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The Bangsamoro: A Search for Autonomy in an Era of Contested Priorities and Global Changes – Implications for Education for All

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Education in Troubled Times:

A Global Pluralist Response

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I dedicate this book to all the young girls and women of Afghanistan and those in similar circumstances whose education has been interrupted or even lost because of international conflicts and proxy wars, political turmoil, traditions, and customs and, above all, because of having been born female. In many parts of the world, the female gender is the only factor that makes women subject to unequal treatment at home, at educational institutions, and in the larger society under the excuses of various narrow-minded interpretations in the name of culture, tradition, and religion.

This is written while hoping for the day when the female gender, to which human existence is tied, will be respected as much as men. Every man knows that he exists because a woman was there before he was born, and that woman gave birth to him and taught him how to talk and walk. And hoping for the day when women of Afghanistan and others around the world may live a peaceful life, free from violence and discrimination.

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

It was October 2019 that I began to think of developing a book proposal under the title of *Education in Troubled Times*. The idea for the book emerged in early 2018 when I wrote a conference paper, 'Navigating Education in a Troubled Time: A Critical Pluralist Discourse', for the second Oxford Symposium for Comparison and International Education (OXSCIE), *Uncertainty, Society, and Education*, 19–20 June 2018. While I was thinking of writing the proposal, Ms. Rebecca Gladders, Senior Commissioning Editor at Cambridge Scholars Publishing, sent me an email with a special invitation to be a Guest Editor of a collection in my chosen area. The email pleasantly surprised me because it came at a time when I was thinking of writing a book proposal. After a few email exchanges, we agreed on the subject and title of the book and other technical details. By sharing this brief history behind this book, I would like to express my sincere thanks to Rebecca for inviting me to be a guest editor for this volume.

The COVID-19 pandemic has created many challenges over the past two years, the direct and indirect effects of which have also been felt during the completion of this book. Soon after Rebecca and I agreed on the book's details in the second half of February 2020, the pandemic began to spread across the world and disrupted all aspects of our lives. Some of our authors and their family members contracted the virus, while some others also experienced the loss of their loved ones. Another friend and colleague of mine had to withdraw her contribution because of a sudden and severe illness for which she had to undergo an operation amid the pandemic. After months of little physical activity and spending more time sitting at my desk at home, I developed muscle stiffness and then severe pains in my lumbar spine and both legs for which I had to attend urgent hospital treatment, followed by weeks of video physiotherapy. It was important not to put pressure on our authors because each of us had to cope with many challenges. Meanwhile, the book project had to be also completed within a reasonable timeframe. Appropriately, Rebecca and Clementine Joly (former author liaison officer for this book), offered their full support to this book and our authors. They always spoke of flexibility and of giving authors more time to complete their chapters. On behalf of all our authors, I wholeheartedly thank Rebecca and Clementine Joly, as well as the technical

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THE BANGSAMORO:
A SEARCH FOR AUTONOMY
IN AN ERA OF CONTESTED
PRIORITIES AND GLOBAL CHANGES –
IMPLICATIONS FOR EDUCATION FOR ALL

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Abstract

The Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF), an offshoot of Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF), was established in the 1970s to struggle for autonomy and self-determination of the Bangsamoro. The Bangsamoro — home of the Moro Muslim community in the Southern Philippines — achieved its strategic goal of a measure of autonomy through a national plebiscite in December 2019. A transition period of three years is underway, with funding from international and bilateral agencies, to strengthen the Bangsamoro Transitional Authority's governing framework and for its service provision particularly education for all. Local educational authorities, personnel, and schools over the past five decades have espoused the mujahidin ideology. Communities spread in barangays (villages) along with their children participated in training and combat — jihad; the new political dispensation seeks a harmonised policy inclusive of the whole population, Muslim and non-Muslim. This chapter addresses the question of what the prospects are for education where public, private, and self-governing autonomous religious schools — madrassahs — play a mediating and determining role with cognate organs of society to shape values and a vision of the future. It explores and analyses the question in the current socio-political situation and the contested ideological underpinnings shaping educational policies during this difficult transition phase.

