

# Rethinking Catholic Education: Experiences of Teachers of a Catholic University

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## **Abstract**

*Catholic education is closely linked to the evangelical mission of the Church. As such, the primary intent of Catholic education is to proclaim the message of salvation to all people. Accordingly, Catholic education aims to provide an integral formation with a religious dimension that will equip the human person to become life, work, and mission ready and attain salvation. But given the contemporary socio-economic, cultural, political, and technological milieus characterized by a secular and consumerist view and praxis, the value of Catholic education may have been obscured or affected. Thus, this paper aims to investigate and analyze the views and practices of the faculty of a Catholic University about Catholic education. The purposive sampling method was used to determine the participants in the study. Using a qualitative research design, the data were gathered from the participants using the face-to-face interview method. Aided by the phenomenological method, the findings discovered semblance in the participants' views and practices of Catholic education with that of Catholic Church. Despite the observed undesirable elements that obscure and marginalize it, Catholic education faithfully remains a Catholic. But making religion as the core of the curriculum of Catholic education is still a great challenge for Catholic schools to realize. Thus, the collaboration of all stakeholders is vital to address this perennial challenge in Catholic education.*

*Keywords: Catholic Education, Catholic Church, Evangelization, Teachers' Experiences, Challenges*

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## **1.0 Introduction**

By its nature, Catholic education is inseparable from the Church's work of evangelization (John Paul II, 1990) because evangelization is the primary concern of Catholic educational institution (Episcopal Commission on Catechesis and Catholic Education (ECCCE) of the Catholic Bishops'

Conference of the Philippines, 1992). This means that all educational programs and activities of Catholic schools are closely linked to the evangelical mission of the Church, that is, to proclaim the message of salvation to all peoples and cultures of the world (John Paul II, 1990). Expectedly, Catholic education aims to transmit the Catholic faith and to provide an

integral formation of the human person grounded in the person of Jesus Christ for the attainment of man's temporal and salvific goals. As an ecclesial enterprise, it is also a potent instrument that can promote and contribute to the spiritual and secular well-being of the society (Paul VI, 1965; John Paul II, 1990; ECCCE, 1992).

In this context, a Catholic school is an ideal place for this holistic and Christian education of the human person. The collaboration with the stakeholders: administrators, students, parents, staff, alumni, and particularly teachers, is vital to the educational ministry (Garrone & Javierre, 1977; Laghi & Martins, 1997). Apart from developing the human faculties, Catholic education forms in students "the ability to judge richly, to hand on the legacy of previous generations, foster sense of values, and prepare [them] for professional life" (Paul VI, 1965; Garrone & Javierre, 1977). Similarly, Catholic schools lead their students "to promote the good of the earthly city efficaciously and also equip them to spread the Kingdom of God" through a life of love and service (Paul VI, 1965).

For more than 400 years of Catholic education in the Philippines, Catholic schools have provided the quality education that our country needs, offering different levels of education and types of formation. They have produced professionals who are top leaders, heroes, and achievers in various fields of endeavors (Palma, 2012; Baltazar, 2003). Guided by the philosophy and pedagogy of the founder, the Catholic University under study is part of the educational apostolate administered by a religious order in the Philippines which offers comprehensive Catholic education. Like any Catholic schools, this educational institution promotes and upholds the purpose of Catholic education while integrating its institutional brand of education, spirituality, and

mission in their programs and activities.

However, the growing postmodern culture is another problem to confront with because it depreciates the distinctiveness of Catholic education. The contemporary ecclesial, political, social, cultural, economic, and technological contexts characterized by a secular and consumerist view and praxis slowly disconnects the relevance of Catholic values and disregard faith in life. This current mindset manifests itself in the lack of interest of students in courses towards teaching, service, and humanity as compared to those courses which can offer excellent salaries and economic benefits (ECCCE, 1992). As described by the Second Plenary Council of the Philippines (PCP II), many graduates consider their Catholic education simply as the passport for better opportunities for economic and political success rather than as a grace to live better human and Christian lives with the responsibility to build a better world (PCP II 627).

