

LEVERAGING SPIRITUALITY IN SPUP'S 21ST CENTURY EDUCATION IN THE LIGHT OF THE NEW EVANGELIZATION

Allan Peejay M. Lappay

Abstract

This study examined the implications and relevance of the educational innovations of St. Paul University Philippines (SPUP) in the light of the educational landscape of the 21st Century and pertinent to its contribution in the realization of the thrusts of New Evangelization.

Using the descriptive method, the study ascertained that infusing realities of the 21st Century and the New Evangelization highlights SPUP's efforts to promote learning experiences to learning opportunities and excellence to spirituality. Their interplay accorded SPUP an avenue to assess all its efforts relevant to its identity and charism. Amidst the challenges brought about by these milieu, SPUP persists to innovate its educational vision by adapting to the current educational setting – the 21st Century Education; and to firmly remain consistent being animated by the Gospel and the teachings of the Church in its pursuit of human excellence through faith and reason – the New Evangelization.

Keywords: 21st Century Education, New Evangelization

@roduction

The 21st Century Education and the New Evangelization have become indispensable realities in leveraging education today. For a Catholic University, the pressing challenges of the 21st Century are questions of relevance. *How does a Catholic University respond to the call and signs of the times?* Meanwhile, the New Evangelization incites a concerted effort to revisit the institutional identity reflected by its vision and mission. *How does a Catholic University persist to be constantly rooted on its identity?*

As a learning institution, SPUP is committed to determine relevant ways and means in the delivery of its educational programs and services. It has engaged in endeavors to integrate dynamism into its process by highlighting the necessity to learn integrated and usable knowledge gained through continuing and life-long learning.

Similarly, as a Catholic University, SPUP is persistent in the transmission of faith by providing avenues for learners to articulate the harmony of faith and reason capable of guiding a life-long pursuit of knowledge and virtue. This is evident in the manner SPUP balances activities in communicating effectively the richness of the heritage of faith, the praxis of Christian moral and sacramental life and the cultivation of personal and liturgical prayer.

Theoretical Framework

The 21st Century have redefined and reinvented the goals of education and directed innovations that led to the assimilation of dynamism in the educational process. Equally, the New Evangelization has become a defining moment for Catholic Universities to institute efforts to conduct introspection regarding their educational messages and services relevant to their Catholic identity and spirituality. In like manner, SPUP, in the light of the New Evangelization, has engaged in endeavors to contextualize and to deepen spirituality of its 21st Century academic setting.

In undertaking 21st Century Education, SPUP has infringed the traditional education of antiquity. Amidst its venture into the blue ocean of the 21st Century society, the challenge of the New Evangelization persists to envelop SPUP as its 21st Century Educational thrusts and processes are deemed to be embedded in its Catholic spirituality.

In the academic year 2010 – 2011, SPUP embarked on the 21st Century Education with three salient attributes: *Strategic Directions*, *Learning Framework* and *Core Concepts*. Similarly, the New Evangelization possesses the following characteristics: *Christocentric*, *call for Participation*, *call to Mission*, *in the context of Culture*, *Comprehensive Christianization*, and *Communion of Spirituality* (Nodar, 2011).

Statement of the Problem

The study to analyzed and drew implications of the 21st Century Education of SPUP relative to the characteristics of the New Evangelization. It sought to specifically address the following concerns:

1. To determine the extent of attainment of the 21st Century Education of SPUP as manifested through its:
 - a. Strategic Directions,
 - b. Core Concepts and
 - c. Learning Framework.
2. To examine the manner by which spirituality is integrated in the 21st Century Education goals of SPUP through:
 - a. the Characteristics of the New Evangelization and
 - b. the Paulinian Core Values.
3. To assess the role of SPUP as an avenue and an instrument of the New Evangelization.

These questions were answered through assessment and analysis by appropriating the 21st Century Education of SPUP with the characteristics of the New Evangelization.

Methods

Research Design

The study utilized the descriptive method to obtain information concerning the current status of the 21st Century educational innovations of SPUP with respect to the characteristics of the New Evangelization. Through the descriptive survey method, the study established the fact that SPUP leverages spirituality in its educational innovations and breakthroughs.

Respondents of the Study

Sectors of the SPUP academic community, composed of administrators, selected students, faculty members and staff, served as the respondents of the study.

