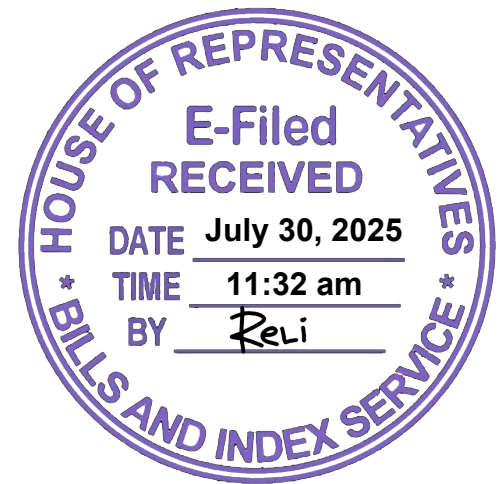


Republic of the Philippines
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
Quezon City

TWENTIETH CONGRESS
First Regular Session

HOUSE BILL NO. 2615



Introduced by **HON. KENNETH T. GATCHALIAN**

EXPLANATORY NOTE

Arabic ranks among the most widely spoken languages globally, with over 420 million native speakers. It serves as the official language in 26 countries across the Middle East, North Africa, and other regions. Its unique linguistic features have significantly influenced many languages, particularly in mathematics, science, and philosophy.¹ The richness and complexity of Arabic have drawn countless scholars to explore its grammar, syntax, and poetry, fostering major advancements in linguistic studies and language development.

Arabic numerals, originally adapted from the Indian numeral system, transformed mathematics and spread throughout Europe during the Middle Ages. The term “algebra” itself comes from Arabic, stemming from the work of renowned mathematicians like Al-Khwarizmi. Arabic scientific manuscripts also safeguarded and expanded the knowledge of ancient Greek and Roman scholars, contributing greatly to fields such as astronomy, medicine, and chemistry.

According to Philippine Statistics Authority, of the 108,667,043 household population in 2020, there are about 6,981,710 persons or 6.4% have Islam as their religious affiliation. ²This is the second religious affiliation next to Roman Catholic.

This bill aims to strengthen and make the **Arabic Language and Islamic Values Education (ALIVE) Program** a permanent part of all public and private basic education schools outside BARMM. It ensures that Muslim Filipinos receive quality education that respects their culture, customs, and beliefs, while

¹ <https://www.verbalplanet.com/learn-arabic/blog/the-cultural-significance-of-arabic.asp>

² <https://psa.gov.ph/content/religious-affiliation-philippines-2020-census-population-and-housing>

also promoting their participation in nation-building and unity among Muslim and non-Muslim learners³.

To support this, the bill requires:

- Providing facilities, school furniture, equipment, textbooks, and instructional materials.
- Hiring and training *asatidz* (teachers), trainers, supervisors, and administrators.
- Giving technical and financial support to DepEd-recognized private *madaris*.

The bill also mandates:

- Creating a **multi-year roadmap** to guide government and private stakeholders.
- Forming an **ALIVE Advisory Council** to oversee implementation.
- Directing DepEd's Bureau of Learning Delivery to coordinate with other agencies.

Currently, DepEd has already taken steps to promote ALIVE by:

1. Issuing a standard curriculum for public schools and private *madaris*.⁴
2. Launching programs for Muslim out-of-school youth and adults under the Education for All initiative.⁵
3. Integrating Madrasah Education into the K-12 Program to make education culturally relevant for Muslim learners.⁶

Despite these efforts, challenges remain, including lack of Islamic knowledge resources⁷, curriculum contextualization, teacher training, instructional materials, facilities, and delays in teacher allowances⁸. Graduates of traditional *madaris* that don't follow the DepEd curriculum often lack the competencies needed for employment or higher education, as there are no universities that cater to Arabic-proficient students.

³ Section 2, Republic Act No. 9997, otherwise known as the "National Commission on Muslim Filipinos Act of 2009".

⁴ DepEd Order No. 51, Series of 2004, August 28, 2004.

⁵ DepEd Order No. 57, Series of 2010, May 17, 2010.

⁶ DepEd Order No. 41, Series of 2017, August 11, 2017.

