

WHAT THE PHILIPPINE CHRISTIAN UNIVERSITY HAS DONE TO INSTILL ETHICS IN PUBLIC SERVICE

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Our educational system has been trying to provide our young people with an education that balances the acquisition and the application of knowledge and skills. Attempts have been made to bridge the traditional gap between theory and practice. Different methods of instruction have been used by different institutions of higher learning with the objective of curricular offerings becoming more practical in outlook. Different schools have varying degrees of success as far as attaining this objective is concerned.

An important part of the learning process for our students is developing their capabilities in the "HOW" of the acquisition and application of knowledge. This kind of capability building will be a major factor in the competence of these future professionals and practitioners. Learning how to learn will also be a big influence on the future outlook and values of our students.

The acquisition of skills and knowledge is like the possession of a double-bladed knife. It can cut either way. The most knowledgeable individual can either be the most productive or destructive person depending on how he uses his skills and knowledge. This in turn will be determined by the kind of values he has. Ethics in public service is greatly influenced by the kind of skills and values our bureaucrats imbibed during their school days.

In our curricular offerings, we had been trying to have the appropriate blend of that which is scientific and that which is normative. There are courses which are by nature highly scientific and there are those which are highly normative. Two years of liberal arts courses are intended to provide a general education that is both scientific and normative. Even in our course content and methods of instruction we try to be both scientific and normative in our approaches. That which is scientific will determine the student's technical competence while the normative aspect will influence what he will use his expertise for.

Throughout their school days, our students should develop values relative to productivity such as competence, industry, a scientific mind, and high ethical standards. This is if everything goes well according to our curricular offerings,

course contents, methods of instruction, and co-curricular activities. The problem is there may be a big difference between what is planned and what is being implemented and realized. That portion which is envisioned and that which is implemented and realized are part of the contribution of the academic institutions in the private and the government sectors in instilling ethics. That portion of our academic program which we have failed to realize is what we have not done as far as maintaining ethics in places of work is concerned.

The graduates of our academic institutions are envisioned to be productive members of society. They must have the capability to get things done. The ethical norms of people are highly influenced by their competence and productivity. Workers who are productive and competent are less likely to have low ethical standards in their places of work. Those who are unproductive and incompetent are the ones most likely to be corrupt and dishonest. There are even instances wherein individuals have to be dishonest as a matter of survival.

Public servants with low ethical standards could be the product of ineffective education caused by irrelevant curricular offerings and course contents. There are those whose poor academic performance is due to lack of motivation because of incompetent teachers and methods of instruction which are not conducive to the learning process. Of course there are factors outside of education (i.e., family, community, and others) which can contribute to poor academic performance and lack of appropriate human values.

To help remedy the problem, values education is now an important component of our educational system. One problem is that in many instances, the kind of values education we have is too theoretical and only good for classroom discussions. Even teachers and students are having a hard time relating it to real life situations. Its application should start right in the values education classes. Some students do not study their lessons (displaying lack of industry and hard work) or even cheat during examinations which are already manifestations of low ethical standards.

What we need is more of applied values education integrated in all of our course offerings. To have maximum impact, this must be part of effective and relevant curricular offerings, course content, methods of instruction, and instructional materials. Values education will have minimal effect if integrated in ineffective and irrelevant academic programs.

Institutions of higher learning are very particular about the character of the professionals they produce. This can readily be seen in the statement of their educational missions and academic visions. They emphasize character, service, and faith. Mission schools are aiming to provide an education that is Christian in perspective as its distinctive feature and at the same time making this as their contribution to instilling high ethical standards for their graduates who will join the public service.

As far as Philippine Christian University (PCU) is concerned, deciding on what is socially relevant and acceptable in public service is based upon the moral

standards that we have instilled in our Christian Ethics and Christian Formation subjects. In effect, students develop a strong social conscience and a strong volition to make right decisions with the right intent. In the words of the Christian philosopher Peter Abelard, "the rightness or wrongness of an act does not lie on the action itself but rather on the intent or motive of the action".

PCU believes and affirms that life is a gift from God, therefore we need to be good stewards of this life. This mission statement has been integrated in our Christian Ethics and Christian Formation subjects, necessitating the students' awareness of how to make use of the body, time, resources, and talents, which in effect provides a very strong perception of how to serve God and country. PCU also instills the Christian principles of service not only to the studentry but also to the whole PCU work force. As it is evident that service is founded on the models presented by Jesus Christ, therefore this University has been trying to instill strong ethical, moral, and intellectual standards among the students as they publicly serve the society. Immanuel Kant's *Categorical Imperative*, states that *knowledge* of the truth and experiencing the *experience* of that knowledge of the truth should go together. Knowledge and experience according to Kant are inseparable. One is not enough without the other.

Lastly, the outreach program of our University well describes how the institution shows its concern for the needy and impoverished. Our mission is to serve the people who may be deprived of the basic necessities such as food, clothing, and medical and dental assistance. We continue to reinforce our outreach program in order to serve fully the needy and impoverished. In all courses, the application of theories and concepts also includes application of Christian values. Faculty, staff, and students are well represented in all the functioning institutional committees that help run the day to day programs of our University. This gives us a good chance of applying the values we teach in our Christian Ethics and Christian Formation subjects.

After all, the academic thrust of the University is to provide an education that is *Filipino in perspective, Christian in character, and university in caliber*.