



Assessing the Teaching of Values in Elementary Grades

Kathrina Lorraine M. Lucasan

University of the Philippines

Center for Integrative and Development Studies Education Research Program

Christine Joy A. Ballada

De La Salle University, Manila

Abstract

The values education framework of the Philippines' Department of Education (DepEd) emphasizes the teaching of core values (i.e., truth, justice, freedom, love, equality, and peace), as well as 21st century skills and critical thinking. The DepEd also expects subject teachers to integrate values in their lessons. Whether these essential components are actually taught in the classroom or not needs to be determined. This study sought to assess the teaching of values in a public elementary school in one city in the National Capital Region. Using questionnaires, teachers and their students were asked to identify the values that are being taught in the classroom, and how these values are taught. Results show that teachers teach a variety of values, and that the importance they give to these values differs from that of their students. Different teaching strategies were also mentioned in the teaching and integration of values in other subjects. Recommendations for the teaching of values and its integration in various subjects are forwarded.

Keywords: Teaching values, values integration, elementary students

Introduction

Values education is an important but often neglected learning area in basic education. It leads to many beneficial effects for learners, such as the development of better sociomoral cognition, prosocial behaviors and attitudes, problem-solving skills, reduced drug use, reduced violence/aggression, school behavior, knowledge and attitudes about risk, emotional competency, academic

achievement, attachment to school, and decreased general misbehavior (Berkowitz & Bier, 2007). Well-implemented character education programs also lead to higher academic achievement (Benninga, Berkowitz, Kuehn & Smith, 2003; Snyder et al., 2009).

In the Philippines, the importance of values education is emphasized in the Department of Education (DepEd) Order No. 6, s. 1988. It defines values education as “the process by which values are formed in the learner, under the guidance of the teacher, and as he interacts with his environment” (DepEd, 1988). The DepEd Values Education Framework aims to “provide and promote values education to all for the development of the human person committed to the building of a ‘just and humane society and an independent and democratic nation” (DepEd, 1988).

The DepEd Values Education Framework is anchored on the 1987 Philippine Constitution, which identified in its Preamble, the core values on “truth, justice, freedom, love, equality, and peace.” Thus, the core and related values included in the Values Education Framework include those that are aimed at supporting and preserving human dignity.

In 2003, the DepEd released Order No. 41, which emphasized values education in the restructured Basic Education Curriculum. In this memorandum, DepEd stressed that every teacher, regardless of discipline, is a values education teacher, and thus, values development must be meaningfully integrated in every subject in basic education. More recently, the DepEd K to 12 Curriculum Guide for the subject *Edukasyon sa Pagpapakatao* (ESP or Values Education) specifies the inclusion of twenty-first century skills aside from the core values that were identified in the original 1988 Values Education Framework (DepEd, 2013). ESP is considered as one of the major subjects and is given the same weight as English, Math, Science, Filipino and *Araling Panlipunuan* (Social Studies) when calculating for a student’s general average, as specified in the Policy Guidelines on Classroom Assessment for the K to 12 Basic Education Program (DepEd, 2015). Figure 1 shows the current conceptual framework for values education (DepEd, 2013).

