

UPF Manila, Philippines Webinar: Vision for World Peace: Universal Values

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Manila, Philippines -- In celebration of the United Nations International Day of Families, UPF–Philippines, in partnership with the Professors World Peace Academy (PWPA) and the International Association of Academicians for Peace (IAAP), an initiative of UPF, hosted a second national "Peace Talks" webinar on May 15, 2020. The theme of the virtual discussion was "A Vision for World Peace: The Need for Universal Values." Seven speakers and panelists presented at the event, which was attended by 80 participants, including scholars, educators and Ambassadors for Peace from various sectors of society.

Educators play a crucial role in nation-building because they inevitably become the second parents to children, nurturing students in their mental, social, academic and spiritual development. This webinar provided a platform for discussing the role of educators and the implementation of Senate Bill 1224, the Comprehensive Values Education Act (CVEA).

A draft response letter to the CVEA, along with a pre-recorded video presentation and a PowerPoint presentation, were sent to the participants several days before the webinar, allowing for more time for discussion and brainstorming.

The program started with warm greetings and an introduction from the moderator, Dr. Venus G. Agustin, president of PWPA–Philippines.

Dr. Chung-sik Yong, regional group chairman of UPF-Asia Pacific, said the life and legacy of UPF founders, Dr. Sun Myung Moon and Dr. Hak Ja Han Moon, have been devoted to resolving the fundamental human problems that challenge the achievement of peace. "As academicians, you are truly front liners when we talk about nation-building," he said. He encouraged further cooperation among UPF, PWPA and educators to promote international cooperation among educators in order to realize a peaceful and sustainable future for young people. Dr. Yong continued, highlighting the urgent need for educators and educational systems to also cooperate to provide significant and sustainable solutions to the growing problems young people face. He emphasized that it is time we focus on raising up values-oriented youth and address the problems that affect families such a breakdown, teenage pregnancy, juvenile delinquency, drug abuse and poverty.

Dr. Thomas Selover, international president of PWPA, said the COVID-19 pandemic has given us the time to think about what really matters in our lives and what we are teaching our children. This is why the universal values that we all share play a vital role, he also said. Discussing universal values will lead us to a deeper appreciation of the values themselves. "This initiative on the CVEA proposal is very serious and very important, and I'm so proud of my colleagues in the Philippines for taking definitive action on this matter," he expressed.

Dr. Robert S. Kittel, international chairman of Youth and Students for Peace and education director of UPF-Asia Pacific, presented a summary of his pre-recorded presentation. He began his talk by reading a

statement by UN Secretary-General António Guterres, which underscored that "We need a networked multilateralism based on deep interaction with civil society, businesses, local and regional authorities and other stakeholders... where the voice of the youth is decisive in shaping our future." Next, he spoke about a statement honoring this day, which affirms that "Although families all over the world have transformed greatly over the past decades in terms of structure and as a result of global trends and demographic changes, the UN still recognizes the family as the basic unit of society."

Dr. Kittel then discussed a few points in the CVEA and five topics UPF and PWPA could contribute for the development of the K to 12 program: 1) universal principles, 2) goodness (interreligious), 3) good character (patriotism and nationalism), 4) gender equality and 5) moral behavior.

He said there are two fundamental "underlying principles": the dual-purpose principle (mind and body) and the pair-system principle (male and female), which coexist. Like pillars, these fundamental principles hold up individuals, families, societies and nations. If the pillars and beams of a building collapse, the building itself will collapse. Similarly, without these principles, society will collapse. This is why it is important to have a clear understanding of these principles, which the CVEA calls for, Dr. Kittel emphasized.

Speaking on the second point, goodness, UPF and PWPA could contribute for the development of the K to 12 program, Dr. Kittel spoke of the importance of defining goodness from an interreligious perspective in order to find common values. According to Rev. Moon, the principle of goodness is to live for the sake of others, and this concept of altruism is found in the holy books of all religions. It is to live a life in which one abandons their selfish desires and seeks the public good.

On the third point, good character, Dr. Kittel talked about how it extends to patriotism and nationalism. Children live for the sake of others, initially for the sake of their parents. This is called filial piety, which is also the foundation for the cultivation of one's conscience. It is also the underpinning of patriotism in which a citizen can willingly sacrifice for the sake of his or her nation. In this case, everyone needs to be a patriot.

