Democratization of curriculum development: theorizing naturalistic model in Philippine Madrasah education

Abdul Haiy A. Sali [a]

[a] Graduate Studies, College of Education, University of the Philippines Diliman, Quezon City, 1101, Philippines

Abstract

Curriculum development is imperative for the overall success of the educational system more so in sustainable development efforts. In the Philippines, the institutionalization of the Madrasah Education Program in public schools provides an opportunity to ensure access to quality and relevant education among Muslim-Filipino learners. The Refined Elementary Madrasah Curriculum serves as the foundation for creating instructional decisions to actualize educational outcomes. However, since the program's inception in 2004, there are various concerns, especially in terms of the elements of the curriculum. There is a dearth of professional literature on the curriculum development practices of Madrasah Education in the Philippines, especially in the planning phase. Thus, the study sought to discuss and explore the naturalistic model as an alternative to planning the Refined Elementary Madrasah Curriculum. This study employed a literature review and used a theoretical synthesis. The analysis revealed that there is a need to democratize curriculum planning initiatives. Furthermore, the implications of the naturalistic model in terms of the platform as anchored to 'Education in Islamic Perspective' as the point of inception in the planning process is unprecedented. The concept of democratization has highlighted the narratives of relevant stakeholders as part of the deliberation to form a holistic consensus. In curriculum design, decision points must be achieved to include deliberate plans for implementation and evaluation. In conclusion, the challenge to ensuring sustainable development in Madrasah Education Program is how to formulate genuine consensus from various stakeholders and create decision points that are relevant to the Philippine context.

Keywords: Madrasah education; naturalistic model; curriculum planning; curriculum development; ALIVE program

1.   Introduction

1.1.   *Background of the Study*

There is no doubt that education changes drastically with the unprecedented development in the global education landscape. However, despite all the inevitable changes, the curriculum must be adept at society's volatility and ambiguity. According to Kress (2000), the curriculum of the future, especially the design, is a kind of metaphor for shaping the future. The demands in contemporary education are diverse and the curricula should be coherent and transformative. In terms of transformative changes, the COVID-19 pandemic prompted the world's authorities and experts to mitigate the impact of the virus, especially in the education sector (Sali, 2020). The curriculum specialists and developers started to redefine the goal of education through the lens of sustainable development in post-pandemic education. The changes in society suggest that a curriculum of the future must be given priority to understanding the past and extending opportunities for participation in learning communities (Young, 1999).

Issues in curriculum studies are part and parcel of understanding the various complexities in the curriculum development process in particular. The curriculum is the heart of educational institutions. With this, exploring the issues in curriculum studies helps in addressing the gaps in education as we gear towards the pivotal changes in contemporary society. In contemporary education, curriculum development is imperative for the overall success of the educational system. The curriculum serves as the foundation and or blueprint for actualizing educational outcomes. The importance of the curriculum processes and products involving key stakeholders in the development process is unprecedented (Walker, 1971). The product is essential in creating instructional decisions that will greatly affect curriculum implementation (Sali, 2021).

Ornstein and Hunkins (2018) described the importance of the interrelatedness of the key elements of the curriculum as basic parts and "should promote the whole" (p. 179). In its form, the elements of the curriculum including the objectives, core competencies, outcomes, and evaluation are embedded in the design. There should be constructive alignment in the dimensions of the curriculum as intended (plan), implemented (instruction), and attained curriculum (outcomes). Therefore, in crafting the curriculum, developers must consider the multifaceted contexts and narratives from various sources to democratize the development process. In terms of curriculum planning, according to Walker (1971), the naturalistic model was "constructed to represent phenomenon and relations observed" (p. 51). In contrast with the classical model which follows logical operations and is mostly prescriptive, the naturalistic model tends to democratize curriculum development by involving various stakeholders in curriculum planning. In this study, *democratization* is

defined as the involvement of various key stakeholders, especially those at the grassroots in the curriculum development process.

