

**MESSAGE OF MINISTER MOHAGHER IQBAL**  
Minister of Basic Higher and Technical Education

**Bangsamoro Education Code Consultation**

1:30 to 4:30 PM, 8 November 2019

Sandbar Beach Resort, Bongao, Tawi-Tawi

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***Asalaamu Alaikum warakmatulahi taala wa barakatuh.***

Good afternoon, Magandang hapon sa ating lahat! It is my privilege to greet and address all of you with a simple message. I want to express my thanks to all the attendees here; your presence makes us in the Ministry of Basic Higher and Technical Education (MBHTE) confident that we will overcome more challenges in this transition period from ARMM to the Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (BARMM). I also want to thank our partners, the Education Pathways to Peace in Mindanao program and the Development Academy of the Philippines, for supporting this gathering.

Investing in Education is paramount for the BARMM. One reason is that education has been cited as an essential tool for peacebuilding, human development and the eradication of poverty. If you look at the existing data, nearly all of the countries that are considered wealthy (especially in Europe) have a strong commitment to education, notably higher education. In fact, these nations have made education a priority. While the context in the Bangsamoro is different, it would be beneficial for us to recognize the connection between the creation of a system of high-quality education and a country's future and well-being. In addition, it is generally acknowledged that educated people are less prone to commit violence in society and can help facilitate peace, understanding and reconciliation. While there are exceptions, it is therefore crucial that the educational program in the Bangsamoro is balanced and holistic, looking at the intellectual, physical, moral and even spiritual advancement of all the learners.

Article IX of the Bangsamoro Organic Law (BOL), or Republic Act No. 11054, stipulates the mandate and responsibilities of the BARMM regarding education. As per the BOL, the Education Ministry will be at the forefront of drafting, implementing and monitoring the strategic interventions aimed at improving every student's learning process and over-all development.

At present, we are working to address a myriad of problems affecting our educational system. High dropout rates of our learners, lack of access to education services especially in the remote areas of the Bangsamoro, poor to nonexistent school facilities, ineffective teacher management processes are just a few of the issues that we need to resolve in this transition period.

Admittedly, the Education Ministry cannot achieve all these goals by ourselves. We need the support and cooperation of those who have an interest to improve the education system in the Bangsamoro, including all of you present here today. Part of what we need to work on is a Bangsamoro Education Code. Generally, the Code shall govern the education system in the Bangsamoro and set the strategic direction for the implementation of a balanced, accessible, and high standard educational structure. In addition, we need to enact a Code that embodies our culture, provides equal opportunities to all, and ensures our graduates will be able to compete in the national and global arena.

I anticipate that many of you here have specific questions that are operational and administrative in nature. I should therefore reiterate that the purpose of the code is to provide strategic and policy direction that would help the MBHTE-BARMM govern the academic and professional institutions and oversee every aspect of education system in the Bangsamoro. The Code is essentially a legal system that lays down the authority and responsibilities of the BARMM, the public, and interested parties in order to develop accessible and quality education in the Bangsamoro. Moreover, the code will contribute to the creation of harmonized relationships to ensure effective collaboration among all stakeholders. Meanwhile, the specific operational questions can be addressed by the Implementing Rules and Regulations (IRR) that will be drafted once the code is approved by Parliament. While it would be challenging to come up with a “perfect” education code, what is important that the resulting draft would include the provisions relevant to us and there will be room for improvement.

This consultation hopes to identify policy questions that the code needs to address. We have done many public discussions in the past. But I would like to assure you that this is not a token exercise; consultations and similar modalities are a critical part of governance. Policymaking bereft of proper context and relevant information from the ground can result in strategies and programs that does not reflect the priorities of our constituents. Again, I want to thank you for your participation in this activity.

Again, I want to thank all of you who took the time to join this consultation. We look forward to hearing your insights. I also want to extend gratitude to our partners, the Australian Government, the Education Pathways to Peace in Mindanao Program and the DAP for supporting us in our efforts to improve the education sector. Let us focus our energies on weaving our beliefs and ideas towards forming a tapestry of peace, unity, and prosperity in the Bangsamoro.

Magandang hapon po sa ating lahat! Thank you and Wassalam!



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