

INTEGRATING ETHICS IN TEACHING SOCIAL STUDIES: A FOCUS ON THE STUDENTS VALUES AND CHARACTER

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ABSTRACT

This article discusses about the importance of ethics, values and character integration in the teaching and learning process particularly on the part of the teacher. In the teaching of Social Studies as a subject, the teacher has also the responsibility of imparting and implying values and ethics particularly in the secondary schools education. In this article, the experiences of the Polytechnic University of the Philippines Laboratory High School in teaching Social Studies, its curriculum and how ethics and values are integrated in the subject are discussed.

Keywords: Ethics, Code of Contact, Patriotism, Character.

INTRODUCTION

Developing an atmosphere that rewards and reinforces ethical conduct should be of paramount importance to all teachers. Interactive ethics education should be a viable part of all secondary curricula.

As ethics remains a very important topic, teachers or educators must identify ways to incorporate ethics, the study of right and wrong behavior into their classes and be willing to commit some of their limited class time to this pursuit.

According to an article in Time Magazine (Time Magazine, 1989), a result of a poll found that more than 90 percent of the respondents agreed that morals have fallen because parents fail to take responsibility for their children or to imbue them with decent moral standards. Recent reports indicate that students and parents spend an average of 30 seconds per day in meaningful conversation; while students spend approximately six hours per day in school. Once again, it seems that the duty and responsibility is on teachers to provide needed guidance and instruction on values. Teachers should not be reluctant, and they will have to take effort to shape the face of tomorrow. It is no wonder that today's teenagers are perplexed as they attempt to differentiate between right and wrong. So much of what they see and hear focuses on greed, honesty and corruption. Students are getting the wrong message, and teachers must find a way to help remedy this. Hence, there is a need to include

a discussion or integrating ethics in the teaching of Social Studies.

Ethics means right living and good moral character and it is in good moral character, man finds his true worth and perfection. All the great teachers of the ages maintain that the supreme purpose of human living lies neither in the acquisition of material goods, a bodily pleasure nor in the attainment of health and strength, nor even in the development of intellectual skills but in the development of moral qualities which have placed man above animals.

Education is the harmonious development of the whole man-of all man's faculties; the moral, intellectual, and physical powers in man. The highest of man's powers are his reason and will. Therefore the primary objective of education is the moral development of the will. Since the teachers are developing the cognitive, motor, and emotional skills of our young children in school, it is deemed important to instill in them what is right, and mould the good moral ways and conduct within the students.

Any secondary education program like social studies should be based on the new basic education in (makabayan) social studies for easier assimilation. It should be made more relevant to the present needs of the time. They are revised to integrate new imperatives to the basic education curriculum.

1. Revised Basic Education Curriculum (RBEC)

The revised basic education curriculum (RBEC) aims at raising the quality of the learners and graduates and empowering them for life long learning which requires the attainment of functional literacy.

The curriculum has been restructured in terms of the following:

- proving more focus on the tool learning areas for an adequate development of the competencies for learning how to learn.
- providing an experiential learning area where the learner can apply practical knowledge and life skills, and demonstrate deeper appreciation of Filipino culture and heritage.
- making 'values development' integral to all learning areas.

1.1 Relevant features of the restructured curriculum

Some relevant features of the restructured curriculum address the following:

(i) A stronger integration of competencies in values within and across the learning areas through the use of integrative approaches for a more holistic learning where appropriate and relevant.

The integrative approaches to teaching will lead to a more holistic view of learning relevant to the view of the learners rather than mere mastery of fragmented knowledge within subject area boundaries. The existing subject areas, however, maintain their identity to ensure that the integrity of the discipline is not lost in the process of integrating.

(ii) The greater focus on values formation in all the subject areas.

Every teacher imparts value education to the students. The nature of knowledge in each subject area denotes certain value emphasis, which every teacher can use as spring boards for values in the school that will help every subject area teachers to integrate value development in his/her own subject areas.

(iii) Emphasis on the development of self reliant and patriotic citizen.

The Makabayan area is an area where these values will be understood and appreciated more deeply. It is the area where concerns for the "common goods" are experienced and enhanced.

Social Studies as one of the content subjects of MAKABAYAN is an area which provides an excellent glimpse of the past. It gives an analysis of the origin of the Philippine Archipelago and the beginnings of the Filipino people and the study of their ancient Filipino civilization, the creation of the Philippine as a nation.

Social Studies or Araling Panlipunan covers the Philippine history, Asian history, world history and economics, geography, political science, government, culture and civic education. Moreover, culture can be integrated in English or in Filipino wherever appropriate.