⁷ <https://www.noveltyjournals.com/upload/paper/ISSUES%20AND%20CONCERNS-1419.pdf>

⁸ <https://cids.up.edu.ph/download/up-cids-discussion-paper-series-2019-09-teacher-shortage-and-quality-of-madrasah-education-in-the-philippines-an-analysis-of-madaris-teachers-support-system-and-qualifications/>

To ensure every child has access to education and to promote national unity, the **immediate passage of this bill is strongly urged.**



KENNETH T. GATCHALIAN

Republic of the Philippines
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
Quezon City
NINETEENTH CONGRESS
First Regular Session

HOUSE BILL NO. 2615

Introduced by **HON. KENNETH T. GATCHALIAN**

AN ACT
INSTITUTIONALIZING AND STRENGTHENING THE ARABIC LANGUAGE AND
ISLAMIC VALUES EDUCATION PROGRAM IN ALL PUBLIC AND PRIVATE
BASIC EDUCATION SCHOOLS AND APPROPRIATING FUNDS THEREFOR

Section 1. *Short Title.* – This Act shall be known as the “*Arabic Language and Islamic Values Education Act*”.

Sec. 2. *Declaration of Principles and Policy.* – The State recognizes the vital role of the youth in nation-building and shall promote and protect their physical, moral, spiritual, intellectual, and social well-being. Towards this end, it shall be the duty of the State to protect and promote the right of all citizens to quality education at all levels, and shall take appropriate steps to make such education accessible to all.

The State likewise recognizes the complementary roles of public and private institutions in the educational system and shall exercise reasonable supervision and regulation of all educational institutions.

It likewise recognizes the natural and primary right and duty of parents in rearing the youth for civic efficiency and the development of moral character, which shall receive government support.

To further this State policy, educational institutions shall promote the inclusion of all learners, especially Muslim Filipinos, in programs that preserve their unique culture which includes the teaching of Arabic Language and Islamic Values. Such programs shall serve as instruments in ensuring their maximum participation in national development and involvement in achieving national unity in diversity among Muslim and non-Filipino learners and the country as a whole.

Sec. 3. *Objectives.* – This Act aims to achieve the following objectives:

a. Institutionalize an effective and efficient program in the basic education system of the country that promotes, strengthens, respects and

preserves the Muslim Filipinos' distinct historical identity, culture, customs, and traditions;

b. Strengthen the existing Arabic Language and Islamic Values Education Program and make it a vital component of the national education system;

c. Ensure the contribution of Muslim Filipinos to national goals and aspirations aimed at making them partners in nation-building;

d. Recognize Muslim Filipinos whose values and competencies enable them to realize their full potential and contribute meaningfully to building the nation; and

e. Qualify and capacitate competent teachers of Arabic Language and Islamic Values Education.

Sec. 4. *Definition of Terms.* – As used in this Act:

a. *Arabic Language* is the language of the Arabs as formally and grammatically taught under the Arabic Language and Islamic Values Education Program.

b. *Arabic Language and Islamic Values Education* refers to programs implemented in public and private schools that aim to provide additional subjects on Arabic Language and Islamic Values in the regular basic education curriculum.

c. *Asatidz* is the general Arabic term for teachers historically or traditionally used in most Muslim Filipino communities. It is the plural form of the Arabic word “ustadz”, a term that refers to a male teacher, and “ustadzah”, a term that refers to a female teacher. It includes *Ulama* (singular, *Ālim*) and *Alimat* (singular, *Ālimah*), male and female Muslim professionals, respectively, who specialized in Islamic Studies and obtained their education locally or abroad through Arabic Language.

d. *Accelerated Teacher Education Program* refers to a customized course approved by the Commission on Higher Education (CHED) and Professional Regulation Commission (PRC) to be delivered by Higher Education Institution partners. Through this program, the ALIVE asatidz deployed in public and private schools may earn a teaching degree and take the Board Licensure Examination for Professional Teachers.

e. *Cultural and Religious Learning Institutions (CRLI)* are the oldest forms of learning in the Philippines which teach Muslim Filipinos their culture, customs, beliefs, and practices. The CRLI is the technical term denoting these indigenous alternative systems of education.

f. *Islamic Values* refer to moral and ethical values or virtues that are based on the teachings of the Glorious Qur'an and exemplified by the practice of the Holy Prophet.

g. *Madrasah* (plural, *madaris*) is an Arabic term for school which is operationally defined as an educational institution that is community-based and operated privately wherein the medium of instruction is the

Arabic Language. Islamic studies and Arabic literacy are its core emphasis.

h. *Private Madaris* refer to private schools or providers of madrasah education. These can be categorized as: (1) traditional madrasah that conducts Arabic Language and Islamic Values Education and Islamic studies, and (2) private madrasah that conducts regular K to 12 classes and implements a madrasah curriculum recognized by the Department of Education (DepEd). For purposes of this Act, these shall include other types of relevant and similar learning institutions that teach Indigenous Knowledge, Skills and Processes which are part of Muslim culture and belief, key cultural and artisan skills of Muslim cultures, and Islamic Studies.

