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The Humanist Philosophy of General Education in the Philippines: Postmodern Framework and Interdisciplinary Approach of the New GE Core Courses

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Abstract

The humanist ideal of liberal education and the postmodern paradigm for learning were interpreted as a form of interdisciplinarity towards knowledge integration applied to the Philippine educational setting, through the expositions of the CHED's memorandum orders pertinent to GE, and through the analysis of the contents of textbooks and modules proposed to be used for teaching the GE core courses at the University of the East. The philosophy of general education was synthesized through this statement: the eight GE core courses interacted with one another in harmonious ways, and, freely sharing their respective knowledge, they created integrated truths that approximate reality. This means that the epistemological value of general education was the capacity of the human race to work responsibly together towards constructing the truths of the world.

Keywords: Interdisciplinary Approach, Humanist Education, Philosophy of General Education, Postmodern Epistemology of Education

Beginning the School Year 2018-19, Tertiary Education in the Philippines has experienced a paradigm shift with the introduction of the new General Education Curriculum (GEC). Directed by the Commission on Higher Education (CHED), the

mode of implementing the GEC was specified in the CHED Memorandum Order (CMO) No. 20, Series of 2013. The CMO clarified that specialized learning "focuses on particular discipline" and is “directed at a more theoretical and technical knowledge,” while general education “introduces the students to different ways of knowing,” and is "oriented towards broad and wide-ranging understanding.” General Education intends to develop in the students intellectual, personal and civic, and practical competencies. In sum, its goal is the total formation of the person, within the intersecting spheres of being an individual, a Filipino, and a global citizen, who is imbued with professional and moral qualities, and attuned to the conditions of the present times. To achieve this humanist ideal of education, the old GEC for college was revised.

The new GEC includes a total of 36 units (equivalent to 12 courses). Out of these, 24 units (eight courses) are for core courses. composed of the following:

Understanding the Self/Pag-unawa sa Sarili
Readings in Philippine History/Mga Babasahin Hinggil sa Kasaysayan ng Pilipinas
The Contemporary World/Ang Kasalukuyang Daigdig
Art Appreciation/Pagpapahalaga sa Sining
Mathematics in the Modern World/Matematika sa Makabagong Mundo
Science, Technology and Society/Agham, Teknolohiya at Lipunan
Purposive Communication/ Malayuning Pagpapahayag
Ethics/Etika

The new paradigm, within which the revised GEC was framed, may be deeply and better understood by revealing its underlying philosophy of general education characterized as “postmodern,” as distinct from the old paradigm described as “modern.” Understanding this philosophy, with the well-defined

distinction between the old and the new conceptual models for learning, would make one realize the peculiar quality of an efficient educational system adapted to the social, and cultural conditions of contemporary times. The theories of knowledge and truth these paradigms entailed, and the complexities and dynamics involved in the implementation of the new curriculum through the GE documents were precisely the subject matters tackled in the study.

Statement of the Problem

The study aimed to formulate a philosophy of general education in the Philippines based on the humanist ideal of liberal education and the postmodern paradigm for learning, through the exposition of the documents and the interpretation of the interdisciplinary contents of instructional materials pertinent to the teaching of the eight GE core courses. In particular, it sought to answer the following questions:

1. What was the epistemological foundation of general education in the Philippines assumed by the GE documents, such as the memorandum orders (CMO's) by the CHED and related sources?
2. What were the underlying humanist ideal and postmodern paradigm for learning assumed by the instructional materials, such as the course modules and the textbooks recommended to be used by the faculty for teaching the eight GE core courses at the University of the East (UE)?
3. What philosophy of general education in the Philippines was formulated through the exposition of the interdisciplinary contents of the GE core courses in the GE documents and UE instructional materials?
4. How was the interdisciplinary approach of the GE core courses interpreted as implying the humanist ideal and the postmodern paradigm for learning in general education?
5. How may the teaching of the GE core courses be further improved in their interdisciplinary approach?