Introduction

The revolutionary Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) signed the Comprehensive Agreement on the Bangsamoro (CAB) with the Government of the Philippines in March 2014. The CAB was reached after 17 years of peace negotiations, more than 40 years of civil strife in Mindanao, and over four centuries of resisting colonialism. The Bangsamoro Organic Law (BOL), passed by the Philippines Senate in 2020, following the Presidential Plebiscite in December 2019, paved the way for a semi-autonomous Bangsamoro Autonomous Region of Muslim Mindanao (BARMM). Subsequently, the Government of the Philippines, as well as stakeholders in the international community, are engaged in supporting the establishment of the requisite governing and institutional frameworks as well as concomitant policies and processes to support the formation of BARMM. This process, following decades of armed conflict and guerrilla warfare, is complicated by local and international vested interests and the need to negotiate complex ideological, social justice, and contested ideas of the vision for all Bangsamoro. The unfolding situation has wide and far-reaching implications for education in the emerging BARMM. This paper reflects on the current socio-political developments in Bangsamoro and considers these developments and future prospects in a time of re-emergence of faith-based governance and its implications for education.

Contextual Background

The famous Portuguese explorer Ferdinand Magellan named the Philippines after his benefactor King Philip II of Spain in the 16th century (C) in what was known as the 'age of discovery'. The Spanish Imperialists found a people there who were Muslim and somewhat dark-skinned. Their experience in North Africa with these Muslim co-religionists led them to label these people 'Moro' after the 'Moors' (Mohajer, 1984). Thus, the term Bangsamoro refers to both the place of the Moro as well as the people found there.

Islam reached the Philippines over a millennium ago. The interaction of the region's people prior to the 13th century with Chinese Muslim Hui, Indian, and Persian traders from the 14th century, and the Brunei Empire in the 15th

century showed a steady Muslim influence before Spanish colonial rule (Tan, 2008). This Muslim influence, from various sources and diverse contexts, developed a Muslim consciousness in the Philippines, which was itself reflective of the peoples' diversity in their understanding and practice of Islam. The advent of Spanish colonialism had two overarching effects on the Muslim communities. First, they were gradually relocated to the southern fringes of the Philippines on the south island of Mindanao which resulted in their gradual displacement from their traditional resources and livelihoods initiating an intergenerational cycle of increasing poverty and disenfranchisement. Second, resistance to colonial rule began to bring disparate Muslim groups together in a collective effort.

The resulting four centuries of colonial rule and the American oversight of the Philippines following the Spanish-American War of 1898 gave way to independence after World War II. The cumulative effect plunged Muslim communities into a dire state of human development, marginalised from state services, and in a state of constant civil and national strife (Table 3 below).

Table 3: Human Development in Comparison: The Philippines, Mindanao, and Bangsamoro (Adapted from UNICEF, 2019)

Indicator	Philippines	Bangsamoro
Population	>100 million	4.5 million (of which 2.5 m Children)
Life Expectancy	71	Undetermined
Poverty Rate	19.8%	63%
Literacy Rate	96.4%	40% never enrolled in school 20% of enrolled children complete basic education 400,000 adolescents not in school

Table 1 above shows the stark developmental disparities that exist, on average, between the Philippines as a whole and the areas of the Bangsamoro particularly in terms of the poverty rate that is more than three times the Philippines' average and access to education whereby more than half the population do not access formal schooling.

The Government of the Philippines, as well as the formation of counter-hegemonic and revolutionary groups (*mujahidin*), fuelled this state of strife

and almost perpetual conflict. The principal Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF), founded more than 50 year ago, and its splinter group the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) were the primary organisations agitating for independence. They created a network of people's action groups based in the barangay — small villages — across the Bangsamoro region. The network supported education and health access, training in armed and guerrilla conflict, and the MILF particularly engaged a Muslim consciousness that built on ideas of *jihad* (permissible defence against aggressors) and social justice or to fight against oppression and hegemonic control.

In effect, over the past five centuries, Muslims in Mindanao built a connection of networks leading to the region becoming a centre of trade, development, and learning. The Mindanao-based Sultanate Maguindanao, founded in the 15th century, with its capital in Marawi, became an important centre of learning with hundreds of madrassahs or colleges and thousands of masjids (mosques) that supported learning. The Sultanate established deep and meaningful links to other Muslim and non-Muslim communities in South-East Asia as well as further afield in China, India, Iran and with British and Dutch traders as well as the neighbouring Indo-Malay communities. Following years of strife, in 2017, Marawi City was destroyed by the forces of the Government of the Philippines. This moment served as an inflection point that precipitated a peace agreement, the creation of the Bangsamoro Organic Law, and the influx of material support to rebuild the region and its communities.