Moreover, religion has never been treated as the core of the curriculum of Catholic schools (ECCCE, 1992). The Catholic faith should permeate all aspects of the academic and non-academic life of the school. In this regard, all members of the school community closely participate in the process of transmission and witnessing of the faith by their specific status and capacity. However, the task has been solely relegated to teachers of religion while others promote and practice values contrary to Catholic faith and morals. The result is a disconnection between faith and life and a depreciation of the significance of faith in life. Accordingly, graduates of Catholic schools do not seem to have sufficiently assimilated Christian values for the renewal of their Christian life and witness of their faith (ECCCE, 1992). Thus, graduates of Catholic schools contribute in one way or another to the dismal economic, social, political, cultural, and

moral problems of our country.

Furthermore, the culture of elitism creates an impression of social and economic discrimination of education among Catholic schools. Due to a high standard of education, it seems that Catholic education is only for the wealthy and famous like in the case of prominent Catholic universities such as Ateneo, De La Salle, and the University of Santo Tomas. The situation reduces Catholic education into a status symbol and discriminates the poor due to expensive education. Although this phenomenon is not common to all Catholic schools, nevertheless it engenders negative image to Catholic schools as elitist schools without the preferential option for the poor (ECCCE, 1992; Palma, 2012).

Given the context, it seems the value of Catholic education may have been obscured or affected (Laghi & Martins, 1997). The question, therefore, is, do stakeholders of the Catholic university, especially teachers, still have the grasp of the identity and mission of Catholic education? Is Catholic education still Catholic from the viewpoints of the teachers? Thus, this paper primarily intends to explore the lived experiences of teachers in a Catholic University about Catholic education assuming that they may have different perspectives given their length of service in the said institution. In particular, it investigates and analyzes the perceptions and practices of teachers about Catholic education.

### **Literature Review**

While it is true that Catholic schools are non-profit institutions, thus operate on a missionary purpose, they are also academic institutions which can be affected by the internal and external environmental factors. All academic and non-academic programs and activities of the school transpire in the institutional setting. Thus, the

identity and mission of the Catholic schools must also be viewed, assessed and approached from the institutional perspective (Johnson & Fauske, 2005). Likewise, the Catholic school must be able to identify these contextual factors because these are forces which can drive the institutional performance (Lusthaus, Adrien, & Anderson, 2002). Also, Tudy (2013) in his study on "Model of Catholicity for Catholic Schools," affirmed the significant influence of the external factors on the catholicity of Catholic schools. These factors include the stakeholders, collaboration with the local church, leadership and motivation, academic and spiritual programs, sociocultural, mass media and economic-political. Likewise, the school's culture, the witness of the members of the school community, extension service, and faithfulness to the mission of the Church and Christ-centeredness contribute significantly to the catholicity of the school.

Moreover, one of the distinct characteristics of Catholic schools is the interaction and collaboration of its various components: students, parents, teachers, directors, and non-teaching staff" in the educational ministry (Laghi & Martins, 1997). Thus, the relationship among those who have the stake in Catholic education must be given importance so that Catholic schools can effectively fulfill their public role and evangelizing mission. The involvement of all stakeholders of Catholic school must be activated because they have a valuable contribution to the realization of the goals of Catholic education (Martin, 2009; Greeley, 1992). Martin (2009) observed that there is active involvement of parents in Catholic schools. In fostering the climate of an educating community, the members of the academic community must commit themselves to the educative mission of their Catholic schools (Baum, 1982). This promotes and strengthens the

sense of communion and service of the school community.

Speaking of stakeholders, there is a need to align the personal values of the workforce to the organizational values and educational ministry so that the workforce can significantly contribute to the success and achievement of the evangelizing mission of Catholic schools. School employees are co-missionaries in the educational ministry (Alfante & Aguilin, 2015). In this context, teachers of Catholic schools have a vital role and contribution in promoting, establishing, and sustaining the unique climate of the Catholic school community. By their teaching and learning activities, they participate closely in the mission of the Church and fulfill the purpose of the Catholic school (Laghi & Martins, 1997).