Furthermore, the Naturalistic Model of Walker Decker (1971) comprises three phases of curriculum planning – platform, deliberation, and design. Walker's (1971; 2002) academic works emphasized the following salient features and use of the naturalistic model: it provides an alternative descriptive model in curriculum development in contrast to the classical model which is more prescriptive; the naturalistic model gives a premium on the participation of the teachers, schools, and the community in curriculum planning and curriculum decisions; Walker's analysis of curriculum policy-making posits local community participation as one of the primary actors within the school system in crafting curriculum decisions; and the process of deliberation where design decisions are made based on the platforms became an integral part of curriculum planning and curriculum development in general.

Unlike Tylerian or the traditional/classical model of curriculum development wherein it is prescriptive and linear in design, the naturalistic model as an alternative allows simultaneous decisions to be incorporated especially in curriculum planning. There are more voices/narratives considered in the planning including the teachers, schools, and even the community are encouraged to participate in the development process. Therefore, the democratization of curriculum development is meant to create more leeway for collective decision-making without neglecting even the minorities.

In the Philippines, the institutionalization of the Madrasah Education Program (MEP) in public schools provides an opportunity to ensure access to quality and relevant education among Muslim learners (Sali, 2020a; Sali, 2020b). The DepEd Order No. 41, s. 2017 catapulted the implementation of the Arabic Language and Islamic Values Education (ALIVE) Program in the Philippine Education System. The ALIVE Program provides additional two subjects on top of the regular basic education curriculum. It provides a platform for mainstream madrasah education in the public school system. Consequently, Muslim Filipinos comprise 6% of the total population of the Philippines (Philippine Statistical Authority, 2015). However, despite being followers of Islam, Muslims in the country have different ethnic backgrounds, cultures, and even languages, to begin with. The pluralistic nature of the Philippines connotes multifaceted narratives and the relevance of sound curriculum development is inevitable.

There were shreds of evidence that the program achieved some essential goals, especially in making sure Muslim learners can participate in the implementation. However, in terms of implementation concerns, the curriculum, and its elements were highlighted (Rodriguez, 1986; Muslim Education Initiative Review Final Report (2014); Review Report on the

Three Years Implementation of ALIVE Program, 2008; Sali and Marasigan, 2020). The development of the Refined Elementary Madrasah Curriculum (REMC) in terms of planning was not further elaborated on in the professional literature. Albeit, in 2010, the Department of Education (DepEd) conducted a "series of consultations and efforts of the government and Muslim intellectuals" (Sali & Marasigan, 2020, p. 204) as part of the curriculum development. As to how REMC was planned and even designed, there was a lack of present literature to understand the process and even how the product was achieved.

However, despite the issuance of salient MEP policies, there are several challenges faced by the different ALIVE schools in their implementation in relation to curriculum and instruction as identified (Sali, 2021): there were no learning activities and assessment tasks explicitly embedded in the intended curriculum; there were issues on the age-appropriateness and developmentally appropriate competencies in the curriculum; the misalignment of some content in the curriculum must be addressed through a series of consultations with education experts; most of the *Asatidz* or Madrasah teachers are not regular teachers, and the dire need to enhance their pedagogical competence is encouraged; cultural variance among Muslim-Filipinos is still evident today, especially in non-Muslim communities.

Lastly, there is a dearth of professional literature on the curriculum development practices of Madrasah Education in the Philippines, especially in the planning phase. Thus, the study sought to discuss and explore the naturalistic model as an alternative to planning the Refined Elementary Madrasah Curriculum. Furthermore, the inquiry sought to increase understanding of the democratization processes as an integral part of the naturalistic model anchored to Walker's Naturalistic Model (1971) on curriculum planning.

More specifically, it attempts to answer this question:

What are the implications of the naturalistic model in the development of the Philippine Madrasah Education Curriculum in terms of the platform; deliberation; and curriculum design?

2.   Method

2.1.   Research design

A conceptual literature review was employed. In this study, a literature review was conducted to discuss the state of knowledge of curriculum development of Madrasah Education in the Philippines and identify gaps with emphasis on the implications of the

naturalistic model. Furthermore, literature reviews are useful in providing an overview of a certain issue or research problem (Snyder, 2019).