Significance of the Study

The primary importance of the study was its academic contribution to the philosophy of education in the Philippine setting. The complete articulation of a philosophy of general education in the country by any government agency, such as the CHED, was found to be wanting in its official documents. There were even no memorandum orders that specifically pertain to this matter. The lack of full intellectual justifications was probably one of the reasons why the CMO's concerning the implementation of the new GEC had received a lot of criticisms from theoretical points of view. If any kind of philosophy was ever mentioned in the documents, it was given only short-sighted and fragmentary discussions. It was found that the philosophy was expressed partially by several documents, so what was needed was to collate them, and then harmonize their relevant parts together to form one, coherent notion. Hence, this study was quite significant in fashioning a well-defined postmodern philosophy of general education in the Philippines.

There were many studies about education and the present state of education in the country, almost all of which, however, were without or at the least short of philosophical insights and were quantitative, descriptive, and empirical. This investigation found some works about the philosophy of education in the Philippines (German & Gregorio 1979, Elevazo 1995, Hornedo 1995, Cenzon 1999, Orate 2000, Mendoza & Santos 2010, Gepila 2017, Magulod 2017, Cunanan 2018), few about the general education curriculum (Torres & Goingo 2011, Digo 2015, UP GE Task Force 2015), and very few about the philosophy of general education (Villaba 1986) and postmodern education in the country (Ellar 2016). From the available sources which had been consulted, there was categorically nothing about the particular area of postmodern philosophy of general education in the Philippines. Given this deficiency, the present study was a unique and notable contribution to the existing body of knowledge.

Research Methodology

The research investigation was purely qualitative because its subject matter was fundamentally in the field of philosophy, particularly, epistemology or theory of knowledge in education. It employed the expository-interpretative method of investigation in the analysis of documents. The study demonstrated the nature of knowledge and truth in education based on a postmodern paradigm for learning, using primary materials on the subject and elaborated by some selected secondary sources. The contents of the GE documents, like the CHED memorandum orders and the UE's instructional materials for the teaching of GE core courses, were analyzed in the light of humanist ideal and postmodern epistemology, for the construction of the philosophy of general education in the Philippines.

The method of inquiry underwent four systematic steps: first, the philosophical discussion about postmodern epistemology and the humanistic concept of education; second, the exposition of the philosophical dimension of the CHED GE documents, and the interdisciplinary approach of the UE instructional materials; third, the interpretation of the epistemology conveyed by the GE documents and the interdisciplinary approach of the instructional materials as falling within the framework of a postmodern theory of knowledge and truth; and finally, the formulation of a humanist and postmodern philosophy of general education by the integration of the GE documents to the concept of general education according to a postmodern paradigm for learning and the humanist ideal,

Scope and Limitations

The particular courses included in the study were the eight GE core courses stipulated in CMO 20, Series of 2013, and have been implemented at UE starting the First Semester, School Year 2020-21. It was only from the perspectives of Ethics and Art Appreciation that the other courses are analyzed. Among the materials considered in the study, one group was the government documents consisting of official documents from national

government agencies concerned with tertiary education, chiefly the Commission on Higher Education (CHED). Called "CHED documents," they had something to do with the GE core courses and their implementations. Primarily included among these were the memorandum orders by the CHED or CMO's concerning the GEC and their related memoranda and their accompanying special releases. The two most important CHED documents were the CMO No. 59, Series of 1996: "The New General Education Curriculum (GEC)", and the CMO No. 20, Series of 2013: "General Education Curriculum: Holistic Understanding and General Competencies".

The other type of GE documents analyzed in the study were the so-called "UE documents". They covered the instructional materials for the eight GE core courses, consisting of the textbooks and the course modules recommended to be used by the UE faculty for teaching the GE core courses during the First and Second Semesters of the School Year 2020-21. The textbooks were the following:

> Casas, John Miller A., Peirce M. Jusayan, Aida V. Menor & Steve B. Obanan (2020). *Science, Technology and Society.* Quezon City: C & E Publishing Inc.
>
> Claudio, Lisandro E. & Patricio N. Abinales (2018). *The Contemporary World.* Quezon City: C & E Publishing Inc.
>
> Co, Madeleine M, Denver B. Dumo & Leonardo S. Garcia (2019). *Ethics in Contemporary Perspectives.* Malabon City: Mutya Publishing House Inc.
>
> Devilles, Gary C., Reagan R. Maiquez & Rolando B. Tolentino (2018). *Art Sense: Sensing the Arts in the Everyday.* Quezon City: C & E Publishing Inc.