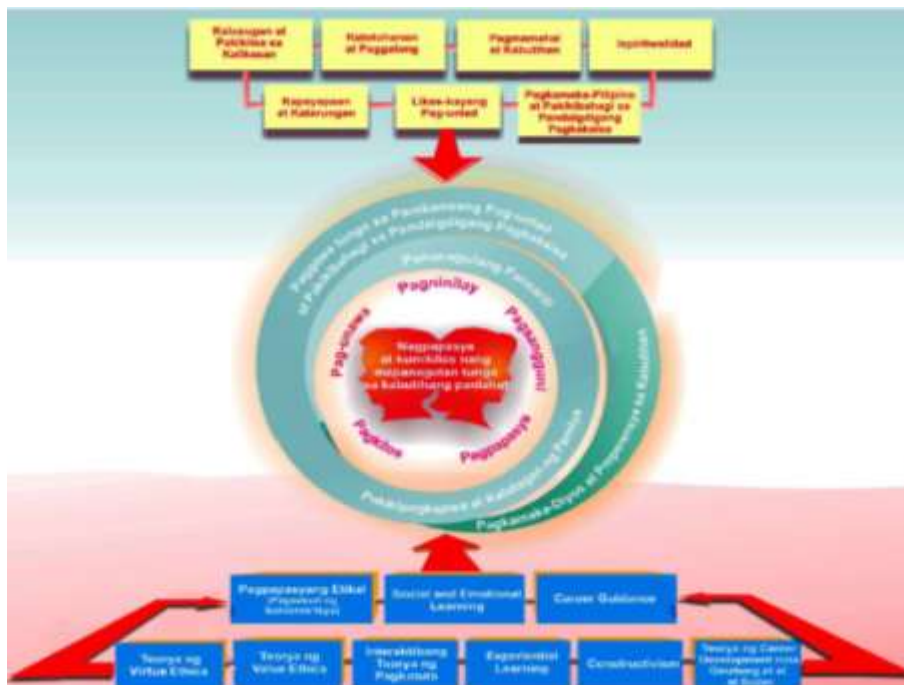


Figure 1. DepEd Conceptual Framework for Values Education

In this framework, the core outcome of values education is the total human development of the student, especially in terms of the 21st century skills. Thus, values education aims to develop students who are able to decide and act responsibly for the common good. To do this, students will be guided in discovering the significance or meaning of their lives and their role in Philippine society so that they can effectively contribute to the building of a community that upholds truth, freedom, justice, and love (DepEd, 2016). Thus, students must be able to demonstrate the macro skills of understanding, reflecting, seeking guidance or advice, making decisions, and acting according to moral standards.

According to DepEd (2016), values education in the Philippines is anchored on the philosophy of personalism and on the concept of virtue ethics. Personalism is a paradigm that gives importance to the uniqueness, significance, and inviolability of the person, and the person's relational or social dimension (Williams & Bengston, 2018). Personalism recognizes the unique, infinite dignity of human persons and one's personhood is made whole only in communion with other persons (Brooks, 2018). Virtue ethics, on the other

hand, posits that a good person is one who lives virtuously, that is, what makes a person good is possessing and living out the virtues (DepEd, 2016).

The curriculum guide for ESP also names other theories used to explain how students ought to learn values education. These include Bandura's Social Learning Theory, Kolb's Experiential Learning, Constructivism, and Theory of Career Development (DepEd, 2016). The curriculum guide briefly describes each theory, but there is no elaboration how these theories play out in the actual teaching-learning process.

Strategies for Teaching Values

Halstead and Taylor (2000) identified several methods of teaching values, which are directly related to values education theories. Character education (Lickona, Schaps, & Lewis, 2007) approaches the teaching of values through direct instruction. This involves identifying the values that ought to be imbibed by students and providing opportunities for studying these values directly through formal instruction, problem solving, cooperative learning, experience-based projects, and discussions of ways to practice virtues (Halstead & Taylor, 2000). Values education that adheres to the theory of moral reasoning (Kohlberg, 1987) prefer the use of dilemma discussion strategies, which have been found effective in advancing moral reasoning in students (Cummings, Maddux, Cladianos, & Richmond, 2010). Another approach to teaching values is circle time, which is a popular method for promoting confidence, self-knowledge, and self-esteem, usually among primary students (Halstead & Taylor, 2000). Circle time involves having students and the teacher sit in a circle on the same level to talk about a topic or theme and/or to share ideas or feelings (Mary, 2014). This approach has been shown to facilitate prosocial behaviors, develop social and personal skills, and improve confidence and self-esteem among students (Cefai, Ferrario, Cavioni, Carter & Grech, 2014; Collins, 2013; Miller & Moran, 2007).

Aside from explicit instruction in a specific subject like ESP, values may be integrated in the teaching of other academic subjects. Veugelers (2000) proposed that teachers often use four strategies in teaching value-laden topics. In the first strategy, teachers trying not to express their own values. The second strategy involves teachers explicitly stating those values that they find important. For the third strategy, teachers stress the differences among values, without expresses the values they find important. Finally, the fourth strategy involves the teacher indicating differences in values, but also expressing the values they find important. Veugelers (2000) also noted that teachers usually

follow a pattern in teaching values. They start off by not expressing their values, and then they stress the differences in values, without stating their own, to allow students to form their own opinions. Eventually, though, teachers end by indicating the values that they find important.

