

UPF Manila, Philippines Peace Talks Discusses Proposed Values Education Law

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June 4, 2020



Manila, Philippines -- UPF-Philippines and the International Association of Academicians for Peace (IAAP), in partnership with the Professors World Peace Academy (PWPA), an affiliated organization, convened another "Peace Talks" webinar on June 4, 2020, in follow up to a previous webinar it held on May 16, on the theme, "A Vision for World of Peace: The Need for Universal Values." This webinar provided an avenue for a dynamic discussion and exchange of insights among a select number of academicians and educators to contribute to UPF's response to the Philippines's Senate Bill 1224, also known as the Comprehensive Values Education Act (CVEA). This Act is expected to be signed into law by the President of the Philippines soon.

A total of 14 people participated, including two speakers and 11 panelists, comprising district supervisors of the Department of Education (DepEd) in Luzon, Visayas and Mindanao, the three main islands of the Philippines; professors; and educators from public high schools, local colleges and universities.

Dr. Julius Malicdem, chairman of UPF-Philippines, gave the opening remarks, in which he spoke about the vital role educators play, especially during this time of crisis. "How can we substantially help in nation-building?" he asked, and continued by saying that the rebuilding of the nation starts with the formation of young minds. He also explained that after many attempts were made in the Congress to strengthen values education, it was only this time through the current version of the joint committee of the Senate and Congress that they were able to produce Senate Bill 1224. The DepEd and UPF can collaborate in the drafting of the Implementing Rules and Regulations. Dr. Malicdem also said that the purpose of this webinar is to come up with tangible ways to support the implementation of the CVEA. He added: "When we talk about laws, it has to be connected to values. With the advancement of technology, our young people [have become] so much into virtual materials. We need to reinforce character education. This is our way of supporting the government." He concluded by saying that UPF would like to join in supporting programs and contribute to materials.

Mrs. Merly Barlaan, president of Women's Federation for World Peace (WFWP)–Philippines, an affiliated organization, remarked saying that the CVEA is a double-edged sword: it can be a blessing and a judgment to the education community. "The role of educators has never been as crucial as now." She also said that the situation today will predict our narrative in the future. "We need to have character building based on universal principles," she stressed.

Father Eliseo Mercado, director of the Institute for Autonomy and Governance and president of Notre Dame University (1992-2002), said that when Senate Bill 1224 becomes law, it will need the proper support from government, the private sector, civil society and churches. He said UPF is taking the lead in this. He also highlighted three points in Dr. Robert Kittel's presentation he agrees on: 1. There is a commonality in all our religions. The love of God and love of neighbor, for example. The golden rule is a universal value. It can be part of the curriculum development and can be part of basic education. 2. Patriotism is born most naturally from filial piety, and 3. teachers' training and development are essential. We need to selection teachers who can work hard on curriculum development when we re-institutionalize values education or else the process will become haphazard.

Dr. Arceli Hernando, director of the Office of Student Affairs at Bohol Island State University, said that although she is thankful to be a part of the academic community and recognizes the big role it plays in

nurturing young minds, she feels challenged by the fact that the modern times has exposed a lot of unwanted influences among young people. "We have a nice general objective of education being enumerated in [Senate Bill 1224], and that is very beautiful. However, in the education system we are always told to mold three things: the cognitive, psychomotor and psych domains. We have perfected the cognitive and psychomotor aspects. What we are not so confident of [shaping] is the psych domain," she said. She continued: "The problem nowadays is cyclical. The family is the core of the community, the seed-bed of the formation of young minds." She said that schools have the responsibility to create approaches that can prevent and solve problems among youth by integrating values into curriculum. We need to continue values education into college because values are needed there too. It should be emphasized at the tertiary level. "College teacher education [programs] should also be happy to have this," she said.

Dr. Rebecca Andrade, president of PWPA-Marikina and secretary-general of PWPA, expressed agreement on Dr. Kittel's point that emphasis should be given on who will teach values education. As educators, we are trained, but teaching values education calls for someone who really understands and has a compassionate heart to teach values. She said that in the past she has observed many faculty members who were asked to teach values, particularly in grade school, solely because they lacked some units. But, they were not able to properly teach the material. "I am one with Dr. Kittel when he said that we need credible teachers to teach values education," she said.

Dr. Raymund Arcega, president of the Association of Local Colleges and Universities Commission on Accreditation (ALCUCA), said, "The Senate Bill seems to be perfect, but we should know the beginning and endpoint. We need to realign [it] with other laws that are already being implemented, most especially [those related] to gender development and environmental care." He also emphasized the need for multisectoral input on the law. "[The approach] should be multisectoral; [that is,] churches, private organizations and even civil societies [should be allowed] to participate in the development of this law." He also stressed how important it is for the curriculum to be aligned with values. It should not be an additional burden to the students. Dr. Arcega emphasized training teachers who have the credibility and integrity to teach this course.

He presented a backward flow for considering when developing the curriculum. "The first thing is [determining] what kind of outcome we want to see from the students. When we have [done that], we can think about the kind of teaching delivery and then we can decide the content."

Dr. Ramon Woo, professor at CODEB IV-A, agrees on emphasizing the family when we teach values education to students.

Dr. Hermogenes B. Panganiban, professor at the main campus of the Public Administration Batangas State University, started by saying that the primary consideration should be the character and integrity of the teachers who will be teaching the CVEA. "The teachers act as second parents to the student. What should be the character of the teacher? Does he or she manifest integrity?"

