

Pedagogical reflections of Muslim-Filipino Madrasah teachers: A phenomenological study

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Abstract

The purpose of the paper was to explore the pedagogical reflections of Madrasah teachers or *Asatidz* as program implementers of Madrasah Education Program (MEP) in selected Arabic Language and Islamic Values Education (ALIVE) schools in Metro Manila, Philippines and identify salient themes on their lived experiences on teaching and learning process. This study utilized qualitative method of research using transcendental phenomenological approach of Moustakas (1994) as adapted from Husserl (1931), employing in-depth interviews and understanding of the participants' description of their lived experiences. The authors used purposive sampling with ten research participants across Metro Manila. There were four (4) major themes identified in the study: (1) Teacher with divine responsibility; (2) Teacher as role model; (3) Teacher equipped with pedagogical practices; (4) Student-centered approach to teaching and learning. This study provided enrichment of evidence-based research especially on the lived experiences of grassroots implementers. Fewer studies on MEP were conducted especially on instructional process and particularly in teaching and learning process in the Philippines. The results served as groundwork for more in-depth understanding of Madrasah teachers' pedagogical practices as an integral part of the educative process.

Keywords: *Asatidz*, Madrasah education, pedagogical reflections, teaching practices

Introduction

Teacher's pedagogical practice is one of the most important elements in the teaching and learning process. It serves as an essential aspect in improving educational experiences of the students. These pedagogical practices also help shape learners' knowledge, motivation, and achievement to better understand the world around them. In addition, Darling-Hammond (2006) argued that teacher qualities are determinant of student achievement. In the 21st century education, "socio-constructivist ideas became prominent in normative approaches to learning" (Vieluf et al., 2012, p. 13). In contemporary education, pedagogical approaches shifted from

a traditional process-product or direct instruction approaches to a more socio-constructivist thinking anchored to differentiated practices or the combination of two – are still being practiced.

The advent of the ever-changing educational landscape prompted educators including Madrasah teachers to explore different pedagogical practices in teaching and learning process. According to Selvi (2010) teachers are expected to improve their knowledge and skills to enhance their teaching practices vis-à-vis the development of their pedagogical content knowledge (PCK) (Shulman, 1986) and pedagogical competence (Olsson and Roxå, 2012). However, there are important factors to consider on how pedagogical practices inside the classroom of Madrasah teachers are being realized: (1) pedagogical orientation (Darling-Hammond, 2006; Vieluf et al., 2012; UNESCO MGIEP, 2017; Pekkarinen and Hirsto, 2017) (2) environment and social interaction (Vygotsky, 1978; OECD, 2009) and (3) self-efficacy (Bandura, 1977; Tschannen-Moran & Hoy, 2001).

Pedagogical orientation of Madrasah teachers

Pedagogical orientation is a significant part of Madrasah teachers' conceptualization of curriculum on 'what to teach' and instruction on 'how to teach' and their relationships. Teachers are expected to be multifaceted in teaching approaches as opposed to teachers as consumers of curriculum knowledge. In shaping these pedagogical practices, pedagogical orientation of Madrasah teachers influences how they plan, execute, facilitate, and even evaluate students' learning. According to Tengku Kasim and Abdurajak (2018), the pedagogical practices of novice Islamic education teachers showed diversity on their teaching methodologies as they employ 21st century teaching methods vis-à-vis to the traditional method which is purely on lecture and rote learning. In addition, Islamic teachers who possessed intercultural competence showed awareness of student's diverse and different needs in the classroom (Amri et al., 2017). Therefore, Madrasah teachers who are adept and able to maximize their pedagogical practices are able to prepare themselves efficiently through enriched classroom interaction, activities, and management of the class. However, teaching and learning is not just about reconciling curricular objectives. Also, teachers have to "adjust their pedagogical approach to their students' lived experience" (UNESCO MGIEP, 2017, p. 11).

