

Final Presentation
A Consultation Meeting on
Dialogue in moral and religious formation in education:
Towards Vision 2020

FABC-Office of Education and Student Chaplaincy

1. Education has been one of the important aspects of the mission of the Church in Asia.¹ This educative mission from the stand point of Catholic faith, keeping in mind the training our Lord and Master had at Nazareth...*the child grew and became strong in spirit filled with wisdom and grace of God was upon him* (Lk 2:40), aims at the integral – physical, intellectual, social, moral and spiritual - formation of the young and the on-going formation of the educators.
2. To fulfill this aim we enter into a meaningful dialogue with various religions and cultures of Asia by following a policy of integrating Gospel values into the curriculum of Catholic education, turning all centers of education into empowering institutions.
3. By getting trained in a humane social milieu the recipients of our institutions will further the cause of human dignity imbibed by Biblical values of love, hope, justice, peace and concern for others.
4. By acknowledging and empowering new avenues of education in the local church beyond institutional structures, Catholic youth groups' experiences through youth ministry and movements provide effective Catholic formation for the marginalized in-campus recipients, off-campus poorer recipients, and to those in countries where Catholic schools are non-existent.
5. The basic premise on which we have built our humble proposals is our consultations on the topic 'dialogue in moral and religious formation in education'. Our mission of education of the young can bear fruit not only on what is done but also on **HOW** and the **Why** it is done especially in a spirit of dialogue as Jesus did. It is imperative that the church in Asia work under common policies with different contexts in mind, so that our work can bear better fruit and we can be better witnesses in establishing the Kingdom of God. With this understanding, we present the strengths to stand for and the Opportunities realized in our on-going dialogue within the sphere of moral and religious education. The

¹ Asian Bishops' Meeting, Manila Philippines 29 November 1970 (For All the Peoples of Asia, edited by Gaudencio Rosales, DD, and C.G. Arevalo, S.J, pp. 3-10). Please see also FABC-OESC, *Toward A Formation-Oriented Education*, 1993.

consultation meeting of representatives² from the youth, families, educators, priests and bishops, was held from 24th to 28th October 2007 at Assumption University, Suvarbhumi Campus, Thailand.

6. Political Environment

6.1 Strengths

- 6.1.1 Pluralistic and multi-cultural environment (Indonesia, Vietnam, India, Korea)
- 6.1.2 freedom to choose staffs, students, members of school board; freedom of worship in school

6.2 Weaknesses

- 6.2.1 Lack of trained teachers
- 6.2.2 direct and indirect government control
- 6.2.3 lack of mass media promoting moral values
- 6.2.4 lack of dialogue between parents and children
- 6.2.5 parents leave the responsibility to the school or let their children do the work

6.3 Opportunities

- 6.3.1 Catholic schools are “an educational power.”
- 6.3.2 The past pupils and alumni are potentials for social transformation and conversion.
- 6.3.3 Collaboration or network among youth groups or movements is strengthened.
- 6.3.4 A renewed trust in the government to develop the principle of “Ethics first before knowledge”.

6.4 Threats

- 6.4.1 Predominant consumerism and materialism
- 6.4.2 Direct and indirect government control and interference
- 6.4.3 Fewer families meaning fewer potentials

6.5 Recommendations

² Countries represented were Bangladesh, Chile, India, Indonesia, Japan, Korea, Malaysia, Myanmar, Mongolia, Nepal, Philippines, Rome, Sri Lanka, Thailand, Vietnam and the following associations: International Office of Catholic Education (OIEC), The Association of South East Asian Catholic Colleges and Universities (ASEACCU), Council of Churches of Asia (CCA), International Movement of Catholic Students (IMCS), and International Youth Catholic Students (IYCS), Myanmar Youth Catholic Students, and Catholic Undergraduate Center of Thailand (CUCT).