A Multi-Frame Analytical Approach

This chapter approaches the modern context of the Bangsamoro in terms of three frames to provide a perspectival lens and an analytical approach. Frame 1 is the backdrop of the 19th and 20th centuries Islamic thought provided by Muslim exponents including scholars, ideologues, and community leaders. This frame provides the 'intent' of the actors of the struggles who have been its main protagonists over a period of the past five centuries. This arena of thought is defined prima facie as self-expression of Muslims. Frame 2 is the onset of decolonisation that was proceeded by Western European imperialism and the subsequent colonisation of the region. This frame denotes the contestation amongst Western Powers to determine both their own courses of history and prevalence of particular models of the political economy. Frame 3 reflects the recent history and development that speak to the expanse of the global community whilst

witnessing the fragmentations that are its consequences. This frame takes note of globalisation, particularly of the world economy and its dominant actors, and its confrontation with the rise of China in the second part of the 20th century accentuated by the post-unipolar world dominated by America following the collapse of the Soviet Union.

The three frames above, dominated and reinforced by Eurocentrism over the past two centuries, have conferred a partial and incomplete rendering of the history and development particularly of regions and peoples such as the Bangsamoro. This has had the effect in scholarship of limiting investigations on Muslim peoples of Arab origin, specifically in the Middle East, and latterly to those of Persia in the pre-Iran age (circa 7th century CE). The Indian sub-continent, sub-Saharan Africa, the Far East, and Southeast Asia are not well considered in the extant literature. Also, the expression and presentation of 'Muslims', following Europe's encounter with Muslim peoples is based on Eurocentric terms (Said, 1979). This perspective, based on hegemonic tendencies, is propagated as such in scholarship, teaching, and research. Termed variously in scholarly discourse as the rise of modernisation whereby Muslims and other subjugated peoples were purportedly passive recipients of intellectual, political, economic, and societal compulsions dictated by the colonialists that continued in the post-colonial era. For our purposes in this chapter, as reflective of the past two centuries, this means to direct how these 'other' societies should determine their political economies and how state-sponsored systems specifically education should be constructed and to what purposes (Green, 1997).

The sustaining interests of the dominant powers and erstwhile influence in their ex-colonies find expression and legitimation in global systems. These systems not only establish governance and trade standards (for example, the World Trade Organisation) and shape international commerce (for example, the General Agreement on Trade and Tariffs), but they also monopolise the use of languages as a tool for hegemonic control strategy. These are bolstered by defence and security organisations as a perpetual threat (for example, the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation). Mention can be made of the United Nations Organisation (UNO) with the charter of human rights established after the Second World War and the Bretton Woods Institutions that created the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund that play a central role in policy formation and funding development in low and middle-income countries (Menashy, 2019). These systems created after the last major disruption at the global level, the Second World War, have reverberations for the world today. A simplistic choice was given to the countries across the world: accept American-style capitalist economy

privileging the rights of the individual subject to oversight by the state or a Soviet-style command economy privileging the welfare of the collective. The formation of BARMM, along with Aceh in Indonesia and to some extent East Timor, challenges the status quo as we enter the post-rationalist paradigm (McFarlane, 2006). This rising consciousness has provided a space for counter narratives to emerge.

Sen (2008) was amongst the first in the international development arena to raise the counter-narrative of dominant development agendas. These agendas considered modernisation of systems and processes built on the European-defined modernity as a template for all human development. Sen's contributions were critical to counter Huntington's Clash of Civilisation thesis (2000) and Fukuyama's claim of the 'end of history' asserting that the American political economy model of democratic citizenship had won the ideological battle with the demise of the Soviet Union (1989). The counter-narrative opened spaces for a multiplicity of approaches that sought to support the expression of humanity and the study of the human experience in a more open-ended manner with some arguing that there can by 'multiple modernities' that support the reality of non-Western societies (Saffari, 2015; Sajoo, 2008). The subsequent rise of literature related to 'identity politics' and 'political Islam' (Haykel, 2009) to explain phenomena that persisted in Muslim contexts as well as the notions of 'religious education' in such societies delaying progress (Coulson, 2004) still perpetuated the clash of civilisations thesis but were severely undermined in scholarship and later in development discourse.

Despite the tendency of international development discourses to reinforce and revivify, possibly unwittingly, the Eurocentric heritage from the late 20th century onwards, this paper posits an argument of the necessity to acknowledge multiple strands needed to inform our understanding of less-studied societies. In the study of Bangsamoro, this paper illuminates the challenges and approaches and thereby to apprehend the scope of what is possible. Most pertinent for the people of the Bangsamoro, and others in similar circumstances, it is hoped that this paper catalyses a rethink on education and reform processes to meet the needs of all their people — regardless of religion.

