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*Ensuring 3es and Responsiveness in
the Delivery of Educational Services
in the Autonomous Region in
Muslim Mindanao, Philippines*

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ABSTRACT

The Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (ARMM) is a public organization in the Philippines located in between the national government and the local governments. It performs unique functions quite distinct from other public organizations in the country, as it performs both political and administrative functions. Using unobtrusive research design, as it relies on mostly secondary data, this paper analyzes the educational system in the region and proposes strategies in attaining administrative efficiency, economy, effectiveness and responsiveness. The paper starts with the introduction which consist of the background and statement of the problem. It is followed by a review of theoretical perspective and then by the research methodology. The fourth part portrays the findings of the study which include: DepEd ARMM resources; the management of DepEd ARMM, and the management outputs such as: net enrollment ratio, achievement rate and literacy rate. The fifth part of the paper deals with the analyses and conclusion. The paper concludes that in addition to certain structural innovation, inculcation of appropriate work ethics in accordance with the Ethical Standards Act, the Anti-Corruption Law, the Civil Service Rules and Regulations as well as the Islamic Practices on Employment must be enshrined in the reform agenda. Finally, among other things that could facilitate the attainment of 3Es and R in the delivery of educational services is a strategy that requires the joint collaboration and teamwork between the civil society, non-government organizations and government organizations in the region.

KEYWORDS: Collaboration, Teamwork, Administrative and Behavioral Reform

INTRODUCTION

BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

In a developing country, like the Philippines, obtaining quality education is considered a stepping-stone in attaining desirable living conditions. This is particularly true among the constituents of the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (ARMM). Ironically, better quality of basic education in the country can hardly be found in government supported schools. Quality basic education have become a domain more of the private schools rather than public schools. For instance, a study (Luz, 2009) on the Philippine Educational System explains the following as primary factors why the country's education performs poorly; (1) Policy discontinuity (2) Sub-professional management (3) lack of participation by primary stakeholders and (4) Poor institutional arrangements between departments and other stakeholders

Basic education in the ARMM is managed by the Department of Education (DepEd) regional office. Common observations and experiences show the poor quality of learning among elementary and secondary pupils in these areas. Graduates in national secondary schools, for instance, can hardly handle the Entrance Examination conducted bi-annually by Mindanao State University. There are also reports showing the low performance of pupils in the National Achievement Tests coming from the public schools in the region. Public schools in this region is the only venue where the people could send their children

to acquire basic education because of their financial condition. Thus, the kind of services that the DepEd ARMM provides have critical impact on the lives of the constituents. In view of the importance of education in the lives of the people, this paper is written to analyze the educational system of the region using the system's framework.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Generally, the study answers the question, "What is the status of the educational system in the ARMM?" In specific terms, the following questions were answered:

- 1) What is the status of DepEd ARMM financial resources?
- 2) How does DepEd ARMM transform its inputs into the system as indicated by: (a) Performance Audit Report; (b) Findings of the Hataman Administration and (c) Reforms Initiated by Hataman Administration;
- 3) What are the outputs of the educational system in the region measured in terms of (a) Net Enrolment Ratio (b) Achievement Rate and (b) Literacy Rate.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This section traces two major milestones in the development of Public Administration, as a field of study, in relation to the concepts of the 3Es and responsiveness. The two major phases of Public Administration include – the Traditional Public Administration (1880 to 1970s) and the New Public Administration.

Theories which may be considered part of the Traditional Public Administration consist of the Scientific Management of Frederick Winslow Taylor, the Principles of Administration by Henry

Fayol and the Bureaucratic Model of Max Weber. These three paradigms focused on the internal aspect of organization. It underpinned the primary normative values of organization such as: efficiency, economy and effectiveness. At this juncture, let us understand the meaning of these concepts.

Efficiency is generally conceived as "competency in performance, or ability to accomplish a job with a minimum expenditure of time and effort" (Wikipedia Free Dictionary). Efficiency is likewise defined as the measure of effectiveness that produces the minimum waste of time, effort, and skill (Archer, 2010). Simply stated, efficiency describes the extent to which time or effort is well used for the intended task or purpose. It is often used with the specific purpose of relating the capability of a specific application of effort to produce a specific outcome effectively with a minimum amount or quantity of waste, expense, or unnecessary effort (Wikipedia Free Dictionary). There are usually two types of efficiency, when referring to organization operations. These types of efficiency are: technical or productive efficiency, which measures the firm's success in producing maximum output from a given set of inputs, and price or allocative efficiency, which measures a firm's success in choosing an optimal set of inputs with a given set of input prices. Efficiency is sometimes quantitatively defined as the ratio of the actual output over the target output multiplied by 100. In this paper, efficiency is better associated to technical or productive efficiency as it refers to the ability of the DepEd ARMM to perform its mandated functions.

Economy, according to the Webster Dictionary, is thrifty management, frugality in the expenditure

or consumption of money, materials and etc. It is further defined as “the disposition or regulation of the parts or functions of any organic whole” (Webster Dictionary). It connotes wise management of resources in order to attain higher productivity. In this paper, economy refers to the availability and utilization of DepEd ARMM budget pursuant to pre-determined purpose.

Effectiveness, according to the Wikipedia Free Dictionary, refers to “the degree to which objectives are achieved and the extent to which targeted problems are solved”. In contrast to efficiency, effectiveness is determined without reference to costs and whereas efficiency means “doing the thing right,” effectiveness means “doing the right thing” (Wikipedia Free Dictionary). In management, according to Peter Ducker, effectiveness relates to getting the right thing done. In addition, organizational effectiveness refers to the ability of an organization to meet its objectives. Among private organizations, the main measure of their effectiveness is expressed in terms of how well its net profitability compares with its target profitability. Other measures of effectiveness may include growth of assets and customer satisfaction. After a review of concepts’ meaning, let us proceed in tracing its association with the paradigms in Traditional Public Administration.

