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Lived experiences of tertiary religious education teachers: Basis for a synodal instructional model²

Doświadczenia życiowe nauczycieli wyższego kształcenia religijnego: podstawa synodalnego modelu dydaktycznego

Introduction

A providential ecclesial movement that may answer several contemporary issues in evangelization is Pope Francis' path of "synodality, which God expects of the Church of the third millennium" (2015, para 5). Synodality speaks of "journeying together" which manifests the real essence of the Church as missionary people of God, which can effectively face relevant issues within and that surround the Church (Francis, 2015, para 6).

In the field of religious education (RE) in the 21st century, a relevant yet perennial question, "Is faith something we can teach authentically?" seeks a new action to be taken. For instance, former Philippine President Rodrigo Duterte,

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a Catholic school alumnus, publicly said that God is stupid (Manahan, 2018). This reflects the reality that some alumni of Catholic schools do not reflect Gospel values. A study entitled, “Young People and the Challenges of Religious Education in the Philippines,” stated that there is a decline in morality and religiosity among Filipino youth (Cornelio, 2018). Ideally, a lesson learned, and one’s conviction must be united and transformed into action. A student may answer objectively the right answer to a specific religious or moral question yet differ from his or her conviction and practice.

Religious education is often challenged by the dynamism of certainty through scientific evidence and obscurity of faith which can be a challenging task to its teachers due to the dichotomic relationship between faith and reason. Although in the Catholic Church, faith and reason go together, a faith that seeks understanding; in Latin *fides quaerens intellectum* (John Paul II, 2001). In Catholic schools, faith is formally taught through a formal religious education subject offering which sheds light on this dichotomy. With this, religious education has its unique components: catechism and evangelization. It must not only exhibit knowledge but must affect authentic Christian living.

Through the years, challenges in teaching religious education have been oftentimes solved by various curriculum development and planning, and various pedagogies. Yet the problem remains the same. With this, Pope John Paul II (1990) in his encyclical, *Redemptoris Missio*, reminds the faithful of the need for “new evangelization” or a “re-evangelization” because many members of the Church have lived a life away from Jesus Christ and His Gospel (para 33). This concern for a new evangelization poses a challenge to an efficacious religious education formation because it is inevitable to remove the faith factor in the interplay of catechesis and evangelization. Therefore, an essential task such as teaching religious education calls for attention to understanding how teachers conceptualize evangelization and catechism, develop perspectives about Christian living, and integrate their ideas and experiences into their teaching methods and strategies concerning the signs of the times through the light of recent movement in the Catholic Church today, synodality.

With these considerations, religious education in the tertiary, due to its mature learners, the youth of today, who experience most of the moral and spiritual challenges, is an area where new evangelization can focus. At the frontlines of this area are religious education teachers inside the classrooms, “who transform the syllabus from a dead letter into a living experience of

learning the faith” (John Paul II, 1992, para 6). Therefore, RE teachers are called not only to facilitate learning but to be evangelizers of faith. As a result, RE teachers assume two roles, a professional teacher and a preacher of faith, an evangelizer. Therefore, the lived experiences of tertiary religious educators in teaching holistic religious education shed light on how religious education, as formal teaching, and evangelization, as an act of faith, integrate efficaciously to transmit the Catholic Faith to religious education students through the path of synodality.

Existing researches and studies show various efforts to come up with fitting religious education teaching models to address the pressing needs of contemporary demands. It includes various attempts for an integral and holistic formation in teaching religious education, shifting from mere indoctrination towards active learning (Freathy & Parker, 2013). For instance, there are different teaching models in RE, which is appropriate in particular contexts, focusing on welcoming and open exchange of faith experiences, academic exercises, championing social justice, and even being technically focused to efficiently affect the science of education (Newton, 1981). Also, creativity in learning religion is adapted to effect fun yet meaningful experiential toward active learning (Paulino, 2014). Then, there is a shift to a more relational and communal approach to teaching religious education involving two-way communication both from the teacher and the student founded on listening and praying together (Sweetman, 2021). While there is so much emphasis given to how RE is taught and related to students, the orthodoxy of the content must be there; and the divergence of the teacher’s personal touch on the subject must be employed not to disrupt the content but to further strengthen its integrity (Flanagan, 2023). In consideration of all relevant research in this study, special attention is given to the unique characteristic of RE, which is not only a mere act of teaching but an act of catechism in the wider realm of evangelization by becoming personal and kerygmatic, developing a friendship with Christ, and becoming communal (Kirkconnell, 2020).