Evangelista, Justina, Carmelita Ragasa & Ethel Baltazar (2019). *Mathematics in Modern World.* Quezon City: C & E Pub. Inc.

Gabriel, Percival S. & Rogelio I. Espiritu (2020). *Saysay at Salaysay: Readings in Philippine History.* Malabon City: Mutya Publishing House Inc.

Go-Monilla, Ma. Jocelyn A. & Normaliza C. Ramirez (2018). *Understanding the Self.* Quezon City: C & E Publishing Inc.

Mercado, Maria Christina P., Rossana V. Mendoza, Ma. Victoria Z. Godinez, Darwin M. Guinan, Francisco V. Dizon & Ernesto SJ. Cledera (2019). *Purposive Communication: Connecting to the World.* Malabon City: Mutya Publishing House Inc.

The GE course modules analyzed in the study were those uploaded to the Canvas Learning Management System (Canvas LMS), the internet platform for online instructions and learning utilized by the faculty and the students of UE in both Manila and Caloocan campuses. The Canvas modules contained the lectures, notes, and readings for each GE core course. The author had soft copies of these modules in his Canvas account, provided by the Office for Curriculum Development and Instructions. The UE Canvas LMS was very significant, especially since, due to Covid-19 Pandemic, all classes at the university were in a fully online distance learning modality during the School Year 2020-21, the period covered by the study. The course modules included in the investigation were those uploaded to the UE Canvas during the First Semester of that school year.

Conceptually, the study covered the field of postmodern philosophy, concentrating only on its epistemological aspect, and the consequence of this kind of epistemology to the humanistic

goal of general education. It was about the postmodern paradigm for learning with its interdisciplinary approach, as this was employed within the context of humanist general education in the Philippines according to CHED's GE documents and UE's GE teaching materials. The interdisciplinary relations of the eight GE courses, represented by their respective textbooks and modules, were scrutinized only from the perspectives of Ethics and Art Appreciation, the GE courses that fell within the expertise of the author having handled them for 20 years as a UE professor. The study was limited to inspecting the relations of the courses only from the viewpoints of these two GE courses, and did not analyze the contents of all GE courses in relation with one another.

Frameworks and Literature Review

In one definitive work on the subject (Ulich 1950), it was explained that the concept of general education had been historically identified with the classical understanding of liberal education as the means towards the formation of the total integral human person. Conceptualized during ancient times, the so-called "liberal education" was meant to cultivate wise and virtuous individuals who have developed their whole nature through their faculties put in perfect balance. More or less the same idea went on up to the Middle Ages through the Renaissance and towards the early part of the modern era. By the years 1800's, brought by the gradual waning of social classes and gender divide and by the legal abolition of slavery, the idea of liberal education came to be as how it was widely understood (Wilds & Lottich 1970). This form of education was "liberal" because it makes people free by introducing them to a wide range of human knowledge and experiences, and making them develop their whole being.

The address by John Stuart Mill (1867) was the best and complete exposition of a philosophy of liberal education. He summarized its fundamental aim as follows: "Whatever helps to shape the human being; to make the individual what he is, or hinder him from being what he is not, is a part of education". "Liberal education is "liberal" because it frees us from those things

that make us what we are not. It frees us from ignorance because we are rational; it frees us from evil because we are moral; it frees us from isolation because we are social. In other words, it frees us from destroying ourselves. Positively, liberal education helps define our humanity by opening up for us more capacities to be what we are as human beings. It makes our essence complete."

In the Philippine setting, general education has been identified as liberal education. In the "Framework for General Education in the University of the Philippines in the 21st Century" (2016), the UP-Task Force for GE articulated the university's long tradition of GE. Having changed through the years, its philosophy is characterized as "liberal education philosophy", the essence of which may be traced back to 1925 in the speech by the then-university president Rafael Palma: "The liberal education ensures a broader outlook on God, man, and events; skills [sic] the student to react properly to the promptings of truth and the world; and develops in him acumen and quickness of mind, so that in the course of time he is able to learn thoroughly the particular practices of a certain professional or technical activity."

