM Executive Order No. 28 (*Adopted Curriculum for the Elementary*

¹⁸ BEAM HOME Survey in 2006

¹⁹ To date, the textbooks and teaching guides for Islamic Values, Arabic Language, and Islamic Studies for Grades 1-2 have been printed with funds from the World Islamic Call Society of Libya. Master copies of textbooks and teaching guides for Grades 3-6 have been prepared by SEAMEO INNOTECH; however these have not yet been printed by WICS.

Schools in the ARMM) was issued in August 2003, which dealt with the enrichment of the curricula of public schools that have Muslim students. This issuance differed in the amount of time allocated to each subject in public schools, and hence to the length of the school day when compared with DepED Order Number 51 s. 2004.

The DepED-ARMM also issued ARMM Executive Order Number No. 13 (*Revised Guidelines and Standards for Operation and Recognition of Madaris in the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao*) in August 2004, which complements EO 28 and dealt with the addition to madrasah curricula of public school subjects such as Math and Science. It also highlighted the discussion on the differences between the nationally prescribed curriculum of madrasah and that of the DepED-ARMM. The key difference between the ARMM and national madrasah curricula relates to the different amount of time allocated to each subject in public schools, and hence to the length of school day. This difference resulted in confusion regarding the implementation of the madrasah curriculum, and led to tension between the DepED National and DepED-ARMM.

ARMM Executive Order Number 13-A, signed by Regional Governor Parouk Hussin, reconciled the DepED Order Number 51 s. 2004 and Regional EO Number 13 by specifying that where the two differ, DepED Order 51 shall prevail. With this, conflicts that arose between the central and regional DepED on the issue should have been resolved, but the study noticed a split among ARMM stakeholders where some madaris still follow 13-A (DepED Order No. 51) while others are still sticking to EO 13.

The DepED-ARMM by its autonomous status can well develop its own curriculum using the framework of the DepED. At present, the full implementation of the DepED Standard Madrasah Curriculum is being held back by the lack of textbooks and competent teachers to teach Islamic Values/Studies and Arabic language, which should be immediately addressed in Mindanao as in other parts of the country.

Dr. Macalinog Saligoin, Assistant Regional Secretary of the DepED-ARMM, pointed out during a consultation forum the initiative of the government to “Islamize” education in Mindanao public schools while providing basic education according to the national system starting in the 1980s. The process was slowed down, however, by the lack of relevant textbooks and financial support, shifting education policies, and other factors. More recently, educators were tackling the issue from the private education perspective, with madaris being viewed by the government as a potential source of quality basic education.

DepEd Order Number 51 s. 2004 and ARMM Executive Orders Nos. 28, 13, and 13-A have encouraged educators and school heads of Mindanao to meet integration of the Madrasah system of education and make public schools more Islamic-friendly and culturally responsive to Muslim learners. This is an important development given that cultural bias and discrimination were identified as access barriers for Muslim

learners by this research study. Actual implementation of these reforms varies across sectors in Mindanao depending on the availability of resources.

The lack of designated teacher items for Islamic Values and Arabic Language subjects has been a great challenge for schools to implement the curriculum. Some schools with access to LGU/LSB funds have been able to hire qualified teachers to teach Islamic values and Arabic language as separate subjects. Other schools lacking funds have partnered with local madaris for exchange of teaching personnel (i.e., madrasah teachers teaching Arabic language and Islamic values in public schools, and public school teachers teaching RBEC subjects in madaris.) Other schools have tried to meet the curriculum requirement by urging their teachers to integrate Islamic values and teachings into their classes, while some schools looked for volunteer madrasah teachers in the absence of existing teacher items to support them.

■ Alternative Learning Systems

In order to address the educational needs of OSCY in the most impoverished sectors of the Filipino society, the DepED provided an alternative pathway of basic education under the BALS. The ALS programs of the BALS offer an alternative pathway by which out-of-school youth and adults gain the reading, writing, and numeracy skills they need to improve their economic status and to function more effectively in society. Through its Nonformal Education Accreditation and Equivalency (NFE A&E) Program, the DepED-BALS provides an alternative means of learning certification for assessing the levels of literacy and non-formal learning achievement of OSCY and adults. The NFE A&E provides an alternative means of elementary and secondary level learning and certification for Filipinos aged 15 and above who are unable to avail of the formal school system or have dropped out of formal elementary and secondary schools. Through Administrative Order Number 116, government agencies and LGUs are mandated to support the nonformal education accreditation and equivalency system.

In 2003, DepED Memorandum Order Number 61 s. 2003 was issued to announce the Strong Republic Schools (SRS) program, which aims to expand learning opportunities in remote areas throughout the country through basic and functional literacy classes and to enhance existing schools with distance-learning technology. The policy further indicated that all public schools in this program are allowed to use classrooms after regular school hours and on weekends. The program targets 7 to 77 year olds from the 500 priority poor barangays identified by the National Security Council (NSC).

The DepED also issued DepED Order Number 8 s. 2003 which introduced the Academic Focused Bridging Program Integrated in the NFE A&E System. This policy reaffirmed earlier orders that examinees of the NFE A&E system who pass the test would receive a secondary level certificate comparable with that of the formal system.

This certificate will also enable them to reenter the world of work and enroll in four-to-five year courses and post-secondary vocational training. It also reiterated that no fees be paid by A&E examinees.

The ALS programs now in place supported by DepED, USAID EQuALLS, BEAM, and other donors embody implementing strategies to improve the quality and reach of the alternative learning systems for Muslim OSCY and adults. Policies promoting alternative learning systems as a window for the vast number of Muslim out-of-school youth to be reintegrated into the formal school system, or to pursue livelihood and life skills development, have likewise been put in place. However, in the roundtable discussion conducted, Muslim learners and parents indicated that alternative learning systems were not well known to them. Alternative learning classes are mostly organized by non-government organizations but operate in only a limited number of municipalities in Mindanao, and learners only hear about the program by word of mouth. The learners also lamented the apparent lack of educational resources, such as textbooks and modules. They also lacked qualified instructional managers to promote effective learning.

Recently, the DepED issued a policy on Open High School Program (OHSP) under DepED Order Number 46 s. 2006. The OHSP is an attempt to provide an alternative mode of delivering secondary education for both public and private schools in the country. It encourages out-of-school youth to return to school using independent, self-paced and flexible study. It aims to reach learners who are not able to start or complete secondary education due to problems of time, distance, physical impairment, financial difficulties, social or family problems. Moreover, the program aims to retain in school potential dropouts and thereby contribute to the goals of Education For All, which targets 100% participation rate by 2015.

The Open High School Program pilot-testing centers in Mindanao include the Don Pablo Lorenzo National High School in Zamboanga City (RIX), Camiguin National High School (RX), Davao del Sur National High School (RXI), New Society National High School (RXII), and Malabang National High School in Lanao del Sur (ARMM). The USAID EQuALLS Project has also supported the pilot testing of four (4) Open High Schools in the ARMM. These are: Parang National High School and Maguindanao National High School in Maguindanao, Lamitan National High School in Basilan, and Tawi-Tawi School of Arts and Trades in Bongao, Tawi-Tawi.

D. Implications of Philippine Access Policies to Muslim Learners in Basic Education

This chapter attempted to undertake a broad review of policies issued at the legislative, executive, and department levels that confront the constraints in educational access. With an understanding of the contours of Philippine educational policies and of access and the factors for exclusion, it can be concluded that:

1. Based on the review, there are enough policies that support the promotion of education for all, give education the highest budgetary support, and provide accessible education especially to the most impoverished regions of the country regardless of creed, religion, and economic status. The DepED's support and commitment to BESRA and EFA goals outlines clearly how access to education would be universalized in the country. However, these are still inadequate, having defined mostly the priorities of the DepED to the exclusion of the DepED-ARMM.
2. There were also reforms undertaken to encourage Filipino Muslim youth to avail of basic education services. The Free Secondary Education Act, Equitable Access Act, and GASTPE Law provided structural support and financial assistance to students. Recently, the Philippine government issued policies to encourage Muslim learners to access basic education. However, the extent of these policies' impact on Muslim learners has yet to reach a significant number. Fully determining the outcomes of such policies may be aided by disaggregating data concerning Muslim children and youth in and out of school.
3. The support policies noted above come with the development and implementation of the madrasah curriculum which incorporates Islamic values and Arabic language in elementary public schools and private madaris. English, Mathematics, Science, and *Makabayan* subjects have likewise enriched the traditional madrasah curriculum, thus encouraging the "portability and transferability" of the courses of study. The DepED and DepED-ARMM's endorsement of the program show their commitment to institutionalize a relevant and responsive educational system for Muslim students – although perceptions prevail about the fragility of reform programs for Muslims. Therefore, the Office of Muslim Affairs, which has been operating informally within the mainstream education bureaucracy, needs a clear mandate for achieving program outcomes. This mandate should empower the office in managing critical alliance-building with the DepED-ARMM and other program partners.
4. The review also noted that policies on access to education in the Philippines cover not only access to formal schooling. They also recognize other

educational systems such as alternative learning systems and madrasah education. In the case of ALS in particular, Muslim learners are afforded wider options in completing quality basic education that is attuned to their needs and aspirations. Moreover, DepED BALS has effectively made quality education available “any time, any where, and in any way,” thus reaching wider numbers of school-age children and OSYs. For older learners, the focus has been on livelihood and life skills. Learning gains attained through nonformal and informal modes are now measurable and may be assigned equivalent academic credits. Donor agencies’ assistance programs (e.g., EQuALLS and BEAM) to ALS have likewise considerably enhanced nonformal learning systems among Muslim learners. Nonetheless, the challenge remains for the DepED and DepED-ARMM to share greater responsibilities such as: (1) institutionalizing and mainstreaming ALS strategies that were proven effective and efficient; (2) bringing the benefits of the DepED NFE A&E program to more Muslim out-of-school youth and children by enhancing its relevance and responsiveness to the context and culture of Muslim learners; and (3) bringing forward the ALS program to include some portfolio assessment and equivalency matrix of learnings gained through the informal system of education.

5. The DepED’s National’s Road Map to Upgrade Muslim Education spearheaded by the Undersecretary for Muslim Affairs provides critical reform areas to improve access to education by Muslim learners. The roadmap would only succeed however if adequate resources are allocated for its implementation. It has to ensure as well that the road map be fully communicated to and eventually owned by Muslim stakeholders, especially by the DepED-ARMM. This requires expanded advocacy and consultation in order to build a constituency of supporters and champions among ARMM education stakeholders.

For the ARMM, it can be gleaned from this review that there is a need to develop, amend, or review the following policies:

1. Amend admission requirements and totally remove the collection of fees from public schools
2. Promote a policy that will strengthen alternative learning system and improve the budget allocation for its activities
3. Develop school feeding policy and programs for Muslim learners, such as the “School Lunch Program,” to encourage impoverished Muslim children to come to school and study

4. There is also a pressing need to harmonize RAs 9054 and 9155 and revise MMAA 14. Moreover, the review of policies have pointed out the following policy options:
 - The DepED-ARMM, at present, is not included in national DepED budget allocation. The Department Secretary is not empowered to directly allocate funds to meet the needs of the region.
 - There is a need to restudy the ARMM Local Government Code particularly as it relates to the operation of Local School Boards. Unlike in other regions, ARMM does not collect tobacco taxes as specified by the Philippine Local Government Code, but relies on its real property tax share for the Special Education Fund for public schools. However, many ARMM LGUs were reported to have an inefficient system for real property tax collection. Thus, there are no or limited sources of funding for improving the educational infrastructure and the professional development of teachers in the ARMM.
 - It is also recommended that legislators revisit the governance of ARMM, particularly as it affects the budget of the education sector. As provided in the law, educational funds go to the Office of the Regional Governor. In the period of leadership transition in ARMM, teachers and educational heads suffered from delayed salaries, loss of essential benefits as well as loss of teacher items. A review of the ARMM educational legislation, particularly the MMAA No. 14, can empower the DepED-ARMM to have greater access to and accountability for education funds.
 - The GASTPE Law has benefited many learners in the country. It is recommended that a similar law be passed to create a Special Fund for Assistance to Mindanao Education. The creation of a separate funding body in the region will greatly enhance student financial programs for the Muslim learners. It is also good to provide vouchers to children so they can study in any school of their preference, and extend these to elementary level learners.
 - There is a need to review madrasah curricular programs and to strengthen mechanisms for accreditation and equivalency for madrasah graduates. This includes enhancing efforts to professionalize madrasah teachers and ensuring that madaris have access to textbooks and teaching materials necessary to implement the Standard Madrasah Curriculum.
5. Given the unavailability of data on the number of Muslim and non-Muslim learners in Mindanao, it took the researchers a long process of building up the data requirements for the study. Setting up a good MIS that organizes

information on Muslim and non-Muslim learners can help many stakeholders doing education intervention programs in the region. As mentioned above, this can be done by disaggregating data concerning Muslim children and youth in and out of school.

CHAPTER 3

Key Findings on Access Barriers to Quality Basic Education For Muslim Learners

The Philippine Constitution envisions access to basic education by all school-age children and youth in the country. In the elementary and secondary levels where free education is mandated, every Filipino child has the right to schooling until he/she completes basic education. This chapter aims to answer the research question—What are the access barriers to basic education for Muslim learners in Mindanao as perceived by Muslim parents, children, teachers, and educational administrators?

Access Barriers to Basic Quality Education for Muslim Learners

The review of education policies shows that, to a large extent, the legal bases to expand access to basic education are in place. However, it is noted that dropout and participation rates remain high, and lack of teachers and educational resources are still widespread in Mindanao. These problems are most acute in the provinces of ARMM, especially those affected by conflict.

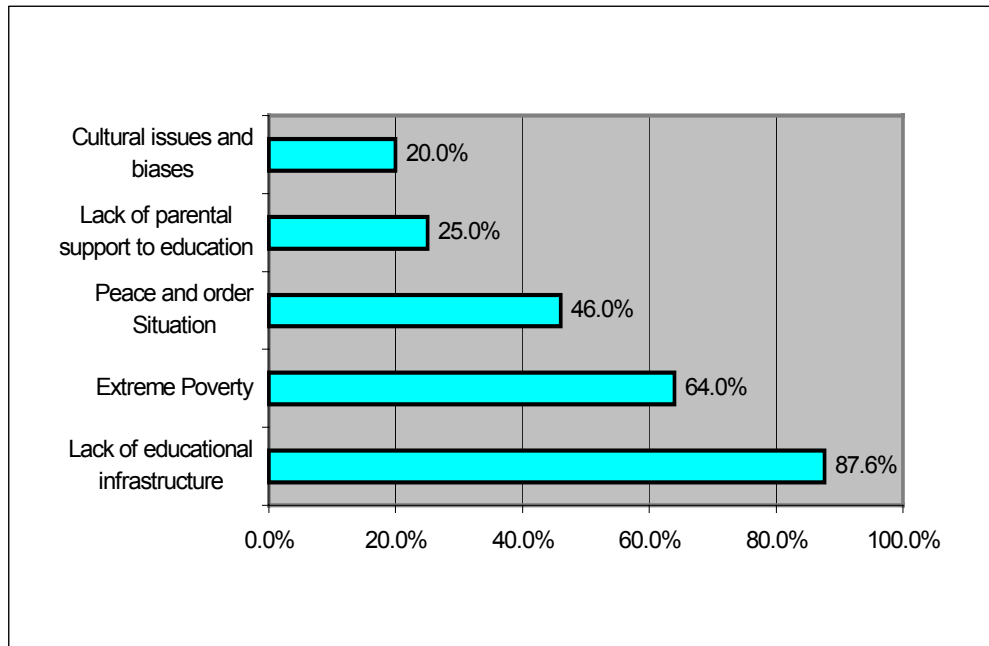
Employing qualitative research, and bearing in mind the framework of the study, a series of focused group discussions was held with 533 respondents from the various regions of Mindanao to identify factors that keep students out of school and hinder teachers from providing quality education. All the respondents were Muslims residing in Regions IX, X, XI, XII, and ARMM.

The respondents were parents of school-age children (23%); teachers (27%); school administrators (21%) and students (20%). The conditions for access in the island provinces, in particular, were critically examined to assess the implementation of access policies in these areas. The study revealed five major access barriers to basic education for Muslim learners:

1. Lack of educational infrastructure
2. Poverty
3. Unstable peace and order situation

4. Lack of parental support to education
5. Cultural issues and biases

Figure 3. Access Barriers to Quality Basic Education for Muslim Learners



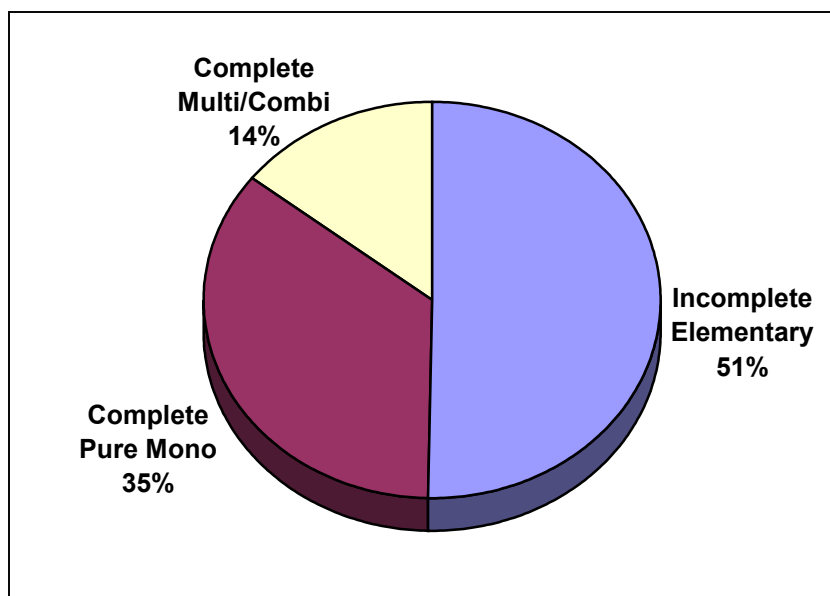
As shown in Figure 3, at least 87.6% of the respondents believed that the lack of essential educational infrastructure is the main reason for children not attending school. Some 64% related that it is because they are very poor and they cannot afford to send their kids to schools; 46% said that the frequent fighting between the government and armed groups disrupted classes and discouraged regular school attendance; 25% said that parents do not want them in school and instead ask them to work; and 20% said that cultural problems, biases, discrimination, and language made them lose interest in attending classes.

1. Lack of Educational Infrastructure

The respondents in the focused group discussions indicated that the distance of school from home, inadequate classrooms, lack of textbooks and instructional materials, and lack of teachers were significant barriers to Muslim learners accessing basic education and staying in the formal school. Figure 4 shows the status of educational infrastructure of elementary schools by type in the ARMM region.

In ARMM, around only 35% public elementary schools are found with a complete elementary program while 14% are complete elementary schools with multi-grade classrooms. The majority of ARMM elementary schools, however, have incomplete elementary schools, with 51% of them offering either only primary levels (Grades 1 to 4) or intermediate levels (Grades 5 to 6) in SY 2003-2004. These incomplete elementary schools provide multi-grade classes in order to meet the schooling needs of as many children as possible.

Figure 4. ARMM Elementary Schools by Type²⁰ (2003)



Source: DepED-ARMM Planning Office, 2006

The pupils interviewed, especially those coming from the island provinces of ARMM and remote areas, complained about walking several kilometers or taking a small boat daily to reach the nearest school. This was most evident in Basilan, Tawi-Tawi, and even in Maguindanao, Cotabato, and Lanao del Sur. There was also the case of a newly-opened school that did not have a school building, so classes are held at the barangay chairman's house, or moved from one community member's house to another. School buildings that are already very old and dilapidated and shanties that are about to collapse were also common in their communities, according to the respondents. The situation calls for investment on complete elementary levels so that

²⁰ ARMM elementary schools are classified as follows: 1) complete pure monoclase, where there is one teacher per class and complete grade levels; 2) complete multi-grade combination, with complete Grades (from 1 to 6) and where a teacher handles 2 or more classes in one classroom; 3) incomplete elementary with either the primary grades (Grades 1-4) or the intermediate grades only (Grades 5-6).

children can study in single-grade classrooms to promote quality learning. As ARMM students lamented:

“Our classrooms are overcrowded with a ratio of 1:86. There are not enough desks, chairs, blackboards, and chalk. Worst of all, we lack classrooms and teachers. There are too many pupils enrolled and teachers could not meet our needs for learning.”

Below are detailed discussions on the lack of educational infrastructure.

■ **Lack of Classrooms**

Majority of the school heads and teachers reported that inadequate school facilities and resources was one of the main factors in pupils’ lack of motivation to attend school. It is also the most oft-cited reason for their inability to learn and for dropping out. They cited not having enough classrooms, desks or chairs, textbooks, and instructional materials. Moreover, there are also schools in municipal centers and cities with overcrowded classrooms due to the influx of transferees from conflict-affected areas.