Various research on Religious Education tends to focus solely on the realm of classroom perspectives such as teachers’ knowledge of the subject matter or students’ perceptions of the subject. A distinct gap that this study is trying to address is understanding the lived experiences, particularly experiences in teaching holistic religious education of the RE teachers, to see the relationship of formal teaching, as focused in the educational realm and approaches, and

the main goal of religious education, which is the propagation of faith to arrive a holistic teaching model that caters not only to classroom-based competencies but faith-based growth and spiritual maturity as well. This study hopefully attempts to bridge the gap of various RE pedagogies about ensuring a lesson learned in RE, is a lesson concretely lived out by its learners by attempting to design an integral and holistic pedagogy in teaching RE in the classroom through the rich experiences of the seasoned RE teachers in Albay.

Although various researches and studies have been made in the field of RE which hoped to achieve assimilating lessons personally and impactfully in lives of its learners; and to achieve ongoing conversion and faith experience while studying its concepts. This study tried to add a holistic and integral approach to religious education by merging the technicality of education through constructivism and evangelization through theological approaches: the interplay of faith and reason, evangelization and catechesis, and synodality; towards a synodal instructional model.

The main objective of the study is to design a synodal religious education instructional model, based on the lived experiences of seasoned RE teachers, that contains the interplay of evangelization and catechesis, with the aid of theology, and religious pedagogy through constructivism that ensures holistic and integral learning towards faith assimilation.

In a synodal sense, this study also promotes a universal language of both teachers and learners, not only in RE, but across all stakeholders of learning to come and walk together as co-journeymen that searches for truth and enlightenment.

Method

In this study, the phenomena were the lived experiences, particularly in the key informants' instructional experiences, and authentic experiences in teaching RE, of tertiary religious education teachers in the Catholic HEIs of Albay. The data was drawn, using total enumeration by interviewing all the 12 current tertiary religious educators with years of experience in the only two Catholic HEIs in Albay, specifically six tertiary faculties at the University of Santo Tomas-Legazpi and six tertiary faculties from Divine Word College of Legazpi in Albay, via one-on-one individual interviews for a maximum of 30 minutes, using open-ended questions. The key informants were selected as

they are residing in Albay, where a recent census conducted by the Philippines Statistics Authority in 2020 has shown that the “Bicol region accounted for the highest proportion of Roman Catholics at 93.5%; while Albay had the highest proportion among all provinces” (Gregorio, 2023). Additionally, the researcher also observed random classes of the key informants to confirm the interview data. The key informants’ lived experiences in RE help demonstrate their “eureka” moments in teaching RE that is utilized in a fitting instructional design in synthesis with constructivism, faith and reason, evangelization and catechesis, and synodality.

It employed Clark Moustakas’ phenomenological method in gathering and capturing the lived RE teaching experiences of the key informants. Then, the method of critical analysis through foundational research covering theological and constructivist approaches was used to shed light on the gathered phenomena. Finally, a synthesis brought about by the product of these approaches with the phenomenon gave birth to the main goal of this research which is to develop a synodal instructional model.

The researcher has developed the interview questionnaire below by using a general structure of a teaching model in religion; specifically, from the teaching religion models of Robert Newton which contains the following elements: “(1) aim of religious education, (2) principle, (3) teacher, (4) student, (5) curriculum, (6) environment, and (7) evaluation” (1981, p. 5). Also, the researcher has designed the questions about the objectives of this research. See the questions below:

Research Interview Questions

On Religious Education Instructional Experience: In your years of experience in teaching religious education in the tertiary:

1. What has been your main goal?
2. What has been your teaching principle?
3. What do you think are the roles of a religious education teacher?
4. What do you think are the roles of a religious education student?
5. What are your observations of a conducive curriculum design in teaching religious education in the tertiary?
6. What is the best environment for learning religious education?
7. What should be the evaluation or assessment of students in religious education subjects?

On authentic experiences in teaching holistic religious education: In your years of experience in teaching religious education in the tertiary:

- 1. How can you tell that your students have integrally learned or applied your lessons in religious education? What are your observations?
- 2. In relation to the previous question, what are your best practices in making that to reality?
- 3. Can you give and describe an experience/s where you are convinced that a student of yours has holistically learned your RE subject?

Results & discussion

Theme Development:

The lived experiences, which are developed into themes, of the key informants are presented in Table 1:

Table 1. Live experiences

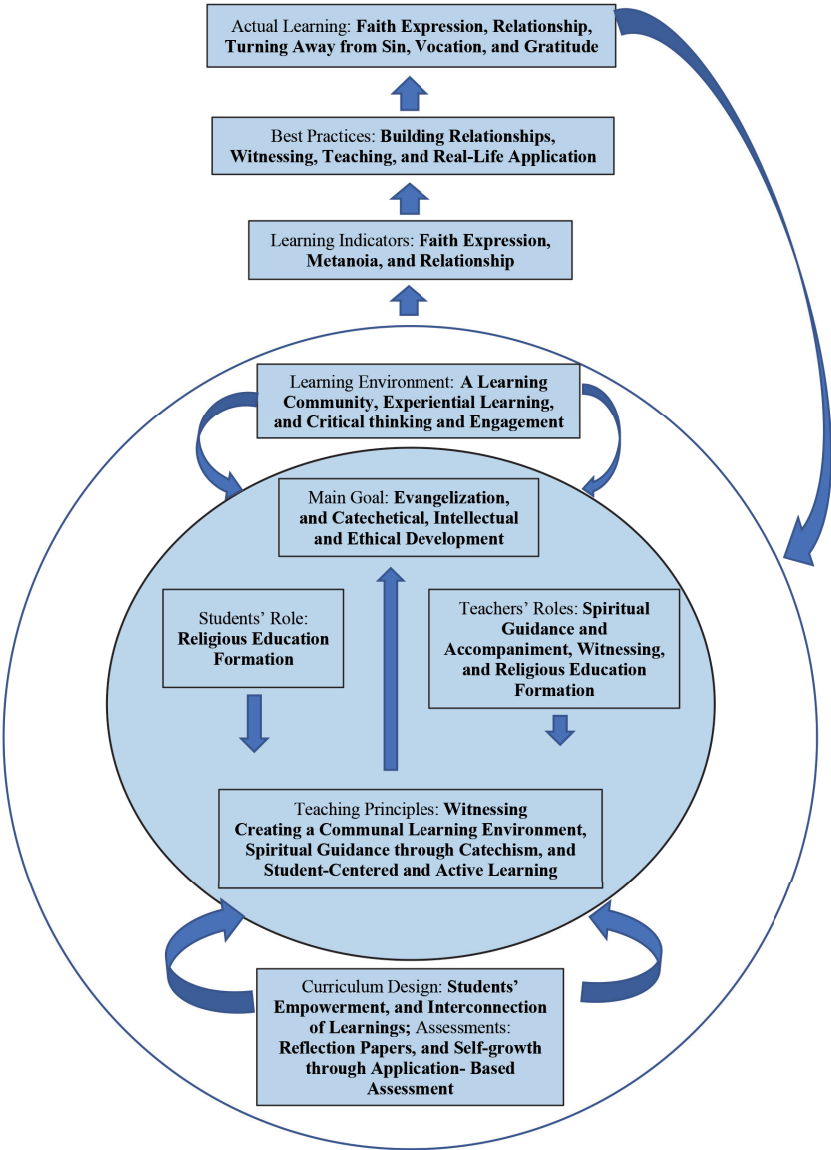
Category	Sub-Categories	Themes
Religious Education Instructional Experience	Main Goal	Evangelization
		Catechetical, Intellectual and Ethical Development
	Teaching Principle	Witnessing
		Creating a Communal Learning Environment
		Spiritual Guidance through Catechism
		Student-Centered and Active Learning
	Teachers' Role	Spiritual Guidance and Accompaniment
		Witnessing
		Religious Education Formation
	Students' Role	Religious Education Formation
	Conducive Curriculum Design	Students' Empowerment
		Interconnection of learnings
	Learning Environment	A Learning Community
		Experiential learning
		Critical Thinking and Engagement
	Students' Assessment	Reflection Papers
		Self-growth through Application-Based Assessment

Authentic Experiences in Teaching Holistic Religious Education	Students Integrally learned or Applied Lessons in Religious Education	Faith Expression
		Metanoia
		Relationship
	Best Practices on Students Integrally Learning or Applying Lessons in Religious education	Building Relationships
		Witnessing
		Teaching
		Real-Life Application
	Actual Holistically Learning of Religious Education	Faith Expression
		Relationship
		Turning Away from Sin
		Vocation
		Gratitude

Source: Authors' own elaboration

The key informants' main goals have been evangelization and catechesis which are confirmed and made possible by the teaching principles of witnessing, communal learning, and spiritual guidance. The interactions of teachers and students are seen in both its roles that give contexts to the teaching principles. The curriculum design and learning environment also give valid descriptions of the actualization of the main goals, teaching principles, and roles validated by the themes of the students' assessments. Additionally, the themes developed in authentic experiences in teaching holistic religious education give concrete examples and a 360-degree understanding of the instructional experiences. The dynamism of the themes shows the direction of the teaching principles to arouse the learners' faith towards the main goal of evangelization. And, to achieve it, the roles of both students and teachers must be applied through internalization and discernment born out of spiritual guidance and authentic dialogue surrounded by a conducive learning environment and planned-out curriculum. See Figure 1 for visualization.