In the Scientific Management Theory profounded by Taylor, it conceived that “to encourage production efficiency and productivity” there is a need for managers to clearly define the organizational activities that would lead to the attainment of organizational goals and then see to it that the workforce are doing their jobs “in the best and cheapest way” (Hertz, 1950). It can be deduced from the work of Taylor that efficieny means

achieving the desired output with the least cost and that it can be attained through the formulation of the best way of doing the task and hiring people who are best fitted to the task. Taylor and Weber’s view on the significance of efficiency in organization is akin to the rational perspectives of organization, which emphasizes goal attainment and focuses on output variables such as quality, productivity and efficiency. The Taylor’s view of efficiency may be illustrated by the figure below.

FIGURE I – ILLUSTRATION OF TAYLOR’S VIEW OF EFFICIENCY

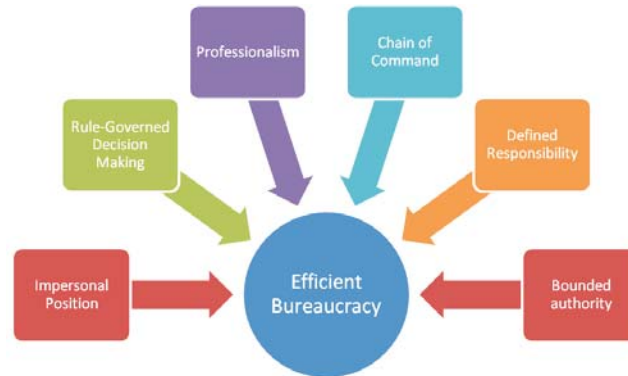


Max Weber, on the other hand, argued that bureaucracy is the most efficient organization provided that it possess the ideal characteristics of a bureaucracy, which include the following: impersonal positions that are earned and not inherited, rule-governed decision-making, professionalism, chain of command, defined responsibility and bounded authority (<http://uregena.cal-gingrich/014199.htm>). According to Weber’s view efficiency can be attained when these characteristics are present in an organizations. .

The 3Es, as normative values of organization, was further supported by the Classical Organization Theories, Neo-Classical and the Modern Organization Theories.

As life becomes more complex and turbulent, scholars struggle to search for more relevant explanation and solution to societal problems, hence, the effort to make things more responsive

FIGURE 2 – WEBER'S VIEW OF THE CHARACTERISTICS OF EFFICIENT ORGANIZATION



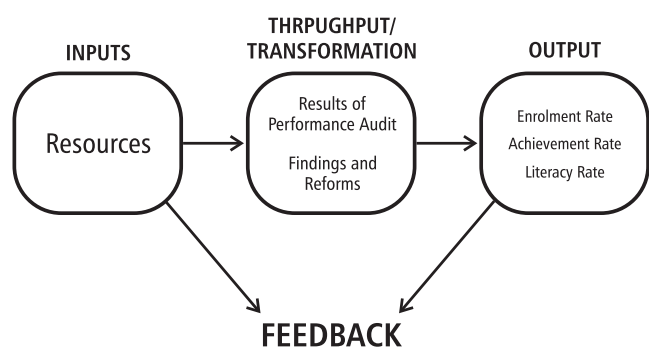
become increasingly relevant. In recent years, modern organizational theories emphasize the need for organizations to be responsive to the needs and demands of the society where they operate. In specific terms, the New Public Administration (NPA) emerged as a result of the inadequacy of traditional paradigms to explain and answer the world phenomena. In addition to the 3Es, the NPA advocates for 3Rs which include: relevance, responsiveness and responsibility. Among the 3Rs, the paper puts emphasis on responsiveness in addition to the 3Es. What then is responsiveness? Responsiveness, in lexical term, refers to “the quality of being responsive, reacting quickly; as a quality of people, it involves responding with emotion to people and events” (Wikipedia Free Dictionary). In general, responsiveness can be better assessed using client satisfaction survey and quasi-experimental study that reflects before and after situation.

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

In analyzing the educational system of the ARMM, the paper uses the system framework, which describes organization as being composed of a set of inputs, throughputs and outputs. The

inputs consist of the DepEd-ARMM resources (e.g. budget, schools, teachers and others) while the throughputs otherwise known as transformation process refer to “how the agency is managed?” or simply the administration of DepEd-ARMM measured in terms of the performance audit report, findings of the Hataman Administration and reforms. It is assumed that economy in the utilization of its resources and efficiency in administration of the educational programs would lead to the attainment of the desired outcome. The figure below depicts this framework.

FIGURE 3 – EDUCATIONAL SYSTEM OF ARMM



RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

RESEARCH DESIGN

The study is a descriptive one. It made use of unobtrusive research design as it relies mostly on

the analysis of information from secondary sources. Nevertheless, there were also data derived from primary sources. For instance, focus-group discussion among teachers and school administrators were done to collect data on the management of educational services in their respective schools.

LOCALE OF THE STUDY

The Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (ARMM) is located in the Mindanao island group of the Philippines, that is composed of predominantly Muslim provinces, namely: Basilan (except Isabela City), Lanao del Sur, Maguindanao, Sulu and Tawi-Tawi. It is the only region in the Philippines that has its own government. The figure below shows the location of ARMM in the Philippine Map.

FIGURE 4 – MAP OF THE MINDANAO SHOWING THE LOCATION OF ARMM



The regional government is situated in Cotabato City although the city is not part of the region. There is only one city located in territorial jurisdiction of the region and this is the City of Marawi. Isabela City, which is the capital city of Basilan, is also not part of the ARMM area.