Mindanao lacks 5,318 classrooms, with the highest number in ARMM (1,029) and Region IX (1,029). Region XI fared well in terms of availability of classrooms for its schoolchildren. The availability of classrooms is not the only problem; even the existing classrooms need to be improved. In SY 2005 to 2006, the DepED-ARMM reported that only 3,151 (25%) of the elementary classrooms are in good condition in ARMM; 3,909 (32%) classrooms needed minor repairs; 3,980 (32%) needed major repair and 1,360 (11%) were already beyond repair. They also reported that at the secondary level, only 31% of the high school classrooms were in good condition and 69% were in need of repair or total replacement.

For the regions of Mindanao, Table 9 shows the shortage in classrooms in the Mindanao regions for SY 2003/04.

**Table 9. Regional Data on Classroom Shortage,
SY 2003/04**

Region	SY 2003/04
IX	1,029
X	862
XI	622
XII	872
CARAGA	804
ARMM	1,029
Total	5,318

*Source: Medium Term Philippine Development Plan (MTPDP)
2004-2010, Annex 18*

■ **Lack of Prescribed Textbooks**

The validation visits conducted in some schools in the ARMM and other provinces of Mindanao revealed the absence of prescribed textbooks for all subjects. Some teachers complained about not having timely teaching materials to help them in teaching the prescribed curriculum. Moreover, it was observed that each region had its own set of prescribed textbooks for each subject area. Without textbooks and other instructional materials, children's learning is negatively affected. Their learning achievement levels are reduced, which increases their risk of dropping out. Muslim youth respondents described their condition as follows:

"Textbooks were given only to pupils in Sections 1 to 3."

"We don't have a library in our school, and if we do, we only have a few books and we can only photocopy them."

It must be noted, however, that the Mindanao regions do not suffer equally from lack of educational infrastructure. Davao City, Zamboanga City, and even Cagayan de Oro City have considerable number of schools and classrooms that adequately support their school-age population.

■ Lack of Teachers

In the island provinces of ARMM, an extreme situation conveyed was the absence of teachers in schools. The main reason for their absence is the extreme delay of their salaries and their inability to avail of benefits from insurance and loan programs for government employees. The principal of one school shared that his teachers have stopped reporting to school because they have not received their basic salaries and benefits for months.

In ARMM elementary schools, seven out of 10 were headed by teachers-in-charge, except for Marawi City where only a third was led by teachers-in-charge. This could result in lower performance (when compared with schools with appointed principals or head teachers) partly because the teachers-in-charge still handle teaching and administrative loads in addition to heading the school. As seen in Table 10, secondary schools experienced the worst shortage in inputs. The student-to-teacher ratio was 42:1, with about 61 students in a room. Regional statistics on secondary schools also show disparities with the national averages. For SY 2003/04, Regions X, XI, and XII, and to a certain extent CARAGA, had higher student-teacher and student-seat ratios.

Table 10. Educational Inputs in Secondary Education, SY 2003/04

Region	Student-Teacher Ratio	Student-Seat Ratio
IX	40.10	1.67
X	43.33	1.74
XI	42.15	1.74
XII	45.08	1.62
CARAGA	44.25	1.68
ARMM	53.25	1.43
Average (Philippines)	41.65	1.57

Source: DepED Basic Education Statistics (2005)

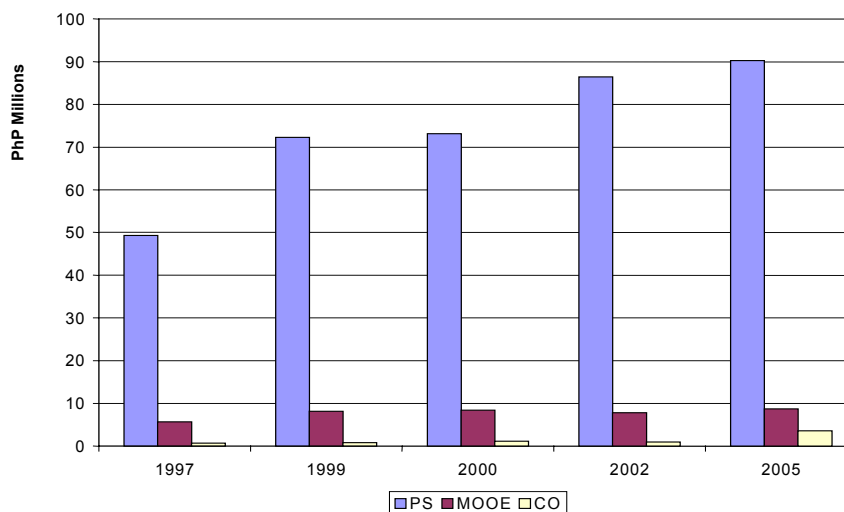
Interestingly, some Muslim learners favored the DepED policy of having multi-shifts because it allowed them to study in the afternoon or night shifts, giving them time to earn additional income to support their studies or to help their parents with their livelihood.

■ **Low Budget for Educational Infrastructure**

The 1987 Philippine Constitution mandates that “*Education should be given the highest priority in the government budget.*” This is the rationale behind the large allocation of the national government budget to education. The education budget provides for teaching and non-teaching positions; classroom construction; textbooks and reading materials; school furniture and equipment; training of teachers in Math, Science and English; and scholarships and loans to students.

Figure 5 shows that although budget trends in education from FY 1997 to 2007 of the DepED increased, the overall development outcomes fell short of expectations. Literacy and academic performance of schoolchildren declined in the same period. Despite the big budget allocation, the Department of Education does not have enough classrooms, desks, chairs, textbooks and instructional supplies and equipment crucial to effective learning in children.

Figure 5. Budget Trends in Education from FY 1997 to 2005



Source: Department of Budget and Management (2005)

While education has been the priority agenda of the Philippine government, the same is not reflected in the expenditure program, where the biggest spending is on personnel services. This makes the DepED the biggest bureaucracy in the country. Simply stated, the low investment in Maintenance and Other Operating Expenses (MOOE) and capital outlays means limited resources are available for improving the educational infrastructure and continues to make education inaccessible to the poor. This threatens the country's attainment of education for all by 2015.

In view of this, the local government units' special education fund augments the resources needed to implement school improvement plans. The DepED-ARMM, in particular, mobilizes local resources in support of basic education programs. Meanwhile, it was recommended that the DepED-ARMM should enhance their financial management system for greater reliability and usefulness to decision-makers. Transparency and accountability in the utilization of these resources also need to be observed consistently.

Among other educational development programs, success has also been noted in maximizing the support of the business sector and other stakeholders, in particular the Adopt-a-School Program. Private business groups belonging to the League of Corporate Foundations organized the Philippine Business for Education forum which adopted the "57 to 75" plan as a corporate social responsibility framework. The plan aims to pull up the national average score in the National Achievement Test from the present 57% to 75% in five years, which would be difficult to do unless adequate attention is given to under-served learners in Mindanao.

2. Poverty

Poverty is the second factor that hindered the participation and retention of Muslim learners in schools as revealed in the focused group discussions. A large majority (80%) of the respondent teachers and school heads reported that schoolchildren dropped out because they belonged to poor families, their parents were mostly jobless or just worked as laborers. This finding concurred with the findings of various educational studies that education deprivation is strongly linked to poverty. The poor have less access to education and are more likely to drop out of school. This lack of education helps sustain a vicious poverty cycle, affecting thousands of poor and disadvantaged children in Mindanao.

While elementary and secondary education are free of tuition, poor families cannot shoulder the cost of further expenses such as school projects and other classroom activities. Families have more primary needs such as food, clothing, and shelter. Dropping out of school is thus prevalent.

In 2000, the poverty incidence was highest in ARMM where 57% of the families can be considered poor. Central Mindanao had a poverty incidence of 48.4%;²¹ Southern Mindanao 31.1%; and Northern Mindanao 32.9 %. The poverty incidence²¹ in these regions has not changed for several years. Five of the 10 poorest provinces or 50% are in Mindanao. These are Sulu (63.2%), Tawi-Tawi (62.8%), Maguindanao (41.6%), Lanao del Sur (55.6%), and Sultan Kudarat (36.6%).

The rise in the poverty incidence from 1997 to 2003 in selected provinces in ARMM and other provinces of Mindanao is shown in Table 11.

Table 11. Poverty Incidence in Selected Mindanao Provinces, 1997 and 2003²²

Selected Mindanao Provinces	Poverty incidence	
	1997	2003
Lanao del Norte	32.9	46.1
Zamboanga del Norte	44.2	63.2
North Cotabato	42.7	23.7
Basilan	30.2	65.6
Lanao del Sur	40.8	38.8
Maguindanao	24.0	55.8
Sulu	87.5	88.8
Tawi-Tawi	52.1	69.9
Philippines	25.1	25.7

Source: Philippine Human Development Report 2005, Statistical Annex 5

Based on the 2003 FLEMMS, poverty is one of the main reasons cited for not attending schools. Various research studies also pointed out that it is the poor who have less access to education, have lower school life expectancy, and are more likely to drop out of school. This study supports the FLEMMS findings. Muslim learners

²¹ Policy Advisory 2003-10, Congressional Planning and Budget Department, House of Congress.

²² Poverty incidence refers to the proportion of families whose incomes are below the poverty threshold. The poverty threshold is the amount of income needed to meet the basic food and non-food requirements of a household. It is measured and monitored by the National Statistical Coordination Board.

interviewed lamented their lack of finances for education. They shared that they sometimes went to school without eating. Because of this, they cannot concentrate on their lessons and cannot attend classes regularly.

Because of poverty, Muslim children have no recourse but to drop out of school to help their parents earn a living. The frequency of absences and eventual dropping out were highest during planting and harvest seasons when children were asked either to stay at home and look after their younger siblings or join their parents as additional hands in planting or harvesting crops.

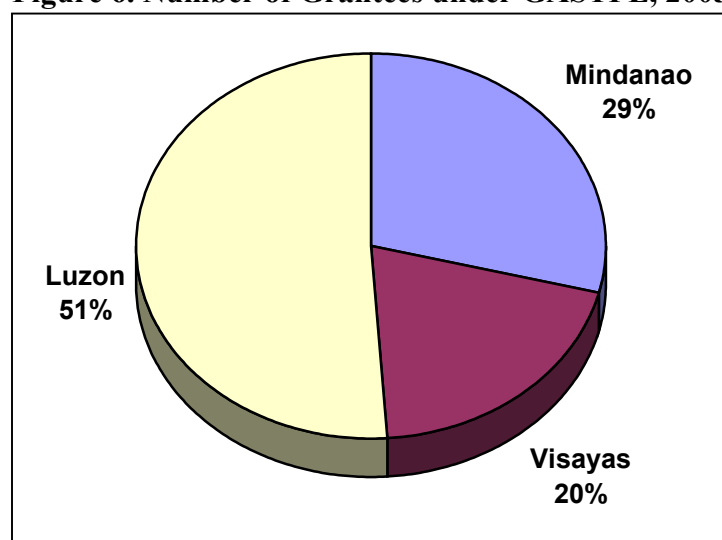
Even if basic education is free, parents complained that they couldn't pay for additional fees such as expenses for school projects and other school requirements. Poor children also reported having suffered from humiliation and removal from the roll because they are not able to submit required projects due to lack of resources. With these complications, students often drop out of school. Study findings also show that family problems, such as separation of families due to conflict and other reasons, make it harder for parents to finance their children's education.

■ *Not enough scholarship and student financial assistance for the poor and disadvantaged Muslim learners*

Poor Muslim learners placed their hope on any student financial assistance offered by the government. Right now, the financial assistance available for secondary students in the country is the Education Service Contracting (ESC) scheme, which was made permanent through RA 6728 or the GASTPE Law. The DepED reported that in SY 2006/07, there were 405,792 grantees in 1,783 participating private schools nationwide. At present, Mindanao GASTPE recipients got around 28% of the total share of the GASTPE fund, which is equivalent to PhP 454.176 million. Luzon receives around 51% or PhP 832,336 million while the Visayas region gets PhP 337 million or 21% of the GASTPE allocation. ARMM has the lowest number of grantees of only 13,922; R IX, 13,730; RX, 23,977; RXI, 18,518; RXII, 28,926 and CARAGA, 14,431. Figure 6 shows the distribution of GASTPE across the country.

The financial assistance under the GASTPE Law is only for learners in the secondary level. In recent years, the DepED pursued strategies to promote universal access to and quality of elementary education, notably by emphasizing the teaching of English, Science, Technology and Mathematics. Alternative delivery schemes, such as multigrade teaching, mobile teaching, and instructional management by parents, community and teachers in disaster areas, were also provided. All these are complemented by management training for principals and school administrators, research and development, improvement of school libraries, and enhancement of teachers' welfare. At present, however, there is a lack of financial assistance program for poor learners in the elementary level, especially in Mindanao.

Figure 6. Number of Grantees under GASTPE, 2005



Source: DepED Planning Office (2006)

■ **Lack of school feeding programs**

The DepED has not adequately addressed the nutritional needs of children in extreme poverty, particularly in Mindanao. One of the key findings of the study is that many schools in the ARMM and in remote areas in Mindanao cater to pupils coming mostly from poor families. Schools can improve access and retention of Muslim learners from very poor families by providing a doable feeding program supported by the DepED. A school feeding program is one solution that reduces absenteeism. However, public schools cannot sustain the program on their own as most of them do not receive their MOOE budget. Still, getting the MOOE budget does not guarantee sustaining a whole year feeding program. This is where non-government organizations can help.

A school feeding program is strongly urged by DepED-ARMM Secretary Udtog Kawit, who expressed concern over schoolchildren experiencing hunger, particularly among those from poor families in the region. He said that the poverty of many Muslim families is likely to be most serious at the very time when the children most need nurture, when they are most dependent, and when they are obtaining the only education which they are ever to receive. He also believed that learning is difficult with hungry stomachs. The lack of learning among so many poor children is certainly due, to an important extent, to extreme poverty in the region.

DepED-ARMM Secretary Udtog Kawit expressed concern, too, that it is difficult to achieve universal access to education by compelling hungry and malnourished Muslim children to come to school and to sit at their desks day in and day out, learning little or nothing. He recommended some provisions for a school feeding program, especially for those who come from poor households.

■ **Lack of parent's capacity to finance school-related expenses**

The 'no collection policy' during opening of classes is intended to encourage even the poorest to enroll their children. This policy has elicited support and approval of many parents, especially in ARMM. However, the reality in the field is that there are schools still collecting other fees and other unauthorized contributions, such as class fund and tickets to various events. In some cases, pupils who are not able to afford these fees and contributions drop out altogether, giving up due to peer pressure and embarrassment.

On the other hand, some principal and teachers were saying that this policy places burden on them, as they sometimes have to cover school expenses such as chalks, photocopying of hand-outs and other instructional devices. The collection also helped principals to implement some school improvement programs.

One notable issue that was raised in one focused group discussion was the imposition of "fines" or "forced contributions" whenever parents miss the Parents Teachers Association (PTA) meetings. Some were asked to pay PHP50 as fine. This practice discouraged them from sending their children to a formal school.

3. Unstable Peace and Order Situation

Mindanao, particularly the southwestern and central part that comprise ARMM, has suffered from continuing strife and conflict for decades due to armed encounters and skirmishes between the military and rebel groups. In other areas like Lanao, conflicts arose from clan or family feuds, locally known as *rido*. Rido is a blood feud or a chain of killings promoted by an affront and disgrace to the honor of a family or its member. It may erupt anytime this honor or "maratabat" is besmirched²³. It takes the form of tribal conflict or clan warfare, and killings are avenged across generations. The common causes of rido in selected tribes in Mindanao are listed in Table 12.

²³ From the Ateneo de Zamboanga and Notre Dame Marbel Research Center, June 2005

Table 12. Causes of Rido in Selected Tribes in Mindanao

Tribe	Land Disputes	Political Rivalry	Petty Crimes	Disagreement/ Misunderstanding	Others²⁴
Magindanao	x	x	x	x	
Maranao	x	x	x		
Tausug	x	x	x	x	x
Sama	x	x		x	x

Source: Ateneo de Zamboanga and Notre Dame Marbel University Research Center (2005)

In the Mindanao provinces studied, there were critical areas affected by constant conflicts between armed groups and lawless elements and government forces. These situations often resulted in the disruption of classes because families have to flee the areas or because school buildings could be burned or damaged. Frequent evacuation and displacement from their land and sources of income drive families further into extreme poverty. This observation is consistent with the findings of a study done by the World Bank (2003) wherein without exception, all the conflict-affected areas in Mindanao experienced a decline in average per capita income from 1997 to 2000.

The peace and order problem in some areas of Mindanao also affects nearby provinces. DepED regional directors reported that when families from neighboring communities are displaced due to fighting, the more peaceful host communities absorb the families unable or unwilling to return to their places of origin, including their school-age children. With the unanticipated influx of transferees, classrooms are overcrowded and teachers are overloaded. Consequently, the quality of instruction is compromised. It is therefore not surprising that pupils become quickly discouraged to attend class.

DepED Order Number 44 s. 2005 declared schools as Zones of Peace, which bars military personnel or weapons in schools. This policy reiterated the provisions of RA 7610, known as the “Special Protection of Children Against Child Abuse, Exploitation and Discrimination Act,” which states that:

“.... Children are hereby declared as Zones of Peace. It shall be the responsibility of the State and all other sectors concerned to resolve armed conflicts in order to promote the goal of children as zones of peace.”

²⁴ Drug-related crimes, elopement and possession of firearms

However, armed conflicts in Mindanao have continued to disrupt classes and sometimes, the entire village or communities. There were reports of the military entering some schools and using them as camps in recent fighting in the Midsayap, North Cotabato area. Other schools were used as evacuation centers. The fighting damaged school properties such as chairs, tables, blackboards and even school buildings, and left the school grounds littered with empty shells, bullets, and other dangerous items.

Schiavo-Campo and Judd (2005) estimated that the number of displaced persons in Mindanao varies from 60,000 to 80,000 from FY 2000 to 2004. The Philippine Human Development Report (2005) also mentioned that children are used as lookouts, couriers, and procurers, and in worst instances, as reserve-troops. Children as early as age 10 are still used as instruments of war. This situation of chronic and recurrent conflict and evacuation of displaced families in public schools in Mindanao lessens the chance of children completing their basic education.

The DepED used to have a program that assisted conflicted affected children and youth to cope with emergency situations and continue with schooling; however this was not sustained. The alternative models of learning offer many options although there is very little “buy-in” for these alternative options from the local communities. The DepED and DepED-ARMM must undertake social mobilization and advocacy strategies about the benefits of alternative education programs to Muslim learners who have been displaced by armed conflict.

4. Lack of Support from Parents

The family exerts the strongest influence on the educational development of the child. Duru-Bellat (2004) reported that there is a strong correlation between the young person obtaining schooling and the educational attainment of his/her parents. This concurs with the report of Willms and Somers (2001) that family background and children’s school performance are strongly correlated.

Based on the focused group discussions, there are Muslim parents who were not enthusiastic about and supportive of the schooling of their children. Some out-of-school youth attributed their parents’ lack of support to extreme poverty and illiteracy. Many Muslim parents simply do not have the resources and capability to provide support to their children. Thus forcing children to quit school to help in earning a living for the family. Other parents are not willing to send their kids to school for fear that they may be “Christianized” or converted to other religions.

According to the teachers that participated in the study, illiterate parents cannot provide guidance and help with their children’s schoolwork and often see education as less important. The respondents also expressed that unschooled parents are

“uneducated” and therefore could not assist their kids in school. This is a largely unfounded perception, which may have been caused by the belief that knowledge, skills, and values can only be provided in the setting of the formal school. This virtually discounts the crucial role of nonformal and informal set-ups in the education system. UNESCO leads the promotion of developing schools as knowledge centers wherein trade, crafts, and other skills are imparted by community members to schoolchildren.

Ideally, the family’s income level or the educational status of parents should not serve as hindrances to attaining quality education among children. However, it has become increasingly clear that although Philippine basic education is free, access to basic education is largely a function of economic status. The free elementary and secondary education, which is supposed to provide the poor with basic and functional literacy, is not, in actuality, equally accessible because parents cannot meet their families’ most basic survival needs. Below is a parent’s comment on their plight:

“I cannot provide for my children’s needs in their technology and home economics projects. Teachers require some electronic materials like voltage regulators and transformers. I do not have money to buy them.”

5. Cultural Issues and Biases

Cultural insensitivity was cited to have discouraged students from attending school or from dropping out of school. Specifically, the respondents observed the little knowledge and understanding of teachers in public schools in Mindanao of the culture and beliefs of Muslims. The following were observations of Muslim students, scholars, and educators on the issue of cultural barriers:

“Teaching of catechesis to Christian students and leaving the Muslim students without a teacher makes them feel discriminated against.”

