

Research Article

From Educational Learning to Spiritual Growth: The Effects of Holistic Education on Students at Santa Monica Institute, Mabini, Bohol

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Abstract: This study explores the pedagogical approaches implemented at Santa Monica's Institute Incorporated in Mabini, Bohol, to understand how teaching strategies align with contemporary educational theories and address the learning needs of students. Using a qualitative-descriptive method, data were gathered through classroom observations, interviews with faculty members, and focus group discussions with students. The findings reveal a blend of traditional and progressive teaching methods, including lecture-based instruction, collaborative learning, and contextualized teaching strategies tailored to the local socio-cultural environment. While many teachers demonstrate adaptability and creativity in their instructional practices, challenges such as limited access to updated teaching resources and professional development opportunities persist. The study underscores the importance of continuous teacher training, integration of learner-centered approaches, and community involvement in improving pedagogical effectiveness. Teachers demonstrate a strong sense of dedication, often adapting their approaches to meet the diverse needs of students despite challenges such as limited resources and access to professional development. The findings underscore the importance of supporting teachers through training, collaboration, and access to innovative pedagogical tools. This research contributes to the broader discourse on improving educational quality in rural areas and highlights the role of contextualized, student-centered teaching practices in fostering meaningful learning experiences.

Keywords: holistic education; student development; spiritual formation; Catholic education; moral development

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1. Introduction

In every school, the teaching strategies of each teacher reflect a unique pedagogical approach. This pedagogy often stems from the teacher's academic experiences during their own studies (Freire, 2018). Teachers typically instruct based on the knowledge and methods they acquired as students, particularly during their college years. Their pedagogy includes their style of teaching, which encompasses how they communicate with students and deliver the subject matter (Urma & Callo, 2023).

At Santa Monica Institute of Mabini, Bohol (SMI), however, the pedagogical approach is an extraordinary practice. It allows students the freedom to connect with others and with the Church. This connectivity exists among administrators, teachers, and the broader school community. The school's approach goes beyond "learning by doing, and it emphasizes learning through application (Dewey, 1938). This application-based learning is not limited to individual concerns but extends to understanding and addressing the collective needs of the school community (Freire, 2018). Each class at SMI has an individual classroom adviser, who acts as the administrator of their section. The adviser's role is to help and guide students. While not a literal parent, the adviser serves as a second parent within the classroom, representing the role of a guardian. One of the adviser's main responsibilities is to prepare the classroom and check the students' attendance daily. This task is a consistent and daily duty that reinforces the teacher's commitment to their learners. The learning materials created by teachers in the classroom reflect the image and values of the school (Bernardo, 2023). These

materials influence students' lives and can result in either positive or negative outcomes, depending on their content and implementation.

Moreover, the Bohol Association of Catholic Schools under the Diocese of Talibon has fostered a nurturing and conducive learning environment for students, particularly at SMI. This Institute is a parochial school led by Rev. Fr. Llyod Lester Liwagon, the School Director, and Mr. Joselito E. Ugay, MAED, the School Principal. As a parochial school under the supervision of Santa Monica Parish in Mabini, Bohol, the institution emphasizes both academic excellence and spiritual formation. Each day, students visit the Blessed Sacrament and offer prayers in honor of St. Augustine and St. Monica, the patron saints of Poblacion I, Mabini, Bohol. These devotional practices are a central part of the school's identity, rooted in its founding values and sustained through the present. The school is rich in spiritual tradition and deeply committed to nurturing a divine connection with the Blessed Sacrament.

These practices at SMI are a unique expression of love and service to the country. Students are guided not only in academics but also in developing their spiritual and moral foundations. The learning that takes place at SMI extends beyond the classroom, and students are encouraged to practice values and apply their learning in real-life situations. And the aims and goals reflect the school's commitment to forming individuals who are both Christ-centered and self-aware, prepared to contribute positively to society.