The region and most of Mindanao have been the traditional homeland of Muslims in the Philippines long before the coming of the first colonizers. The Muslim Filipinos claimed that Mindanao has been a separate territory distinct from the other islands of the country. There is a substantive evidence on this claim in Philippine history. In fact, this situation enabled them to develop and preserve their own culture and identify. As described by a historian,

The region has been the traditional homeland of Muslim Filipinos since the 15th century, even before the arrival of the Spanish who began to colonize most of the Philippines in 1565. Muslim missionaries arrived in Tawi-Tawi in 1380 and started the conversion of the native population to Islam. In 1457, the Sultanate of Sulu was founded, and not long after that the sultanates of Maguindanao and Buayan were also established. At the time when most of the Philippines was under Spanish rule, these sultanates maintained their independence and

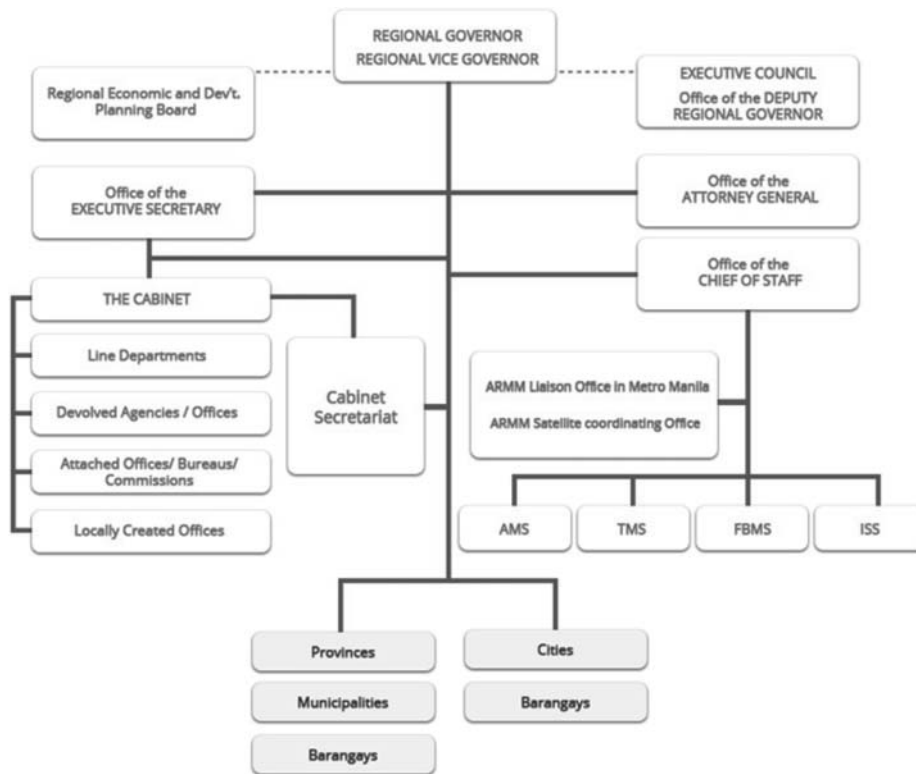
TABLE I – POPULATION AND AREA OF THE ARMM BY PROVINCE

Province	Capital	Population	Area (in sq.km)	Pop. Density (per sq.km)
Basilan	Isabela City*	408,520	1,994.1	204.9
Lanao del Sur	Marawi City	1,138,544	12,051.9	94.5
Maguindanao	Buluan	1,377,430	7,142.0	178.3
Sulu	Jolo	849,670	2,135.3	397.9
Tawi-tawi	Bongao	450,346	3,426.6	131.4
Total		4,224,510	26,749.9 km ²	

Source: National Census and Statistics Office

FIGURE 5 – ARMM ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE

**Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao
OFFICE OF THE REGIONAL GOVERNOR**



regularly challenged Spanish domination of the Philippines by conducting raids on Spanish coastal towns in the north and repulsing repeated Spanish incursions in their territory. It was not until the last quarter of the 19th century that the Sultanate of Sulu formally recognized Spanish sovereignty, but these areas remained loosely controlled by the Spanish as their sovereignty was limited to military stations and garrisons and pockets of civilian settlements in Zamboanga and Cotabato,^[3] until they had to abandon the region as a consequence of their defeat in the Spanish-American War (Wikipedia).

The Chief Executive of the region is the regional governor. He implements policies and programs

formulated by the Legislative Assembly. He is assisted by the members of the cabinet which he himself appoints. The organizational structure of the region is depicted in Figure 2 below.

The first regional governor of ARMM was Zacaria Candao. After the expiration of his term, Candao was replaced by Atty. Lininding Pangandaman, then Prof. Nur Misuari followed, then Farouk Hussein, Zaldy Ampatuan, Ansaruddin A. Adiong and Mujiv Hataman. All of these governors belong to the ruling party of the country at the time (Please see Table 2). Consequently, the regional secretary of DepEd has always been a supporter of the incumbent regional governor. Nevertheless, there were times that the

DepEd regional secretary came from the academic sector and these were in the person of : Prof. Salipada Tamano. Atty. Abdulhamid Barra and Atty. Baratucal Caudang. All three are faculty members of the Mindanao State University in Marawi City. Below is the organizational structure of the Office of the Regional Governor.

FINDINGS

This portion of the paper consists of three subsections, namely: The Inputs to the DepEd ARMM System, the Transformation Process and the Outputs.

THE INPUTS: The DepEd ARMM Resources
Before discussing the Department' resources, it is perhaps important that we first mention its vision and mission.

The DepEd ARMM, just like its mother agency in the national government, envisions to develop the holistic nature of individuals composing the society. As stated in the Performance Audit Report of the agency, and we quote

The Department of Education (DepEd) in Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (ARMM) was envisioned to develop the spiritual, intellectual, social, cultural, scientific and physical development of man in order to make him God-fearing, peace loving, value conscious and productive citizen thru basic education. It was commissioned to establish, maintain and support a complete and integrated system of quality education that is meaningful, relevant and responsive to the needs, ideals and aspiration of the people in Muslim Mindanao (Performance Audit Report, 2006).