“Our school teaches Religion. My classmates attend mass during first Fridays and we are just left behind with no instructions and things to do.”

“Some schools do not allow female Muslim learners to wear ‘kumbong.’ Some teachers ask them to remove their ‘kumbong.’”

Cultural insensitivity significantly contributes to the promotion among non-Muslim learners a similar bias against their Muslim classmates. This is an issue that stems from lack of knowledge about and awareness of the culture and beliefs of Muslims.

PHDR (2005) indicated that 33% to 44% of Filipino adults have an anti-Muslim bias, with a larger percentage of Visayans (from 50% to 67%) exhibiting this bias. The study also said that those aged 54 and over tend to be more biased, while those 35 years old or younger tend to be less biased. Monsod (2006)²⁵ cited that a considerable percentage of Filipinos (33% to 39%) are biased against Muslims, notwithstanding the fact that only 14% of them have direct dealings with Muslims. The more widely held stereotypes of Muslims include being prone to run amok and being terrorist and extremist.

Moreover, based on the focused group discussions, Muslim students reported that their needs are neglected. As an example, one student cited the presence of offensive content in the RBEC textbooks:

“The contents of some books are not fit for Muslim learners. Other textbooks have some content errors especially on Muslim celebrations and festivities, where Ramadan is explained as similar to the Christmas season of the Christians. This is a wrong concept.”

It is imperative that school administrators and teachers in public schools in Muslim communities should be provided with orientation and training programs on respect for cultural diversity, with particular focus on understanding the Muslim culture. On a broader scale, the remarks above underscore the urgent need for education providers, especially in Muslim-dominated communities, to address this access barrier by advocating to raise awareness of inter-faith issues, intercultural understanding and respect; developing local capacity for contextualizing textbooks and instructional materials such as ensuring the representation of a Muslim scholar/expert in the RBEC textbook development and review committee; and ensuring the implementation of existing DepED policies supporting cultural understanding. Furthermore, the DepED should also review the implementation of DepED Order 53 s. 2001 on “Strengthening and Protecting the Religious Rights of Students” to ensure that the plight of the Filipino Muslim students are understood.

Other Issues and Challenges

■ *Difficulty in the Language of Instruction*

During the roundtable discussions one of the issues that the Muslim scholars and ALS learners have raised was the use of Filipino and English as languages of instruction. Some ALS Muslim learners said that they have dropped out of formal basic education because they find it difficult to learn in English and Filipino.

²⁵ Philippine Daily Inquirer, 5 November 2005, p. A12.

Most Muslim learners use the *lingua franca* at home. Their exposure to English and Filipino radio or television programs and newspapers are virtually unavailable. Consequently, some Muslim students lack proficiency in the use of English or Filipino. For this they feel discriminated against. Some Muslim learners drop out during the primary grades of elementary schooling because they find it difficult to learn in English and Filipino. This shows how the transition from a local dialect to English and Filipino at the beginning of elementary school is a learning barrier for many Muslim learners and a deterrent factor for continuing their schooling.

UNESCO is advocating the use of the mother tongue language as the medium of instruction especially in the primary grades. Teaching learners in school and out-of-school how to switch between the mother tongue and Filipino or English can be facilitated through a “bridging” program, thus eliminating the language obstacle to learning.

■ ***Lack of ALS Programs, especially in the ARMM***

Some former ALS Muslim learners related that they completed their basic education in ALS programs organized by non-government organizations such as Save the Children, through its Assistance for Comprehensive Educational Development of Mindanao (ASCEND) Project. Many of these ALS learners also reported frustrations over not passing the test provided by the DepED-BALS or not being allowed to take the examination because they lacked documentary requirements, which leads to their demoralization and frustration. As such, they recommend a review of the ALS program, including the A&E examination admission policies and passing cut-off scores, to increase their chance in passing the test and completing their education.

While the DepED NFE A&E program had been successful with the younger cohort of OSCYs who have some levels of functional literacy, older cohort of OSCYs, including Muslim learners, performed poorly in the A&E tests. However, the following had been noted: (1) the Muslim learners who failed the A&E tests were nonetheless pleased with acquiring some competencies and gaining self-esteem and self-confidence; and (2) many intended not to go back to the formal school system but were interested in obtaining some short courses in basic life and livelihood skills.

As such, Regional DepED Director Dr. Estrella Babano, during the roundtable forum conducted for this study in October 2006 in Cotabato City, suggested a competency-based assessment that would provide a more indigenized system for assessing ALS Muslim learners. She added that the learners may not be good in learning English, Math, Science and other subjects but may be assessed on their life skills or in practical application of these subjects. Such a competency-based portfolio assessment should complement the existing paper-and-pencil A&E testing system.

The roundtable forum also delved on the need to have a screening mechanism for ALS learners to determine their readiness and competencies in taking the A&E Test. Some instructional managers also reported difficulty in handling special Muslim learners who lacked interest in learning and who frequently move in and out of the program. The lack of modules and learning materials was also identified as another reason why ALS students find it difficult to master the learning areas required by the ALS A&E curriculum. The feedback from ALS learners also pointed to the need for a broader range of ALS programs to respond to varying learning goals that may not be addressed by A&E equivalency programs. This includes opportunities for shorter-term special-interest ALS programs addressing a narrower range of life skills and livelihood skills as well as functional literacy cum livelihood programs.

■ *Technical-Vocational Education*

Respondents expressed that getting a secondary education diploma does not ensure that they have the relevant skills to earn a living. Some of the Muslim learners who were interviewed related their need for livelihood education and skill training programs instead, which they say could provide them with more meaningful preparation for future employment. Vocational and technical education in the fields, such as trades (technology, communication, electronics, computers, transportation, etc.), agriculture, fisheries, home industries, and non-traditional courses could help them improve their present economic situation. The recent initiatives of the DepED to strengthen the technical-vocational subjects in secondary education are bold steps in the right direction.

Likewise, under the USAID EQuALLS Project, the ASCEND Mindanao Project of Save the Children has provided some learners with training on T-shirt printing, floor tile making, plumbing, and goat raising. The results have been promising; however, the number of OSCY reached has been relatively small. The BALS national A&E curriculum has modules focusing on some of these competencies; however, the majority of the Muslim ALS learners interviewed in ARMM and in Region XII were not aware of these materials.

Summary

Diaz (2003) cited that the problems in Mindanao are rooted in poverty, illiteracy, poor education, poor health conditions, landlessness, lack of incentives and other social factors that make Muslims disadvantaged for many generations now. Only by combating these problems can real full economic sufficiency and development be realized. On a similar note, this study aims to explain the plight of Muslim learners by examining factors that hinder their access to quality basic education. By addressing these access barriers, we hope to achieve educational improvement for Muslim learners.

The study used the emergent research design in which the initial output of the study was validated by a group of experts in education. From the series of roundtable forums, education stakeholders confirmed that the lack of educational infrastructure, poverty, unstable peace and order situation, lack of support from parents, cultural issues and biases, and, to a certain extent, language barriers are the factors that most hindered access.

It should be noted that since this study was started in late 2004, a number of initiatives have been taken by various donor-assisted projects to improve access to quality basic education, mostly in Regions IX, XII, and ARMM. Among others, the BEAM Project, in collaboration with the DepED and DepED-ARMM, is developing training materials and is training the teachers and administrators of a number of madaris in line with the implementation of DepED Order 51 s. 2004. This initiative lies within the framework of the broader Road Map for Muslim Basic Education prepared by the DepED.

For its part, the USAID EQuALLS Project has embarked on a five-year program to train formal school teachers, madaris teachers and instructional managers in teaching English, Science and Math and expand the scope and reach of its ALS program. The project envisions training these teachers to deliver quality basic education to both formal school learners and OSCY in Regions IX, XII, and ARMM where the vast majority of Muslim learners can be found. Considering these initiatives and the programs and policies already being undertaken by the DepED and the DepED-ARMM as discussed in the previous chapter, it is clear that much needs to be done to address the identified access barriers.

CHAPTER 4

Case Studies on Access to Basic Education

This chapter presents the facilitating factors for accessible education that directly or indirectly address the learning needs of Muslim learners. A series of case analyses of educational practices that provide better access to basic education for Muslim learners was used. The education providers selected as case studies include:

A. Case Study on School-Based Education

- J. Marquez Elementary and High School or the “School of Peace” (SOP) in Cotabato City
- Notre Dame Village Elementary School in Cotabato City

B. Case Study on the Expanding Educational Opportunities through Alternative Learning Systems (ALS)

- Notre Dame Foundation of Charitable Activities Inc. - Women in Enterprise Development in Conflict-affected Zones (Cotabato, Basilan, and Tawi-Tawi)

C. Case Study on Increasing Access to Education through the Madrasah System

- Madrasah Pahamuddin Al-Islamie in Pigcawayan, North Cotabato

A. Case Study of School-Based Education

1. *The J. Marquez School of Peace*

J. Marquez Elementary and High School is located in an area where most of the inhabitants were rebel returnees. The community was a haven for lawless elements. Before the School of Peace program was launched, vandalism was a common occurrence and the lack of discipline among pupils was the biggest challenge that confronted teachers and administrators. Determined efforts by administrators of the J. Marquez Elementary and High School were the key factor that motivated the Muslim learners to come to school and study. Located in an inner city settlement in Cotabato City of mostly Maguindanaon Muslims, the J. Marquez Elementary and High School distinguishes itself as one of a few, if not the only, School of Peace in the country. It should be noted that the school is led at present by a predominantly Christian and female personnel (28 are female Christians; 11 are non-Christians; and seven are males) although 99% of its students are Muslims and only 1% are Christians.

The Peace Paradigm of the School of Peace

In 1997, the DepED Region XII Director made J. Marquez a School of Peace (SOP) under a flagship program of the DepED. The School of Peace program is in support of the 1996 Final Peace Agreement between the Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF) and the Government of the Philippines.

The SOP formulated a mission statement that embodied the spirit of peace building. It aims to contribute to conflict resolution and peace building in Southern Mindanao by supporting dialogues on cultural diversity and human rights through quality education. It is tasked to improve access to education and to basic services by enhancing teachers' capacities and promoting a culture of peace and respect for multicultural diversity. The practices of the school that provide positive conditions for Muslim learners are the following:

Even without DepED Order Number 53 s. 2001, which protects the religious rights of students and prescribes wearing school uniforms within the cultural context and choice of both Christian and Muslim learners, this was already a practice in the School of Peace.

Celebrating the Month of Peace every November with varied activities such as slogan and poster-making contests, and displaying doves and other symbols of peace in every classroom. Doves are freed during the culminating activity, usually every December 2.

Conducting search-in activities with the pupils as participants every Saturday, which has resulted in students having a deeper understanding of one another's culture and consequently, achieving an atmosphere of love, respect, and trust in school.

Implementing the NFE A&E Program, which caters to out-of-school youth and adults interested in completing their elementary and/or secondary level education.

Teacher Training for Cultural Understanding

The school introduced a pioneer program to provide a positive environment for Muslim learners. It supported training programs to develop teachers' awareness of Muslim values, beliefs, and culture. The school sponsored teacher training on the culture of peace, strategic planning, and training on human security to prepare teachers to respond to conflict situations. The other teacher training activities conducted by the school to promote awareness of Muslim culture for greater retention of Muslim learners include:

Dissemination of appropriate information about the beliefs, practices, traditions, rights, and privileges of all students through symposiums, meetings, and other relevant gatherings. These information-dissemination efforts aim to educate pupils as well as their parents to learn to accept and respect each other.

Inter-faith training, which emphasizes the flexibility of both Christian and Muslim teachers, parent, and pupils to respect and accept each other and to recognize their individual freedom to exercise their religious practices.

Partnerships and Linkages with Non-Government Organizations

Since 1997, the government and the UN Act for Peace Programme have supported the school. The latter is the successor of the Government of the Philippines-UN Multi-Donor Program (GOP-UNMDP) Phase 3, which builds on the gains of the GOP-UNMDP, implemented in support of the peace agreement between the Philippine government and the MNLF. The project undertakes capacity-building programs to promote social healing and peace building for teachers and parents who, in turn, promote and practice their learning at home and in the broader community.

Through the help of non-government organizations, the school was able to build a mosque inside the school compound. Pupils are allowed to pray five times a day, as in Islamic practice. The school also has a permanent *ustadz* paid by the PTCA to teach Islamic values and the Arabic language. As a result, the people in the community

became more cooperative and, instead of asking for help from the school, they now voluntarily support the school.

Among the school's partners is Kasiglahan Foundation, a non-government organization that trains pupils on peace building and social awareness. The school uses peace education modules integrated in all subject areas developed by the foundation in cooperation with the British Council and Notre Dame University in Cotabato City. The training for student and teacher leaders is sponsored by the Kasiglahan Foundation and is open to both Christian and Muslim pupils and teachers. The objective of the training is to develop students into leaders and advocates of peace to other students and their parents. Some activities fully participated in by Christian and Muslim teachers, pupils and parents, without any discrimination and biases, include the conduct of Islamic Symposium, ecumenical services, Children's Fun Day, and thanksgiving celebrations.

Project "ESCUELA"

Since 1997, the school has been supportive of access programs. One of the SOP's access strategies is to hold a meeting with parents on a monthly basis to follow up students, especially those who are frequently absent. The teachers of J Marquez School of Peace conduct home visitation to check on the children whether they are in conflict or in difficult situations. For parents who are not supportive of the children's education, the School of Peace administrators try to explain and campaign for the value of education. If the problem is money, the school tries to adjust policies and programs to win them back to school. Frequently, the parents complain about PTCA contributions, which are being used for school maintenance, services and facilities.

Impact of the SOP on the Community

The following are some remarks of educational administrators, parents, and the community on the peace programs of the school:

"The SOP has changed the students and even the parents. Some of them are already giving their services to the school for free, to beautify the surroundings, and to help clean the school premises."

"Those juveniles who were responsible for damages are now the ones who are improving the school and who promised to safeguard this school."

These testimonies reflect the overall outcome of the peace education program: stakeholders working together harmoniously toward school improvement. The case of J. Marquez Elementary and High School demonstrates that integrating peace education in student activities can help overcome some access barriers, creating an environment conducive to learning, and contributing to student retention. Such positive results can be

seen in the school's increase in enrolment, participation, and retention rates as indicated in Table 13.

**Table 13. J. Marquez School of Peace Performance Indicators
(SY 2003/04 and SY 2005/06)**

Indicator (Rate)	SY 2003/04	SY 2005/06
Enrolment	117.72	140.6
Retention	80.07	86.87

Source: SOP School Profile (2005)

Peace education programs that provide opportunities for linkages among parents, non-governmental organizations, and members of the broader community create greater awareness among groups on the value for their participation in the education improvement of their children. In addition, the school's best practices in peace education elicited more support from other groups, including donor organizations. As illustrated by this case study, the learning environment and greater community participation arising from the integration of peace education encouraged Muslim children to stay in schools. Moreover, SOP promises to instill a culture of peace by forming individuals whose personal discipline and ethical choices are guided by Islamic values, who respect human rights, understand the cultures of Muslims and non-Muslims, think critically and creatively, appreciate scientific reasoning, know their cultural heritage and the roots of the Filipino nation, and exercise their rights and duties as citizens of the Philippines, and the world²⁷.

2. The Notre Dame Village Elementary School Case Study

Notre Dame Village Elementary School is a public school located in Rosary Heights, Cotabato City. Established in 1979, it has become the most dynamic school in District III of Cotabato City. The school has a total lot of 68,821 sq. m. donated by the city government. Guided by its mission statement of promoting quality and relevant education that is equitable and accessible to all, Notre Dame Village Elementary School takes pride in having competent teachers and school heads with supportive community stakeholders. Notre Dame Village Elementary School is also committed to developing Filipino learners to become God-fearing citizens. The school was adjudged as the Most

²⁷ Adapted from the Congressional Education Commission's definition of an "educated Filipino" as cited in DepED (2006) *Functionally Literate Filipinos: An Educated Nation. Philippine Education For All (EFA) 2015 National Action Plan* and from various sections of Philippine EFA2015

Effective School in both the division and regional level competitions for School Year 2003/2004 and the Most Effective School in Science and Mathematics.

One of the mandates of the school is to provide accessible education to all. In pursuing this mandate, the school works hard at programs designed for its multicultural learner population. The increase in enrolment of the school was attributed to the influx of pupils from conflict-affected communities such as Maguindanao and Pikit in Cotabato. Despite this situation, the school helps all pupils to meet academic standards by giving them a fair and equal opportunity to learn. Table 14 shows the school's increasing number of enrollees from SY 2004/05 to SY 2006/07 while Table 15 shows the school's performance indicators for the last two school years. The principal reported that there were years when enrolment jumped by as much as 20% to 40%.

**Table 14. Year Enrolment in Notre Dame Village Elementary School
(SYs 2004/05, 2005/06, and 2006/07)**

Grade	SY 2004/05	SY 2005/06	SY 2006/07
I	335	406	440
II	321	261	379
III	308	308	319
IV	265	301	305
V	252	247	319
VI	270	247	286
Total	1751	1770	2048

Source: NDVES Statistical Bulletin, 2006

Table 15. Notre Dame Village Elementary School Performance Indicators, SYs 2004/05 and 2005/06²⁸

Indicator (Rate)	SY 2004/05	SY 2005/06
Achievement	79.4	81.12
Participation	106.14	110.8
Enrolment	107.12	110.90
Survival	88.59	92.22
Dropout	0	0
Completion	86.9	89.42
Promotion	99.48	100.17

Source: NDVES Statistical Bulletin (2006)

Implementing the Standard Madrasah Curriculum

Children should be given quality education irrespective of their race, color, religion, and culture. For Muslims in the country, Islamic education should prepare a generation of learned and intellectual citizens imbued with Islamic values and spiritually-prepared to serve the people and the country as a whole. The Notre Dame Village Elementary School, with almost 44% or 930 pupils who are Muslims coming from nearby communities, was guided by DepED Order Number 51 s. 2004 to realize the goals of Islamic education for its learners. The school's implementation of this DepED Order is one of the ways to cater to the spiritual needs of its Muslim pupils. Among the activities done to encourage Muslim learners to study is to encourage multi-cultural dialogues, religious symposiums, and inter-faith conferences.

In SY 2005/06, Notre Dame Village Elementary School implemented the Madrasah Curriculum for the new Arabic Language and Islamic Values (ALIVE) subjects. The ALIVE curriculum was somehow haphazardly implemented in the first year because there were no clear guidelines on its implementation and teaching guides and materials to help the *asatidz*²⁹ were lacking. Notre Dame Village Elementary School Principal, Mrs. Concepcion Balawag, has solicited Arabic and Islamic pamphlets and reading materials to make ALIVE implementation a reality. From their

²⁸ The participation rate exceeded the target pupils from the village. Some pupils from ARMM conflict-affected areas transferred to Notre Dame Village Elementary School.

²⁹ *Asatidz* refers to the Intensified Training of Muslim Teachers Arabic Language and Islamic Values Education (ALIVE).

own community, the school hired three madrasah teachers to handle the ALIVE class. The school made arrangements for their honoraria to be paid by the city government through the School Education Fund. The PTCA also partly augmented the funds provided by the city government. The selection of madrasah teachers followed a rigorous screening by the Cotabato City Division selection panel. The class used regular classrooms with a showroom for the collected madrasah resources such as reading materials in Arabic language and Islamic values and RBEC instructional materials.

To truly implement interfaith activities, ALIVE activities such as Eid'l Fitr and Eid'l Adha were included in the school calendar and given due recognition with Qur'an reading contest, symposiums and verse contests to motivate Muslim as well as non-Muslim children to understand the significance of the Muslim holidays. A prayer room with water facilities was also provided so that the ustadz can perform ablution and observe their obligatory prayers in private.

Impact of Notre Dame Village Elementary School's Quality and Accessible Basic Education for Poor Muslims

The school resorted to the *bayanihan*³⁰ practice to get volunteer teachers who were not paid much but who were willing to teach Muslim kids in school. This arrangement, however, was not expected to be permanent but obtained community support. While the school used volunteers, there was also an effort to maintain teaching standards by securing the services of madrasah teachers who are at least holders of education degrees (BSE or BEED) and possibly professional teachers who are passers of the licensure examination. The leadership of the principal encouraged the parents to support the ustadz by giving personal contributions to support the madrasah education. Although there is widespread poverty in the province, the parents were still willing to help the school within their limited means.

B. Case Study on Expanding Educational Opportunities through the Alternative Learning System: The Notre Dame Foundation for Charitable Activities, Inc. - Women in Enterprise Development

Access to education continues to be a priority development concern in Mindanao. The focused group discussions and roundtable forums with Muslim learners and parents revealed that the main reasons for their being out of school were lack of schools, extreme poverty and lack of their peers' and teachers' understanding of the Muslim culture. The other reasons cited were peace and order problems and lack of parental support for their education.