On the fourth point, gender equality, instead of trying to make genders equal, often through external means, a better idea is gender complementarity, Dr. Kittel stated. A man thinks his wife is more valuable and more needed than himself and vice versa. A man needs a woman to be fully man; a woman needs a man to be fully woman. Together they complement and complete each other in God's image.

On the last point, moral behavior, Dr. Kittel stressed the importance of the value of purity and eliminating the culture of free sex from society because it promotes selfishness and negates the institution of marriage.

The first panelist, Hon. Anthony Bravo, a member of the Philippines House of Representatives, talked about how the Philippines is tackling armed conflicts. He highlighted that civil society is a powerful force that can either escalate or facilitate the resolution of conflict. "Civil society engagement in addressing societal problems strengthens social, economic and political development," he said.

The next panelist was Dr. Raymund P. Arcega, who is with the Association of Local Colleges and Universities Commissions on Accreditation (ALCUA). He spoke about the importance of understanding our vision of world peace and multilateralism, a process in which each and every sector of society has an important role to play in the attainment of sustainable peace. The education sector can contribute greatly to this vision, he said, and added that there is nothing wrong with the curriculum that is taught in schools. "It has been introduced and revised several times. The problem lies in [how it is delivered]," he underlined. "Do we have the right people to implement this curriculum?" He continued: "Unless and until we accept within ourselves and accept with full humility that there is something wrong [with] the delivery of values education, our vision of world peace will [remain] a vision and will never [become] a reality."

Dr. Arcega concluded by thanking UPF for spearheading the "Peace Talks" initiative. He also said becoming moral and ethical is a choice regardless of where you went to school. "Becoming good and godly is a decision, and you can be what you want to be as a matter of choice," he remarked. "As educators, we are just assisting students to be good citizens. What we're trying to do is to help you choose what is best and to see world peace during our lifetime," he said in closing.

Dr. Amado Magsino, president of the Philippines Association of Colleges and Schools of Business (PACSB), spoke about how PWPA can administer comprehensive values education as it relates to peace education. He said in some tertiary-level schools, values education is a stand-alone, one-unit course, while in others, it is incorporated into social science and other courses. As PWPA seeks to partner with the Commission on Higher Education of the Philippines (CHED) and Department of Education (DepEd) in the proper administration of educating students with values education, a challenge they face is finding credible teachers. "Values education is a critical subject, and not just anybody should be qualified to teach

it. I highly recommend UPF, PWPA and the International Peace Leadership College (IPLC) start this." He added: "At the IPLC, we offer six subjects on peace education and this is infused in all programs [at the college].... The students are imbued with peace education, and I can recommend some of our faculty members to be part of the training team to train trainers for values education." He expressed that he believes this would help the program be successfully implemented in schools.

He closed by encouraging administrators and program heads to examine the integrity and credibility of CVEA teachers very well for the effective implementation of this program.

QandA

1st Question: If we look at the bill (the CVEA), it focuses on character-building activities for children in grades K to 12. Can integrating the Parent Teacher Association (PTA) as collaborators for character building be helpful in realizing the purpose of the bill?

Answer by Dr. Arcega: I agree 500 percent that parents should be involved. Sending their children to school should not excuse parents of their responsibility. Educating children should be a partnership between the school and the parents. This may be an extreme proposal, but I would like to suggest that parents sign a contract with the school that says the school will be part of rearing and educating their child. It is a joint responsibility as stated in the Philippines Constitution.

Answer by Dr. Alicia G. Eleazar, DepEd, Palawan: Once the bill is passed the DepEd and the school will follow it. Character building should be incorporated into the curriculum guide used by public school teachers. Character building is also integrated in all subjects of the DepEd. It has to be suitable and appropriate for all cultures, even that of the indigenous people.

2nd Question: Please enlighten us on the efforts that have been made so far for this proposed law. Has it been deliberated on or is it scheduled to be so? What is the next step of the CVEA?

Answer by Dr. Kittel: Congressman Bravo said the bill has already been submitted and will most likely be signed into law by the President before this session ends, which is in the beginning of June.

3rd Question: While this webinar discussed values education for grades K to 12, may we know how values education is integrated into the higher education (HE) sector? How effective is it?

Answer by Dr. Arcega: While basic education is more competency based, higher education uses an outcome-based model or framework more.... Teachers have the opportunity to integrate values into all subjects in HE. Even in the grading system, there is a matrix allotted for the character of the child while inside the classroom. The National Service Training Program (NSTP) has been integrated into colleges and incorporates nationalism, patriotism, love for God, etc.

The webinar ended with all the participants singing "Heal Our Land" together.