In addition, a theory synthesis (Jaakola, 2020) was initiated that sought to increase understanding of a relatively narrow concept or empirical phenomenon. The author attempted to achieve conceptual integration across multiple theories or literature streams (Jaakola, 2020) including the analysis of data in a conceptual framework anchored to Walker's Naturalistic Model (1971) in the context of Philippine Madrasah Education.

2.2.   *Analysis of data*

A desk review (Silewey, 2019) was instigated to provide more structured data from various sources. There are two data courses used in this study: the primary sources; and the secondary sources. The primary sources consist of the academic works of Walker Decker on the naturalistic model of curriculum development. In addition, the secondary sources of data were peer-reviewed articles from reputable journals and other written artifacts that can be readily accessed on online repositories. A deductive manner (Miles and Huberman, 1994) of data analysis was also initiated. There were codes distinguished and themes were identified to abstract the conceptual foundation of the paper.

3.   Results

3.1.   *Platform: A Democratization Model of Curriculum Development*

The naturalistic model recognizes the importance of identifying the phenomenon and relations observed as an integral part of curriculum development. It is also called the communicative approach. In curriculum planning, the model starts with the more subjective perceptions and views of the designers, the target group, and other stakeholders. Walker describes the platform as the "system of belief and values of curriculum developers" (p. 52) wherein these conceptions are recognized. Over the past years, the call to democratize the curriculum has yielded positive results as opposed to the premise that teachers, learners, and the members of the community are only curriculum consumers. The importance of 'democratization' or co-ownership of the curriculum development process among educators and co-created by the learners unequivocally is unprecedented (Gregersen-Hermans, 2021).

Furthermore, the progressivist and socio-constructivist movements to name a few, situate teachers as an integral part of developing the curriculum and instruction. John Dewey, a known Progressivist in the book Curriculum and Children (1902) placed teachers, not content experts - at the center of the process of designing powerful classroom experiences. Surprisingly, the Taba Model was heavily influenced by Dewey, which instigated that

there should be a clear and definite order in curriculum design and that teachers must be involved in the process, thus, the term 'Grassroot Model'. Taba's inductive approach starts from specific to building up a general design as opposed to the traditional deductive model where it emanates from general down to the specific.

In the implementation of the Arabic Language and Islamic Values Education (ALIVE) Program, the *Asatidz* or the madrasah teachers are pivotal in its overall success. They are the ones who utilize the Refined Elementary Madrasah Curriculum (REMC) in crafting their instructional plans to be implemented in the classroom. The appreciation of the madrasah teachers of the curriculum and its elements are pivotal in the refinement and development of the REMC. In addition, the feedback from the learners can also be utilized to triangulate the responses of the madrasah teachers. Both narratives from the teacher and learner serve as the impetus on the platform as an essential part of initial conceptions. However, the relevant stakeholders outside the school premises like the parents and guardians should also be considered. As such, on the platform as part of the curriculum planning having the initial discussion on the beliefs, conceptions, theories, praxes, and other essential contributions is more effective if it is anchored in democratic principles.

The importance of the curriculum processes and products as a collection of work encompasses the significant involvement of various stakeholders and actors. The 'curriculum presage' as Print (1993) reiterated captures the importance of the roles and influence of the people involved in various curriculum activities. The products as anchored to the curriculum development model are very essential in the educative process as it provides instructional decisions. These decisions will help achieve the goals and the learning outcomes. However, we can only assume if the structures and representations of the curriculum development model are properly defined and constructed. After all, the model serves as the basis for sound design and development.

In general, the flexibility of the design allows curriculum planners to deliberate ideas, form alternatives, find consensus, and make necessary changes to improve the curriculum. On the contrary, the classical model focuses on outcomes and curricular objectives that are based on the needs of the learners, society, and standards. The naturalistic model describes how the process of curriculum planning is done instead of how it should be done. Indeed, the model provides a structure for examining variables. According to Print (1993), the model is a miniature representation that summarizes data and/or phenomena that Philippine Madrasah Education must practice in making sure various narratives at the grassroots are heard for sustainability efforts and exercises a holistic approach.