³⁰ Bayanihan is a Filipino term taken from the word *bayan*, referring to a nation, town or community. The whole term *bayanihan* refers to a spirit of communal unity or effort to achieve a particular objective.

A strategy to bring Muslim children back to school or provide another pathway of basic education is the use of alternative learning systems, as exemplified by the programs undertaken by the Notre Dame Foundation for Charitable Activities Inc.-Women in Enterprise Development (NDFCAI-WED). The Notre Dame University established the foundation in 1987 to provide educational opportunities to the underserved, deprived illiterates and unemployed girls and women of Muslim Mindanao.

The NDFCAI-WED gives premium to education and training to establish and promote peace and inter-faith understanding among Muslims and Christians. It works mostly in conflict-affected areas in Mindanao, often in partnership with other local NGOs. It has been the lead implementing agency of many literacy projects funded by international donors in impoverished areas in Mindanao, including: USAID from 1987 to 2001 and 2004 to 2007; UNESCO from 1996 to current; ACCU-JAPAN from 1995 to current; World Bank from 2000 to 2002; and ADB from 1994 to 2001. With this multi-donor funding support, NDFCAI-WED provided education to non-literate, unemployed, marginalized women and OSY through the following ALS access programs:

Responsive Education and Accreditation for Children and Youth (REACH) in Mindanao Project

The REACH program funded by the Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD), World Bank and Consuelo Foundation, was a comprehensive development program for OSCY at ages 10 to 24 years. The primary goals of REACH Mindanao are to: (a) engage young people, their families, and the community members in creating a learning community of caring relationships, high expectations for positive behaviors and meaningful involvement; (b) provide young people opportunities to learn essential life and employability skills for productive lives; and, (c) engage OSCY in the practice of good citizenship through cooperation and service to others.

The first phase of the REACH Mindanao Project was implemented from October 2000 to September 2001 with a total of 598 learners who completed the program, divided into two six-month sessions of either NFE A&E or Vocational Entrepreneurship Training. A second phase of the sub-project targeted 1,500 OSCY aged 10-18 and 500 parents or family members of learners who enrolled in Vocational Entrepreneurship Training courses. At the end of the project life, actual learners served were 1,669 OSCY and 625 adults. This project was implemented in the areas of Cotabato City, Sultan Kudarat, Sultan Mastura, and Sultan Barongis in the province of Maguindanao.

Of the OSCY learners served in both phases, approximately 85% have re-entered the formal education system through the Philippine Education Placement Test (PEPT), an equivalency mechanism administered by the DepED. The vocational skills

and enterprise development component of the REACH Program was completed in December 2002, with a total of 625 trainees.

Literacy for Empowerment Against Poverty (LEAP) in Mindanao Phases 1, 2, and 3

With the help of partner organizations such as the Maguindanaon Development Foundation Inc., Tribal Leaders Foundation, the Bangsa Moro Women Foundation for Peace and Development, and the LGUs of Bayang and Buluan, NDFCAI implemented the Literacy for Empowerment Against Poverty in Mindanao as a component of the ADB-assisted Philippine Nonformal Education Project from 1994 to 2001. The project aimed to provide an alternative pathway of learning for those who are unable to avail of the educational services of the formal system and those who dropped out of the formal elementary and secondary education. The LEAP Project provided ALS programs to some 12,634 OSCY in the municipalities of Pikit and Carmen in North Cotabato, Sultan sa Barongis and Buluan in Maguindanao, Sibuco and Baliguian in Zamboanga del Norte, Ditsaan Raman in Lanao Sur; and Lutayan and Columbio in Sultan Kudarat Province.

GENPEACE

The Gender, Peace and Development Project (GENPEACE) is a tri-people capability building and community-based mobilization effort addressing the basic need for education and the necessity for communication facilities implemented in five regions in Mindanao - Regions IX, X, XI, XII, and ARMM. The project seeks to integrate peace education and gender and development in literacy and continuing education activities and to maximize the use of community radio as a tool for the promotion of culture and peace.

USAID EQuALLS Accreditation and Equivalency Support for Out-of-School Children and Youth (ACCESS) Mindanao Project through the Creative Associates International, Inc. (CAII), and Lifelong Education for Accreditation and Development (LEAD) through the International Youth Foundation and Consuelo Foundation

Recently, NDFCAI-WED, in collaboration with a network of NGOs supported by USAID EQuALLS, provided ALS accreditation and equivalency programs to over 12,000 Muslim OSCY throughout the conflict-affected areas of ARMM and Regions IX and XII.³¹ Large numbers of these learners were able to successfully take the Philippine Education Placement test as a bridge back into the formal school system.

³¹ The umbrella organization mode of ALS delivery as implemented by NDFCAI-WED and its partner NGOs had advantages in that the organization was able to reach a large number of OSCY. However, the organization had administrative and financial management shortcomings that limited the effectiveness of

The project known as the ACCESS-Mindanao also supported the rehabilitation and construction of over 150 community learning centers and the organization of the OSCY learners into 280 action teams dedicated to implementing community-based civic action projects such as repainting local mosques and conducting community clean-up campaigns. The work of these action teams helped build leadership and teambuilding skills mostly among Muslim OSCY and engaged them as active agents of peace and community development.

Impact of NDFCAI-WED ALS Programs on Muslim Learners

The Notre Dame Foundation for Charitable Activities, Inc.-Women in Enterprise Development through its various ALS programs have transformed the lives of many Muslim OSCY throughout Mindanao. Furthermore, it has provided credit or soft loans to qualified completers of its alternative learning system programs to support their further studies or income generating projects. The following implementation strategies assisted them in carrying out their programs more effectively:

- Identification of community-based partners and advocates to assist the ALS Instructional Managers (IMs) in recruiting targeted learners and undertaking social preparation activities.

- Establishment of strong working relationships and collaboration with the LGUs and other local leaders.

- Integrating the culture of peace, respect for multicultural diversity, and gender sensitivity into all ALS programs.

- Emphasis on learner-centered approaches.

- Strong coordination with other government line agencies such as the Department of Social Welfare and Development and the DepED.

- Continuous capacity building and technical support for ALS Instructional Managers.

- Building leadership and teambuilding skills of OSCY as key life skills in all its ALS programs.

NDFCAI-WED has empowered thousands of Muslim OSCY and adult illiterates through education and training that integrated peace education and strategies in dealing with conflicts. In so doing it has played a key role in improving access to education in Mindanao.

this delivery mode. The NDFCAI-WED had experienced financial problems that resulted in negative findings by the USAID.

C. Case Study on Increasing Access to Education Through the Madrasah Education System: The Madrasah Pahamuddin Al-Islamie

Education in Muslim Mindanao underwent different periods of history. Madale (1975) related that madaris were established in Sulu and spread to Maguindanao, Cotabato and Lanao in the 15th century. At that time, there was no organized system of education. Madaris were informal and owned and managed by either a *guru*³² (religious leader) or the community. Today, the madrasah system of education³² has been providing an alternative pathway of educating Muslim learners.

The Madrasah Pahamuddin Al-Islamie serves as model for two existing types of madrasah education: the weekend madrasah and the weekday madrasah, which now follows the DepED Madrasah Curriculum. Madrasah Pahamuddin Al-Islamie was established in 1994 to cater to those interested in weekend madrasah purposely to impart basic knowledge in Arabic to less privileged children in Poblacion 3 in Pigcawayan, North Cotabato. The children whose parents are laborers in rice mills are not able to attend formal education in a nearby public elementary school because of extreme poverty.

The first madrasah of MPAI was a makeshift building constructed with the help of the parents. Classes were held on Saturdays and Sundays only. The services rendered by the ustadz were free since the parents could not afford to pay their children's tuition fees. In 2004, MPAI developed a three-room concrete school building, which was provided by Muslim benefactors from the Middle East. During that year enrolment rose to 35 and with the increase in the number of pupils, ustadiz were paid Php500 monthly.

Taking Bold Steps to Educate Poor Muslims

The Madrasah Pahammuddin Al-Islamie's Director knew that to survive, the madrasah must articulate with the DepED's formal education system so that its graduates would be accepted by education authorities, future employers and the community itself. He took the bold step of adopting the Standard Curriculum for Madrasah Education in Elementary Private Madaris under DepEd Order No. 51, s. 2004. With this development, its facilities for teaching and learning were improved. The weekday madrasah holds regular classes for poor children who cannot attend the nearest

³² Madaris are institutions of learning which exist basically for the teaching of Islamic faith and for the moral and spiritual development of Muslim children. A madrasah is usually organized and managed by a *guru* or the community. Classes are headed by an *ustadz* (plural *ustadiz*), while the pupils are called *moritz*. Madrasah classes offer instruction in the Arabic language and Islamic studies, which enable Muslim learners to become familiar with Islamic religious teachings. The language of instruction is usually Arabic which is widely used in conversing with teachers and among the *moritz* themselves. Other *ustadz* also use the local dialect in their classes.

formal elementary school, while the weekend class caters to learners of all ages who are normally out of school.

Madrasah Pahammuddin Al-Islamie has linked with Save the Children-ASCEND, one of the implementers of the USAID EQuALLS Project, which provided books for students' use and training of its teachers. BEAM also provided teaching materials. Now, the madrasah holds two classes (Grades 1 and 2) and has one ustadz who teaches 48 Muslim students, most of whom are children of laborers in Pigcawayan, North Cotabato. The ustadz earns PhP1,000 per month for his service. The students are given drills in Arabic language, pronunciation and writing the Arabic script.

Table 16 shows the enriched madrasah curriculum offered by MPAI for weekday and weekend madrasah classes.

Table 16. Enriched Madrasah Curriculum of MPAI

Madrasah Curriculum of MPAI	Classes	
	Weekday	Weekend
English	x	
Filipino	x	
Arabic Language	x	X
Science and Health (Oilom was Sihhat)	x	
Islamic Studies*		
▪ Qur-an	x	x
▪ Seerah and Hadith	x	x
▪ Aqeedah and Figh	x	x
Makabayan* (Ijtimaiyah)	X	
Tarkh (SK/HKS)	X	

Source: MPAI, 2007

As of SY 2006/2007, MPAI has 8 pupils in Kindergarten, 22 in Grade 1, 14 in Grade 2, and 20 pupils in the weekend classes. The number of enrollees has dramatically increased during the last five years. Adhering to the Standard Madrasah Curriculum, the school has introduced the teaching of Arabic language and Islamic studies/values in its classes along with secular subjects like English, Mathematics,

* Subjects sometimes taught in a prescribed schedule, e.g. 2x a week

Science and Makabayan. At present, Grade 1 madrasah provides teachings on Islamic core values such as faith in Allah, love of knowledge, cleanliness, respectfulness and patience; while Grade 2 teaches the values of sincerity, purification, orderliness, helpfulness, honesty and humility.

Having opened its doors to Muslim learners for over ten years already, MPAI has given education opportunities to extremely poor children and youth of Pigcawayan, North Cotabato, and nearby ARMM provinces. Although the school is only on its second year of implementing DepED Order No. 51, it boasts initial success of implementation.

Madrasah Pahamuddin Al-Islamie Weekend Madrasah Model

MPAI serves young Muslim children in preschool, out-of-school youth, and Muslim adults. The greatest advantage of learners enrolled in MPAI is that they can avail of the weekend schedule to learn the basic principles of Islam as well as Islamic laws.

The MPAI pays attention to quality of learning and uses repetitive method or recall type of teaching, which provides high retention in all the subject areas. Teaching-learning activities are usually captured on tape and the chalkboard is the most popular tool used for teaching. With the help of cassette tapes, the ustadiz teach Arabic lessons, which involve recitation of Qur'an and Al-Fatiha. They also teach history, and encourage the recitation of the As'r prayer in the mosque located just beside the madrasah.

The Arabic language is the required medium of instruction during weekend classes and is used for conversing with the teachers and fellow students. There are also instances when a bilingual class is held, combining the local dialect and Arabic as a medium of instruction.

Creating a Sustainable Livelihood Education Programs for the Community

Through workshops and seminars of the ASCEND Program, the school was able to educate the parents of students on how to start a small-scale business. The low-cost livelihood program helped parents pay for the tuition of their children in the madrasah. ASCEND also provided MPAI with educational supplies such as books, ball pens, notebooks, bags and t-shirts for the madrasah pupils.

Impact of the Weekend Madrasah on Muslim Learners

The MPAI charges students a minimal fee. The program is basically sustained through the pooled assistance of the community, donors, and other benevolent citizens. It is for this reason that MPAI in North Cotabato has proven itself as truly accessible to the poor. The parents have this to say about MPAI:

“The program helped in the education of my three kids. My husband is just a laborer and we cannot afford to send our children to public schools. But the madrasah is a good alternative; it is not costly.”

The madrasah weekend educational program harnessed Muslim learners' aspirations and beliefs. The learners, in turn, recognized the importance of the program in learning and living out Islamic values, which they can pass on to the next generation. The program has become very popular among Muslims, but it can be complemented with the enhanced standardized curriculum of the DepED and can be further improved by integrating peace education programs and inter-faith activities upon the discretion of the Madrasah administrators.

Summary

The case studies on school-based, alternative and madrasah systems of education demonstrate a common commitment to quality education and the use of relevant innovative strategies that serve as facilitating factors for access to quality basic education by Muslim learners. The case studies highlighted the following:

■ ***Promoting a Peace Paradigm and Quality Education for Muslim Learners***

In the case of the J. Marquez School of Peace in Cotabato City, the integration of a Peace Education Program, including the provision of opportunities for dialogue and interaction among students, teachers, and parents on cultural diversity issues as well as teacher training on cultural sensitivity, proved to be a positive condition for Muslim learners. The school's Peace Education Program helped address cultural bias and discrimination, lack of parental support, and lack of educational infrastructure, resulting in the retention of Muslim learners. Another school-based model is the Notre Dame Village Elementary School, which provides accessible education to Muslim learners. The school works hard to develop programs that nurture the multicultural diversity of its learners, which include Muslims and non-Muslims coming from various dialect groups.

■ ***Promoting Muslim Learners' Access to Basic Education through the Alternative Learning System***

Alternative learning options, including functional literacy and accreditation and equivalency, proved to be an effective strategy to bring back and retain many Muslim OSCY. ALS provided opportunities for its learners to take the DepED's Philippine Educational Placement Test, enabling the majority to receive certification for promotion to higher grade levels and reenrolment in formal schools. It was also able to start a mechanism for cooperation with LGUs, which was crucial to scaling up and sustaining this type of access intervention. The successful use of community radio facilities by NDFCAI-WED through its GENPEACE Project highlights the possibilities of radio-based instructions as an alternative delivery modality of ALS programs targeting OSCY.

Alternative learning systems are clearly a viable option for reaching out to Muslim schoolchildren and youth, particularly those in remote and conflict-affected, and often school-less barangays. It was noted that while ALS service providers had successful programs, the number of Muslim OSCY yet to be reached is still very large. Thus, there is a need for investment of additional resources to support the expansion of ALS programs targeting Muslim OSCY. There is also a need for institutional capacity building for prospective ALS service providers and

organizations as a precondition of such expansion and to improve the quality of ALS programming.

■ ***Promoting Better Pathways for the Standardized Madrasah Model of Basic Education***

Access to basic education can also be effectively provided through the madrasah system of learning. The Madrasah Pahamuddin Al-Islamie in Pigcawayan, North Cotabato provides a good example of implementing Arabic Language and Islamic Values Education (ALIVE) for madrasah learners in addition to offering English, Science, Math, and Makabayan curriculum content. The operation of a madrasah is sustained by the converged assistance from the community, donors, and other benevolent citizens. However, the case study clearly demonstrates that DepEd needs to strengthen support mechanisms for the implementation of the Standard Madrasah Curriculum provided for by DepED Order No. 51. This includes ensuring availability of textbooks and teacher guides for Grades 1 to 6 ALIVE subjects and providing opportunities for training of madrasah teachers.

CHAPTER 5

Policy Recommendations

The policy review and case study analyses with regard to access barriers to education in Muslim Mindanao show that access programs and policy reform initiatives were implemented in recent years to improve Muslim learners' access to education. Findings based on the policy review and case studies show that policy support and resources were provided by the national government, funding agencies, and non-government organizations. However, these programs and policies need to be more responsive to the needs of the Muslim learners. In spite of the lack of objective data on the impact and sustainability of these interventions, the continued deprivation of Muslim learners indicates the ineffectiveness of the implementation of the educational policies and programs, with transparent and accountable use of resources remaining a challenge. Focus should also be given on capacity building. Based on the analysis of access barriers that arise from the study and the case studies on access to education, below are the recommended policy recommendations:

Summary of Findings

The major findings of the policy research are grouped into three areas: 1) trends in access to quality basic education for Muslim learners; 2) access barriers to quality basic education for Muslim learners; and 3) recommended policy and program priorities derived from the case studies.

1. Trends in Access to Quality Basic Education for Muslim Learners

A broad review of the legislated and non-legislated policies as well as other initiatives in basic education promulgated at the legislative and executive levels of government, including pertinent department levels, helped identify some policy gaps and indicate potential areas of improvement or reform. They include the following:

▪ ***Broadening Policy and Program Support for Access to Quality Basic Education***

The Philippines has promulgated a significant number of laws, declarations, resolutions, policies, proclamations, orders, and other issuances that promote quality basic education for all. Included are those that give education the highest budgetary support and expand educational opportunities especially to children and youth in the most impoverished regions of the country such as in the ARMM region. At the national level, reform programs have been developed to encourage Filipino children and youth, including Muslim learners, to avail of basic education services offered free for the elementary and secondary levels and compulsory only for the elementary level.

The Free Secondary Education Act, the Equitable Access Act, and the Government Assistance to Students and Teachers in Private Education Act all provide a structural support strategy and financial assistance to students and teachers. Unfortunately, the benefits of the implementation of these important legislations have yet to reach a significant number of Muslim children and youth and their Muslim mentors.

However, the lack of systematic information on the extent by which Muslim learners may have benefited from the implementation of national and regional policies had limited this study. The DepED may find it worthwhile to segregate data concerning Muslim children and youth in school and out of school. If data about Muslim learners can be more accurately derived, the DepED Basic Education Information Service will better guide policy makers and program implementers on what policies will be most responsive to the needs of Muslim learners.

▪ ***Enhancing the Alternative Learning System for Out-of-School Children and Youth***

A very recent development is the promulgation in August 2001 (R.A. 9155) of the Alternative Learning System (ALS) that provides opportunities for out-of-school children and youth to become functionally literate through education programs that may be delivered outside the formal school system. Today the Alternative Learning System is increasingly recognized as comparable and equivalent to the formal education system. Moreover, choices are available for Muslim learners to complete quality basic education in any manner responsive to their needs and their aspirations. Knowledge, skills, and values acquired from nonformal and informal education are now measurable and may be assigned some equivalent academic credits.

Executive Order No. 283, which renamed the former DepED Bureau of Nonformal Education as the DepED Bureau of Alternative Learning System (BALS), gave mandate to the staff bureau the promotion of quality basic education for out-of-school-children-and youth through alternative systems of delivery. Policies were promulgated that enabled the DepED BALS to make available to the marginalized sectors of the Filipino society basic education programs on an “any time, any where and in any way” basis. The DepED BALS is now implementing programs, projects, and services designed to reintegrate back to the formal school system a vast number of school-age children and youth who are out-of-school. For the older cohort of learners, the pathways are towards livelihood and life skills development. “Bridging” courses towards post-secondary and/or tertiary education programs are also available.

Donor agencies like the USAID through EQuALLS and the Australian Agency for International Development (AUSAID) through the Basic Education Assistance for Mindanao (BEAM) Project have helped the DepED and DepED-ARMM implement strategies to further improve the quality and expand the reach of the nonformal learning system for Muslim out-of-school children and youth in Mindanao. Nonetheless the challenge remains for the DepED and DepED-ARMM to share greater responsibilities such as: (1) institutionalizing and mainstreaming ALS strategies that were proven effective and efficient; (2) bringing the benefits of the DepED Nonformal Education (NFE) Accreditation and Equivalency (A&E) program to more Muslim out-of-school youth and children by enhancing its relevance and responsiveness to the context and culture of Muslim learners; and (3) bringing forward the ALS program to include some portfolio assessment and equivalency matrix of learnings gained through the informal system of education.

The ALS programs now being implemented with assistance from USAID EQuALLS, AUSAID BEAM, and other donors are models that may be brought to scale by the DepED and DepED-ARMM to benefit more out-of-school Muslim learners. Policies promoting alternative systems as opportunities for reintegration into the formal school system or towards the pursuit of livelihood and life skills have likewise been put in place. The next step is for the DepED and the DepED-ARMM to ensure that the organizational structures for the alternative learning system are well established and that adequate funds are provided for mainstreaming and sustaining these initiatives. Otherwise the gains will be put at great risk.