Lived experiences of students' in the classroom are essential for authentic learning. Learning proponents also reasoned that knowledge cannot be taught in an abstract manner, and that to be useful, it must be situated in a relevant or authentic context. Inevitably, learning environment such as the classroom and cooperative activities allows social interaction among students. Vygotsky (1978) argued that "learning is a necessary and universal aspect of the process of developing culturally organized, specifically human psychological function" (p. 90). In addition, all cognitive functions originate as products of social interactions and that learning was not simply the assimilation and accommodation of new knowledge by the learners. As such, learners must be given variety of classroom interventions and different opportunities to learn from each other through varieties of teaching strategies being implemented by the teacher.

Therefore, the translation of teacher's knowledge into practice and self-preparedness are crucial to the outcomes of classroom teaching. The concept of self-efficacy is also an essential factor to consider. Moreover, efficacy beliefs or self-concept in teaching may influence how a teacher manages and engages student's behaviour in the classroom. According to Tschannen-Moran & Hoy (2001), there are three factors of teaching beliefs that in-service teachers are efficacious: (1) efficacy for instructional materials, (2) efficacy for classroom management, and (3) efficacy for student engagement. In the educative process,

teacher quality is pivotal to the teaching and learning process, which is part of the pedagogical competence expected to an educator through her pedagogical skills and knowledge. Similarly, to Pekkarinen and Hirsto (2017), identifying a single concept that defines the teachers' pedagogical skills is difficult and the closest equivalent to such description is "competence" or "competency".

On Islamic pedagogy vis-à-vis Filipino Madrasah teacher's pedagogical practices in the implementation of ALIVE program

In the Philippines, the Arabic Language and Islamic Values Education (ALIVE) program requires well-trained and competent Madrasah teachers who will facilitate relevant learning inside the classroom. The *Asatidz* or Madrasah teachers are the main implementers of the ALIVE program of the Department of Education (DepEd) in public schools nationwide. The DepEd Order (DO) No. 41, series of 2017 or "Policy Guidelines on Madrasah Education in the K to 12 Basic Education Program" provides recent guidelines in the implementation of the said program. It gives appropriate and relevant educational opportunities within the context of accepted cultures, customs, traditions, and interests of Muslim learners. The ALIVE program is being implemented in public school system which adds two subjects to the regular basic education curriculum: (1) Arabic Language and (2) Islamic Values (Sali and Marasigan, 2020).

Most *Asatidz* or Madrasah teachers of the ALIVE program are not regular teachers and are not necessarily graduates of education course in tertiary level. However, the *Asatidz* are expected to be curriculum planner, designer, implementer, and evaluator with awareness on pedagogical practices and content knowledge (Sali and Marasigan, 2020). With this, quality learning is simply possible if *Asatidz* are embodied with pedagogical competence through effective pedagogical practices based on their class interactions, activities, and techniques to promote learning within learning environment (Lewis and Norwich, 2007 as cited in Sabki and Hardaker, 2013).

Along with the changes in pedagogy as art and science of teaching through times, its aporetic (Saevi, 2011) characteristic makes it hard to define the concept in one universal definition. In relation to knowledge transmission, Sabki and Hardaker (2013) argued that Islamic pedagogy is the 'interactions' between Islamic teacher and students through orality, memorization, and didactic approach towards the sacred. However, Halstead (2004), described the heart of the Muslim concept of education is the aim of producing good Muslims with an understanding and strong knowledge about of Islamic faith. The concept of knowledge or *Ilm* is an integral part of Islamic thoughts, it was emphasized in the Holy Qur-an with repeated injunctions, "God will exalt those of you who believe and those who have knowledge to high degrees" (58:11), and "Oh my Lord! Increase me in knowledge." (20:114).