At the University of Santo Tomas, Dr. Magdalena Villaba in her paper entitled "Philosophy of Education and General Education" (1986), explained the aim of liberal education in line with the classical view of humanism. She said that "educational theory is based on a conception of life, consequently, is associated necessarily with a system of philosophy." Since the central concern of every education is the human person, fundamentally, the philosophy of education must answer the philosophical question: "What is man?" The philosophy of general education, therefore, is the search for the whole essence of man through the wisdom the students acquired through the study of the human sciences. A genuine general education ultimately ends at the full development of one's rational, moral, social, and spiritual faculties which make up the true and complete human being.

At the University of the East-Manila, it was not surprising that the Statement of the Philosophy of the College of Arts and Sciences (CAS) conveyed the classical concept of liberal education.

It carried a direct quotation from Mill: "The College of Arts and Sciences is committed to the harmonious development of the total person. It believes with John Stuart Mill that "men are men before they are lawyers, or physicians, or merchants, or manufacturers; and if [they are made] capable and sensible men, they will make themselves capable and sensible lawyers or physicians." A solid based in the arts and sciences, with knowledge and training that will develop and expand to the fullest a student's intellectual, spiritual, moral, artistic, and physical powers, is the best preparation that students can bring to whatever professional endeavor they may decide later on.

Aside from being framed within a humanistic tradition, the concept of general education has also developed beginning in the 1960s which marked a revolutionary era in the progress of human thought. According to the philosopher John Francois Lyotard in his momentous work *The Postmodern Condition* (1984, original 1979), starting that decade, we were no longer in the modern age, but in the period after the modern, in a word, "postmodern". Postmodernity is the general condition of the human, social, and cultural life of every person at present.

In the “Condition of the Present: Postmodernity” (1999), Dr. Hornedo explained the relativity and multiplicity of knowledge and truths as the basic stance of postmodern epistemology. According to him, postmodernism asserts that there is one objective reality out there in the world, but this reality could never be fully known, it could only be approximated, because people are conditioned by their subjectivities, interests, and prejudices, and are influenced by the institutions where they belong. There is no absolute truth, hence, no fixed, grand discourse about reality. There are many truths concerning reality brought by many different knowledge that people construct when they look at and think about the world. But people can see the world only from their perspective so that what they know about the world is just a portion of it. People formulate knowledge based on their positionalities. As to which knowledge would count as "the truth" depends on how powerful the established institutions in the society, like the school, the

state, the industry, or the church, to impose their own instituted knowledge upon the individual persons (Foucault 1972, 1980, 1984).

Based on postmodernism, Younkins (2005) recognized the interdisciplinary nature of integrated knowledge. The interdisciplinary approach to education towards knowledge integration, along with the theory on the relativity and multiplicity of truths, is the outcome of the postmodern consciousness about general education. Likewise, in his review of the studies on this subject, Erik Szostak (2007) observed that postmodernism had been associated with the concept of interdisciplinarity because both were inimical to the disciplinary tradition in the administrative set-up of the academe. Avoiding a disciplinary approach, therefore, postmodern education was necessarily interdisciplinary. For his part, Shu Nu Yang (2013), proposed a kind of postmodern education where interdisciplinarity is the prevailing idea. He mentioned an example about the situation of a grade school teacher giving a variety of chocolates for his pupils to choose from according to their individual preferences and reasons, and saying that the one who picked up many varieties and then ate them has gained experience that one can use to make the best option. That means students can analytically think and decide best concerning matters in their lives by being exposed to many different disciplines, and not only to a singular specialized field. But this can be done only upon realizing the basic postmodern notion that there is no one, absolute truth about everything.

