

The Underpinning of Faith in Public Secondary School: A Call for a Governing Ministry

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Abstract— The Department of Education (DepEd) banners its core values as *Maka-Diyos (Godly)*, *Maka-tao (humane)*, *Makakalikasan (nature lover)*, *Makabansa (nationalist)*. Worth noting is its inclusion of *Godliness*. The Department sees the importance of this value to be inculcated among its clientele and personnel. Accordingly, in one of its directive, namely, *DepEd Order 105 series of 2010*, the Department reiterates the constitutional right of its personnel and students to freely exercise their religion. This mandate underscores the non-sectarian nature of the Department of Education for both students and personnel. Consequently, it is expected that in public schools, people with different backgrounds converge. Despite their differences, one thing that unites staff and students is faith. Based on this study, the respondents agree that faith is important to them. Although, they do not have a unified perception of what faith is because of varied upbringings, it is common to them to see faith as something beyond themselves where they can gather strength, inspiration and purpose at certain points of their lives. Though not explicitly expressed in public school setting, hence underpinned, its influence remains remarkable. It is within this circumstance where this study emerged, to place faith in its proper context in a public school setting. This action research transpired in Tanauan City National High School in school year 2015 – 2016. It used mixed method, namely, research-made questionnaire, interviews and focus group discussion. It proposed a creation of a faith ministry. The ministry does not campaign conversion, but finding common threads and making them starting points for dialogue and moral formation. The researcher believes that it is not only the intellectual, physical and social aspects that should be given considerations in school but also the spiritual dimension of persons.

Keywords— Campus; Faith; Ministry; Students; Personnel.

I. INTRODUCTION

You may hear the wind blowing anywhere it pleases, but you cannot determine where it is coming from or going. So it is with everyone who is born of the Spirit (John 3:8).

The stirrings of the Holy Spirit can be felt even in secular contexts; it cannot be confined only in religious environments. Customarily, organized faith expressions as answer to the promptings of the Holy Spirit can only be seen in Catholic or Christian schools. But, such stirrings also exist in public schools.

The Department of Education addresses this facet by formulating mandates connected to such reality. DepEd Order 105 series of 2010 is one example of how the constitutional right of staff members and students to freely practice their faith is reaffirmed. This mandate underscores the non-sectarian nature of the Department of Education for both students and personnel. Consequently, it is expected that in public schools, people with different backgrounds converge.

Despite their differences, one thing that unites staff and students is faith.

Given this DepEd Order, the promptings of faith can further be addressed by establishing a unifying organization among different beliefs in public school. It is inappropriate to mandate conversion but graciously acknowledging the differences and finding similar threads for unity and respectful expression is a possibility.

Furthermore, based on this study, the respondents agree that faith is important to them. Although, they do not have a unified perception of what faith is because of their diverse backgrounds and beliefs, it is common to them to see faith as something beyond themselves where they can gather strength, inspiration and purpose at certain points in their lives.

This research proposes the creation of a faith-governing ministry. The reason for this is foremost to acknowledge the reality of faith. Though invisible, its foundational character can be visible through actions and can be a source of strength, inspiration, and purpose according to the research respondents. Secondly, the research intends to place faith in its rightful context, not undermined nor exalted beyond necessary. Faith can be expressed in spite the diversity of religions and peaceful co-existence is achievable. Lastly, this study was done to oversee the different beliefs in public school and draw from them unifying elements for the benefit of the school community.

The researcher believes that it is not only the intellectual, physical and social aspects that should be given considerations in school but also the faith or spiritual dimension of persons.

II. METHODOLOGY

The target population of this study was Tanauan City National High School students and personnel and the sample size of 352 respondents was taken using Slovin's formula at five percent margin of error. The population was 2931 during the time of the study.

$$n = N / (1 + Ne^2)$$

where:

n = Number of samples

N = Total population

e = Error tolerance

The study utilized mixed method and particularly used research-made questionnaire, interviews and focus group discussion.

Proper permission was asked from authority to conduct this research. Those who were involved were appropriately informed of the purposes of the data asked from them.

Sensitive issues regarding faith and belief were carefully handled in respect for the differences of views.

In order to present the results of the study, the following tools were considered.

1. Percentage and rank. These were used in describing the positional importance of the responses.

$$P = \frac{x}{n} \times 100$$

where:

x = given quantity

n = total amount

2. Weighted mean. This was used as measure of the average responses.

$$WM = \frac{fx_1 + fx_2 + fx_3 \dots fx_n}{n}$$

where:

f = frequency

x = scores

n = number of sample

3. Interviews and Focus Group Discussion. Data from these qualitative methods were documented, synthesized and appropriately utilized to accomplish the purpose of this paper. The respondents basically answered three significant questions for this research. The responses were appropriate treated for a reliable result of the research.

III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

1. How important is faith in the school community?

TABLE 1. Importance of Faith

Is faith important to you?	Yes	Percentage	No	Percentage
	352	100	0	0

This table shows the importance of faith among respondents. Overwhelmingly, everyone who was asked acknowledged the importance of faith in their lives. Even though the external manifestation of faith is not very much underlined in public schools, and upon scrutiny some respondents cannot exactly articulate what faith is for them, the result indicated its undeniable relevance to the respondents.