According to the theoretical research of Sabki and Hardaker (2013), Islamic education follows a traditional approach attained through revealed knowledge of religious sciences and acquired knowledge attained through the rational, intellectual, and philosophical sciences. In addition, secular association with modern Western knowledge in education may be incongruous particularly on the pedagogical competence and practices. Abdullah (2018) pointed out the importance and essence of having an Islamic pedagogical framework in the education literature. Furthermore, Abdullah (2018) argued that Islamic pedagogical framework must also be responsive to contemporary educational research embedded in a prophetic pedagogy thereby, enabling the achievement of the 'Islamic' and enhanced the student's outcomes.

Remarkably, the pedagogical practices of the *Asatidz* or the Filipino-Muslim Madrasah teachers in the Philippines are both influenced by secular and non-secular

orientations. As part of the professional development of the *Asatidz*, the Madrasah teachers are regularly invited to join different seminars and trainings conducted by DepEd and their respective schools. However, despite the Islamic pedagogies being instituted in the traditional religious schools where *Asatidz* graduated are mostly essentialist in orientation, they are enjoined to participate in the different pedagogical trainings in congruent to Philippine secular education orientation were of mix of philosophical tenets from realism (essentialism), progressivism (pragmatism), existentialist humanism and social reconstructionism (Muslim Education Initiatives Final Report, 2014).

The seminars and enrichment activities of *Asatidz* in selected schools in Quezon City showed diversity on their teaching strategies and understanding of the concepts in pedagogy as observed in the classroom (Sali and Marasigan, 2020). However, according to the results of the Review Report on the Three Years Implementation of ALIVE Program, 2018 and the Final Report of Muslim Education Initiatives, 2014, indicated the same recurring challenges on the pedagogical practices of the *Asatidz* who were implementing ALIVE program in different public elementary schools across the country.

Since the inception of Madrasah Education Program (MEP) in 2004, to its extensive years of implementation, the following were some of the relevant gaps and challenges regarding the pedagogical practices of the *Asatidz*: (1) there were challenges on the existing structures and support systems for effective pedagogy in ALIVE program; (2) further training on teaching strategies, test construction, art of questioning, classroom management, and traditional and non-traditional assessment methods were sought; and on the top of the evaluation of the content and pedagogy, there is a need to assess the technical aspects of a curriculum especially how the curriculum is being translated to practice. Solaiman (2017) in his descriptive research on the implementation of ALIVE in Marawi City, showed infrequent monitoring of the program including classroom observation of the *Asatidz* were also noted.

There are extensive studies conducted on pedagogical practices of Madrasah teachers mostly within Muslim-majority countries especially in Southeast Asia. However, in the Philippines, there is a dearth of such research study. The results of this study will benefit major educational stakeholders particularly, the DepEd and policy makers who has jurisdiction to create or revise sound policies upon empirical results but not limited to enrichment of pedagogical training and enhancement of pedagogical practices through teacher development. This study provides enrichment of evidence-based research especially on the lived experiences of grassroots implementers. Lastly, it will enrich the existing dearth of literature (Sali and Marasigan, 2020) on pedagogical practices of Madrasah teachers especially in the Philippines.

Hence, this study sought to explore and analyze the pedagogical reflections of the *Asatidz* who are currently implementing the ALIVE program on Arabic Language and Islamic Values Education in selected schools in Metro Manila.

More specifically, it will answer the following question:

RQ: What are the general beliefs of Madrasah Teachers on their pedagogical practices in terms of teaching and learning process?

Conceptual framework

Primarily, the framework is anchored to Bandura’s Reciprocal Determinism. This social lens purports that not only does the environment influence the teacher but also brings about a change in the environment. In this study, the conceptual flow will be analyzed to examine the important relationships among the different factors that affect and influence the pedagogical practices of Madrasah teachers.