The Philippines and Bangsamoro:
Building on the Rapprochement

The history and development of the Bangsamoro has been outlined above along with the central role of the MILF. Mohager Iqbal's *Bangsamoro, A Nation under Endless Tyranny: History of the Muslims in the Philippines,* 1984, is the first published articulation of the struggle, vision, and aspirations as well as its modus operandi. A feature of this work and the author is that the work was compiled in Pakistan, where the author was in exile, during the time of President Zia ul-Haq. Ironically, hence, the construction of the history and formation of the *Bangsamoro* was undertaken whilst Pakistan itself underwent its 'Islamisation' process. General Zia ul-Haq seized power in a military coup d'état and, through constitutional changes, reformed the country as the 'Islamic Republic of Pakistan' with the privileging of shariʿa law in the Muslim majority country.

The notion of 'Islamisation' rises from a series of introspective conferences in the 1970s and 1980s under the auspices of the Organisation of Islamic Conference (OIC) (Saqeb, 2000). The conferences held that there was a 'crisis' of education in Muslim societies generally. This crisis had been precipitated by the colonial experience and the post-colonial, hegemonic control of Muslim communities. Further, the education on offer did not allow for the development of Muslim policy in either the sciences that led to the growth and domination of the Western World or the religious character that had, in turn, led to the deterioration of societies from within the Muslim world. This divide of *dīn* and *dunyā* or the religious and secular aspects of life and their lack of integration in school curriculums needed to be bridged and reconfigured.

The response of many Muslim communities, Muslim-majority countries and those who lived as minorities, was to support the development of faith-based schools. This effort was funded at a global scale and found expression in the renewed, outward expression of faith including choice of dress and learning Arabic from the 1980s onwards (Brenner, 1993; Fealy and White, 2008; Haddad, 2004; Hasan, 2006; Salih, 2004; and Soysal, 1997). This form of 'Islamisation' was primarily about 'identity politics' and based on the parameters of the modern nation state and rights of citizens. Against this background, the intellectual project of 'Islamisation' was propounded by the Malaysian scholar Ismail al-Faruqi whose main concerns was expressed as:

> The Ummah of Islam stands at present at the lowest rung of the ladder of nations. In this century, no other nation has been subjected to comparable defeats or humiliation. Muslims were defeated, massacred, double-crossed, colonized, and exploited, proselytized, forced or bribed into conversion to other faiths. They were secularized, Westernized, and de-Islamized by internal and external agents of their enemies. (al-Faruqi, 1984:1)

In order to make a conscious and cognisant response, al-Faruqi called for an epistemological project building on the character of knowledge itself and not specifically harking back to the past achievements of Muslim civilisations. For al-Faruqi, 'Islamisation' does not mean the subordination of any body of knowledge to dogmatic principles or arbitrary objectives, but liberation from pre-conceived and dogmatic limitations. He holds that 'Islam' means a regard for all knowledge as critical; that is, as universal. Critical faculties of interrogation and tests of internal coherence, with correspondence with reality, and enhancement of human life and morality remain principal in his notion of the 'Islamisation of knowledge'. Al-Faruqi goes beyond the 19th and 20th-century thinkers, such as Jamal al-Din al-Afghani, Syed Qutb, Muhammad Abduh, Ziya Gokalp, and Ismail Gasprinski who influenced developments across the Middle East, Turkey following the break-up of the Ottoman Empire, Central Asia as it was entering Moscow's sphere of influence prior to the establishment of the Soviet Union, and South Asia. Their collective works, in reaction to the status of the Muslims in comparison to their colonial masters, was to work towards a Muslim polity, built on the modern idea of the Jacobin Nation State, with shariʿa rule and based on the model of the first Muslim community established by the Prophet Muhammad in Medina in the 7th century.

It is evident that the central, Arab Muslim powers have much influence in Bangsamoro with its leaders and religious functionaries trained at Al-Azhar University in Cairo, Sunni Islam's main site of learning, as well as in Saudi Arabia, Malaysia, and Indonesia. However, the current leadership of BARMM, having achieved a measure of autonomy, faces challenges not from the precepts of the 20th-century 'Islamisation' of society but in the form of intellectual and governance challenges that is reflective of the 21st century.

Immediately, this infers building structures and processes to overcome years of disenfranchisement so that the prospect of maintaining peaceful coexistence in not endangered. The international community has been committed to the development of social services across BARMM over a 10

year period with an USD 1 billion commitment (Bangsamoro Development Agency, 2015). The Government of the Philippines and BARMM leadership, governed by the Bansamoro Organic Law (2018), have committed themselves to three principles: upholding the rights of all people in the region including Muslims, indigenous peoples, and non-Muslims; the application of shariʿa laws; and respect for the federal make-up of the Philippines.