▪ ***Preparing Pathways for the Madrasah Education System***

DepED Order No. 51, s. 2004 and DepED-ARMM Executive Order No. 13, s. 2004 established the pathways to promote access to quality basic education for Muslim learners. Arabic Language and Islamic Values are subjects now offered in public schools with Muslim students. At the same time, the teaching of English, Mathematics, Science and *Makabayan* as secular subjects in the private madaris are

encouraged to enrich the traditional madrasah curriculum. The model curricula proposed for the public schools and the private madaris are envisaged to encourage “portability and transferability” of the courses of study. It likewise promotes the national Filipino identity and preserves the cultural heritage of Muslims. The DepED and DepED-ARMM have jointly endorsed the programs.

The present leadership of the DepED and the DepED-ARMM have demonstrated their commitment to help realize for Muslim learners an educational system that is truly authentic and appropriate. The spirit of cooperation and the desire to work in collaboration with each other have remained strong and stable. Yet there are perceptions that the policy and program framework of the reform strategy for Muslim learners continue to be very variable and fragile.

As such, the Office of Muslim Affairs of the DepED needs to be genuinely empowered with a clear mandate to achieve program outcomes and manage the critical alliance-building with the DepED-ARMM and other program partners. More importantly, adequate measures must be taken to keep the Office beyond the reach of the usual political and bureaucratic practices that may hamper the efficient and effective administration of innovative educational programs.

▪ ***Focusing Priorities on “Educational For All” Programs***

The DepED promulgated policies and implemented programs in support of the ideals of universal access to quality basic education. Developed and observed over the years were policies relating to the expansion of educational infrastructure, development and procurement of textbooks and instructional materials, regulation of school fees and contributions, improvement in the management of student financial assistance, relevant curriculum design, development of teacher education and teacher remuneration standards, and promotion of alternative options.

In recent years, technical assistance focusing on providing access to quality basic education as well as capacity-building for key stakeholders have been provided through donor-assisted projects, most notably the EQuALLS Project funded by the USAID and the BEAM Project funded by the AUSAID.

The World Bank also addressed the concerns for equity, efficiency, and quality of elementary education through its Third Elementary Education Projects (1990–1992; 1996–1998) and, in 2006, through the National Program of Support for Basic Education (NPSBE). The NPSBE was designed to strategically support the implementation of DepED’s Basic Education Sector Reform Agenda (BESRA) over a five-year period that became effective in 2006.

It is to the credit of the donor agencies that the DepED-ARMM was included as a significant project beneficiary. Regrettably both the national EFA and

the BESRA plans are inadequate in defining mostly the priorities of the DepED to the exclusion of the DepED-ARMM.

- ***Increasing Budgetary Support for Basic Education***

The national budget for basic education has been steadily increasing, albeit it continues to be insufficient in meeting the basic requirements of the DepED and DepED-ARMM. On the other hand, more of the local government units' special education funds and other funds are meaningfully mobilized to finance the implementation of school and schools division improvement plans. In the case of the DepED-ARMM there are parallel efforts to mobilize local resources to augment the national budget support and help provide for the requirements of the region's basic education programs. However, suggestions have been offered to the DepED-ARMM to further improve the financial management system for greater reliability and usefulness to decision-makers, as well as for more transparency and accountability.

Likewise, the program of DepED to engage the participation of business, industry, and other stakeholders in mobilizing resources for basic education such as the "Adopt-a-School Program" has been extremely successful. The national business community also responded by organizing a Philippine Business for Education forum and launching a "57 to 75" plan that has been widely adopted as a corporate social responsibility goal of members of the League of Corporate Foundation. The goal that remains to be more vigorously pursued is for the members of the League of Corporate Foundation to further expand corporate initiatives and embrace an affirmative action agenda that will truly benefit the Muslim learners in Mindanao.

2. Access Barriers to Quality Basic Education by Muslim Learners

Based on the responses of education stakeholders, five major access barriers to basic education were identified:

- ***Lack of Educational Infrastructure***

The classroom shortage in Mindanao in SY 2003–2004 reached 5,318, with the highest shortage in the ARMM region of 1,029 classrooms. According to the respondent-stakeholders, the inadequacy of school facilities and resources was a major reason why pupils and students lacked the motivation to attend school. As a result, learning was deterred, resulting in the eventual dropping out from school of the learner. The key findings on educational infrastructure include:

- Lack of classrooms
 - Lack of prescribed textbooks
 - Lack of teachers
 - Lack of infrastructure to support the Alternative Learning System
 - Lack of infrastructure to support reform initiatives for Madrasah education
- ***Lack of Access to Education by Poor Muslim Learners Due to Poverty***

Poverty is the second major reason for the very low rates of participation, cohort survival, and completion of Muslim learners. In 2000, the poverty incidence was highest in the ARMM region where 57% of the families were considered poor. Central Mindanao had a poverty incidence of 48.4%, Northern Mindanao, 32.9% and Southern Mindanao, 31.1%. The poverty incidence in these regions has remained unchanged for several years now.

Many parents lamented their inability to pay for the “hidden costs” of education. Even if elementary and secondary education programs were offered free of tuition and other school fees, the poor families could not pay for the other costs such as expenses for school projects and other classroom activities. Providing for the family’s food, clothing, shelter, and other basic requirements for survival was the highest priority.

Due to extreme poverty Muslim children and youth often have no choice but to drop out of school in order to take care of their siblings while their parents earn a living. Often they are compelled as well to go out to earn a living for the family. The DepED’s school feeding program is one solution that reduces absenteeism especially among children from very poor families. School attendance also improved for selected schoolchildren in some ARMM provinces who received scholarship grants from the Philippine Business for Social Progress and Petron Foundation, both members of the ELSA Alliance, to buy books, bags, and other essential school requirements. The challenge is how to expand school feeding and financial assistance beyond the ELSA project beneficiary schools. Moreover, the strategy of ELSA requiring parents and other community members to provide some counterpart either in the form of cash, in kind, or in service is a good strategy to observe.

▪ ***Unstable Peace and Order Situation***

Continuing conflicts between government forces and armed groups or other lawless elements as well as fighting between clans (*rido*) often resulted in many disruptions as classes were suspended. During periods of massive displacements, school buildings that were used as evacuation centers were often damaged or left in

shambles. Communities were also displaced from their lands and sources of income. As a result, they were further pushed to extreme poverty. For schools receiving displaced children, the unanticipated influx of transferees and evacuees led to the overcrowding of classrooms and the overloading of teachers. Consequently, the quality of instruction was compromised and students were quickly discouraged from attending class.

Years ago the DepED implemented an educational program for children and youth who were in situations of armed conflict to help them cope with emergency situations and continue with schooling. Unfortunately the program was not sustained. The alternative models of learning offer many options. However, there is very little “buy-in” for these alternatives from the local communities. The DepED and DepED-ARMM must thus undertake social mobilization and advocacy strategies and conduct a continuous information and education campaign about the benefits from alternative education programs that Muslim children and youth in-school and out-of-school.

▪ ***Lack of Support from Parents***

Several out-of-school children and youth attributed extreme poverty and illiteracy as the reasons why their parents could not support their education. They lamented being forced to drop out of school in order to help earn a living for the family.

The study made known an unfounded perception expressed by many respondents that parents who were unschooled were therefore also “uneducated”, thus, they could not guide nor help their children with schoolwork. Unfortunately this thinking may be unintentionally promoted by the DepED and the DepED-ARMM whose education programs are mostly school programs. Children and youth can acquire knowledge, skills, and values not only from the formal school system but also from nonformal and informal sources of education. This is the reason why most educators acknowledge that “Education for All” is not synonymous with “Schooling for All.”

The development of schools as centers of learning for communities was recently espoused by the UNESCO to help “reconnect” schools to their respective communities by encouraging community members to share their experiences in some trade, craft, or other skills with schoolchildren.

▪ ***Cultural Issues and Biases***

The Muslim students, scholars, and educators who responded to the study observed that teachers in many public schools in Mindanao had very little

knowledge and understanding of the culture and beliefs of Muslims. As a result many teachers were often insensitive to the customs and traditions observed by the Muslim learners in school. In some way this cultural insensitivity contributed to the promotion among the non-Muslim learners in class a similar bias against their Muslim classmates. Consequently, the Muslim learners were discouraged from attending school and sooner or later dropped out of school.

School administrators and teachers in public schools in Mindanao especially in the Muslim communities should be provided by the DepED and DepED-ARMM with orientation and training programs for them to become respectful of cultural diversities including the Muslim culture.

Other Issues and Challenges

▪ *Use of Regional Lingua Franca or the Vernacular in Primary Grades*

The study noted the difficulty of Muslim learners in school and out of school to understand lessons taught to them in Filipino and English. It was further observed that most Muslim learners use the regional *lingua franca* or the vernacular at home. Unlike in other regions of the country most homes in the ARMM region have no easy access to national radio and television programs that provide broadcasts in Filipino and English. National newspapers in Filipino and English are likewise not available. Hence, the regional lingua franca is the main dialect at home and in the local community. UNESCO has been advocating the use of the mother tongue language as the medium of instruction especially in the primary grades. A “bridging” program to help the young learner switch from the mother tongue language to Filipino and English has been strongly recommended.

▪ *Alternative Learning System A&E Examination Issues*

The Alternative Learning System opened opportunities for Muslim out-of-school children and youth to be reintegrated back to the formal school system and complete an elementary or secondary education. The DepED NFE A&E program has been successful for a younger cohort of out-of-school children and youth with some levels of basic and functional literacy and who would like to continue further education and training. However, the older cohort of out-of-school children and youth, including Muslim learners, performed very poorly in the A&E tests organized by the DepED Bureau of Alternative Learning System.

Further examination and analysis of the test results conducted for the older cohort of Muslim learners revealed some interesting findings, namely: (1) the Muslim learners who failed the A&E tests were nonetheless pleased with acquiring some competencies and gaining self-esteem and self-confidence; and (2) many intended not

to go back to the formal school system but were interested in obtaining some short courses in basic life and livelihood skills.

The respondents to the study suggested that the DepED ALS programs should be expanded to provide a wider range of options for the OSCY, including basic and functional literacy, life and livelihood skills, special-interest programs and competency-based technical-vocational training. They also recommended that the DepED BALS develop a more contextually appropriate ALS program and NFE A&E tests for Muslim learners.

- ***Technical-Vocational Education***

It is clear during the discussions and interviews with parent-respondents and with some out-of-school children and youth that they do not appreciate the relevance of secondary education. It was considered a waste of time and family resources to send a child through high school who will graduate with a diploma but without the necessary competencies to earn a living.

The recent initiatives of the DepED to strengthen the technical-vocational subjects in secondary education are bold steps in the right direction. The goal is to provide high school graduates with the right skills for the right jobs and small business opportunities available in the community while at the same time opening learning pathways for post-secondary and tertiary education programs.

3. Recommended Policy Priorities from the Case Studies

Some best practices on providing quality basic education to Muslim learners are found in the formal school system, alternative learning system, and the madrasah system of learning. A qualitative analysis of the three models of study revealed certain factors that contributed to the improvement of the holding power of the institutions. As a result there was improved participation and retention of Muslim learners. The cases studied proved that partnerships between the school and community-based organizations that are based on respect for cultural diversity truly promote an environment that encourages Muslim learners to complete basic education.

- ***Promoting Peace Paradigm and Quality Education for Muslim Learners***

In the case of the J. Marquez School of Peace in Cotabato City, the integration of a Peace Education Program, including the provision of opportunities for dialogue and interaction among students, teachers, and parents on cultural diversity issues as well as teacher training on cultural sensitivity, proved very

encouraging for Muslim learners. The School of Peace helped promote interfaith activities that counterbalanced some cultural biases and discrimination.

The Notre Dame Village Elementary School, which showcased accessible education programs for Muslim learners, was another model that helped pupils who were displaced from conflict-affected areas. The school promoted quality basic education and developed multi-cultural programs appropriate to a learning environment.

▪ ***Promoting Muslim Learners' Access to Basic Education through the Alternative Learning System***

Alternative learning options, including functional literacy and accreditation and equivalency programs, were conducted by the Notre Dame Foundation for Charitable Activities Inc. - Women in Enterprise Development. The programs proved that to help many Muslim out-of-school children and youth complete a basic education course are effective strategies. Through the ALS programs many Muslim learners qualified for the DepED's Philippine Education Placement Test (PEPT), some of whom were promoted to higher grade/year levels.

The NDFCAI-WED started a program, in cooperation with local government units, that was crucial in scaling up and sustaining the ALS access intervention. The NDFCAI-WED experience clearly demonstrated that the alternative learning system may be a viable option for reaching out to Muslim children and youth, particularly those in remote, conflict-affected, and often school-less barangays.

▪ ***Promoting Better Pathways for Standardized Madrasah Model***

Access to basic education may also be effectively provided through the madrasah system of learning. The Madrasah Pahamuddin Al-Islamie in Pigcawayan, North Cotabato provided a good example of implementing Arabic Language and Islamic Values Education (ALIVE) for Madrasah learners. In addition, English, Science, Math, and *Makabayan* were offered to enhance the curriculum. The madrasah was operated with assistance provided by the community, some donors and other generous citizens.

Policy Recommendations

To ensure that every Muslim learner in Mindanao will have the opportunity to benefit from free basic education of a quality prescribed by the DepED and the DepED-ARMM, the following specific recommendations have been put forward:

1. Improve education-financing schemes in most-deprived provinces in Mindanao

The DepED and the DepED-ARMM should actively pursue various strategies and modes in improving educational infrastructure in Mindanao, most especially in the ARMM region. It should look for better options and strategies to expand its school-building programs. Some of these strategies may include seeking assistance from the local school boards for a larger share in the budget for educational infrastructure. Another is to seek partners from the private sector such as in the “Adopt-a-School Program”. The establishment of more community learning centers for the alternative learning system programs must likewise be promoted. Moreover, it is crucial to review the implementation of the Roxas Law (RA 7880), which provided for all legislative districts a minimum and continuing level of educational development through a rationalized and equitable allocation of the DepED budget.

2. Increase access of Muslim learners to government financial assistance programs

The GASTPE Law provided means for poor children to access secondary level education in the nearest private high school. This program has to be expanded to benefit Muslim learners considering the severe concerns of access that confront children and youth in Mindanao. Moreover a study should be made to determine how much benefits were received by Muslim children and youth from the GASTPE program since its implementation many decades ago. There is no report either of any scholarships or tuition fee subsidies provided to Muslim learners and their teachers. For Muslim learners in Mindanao it was recommended that some amendment to the present GASTPE Law be introduced in order to expand the program to include the elementary level and as well as to consider alternative learning programs as eligible for subsidies. It is likewise worthwhile to consider the creation of a Fund for Assistance in Madrasah Education to provide for the development and scholarship of madrasah students.

3. Increase access of Muslim learners to school feeding programs

Children who are hungry will not benefit from any learning in school and will most likely drop out. The DepED reported that poverty is the principal reason

why pupils drop out between Grades 1 and Grades 3. A pupil who will drop-out of the school system will join the company of out-of-school children and youth. Clearly, there is also an economic loss on the investment for his/her education. A school feeding policy should be established as a strategy to encourage children to come to school particularly in the ARMM Region. Most families in the ARMM region are very poor and are most likely to send their children to school even without breakfast. A school feeding program will be an incentive for the children to come to school and stay long enough to complete an elementary education.

4. Strengthen the Madrasah Education System

The madrasah system of learning is a recognized program of education in Muslim Mindanao that is operated as a private school. The relevant component affecting the madrasah system of learning in the recently promulgated “Enriched Curriculum Framework for Public Elementary Schools and Standard Curriculum for Private Madaris” by the DepED is the promotion of English, Math, Science and *Makabayan* as enrichment subjects. The DepED and DepED-ARMM through various department orders and/or memoranda issued to the field have committed to build the institutional capability of the madrasah system and bring the madrasah system standard of instruction to a level comparable with the public schools.

However, there are serious concerns regarding the qualifications of madrasah teachers or *ustadiz*. Many have recommended for a program to professionalize madrasah teachers. The program shall require pre-service education and training and that madrasah teachers shall pass the Licensure Exams for Teachers (LET). Some educators also recommended that a regional university be designated to specialize in the training, research, and development of the madrasah system and to serve as a center of excellence in madrasah education. The university should also assist in conducting teacher training for the madrasah teachers to enable them to teach RBEC subjects.

With some assistance from donor agencies such as the USAID in EQuALLS and the AUSAID in BEAM both the DepED and DepED-ARMM have been encouraged to begin the process of accrediting the madrasah system of learning.

5. Strengthen the alternative learning system to provide greater flexibility of learning options for Muslim learners

The study revealed that Muslim learners are unable to attend formal school and complete a basic education program mainly because of the lack of educational infrastructure, extreme poverty, and displacement due to conflict. In the ARMM region, a large number of pupils in barangays with very small pupil participation are in multi-grade schools. Moreover, the population of out-of-school children and youth has been increasing tremendously. The alternative learning system is a

strategy that can reach out to Muslim learners who are unable to meet the rigid requirements of the school system.

Muslim learners can also benefit from interventions that include basic and functional literacy, life and livelihood skills, special-interest programs, and some short-term vocational/technical and livelihood skills courses. The DepED NFE A&E program is another program that prepares the OSCY for elementary or secondary level certification and reentry into the formal school system.

In many regions in Mindanao, the DepED and the DepED-ARMM, through division-level alternative learning system coordinators and mobile teachers, are currently implementing a range of ALS programs. There is a need, however, to increase the number of mobile teacher items and to ensure that ALS district coordinators are freed from teaching responsibilities so that they could work full time on ALS matters. The need to improve the entire ALS delivery system is equally urgent and should cover the quality of ALS instruction; administrative and financial management system of service providers; and adequacy of community learning centers through targeted training and capacity-building interventions.

As it is, the reach of ALS interventions has been beset by inadequate financial resources. Non-government organizations, often with external funding sources, have been able to serve large numbers of OSCY but the cost-effectiveness and sustainability of the interventions pose a constraint to their institutionalization. Thus, efforts should be made to enhance the collaboration between these organizations and the DepED and the DepED-ARMM. Linkages with LGU leaders also need to be strengthened to ensure continued local funding for ALS programs. Particularly, this should be intended for the construction of community learning centers and the provision of skills training to OSCY to enhance their opportunities for employment or self-employment. Moreover, unemployed parents should also be encouraged to participate in ALS programs that develop their skills and offer them livelihood opportunities. There is an urgent need, however, to strengthen the capacities of existing and prospective alternative learning system service providers as a prelude to expanding the reach and upscaling the implementation of ALS programs.

Alternative delivery modalities, or the use of non-traditional or non-conventional systems of implementing the formal education programs, should also be pursued as an option for expanding the access of Muslim learners to quality basic education. For instance, the possibilities offered by radio and television broadcast as alternative delivery technologies for ALS programs should be explored. By using approaches such as open learning and home study that are supported by self-learning programmed modules, learners who drop out or are at risk of dropping out are given the opportunity to continue learning. Some alternative delivery programs that have been implemented on a pilot basis in the Muslim areas are SEAMEO

INNOTECH's (Southeast Asian Ministers of Education Regional Center for Educational Innovation and Technology) Instructional Management by Parents, Community and Teachers (IMPACT); DepED's Effective and Affordable Secondary Education (EASE); and Open High School System (OHSS). These programs have shown initial successes in bringing back and keeping children in school. A careful assessment of their sustainability and cost-effectiveness needs to be undertaken for possible scale-up.

In more urbanized areas, education has moved from a “brick and mortar” to a “click and portals” experience. Undoubtedly, teaching using CD-ROMS, PCs and the Internet will decongest a large number of classrooms and will enable students to go beyond classroom-based instruction. However, such a system may not be practical in poorer communities, especially in ARMM, where barangays unreached by external funding are also often the same areas without electricity, computer hardware, or Internet access. Thus, a well-planned distance education program that takes into consideration these limitations may be able to offer basic education to remote and marginalized areas of Mindanao. A system of accreditation and student subsidy for open learners should also be established for greater access to education.