3.2.   *Deliberation: A Consensus Building among Stakeholders*

The implementation of the ALIVE program in basic education is a progressive move to mainstream Madrasah education in the Philippines. The program provides educational opportunities for Muslim learners which aims to provide them with appropriate and relevant educational opportunities while recognizing their cultural contexts and unique purposes as part of the program (DepEd Order No. 41, s. 2017). The comprehensive educational program for Muslim learners is pivotal in the public school system (Caballero-Anthony, 2007). Therefore, there is a need to deliberately plan and achieve genuine consensus for the implementation and improvement of the program. According to the UNESCO International Bureau of Education (2016), what makes a quality curriculum is it must be inclusive and consultative. As such, consensus comes after deliberation. Walker (1971) defined deliberation as the process by which "beliefs and information are used to make decisions" (p. 54).

As mentioned, in the past, one of the implementation concerns of the ALIVE program was the curriculum and its elements. The REMC is an essential guide in the implementation of the ALIVE Program, especially in teaching and learning. In practice, there should be at least an appreciation of the different elements of the curriculum. However, in the REMC, some elements were missing for instance, "both for Arabic Language and Islamic Values Education despite having the vision, framework describing the core values, and objectives, to include learning competencies; there were no specific learning activities elaborately explaining the instructional strategies and the course resources" (Sali, 2021, p. 175). In addition, the prescribed curriculum lacks elaboration on the learning activities. Also, there was no assessment task and evaluation to measure the results of the curriculum to gauge the performance of the learners. Ornstein and Hunkins (2018) described the importance of the interrelatedness of these basic parts as it promotes the wholeness of the curriculum. Therefore, there is a dire need to revisit the elements of the curriculum in making sure the age-appropriateness and developmentally appropriate competencies for the learners are present.

In the implementation of the program, curriculum and instruction are vital in the achievement of the intended outcomes. However, if the curriculum is not reflective to achieve the attained curriculum, the gaps identified should be addressed to mitigate the challenges and help improve the implementation practices. Considering the platforms, the deliberation must build on consensus building capitalizing on the procedures, alternatives, and prioritization of the key competencies in preparation for the design. However, there should be an emphasis on other relevant implementation concerns in relation to the curriculum. For instance, the curricular policies, learning spaces, translation of the competencies, and selection of competent madrasah teachers.

In terms of curricular policies and their implications at the grassroots, based on the arrangement and availability of learning spaces, the implementation practices vary. The various narratives from the *Asatidz* described the need to extend the time allotment as they perceived it was too short to translate the competencies during classroom instruction. In addition, the class schedule varies from one school to another and most of the time depends on the availability of the learning spaces in the implementing schools. The other factors that greatly affect the translation of the competencies in the curriculum are as follows: the number of *Asatidz; the* discretion of the school heads; and even learner availability.

In terms of the translation of the competencies in the curriculum, according to Sali and Marasigan (2020), the *Asatidz* understood the role of the REMC as a guide in crafting their instructional plans. However, it was observed that the *Asatidz* had a high dependency on textbooks and didactic in teaching Islamic values in their classroom instruction (2014 Final Report of Muslim Education Initiatives). In addition, despite the diversity in their instruction, most of the *Asatidz* showed misalignment between the lesson objectives and the chosen formative assessment as reflective in their evaluative practices. Furthermore, one of the important factors to consider in the success of the program is to hire or select competent teachers to teach. Considerably, there were Madrasah teachers hired as program implementers who were high school graduates, and most did not have an undergraduate degree in education. However, they are expected to assume roles just like the regular teachers in basic education especially being curriculum implementers (Sali & Marasigan, 2020).

In 2014, the Final Report of Muslim Education Initiatives provided a curriculum analysis in terms of its responsiveness, appropriateness, and relevance (RAR). There were some salient results that are imperative for deliberation and consensus building. For instance, on level 1 curriculum mapping, the Arabic language of the ALIVE program, accordingly, cannot be "considered completely relevant" (p. 195). Therefore, there is a need to consider the various aspirations that are achieved only if the "primary goals" (p. 195) are met. Furthermore, in Islamic values, the results of level 4 curriculum mapping, accordingly, are somewhat relevant but not appropriate. In general, there is a misalignment in the curriculum of the Madrasah Education in public schools.