The Formation of BARMM

The formation of BARMM followed from the failed experience of the Autonomous Region of Muslim Mindanao (ARMM). The ARMM was created by the Aquino government in 1989 through an Act of Parliament with the overriding commitment, by the ARMM leadership, to maintain peace. This was not achieved and the leadership of President Duterte abolished the ARMM in 2019 after the siege of Marawi. The MILF then assumed leadership of the newly formed BARMM after a Presidential Plebiscite and the Philippine Senate enacted the Bangsamoro Organic Law (BOL). The BOL ceded a number of areas of governance to BARMM and maintained national oversight, particularly security, to the central government.

The first step in the process of the formation of BARMM was the development of the Administration Code, which is the primary legal instrument required to legalise the process of self-determination. Underpinning the formation of BARMM are a number of factors that ranged from the geopolitical changes the region experienced (Sinification) to the ethical principles of redressing past injustices accompanied by reparations as well as the demands of both existential threats facing all humanity that is intrinsically interdependent, and the unfolding knowledge economy. These factors, it is argued, require human development, peaceful coexistence, and a defined role for the private sector as the engine of the economy (UN 2017).

Education and Responses

The political accommodation in the creation of spaces for Muslim self-rule with the acknowledgement of the premise of religious principles (or shariʿa) are charged to build educational systems that are true to those principles. This acknowledges the aim of education — secular and religious — of improving the conditions of people here and for the hereafter.

The BARMM region has three main types of school systems: madrassah; state-sponsored formal schools, and private sector hybrid schools (ARMM, 2017). The most pervasive, but most understudied, is the madrassah system. These are schools in barangay (villages) across Bangsamoro that cater to any child who wishes to attend regardless of ability to pay. These schools build on the tradition of Muslim education that conceives of education as meeting the immediate needs of children as well as preparing them to be good Muslims to merit salvation. The curriculum in these schools is offered from early years (aged 4+) into adulthood depending on the interest of the learners. The Indonesian and Malaysian Pesentren or Pondok (Islamic boarding schools) are good approximates to the education on offer. It is estimated that virtually all children will attend a madrassah to learn the basic tenets of their faith to enable them to practice and perform their prayers at a minimum. A small minority will go onto further studies preparing them to become religious functionaries in the mosques and act as jurists in their communities.

The state-sponsored formal education is the second most pervasive; however, its reach at the level of individual villages is limited. Education is offered along the formal Philippines curriculum at both the primary and secondary level. Schools are primarily in urban and peri-urban areas and as Table 4 below shows experience high levels of drop-out in the transition from the primary to secondary levels.

Table 4: Net Enrolment in ARMM Compared to National Level (ARMM, 2017)

Net Enrolment	ARMM	Philippines
Primary	72%	95%
Secondary	26%	65%

The third system of education is private sector fee-paying provision. The system attempts to reconcile the aspirations of parents to prepare children with the skills required for gainful employment whilst also preserving their Muslim heritage and religious obligations.

Current figures of the provision trends are very difficult to obtain and the capacity of authorities to obtain such data is very limited. However, it is evident that the type of schools accessed is related to geographical location and socio-economic status (Kulidtod, 2017). There are no state-sponsored schools in isolated barangays, which comprise the majority of the

population of Bangsamoro. Madrassahs were actively engaged in the MILF-led *jihad.* They are thus potential sites for further insurgency, particularly if the promised benefits of the BARMM administration do not trickle down to the barangay (Kulidtod, 2017). This threat is apposite given that funding for education provision has multiple sources. The state funds formal schools as well as madrassahs but not on an equitable basis. Other external funding agencies include UNICEF, AusAid, Islamic Foundations in Malaysia, Indonesia, and the Middle East has been a source for many decades (Australian Embassy BEAM, 2019).

The BARMM administration has established a Ministry of Education and is working with international partners, particularly UNESCO and UNICEF, to develop its first Education Sector Plan. The sector plan is necessary to support the mandate of the Ministry and ensure transparency and accountability to a region that has limited data collection capacity (Sencil, 2010). The sector plan was scheduled to be developed in 2020 with an agreed curriculum aimed at all school systems, school building programmes for those barangay that did not have schools, and teacher training. However, with the global COVID-19 pandemic leading to lockdowns, plans and programmes have been delayed.