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Annexes

Annex 1

Key Informants Interviewed

Annex 2

Philippine Laws and Policies Governing Access to Quality Basic Education (1987-2007)

Annex 3

Focus Group Discussion Guide

Annex 4

DepED Road Map for Upgrading Muslim Basic Education

Annex 1

Key Informants Interviewed

	Names	Position	Region
<i>I. DepEd</i>			
1.	Undersecretary Manaros B. Boransing	Undersecretary for Muslim Affairs	
<i>II. DepEd-ARMM Regional Officials and Staff</i>			
2.	Dr. Macalinog Saligoin	Assistant Secretary, DepED-ARMM	ARMM
3.	Dr. Abdusali M. Asaali, Al-Hadz	Superintendent, Basilan	ARMM
4.	Dr. Nordina Sarip	Assist. Superintendent, Lanao del Sur II	ARMM
5.	Atty. Morahib Maruhdonsalic	Legal Officer	ARMM
6.	Mr. Tojame Noor	Planning Officer	ARMM
<i>III. DepEd Regional Directors</i>			
7.	Dr. Estrella A. Babano	Regional Director	Region 10
8.	Dr. Diamar P. Kadon	Regional Director	Region 11
9.	Dr. Jesus L. Nieves	Regional Director	Region 9
<i>IV. School Heads</i>			
10.	Ana Isabel R. Valdez	Davao City	Region11
11.	Alaina t. Moneran	Davao City	Region11
12.	Abduc J. Tuto	Davao City	Region11
13.	Jaliha S. Basilio	Davao City	Region11
14.	Dalisay N. Nacadaway	Davao City	Region11
15.	Estelita D. Andres	Davao City	Region11
16.	Rosito L. Asarak	Davao City	Region11
17.	Abdulpatta U. Kamdon	Davao City	Region11
18.	Talib F. Tuttuk	Davao City	Region11
19.	Abdula Wahab	Datu Piang	Region 12
20.	Haron P. Mantil	Datu Piang	Region 12

	Names	Position	Region
21.	Norma P. Yosores	Datu Piang	Region 12
22.	Abdullah K. Aba	Datu Piang	Region 12
23.	Akmad S. Gulamblang	Datu Piang	Region 12
24.	Mama C. Palao	Datu Piang	Region 12
25.	Diokani Tuladteg	Datu Piang	Region 12
26.	Lily Chio Padilla	Datu Piang	Region 12
27.	Labaya S. Bakal	Datu Piang	Region 12
28.	Arthur D. Anayatin	Datu Piang	Region 12
29.	Antoling M. Ambel	Datu Piang	Region 12
30.	Abusama D. Manisi	Datu Piang	Region 12
31	Malipa T. Adzal	Cotabato	Region 12
32.	Rakima A. Anggie	Cotabato	Region 12
33.	Bayingkong S. Diocolano	Cotabato	Region 12
34.	Thong A. Amino	Cotabato	Region 12
35.	Bai Tusle D. Cabilo	Cotabato	Region 12
36	Nanang A. Mangatong	Cotabato	Region 12
37	Malumpil S. Balawag	Cotabato	Region 12
38	Sarapia G. Talapu	Cotabato	Region 12
39	Nooma Sinsuat	Cotabato	Region 12
40	Guiadida K. Nanding	Cotabato	Region 12
41	Ernesto Perez	Marawi City	ARMM
42	Lilibeth Villacrusis	Marawi City	ARMM
43	Ana Margarita A. Rabuyo	Marawi City	ARMM
44	Deogenisa O. Abungan	Marawi City	ARMM
45	Ma. Isabel N. Anonuevo	Marawi City	ARMM
46	Cecilia T. Hidlao	Marawi City	ARMM
47	Reneth D. Magiasang	Marawi City	ARMM
48	Teodora L. Caorong	Marawi City	ARMM
50	Juliet F. Lugtu	Marawi City	ARMM

	Names	Position	Region
51	Norma J. Calimpong	Marawi City	ARMM
52	Omaira B. Ramalan	Marawi City	ARMM
53	Baul U. Pumbaya	Marawi City	ARMM
54	Mariam S. Macabanding	Marawi City	ARMM
55	Arabac A. Maruhong	Marawi City	ARMM
56	Sanaria S. Pagsidan	Marawi City	ARMM
57	Imelda S. Maruhom	Marawi City	ARMM
58	Elma M. Quenoyla	Marawi City	ARMM
59	Rohaina A. Mama	Marawi City	ARMM
60	Noronisa M. Panontongan	Marawi City	ARMM
61	Ramon M. Abagnal	Marawi City	ARMM
62	Fe L. Sepaya	Koronadal City	Region 12
63	Nawarrah A. Calug	Koronadal City	Region 12
64	Ivy C. Cabarlo	Koronadal City	Region 12
65	Pagernan T. Mantaon	Koronadal City	Region 12
66	Evelyn C. Banggoc	Koronadal City	Region 12
67	Generosa C. Simora	Koronadal City	Region 12
68	Arlyn N. Bantug	Koronadal City	Region 12
69	Celia M. Alon	Koronadal City	Region 12
70	Edna S. Alonto	Koronadal City	Region 12
71	Maria Fe Salipadan	Koronadal City	Region 12
72	Dido G. Balawag	Midsayap	Region 12
73	Esmael G. Sapad	Midsayap	Region 12
74	Tayan T. Sapad	Midsayap	Region 12
75	Nelly G. Espano	Midsayap	Region 12
76	Mary Jean C. Bontog	Midsayap	Region 12
77	Salaban T. Tutin	Midsayap	Region 12
78	Dali S. Endaila	Midsayap	Region 12
79	Madsobia M. Tioma	Midsayap	Region 12

	Names	Position	Region
80	Fatima P. Pilas	Midsayap	Region 12
81	Mayla A. Butuan	Midsayap	Region 12
82	Bagundang G. Calim	Midsayap	Region 12
83	Elena D. Akmad	Midsayap	Region 12
84	Kadel S. Mamasalido	Midsayap	Region 12
85	Kuyad A. Mascud	Midsayap	Region 12
86	Fatima E. Embalayva	Midsayap	Region 12
87	Roger S. Balimbingan	Midsayap	Region 12
88	Noraisa T. Sandag	Midsayap	Region 12
89	R. Mandag	Midsayap	Region 12
90	Marilou P. Mangansakan	Midsayap	Region 12
91	Estefanio A. Castillo	Kidapawan City	Region 12
92	Vivencio B. Irig	Kidapawan City	Region 12
93	Natividad G. Ocon	Kidapawan City	Region 12
94	Josefina A. Osis	Kidapawan City	Region 12
95	Anita Aganon	Kidapawan City	Region 12
96	Felipe V. Terono	Kidapawan City	Region 12
97	Gloria I. Irig	Kidapawan City	Region 12
98	Rosalinda T. Lonzaga	Kidapawan City	Region 12
99	Emelda Victoria	Kidapawan City	Region 12
100	Flordeliza A. Padillo	Kidapawan City	Region 12
101	Wilfredo P. Solmurano	Kidapawan City	Region 12
102	Nieves B. Flores	Kidapawan City	Region 12
103	Francis C. Tajantajan	Kidapawan City	Region 12
104	Nenita E. Rodriguez	Principal, Kidapawan	Region 12
104	Leonila Murad	Principal, Basilan	ARMM
105	Hadji Saberín J. Ulama	Principal, Tawi-Tawi	ARMM
106	Perla B. Dans	Principal, CCI- Basilan	ARMM

<i>V. Mindanao Key Informants</i>			
107	Dr. Camar A. Umpa	Former MSU-IIT, Iligan City	Region 10
108	Dr. Eddie Alih	MSU Tawi-Tawi Chancellor & MUFTI President	ARMM
109	Rev. Fr. Felimon P. Libot	CMF President	ARMM
110	Dr. Myrna Lim	NDFCAI-WED Director	Region 12
111	Dr. Emmylou Yanga	Ched Regional Director	Region 9
112	Mr. Pancho Balawag	Education Specialist	Region 12
113	Mrs. Grace Somera	Education Supervisor	Region 12
114	Ms. Noraida Chio	NDFCAI-WED Officer	Region 12
115	Mr. Henry Lu	NDFCAI-WED Officer	Region 12
116	Ms. Hanina Untong	Instructional Manager	Region 12
117	Ms. Racma Batuan	Instructional Manager	Region 12
118	Ms. Abigail Luna	NDFCAI Monitoring Staff ,Basilan	ARMM
119	Ms. Beverly Hamid	NDF-CAI Monitoring Staff ,Tawi-Tawi	ARMM
120	Dr. Jacinta Tan	CHED, Basilan	ARMM
121	Josephine J. Manila	MUFTI Adm. Officer, Tawi-Tawi	ARMM
122	Soraida Noor	Assistant Division Chief, NFE	ARMM
123	Basir Alipolo	Administrator, Madrasah School, Pigcawayan, North Cotababo	Region 12

Annex 2

Philippine Laws and Policies Governing Access to Quality Basic Education (1987-2007)

Department Order	Title	Particulars
1987	Philippine Constitution	Everyone has the right to education and education should be made accessible to all.
40, s. 1988	Guidelines in Implementation of the Free Secondary Education Program for SY 1988-1989	Free Public Secondary Education – means that the students enrolled in secondary course offerings in national high schools, general comprehensive high schools, state colleges and universities, specialized schools, trade, technical, vocational, fishery and agricultural schools, and in schools established, administered, maintained and funded by local government units, including city, provincial, municipal and barangay high schools, and those public high schools which may be established by law shall be free from payment of tuition and other school fees.
		Tuition fee refers to the fees representing direct costs of instruction, training and other related activities and for the students' use of the instruction and training facilities.
		Other school fees refers to those fees which cover other necessary costs supportive of instruction, including but not limited to medical and dental, athletic, library, laboratory and Citizens Army Training (CAT) fees.
		Parents and the general public should be oriented on the concept of Free Secondary Education.
		Enrolment period shall be from June 1 to 15. First year students should be admitted on a first-come-first-served basis giving priority to graduate of public elementary schools who are residents of the local community.
		However, some of those who cannot be accommodated may be shifted to the cooperating private schools under the Education Service Contracting Program depending on available slots at a cost not higher than government schools.
44, s. 1988	Rules and Regulations Governing the Implementations of the "Free Public Secondary Education Act of 1988" (RA 6655)	Nationalization of Public Secondary Schools – To effectively implement the system, the establishment, renaming, conversion, integration, separation, administration, supervision and control of all public secondary schools and public secondary school teachers and other school personnel, including the payment of their salaries, allowances and other fringe benefits as well as those already provided by local governments and hereby vested in the Department of Education, Culture and Sports.
		In order to upgrade the quality of education at the secondary level, the curriculum shall provide for the development of knowledge, value and skills, including skills that will give students gainful employment.

Department Order	Title	Particulars
		Limitation. – The right of any student to avail of free public high schools shall terminate if he fails for two (2) consecutive school years in the majority of the academic subjects in which he is enrolled during the course of his study unless such failure is due to some valid cause.
46, s. 1988	Guidelines on Tuition and Other School Fees	These guidelines, consisted with Section 42 of the Education Act of 1982, are hereby issued until Congress shall have passed new legislations. Compliance to RA 6640 of 1987
48, s. 1988	Filling of Vacancies for Elementary and Secondary School Teachers	It includes the prescribed basic requirements from the Qualification Standards Manual of 1987
49, s. 1988	Clarifacatory Guidelines on Free Public Secondary Education, Particularly on Fees as provided in RA 6655	Definition of “FREE” (Tuition Fees and Other School Fees) and Authorized by Voluntary fees (IDs, membership fees to student organization, school publication, Red Cross, GSP, BSP and Anti-TB and PTCA contributions)
57, s. 1988	Guidelines for the Allocation of Teachers’ Positions Under the Free Secondary Education Program	Organization of additional classes from 40-50 to 50-60 students/class if space will allow. Request for additional teacher positions shall be supported by school analysis of teacher requirements.
		Distribution of authorized additional teacher positions for SY 1988-1989, priority will be given to temporary teacher hired after July 1, 1987 and whose salaries and COLA are paid by LGU. Selection of teachers shall be considered the major of the applicant and subjects needed in High School.
28, s. 1989	Private Education Student Financial Assistance (PESFA) Program	DECS established the Private Education Student Financial Assistance Program for high school graduates and graduating students who intend to study in private colleges and universities, in order to complement the government practice of subsidizing state colleges and universities and their students. The PESFA program shall be implemented beginning with the SY 1989-1990.
29, s. 1989	Guidelines for the Administration of the Study-Now-Pay-Later Plan Effective School Year 1989-1990	Attached herein is the set of guidelines for the administration of the Study-Now-Pay-Later Plan
38, s. 1989	Amendments to DECS Order No. 28, s. 1989 [Private Education Student Financial Assistance (PESFA) Program]	Amended section of DECS Order No. 28, s. 1989 : 8 (a) The requirement that an applicant must belong to the top 20% of his high school graduating class shall be waived in the initial implementation of the PESFA Program in SY 1989-1990; and 14 (e)...
46, s. 1989	Transition Guidelines on School Fees for SY 1989-1990	Until Congress shall have enacted the legislation on assistance to students in private education, pursuant to the bill proposals.
		Statement of Policy, School Fees for Elementary and High Schools and Tertiary Schools, School Fees for Accredited Schools in All Levels, Allocation and Use of Increases, Schools’ Student Assistance Program, Government Assistance to Students in Private Education

Department Order	Title	Particulars
55, s. 1989	Guidelines on School Fees Pursuant to the “Government Assistance to Students and Teachers in Private Education Act” (RA 6728)	The State shall provide resource generation mechanisms through assistance to students and teachers in private education; institute deregulation procedures for school financing requirements and prescribe accountability function of the school administration towards quality education and the educational community
		Polity on Tuition Supplement: for High School Students – the government shall provide a voucher equal to Two Hundred Ninety Pesos (P290.00) for students enrolled in private high schools... etc.
81, s. 1989	Implementing Guidelines for Specific Financial Assistance Programs under RA 6728	A copy of the Implementing Guidelines for Specified Financial Assistance Program under RA 6728 (for SY 1989-90), as approved by the State Assistance Council for initial implementation, subject to availability of funds, is enclosed for dissemination and implementation.
15, s. 1990	On Simple and Inexpensive Graduation	Due to economic difficulties besetting the country today all school heads are advised to hold simple and inexpensive graduation rites.
36, s. 1990	Guidelines Concerning Use of Textbooks in Elementary and Secondary Education	All private elementary and high school will continue to exercise prerogative of choosing and prescribing their textbooks on condition that they are locally authored, published and/or prescribed by law. Use of these textbooks will be for 6 years (economical for parents).
37, s. 1990	Guidelines on Tuition and Other School Fees in Private Schools, Colleges and Universities for SY 1990-1991	RA 6728 tuition fee increase – 70% - salaries for teachers and 20% for school improvement
50, s 1990	Guidelines on Tuition Fees in Private Schools, Colleges and Universities for SY 1990-1991	Schools enrolling students – 2 nd , 3 rd , and 4 th year for SY 1990-91 may increase tuition and other fees provided that increase is not more than ½ of the collective rate as of May 1990 officially released by NEDA
		Financial assistance for tuition fee for students in private high school and college shall be provided by government
13, s. 1991	Maximum Number of Students to be Accepted in All Public High School	Effective SY 1991-1992, all public high school may accept students up to a max of 60/class. The certification of ESC (Educational Service Contracting) scheme will be strictly observed.
58, s. 1991	Educational Service Contracting and Tuition Fee Supplement at the Secondary Level SY 1991-1992	ESC scheme which has been managed by FAPE since SY 1986-1987 will be directly administered by BSE through DECS Regional Offices effective SY 1991-92.
		In ESC, the government and private schools may enter into a contract for the purpose of accommodating students in said private school. The government pays tuition and other school fees of student who cannot be accommodated by public schools because of lack of teachers, space, facilities or similar reasons. The scheme may also be applicable in communities where there is no public school and only educational service available is in the private school, subject to availability of funds after all other requirements have been met and explicitly approved by the regional director concerned as to the number of students to be accommodated

Department Order	Title	Particulars
		Student Grantee – overflow student whose family income is not more than P36,000 per annum.
98, s. 1991	Guidelines on Student Fee Discounts (25%)	Student fee discount of 25% in fares for public utility transportations.
140, 2. 1991	Guidelines in the Administration of the Study-Now-Pay-Later Plan in the Regions Effective SY 1992-1993	The SAC (State Assistance Council), the body responsible for policy guidance and direction as well as monitoring and evaluation of GASTPE programs under RA 6728 has unanimously approved the transfer of ELF (educational Loan Fund) to the regional office of DECS for GFIs (Government Financial Institution) effective SY 1992-1993. This is in line with decentralization policy of DECS.
2, s. 1992	Integration of Education For All programs and Projects in the 1993 Annual Plans and Budget	October 1989 Proclamation 480 “Declaring the period 1990-1999 Decade of EFA”
		Proclamation 841 “Reorganizing the National Committee on EFA” (October 16, 1989)
		Memo Circular 141 “Adopting EFA: A Philippine Plan of Action, 1991-2000 as a Major Social Development Policy Program of the Government.” (December 4, 1991)
67, s. 1992	Educational Service Contracting and Tuition Fee Supplement at the Secondary Level 1992-1993	ESC managed by FAPE for SY 1986-1987 is now directly administered by BSE-DECS effective SY 1991-1992 – P1,320 tuition fee. Tuition fee supplement for high school student is conducted by BSE through DECS RO – P290.00 per student whose private school charged less than P1,700 including subsidy for SY 1991-92.
78, s. 1992	Limitation to Free Public Secondary Education	Section 6 of RA 6655 provide for limitation of availment of free high school
		- right of student shall terminate if he fails for 2 consecutive SY in the majority of the subjects he is enrolled during the course unless failure is due to a valid case. “Valid Case” (DECS Order No. 44, s. 1988) reasons beyond student’s control – illness, family instability, environmental disturbance)
65, s. 1993	Hardship Allowance for Eligible Public School Teachers	RA 7645 (GAA 1993)
21, S 1994	Reiterating the Prohibition on the Collection of Contributions from Students of Public Elementary and Secondary Schools	
23, s. 1995	Rules and Regulations for the Implementation of Republic Act No. 7880	Otherwise known as the “Fair and Equitable Allocation of DECS’ Budget for Capital Outlay”
		It shall be apportioned equitably, taking into account the number of school children in all the legislative districts and the number of usable classroom except the 10% to be allocated in accordance with the implementation of the policy
		Computation is done per school and per grade/year level using the enrolment date of the school preceding the budget year and the pupil/student-classroom ratio of 45
27, s. 1995	Modifying the Policy Prohibiting the Collection of Contributions from Public School Students	The policy prohibiting the collection of contribution during the period of enrolment from pupils/students of public elementary and secondary levels is hereby

Department Order	Title	Particulars
		modified to allow collection of authorized contributions provided these are made on a voluntary basis and are not made a requirement for admission or for clearance purposes in case of transfer of pupils/students to other schools.
42, s. 1997	Provision of Educational Service to All Out-of-School Children	In recognition of the necessity and urgency of making these children enjoy the right to education which they deserve, the following guidelines are issued: (a) All schools shall undertake the project "Child Find". Data on the names of school-age children who are out-of-school, their addresses and reasons why they are not in school should be gathered, (b) Schools Divisions shall plan and implement educational programs responsive to the diverse needs of these children, etc.
		Needs for teachers, classrooms and textbooks relevant to the provision of educational services to the out-of-school age children shall be given priority.
47, s. 1997	Balik-Paaralan Para sa Out-of-School Adult (OSA) Program	In this connection, the aforementioned program will be initially implemented in 33 participating secondary schools nationwide beginning SY 1997-1998 specifically from July 9, 1997 to April 10, 1998. However, inasmuch as teaching-learning under this program is self-paced, adult learners shall be given the option to enroll anytime during the school year and complete the requirements of the program at their pace.
		Budgetary allocations for this program shall be taken from OSEC funds.
83, s. 1997	Guidelines for Assessing Learner Performance Under the Secondary Education Curriculum for Adult Learners (SECAL)	Owing to the nature of adult learning, a functional competency-based program called the Secondary Education Curriculum for Adult Learners (SECAL) has been developed to provide the learning and training experiences in employable and entrepreneurial skills.
		Conformably with this curriculum, a new set of guidelines is inclosed for assessing learner performance and feedback about the program, shall be part of the periodic report of the participating high school.
88, s. 1997	Implementing Guidelines for the Operation of High School Evening Classes	This DECS Order shall take effect starting SY 1998-1999. Inclosure No. 1, the Implementing Guidelines for the Operation of High School Evening Classes, and Inclosure No. 2, Prototype Class Programs for All Year Levels, are formulated and designed, respectively to conform with the provision of DECS Order No. 11, s. 1989 entitled, "Implementation of the New Secondary Education Curriculum under the 1989 Secondary Education Development Program (SEDP)."
13, s. 1998	Revised Rules and Regulations on Teaching of Religion in Public Elementary and Secondary Schools	The State is cognizant of the vital role that the teaching of religion assumes in citizen formation, particularly the molding of youth; hence, it recognizes the necessity of religions instruction not only in the private schools but also in public schools.
9, s. 2001	Prohibition to conduct NEAT and NSAT review sessions and solicitation from examinees	School authorities are ordered to desist from offering any form of review for students prior to the NEAT and NSAT.
		No classes maybe suspended to give way for sessions.