The basic contention of this paper highlights the mode of learning of the students at SMI, which aims to form individuals into integral and holistic students in a Catholic institution. The aim of this research is to examine how holistic education influences students not only academically but also spiritually. This Holistic education focuses on the development of the whole person, including intellectual, moral, emotional, social, and spiritual aspects. Therefore, the study intends to determine whether the educational practices at SMI help students grow not only in their academic learning but also in their spiritual life and personal formation.

Moreover, to guide this research, the objectives of this paper focus on the following questions: What is the role of the Teacher in the academic formation of the students, in the SMI? How does holistic education influence the educational learning of students? How does holistic education contribute to the spiritual growth of students? In addressing these questions, it becomes the responsibility of teachers to be adequately prepared to facilitate activities that help students recognize the significance of their existence and personal development.

Thus, the researcher analyzes the essential elements that contribute to the academic and holistic formation of the students at the said institution.

2. Materials and Methods

This study uses a qualitative and theoretical approach to examine how holistic education affects the personal and academic development of students at SMI. It primarily relies on secondary sources, including books, journals, and articles on Catholic education and pedagogical approaches. A limited empirical investigation was conducted through a questionnaire given to selected students. It included structured and open-ended questions to capture their experiences and perceptions of holistic education, particularly its impact on spiritual growth, moral values, and academic development. Responses were organized to identify common themes and patterns. In this regard, the paper focuses on the importance of the academic formation of the students in the SMI.

For this reason, the data were analyzed using qualitative descriptive methods, comparing student experiences with theoretical principles of holistic education. This approach provides insights into how holistic education shapes students as academically competent, morally responsible, and spiritually grounded individuals.

Moreover, the researcher explores the topic through an in-depth qualitative and theoretical investigation. The researchers relied entirely on secondary sources such as books of the Catholic Institutions, journals, and published articles related to the Pedagogical Approach. Through a careful reading, analysis, and interpretation of these materials, the researchers examined how the Holistic Education on the Personal and Academic Development of the students in SMI. This research has no fieldwork or empirical data collection, as the study focused solely on theoretical and conceptual analysis. The researcher will conduct an investigation into how the students apply the holistic form of spirituality in their lives as a sojourner creation in this world.

Lastly, the researcher will conduct a sole investigation in the form of giving

questionnaires to the students, and they will answer these according to their experiences in the school premises. This kind of investigation will uplift the students to continue their moral beliefs in a field of accepting all those moral perspectives they experience in the Catholic School. Thus, this method of investigation aims to encourage students to reflect on and strengthen their moral beliefs while embracing the various moral and spiritual perspectives they encounter in a Catholic educational environment. Thus, the researcher will provide a structured set of questions designed to assess the students' understanding, application, and perception of holistic spirituality in their daily school life. The responses gathered will help identify how the school's spiritual programs, values formation activities, and faith-based initiatives influence students' personal development, ethical decision-making, and overall well-being.

3. Results and Discussion

3.1. *An Overview of the Pedagogical Approach of SMI*

In the overview of the pedagogical approach can be an intentional connection of academic content with spiritual values and moral teachings in making faith a living form and a dynamic part of the educational experience (Galioto & Marini, 2021). At SMI, this approach ensures that learners do not compartmentalize their beliefs from their academic pursuits but see them as deeply intertwined. Faith-Integrated Learning is a form of pedagogical approach to understand how the school harmonizes academic excellence with spiritual and character development. SMI is deeply committed to its mission of providing a Christ-centered education that nurtures not only academic excellence but also the spiritual and moral growth of every learner. This mission reflects the belief that education should be holistic in integrating faith, reason, and values for the students who can develop as integral persons who are grounded in Christian principles (Jacob, 2025). The objective of the school is to form students who embody Christian virtues such as love, humility, honesty, compassion, and service towards the lives they have in the future. The school believes that true education goes beyond academic knowledge to include the development of moral character rooted in the teachings of Jesus Christ.