- 6.5.1 Catholic education should protect and enhance the common values which different religions and culture espouse in the pluralistic and multi-cultural environments.
- 6.5.2 Recognizing the critical importance of teachers, it must periodically reeducate and train teachers in moral and religious education.
- 6.5.3 Family education, particularly parents education must be emphasized to facilitate a dialogue between parents and children, as well as parents' role in moral education. In this context, several siblings instead of "one" are strongly suggested to inculcate moral values in the family in two countries.
- 6.5.4 Catholic schools should be "an educational power" in the environment of predominant consumerism and materialism, through which transformation at moral, religious and societal levels can work.
- 6.5.5 On-site and off-site collaboration or network among youth groups or movements needs to be strengthened to further moral and religious values.
- 6.5.6 It is proposed that a new role of government in the formation of moral and religious spheres needs to be developed, such as "Ethics first before knowledge" under the direct and indirect government control and interference.
- 6.5.7 The role of mass media needs to include the promotion of moral and religious values.

7. Academic Factors

7.1 Strengths

- 7.1.1 Presence of moral/religious formation (in campus), curriculum and/or extra-curricula activities; and in informal (off-campus), e.g., Vietnam and Myanmar.
- 7.1.2 Presence of trained instructors on moral/religious formation.
- 7.1.3 Recommendation: Supply of reference materials (i.e., multi-media, print and/or audio video visuals) on dialogue in moral and religious formation

7.2 Weaknesses

- 7.2.1 A mismatch between what is learnt inside the classroom and what is done in society (outside the classroom); therefore, what is learnt in school does not lead to social transformation and Gospel-inspired spirituality.
- 7.2.2 Lack of lay religious collaborators.
- 7.2.3 Inability on the part of Catholic universities to supply personnel to Catholic run institutions.
- 7.2.4 Lack of enthusiasm on the part of formators to get involved with activities outside the classroom

7.2.5 Recommendations:

- 7.2.5.1 Review of curriculum (formal) and course outline (informal) so that the educative process is led towards a holistic formation of the recipients (educands)
- 7.2.5.2 Retrain educators towards this proposed educative aim

7.3 Opportunities

- 7.3.1 Catholic institutions have become avenues for non-catholics to learn about Catholicity (in all its facets); for all students to acquire and open-minded and wholistic but quality education; to find training venues for all formators on moral/religious formation.
- 7.3.2 In the absence of Catholic schools, Sunday schools have become venues to know the social teachings of the Church and Catechism.
- 7.3.3 Recommendation: Reinforce these opportunities so that they may be maintained and further improved towards being strengths in the near future.

7.4 Threats

- 7.4.1 Secularism with its varied faces affecting family decisions to send children to schools mainly for academic excellence and not for reasons of values formation.
- 7.4.2 High cost of sending children to Catholic institutions and therefore the financial inability of Catholic families to send their children to them.
- 7.4.3 Practice of capitation fees in two represented nations
- 7.4.4 Lack of social grace (etiquette) on the part of school administrators in their dealings with parents and students
- 7.4.5 Recommendation: To minimize, if not totally eradicate, these threats by updating formators on current philosophies that shape the world today, e.g. globalization, secularism, consumerism, new age movements and the like; and explore possible means of subsidizing Catholic schools other than tuition fee increases.

8. Church Factors

8.1 Strengths

- 8.1.1 Active participation of lay as volunteer catechists, e.g. Vietnam
- 8.1.2 Active participation of families in moral and religious formations, e.g. Vietnam
- 8.1.3 Ownerships of most private properties by Church congregations, orders and institutes, e.g. the Philippines.

- 8.1.4 Enthusiastic educative collaborators, e.g. Korea
- 8.1.5 Significant support from the Bishops' conferences
- 8.1.6 Capitalize on Sunday Church activities, e.g. Myanmar
- 8.1.7 The presence of the spirit of Voluntarism
- 8.1.8 Recommendations
 - 8.1.8.1 Sustain this enthusiasm and readiness to serve through on-going formation
 - 8.1.8.2 Plan out training programs for formators

8.2 Weaknesses

- 8.2.1 Too much emphasis on hierarchized nature of the Church (top-down structure and feudalistic nature)
- 8.2.2 Lack of parental and church support in some countries
- 8.2.3 Non-conducive social attitudes of Church people (i.e., priests and religious) to dialogue.
- 8.2.4 Need for compassion (i.e., in action) towards the deprived and the poor.
- 8.2.5 Non-admittance of some catholic students to Catholic schools
- 8.2.6 Recommendation
 - 8.2.6.1 A change of attitude towards those that Church people do really serve; maybe a review on the part of the Church people to discern Gospel values of service
 - 8.2.6.2 Devise some scheme on how to respond to non-Catholic students who are not admitted into catholic schools due to selection process of some Catholic institutions