Resources. Resources, as used in this paper, refer to agency budget and personnel. With regards to agency budget, we may recall that as early as its

initial years of operation, it was already considered insufficient. As revealed by the first Secretary of the agency and we quote

. . . the funds that are supposed to go with some of the devolved powers and functions were not made available for its operation. In fact, I found difficulty with the Office of the Secretary because no funds were made available for its operation" (cited in Tanggol, 1993:196).

It seems the problem on budget insufficiency in the ARMM is not only true during its early years of operation. It is rather a perennial problem. As unveiled by Atty. Naguib Sinarimbo, the ARMM executive secretary who was branded as the "wind beneath the wings." the two primary causes of the region's snail-paced development are: inadequate budget and lack of fiscal autonomy (Macabalang, September 1, 2011). Since its establishment in 1989, the ARMM annual budget is consistently less than 1% of the national budget, The highest percentage was in 2009 (,69%) and the lowest was in 2010 (,63%) (Sinarimbo cited in Macabalang). . . In addition, another ARMM official revealed that more than 60% of the region's annual budget goes to salaries and maintenance and operating expenses, Sinarimbo further elaborated to justify the discrimination in budget allocation that the "national funded infrastructure in 2011 in ARMM was P833M while the average share of each of the other regions was P2.9B"

Aside from financial resources, the human component of the organization is another critical input to the system. Here, we are more concerned not only on the number of personnel but more so on the competence of and how the personnel composing the agency are recruited and promoted.

With regards to the number of personnel in DepEd ARMM, there are two conflicting data. According to Philippine Information Agency, DepEd ARMM, as of 2012, has a total teaching and non-teaching personnel of 16,170. But in an interview with OIC Governor Mujiv Hataman, he said that the official number of personnel in the agency is 20,000 contrary to the claimed of 22,000. We grasp of another source which tells that the total number of employees in DepEd ARMM, as of March 2012, is more than 24,000. The situation signifies a significant controversy because if the number of personnel cannot be accurately determined, how much more of the financial transactions and services provided. Nevertheless, if we use the 22,000 personnel as base in our analysis, it means in 21 years, the number of teachers in the DepEd ARMM has increased by 78% or 9,659 teachers. In other words, there is an average increase of 460 teachers every year. Nonetheless, according to Noor D, Saada, ARMM Assistant Secretary, in an interview by the Business World, the teaching and non-teaching personnel of DepEd ARMM constitute 80% of the total workforce of ARMM, It may be said that the human resource management, performance and behavior of DepEd ARMM reflect that of the whole region.

Selection and recruitment in the ARMM is saddled with personalism including hiring of teachers. The dominant slogan known to applicants is “May Backer ka Ba?”. It means that if you don’t have somebody to back you up in your application you don’t land a job in the region, Merit and competence are not the popular criteria in recruitment. It implies that the agency is manned by mostly incompetent people with the exclusion of a few who meet the job requirements.

When incompetent people with questionable credentials mix with the rest, the latter’s attitude and performance can be affected (Tanggol, 1993:205).

THE TRANSFORMATION PROCESS: DEPED ARMM ADMINISTRATION

As used in this paper, the transformation process includes three main topics, namely (a) Performance Audit Report On 2006 and (b) Findings of the Incumbent DepEd ARMM Administration; and (c) Reforms Initiated by the Incumbent Administration.

Summary of the 2006 Performance Audit Report. With regards to how the agency is managed, the authors contend that the results of the performance audit conducted in the agency could be a better indicators, if not the best. On how the funds allocated for the agency is being managed, the performance audit sometime in 2006 revealed that there is somekind of mismanagement. As stated in the report and we quote

1. The existing controls in managing funds intended for salaries and mandatory contributions of DepEd employees were not adequate. Thus, while funds allocated by the DBM to DepEd ARMM for Personal Services (PS) were adequate to meet its obligations, the remittances of mandatory deductions and loan repayments of employees were either delayed or not done at all. For CYs 2002 to 2004 alone, the DepEd failed to remit to GSIS, deductions from employees’ salaries representing loan repayments amounting to P233,945,228.30 and government share of P118,344,279.60.
2. Despite non-remittance, the funds intended for the purpose were no longer available as the PS

bank accounts reflect minimal balances of P57,411.80 and P10,726.81 as of December 31, 2004. These balances are not even enough to cover unnegotiated checks amounting to P104,659,500.98 which were already reported stale.

3. The PS funds are depleted on account of the following deficiencies:
 - a. Withdrawals amounting to P32,148,295.48 from the PS account during CYs 2002-2004 and P1,929,205,367.41 from other accounts could not be accounted for due to the absence of debit memos. Therefore, the validity and regularity of these withdrawals could not be ascertained. The amounts could not be traced as transferred to other accounts.
 - b. During CY 2004 alone, the LBP imposed penalties and surcharges amounting to P36,021,621 for advancing payments in view of insufficient balances of DepEd accounts at the time the checks became due and presented for encashment. The teachers' checks are due and demandable upon presentation.
 - c. Erroneous bank debits amounting to P7,621,524 were not detected and remained unadjusted as of July 31, 2005.
 - d. Checks issued amounting to P1,024,295,235.74 were negotiated but were not reported in the books of DepEd ARMM. Thus, the nature of these payments could not be assessed.
 - e. Expenditures for salaries of casual and contractual employees exceeded the appropriation by P162,782,781.75.
4. The team also noted irregular practices contributing to the difficulty of managing funds and meeting its obligations such as:
 - a. The DepEd's practice of transferring funds from one account to another. For CY 2004 alone, funds transferred from the PS account to other accounts amounted to P150,787,000 while funds transferred to PS account from other accounts amounted to P140,680,000.
 - b. The transfer of funds by the LBP from the PS account to the IBM Payroll account was delayed. There were a number of instances where the LBP Cotabato branch failed to transfer the specified amount from the PS account to the IBM Payroll account despite sufficient balance at the time of request for transfer of funds. There were transfers effected only after 4 to 48 days.
 - c. The transfer of funds by DepEd Regional Office No. IX to DepEd ARMM was also delayed. In several instances, the transfer of funds by DepEd Region IX to cover payroll requirements of Basilan Province was delayed by 19 to 90 days. The transfer of funds by DepEd Regional Office No. XII to cover salaries of Marawi City could not be assessed due to absence of documents ((Performance Audit Report, DepED ARMM (CY 2006).