2. What should be addressed and emphasized by the school among the dimensions of faith (General Catechetical Directory)

- 2.1 Knowledge of Faith
- 2.2 Liturgical Life
- 2.3 Moral Formation
- 2.4 Prayer
- 2.5 Communal Life
- 2.6 Missionary Spirit

TABLE 2. Dimensions of Faith

Dimensions of Faith	Mean	Rank
Knowledge of Faith	3.37	4
Liturgical Life	3.01	6
Moral Formation	3.42	3
Prayer	3.45	2
Communal Life	3.51	1
Missionary Spirit	3.35	5

Communal Life (3.51) had the highest weighted mean. In the questionnaire given, this meant having sound relationship

with people of the same and different faith. Given the study took place in school and how sociable people, especially the students, can be right now through media it was not surprising for this dimension to stand out.

The second in rank was Prayer (3.45). An integral part of faith is prayer. Without prayer, the relationship with God cannot be deepened. In the questionnaire provided, what was emphasized is the development of prayer life as an individual and as a school community. Ranking second meant prayer can be given some amount of time in school.

Moral Formation (3.42) was the third in rank. Highlighted in this dimension was conscience and doing what is good and avoiding what is evil. In this day and age when relativism looms large in the society forming a moral life becomes all the more necessary. This dimension is not only applicable to students but to the personnel as well, especially to teachers. As teachers, there are indeed some moral expectations from people around the community and the students.

Knowledge of Faith (3.37) was the fourth in rank. This is the middle part of the ranking. This placement is acceptable because the knowledge of faith, that is, doctrines and dogmas, should not take precedence among the dimensions in order for dialogue to be possible among different religions and denominations.

Most of the debates and misunderstandings happen under the content of faith. Content is very important but for the sake of peace and communion other dimensions can take precedence in the context of the non-sectarian nature of public schools.

Missionary Spirit (3.35) was the fifth in rank. This is all about extending oneself. Faith should have an external expression and not only a private relationship with God (cf. James 2:26). The school can be a place where students can learn how to extend themselves to others.

The sixth in rank was Liturgical Life (3.01). For people who do not have theological background, it is easy to have less regard for liturgy. Not surprisingly it was ranked last. Liturgical life is worship and structure. People can freely express themselves with God but sometimes worship also needs structure. Worship services should be given attention and preparation so that adoration to God can be fully felt by those who commune with Him.

All the dimensions of faith are important but from the result, it can be seen that the respondents want the communal life to be addressed primarily. The school has a lot of students and personnel and proper communication and socialization is worth doing in the context of faith so that camaraderie and a well-organized community can be experienced.

3. What intervention/ program/ organization can be developed to enhance the faith dimension in school?

Table 3 displays the options as how to address the faith dimension of the school. There are three options. The least chosen was other suggestions and opinions.

The second option was Let different religious organizations enter the school without any consideration of the doctrines and effects it can bring in the school. It had 15 responses or 4%.

TABLE 3. Options to Address the Faith Dimension of the School Community

Options	Responses	Percentage
Establish an organization or ministry with sound rules and regulations about faith formation which will address the faith dimension of the school community.	328	93
Let different religious organizations enter the school without any consideration of the doctrines and effects it can bring in the school.	15	4
Other suggestions and opinions	9	3
TOTAL	352	100

Establish an organization or ministry with sound rules and regulations about faith formation which will address the faith dimension of the school community had the most responses. The common name for faith ministry in schools is Campus Ministry. There are benefits of establishing Campus Ministry. It is very relevant because it purifies and even provides practical application of what was learned in the classroom (Kendall and Labelle, 2011). Founding a Campus Ministry addresses the dimensions of faith which was discussed in the previous table.

Moreover, Campus Ministry gives structure. Structure, in reality, is attractive because it focuses effort where it should be channeled. Wastage of time and energy will be avoided when there is organization. Hence, efforts to address the spiritual dimension of the school community will be more effective and efficient when there is structure which will be provided by the ministry.

IV. CONCLUSIONS

1. The students and personnel acknowledged the importance of faith in their lives. Though there is no unified concept of faith in public schools because of its non-sectarian nature and its vivid expression is not always prioritized. It is best to leverage this to produce citizens who will positively contribute to society. Students are full of energy and it can be channeled to wholesome activities based on faith to morally form them.

Personnel, on the other hand, can have bible sharing activities, among others, to strengthen their faith and moral compass.

2. There are dimensions of faith and they can be addressed in the school in order of priority. In the study, communal life ranked first. Unity in school is very important. Though diverse in background, this may be achieved through proper communication. Interfaith and interreligious activities may be developed to enhance unity in school.

3. The faith dimension of the school community can be properly addressed if there is an organization or ministry which will look into the dimensions of faith, such an organization is Campus Ministry. Establishing a ministry underscores the importance of faith and also its expression even in public school. Furthermore, Campus Ministry should have a manual or guide so as to properly structure its apostolate or services

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