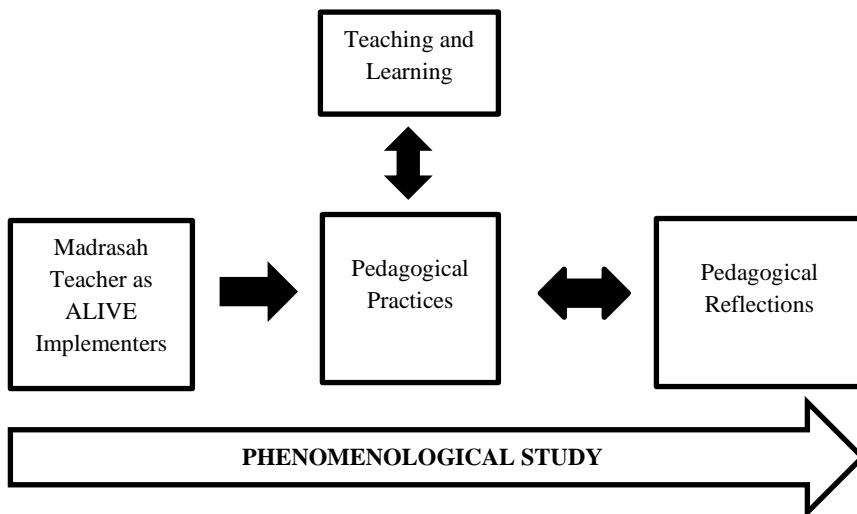


Figure 1. The conceptual framework of the study

The three-way interaction to some degree influences the practices of the *Asatidz* that will be explored through their relevant pedagogical reflections. Pedagogical practice as defined in this study refers to instruction means the “whole process as sum of teaching and learning processes” (Akdeniz et al., 2016, p. 61).

Methodology

This study used a qualitative transcendental phenomenological approach Moustakas (1994) as adapted from Husserl (1931) which gathered an in-depth understanding of the participants’ description of their lived experiences to generate an essence (Merriam, 2009) in the experience of Madrasah teachers on their pedagogical practices in teaching and learning. The purpose is to describe the commonalities of the experience and explore relevant themes. The participants of the study were: ten (10) Madrasah teachers or *Asatidz* from selected ALIVE public schools in Metro Manila in National Capital Region. Creswell (1998) suggested that the minimum size for phenomenological study ranges from 5 to 25 individuals.

The sampling technique used in this study was non-probability purposive sampling. The participants must have at least a year of service and teaching experience, attended professional development of DepEd, and implemented ALIVE program for at least one (1) year. The study employed the validated semi-structured interview method. Prior to the interviews, the interview questions were used in a pilot study to determine their appropriateness. Participants’ consent was secured they were made aware of the objectives of the study and they were not coerced to participate in the study.

Furthermore, interviews were transcribed verbatim. Interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA) of the data was utilized to search for common themes of the interviews which

were audio-taped. The transcriptions, after being coded, were used to create themes anchoring the 50 most frequent words considering the rich data generated from *Nvivo 12*. The most frequent words were also considered on the thematic analysis for initial coding. A validity assumption was made that each participant provided truthful answers to the questions presented. To verify the accuracy of the participant’s responses, respondent validation was made. Triangulation was employed in the study to provide a multifaceted perspective of the data.

The table below represents demographic data of the participants based on the questionnaires. The *Asatidz*’ average years of service in the implementation of ALIVE program are seven (7) years. However, despite passing the pre-deployment requirements for Madrasah teachers given by DepEd, all *Asatidz* are not LET passers as administered by the Professional Regulation Commission. However, they underwent professional development including the DepEd pre-service and in-service workshop and training on pedagogy enrichment before and during deployment to schools. Furthermore, seven (7) out of ten (10) have formal schooling in Education either graduated with a degree or currently pursuing the course. Initially, there were 12 *Asatidz* who agreed to participate in the study. However, only 10 participants completed the entire process of the study.

Table 1. Basic profile of the participants

Characteristics	Indicators	No. of Participants
Gender	Female	9
	Male	1
Age	21-30	4
	31-40	1
	41-50	2
	>51	3
	Length of Service	1-5 years
LET Eligibility Passers	6-10 years	1
	11-15 years	3
	Licensure Exam for Teachers	0
Professional Development	Attended DepEd in-service teacher workshops and seminars	10

Findings and discussion

General beliefs of Madrasah teachers on their pedagogical practices

During the data analysis, four major themes emerged: (1) Teacher with divine responsibility (2) Teacher as a role model (3) Teacher equipped with pedagogical practices and (4) Student-centered approach to teaching. Each of the themes is discussed below.