The above description on the DepEd management system is a result of the 2006 performance audit conducted by the Commission on Audit. What about the present administration? The agency is now under a new leadership with the assumption to office of the incumbent OIC Regional Governor, Mujiv Hataman. The succeeding discussion reveals the observations and discoveries of the new administration on the DepEd ARMM.

Findings of the Incumbent Administration. A general way of describing the DepEd ARMM

management maybe done using the statement of the OIC Governor in the ARMM Health Education Summit which was attended by local executives and other officials in the region held after his assumption to office. He said and we quote

“Isa sa pinakamalaking problema sa ARMM ay ang DepEd. Kaya nuong umupo po tayo ang unang pinagtuunan ko ng pansin ay ang Department of Education (in Lacson).

“One of the serious problems in the ARMM is the DepED, that is why when we assume to office, the first thing that I looked into was the DepEd”.

In other words, if the administration is able to solve the DepEd problems, more than half of the problems in the region will be solved.

The above-mentioned problem on budget allocation appear recurring as evidence by the fact that immediately after his assumption to office, the incumbent OIC regional governor, Mujiv Hataman discovered and revealed that DepEd ARMM has a questionable budget allocation. He said in an interview that: 60 to 70% of the budget goes to division expenses due to the splitting of 2 divisions in Lanao del Sur into four divisions. He also revealed that about P1.9B GSIS premiums were not remitted and yet the money is not available.

Another problem in the agency administration is the irregularities in the preparation of reports concerning number of schools, number of teachers and number of pupils. In a local news report, the OIC Gov., Mujiv Hataman, acknowledged these irregularities in the region, saying that the databank system established by the previous administration showed that there are discrepancies in the

number of teachers, schools, and students in the region. Some of the noted irregularities include the following:

1. Present records showed there are 22,000 teachers in the region, 2,000 in excess of the 20,000 who were officially hired. Names of teachers who are already dead, retired, or abroad were still listed and continue drawing their salaries.
2. Records showed that there are 144 schools operating in the Lanao del Sur province or 14 schools higher than the official number of 130 schools (as reflected in DepEd’s records in Manila.
3. Bloated enrolment reports;
4. Unauthorized and illegal salary deduction of teachers.;
5. Collection of fees from pupils;
6. Selling of Teachers’ Item;
7. Local Chief Executive Interference in designation of school administrator

In retrospect, administration of DepEd AARMM may be considered inefficient as evidence by the above data. A deeper analysis of the situation shows that absence of appropriate work ethics from the frontline workforce up to the middle level management has largely contributed to the status of DepEd Armm performance over the years. This has been a problem since its establishment and up to the present time.

Considering that it is the largest department in the region that houses more or less 80% of the region’s workforce, its performance is a direct reflection on the portrayal of the regional government.

Reforms Initiated by the Incumbent Administration. Given the above-mentioned

problems in the administration of the region, the present administration faces the challenge of reforming the agency that was found to be one of the three corrupt laden agencies in the region.

The administration of Mujiv Hataman envisions to institute new policies, programs and projects geared towards effective delivery of social services, especially in the field of education. Some of the reforms enunciated by his administration include, but not limited to the following: (1) financial and management reforms to correct flaws and address underlying issues that confronts the DepEd-ARMM, such as: (a) inventory of personnel; (b) validation of the database of schools, students, pupils and teachers; (c) reactivation of local school boards; (d) inventory of physical facilities; and (e) organizational strengthening through proper placement and assignment of personnel; (2) A systematic flow of personnel transactions to fast track action and approval on appointments and official communications; facilitate the processing of personnel benefits and unpaid teachers' salaries; and minimize delay in the salaries of teachers through the automation of salaries of the employees of the department; (3) Memorandum of Understanding with GSIS to come up with better alternatives and agreement that will address issues on the unpaid premiums of the teachers and on-time remittance of personnel contributions to the GSIS. (4) Revision of existing policies on recruitment, selection and promotion to devise new policies that would address issues on this matter; (5) A total of 698 classrooms will soon be constructed in ARMM, of which 62 classrooms have been completed and 143 classrooms are still to be constructed, along with a total of 5,000 tables and chairs that have been distributed in the school

divisions. The new regional leadership also emphasizes its concern for merit and fitness to prevail in recruitment. Governor Hataman once said "If we want to professionalize the health and education sectors, we must employ people who are qualified to handle the post and not just employ them because they were recommended by top political officials of the province." Kulayan's administration claimed to have accomplished the following, namely: (1) Removal of ghost teachers in the payroll; (2) Prioritization of teacher's license-holder applicants in recruitment and promotion for those already in the system by verifying teachers' board exam results in the Professional Regulatory Commission (PRC).

On the basis of the results of the focus-group-discussion (FGDs) among teachers and school administrators in Lanao del Sur, some of the unique features of Hataman administration are (a) "surprise visits to schools without the usual entourage", (b) his way of engaging the civil society in governance and (c) transparency.

THE OUTPUTS: Net Enrolment Ratio (NER), Achievement and Literacy Rate.

The effectiveness and responsiveness of the educational system may be measured using the following key performance indicators, namely: net enrolment ratio in primary and secondary education, achievement test results and literacy rate.