Sec. 5. *Scope of Application.* – This Act shall be implemented in all public schools and private madaris in the country located outside the Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (BARMM). It shall also apply to learners enrolled in the Alternative Learning System created pursuant to Republic Act No. 11510 or the “*Alternative Learning System Act*”.

Sec. 6. *The Arabic Language and Islamic Values Education (ALIVE) Program.* – The ALIVE Program is hereby institutionalized to provide Muslim Filipino learners the appropriate and relevant educational opportunities while recognizing their cultural contexts and unique purposes for participating in the Program. It shall include, but not be limited to:

- a. provision of facilities, school furniture, and equipment;
- b. provision of relevant textbooks and instructional materials;
- c. training or capacity-building of *asatidz* to include training of trainers, supervisors, and administrators;
- d. provision of technical and financial educational assistance to DepEd-accredited or recognized private madaris;
- e. monitoring and evaluation system of the ALIVE Program and its implementation;
- f. accreditation or recognition criteria and system for private madaris; and
- g. forging of inter-agency or inter-governmental agreements on curriculum and standards.

Sec. 7. *Teaching of ALIVE.* – At the option expressed in writing by the parents or guardians of the learners, the subjects of Arabic Language or Islamic Values Education, or both, shall be taught to Muslim Filipino learners as well as to non-Muslim Filipino learners as an integral part of the ALIVE Program.

The teaching of Arabic language aims to develop the learners’ functional literacy in Arabic, while the teaching of Islamic values aims to help learners acquire the desired Islamic values that would guide them to *be makatao, makaDiyos, makakalikasan, at makabayan*. The teaching of Islamic values must

also emphasize the values of interfaith dialogue, multiculturalism, and respect for differences in belief.

Subject to the consent, in writing, by the parents or guardians of the learners, Islam shall be allowed to be taught to their children or wards within the regular class hours without additional cost to the government.

Sec. 8. *The ALIVE Program Multi-Year Roadmap.* – Within sixty (60) days from the effectivity of this Act, the DepEd shall initiate the crafting of an ALIVE multi-year roadmap covering a minimum period of five (5) years. The multi-year roadmap shall serve as a guide to government agencies and private stakeholders for the optimal realization of the objectives of this Act. It shall set the overall direction of the ALIVE Program and shall contain the current policy, practices, gaps, and challenges affecting its integration and implementation in the basic education of Muslim Filipinos as well as of non-Muslim Filipinos. It shall likewise set detailed targets and outcomes for a minimum period of five (5) years and provide the public and private stakeholders' specific actions or interventions to include implementation and monitoring strategies, and annual budgetary requirements. It shall be subject to a periodic review and updating to determine its implementation status and ensure that the institutionalization and strengthening of the ALIVE Program envisioned in this Act is realized and sustained.

The roadmap shall be completed within one (1) year from the effectivity of this Act and crafted in consultation with the ALIVE Advisory Council created hereafter, the National Commission on Muslim Filipinos (NCMF), the CHED, the Technical Education And Skills Development Authority (TESDA), the National Commission on Indigenous Peoples (NCIP), the National Commission for Culture and the Arts (NCCA), the University of the Philippines Institute of Islamic Studies (UP-IIS), the King Faisal Center for Islamic, the Arabic and Asian Studies (KFCIAAS) of the Mindanao State University (MSU), other concerned government agencies, and other relevant organizations and education stakeholders. The roadmap shall be periodically reviewed and updated not later than every five (5) years from its implementation until the ALIVE Program is fully institutionalized and integrated into the Philippine Education System.

Sec. 9. *The Bureau of Learning Delivery as Implementing Bureau.* – The Bureau of Learning Delivery (BLD) of the DepEd shall implement the provisions of this Act. It shall:

- a. Coordinate with other national government agencies and offices as partner implementing agencies;
- b. Promote and strengthen the ALIVE Program;
- c. Initiate the preparation and regular updating of an ALIVE Program multi-year roadmap, supported by annual work and financial plans, for the effective implementation of this Act;

d. Subject to the approval of the Secretary of the DepEd (Secretary), set the standards, approve, and ensure the availability of textbooks and other learning resources for use in the ALIVE Program. The BLD shall ensure that these textbooks and learning resources passed the standard screening and evaluation process prior to their publication, procurement, and distribution;

e. Ensure the training and capacity building of asatidz and the training of trainers, administrators, and supervisors;

f. Implement policies and standards for the use of learning delivery modalities, including the training of asatidz on distance education;

g. Subject to the approval of the Secretary, formulate standards and criteria in the establishment, accreditation or recognition of private madaris and CRLIs;

h. Supervise, monitor, evaluate, and assess the compliance, operations and performance of public and private madaris and their personnel pursuant to this Act, and regularly submit reports to the Secretary; and

i. Perform such other necessary functions for the effective and efficient implementation of this Act.