The Curriculum Guide for ESP identifies three strategies for teaching values (DepEd, 2016). These are ethical decision making through analysis of issues or problems, Social-Emotional Learning (SEL), and career decision-making. According to the Curriculum Guide, students should be taught how to choose actions with a preference for the common good. Specifically, the process of decision making should include identifying details related to the issue or problem and careful consideration of the moral values that impact that situation and the impact of one's actions on others. The Curriculum Guide also identifies the SEL skills that ought to be developed in students. These skills include self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, responsible decision-making, and relationship skills (CASEL, 2019). There is no discussion, however, how these skills may be facilitated inside the classroom. Finally, the ESP Curriculum Guide specifies that career decision-making should be included as a strategy in teaching values, but there is no discussion to explain how this will be articulated in the teaching-learning process.

The Present Study

The present study aimed to assess the practice of teaching values in a public elementary school. Specifically, it sought to determine what values are being taught, how these are integrated in other subjects, and the strategies that teachers use in teaching these values. Furthermore, it sought to identify if teachers and their students differ in terms of the importance they give to the values being taught in school.

Method

Research Design

This study made use of a cross-sectional, descriptive research design (Johnson, 2001). This design was used because the purpose of the study was to describe the current state of practice in the teaching of values in the elementary grades.

Participants

The main participants of the study were elementary teachers ($n = 35$, age range = 28 to 40 years, M age = 39.07 years, $SD = 6.89$) in a public school in Makati City, Metro Manila. Table 1 shows the distribution of the participants according to selected demographic variables.

Table 1. *Distribution of Study Participants*

Variable/Levels	Frequency	Percent
Gender		
Male	4	11.43
Female	27	77.14
No response	4	11.43
Highest Educational Attainment		
Bachelor's	20	57.14
Master's	6	17.14
No response	9	25.71
Years of Teaching Experiences		
5 to 9 years	5	14.29
10 to 14 years	12	34.29
15 to 19 years	8	22.86
20 or more years	6	17.14
No response	4	11.43
$M = 14.61, sd = 5.96$		
Grade Level Taught		
Grade 1	5	14.29
Grade 2	4	11.43
Grade 3	7	20.00
Grade 4	6	17.14
Grade 5	7	20.00
Grade 6	6	17.14
Subjects Taught		
<i>Araling Panlipunan</i> (Social Studies)	11	31.43

Variable/Levels	Frequency	Percent
English	13	37.14
<i>Edukasyong Pantahanan at Pangkabuhayan</i> (Technology and Livelihood Education)	4	11.43
<i>Edukasyon sa Pagpapakatao</i> (Values Education)	23	65.71
Filipino		
Health	15	42.86
Music, Arts, Physical Education and Health	1	2.86
Math	10	28.57
Mother Tongue	13	37.14
Science	7	20.00
	5	14.29

Grade Six students were asked to validate the responses of their teachers. A total of 189 students (47% boys) responded to a questionnaire that asked them to identify the values being taught by their teachers.

Instruments

Teachers responded to a questionnaire that generated information about the values they think should be taught and why, the top five values which should be taught, and the teaching strategies used and in which subjects these were used.

Students also answered a questionnaire that sought to validate the top five values that were identified by teachers. Only Grade 6 students were selected to participate in this validation phase because younger students might not be able to accomplish a self-report instrument.

Procedure

The researchers first sought permission from the school principal and informed consent from the teachers and the parents of the Grade Six pupils. Once permission had been given, the teachers and their students were asked to respond to the instrument. A follow-up interview was conducted with one teacher to verify the responses obtained from the questionnaire.

Data Analysis

Teachers were asked to identify all the values that they teach to students. They were then asked to rank the top five values in order of importance. Students were also asked to rank the top five values that they believe their teachers emphasize during class. The Mann-Whitney U Test was then conducted to determine whether there was a significant difference in the mean ranks of these values as rated by teachers and their students.

Results and Discussion

Values Taught

Teachers and students were asked to identify the values that are being taught in their school. These may be values taught either in ESP or integrated in other subjects. Table 2 shows these values in alphabetical order.

