

# Human Rights Education in Selected UNESCO Associated Schools in the Philippines

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The Philippines was called the “show window of democracy in Asia” from the 1950s to the early 1970s. After 14 years of dictatorship under President Ferdinand Marcos (1972–1986), Filipinos ousted him peacefully through the 1986 “people power” revolt (EDSA I). When Corazon Aquino became president, democratic institutions and free and regular elections were reestablished and interest surged in human rights, especially in schools. The framers of the 1987 Constitution created the Commission on Human Rights as an independent constitutional body. Fifteen years after EDSA I, another peaceful people’s movement toppled an allegedly corrupt, incompetent, and immoral President Joseph Estrada. This movement came to be known as EDSA II.

Unfortunately, desired changes seem not to have trickled down to the masses. Can the mass movement be harnessed to improve the quality of life and reduce poverty? Can it create values for a more prosperous and egalitarian society? To what extent people have internalized democratic values and respect for fundamental freedoms is not well known. Are young Filipinos highly aware of human rights and do they respect and exercise them at home, in school, and in their communities?

This article focuses on pilot projects of selected schools associated with the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) Associated Schools Project Network (ASPnet) and reviews UNESCO’s efforts to promote a culture of peace and human rights.

## **Human Rights Initiatives of Selected ASPnet Schools**

ASPnet is a unique global network of some 7,000 schools in 173 countries, all committed to promoting peace, human rights, democracy, and sustainable development. Launched in 1953, with more than 50 secondary schools as members, ASPnet pioneered international and intercultural education.

More than 400 schools in the Philippines are actively involved in ASPnet flagship projects, including human rights education. ASPnet is global in its concerns but adapts UNESCO’s goals to local conditions. Varied activities are bound by a universal concern for peace and human rights, the environment, intercultural and heritage education, literacy, and gender sensitivity. ASPnet seeks to ease the tension between a global orientation and blind ethnicity.

ASPnet has always been thought to have a multiplier effect that would incorporate its innovations in educational content, methods, and materials into the educational system. ASPnet members are meant to serve as “centers for innovation” and “beacons” to promote the ideals of UNESCO at the grass-roots level. ASPnet’s work reflects a profound commitment to promoting a culture of peace and human rights. Some institutional activities in different schools are the following:

Jose Abad Santos Memorial School  
and Philippine Women’s University, Metro Manila

*Children and peace-building activities*

The Philippine Women’s University elementary and high schools started a pilot program on peace education in 1988 against a backdrop of a military coup d’etat, rising criminality, and violent television programs. Children held peace vigils during the coup d’etat and visited military camps to help foster harmonious civilian-military relationships.

A core of elementary- and high-school students were trained to facilitate children’s workshops and sent to the 1990 Children’s World Summit in Vermont, Children’s Conference on Human Rights in Geneva, and Global Leadership Training Program in Tokyo, among others. The convenor of the students’ group, Josie Luciano, received the Doña Aragon Peace Award in Peace Education in 1998.

Children and Peace Philippines has held more than 20 leadership-training seminars for the young, especially in conflict-ridden Mindanao in the southern Philippines. ASPnet gave the group the Peace Pillar Award in January 2002.

Philippine Normal University, Metro Manila

*Family literacy project*

This project aimed to evolve models for partnership between school and parents to enhance

the literacy of early readers. One model included literate parents who could be teacher-partners. The other included illiterate parents who would train to be literate and eventually help the teacher. The projects involved working with parents and children, and preparing modules for parents and teachers.

*Peace and World Order Studies Unit*

Responding to the challenges of new worldviews, globalization, emerging democracies, and alternative forms of promoting peace and international understanding, the Philippine Normal University (PNU) created the Peace and World Order Studies Unit (PWOSU) in 1990 in line with the school’s desire to promote progressive leadership in education that is responsive to the needs of the 21st century. PWOSU commits itself to political and citizenship education that is global in outlook and oriented to problem-solving. Peace, democracy, human rights and gender equality, ecological balance, and intercultural understanding are concerns that have found their way into PNU’s formal and informal curriculum, integrated into the various courses or taught separately (for example, Women’s Studies and Global Education), particularly at the graduate level. PWOSU defines content and develops specific approaches and methodologies for teaching these concepts.

PWOSU set up URDUJA (women’s issues), an Amnesty International chapter (human rights), and Education for Freedom (literacy and intercultural understanding), and through them has embarked on four major tasks:

- raising consciousness;
- conducting education for peace and democracy;
- organizing workshops and conferences to train teachers in the field; and
- conducting education for international understanding and solidarity.

Modules for intercultural awareness, gender sensitivity, and human rights education were

developed and tried out to help teachers reach PWOSU's goals. Students were also trained to conduct workshops to develop strategies for teaching and processing "group sensitivity" to human rights. Students in the Amnesty International chapter wrote a book, *Shopping List in Teaching Human Rights*.

In the Graduate College, Peace and Global Education is a separate three-unit course for a Master of Arts in education, with a major in values education.

PNU launched five important projects:

- education for democracy and nonviolent resolution of conflict based on the UNESCO ASP experience;
- development of prototype literacy materials;
- integration of cultural diversity into the teacher education curriculum to prepare for the International Year of Tolerance;
- preparation of cultural literacy materials for Asians; and
- development of the module "Come and Visit the Philippines" by the UNESCO Club youth leaders.

Students active in UNESCO clubs were sent to international conferences and to peace and ecology work camps in Indonesia, South Korea, and Thailand. Exchange of students and teachers under the school-twinning program is being arranged with Germany, New Zealand, Thailand, South Korea, and Brunei. These activities let participants observe other cultures and build bridges of understanding and friendship. In 2001, PNU hosted the visit of students and educators from South Korea, Bangladesh, the US, Germany, and Japan.

