

**IN PURSUIT OF NATIONAL STANDARDS:
THE DEVELOPMENT OF ISLAMIC
STUDIES PROGRAM IN HIGHER
EDUCATION IN THE BANGSAMORO
REGION**

A Thesis

**Submitted to the Master's Study Program of Islamic Studies at the
Faculty of Islamic Studies in partial fulfillment of the requirements for
the degree of**

Master of Arts (M.A.)



Almohaimin Tacbil Pakal

01212320002

UNIVERSITAS ISLAM INTERNASIONAL INDONESIA

DEPOK

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بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

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ABSTRACT

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This thesis examines the development of Islamic Studies in higher education in the Bangsamoro region, arguing that the government has supported Islamic studies in higher education in the Philippines. However, the quality standard is comparatively lower than that of other higher education programs. This study uses qualitative methods, specifically in-depth interviews and document analysis, focusing on the Bangsamoro Kulliyah for Islamic Studies (BKIS) in Buluan, Maguindanao del Sur. Three (3) key dimensions are explored: (1) Roles and Initiative of the Ministry of Basic, Higher, and Technical Education (MBHTE) in enhancing the quality and relevance of the Islamic studies program, (2) The evolution of the Islamic studies program at BKIS to meet the national standards and regional needs, and (3) The implementation of strategies by BKIS to improve the quality and relevance of their Islamic studies program. Findings reveal that MBHTE's role functions on two divisions: a general role overseeing higher education and a specific role directly supporting Islamic Studies. In meeting the national standards for Islamic studies, the BKIS adheres to dual regulatory standards set by regional and national education authorities, reflecting a hybrid model of recognition and compliance. Collaborative efforts between BKIS and MBHTE include international and national benchmarking, policy reforms, and the integration of Islamic Studies into broader educational frameworks. Notable initiatives to develop Islamic education for the Bangsamoro people include the Public Madrasah Education or the Madrasah Education Program, Islamic Studies and Arabic Language (ISAL), Arabic Language and Islamic Values (ALIVE) in basic education, and a policy mandating Islamic Studies components across Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) in the Bangsamoro region. These efforts signify a transformative advancement in Islamic education, aiming to develop its quality and align its relevance within the national academic landscape and in response to regional needs.

Keywords: *Bangsamoro region, BKIS, Higher Education, Islamic Studies, MBHTE*

خلاصة البحث

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ماجستير الآداب في الدراسات الإسلامية

الجامعة الإسلامية الدولية الإندونيسية

تناقش هذه الرسالة تطور الدراسات الإسلامية في التعليم العالي في بانغسامورو، مجدداً بأن الحكومة قد دعمت الدراسات الإسلامية في التعليم العالي في الفلبين. ومع ذلك، فإن معيار الجودة أقل نسبياً مقارنة ببرامج التعليم العالي الأخرى. تستعين هذه الدراسة بأساليب البحث النوعية، وتحديد أسلوب المقابلات المتعمقة وتحليل الوثائق، مركزاً في ذلك على كلية بانغسامورو للدراسات الإسلامية (BKIS) في بولوان الموجودة في مقاطعة ماجينداناو ديل سور. يتم في هذا البحث استكشاف ثلاثة أبعاد رئيسية: الأول، أدوار ومبادرات وزارة التعليم الأساسي والعالي والتقني (MBHTE) في تعزيز جودة وأهمية برنامج الدراسات الإسلامية. والثاني، تطوير برنامج الدراسات الإسلامية في كلية بانغسامورو لتلبية المعايير الوطنية والاحتياجات الإقليمية. والثالث، تنفيذ كلية بانغسامورو لاستراتيجياتها في تحسين جودة وأهمية برنامج الدراسات الإسلامية. أظهرت نتائج الدراسة أن لوزارة التعليم الأساسي والعالي والتقني دورين: دور عام في الإشراف على التعليم العالي. ودور خاص يتمثل في الدعم المباشر للدراسات الإسلامية. في إطار استيفائها للمعايير الوطنية للدراسات الإسلامية، تلتزم كلية بانغسامورو للدراسات الإسلامية بمعايير تنظيمية مزدوجة وضعتها هيئات التعليم الإقليمية والوطنية، مما يعكس نموذجاً هجيناً يدمج الاعتراف والامتنال. تشمل الجهود التعاونية بين كلية بانغسامورو للدراسات الإسلامية ووزارة التعليم الأساسي والعالي والتقني وضع معايير مرجعية دولية ووطنية، وإصلاحات سياسية، ودمج الدراسات الإسلامية في أطر تعليمية أوسع. من المبادرات البارزة لتطوير التعليم الإسلامي لشعب بانغسامورو: برنامج التعليم المدرسي، وبرنامج الدراسات الإسلامية واللغة العربية (ISAL)، وبرنامج اللغة العربية والقيم الإسلامية (ALIVE) في المرحلة الأساسية، وسياسة تُلزم مؤسسات التعليم العالي في منطقة بانغسامورو بتضمين مكونات الدراسات الإسلامية (HEIs). تشير هذه الجهود إلى وجود تقدم جذري في التعليم الإسلامي والذي يهدف إلى تحسين جودته ومواءمة أهميته مع المشهد الأكاديمي الوطني وتلبية الاحتياجات الإقليمية.

الكلمات المفتاحية: الدراسات الإسلامية، التعليم العالي، منطقة بانغسامورو، وزارة الأساسي والعالي والتقني (MBHTE)، كلية بانغسامورو للدراسات الإسلامية (BKIS)

TRANSLITERATION GUIDE

Arabic	Roman	Arabic	Roman	Arabic	Roman
أ	a	س	s	ل	l
ب	b	ش	sh	م	m
ت	t	ص	ṣ	ن	n
ث	th	ض	ḍ	و	w
ج	j	ط	ṭ	ه	h
ح	ḥ	ظ	ẓ	ء	'
خ	kh	ع	'	ي	y
د	d	غ	gh		
ذ	dh	ف	f		
ر	r	ق	q		
ز	z	ك	k		

Short Vocal

Arab Alphabet	Roman Alphabet	Arabic Example	Transliteration
َ	A	فَتَحَ	<i>fataḥa</i>
ِ	I	عَلِمَ	<i>'alima</i>
ُ	U	حَسُنَ	<i>ḥasuna</i>

Long Vocal

Arab Alphabet	Roman Alphabet	Arabic Example	Transliteration
آ/أ	Ā	رَضِيَ / قَامَ	<i>riḍā/qāma</i>
ي	ī	قَرِيبٌ	<i>qarīb</i>
و	ū	جُلُوسٌ	<i>julūs</i>

Diphthong

Arab Alphabet	Roman Alphabet	Arabic Example	Transliteration
ؤ	Aw	قَوْمٌ	<i>qawm</i>
ئ	Ay	رَيْبٌ	<i>rayb</i>

Notes:

1. Consonant with shaddah (ّ) for instance سَلَّمَ is written as *sullam* (double letters).
2. The Arabic letter *hamzah* (ء) at the beginning of a word is transliterated into “a” not into “’a”. For instance أَكْبَرُ is written as *akbar* not *'akbar*, except in the middle of a term after a consonant. For example, مَرْأَةٌ is written as *mar'a*.
3. The Arabic script of *alif-lām qamariyah* and *alif-lām shamsiyya* (ال) is written as “al” at the beginning of words. For instance, الْمَجْلِسُ is written *al-majlis* and الرَّجُلُ is written *al-rajul*.
4. The Arabic letter *ta' marbūṭa* (ة) is unwritten/invisible when it is located at the end of the words, such as سُورَةٌ is written as *sūra*. When located in the middle of a sentence is written as “t”, such as الْمَغْرِبِ صَلَاةٌ is written *al-maghrib ṣalāt*.

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APPENDIX

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

ALIVE	: <i>Arabic Language and Islamic Values</i>
ARMM	: <i>Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao</i>
BAA	: <i>Bangsamoro Autonomy Act</i>
BARMM	: <i>Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao</i>
BAIS	: <i>Bachelor of Arts in Islamic Studies</i>
BEC	: <i>Bangsamoro Education Code</i>
BKIS	: <i>Bangsamoro Kulliyah for Islamic Studies</i>
BOL	: <i>Bangsamoro Organic Law</i>
BOT	: <i>Board of Trustees</i>
BP	: <i>Bangsamoro Parliament</i>
CHED	: <i>Commission on Higher Education</i>
CMO	: <i>CHED Memorandum Order</i>
CSE	: <i>Civil Service Examination</i>
DepEd	: <i>Department of Education</i>
EO	: <i>Executive Order</i>
GRP	: <i>Government of the Philippines</i>
HEIs	: <i>Higher Education Institutions</i>
ISAL	: <i>Islamic Studies and Arabic Language</i>
KFCIAS	: <i>King Faisal Centre for Islamic, Arabic, and Asian Studies</i>
LET	: <i>Licensure Examination for Teachers</i>
LUCs	: <i>Local Universities and Colleges</i>
MBHTE	: <i>Ministry of Basic, Higher, and Technical Education</i>
MEP	: <i>Madrasah Education Program</i>
MILF	: <i>Moro Islamic Liberation Front</i>
MMAA	: <i>Muslim Mindanao Autonomy Act</i>
MNLF	: <i>Moro National Liberation Front</i>
MSU	: <i>Mindanao State University</i>
PD	: <i>Presidential Decree</i>
PRC	: <i>Professional Regulatory Commission</i>
RA	: <i>Republic Act</i>
REMACADEMY	: <i>Regional Madrasah Graduate Academy</i>
SUCs	: <i>State Universities and Colleges</i>
TC	: <i>Technical Committee</i>
TESDA	: <i>Technical Education and Skills Development Authority</i>
UAQTEA	: <i>Universal Access to Quality Tertiary Education Act</i>
VET	: <i>Vocational Education and Training</i>

DEFINITION OF TERMS

Akhlāq	: <i>(pl. of Khulq) It refers to moral character or disposition. In Islamic thought, it denotes the internal traits that guide ethical behaviour; shaped through habit, discipline, and spiritual refinement.</i>
Fiqh	: <i>Subject area taught in institution with Islamic jurisprudence.</i>
Guru	: <i>Honorific designations of classical Islamic scholars in the Philippine context.</i>
Hāfidz	: <i>The title of a person who memorizes the whole Qur'ān.</i>
Halaqāt	: <i>A semi-structured or informal learning institution of the Muslims focused on memorizing the Qur'ān, hadīth, fiqh, or spiritual development.</i>
Ibtida	: <i>Elementary level of Islamic School.</i>
Kulliyah	: <i>Collegiate level of Islamic School.</i>
Madrasah	: <i>(pl. of Madaris) Islamic institution offers Arabic and Islamic knowledge.</i>
Maktab	: <i>Traditional models of Islamic schooling in the Philippines, particularly for memorizing the Qur'ān.</i>
Mutawassit	: <i>High school level of Islamic School.</i>
Pandita	: <i>Traditional models of Islamic schooling in the Philippines, particularly held in the house of the Guru.</i>
Qur'ān	: <i>The divine speech of Allah revealed in Arabic to Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him), preserved through mass transmission (tawātur), whose recitation constitutes an act of worship and whose content is inimitable.</i>
Sulṭan	: <i>Muslim leaders.</i>
Tafsīr	: <i>Qur'ānic exegesis.</i>
Thanawī	: <i>Senior high school level of Islamic school.</i>
Ustadzes	: <i>Arabic teachers.</i>
'Ulama	: <i>Islamic scholars.</i>
Hadīth	: <i>About the practices, sayings, and actions of prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him).</i>

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the Study

Several decades ago, the Philippine government recognized the need to provide quality higher education opportunities for Muslim-majority communities, particularly in the southern part of the archipelago.¹ An essential development was the establishment of institutions and universities offering the Bachelor of Arts in Islamic Studies (BAIS), a program designed to preserve Islamic learning and tradition while equipping students with skills pertinent to regional and national development.

On 1 September 1961, Mindanao State University (MSU) was founded through the initiative of the late Senator Domacao A. Alonto,² under the Republic Act (RA) No. 1387, as amended by RA No. 1893, No. 3791, and No. 3868 “*An Act Providing for the Establishment of the Mindanao State University in Marawi City and Authorizing the Appropriation of Funds Therefor.*”³ Through the years, from its original purpose, which is to focus on instruction, research, and extension,⁴ the MSU was officially transformed into a university system based on Executive Order (EO) No. 3 to meet the educational needs of Muslims and indigenous people.⁵ This order effectively transformed the overall aspects of the MSU system and instituted additional colleges or initiated six external entities across four political regions in the Southern Philippines, namely: MSU-Iligan, MSU-Gensan, MSU-Maguindanao, MSU-Tawi-Tawi, MSU-Jolo, and MSU-Naawan.⁶ Except for Iligan and Naawan, the rest of the universities offered four-year baccalaureate degrees in Islamic Studies that consist of several fields such as Islamic law, jurisprudence, and Islamic history.⁷

¹ Arlyne Canales Marasigan, ‘Sustainability Concerns of the Madrasah Education Program: Basis for Philippine Islamic and Madrasah Education Policy Review’, *University of the Philippines, Center for Integrative and Development Studies, Islamic Studies Program*, October 2019, 1–45, file:///C:/Users/pakal/Downloads/SustainabilityConcernoftheMadrasahEducationProgram_Marasigan_UPCIDSDiscussionPaper2019-10.pdf. Also see, Susan Atkins et al., *Independent Completion Review of the Philippines Response to Indigenous Peoples’ and Muslim Education (PRIME) Program* (2014), 1–42, <https://www.dfat.gov.au/sites/default/files/philippines-response-to-indigenous-and-muslim-education-icr.pdf>?

² See the Overview section of ‘Mindanao State University System - About MSU System’, accessed 2 January 2025, <https://www.msu.edu.ph/about.php>.

³ See the MSU Charter of ‘Mindanao State University System - About MSU System’.

⁴ See the Overview section of ‘Mindanao State University System - About MSU System’.

⁵ Alizaman D. Gamon and Mariam S. Tagoranao, ‘The Transformation of Muslim Education in the Philippines: A Revisit’, *Al-Hikmah International Journal of Islamic Studies and Human Sciences* 5, no. 4 Special Issue (2022): 122, <https://doi.org/10.46722/hikmah.v5i4f>.

⁶ Gamon and Tagoranao, ‘The Transformation of Muslim Education in the Philippines’, 2022, 122.

⁷ Gamon and Tagoranao, ‘The Transformation of Muslim Education in the Philippines’, 2022, 122.

Under the MSU system, the King Faisal Centre for Islamic, Arabic, and Asian Studies (KFCIAS), also known as the Institute of Asian and Islamic (Arabic) Studies, was created as a separate institute in 1973 to be the pioneering governmental institution in the nation to provide Islamic and Arabic Studies programs.⁸ Recently, MSU-Gensan launched the Institute of Islamic, Arabic, and International Studies (IIAIS) on 17 January 2024.

Following the establishment of the MSU system, the Institute of Islamic Studies of the University of the Philippines, Diliman (IIS-UPD), which also offers various Islamic Studies programs and extension activities, was founded and reconstituted as an independent university branch pursuant to the Presidential Decree (PD) No. 342 on 9 July 1976, following its creation on 22 November 1973. It aims to foster Muslims to participate in national development and develop a harmonious relationship between the Muslims in the Philippines and the national community.⁹

Other universities such as Cotabato State University (CSU), Jami'at Cotabato (JC), Ateneo de Davao University (ADU), the University of Southern Mindanao (USM), and others also offer four-year baccalaureate degrees in Islamic Studies. On 11 March 2003, another development for the educational needs of Muslims in the Philippines was established. The Regional Legislative Assembly of the former Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (ARMM) passed the Muslim Mindanao Autonomy Act (MMAA) No. 164, "*An Act Providing for the Creation of Regional Madrasah Graduate Academy in the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao, Appropriating Funds Therefor, and for other purposes.*" This act requires the national government to foster the educational needs of Muslims by developing, promoting, preparing *Ustadzes* (Arabic Teachers), *'Ulama* (Islamic Scholars), and other sectors of the Muslims in the country to become more effective partners in the governance of the Bangsamoro region, particularly by enhancing their competencies in educational administration, Islamic governance, technical fields, and particularly meet the national education standards.¹⁰

The act leads to the creation of the Regional Madrasah Graduate Academy, known as REMACADEMY. The REMACADEMY is a higher education institution that collaborates and adheres to the Commission on Higher Education (CHED), an agency of

⁸ See the Academic Units, Colleges, I-P, King Faisal Centre for Islamic, Arabic and Asian Studies section of 'The University', MSU Main Campus - Marawi City, accessed 2 January 2025, <https://www.msomain.edu.ph/>.

⁹ See About IIS, History of IIS section of the 'Institute of Islamic Studies, University of the Philippines-Diliman', Institute of Islamic Studies, University of the Philippines-Diliman, 25 November 2024, <https://iis.upd.edu.ph/>.

¹⁰ Muslim Mindanao Autonomy Act No. 164, RLA BILL NO. 81, Regional Legislative Assembly Fourth Legislative Assembly (2003). https://lawphil.net/administ/mmaa/4a/pdf/mmaa_164_4a.pdf?

the Office of the President (OP) of the Republic of the Philippines, mandated with advancing pertinent and attainable higher education in the nation to build locally receptive, globally competitive graduates, and perpetual learners.¹¹ The institution mainly offers regular graduate and post-graduate programs for the *Ustadzes*, *‘Ulama*, secular professionals, and educators who earned their degrees in the Middle East, near Asian countries, and at local and national universities.¹² On 15 September 2022, the Bangsamoro Parliament (BP) of the Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (BARMM) renamed the REMACADEMY to the Bangsamoro Kulliyah for Islamic Studies (BKIS) following the Bangsamoro Autonomy Act (BAA) No. 50.¹³

However, while the development of the Islamic studies program has been massively conducted with the support of the government, there are challenges that cannot be answered with the emergence of these institutions, even with a large quantity. Several studies confirmed that Islamic studies programs in the Philippines face several challenges. Sahraman D. H. Latif found that there is a perception of stagnation and backwardness in institutions. The reason is that many institutions only focused their curriculum on moral strengthening and spiritual needs, rather than producing graduates with good working skills and comprehensive knowledge of Islam.¹⁴ As a result, there is a lack of quality and competitive graduates,¹⁵ and a gap between what has been learned in the traditional madrasah education with the demands of modern society.¹⁶ These problems are rooted in an unstandardized curriculum in Islamic education, which is not compatible with the job market.¹⁷

On the contrary, the Islamic Studies program is the only educational program for Muslims in the country to receive full recognition from the Philippine government. Then

¹¹ See About Us, The Commission, History section of the ‘Republic of the Philippines, Office of the President, Commission on Higher Education’, Commission on Higher Education, accessed 5 January 2025, <https://ched.gov.ph/>.

¹² Muslim Mindanao Autonomy Act No. 164, 81, Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao Regional Legislative Assembly (Regional Assembly), Muslim Mindanao Autonomy Act No. 164 (2004). https://lawphil.net/administ/mmaa/4a/pdf/mmaa_164_4a.pdf.

¹³ Bangsamoro Kulliyah for Islamic Studies Act of 2023, 31 (2022).

<https://parliament.bangsamoro.gov.ph/wp-content/uploads/2024/02/BAA-50-Bangsamoro-Kuliyah-Islamic-Studies-Act-of-2023.pdf>.

¹⁴ Sahraman Dimakuta Hadji Latif, ‘Islamic Education: Opportunities and Challenges in Secular Philippine State’, *SAINTEKBU* 7, no. 1 (2014): 1, 1, <https://doi.org/10.32764/saintekbu.v7i1.73>.

¹⁵ Ibid

¹⁶ Abdul Haiy Abdul Sali, ‘Sociological Understanding of Muslim Education in Multicultural Philippines’, *Dinamika Ilmu* 23, no. 1 (2023): 105–22, <https://doi.org/10.21093/di.v23i1.6255>.

¹⁷ Zainal Dimaukom Kulidtod, ‘Islamic Educational Policies in the Philippines: Its Evolution and Current Problems’, *International Research-Based Education Journal* 1, no. 1 (2017): 92–102, <https://download.garuda.kemdikbud.go.id/article.php?article=492570&val=10070&title=ISLAMIC%20EDUCATIONAL%20POLICIES%20IN%20THE%20PHILIPPINES%20ITS%20EVOLUTION%20AND%20CURRENT%20PROBLEMS>.

why, despite its status as a fully recognized program by the Philippine government, the quality of the Islamic studies program in the Philippines remain questionable. Research discussing a comprehensive analysis of the development of Islamic education in the Philippines is lacking. Scholars have primarily concentrated their attention on the development of the *madrasah* systems, which these institutions received little attention and acknowledgement from the Philippine government. This lack of attention contrasts with the focus on *madrasah* education because this is the historically primary mode and center of Islamic learning in the Philippines.

In that regard, this study discusses the development of the Islamic Studies program in higher education in the Bangsamoro region that aims to demonstrate whether or not the educational development of Islamic studies has been fulfilled for the needs of the Muslim Filipinos. To do this, I use the policy theory of Juan F. Perellon on quality assurance in higher education. Perellon's policy theory emphasizes the significant role of policy in enhancing the quality of higher education institutions and programs. By focusing on one higher education institution, namely the BKIS at Buluan, Maguindanao del-Sur, BARMM, Philippines, this thesis argues that Islamic studies in higher education in the Philippines have been supported well by the government. However, the quality standard is comparatively lower than that of other higher education programs in general.

Understanding the broader development of Islamic education among Muslims in the Philippines is important to analyze what can be done to develop Islamic education in the Philippines. This development is crucial to support the socio-economic development of the country, particularly in the BARMM. Because of this, I intend to outline a foundational understanding of how Islamic studies in the Bangsamoro region evolved to meet the Philippine educational standards, despite its isolation as an academic discipline. Along with this, given that the Philippines' education system is a secular one, I seek to illuminate the consequences and quality of the courses offered in the Islamic studies program in pursuit of the Philippine national academic standard.

1.2 Literature Review

1.2.1 Studies on Modern Islamic Education

It is evident in the Muslim world that the beginning of Islamic education began with the emergence of Islam in the 7th century CE. Islamic education has been the fundamental mechanism in preserving and transmitting the tradition, scholarship, and

religious thought of the Muslims and their civilization.¹⁸ Originally, Islamic education is rooted in interpreting and understanding the *Qur'ān* and *Hadīth*, eventually achieving the moment where formalized educational institutions are established. From this foundation, the educational program of the Muslims was laid, consisting of purely religious studies like *tafsīr* (Qur'ānic exegesis), *usūl al-fiqh* (principles of Islamic law), *aqīdah* (belief), and *fiqh* (Islamic jurisprudence). Mosques and *madrasah* institutions play a significant role in nurturing a strong religious education of Muslims at the time.¹⁹

Over the centuries, Islamic education, or more precisely, Islamic studies as an academic discipline, transformed into many institutional frameworks and adopted a modern approach of academic discipline and interdisciplinary discourses. Bustami M. S. Khir provided two major developments of Islamic studies in the second half of the 20th century. First is in light of the invaluable contribution of Martin C. Richard, whose work contributed to analyzing Islam into a wider discipline of scientific religious studies.²⁰ Khir pointed out that Islamic studies initially developed with the integration of the emergence of the scientific study of religions. Thereby, Islam was studied alongside other religions, mainly Christianity and Judaism. This discipline was objectively analyzing Islamic history, theology, and practices within the framework of academic scholarship.²¹

The second development was within the field of social sciences and humanities. Sociologists and anthropologists began systematically analyzing the Muslim communities, societies, and cultures, demonstrating a growing interest among scholars in how Islam shaped the Muslim societal structures, laws, identity, and intercultural interactions. Scholars further studied Muslim societies through interdisciplinary frameworks, integrating social, political, and economic perspectives, providing a more comprehensive understanding of Islam's societal situation and impact.²² Therefore, integrating Islam into the “scientific study of religions” and “social sciences and humanities” transformed Islamic studies from a theological study into multidisciplinary academic fields.²³ This development

¹⁸ Khairul Amri, ‘The Evolution of Classical Islamic Education Institution’, *Proceeding International Seminar and Conference on Islamic Studies (ISCIS) 2*, no. 1 (2023): 520–21, 1, <https://doi.org/10.47006/iscis.v2i1.17730>.

¹⁹ Amri, ‘The Evolution of Classical Islamic Education Institution’, 521.

²⁰ Richard C. Martin, ‘Islam and Religious Studies: An Introductory Essay’, in *Approaches to Islam in Religious Studies*, ed. Richard C. Martin, International Symposium on Islam and the History of Religions, Tucson, Ariz (University of Arizona Press, 1985), 1–18.

²¹ Bustami M. S. Khir, ‘Islamic Studies Within Islam: Definition, Approaches and Challenges of Modernity’, *Journal of Beliefs & Values* 28, no. 3 (2007): 260, <https://doi.org/10.1080/13617670701712430>. See Martin, ‘Islam and Religious Studies: An Introductory Essay’, 1–18.

²² Khir, ‘Islamic Studies Within Islam’, 260.

²³ Nugroho Notonegoro, ‘Islamic Study with An Integrative-Interdisciplinary Approach’, *Proceeding of Saizu International Conference on Transdisciplinary Religious Studies*, 1

enabled Islamic studies to become widely recognized in universities globally and promoted interdisciplinary scholarship.

1.2.2 Doctrinal Outlook of Islamic Education

The doctrinal foundation of Islamic education is historically related to the transmission of revealed knowledge, such as the Qur’ān and Hadīth.²⁴ Through traditional forms of institutions like the *madrrasah* or *halaqāt* in a mosque, these traditional institutions transform through several modern intellectual, political, and pedagogical interventions.²⁵ For example, ‘Abdul Ḥamīd Abū Sulaymān envisioned a thoughtful reconceptualizing of Islamic epistemology. Rather than secularizing Islamic education, he encouraged scholars to incorporate ethical and divine principles into modern scholarly disciplines such as the social sciences and humanities. He aimed to ensure that Islamic knowledge remains vital and relevant in contemporary academic and societal landscapes.²⁶

Moreover, Louis Brenner highlights the relationship between religious authority and the distribution of knowledge, which shows that Islamic education is not merely a pedagogical procedure but an instrument for forming social power structures.²⁷ Similarly, Brannon D. Ingram observes that in South Asia, Islamic reform movements often frame their pursuit of doctrinal purity and revolt against the epistemological concessions while maintaining their engagement with modern intellectuality. His analysis emphasizes how doctrinal adherence shapes the content of a discourse, institutional frameworks, and teacher-student relationships and hierarchies within Islamic educational frameworks.²⁸

On the other hand, Richard C. Martin moves beyond a purely theological paradigm when it comes to Islamic studies. He demonstrated how Islamic studies, which were once

September 2023, 210–20, <https://doi.org/10.24090/icontrees.2023.340>. For a broad discussion of integrating Islamic knowledge into multidisciplinary academic fields, see Asfa Widiyanto, ‘Studying Islam in an Age of Disruption: Towards Knowledge Integration’, *IJoReSH: Indonesian Journal of Religion, Spirituality, and Humanity* 1, no. 1 (2022): 52–75, <https://doi.org/10.18326/ijores.v1i1.52-75>.

²⁴ Brady Stimpson and Isaac Calvert, ‘Qur’anic Educational Philosophy: Foundational Principles of Education in Islam’s Holiest Text’, *Religions* 12, no. 2 (2021): 82, <https://doi.org/10.3390/rel12020082>.

²⁵ Eric Hilgendorf, ‘Islamic Education: History and Tendency’, *Peabody Journal of Education* 78, no. 2 (2003): 63–75, https://doi.org/10.1207/S15327930PJE7802_04. Also, see Ebrahim Moosa, *What Is a Madrasa?* (Edinburgh Univ. Press, 2015).

²⁶ ‘Abdul Ḥamīd Abū Sulaymān and International Institute of Islamic Thought, eds., *Islamization of Knowledge: General Principles and Work Plan*, Second Edition, Revised and Expanded, trans. Islamiyat al-ma’ifah, Islamization of Knowledge Series, 1 [i.e.] 2 (International Institute of Islamic Thought, 1989).