Table 2. *Values Taught in Grades 1 to 6*

1. commitment	11. generosity	21. patience
2. cooperation	12. Godly devotion	22. perseverance
3. courtesy	13. grit	23. resourcefulness
4. creativity	14. hard work	24. respect
5. devotion	15. honesty	25. responsibility
6. diligence	16. initiative	26. sacrifice
7. discipline	17. judgment	27. self-discipline
8. entrepreneurial spirit	18. love	28. self-respect
9. faith in God	19. love of country	29. self-worth
10. faithfulness	20. obedience	

From the list above, teachers were asked to identify the top five most important values to teach. These values, in alphabetical order, are faith in God, honesty, kindness, love, and respect. Grade Six students were then asked to validate whether or not these are the values they have learned from their teachers. The Mann-Whitney U Test was used to test the hypothesis that the mean ranks assigned by teachers and students would not be significantly different, indicating that the values considered by teachers to be important are also the same values that students feel they are learning. Table 3 shows results of the Mann-Whitney U Test.

Table 3. *Comparing Mean Ranks using the Mann-Whitney U Test*

	Group	Mean Rank	Mann-Whitney U	<i>p</i> -value
Respect	Students	121.42	2930.5	.107
	Teachers	101.73		
Honesty	Students	121.64	2886.0	.084
	Teachers	100.46		
Faith in God	Students	126.83	1843.5	.000
	Teachers	70.67		
Love	Students	120.48	3120.0	.147
	Teachers	107.14		
Kindness	Students	124.24	2364.0	.001
	Teachers	85.54		

Note. Smaller mean ranks indicate greater importance of the value

The results showed that these five values are perceived by teachers to be more important compared to their students. While students ranked these values as equally important (mean ranks range from 120.48 to 124.24), teachers place more importance to certain values than others (mean ranks range from 70.67 to 107.14). In particular, the Mann-Whitney U tests showed that *Faith in God* ($U = 1,843.50, p = 0.000$) and *Kindness* ($U = 2,364.00, p = 0.001$) have mean ranks rated by teachers that are significantly different from the mean ranks rated by students. This means that teachers consider these two as the more important values they teach in class, but students perceive these values to be given the same importance as other values.

It should also be noted that although there are a variety of values that teachers focus on, these values are still anchored on the DepEd Values Education framework, as shown in Table 4.

Table 4. *DepEd Core Values and Values Taught by Teachers*

DepEd Core Values	Values Identified by Teachers
<i>Kalusugan at Pakikiisa sa Kalikasan</i> (Health and Concern for the Environment)	self-discipline self-respect self-worth
<i>Katotohanan at Paggalang</i> (Truth and Respect)	honesty kindness respect
<i>Pagmamahal at Kabutihan</i> (Love and Kindness)	courtesy devotion generosity kindness love obedience patience sacrifice
<i>Ispiritwalidad</i> (Spirituality)	faith in God faithfulness godly devotion
<i>Kapayapaan at Katarungan</i> (Peace and Justice)	judgement patience
<i>Likas-kayang Pag-unlad</i> (Personal Development)	commitment cooperation creativity devotion entrepreneurial spirit grit hard work initiative perseverance resourcefulness responsibility sacrifice self-discipline

DepEd Core Values	Values Identified by Teachers
<i>Pagkamaka-Pilipino at Pakikibahagi sa Pandaigdigang Pagkakaisa</i> (Nationalism and Global Citizenship)	cooperation love of country responsibility

An interview conducted with one teacher clarified why teachers identified different values. This teacher noted that the choice of which values to teach is incidental and usually based on the content to be discussed. For example, when the topic is about water and land resources, the teacher also takes the opportunity to teach the value of caring for the environment. Schuitema et al. (2008) noted that this strategy entails using topics with a moral dimension as a jump off point for discussing specific values. This implies, however, that teachers could focus on as many values as there are topics in a particular subject area. Moreover, the finding that teachers do not have a consensus in terms of the values that they teach suggests that they have no common understanding of the DepEd values education framework.

Lickona (2002) noted that effective character education calls for schools to explicitly state the values they stand for, define these values in terms of observable behaviors, disseminate these values to all members of the school community, and hold all school members accountable to a standard of conduct consistent with such values. In the current study, it was found that teachers and students held different beliefs in terms of what values are important. This incongruence may be due to the fact that the values held important by the school are not explicitly stated and communicated with all school members, including the teachers and students. This is a cause for concern, because the identification and definition of values to be taught are essential for character education (McKay, 2002).