By learning this subject the learners shall develop the following objectives:

- highlights the cooperative efforts of the government and the citizen and try to attain a progressive and virtuous society;
- achieve effective governance and economic development;
- challenge Filipino people to hurdle or face problems including economic difficulties, poverty, political stability and terrorism;
- develop optimism, strength, stability, strong faith and outmost perseverance

1.2 The new curriculum structure

There are five learning areas, four of which are the tool subjects and a fifth one, which is a cluster of subject areas, called MAKABAYAN.

The MAKABAYAN learning area provides the balance between individual and societal needs:

The tool subjects are indispensable learning areas, and the basic tools to learning how to learn these subject areas address the individual competencies or needs of the learner.

The tool subjects are the following:

1. Filipino
2. English

3. Science (science and health for elementary and science and technology for secondary)

1st year - Integrated science

2nd year - Biology

3rd year - Chemistry

4th year Track A- Advance chemistry

Track B- Physics

4. Mathematics

1st year- Elementary algebra

2nd year- Intermediate algebra

3rd year- Geometry

4th year- Track A- Business mathematics & statistics

Track B- Trigonometry & advanced algebra

The fifth learning area is called MAKABAYAN. To convey that the unifying principle in the development of lessons is love of country, while recognizing global interdependence. Learning is first contextualized in relation to the learners physical and social environment while the tool subject areas address the individual needs of the learners, the MAKABAYAN area addresses social needs. Thus, the MAKABAYAN learning area-provides the balance between individual and societal needs. This is the area where deeper appreciation of our culture, heritage and history is developed, including the development of patriotism that is neither hostile nor isolationist towards other nation. This is also seen as the experiential area where applications in the technology and home economics are insured. The components are:

(i) Social Studies:

For elementary -

Sibika at Kultura

Heograpiya, Kasaysayan, Sibika

For secondary -

Araling Panlipunan

1st year- Philippine History and Government

2nd year- Asian Studies/Culture

3rd year- Economics

4th year- World History

(ii) Home Economics and Livelihood Education:

For elementary-

Edukasyon Pantahanan at Pangkabuhayan

For secondary-

Teknolohiya at Edukasyong Pantahanan at Pangkabuhayan

Industrial Arts

Home Economics

Agriculture and Fishery arts

Entrepreneurship

(iii) Physical Education, Health, Music and Arts:

For elementary-

Musika, Sining at Edukasyon Pangkatawan

For secondary-

Musika, Sining, at Edukasyon Pangkatawanan at Pangkalusugan

Each of the five learning areas address both the individual and social needs of the learners. Makabayan, however, will be the learning area that most stresses on the development of social awareness, empathy and firm commitment to the common good.

2. Revitalized Social Studies Program: PUPLHS Experience

In basic education, the curriculum should be reviewed and revised periodically to be relevant and up-to-date. Specifically, the course content should be updated and programs be designed to fit the students and to attain desired objectives.

In the revised Department of Education MAKABAYAN program, the latest trend is the integration of the values and ethics education.

The curriculum stands on the conviction that functionally its comprehensive meaning is the ability that is most essential for lifelong learning in our risky new world. It aims at empowering the Filipino learners to be capable of self-development throughout one's life and to be patriotic, benevolent, possess life skills, a reflective understanding and internalization of principles and values, and development of the person's multiple intelligence. Thus, in the restructured curriculum training in life skills, the

identification and analysis of values and the recognition of multiple intelligence permits all the learning area.

To actualize a gracious life in our changing world, learners need an educational system that empowers them for life long learning or enables them to be competent in learning how to learn in any circumstances even when they are left to themselves. Life long learning prepares us to meet the challenges of a rapidly changing world.

Our world is increasingly constituted by information, and is one in which we have to take many future-oriented decisions, learners are confronted with an explosion of knowledge and they have to take stock of a daily barrage of data and commentaries from far and near sources.

We have to educate our students to filter information critically, seek credible sources of knowledge and data and facts creatively so that they can survive, overcome poverty, raise their self esteem, develop patriotism and realize a gracious life in our risky new world.

Today, with growing numbers of students lacking solid character development, it is imperative that schools incorporate ongoing value education. The best character lessons are ones that blend naturally into exiting plans. Perhaps, the simplest way to enhance students' character development is to accentuate character traits periodically. Doing so, we would be able to optimize students chances of development of solid character, they'll develop for the rest of their lives.

Because of the proven importance and relevance of value education, fresh opportunities and challenges through VASA (Value across Subject Areas) Value education, which instills character building is no longer treated as a separate subject, but is integrated in every subject area.

As King David, during his old age, in his book of Psalms, wrote "Oh God, you have taught me from youth, and to this day I decreased your wondrous works," (Psalm 71:17 NKJ), this passage clearly shows that teaching a person while still young is truly effective and by all means lasting.