Education Policy Formation and Aims

The formation of education policy, building on requirements legislated in the BOL and the creation of the Education Sector Plan, revealed a number of factors that need consideration in the light of current provision as well as the history of the Bangsamoro. Education is a function devolved to the MILF-led government. The first and current Minister of Education is the Honourable Mohager Iqbal – the author of the *Bangsamoro – A Nation Under Endless Tyranny* who was exiled in Pakistan during the 1980s. The main factors to be addressed in the education sector plan are:

- Efforts to reconcile *dini* (religious) education within an agreed curriculum, particularly for non-Muslim and indigenous peoples. The current curriculum development committees under the auspices of the Ministry is led by the Chair of the Tarbiyyat: a group of Muslim leaders who envisage a Muslim polity complaint with shariʿa law.
- Engagement and support of civil servants and education technocrats who served in the earlier ARMM administration. This cadre of professionals, who developed the earlier curriculum provision that

effectively separated religious education in schools, is ideologically at variance with Tarbiyyat.

- The threat of a recurrence of insurgency at the barangay level is existent, given the support afforded to MILF that saw its leadership ascend to power. The reconciliation of the former barangay-centred guerrilla war, the aspiration to realise Islamic principles, and the demands for social justice and equity need to find expression in the services to be offered by BARMM. How this expression is fashioned in the unfolding system of education will be closely watched and contested.

- Financing from multilateral agencies and donors, with a 10-year commitment, will need responses for both building sustainability and localisation of funding sources as well as increased scrutiny and accountability: how funds have been used.

The plebiscite established a transition period of three years of MILF rule after which time elections were to be conducted. With the COVID-19 pandemic it is likely that this transition period may be extended but not indefinitely. It is during this time that the role and function of Islam in society generally and within the education sector plan specifically, as an overarching framework, to promote values will be tested.

The Socio-Political Situation and the Contested Ideological Underpinnings

The section above brings into relief the role and function of the state as a counter-narrative force assumes power. The BOL has outlined the authority and legal structures that underpin the MILF administration as well as the governance system with oversight and accountability within national state. However, it is at the level of the barangay and its latent capacities or real politics that are also a significant force in both sustaining a counter-narrative, even against the regime it helped to bring to power, as well as to shape the course of future events. This contestation within the Bangsamoro is the perpetual threat to revert to guerrilla warfare that has embedded *jihad,* striving for social justice, and self-determination as a defining feature of BARMM.

The current education provision that is a continuation of various systems of education — government, private, and madrassah — with a reformulated narrative of the MILF, raises three important considerations. These elements centre on the political economy of the Bangsamoro and the

continued (and evolving) presence of culture, religion, and people's non-material or metaphysical aspirations for the future.

First, the cultural lens provides an apparent obligation on systems' development with hegemonic tendencies. These forces must confront globalisation and other processes, entrenched in extrinsic — including scholarly — discourses that influence the purpose of education. Concurrently, these forces provide lenses on the intra-community contestations and the dynamics of competing discourses or 'visions' of society.

Second, the essentialising or objectification of religion, via the agency of tarbiyyat is made evident. Tarbiyyat and the cadres that oversee this institution insist, under threat of insurgency, on Islamic religious education for all that therefore reconfigures the formal, state-sponsored school system. This position runs counter to the federal composition of the Philippines and its various commitments including the rights of indigenous peoples (UN General Assembly, 2007) amongst other binding and legal declarations passed by the Philippines Legislation.

Third, the discourse advances a reconstruction of the 'cultural,' including religious affiliation, and skills for the economic development of the region. This consideration aligns with the conception of networks or equivalences that in turn link to control and acquisition of social and cultural capital, via school, which rebalances existing inequalities (Bourdieu, 1973). BARMM as a legal extension of the federal authority of the Philippines must also focus on developing the skillsets deemed necessary within a proposition that people must work for material gain. This reinforces the instrumental purpose of education in the service of the state's development vision (Apple, 2014).

The constructs that inform what education should be like and the approaches adopted for the development of the education system can be said to have been created to place Islam within it whilst at the same time creating a tension to interrogate the 'Islamic' as the system unfolds. The resolution of this tension and establishing a dynamic equilibrium of the forces underpinning the tension are the actual work of education in the extant system as it contends with these forces. Arkoun (2002) and Foucault (1971) provide intellectual tools to study and analyse these developments.

Arkoun (2002) asserts that the term 'Islamic' is semantically meaningless when used in the adjectival sense to refer to the concept, Islam, whilst

Foucault (1971) asserts the need for deconstruction to reveal the structures that maintain and reinforcing narratives to support power and hegemonic tendencies. An Arkounian and Foucauldian analysis would infer that the development of education in Bangsamoro, with the spectre of 'Islamisation' is itself a self-perpetuating discourse to maintain the status quo with the inherent inequalities this presupposes. Alternatively, the analysis also suggests the counter-hegemonic struggles, by the same process, have coming to fruition in the MILF rule: to ameliorate past injustices and provide a space for the greater inclusion of previously marginalised factions of society.