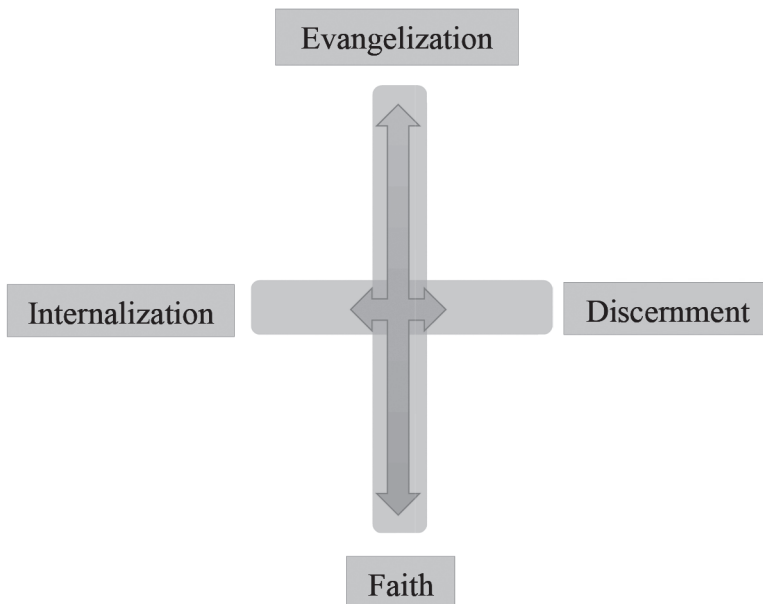
Figure 1. Lived Experiences in Teaching Religious Education



Source: Authors' own elaboration

The themes of the teaching principles are ignited by the openness of the student in learning RE and the action of the RE teacher to nurture the student through the themes developed in the teacher's role. This shows the movement or the attempt of the arousal of faith in the students. As observed in the key informants' teaching of RE, the teachers start engaging the students for them to be ready for class. The teachers do not right away discuss the topic but set the mood for learning by building student-teacher rapport as observed in formal and informal classroom "kumustahan" (inquiring one's state of being). Even though, the end of RE teaching is evangelization, the key informants, as observed in their classroom teachings, do not right away offer the content of the teachings of the Church; rather, the teachers let the learners undergo the process of self-internalization through spiritual guidance facilitated by a community of learning to draw out the learners thoughts and personal meanings. Then, the teachers proceed to the discernment of the learnings in the classroom in the light of the magisterium of the Church which eventually leads to evangelization. Visually see this movement in Figure 2:

Figure 2. Learning Movement in RE



Source: Authors' own elaboration

Proposed Synodal Instructional Model

In consideration of the lived experiences of the key informants in their religious education instructional experiences, the disciplines and theories that correspond to the themes, and the related literature and studies, this research has proposed a synodal instructional model in religious education based on four points, namely: faith, internalization, discernment, and evangelization. These points are developed into learning phases that achieve an instructional model in religious education.

The lived experiences of the key informants have developed themes that lead both the learners towards faith and evangelization through the process of internalization and discernment. The first and primary phase in learning holistic RE is the openness to faith. It is followed by a journey of internalization and discernment towards the main goal which is evangelization. The disciplines and theories of constructivism, faith and reason, catechesis, and evangelization correspond to these four phases.

Constructivism supports the making meaning stages that develop in the faith and internalization phases and is redirected in the discernment phase with the deconstruction of privilege and power towards objective and authoritative truth, as to “BE” and applied in the evangelization phase (Grimmitt, 2000; Dettoni, 1995). This deconstruction of knowledge aligns the learners internalized and discerned knowledge to the authority of the truth of faith and lessons in RE; and not on their personally held biases that are incongruent with the authority of objective truths and facts. With this, objective learning does not eradicate subjective learning but empowers it by directing personal convictions into the authority of knowledge and truth. Faith and reason are developed on the first dimension in the faith phase emphasizing on the openness to faith which seeks understanding, then move to the second dimension in the internalization and discernment phases, and reach the third dimension in the evangelization phase (John Paul, 2001). Evangelization and catechesis, ignite the faith phase through the personal and kerygmatic introduction of Christ which then continues towards the internalization phase which is a deeper encounter with Christ through study and research and is validated in the dialogue with the Church’s teaching in the discernment phase through communion in the form of mentorship and is capped evangelization phase forming a meaningful relationship with God (Kirkconnell, 2020),

Finally, synodality is manifested in the faith phase through communion, then in internalization and discernment phases through participation, and towards evangelization phase through the mission. These four learning phases manifest synodality in a religious education setting, thus achieving the objective of this study in developing a synodal instructional model. See Table 2 for easy visualization.

Table 2. Four learning phases

Disciplines/ Theories	Synthesized Lived Experiences of Religious Educators (four learning phases)	Constructivism	Faith and Reason	Evangelizing Catechesis	Synodality
Phases/ Stages in Relation to its Goal	Faith	Making Meaning	Believing in a God	Personal and Kerygmatic Introduction of Christ	Communion
	Internalization	Making Meaning	Believing God	Deeper Encounter with Christ	Participation
	Discernment	Deconstruction of Privilege and Power Towards Objective and Authoritative Truth	Believing God	Mentorship	Participation
	Evangelization	“BE”	Believing in God	Meaningful Relationship with God	Mission

Source: Authors’ own elaboration

The research also observes the complementarity of this synodal instructional model with the existing religious education pedagogies and formation models in RE subjects. See Table 3 for comparison and complementarity with religious education pedagogies and Table 4 for RE formation models.