The approach coming from the various disciplines of knowledge was described by Dean Flores (1996) as having the teachers make the students "see reality as one—that which has a mathematical aspect, economic aspect, biological aspect, and so on, but always in an integrated unity". Analogically, it is "seeing the forest not the trees," or "seeing the castle not the bricks," which means, "seeing the whole beyond the complex parts". Each discipline, advancing knowledge of its own, moves towards one another in a unifying order resulting in the production of integrated truths. This way, interdisciplinarity creates a friendly

atmosphere among the proponents of the different fields of learning, because instead of seeing many distinct pieces, they see one connected totality. In practice, they would treat the specialists of other disciplines not as adversaries but as collaborators.

The review of literature clarified the theoretical and methodological frameworks employed in the investigation by surveying the history of liberal education from which had originated the humanist ideal of general education, and by differentiating between the modern and the postmodern paradigms for learning. It also emphasized the postmodernist view on the relativity and multiplicity of knowledge and truths, which called for the interdisciplinary approach of general education, and thereby ascertained the central idea in postmodern education that interdisciplinarity resulted in the integration of knowledge.

Analyses, Expositions and Interpretations

The study exposed the theoretical application of postmodern epistemology to the humanist philosophy of general education, and interpreted this theory as having been implied by the CHED GE documents. According to this theory, truth is knowledge legitimated through discourse by the structures of power in society. The absence of totalizing systems of thought resulted in a pessimistic consequence that education has no legitimate knowledge and truth to impart to the students. Positively, however, it may be seen as a means towards human development. The view by Usher and Edwards (cited by Burbules, 2009) asserted the conceptual merging of postmodern epistemology and the humanist ideal inherent in the liberal idea of education. According to them, if the purpose of liberal education is to make the students, who are rational subjects and individual agents, capable of defining their humanity, therefore, it presupposes that education would offer them all possibilities of becoming. These possibilities could only be presented if there is no given ground on which the students would stand along the process of education, and this lack of theoretical foundation is what postmodern epistemology affords the students, making them open for

constructive interactions with other people. In other words, by having given chances to choose from a variety of alternatives presented to the students in general education through an interdisciplinary approach, they become free to claim any knowledge and truth for themselves.

The humanist and postmodern philosophy of general education was demonstrated by the CHED documents on the GE curriculum and courses implemented for tertiary schools in the country. The CMO 59: 1996 and CM 4: 1997 were intended to make the GE curriculum more responsive to the demands of the 20th century, but they fell short of this goal since the curriculum provided separate knowledge domains instead of as a whole, and they were only introductory or foundational courses of the discipline rather than interdisciplinary courses. The provisions of this CMO were also criticized by a position paper (Torres and Goingco, *et al.* 2011), which recommended that the GEC must be the same for all students of all programs if the CHED wanted to found GE courses on the liberal ideals of humanism. The modern paradigm of education, upon which the 1996 curriculum was grounded, was found to be already outdated, and therefore the paradigm should be changed into the a postmodern one to suit the contemporary ways of thinking and learning.

Finally, in 2013, the GE curriculum was further revised to be adapted to the conditions of the 21st century in the CMO 20: 2013. This memorandum was a paradigm-shifting document concerning the nature and the state of general education in the country during the present times. It provided a GE curriculum containing a lesser number of courses which were more holistic and less disciplinal than the previous curriculum. The eight GE core courses in the revised curriculum exhibited the humanist ideal of education, and were characterized by the interdisciplinary approach being the aspect of the postmodern paradigm for learning in general education.

The textbooks, which were recommended to be used for teaching the eight GE core courses at UE during the School Year 2020-21, were analyzed as to their interdisciplinary contents,

specifically, from the perspective of the GE course Ethics. The lessons in Ethics converged with those in other courses at varying degrees, through the fields of philosophy, psychology, anthropology, sociology, economics, political science, law, and governance. Ethics was integrated most with Understanding the Self because these two courses fundamentally dealt with the human essence and moral attributes which make up the individual identity of a person. Ethics was related to Science, Technology, and Society at the point where the concepts of morality connect with the topic of the use and effect of science and technology on the lives of people in society. While Ethics and Art Appreciation, both speculated about the use of sense faculties for the perception of things in the world, were linked to the idea of human equality according to the moral principles of right and justice.