According to Marasigan (2019a), the gaps in the development of the curriculum must be addressed to ensure the success of the ALIVE program. As such, in the context of the curriculum, the competencies in the REMC if translated well into practice will enable learners to experience relevant and transformational education. Remarkably, there is a need to explore and understand the Madrasah teacher's perspective of the curriculum as

curricular policy implementers. With this, the Madrasah teachers as grassroots implementers must be part and parcel of the curriculum development. The feedback from the grassroots must not be excluded as it provides valuable information in terms of curriculum feasibility and acceptability in various institutions once enacted. In addition, to consider, post-pandemic education entails various changes in the curriculum.

The Refined Elementary Madrasah Curriculum was designed based on a series of consultations and efforts of the government and Muslim intellectuals (Sali & Marasigan, p. 204). This is a good practice and should continue to capture the different voices in the development process. In theory, the program might have the best curriculum, however, if it is not accepted by the schools, teachers, parents, and even the community, its full institutionalization will not be materialized. Therefore, collaborative, evidence-based, and participatory approaches must be enacted in curriculum development. As Walker (1971) emphasized the importance of consensus and "justification is an important component of the naturalistic model" as part of the salient expectation of deliberation (p. 62).

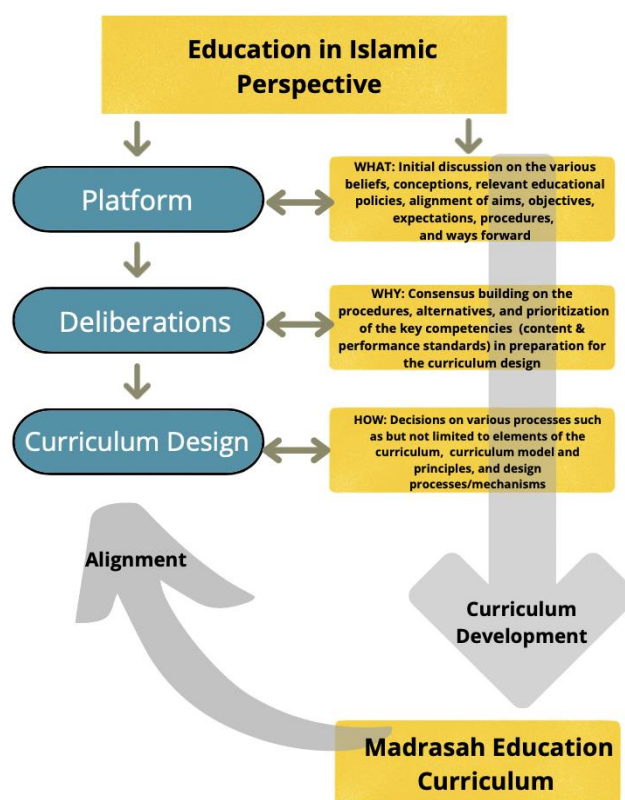### 3.3.   *Curriculum Design: Towards a Naturalistic Model*

Figure 1. Democratization of Curriculum Development

In Figure 1, it expounded on Walker's naturalistic model in the context of curriculum planning of Philippine Madrasah Education. It comprises three phases – platform, deliberation, and design. The concept of democratization is highlighted as the model allows various narratives of relevant stakeholders to be part of the curriculum development process. In curriculum planning, the need to conceptualize what is the vision and how to fully actualize it matters. The framework starts with the thinking of 'Education in Islamic Perspective' as the point of inception in the curriculum planning. Furthermore, Islam has had a - rich tradition of education dating back to some 1, 300 years ago (Shamsavary et al., 1993, as cited in Halstead, 2004, p. 517). To understand the context of education from an Islamic viewpoint, one should distinguish the epistemology and the nature of knowledge in Islam and its inherent complexities. Another indispensable need is understanding the inseparability of knowledge and sacred in the context of rationalist (*Aṣḥâb al-Ra'y*) and traditionalist (*Aṣḥâb al-Ḥadîth*) perspectives. These are some of the considerations before proceeding to the first phase - the platform.