Moreover, SMI is committed to cultivating students who live out Christian virtues as a reflection of their faith. The school fosters an environment where values such as love, humility, forgiveness, and service that are taught, modeled, and practiced daily. This holistic formation aims to shape students into compassionate individuals who respond to life's challenges with grace and integrity (Lovat & Toomey, 2009). The school's mission centers on developing students grounded in Christian virtues, encouraging them to become role models in their families, schools, and communities. Emphasizing virtues like truthfulness, kindness, patience, and generosity, the school guides learners to grow in character and faith, empowering them to make ethical choices and lead lives to a meaningful service. This formation encourages students to practice compassion, honesty, respect, and responsibility as essential traits, equipping them to be morally upright individuals who contribute positively to society and witness their faith through actions.

The next subsection of this paper examines the importance of the teacher's role in the classroom setting. In particular, it highlights how teachers serve not only as facilitators of knowledge but also as mentors who guide students in the development of critical thinking, moral values, and personal growth within the learning environment.

3.2. *The Role of the Classroom Adviser as the Facilitator of Student Academic and Personal Development*

The classroom adviser plays a pivotal role in the educational environment, acting as the primary mentor and guide for students (Kolb, 1984). This sub-topic is essential to explore because it highlights the multifaceted responsibilities of the adviser, which go beyond academic supervision to include emotional support, personal development, and the promotion of a positive classroom climate. Understanding the role of a classroom adviser helps educators, students, and parents appreciate the importance of this position in fostering student success, addressing individual needs, and facilitating effective communication between students, teachers, and the school administration.

Furthermore, clarifying the adviser's role encourages educators to adopt best practices that promote holistic student development and build a supportive learning community (Vygotsky, 1978). This understanding ultimately contributes to improving student outcomes, enhancing classroom management, and strengthening the overall educational experience. The

role of the class-room adviser is crucial in shaping the academic and social experiences of students (Ormrod et al., 2016). This topic is important because it sheds light on how advisers serve as a bridge between students and the school system, helping to guide students not only in their academic progress but also in their personal growth and well-being. Classroom advisers are often the first point of contact for students facing challenges, making their role vital in identifying and addressing issues early on.

Exploring this topic provides insight into the various responsibilities of classroom advisers, such as monitoring attendance, fostering discipline, providing counseling, and encouraging student participation (Salandanan, 2009). By understanding these functions, schools can better support advisers in fulfilling their duties effectively, which in turn promotes a positive and productive classroom environment. Highlighting the role of the classroom adviser ultimately emphasizes their importance in creating a nurturing and organized learning space that supports the overall development of students. The classroom adviser holds a fundamental position within the school community, serving as a key figure in fostering student engagement, discipline, and holistic development (Van der Wal-Maris et al., 2019). This topic is relevant because it underscores how the adviser's guidance and support contribute to building a safe, orderly, and motivating classroom environment. Understanding the adviser's role is essential for recognizing how they help students navigate academic challenges, social interactions, and personal issues.

By examining the responsibilities of the classroom adviser, educators and school administrators can appreciate the importance of this role in bridging communication between students, parents, and the school. This knowledge helps in promoting collaborative efforts that enhance student welfare and academic performance. Ultimately, the topic highlights the adviser's significant contribution to cultivating well-rounded individuals prepared to succeed both inside and outside the classroom.

The next subsection of this paper examines the importance of the teacher's role in the student's identity. In particular, it highlights how teachers serve not only as facilitators of knowledge but also as mentors who guide students in the development of critical thinking, moral values, and personal growth within the learning environment. In this context, the teacher assumes a vital role as both mentor and counselor, supporting students not only in their academic pursuits but also in their personal and moral development.

3.3. The Teacher as Mentor and Counselor

The teacher plays a critical role not only in delivering academic instruction but also in guiding the personal, social, and emotional development of students (Nyarko, 2020). As a mentor, the teacher provides guidance, encouragement, and support, helping students set goals, build self-confidence, and develop problem-solving and decision-making skills. Mentorship involves fostering a positive relationship with students, understanding their individual strengths and weaknesses, and motivating them to reach their full potential academically and personally.