Teacher with divine responsibility

The *Asatidz* recognized the importance of teaching being more than just a profession but an upright obligation to God. The participants believe that being a learned Muslim is a divine responsibility for them especially in sharing Islamic knowledge to the learners. Most of the participants shared that teaching Islamic knowledge serves a higher purpose and educating younger learners especially Muslim pupils is more than just the teaching and learning process.

Therefore, performing the duties and responsibilities of ALIVE teachers are tantamount to carrying out their Islamic faith with obligation as learned Muslims and scholars. In addition, according to Barni et al., (2019), “teachers for whom values such as novelty, freedom, and choosing one’s own goals are important for their perception of efficiency actually feel more efficient in their teaching activities when they feel independent from external conditions.” (p. 5).

The concepts of self-transcendence and personal values were evident during the in-depth interview. The participants agreed that being a madrasah teacher is beyond a typical educator who teaches literacy and numeracy to the learners. Above all, being a madrasah teacher especially sharing Islamic knowledge to the younger generation of Muslims is an act of charity and good deeds. The teachings of Allah in the Holy Qur-an and the *Hadith* of the Prophet Muhammad were some of the influence of the participants in pursuing teaching in madrasah education.

As some of the participants shared:

There is a saying [in Islam] that when you know something [knowledge] you have to teach and share it. It is beneficial for you to share your [Islamic] knowledge. What I have said was part of a Hadith [Prophet Muhammad’s Narration], the moment I learned about it, and I prepared myself to teach. (P5)

I thought of things that will be asked when you are in the life hereafter, if you are knowledgeable in Islam, it will be asked what I did with my knowledge if I shared it with my pupils and other people. I thought about it often. Allahu Akbar [Allah is Great]. (P7)

As a teacher you need to be prepared [during classroom teaching]. It was the advised of our Prophet Muhammad... all of us are obliged to share the knowledge that we have learned. That’s why we should always be ready [teaching and learning]. (P12)

In addition, the personal values of the participants toward choosing madrasah education were evident. Most of the *Asatidz* chose the path of teaching as part of their intrinsic motivation to serve God and at the same time able to earn from their monthly stipend. According to Barni et al., (2019) “values, under certain motivational conditions, are precious resources to improve the quality of teaching experience for teachers and indirectly for their students.” (p. 5). Therefore, teachers with unwavering personal values for teaching under certain motivational factors are able to develop and progressively apply relevant pedagogical practices during teaching and learning process. The *Asatidz* understood the importance of being effective and efficacious teachers in terms of teaching preparedness during the educative process.

As some of the participants shared:

First, we have to attend seminar and training in pedagogy or other training for strategies intended for Madrasah Program especially on how to implement classroom management. (P1)

You should be ready with your instructional materials and the quizzes. I usually post an instructional material on the board and explain it to them once they are ready to listen. (P6)

You need to know your learners you are teaching. If you have a new set of pupils you should be familiar with them [learners] in your class including their parents. (P8)

Teacher as role model

The *Asatidz* believe that teacher must be a role model inside and outside the classroom. The participants understood that becoming a good teacher one must be acquainted with self-efficacy or being over-all prepared to teach and assume different roles as madrasah teacher. The participants described some things that a madrasah teacher should ensure during the actual teaching and learning process: (a) kind gesture towards the learners (b) concrete plans to accomplish for everyday class and (c) teaching obligation.