Table 3. Religious education pedagogies

Religious Education Pedagogies/ Instructional Models	Synodal Instructional Model	Newton's Models in Teaching Religion	Paulino's Active Learning Strategy Model in Religious Education	Dominican-Thomistic Education by Design (DoT-ED)	Catholic Church Classic Method
Phases/ Stages/ Types	Faith	Open Education Model	Information/ experience	Study	See
	Internalization	Academic Model	Information/ experience	Research	See
	Discernment	Educational Technology Model	Formation/ Encounter	Analysis	Judge
	Evangelization	Social Reconstruction Model	Transformation/ Exchange	Action	Act

Source: Authors' own elaboration

In Table 3, the Synodal Instructional Model's learning phases correspond with Newton's Models in Teaching Religion. The faith phase corresponds to the open educational model through a relational approach in drawing out learners' needs and interests in an openly accepting environment. The internalization phase corresponds with the academic model in terms of a scholarly atmosphere where the teacher facilitates learning in RE toward religious knowledge. Then, the discernment phase corresponds with the educational technology model in the adaptability of the learners to promote changes among themselves. Lastly, the evangelization phase corresponds to the social reconstruction model in making learners agents of social change through evangelization.

In Paulino's Active Learning Strategy Model in Religious Education, the Synodal Instructional Model corresponds its faith and internalization phases with the information/ experience stages through the acquisition and transmission of knowledge through relational and scholarly experiences in the classroom. While the discernment phase corresponds with the formation/ encounter stages to norm and value setting of the authoritative and objective

truth. As well, the evangelization phase corresponds to the transformation/exchange stages through the practice and inculcating of responsibility to the learners.

The Synodal Instructional Model also complements the Dominican-Thomistic Education by Design. The faith phase corresponds to the study phase by stirring up the curiosity and interests of the learners. Next, the internalization phase corresponds with the research phase by looking at the opened horizons and questions in the study phase through research. Then the discernment phase corresponds directly with the analysis phase in terms of the authenticity and conformity of the learners' newfound meaning with the doctrines and teachings of the Catholic Church. Finally, the evangelization phase corresponds with the action phase through the application of the learnings by the learners.

In the Catholic Church's Classic Method of See, Judge, and Act, the Synodal Instructional Model also complements in terms of seeing the learners' context in the faith and internalization phases; judging the learnings through the lens of the Catholic faith in the discernment phase; and acting on the Christian call to social transformation in the evangelization phase.

In Table 4, the Synodal Instructional Model complements the RE formation models and literature in the faith phase through the awakenings of believing, with gratitude, and prayer that forms the affective dimension of the human person which affects more relational attitude and listening. The internalization phase complements respectively in the literature below through the way of truth by preaching it that helps trust God and neighbour that contributes to the cognitive dimension of the learners through Christian discipleship guided by critical thinking that arouses a hunger for formation. Then, the discernment phase also trod the way of truth by preaching it that helps trusting God and neighbour but now affects not only the intellect but the will to conform to the norm of the Church where a tailor-fit formation can be catered to the learners. Lastly, the evangelization phase is borne out of doing, charity, and service that facilitates the corporeal and spiritual needs that are the indicator of an effective Christian Education as a product of praying together.

Table 4. RE formation models and literature

Religious Education Formation/ Literature	Synodal Instructional Model	UST-Legazpi ORA Faith Formation Program	Four Essential Dimensions of the Human Person	Christian Education in the 21st Century: Renewing a Transformational Vision	Adult Religious Education and Faith Development
Phases/ Stages/ Types	Faith	Believing/ Gratitude/ Laudare/ Priest	Affective	more relational approaches	Listening
	Internalization	Trusting/ Truth/ Praedicare/ Prophet	Cognitive	Christian discipleship guided by critical thinking	Hunger for Formation
	Discernment	Trusting/ Truth/ Praedicare/ Prophet	Volitive	-----	Tailor-fit Formation
	Evangelization	Doing/ Love/ Benedicere/ King	Corporeal	Effective Christian Education	Praying Together

Source: Authors' own elaboration

The Synodal Instruction Model is a learning pedagogy in RE that is founded firstly on creating a faith community in the classroom, headed by the RE teacher, through personal and communal conversations about faith-related experiences and contexts, and even pressing and valid concerns in their lives about the topics that will be discussed. The goal is to let the class loosen up a bit in the academic atmosphere so that there will be a healthy vulnerability in opening up about the objectives of the class. With these, authentic insights, more participation, and faith topics will naturally flow from the learners to the classroom. This is what the faith phase is all about; to harness everyone's

participation just like in a recollection or retreat atmosphere and build a learning community that is rooted in faith and trust.