Furthermore, one concern that confronts Catholic education today is how to embrace the multicultural education yet remaining faithful to its mandate to teach the Catholic faith and morals. Samaniego (2016) proposed the revitalization of the educational programs and activities of the Catholic schools which do not only promote respect, tolerance, and inclusivity but also respond to the changing landscape of the 21st-century education and fidelity to the teachings of the Catholic Church. Unless necessary actions are taken to address these challenges, "Catholic schools will remain just an ordinary arm of the Catholic Church in propagating the faith through outdated means that run contrary to the advancements in educational philosophy and culture" (p. 13).

Also, the problem of viability due to the decline in enrollment adversely affected Catholic schools, especially those in the basic education administered by the parishes or religious congregations. The rising incidence of poverty and proliferation of public

schools elsewhere can be contributing factors to the decline. Many students are leaving Catholic schools because they cannot afford a private Catholic education. Teachers of Catholic schools are transferring to public schools for higher pay. These conditions affect not only the sustainability of Catholic schools but also the evangelizing mission of the Church in general (Baltazar, 2003).

Relatedly, PCP II noted that Catholic schools have been deficient in their evangelizing mission. The work of evangelization must be the concern of every member of the school community. But sadly, the evangelical mission has been downgraded if not eclipsed by the academic interests of the Catholic schools. For instance, the formation of the Catholic faith and values, as well as the sacramental and pastoral programs and activities of the Catholic school, have been relegated exclusively to religion teachers and campus ministers. Moreover, the opportunities for the celebration and practice of the Catholic faith to counter the influence of secularism, consumerism, and culture of death have been significantly wanting if not absent (ECCCE, 1992). Also, the competition among Catholic schools and the growing elitism of Catholic education have been a setback to the mission of Catholic schools (ECCCE, 1992). Thus, the revitalization of Catholic schools is much needed so that evangelization will take center stage in their educational goals and activities. Particular attention should focus on the areas of religion as the core of the curriculum, spiritual formation program for administrators, teachers, non-teaching staff, and students; school policies, the involvement of stakeholders in the educative mission of the school (ECCCE, 1992).

On the other hand, despite the great difficulties that Catholic schools confront, many parents would still opt to send their children to Catholic

school for various reasons which public schools cannot provide. One major reason is the religious or values education grounded in the Catholic faith. Catholic parents would still want their children to be formed in Catholic beliefs and morals (Cruz, 2014). In a study conducted in the United States on why parents chose to send their children to private Catholic education, the findings revealed that the “perceived school characteristics, quality education, physical environment, and extracurricular activities” of Catholic schools were considered by them (Davis, 2011). In fact, Catholic education has been associated with high income due to the quality instructions that Catholic schools provide to their students (Kim, 2011).

## 2.0 Method

Utilizing a qualitative research design, the paper used the phenomenological approach to explore the meanings that teachers attached to Catholic education (Sarantakos, 1998). Phenomenology is an inductive-descriptive method which aims to describe participants’ lived experiences (phenomena) in an attempt to enrich the lived experience by drawing out its meaning (Holloway, 2005). It also examines the particular experiences of unique individuals in a given situation, thus exploring not what is (reality) but what is preconceived to be. It further concerns with meaning and the way in which the meaning arises from experience. This method simply aims to discover and describe the primordial meanings or essence of the phenomenon as experienced by the participants (Lichtman, 2012). The process brackets or suspends all previous knowledge of the phenomenon being explored that is not due to the actual instance of the phenomenon (Giorgi, 2007).

The participants were eight (8) Catholic religion and non-religion teachers who served

the University for at least five years. They were determined using purposive sampling technique (Sarantakos, 2013). The data were gathered using an unstructured interview. The interview was individually done to obtain perspectives, practices, and problems relevant to Catholic education from the participants. The use of in-depth interview facilitated the gathering of detailed and useful information to provide the context to the data (Leedy & Ormrod, 2010; Boyce & Neale, 2006). Guided by the interview protocol, the participants were oriented on the purpose of the study, duration of the interview, the interview approach, content, confidentiality, consent, and recording methods, and the use of the data.