The head of the ALIVE Program in the DepEd and its regional and division offices shall be a Muslim Filipino who shall be qualified based on existing Philippine Qualification Standards.

Sec. 10. *Hiring of Asatidz.* – The DepEd, through the BLD, and in consultation with the Civil Service Commission (CSC) and the Department of Budget and Management (DBM), shall hire a sufficient number of asatidz and create plantilla positions for the asatidz. It shall also establish a merit and classification system taking into consideration the position classification, salaries, career progression, and their duties and responsibilities.

Sec. 11. *ALIVE Teacher Education and Training.* – The DepEd shall develop and conduct regular training programs and workshops for in-service asatidz, including the training of trainers, to ensure that they have the necessary knowledge and competence to teach ALIVE, as well as enhance their skills on their roles as asatidz taking into consideration the Muslim Filipinos' culture and values.

The CHED, under its established Technical Committee for Islamic Studies, shall likewise develop policies, standards, and guidelines for a standardized and formalized madrasah education curriculum with tracks that include a specialized degree in Madrasah Teaching.

The DepEd shall likewise strengthen the Accelerated Teacher Education Program to ensure that there is a sufficient number of asatidz for the teaching of Arabic Language or Islamic Values Education, or both.

Sec. 12. *Special Eligibility; Qualifying Examination.* – For the purpose of meeting the eligibility requirement for the position of asatidz, the PRC shall develop and administer special qualifying examinations for permanent appointment of asatidz positions in the DepEd. This shall include ulama, alimat, and other madrasah education teaching graduates and holders of degrees or sufficient units, or credentials earned from institutions of higher learning within or outside the country, or both, for them to become asatidz.

The PRC, in coordination with the CSC, shall grant special license for those enumerated in the preceding paragraph who passed the special qualifying examinations: *Provided*, That the eligibility herein granted may only qualify the grantee to permanent appointment as asatidz and shall not be considered as a substitute to second level eligibility unless authorized by the CSC.

Graduates with Latin honors, *i.e., summa cum laude, magna cum laude and cum laude*, from a recognized university or institution of higher learning in Arabic or Islamic Studies, whether local or international, may be exempted from the special qualifying examinations and shall be deemed to have met the eligibility requirement for permanent appointment to asatidz positions subject to applicable Civil Service rules on granting honor graduate eligibility.

Sec. 13. *Data on ALIVE.* – Through its Information and Communications Technology Service, the DepEd shall gather relevant data on the implementation of the ALIVE Program. It shall include, but not limited to, data on learners in the ALIVE Program, asatidz, list of existing private madaris and CLRIs, list of private partners, and other relevant data and information that the DepEd may identify.

For statistics purposes, the Learner Information System of the DepEd shall state if a learner is a Muslim Filipino.

Sec. 14. *The ALIVE Program Advisory Council.* – The ALIVE Program Advisory Council (“Council”) is hereby created to ensure the attainment of the objectives of this Act. The Council, which shall directly coordinate and collaborate with the Secretary, shall have the following powers and functions:

- a. Represent Muslim Filipino learners, asatidz, private madaris, and their respective organizations, and participate in consultative meetings of the DepEd and other organizations in the formulation of policies, plans and strategies, educational programs, rules and regulations, guidelines, or regulatory changes;
- b. Conduct research and policy studies on the ALIVE Program;
- c. Participate in crafting, amending, or updating the roadmap referred to in this Act, and monitor and evaluate its implementation;

- d. Monitor and assess the implementation of the ALIVE Program as provided in this Act;
- e. Review existing and recommend new legislation to promote the educational welfare of Muslim Filipino learners; and
- f. Perform other similar functions as may be necessary.