Department Order	Title	Particulars
		No solicitation for review sessions.
10, s. 2001	On Simple and Austere Graduation Rites	DepEd encourages that simple and austere school activities be held through a simple but meaningful graduation ceremony.
		Graduation contributions should not exceed P150.00.
		Parents should be informed about the use of the contributions. But for private schools the contribution may vary from school to school.
		Graduation exercises must be held in the school grounds and graduation balls compelling graduating students to participate and contribute excessive amounts are discouraged.
		No extravagant special attire should be required; school uniforms may be used for graduation rites.
		Togas, if used should be passed on at cost.
		The annual yearbook should be discouraged or should be considered non-compulsory.
14, s. 2001	Pagwawalang-bisa sa Kautusang Pangkagawaran Blg. 81, s. 1987	Department Order 81, s. 1987 is revoked and the further revision of the rules about the Filipino alphabet and spelling will be conducted
17, s. 2001	Registration Procedures for the 01 July 2001 Nonformal Education Accreditation and Equivalency (NFE A&E) Tests	NFE A&E tests will be administered to qualified Filipinos, Balikbayans and Foreigners in the ADB approved sites.
		Prospective examinees are out-of-school youths and adults aged 15 years and above (as of 01 July 2001) who are basically literate or have completed the Functional Education and Literacy Program (FELP) who must be out of school for at least three (3) years on the date of registration.
		There are two (2) levels of the NFE A&E tests, Elementary and Secondary levels, that are paper and pencil based tests.
		The NFE A&E system is a flexible learning system that recognizes prior learning gained outside the formal school. Applicants who have not attended formal school may be allowed to take the test provided they qualify in the screening process.
		No fees shall be paid by the examinees.
18, s. 2001	Disclaiming DepEd Endorsement of Private Review Classes for the High School Readiness Test (HSRT)	DepEd does not endorse any review classes for any commercial undertaking.
		Any institution claiming such should be reported immediately.
		Anyone considering attending these review classes must exercise due care and diligence.
24, s. 2001	July 2001 Nonformal Education Accreditation and Equivalency (NFE A&E) Test Administration	
25, s. 2001	New List of DECS-Managed Regional	In view of the evolution of most of the Regional Science

Department Order	Title	Particulars
	Science High Schools	High Schools (RSHSs) from regular secondary schools, a new list of said schools are given.
28, s. 2001	Prohibiting the Commercialization of the DECS Organization through Endorsements and Accreditation of Goods and Services	No endorsements or accreditation shall be issued by DECS. DECS may however, disseminate information on events, scholarships and training opportunities for teachers and students. This will be issued as advisories.
34, s. 2001	Two Books A Year Per Student	Starting this SY, all students in public elementary and secondary schools must show evidence of having read at least one (1) book in vernacular and one (1) book in English per year before being promoted to the next grade or year level.
		For purpose of this Order, textbook are NOT considered a book. A book may range from a picture (for Grade 1) to a novel (for Fourth Year)
		Evidence may consist of a written or oral book report, submitted as part of minimum requirements for Filipino or English subjects, as appropriate.
		The first book report should be given in the end of Second Grading Period and the second book is on the end of the Fourth Grading Period.
40, s. 2001	Guidelines in the Utilization of the Allocation for the Regional Science High Schools for CY 2001	For CY 2001, all Regional Science High Schools (RSHSs) will be given financial aid in amount of Two Million Pesos each for specific purposes under budget line for Maintenance and other Operating Expenses (MOOE)
45, s. 2001	Ang 2001 Revisyon ng Alfabeto	In line with the 1986 Constitution, Filipino as a national language must be continually enriched and to fully address the rapid development and growth of the language, the Commission on the Filipino Language revised the rules on spelling and the primer on the Filipino Language.
		This is a guide to teaching, writing books and correspondence using Filipino.
53, s. 2001	Strengthening the Protecting Religious Rights of Student	The Constitution guarantees for citizens to have freedom of religion and non-discrimination on the basis of sex, religion, creed or color.
		All schools should strive to ensure that these rights are protected and strengthened.
		The National Youth Commission has called attention to the plight of Muslim students attending schools where certain policies or practices infringe on their religious rights.
		All schools, both public and private, are directed to review their policies to ensure that these are sensitive to the religious rights of the students.

Department Order	Title	Particulars
		For Muslim students the following policies shall be adopted: Female Muslim schoolchildren should be allowed to use their veil or headdress (hijab) inside the school campus; in Physical Education classes, Muslim girls shall not be required to wear shorts, they shall be allowed to wear appropriate clothing in accordance with their religious beliefs; Muslim students shall not be required to participate in non-Muslim religious rites.
56, s. 2001	Policy on Educational Field Trips	The Department of Education did not issue a ban against field trips.
		Field trips may supplement classroom instruction.
		Student who cannot attend should not be penalized; teachers should not conduct tests based on the field trip, those who cannot join should be given special tests or assignments as substitutes.
		Organizers may tap external sources to reduce burden on students.
		Organizers should secure the consent of parents.
3, s. 2002	On Simple and Austere Graduation Rites	Graduation contributions should not exceed P200.00
11, s. 2002	Registration Procedures for the May 2002 Nonformal Education Accreditation and Equivalency (NFE A&E) Tests	
17, s. 2002	May 2002 Nonformal Education Accreditation and Equivalency (NFE A&E) Test Administration	
43, s. 2002	The 2002 Basic Education Curriculum (BEC)	Basic education curriculum shall be implemented in all public schools in the pilot year 2002-2003.
		These cover the salient features of the 2002 Secondary Education Curriculum: 1. Subject Nomenclature, Description and Sequencing, 2. Time Allotment, 3 Class Program, 4. Curriculum Enrichment and Localization/Contextualization, 5. Medium of Instruction, 6. Textbooks and other Instructional Materials, 7. Teaching Load, 8. Coordinatorship in Makabayan, 9. School Curriculum Committee, 10. Grading System and Reporting of Student Performance, 11. Promotion and Retention
45, s. 2002	Reading Literacy Program in the Elementary Schools	One of the 2002 BECS's main thrusts is to ensure that every child is a successful reader at the end of Grade 3. The Department shall enforce the policy "Every Child A Reader" beginning SY 2002-2003.
		It is expected that no pupil will be promoted to the next higher level unless s/he manifests mastery of the basic literacy skills in a particular grade level.
		All schools are enjoined to develop a school-based reading program that includes a conduct of an inventory of the children's reading ability, a diagnosis of those who need further reading instruction and appropriate measures to improve reading comprehension.

Department Order	Title	Particulars
47, s. 2002	Nonformal Education Accreditation and Equivalency (NFE A&E) System Implementation	NFE A&E provides an alternative means of certification of learning to Filipinos and foreigners aged 15 and above who are basically literate, unable to avail of the formal school system, who have dropped out of formal elementary or secondary school.
		NFE A&E aims to: provide a system of assessing levels of literacy and nonformal learning achievement based on a National NFE A&E Curriculum; offer an alternative pathway by which out of school youths and adults earn an educational qualification comparable to the formal elementary and secondary school system and to enable out of school youths and adults to gain reading, writing, and numeracy skills they need to improve their economic status and function more effectively in society.
		The target learners of the NFE A&E system are out of school youths and adult Filipinos and foreigners who are 15 years and above who are basically literate. However, out of school children aged 6-14 years may avail of the NFE A&E system components except for the NFE A&E tests.
		The NFE A&E system will be implemented in 16 regions.
48, s. 2002	The Regional Science High Schools for the Reorganized Regions in Mindanao	Executive Order #36 provided the reorganization of the new Administrative Regions in Mindanao and identified 3 New Regional Science High Schools in the designated region and these schools shall implement the curriculum required for Regional Science High Schools starting 2003-2004.
		Region 10: Gusa National High School (RSHS Annex)
		Region 11: Governor Leopoldo Lopez Memorial Science High School
		Region 12: Alabel National Science High School
51, s. 2002	Policy on Educational Field Trips	Organizers must obtain a written consent form the parents
		Teachers should accompany the children from assembly time until they go home. Parent volunteers are encouraged to help look after the children.
		Organizers must select the safest means of transportation, students must be loaded into the vehicle in accordance with the maximum passenger capacity; no riding on the roof or boarding platform.
		Drivers should be advised to drive with extreme care; and should not take alcoholic beverages or drinks during the entire duration of the trip.
		If there is a recreational activity like swimming, lifeguards or teachers should be strategically stationed to watch the children.
		The school should arrange for optional accident insurance.
1, s. 2003	Promulgating the Implementing Rules and Regulations of Republic Act No. 9155 otherwise known as The	The rules and regulation of RA 9155 is enclosed for the information of all.

Department Order	Title	Particulars
	Governance of Basic Education Act of 2001	
2, s. 2003	April 2003 Nonformal Education Accreditation and Equivalency (NFE A&E) Test Registration and Administration	
8, s. 2003	Academic-focused Bridging Program in the Nonformal Education Accreditation and Equivalency System	Examinees who successfully pass the secondary level of NFE A&E test will receive a secondary level certificate comparable to that of the formal school system. This certificate will enable them to enter or re-enter the world of work and enroll in four to five year courses and post-secondary vocational training.
		To address the learning needs of NFE A&E learners wishing to enter college, the Bureau of Nonformal Education developed a range of supplementary bridging courses to provide interested learners with skills and competencies in higher mathematics, advance science, English and Filipino if they are to cope with the demands and entry requirements of college education.
9, s. 2003	Guidelines in the selection of honor pupils/students in public schools.	Amends the existing guidelines.
		Any pupil/ student is a candidate for honors even if s/he is a transferee.
		Only the top 2 regardless of grades lower than 80% in any of their subjects shall be ranked valedictorian/salutatorian.
		Academic standing will be based on the general average of grades.
		The ranking of valedictorian/salutatorian in the secondary level shall follow 7-3 point scheme, that is academic excellence shall be given 7 points and 3 points for co-curricular activities. This applies only in the secondary level. At the elementary level, all awards shall be based on academic standing only.
13, s. 2003	Inclusion of the out-of-school children six to fourteen years of age in the NFE Accredited and Equivalency Program	Pursuant to RA 9155 (Governance of Basic Education Act of 2001), out-of-school children aged six-fourteen years will be given access to the NFE A&E program through community learning centers, the schools or the home and also as a home study program supervised by the school or a service provider.
		Additional test qualifiers for the program are as follows: 6 to 14 years old who are dropouts from the formal school system; in the labor force; street children; children of indigenous communities; physically disadvantaged; living in areas of armed conflict and are in educational institutions that offer curricula different from the Basic Education Curriculum.
		Passers of the NFE A&E tests for elementary level shall be accepted in 1 st year high school, and those for the secondary level shall be eligible to enter college or post-secondary education.

Department Order	Title	Particulars
		The NFE A&E field operations funds, Literacy Service Contracting Scheme (LSCS) and Learning Support Delivery System (LSDS) given to regional and division offices will also be used for this purpose.
19, s. 2003	BEC Based Summer Classes	Enclosed guidelines for the summer classes.
22, s. 2003	Guidelines on the selection of honor students under the 2002 Basic Education Curriculum (BEC)	Guidelines were developed by the Bureau of Secondary Education on choosing honor students who have shown exemplary performance in their academic work. The guidelines are to be implemented starting SY 2002-2003. The fourth year level shall base its guidelines on DECS Order No. 65, s. 1998 for SY 2002-2003. Starting SY 2003-2004 these guidelines are to be followed by fourth year level as well.
		Private schools implementing the BEC are encouraged to follow these guidelines as well.
		At the beginning of every school year, teachers, parents, and students are to be oriented on the new scheme.
26, s. 2003	Supplemental Provisions/Guidelines on the Strengthening of Local Literacy Coordinating Councils and Literacy Implementing Units	Enclosed a copy of DepEd-DILG-NEDA Joint Circular No. 1 dated March 25, 2003 to reinforce the efforts in addressing the various literacy concerns in the country and to ensure proper implementation, management and sustainability of these literacy programs and projects.
35, s. 2003	Implementation of CAT at 4 th Year High School level	In accordance with the revised implementing rules and regulations of the National Service Program issued by the Department of National Defense, the Citizenship Advancement Training (CAT) a restructuring of the Citizens Army Training, will be implemented starting SY 2003-2004 in the Secondary Level.
		The CAT program has two components: Military Orientation and Community Service. This program is a requirement for graduation for all fourth year high school students in both public and private secondary schools.
37, s. 2003	Revised Implementing Guidelines of the 2002 Secondary Education Curriculum Effective SY 2003-2004	Revision on the time allotment and unit credits; medium of instruction; grading system; promotion and retention of students; sample report card.
41, s. 2003	Valued Education in Basic Education Curriculum	Values education purposely planned as part of the regular lessons in the subject and not taken as incidental lessons.
		Trained values education teachers or those who majored in values education are duly recognized to perform functions relevant to their expertise.
52, s. 2003	Policy on Educational Field Trips (Additional Guidelines)	Evaluate the result of interventions conducted both inside and outside the classroom.
		Fieldtrips should be well planned ahead of time with the students. Safety measures should be discussed.
		Places that will be visited must be educational to supplement classroom lessons.
		Trips to malls and noontime shows are discouraged.

Department Order	Title	Particulars
		The field trip should not put an additional financial burden to the parents. Possible sponsors or other sources may be tapped.
61, s. 2003	Support to Strong Republic Schools	To help the government efforts to expand learning opportunities in remote areas, strong republic schools are being established in selected barangays throughout the country.
		All public schools in this program are to allow the use of classrooms after regular school hours and weekends and to refer to the District Noformal Education Coordinator and/or the Division Office any individual who seeks to register with the SRS.
64, s. 2003	Addendum to DepEd Order No. 61, s. 2003	All interested elementary and secondary school teachers shall be allowed to serve as instructional managers for accreditation and equivalency and/or literacy facilitators for the basic literacy program after undergoing training as such and if they are willing to undertake such work in addition to their present teaching assignments.
		These teachers shall be authorized to render service after class hours and on Saturdays and Sundays to enable them to earn service credits duly certified by their school Principal and approved by the Schools Division/City Superintendent.
67, s. 2003	2002 BEC Implementation in Private Schools	For private schools the implementation of the BEC is optional for SY 2003-2004.
70, s.2003	Revised grading system for elementary and secondary schools	Grading system is now designed to reflect consistency between true level and degree of mastery of competencies by students in each subject area.
		Actual effectiveness of the teaching-learning process may be correctly assessed by all concerned.
		Policies and Guidelines on the transmutation of scores and ratings: numeric/descriptive ratings converted to percentage grades without applying base percentage. This disclaims the transmutation table that uses 70% as the baseline.
75, s. 2003	Corrigendum to DepEd Order No. 13, s. 2003	Corrected paragraph 5 as follows: "The NFE A&E operations funds better known as Learning Support Delivery System (LSDS) given to regional and division offices will be used for this purpose."
79, s. 2003	Assessment and evaluation of learning and reporting of students progress in public elementary and secondary schools.	Guidelines in the assessment and reporting of student's progress: grades not to be computed on the basis of any transmutation table.
		Grades shall be based in assessment the covers the range of learning competencies. 60% easy items focused on basic content and skills expected of a student in each grade/level; 30% medium level to identify higher level skills and 10% difficult items to distinguish the fast learners.
		Easy does not mean items that require simple recall only.
		Scores are based on the raw scores totaled at each grading period's end and then computed as percentages.

Department Order	Title	Particulars
		There will be a 75% requirement to pass.
		65% is the lowest grade in the report card, true grades lower than 65% will be reflected in the class record.
		For different subjects, grades will be based on the allotted weights.
		The use of rubrics/scoring guides are encouraged.
		The final grade is composed of the average of 4 periodical grades.
		Nontraditional assessments are also encouraged to complement traditional assessments.
82, s. 2003	Amendment to DepEd Order No. 79, s. 2003	Information did not reach school level in time for the administration of the periodicals and computations for the second grading period.
		Modification in the testing instruments prescribed can only be implemented after teachers are trained.
		Other components can be assessed using existing practices.
		No. 79, s. 2003 implemented for 3 rd Grading Period SY 2003-2004.
4, s. 2004	Additional guidelines on the new performance-based grading system	Changes: the use of transmutation tables are to be ended; redesigning of test-based assessment; basing the year-end mark on the average grades in the four grading periods.
		Additional guidelines to help in the transition: in the 4 th grading period, the tests will be designed so that 70% is easy, 20% moderate and 10% difficult.
		The passing mark is 70% instead of 75%.
		The lowest rating indicated in the card is still 65%.
20, s. 2004	2004 BEC based summer classes	Shall be held 6 weeks inclusive of Saturdays between April 19, 2004 and May 28, 2004. Private schools may deviate from this schedule provided they notify their respective Regional Offices in advance.
		Teachers shall administer diagnostic exams to identify student's development areas as basis for the preparation of the remedial lessons.
		Daily sessions per subject should be based on the time allotment given by the department.
21, s. 2004	Recognition of graduates with distinction in public elementary and secondary schools.	Those who have excelled overall in both curricular and co-curricular activities may likewise be recognized as Graduates with Distinction.
		This recognition shall be given to students other than those who have been declared Valedictorian, Salutatorian and Honorable Mention.

Department Order	Title	Particulars
		The selection shall be based on a 9-1 point scheme for elementary; 9 points for curricular activities and 1 point for co-curricular activities and 7-3 point scheme for secondary level; 7 points for curricular activities and 3 points for co-curricular activities.
27, s. 2004	Amendment and Clarification to DepEd Order No. 20, s. 2004	Clarified and added that the PRA (Parent-Teacher Association) will be the ones to collect the fees for teacher's honoraria as well as the disbursement and liquidation of the amount to be collected.
33, s. 2004	Implementing guidelines on the performance-based grading system for SY 2004-2005	Lowest passing grade is 75% for SY 2004-2005; lowest failing grade is 65%. The same standard applies to students in the Bridge program.
		In assessing learning outcomes test design should be consist of 60% basic items, 30% more advanced items and 10% for distinguishing honor students. Questions should have different weights and should cover only what is actually taken up in class.
		Transmutation tables are not to be used.
		Final grades are the average of the 4 quarters.
		Promotion to high school shall be by subject. Retention: 3 units or more during the year is unable to make up during summer. Retained students may repeat only those subjects they failed.
34, s. 2004	Corrigendum to DepEd Order No. 37, s. 2003 (Revised Implementing Guidelines of the 2002 Secondary Education Curriculum Effective SY 2003-2004)	Time allotment for Science: from 400 minutes to 360 minutes per week Time Allotment for AP: from 200 minutes to 240 minutes per week
51, s. 2004	Standard Curriculum for Elementary Public Schools and Private Madaris	For the Muslims in our country, they aspire to have an Islamic Education that is authentic and appropriate for the Bangsa Moro population. In the interest of national unity and the implementation of the 1996 Peace Agreement, Madrasah Education is declared a vital component of the National Educational System.
		The significant role of Islamic education through the Madaris to provide access to education must be recognized as it is a way to teach unreached Muslim children and providing education that is meaningful, relevant and culture-sensitive.
		The crucial issue that confronts Muslim educators is the unification of curriculum amongst the Madaris. Public schools do not include Arabic Language and Islamic values, making the Muslim ignorant of their religion and the Holy Qur-an. Private Madaris do not follow the public education curriculum, turning students into virtual foreigners in their own country.
		The Department of Education in its effort to address these concerns facilitated the formulation of a standard curriculum for both the public schools and private Madaris.

Department Order	Title	Particulars
		The curriculum for both schools would aim to: establish a smooth transfer of students from public to private Madrasah or vice versa; unite the long history of dichotomy among Muslims; promote the Filipino national identity and at the same time preserve the Muslim's cultural heritage.
		In this light all public schools and private Madaris in Muslim communities are hereby enjoined to implement this standard curriculum provided in the Enclosure during the pilot year SY 2005-2006.
52, s. 2004	Implementation of CAT in Public and Private Secondary Schools	Trainers who participated in the CAT training held on May 13-16, 2003 at RELC, Marikina City may be tapped to provide training to the teacher-facilitators in both public and private secondary schools.
		The school shall be determine the component of CAT that shall be offered (Military Orientation, Community Service, Public Safety and Law Enforcement).
		35 hours is the minimum requirement for the completion of any component/combination in a school year.
		Pass or fail basis of grading only.
57, s. 2004	Clarificatory Guidelines on the Unit Credits and the Grade in Makabayan (secondary level)	In view of the changes in the time allocation of science and AP; Science 400 minutes to 360 minutes a well will have 1.8 units and for AP which changed from 200 minutes to 240 minutes a week will have 1.2 units.
		CAT is separate subject on a Pass or Fail basis of grading and with a 0.30 units credit.
62, s. 2004	Adoption of double shift policy in public schools to address classroom shortage	To reduce the classroom deficit which is placed at 51,947 classrooms as of the beginning of SY 2004-2005, based on a class size of 45, the double shift session for classes shall be adopted to the extent practicable in the following schools starting SY 2005-2006: Elementary level: schools holding 3 or 4 shift classes; schools in the city division on single shift; schools in non-city divisions on single shift with classroom-pupil ratio of 66 and above and black zone schools.
		In the secondary level all secondary schools will adopt the double shift session.
		Elementary schools in non-city divisions with classroom-pupil ratios of 65 and below and operating on single shift will remain on single shift.
		Class size shall range from a minimum of 15 pupils/students to a maximum of 65 pupils/students per class. The average class size shall be 50.
		To prepare for the efficient implementation of the strategy, schools shall conduct an assessment of the required quantity of resources needed by the school to operate on the double shift system.
6, s. 2005	Selection of honor pupils/students in public elementary and secondary schools	Candidates for honors, at any grade/year level shall be drawn from the top ten pupils/students of the school and must not have a final grade lower than 80%.