Concerning the course Readings in Philippine History, Ethics complemented some of its lessons in terms of specifying the patriotic or nationalistic features of human virtues and values possessed by people as citizens of the country, concerning those possessed by people as human beings in general. As for the convergence of Ethics and The Contemporary World, the issues brought by economic, religious, and cultural globalization were broadly understood as a prevailing phenomenon happening in the world today, by looking at them from the viewpoint of morality. The integration of Ethics and Purposive Communication was found in the lessons about communication ethics which provided moral values and principles for good conduct and behavior. And Ethics and Mathematics in the Modern World had no connections with each other, as revealed by the contents of their respective textbooks.

The study analyzed the contents of the modules which were suggested to be used for teaching the eight GE core courses in UE-Manila, and which were uploaded to the UE Canvas LMS for online distance learning during the First Semester of the School Year 2020-21. These modules contained relevant lessons taken from various disciplines in the humanities and the social,

behavioral, and natural sciences. In particular, the modules for Art Appreciation were designed to be largely related to aesthetics and generally to philosophy. The other disciplines, such as anthropology, history, mathematics, and others, had their turn in the modules as the contents of Art Appreciation concentrated on their respective areas.

Looking at the rest of the modules from the viewpoint of Art Appreciation, the study found that the GE courses had varying degrees of complementary relations to each other. Strong connections between the lessons in Art Appreciation were established to those in Understanding the Self, and those in Readings in Philippine History because the topics of these courses were fundamentally about human phenomena. Whereas, Art Appreciation and the course Science, Technology, and Society were integrated into matters of utilizing science and technology in the production and reproduction of art. The numerical concepts of measurement, order, and proportion were the connecting link between Art Appreciation and Mathematics in the Modern World. While Ethics converged with Art Appreciation in providing lessons about art with moral dimensions. And there were a few integrations of Art Appreciation to Purposive Communication and The Contemporary World discovered in the contents of the modules for these courses.

For a more in-depth analysis of the learning materials in the Canvas modules, particularly between Art Appreciation and Ethics, their complementary topics were about the philosophical theory of hedonism and the anthropological theory of cultural relativism, in so far as these theories were applied in expounding the concepts of beauty in art and morality in ethics. One Canvas module in Art Appreciation dealt with the study of the so-called "aesthetic hedonism" which enquired about the essence of beauty based on the experience of pleasure by the person, used in the kind of experience that one gets out of painting, music, film, and culinary arts. It mentioned the forms of hedonism by Aristippus and Epicurus, a lesson that is also discussed in a Canvas module in Ethics. Looking at hedonism as an ethical theory, the Ethics module dealt with the analysis of the pleasurable or painful

experience as the end or result of a person's action which determines whether such action is good or bad. The lessons about cultural relativism also served as the meeting point of the two courses.

One topic in the Art Appreciation modules was the theorization of art from an anthropological point of view. With the title "Art and Anthropology: Cultural Relativism," the lessons were about the concepts of ethnocentrism, cultural evolutionism, historical particularism, and patriarchy; they serve as the underlying theoretical foundations for the appreciation of art and beauty in various cultures of the world, such as the Suri tribe in Africa, the Padaung people in Myanmar, the traditional Chinese society, and the pre-colonial communities in the Philippines. Highlighting the different cultural practices, these lessons in Art appreciation asked the students to evaluate the morality of such practices, thereby touching a topic in Ethics concerning the theoretical debate between ethical relativism and ethical absolutism, and the role of culture in the moral development of people in the context of the society where they live.

Analyzing the contents of the textbooks more specifically, the lessons in Art Appreciation implied discourses about morality, although without referring to any ethical theory. One of the writings it cited was the essay by Benjamin (original 1935), "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction", which problematized the loss of authenticity and the so-called "aura" of original artworks due to their mass reproductions by machines, and their inevitable inclusion into the capitalist economic and political system during the modern period, hence, giving rise to the moral issues involving copyright, plagiarism, and film piracy; the textbook extended the dialectic of the problem into the present era of computers and the internet along the ongoing information technological revolution during the present times when those issues have become more acute. These lessons in the Art Appreciation textbook may be integrated into the topics discussed in the third part of the Ethics textbooks, Module 3: "The Millennials and the Challenges of Time", and “Moral Issues on the

Utilization of Social Media", which were about the effect of modern computer science and information technology to shaping the concept of morality among the young people of the contemporary generation to which the students belong.