Teaching Strategies Used

Table 5 shows the strategies teachers use to teach values. Teachers use a variety of strategies, some of which are applied in both ESP (i.e., values education) and in integrating values in other academic subjects. The use of different approaches is not surprising considering that the DepEd (2016) Curriculum Guide for ESP does not clearly or sufficiently explain how values should be taught in the classroom.

Table 5. *Strategies Used to Teach Values* (n = 35)

Strategies	Used in ESP		Used in Integrating Values in other Subjects	
	f	%	f	%
Analysis of everyday situations	1	2.86	-	-
Behavior management	3	8.57	-	-
Direct instruction/Lecture	9	25.71	9	25.71
Experiments	-	-	1	2.86
Games	-	-	4	11.43
Group activity	1	2.86	2	5.71
Modeling	-	-	2	5.71
Role playing	3	8.57	3	8.57
Setting standards	-	-	5	14.29
Use of stories	1	2.86	7	20.00
Use of video clips	8	22.86	1	2.86
Visualization	2	5.71	-	-

The results show that teachers frequently use direct instruction or lecture, video clips, stories, role play, group activities, and games in teaching values. Among these strategies, the use of stories has been found to be an effective method for teaching values. For example, Leming (2000) found that a literature-based character education program was effective in improving students' ethical conduct. Using stories also helps students build social skills and decrease negative social behaviors (DeRosier & Mercer, 2007). While the teachers in the study identified the use of stories to teach values, there was no opportunity for them to explain how they practice this in the classroom.

Other effective approaches of teaching values include cooperative learning and group work where students are given the opportunity to discuss and solve problems (Schuitema, Dam, & Veugelers, 2008). In a review of character education programs, Berkowitz and Bier (2005) noted that peer interaction is a powerful means of promoting character development among students. Based on the response of the teachers, it can be seen that they do provide opportunities for students to interact and work together through group activities, role playing, games and experiments.

Note, however, that direct instruction is still the favored teaching strategy identified in this study. This suggests that teachers may need more training or professional development in the teaching of values, either as a

subject in itself or integrated with another academic discipline. Previous research in Western countries has shown that teachers often receive very little training in the teaching of values (Milson & Mehlig, 2002), which may explain why they lack professional knowledge (i. e., a common formal ethical language and knowledge based on educational theories and research) in the field of values education (Thornberg, 2008). This is also likely to be true among Filipino teachers. A cursory examination of the Teacher Education curriculum (CHED, 2017a; CHED, 2017b) shows that the teaching of values is given emphasis only in the Bachelor of Secondary Education, major in Values Education program. The Bachelor of Elementary Education program has one course on Good Manners and Right Conduct, while the other specializations (i. e., English, Mathematics, Science, Social Studies, and Filipino) in the Bachelor of Secondary Education program do not include a course on the teaching of values.

Conclusions and Recommendations

This study identified the values that elementary school teachers deem important to impart to students and the strategies they employ in teaching those values. Teachers named a variety of values, but the top five most important values they teach students are faith in God, kindness, honesty, respect, and love. Students ranked the values they think have been taught to them, and their rankings were found to be different from that of their teachers. This lack of consensus suggests that the values being given importance in the school are not explicitly and publicly stated. Teachers also identified various strategies of teaching values, but the most common method is direct instruction, either in ESP or in other academic subjects. This indicates that teachers may need additional training in the teaching of values, and especially in integrating values in other academic subjects.

In order to make the teaching of values more effective, schools should clearly identify and define the values that will be taught and emphasized across grade levels and subjects (McKay, 2002). All adult members of the school, including non-teaching staff, should consistently practice these values so that they can be effective role models for students (McKay, 2002). Teachers should employ strategies that have been found effective in values education, such as the use of stories (Leming, 2000), having moral dilemma discussions (Schuitema et al., 2008), and collaborative learning (Berkowitz & Bier, 2005). Finally, schools should provide opportunities for community participation

whenever possible so that students are able to see these values being practiced in real life (McKay, 2002).

We recognize that the current study is limited in terms of its sample size and methodology. Future research may consider a larger sample across different schools and levels. A deeper examination of the teaching strategies in values education may also be considered through a mixed-methods research design. In particular, a qualitative phase that utilizes both interview and observation data will give a clearer picture of how values are being taught in Philippine classrooms.

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