To facilitate the phenomenological method, the recursive textual data analysis was used to determine what the experience means for the participants who experienced the phenomenon (Lichtman, 2012). Guided by the three C’s of Lichtman (2012)—coding, categorizing, and conceptualizing, an in-depth, holistic understanding of Catholic education as perceived and experienced by college faculty of University was culled out.

## 3.0 Results

### Cognizance of Evangelization as the Heart of Catholic Education

*Proclaiming the Good News.* The participants consistently agreed that the primary purpose of Catholic education is evangelization, that is, the proclamation of the message of the Gospel. Consequently, Catholic schools should teach and transmit the teachings of Jesus Christ to all members of the academic community so that they may know, love, and worship Jesus Christ, the only begotten Son of God and Savior of the world. Thus, all educational activities have to be firmly grounded

in the teachings of the Catholic faith and be directed towards the attainment of their salvation. Given the context, teachers in Catholic schools are not merely teaching their specific subjects of expertise but are called to exemplify and transmit the content of the faith. Some participants verbalized it this way:

*It's a kind of an evangelization...not just merely providing a curriculum and some extra-curricular activities to the students, but it has to be firmly grounded in the Catholic teachings and Catholic faith.*

*There's also some dynamics between Catholic educators and Catholic students because Catholic educators are not just merely teaching a subject but they are also exemplars of faith... they are transmitters of the content of the faith.*

*Teaching the way to salvation.* For teachers, Catholic education shows the way to salvation of the human person. Teaching is giving life, and the highest form of life that students can receive is the salvation, the fullness of life. For that reason, all educational programs and activities should help students discover and realize the ultimate purpose of their lives, that is, salvation. Hence, all teaching and learning undertakings that do not promote, lead, and give students to the fullness of life are not reflective of Catholic education. Teachers in Catholic schools should lead and guide students towards salvation by living a life of love and service as shared by the participants:

*Catholic education caters to the salvation of the soul. It should teach the way to salvation of the soul. The end point is always the salvation of the students.*

*It teaches and gives life, and the highest form of life is salvation, the fullness of life in the next. The goal of it all is their salvation, leading the*

*students to live a Christlike life.*

*Promoting Catholicism.* The participants shared an understanding that Catholic education should teach and promote Catholic beliefs and practices articulated in the Creed, morals, and worship of the Church through religious education and campus ministry. As a result, Catholic education helps students understand, articulate, and defend their Catholic faith, appreciate their religious identity, profess the faith with confidence, and live a life inspired and guided by the principles of Catholic faith and values. Thus, through Catholic education, the Church forms her children, the faithful to become faithful adherents to the Catholic faith. Some participants expressed the following:

*It is a means of promoting Catholic beliefs, practices to promote Catholicism that will enable administrators, faculty, staff, and students to understand their identity as Catholics and he should live according to the values of Catholic individual.*

*It teaches you the Catholic way, beliefs, standards, and practice grounded in the doctrine, moral, and worship/prayer.*

*Forming the whole person.* Catholic education is an integral human formation grounded in Christ which forms all dimensions of the human person. Side by side with the excellent academic training is the formation of the person's character, competence, and Christian faith which can help him face and cope the challenges, temptations, and obstacles in life. The participants shared these observations:

*Catholic education is an integral formation of the human person which is grounded in Christ.*

*It forms not only the intellectual but also other*

*aspects and the faith and moral life of the young.*

*What makes Catholic education different from public education is the balance of formation in character, competence, and Christian faith.*

### **Adherence to Church's Teachings**

*Adhering to the Church's teachings.* Catholic educators adhere to the orthodox teachings of the Catholic Church relating to matters of faith, morals, and worship. For Catholic educators, orthodoxy is essential to connect to God. Thus, they do not merely teach the subjects but also integrate and relate the teachings of the Church in the discussion of the content. By doing so, Catholic educators promote and transmit the authentic Catholic beliefs and practices. One participant confidently said:

*Regarding content, I make sure that I am faithful to the teaching of the Church. Orthodoxy is important in matters relating to faith and morals. Catholic educators are not just merely teaching a subject, but they are also exemplars and transmitters of the content of the faith as taught by the Magisterium.*