After the alignment of the various perspectives in Islamic education among the curriculum developers and relevant stakeholders, the platform comes in. Walker describes the platform as the "system of belief and values of curriculum developers" (p. 52) wherein these conceptions are recognized. However, in the framework, more than recognizing the system of belief and values, a dire need to discuss certain expectations in terms of alignment to educational policies (DepEd's strategic directions) and how it complements to Islamic perspective on education is sought. In addition, the inclusion of the input from curriculum evaluation of madrasah education is encouraged. Through this alignment process, issues and conflicts if any will be deliberated and a firm consensus will be achieved.

Furthermore, deliberation is the process by which beliefs and information are used to make decisions (Walker, 1971, p. 54). In the framework, consensus building is highlighted. As a primordial step in this phase, the curriculum developers and key stakeholders will have to agree on the relevant procedures including alternatives to undertake and prioritization of the key competencies in preparation for the curriculum design. The key stakeholders must include the following: curriculum specialists, developmental psychologists, early childhood educators, *Asatidz* (madrasah teachers), content experts (Islamic Values and Arabic Language), school heads, parents, and even learners. This will address the following implementation challenges: (1) no learning activities and assessment tasks explicitly embedded in the intended curriculum and (2) issues on the age-appropriateness and developmentally appropriate competencies in the curriculum.

Curriculum design is the theoretically significant output of the curriculum development process (Walker, 1971, p. 53). In the framework, decision points are required but not limited to the following: elements of the curriculum, curriculum model and principles,

design processes, and even the mechanisms as the curriculum developers commence with the curriculum development. Despite the dynamic and interactive model giving us flexibility, interactiveness, and modifiability of the process which are grounded in the naturalistic way of developing a curriculum, the need to come up with a consensus is tantamount to achieving the desired vision of the curriculum.

4.   Discussion

In an attempt to give viable solutions to the gaps in the alignment of the curriculum and to maximize its use of it, according to Rodriguez (1986), there is a need to adopt the MECS-Madrasah Reconciliatory Curriculum to harmonize the national basic education with the madrasah schools in the Philippines. The said curriculum as she proposed will not waste the country's resources, especially in uplifting socioeconomic status; when one gets to be employed regardless of where the Muslim learners completed their basic education. However, the author argues that more than the socioeconomic indicators as a curriculum outcome and the integration of the essential secular subjects in the Madrasah Education System in the Philippines, there is a need to revisit how the curriculum was developed in the first place. As mentioned, Walker (1971) emphasized that the process of deliberation where design decisions are made based on the platforms became an integral part of curriculum planning and curriculum development in general. According to Majul (1978), Madrasah as an educational institution has a core curriculum. However, understanding how the curriculum was made and its intent are essential to bridge the gaps in the implementation of the program.

In the case of the ALIVE Program, the REMC serves as a guide of what are the essential competencies to be taught across the public schools in the country. Moreso, the author argues that there is a dire need to initiate a curriculum evaluation considering the curriculum was crafted in 2010. A decade of implementation is a fertile ground for studies in making sure the gaps and challenges are identified and addressed deliberately. The curriculum is the blueprint of education that must be developed in a way it serves its purpose as a guide to the implementers. Therefore, the different foundations and alignment of the curriculum must be highlighted.

Furthermore, discussion on the different foundations of the curriculum should be instigated at this level. I argue that the sociological foundation of the curriculum is relevant to the democratization of curriculum development of madrasah education. More than contextualization, I think it is imperative that different voices and narratives are heard and incorporated into the process of curriculum development as part of democratization. On the contrary, Milligan (2005) pointed out that the centralization of policy and curriculum making in Manila, "unsurprisingly, that both reflected a Christian-bias" (p. 73). In turn, the voices of the sub-groups or the so-called minorities in the country

were somehow excluded. Also, these cultural variances (Sali and Marasigan, 2020) are what we steer clear of in the curriculum planning. Therefore, the Madrasah Education Curriculum must be aligned with the curriculum design as a product of deliberation and consensus of the curriculum developers and key stakeholders.