As a counselor, the teacher assists students in navigating challenges such as stress, peer pressure, family issues, and ethical dilemmas. This role involves active listening, providing advice, and helping students develop coping strategies to handle difficulties constructively (Pant, 2021). Through mentorship and counseling, teachers contribute to the holistic development of students, promoting not only academic success but also moral, social, and emotional growth (Kolb, 1984). In essence, the teacher's role as mentor and counselor ensures that students are supported in their journey toward becoming responsible, resilient, and well-rounded individuals.

Furthermore, the teacher's role as mentor and counselor contributes to the formation of well-rounded individuals. Beyond improving academic performance, it nurtures social skills, ethical reasoning, and moral development, equipping students to face real-world challenges with confidence and integrity (Siahaan, 2021). Teachers also act as liaisons between students and parents, collaborating to ensure consistent support for the student's growth at home and in school. In Catholic or values-oriented educational settings, this role is even more significant, as teachers help integrate moral and spiritual guidance into the everyday lives of students, reinforcing ethical principles and nurturing character formation.

The next subsection of this paper examines the importance of the teacher's role in the development. In particular, it highlights how teachers serve not only as facilitators of knowledge but also as mentors who guide students in cultivating critical thinking, moral values, and personal growth within the learning environment. In this context, the teacher assumes a vital role as both mentor and counselor, supporting students not only in their

academic pursuits but also in their personal and moral development.

The next subsection of this paper examines the importance of the teacher's role in the development of students. It shows how teachers serve not only as facilitators of knowledge but also as mentors who guide students in cultivating critical thinking, moral values, and personal growth within the learning environment. In this context, the teacher assumes a vital role as both mentor and counselor, supporting students not only in their academic pursuits but also in their personal and moral development. Furthermore, consecrated persons exemplify this role by serving as living models of evangelization, demonstrating through their actions the values of faith, service, and moral integrity that students can emulate in their own lives.

3.4. The Consecrated persons as role models of Evangelization

The consecrated persons serve as living examples of faith and devotion, making them vital role models for students in educational and religious settings (Cejuela, 2025). Their lives are marked by commitment to God, service to the community, and adherence to moral and spiritual principles, demonstrating the essence of Christian living. Through their daily actions and interactions, they exemplify how the teachings of Christ can be integrated into everyday life, inspiring students to follow a path of virtue and holiness (Lovat, Toomey, 2009). In their role as models of evangelization, consecrated persons actively engage in guiding, mentoring, and supporting students in their spiritual journey. They embody qualities such as humility, compassion, perseverance, and selflessness, providing tangible examples of how faith can shape character, decisions, and relationships (Madden, 2020). Students witness their dedication to prayer, service, and the common good, which encourages the adoption of similar values in their personal and social lives.

Additionally, consecrated persons facilitate evangelization by creating spaces for active faith formation. They lead religious activities such as retreats, liturgies, prayer groups, and community service projects, which provide students with hands-on experiences of living the Gospel. By observing and participating in these activities, students learn not only the principles of evangelization but also the importance of translating faith into action, service, and social responsibility.

Thus, consecrated persons influence students both directly and indirectly: directly through guidance, instruction, and example, and indirectly by fostering an environment rooted in faith, moral integrity, and service. Their presence encourages students to internalize the values of Christianity, live ethically, and participate actively in the mission of evangelization. By exemplifying a life dedicated to God and humanity, consecrated persons inspire the next generation to become responsible, compassionate, and faith-driven members of society

4. Conclusions

To end this paper, it is good to say that the pedagogical approach at SMI, reveals the institution's commitment to providing quality education tailored to the needs of its students. The various teaching methods employed are a demonstration of a unique effort to engage learners actively, promote critical thinking, and support the holistic development of the students. In understanding these pedagogical strategies not only highlights the strengths of the school's instructional practices but also provides valuable insights for continuous improvement. So, what happens to the students if they attain this holistic formation in their lives? This is a good conclusion to talk about because once the student receives the unique approach coming from the Catholic Institution, they will become a man or woman of prayer in the future. This holistic approach provides an extraordinary synthesis of the lives of a human person, and once the students receive this kind of approach, they will become strong individuals in the future. A strong individual that always fights for what is good and avoid for what is bad.

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