*Obeying Church's authorities.* Catholic educators need to submit to the instructions and decrees of their local Bishops and the Pope in teaching and interpreting matters related to faith and morals. As ordained ministers and shepherds of God's flock, Church's authorities serve as God's voice in guiding and forming the mind, heart, and conscience of the faithful in the midst of confusion, crisis, and chaos in the Church and the world. They boldly responded:

*As a Catholic educator I need to establish my obedience to the Pope, and everything follows.*

*If there is the practice of adherence to the teachings of the Church and authority of the pope and the bishop in the Catholic school, it's still Catholic.*

*Catholic education manifests a firm belief in the Magisterium and gives due respect to Church's authorities (Pope, bishops, and priests) as people entrusted to us by God.*

### **Exemplification of Faith in Actions**

*Witnessing the faith.* Catholic educators exemplify the faith that they profess and teach by the witness of their lives. They demonstrate it by dealing people with humility, truthfulness, sincerity, and honesty; setting good examples and radiating a joyful disposition to students; and living a life of simplicity and prayer. Accordingly, they need to take care of their personal, social, and family life because their problems in the relationship can affect their work in school. By their exemplary life, they become models and inspiration to their students and their colleagues. For examples, they mentioned the following:

*As Catholic educators, we have to set good examples for our students; we have to witness what we believe.*

*The witness of your life as Catholic teachers, the kind of life you do that demonstrate what you believe.*

*As an educator, I need to radiate joy, the happiness of my students. Thus, I need to take care my family life, my personal life, and my social life. When a teacher has many problems in a relationship, he or she will bring that to the class and the students can sense that.*

*Living a prayerful life.* Prayer is an important

activity of the day for Catholic educators. They always talk and turn to God in whatever they think and do. Prayers strengthen their faith and help them cope with the problems in life and work. In their prayers, they ask the intercession of the Virgin Mary and the saints. Some participants shared these:

*I would tell my students that it's always safe to pray for whatever you are thinking about it's always safe to include God, you always consult to him whatever you are thinking and whatever your actions will be... I always include prayer in my activity every day.*

*I draw strength and guidance from God every day in my work. If ever I have problems I talk to God to strengthen my faith. I ask the intercession of Mary and the saints, especially St. Monica, my patron saint.*

*Forming value-laden students.* By their good examples, they teach and develop in their students the values that they possess. They instill in their students the values of concern for others and the greater honor and glory of God above all else in everything that they do. Thus, they provide students with activities to learn, immerse, or practice values such as goodness, justice, love of God, humility, honesty, simplicity, prayer, and concern for others. As most of them expressed the following:

*Students have values. They have that fear of God, humility, love, service, and concern for others. They have faith in God; they value their family, and [and] prayerful. All these were introduced to them by the Catholic school.*

*Catholic school provides students the kind of activities that they can learn, immerse, experience, and practice values, especially the core values of the school.*

*I always promote the values of simplicity, honest communication, honesty and sincere*

*communication which should not only be applied not only [to] writing and graded speech but every day in their lives.*

*Community outreach activities are okay, but they must not be seasonal. These activities reflect the relevance of Catholic school in the community, especially to those marginalized sectors. And everyone in the academic community should participate.*

### **Challenges Confronting Catholic Education as Viewed by Teachers**

*Strengthening the marginalized evangelical mission of Catholic education.* The philosophy, vision, mission, goals, and objectives of the University in principle reflect the Catholic identity and purpose of its existence as a Catholic educational institution. In Catholic school, religious activities are still part of the life of students, faculty, and staff. Regrettably, certain qualities and practices which do not adhere to the ideals of Catholic education are quite observable. Compared to academic, social, and sports, the spiritual and religious programs and activities for students, faculty, and staff received marginal attention and support. Consequently, members of the academic community do not put premium in spiritual and religious undertakings. Likewise, the number of hours spent on religion classes and other related activities have been reduced to give way to academic subjects and activities. Some of the participants shared these observations:

*How the school manifests and sustains the mission of the school is not clear to me. For example, even the programs about the spiritual growth of students and teachers are very weak compared to the academics. Budget wise, the religious programs get less budget compared to sports, to cultural, to the academic programs.*

*As far as its VMGO is concerned, the University itself is trying to live a Catholic life. I believe it tries to live out its Catholic identity and mission, but sometimes I see some faculty and staff whose values do not adhere to Catholic beliefs and practices.*

*Some teachers and even student[s] do not show interest in religious activities of the school.*

*Religion classes and activities are not given much attention compared to academic subjects.*

*Making religion the core of the curriculum.* The relegation of religion as an ordinary non-academic subject in Catholic school remains a big problem. Compliance with CHED and DepEd policies and directives should not undermine the purpose of Catholic education. The curriculum, instruction, and learning resources should be permeated with the Catholic faith. Another area of concern is the professional, spiritual and moral formation of teachers so that they can better equip themselves as collaborators of the University in its evangelizing mission. Teachers need proper training to acquire expertise and form values grounded in Catholic perspective to fulfill the purpose of Catholic education. The participants observed and suggested the following:

*Making religion as a core of the curriculum is a challenge. Religious instructions are relegated to teachers of religion.*

*Some teachers teaching religion are poorly trained in content and methodology.*

*But more problematic is the faith of teachers in Catholic schools. They are supposed to be models and transmitters of the faith to students by the witness of their lives and collaborators in the teaching apostolate of the school.*

*The content of the curriculum and the books used in the schools must be looked into. The material may be reflective only what the DepEd/CHED is trying to mandate but not what the Church teaches.*

*Linking the relevance of Catholic teachings to contemporary issues.* The graduates of Catholic schools attest to the success and fruitfulness of Catholic education. The participants believed that Catholic education had imbued their students with knowledge, skills, and attitudes that set them apart from other graduates with their strong faith in God, love for the Church, and passion for serving others. Sadly, they also observed that graduates of Catholic schools faltered in their faith and contradicted the Catholic teachings in matters relating to contemporary issues such as contraceptives, the death penalty, same-sex marriage, and other political and moral issues. Some of these alumni of Catholic schools would even publicly defy the authority of their bishops and the Pope. For example, the participants mentioned these specific situations:

*There must be a problem in the way Catholic education is taught by teachers in Catholic schools.*

*They transmitted the doctrine but failed to connect the relevance of the doctrine in real life situations, issues, and concerns. The living out or practice aspect has not been given much importance.*

*Our products I still believe have imbibed that Catholic education but the mystery of sinfulness will always be a challenge.*

*Some faculty, students, alumni of Catholic schools opposed the Church's teachings and even disobeyed the pronouncements of the authorities of the Church.*

*Fostering collaboration with the family and community.* The participants recognize the vital role of the family in sustaining Catholic education at home. The Catholic university needs to strengthen the collaboration of parents and the community in the educational process. Parents and guardians should follow-up what the students learn in school so that they can relate and practice the lessons learned in school at home and in the community. The influence of the family and society affects Catholic education. These realizations were reflected in the following responses of participants:

*We educate students in Catholic school with values, but the problem is when they go home. The family and community teach and practice different things. The students are confused as to what is the right thing to do because of the strong influence of the family and the society. This undermines or affects Catholic education. The parents at home and the community should follow up what is taught in school.*

*The family is an important partner of the Catholic school in the mission of evangelization. There must be cooperation or some collaboration in the Christian formation of students.*

#### **4.0 Discussion**

In general, the perspectives and practices of teachers of a Catholic University reflect the essential characteristics of Catholic education according to its mission and vision. Meaning to say, how the teachers view Catholic education and perform their roles as Catholic educators show concurrence with the Church's understanding and practice of Catholic education. For instance, seeing Catholic education as evangelization, integral human formation, promotion of Catholic faith and practices, and means of salvation reflect the mainstream Church's teachings about Catholic education. Likewise,

teachers consider fidelity to magisterial teachings, obedience to the pronouncement of Church's authorities, a life of witnessing, values formation, prayerfulness, and service as essential qualities that teachers in a Catholic school should demonstrate. In brief, the experiences of the teachers reflect the faithful adherence of the education offered by the University to its Catholic identity and mission. The semblance may not be a perfect and complete congruence with what the Church teaches; nevertheless, it shows a positive alignment of ways of thinking and acting between the ideal Catholic education and the real experience of it by teachers.