Net Enrolment Ratio. Net Enrolment Ratio (NER) is defined by the UNESCO Institute for Statistics as enrolment of the official age-group for a given level of education expressed as a percentage of the corresponding population. There are two types of data on this respect - net enrolment ratio in primary and net enrolment ratio in secondary

education. The data on the NER in primary education is not so discouraging in so far as the ARMM is concerned. Table 2 shows that ARMM ranked number four (4th) in the NER for primary education. It means that high percentage of children in ARMM who are supposed to be in primary education are indeed schooling. However, the table also shows that NER in primary education has a decreasing trend from 2003 to 2007 and this is true to almost all regions including the ARMM.

At the secondary level, NER increased barely by 0.1 percentage point in SY 2006-2007 and as shown in Table 4, NER was steady at 58 to 60 percent in the last five years. Table 4 further shows that 12 out of the 17 regions experienced declines in NER from SY 2002-2003 to SY 2006-2007. Furthermore, as shown in the table, Mindanao regions had the lowest NERs. Although ARMM had the lowest NER during the five-year period, it posted the biggest improvement with an increase of 8.9 percentage points, from 23.7% in

SY 2002-2003 to 32.6% in SY 2006-2007. Nevertheless, ARMM still got the lowest NER in secondary education.

Some people associate low in NER with poverty situation, especially so that regions with low NER are mostly those with high incidence of poverty.

As noted in the DepEd source and we quote:

Past studies show that non-attainment of secondary education of the household head correlates very highly with poverty. . . . a highly significant correlation in net enrolment ratio in secondary schools and poverty incidence. Regions with high poverty incidence are those with low enrolment ratios in secondary schools! The six regions with the highest net enrolment ratios in secondary education are the same six regions with the lowest poverty incidence! (Sexy Statistics-DepEd, 2012).

In other words, parents are able to send their children in elementary but when they reached secondary education, they can no longer afford the financial requirements.

TABLE 2. NET ENROLMENT RATIO (NER) IN ELEMENTARY EDUCATION BY REGION, SY 2002-2007

Region	SY 02-03	Rank	SY 03- 04	Rank	SY 04- 05	Rank	SY 05- 06	Rank	SY 06- 07	Rank
Philippines	90.3		88.7		87.1		84.4		83.2	
NCR	97.4	1	96.8	1	94.8	2	92.6	2	92.9	1
CAR	91.5	5	89.2	7	86.4	8	82.6	8	80.9	8
I - Ilocos	89.6	9	88.5	8	87.0	7	84.9	6	82.7	7
II - Cagayan Valley	86.7	12	85.7	10	82.9	12	79.9	12	77.7	13
III - Central Luzon	93.6	3	93.6	3	92.0	3	90.8	3	89.1	3
IV-A – CALABARZON	96.0	2	95.3	2	95.1	1	92.9	1	92.4	2
IV-B – MIMAROPA	91.5	5	89.4	5	88.0	5	84.4	7	83.8	5
V - Bicol	91.0	7	89.3	6	87.8	6	85.4	5	83.8	6
VI - Western Visayas	86.0	13	83.3	15	80.5	15	77.1	16	75.0	17
VII - Central Visayas	88.1	11	85.6	11	83.5	10	80.1	10	78.9	10
VIII - Eastern Visayas	85.9	14	83.7	14	83.4	11	80.0	11	78.2	11
IX – Zamboanga Peninsula	89.7	8	84.8	12	82.8	13	79.1	13	77.6	14
X - Northern Mindanao	89.0	10	86.9	9	84.2	9	80.2	9	79.0	9
XI – Davao Region	85.0	15	84.4	13	82.5	14	79.0	14	75.9	16
XII – SOCCSKSARGEN	82.0	16	81.2	16	80.0	16	77.4	15	76.4	15
XIII – Caraga	80.7	17	78.0	17	75.1	17	74.8	17	77.8	12
ARMM	92.7	4	90.1	4	90.0	4	87.3	4	85.8	4

Source of data: Department of Education

TABLE 3. NET ENROLMENT RATIO (NER) IN SECONDARY EDUCATION BY REGION: SY 2002-2003 TO SY 2006-2007

Region	SY 02- 03	Rank	SY 03- 04	Rank	SY 04- 05	Rank	SY 05- 06	Rank	SY 06- 07	Rank
Philippines	59.0		60.2		60.0		58.5		58.6	
NCR	75.3	1	76.4	1	76.4	1	75.0	1	75.1	1
CAR	59.6	5	61.8	5	60.7	5	57.8	6	59.1	5
I - Ilocos	68.3	2	68.1	4	67.0	4	65.8	4	68.2	4
II - Cagayan Valley	59.5	6	61.7	6	60.6	6	59.0	5	58.9	7
III - Central Luzon	67.7	4	69.4	3	69.8	3	68.9	3	69.1	3
IV-A - CALABARZON	68.2	3	70.2	2	70.9	2	69.1	2	71.3	2
IV-B - MIMAROPA	57.6	7	58.4	7	57.8	7	56.1	7	58.9	6
V - Bicol	54.9	10	55.6	10	55.8	10	53.2	10	54.3	8
VI - Western Visayas	57.3	8	57.9	9	57.0	9	54.9	8	52.9	10
VII - Central Visayas	57.3	9	58.4	8	57.4	8	54.8	9	53.9	9
VIII - Eastern Visayas	49.0	16	50.0	14	50.6	14	50.1	13	49.9	12
IX - Zamboanga Peninsula	49.2	15	49.3	16	50.5	15	47.2	16	47.7	16
X - Northern Mindanao	53.4	11	53.8	12	52.1	12	51.3	12	51.2	11
XI - Davao Region	52.6	13	52.1	13	51.2	13	49.0	14	47.8	15
XII - SOCCSKSARGEN	53.4	12	53.9	11	55.2	11	51.3	11	48.9	14
XIII - Caraga	49.8	14	49.7	15	49.7	16	48.5	15	48.9	13
ARMM	23.7	17	29.3	17	28.4	17	35.6	17	32.6	17

Source of data: Department of Education

Achievement. Achievement, according to Merriam Webster Dictionary, refers to the “quality and quantity of a student’s work.” In this paper, achievement is measured using the results of the National Achievement Test. The National Achievement Test is an examination designed to determine the students’ academic strengths and weaknesses through the five key-major subjects: *Mathematics, Science, English, Filipino, HeKaSi (Heograpiya, Kasaysayan at Sibika)* in elementary and *Araling Panlipunan* in high school. Ratings obtained from NAT for Grade VI and Fourth Year serve also as a tool to measure the school’s competency and effectiveness as well as the students’ aptitude and mastery towards the basic learning areas (DepEd, 2012).