²⁷ Louis Brenner, *Controlling Knowledge: Religion, Power and Schooling in a West African Muslim Society* (Hurst, 2000).

²⁸ Particularly, the Deoband movement. See Brannon D. Ingram, *Revival from Below: The Deoband Movement and Global Islam*, The Fletcher Jones Foundation Humanities Imprint (University of California Press, 2018).

excluded from secular academic practices, have increasingly participated in comparative, cross-disciplinary, and multidisciplinary frameworks.²⁹ Scholars like Zainul Fuad and Nugroho Notonegoro advocate for an interdisciplinary approach for Islamic studies, integrating other scholarly disciplines like anthropology, philosophy, social sciences, and others, which facilitates a holistic yet faithful representation of the Islamic scholarly discipline and practices. This approach expands the breadth of Islamic studies, allowing scholars to study the lived experiences, cultural contexts, and philosophical reinforcements that shape Islamic discourse across time and place. This epistemological methodological transformation represents a doctrinal flexibility of Islamic education without abandoning foundational Islamic principles.³⁰

Furthermore, Dietrich Reetz noted the delicate balance between conserving Islamic doctrine and adopting modern institutional structures. In an era of intellectual shifts and global pressures, he encourages Islamic education to adopt a comprehensive approach to knowledge that is both profound and open-minded, rather than defensive or strictly theological. Taken together, these visions illustrate that the doctrinal outlook of Islamic education is not enclosed or isolated; rather, it actively engages with historical contexts, navigates complex power dynamics, and adapts to the growing landscape of the production of knowledge.³¹

1.2.3 Case of Islamic Studies in Secular Countries

Jørgen S. Nielsen provided a brief narrative of how Islamic studies were introduced into European universities before gradually expanding across different European countries. Following the narrative of Albert Hourani, he accentuated that the institutionalization of Islamic studies is linked to the Collège de France, whereas systematic Arabic learning commenced in 1587. In 1613, Leiden University established an Arabic chair, and shortly after, Cambridge created a chair of a similar nature in 1632, followed by Oxford in 1634.³² To be more precise, the resurgence of interest in Islamic studies at Cambridge happened in

²⁹ Martin, 'Islam and Religious Studies: An Introductory Essay', 1–18.

³⁰ Zainul Fuad, 'Islamic Studies: A Transdisciplinary Approach', *Proceeding International Seminar and Conference on Islamic Studies (ISCIS)* 1, no. 1 (2022), <https://doi.org/10.47006/iscis.v1i1.17388>. Notonegoro, 'Islamic Study with An Integrative-Interdisciplinary Approach'.

³¹ Dietrich Reetz, 'From Madrasa to University – the Challenges and Formats of Islamic Education', in *The Sage Handbook of Islamic Studies*, ed. Akbar Salahudin Ahmed and Tamara Sonn (SAGE Publications Ltd, SAGE Publications Inc., SAGE Publications India Pvt Ltd, SAGE Publications Asia-Pacific Pte Ltd, 2010).

³² Jørgen S. Nielsen, 'Islamic Studies in University and Seminary: Contest or Constructive Mutuality?', in *Islamic Studies in European Higher Education: Navigating Academic and Confessional Approaches*, ed. Jørgen S. Nielsen and Stephen H. Jones (Edinburgh University Press, 2024), 15.

the early 19th century when William Wright (1830-1889) was appointed as a professor of Arabic studies in 1879 after he studied at Leiden. Thanks to him, scholars such as William Robertson Smith (1846-94), Reynold Alleyne Nicholson (1868-1945), and Edward Granville Browne (1862- 1926) followed in his footsteps, and Cambridge became part of the mainstream European tradition. At Oxford, the advancement of Arabic and Islamic studies occurred following the inauguration of David Samuel Margoliouth's professorship of the Laudian Chair of Arabic in 1889. Margoliouth was a well-educated, self-taught scholar; however, he was short of direct teaching from senior scholars. He had a creative and unconventional way of thinking, which led to controversial conclusions—some of which were disproved by experts. And it was only at the time of Hamilton Alexander Rosskeen Gibb (1895-1971), his successor, that Oxford became part of mainstream European tradition.³³ Toward the last decade of the 19th century, the *École des langues orientales vivantes* was established in Paris, in which Silvestre de Sacy (1758–1838), the founder of modern Islamic and Arabic studies, according to Hourani, became its principal figure.³⁴

As said above, the development of Islamic studies is highly attached to the “scientific study of religions” and the “social sciences and humanities.” This situation of Islamic studies remained for a long time and was only considered a supplement to Arabic language studies rather than an independent discipline. At the time, the Arabic language was an essential mechanism for scholars interested in studying Islam because it was the primary language of Islamic religious texts, as it was for Muslim-majority themselves. Further, it played a significant role in supporting the study of Hebrew and, consequently, the study of the Biblical Old Testament. It was not until the 19th century that European researchers, travellers, diplomats, and missionaries began contributing to Islamic research and publications, which eventually resulted in the institutionalization of Islamic studies.³⁵

To further understand the development of Islamic studies in Europe, it is deemed important to explore the historical accounts that shaped its evolution. Five key foundational reports shed light on this progression. But before discussing the reports, bear in mind that studying Islam in Europe has been deeply associated with Orientalism. Initially, Orientalism as an academic discipline mainly concentrated on studying languages and

³³ Albert Hourani, *Islam in European Thought* (Cambridge University Press, 1991), 33.

³⁴ Hourani, *Islam in European Thought*, 32.

³⁵ Jørgen S. Nielsen and Stephen H. Jones, eds., *Islamic Studies in European Higher Education: Navigating Academic and Confessional Approaches* (Edinburgh University Press, 2023), 15, <https://doi.org/10.1515/9781399510875>.

ancient texts, such as Arabic, Persian, and Sanskrit manuscripts.³⁶ However, this early stage of Orientalism lays the foundation for later academic developments, which culminated in the first report—the Reay Report of 1909. The Reay Report heeded the limitation of Orientalism as only focusing on studying and translating ancient manuscripts. While the report reaffirmed and strengthened the importance and scope of the study, it demanded its expansion at the same time. Evelyn Baring (1841-197), better known as Lord Cromer, a British political figure, Secretary of State for India, and former Controller-General of Egypt, supported the report's suggestion to expand Orientalism beyond philology. Therefore, this effort successfully led to the establishment of the School of Oriental and African Studies (SOAS) in London. The university's mission was similar to that of other European universities, which is to produce academic contributions that deepen the understanding of Muslim societies, cultures, history, civilization, legal systems, and political structures.³⁷

However, Orientalism faced a devastating calamity in post-World War 2. Orientalism, known to its deeply rooted in its colonial administration and philological studies, witnessed a decline in its classical form due to the impact of wartime and post-war factuality. The war demanded a new approach in studying non-Western societies, one that was more practical and strategic with modern interests. In response to this academic crisis, comes the second report—the Scarbrough Report of 1947, which sought to revitalize Orientalism once more. This report was commissioned by the British government, which advocated the integration of Western and Eastern scholarship, encouraging a more cosmopolitan and interdisciplinary approach, which resulted in a global academic exchange. In a nutshell, Orientalism, being isolated in Western colonial governance, became a global discipline. Following the Scarbrough Report, the British Parliament started to provide financial support to implement recent Orientalism expansion. A huge amount of money was channelled to numerous centers of Oriental studies. However, this growth of Orientalism came to an end in 1951 as the British government exhausted the budget that was initially allotted for its expansion.³⁸ Therefore, despite the recommendations of the Scarbrough report, as noticed by William Hayter, many universities and departments

³⁶ Amit Ray, *Negotiating the Modern: Orientalism and Indianness in the Anglophone World*, Literary Criticism and Cultural Theory (Routledge, 2007), 20.

³⁷ Scott Baumann, *Islam on Campus: Contested Identities and the Cultures of Higher Education in Britain* (Oxford University Press, 2020), 173.

³⁸ Ray, *Negotiating the Modern*, 12–20.

remained small with a small number of students, limited in their scope, focusing only on linguistic and literary studies, and dissociated from the rest of academia.³⁹

Therefore, the third report—the Hayter Report 1961—was created addressing the said problem after the Scarbrough Report. This is best discussed by the person who authored the report, William Hayter. In 1959, the University Grants Committee (UGC) had called for a review of the state of the Interdepartmental Commission on Inquiry on Oriental, Slavonic, East European, and African Studies, which had been established following the Scarbrough Report. The UGC organized a Sub-Committee, of which Hayter became the Chairman, to oversee the project. They, therefore, visited and surveyed many government agencies to see the reality of the situation of the graduates in this field of study, i.e., linguistic study, and the results were devastating, stating:

“Government departments said they could themselves train any linguists they needed. Businesses were not interested. Even the oil companies said they would not recruit Arabic or Persian speakers; they had, they said, competent interpreters in the oil fields.”

Hayter observed greater problems within and beyond the European universities. In response, the Rockefeller Foundation funded the Sub-Committee to conduct a benchmarking in North American universities, which greatly influenced the implementation of the Hayter report. Their benchmark revealed three key foundations for the success of American universities. First, the United States made linguistic studies valuable as a natural science, emphasizing their academic and practical importance. Second, they established centers and institutes to unite different scholars from various disciplines, creating the so-called “area studies.” Third, they concentrated their academic programs on modern disciplines, such as social sciences, contemporary history, and literature, which guarantees pertinence to contemporary global challenges. These foundations eventually influenced the Hayter report. The UGC funded all the recommendations of the Hayter report, and in 1970-1971, they declared that the report successfully achieved expanding non-Western studies, creating ten centers of area studies following the American approach, and encouraging scholars to pursue their field of interest in non-Western academic disciplines. Four flourishing centers were established for Asian Studies, two each for African Studies, Middle Eastern Studies, and Slavonic and East European Studies.⁴⁰

³⁹ William Hayter, ‘The Hayter Report and After’, *Oxford Review of Education* 1, no. 2 (1975): 169, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/1050223>.

⁴⁰ Hayter, ‘The Hayter Report and After’, 169–72.

As shown, Middle Eastern studies were included for the development outlined by the Hayter report. Therefore, to understand its significance, briefly understanding what Middle Eastern studies encompass helps trace how Islamic studies emerged as an independent academic discipline. Though this study doesn't only focus on studying Muslims and Islam, as it incorporates North Africans' history, politics, culture, languages, and societies, as well as religions such as Christianity, Judaism, ethnic minorities, and secular political movements, they become the central factor of the discipline.⁴¹ Therefore, when the 9/11 incident occurred, and perhaps including 7/7, the Middle Eastern studies faced immense criticism. In a nutshell, they have been viewed as a focal point of creating terrorism, or to make it less harsh, the Middle Eastern scholars have been seen as sympathetic to Arab and Muslim nations.⁴²

Because of this alarming and misleading accusation, as argued by Léon Buskens, against Middle Eastern studies, including their scholars.⁴³ The Higher Education Minister, Bill Rammell, decided to instigate a significant review—the fourth report—on “teaching Islam on campus” to put an end to the issue of terrorism that has been plaguing them. He even asserted the need to refine the quality of teaching Islam within universities.⁴⁴ Therefore, they held a conference at the University of Edinburgh on 4 December 2006 to undertake the review. The conference assembled scholars specialized in Islamic studies across UK universities. They addressed three key issues, though not limited to. First, the definition of Islamic studies. Second is the effect of funding sources, politics, and institutions in shaping (Islamic) academic and teaching practices. Third is, the most controversial, the issue of terrorism linked to Islamic studies in UK universities. Evidently, all conference participants refuted the allegation of terrorism. And to support their stance, they suggested revolutionizing the way they teach Islamic studies, including their courses. They affirmed the importance of learning through experience, which includes cultural influence and values, such as music and film. This scholarship discussion with suggestions

⁴¹ Leonard Peter Hubert Marie Buskens and Annemarie van Sandwijk, *Islamic Studies in the Twenty-First Century: Transformations and Continuities* (Amsterdam University Press, 2016), 241 and 243.

⁴² Buskens and Sandwijk, *Islamic Studies in the Twenty-First Century*, 245. Also see Hugh Goddard (2007). Where does Islamic Studies Fit? Douglas James Davies and Mathew Guest, eds., *Death, Life, and Laughter: Essays on Religion in Honour of Douglas Davies* (Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group, 2017).

⁴³ Buskens and Sandwijk, *Islamic Studies in the Twenty-First Century*, 245.

⁴⁴ Yasir Suleiman and Ayman Shihadeh, ‘Islam on Campus: Teaching Islamic Studies at Higher Education Institutions in the UK. Report of a Conference Held at the University of Edinburgh, 4 December 2006’, *Journal of Beliefs & Values* 28, no. 3 (2007): 309, <https://doi.org/10.1080/13617670701712497>.

and future actions laid the groundwork for further Islamic studies development in higher education institutions.

Arguably, around the 21st century, the time when Islamic studies sparked the interest of scholars and higher education institutions in Europe, particularly in England, leading them to consider Islamic studies as a valuable discipline in its own right, and not as merely a subset of Middle Eastern studies.⁴⁵ And comes the fifth report—the HEFCE report 2008—that was conducted to address the further development of Islamic studies. Keeping in mind that the “Teaching Islam on Campus Report” and the HEFCE report were primarily conducted following the Dr. Ataullah Siddiqui Report.⁴⁶ The focus of the HEFCE report was on the “international approach to Islamic studies in higher education institutions.” They examined the approach of Islamic studies in eight countries, such as the United Kingdom, France, Germany, the Netherlands, the United States, Australia, Malaysia, and Turkey. All countries surveyed agreed that Islamic studies became an essential discipline, particularly since 2001. Therefore, many universities created modules in Islamic studies, incorporating different degree programs, such as Islamic Finance and Islamic Banking, and they also initiated outreach programs.⁴⁷ In 2010, the departments of Religious Studies, Politics, and History in the UK became the primary sources of modules in Islamic studies.⁴⁸

In examining the development of Islamic studies within secular countries. It becomes evident that this discipline transcended the institutional and ideological challenges. From the first to the fifth report, a continuous effort by various scholars, key figures, and organizations in developing Islamic studies as an independent and significant field has been witnessed. Keeping this foundation in mind, I shall discuss the development of Islamic studies beyond the Western sphere, where the evolution of the discipline may

⁴⁵ The Government of England designated Islamic Studies a strategically important subject in June 2007. They are developing a programme of works to support this field. See ‘Strategically important subjects, Other Strategically Important Subjects, Islamic studies. ‘[Archived Content] Higher Education Funding Council for England’, accessed 16 May 2025, <https://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/ukgwa/20080316045850/http://www.hefce.ac.uk/>.

⁴⁶ The Siddiqui Report is Dr. Ataullah Siddiqui’s review of allegations linking Islamic Studies to terrorism, prepared at the request of Higher Education Minister Bill Rammell. See Dr. Ataullah Siddiqui, ‘Islam at Universities in England: Meeting the Needs and Investing in the Future’, *Islamic Studies* 46, no. 4 (2007): 559–70, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/20839094>.

⁴⁷ Lisa Bernasek and Gary Bunt, *International Approaches to Islamic Studies*, Monograph, with Lisa Bernasek and Gary Bunt (Higher Education Funding Council for England, 2008), 3, 4, and 8, http://www.hefce.ac.uk/pubs/rdreports/2008/rd07_08/.

⁴⁸ See the data from Lisa Bernasek and Gary Bunt, *Islamic Studies Provision in the UK*, Monograph, with Lisa Bernasek and Gary Bunt (Higher Education Funding Council for England, 2010), 9–11, http://www.hefce.ac.uk/pubs/rdreports/2010/rd06_10/. Keep in mind that there is no titled degree in Islamic Studies. The students would not graduate with a degree labelled as ‘Islamic Studies.’

differ from it, influenced by, perhaps, many different factors. Therefore, I shall focus my attention on Southeast Asian countries, leading to the specific subject that I want to contribute to— the case of the development of Islamic studies in the Philippines, specifically in the Bangsamoro region.

1.2.4 Case of Islamic Studies in Southeast Asia

Islamic studies in Southeast Asia have been a long, integral part of their educational landscape. According to the invaluable contribution of Kamaruzzaman Bustaman-Ahmad and Patrick Jory, the state of Islamic studies in this region is the result of the long-lasting persistence and struggle with the governments, religious sectors, and sectarian division in religious thought, considering different objectives, such as politics, economics, and/or the education system itself.⁴⁹ Just like the interest of European scholars in expanding Islamic studies, as discussed above, Southeast Asia is without a doubt a topic of discussion.

Arguably, leading scholars interested in this field, and who have already done an invaluable contribution in the scope of Southeast Asia, are Bustaman-Ahmad, Jory, and Robert W. Hefner.⁵⁰ Their works include many aspects of Islamic studies and education, examining their development, challenges, current state, and their greater influence on framing Islamic discourse within the region. Other scholars who have also made an invaluable contribution to the scope of a specific country in the region are like Norshahril Saat, Azhar Ibrahim, Noor Aisha Abdul Rahman, Azmil Tayeb, Ibrahim Abu Bakar, Muhammad Amin Abdullah, Ahmad F. Yousif, Norarfa Hj. Zainal, Abd. Rachman Assegaf, Abd. Razak Zakaria, Abdul Muhsein Sulaiman, Rosnani Hashim, Zamakhsyari Dhofier, Abdullah Saeed, and many more.⁵¹ Their works consist of many aspects contributing to and

⁴⁹ Kamaruzzaman Bustamam-Ahmad and Patrick Jory, eds., *Islamic Studies and Islamic Education in Contemporary Southeast Asia*, 1. print (Yayasan Ilmuwan, 2011), viii.

⁵⁰ See Bustamam-Ahmad and Jory, *Islamic Studies and Islamic Education in Contemporary Southeast Asia*. Also, see Robert W. Hefner, *Making Modern Muslims: The Politics of Islamic Education in Southeast Asia* (University of Hawaii Press, 2009).

⁵¹ See Norshahril Saat et al., *Reaching for the Crescent: Aspirations of Singapore Islamic Studies Graduates and the Challenges*, with ISEAS-Yusof Ishak Institute (ISEAS-Yusof Ishak Institute, 2021). See Azmil Tayeb, *Islamic Education in Indonesia and Malaysia: Shaping Minds, Saving Souls*, Routledge Contemporary Southeast Asia Series (Routledge, 2018). See Ibrahim Abu Bakar, 'A History of Islamic Studies in Malaysia', *Oriente Moderno* 19 (80), no. 2 (2000): 371–93, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/25817721>. See Muhammad Amin Abdullah, 'Islamic Studies in Higher Education in Indonesia: Challenges, Impact and Prospects for the World Community', *Al-Jami'ah: Journal of Islamic Studies* 55, no. 2 (2017): 391–426, <https://doi.org/10.14421/ajis.2017.552.391-426>. See Ahmad Yousif and Norarfan Hj. Zainal, 'Islamic Education in Southeast Asia: A Study of the Integration of Knowledge in Brunei Darussalam', paper presented at 2nd International Conference on Religion and Education, INCRE 2020, 11-12 November 2020, Jakarta, Indonesia, Jakarta, Indonesia, *Proceedings of the 2nd International Conference on Religion and Education, INCRE 2020, 11-12 November 2020, Jakarta, Indonesia*, EAI, 2021, <https://doi.org/10.4108/eai.11-11-2020.2308308>. See Yousif and Hj. Zainal, 'Islamic Education in Southeast Asia'. See Abd. Rachman Assegaf et al., 'The Closer

reflecting the overwhelming and continuing discourse of the Islamic studies discipline in higher education in Southeast Asia.

Because of the evolving educational landscape of Southeast Asia, in which their governments are seen to transition the focus of their education system from nation-building to training for employment, Islamic studies are being compelled to become a more career-driven framework. For instance, Nur Manuty elaborated on some degrees related to Islamic studies in Malaysia, which can be seen in other countries of the region, being pressured in this kind of framework.⁵² For instance, Islam and Contemporary Issues, Islamic Work Ethics, Organizational Management, additionally, Islamic Finance, Islamic Banking, Human Rights, Political Islam, Gender Equality, Islam and Democracy, and many more. All these courses are relevant and align with the contemporary situation of the professional sectors.

According to the work of Bustaman-Ahmad and Jory in assessing Islamic studies in Southeast Asia, Indonesia and Malaysia are the major countries of the region in providing Islamic studies in their respective higher education institutions.⁵³ However, Brunei Darussalam definitely fits into this powerhouse, as seen in the following discussion. In Indonesia, they initially established Sekolah Islam Tinggi (SIT) at Padang in 1940 and changed its location to Yogyakarta in 1945. Following the Indonesian independence in 1946 and the migration of the capital of the Indonesian government to Yogyakarta, SIT changed its name to Universitas Islam Indonesia (UII) on 22 March 1948. This university has four faculties: the Faculty of Religion, the Faculty of Law, the Faculty of Economics, and the Faculty of Education. A few years later, the Faculty of Religion transitioned to become the State Islamic College around the 1950s. In 2014, the State Islamic College transitioned again to become the State Islamic Institute Bukittinggi. And recently, last 2022, it finally transitioned to become the State Islamic University, also known as Universitas

Bridge towards Islamic Studies in Higher Education in Malaysia and Indonesia', *Creative Education* 03, no. 06 (2012): 986–92, <https://doi.org/10.4236/ce.2012.326149>. See Rosnani Hashim, 'The Curriculum of Islamic Studies and Islamic Studies Education Programs in Meeting the Challenges of Globalization: A Case Study of Selected Malaysian Universities', *Al Shajarah, Journal of Islamic Thought and Civilization of the International Islamic University Malaysia (IIUM)*, 2017, 1–31. See Zamakhsyari Dhofier, 'The Intellectualization of Islamic Studies in Indonesia', *Indonesia Circle. School of Oriental & African Studies. Newsletter* 20, no. 58 (1992): 19–31, <https://doi.org/10.1080/03062849208729783>. See Abdullah Saeed, 'Towards Religious Tolerance Through Reform in Islamic Education: The Case of the State Institute of Islamic Studies of Indonesia', *Indonesia and the Malay World* 27, no. 79 (1999): 177–91, <https://doi.org/10.1080/13639819908729941>.

⁵² Bustaman-Ahmad and Jory, *Islamic Studies and Islamic Education in Contemporary Southeast Asia*, x.

⁵³ Bustaman-Ahmad and Jory, *Islamic Studies and Islamic Education in Contemporary Southeast Asia*, ix.

Islam Negeri (UIN) Sjech M. Djamil Djambek Bukittinggi. Now, UIN is known for its progressive development of Islamic studies, incorporating Sharia, Islamic Economics and Business, and *Usūluddīn, Adab, and Da'wah*.⁵⁴ Moreover, Indonesia is currently known for offering Islamic studies at the undergraduate and graduate levels.

In Malaysia, they have two public universities, namely Universiti Malaya (UM) and Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia (UKM), and one private university, namely the International Islamic University Malaysia (IIUM), which offers Islamic studies at undergraduate and graduate levels. Other universities are only required to offer Islamic courses as part of their general education. The historical development of the establishment of Islamic studies in Malaysia, as presented by Ibrahim Abu Bakar, unfolds intricate and multifaceted phases. Nonetheless, to put it simply, the Islamic studies in Malaysia, which began its development in the late 20th century, is currently consists of various departments, such as the Department of Islamic Law, Department of Islamic Theology and Philosophy, Department of Arabic Studies and Islamic Civilization, Department of Islamic Mission and Leadership, and Department of Koranic and Traditional Studies.⁵⁵

In Brunei Darussalam, the Department of Islamic Studies was established following the foundation of the University of Brunei Darussalam (UBD) in 1985. The department transitioned in 1992 to become a full-fledged faculty consisting of three departments specializing in Arabic, such as the Department of Shari'ah, the Department of Arabic Language and Islamic Civilization, and the Department of Usūl al-Dīn wal-Da'wah. They also founded the Institute of Islamic Studies in 1989 under the Ministry of Religious Affairs, but it was merged into the Faculty of Islamic Studies at UBD in 1999. The state of Islamic studies in Brunei sits in a quite unique position. Perhaps, they are the only country in SEA who have an Islamic studies program with a strong influence of Al-Azhar and promotes purely Islamic teaching rather than being integrated in the modern framework of scholarships.⁵⁶ However, the elements of modern education are still present.

The development of Islamic studies in other parts of Southeast Asia, such as in Southern Thailand, Cambodia, Singapore, and the Philippines, faces significant challenges

⁵⁴ Saeed, 'Towards Religious Tolerance Through Reform in Islamic Education'. Also, see Sjech Djamil Djambek Bukittinggi, 'Sejarah UIN Sjech M. Djamil Djambek Bukittinggi', *Universitas Islam Negeri Sjech M. Djamil Djambek Bukittinggi*, n.d., accessed 17 May 2025, <https://uinbukittinggi.ac.id/sejarah/>.

⁵⁵ Bakar, 'A History of Islamic Studies in Malaysia', 372 and 380.

⁵⁶ Iik A. Mansurnoor, 'Maintaining Religious Tradition in Brunei Darussalam: Inspiration and Challenges', in *Islamic Studies and Islamic Education in Contemporary Southeast Asia*, 1st ed., ed. Kamaruzzaman Bustamam-Ahmad and Patrick Jory (Yayasan Ilmuwan, 2011), 180–88.

due to the minority status of the Muslims in these respective countries.⁵⁷ Nonetheless, the development of Islamic studies, or at least Islamic education in these countries, has transcended institutional barriers and evolved through community-driven efforts, private institutions, and international benchmarking. For instance, in Thailand, they have successfully established the Yala Islamic University and the Faculty of Islamic Sciences under the Prince of Songkla University.⁵⁸

In Singapore and Cambodia, the integration of Islamic education is constantly being part of wider discourse on educational reform, integration, and multicultural coexistence.⁵⁹ In the case of Islamic studies in the Philippines, and observing the existing studies concerning this matter, there remains a significant gap in scholarly discussions concerning the landscape of the program in the Philippines' higher education.

1.3 Research Gap

Thomas M. McKenna and Esmael A. Abdulla discussed the historical development of madrasah institutions in the Philippines, refuting the alleged assumption of the Philippine government linking terrorism and extremism to the mainstream madrasah institutions of the country. Although they briefly discussed the REMACADEMY, they overlooked the institutional framework, operational mechanism, and academic development of the Islamic studies program of the institution.⁶⁰ Study of Carmen Abu Bakar discussed the issues, problems, and challenges of mainstreaming madrasah education in the Philippines, i.e., integrating madrasah institutions into the Philippine education system. Though this initiative is challenging to pull off, it is regarded as one of the solutions to suppress terrorism in the country.⁶¹

⁵⁷ Bustamam-Ahmad and Jory, *Islamic Studies and Islamic Education in Contemporary Southeast Asia*, viii–ix.

⁵⁸ See 'Yala Islamic University, Thailand', Standyou.Com, accessed 18 May 2025, <https://www.standyou.com/study-abroad/yala-islamic-university-thailand/>. See 'Faculty of Islamic Sciences - Prince of Songkla University', เว็บไซต์คณะวิทยาการอิสลาม มหาวิทยาลัยสงขลานครินทร์ วิทยาเขตปัตตานี, accessed 18 May 2025, <https://fais.psu.ac.th/en>.

⁵⁹ In case of Singapore, see Norshahril Saat et al., *Reaching for the Crescent*. For Cambodia, see Blengli Atle Bjørn, 'Muslim Metamorphosis: Islamic Education and Politics in Contemporary Cambodia', in *Making Modern Muslims: The Politics of Islamic Education in Southeast Asia*, ed. Robert W. Hefner (University of Hawaii Press, 2009).

⁶⁰ Thomas M. McKenna and Esmael A. Abdulla, 'Islamic Education in the Philippines: Political Separatism and Religious Pragmatism', in *Making Modern Muslims: The Politics of Islamic Education in Southeast Asia*, ed. Robert W. Hefner (University of Hawaii Press, 2009), 205–36.

⁶¹ Carmen Abu Bakar, 'Mainstreaming Madrasah Education in the Philippines: Issues, Problems and Challenges', in *Islamic Studies and Islamic Education in Contemporary Southeast Asia*, 1st ed., ed. Kamaruzzaman Bustamam-Ahmad and Patrick Jory (Yayasan Ilmuwan, 2011).