In the internalization phase, the learners are directed by the teachers to question or study their contexts, perspectives, and experiences that are discussed in the faith phase. The learners are asked to look at these named insights with different lenses, list their strengths and weaknesses, and value their worth in their lives to develop a personal conviction that lets them own and express the knowledge of the faith on their terms with the help of study and research. In this part, the class is to develop their own, “*instrumentum laboris*” that will be used in the next phase.

The discernment phase begins in humble acknowledgment that both the RE teacher and the learners are not holders of truth but only God. This learning phase aims to compare and contrast the learners’ learned convictions and truths, the “*instrumentum laboris*,” to the teachings and magisterium of the Church, which is the concrete manifestation of the truth of God in RE. This leads the learners to appreciate the objectivity of truth and knowledge and avoid mere sociological acceptance on matters of faith and morals. It also cautions an authoritative and subjective approach of the teacher to avoid invalidating the personal convictions of the learners in their faith contexts and experiences. At this learning phase, the teacher will share his or her expertise on the RE subject and offer an impartial teaching of RE not to distort the content but to further solidify its integrity and authenticity (Flanagan, 2023). Then, the dialogue of truth happens that leads to the acceptance of a faith content that is not simply forced in a mere indoctrination but has undergone a process of communion, and consultation.

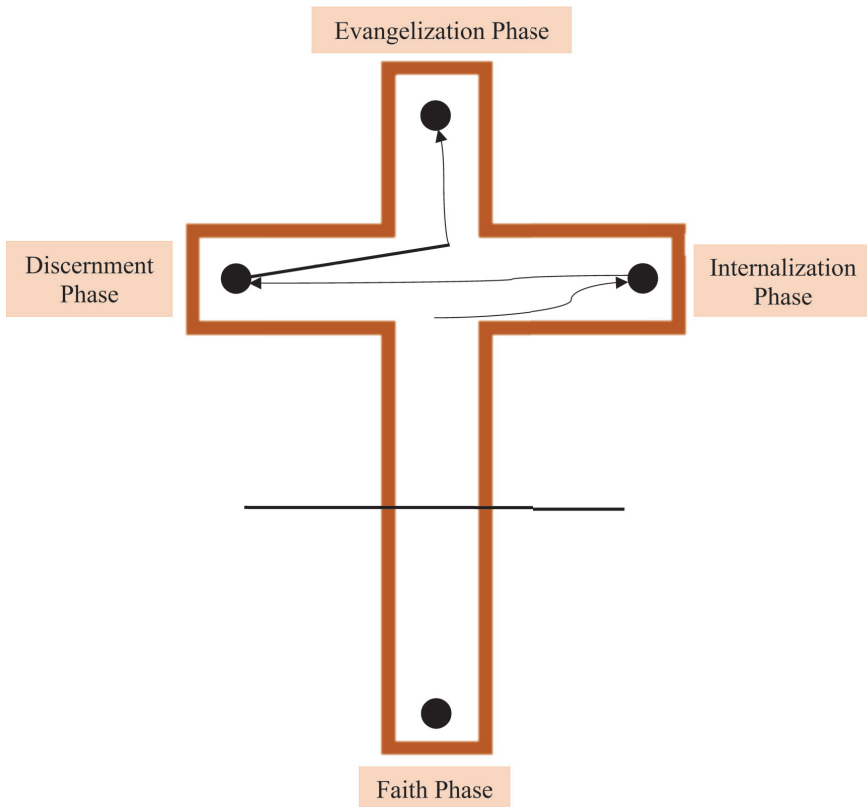
The last phase is evangelization. This is where the learners and the teachers are called, as evangelizers, to witness Christ to the world in prayer, words, and deeds. The goal of this phase is to express the faith learned in the RE subject. This is a missioning phase where the learnings do not only stay in the reflection but are applied in reality. It is a call to make Christ, come alive in the lives of the learners and the teachers.

In Figure 2, there is a figure that has a resemblance to the iconic symbol of the Catholic faith which is the cross. These four phases, when applied, follow the shape of the cross. Thus, this synodal instructional model is like the Christian call to be disciples of Christ as He said in Matthew 16:24, “Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their

cross and follow me”. Learning RE is different from other academic subjects as it challenges everyone, both the teacher and the student, to journey together with the carrying of their crosses; that is faith towards evangelization.

Here is the visualization of the proposed synodal instructional model which the researcher named “**FIDE** method: Faith In Development Education. See Figure 3:

Figure 3: A Synodal Instructional Model: FIDE (Faith in Development Education) Method



Source: Authors' own elaboration

Sample Learning Guide of FIDE Method

This sample learning guide shows the application of the FIDE method in teaching the lesson about human dignity in the social teachings of the Church. The principle of human dignity is one the foundational concepts in the social teachings of the Catholic Church. The learning outcome for this instructional guide is for the learners to express and realize the importance of the centrality of the principle of human dignity as a core principle of the Social Teachings of the Catholic Church through prayer.