The recognition of teachers of Catholic education as essential part of Church's evangelizing mission (John Paul II, 1990; ECCCE, 1992) is critically important. This perspective signifies that teachers do not see teaching job in the Catholic school as mere income-generating undertaking but as participation in the mission of the Church to proclaim the message of salvation so that everyone will come to know, love, and serve God (John Paul II, 1990). As co-missionaries in the educational ministry (Alfante & Aguilin, 2015), teachers do not see themselves as mere providers of knowledge and skills to their students but also as values formators and transmitters of faith. By doing so, they form the religious identity and missionary spirit of their students inspired by the charism of the educational institution. Likewise, they bring them closer to God and make them aware of the ultimate goal of their lives which is salvation, the fullness of life in God's Kingdom.

Furthermore, the teachers' emphasis on the whole person education of students is noteworthy. For them, Catholic education is oriented towards the integral formation of the human person with religion as the core. It simply means that Catholic schools

do not only provide globally certified academic training for students to secure their employment but also the religious/values formation grounded in the faith to promote their moral and spiritual well-being (Paul VI, 1965; John Paul II, 1990; ECCCE, 1992). As graduates of Catholic schools, students are expected to become upright, honorable, productive individuals. They should be agents of transformation in the family, society, and the Church (Tabora, 2014). Thus, teachers in Catholic schools should not only focus on the academic training but also on strengthening the values or religious formation of students. This values/religious formation what makes Catholic schools uniquely appealing despite its relatively expensive matriculation (Cruz, 2014).

On the other hand, orthodoxy in teaching is critical to Catholic education. Accordingly, teachers of Catholic schools should faithfully uphold and adhere to the teachings of the Church's Magisterium particularly in matters that relate to faith, morals, and worship. Doing so, it strengthens the Catholic identity and mission of Catholic schools (Benedict XVI, 2008). Thus, Catholic educators should not only be experts in their fields of expertise but also be well-informed and articulate in the Catholic faith and practice so that they can discuss and evaluate contemporary issues in the light of the Catholic faith. For that reason, Catholic educators should show filial respect to and accept the authority of the bishops and the Pope in matters of faith and morals. The statements or decrees of Church's authorities ensure unity and orthodoxy in the understanding and application of Church's teachings in relevant societal and ecclesial issues. Thus, Catholic educators should manifest faithful adherence to the teachings of the Church to ensure that what they are teaching to students is not just a mere theological or moral opinion but the authentic teachings of the Church

stated in the official magisterial doctrines.

Also, making religion as the core of the curriculum remains a perennial challenge in Catholic education (ECCCE, 1992). Catholic schools exist foremost on an evangelical mission (Benedict XVI, 2008). In fact, the religious dimension of education makes Catholic education distinctive from the public and private, nonsectarian schools. Hence, the pursuit of academic freedom and excellence, economic sustainability, and institutional competitiveness should not obstruct, betray, or marginalize the Catholic identity and mission of the academic community (Benedict XVI, 2008). In this context, Catholic schools should also give priority and extend full financial support to evangelical not just on academic, cultural, and sports-related programs and activities. For examples, strengthening religion or values education classes, professional and spiritual formation of teachers, prayers and liturgical celebrations, community service, campus ministry, and involvement of stakeholders can be concrete ways to making religion as the core of Catholic education curriculum.