Parents should also pass on their children the significant account of their day-to-day experience entailing morals, and explain to the latter how a wise child who dutifully

does what is might and pleasing to God will surely succeed in life.

Young people today, especially those living in the cities and in the industrialized regions worldwide, are exposed to a new era that is characterized by great advancement and developments in the field of information and communication technology. With the automation of almost everything in their immediate environment, they have involuntarily adopted modern lifestyles that are mechanical and impersonal. Such striking changes in their lifestyles have consequently widened generation gaps that somehow alienate them from their forebears, as the intrinsic value of sanguine relations seems to be gradually weakening, and the old manners and conduct are suffering from rapid decadence.

While it is true that modern technology has made life convenient, it has also brought increasing complexities and difficulties into the life of the younger generations especially with the advent of new challenges that contribute to their behavioral patterns and the formation given the present conditions, the amount of discipline and the level of skills, the kind of wisdom, and the values acquired by the youth in and out of school need to be addressed carefully to help them in moving forward through the stiff competition that lies ahead of them.

Social Studies programs help students to construct a knowledge base and attitudes drawn from academic disciplines, which begin from a specific perspective and applies unique "process for knowing" to the study of reality. History for existence use the perspective of time to explore the effects of events in the past.

Social Studies program reflect the changing nature of knowledge, fostering entirely new and highly integrated approaches to resolve issues significant to humanity. Social Studies, such as poverty, crime, and public health are increasingly understood to transcend the boundaries of discipline, culture and nations. As these issues grow increasingly complex, the work to develop solutions demands an increasingly integrated view of scholarly domains and of the world itself.

By addressing the contemporary conditions of real life of

academic scholarship, such a program is more likely to help the students develop a deeper understanding of how to participate in building a future.

It is within this context that integration of ethics to social studies is created. They pay attention to the specific contributions of history, social science, humanities, fine arts, the natural resources and other disciplines while simultaneously providing an umbrella to the integrative potential of these several disciplines. Objective of integrating ethics to social studies is to create a learning environment in which students can develop, among other things, the ability to make nature moral judgment.

This objective can be achieved in a variety of ways:

- Identify the ethical debates in one's discipline: There are almost, always ethical issues that arise out of a course;
- Lay the groundwork at the beginning of the course: Introduces the idea that there are some important, ethical issues/areas of debate related to the course that one wishes to explore (about which reasonable people may disagree). Indicate that any such explorations will be carried out in a respectful disagree; derogatory language is not acceptable.
- Raise an issue: Bring a relevant newspaper article for discussion; raise an issue in response to a student's question; describe an ethical scenario that specifically relates to the week's topic.
- Generating discussion: Outline a position (either common sense or devil's advocate) and invite the class to support it/attack it; outline two respectable positions and invite the class to consider which is better, state a debate; invite guest speakers to outline their views, have students share their opinions in small groups.
- Keep the discussion going by asking follow up questions: Is someone being threatened or harmed? Who stands to lose? If you were on the receiving end, would you think differently? What ethical principles are involved?
- Ensure the students stay respectful of one another by referring back to the code of conduct as required.

Social Studies can help students to search for situations analogue to these in both contemporary and historical settings. By learning ways others have responded to such dilemmas, students can begin to understand that choices the society faces or have been confronted by others in different times and places. By helping students learn how to be confronted by others in different times and places; By helping students learn how to understand ideals such as patriotism and loyalty; and to examine the meaning of justice, equality and privacy in specific complex situations, educators can give them practice in discussing the arguments and evidence that surround such dilemmas. By guiding them to clarify the facts connected with value dilemmas and teaching them how to identify pros and cons, and consequences of various positions, educators can also give students tools that will inform their decision-making processes as they face difficult choices in life.

Some values are so central to our way of life and view of the common good that we need to develop student commitment to them through systematic social studies experiences. These include such fundamental rights as the right to life, liberty, individual dignity, equality of opportunity, justice, privacy, security, and ownership of private property. Our moral imperative as educators is to see all children as precious and recognize that they will inherit a world of baffling complexity. Our responsibility is to respect and support the dignity of the individual, and the common good of all. This responsibility demands to recognize and report the diversity that exists within the community.

Conclusion

PUPLHS is supporting the Department of Education with its objective. The curriculum is humanistic, individualistic and practical in approach. It is, likewise, values driven where it aims to develop the students' potentialities especially in the inculcation of virtues such as love of God, love of oneself, family and country, courage, honesty, patience, cooperation, sharing, trust, loyalty, honesty, responsibility, concern communication, commitment and companionship. It presents day-to-day situations revolving around the experiences and needs of students

self awareness of their development and growth, and realization of their possible personal problems and responsibilities.

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