Table 4 shows the mean percentage scores of the National Achievement Test in Grade 6 and Fourth Year High School SY 2006-2007. As shown in the table, the ARMM was consistently the lowest in both levels – grade 6 and fourth year

high school. It means that students in elementary and secondary schools in the region are not able to master the basic subject areas that they are supposed to learn. Consequently, they are not ready to undergo learning in secondary and tertiary education respectively. This data is further affirmed by the fact that very few students, who have finished in secondary schools in the region, are able to pass the System Admission and Scholarship Examination given by the Mindanao State University throughout Mindanao every year.

Students’ performance in National Achievement Test is indicative of how they were taught in schools, although we do not discount other factors contributing to their performance like intelligence and home environment. Suffice it to say that the low performance of students coming from the ARMM in the National Achievement Test is a result of the kind of inputs and the way these inputs are transformed by the management and frontline workers of the Department.

TABLE 4 - MEAN PERCENTAGE SCORES OF THE NATIONAL ACHIEVEMENT TEST IN GRADE 6 AND FOURTH YEAR HIGH SCHOOL SY 2006-2007

Region	Grade 6	Rank	Fourth Year High School	Rank
Philippines	54.5		44.3	
NCR	49.0	16	42.3	11
CAR	56.1	7	44.6	6
I - Ilocos	56.1	6	43.0	8
II - Cagayan Valley	53.1	11	45.0	5
III - Central Luzon	53.7	10	42.2	12
IV - A - Calabarzon	57.5	4	41.6	13
IV - B - Mimaropa	61.6	3	44.3	7
V - Bicol	50.4	13	40.9	15
VI - Western Visayas	49.3	15	42.6	10
VII - Central Visayas	55.5	8	52.2	3
VIII - Eastern Visayas	65.7	2	59.7	1
IX - Zamboanga Peninsula	57.1	5	45.1	4
X - Northern Mindanao	54.1	9	42.8	9
XI - Davao	52.8	12	41.5	14
XII - Soccskargen	49.7	14	39.4	16
CARAGA	70.8	1	58.6	2
ARMM	45.3	17	33.6	17

Source: National Education Testing and Research Center (NETRC), Department of Education (DepEd).

TABLE 5- LITERACY RATE IN THE PHILIPPINES IN DIFFERENT YEAR BY REGION

REGION	1989	1994	2000	2003	2008
Philippines	89.8	93.9	92.3	93.4	95.6
Metro Manila	98.1	98.8	90.5	91.6	94.8
Cordillera Administrative Region	86.4	88.8	95.2	97.4	98.2
Ilocos Region	90.6	95.5	91.8	93.7	95.0
Cagayan Valley Region	88.4	93.3	84.8	96.9	97.8
Central Luzon	93.7	96.3	94.0	97.2	98.0
Southern Tagalog Region	93.2	96.4		91.2	95.1
Bicol Region	87.3	91.9	92.7	95.0	96.6
Western Visayas Region	87.7	91.9	93.0	92.8	94.5
Central Visayas Region	88.0	93.1	91.7	92.4	95.1
Eastern Visayas Region	81.7	90.9	89.9	90.1	91.6
Western Mindanao Region	80.4	89.7	85.3	88.9	94.0
Northern Mindanao Region	90.5	94.6	91.4	91.8	93.9
Southern Mindanao Region	90.5	92.0	90.2	90.2	93.7
Central Mindanao Region	76.3	90.8	87.0	87.3	92.1
Caraga Region			92.0	92.1	94.7
ARMM		73.5	68.7	70.2	81.5

Sources: National Statistics Office and Department of Education.

Literacy Rate. In general, literacy rate means the percentage of people with the ability to read and write. Table 6 below shows that from 1989 to 2008, or in 19 years, ARMM consistently has the lowest literacy rate.

ANALYSIS AND CONCLUSIONS IMPLICATIONS

Indeed, the ARMM educational system is in a state of performance crisis. It is manifested in our analysis of the inputs, throughputs and outputs of the system. The financial and human resources

which form the most part of the inputs component are inadequate to make the system work efficiently. It is aggravated by inefficient management system as indicated by the performance audit report and the findings of the incumbent administration. Consequently, the output of the system is very much below the national standard as shown in the enrolment, achievement and literacy rate in the region. In fairness to the school administrators and teachers, although some aspects of the system can be considered uniquely distinctive of the region, most of the problems mentioned are likewise true to other regions in the country. As pointed out by Abad (2004), "The Philippine education is in crisis." In his paper, Luz described the system as and we quote

Numerous studies of the problems in Philippine education lead to predictable and oft-repeated conclusions: the school system has gotten too large, too unwieldy and too difficult to manage; shortages in classrooms, teachers, textbooks and material resources are at the heart of the problem; teachers are poorly trained despite having passed a licensure examination; there is little or no in-service training to improve teachers once hired; oversized classroom sections, multiple shifting or both undermine student learning to occur (Luz).

Considering that the DepEd is the largest bureaucracy in the ARMM, the situation begs another question. Is underperformance of DepEd ARMM caused by poor governance, or is it due to a problem of leadership? Whatever is the answer to these questions, one thing is definite, the system needs change.

The findings of the study suggest that some of the pre-requisites of 3Es stipulated in the works of Taylor and Weber are not present in the educa-

tional system of ARMM. For instance, there is no economy in the use of the DepEd resources (both human and non-human); the transformation process is inefficient and ineffective, which makes the whole system non-responsive to the vision and mission of the agency.