By articulating the moral consequence of the evolving mechanical means of production and reproduction of art, Art Appreciation was informed by Ethics about the concepts that could be applied to the utilization of modern technology such as the moral principles of veracity, privacy, and justice. In turn, Ethics was enlightened by the Art Appreciation of the use of technology in art, interpreted in the light of present technological development, particularly about the spread in the social media of fake news through the manipulation of photographs and videos, and the recontextualization of sounds and images, for advancing the interest of some parties and scandalizing others. Integrating the common topics from these two textbooks, the theoretical lessons of the GE course Ethics concerning the moral consequence of technology were exemplified and concretized in the Art Appreciation for better comprehension by the students within the peculiarities of their millennial conditions.

Conclusion

The epistemology based on postmodernism asserts that there is no one, universal and absolute truth that makes up the reality of the world. Applied to education, the postmodern paradigm for learning theorizes about the multiplicity, temporality, and relativity of truths that the students know through the study of their courses within the context of an academic institution that is composed of people and groups with varying degrees of power. Although the institution exerts considerable influence on the students, the lack of epistemological foundation in postmodern education has a positive theoretical consequence to them based on the humanistic goal of general education; it brings about the view that the students, as individual agents being presented with many discourses, are not predetermined by outside forces, instead they define themselves towards forming their total, integral personhood through the GE

courses which give them a wide variety of knowledge from different disciplines. This goal is theoretically in consonant with the fundamental concept in humanism that people create themselves by their freely chosen actions for which they become responsible members of the society in which they live. In the postmodern and humanist philosophy of general education, therefore, the GE courses are designed to provide the students with various perspectives of truths using an interdisciplinary approach towards the integration of knowledge, to afford the students greater possibilities of becoming whatever they choose to be.

In the Philippines, the curriculum for general education in tertiary schools articulated by the CHED documents, particularly the CMO 20: 2013, implied the humanist ideal and the postmodern paradigm for learning. With ground-breaking provisions which have changed the nature of general education to adapt to the technological and globalizing conditions of the world during the 21st century, this memorandum did away with the purely disciplinal orientation of the previous GE curricula and courses, and in turn, had emphasized interdisciplinarity being the aspect of postmodern general education. Started to be fully implemented during the School Year 2018-19, the eight core courses under the new GE curriculum are humanistic because they intend to nurture the whole personhood of the students, and postmodern since they are geared towards the integration of knowledge from a wide array of interdisciplinary sources. These two qualifications implied by the documents connote the students' well-rounded ability for them to be able to actively engage in critical dialogue with others through the exchange of discourses, which produce in their minds varieties of knowledge through which they could decide the truths they would claim for themselves. Eventually, the GE core courses' aim of leading the students into holistic development, and making them choose the knowledge and truths presented to them by the teachers and the instructional materials for these courses, means that they become free human beings who are responsible not only for themselves but for others and the world.

The contents of the textbooks and modules, which were recommended to be used by the faculty for teaching the eight GE core courses at UE, were exposed and interpreted as to the interdisciplinary approach they applied, being the aspect of the humanist ideal and the postmodern paradigm for learning in general education. These instructional materials were collectively intended to provide the students with different knowledge from a lot of disciplines; individually, they contained relevant lessons taken from various fields in the humanities and the social, behavioral, and natural sciences. In particular, the textbook in Ethics was mostly philosophical, but there were also some points that it was psychological, anthropological, sociological, religious, political, and even technological, as it advanced moral perspectives to the textbooks in other GE courses. Art Appreciation was designed to be largely related to aesthetics and generally to philosophy; the other disciplines, such as anthropology, psychology, history, mathematics, physical and computer sciences, and others, had their turn in the Canvas modules as the contents of Art Appreciation concentrated on their respective areas.