Department Order	Title	Particulars
		The top 10 pupils shall be ranked using the 7-3 point scheme and the students' grade in the previous level shall not be considered in the ranking of graduating students.
		In case of a tie, candidates may both be declared for the honor ranking.
		Candidates for honors at any level must have done the entire work of the grade/year level in the school where they are candidates of honors. Thus students who transfer during the school year shall be ineligible for honors for the curriculum year.
		A student who has been suspended for serious disciplinary infractions shall be disqualified for honors for the curriculum grade/year during which suspension is imposed.
		Any teacher who is related within the second degree of affinity or consanguinity to any candidate for honors shall not be allowed to sit as member of the Selection Committee.
11, s. 2005	Addendum to DepEd Order No. 57, s. 2004	All schools are advised that CAT is excluded in the computation of the MAKABAYAN grade, as CAT does not have a numerical grade.
		CAT shall not be included in the computation of the grades for honor students however a "PASSED" rating is required for eligibility for honors.
13, s. 2005	2005 BEC based summer classes	Shall be held 6 weeks inclusive of Saturdays between April 19, 2005 and May 28, 2005. Private schools may deviate from this schedule provided they notify their respective Regional Offices in advance.
14, s. 2005	Instructions to ensure consumption of nutritious and safe foods in schools	Every school must have a school canteen no matter how small the school and how modest the canteen. For schools without canteens, school heads must coordinate with the PTA.
		Students must be advised to buy food and beverages only from the school canteen and discouraged to go out of the campus to buy food outside. Recess periods must be supervised by class advisers.
		Food items sold at canteens must include natural or fortified food products that are rich in energy, vitamins and minerals, like root crops, rice, and corn products in native preparations, fruits and vegetables in season and fortified foods bearing the Sangkap Pinoy seal. Beverages shall be limited to milk, shakes, and juices made from fresh fruits and vegetables.
		Parents should be encouraged to prepare packed snacks for their children to eat during recess periods supervised by class advisers.

Department Order	Title	Particulars
		School heads should seek the help of the Local Government Units and the health centers to help in regulating the sale of food and beverages by ambulant vendors. The Presidential No. 856 also known as the Code of Sanitation of the Philippines allows ambulant food vendors to sell only bottled drinks, biscuits, and confectionaries and other pre-packed food, they are not allowed to sell food which require utensils.
		In order to raise consciousness on food safety, basic messages and concepts shall be integrated in selected subjects in the basic education curriculum.
		The health and nutrition center shall provide food safety handbooks to schools as reference materials and shall initiate the orientation training of regional health and nutrition personnel who in turn will orient the division offices and school health personnel and administrators.
		Health and nutrition personnel at the regional and division levels and school heads shall intensify advocacy on nutrition and food safety and ensure strict implementation of all appropriate safety measures in the schools.
15, s. 2005	2005-2006 School Readiness Assessment for All Grade One Entrants	The department supports the thrust of the national government in the standardization of all preschool and day-care centers. In this light, the Department will conduct School Readiness Assessment (SRA) to all Grade One entrants effective SY 2005-2006.
		The SRA is a tool to determine the readiness of grade one entrants in tackling formal Grade One work.
		It will be administered by Grade 1 teachers, assisted by Grade 2 and 3 teachers one week before the opening of classes. An orientation of the administration of the SRA tool and interpretation of results will be conducted by Preschool Coordinators trained by DepEd central office staff.
		The result of the said assessment will be the basis for the grouping of the grade one pupils. All pupils found not to be ready will undergo the 8-week curriculum to prepare them for formal grade one work. For children found to be ready, the 8-week curriculum will serve as a refresher of their readiness skills acquired.
		There is no prescribed length of time for its use, rather, the Grade One teacher shall determine how much of the 8-week curriculum his/her class needs before proceeding to formal grade one work.
		Each division shall be provided with hardcopies of the SRA tool and the Manual of Administration for reproduction, the cost of which shall be charged against local funds.
22, s. 2005	Guidelines in the voluntary collection of fees from students of public elementary and secondary schools	The Constitution provides the mandate for free public education. These students of public elementary and secondary schools have the right to enroll without being compelled to pay any amount as required for enrollment.

Department Order	Title	Particulars
		Contribution to the following organizations may be collected provided that the student has enrolled and the contribution is voluntary: Boy Scout of the Philippines; Girl Scout of the Philippines; Philippine National Red Cross; Anti-TB education and fund drive. Payment of these contributions shall not be made a requirement for admission, enrollment, and release of report cards or test results or for clearances in purposes of transfers to other schools. The following practices are prohibited to make sure that the donations are voluntarily: Requiring payment of contributions before admission, release of report cards or test results, or for clearance for transfer students; requiring parents to sign promissory notes for contributions they are unable to pay; setting up variations in enrolment procedures discriminating those who contribute from those who do not; using the moral suasion or authority of the school head or teacher to shame or criticize those who do not contribute. Teachers and other school personnel are not allowed to collect these contributions in behalf of the organizations. They shall assign their own personnel to collect contributions or membership fees at the school level. In case they do not have such personnel, these organizations may coordinate with the school's PTA/PTCA to authorize the school's PTA/PTCA Treasurer to collect these contributions in behalf of the organizations. During the enrolment period, the school head shall post an announcement written in English and/or Filipino in "cartolina" or manila paper with a minimum size of 23 in. x 28 in. at the entrance of the school which states that: Enrolment does not require any payment of any contribution/fee; all contributions/fees that are being collected are VOLUNTARY in nature." School heads should see to it that separate tables are put up to be manned by PTA/PTCA personnel, Girl/Boy Scout volunteers to receive these contributions. These tables should be located away from the enrolment area, and a sign stating "Voluntary Contributions" must be posted in front.
31, s. 2006	Implementation of policy instruments in reporting cases of children involved in armed conflict	This order ensures educational opportunities for all children in all areas, develop culture-sensitive curriculum manuals on children, peace and human rights to be used in all areas, especially indigenous people (IPs) communities/areas, make available non-formal education programs and other alternative learning system to children in identified conflict areas, and declare schools as zones of peace.
39, s. 2006	Promoting equitable access to and optimum utilization of instructional facilities for basic education	In order to improve access to quality basic education by maximizing the utilization of instructional facilities in schools and ensure equity in the distribution of government resources for basic education, all DepED Regional Offices are advised to implement the following guidelines: Maximize the utilization of existing classrooms in the private secondary schools through the

Department Order	Title	Particulars
		Education Voucher System; Rationalize the establishment of new schools for focusing on those communities not being served by any school.
41, 2. 2006	Organization of preschool classes under the preschool service contracting program for SY 2006-2007	In consonance with the Education for All (EFA) goal of achieving universal participation and elimination of dropout and repetition in the first three grades of schooling, the Department shall continue to implement the Preschool Service Contracting (PSC) Program. It is a delivery system that provides education to incoming Grade One pupils who cannot afford to enroll in any regular preschool and who were not accommodated in any kind of preschool services, e.g., Parent-Teacher Community Association (PTCA) initiated classes and Daycare Centers, during the opening of the School Year 2006-2007.
		The program engages the services of the private schools and the non-government organizations/institutions in preparing the five-year old to learn and achieve the desired competencies in Grade One through contracting scheme. For School Year 2006-2007, contracting classes shall be expanded to cover more disadvantaged five-year old children in fifth and sixth class municipalities, urban slums and relocation areas.
46, s. 2006	Guidelines in the pilot implementation of the Open High School Program (OHSP)	The Open High School Program (OHSP) is an alternative mode of delivering secondary education for both public and private schools. It puts premium on independent, self-pacing and flexible study to reach learners who are unable to start or complete secondary education due to problems of time, distance, physical impairment, financial difficulties, social, or family problems.
		The OHSP aims to: Retain in school potential dropouts; Encourage out-of-school youth of high school age (12-16) to return to school; and Contribute to the accomplishment of the Education for All (EFA 2015) target which is 100% participation rate and zero dropout rate by 2015.
10, s. 2007	Submission of the priority lists of recipient schools to be funded under the CY 2007 DepED school building program for areas experiencing acute classroom shortage (Red and Black Schools)	The appropriation for CY 2007 DepED School Building Program has been set at PhP2.76 Billion. Of this amount, PhP1.0 Billion will be utilized to address the classroom requirements of schools belonging to the Red and Black codes of the Basic Education Information System (BEIS). Red and Black Schools refers to areas experiencing acute classroom shortage: (a) where the number of students divided by the existing number of classrooms shall result to a classroom-student ratio of 1:60 or more, (b) those where classrooms are temporary in nature or makeshift structures; or (c) those without classrooms at all.

Focus Group Discussion Guide

Welcome and thank you for coming to participate in this focus group discussion meeting. The purpose of this FGD is to get your perceptions, opinions, views, comments, and suggestions regarding current educational policies and programs of the Department of Education (DepED) with the view of improving or strengthening them for the benefit of both Muslim and non-Muslim pupils and students. Because your responses are personal perceptions and views, there will be no right or wrong answers; only different perceptions and points of views. Thus, I encourage you to be very open as you voice out your ideas. Your responses to the questions I will pose will be kept strictly confidential.

- Question 1: What are some of the most perplexing problems faced by Muslim learners studying in our public elementary and secondary schools? Please site examples or actual cases.
- Question 2: What education policies are being implemented/carried out by DepED to address the problems you mentioned? In your opinion how effective are these policies when carried out in the schools where there are Muslim children?
- Question 3: If there are educational policies, laws, rules or regulations that should be strengthened, amended or repealed in order to improve access, equity and quality of basic education for Muslim children, what should they be? Please elaborate or give examples.
- Question 4: As (school head/teacher/parent), what specific educational policies, laws, rules or regulations formulated and handed down by DepED National have affected you, positively or negatively? Please give specific examples or cases by which these policies, rules or regulations have affected you as (school head/teacher/parent).
- Question 5: Lastly, in very specific terms what do you suggest to our DepED officials (national, regional, division, district or school level) to make implementation of educational policies, rules or regulations more user-friendly to our Muslim children and youth in the public elementary and secondary schools here in Mindanano or elsewhere in the country.

Question 6: How important is Madrasah education to you and your children? What can you say about the DepED policy with regard to Madrasah education? What do you suggest to our DepED policy makers to make Madrasah education truly meaningful to the lives of every Muslim pupil and student?

ROAD MAP FOR UPGRADING MUSLIM BASIC EDUCATION

A COMPREHENSIVE PROGRAM FOR THE EDUCATIONAL DEVELOPMENT OF FILIPINO MUSLIMS

Rationale

The Muslims, like all Filipino citizens shall have the 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 their quality of life.

The Muslims as Filipino citizens shall ensure sustained and permanent peace through access to Islamic-friendly educational curriculum and quality basic education comparable with the rest of the Filipino children.

The Muslim Filipinos shall advance their educational status for which the Philippine nation shall obtain political and economic gains and benefits that will ensure a steady flow of investments, not only in Mindanao but in the whole country.

There shall be a strengthening of the present Madrasah educational system as a vital component of the national education system.

The peace process shall be enhanced when Filipino Muslims are educated in Islamic-friendly and quality basic education which will contribute to the eradication of separatist sentiments in the minds of present and future generations of Filipino Muslims.

PROGRAM COMPONENTS

- I. Development and Institutionalization of Madrasah Education;
- II. Upgrading Quality Secular Basic Education in formal elementary and secondary schools serving Muslim children;
- III. Developing and Implementing an Alternative Learning System for Filipino Muslims out-of-school youth;
- IV. Developing and Implementing Appropriate Livelihood Skills Education and Training for present day students of Private Madaris, and out-of-school youth.
- V. Supporting Government Efforts to Provide Quality ECCD Program for Muslim Filipino Pre-School Children

- VI. Creation of a Special Fund For Assistance To Muslim Education (FAME) by an Act of Congress
 - VII. Improvement of the Health and Nutritional Status of Filipino Muslim learners particularly in the public elementary schools
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**Program Component I:
Development and Institutionalization of Madrasah Education**

The standard curriculum for elementary public schools and private Madaris had been 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, Madrasah educational system has now been upgraded as a vital component of the national educational system, similar to the Christian and Chinese schools systems.

To develop and institutionalize Madrasah education as a vital component of the national education system, the Road Map proposes the following activities:

- 1) Formulate, refine and promulgate the Standard Curriculum for Private Madrasah and Enriched Curriculum for the Public Elementary and Secondary Schools

Elementary level

Secondary level

- 2) Develop, print, deploy and distribute instructional materials for Arabic language, Islamic values and Islamic studies for use in public schools and private Madaris;

Elementary level

Secondary level

- 3) Professionalization of Madrasah Teachers

- a) Teaching in Private Madaris

Conduct of Accelerated Teachers Training Course (ATTC) for Madrasah teachers focused on English language proficiency and pedagogical skills and content mastery in Science, Mathematics;

Scholarship program for a three (3) to four (4) semester postgraduate diploma in Pedagogy with at least 18 units of education subjects, after passing an English proficiency at the levels of TOEFL or IELTS;

Licensure examination through LET;

Certification of competencies for teaching Arabic language and Islamic values, and Islamic studies;

Recognition by CHED of college degree/diploma obtained by graduates from unaccredited institutions in the Philippines and abroad.

b) Teaching Arabic Language and Islamic Values in Public Schools

Conduct of Accelerated Teachers Training Course (ATTC) for capacity building in English and pedagogical skills

Scholarship program for a three (3) to four (4) semester postgraduate diploma in Pedagogy with at least 18 units of education subjects, after passing an English proficiency at the levels of TOEFL or IELTS;

Licensure examination through LET;

Certification of competencies for teaching Arabic language and Islamic values,

Provision of teacher items for teachers of Arabic language and Islamic values in the public schools;

c) Develop Teachers education curricula with majors in Arabic language and Islamic studies for approval by CHED.

4) Enable students to move between public schools and Madrasah institutions and vice versa in order to complete basic education

Developing a special equivalency mechanism for presently enrolled Madaris students covering RBEC subjects during the transition period until the full implementation of the standard curriculum for all grade and year levels.

5) Provide mechanisms for recognition and accreditation of Madrasah institutions.

Developing a system for recognition and accreditation of private Madaris.

Developing assessment and evaluation systems for Arabic languages, Islamic values, and Islamic studies.

Provision of special funds by DepED to encourage Madrasah institutions to get government recognition and teach RBEC subjects, e.g. RBEC textbooks, laboratories in Science and computer science/technology

**Program Component II:
Upgrading Quality Secular Basic Education in Formal Elementary and
Secondary Schools Serving Muslim Children**

To bring to a comparable level the achievement of Filipino Muslim schoolchildren with the rest of the Filipino children, they should have access to Islamic-friendly educational curriculum and quality basic education. This will be achieved through the following activities:

- 1) Contextualizing the RBEC curriculum so that it is culturally sensitive and Islamic friendly. This involves:
 - Localization of RBEC competencies
 - Development of contextualized learning materials
 - Training of teachers in CTL (contextualized teaching and learning) process
 - Development of appropriate assessment measures
 - Printing, deploying and distributing contextualized RBEC instructional materials (textbooks, teachers manual, students skillsbooks), and supplementary materials
 - 2) Providing appropriate facilities to improve the quality of the teaching-learning process through increased resource allocation for school buildings, laboratory facilities, computer facilities, equipment and furniture
 - 3) Building/strengthening institutional capacity for content mastery of RBEC subjects through
 - Regular evaluation of teacher and school head performance
 - Mentoring and training of teachers and school heads
 - Benchmarking opportunities with teachers and school heads elsewhere in the country and in Southeast Asia
 - 4) Instituting strict adherence to the highest standard for school heads and teachers through continuing professional education programs and compliance to national standards of recruitment, selection and hiring and performance evaluation
 - 5) Implementing appropriate ADM (alternative delivery modalities) for the hard-to-reach students
 - 6) Implementing the SFI (Schools First Initiative) program strategies designed to transfer authority, responsibility and accountability for higher pupil achievement to the school heads and the school community
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**Program Component III:
Developing and Implementing an Alternative Learning System for Muslim
Filipino Out-of-School Youth**

Muslim OSY are the product of extreme poverty and the continuing armed conflict in Mindanao. In the short run, problems of OSY are the most urgent. They are the likely targets for recruitment not only of extremist, but criminal elements which includes drug pushing, kidnapping, and car napping. The Roadmap proposes the following interventions:

- 1) Conduct of regular demographic and literacy mapping in every barangay with Muslim population nationwide
- 2) Computerization of a database on OSY and literacy among Muslims and regular updating of mapping data.
- 3) Development, reproduction and deployment of contextualized ALS curriculum and learning materials responsive to the needs of Filipino Muslims
- 4) Building capacity of ALS service providers and personnel to implement quality ALS programs and services for Filipino Muslims
- 5) Implementation of the DepED ALS programs in Filipino Muslim target communities with the following program components.

Accreditation and Equivalency

Basic Literacy

- 6) Establish/organize community learning centers for Filipino Muslim ALS learners
-

**Program Component IV:
Developing and Implementing Appropriate Livelihood Skills Education and
Training for Present Day Students of Private Madaris, and Out-of-School Youth**

Due to the absence of economic opportunities in Muslim Mindanao caused by the armed conflict, Muslims have migrated to cities and large municipalities in the Visayas and Luzon, especially in Metro Manila. There is need to guide and counsel Filipino Muslim high school students, out-of-school youth into the world of work so they can make choices for a career in employment or entrepreneurship. The Road Map proposes the following activities:

Formal School

Introducing applied academics (APEX) for excellence with career preparation in the Private Madaris and public secondary schools,

Strengthening vocational high schools to deliver quality and relevant techvoc education for Private Madaris and public secondary schools

Developing partnerships with community colleges and other post secondary education and training institutions to facilitate access to techvoc training programs by students in Private Madaris and public secondary schools;

Developing school to industry attachment/internship programs for private madaris and public secondary schools

Alternative Learning System

Integration of ALS programs with livelihood skills training in collaboration with TESDA and other TVET providers

Developing partnerships for employment/apprenticeship opportunities for out-of-school youth

Developing entrepreneurship opportunities in collaboration with the private sectors, government agencies and micro financing institutions

Provide scholarships, guidance and counseling, and bridging programs for access to higher education

Program Component V: Supporting Government Efforts to Provide Quality ECCD Programs for Muslim Filipino Pre-school Children

Support/encourage the establishment of community learning centers with child minding facilities for young mothers

Extend preschool service contracting facilities for Filipino Muslim preschool children

Developing contextualized preschool education standards for Muslim Filipino pre-school children

**Program Component VI:
Creation of a Special Fund for Assistance to Muslim Education (FAME) by an
Act of Congress**

The Roadmap supports ongoing congressional initiatives to establish a Fund for Assistance to Muslim Education (FAME) similar to the existing Fund for Assistance to Private Education (FAPE). This Fund shall sustain the gains and benefits derived from this roadmap after five (5) years. It is proposed that GOP shall contribute US\$10M to the Fund and solicit matching donations from Malaysia and Brunei, our partners in Southeast Asia for improving the quality of Muslim Education in the Philippines.

**Program Component VII:
Improvement of the Health and Nutritional Status of Filipino Muslim Learners
Particularly in the Public Elementary Schools**

One among the many reasons why Filipino Muslim learners are very much behind in the academic performance is poverty. Most often, Filipino Muslim learners are asked to help in the livelihood pursuits of the family, thus resulting in their frequent absences, if not dropping out of schools. The Roadmap proposes the following activities to help improve the quality of life of Filipino Muslims particularly, the health and nutritional status of Filipino Muslim learners in the public elementary schools:

Provide regular feeding programs in public elementary schools with Filipino Muslim learners

Conduct regular medical and dental checkups to learners in public elementary schools with majority of pupils are Filipino Muslims

Upgrade/Provide medical and dental facilities in at least one school in a district preferably a central public elementary school that is accessible for pupils to have their medical and dental checkup

Conduct livelihood skills training to parents of Filipino Muslim learners including provision of micro-financing programs

Advocate for peaceful Muslim communities that are conducive for business opportunities and investment to generate jobs for parents of Filipino Muslim learners

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