Some of the participants shared that as a madrasah teacher you should be aware of your gestures especially during the classroom teaching and interaction. According to some *Asatidz*, the learners are observant and will try to emulate what they have observed on their teacher. As a role model to their pupils, the participants were consciously aware most of the time on how to maintain a positive learning environment to make the learners more comfortable throughout learning and teaching process. According to Liu et al., (2018), teaching practice on a 'deep level' will initiative teachers to modify or reconstruct their values of development. Therefore, it makes teaching more meaningful, which can facilitate teachers' positive feelings about the teaching process. Some of the participants expressed their beliefs:

“Always put a smile [on your face]. Of course, when your learners will see you teach [on the first day of school] and that you are not smiling [not welcoming] or if you will not politely greet them with a ‘hi’, they [learners] feel that their teacher is bad-tempered. The learners will judge you.” (P6)

You should [as a teacher] ahhhm should get your learner’s attention. They should listen to you. There will be no sense if they will not listen to what you are teaching. (P10)

“As a model ahhhm [to your learners] you should show them how to be punctual. You should model your punctuality to your pupils. (P9)

“If you enter your classroom you should be humble [as a teacher] because you will teach them [learners] Arabic and Islamic Values. Your learners should reflect and see [good manners] it with you. If the learners will see you misbehave it seems like it is not Islamic.” (P8)

The *Asatidz* knew as a teacher there are several things that are expected of them to implement and are reminded of their teaching obligation as madrasah teacher. Some of the participants believe that planning for teaching every day before coming to the school would make a difference – as efficacious. According to Bandura (1977), self-efficacy beliefs determine how people feel, think, motivate themselves and behave. Therefore, a motivated teacher with high perception of self-efficacy does well in the learning and teaching process.

“Before we go to school, everything [teaching materials] should be prepared at home. We prepared for our instructional materials especially all the visual aids whenever we teach in front of our learners. All of those things are planned. So that... tomorrow whenever we go to school we will not miss anything.” (P8)

“We are obliged to teach and obliged to be a teacher. It is part of our job. So in being prepared, you can't instruct your learners to be prepared if you yourself is not. That should be the first thing that we should see in an ALIVE teacher. (P9)

First, you are the teacher, you should plan [how to teach]. You should have plans on all those things you will execute. You should have plans too to your learners. Being an ALIVE teacher, you are a model. Isn't it? You are being observed by your learners and sooner emulate and follow your behaviour. That's why we should show them good values, good words, and good way of interaction. (P10)

Teacher equipped with pedagogical practices

The *Asatidz* perceived teacher's teaching competence as the most essential factor in the teaching and learning process. The pedagogical competence comes along with teacher's effectiveness and efficiency in teaching preparation, teaching implementation, and teaching evaluation. Furthermore, part of the pedagogical competence during teaching and learning process is to set educational objectives, identify and develop learning activities, and continuous monitoring of student progress (Ormrod, 1998, as cited in Suci and Măță, 2015). All of the participants agreed that effective classroom instruction through implementing different pedagogical practices is an important factor to consider in the educative process. Teaching preparation posits readiness of the *Asatidz* in handling ALIVE classes through the different strategies and methods of teaching and learning. There is a crucial need to capacitate teachers with pedagogical training as according to Ong et al., (2017), this will eventually impact the instruction of quality students.

According to Ní Ríordáin et al., (2019), it is essential to develop both specialized content knowledge and essential skills and practices that are necessary for competent teaching. The specialized content knowledge of the *Asatidz* is being enriched through various trainings and seminars conducted by the Department of Education (DepEd). It generally prepares madrasah teachers on how to familiarize and teach the competencies in the Revised Elementary Madrasah Curriculum (REMC) utilizing their Islamic background and instructional strategies. In addition, *Asatidz* emphasized the importance of learning essential skills such as improving your classroom management, using information technology in teaching, and filling out promotional records and lesson planning – as part of enriching pedagogical practices. In a study by Gaboy et al. (2020), it has been argued that the teacher's ICT capacity be beefed up through local trainings and programs. Some of the participants explained how teacher should be equipped with relevant teaching practices:

“During the training, our knowledge increases especially on the different styles of teaching. The strategies that you utilize for classroom management and your teaching plan for instruction as examples. Also, teaching technique on how to do grading system [filling out the promotional records]. (P1)

“The best [learning during the training] is how to manage the learners. (P2)

“We were taught how to create visual aids. Also..... how to write a lesson plan. (P7)

“We had summer camp training. We were taught by the Division Office to learn how to use laptop and print tarp papel [paper].” (P4)

“I have learned from the training the don'ts in teaching. There are rights of our learners and that you should neglect their rights as part of the child [protection] policy. (P5)

Remarkably, seven (7) out of ten (10) participants have formal schooling in education either graduated with a Bachelor's degree or currently pursuing the course in secular education. Most of the *Asatidz* were adept in explaining the different concepts in Arabic using local language translation and contextualization of knowledge for learners' easy understanding. Indeed, teachers have to “adjust their pedagogical approach to their students' lived experience” (UNESCO MGIEP, 2017, p. 11). The participants were aware of the importance of continuous professional development in their field as madrasah teachers and the task of enriching their pedagogical practices through times.

Most importantly, the participants agreed that pedagogical practices (e.g. instructional strategies, methods, and tactics) are imperative to the success of teaching and learning. Based on the relevant themes and data analysis, pedagogical practices of the *Asatidz* or the Filipino-Muslim Madrasah teacher clearly are both influenced by traditional teaching such as memorization, orality, and rote learning and socio-constructivist thinking where different instructional strategies and methods are being used of mostly student-centered approach to teaching. Islamic education especially the ALIVE program imparts knowledge to the learners through the different pedagogical practices in teaching and learning as performed by madrasah teachers.

Student-centered approach to teaching

Most *Asatidz* expressed the importance of creating a safe space for learning especially for the learners. They believe that creating a “positive, nonthreatening social climate in which they learn frequently” (Pritchard & Honeycutt, 2007, p. 31) and teacher has the abilities and skills to overcome students' difficulties in learning during teaching and learning process. Interestingly, six (6) out of ten (10) *Asatidz* said that self-efficacious madrasah teacher should recognize and consider the needs, differences, and the level of the learner's knowledge in their instruction and teaching implementation.

Teacher's classroom practices that give emphasis on both learning process and learning outcomes have become the main difference from teaching in the past. As defined by Moore, 2007 (as cited in Akdeniz, 2016), teaching in contemporary times should “focus on assisting students to gain their highest-level development in physical, social, emotional and cognitive aspects.” (p. 6). Furthermore, the *Asatidz* shared their beliefs in creating conducive environment for their learners by focusing on student-oriented practices such as establishing instructional tactics in the classroom. Instructional tactic refers to a way on how to enhance learning which has a narrower scope than instructional strategies (Akdeniz, 2016).

One (1) of the participants shared some of their best practices inside the classroom in terms of fostering harmonious relationship with the learners:

“In the morning, I have this strategy to include exercise in my class. We do singing and playing and go outside.” (P2)

“I do prepare a lot of tricks for my learners. We need more devices [visual aids] and you should explain it very well. (P4)

“As a teacher, I am strict [management] sometimes in the classroom, but I am balancing everything and I do crank jokes [laughing]. (P6)

Most of the participants were aware of their learner’s own learning styles and strategies to cope in different subjects in the ALIVE program implementation. In order to establish student-oriented practices, based on the *Asatidz*’ responses they implement the following: (a) choose instructional methods and materials suited for the learner’s needs and (b) provide different learning opportunities. Some of the participants shared their student-centered approach to teaching and learning:

“If you will ask your learners a direct question with one specific answer... they will respond directly with the answer. However, they will appreciate if there is an interaction [cooperative learning]. (P6)

“Learning should not be coming from the teacher it should also be coming from the learners and the interaction between you [teacher] and your learners.” (P10)

“As teachers, we should be multi [multi-tasking] that we need to apply the concept of ‘multiple intelligence’. That’s the most important, Sir.” (P9)