Faith Phase. The RE class begins in a prayer asking the grace of the Holy Spirit to guide the class in learning prayerfully. The learning objective of this phase is for the learners to be able to spontaneously be aware, ask, relate, and share their views about their experiences and perception of human dignity. This will be made possible through a class activity which is entitled, *Kumustahan ng Dignidad*. This activity revisits the students' experiences and perception of their own worth. In particular, the learners are asked to rate their own valuation of their self-worth. Then, the teacher will ask the class to form a circular formation using their seats. This formation will give a conducive sharing atmosphere about the why's of their self-worth. After the sharing, the teacher will gather and summarize the fruit of the sharing and give instructions to proceed to the next activity entitled, *Who Am I?*. This activity gives an opportunity to further express the learner's individual reflection of their human dignity by making them draw and describe themselves on a paper. Then, the teacher will ask them to answer this question, *Is your dignity based on your merits? Why?*, at the back of their paper. Then, the teacher will process the activity by pointing out the idea that human dignity is never merit based but inherent. The teacher will not yet point out to the main concept of the principle of human dignity as it will be fully taught in the discernment phase. In this faith phase the goal is to direct the learners' focus on their own understanding, and experiences of human dignity.

Internalization Phase. This learning phase proceeds from the processing of the teacher in the last activity of the previous learning phase. The learning objective of this phase is for the learners to be able to examine and analyse their views about their experiences and perception of human dignity through research and study. The teacher will facilitate a debate that focuses whether human dignity is earned or inherent. The class can be divided in four groups,

namely: the audience, the panel, the *earned* group, and the *inherent* group. The groups are tasked by the teachers to research and study their own roles and positions in the debate through research and study in the library. After which, the debate proper will come next. After the debate, the teacher will ask each student to write a reflection paper and position their stand on the debate in their own RE journals or notebooks. Then, the class are asked to make a summarize outline of their stand on the topic for everyone to see.

Discernment Phase. This learning phase starts with the teacher acknowledging the learners stand and position on the topic of human dignity from the internalized phase. The learning objective of this phase is for the learners to be able to clarify and align their internalized thoughts and experiences with the Church's concept of human dignity. The teacher will compare and contrast the learners' internalized ideas with that of the social teachings of the Catholic Church. Also, the teacher will point out the points of alignment and clarification of the students in an open discussion pedagogy. Then, the teacher will solicit ideas from the class on what good it is to acknowledge and practice the social teachings of the Church in relevance to the issues of today about human dignity.

Evangelization Phase. This final phase proceeds from the discernment phase to practice and express the class learnings on the topic of human dignity through a creation of a theological and doctrinally sound prayer that addresses the contemporary issues that face the principle of human dignity. The learning objective of this phase is for the learners to be able to express and realize the importance of the centrality of the principle of human dignity as a core principle of Social Teachings of the Catholic Church through prayer. In this activity, the learners are able to participate, communicate, and act on the realities that face human dignity from the learnings in class through journeying together in faith and reason. The class will culminate with the class praying, their created prayer about human dignity.

On the next page, table 5 shows a brief summary of the sample learning guide using the FIDE method. It shows the topic taught, which is the principle of human dignity, on top, and the learning outcome below. Under it are the learning phases, objectives, activities, and assessments that make the topic teachable in the classroom.

Table 5. Topic

Topic (The Principle of Human Dignity) <i>Learning Outcome: The learners are able to express and realize the importance of centrality of the principle of human dignity as a core principle of the Social Teachings of the Catholic Church through prayer.</i>			
Learning Phases	Learning Objectives	Learning Activities	Learning Assessments
Faith Phase	The learners are able to spontaneously be aware, ask, relate, and share their views about their experiences and perception of human dignity.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Class Activity: “Kumustahan ng Dignidad ▪ Individual Activity: “Who am I? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Class Participation
Internalization Phase	The learners are able to examine and analyse their views about their experiences and perception of human dignity through research and study.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Debate on the Inherency of Human Dignity 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Reflection Paper
Discernment Phase	The learners are able to clarify and align their internalized thoughts and experiences with the Church’s concept of human dignity.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Lecture ▪ Open Discussion 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Class Participation ▪ Pen and paper test
Evangelization Phase	The learners are able to express and realize the importance of the centrality of the principle of human dignity as a core principle of Social Teachings of the Catholic Church through prayer.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Creation of a prayer about the relevance and importance of the principle of human dignity in the society of today. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Group Performance Task: Prayer Making

Source: Authors’ own elaboration

Conclusion

Jesus Christ is the best Teacher of faith because he is God, himself. In His life, Jesus can evangelize people even without saying a word just because

of his presence. In the gospels, Jesus is not quick to judge or anger people who err; he is not like the teachers of the law who are strict and rigorous. Rather he starts by welcoming all and inviting everyone to journey with Him. There are instances where His followers would leave Him not because He is a false teacher but because one cannot accept His teachings, just like the rich young man. Teaching religious education is not an easy task, it involves personal configuration to the God who one believes in. The demand of witnessing and following Christ is noble yet a cross to bear.