He said that UPF and PWPA serve a unique role as resource organizations wherein their officers and members can act as speakers or mentors and trainers. "The next step is to come up with a model curriculum and a course syllabus that is suited for the K-12 system. This can be done by experts [in] UPF's and PWPA's networks in collaboration with the DepEd through training the trainer," he emphasized. He added that the International Peace Leadership College can help facilitate these efforts in peace- and nation-building. "It can share its best practices and activities, and give exposure to the students." He said that the Advisory Board of this collaboration with the DepEd can be comprised of UPF and PWPA board members and even representatives of different religions.

Dr. Alicia G. Eleazar, public schools district supervisor, Quezon and the Department of Education, Quezon, Palawan, said that in the home, there are parents, so there should be parents in the school. "We need to [develop] modules with the aid of parents. It is very important that a teacher traces the kind of home the learner is from." She also said that the teacher being a role model can significantly affect the learning performance of the learner. "[The teachers] need to have unquestionable integrity and dignity," she underscored.

She also explained an important point: schools are not allowed to select teachers and that this is done by the division level of the DepEd. "Schools will only accept a teacher if he or she is on a list of teachers qualified to teach in their school that is provided by the division. It is the role of the district supervisor and principal to select who can teach values education."

Dr. Elisar Gapol, public schools district supervisor of the Department of Education-Zamboanga Del Norte, expressed how happy he was that UPF and PWPA are spearheading an initiative to develop the program. "I am a product of the values education UPF has given, which is a wholesome one. It has been a blessing because it has affected how I deal with my co-teachers, and there are so many programs in my school that have changed the views of teachers and students." He said that one of the main problems of the DepEd is that there are teachers who are misguided and who eventually produce misguided students. He emphasized that it is an enormous task of the DepEd district supervisor to help principals assign teachers to teach values education. "The dignity of the teachers will be jeopardized if they do not have the

right qualifications to teach it," he said.

Dr. Jay Chy, chief admin officer at Isabela State University (ISU), expressed his strong agreement with Dr. Kittel regarding putting the family first and emphasizing the importance of marriage. She said that Isabela State University scrutinizes the qualifications of potential candidates for faculty member positions. "We do background investigations and really see to it that we hire the most qualified teachers. It is important that we hire really good professors who will teach values, not by being a professor who will say, 'Do what I say and do not do what I do.'" She said that the present situation of the Philippines, including the increase in bullying and crimes, necessitates the strengthening of the curriculum of its schools. "Training and hiring are vital aspects of this particular Senate Bill, and we need to look at it based on the moral ascendancy of the recruits or faculty who will impart values education." She also shared that PWPA has a memorandum of understanding with the ISU wherein the university taps UPF through PWPA to conduct trainings and values education for its teachers and faculty.

Dr. Myrna Ligas, principal of the Don Eulogio De Guzman Memorial National High School, said, "As a principal of the biggest high school in La Union, I think the best contribution UPF and PWPA can make in supporting this Bill is to conduct webinars and seminars like this one and apply UPF's principles to the learning competencies of the DepEd." She continued by saying that this was done in the past by UPF in her own school. "It was a long time ago when teachers in our school attended such seminars, but I would like to share my experiences," she started. "In our school, before the local school board hired a teacher, [the teacher was required to] attend a UPF conference. Through the conference, we could transform them to be better teachers." She said that annually the city gave Most Outstanding Teachers awards and that all the teachers who attended UPF's conferences were selected for the award. "If you come to our school, you can see the gallery of these accomplishers," she happily shared. "Happiness is a life lived for others, as taught by Rev. and Mrs. Moon. These teachers conducted community outreach programs. This is the result of UPF," she testified. She also added that her school gives special focus to learners who are about to drop out or fail, and visits these learners in their homes to trace the nature of and understand their problems before they implement measures.

Dr. Amado L. Magsino, vice president for international relations and linkages at the International Peace Leadership College, said that once the CVEA becomes law, it can be highly institutionalized by UPF and PWPA. "With this UPF-PWPA partnership with the DepEd, it is a must that we identify possible training institutions." He continued by saying that at present the college's faculty training program is given full authority to handle this training program. "We have to be official partners of the DepEd, and the biggest challenge is [finding] qualified faculty to teach values education. The character of the person should be in consonance with the subject he is about to teach. The primary importance is his or her integrity and credibility as a teacher of this subject." He said that this all adds up to the charismatic delivery in teaching values education.

Open Forum with the Panelists

What is the next step that we should take from here?

Dr. Arcega: When we sell this idea, it should be a complete package. We need to push certification training with the DepEd. Choosing who will be the teachers will complete the framework. Also, after integrating this into K-12 education, we need to talk with CHED because this should be continued in higher education.

Dr. Andrade: I support what Dr. Raymund said when he presented the background framework. It really should be an outcome-based education. What will our students learn after an hour of staying with the teacher? Values never change; the only thing that changes is people's attitude towards values.

Dr. Panganiban: We should come up with learning outcomes, assessments and strategies. We need to have a model syllabus and an action plan to implement that syllabus.

Dr. Arcega: While the CVEA has not yet been signed, we have to be active participants in the formulation of it.

Dr. Eleazar: The first step is to present the framework in terms of resources and training to be given to the DepEd. The second step is to identify the learning outcomes, model syllabus and learning assessment. I would like to say that we will be identifying who will teach. Values education is being integrated in all subjects.

Dr. Gapol: This is very effective in our field here in Mindanao because of our diversity. We are united with the principles of UPF. We do well without pushing our own religious background. I've seen that this has had a great impact on students.

Dr. Ligas: The contribution of the DepEd will be to look at competencies first. We usually select the topics from the competencies in that Bill. What we are going to do is organize activities and seminars that can realize the objectives of each subject area.