Some practitioners might argue that proposing a curriculum review and evaluation will consume a lot of time and resources. In addition, the curriculum development model for some must strictly follow a top-bottom approach (Tyler, 1949). According to Smith and Lovat (2003), the complex and multifaceted of the curriculum and knowledge are inevitable and unprecedented at the same time. With this, who must be involved in curriculum development and their diversity is pivotal in the over-all development process. Since education experts in various government institutions (e.g. DepEd Central Office) and policymakers with their influence, in practice, are presumed to stir most of the conversation and direction of the development, the review, and even the evaluation of the curriculum (Sali, 2021). However, the author argues that the success of the implementation lies in the collective efforts of the different education sectors in ensuring that the curriculum is aligned with the intended outcomes (Sali & Ancho, 2021). There must be a willingness for various key stakeholders to be part of and involve themselves in the process (Marasigan, 2019a; Marasigan, 2019b; Sali & Marasigan, 2020; Sali, 2021).

However, there are certain disadvantages to every model created (Armstrong, 1991). In the naturalistic model, for instance, some of these scenarios might hinder the continuous development process in terms of the platform: the curriculum specialists might have contradicting ideas; the final outcome is not clear and can be biased based on multiple opinions of curriculum specialists and developers; and the outcomes of this model can be changed at any time and clash with the perspective of society, students, religious beliefs, and opinions based on the cultural background is possible. Consequently, in curriculum development, the models are used to guide teachers and developers in the actions and the order of the processes undertaken such as choosing the right people in the curriculum development (Print, 1991; Walker, 1971; Ornstein & Hunkins, 2008).

Lastly, despite the shortcomings, the naturalistic model revolutionizes and democratizes the way curriculum development is being done as an alternative to the traditional or classical model. The dynamic and interactive model gave us flexibility, interactiveness, and modifiability of the process which are grounded in the naturalistic way of developing a curriculum (Walker, 1971). The author argues that striking the balance between coherence and ambiguity in the system of belief and values of the curriculum developers is critical in the entire process of curriculum planning. Lastly, according to Armstrong (1991), curriculum development is a "dynamic, interactive process, which is subject to continuous modifications and change" (p. 61). According to Kress (2000), at present, the new

arrangements in education seem to demand addressing periods of fluidity and instability. The author reiterates that no model should be regarded as unyielding.

5.   Conclusions

The concept of curriculum development is multifaceted and ever-dynamic as changes in the educational landscape become inevitable. The curriculum is the blueprint of education that must be developed in a way it serves its purpose as a guide to educators and the entire gamut of the education system. Unlike Tylerian or the traditional/classical model of curriculum development, the naturalistic model as an alternative allows simultaneous decisions to be incorporated especially in curriculum planning. These salient features of the model fit the essence of democratizing the development of Philippine Madrasah Education. Based on the identified implementation challenges, a need for more voices/narratives to be considered in the curriculum planning is sought. This includes key stakeholders, teachers, schools, and even the community are encouraged to participate in the development process. The democratization of curriculum development is meant to create more leeway for collective decision-making without neglecting even the minorities.

To capture the effectiveness of the ALIVE program, there is a need to create deliberate plans to achieve the intended learning outcomes through the Democratization of Curriculum Development Framework (see Figure 1). The conceptual framework is anchored through Walker's naturalistic model. All of the challenges mentioned, especially the various factors which affect the MEP implementation must be assessed and also plan for solutions based on the empirical data - the call for curriculum evaluation is sought. Consequently, the responsibility to address the gaps and challenges does not solely depend on the Education Department. The need to maximize and strengthen the participation of the various stakeholders and different sectors in society will enable a holistic approach.

However, despite the prominence of the naturalistic model in the development of the madrasah education curriculum, all grassroots implementers of Madrasah Education must share common goals of achieving relevant, culturally appropriate, and inclusive education for Muslim learners in the country - as the platform. The decision points and even the alternatives follow as consensus must be deliberated judiciously. After all, according to Marasigan (2020b), sustainability cannot be achieved overnight, especially if the concerns and issues are deeply rooted in a long history of educational challenges. The challenge is how to formulate genuine consensus and decision points as imperative to the overall conception of what curriculum for madrasah education must be - as relevant to our context and learners.

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