Khadiguia O. Balah provided a study about the effectiveness of the Arabic Language and Islamic Values (ALIVE) program in Philippine public elementary schools.⁶² Latif identified the opportunities and challenges facing Islamic education in the Philippines, mainly focusing on the *Madrasah* institutions.⁶³ Abdul H. A. Sali and Arlyne C. Marasigan also conducted the same study that explores the implementation of the Madrasah Education Program (MEP) in selected ALIVE schools in the Philippines. In their study, they also identified the challenges of Islamic education but focused on the implementation of the ALIVE program.⁶⁴ Amina H. Samid as well as studied the historical roots, development, and contemporary situation of Islamic education, i.e., *Madrasah institutions*, in the Philippines, focusing on the management and curriculum.⁶⁵

Arguably, Nefertari A. Arsad, Alizaman D. Gamon, and Mariam S. Tagoranao are the only scholars who have conducted a complex study on the development of Islamic education in the Philippines, which includes the Islamic studies program in higher education. They discussed the historical account that shaped the relationship between the Philippine government and Muslim communities through the lens of education.⁶⁶ They highlight how the Philippine government, through educational integration and accommodation, interfered and cooperated with the Muslim leaders and scholars of the country to develop the alarming situation that had plagued the Muslim communities in the country.

They provided a brief overview of the creation of the Islamic studies program that has been adopted in Philippine higher education. However, even though they discussed the creation of the program and provided critiques on the subject offered, they have not discussed its implementation across higher education institutions and/or universities in the

⁶² Khadiguia Ontok Balah, 'A Systematic Review on the Implementation of the Arabic Language and Islamic Values Education (ALIVE) Program in the Philippines: Implications on the Educational Psychology Practice', *International Journal for Multidisciplinary Research* 5, no. 6 (2023): 11290, <https://doi.org/10.36948/ijfmr.2023.v05i06.11290>.

⁶³ Latif, 'Islamic Education'.

⁶⁴ Abdul Haiy Abdul Sali and Arlyne Canales Marasigan, 'Madrasah Education Program Implementation in the Philippines: An Exploratory Case Study', *International Journal of Comparative Education and Development* 22, no. 3 (2020): 201–17, <https://doi.org/10.1108/IJCED-06-2019-0034>.

⁶⁵ Amina Samid, 'Islamic Education and the Development of Madrasah Schools in the Philippines', *International Journal of Political Studies* 8, no. 2 (2022), <https://doi.org/10.25272/icps.1139650>.

⁶⁶ Nefertari Al-Raschid-Arsad, *Institutional Development of Muslim Education in the Philippines | Discussion Paper* (University of the Philippines Center for Integrative and Development Studies, 2022), <https://cids.up.edu.ph/download/institutional-development-muslim-education-philippines/>. Also, see Alizaman D. Gamon and Mariam S. Tagoranao, 'The Transformation of Muslim Education in the Philippines: A Revisit', *Al Hikmah International Journal of Islamic Studies and Human Sciences* 5, no. 4 Special Issue (2022): 108–42, <https://doi.org/10.46722/hikmah.v5i4f>.

Philippines. Reviewing all of these studies conducted concerning the landscape of Islamic education in the Philippines, it can be said that the majority of scholarly discourse mainly concentrated its attention on the *Madrasah* institutions. They either focus on challenges, development, implementation of the ALIVE program, the *Madrasah* integration process, its historical roots, or the institutions themselves, and little attention has been given to the university-level Islamic studies program. Therefore, by synthesizing all of these great works provided by great scholars, this review intends to contextualize the development of Islamic studies in the Philippine higher education and establish the foundation of this present study by focusing on the BARMM educational governance.

1.4 Theoretical Framework

Before I provide the theoretical framework that guides my study, it is essential to identify key terms and concepts to understand the direction of my research. In defining these key terms and concepts, I anchor my research in the work of Ahmed O. Al Jaber and Haifaa O. Elayyan on quality assurance and excellence in higher education.⁶⁷ Their contribution to achieving quality assurance in higher education emphasizes the significant role of strategic and institutional planning, continuous program assessment, stakeholder collaboration, accreditation systems and performance, quality assurance policies, curriculum development, institutional audits and effectiveness, policy-driven reforms, and ensuring academic excellence.

Al Jaber and Elayyan asserted that the need for quality assurance has proven to be a determining factor in the success or failure of various aspects of society, including education and higher education programs, shaping institutional effectiveness through structured evaluation cycles.⁶⁸ Therefore, achieving quality assurance represents a system for managing a cycle of development plans, ensuring that the ongoing improvement of a program follows a regular cycle.⁶⁹ In the context of my research, Islamic studies in the BARMM represent the higher education program, while the Philippine higher education standard serves as the benchmark. Assessing the quality and the development process of Islamic studies is crucial for understanding how it was adopted in the BARMM, ensuring its academic integrity and relevance while maintaining alignment with national education policies and standards. As AlJaber and Elayyan indicated, quality assurance, incorporating

⁶⁷ Ahmed Odeh Al Jaber and Haifaa Omar Elayyan, *Toward Quality Assurance and Excellence in Higher Education*, River Publishers Series in Innovation and Change in Education (River Publishers, 2018).

⁶⁸ Al Jaber and Elayyan, *Toward Quality Assurance and Excellence in Higher Education*, 6–7.

⁶⁹ Al Jaber and Elayyan, *Toward Quality Assurance and Excellence in Higher Education*, 10.

all of its significant aspects and methods, is a system applied to certify an academic program in terms of meeting the higher education's standards, rules, and regulations.⁷⁰

Having established the key terms and concepts, my study employs the proposed policy theory of Juan F. Perellon on quality assurance in higher education. I use Perellon's policy theory because he emphasizes the significant role of policy in enhancing the quality of higher education institutions, which has been the instrument of the BARMM in developing the Islamic studies program in higher education. He argues that policy, specifically public policy, consists of two distinct but complementary dimensions: ideational and material. Ideational refers to the ideological assumptions about how the domain of policy should be organized. Material, on the other hand, concerns the establishment of mechanisms to transform those ideological assumptions into practical implementation.⁷¹

In the context of my research, since Perellon's policy theory highlights how educational policy, specifically Philippine education standards in this research's case, shapes the quality of higher education programs, like the Islamic studies program in the BARMM. Furthermore, by applying Perellon's policy theory, I examine how the Islamic studies program in the BARMM has been shaped, recognized, aligned, and regulated within the larger, secular Philippine education system and standards while maintaining its own academic framework, as implied by Nielsen.⁷² Ultimately, Perellon argued that policy control is both quasi-political and quasi-institutional.⁷³

1.5 Research Questions

Based on my argument demonstrated above, my research investigates a series of key questions aimed at exploring the roles, initiatives, dynamics, and influences related to the development, quality, and relevance of Islamic Studies in the BARMM higher education institutions. The following questions are:

1. What roles and initiatives have the Ministry of Basic, Higher, and Technical Education (MBHTE) undertaken to enhance the quality of Islamic Studies programs in higher education institutions in the Bangsamoro region?

⁷⁰ Al Jaber and Elayyan, *Toward Quality Assurance and Excellence in Higher Education*, 9.

⁷¹ Juan F. Perellon, 'Analysing Quality Assurance in Higher Education: Proposals for a Conceptual Framework and Methodological Implications', in *Quality Assurance in Higher Education: Trends in Regulation, Translation and Transformation*, ed. Don F. Westerheijden et al., Higher Education Dynamics 20 (Springer, 2007), 155.

⁷² Nielsen, 'Islamic Studies in University and Seminary: Contest or Constructive Mutuality?', 15.

⁷³ Perellon, 'Analysing Quality Assurance in Higher Education: Proposals for a Conceptual Framework and Methodological Implications', 163.

2. How has the Islamic Studies program in the Bangsamoro Kulliyah for Islamic Studies in the Bangsamoro region evolved in response to the Philippines' national education standards and regional needs?
3. How has the Bangsamoro Kulliyah for Islamic Studies implemented strategies to achieve the quality and relevance of their Islamic studies program based on the standard set by the government?

1.6 Research Methodology

1.6.1 Research and Data Collection Methods

This study employs a qualitative research method to gain an in-depth understanding of the development of the Islamic Studies program in the Bangsamoro region, utilizing thematic and case analysis.

For thematic analysis, the data were collected through in-depth interviews with three (3) key members involved in developing and (re)forming Islamic education, crafting educational policy, and establishing institutional development in the Bangsamoro region, in which I employed a purposive sampling procedure to purposely select the respondents of my research, as they have direct experience and involvement in developing Islamic studies and education in the Bangsamoro region's higher education. Due to limitations in time, financial support, and geographical barriers, the interview was conducted through a virtual method, such as a video call on Messenger. Through this, I was able to easily ask follow-up questions even after our initial meeting by texting and voice recording, as they are all actively responsive. During the online interview, I followed an interview guide with questions, but the wording and sequencing of questions were adjusted in real time to each of my research respondents. This interview approach allows me to clarify ideas that seem unclear in their initial answer and deepen the understanding of the respondent's perspectives by seeking elaboration, probing follow-up questions, and reflective dialogue during and after the interview. Thus, the interviews were transcribed, analyzed, and coded to identify and refine emerging themes.

For case analysis, in addition to thematic, the data of my research were collected through document analysis, such as from conference transcription, websites, social media, observation, bills, and/or legal codes. This additional approach is important as it provides contextual backgrounds on the development of Islamic studies in the Philippine higher education. As Glenn A. Bowen argues, document analysis provides supplementary research data, making the study more comprehensive by integrating insights derived from existing

documents, such as texts, policies, and archival records.⁷⁴ Therefore, the method of this study is expected to provide a profound understanding of the development of Islamic studies in the Bangsamoro region, with the thematic analysis offering a broader theme and the case study providing detailed insights into specific possibilities.

1.6.2 Data Analysis Methods

I analyzed the data of my research through thematic analysis, which helped me identify the patterns of the themes. Precisely, I followed the following outline set by Virginia Braun and Victoria Clarke: familiarization-reading and rereading data to get an initial feel; coding-labeling of significant segments of data; and theme development codes into broader themes reflecting key aspects of the development of Islamic studies in the Bangsamoro higher education.⁷⁵ I manually coded my research data, employing an interpretative coding, and subsequently analyzed the codes to develop overarching themes. These themes were then critically analyzed, examined, and synthesized to inform the discussion section of my research, allowing for a deeper interpretation of the findings in relation to my research's theoretical framework, research questions, and the broader educational context of the BARMM.

1.6.3 Demographic Profile of the Bangsamoro Kulliyah for Islamic Studies (BKIS)

I chose and limited my study to one (1) institution: the BKIS at Buluan, Maguindanao del-Sur. I chose BKIS as it represents the developing landscape of Islamic higher education in the Bangsamoro region. Buluan is the capital municipality of the province of Maguindanao del Sur, in central Mindanao. Buluan was officially designated as the provincial capital in 2014 and is recognized as a key administrative and cultural center in the BARMM. On 30 November 2023, the Member of Parliament of the Bangsamoro government approved the Bangsamoro Transition Authority (BTA) Bill No. 31, or the BKIS Act, and it was enacted as the BAA No. 50 on the same day.

Additionally, as a newly developed institution, from REMACADEMY to BKIS, it makes it an ideal case for examining new approaches and innovations in Islamic higher institutions in the BARMM. Currently, they have over 200 Islamic studies students. Furthermore, the MBHTE has a direct influence on them, making them a key player in the development of Islamic studies in the Bangsamoro region. This institution can provide a

⁷⁴ Glenn A. Bowen, 'Document Analysis as a Qualitative Research Method', *Qualitative Research Journal* 9, no. 2 (2009): 27–40, <https://doi.org/10.3316/QRJ0902027>.

⁷⁵ Virginia Braun and Victoria Clarke, *Thematic Analysis: A Practical Guide* (SAGE, 2022).

great opportunity to examine how Islamic studies are structured, taught, and developed at the higher education level.

1.6.4 Profile of the Key Respondents

To gather primary data, I conducted an in-depth interview with three (3) key members involved in developing and (re)forming Islamic education, crafting educational policy, and establishing institutional development in the Bangsamoro region. Two of them work directly under the MBHTE, holding a position of leadership. For confidentiality purposes, I use the term “member” to refer to them, indicating their involvement in the BKIS, MBHTE, and other sectors with which they might be affiliated for the purpose of developing an educational landscape for the Bangsamoro and for the Muslim Filipinos in a broader context.

1.6.4.1 Member A

Member A is a male between 50 and 60 years old with a Bachelor of Arts in Sociology, a Master of Arts in Islamic Studies, and a Doctorate in Development Education. He has been involved in developing education for Muslims in the Philippines and in the Bangsamoro Region for over ten (10) years. He is currently a member of the MBHTE under the leaders’ category and is a member of the Board of Trustees (BOT) of the BKIS. He has been one of the critical members of the team, conducting benchmarking at both the international and national levels to develop the Bangsamoro educational landscape.

1.6.4.2 Member B

Member B is a male between 40 and 50 years old with a Bachelor of Arts in Islamic Studies, a Master of Arts in Islamic Studies, a Master’s of Arts in Applied Conflict Transformation Studies, and a candidate for a Doctorate degree in Rural Development. He has been involved in developing education for Muslims in the Philippines and in the Bangsamoro Region since 2019. He is a member of the BOT of the BKIS and also one of the critical members of the team, conducting benchmarking at both the international and national levels to develop the Bangsamoro educational landscape.

1.6.4.3 Member C

Member C is a male between 50 and 60 years old. He has been involved in developing education for Muslims in the Philippines and in the Bangsamoro Region for no less than thirty (30) years. He is currently a member of the MBHTE under the leaders’ category and is a member of the BOT of the BKIS. Also, he has

been one of the critical members of the team, conducting benchmarking at both the international and national levels to develop the Bangsamoro educational landscape.

1.6.5 Researcher's Positionality

Identifying my position as a researcher is deemed important because, as Andrew G. D. Holmes argues, it is crucial for contemporary researchers to recognize that their position as researchers can affect the entire process of their research, including the interpretation of the research findings.⁷⁶ As a researcher entrenched in scholarly disciplines and cultural sensitivity, I position myself within the academic and intellectual discourse, committed to uncovering the multifaceted realities of the Islamic studies discipline and, perhaps, Islamic education in a broader context.

Keep in mind that I do not occupy a position as a policymaker or faculty member in Islamic studies, nor do I possess formal teaching experience within the discipline. And as an outsider, I acknowledge that I have limited knowledge in crafting an educational policy, such as the policy mandating the Islamic studies program in higher education, and establishing a curriculum for the Islamic studies discipline. Above all, I did not obtain my background in Islamic studies at BKIS.

⁷⁶ Andrew Gary Darwin Holmes, 'Researcher Positionality - A Consideration of Its Influence and Place in Qualitative Research - A New Researcher Guide', *Shanlax International Journal of Education* 8, no. 4 (2020): 2-3, <https://doi.org/10.34293/education.v8i4.3232>.

CHAPTER II

ISLAMIC EDUCATION IN THE PHILIPPINES: HISTORICAL BACKGROUND, AND CONTEMPORARY DEVELOPMENTS IN THE BANGSAMORO REGION

In this chapter, I discuss the historical background of Islamic education in the Philippines and its contemporary situation. This is crucial to understand as it provides insights into the continuation efforts of the national and regional governments on developing the educational demand of the Muslims in the Philippines from the lower-level to collegiate levels. Hence, I discuss the situation of education of the Muslims in the Philippines in a comprehensive manner, including the Madrasah institutions and the programs implemented in the Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (BARMM). I brought it up due to the significance of understanding how the Philippine government, despite its secular nature and being a Christian-dominated country, accommodated Islamic education in public lower-level schools and Islamic studies at the higher education level. Nonetheless, given that the focus of my study revolves around Islamic studies in higher education, in this Chapter, I discuss the role of the Commission on Higher Education (CHED) in developing education for all Filipinos in higher institutions and universities, with particular attention to the Muslims.

2.1 Overview of the Philippines and the Historical Background of Islamic Education

2.1.1 Socio-Political History of Islamic Education in the Philippines

Generally, the coming of Islamic education in the Philippines can be traced back to the influence of different important personalities and contributing factors. However, pinpointing the exact date of its introduction remains challenging. Among them are the following important personalities: Tuan Masha'ika, an Arab missionary and the person who married the younger daughter of the Raja Sipad in Jolo,⁷⁷ the missionary and preacher Karimul Makhdum, also known as Tuan Sharif Aulia, the first person to ever build a mosque in the Philippines,⁷⁸ Raja Baguinda, the one who began the establishment of the Sulu dynasty, and Sayid Abu Bakr, also known as Sultan Sharif ul-Hashim, the one who married the daughter of Raja Baguinda and introduced Islamic political institutions, making him the first ruler of the Sulu Sultanate.⁷⁹

Because Sayid Abu Bakr culminated the establishment of the Islamic political institution, it is on him as well that the beginning of Islamic educational institutions was

⁷⁷ Cesar Adib Majul, *Muslims in the Philippines*, 1999th ed. (University of the Philippines Press, 1999), 57.

⁷⁸ Majul, *Muslims in the Philippines*, 58–59.

⁷⁹ Majul, *Muslims in the Philippines*, 61–62.

attributed. He established the first *madrasah* in the Philippines, where an organized and formal class of the *Qur'ān* and *Hadīth* started. He was also the mentor of the earliest local teachers, ensuring the ongoing transmission of knowledge across generations in the archipelago.⁸⁰

Therefore, it could be asserted that the origins of formal Islamic education in the Philippines can be traced during the reign of Abu Bak'r in roughly the mid-15th century.⁸¹ The initial emergence of Islamic education was characterized as *Maktab*, or *Qur'ānic* schools, designed for young children to acquire the skills of writing, reading, and reciting the *Qur'ān*.⁸² However, Thomas M. McKenna and Esmael A. Abdula claimed that the *Maktab* had not been previously used by Muslims to refer to Islamic education.⁸³ There is also a study that identified Islamic education as *Pandita* school. *Pandita*, specifically known by the Muslims in the Philippines, signifies a ritual specialist who is considered an equipped person with arcane religious knowledge. The teachers in this school are famously called *guru/s*.⁸⁴ It is widely accepted by Muslims in the Philippines since the Americans witnessed large numbers of local schools during their occupation in the Philippines. As Peter G. Gowing notes, the Americans discovered that almost every area in the Philippines has its own *Pandita* school where students go to the house of their *guru/s*, particularly women, and learn how to read the *Qur'ān*, write Arabic, and also a little bit of arithmetic.⁸⁵

However, when the colonizers of the Philippines arrived, the presence of Islam began to become marginalized. During the occupation of the Spaniards (1565-1898), they successfully subjugated the northern parts of the archipelago, built a centralized colonial government, administered provinces, cities, towns, and municipalities, collected taxes, and established catechism schools.⁸⁶ However, in the south, they failed to exert total control over Muslim populations. And throughout their colonial period, the Muslims avoided

⁸⁰ Majūl, *Muslims in the Philippines*, 64.

⁸¹ See Establishment of the Mohammedan Church in Sulu and the reign of Abu Bakr, 1450–1480, Najeeb M. Saleeby, *The History of Sulu* (Bureau of Public Printing, 1908), 4:161, [https://ebookhub.ph/test/pdf/The%20History%20of%20Sulu%20\(dk\).pdf](https://ebookhub.ph/test/pdf/The%20History%20of%20Sulu%20(dk).pdf).

⁸² Abu Bakar, 'Mainstreaming Madrasah Education in the Philippines: Issues, Problems and Challenges', 75.

⁸³ McKenna and Abdula, 'Islamic Education in the Philippines: Political Separatism and Religious Pragmatism', 208.

⁸⁴ See '*Islamic Education in the Philippines: Political Separatism and Religious Pragmatism*' by Thomas M. McKenna and Esmael A. Abdullah, Chapter 6 of McKenna and Abdula, 'Islamic Education in the Philippines: Political Separatism and Religious Pragmatism', 208.

⁸⁵ Peter G. Gowing, 'Mandate in Moroland: The American Government of Muslim Filipinos 1899-1920' (Syracuse University, 1968), 63.

⁸⁶ 'The Spaniards as Colonial Masters in the Philippines', accessed 2 June 2025, <https://www.philippine-history.org/spanish-colonial-masters.htm>. Also, see Jeffrey Ayala Milligan, 'Reclaiming an Ideal: The Islamization of Education in the Southern Philippines', *Comparative Education Review* 50, no. 3 (2006): 412, <https://doi.org/10.1086/503883>.

sending their children to the public schools they established, as they felt these schools were an attempt to inculcate Catholicism.⁸⁷ Moreover, because the Spaniards sought to Christianize the whole archipelago, they suppressed the growth of Islamic education. As a result, although Islamic education survived, it faced tremendous challenges and became informal and unrecognized.

The Spanish colony over the Philippines ended when Americans came and defeated them. Under the Treaty of Paris, Spain surrendered the Philippines to the Americans in 1898 for 20 million dollars.⁸⁸ The American occupation during the early 20th century was likewise successfully implemented colonial control over the Philippines.⁸⁹ However, unlike the Spaniards, the Americans successfully established a structured public education program in the South, addressing the Muslims.⁹⁰ Najeeb Saleeby, an American physician born in Lebanon, was named the first superintendent. He recognized that trying to dominate Muslims by force would not succeed, as the Spaniards had already tried and failed for over three centuries. Therefore, he promoted public education as a primary method to persuade Muslims to adapt the social structure of the Philippine nation-state.⁹¹ However, as the Americans regarded the separation of church and state as a fundamental tenet of their colonial hegemony, this public education system was likewise an attempt at colonialism.⁹²

The central focus of their educational policy was on civilizing Muslims and introducing and teaching technological and scientific scholarship, employing English as the medium of instruction.⁹³ Further, because the Americans regarded the separation of church and state, they aimed to de-Islamize the Muslims and even suppressed the participation of any religious affairs in public education, specifically Islam.⁹⁴ They employ the idea of civilizing the Muslims through modern education, and the Muslims would eventually become unfamiliar with Islam and adopt the norms, values, morality, and

⁸⁷ Milligan, 'Reclaiming an Ideal', 412–13.

⁸⁸ Peter Briggs, 'What Happened to the Philippines After the Spanish Colonization?', Geographic FAQ, *Geographic FAQ Hub: Answers to Your Global Questions*, 7 March 2025, <https://www.ncesc.com/geographic-faq/what-happened-to-the-philippines-after-the-spanish-colonization/>.

⁸⁹ McKenna and Abdula, 'Islamic Education in the Philippines: Political Separatism and Religious Pragmatism', 207.

⁹⁰ Milligan, 'Reclaiming an Ideal', 413.

⁹¹ Milligan, 'Reclaiming an Ideal', 413.

⁹² Nobutaka Suzuki, 'The Trajectories of Colonial Education and Muslim Filipinos Under American Rule', *CORE: Prometheus-Academic Collections: Tokyo University of Foreign Studies, Institute for Languages and Cultures of Asia and Africa*, Islam and Cultural Diversity in Southeast Asia, forthcoming, 41, accessed 3 June 2025, <https://core.ac.uk/reader/195718960>.

⁹³ Suzuki, 'The Trajectories of Colonial Education and Muslim Filipinos Under American Rule', 43–44.

⁹⁴ Suzuki, 'The Trajectories of Colonial Education and Muslim Filipinos Under American Rule', 57.

viewpoint of a more Christian civilized people of the south.⁹⁵ However, this colonial method did not succeed in achieving its expected outcomes. Although some of the *Sulṭan/s* (Muslim leaders) showed cooperation in establishing public schools in their region, the bulk of the Muslims showed little interest and instead continued to be affiliated with their traditional and local religious schools, i.e., the *Pandita* schools.⁹⁶ In the initial phase of public schools introduced by the Americans in 1903, only 240 Muslim students enrolled out of 2,114. In 1906, it increased to 793, 842 in 1907, 1,274 in 1911, and 1,825 in 1912. However, considering the number of enrollees in 1907, which was roughly 50,000, the data showed that only 1.6% of the students were Muslims.⁹⁷

Even though the American colonies transitioned the Muslims into cooperation and resistance, the expansion of public education deeply penetrated the Muslims, where 52 public schools from the first grade to the fourth grade were opened.⁹⁸ The Muslims even viewed it as an opportunity and/or a challenge.⁹⁹ Moreover, in contrast to what Americans anticipated, the *Sulṭan/s* gained benefits from the modern education they introduced. Instead, the Muslim educated individuals stand as the defenders of Muslim societies and Islam, and continue to consider Islam as the central value of their identity. They acted as representatives in national politics and in protecting Muslim societies from Christian hegemony.¹⁰⁰ The Muslims who did not attend public schools, on the other hand, developed their *pandita* schools and transitioned to institutionalizing *madrasah* education, which has been formalized in the post-colonial period. This shift was achieved through the participation of the Islamic network of Middle Eastern ulama (Islamic scholars) in providing training and scholarships at Islamic universities overseas. As a result of this effort, the majority of Muslims became more attached to and adhered to Islam.¹⁰¹

Analyzing the historical struggle of Islamic education in the Philippines during the Spaniard and American periods, one can firmly assert that its survival remains undeniable

⁹⁵ Suzuki, 'The Trajectories of Colonial Education and Muslim Filipinos Under American Rule', 57–58.

⁹⁶ Suzuki, 'The Trajectories of Colonial Education and Muslim Filipinos Under American Rule', 43.

⁹⁷ Suzuki, 'The Trajectories of Colonial Education and Muslim Filipinos Under American Rule', 43–44.

⁹⁸ Suzuki, 'The Trajectories of Colonial Education and Muslim Filipinos Under American Rule', 43.

⁹⁹ Abdul M. Lantong, 'Islam and Colonialism: The Response of the Muslims in the Southern Philippines to Western Colonialism and Legacies', *PEOPLE: International Journal of Social Sciences* 4, no. 2 (2018): 547–67, <https://doi.org/10.20319/pijss.2018.42.547567>.

¹⁰⁰ Suzuki, 'The Trajectories of Colonial Education and Muslim Filipinos Under American Rule', 63.

¹⁰¹ Suzuki, 'The Trajectories of Colonial Education and Muslim Filipinos Under American Rule', 64.

despite a systematic effort to suppress it. In a nutshell, Muslims in the Philippines, known as the Bangsamoro, share a common history as the largely unsubjected, unchristianized, and uncolonized people, and they have maintained their own distinct cultural, religious, and educational identities to the present day.¹⁰² As Hefner indicated, the colonial rule had varying impacts on Islamic education across different regions, leading to challenges and opportunities for reformists.¹⁰³ Thus, despite this survival attainment of Islamic education in the Philippines, it continuously faced structural and ideological pressure that sought to limit its influence and accessibility in the post-colonial period. From the beginning of the preparation of the Philippine independence in 1935, which granted them local control under a Commonwealth government, the Muslims were directly governed by the Christian Filipinos, a government they never wished, or even anticipated.¹⁰⁴ Under this regime, the Christian Filipinos continued the American policy of integrating Muslims into a unified Philippine nation-state, including education.¹⁰⁵ When the Philippines obtained independence in 1946, the education policy under the National Council of Education instilled in the people of the Philippines, including the Muslims, whether they like it or not, that they are citizens of the Republic of the Philippines, which they must comply with.¹⁰⁶

The reinforcement of national identity among Filipinos, the Muslims denied it and prefer their unsubjected identity. In terms of education, the Muslims viewed the so-called national curriculum as anti-Muslim and “basically Christian.”¹⁰⁷ The effort of the Philippine government in the early 1970s to integrate Muslims into the Philippine mainstream education did not achieve the expected result because it largely marginalized religious differences. The surveyed data in 1971 showed that 65% of the Muslims identified themselves as Muslim rather than Filipino and showed a displeasure attitude toward the Philippine education system.¹⁰⁸ In another report by Abdullah T. Madale in 1983, the

¹⁰² Abdul Haiy A. Sali, ‘Perceptions of Muslim Educators on Postcolonial Education in the Philippines: A Qualitative Inquiry’, *International Multidisciplinary Research Journal* 6, no. 1 (2024): 2, <https://doi.org/10.54476/ioer-imrj/171307>.