“Then I will let them [learners] work in groups. Grouping [the learners] is essential. With this, they can learn from each other.” (P1)

“I always incorporate group activity [in my instruction]. There are times, some of your learners are shy [to cooperate]. However, if you will let them join a [group] activity, they will eventually join; especially, the group leaders. They will tell themselves [shy learners] that at least I am not the leader but I can still join [the group]. That is why I like group activity.” (P12)

The participants shared that choosing instructional methods and materials suited for the learners is a humungous task but essential. Most of the *Asatidz* were aware of the concept of learners’ different learning styles and some of them would ascribe to do more interactive and collaborative activities rather than complaisant to only following traditional teaching practices in their instruction. Bishop and Berryman (2009), “relationships and interactions between teachers and students in the classroom are keys to effective teaching of students” (p. 27).

Conclusions and recommendations

The study using phenomenological design identified salient themes on the participants’ lived experiences on teaching and learning process. There were four (4) major themes identified in the study: (1) Teacher with divine responsibility; (2) Teacher as role model; (3) Teacher

equipped with pedagogical practices; (4) Student-centered approach to teaching and learning. The pedagogical reflections of Madrasah teachers or *Asatidz* encompass both teaching and learning practices that shape the learner's learning environment. The selected madrasah teachers as program implementers of Madrasah Education Program (MEP) in selected Arabic Language and Islamic Values Education (ALIVE) schools in Metro Manila, Philippines indicate continuous adaptation of pedagogical practices to serve the needs of their learners in contemporary classroom.

In addition, the *Asatidz* combine both traditional teaching including direct instruction approaches and socio-constructivist thinking in classroom instruction. Furthermore, despite the influence of both secular and non-secular orientations on the pedagogical practices of the *Asatidz*, enrichment of classroom experiences for the learners is unprecedented. The integration of the professional development for Madrasah teachers such as the different seminars and trainings on pedagogical enrichment conducted by DepEd and their respective schools were imperative to the over-all teaching and learning experiences of the participants. These results of the study are useful in guiding education stakeholders in an evidence-based policymaking to further improve the implementation of Madrasah Education. Particularly, in the enrichment of pedagogical training and enhancement of pedagogical practices of Madrasah teachers that suit their pedagogical needs and contextualized teaching and learning based on the context of Muslim-Filipino learners.

However, more studies are enjoined on the pedagogical practices of the *Asatidz*: (1) their best practices in teaching and learning (2) challenges and factors affecting their pedagogical practices (3) influence of professional learning community in school and collaborative practices among group of teachers and (4) comprehensive study on the over-all conceptualization of *Asatidz*' pedagogical practices in teaching preparation, actual teaching, and teaching evaluation. This study provides enrichment of evidence-based research especially on the lived experiences of grassroots implementers. Fewer studies on MEP (Hassoubah, 1981; Lacar, 1994; Milligan, 2006; Boransing, 2006; Arsad 2007; Caballero-Anthony 2007; Refined Elementary Madrasah Curriculum, 2010; Eder, 2010; Muslim Education Initiatives Review Final Report, 2014; Muhamat, Guleng, and Zulkefli, 2015; Solaiman 2017; Marasigan, 2019a; Marasigan, 2019b; Sali and Marasigan, 2020) were conducted especially on instructional process and particularly in teaching and learning process in the Philippines. The results serve as groundwork for more in-depth understanding of Madrasah teachers' pedagogical practices as an integral part of the educative process.

The narratives of Muslim-Filipino Madrasah teachers present how pedagogical practices are contextualized in specific teaching-learning settings suitable to the needs of the learners towards academic achievement. This study provides perspectives on revisiting programs and policies concerning Madrasah education in the Philippines as regards relevant instructional support and assistance. Teacher reskilling and upskilling would impact classroom performance as well as responsive pre-service teacher training being a significant aspect in preparing the future front liners of Madrasah education in the Philippines and beyond.

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