In the context of BARMM, this presages a struggle with both intrinsic and extrinsic antecedents and thereby affects prospects for education. Intrinsically, this struggle refers to dominant 19th and 20th-century Islamic thought that has prefaced globally an Arabisation of the larger and more diverse Muslim community and more specifically, in the context of the Southeast Asia, a Malay-Indonesian outlook. Extrinsically (exogenously), the struggle also refers to the European colonialisation and the post-war American oversight of the region during the Cold War that is now confronting a global crisis exacerbated by the increasing sphere of Chinese domination of the region (Ikenberry, 2020).

Discussion

The three frames presented above allow us to rethink and indeed reimagine an approach that is both meaningful in the existential sense as well as accommodative of the current efforts to cast a responsive political economy. McFarlane (2006) and others argue this means that we are entering a post-rationalist development paradigm. This paradigm offers a critique of structural and functional processes in which education and development within organisations did not appreciate the political and partial nature of the knowledge underpinning them. The post-rationalist paradigm considers knowledge as partial, socially constructed, and accepts organisational practices as relational arguably to metaphysical concerns.

Similarly, the UNDP Human Development Report (2020) acknowledges the existential threat facing all humanity and asks fundamental non-materialistic questions about the purpose of human existence. The report provides a new analytical lens, the Anthropocene,[1] challenging the

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[1] For the first time in geological terms, humans now have more of an influence on the biosphere than are affected by it.

dominant paradigms informing development discourses and the implied systems of education that have at their base a notion of national level wealth as quantified by gross domestic product (GDP) as an indicator of development. The Report provides a useful critique first proposed 30 years ago by the originators of the UNDP reports, Mahbubul Haq and Amartya Sen. It argues that the economic matrices and indicators developed as part of global monitoring reports are insufficient to denote the meaning of either national or individual 'development' and that they ignore other aspects of development in which people engage.

In Bangsamoro, to describe the history and ongoing conflict as 'political Islam', separatist tendencies, or antinomianism is challenging. The primary challenge comes from the fact that what has been ongoing in Bangsamoro for more than four centuries predates the conception and term political Islam itself. The notion of ascribing an analytical construction post-facto is thus problematic. This alerts us to the need to think of attributions of Muslim polities as societal expressions of their own aspirations self-referencing their values, cultures, traditions, and heritages. These aspirations have been various described as *jihad*: reacting to and repelling (non-Islamic) hegemonic forces that seek control. Whilst this narrative is incomplete in terms of characterising a complex dynamic, it is nonetheless critical to accept or to enshrine the right for the Bangsamoro to seek to express their values, pass on their heritages, and struggle to assert their right to educate subsequent generations as they see fit (BOL, 2018).

The above considerations, applied to a Muslim self-autonomous context, offer a bridge from the dichotomies presented in earlier analyses. These dichotomies refer to new conceptualisations, such as 'political Islam', that have echoes of liberation theology and, in the context of Muslim communities, appear to refer analytically to Christian doctrinal accommodations that mirror dominant Catholic and Protestant differences in theology (Hoffman, 2017). In the context of the Bangsamoro in the Philippines, which has a Catholic-majority population, this mirroring and ascription of dichotomies that are not inherent raise additional conceptual and analytical difficulties for policy makers.

The traditions of Islam and the struggles for self-determination in Bangsamoro are not akin to the 20th-century discourses within the Muslim world of the Middle East or South and Central Asia, and nor do these fit the categories of the Sunni/Shiʿa branches of Islam, reflecting the Catholicism and Protestantism that are familiar to the Western World. Within the broader conceptualization of Islam and evident in Bangsamoro, the division of the

world into the sacred and the profane spheres does not feature. The (philosophical) *Weltanschauung* that dictates and reflects worldly actions, ethical stances, and aspirations is integrally linked and inseparable according to the population itself. Thus, adherence to religion, reliance on traditional sources of authority or inspiration from their heritage, such as the promotion of religious education in madrassahs, are in effect holding firmly to their 'way of life'. When viewed from within the Bangsamoro, as a community that is faith-based, the struggle to both fight oppression for self-expression (*al-jihad al-asghar — the lesser struggle*) and to aspire to self-realisation and full human potentialities that has meanings that refer to both worldly excellence and spiritual enlightenment (*al-jihad al-akbar — the greater struggle*), the apparent dichotomies when viewed from the outside melt away.