¹⁰³ Robert W. Hefner, ‘The Best and Most Trying of Times’, in *Pathways to Contemporary Islam: New Trends in Critical Engagement*, ed. Mohamed Nawab Mohamed Osman, Religion and Society in Asia 6 (Amsterdam University Press, 2020).

¹⁰⁴ Jeffrey Ayala Milligan, ‘Islamic Education in The Philippines’, in *Handbook of Islamic Education*, ed. Holger Daun and Reza Arjmand, Springer International Handbooks of Education (Springer International Publishing, 2018), 786, https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-53620-0_34-1.

¹⁰⁵ Milligan, ‘Islamic Education in The Philippines’, 786.

¹⁰⁶ Milligan, ‘Islamic Education in The Philippines’, 786.

¹⁰⁷ Milligan, ‘Islamic Education in The Philippines’, 786.

¹⁰⁸ Milligan, ‘Islamic Education in The Philippines’, 786.

Muslims remain doubtful about the Philippine education system as it pushes them away from their Muslim identity.¹⁰⁹

The resistance of Muslims to mainstream education in the Philippines becomes even more evident with the resurgence of Madrasah education during the 1950s. A formal Madrasah institution named Kamilul Islam Institute was established in Marawi City in 1954 and expanded to the collegiate level in 1959, adopting the name Jamiatul Philippines Al-Islamia.¹¹⁰ Muslims in the Philippines who received education in Islamic universities abroad, along with Muslim missionaries from the Middle East, significantly contributed to the growing network of Madrasah institutions, particularly in the southern region during the 1950s and 1960s.¹¹¹

By the early 1970s, Madrasah institutions had proliferated into the thousands. A report from the Ministry of Muslim Affairs in the 1980s indicates that 1110 Madrasah institutions were established. Moreover, considering Boransing et al.'s argument in 1987, "if small, less formally" established Madrasah institutions were included, the number would rise to nearly 2000.¹¹² Therefore, those Muslims unwilling to send their children to public schools in the Philippines were provided with an alternative option for education, which fostered and strengthened their identity as Muslims rather than as Filipinos. Thus, two parallel educational systems—Islamic education and Philippine public schools—emerged, each with distinct objectives for educating Muslim Filipinos.¹¹³ This enduring experience of Islamic education from the colonial to the post-colonial period serves as a testament to the significance of Islamic identity, religion, and education to Muslims in the Philippines.¹¹⁴

2.1.2 Overview of the Philippines and its Muslim Population

The Philippines is a lower-middle-income nation¹¹⁵ and a sovereign state located in archipelagic Southeast Asia, consisting of 7,641 islands encompassing over 300,000 square kilometers of territory. It is classified into three island groups, namely: Luzon,

¹⁰⁹ Abdullah T. Madale, 'Educating the Muslim Child: The Philippine Case', in *The Muslim Filipinos: A Book of Readings*, ed. Nagasura T. Madale (Alemar-Phoenix Publishing House, Inc., 1981).

¹¹⁰ Milligan, 'Islamic Education in The Philippines', 790.

¹¹¹ Milligan, 'Islamic Education in The Philippines', 790.

¹¹² Milligan, 'Islamic Education in The Philippines', 791.

¹¹³ Milligan, 'Islamic Education in The Philippines', 791.

¹¹⁴ Milligan, 'Islamic Education in The Philippines', 791.

¹¹⁵ See Lorraine Pe Symaco and Martin Hayden, 'The State of Education in Southeast Asia', Lorraine Pe Symaco and Martin Hayden, eds., *International Handbook on Education in South East Asia*, Springer International Handbooks of Education (Springer Nature Singapore, 2024), 14, <https://doi.org/10.1007/978-981-16-8136-3>.

Visayas, and Mindanao.¹¹⁶ It is a tropical country, encompassing many subtypes such as tropical monsoon, tropical savanna, and tropical rainforest climates, which vary depending on a specific area.¹¹⁷ Around the 16th century, the Philippines was named after King Philip II, also known as Prince Philip, of Spain by the Spanish traveller Ruy Lopez de Villalobos during his expedition in the country.¹¹⁸ Following the declaration of the Philippine Statistics Authority (PSA), the Philippines has a total population of 109,035,343 as of 1 May 2020 (last official census of the Philippines).¹¹⁹ In global rankings, the Philippines is the 14th most populous country in the world, with 31% of its people below 15 years old.¹²⁰

Religiously speaking, the Philippines and Timor-Leste are known as the only predominantly Catholic countries not only in Southeast Asia but in the whole continent of Asia.¹²¹ Of the said country's total population, 78.8% identified as Catholic.¹²² However, when considering Christianity in the Philippines as a whole, such as the Iglesia ni Cristo, Seventh Day Adventists, Aglipay, Iglesia Filipina Independiente, Bible Baptist Church, United Church of Christ in the Philippines, Jehovah's Witnesses, and Church of Christ, 92.6% of the total population adheres to this religion.¹²³ Meanwhile, Islam, as the second-largest religion in the country, accounts for only 6.4% of the total population.¹²⁴ The main cause of the minority status of Muslims in the Philippines is the colonization and

¹¹⁶ 'The Philippines - GOVPH', *GOVPH - The GOV.PH or National Government Portal (NGP) Is a Single Window Uniting All Web-Based Government Content to Maximize Efficiency and Provide Rapid, High-Quality Services to Citizens.*, 7 June 2022, <https://www.gov.ph/the-philippines-3/>.

¹¹⁷ See Weather Atlas, 'Yearly & Monthly Weather - Philippines', Weather Atlas, accessed 29 May 2025, <https://www.weather-atlas.com/en/philippines-climate>.

¹¹⁸ See 'The Philippines - GOVPH'.

¹¹⁹ See 'Population and Housing | Philippine Statistics Authority | Republic of the Philippines', accessed 27 May 2025, <https://psa.gov.ph/statistics/population-and-housing/node/164786>.

¹²⁰ See 'Philippines Demographics 2025 (Population, Age, Sex, Trends)', Worldometer, accessed 27 May 2025, <http://www.worldometers.info/demographics/philippines-demographics/>. See Lorraine Pe Symaco and Bustos Marie Therese A.P., 'Overview of Education in the Philippines', in *International Handbook on Education in South East Asia*, ed. Lorraine Pe Symaco and Martin Hayden, Springer International Handbooks of Education (Springer Nature Singapore, 2024), 782, <https://doi.org/10.1007/978-981-16-8136-3>.

¹²¹ See Chester Lester, 'What Is the Only Catholic Country in Asia?', *Geographic FAQ, Geographic FAQ Hub: Answers to Your Global Questions*, 24 February 2025, <https://www.ncesc.com/geographic-faq/what-is-the-only-catholic-country-in-asia/>. Also, see Oliver Samson, 'Timor-Leste: The Un-Member State with the Highest Percentage of Catholics', *RVA*, 5 July 2024, <https://www.rvasia.org/feature-story/timor-leste-un-member-state-highest-percentage-catholics>.

¹²² See 'Religious Affiliation in the Philippines (2020 Census of Population and Housing) | Philippine Statistics Authority | Republic of the Philippines', accessed 29 May 2025, <https://psa.gov.ph/content/religious-affiliation-philippines-2020-census-population-and-housing>.

¹²³ See Religion in the Philippines, 'Philippines Population (2025) Live—Countrymeters', accessed 29 May 2025, <https://countrymeters.info/en/Philippines>.

¹²⁴ See 'Religious Affiliation in the Philippines (2020 Census of Population and Housing) | Philippine Statistics Authority | Republic of the Philippines'.

occupation by the Spaniards in the late 16th century, which halted the expansion of Islam across the country.¹²⁵

The Muslims in the Philippines are mainly located in the southern part of the archipelago, specifically, in the southern parts of Palawan, the Sulu archipelago, and the southern and northern parts of Mindanao.¹²⁶ They are called the Bangsamoro or Moro historically, a name imposed on them by the Spanish colonizers.¹²⁷ They consist of 13 ethnic communities, namely, Maranao, Maguindanaon, Tausug, Iranun, Yakan, Sama, Sama di Laut, Jama Mapun, Kagan/Kalagan, Kolibugan, Sangil, Molbog, and Palawanon.¹²⁸ The Maguindanaons of Sultan an Kudarat, North Cotabato, Maguindanao del Norte, and Maguindanao del Sur provinces, the Maranaos of Lanao del Norte and Lanao del Sur provinces, and the Tausugs of Jolo island are the majority ethnic groups of the Bangsamoro.¹²⁹ The Muslims in the Philippines share cultural ties with Muslim neighboring countries in Southeast Asia, particularly in the Patani region of Southern Thailand, Malaysia, Brunei, and Indonesia.¹³⁰ They consider themselves to be descended from the Sulu Royal Sultanate, an Islamic kingdom related to Brunei that governed the ocean and islands of southern Philippines and northern Borneo (also known as Sabah) for a long time before the advent of Spanish colonizers in the 16th century.¹³¹

2.2 Philippine National Academic Standard

2.2.1 Philippine Higher Education

The Philippines has three educational governing bodies that mandate the educational reform of the country. These are (1) the Department of Education (DepEd) for basic education, (2) the Technical Education and Skills Development Authority (TESDA) for technical-vocational and middle-level education, and (3) the CHED for tertiary and

¹²⁵ McKenna and Abdula, 'Islamic Education in the Philippines: Political Separatism and Religious Pragmatism', 207.

¹²⁶ See Muslims and Moros in the Southern Philippines, Jeffrey Hays, 'Muslims in the Southern Philippines | Facts and Details', accessed 30 May 2025, https://factsanddetails.com/southeast-asia/Philippines/sub5_6d/entry-3885.html.

¹²⁷ See Muslims and Moros in the Southern Philippines, Hays, 'Muslims in the Southern Philippines | Facts and Details'.

¹²⁸ See 'Bangsamoro People', *Bangsamoro Commission for the Preservation of Cultural Heritage - BARMM*, n.d., accessed 31 May 2025, <https://bcpch.bangsamoro.gov.ph/bangsamoro-people/>.

¹²⁹ See Muslims and Moros in the Southern Philippines, Hays, 'Muslims in the Southern Philippines | Facts and Details'.

¹³⁰ See The Muslim Ethnic Groups, Hannibal Bara, 'The History of the Muslim in the Philippines', *National Commission for Culture and the Arts*, n.d., accessed 31 May 2025, <https://ncca.gov.ph/about-ncca-3/subcommissions/subcommission-on-cultural-communities-and-traditional-arts-sccta/central-cultural-communities/the-history-of-the-muslim-in-the-philippines/>.

¹³¹ See Islam Introduced to the Philippines, Hays, 'Muslims in the Southern Philippines | Facts and Details'.

graduate education. Since I focus on the development of the Islamic studies program in higher education, I am not furtherly discussing the role of the DepEd and TESDA.

The Philippine Constitution of 1987 mandated the government's role in education, stating that it “*shall 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.*”¹³² Specifically, the constitution also requires the government to maintain, establish, support, and encourage quality education, scholarship programs, free public education, and an alternative learning system for everyone.¹³³

The education system of the Philippines is broad and well-developed.¹³⁴ They are ranked as the second-largest higher education sector in Southeast Asia, following Indonesia's.¹³⁵ Their educational institutions significantly reflect the legacy of the Spanish (1565-1898) and American (1898-1946) colonies.¹³⁶ The Philippine government oversees and provides 70% of the school sector's needs and resources, except for the higher education sector, where private suppliers play a larger role. Despite the dominance of private institutions in higher education, most of the students in the country are enrolled in public colleges or universities due to the impact of the Universal Access to Quality Tertiary Education Act (UAQTEA) of 2017.¹³⁷ This act provides financial support for students' enrolment in higher education by mandating free tuition and covering additional expenses in public colleges or universities, including vocational education and training (VET) institutions.¹³⁸

In the Philippines, the CHED, as one of the three educational sectors of the three governing bodies,¹³⁹ mandates the educational development plans, standards, policies, and regulations to ensure relevance, accessibility, high-quality education, academic freedom,

¹³² See Article XIV, Section 1, ‘The Constitution of the Republic of the Philippines | GOVPH’, *Official Gazette of the Republic of the Philippines*, n.d., accessed 28 May 2025, <https://www.officialgazette.gov.ph/constitutions/1987-constitution/>.

¹³³ See Article XIV, Section 2, ‘The Constitution of the Republic of the Philippines | GOVPH’.

¹³⁴ Lorraine Pe Symaco and Martin Hayden, ‘The State of Education in Southeast Asia’, in *International Handbook on Education in South East Asia*, ed. Lorraine Pe Symaco and Martin Hayden, Springer International Handbooks of Education (Springer Nature Singapore, 2024), 14, <https://doi.org/10.1007/978-981-16-8136-3>.

¹³⁵ Symaco and Hayden, ‘The State of Education in Southeast Asia’, 14.

¹³⁶ Symaco and Hayden, ‘The State of Education in Southeast Asia’, 14.

¹³⁷ Symaco and Hayden, ‘The State of Education in Southeast Asia’, 14. For a detailed discussion, see Roger Chao Jr., ‘Higher Education in the Philippines’, in *International Handbook on Education in South East Asia*, ed. Lorraine Pe Symaco and Martin Hayden, Springer International Handbooks of Education (Springer Nature Singapore, 2024), <https://doi.org/10.1007/978-981-16-8136-3>.

¹³⁸ Symaco and Hayden, ‘The State of Education in Southeast Asia’, 14.

¹³⁹ See Commission's History, ‘About the Commission’, *Commission on Higher Education*, n.d., accessed 27 May 2025, <https://ched.gov.ph/about-us/>.

and institutional transparency of higher education institutions, colleges, and universities throughout the country. Given the commitments of the national government to transform and empower the Filipino people, making education a central method to reduce poverty, build national competitiveness, and following the Republic Act (RA) 7722, the CHED is mandated to facilitate a higher education system that is both relevant and globally competitive, ensuring that institutions and graduates meet international standards.

Furthermore, the CHED is entrusted with creating high-quality education at the higher level, which is accessible and addresses the marginalized sectors, while maintaining academic freedom to promote educational development, research, leadership development, and cultural enrichment. The CHED is also envisioned to demonstrate moral ascendancy by eradicating corruption, promoting transparency and accountability, and facilitating participatory governance within the higher education sector.¹⁴⁰

Moreover, the CHED has the power to create minimum standards for higher education programs and institutions. This standard is based on the recommendation of expert panels with a consultative process, which includes public hearings. The set standards ensure quality and consistently higher education institutions. Thus, the CHED monitors and evaluates the performance of a program and a higher institution, which the CHED uses as a criterion to either provide funding or impose sanctions. This includes decreasing or removing government support, recommending downgrading or revocation of accreditation, or terminating specific programs or courses, reinforcing accountability, and continuous development in higher education.¹⁴¹

The CHED was established following the enactment of RA No. 7722, also known as the Higher Education Act of 1994. It is an attached agency to the Office of the President (OP) for administrative purposes.¹⁴² A few years later, the RA No. 8292, also known as the Higher Education Modernization Act of 1997, was passed to create a complete, adequate, and integrated system of higher education.¹⁴³ According to the latest published data from CHED for the 2019-2020 academic year, there are 2,396 established higher education institutions across the country, including state university satellite campuses, with a total of 3,408,425 enrollees. 1729 of these institutions are private, 533 are State Universities and Colleges (SUCs), including their satellite campuses, 121 are Local Universities and

¹⁴⁰ See Mandate, 'About the Commission'.

¹⁴¹ See Power and Functions, 'About the Commission'.

¹⁴² See 'About the Commission'.

¹⁴³ See 'About the Commission'.

Colleges (LUCs), and 13 are government schools.¹⁴⁴ Amongst the enrollees, 1,832,780 are enrolled in private institutions, 1,321,773 are enrolled in SUCs, 248,731 are enrolled in LUCs, and 5,141 are enrolled in government schools.¹⁴⁵ The top disciplines where the enrollees belong are in business administration and related courses, education science and teacher training, engineering and technology programs, information technology related disciplines, and medical and allied programs.¹⁴⁶

As mentioned above, the CHED legislates a set of minimum curriculum standards and guidelines for Philippine public and private higher education, encompassing graduate competencies, general education required units, and specialized professional courses.¹⁴⁷ To develop various higher education programs and courses, the CHED appoints technical panels for every program, consisting of representatives from academia, industry, and government agencies, including the Professional Regulatory Commission (PRC), to design the minimum academic requirements, ensuring they meet high-quality standards and professional legitimacy. These technical panels suggest the number of general education units, learning objectives, and specialized courses needed to meet the desired education results.¹⁴⁸ Then, the CHED conducts consultation workshops to gather feedback from various stakeholders nationwide, ensuring the program's effectiveness and relevance. After an adequate review and assessment of the gathered feedback, the CHED adapts and refines the suggested curriculum and academic guidelines, making it a formalized and official policy for higher education institutions, universities, and colleges to follow. This policy is commonly referred to as the CHED Memorandum Order (CMO).¹⁴⁹

2.3 The Establishment of the Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao and the Contemporary Situation of Islamic Education in the Philippines

2.3.1 Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao

Etymologically speaking, the term Bangsamoro is a combination of two languages, Old Malay and Spanish. Bangsa is from Old Malay, which means nation, and Moro from a

¹⁴⁴ See Distribution of Higher Education Institutions by Institution Type: AY 2019-2020, 'Higher Education Facts and Figures', *Commission on Higher Education*, 2020, <https://ched.gov.ph/2020-higher-education-facts-and-figures/>.

¹⁴⁵ See Higher Education Enrollment by Sex and Institution Type: AY 2019-2020, 'Higher Education Facts and Figures'.

¹⁴⁶ See Top 5 Discipline in Terms of Enrollment: AY 2019-2020, 'Higher Education Facts and Figures'.

¹⁴⁷ Chao Jr., 'Higher Education in the Philippines', 872.

¹⁴⁸ Chao Jr., 'Higher Education in the Philippines', 872-73.

¹⁴⁹ Chao Jr., 'Higher Education in the Philippines', 873.

Spanish word for a collective name for the Muslim ethnic groups in the Philippines,¹⁵⁰ which was first referred to as the Moors, who once controlled Spain before the Reconquista.¹⁵¹ Basically, Bangsamoro means the “Moro Nation.” The Bangsamoro region consists of six provinces, namely Lanao del-Sur, Sulu, Basilan, Maguindanao,¹⁵² Tawi-Tawi, and three cities: Marawi, Lamitan, and Cotabato (the capital city of the region), one hundred sixteen provinces, two thousand five hundred ninety barangays, and one Special Geographic Area (SGA).¹⁵³ Among the Bangsamoro people, the Maguindanaon dominated Cotabato City, Maguindanao, and the surrounding areas,¹⁵⁴ the Maranao in Lanao del-Sur, and the Tausug in Sulu.¹⁵⁵ The Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (BARMM), according to the Philippine Statistics Authority (PSA), is the fastest-growing region in the Philippines since the 2015 census of population (POPCEN), with a yearly population growth rate (PGR) of 3.26% from 2015 to 2020. The total population of the BARMM as of 1 May 2020 is 4,404,288.¹⁵⁶

The objective to maintain the significance of the Muslim endeavor in the Philippines to establish a nation-state for themselves bounced back in the struggle of the Bangsamoro people for self-determination.¹⁵⁷ The Bangsamoro people’s determination to establish their independent state relies on their ongoing process of defining their national

¹⁵⁰ ‘BARMM | Central Online Portal’, accessed 22 June 2024, <https://barmm.ph/index.html>.

¹⁵¹ For more detailed information about the Moors, see Stanley Lane-Poole, *The Moors in Spain*, with Arthur Gilman, Kiraz Theological Archive (Gorgias Press, 2010), <https://doi.org/10.31826/9781463219093>.

¹⁵² Currently, Maguindanao is divided into two provinces: Maguindanao del-Norte and Maguindanao del-Sur. See Institute for Policy Analysis of Conflict, *Violence in the Southern Philippines in the Lead-up to Local Elections | IPAC* (Institute for Policy Analysis of Conflict (IPAC), 2023), 11, <https://understandingconflict.sgp1.digitaloceanspaces.com/dashboard/IPAC-Report-88-Violence-in-the-Southern-Philippines-in-the-Lead-Up-to-Local-Election-18092023.pdf.pdf>.

¹⁵³ International Crisis Group, *Southern Philippines: Fostering an Inclusive Bangsamoro | Crisis Group*, Asia Report N°322 (Manila/Brussels, Belgium, 2022), 1, <https://www.crisisgroup.org/asia/south-east-asia/philippines/southern-philippines-fostering-inclusive-bangsamoro>.

¹⁵⁴ Sinaunang Panahon, *Maguindanao Language of the Philippines*, Filipino Culture and Heritage, 25 April 2025, <https://sinaunangpanahon.com/maguindanao-language-of-the-philippines/>.

¹⁵⁵ Queenie Pearl Villalon Tomaro, ‘The Moros of Mindanao: A Subject of Social Closure’, *Journal of Governance and Public Policy* 6, no. 2 (2019): 80, <https://doi.org/10.18196/jgpp.62109>.

¹⁵⁶ See ‘Census of Population and Housing: Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (BARMM) | Philippine Statistics Authority | Republic of the Philippines’, 2020, <https://psa.gov.ph/infographics/2020-census-population-and-housing-bangsamoro-autonomous-region-muslim-mindanao-barmm>.

¹⁵⁷ Rizal G. Buendia, ‘The Ethnopolitics of Moro Self-Determination in the Philippines: So Little, Too Late?’, *Asia-Pacific Social Science Review* 12, no. 1 (2012): 45, <https://doi.org/10.59588/2350-8329.1003>.

identity.¹⁵⁸ Currently, the Philippine government and the Moro National Liberation Front (MILF) are peacefully recognizing and developing the self-determination of the Bangsamoro people.¹⁵⁹ This effort can be seen in paragraph B, section 1, of the peace agreement between the Philippine government and MILF, known as the Tripoli Agreement, signed on 22 June 2001 in Libya.¹⁶⁰ It states as follows:

“The observance of international humanitarian law and respect for internationally recognized human rights instruments and the protection of evacuees and displaced persons in the conduct of their relations reinforce the Bangsamoro people’s fundamental right to determine their own future and political status.”

Moreover, despite numerous challenges, the effort to develop the social status of the Bangsamoro people can be seen with the creation of the BARMM.¹⁶¹ After roughly five centuries, through the interim guidance of the Bangsamoro Transition Authority (BTA), the Philippine Congress finally passed RA No. 11054, known as the Bangsamoro Organic Law (BOL) on 26 July 2018.¹⁶² The bill, said to be all-encompassing in “spirit and intent,” led to the creation of the BARMM in January 2019 by plebiscite¹⁶³ and determined the parameters of two significant peace agreements.¹⁶⁴ The main objective of the progressive autonomous region, regardless of religion, identity, and gender, is to serve as a “major step

¹⁵⁸ Rizal G. Buendia, ‘Looking into the Future of Moro Self-Determination in the Philippines’, *Philippine Political Science Journal* 29, no. 52 (2008): 2, <https://doi.org/10.1080/01154451.2008.9723506>.

¹⁵⁹ Abhoud Syed M Lingga, ‘Understanding Bangsamoro Independence as a Mode of Self-Determination’, *Mindanao Journal XXVII*, 2004, 4, <https://www.ombudsman.gov.ph/UNDP4/wp-content/uploads/2013/01/Independence-Option.pdf>.

¹⁶⁰ Agreement on Peace Between the Government of the Philippines and the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (2001). <https://www.scribd.com/document/330996511/Tripoli-Agreement-of-2001>. In this agreement, Dureza represented the Philippine government, while Ebrahim represented the MILF, with Saif al-Islam Gaddafi as a witness.

¹⁶¹ The BARMM was a transition of the former Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (ARMM). The ARMM was the first regional autonomy of the Muslims in the Philippines, which was adopted in 1989 under the provisions of the 1987 Philippine constitution. However, because of the failed implementation of the former autonomy, the BARMM, through the Republic Act. 11054 was adopted to address longstanding governance challenges and enhance self-determination for the Bangsamoro people. For detailed information about the failure implementation of the ARMM, see Buendia, ‘Looking into the Future of Moro Self-Determination in the Philippines’, 1. Also, see Buendia, ‘The Ethnopolitics of Moro Self-Determination in the Philippines’, 51–55. For a detailed analysis on the transition of the autonomous government of the region from ARMM to BARMM, see Steven Rood et al., ‘The ARMM Is Gone: Long Live the BARMM’, in *Contesting the Philippines*, ed. Steven Rood and Veronica L. Taylor (ISEAS Publishing, 2024).

¹⁶² International Crisis Group, *Southern Philippines*, 1.

¹⁶³ Zachary Abuza and Luke Lischin, *The Challenges Facing the Philippines’ Bangsamoro Autonomous Region at One Year*, 468 (US Institute of Peace, 2020), 3, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/resrep24906>.

¹⁶⁴ International Crisis Group, *Southern Philippines*, 1.

forward” in achieving long-lasting and durable peace and development for all the people living in the region.¹⁶⁵

The progress and development of the BARMM certainly face numerous challenges. Nevertheless, the agreement serves as a significant opportunity for the Bangsamoro people to show their capability to govern and to be an independent nation. It is crucial to recognize that the focus of the Bangsamoro government is not only on Muslims living in the region. The BTA acknowledges the rights of the Indigenous people (IP) residing in the region and entails provisions defending their rights and upholding their traditional legal system.¹⁶⁶ Among the aims of the BARMM is to provide good governance for the people regardless of their religion. This has been seen, for instance, during the tragic COVID-19 pandemic, regardless of its initial establishment and lack of funding resources showed its concern and responded decisively and humanely.¹⁶⁷

In the initial year of the BARMM, it has already accomplished various achievements. To highlight a few, the cease-fire between the MILF and the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) has been solidified, an interim government has been formed, the Sharia court has been strengthened, they cooperated with the participation of conducting disarmament and demobilization of the initial batch of their combatants and the distributing of block grants, and above all, the BARMM specifically the MILF has been transitioned into a political faction creating and enacting laws and orders.¹⁶⁸ Therefore, the BARMM gained support from various foreign governments such as Saudi Arabia, Malaysia, Indonesia, and Turkey, and expressed their interest in helping and investing in monitoring the adherence to the provisions of the peace agreements signed by both parties, the Philippine government and the MILF.¹⁶⁹ BARMM as a known autonomous region in the Philippines was created to aid the demand of the Muslims in the Philippines, however, it does not govern in a largely Islamic setting and still adheres to the Western concept of public leadership, therefore, it must be adaptable and innovative in selecting suitable public

¹⁶⁵ International Crisis Group, *Southern Philippines*, 2.

¹⁶⁶ Abuza and Lischin, *The Challenges Facing the Philippines' Bangsamoro Autonomous Region at One Year*, 10.

¹⁶⁷ Abuza and Lischin, *The Challenges Facing the Philippines' Bangsamoro Autonomous Region at One Year*, 41.

¹⁶⁸ Abuza and Lischin, *The Challenges Facing the Philippines' Bangsamoro Autonomous Region at One Year*, 21.