Subject to prior consultation with Muslim Filipino professionals from the academe, organizations of asatidz in public and private madaris, organization of private madaris, and other relevant Muslim-Filipino stakeholders regarding the composition of the Council and the qualifications and terms of office of its members, the DepEd, within sixty (60) days from the effectivity of this Act, shall issue the necessary orders on the creation and composition of the Council, and direct the Department, bureaus, and its attached agencies to extend the required assistance and cooperation to the Council in the performance of its functions. The Implementing Rules and Regulations (IRR) of this Act shall state the composition of the Council and the qualifications and terms of office of its members.

The Council shall be independent from the DepEd, and its members shall not be entitled to any compensation in the performance of their functions but shall be entitled to reimbursement or honoraria in the performance of their functions.

Sec. 15. *Learning Continuity; Equivalency.* – The DepEd, in collaboration with the NCMF, the CHED, and the TESDA, shall establish programs to ensure the integration of the teaching of Islamic Studies and Arabic Language with the higher and technical-vocational education system towards continuity of learning and creation of opportunity for basic education graduates in the country to harness their potential, pursue higher education, or seek employment.

The CHED, the PRC, and other relevant government agencies shall likewise develop and implement a system of recognition, certification, accreditation or equivalency for the degrees and programs earned by Muslim Filipino graduates from institutions of higher learning outside the Philippines.

Sec. 16. *Authority to Receive Donations or Grants.* – The DepEd may accept any donation, or grant, in cash or in kind, whether local or foreign, which may be made by individuals and organizations, public or private, which shall provide the appropriate services, facilities, materials, and other support services for the implementation of the ALIVE Program and the promotion and preservation of Muslim Filipino culture as provided in this Act.

Sec. 17. *Private Sector Participation; Tax Incentives.* – Partnership between the government and the private sector in support of the ALIVE Program shall be encouraged. Any donation, contribution or grant, in cash or in kind, whether local or foreign, which may be made by individuals and organizations, including

private entities, which shall provide the appropriate services, facilities, materials, and delivery support services for the promotion and development of the ALIVE Program, shall be exempt from the donor's tax and the cost of which shall be considered as an allowable deduction from the gross income in the computation of the income tax of the donor in accordance with the provisions of the National Internal Revenue Code of 1997, as amended.

Sec. 18. *Operation of Private Madaris.* – The DepEd shall adopt an accreditation mechanism for all private madaris and CRLIs in the country, regardless of their kind, as part of its external quality assurance process for every madrasah to ensure the continuous improvement of the madaris and for purposes of public accountability. They shall be subject to the reasonable supervision and regulations of the DepEd and the relevant provisions of this Act.

Sec. 19. *Mandatory Review and Impact Assessment; Submission of Annual Report to Congress.* – In partnership with the other concerned government agencies, the DepEd shall conduct a mandatory review of the implementation of this Act five (5) years from its effectivity to determine its impact, measure its effectiveness, and ensure its proper implementation.

An annual report of the implementation of this Act shall be submitted to the Committees on Basic Education of both houses of Congress.

Sec. 20. *Interpretation.* – The provisions of this Act shall be applied in harmony with any law on education implemented in the BARMM and shall be interpreted towards the attainment of the goals of “Education for All”.

Sec. 21. *Appropriations.* – The amount necessary for the implementation of this Act shall be charged against those authorized in the current appropriations of the DepEd. Thereafter, the amount necessary for its continued implementation shall be included in the budget of the DepEd as a separate line item in the annual General Appropriations Act.

Sec. 22. *IRR.* – Within sixty (60) days after the effectivity of this Act, the Secretary of Education, in consultation with the Council, the NCMF, other concerned government agencies, and other education stakeholders, shall issue the rules and regulations for its effective implementation. The IRR issued pursuant to this section shall take effect fifteen (15) days after its publication in a newspaper of general circulation.

Sec. 23 *Transitory Provision.* – All existing madaris in the country, whether established or operating pursuant to the provisions of Republic Act No. 10533 or the “Enhanced Basic Education Act of 2013”, DepEd issuances, rules and

regulations, and other laws shall continue to operate pursuant to, and shall be regulated by, the provisions of this Act and its IRR and other applicable laws.

Sec. 24. *Separability Clause.* – If any provision of this Act is held invalid or unconstitutional, the other provisions not so declared shall remain in force and effect.

Sec. 25. *Repealing Clause.* – All other laws, executive orders, presidential decrees, administrative orders, rules and regulations, issuances, or parts thereof contrary to or inconsistent with the provisions of this Act are hereby repealed or amended accordingly.

Sec. 26. *Effectivity.* – Notwithstanding the non-issuance of the IRR, this Act shall take effect fifteen (15) days after its publication in the Official Gazette or in a newspaper of general circulation.

Approved,