8.3 Opportunities

- 8.3.1 Majority of formators are catholic, e.g. Korea
- 8.3.2 Muslim problem, an avenue to Dialogue with them, e.g., Philippines.
- 8.3.3 Recommendations:
 - 8.3.3.1 Maintain and improve the majority of Catholic formators
 - 8.3.3.2 Resolve the conflict with Muslims through peaceful means like dialogue by different sectors, i.e., government, academe, and Church

8.4 Threats

- 8.4.1 Lack of sensitivity of some bishops to the urgency of addressing educational concerns in one north east Asian country
- 8.4.2 Recommendation: Exhort Bishops' Conferences to act on these recommendations

9. Religious factors

9.1 Strengths

- 9.1.1 In spite of the existence of diverse religions and cultures values like respect for human life and promotion of peace and harmony in the society are positive dimensions in the countries like Indonesia, Philippines, Thailand and India.
- 9.1.2 Even though a minority, catholic youth try to uphold their identity and religiosity as Catholics in countries like Burma and Vietnam.
- 9.1.3 Catholics take part in inter-religious festivals of different groups.

9.2 Weaknesses

- 9.2.1 Lack of living witness from the part of educators is experienced in the context of Thailand.
- 9.2.2 Observable distancing between the privately owned schools of the religious congregations and bishops' conference in one country
- 9.2.3 Few and diminishing family attendance at mass (Japan)
- 9.2.4 Though born in a Catholic –religious country there is evident complacency and laxity in the practice of faith values. (Philippines)

9.3 Opportunities

- 9.3.1 Moderate Muslims agree and cooperate to all positive initiatives of the Catholics for brotherhood and harmony in the country. (Philippines)
- 9.3.2 Protestants and Catholics can unite in their efforts towards moral formation of the young. (Thailand)

9.4 Threats

- 9.4.1 There is a growing tendency from the radical Muslims to undermine the religious plurality in two countries
- 9.4.2 The proliferation of anti-Christian values to the detriment of traditional values in another country
- 9.4.3 Christian sects antagonize the other faiths to the detriment of all who are named Christians.

10. Recommendation from the Youth

10.1 Strengths

- 10.1.1 Youth at the levels of secondary and highschool and university are in a crucial formative stage of life where Gospel and humanistic values need to be taught and learned.

- 10.1.2 The holistic education process used includes various empowering methods that help them think critically and be aware of issues including globalization, human rights and peace building.
- 10.1.3 They do joint formations with youth from non-Christians groups and this is dialogue itself.
- 10.1.4 The formations result in well-rounded Catholics whom will contribute to civil society upon finishing students.
- 10.1.5 Recommendations
 - 10.1.5.1 Exposure and immersions are crucial to ensure young people experience and understand realities and respond together with others in Church inspired by Gospel and humanistic values.
 - 10.1.5.2 More resources, in particular, formations for students, animators and chaplains, financial assistance, full-time pastoral chaplains for youth, free and safe spaces are needed for a good holistic information.

10.2 Threats

- 10.2.1 Lack of knowledge on catholic social teachings and the negative effects of globalization pose a threat to young Catholic spirituality.
- 10.2.2 Young people are very quickly “judged” by adults and this is a dis-empowering process.
- 10.2.3 Lack of openness to discuss gender equality.
- 10.2.4 Catholic educational institutions which offer privatized education must not make income generation as a priority but focus on developing a holistic and empowering education process which is accessible, and affordable to all.

11. **Conclusion:** The hope to produce other-Christ in education takes its rootedness in the Eucharist, from which the entire consultation process started and culminated, and with the plenary making reference to it as the center and summit of all moral and religious formation in education. And so we end this consultation with fervent prayer that the dialogue in the Holy Trinity transforms all agents and beneficiaries of education in Asia hopefully in a decade or so: youth, families, educators, priests and bishops. Finally, the delegates thank MISSIO, Aachen, Germany for the kind support.