¹⁶⁹ Danica Denise M. Manicad et al., 'BARMM Normalization: Opportunities and Challenges for the DFA', in *FSI Insights | Cadets' Research Papers: Balintanaw Edition* (Pasay City: Foreign Service Institute, 2022), 98, https://fsi.gov.ph/wp-content/uploads/2024/02/FSI-INSIGHTS_BALINTANAW-2022.pdf?appgw_azwaf_jsc=MaWH-X3I1sf7bzpmaq74Bg8_fy4jZel3CfC4ZPqTSDM#page=98.

servants for various circumstances to maintain the demands of a rapidly changing environment.¹⁷⁰

Nonetheless, greater autonomy means greater educational policy. When the former autonomy was achieved (i.e., the ARMM), they initially initiated the Islamization of public education and the integration of Madrasah institutions into the Philippine public education system in the region.¹⁷¹ The organic act of the former autonomy yielded necessary means for the regional government to develop an education (sub)system to address the values, spiritual, social, intellectual, scientific, cultural, and physical aspects of the Bangsamoro people, with special emphasis on the Muslims.¹⁷² The BARMM, on the other hand, continued this effort under the provision of RA No. 11054, known as the Bangsamoro Organic Law (BOL), which entails that developing quality education at all levels “shall be the top priority of the Bangsamoro government.”¹⁷³ The commitment of the BARMM to deliver quality education for the Bangsamoro people is reflected in its inclusive and culturally grounded policies.¹⁷⁴ The former chief minister of the BARMM, Ahod Murad Ebrahim, indicates that “*the Ministry of Education will work to ensure that no Bangsamoro child is left behind in terms of education.*”¹⁷⁵

2.3.2 Integration of Madrasah Education into the Philippine Mainstream Education

Integrating Madrasah institutions in the Philippines has been started since 1987, following the Letter of Instruction 1221 of 1982.¹⁷⁶ One of its provisions is the formulation

¹⁷⁰ Mustapha Edres Dimaro, ‘Islamic Leadership in BARMM, Philippines: Compatibility with Western Leadership and Effects on Organizational Performance’, *European Extended Enablement in Science, Engineering & Management (IEEE-SEM)* 11, no. 4 (2023), https://www.ieeesem.com/researchpaper/Islamic_Leadership_in_BARMM_Philippines_Compatibility_with_Western_Leadership_and_Effects_on_Organizational_Performance.pdf.

¹⁷¹ Milligan, ‘Islamic Education in The Philippines’, 792–93.

¹⁷² Hamsira M. Harad and Benjier H. Arriola, ‘Challenges on the Implementation of Arabic Language and Islamic Values Education (ALIVE) Program’, *International Journal of Multidisciplinary Research and Publications (IJMRAP)* 4, no. 9 (2022): 17, <https://ijmrp.com/wp-content/uploads/2022/02/IJMRAP-V4N8P135Y22.pdf>.

¹⁷³ See Article IX, sections 16-20, An Act Providing for the Organic Law for the Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao, Repealing for the Purpose Republic Act No. 6734, Entitled ‘an Act Providing for an Organic Act for the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao,’ as Amended by Republic Act No. 9054, Entitled ‘an Act to Strengthen and Expand the Organic Act for the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao’, Republic Act No. 11054, known as the Bangsamoro Organic Law (BOL) (2018).

https://lawphil.net/statutes/repacts/ra2018/ra_11054_2018.html.

¹⁷⁴ MBHTE-BARMM, ‘Key Features of the Bangsamoro Education Code’, *Ministry of Basic, Higher and Technical Education - Bangsamoro*, n.d., accessed 13 June 2025, <https://mbhte.bangsamoro.gov.ph/key-features/>.

¹⁷⁵ MBHTE-BARMM, ‘The Ministry of Basic, Higher, and Technical Education | BARMM’, *Ministry of Basic, Higher and Technical Education - Bangsamoro*, accessed 13 June 2025, <https://mbhte.bangsamoro.gov.ph/>.

¹⁷⁶ Abu Bakar, ‘Mainstreaming Madrasah Education in the Philippines: Issues, Problems and Challenges’, 83.

and adaptation of developing Madrasah institutions to mainstream Muslim students in the Philippine education system and the reinforcement of the Islamic studies program in state universities and higher institutions, particularly in Mindanao.¹⁷⁷ The provision following the Department of Education, Culture and Sports (DECS)¹⁷⁸ recognizes the Madrasah institutions as sectarian private schools.¹⁷⁹ Thus, the provision did not develop the Madrasah curriculum as an independent model; rather, it was infused within the Philippine national education standards. As a result, those Madrasah institutions that refused to be integrated were left alone.¹⁸⁰ Nonetheless, during the Conference and Workshop on the Unification of the Curriculum of private Madrasah institutions in May 2002, nearly 400 institutions agreed to be integrated into the Philippine education system.¹⁸¹ Moreover, one of the objectives of integrating Madrasah institutions into the Philippine education system is to create a standard curriculum for private Madrasah institutions. This includes *Fiqh* and *Aqīdah*, the *Qur'ān*, *Hadīth*, and *Sīrah*. These three subjects were infused with the secular subjects of the Philippine education system.¹⁸²

The policy of integrating the Madrasah institutions into the Philippine mainstream education was formally approved following the implementation of guidelines under the Department Order (DO) No. 52, series of 2004, also known as the “Standard Curriculum for Elementary Public Schools and Private Madaris.” This order has been amended by the DO No. 40, series of 2011, aiming to ‘Refined Elementary Madrasah Curriculum (REMC) for public schools and ‘Refined Standard Madrasah Curriculum (RSMC) for private integrated madrasah institutions.¹⁸³ However, despite a positive reaction from Muslims in the Philippines concerning this policy,¹⁸⁴ it remains facing significant challenges within the autonomous government in the country. Further development has been impeded by

¹⁷⁷ Abu Bakar, ‘Mainstreaming Madrasah Education in the Philippines: Issues, Problems and Challenges’, 83.

¹⁷⁸ Department of Education, Culture, and Sports (DECS) was renamed as Department of Education (DepEd) in 2001, following the Republic Act No. 9155. See Republic of the Philippines | Department of Education, ‘History | Department of Education’, *Historical Perspective of the Philippine Educational System*, n.d., accessed 13 June 2025, <https://www.deped.gov.ph/about-deped/history/>.

¹⁷⁹ Abu Bakar, ‘Mainstreaming Madrasah Education in the Philippines: Issues, Problems and Challenges’, 84.

¹⁸⁰ Abu Bakar, ‘Mainstreaming Madrasah Education in the Philippines: Issues, Problems and Challenges’, 84.

¹⁸¹ Abu Bakar, ‘Mainstreaming Madrasah Education in the Philippines: Issues, Problems and Challenges’, 85.

¹⁸² Abu Bakar, ‘Mainstreaming Madrasah Education in the Philippines: Issues, Problems and Challenges’, 86.

¹⁸³ Samid, ‘Islamic Education and the Development of Madrasah Schools in the Philippines’, 43.

¹⁸⁴ Abu Bakar, ‘Mainstreaming Madrasah Education in the Philippines: Issues, Problems and Challenges’, 87.

endemic poverty, financial constraints, corruption, political power rivalry, and, especially, resistance to educational centralization.¹⁸⁵ Therefore, to successfully achieve the desired result for educational development for the Muslims in the Philippines, it requires a more comprehensive planning and involvement of key stakeholders from national and regional governments.

2.3.3 Implementation of Arabic Language and Islamic Values (ALIVE) Program

The adaptation of teaching the ALIVE has been part of developing regional autonomy for Muslims in the Philippines. The RA No. 9054, though not explicitly stated, requires the autonomous government to include and develop teaching the ALIVE in public schools.¹⁸⁶ However, the adaptation of ALIVE as an official program falls under the wider framework of DO No. 52, series of 2004. The order's function in this program is to outline guidelines for integrating the ALIVE into public schools with a significant Muslim student population.¹⁸⁷ The program has been integrated into the K to 12 curriculum of the DepEd, which provides an opportunity and respect for Muslim students to learn their traditions, cultures, and beliefs.¹⁸⁸ As indicated by Nene Astudilla C. Godoy, the program is a tool to advance the education of Muslims with relevance, meaningfulness, and cultural sensitivity.¹⁸⁹ Moreover, the program represents a peaceful interaction between the Muslim, Indigenous, and Christian communities in the Philippines.¹⁹⁰ Above all, the Philippine government began offering the program as an indication of reconciliation with the Bangsamoro people, who have long been striving for independence.¹⁹¹

Because of the ALIVE program, the problem of integrating Muslims into the Philippine mainstream education system has arguably been temporarily alleviated. Those students who have been struggling to attend the two parallel educational systems in the

¹⁸⁵ Milligan, 'Islamic Education in The Philippines', 793.

¹⁸⁶ See Article XIV, section 2 (j) (k) (n) (5), An Act to Strengthen and Expand the Organic Act for the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao, Amending for the Purpose Republic Act No. 6734, Entitled 'an Act Providing for the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao,' as Amended (2001). https://lawphil.net/statutes/repacts/ra2001/ra_9054_2001.html.

¹⁸⁷ Balah, 'A Systematic Review on the Implementation of the Arabic Language and Islamic Values Education (ALIVE) Program in the Philippines', 1–2.

¹⁸⁸ Rita L. Salindab and Allan A. Maglantay, 'Arabic Language and Islamic Values Education (ALIVE) Implementation, Pedagogical Practices of Alive Teachers and Learners' Performance', *International Journal of Research and Innovation in Social Science* IX, no. IV (2025): 1137, <https://doi.org/10.47772/IJRIS.2025.90400087>.

¹⁸⁹ Razaleigh Muhamat Kawangit et al., 'Impact of the Implementation of Arabic Language and Islamic Values Education (ALIVE) Program in the Philippines', *Educational Research Journal* 2 (January 2015): 1, <https://doi.org/10.6084/m9.figshare.1599781>.

¹⁹⁰ Kawangit et al., 'Impact of the Implementation of Arabic Language and Islamic Values Education (ALIVE) Program in the Philippines', 1.

¹⁹¹ Balah, 'A Systematic Review on the Implementation of the Arabic Language and Islamic Values Education (ALIVE) Program in the Philippines', 2.

Philippines have been given an opportunity to acquire both educations at the same time and at the same school. Meaning, the students do not need to attend the Weekend Madrasah if and when they wish to. They have given more leisure time to spend with their families, enjoyment, relaxation, and playing hours. However, during their weekly class, they have to stay longer in school since the ALIVE program was added to their curriculum.¹⁹² Given this new situation of the educational setup of the Muslims in the Philippines, the ALIVE program faces significant challenges. For instance, since the Arabic language and Islamic values are merely an integrated subject in the Philippine public educational curriculum, their full potential to greatly educate the Muslims about these areas of study remains constrained.¹⁹³ Therefore, as one of the students who have taken these subjects in Cotabato City, I argue that the ALIVE program is limited when it comes to educating Muslims in the Philippines concerning their faith, identity, and moral values. The Arabic language is only a matter of reading and writing, while Islamic values are taught in a general and often seemingly manner, lacking depth in ethical practice, theological discourse, and practical application.

Moreover, aside from the challenges of the students in taking the Arabic language and Islamic values subjects, several challenges also impeded the implementation of the program. Hamsira M. Harad and Benjeir H. Arriola provided a comprehensive study on the matter of identifying challenges concerning the implementation of the ALIVE program. They identified that the inadequate financial and instructional materials, poor monitoring and supervision from the division office, and insufficient evaluation policies for ALIVE teachers are the major problems in implementing the program.¹⁹⁴

Moreover, Sali and Marasigan identified that cultural variances among students, ALIVE teachers, and key figures, lack of physical facilities for ALIVE teachers, lack of interest among students, doubtful attitude of students' parents, and insufficient teaching materials are also a great deal for the successful implementation of the program.¹⁹⁵ Nonetheless, despite all of these challenges obstructing the program's full potential, it has been viewed with a great effect among students taking the Arabic language fluency and

¹⁹² Abu Bakar, 'Mainstreaming Madrasah Education in the Philippines: Issues, Problems and Challenges', 87.

¹⁹³ Abu Bakar, 'Mainstreaming Madrasah Education in the Philippines: Issues, Problems and Challenges', 87–88.

¹⁹⁴ Harad and Arriola, 'Challenges on the Implementation of Arabic Language and Islamic Values Education (ALIVE) Program', 17.

¹⁹⁵ Abdul Haiy Abdul Sali and Arlyne Canales Marasigan, 'Madrasah Education Program Implementation in the Philippines: An Exploratory Case Study', *International Journal of Comparative Education and Development* 22, no. 3 (2020): 210–13, <https://doi.org/10.1108/IJCED-06-2019-0034>.

Islamic values discourse. Muslim students showed significant cultural awareness.¹⁹⁶ Moreover, the program plays a key role in enlightening the moral consciousness of Muslim students, directing their everyday decisions and actions.¹⁹⁷

2.3.4 Form of Madrasah Institutions in the Philippines

To systematically identify the forms of Madrasah institutions in the Philippines in this section, I analyzed two existing studies that provide valuable insights into the structure of various Madrasah institutions in the country. First, is the study by Latif, which examines five forms of Madrasah institutions, one of which has received accreditation from the Philippine government. Second is the study of Amina H. Samid, which provides only two forms of the Madrasah institutions. Samid simply categorized the Madrasah institutions in the Philippines into Traditional Madrasah Education, which does not receive government accreditation, and Integrated Madrasah Education, which does. In contrast, Latif further subdivides Traditional Madrasah Education into four specific divisions, offering a more detailed classification of Madrasah institutions. Therefore, it could be asserted that the first form of the Madrasah institutions in the Philippines is the Traditional Madrasah Education with four (4) subdivisions. While the second form is the Integrated Madrasah Education, which provides a single branch.

Traditional Madrasah Education is managed and operated by either a family or an organization. Ownership and managing traditional madrasahs can be undertaken by a family, individual, community, or organization that has the capability to do so. This system does not receive any support from the Philippine government. The subjects are mainly focusing on Islamic theology, and the classes primarily operate on Saturday and Sunday, except for Madrasah institutions, which require the students to stay on the campus twenty-four seven.¹⁹⁸ The following are the four (4) subdivisions:

1. *Weekend Madrasah*: This is the oldest and most fundamental form of Madrasah in the Philippines, dating back to the advent of Islam and continuing to the present. This Madrasah has no formal and standard curriculum, and the subjects change occasionally. It is called the Weekend Madrasah because the classes are only on

¹⁹⁶ Kawangit et al., 'Impact of the Implementation of Arabic Language and Islamic Values Education (ALIVE) Program in the Philippines', 27–32. For more discussion, see Aminah B. Mangadang et al., 'Implementation and Challenges of Arabic Language and Islamic Values Education Program: Basis for School Development Plan', *American Journal of Arts and Human Science* 4, no. 1 (2025): 1, <https://doi.org/10.54536/ajahs.v4i1.4139>.

¹⁹⁷ Abu Bakar, 'Mainstreaming Madrasah Education in the Philippines: Issues, Problems and Challenges', 87.

¹⁹⁸ Samid, 'Islamic Education and the Development of Madrasah Schools in the Philippines', 41–42.

Saturday and Sunday. Guro's (teacher) primary focus is teaching the students how to read and write, and they are not required to have bachelor's degrees, given that they have at least undergone training from the same Madrasah, *Pandita*, or Imam of the Masjid.¹⁹⁹ During the weekdays, the students have the opportunity to attend the Philippines' public education system.

2. *Formal Private Madrasah*: This system of institution is systematic. It has an order of educational levels. From elementary (*Ibtida*) to high school (*Mutawassit*) to senior high school (*Thanawī*) to college (*Kulliyah*), the students must go through an order of schooling, and they must adhere to Madrasah regulations. The subjects were usually focused on Islamic theology, with minor subjects in Mathematics, Science, and History. Further, the subjects were also changing occasionally. The medium of instruction from Elementary to High School is the mother tongue of the particular tribal area. A mixture of mother tongue and Arabic language in Senior High School, and complete Arabic language in a Bachelor's degree. The class schedule from elementary to senior high school is usually provided within three days: Friday, Saturday, and Sunday. During the weekdays, the students also have the opportunity to attend the Philippines' public education system. For a Bachelor's degree, the Madrasah usually offers four-year courses in different fields, such as Shari'ah, Da'awah, and Tarbiyyah. The class schedule for the Bachelor's degree is from Monday to Thursday. The teachers are typically those scholars educated from the Middle East and other Islamic universities, both nationally and internationally. However, due to the limited sources of this Madrasah institution, the students prefer to study abroad, primarily in the Middle East. Even worse, no departments of the Philippine government offer job opportunities for students who obtain a bachelor's degree from this Madrasah institution.²⁰⁰

3. *Special Qur'ān Memorization Madrasah*: This institution is usually known as the '*halaqāt*' in the Philippines. The students were primarily children, around four to ten years old. The teachers must at least know how to read the *Qur'ān* with proper pronunciation (*tajwīd*). In some areas, this Madrasah institution offers a limited number of religious subjects. The class schedules are usually conducted in the mosque for a specific time, decided by the teacher. This is an informal

¹⁹⁹ Latif, 'Islamic Education', 75.

²⁰⁰ Latif, 'Islamic Education', 75.

institution with a loud vocal class as the students read the *Qur'ān* simultaneously and sometimes with a microphone.²⁰¹

4. *Toril Madrasah*: This institution is also known as '*markāz*.' The students are required to memorize the whole *Qur'ān* and become '*hāfīdz*' (the title of a person who memorizes the whole *Qur'ān*). They must learn the Arabic language. The students are also required to stay on the campus twenty-four-seven as the teacher manages the students to memorize the *Qur'ān* during the day and evening. During weekends, the students are required to attend a Formal Private Madrasah to further study religious subjects. The teacher must be able to read the *Qur'ān* with proper pronunciation (*tajwīd*) and speak Arabic fluently. The length of the course is usually two to three years, and the students must thoroughly memorize the *Qur'ān* to step up to another level, which is to study the exegesis (*tafsīr*) of the *Qur'ān*.²⁰²

On the other hand, Integrated Madrasah Education, also known as the '*integrated Madaris*,' a private Islamic institution, has been granted accreditation and acknowledgement by the Department of Education (DepEd) in the Philippines.²⁰³ Given that they must follow certain conditions imposed by the DepEd, such as integrating scientific and cultural courses into their religious education. Thus, this institution integrated essential components with the curriculum mandated by the DepEd to address the conundrum faced by Muslim students when choosing between an Islamic and public education.²⁰⁴ This is a single institution as follows:

Standard Private Madrasah: This represents the latest, transformed, and synchronized form of Madrasah in the Philippines that has become an integral part of the Philippine Education System and has received recognition and accreditation from the government.²⁰⁵ Its establishment is in accordance with DO No. 51. series of 2004, which prescribed the standard curriculum for Elementary Public Schools and Private Madaris.²⁰⁶ This Madrasah is quite successful in gaining accreditation and support from the government of the Philippines. The students have the opportunity to study in secular higher education funded by the government. However, the religious subjects in this Madrasah institution are limited; the medium of instruction is English, and the students are not required to learn how to speak Arabic. Therefore, some of the Muslims in the Philippines view this as a

²⁰¹ Latif, 'Islamic Education', 75.

²⁰² Latif, 'Islamic Education', 76.

²⁰³ Samid, 'Islamic Education and the Development of Madrasah Schools in the Philippines', 42.

²⁰⁴ Milligan, 'Reclaiming an Ideal', 417.

²⁰⁵ Latif, 'Islamic Education', 75.

²⁰⁶ Latif, 'Islamic Education', 75.

threat to the Muslims. For them, this is one of the strategies of the government to colonize the Muslims in the Philippines. Nonetheless, the graduates in this Madrasah have the opportunity to take national examinations and secure admission to public and private higher education institutions.²⁰⁷

²⁰⁷ Milligan, 'Reclaiming an Ideal', 417.

CHAPTER III

ISLAMIC STUDIES IN NATIONAL AND REGIONAL HIGHER EDUCATION

3.1 Overview of the Islamic Studies Program in Philippine Higher Education

The Islamic studies program in Philippine higher education has been adopted in the present day alongside Muslim education development in the country. It has been adopted and formalized as a four-year Bachelor of Arts following the CHED Memorandum No. 30 in 2008, specializing in Political Economy and Islamic Arts & Multimedia Technology. The program aims to “study Islam as a way of life in the context of economic, social, cultural, political, and legal aspects. To create a group of scholars who would contribute to the education of Muslims and non-Muslims, as well as to the integration of Muslim Filipinos into the mainstream Philippine society.”

The CMO No. 30 requires all the state universities and colleges (SUCs) and local colleges and universities (LUCs), including private higher institutions (PHEIs), to obtain official authorization from the CHED before offering the Bachelor of Arts in Islamic Studies (BAIS) and/or establishing an Islamic education-focused higher institution. Within this policy standard development program, the CHED crafted a Technical Committee (TC) to present input and/or expertise on the developmental, disciplinal, and degree program roadmap for BAIS. Admiral Joel S. Garcia, Dr. Arturo F. Eustaquio, and Mr. Yusuf Roque Morales were the first members of the TC. They were mainly tasked to craft an Islamic studies curriculum. Dr. Mashur Bin-Ghalib Jundam, Dr. Arturo F. Eustaquio, and Prof. Abdulhadi T. Daguit were the second members of the TC. They significantly contributed to the transition and development of the Islamic studies curriculum. Dr. Mashur bin Ghalib Jundam, Prof. Abdulhadi T. Daguit, and Dr. Nur N. Hussein were the third members of the TC. They were tasked to oversee the technical aspects of the Islamic studies curriculum. Prof. Abdulhadi T. Daguit, Dr. Nur N. Hussein, Dr. Nefertari A. Arsad, and Dr. Jamel R. Cayamodin are the fourth and current members of the TC. They are tasked to further improve the content, context, and technical aspects of the Islamic studies curriculum. The first members of the TC significantly contributed to the formalization of the BAIS, which resulted in the adaptation of the CMO No. 30.²⁰⁸

Nonetheless, even before the CMO No. 30, BAIS has been operating in some other higher institutions and universities in the Philippines, particularly in the Bangsamoro

²⁰⁸ Nefertari Al-Raschid-Arsad, ed., ‘Muslim Institutional Development in Education | Proceedings’, in *Muslim Institutional Development in Education*, trans. Arlene A. Tarroja, with Camille Lucille A. Bello and Cheery D. Orozco (University of the Philippines Center for Integrative and Development Studies, 2021), 11–14, <https://cids.up.edu.ph/download/muslim-institutional-development-education/>.

region. To mention a few, these include the King Faisal Center for Islamic, Arabic, and Asian Studies (KFCIAAS) at Mindanao State University-Marawi, the College of Islamic and Arabic Studies at Mindanao State University-Tawi-Tawi, Islamic Studies major in Shari'a at Mindanao State University-Sulu, and the Institute of Middle East and Asian Studies at the University of Southern Mindanao. Recently, the College of Islamic Studies at Cotabato State University, the Institute of Islamic, Arabic, and International Studies at Mindanao State University-General Santos City, and the newly created Bangsamoro Kulliyah for Islamic Studies (BKIS) at Buluan, Maguindanao del-Sur.

3.2 Ministry of Basic, Higher, and Technical Education (MBHTE)

Given that the mandate of the MBHTE is to cover all “formal and non-formal education at all levels” in the Bangsamoro region, I specifically focus my discussion on the role of the MBHTE at the higher education level.

The BARMM, as a parliamentary democratic regional government, consisting of executive and legislative branches led by the Chief Minister, integrated the educational sectors of the Philippines—the DepEd, CHED, and TESDA—for the Bangsamoro autonomous regional government to mandate their educational development, forming a single entity, as part of the Bangsamoro governance framework, named the MBHTE.²⁰⁹ The MBHTE was created to mandate the:

“Formulation, planning, implementation, and coordination of the policies, plans, programs, and projects in the areas of formal and non-formal education at all levels, supervise all educational institutions, both public and private, and provide for the establishment, maintenance, and support of a complete, adequate, and integrated system of education relevant and responsive to the needs, ideals, and aspirations of the Bangsamoro People.”²¹⁰

Further, the MBHTE is committed to:

“Deliver balanced, inclusive, rights-based and quality education by creating education policies that reflect the history and aspirations of all Bangsamoro people, implementing programs that produce globally competitive leaders and

²⁰⁹ Harad and Arriola, ‘Challenges on the Implementation of Arabic Language and Islamic Values Education (ALIVE) Program’, 17.

²¹⁰ See the MBHTE Mandate in MBHTE-BARMM, ‘About MBHTE’, *Ministry of Basic, Higher and Technical Education - Bangsamoro*, n.d., accessed 15 June 2025, <https://mbhte.bangsamoro.gov.ph/about/>.

professionals, and developing informed and empowered citizens through moral governance-based educational programs and policies."²¹¹

To strengthen the significance of the MBHTE, the Bangsamoro Autonomy Act (BAA) No. 18 (BAA-18), known as the Bangsamoro Education Code (BEC) of 2021, was adopted to oversee the formulation, planning, implementation, and coordination of the educational policies, ensuring alignment with Bangsamoro governance principles (i.e., the Moral Governance).²¹² It is stated in the BAA No. 18 that the code:

*"Shall provide an educational framework that is relevant and responsive to the needs, ideals, and aspirations of the Bangsamoro people, which shall conform to the minimum standards set by the National Government."*²¹³

Specifically, at the higher education level, the MBHTE:

*"Covers all Higher Educational Institutions (HEIs) that were under CHED-ARMM, such as State Universities and Colleges (SUCs), CHED-Supervised Higher Educational Institutions (CHEIs), CHED-ARMM/BARMM Supervised Institutions (BSIs), Private Higher Educational Institutions (PHEIs), Islamic Higher Education and Transnational Higher Education Institutions as well as tertiary degree programs in all postsecondary institutions in the BARMM."*²¹⁴

When it comes to power and functions, all programs, projects, budgets, assets, allocations, power, and functions of the former CHED-ARMM²¹⁵ have been absorbed into

²¹¹ Mohaliden Rontayan, *The Implementation of Ministry of Basic, Higher and Technical Education School Programs: Basis for Program Enhancement*, version 1, Psychology and Education: A Multidisciplinary Journal, 6 September 2024, 1111, <https://doi.org/10.5281/ZENODO.13712760>. Also, see Norsaima U. Umpara et al., 'Assessing the Implementation of the MBHTE-BARMM Science Learning Modules: Exploring Issues, Challenges, and Suggestions for Policy Development', *Education Quarterly Reviews* 7, no. 1 (2024): 119, <https://doi.org/10.31014/aior.1993.07.01.805>.

²¹² See About the Education Code, MBHTE-BARMM, 'Education Code', *Ministry of Basic, Higher and Technical Education - Bangsamoro*, n.d., accessed 16 June 2025, <https://mbhte.bangsamoro.gov.ph/about-the-code/>.

²¹³ See Article I, Chapter 1, Section 4, An Act Providing for the Establishment, Management, and Support of a Complete and Integrated System of Quality Education in the Bangsamoro, Bangsamoro Autonomy Act No. 18, known as the Bangsamoro Education Code of 2021 (2021). <https://mbhte.bangsamoro.gov.ph/wp-content/uploads/2022/02/BA-Act-No.18-Bangsamoro-Education-Code.pdf>.

²¹⁴ See Article IX, Chapter 1, Section 130, An Act Providing for the Establishment, Management, and Support of a Complete and Integrated System of Quality Education in the Bangsamoro, 54.

²¹⁵ CHED-ARMM was the former regional office of the autonomous government overseeing the development of higher education in the region. See Devolving to the Autonomous Regional Government of the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao Certain Powers and Functions of the Commission on Higher Education, the Control and Supervision Over Its Programs in the Region and for Other Purposes, Executive Order No. 315 of 1996. Accessed 16 June 2025. https://lawphil.net/executive/execord/eo1996/eo_315_1996.html.

the MBHTE.²¹⁶ Therefore, the MBHTE is mandated to play a significant role in promoting and developing higher education programs, particularly Islamic studies in the BKIS. These responsibilities include formulating and recommending development plans, policies, programs, and grants to the executive and legislative bodies of the Bangsamoro government, setting minimum standards for academic programs and institutions, and monitoring their academic and related performance. The MBHTE is also responsible for identifying and supporting centers of excellence and administering research to align with regional development plans and goals. The MBHTE is also expected to oversee institutional charters and governance structures for Higher Education Institutions (HEIs). They shall allocate budgets, manage and rationalize program offerings, and craft guidelines for creating and/or upgrading institutions, ensuring alignment with fiscal and regional priorities.