In this synodal instructional model, both the learners and the teachers are journeying towards faith. If one pays attention to the initials of the four phases, it will give F-I-D-E, and the word *fide* in Latin is faith. Pedagogically, spiritually, and literally, this model is a journey of faith. It proceeds from one's curiosity and interest about the faith enhanced by relational dialogue (faith phase), then developed into personal conviction through research and study (internalization phase), then accustomed to the objective truth, Catholic doctrine, to caution meaningless making meaning (discernment phase), then application process (evangelization phase) which shares an authentic Catholic Christian in deeds and words.

The four learning phases, faith, internalization, discernment, and evangelization, seem to happen in this synodal instructional model as a stage to be completed in a learning process; but in reality, these four phases happen simultaneously in one's heart. The goal of this instructional model is to practice it consciously to apply it seamlessly in life lifelong journey of every believer; so that no one will walk blindly by the false truths that ensnare the ruin of souls in the world. A Christian should not walk alone, he or she must walk together with the whole Church.

Although, the pedagogical design is heavily focus on RE teaching. It is worth noting that this instructional model can be suitable in a generic sense to subject areas that has faith element not in the sense of the spiritual and religion alone; but also building confidence in teacher-student relationship and impacting orthodoxy in sciences through: the means of classroom learning motivation (faith phase); developing mutual dialogue through study and research (internalization phase); gradual attuning on the truths of every sciences, per se (discernment phase); and application of the transfer of learning (evangelization phase).

Abstract: Proclaiming the Good News is the primary goal of every religious educator, grounded in authentic and integral teaching of the Catholic faith. This study examined the lived experiences of all the tertiary religious educators in Catholic Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) in Albay, focusing on their “eureka” moments during their years of teaching religious education (RE). These experiences were captured using Clark Moustakas’ transcendental phenomenology. The findings reveal key themes related to Evangelization, Catechetical development, and Intellectual and Ethical growth, which emerged as the main goal of teaching RE. These are supported by teaching principles of Witnessing, creating a Communal Learning Environment, providing Spiritual Guidance through Catechism, and promoting Student-Centred and Active Learning. These principles guide the direction of RE instruction. The progression of RE learning—from awakening faith to evangelization—is seen through the processes of internalization and discernment. All these elements are illuminated by theological approaches that emphasize faith and reason, evangelization and catechesis, synodality, and the educational theory of constructivism. The synthesis of these theories and experiences led to the development of a synodal instructional model comprising four learning phases: faith, internalization, discernment, and evangelization. These phases can easily be remembered using the acronym FIDE, which is Latin for “faith.”

Keywords: religious education, lived experiences, synodality, evangelization

Streszczenie: Głoszenie Dobrej Nowiny jest podstawowym celem każdego nauczyciela religii, zakorzenionym w autentycznym i integralnym nauczaniu wiary katolickiej. Niższe badanie analizuje doświadczenia życiowe wszystkich nauczycieli akademickich religii pracujących w katolickich instytucjach szkolnictwa wyższego (HEIs) w Albay, koncentrując się na ich przełomowych momentach („eureka”) w trakcie lat nauczania edukacji religijnej (RE). Do uchwycenia tych doświadczeń wykorzystano fenomenologię transcendentálną Clarka Moustakasa. Wyniki badań ujawniły kluczowe tematy związane z ewangelizacją, rozwojem katechetycznym oraz wzrostem intelektualnym i etycznym, które wyłoniły się jako główny cel nauczania RE. Są one wspierane przez zasady dydaktyczne, takie jak: świadectwo, tworzenie wspólnotowego środowiska uczenia się, zapewnianie duchowego przewodnictwa poprzez katechezę oraz promowanie uczenia się skoncentrowanego na uczniu i aktywnych metod nauczania. Zasady te wyznaczają kierunek dydaktyki RE. Proces nauczania RE – od budzenia wiary po ewangelizację – jest widoczny poprzez wewnętrzne przyswajanie i rozeznawanie. Wszystkie te elementy są oświetlone przez podejścia teologiczne podkreślające relację między wiarą i rozumem, ewangelizację i katechezę, synodalność oraz teorię edukacyjną konstruktywizmu. Synteza tych teorii i doświadczeń doprowadziła do opracowania synodalnego modelu dydaktycznego składającego się z czterech faz nauczania:

wiary, internalizacji, rozeznawania i ewangelizacji. Fazy te można łatwo zapamiętać dzięki akronimowi FIDE, który w języku łacińskim oznacza „wiarę”.

Słowa kluczowe: edukacja religijna, doświadczenia życiowe, synodalność, ewangelizacja

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