It can be inferred that the present state of the DepEd ARMM is a triangular function of the national government, the regional leadership and the teachers.

The national government assumes a significant role in the present conditions of the agency and of the region as a whole because while the region is named as an autonomous region, lots of the vital powers still remain at the national level. The Department of Budget and Management is micromanaging and directly managing funds of ARMM agencies as in undermining the authority of the regional governor (Sinarimbo). In other words, the region lacks fiscal autonomy, not to mention its limited financial resources. As the saying goes, "the promise of education reform can never be fulfilled without adequate funding" and by limiting the fiscal power and autonomy of the region the national government is hampering the development of our children in the region.

As the primary responsible authority in the region, the regional leadership assumes the greater blame in this respect. It is legally and morally responsible to carry out its mandated functions accordingly. No matter how insufficient, the power vested upon the regional leadership since its establishment should have been fully utilized following the principles of good governance. It is ironic that while the concepts of good governance emanate from Islamic principles and traditions (the Qur'an and Hadith), these are not

observed by Muslim officials in the region. The regional leadership largely contributes to the absence of merit and competence system, financial mismanagement and structural inadequacies. There is no political will to institute real education programs for the children. Every candidate during election has made a number of promises to our people. Sadly, these promises on social and economic development (relevant health and education services) and other benefits have existed more in rhetoric than in reality.

As the frontline service provider, the teachers likewise play a critical role in the status of basic education in the region. Under a democratic management system, they could have aired out any deficiency in the system and for their part, at least, the classroom under their control should have been managed in accordance with the approved classroom teaching methods and strategies so that desired outcomes can be derived. As the saying goes, “. . . when sound instruction takes place, students experience the joys of new-found knowledge and the ability to excel (Daniel Akaka in Quotepia). It is sad to say that as if the school administrators and teachers have not educated themselves in the real sense of the word, for if they have, they would have done their best in educating the children. As stated by Nancy Astor, “Real education should educate us out of self into something far finer; into a selflessness which links us with all humanity” (Quotepia).

On the whole, it is inferred that the components of the educational system of ARMM are cyclically interrelated. While the resources in the form of budget and human resources were insufficient to meet the requirements of the agency, the problem has been magnified by mismanagement

of the system. The non-economical utilization of resources coupled with inefficient and ineffective management system contributed, to a large extent, on the performance of students in the National Achievement Tests.

RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSION

On the basis of the findings and implications derived thereat, the following recommendations are forwarded.

As a society composed of people who claim themselves as Muslims, any recommendations intended for their progress should be anchored on Islamic perspectives. Regarding development, Allah says in the Holy Qur'an "God will not change the conditions of the people, unless they themselves will change what is in them". There must be an intrinsic desire and willingness to change, among the primary stakeholders (DepEd administration and teachers), the status quo.

There are two levels of change required. One is organizational change and the other is individual behavioral change. Organizational change, in this respect, entails search for visionary leader with commitment and proactive attitude to enforce the principles of merit and competence as well as effective financial and human resources management. It is ironic to say that appointing a technically and morally competent executive is most of the time easier said than done because there is no standards for measuring moral competence. Nevertheless, the incumbent leadership of ARMM shows some amount of sincerity in strategizing solutions to the inherited administrative and technical problems in the department. It is only a question of sustaining the reforms and further injecting innovative strategies to eliminate the

cancerous parts of the system. Regarding the need for competent DepEd ARMM regional secretary, it is suggested that aside from other political requirements, possession of career executive service officer (CESO) eligibility, at least masteral degree in management or public administration, and proven dedication to public service as demonstrated in previous work experiences be made as minimum requirements.

In order to ensure economy, efficiency effectiveness and responsiveness in the agency, the following recommendations are forwarded. Since one of the serious problems identified in the agency is unreliable statistics on the number of teachers, pupils and schools, it is suggested that physical inventory of these things be done in all public elementary and secondary schools located in the region. Establishing a valid information on the number of teachers, number of pupils and schools is extremely necessary for financial and human resources management.

Another aspect of organizational change includes a review of DepEd policies, processes and procedures through policy analysis and strategic planning. It is through strategic planning that organizational weaknesses and strengths as well as environment threats and opportunities are determined. In this regard, two things are forwarded: formation of Task Force that will review the existing policies and procedures and capability training of DepEd officials on strategic planning and financial management. Training on financial management is an immediate concern among DepEd officials because lots of the identified problems pertain to defective fund utilization. As stressed by the 2006 performance audit report "Most of these deficiencies could have been de-

tected, addressed and accounting records adjusted had there been regular bank reconciliation of bank records with the accounting records of DepEd ARMM."

Part of the processes that may be done is redesigning the curriculum to include not only the substance, but also the needed classroom teaching methodology, testing methods, counseling and even extra curricular activities to supplement classroom learnings.

There is likewise a need to develop the capability of school principals and head teachers to manage their schools and its resources. In this regard, it is suggested that passing in a licensure examination for principals be instituted as a requirement. Among the incumbent principals and headteachers, short-term management courses may be undertaken. Next to principal managerial skill enhancement is decentralization of decision making. At present, decision-making is more a function of the regional government or at the very least at the division. For as long as the principals or headteachers are managerially incapacitated, it is suggested that decision-making on matters affecting their schools must be brought down.

On the aspect of behavioral change, the strategy of the incumbent Governor of the region in conducting surprise supervisory visit to elementary and secondary schools (without the usual entourage) needs to be sustained, although it may not always be the Governor himself. The regional secretary's hands-on supervision on these schools is recommended.

Finally, inculcation of appropriate work ethics in accordance with the Ethical Standards Act, the Anti-Corruption Law, the Civil Service Rules and Procedures as well as the Islamic Practices on

Employment must be enshrined in the reform agenda.

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