Moreover, the MBHTE develops standards for resource funding, implements funding procedures, and distributes development funds to support, establish, and develop HEIs in the Bangsamoro region. It operates regional offices across regional provinces and cities to monitor, evaluate, and facilitate administrative functions such as the issuance of Special Orders, certifications, and academic validations. The MBHTE is also authorized to enact regulations that are necessary to attain its mandate, ensuring inclusive education for learners with special needs and carrying out any additional functions essential for the growth and sustainability of higher education in the region.²¹⁷

Moreover, the MBHTE is responsible for providing *“incentives to institutions of higher education, public and private, whose programs are accredited or whose needs are for accreditation purposes.”*²¹⁸ The chosen higher institution mentioned in this study, alongside other relevant entities, is under the jurisdiction of the MBHTE, including other independent Islamic higher education institutions, like the Jami’at Cotabato and Jamiatul Philippine-Al Islamia, Inc.²¹⁹ According to Mohagher Iqbal, the Minister of the MBHTE, the Bangsamoro region already has 126 higher education institutions.²²⁰

²¹⁶ See Article IX, Chapter 1, Section 131, An Act Providing for the Establishment, Management, and Support of a Complete and Integrated System of Quality Education in the Bangsamoro, 54–55.

²¹⁷ See Article IX, Chapter 1, Section 132, An Act Providing for the Establishment, Management, and Support of a Complete and Integrated System of Quality Education in the Bangsamoro, 55–56.

²¹⁸ See Article IX, Chapter 3, Section 136, An Act Providing for the Establishment, Management, and Support of a Complete and Integrated System of Quality Education in the Bangsamoro, 58.

²¹⁹ See Article IX, Chapter 4 and 6, Section 144 and 147-150, An Act Providing for the Establishment, Management, and Support of a Complete and Integrated System of Quality Education in the Bangsamoro, 60–62.

²²⁰ Gandhi Kinjiyo, *Education Minister Iqbal Highlights MBHTE Achievements at the 2nd Bangsamoro Education Summit*, 1 December 2024,

3.2.1 Higher Education

Higher Education is also one of the sectors in the BARMM under the jurisdiction of the same minister. It is responsible for establishing, maintaining, and supervising colleges, state universities, and other post-secondary institutions within the Bangsamoro region, including the BKIS. Following the BEC, the Higher Education sector manages all private and public higher institutions, guaranteeing that they deliver high-quality education that is pertinent to and addresses the needs and goals of the Bangsamoro people. The sector's objective is to create professionals at the top and mid-levels who may have the capability of supporting the growth of their communities, region, and the nation. Under the provisions of the MBHTE, following the BEC, the Higher Education sector should monitor and assess the programs of higher institutions in the region to ensure quality assurance. The sector must be under the supervision of the Bangsamoro Director-General, who also stands as the first Vice-Chairman of the BKIS, following the BAA No. 50.

Higher Education should also have two divisions: the Policy and Program Division and the Regional Division. The former, led by the Division Chief, is responsible for ensuring the formulation of appropriate policies, programs, and plans of higher institutions within the Bangsamoro region. While the latter, also led by the same personnel, is responsible for ensuring that higher education institutions comply with established standards, rules, and regulations of the CHED and/or MBHTE, such as the CMO No. 30 for Islamic Studies and the BEC for a broader educational context in the Bangsamoro region. The influence of the Higher Education sector on programs of higher institutions in the region, including the BKIS and the Islamic studies program, has already been evident in developing academic standards, institutional governance, and curriculum development, since they are the ones who directly oversee Higher Education Institutions (HEIs).

3.2.2 Madaris Education

Madaris Education is one of the characteristics that sets the BARMM's educational system exceptional. For Bangsamoro people, including non-Muslims, the BEC demands that the MBHTE develop both public and private madrasahs as a better alternative for learning opportunities for the Muslims residing in the region. Madrasah Education is one of the sectors under the MBHTE, which ensures that children obtain both religious and secular education by combining the national curriculum with Islamic Studies and Arabic Language (ISAL), encompassing elementary, secondary, and higher levels. According to the mandate of the BEC, the Madaris Education shall have two divisions: the Curriculum

<https://www.luwaran.com//news/article/2849/education-minister-iqbal-highlights-mbhte-achievements-at-the-2nd-bangsamoro-education-summit>.

and Learning Division and the Quality Assurance Division. Within the supervision of a Division Chief, the Curriculum and Instruction Division creates suitable delivery services and guarantees the availability of educational materials so that the sector may solely concentrate on providing a basic education curriculum that is effective, responsive, and relevant, on which all other offices and strands provide support. The Quality Assurance Division, on the other hand, under the supervision of the same personnel, ensures quality education through performance evaluation, monitoring, and assessment. Moreover, the Madrasah Education sector must be under the supervision of the Bangsamoro Director-General, who also stands as the second Vice-Chairman of the BKIS, following the BAA No. 50.

Under the mandate of the Bangsamoro Organic Law (BOL) concerning educational development for the Bangsamoro people, the Bangsamoro government should establish, maintain, and supervise Madrasah education not only as a sector but also as an educational program, for example, the Madrasah Education Program (MEP). The Madaris Education is significantly regarded for upholding Islamic identity and education, enhancing religious tolerance, and molding the moral and ethical foundation of the Bangsamoro pupils. The Bangsamoro government should ensure the integration of the Arabic Language and Islamic Values (ALIVE) into the elementary and secondary curricula under MEP. Furthermore, the Bangsamoro Parliament of the BARMM is required to formulate legislation to develop and reinforce Madrasah Education, which resulted in the creation of the BKIS following the BAA No. 50 in 2023. Hence, since the BKIS is a newly established institution—and the first of its kind to be solely dedicated to Islamic Studies in the Philippines—the influence of the Madaris Education in higher education is yet to be seen and is currently limited.

3.3 Islamic Studies Faculty and Faculty Member Qualifications

According to the CMO No. 30, the faculty members should have at least earned a Master's degree related to Islamic studies. If the degree is obtained overseas, the necessary documents shall be validated by the Philippine Foreign Service Post where the institution is located. Additionally, the concerned institution is responsible for formulating other means of shaping the competency of the candidate to ensure it follows the CHED's standard. Therefore, the faculty members are expected to teach within their respective disciplines. However, they might be allowed to teach in respective courses, for which they don't have any special training to do so. Given that they show competence and acknowledged scholarly output. The faculty members are encouraged to engage in research and other related development activities to further develop their academic careers.

Moreover, the faculty, department, or the college of Islamic Studies must have at least one full-time faculty member with published works in a reputable journal. The faculty must have at least sixty percent Filipino citizens, regardless of their religion or any affiliations. The CMO No. 30 provided two specializations for Islamic studies students— Political Economy and Multimedia Technology. These two specializations’ curriculum is designed to follow the Sunni orthodox belief, which reflects the practice of the Muslim majority in the Philippines.

3.4 Between Authority and Institutional Identity: The Development of Islamic Studies in the BARMM

The following discussion demonstrates the themes that emerged from the in-depth interviews I conducted with the three key members of the Board of Trustees (BOT) of BKIS. The following themes mainly focus on the role of the MBHTE in developing the Islamic studies program in the BARMM. Qualitative themes are: Negotiating educational authority and identity within the constraints of autonomous governance; Institutional repositioning of Madaris Education through structural reforms and power consolidation; and Dual regulatory recognition in the standardization of Islamic studies at BKIS. These themes, drawn from participants’ narratives and supported by policy-driven perspectives, help me generate the basis for the result and guide my interpretation of findings in the discussion section, which are based on the research questions.

3.4.1 Negotiating Educational Authority and Identity Within the Constraints of Autonomous Governance

The first theme to emerge from the coding was negotiating educational authority under the Bangsamoro autonomous government, which demonstrates how the MBHTE operates within the institutional power, legal limitations, and regional identity within the structure of the Bangsamoro government. When I interviewed the three key members of the BOT in BKIS involved in forming Islamic education policy and institutional development in the Bangsamoro region, Member A expressed that even though the BARMM is an autonomous government, they are still a sub-system of the national government, limiting their authority and power to establish their own educational identity. When I asked him how the MBHTE approaches the development of Islamic studies to achieve the national education standard, he stated:

“... because of the advent of the BARMM, our education system... is in a state of autonomy... but... even though it is like that, we are still a sub-system of the national government.”

Meaning, they still need to comply with the mandate of the national education standard despite having an autonomous government.

Moreover, when it comes to higher institutions that have independence and autonomy located in the Bangsamoro region, such as the King Faisal Center for Islamic, Arabic, and Asian Studies at Mindanao State University-Marawi, Members A and C shared the same understanding that the MBHTE's authority and influence do not extend to them. Member A highlighted that the MBHTE does not have any involvement in developing the Islamic studies program in institutions, like the Mindanao State University (MSU), as they are a chartered university. Member A noted:

"... the MSU is a chartered university; they have independence or autonomy... we don't really have an involvement over there... Even the MBHTE doesn't have an involvement with them."

Member C clarified that instead of imposing direct authority over institutions like the MSU, what exists between the MBHTE and such institutions is a collaborative partnership, saying:

"The power of the MBHTE-BARMM as defined in the law does not extend to the state universities and colleges, and this would include the Mindanao State University and all the faculties and colleges there. So, it's more of a collaborative relationship that we have rather than a regulatory authority."

Moreover, Member C provided that because institutions like the MSU and others have their own board (e.g., Board of Regents or Board of Trustees), making them immune from foreign influence like the MBHTE. And since they have their own board, they are directly governed by the CHED.

"By provision of law, the state universities and colleges are not within the regulatory authority and mandate of the MBHTE because they have their own separate Board that operates for them. MSU would have Board of Regents, and the other state colleges would have their own Board of Trustees. So, that would make them directly regulated by the Commission on Higher Education."

This means the MBHTE can only coordinate, consult, and cooperate with State universities and Colleges (SUCs) on educational initiatives. However, it cannot impose policies or exercise direct control over their internal academic and administrative affairs, even if it is still related to Islamic education, such as Islamic studies.

Another key factor that hinders the influence of the MBHTE on such universities and/or higher educational institutions is the longevity of the higher educational institutions.

Their long-standing presence shields them from new governance structural influences, such as the BARMM, including the MBHTE under her. As the key informant further noted:

“... the King Faisal, we don't have any involvement so far with them. Because... they have been established for so long.”

Nonetheless, even though the power and influence of the MBHTE are currently limited even within the Bangsamoro region, having an autonomous government opens the Bangsamoro community an opportunity to begin crafting their own unique educational identity. This is proven in the creation of the BKIS at Buluan, Maguindanao del-Sur—the first of its kind among higher educational institutions, not only in the Bangsamoro region, but also in the whole Philippines, dedicated to an Islamic-focused higher learning institution. Member A emphasized:

“... our education system in the BARMM is in a state of autonomy. It is one of the powers that has evolved in the BARMM, that is, crafting our educational system.”

Therefore, the MBHTE-BARMM is the locus of educational authority in developing quality education in the Bangsamoro region, particularly the Islamic studies program in BKIS, with the MBHTE under the BARMM being the main bureau in doing so. As Member A summarized:

“... our endeavor is directly worked on by the BARMM. But the MBHTE is the main actor in doing that.”

3.4.2 Institutional Repositioning of Madaris and Higher Education Through Structural Reforms and Power Consolidation

The second theme to emerge from the coding was repositioning Madaris and Higher Education under MBHTE through structural reform, which demonstrates how the Madaris and Higher Education sectors have undergone a strategic transformation to elevate their institutional status and strengthen their role in developing quality education in the Bangsamoro region in accordance with Islam. When I interviewed my respondents, Member A initially told me a little story about the background of the Madaris sector. He told me that during the ARMM (the former autonomous government before the BARMM), the Madaris were a minor unit within the national and regional basic education system. Its leadership was positioned at a lower executive level. Member A stated:

“... during the ARMM administration, the Madaris Education was just a bureau... part of the basic education, or the DepEd.... The head of Madaris was the undersecretary... like a political appointee...”

But when the BARMM was finally established. The Madaris Education sector was incorporated into the MBHTE, having an equal level of power, authority, responsibility,

and influence among others in developing quality and well-balanced education for the Bangsamoro region. As Member A stated:

“When the BARMM was established, the Bangsamoro leaders made it the MBHTE, where the basic education... higher education, technical education, and Madaris education... have an equal level when it comes to our regional office. So... the Madaris education was included.”

This means that the structural elevation of the Madaris sector within the MBHTE has been an integral and significant part of elevating quality education in the BARMM, with its leadership having been properly designated alongside this development. As Member A said:

“The... Madaris Education was included. So, that’s the time we had a head, or I should say the right term with... position or designation is Bangsamoro Director-General.”

In terms of the Higher Education sector, they are the ones who are responsible for supervising and overseeing the operation, management, and quality of the BKIS, particularly in ensuring that the program, like Islamic studies, adheres to appropriate academic national and regional standards. Member C stated:

“Our role (the HE sector) in the ministry is to oversee the management, the operations to include the academic standards of the Bangsamoro Kulliyah, and the different programs that they will implement or offer, especially when it comes to Islamic studies.”

3.4.3 Dual Regulatory Recognition in the Standardization of Islamic Studies

The third theme to emerge from the coding was standardizing Islamic studies in the BARMM through dual recognition, which shows how the Islamic studies program shall comply with both CHED and MBHTE policy frameworks to ensure a quality program and legitimacy. When I interviewed my respondents, Member A stated that before a bachelor’s degree could be adopted and established, a CHED Memorandum Order (CMO) shall be followed. The CMO represents the first policy to be followed. Thus, the BAIS at BKIS shall be evaluated first by the CHED for approval. As Member A said:

“Here in the Philippines... until the CMO is adopted, the course cannot be given. So... the Bachelor of Arts in Islamic and Arabic Education will be submitted to the CHED for the eventual issuance of the CMO, so that it could be approved.”

Furthermore, the second policy to be followed for Islamic studies to have full recognition and operation in the Bangsamoro region shall be imposed by the MBHTE,

where the Madaris and Higher Education sectors play a vital role in assessing its curriculum. As Member A stated:

“The MBHTE will also make a memorandum order... it will be under the Madaris Education. We will see how the values of Islam being in place in that courses.”

Nonetheless, the MBHTE is looking forward to expanding the CMO No. 50. This reflects a strategic attempt to address the needs of the Bangsamoro people in terms of education, seeking more opportunities and benefits that suit them, which the CMO might fail to address. Member C indicated:

“So, even if there is a CMO covering the Bachelor of Arts in Islamic Studies, ... in Bangsamoro territory, we are trying to explore how much can we expand and what other things can be harvested, or can be gained if we expand the CMO covering the Islamic studies.”

3.5 The Role of the Ministry of Basic, Higher, and Technical Education in Developing Islamic Studies in Higher Education in the BARMM

In this section, I present an analysis of the findings and discussion concerning the role of the Ministry of Basic, Higher, and Technical Education (MBHTE) in developing Islamic studies in higher education in the BARMM on the basis of the data demonstrated above. Through the integration of the DepEd, CHED, and TESDA, forming a single educational entity, the MBHTE functions in a unified system. It has centralized quality educational governance, which is best defined as policy-led institutional consolidation, as reflected in Perellon’s emphasis on regulatory frameworks.²²¹

Through the MBHTE, as consolidated educational governance for the Bangsamoro region, the reinforcement of legitimacy and quality assurance can be implemented efficiently, which addresses the prevailing marginalization of Islamic studies in terms of academic recognition and employment demands within national standards. Analyzing the results of my research data concerning this matter, I argue that the role of the MBHTE in enhancing the quality of Islamic studies in BARMM’s higher education can be divided into two divisions: (1) General for overseeing the broader system of higher education in the Bangsamoro region, and (2) specific for directly supervising, supporting, and developing Islamic studies in the Bangsamoro region.

3.5.1 General Role

Generally, the role of the MBHTE extends to all educational levels operating in the Bangsamoro region. They have been entrusted with responsibilities that require them to

²²¹ Perellon, ‘Analysing Quality Assurance in Higher Education: Proposals for a Conceptual Framework and Methodological Implications’, 170–74.

advance the education of the Bangsamoro people, which serves as a source of hope for them to gain knowledge about their cultural and religious identity and thereby become qualified to meet the employment demands of the Philippine labor market and academic standards. Their responsibilities and functions are backed by specific laws, such as the Bangsamoro Organic Law (BOL) and the BEC, which mandate them to protect, oversee, and develop the education of Bangsamoro people residing within their territory. However, MBHTE's role and functions do not extend to autonomous institutions, like Mindanao State University, as they are governed directly by the national education system.

Among their roles, which include responsibilities, is the duty to inherit and further develop the educational initiatives left behind by the former CHED-ARMM to benefit the Bangsamoro people. Accordingly, they are responsible for formulating plans, implementing programs, and fostering cooperation to address the educational needs and policies for the Bangsamoro region, as well as making sure all programs implemented align with the national standards and Bangsamoro governance principle — Moral Governance. In terms of crafting policies, the MBHTE shall reflect the historical aspirations of the Bangsamoro people, which shall create professionals and leaders with globally competitive skills, Islamic values, and civic commitment, equipping them to lead with integrity both within BARMM and on national and international levels.

As argued earlier, the role of the MBHTE to oversee the development of education in the Bangsamoro region was strengthened through the adaptation of the BEC enacted by the Bangsamoro Transition Authority (BTA) Parliament, which covers all Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) in the region. The BEC transfers all power and functions of the former CHED-ARMM to the MBHTE, including allocating funds, budgets, and assets, and implementing educational projects. Moreover, the MBHTE is responsible for formulating and monitoring minimum academic, program, and institutional standards and performance. They shall oversee institutional charters and governance structures for all HEIs in the region, which operate across regional provinces and cities. They are also evaluating and facilitating administrative functions, including the issuance of Special Orders, certifications, and academic validations for the Bangsamoro pupils. They are authorized to enact regulations that are necessary to attain their mandate, ensuring inclusive education for all learners with special needs and carrying out any additional functions essential for the growth and sustainability of all HEIs in the region.

From the perspective of Perellon's policy theory on higher education quality assurance, the general role of the MBHTE represents how quality assurance frameworks are shaped by specific policy choices embedded in the regional governance context.

Perellon argues that quality assurance is not simply a neutral or technical mechanism but is significantly influenced by the values, priorities, and power relations of the actors involved.²²² In this case, the MBHTE's mandate—anchored in legal mechanisms such as the BOL and the BEC—serves as a purposeful policy instrument to consolidate educational authority in the BARMM under a unified and autonomous entity.

Thus, the MBHTE is not just implementing national standards; it is adapting and framing them through moral governance and cultural and historical contextualization, thereby asserting a distinct educational identity within the national standards system. This aligns with Perellon's view that quality assurance policies are tools through which governments express normative visions of what education should be and achieve.²²³ In this case, creating globally competitive yet religious and values-driven Bangsamoro professionals. Hence, the MBHTE's general role illustrates how regional autonomy in policy-making can serve as a mechanism for localized quality assurance that still operates within national standards. However, despite having autonomous educational and political governance, MBHTE's limited role over autonomous institutions relates to Perellon's argument that policies reflect on governance structures, where institutional autonomy limits the implementation of regional goals in terms of crafting quality education that conforms to their own cultural, historical, and religious identity.²²⁴

3.5.2 Specific Role

Specifically, the Higher and Madaris Education sectors under the MBHTE have a direct role in overseeing the development of the Islamic Studies program in the Bangsamoro region, or precisely, the BKIS itself. Given that the BAA No. 50 mandated that the Minister of the MBHTE serves as the Chairman, the Bangsamoro Director-General of Higher Education acts as the first Vice Chairman, and the Bangsamoro Director-General of Madaris Education serves as the second Vice Chairman of the BOT of the BKIS, it is evident that the MBHTE exerts significant institutional influence and authority in shaping the strategic direction, academic standards, and administrative policies of the BKIS, while making Islamic studies relevant and gain academic recognition and meet employment demands for its graduates.

²²² Perellon, 'Analysing Quality Assurance in Higher Education: Proposals for a Conceptual Framework and Methodological Implications', 159–200.

²²³ Perellon, 'Analysing Quality Assurance in Higher Education: Proposals for a Conceptual Framework and Methodological Implications', 161–62.

²²⁴ Perellon, 'Analysing Quality Assurance in Higher Education: Proposals for a Conceptual Framework and Methodological Implications', 171.

Particularly, Higher Education plays a significant role in overseeing institutional development, while Madaris Education is more focused on developing and adopting a curriculum for the Islamic studies program in the BARMM. However, since Madaris Education is still working with Basic Education and remains part of the DepEd, the Higher Education sector ensures that Madaris Education is actively included in developing plans, policies, guidelines, and programs aimed at developing and elevating Islamic studies and related programs in the Bangsamoro region so the graduates can effectively compete with employment demands and achieve institutional recognition aligned with the national standards. Nonetheless, Higher and Madaris Education's role is to ensure that the Islamic studies programs and related programs conform to the standards set by national and regional educational frameworks, while remaining responsive to the distinct cultural and religious identity of the Bangsamoro people.

This specific role of the MBHTE reflects Perellon's policy theory, particularly in his concept of policy actualization having multiple governance structures, which he emphasizes that the policy paradigm is shaped by the actualization of essential choices, such as curriculum, governance, and institutional control, within a provided time and space, influenced by institutional structures and power distributions.²²⁵ In this case, the MBHTE's authority and influence over institutions, like the BKIS, is manifested through the chairmanship of the ministry and the Vice Chairman roles of the Director-Generals. Thus, it demonstrates the tangible enactment of a policy mechanism, whereas key actors—and in this case, the MBHTE—establish institutional tools to exercise control and implement methodologies, academic purposes, and plans. Moreover, Perellon argued that forming a policy is controlled and administered by the collaboration of various key actors across government levels, which reflects the distinct and collaborative roles and functions of Higher and Madaris Education.²²⁶ This reinforces Perellon's argument that public policy is not simply a matter of conceptual responsibility but also steering institutional structures and independence. Therefore, MBHTE's specific yet collaborative roles in developing Islamic studies and related programs demonstrate how BARMM's educational governance adapts standards set by the national educational government to accommodate academic needs, cultural identity, and religious faith of the Bangsamoro people.

²²⁵ Perellon, 'Analysing Quality Assurance in Higher Education: Proposals for a Conceptual Framework and Methodological Implications', 160.

²²⁶ Perellon, 'Analysing Quality Assurance in Higher Education: Proposals for a Conceptual Framework and Methodological Implications', 171.

CHAPTER IV

INSTITUTIONAL FOUNDATIONS AND REFORMS OF ISLAMIC HIGHER EDUCATION IN THE BANGSAMORO REGION

4.1 Founder and the Establishment of the Bangsamoro Kulliyah for Islamic Studies

As I have indicated, the Bangsamoro Kulliyah for Islamic Studies (BKIS) is a great case representing the developing landscape of Islamic higher education in the Bangsamoro region. The efforts of key individuals governing the BKIS, together with the MBHTE, to transform this higher institution to become an Islamic-focused institution reflect a strategic and values-driven approach to educational reform.

The establishment of the BKIS, with its former name, Regional Madrasah Academy (REMACADEMY), is considered an outcome of the final peace agreement between the Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF) and the Government of the Philippines (GRP) in 1996. And as one of the Bangsamoro intellectuals with high moral and spiritual regard, and who prompted the establishment of several institutions in the Bangsamoro region, Dr. Benjamin P. Dumato is considered the founder of the BKIS. Key Bangsamoro leaders and a group of elected officials strongly supported the creation of the institution, such as the former acting Regional Governor of the former ARMM, Hon. Guimid Matalam, who endorsed the creation of the institution to the office of the President through a Memorandum on 28 July 2000, and the Regional Legislative Assembly on its Resolution No. 158.

Hon. Matalam empowered the establishment of the BKIS during its former name as REMACADEMY through Executive Order No. 23 on 27 November 2000, with its operational budget, with the support of the former Assistant Regional Treasurer Prof. Saad Sambutan and the former assemblyman Hon. Abdulkarim T. Langkuno. Therefore, in 2004, the BKIS, formerly known as REMACADEMY, was established and operated with several classrooms, facilities, students, employees, and a 2-hectare plot of land donated by the Manibpel and Mangudadatu families, who also happened to significantly support not only the establishment of the institution but also the Bangsamoro communities.

Additionally, the former CHED-ARMM Commissioner Samon Gogo, Dr. Johnny Bago, Dr. Dangan Ali, a member of the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) Central Committee, Ustadz Khalifa Nando, and the co-founders of the institution are all considered essential figures in the creation of the REMACADEMY.²²⁷ On 15 September 2022, the

²²⁷ Sittie Farhana Dumato-Sinay and Suhail Mamaluba, 'The Story of the Regional Madrasah Graduate Academy', Facebook, Apolinario Villalobos's Post, 3 September 2020, <https://web.facebook.com/apolinario.villalobos.5/posts/pfbid02kyKJ1LfM9nWnMuMA58jWnCqe>

Bangsamoro Parliament (BP) of the BARMM approved the BKIS following the Bangsamoro Autonomy Act (BAA) No. 50, which amended the Muslim Mindanao Autonomy Act (MMAA) No. 164, mandating the former RAMACADEMY.²²⁸

4.2 The Development of Bangsamoro Kulliyah for Islamic Studies in the Bangsamoro Region

The following discussion demonstrates the themes that emerged from the in-depth interviews with the same key members of the Board of Trustees (BOT) of BKIS. The following themes mainly focus on the development of the Islamic studies program in the BARMM. Qualitative themes are: Institutionalization and standardization of BKIS in the Bangsamoro Region; Structured governance and institutional legitimacy in the quality assurance design of BKIS; Curricular authority, faculty development, and epistemic integration in the quality formation of Islamic studies at BKIS; International benchmarking and ethical-Islamic framing in the development of Islamic studies at BKIS; and Structural and epistemic challenges and the strategic responses in developing Islamic studies in the BARMM. These themes, which are derived from participants' narratives and supplemented by policy-driven approaches, help me generate the basis for the result and guide my interpretation of findings in the discussion section, which are based on the research questions.

4.2.1 Institutionalization and Standardization of Bangsamoro Kulliyah for Islamic Studies in the Bangsamoro Region

The first theme to emerge from the coding was the transition toward the institutionalization and standardization of BKIS, which shows how the new policy initiatives under the government of the Bangsamoro region were central to developing and strengthening the BKIS. When I interviewed the three key Members of the BOT of the BKIS, Member A and B initially provided the former status of the BKIS, while Member B provided the former status of the Islamic studies program at BKIS. Member A expressed an understanding that during the REMACADEMY (former name of the BKIS), the institution was fragile, stemming from the absence of effective guidance and the lack of coherent organizational leadership. According to Member A:

“The BKIS is at the very beginning of its operation, and even during the REMACADEMY, it has not really been organized. It has not really been handled very well.”

QcFYNaSjTKoRfF4oxJZXcqXSjdV9KJFWUMwxBXyFl?rclid=VkeEwdm2rB94m5ZM#. From the personal Facebook account of Apolinarion Villalobos.

²²⁸ Bangsamoro Kulliyah for Islamic Studies Act of 2023.

Member B, on the other hand, conveyed a concern that the Islamic studies program at BKIS during the REMACADEMY was on the brink of being discontinued. Member B said:

“... the program is almost dying...”

Given the status of the former REMACADEMY, including the Islamic studies program. Members A and C recognized that institutional reformation was a necessary step to develop a quality higher institution and educational program for the Bangsamoro region. Member A cited the bill that transforms the institution from REMACADEMY to BKIS, saying:

“That’s why we need to reform its operation... Our Bangsamoro Parliament has made a bill to create our BKIS.”

That is, the BP of the BARMM, guided by the Bangsamoro Transition Authority Bill No. 31, adopted the BAA No. 50, mandating the establishment of BKIS and nullifying the Regional Madrasah Graduate Education Act of 2003, which was the former policy guidelines of REMACADEMY.

While Member C expressed a strong conviction in making the Islamic studies program relevant in the contemporary landscape of the Bangsamoro region. Member C recognized the shortcomings of being an Islamic studies graduate in the Philippines. Thus, he is not only looking forward to offering Islamic studies in BKIS; rather, he is looking at the big picture of making Islamic studies an opportunity for the Bangsamoro people to elevate the marginalized status of its graduates, saying:

“We have to make sure that we are guided with very strong vision. Why is there a need to offer Islamic studies? And economically, is it really able to uplift some professionals who are practicing Islamic in the territory of the Bangsamoro, after graduating from their institutions? ... So, what are we looking here is not only the learning, not only the completion, but also, we should look what will be the results, what awaits them after they finish Islamic Studies, and how they live like other professionals with certain amount of integrity and ... the profession is being appreciated and recognized.”