Instrumentation

Varied data gathering method and techniques were employed in the study. The quantitative information was obtained from: a) the assessment of the University Administrators on the strategic directions; b) the survey questionnaire on the Paulinian Core Values Inventory; and, c) survey questionnaires on the extent of attainment of the 21st Century Strategic Directions vis-à-vis the characteristics of the New Evangelization, the implementation of the Learning Framework and the integration of Core Concepts. Meanwhile, the qualitative data were deduced from interview-discussions and documentary analysis. This procedure facilitated the validation of the role of SPUP as an avenue and an instrument of the New Evangelization.

Data Gathering Procedure

The gathering of the necessary information relative to the crux of the endeavor was done.

1. The approval of the University President was sought for utilization of the formative evaluation results of the educational innovations of SPUP along the 21st Century Education.
2. The interviews and discussions conducted to members of the academic community elicited insights and challenges pertinent to the role of SPUP as an avenue and an instrument of New Evangelization.
3. The documentary analysis provided further evidences regarding the implementation of SPUP's 21st Century education and the integration of spirituality in SPUP's design.
4. The responses of the participants in the questionnaires were collated, analyzed and interpreted using appropriate data analysis tools.

Data Analysis

Simple frequency counts, means and percentages were used to treat the collected data. The responses of the respondents on the questionnaires were treated in their weighted means. Moreover, the obtained qualitative data through interviews, discussions and documentary analysis were also organized using thematic analysis. Series of coding were done on the qualitative responses, after which common themes that encompassed their familiar responses were identified. After common themes were determined, frequency counts and rank of the themes were obtained.

RESULTS

On the Attainment of SPUP's 21st Century Education Goals

The general assessment on the attainment of SPUP's *Strategic Directions* for the past three academic years (2010-2011, 2011-2012 and 2012-2013) was rated as "great extent." In the manner each strategic direction was attained, only the fourth strategic direction was rated as "very great extent." Five strategic directions (SD 1,2,3,5 and 7) were given a rating of "great extent;" while, the sixth strategic direction was ascertained to be "moderate extent."

The overall evaluation on the integration of the *Core Concepts* into the curriculum and teaching-learning process was "very great extent." Respondents from schools 1, 2, 3, and 4 gave an overall rating of "very great extent," while "great extent" by those from school 5.

The implementation of the *Learning Framework* was of "great extent." Except the integration of the 21st Century competencies which was rated as "very great extent," the rest of the domains, which include: schedule, grouping patterns and spaces, were determined to be of "great extent."

On the Integration of Spirituality

The assessment of the characteristics of the New Evangelization vis-à-vis the Strategic Direction yielded a rating of "very great extent." Of the six characteristics (of the New Evangelization); only the Call to Mission was rated as "great extent," while the other five characteristics, namely Christocentric, a Call for Participation, in the Context of Culture, a Comprehensive Christianization, and a Communion of Spirituality, were considered as "very great extent."

All Paulinian core values were evaluated as “great extent” by all groups of respondents. In the individual presentation of each Core Value, all their specific behaviors were also rated as “great extent.”

The integration of the Paulinian Core Values and the Characteristics of the New Evangelization was evaluated as “very great extent.” Except for the “great extent” remark accorded to the core value of Commission, all other Core Values (Christ, Charity, Charism and Community) were deemed as “very great extent.”

Spirituality in SPUP’s 21st Century Education

For the Paulinian learners, their spiritual formation at SPUP fosters avenues for spiritual growth, forms them to be more caring, more globally aware, more committed to social justice and responsive to the many challenges of the rapidly changing technological society with a greater sense of equanimity; however, the learners considered the following challenges:

1. The necessity of guiding the learners in developing their own ways of being connected to the Catholic faith and tradition.
2. The necessity of formulating spiritual goals in a language that could inspire learners by means of using words and images that have meaning to them.

For the Paulinian employees, the significance of the development of their spirituality is relative to their commitment as they fulfill their duties anchored in the Faith, to the manner they partake in the celebration of the Faith, to the way they are led to experience spiritual development programs, to the attitudes and behaviors based on institutional standards, and the consciousness to contribute in the community and society. Still, the subsequent challenges were identified:

1. The creation of opportunities where employees test their spiritual views and experiences, by questioning them and sharing them with others;
2. The development of mutual trust and respect; to accept faith as authentic, and find ways in which they might accept other ways of believing; and,

3. The encouragement to be more open, to listen to their life-stories and hear their expectations and act accordingly by finding better ways of communicating.