From the viewpoint of the lessons in Ethics and Art Appreciation, the contents of the instructional materials in other GE core courses had varying degrees of complementary relations, making the students aware of their greatest potentialities conditioned by the diverging and contending truths available in the society in which they live. Hence, what the textbooks and the modules presented were knowledge coming from interdisciplinary sources, for the students to create the truths for themselves towards the formation of their integral personhood.

Overall, the humanist ideal and the postmodern paradigm for learning were interpreted as a form of interdisciplinarity towards knowledge integration applied to the Philippine educational setting, through the expositions of the CHED's memorandum orders pertinent to GE, and through the analysis of the contents of the textbooks and modules proposed to be used for teaching the GE core courses at UE. The postmodern and

humanist philosophy of general education in the Philippines may be synthesized through this statement: the eight GE core courses—Ethics, Art Appreciation, Understanding the Self, Science, Technology and Society, Readings in Philippine History, The Contemporary World, Purposive Communication, and Mathematics in the Modern World—interacted with one another in harmonious ways; they freely shared their respective knowledge, and created integrated truths which approximate the reality. Ultimately, therefore, the epistemological value of general education, based on the humanist ideal and the postmodern paradigm for learning, was the capacity of the human race to work responsibly together towards constructing the truths of the world.

Recommendations

Academically, the study opened up fertile intellectual avenues for the researchers to carry on further. It could serve as trajectories for some parallel or additional investigations to address the limitations it determined. Firstly, the study looked into the integration of the GE core courses from the perspectives of Ethics and Art Appreciation, hence, giving only a partial aspect of their interdisciplinarity. To tie up these loose ends, researchers are invited to scrutinize the interdisciplinary connections using the other courses as points of reference. The GE elective courses may be included too for supplementary inputs. By having covered the views from all GE courses, a complete picture of their relations would emerge.

Secondly, because the study was mainly philosophical, it tended to delve along the level of speculation, and by using only the CHED documents and the proposed GE textbooks and modules, its expository and interpretative components had been purely textual. A quantitative and descriptive inquiry is thereby proposed to find out the actual contents of the courses and to empirically verify the theoretical findings of the study.

Thirdly, since the study had emphasized only the contents of the GE core courses, other research is suggested to deal with the course objectives, and investigate whether the courses abide by the Outcomes-Based Education (OBE). This is important because the GE courses in the 2013 curriculum were defined by the CHED to be based not only on an interdisciplinary approach but also on the OBE model.

The pedagogical recommendations of the study were about the interdisciplinary contents of the GE core courses, towards further improving the teaching of these courses in the university. It was shown that the courses contained lessons from different disciplines in varying measures, according to the textbooks and modules suggested to be used for the teaching of these courses. The lessons in Ethics and Art Appreciation were discovered to have a lot of complementary relations to the lessons in Understanding the Self, in Science, Technology, and Society, as well as in Readings in Philippine History, from the vantage points of philosophy, anthropology, psychology, and other social sciences.

However, Ethics and Art Appreciation were found to have minimal interconnections to Purposive Communication, The Contemporary World, and Mathematics in the Modern World; in particular, the connection between Ethics and Mathematics in the Modern World was practically nil. If the textbooks and modules for these courses are revised, it is suggested that more interdisciplinary content for them should be included. The textbook authors and the module developers have to be informed of the insufficiency of interdisciplinary lessons they included in their instructional materials, so that appropriate adjustments may be worked out.

On a personal note, the study had been a journey of self-realization and discovery for the author by looking deeper into the academic and professional life and adopting some modifications to the author's role as a GE professor. The more than 20 years still leave more to be desired in the author particularly in the interdisciplinary approach to the GE courses

handled by the author. The study encouraged more patience with the temperaments of students, and more understanding of their perspectives. There was a realization of the supreme arbiter of truths for the students and that in the end it is the students who choose the truths for themselves after having presented with various discourses. This epistemological orientation had nurtured the virtue of humility in the face of contending narratives available in society. The postmodern and humanist philosophy, which the study had articulated, was the guiding principle that had shaped the author's way of teaching that he would follow in the following years that he would continue teaching GE courses.

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