Moreover, Member C is even looking forward to strengthening the Islamic studies program by expanding the CMO No. 30 mandating Islamic studies in higher education institutions in the Philippines. He sees an opportunity for the Bangsamoro government to develop the Islamic studies program, looking at a different angle and position of the program they might offer in BKIS, and to develop the program way beyond what the CMO is telling them, making the program known at the national level. He asserted:

“... there are modifications in implementation of this program. Because the Islamic studies is actually an opportunity for us to strengthen the program implementation by looking at the different factors and by looking at the different perspectives of Islamic studies in the Bangsamoro territory... We should do something about the Islamic studies, way behind what the CHED Memorandum Order is telling us. We are about to have a Shari’ah here in various HEIs, like the Bachelor of Arts in Islamic Studies major in Shari’ah, but the national CHED is actually not covering that; they only cover Multimedia and Political Economy. So, this is what we are managing, this is what the Higher Ed of the MBHTE-BARMM will oversee, making sure that the intention of the Bangsamoro government to offer this would be known to the national government through CHED, so that it will be collaborated with the efforts of the CHED.”

Member C further stressed that Bangsamoro people need more than a BAIS only, citing further development of the program to be considered, such as the Bachelor of Science in Elementary Education major in Islamic Studies. Member C stated:

“Based on the needs of our Bangsamoro communities, it’s not enough that it will be a Bachelor of Arts in Islamic studies. It should be elevated, and we are looking forward to Bachelor of Elementary Education major (in) Islamic Studies, or it could be a Bachelor of Education in Islamic Studies... In Bangsamoro territory, we are trying to explore how much can we expand and what other things can be harvested, or can be gained if we expand the CMO covering the Islamic studies.”

In terms of policy guidelines of the BKIS, including the Islamic studies program. Members A and B expressed the same concern. That is, the BKIS, including the Islamic studies program, is still in the process of development. Members A and B said:

“As for the policies, the majority of them are still in process.” -Member A

“We are still transitioning from REMACADEMY to BKIS... Islamic studies... the program is still under develop.” -Member B

While Member C, on the other hand, noted that the BAA No. 50 shall be the basis for the policies that will be crafted and implemented, and what should be included, and must be given significant focus. Member C stated:

“All the policies that will be implemented shall be rooted and shall be based on the Bangsamoro Autonomy Act that created Kulliyah... The policy should cover... the structure... academic standards... and... the different programs... admission policies, grading systems, and then the faculty and staff qualifications...”

As such, Member A noted that the BKIS represents the first of its kind to be an Islamic-focused higher institution not only in the Bangsamoro region, but also in the whole Philippines, saying:

“The first Kulliyah of ours, or government higher education, or Islamic higher education institution, is the BKIS only.”

4.2.2 Structured Governance and Institutional Legitimacy in the Quality Design of Bangsamoro Kulliyah for Islamic Studies

The second theme to emerge from the coding was the structured governance and institutional legitimacy of the BKIS, which highlights how the Ministry of Basic, Higher, and Technical Education (MBHTE) implemented a formal quality assurance framework to legitimize and structure the academic operations of the BKIS. During the interview, Member A explained the governing bodies of BKIS, Member C explained the role of these governing bodies, while Member B referred me to the BAA No. 50. Hence, Members A and C’s explanation followed the BAA No. 50, representing the following narrative.

The governing bodies and/or the composition of the BOT of the BKIS is designed to embody a broad representation of leadership and stakeholders of higher learning institutions in the Bangsamoro region. The Minister of the MBHTE serves as the Chairman of the Board, while the Bangsamoro Director-General of Higher Education under the MBHTE acts as the First Vice Chairman, and the Bangsamoro Director-General of Madaris Education under the same ministry serves as the Second Vice Chairman. The Board’s membership includes the President of BKIS, the Chairperson of the Committee on Basic, Higher, and Technical Education of the BP, the Mufti of the Bangsamoro, the President of the BKIS Faculty Association, the President of the Student Government Organization, the President of the Alumni Association, and a representative from private Islamic institutions recognized by the MBHTE. These governing bodies ensure the governance and quality of the BKIS, presenting governmental supervision and community involvement.

Moreover, the BOT of the BKIS is entrusted with comprehensive power and significant responsibilities to govern, manage, and develop the institution. They formulate and implement policies for the effective, relevant, and quality operation of the BKIS, ensuring transparency and participative decision-making, and are empowered to assign authority as necessary to develop administrative efficiency. They administer academic matters, including curriculum adaptation, establishing higher institutional policies, implementing admission and graduation standards, awarding honorary degrees and necessary certificates, providing scholarships, professorial chairs, and faculty members. In terms of financial matters, the Board manages all funds, such as tuition fees, subsidies,

donations, and other income, demonstrating accountability and transparency, implementing need-based tuition policies, ensuring that all income is preserved and disbursed to support the development of BKIS, including all necessary programs.

Hence, the Board may redistribute unused funds for emergency purposes and privatize non-academic services when advantageous. Furthermore, the Board has the authority to create research centers and institutional branches in the Bangsamoro region, which shall collaborate with other higher educational institutions regionally and nationally, and engage in strategic alliances and/or form partnerships with public and private, local and foreign, educational and/or non-educational entities. The Board also conducts external audits and implements reforms in response to the results of the audit. Finally, to ensure effective and continuous leadership and institutional development, the Board may extend the term of service of an exceptional President beyond the mandatory retirement age up to seventy years old.

Nonetheless, given that the BKIS is a higher institution focusing on Islamic scholarships, the Madaris and Higher Education sector under the MBHTE exercise more authority with distinct concentration. Member A stated:

“... the BKIS is... the idea is being governed by higher education and Madaris education.”

Nonetheless, Member C indicated that the Madaris Education has not yet taken off to extend its work and contribution in higher education institutions. Member C further clarified that Madaris Education is still working as part of the Basic Education sector under the MBHTE. Hence, since the Higher Education sector has shortcomings when it comes to technical expertise concerning Islamic education and Islamic studies, they must collaborate with the Madaris Education since it is emphasized in the BAA No. 50 that all the education sectors of the Bangsamoro government should cooperate and collaborate with one another. In a nutshell, Higher Education is ensuring that even though Madaris Education has not yet taken off at the higher education level, they shall be included, incorporated, invited, and represented in all of the assemblies and/or meetings concerning the Islamic education in higher education institutions, particularly the Islamic studies program. Member C clarified this, saying:

“The Madaris Education, for now, is still in the Basic Ed. They have not worked higher because there are still a lot of things to be done. There are still a lot of problems that need to be addressed in the Basic Ed. So, as a matter of fact, they are still working on the elementary. They haven't taken off in the secondary or the high school.”

“But we collaborate with them. Because it is indicated in the law, when it comes to implementing rules and regulations of the Bangsamoro Education Code that there is a cooperative and collaborative relationship of the Higher Education and the Madaris Education in addressing the Islamic higher education concerns and issues.”

“(If) there are meetings concerning higher Islamic education or Islamic higher education, we are inviting the Madaris because we don’t have that kind of technical expertise, when it comes to Islamic Education. So, we bring them on board. We involved them in the discussion...”

Generally, this has been the formalized division of responsibilities and roles of the MBHTE in governing and overseeing the BKIS, with structured and coordinated collaboration.

4.2.3 Curricular Authority, Faculty Development, and Epistemic Integration in the Quality Formation of Islamic Studies at Bangsamoro Kulliyah for Islamic Studies

The third theme to emerge from the coding was the strengthening curricular authority and faculty development at BKIS, which illustrates how the MBHTE emphasized the integration of Islamic scholarship and academic standards in shaping the quality of the Islamic studies program. When I interviewed the three key members of the BOT of BKIS, Members A and B both expressed the same idea when it comes to adopting a form of curriculum for the Islamic studies program at BKIS. While Member C’s explanation gives more focus on the role of the BOT. Members A and B both agreed on a balanced concept of education for BKIS, including the Islamic studies program. Member A expressed the importance of considering both parallel educational systems that have existed in the BARMM for a long time, saying:

“... we cannot leave secular education... much more that we should not leave the Islamic values...”

Member B, on the other hand, expressed an enthusiastic attitude toward producing Bangsamoro people who will be well-versed in both Arabic and English education, saying:

“We would provide a graduate who would be knowledgeable in both Arabic and English.”

In terms of exercising authority over curriculum design, Member A explained that the Madaris Education sector has stronger authority, particularly in the curriculum of the Islamic studies program, while Higher Education has a bigger role in overseeing the institutional supervision of BKIS. Member A stated:

“When it comes to... institutional supervision, it is under the director general of Higher Education. When it comes to issues like curriculum, what I mean is the content of the courses being offered in the BKIS... the director general of Madaris Education... would be involved more.”

Moreover, Member C agreed with Member A’s explanation on the role of Higher Education in supervising the higher institutions in the Bangsamoro region. However, Member C stressed that the BOT of the BKIS plays a significant role in improving the faculty of Islamic studies, including its members, saying:

“The manner selecting the human resource or the faculty, to be specific, for the Bangsamoro Kulliyah. ... The board will be the one that will do this activity. So, when the Board decided to who will be the people in the selection committee, they are the one who will manage, and they are the one who will assign qualification standards, or the QS for the faculty, not only of the Islamic studies, but to include other programs that they will be offering. But when it comes to Islamic studies, I think it’s very clear that the hiring or selection committee of the Kulliyah, which is empowered by the Board to do it.”

While the BOT of the BKIS exercises the role of legislating the qualification standards of the faculties of the institution, including the faculty members, the Higher Education sector would play the role of overseeing how the BOT exercises this role, that is, institutional supervision, as Member A indicated earlier. Also, they are the ones who are responsible for providing training and technical assistance for the development of the BKIS, including the faculty members of Islamic studies. Member C stated:

“Our role (the Higher Education) there is just to oversee how they (the BOT) do it. So, this is the role of the Higher Ed we are seeing, providing the training, providing the technical assistance to the Bangsamoro Kulliyah.”

4.2.4 Benchmarking and Ethical-Islamic Framing in the Development of Islamic Studies at Bangsamoro Kulliyah for Islamic Studies

The fourth theme to emerge from the coding was the strategic integration of international and national models and principles in shaping the development of the BKIS, particularly the Islamic studies program. This highlights how the MBHTE sought global inspiration while navigating Islamic studies within the moral foundation of Islam. When I interviewed the three key members of the BOT of the BKIS, they all emphasized that the development of Islamic studies in BKIS involved adopting and learning models from other countries and reputable Islamic institutions overseas, regardless of which religion dominated the nation. In developing the BKIS, particularly the Islamic studies program, all

three key Members of the BOT I have interviewed have participated in doing the benchmarking, assessing, and validating the results of it.

According to them, internationally, the MBHTE mostly did their benchmarking around Southeast Asia, though it has extended to other nations where the minority status of the Muslims in the Philippines might be similar to theirs, such as Australia. In Southeast Asia, they have visited the International Islamic University, Malaysia (IIUM), the Indonesian International Islamic University (IIU), including other universities and educational institutions in Indonesia, Thailand, and Singapore. Although they have not conducted a benchmarking in other nations and/or prestigious universities like Turkey, Egypt, particularly the Azhar University, the Islamic University of Madinah, and some other universities and educational institutions in the Middle East, they have established partnerships and coordination with them through key individuals and students they have sent to study over those institutions.

Nationally, the MBHTE has established good relationships with the University of the Philippines (UP), where its Institute of Islamic Studies has been operating since 1973. As a matter of fact, UP is not only an institution for MBHTE's benchmarking. They even extend their assistance for the establishment of the BKIS. Member A noted:

"They are helping us doing our curriculum. In fact, some of the writers of our Islamic studies here have come from UP Islamic studies. So, they help a lot not only in benchmarking. They are even helping us directly."

Moreover, Member A highlighted during my interview with him that for the general development of education in the Bangsamoro region, the MBHTE also did a benchmark in Iloilo, Philippines, for localized adaptation for Islamic education in the BARMM, including BKIS. As he indicated that Iloilo is one of the leading provinces in the Philippines in terms of educational axis, leadership, and influence.

Members A and B further extend their narrative, explaining the focus and objectives of the MBHTE's benchmarking. According to Member A, the benchmark they have successfully done is to see how other countries manage their curriculum. For instance, he noticed that in Indonesia, moral development in accordance with Islam is integrated into their primary curriculum. Member A noted:

"The way they teach there in Indonesia, the Akhlāq in basic education... the Akhlāq of a person, from the very start, they are already giving attention to teaching and developing the characteristics of a child. So, that's one of what we have seen... The concept of developing the character of an individual, we got it from Indonesia."

In support, Member C also observed that in Malaysia, particularly in the IIUM, they don't have a BAIS; rather, they integrate Islamic studies or related discourses in all of their programs, such as engineering, education, medicine, law, and others. Member C said:

“You cannot see any program like Islamic studies. But all of their programs there have Islamic Studies built into them. In their education, in their medicines, in their engineering. You can analyze that in their Bachelor's of Law, Bachelor's of Medicine, their various programs, nursing, psychology, or whatsoever. Islamic studies are highly integrated there.”

Member B, on the other hand, pointed out that the benchmark they have successfully done purposefully is for crafting the rules and regulations of the BKIS. Member B enunciated:

“Our benchmark... was about... implementing rules and regulations of the BKIS. That's it, the BAA No. 50.”

4.2.5 Structural and Epistemic Challenges and the Strategic Responses in Developing Islamic Studies in the Bangsamoro Region

The fifth theme to emerge from the coding was acknowledging and addressing structural and epistemic challenges of developing Islamic studies in the Bangsamoro region. This theme reveals how the MBHTE, alongside the Bangsamoro autonomous government, faced institutional limitations, curriculum fragmentation, and knowledge production gaps through targeted strategies such as policy support, collaborative networks, and localized educational innovations.

When I interviewed the three key members of the BOT of the BKIS, they all agreed on how challenging it is to develop Islamic studies, especially its faculty members who came from different Islamic concentrations and methodologies in pedagogical approach. Examining the responses of the three key respondents amongst the members of the BOT, the pedagogical approach stands as the main challenge in the development of Islamic studies in the Bangsamoro region. They have all agreed that having a faculty member with a diverse educational background hinders the good production of the Islamic studies program. For instance, Member A highlighted the heterogeneous composition of the faculty members of the Islamic studies program at BKIS, who are trained from different countries with different curricular models. While this international diversity may seem enriching at first glance, it also introduces curricular fragmentation and epistemic dissonance within the Islamic Studies program. Member A noted:

“We struggle with it... Our teachers came from different backgrounds, or diverse backgrounds. They came from different countries (and) different curricula. They

came from Egypt, from Saudi Arabia, from Libya, and from Indonesia, from Malaysia.”

For instance, Member B pointed out that many of the Islamic studies instructors are not formally trained in Islamic studies as a structured discipline, but instead hold the traditional methods of Madrasah-style instruction they have gained in studying overseas. As I have noted, they follow a simple pattern: writing topics on the board, brief explanation, and rote memorization. It does not involve critical engagement, contextualization, or integration with modern academic standards. Member said:

“Most of them are not really that Islamic studies: they finished Shari’a instead. For example, one of my staff (members) who graduated from Pakistan. His mode of teaching became a challenge for us. Because he brought with him the curriculum when he studied at ... Pakistan...”

“Their mode of teaching still remains in Madrasah. What they are teaching is the Madrasah context. That’s it, the basic... You have maddah (subject). You have a topic. And then, write it on the blackboard, then, followed by an explanation, then, let the students memorise it, then, khalas, finish.”

Additionally, Member C expressed the same thought concerning the problem of the faculty members of Islamic studies, underscoring the challenge of implementing a unified Islamic studies curriculum. Member C also challenges the notion of auto-qualifying a faculty member candidate just because he/she gained an educational background related to Islamic studies. Member C noted:

“The supplies of our associates, our Ulama, and our experts. They came from different places. They have different trainings, they have different perspectives, and they have different practices. Yet, we are implementing the same program.”

“Now, they have meet at there and been together there in one school, and they will implement one the same program and one the same curriculum. Should the curriculum adjust to them? Or should they adjust to the curriculum? It’s becoming a challenge because the backgrounds they came from are also different. It doesn’t mean that they studied Arabic overseas, doesn’t necessarily mean they are qualified to teach.”

“It’s a major challenge that you have different ālim, different asātidz, that are coming from different backgrounds.”

Moreover, in relation to the faculty members of the BKIS, Member B highlighted the problem of hiring quality professionals in the field of Islamic studies due to the constraints of having no regular positions. That’s it, the absence of plantilla positions due

to its unestablished juridical personality. For context, in the Philippines, plantilla positions refer to permanent and government-funded jobs that allow institutions and/or bureaucrats to hire qualified personnel. Member B indicated that the inability of the BKIS to provide regular positions hinders the BKIS from recruiting competent Islamic studies graduates, despite growing needs for the development of the program. Member B indicated:

“We don’t have yet permanent plantilla positions on the grounds that the juridical personalities of the BKIS is not yet established... We could not hire... who could teach Islamic studies, because we don’t have plantilla positions... The main challenge we are facing is we don’t have plantilia positions. So, we couldn’t hire competent youth like a fresh graduate. There are colleges... in some university... of Islamic studies. Like, Cum Laude, or even if it’s not. So, we couldn’t hire them because we don’t have a plantilla position.”

Another challenge that emerged from the narrative of the three key Members during the interview is the presentation of the Islamic studies program to the Bangsamoro people. According to them, the Islamic studies course lacks in providing career opportunities, thus marginalizing its relevance to the broader landscape of higher education, not only in the Bangsamoro region but in the whole Philippines. This perceived limitation often leads students and parents to undervalue Islamic studies, seeing it as disconnected from a professional career and employment-driven demand. Member A highlights an educational hierarchy of discipline, where courses like Engineering Medicine are viewed as more prestigious, valued, rewarding, and practical. In contrast, Islamic studies received little recognition from the masses, who viewed the program as impractical in terms of employment and market-based demand. Member A noted:

“How could our people accept it fully and love it fully? Where ... they would love Islamic studies like the way they love Engineering courses ... (and) medical courses. That is, it should be seen the importance of it in the way they see other courses. So, that is one of our challenges... Our parents don’t want to let their children study Islamic studies because there is no job market for it. They have nothing to go.”

This challenge was further stretched by Member B during our interview, where he genuinely questioned the practical outcome of the program, not in terms of the academic value, but likewise in terms of economic viability. Member B asserted:

“The reality ... is that Islamic studies as a course is not sellable. The challenge here ... (of) our Islamic studies graduates. What’s the market? Where do we market them? ... Where are they going to work?”

Another challenge that emerged from the interview is the lack of institutional guidelines and policies for Islamic studies. This problem underscores a critical policy and structural gap, that Islamic studies is operating without formal institutional guidelines and policies. Member A noted:

“Our problem in Islamic studies or Madrasah in general is that it is not institutionalized.”

Despite all of the struggles mentioned, during my interview with the three key respondents from the BOT of the BKIS, the MBHTE has addressed and continues to provide solutions to develop Islamic studies, and in general, the landscape of Islamic education in the Bangsamoro region. As a response to those challenges, they highlighted the implementation of Public Madrasah Education or the Madrasah Education Program, the Islamic Studies and Arabic Language (ISAL), the Arabic Language and Islamic Values (ALIVE) subjects in basic education, the adaptation of offering Islamic studies subjects in all academic disciplines of Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) in the Bangsamoro region, and above all, the creation of the BKIS.

Nonetheless, during our interview, Member C initially recognized the significance of the integration of all educational sectors in the Bangsamoro region before providing the programs that has been implemented in the educational landscape of the Bangsamoro region, viewing it as a great development that allows for more systematic planning, resource sharing, collaborative duties and responsibilities, and a harmonized vision for education in the Bangsamoro region. This unified system also elevates the Madaris Education by setting it on equal ground with regional educational bodies, facilitating Islamic and secular learning under one administrative umbrella.

“You have to recognize the effort of the Bangsamoro government in coming up with one education system. So, this is an integrated system of education in which you unify the TESDA, DepEd, and CHED, then you add the Madaris Education... But we are seeing now the goodness of a ministry, that the DepEd, CHED, TESDA, and also the Madaris are being united.”

Member A, on the other hand, illustrated the ISAL and ALIVE programs, bridging Islamic education with state recognition and ensuring that bureaucrats do not marginalize Islamic Studies graduates in terms of the job market and opportunities. It signifies a curricular integration strategy and a governance response to one of the most persistent challenges in Islamic higher education: post-graduation employability. Member A noted:

“We made ... the ISAL program and the Arabic Language and Islamic Values in public schools... Because of this, Islamic studies learners see that they can land a job.... BARMM has established a public Madrasah, like that of public schools.”

Moreover, Members A and B shared the same understanding with the primary purpose of the establishment of the BKIS in the Bangsamoro region. That is to produce qualified teachers for the Islamic Studies and Arabic Language (ISAL) program in basic education within the region. While Member A pointed out the necessity of providing teachers for the ISAL, Member B underlined the opportunity for career development of Islamic studies graduates through BKIS, ensuring that they qualified for licensure examinations like the Shari’ah 1083 Examination, the Civil Service Examination (CSE), and the Licensure Examination for Teachers (LET). They said:

“The very purpose of ... why we have the BKIS is to supply teachers for ISAL here in our Madaris education.” -Member A

“Our students would be here ... they could take ISAL, and they could also take other professional eligibility. For instance, LET, Civil Service, Shari’ah 1083.” - Member B

Additionally, Member C indicated that Islamic Studies has been made a mandatory subject for all college students in the Bangsamoro region. Member C enunciated that a policy has been implemented requiring all Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) in the Bangsamoro region to include a three-unit subject related to Islamic Studies, which must be taken by students during their first and/or second year of college, regardless of their degree program. Member C noted:

“Islamic studies, has already been considered mandatory subject for all colleges in the BARMM... All of the programs that has been offering in the Bangsamoro, they have accompanied by Islamic studies, which is taken at the first or second year in college of our youths... For the rest of the HEIs in the Bangsamoro territory, we have made it a policy that the Islamic studies is a mandatory course with three units, which should be offered by all HEIs in the BARMM and making sure that it will be offered in the first or second year of our students, in the different programs.”

Moreover, in terms of policy guidelines, the MBHTE, particularly the Madaris Education, has continuously made an effort to structure and provide a quality-assured Islamic education system in the Bangsamoro region. For instance, Member A highlighted this ongoing effort to standardize the operation of Islamic education in the region. At the

same time, Member B indicated this ongoing effort to standardize the operation of Islamic studies in the BKIS. They said:

“We developed policy guidelines for quality assurance when it comes to establishing Madrasah education. We have established guidelines on how to implement a curriculum.” -Member A

“We are now formulating ... a document that could have a concrete program for Islamic Studies, or the Bangsamoro Kulliyah for Islamic Studies.” -Member B

Lastly, my respondents explained their strategy to make Islamic studies recognizable. They initiate a dialogue with local leaders, particularly those leaders from the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) and nearby communities. Through the BKIS, they offer a fully funded scholarship for Islamic studies students, thus increasing their enrollment. Member B explained this effort, while Member A appreciated it. They said:

“We organized ... the nearby communities (and) the nearby municipality here in Buluan. So, we had a dialogue. We talked with the MILF ... leader. Send your children to study Islamic Studies, at ... Bangsamoro Kulliyah. Send your children and we will give full scholarship. Your children won't pay anything, even 50 cents. So, that's (the time) when our enrollees started to increase.” -Member B

“Messages are so important that they would lead our population to accept Islamic studies and Islamic education.” -Member A

4.3 Meeting the National Standard and the Development and Quality of Islamic Studies in Higher Education in the Bangsamoro Region

In this section, I present an analysis of the findings and discussions on how the Islamic studies program is meeting the national standards and how the selected higher institution implemented strategies to enhance the quality and relevance of the Islamic studies program in the BARMM.

4.3.1 Meeting the National Standards: The Development of Islamic Studies in Higher Education in the Bangsamoro Region

In terms of meeting the national standards, whether for academic or employment purposes, the Islamic studies program followed a set of standards established by the regional and national educational standards. In its initial development, it is important to acknowledge the contribution and role of the Commission on Higher Education (CHED) in crafting the Islamic studies in national higher education. The CHED crafted a Technical Committee (TC), which presents and provides a set of expertise on adopting, crafting, and developing a disciplinary and program roadmap for the BAIS. The key members

comprising the TC are mainly tasked with creating and continuously furthering the development of a relevant curriculum for the BAIS. This initiative of the CHED, with the work of the TC, resulted in the establishment of CMO No. 30, mandating the national standards of the BAIS from students' program specialization, program administration, to faculty and faculty member qualifications.

However, as demonstrated in the results of my research, the CMO No. 30 remains limited as it does not cover the real needs of the Bangsamoro people and, in a broader context, the real needs of the Muslim Filipinos in the Philippines. To make this argument clear, the CMO No. 30 provides two specializations only, Islamic Studies in Political Economy and Islamic Studies in Multimedia Technology, which follow the Sunni orthodox, reflecting the Islamic belief of the Muslim majority in the Philippines. These two specializations limit the real needs of the Muslim Filipinos, particularly the Bangsamoro people, in asserting educational freedom and identity. For instance, Al-Raschid-Arsad demonstrated that the Sunni orthodox follows a set of standards including the following: Islamic Law (*Sharī'ah*), Jurisprudence (*Fiqh*), Prophetic Sayings (*Hadīth*), Arabic Language (*Lughatul'Arabiyya*), Qur'ānic Exegesis (*Tafsīr*), Polemics (*Kalām*), History (*Tārikh or Sīrah*), and Qur'ānic Reading (*Qirāat*). This is also supported by Siddiqui's emphasis on Islamic theology and civilization as the fundamental aspect of Islam.²²⁹ Therefore, the two specializations of Islamic studies, as mandated by CMO No. 30, as examined by Al-Raschid-Arsad, do not fall under the frame of the Sunni orthodox.²³⁰

Therefore, Islamic studies in the Philippine higher education system need to be developed as a single educational entity separate from the influence of politics, economics, and even from multimedia, technology, and others. As I have observed here in the Faculty of Islamic Studies of Indonesian International Islamic University, Islamic studies is the umbrella of a multi-disciplinary approach. This argument also aligns with Nielsen's views that Islamic studies work within their own educational frameworks and do not incorporate recent methods and theories from outside influence, and demonstrate resistance to external academic frameworks.²³¹

In the case of BARMM educational governance, Islamic studies, including the guidelines and policy needed, are still in the stage of materializing and, thus, necessitate critical attention. As shown in the findings of my research, the Bangsamoro government is in the stage of expanding the CMO No. 30 under the supervision of the MBHTE. They are

²²⁹ Siddiqui, 'Islam at Universities in England'.

²³⁰ Al-Raschid-Arsad, *Institutional Development of Muslim Education in the Philippines | Discussion Paper*, 19.

²³¹ Nielsen, 'Islamic Studies in University and Seminary: Contest or Constructive Mutuality?', 15.

addressing the shortcomings of the CMO No. 30, forming a dual regulatory recognition for the standardization of the Islamic studies program—national and regional standards. For instance, they are looking forward to offering a Bachelor of Science in Elementary Education major in Islamic Studies, qualifying graduates to take the Licensure Examination for Teacher (LET). The BARMM believes that the mandate of the CMO No. 30 is not enough for the needs of the Bangsamoro people in terms of gaining academic recognition and employment demand. It should be elevated, addressing the educational demand of the Bangsamoro people and reflecting their historical aspirations, cultural identity, and religious values through a curriculum and/or program that fosters both intellectual rigor and spiritual depth. The adaptation of the BEC, mandating the MBHTE and the creation of the BKIS, demonstrates this vision.