As to its spiritual legacy, SPUP highly regarded spirituality as the highest value of human aspiration as it permeates any historical, artistic, scientific and cultural endeavor of the University. Moreover, in SPUP spirituality encompasses world outlook, ideology, methodology, knowledge, awareness of the person and of society, value orientations and social action.

Conclusions

Based on the findings of this study, the following conclusions were derived:

The SPUP's 21st Century Education Framework was formulated to respond the challenge of bridging the gap between the academe and the society. Through its 21st Century Education goals, SPUP has navigated the transition from traditional to dynamic learning environment. At the same time, SPUP has focused on high standards for all; coupled with the recognition on the significance of versatility and dynamism in the face of change to prepare Paulinian learners along the demands of the 21st Century.

The spirituality in the era of New Evangelization requires a commitment to be inclusive on many different levels. For education, it is manifested in the spiritual formation of the learners. Through this SPUP affirms that learning happens in a context where authentic and spontaneous relations flourish between faith and reason; and, the meaning and purpose of education.

The impact of the New Evangelization on the 21st Century Education necessitates the role of spirituality in SPUP as a Catholic educational institution. Furthermore, spirituality in the light of the New Evangelization and of the 21st Century Education enhances its relationship with teaching and learning; the cultivation of values; the practical application of moral and ethical principles; and the formation of learning communities and responsible citizens.

Recommendations

The following recommendations were generated on the bases of the results of the study:

1. That an annual evaluation on the attainment of the Strategic Directions, integration of the Core Concepts and the implementation of the Learning Framework to facilitate the overall assessment of the 21st Century Goals of SPUP for 2010-2015 be conducted.
2. That an assessment on students and employees' engagement activities for proper alignment with the Paulinian Core Values and the vision-mission of the University be done annually.
3. That an impact study of Paulinian Education to the SPUP Alumni relevant to their spirituality be conducted.
4. That an enhanced spiritual formation program for SPUP employees be mapped out and formulated.
5. That the orientation of Paulinian students and employees to the Paulinian Core Values, Spirituality and Heritage be emphasized.
6. That an instrument for gauging the Spiritual Quotient (SQ) of the members of SPUP academic community be formulated, tested, validated and administered.
7. That a thorough documentation of the all endeavors of the University and their proper classification for access and study be carried out.
8. That continuing efforts to promote SPUP as a Catholic Cultural Center, be institutionalized to ensure that faith and culture meet, be kept alive.
9. That a thorough review of the extent of integration of Catholic Teachings to non-Religious Education courses be conducted.

References

A. Books

- Anzilotti, L. (2004). *Evangelization: three contemporary approaches*. ed. Thomas Rausch. New York: Paulist Press.
- Astin, H. (2004). *The value of spirituality*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Brauer, E. (2009). *The 21st century: its impact to education*. New York: McGraw Hill.
- Douglas, J. (2009). *Defining 21st century education*. New York: Pantheon Books, Inc.
- Granados, S. (2009). *Higher education for change*. Buckingham: Open University Press.
- Harding, V. (2002). *Spirituality: the heart of learning*. New York: Penguin Putnam, Inc.
- McLeod, A. (2010). *Shifting to the 21st century education*. New York: Charles Scribner's and Sons.
- Miller, R. (2013). *Meaning and purpose in education*. New York: New York University Press.
- Nodar, G. (2011). *New evangelization: the challenges ahead*. New York: Harper and Row.
- Roseblatt, B. (2010). *The attributes of the 21st century education*. New Haven: Putnam.
- Scott, J. (2003). *Towards spiritual development*. New York: Penguin Putnam, Inc.

B. Journals

- Buchanan, M. "Pedagogical Drift: The Evolution of New Approaches and Paradigms in Religious Education." Religious Education, 100 (1), April 2005: pp. 48 – 65.
- Forte, Cardinal B. "Education and the New Evangelization." Vatican Journal, 70 (1), November 2012: pp. 93 - 105.
- Grocholewski, Cardinal Z. "The New Evangelization: Prospects and Challenges." Vatican Journal, 70 (1), November 2012: pp. 55 - 72.

C. Electronic Sources

Evangelization and education. (2011, May 02): The discourse of Pope Benedict XVI to the *ad limina* bishops of the United States from www.catholicnewsagency.com/. Retrieved: April 22, 2013.

The Era of New Evangelization. (2012, December 10): The Pastoral Statement of the Italian Episcopal Conference from www.catholicnewsagency.com/. Retrieved: April 15, 2013.