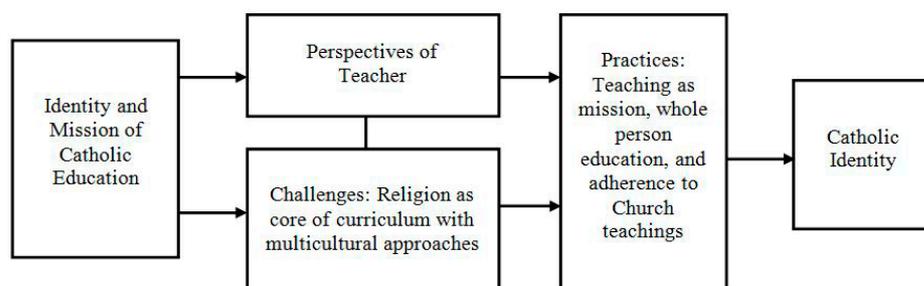
Finally, while it is important to ensure fidelity to Church's teaching in matters of faith and moral, the multicultural aspect of Catholic education has been inadvertently overlooked by the participants. The changing landscape of 21st-century education calls for teachers in Catholic schools to employ multicultural approaches and respect and tolerance of students whose cultural beliefs, values, and practices may not be acceptable in the light of the Catholic faith (John Paul II, 1990). Cognizant of its mission to bring all men and women to salvation regardless of its sex, color, ethnicity, and creed, Catholic schools should address the challenges of inclusivity and cultural sensitivity while remaining faithful to its evangelical mandate so that Catholic

education will be as relevant and responsive as ever (Samaniego, 2016).

Overall, the views and practices of faculty articulate and validate the distinctive brand of Christian education that the Catholic Church advocates, maintains, and supports, that is, humane, missionary, and salvific. In viewing and appraising Catholic education, the internal and external factors should be taken into account because they significantly influence the way Catholic schools conduct or implement Catholic education (Tudy, 2013). Thus, revisiting institutional vision, mission, goals, objectives, and practices may help identify factors which need re-alignment, redirection, re-strategizing, or revision for the Catholic school to remain faithful to its Catholic identity and mission and to remain relevant and responsive to the needs of the society and the Church today.

In summary, this paper points out the relevance of the mission and vision of Catholic schools in the design and delivery of its brand of education that is distinct from public and secular private schools have promoted. Catholic education, given its main

mission of evangelization, cannot depart from the teachings of the Catholic Church. In fact, a Catholic school is expected to perform the complementary task of what the church is doing of promoting the Catholic faith in classroom instruction. Corollary to this, how teachers view their roles in a Catholic school mindful of its mission and vision is critical on achieving its goal of keeping Catholic identity and mission in the multicultural world (see Figure 1). The current context itself formed by globalization, modernization, liberalization and other related social and political developments has posed various challenges on how teachers can demonstrate or actualize the practices of teaching and evangelizing pursuant to the Catholic tradition. Expectedly, teachers in variable situations according to age, sex, the number of years of teaching, and discipline or field of expertise would differ on their experiences on what is supposed to be Catholic education and what this should produce among students which reinforce or redefine Catholic identity.



**Figure 1.** Conceptual summary of what constitutes the experiences of teachers of a Catholic

## 5.0 Conclusion

The views and practices of teachers affirm the Catholic character of education that the Catholic University under study offers. As co-missionaries in the educational apostolate, teachers of the

Catholic University mold and empower students of Catholic schools through their academic and faith-values formation, making them work, life, and mission ready. Making religion as the core of the curriculum of Catholic education and embracing

multiculturalism are challenges that teachers of Catholic school face today along with the sense of apathy to Church's teachings and leadership. In this aspect, teachers need to collaborate with other stakeholders to address this perennial challenge in Catholic education. Thus, revisiting institutional vision, mission, goals, objectives, and practices may help identify factors which need re-alignment, redirection, re-strategizing, or revision in order for the Catholic school to remain true to its Catholic identity and mission and to be always relevant and responsive to the needs of the society and the Church today.

To revitalize Catholic education, the following recommendations are in order: (a) revisit the evangelical mission of the Catholic university through the alignment of its programs and activities to the vision, mission, goals, and objectives; (b) re-strengthen the religious education and campus ministry with special focus on non-Catholics for a more multicultural approach to Catholic education; (c) re-tool the faculty and non-teaching personnel on the nature and purpose of the Catholic university as well as on the charismatic identity, spirituality, and mission of the institution; and (d) re-assess the quality Catholic education of Catholic school in the light of the Philippine Catholic School Standards for a comprehensive assessment of its Catholicity.

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