The shortcomings brought by the CMO No. 30 also reflect Perellon's policy theory on actualizing public policy governed by several context-specific structures. According to him, implementing a policy emerges from interaction between ideational and material dimensions. Ideational reflects the belief, values, objectives, and ideas, corroborating a policy, while material reflects the instrument and procedures in implementing it.²³² In this case, the ideational dimension of the CMO No. 30 as a policy instrument demonstrates a limited and arguably technocratic objective of Islamic studies, restricting it to two specializations only sewn to political economy and multimedia technology, which do not answer the real need of the Bangsamoro people in terms of academic recognition and employment demand.

Moreover, the Bangsamoro government's objective through the MBHTE to offer degree programs, like the BSED major in Islamic Studies, shows how the regional actors, such as the BARMM, sought to redesign national standards to address educational needs, cultural identities, historical aspirations, and religious values. Again, this reflects Perellon's policy theory that national policies, like the CMO, are formed by spatial and temporal actualization, limiting and redefining institutional autonomy, socio-cultural demands, and the distribution of political power.²³³ Nonetheless, the development of Islamic studies in the BARMM shows not a rejection of the national standards, but an attempt to negotiate the national education system with their regional legitimacy.

²³² Perellon, 'Analysing Quality Assurance in Higher Education: Proposals for a Conceptual Framework and Methodological Implications', 155–56.

²³³ Perellon, 'Analysing Quality Assurance in Higher Education: Proposals for a Conceptual Framework and Methodological Implications', 161, 162, and 171.

4.3.2 Quality and Relevance of the Islamic Studies Program in Higher Education in the Bangsamoro Region

The quality and relevance of Islamic studies in higher education in the Bangsamoro region face tremendous challenges. Analyzing the findings of my research elaborated above, I found four (4) challenges in the development of Islamic studies in higher education in the BARMM. These are: Challenges in Pedagogical Approach, Absence of Regular Positions, Recognition of the Students and Parents, Lack of Institutional Guidelines and Policies, and Lack of Facilities. These challenges significantly affect the quality of the Islamic studies program. However, bear in mind that these challenges do not represent autonomous institutions, such as the Mindanao State University, among others, and Cotabato State University, located in the Bangsamoro region, which necessitates an independent investigation. These challenges are only found at the BKIS, which is the focus and limitation of my research.

4.3.2.1 Challenges in Pedagogical Approach

As I have observed, the pedagogical approach represents a main challenge to enhancing the quality of Islamic studies. The faculty members of the BKIS have distinct teaching methodologies, which reflect the different Islamic educational backgrounds they gained from different countries. Many of them did not receive proper training in teaching Islamic studies as a structured discipline. Instead, they follow the traditional way of teaching the Madrasah framework. This involves three (3) patterns: writing topics on the board, brief explanation, and rote memorization. It does not involve critical engagement, contextualization, or integration with modern academic standards.

As a result, the BKIS faces a problem in implementing a unified curriculum for the Islamic studies program. This creates tensions between individual epistemologies and institutional curricular authority. Thus, the central predicament—whether the curriculum should adjust to the heterogeneity of the faculty members or they should blend themselves into a unified curricular standard—reflects a significant struggle between academic standardization and pedagogical approach.

4.3.2.2 Absence of Regular Teaching Positions

As a newly developed Islamic-focused institution, from its original entity (REMACADEMY) to its newly established name (BKIS), the absence of regular teaching positions for the faculty members of Islamic studies remains a problem, as it hinders the program from hiring quality teachers who are experts in the Islamic studies discipline, which emphasizes a significant institutional imbalance.

The absence of permanent positions for highly qualified faculty members hampers the full potential of institutions like the BKIS to deliver a quality and relevant Islamic studies program. Without a stable roster of quality faculty members, the program will continuously struggle to meet the standards set by the national and regional frameworks. Furthermore, the absence of permanent positions affects the vision of attaining national academic standards and their long-term sustainability, limiting research output, pedagogical development, and teaching opportunities for Islamic studies students.

4.3.2.3 Lack of recognition from the Students and Parents

Since the academic recognition and employment demand for Islamic studies is contemporary in the state of struggle, the program receives little recognition from students and parents, which affects the growth of enrollees. This challenge is evident when the Islamic studies at BKIS were about to be discontinued, as one of my respondents said when he assumed the office as a member of the BOT of the BKIS, because the students and parents did not see the value and relevance of the program.

In a system shaped by labor market demand, a program like Islamic studies in the Philippines is perceived as less life-sustainable and has less public legitimacy. Students and parents who are filled with a perception that the program provides limited opportunities for career development and societal value, enrollment growth in Islamic studies remains critically low, further marginalizing the program within academic recognition and policy spaces. This problem not only affects the enrollment growth but also undervalues the program when it comes to academic evaluation, where the lack of recognition leads to diminished budgetary allocation, which will affect program innovations.

4.3.2.4 Lack of Institutional Guidelines and Policies

The lack of institutional and programmatic guidelines and policies for Islamic studies underscores a critical policy and structural gap that Islamic studies operate without formal institutional guidelines and policies. Without formal policy guidelines to govern curriculum design, academic standards, faculty positions, and quality assurance mechanisms, the Islamic studies program tends to operate in an ambiguous manner, lacking consistency, legitimacy, recognition, and strategic direction.

Furthermore, the lack of proper guidelines and policies may hinder potential collaboration between institutions that offer the same program, like the MSU,

limiting opportunities for research expansion and exchange of best practices. Above all, this problem may affect the quality, diversity, and richness of Islamic scholarship and practices.

Nonetheless, despite all of the challenges discussed above, the BKIS, in collaboration with the MBHTE, has taken a step to develop the Islamic studies program and increase its relevance, making it more appealing to the Bangsamoro people. The international and national benchmarking they have conducted gives them the aspiration to innovate the program, making it adaptable to the modern educational platforms, incorporating technological aspects in enhancing the pedagogical approach, curriculum design, and program and institutional structures.

Moreover, the development of the BKIS from its original institutional structure, i.e., the REMACADEMY, through the enactment of the BAA No. 50 approved by the BP, established a firm and sustainable foundation for the Islamic studies program. This institutional development reflects a deliberate policy innovation embedded in the regional, political, and educational autonomy of the BARMM. It arguably represents a gradual recognition of Islamic studies as an essential component of the development of education in the Bangsamoro region for the Bangsamoro people, and for the Muslim Filipinos in a broader context.

By properly putting the BKIS within a formal, legal, and governance structure, the institution itself and the MBHTE can systematically oversee, evaluate, and assess the quality and relevance of Islamic studies, ensuring that it aligns and is able to meet the national and regional standards while maintaining its academic independence and values. Moreover, the enhancement of the BKIS opens strategic pathways and opportunities for curriculum development, faculty professionalization and innovation, academic recognition, and providing permanent, quality teaching positions. This will also enhance the pedagogical methodologies from the traditional Madrasah teaching style to a systematic procedure, critical engagement, and state-supported Islamic scholarship, which has been a significant problem in the program.

Above all, the implementation of Public Madrasah Education or the Madrasah Education Program, the ISAL, the ALIVE subjects in basic education, and the policy requiring all HEIs in the BARMM to incorporate Islamic studies-related subjects, provides clear direction to Islamic studies program and its students, making it relevant and addressing not only the employment demand and standard set by the national and regional governments but also expanding and continuously develop the landscape and state of Islamic education in the BARMM.

In this case, the strategic responses of the BKIS, in collaboration with the MBHTE, also illustrate Perellon's notion of policy actualization, which is the process of translating ideational policy ideas into factual institutional instruments within an actual and structural context, like the BKIS.²³⁴ As Perellon argued, a policy for quality assurance is shaped by a collaborative exercise of administrative authority, institutional mechanisms, and the need to balance standardization with contextual sensitivity.²³⁵

In this case, the transformation of BKIS from REAMACADEMY, through a legal basis, reflects a purposeful act of policy-driven institutional consolidation to address longstanding structural gaps in national and/or regional higher education for Islamic scholarship. The collaborative initiatives of the BKIS with the MBHTE to enhance curriculum standards, adopt institutional and programmatic policy guidelines, establish proper program direction, and regularize teaching positions demonstrate a material domain of policy instruments and structure to develop the quality and relevance of Islamic studies.

At the same time, their benchmarking efforts, addressing curricular innovations, adaptation of modern pedagogical approaches, and ensuring the institution and program meet the national standards, including the innovation of the Islamic studies program direction, demonstrate an initiative to address and honor the cultural identity and Islamic epistemologies of the Bangsamoro people. This notion relates to Perellon's assertion that national policy paradigm, i.e., the national educational standards, are rarely implemented uniformly but are instead negotiated through regional governance, i.e., the Bangsamoro governance, mediating national authority and regional educational needs.²³⁶ Therefore, BKIS and MBHTE's collaborative strategies represent an essential case of regional policy actualization where ideational goals (Islamic education for the Bangsamoro, and for a broader context, for the Muslim Filipinos) are transformed into material practices aligned with both national standards and regional autonomy.

²³⁴ Perellon, 'Analysing Quality Assurance in Higher Education: Proposals for a Conceptual Framework and Methodological Implications', 160.

²³⁵ Perellon, 'Analysing Quality Assurance in Higher Education: Proposals for a Conceptual Framework and Methodological Implications', 160–62.

²³⁶ Perellon, 'Analysing Quality Assurance in Higher Education: Proposals for a Conceptual Framework and Methodological Implications', 170–72.

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Conclusion

This study argues that the development of Islamic studies in higher education in the Philippines is shaped by their intention to achieve the national standard of higher education set by the government. Some Islamic studies higher education institutions currently lack a curriculum, qualified teachers, and systems that adequately address the specific needs of the Muslim society in Bangsamoro. Several efforts such as the implementation of the Arabic Language and Islamic Values (ALIVE) program, Islamic Studies and Arabic Language (ISAL), and Madrasah Education Program (MEP) have been considered successful and addressed the need of the Bangsamoro people, and the Muslim Filipinos in a larger context. However, further institutional assessment may help provide a more comprehensive analysis of existing shortcomings. In that regard, I limit my study to the BARMM territory, as this is the only autonomous region in the Philippines with a Muslim majority population. I chose only one (1) higher education institution—the Bangsamoro Kulliyah for Islamic Studies (BKIS)—located at Buluan, Maguindanao del Sur, as the case study for my research. Making the research questions established in Chapter 1 a guideline, this study concluded that:

First, as an integrated educational governance forming a single entity, the role of the Ministry of Basic, Higher, and Technical Education (MBHTE) extends to all educational levels operating in the BARMM, and the reinforcement of legitimacy and quality assurance is effectively implemented. Generally, they have been entrusted with significant responsibilities that require them to develop the education of the Bangsamoro people, aim to provide knowledge about their cultural and religious identity, and thereby become qualified to meet the employment demands of the Philippine labor market and academic standards. They inherit the responsibilities, functions, and duties of the former CHED-ARMM, which are mandated by specific laws, such as the Bangsamoro Organic Law (BOL) and the Bangsamoro Education Code (BEC).

Specifically, the Higher and Madaris Education sectors under the MBHTE have a direct role in overseeing the development of the Islamic Studies program in the Bangsamoro region. Higher Education plays a significant role in overseeing institutional development, while Madaris Education is more focused on developing and adopting a curriculum for the Islamic studies program in the BARMM. This is more evident as the Minister of the MBHTE serves as the Chairman, the Bangsamoro Director-General of Higher Education acts as the first Vice Chairman, and the Bangsamoro Director-General of

Madaris Education serves as the second Vice Chairman of the Board of Trustees (BOT) of the BKIS, as mandated by the BAA No. 50. Higher and Madaris Education have been tasked with aligning Islamic studies programs with national and regional educational frameworks, while also considering the distinct cultural and religious identity of the Bangsamoro people.

Second, in terms of meeting the national standards, the Islamic studies program followed a set of standards established by the regional and national educational governance. Nationally, the Islamic studies program in all higher educational institutions, including those institutions and even universities and colleges located in the BARMM territory, must conform to the CHED Memorandum Order (CMO) No. 30, designed by the Technical Committee (TC) and enacted by the national Commission on Higher Education (CHED).

Regionally, the guidelines and policy needed for the Islamic studies program are still in the stage of materializing and, therefore, have become a focal point for further policy discussions. The MBHTE included in their policy vision the expansion of the CMO No. 30 in crafting the guidelines and policies of Islamic studies in higher education in the BARMM, as they believe that it does not address the real needs of the Bangsamoro in terms of educational demands. This vision is demonstrated in the adaptation of the BEC, mandating the MBHTE and the creation of the BKIS.

Third, the BKIS, in collaboration with the MBHTE, has made significant strategies to develop the quality and relevance of the Islamic studies program. Despite facing significant challenges, they were able to uplift the quality and relevance of the Islamic studies program. From the initial establishment and structure of the BKIS, i.e., the REMACADEMY, through the enactment of the Bangsamoro Autonomy Act (BAA) No. 50, approved by the Bangsamoro Parliament (BP), they established a firm and sustainable foundation for the Islamic studies program. This institutional development reflects a deliberate policy innovation embedded in the regional, political, and educational autonomy of the BARMM.

The implementation of Public Madrasah Education or the Madrasah Education Program, the Islamic Studies and Arabic Language (ISAL), the Arabic Language and Islamic Values (ALIVE) subjects in basic education, and the policy requiring all Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) in the Bangsamoro region to incorporate Islamic studies-related subjects, has influenced the trajectory of the Islamic studies program and its students by aligning with employment demands and educational standards set by both national and regional governments, while also contributing to the ongoing evolution of Islamic education in the Bangsamoro region.

5.2 Recommendations

In this section, I provide recommendations acknowledging my position as a researcher. Keep in mind that I do not occupy a position as a policymaker or faculty member in Islamic studies, nor do I possess formal teaching experience within the discipline. Thus, these recommendations are only framed from professional practice, students of the discipline, and scholarly observation and analysis.

Reflecting on the findings and discussion demonstrated in previous chapters, this study recommends to the heads of the MBHTE, academicians, Islamic Studies Technical Committee, boards of higher education institutions, and perhaps also to the CHED, to develop the curriculum of Islamic studies. The Islamic studies discipline should have its own academic tracks addressing authentic Islamic scholarship. The Islamic studies discipline should be the intellectual umbrella that accommodates a multi-disciplinary approach. Such an approach not only strengthens the quality, relevance, and integrity of Islamic studies but also ensures its adaptability to contemporary academic and societal challenges, positioning it as a transformative force within the development of the Bangsamoro educational landscape.

Additionally, this study recommends that the MBHTE and HEIs continuously strengthen their relationships in creating policy and quality assurance guidelines for Islamic studies. These policy and quality assurance guidelines should be established by a comprehensive dialogue involving academic leaders, Islamic scholars, and key educational organizations, like the TC established by the CHED, to make sure that the Islamic studies program meets the educational standards set by the national and regional governments, while maintaining its scholarly independence and values. Specifically, HEIs in collaboration with the MBHTE should prioritize faculty development through training and academic exchanges, while also improving academic recognition and student support systems to elevate the quality, credibility, and career relevance of Islamic Studies programs in higher education in the BARMM.

Above all, this study recommends addressing the shortcomings of my research. As I have highlighted, I only focus on one (1) institution—the BKIS. Consider that this institution is newly developed and is one of its kind to focus on Islamic scholarship recognized by the Bangsamoro and Philippine governments. Islamic studies have been operating in the Philippines and the Bangsamoro region in other institutions, colleges, and universities with an autonomous framework even before the enactment of the CMO No. 30. Therefore, the discussion demonstrated in this study may or do not cover other cases concerning the development of Islamic studies at both the national and regional higher level

institutions, and as a student of Islamic Studies in the Philippines, I observed in our previous Islamic studies department a great challenge concerning the qualification and expertise of the faculty members, curriculum design of our program, program implementations, and student career pathways, making it a great case for further research investigation.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A: Letter of Research Permit 1



Faculty of
Islamic Studies

Kementerian Agama Republik Indonesia
Universitas Islam Internasional Indonesia
Jalan Raya Bogor KM.33.5
Ciasih, Sukmajaya, Depok, West Java 16416
islamic.studies@uii.ac.id
uii.ac.id

LETTER OF RESEARCH PERMIT

Ref. No : 67/Dek/FSI/UIII/SIP.02/06/2025 Depok, June 10th, 2025
Attachment :-
Subject : Request for Research Permit

Dear,
Tahir G. Nalg
Director General for Madaris Education under MBHTE

Assalamu'alaikum wr. wb.,

We hereby certify the following student:

Name : Almohaimin Tacbil Pakal
Student ID Number : 01212320002
Faculty : Islamic Studies
Study Program : MA in Islamic Studies

Is conducting research for her thesis with the following details:

Thesis Title : In Pursuit of National Standard: The Development of Islamic Studies Program in Higher Education in the BARM
Research Duration : May - June

We respectfully request your assistance in granting research permission to the student. The research data will only be used for academic purposes and will not be disseminated for other purposes.

This request letter is made for its definite intent. Thank you for your kind attention and cooperation.

Wassalamu'alaikum Wr. Wb.,

Kind Regards,
Dean of the Faculty of Islamic Studies



Faculty of
Islamic Studies

Prof. Yanwar Pribadi, Ph.D.

Appendix B: Letter of Research Permit 2



Faculty of
Islamic Studies

Kementerian Agama Republik Indonesia
Universitas Islam Internasional Indonesia
Jalan Raya Bogor KM. 33.5
Cisalah, Sukmajaya, Depok, West Java 16416
islamic.studies@uili.ac.id
uili.ac.id

LETTER OF RESEARCH PERMIT

Ref. No : 66/Dek/FSI/UIII/SIP.02/06/2025 Depok, June 10th, 2025
Attachment : -
Subject : Request for Research Permit

Dear,
Marjunn M. Maddi
Director General of Higher Education under MBHTE

Assalamu'alaikum wr. wb.,

We hereby certify the following student:

Name : Almohaimin Tacbil Pakal
Student ID Number : 01212320002
Faculty : Islamic Studies
Study Program : MA in Islamic Studies

Is conducting research for her thesis with the following details:

Thesis Title : In Pursuit of National Standard: The Development of Islamic
Studies Program in Higher Education in the BARMM
Research Duration : May - June

We respectfully request your assistance in granting research permission to the student. The research data will only be used for academic purposes and will not be disseminated for other purposes.

This request letter is made for its definite intent. Thank you for your kind attention and cooperation.

Wassalamu'alaikum Wr. Wb.,

Kind Regards,
Dean of the Faculty of Islamic Studies



Faculty of
Islamic Studies

Prof. Yanwar Pribadi, Ph.D.

Appendix C: Letter of Research Permit 3



Faculty of
Islamic Studies

Kementerian Agama Republik Indonesia
Universitas Islam Internasional Indonesia
Jalan Raya Bogor KM. 33.5
Cisalak, Sukmajaya, Depok, West Java 16416
islamic.studies@uili.ac.id
uili.ac.id

LETTER OF RESEARCH PERMIT

Ref. No : 68/Dek/FSI/UIII/SIP.02/06/2025 Depok, June 10th, 2025
Attachment : -
Subject : Request for Research Permit

Dear,
Datuan G. Magon
Interim President of Bangsamoro Kulliyah for Islamic Studies

Assalamu'alaikum wr. wb.,

We hereby certify the following student:

Name : Almohaimin Tacbil Pakal
Student ID Number : 01212320002
Faculty : Islamic Studies
Study Program : MA in Islamic Studies

Is conducting research for her thesis with the following details:

Thesis Title : In Pursuit of National Standard: The Development of Islamic Studies Program in Higher Education in the BARMM
Research Duration : May - June

We respectfully request your assistance in granting research permission to the student. The research data will only be used for academic purposes and will not be disseminated for other purposes.

This request letter is made for its definite intent. Thank you for your kind attention and cooperation.

Wassalamu'alaikum Wr. Wb.,

Kind Regards,
Dean of the Faculty of Islamic Studies



Faculty of
Islamic Studies

Prof. Yanwar Pribadi, Ph.D.

Appendix D: Interview Guide Question 1

Almohaimin Tacbil Pakal
 (01212320002)
 Universitas Islam International Indonesia
 Faculty of Islamic Studies
almohaimin.pakal@uiii.ac.id
 WA +639153559683

Thesis Title: In Pursuit of National Standards: The Development of Islamic Studies in Higher Education in the Bangsamoro Region

Note: The following interview questions are intended to be asked and discussed with respondents from the Ministry of Basic, Higher, and Technical Education (MBHTE) in the Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (BARMM). They are also members of the Board of Trustees (BOT) of the Bangsamoro Kulliyah for Islamic Studies (BKIS). This set of questions focuses on the participation of the minister, as they are the ones who are administering the development of the education system in the Bangsamoro Region, including the development of the Islamic studies program.

Interview Question: How does the Madaris and Higher Education under the Minister of Basic, Higher, and Technical Education (MBHTE) increase the quality of the Islamic Studies program in selected higher institutions in the Bangsamoro government?

Categories	Sub-Questions to be asked or discussed with the respondents
Participation	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. What role does the Madaris and Higher Education under the MBHTE in the BARMM play in overseeing the development and quality of Islamic studies in the BARMM? 2. What policies has the Madaris and Higher Education under the MBHTE in the BARMM implemented in the BARMM to improve the quality of Islamic Studies in higher education? 3. How does the Madaris and Higher Education under the MBHTE ensure that Islamic Studies programs in BARMM are aligned with both Islamic values and national educational standards?
Training Offered	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. What initiatives have been implemented by Madaris and Higher Education in the BARMM to improve the quality of educators in Islamic Studies? 2. How will your sector intend to help ensure that instructors teaching Islamic Studies are qualified and well-supported? 3. What steps are being taken by your office to address faculty shortages or skills gaps in the Islamic Studies field?
Progress of the Program	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. What major reforms from Madaris and Higher Education under the MBHTE have been introduced to the Islamic Studies program in the BARMM over time? 2. How will your office promote the integration of Islamic and secular scholarship to improve educational accessibility for the Bangsamoro students?

	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 3. How will your office monitor and evaluate the effectiveness and relevance of Islamic studies?
Curriculum Development and Standardization	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. How is your sector involved in designing or revising the Islamic Studies curriculum in higher education? 2. Are there efforts by the Higher and Madaris Education under the MBHTE to standardize Islamic Studies curricula in the BARMM? If so, how is this being achieved? 3. Are there specific national or regional benchmarks made by the MBHTE that the Islamic Studies curriculum is expected to meet? How are these integrated? 4. How is your sector balancing traditional Islamic content with contemporary subjects or interdisciplinary approaches for Islamic studies?
Challenges and Innovations	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. What are the main challenges that the MBHTE faces in improving Islamic Studies in the BARMM? And how do these challenges affect the Islamic studies program? 2. How effectively are the MBHTE's approaches meeting the evolving needs of Islamic studies in BARMM? 3. What innovations or reforms implemented by the MBHTE have shown promising results in upgrading the quality of Islamic studies?

Appendix E: Interview Guide Question 2

Almohaimin Tacbil Pakal

(01212320002)

Universitas Islam International Indonesia

Faculty of Islamic Studies

almohaimin.pakal@uiii.ac.id

WA +639153559683

Thesis Title: **In Pursuit of National Standards: The Development of Islamic Studies in Higher Education in the Bangsamoro Region**

Note: The following interview questions are intended to be asked and discussed with the member of the Board of Trustees of the Bangsamoro Kulliyah for Islamic Studies (BKIS) at Buluan, Maguindanao del-Sur, BARMM. This set of questions focuses on the development of the Islamic studies program at BKIS.

Interview Question No. 1: How has the Islamic Studies program at selected higher institutions in the BARMM evolved to meet the Philippines' national education standard?

Categories	Sub-Interview Questions to be asked or discussed with the respondents
Historical	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. What is the history behind the establishment of Islamic studies at your institution? Who were the initiators and the supporters?2. How was Islamic studies formally introduced to your institution and recognized as being part of the Philippine national higher education program?3. What were the initial goals and objectives of establishing Islamic studies at your institution? And how do these goals and objectives align with the Philippine higher education standards?4. How has Islamic studies in the Philippine higher education, particularly at your institution, been shaped by the historical events of colonialism?5. What sources or models did the Islamic studies program at your institution draw from, and how did they influence and shape its establishment process?6. How was the curriculum or courses of the Islamic studies program at your institution initially structured? And who were the key figures, stakeholders, and institutions involved in its early development? How did they contribute?7. What were the early challenges faced in adopting Islamic Studies at your institution into the Philippine higher education system and gaining recognition from the national academic standard?

<p>Curriculum/Courses</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. How has the curriculum or courses of Islamic studies at your institution evolved to align with the Philippines' national higher education standards? 2. What key subjects are included in Islamic Studies at your institution? And what have been the consequences or sacrifices, in terms of curriculum changes and adoption, of aligning Islamic studies at your institution with the Philippine national academic standards? 3. How is the curriculum reviewed or updated at your institution to remain relevant and effective? 4. What efforts have been made to balance traditional Islamic scholarship with modern academic discipline in Islamic studies at your institution while meeting national higher education standards? 5. How does the curriculum of Islamic studies at your institution differ across various universities in the Philippines offering Islamic Studies? 6. Are there any higher education institutions that your institution aspires to emulate or looks up to?
<p>Progress of the Program</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. What major reforms have been introduced to the Islamic Studies program at your institution over time? 2. In what ways has the teaching methodology or pedagogical approach at your institution evolved? 3. How does your institution assess whether the program is progressing effectively?
<p>Alignment with National Education Standards</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. What challenges have your institution encountered in aligning the program with national academic policies and standards? How does your institution address these challenges? 2. How does your institution through Islamic studies balance the distinct cultural and religious identity of BARMM with national academic expectations? 3. In what ways do national assessments or evaluations influence the development of Islamic Studies at your institution?

Interview Question No. 2: How are the efforts made by selected higher institutions in the BARMM in ensuring the overall development and quality of the Islamic Studies program?

<p>Categories</p>	<p>Sub-Interview Questions to be asked or discussed with the respondents</p>
<p>Quality Assurance and</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. What mechanisms are in place to ensure the quality of Islamic Studies at your institution? 2. How do external agencies, such as the CHED and the MBHTE, play in assuring the quality of Islamic studies at your institution?

Program Maintenance	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 3. How do Islamic Studies programs at your institution maintain academic excellence while preserving traditional Islamic scholarship? 4. What are the main challenges in maintaining a consistent and growing quality assurance of Islamic Studies at your institution?
Quality of the Faculty Members	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. What qualifications are required for faculty members at your institution to be qualified to teach Islamic Studies? 2. How are the faculty members at your institution qualified and assessed in the program? 3. How expert are the faculty members at your institution in teaching Islamic studies? And how does your institution assess the expertise of its faculty members? 4. What challenges does your institution face in employing qualified faculty members to teach Islamic studies?
Accreditation and Institutional Support	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. How does your institution ensure the accreditation and standardization of Islamic Studies programs? 2. What role does the CHED and/or the MBHTE play in overseeing the development of Islamic studies at your institution? 3. How does your institution collaborate between local Islamic institutions and international academic networks to maintain and develop the quality of the Islamic studies program? 4. How is quality assurance maintained at your institution to ensure compliance with national accreditation requirements?
Institutional Vision and Strategic Planning	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. How does your institution sustain its vision and mission in developing and maintaining the quality of its Islamic studies program? 2. How does your institution integrate its vision into its Islamic Studies program? 3. What strategic plans or policies are in place to guide the growth and quality of Islamic Studies at your institution? And how do you come up with such plans or policies? 4. What specific goals or outcomes does your institution aim to achieve through the Islamic Studies program? 5. How does your institution incorporate feedback from students, faculty, and organization leaders, such as the CHED and MBHTE, into its planning for Islamic Studies?
Student Outcomes and Career Pathways	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. How does your institution support students in integrating Islamic knowledge into modern professions? 2. How does your institution perceive the relevance of the program for its students? 3. What are the expectations of the students for their future careers after finishing Islamic studies at your institution?

	<p>And how can they compete with other programs that are not Islamic in nature?</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li data-bbox="582 309 1356 421">4. What are the main challenges of your institution in expanding the number of its enrollees? And how challenging is it?<li data-bbox="582 427 1356 495">5. What are the main challenges of your institution in teaching students? And how challenging is it?
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