The above discussion highlights the need for conceptual clarity when studying the 'other' building on the work of Said (1979). Said realised that the construction of the 'other' affects our own actions with consequences across the broad spectrum of human activities and systems. Foucault (1971) furthered understanding of how systems maintain the status quo to promote vested interests and control of a dehumanised other. Spivak (1999) illustrated that the analytical notion of the binary that comes from postcolonial studies, self and other, is insufficient in a globalising world. She noted the importance of the 'hybridity' of human expression at all levels of society. Sen (2008) addressed the questions of identity and identity politics that builds on the exclusivities promoted which are simultaneously false and harmful. He considered the idea of pluralism and multiple identities. Sen's work along with Green (1997) showed that the development of the nation state in the post-imperial Age has 'origin' myths that falsely constructed exclusive and unique ethnic, religious, and linguistic peoples and that these myths are continually promoted through their education system. Similarly, Gamarnikow (2008) showed, particularly in multicultural contexts, the hegemony propagated through the formal curriculum as well as the ever-persistent efforts of the state to increasingly control aspects of the lives of its citizens using the ubiquitous notion of 'rights'.

In the context of the Bansgamoro, this reach of the state into the lives of Muslims — whether the imperial power that was Spain, the American superpower, or the Philippine nation state — is unacceptable. A critical area of analysis, which has sustained the discourse of received modernisation and thereby control over knowledge, resources, and future developments, is the experience of the modern itself. The future prospects of education in

Bangsamoro may be more aligned to other similar communities and it would be instructive to study education in Indonesia and Malaysia. Although both are Muslim-majority contexts, they have developed political philosophies with legal systems that incorporate religion and accommodate their heritages to inform their ways of life. The Pancasila in Indonesia and Rukun Negara in Malaysia have effective systems of education that encompass their Islamic heritage, cultural and traditional sources of authority, and national development aspirations (Morfit, 1981; Abu Muis et al., 2012; Abu and Othman, 2019).

The discussion indicates the need to position and reposition religion and peoples' faith as a central and critical factor in ongoing debates on the purpose and type of education to be offered. With respect to the BARMM position and the authority that it must defend, there is no escape from explicitly engaging with Islam whether this is a matter of faith or a legal matter.

Conclusion

This chapter has reflected upon a less-known region of the world with a prolonged history of contested development. In doing so, it considered prospects for a post-rationalistic development paradigm that is necessarily complex and untidy and the consequences for education for the Bangsamoro. The chapter has also presented salient features of the current situation in Bangsamoro within a wider historical backdrop and argued that the situation, as it presents itself, can be viewed from multiple perspectives.

The challenges, with the various issues and emergent considerations, are complex and manifold. The notion of who a people are and the identities they convey — to themselves and others — are today necessarily mediated by the existential threats faced by all human beings. Similarly, as the natural world forces reconsideration of our constructed education and development paradigms that have been human-centric over the past two centuries, relatively recent developments in the digital ecosystem are increasingly and quickly changing prospects and possibilities of education beyond defined cultural and geographic borders. These possibilities are most evident in the changes known as the 'knowledge economy' heralding the fourth industrial revolution (Schwab, 2017).

With semi-autonomy or self-determination in Bangsamoro and Aceh in South East Asia, a new accommodation is being sought at the international level that acknowledges the place of religion in the polity of different

peoples. Finally, a challenge for Bangsamoro and other similar religious communities will be the responses and reactions of what has become a competing paradigm. *Laïcité,* with roots in the French Revolution, is increasingly being framed as the challenge to, and in direct confrontation with, Islamic peoples (Hussey, 2020). Both within Western societies that are secularised, with significant numbers of people who are Muslim, and in Muslim-majority countries, the point of contestation beyond ideology is competition for talent and resources leading to glaring inequalities of wealth and increasing gaps between the rich and the poor (Oxfam, 2020).

The United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (2015) called upon education systems to address these challenges that require transformative approaches. The UNDP Human Development Report (2020) put education at the centre of our efforts that humans must confront, in a limited time span, to preserve humanity on earth.

How this transformation is to be achieved will require novel thinking and innovative approaches; it is neither evident nor straightforward. Previous development paradigms have been challenged with the evidence of the Anthropocene, a term coined to show that human activity has more of an impact on the biosphere than the biosphere has on humans, and hitherto unrecognised reserves of heritage and culture have been recognised (UNDP, 2020). The Bangsmoro, with five centuries of effort as proof of resolve, illuminates these reserves from their religious tradition albeit at great expense. The efforts of the Bangsamoro provide a lens and lessons to confront the transformative moments possible as humanity considers its collective responses to continuing crises and unpredictable futures.

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