Linkages and networking activities were established with government and professional nongovernmental organizations (NGO) here and abroad, such as UNESCO, Global Education Associates, World Council for Curriculum and Instruction, World Future Studies Federation, Pax Christi, International Network for Global Education, Ecology Link, Philippine

Council for Peace and Global Education, International Council of Education for Teaching, and the International Association of University Presidents, Commission on Disarmament Education, Conflict Resolution and Peace.

After the university restructuring in 2001–2002, PWOSU became the Center for Peace, Gender and Human Rights, whose main functions are the following:

- Serve as a resource center for academic, instructional, and research materials on peace, gender, human rights, and related fields.
- Conduct researches to establish these emerging fields in education.
- Provide training, seminars and workshops, symposiums, and lecture forums on peace, gender, human rights education, and other related fields.
- Publish academic, instructional, and research materials on peace, gender, human rights education, and related fields.
- Serve as an advocacy group promoting peace, gender equality, and human rights as a basis for education reform and community building.
- Establish strong networks and linkages with national and international organizations.

#### *Youth camps*

Over the last five years, PNU's youth volunteer program, Student and Educators for Empowerment and Community Development, hosted several youth camps at PNU, Tagaytay, Legaspi, Baguio, and Davao. The camps usually lasted for a week and gave young people the chance to exchange ideas, strengthen networking, and plan projects.

Youth camps expanded to neighboring countries when PNU and UNESCO ASPnet hosted the First Asia-Pacific Youth Volunteer Encounter on 19–24 March 2001 in celebration of the International Year for Volunteers, with around 100 youth leaders from East Timor, Germany, Israel, Canada, Vietnam, Myanmar, Japan, South Korea, among others.

### Miriam College, Metro Manila

Miriam College believes that a school should be a vehicle and catalyst for social transformation, an important goal of which is building of a culture of peace. Through the school's Center for Peace Education, a network of peace and human rights educators meet regularly to plan projects. The college community has declared the school a "zone of peace" to promote caring relationships, cooperation, non-violent conflict resolution, a simple lifestyle, and activities of peace and social concern. The Center for Environment Education conducts training, research, and outreach programs on the right to live in a healthy and sustainable environment.

The college is the headquarters of the Asia-Pacific Network for International Education and Values Education (APNIEVE), which was established in 1995, and cooperates with other UNESCO member states in the Asia-Pacific region to share experiences and practices in values education and to help develop educational materials and case studies. APNIEVE-Philippines has 90 individual and 15 institutional members. APNIEVE published two instructional books: *Learning to Live Together in Peace and Harmony* (1998), a source book for teacher-training institutions; and *Learning to be Fully Human, A Holistic and Integrated Approach to Values Education* (2001).

### Divine Word College, Calapan City, Mindoro Oriental

The school's activities center on multicultural education due to the presence of Mangyans, a cultural minority, in the province:

- A world cultural heritage kit was produced, focusing on the five UNESCO heritage sites in the Philippines: four baroque churches; Tubbataha Reef; Cordillera rice terraces; Vigan Heritage Village; and Underground River in Palawan. ASP teachers translated *World Heritage Sourcebook* into Filipino.

- The ASPnet coordinator and a youth leader attended the Asia-Pacific World Heritage Youth Forum in Beijing in 1997.
- The ASPnet coordinator for Mindoro Oriental coordinates the institutional and provincial youth training for peace, human rights, and intercultural learning.
- The Mangyan Museum was inaugurated in 2001 thanks to the efforts of UNESCO member clubs.
- A yearly leadership training focused on peace and human rights for teachers and students is conducted.

### Mercy Schools, Mindanao

The school program focuses on training. Muslim and Christian children and youth learn to resolve conflict peacefully and to appreciate cultural diversity. The Sisters of Mercy, Catholic missionaries, set up the Mercy Junior College in Tubod, and Holy Cross High School in Kolambugan, both in Lanao del Norte; and St. John the Baptist School in Misamis Occidental. A conflict management skills workshop was conducted in April 1999 in Siasi, Sulu, as part of UNESCO's Culture of Peace program. A peace rally was held to launch the Peace Manifesto 2000. The three-day Peace Education Seminar-Workshop for teachers and students was held in the three schools in May 2001.

### Notre Dame University, Mindanao

In a conflict-ridden area in southern Philippines where Muslims, Christians, and *lumad* (indigenous people) must learn to live together in peace, this school is a pioneer in peace education, offering the graduate Peace and Development Program since 1988, and the undergraduate Peace and Education Program. Graduates have gone on to teach graduate courses to find alternatives to violent conflict resolution and to promote human development.

Programs include a master of arts in education, with a major in peace and development;

master of arts in peace and development; and doctor of philosophy in peace and development.

#### Bukidnon State College, Mindanao

In southern Philippines, the home of several ethnic minorities and the site of massive environmental degradation, the school conducts ASPnet activities revolving around environmental and multicultural education: an environmental literacy program, tree planting, zero-waste management program, garden and forest planting in schools, and visiting and working with cultural minorities such as the Higanon in Salug, Agusan del Sur, in May 1996, when 20 youth leaders from Luzon and Mindanao and the UNESCO ASPnet coordinator learned indigenous traditions of caring for the earth.

#### International schools

Southville International School (Luzon), Cebu International School (Visayas), and Dole International School (Mindanao) students are from diverse backgrounds. Plans are underway to link the schools electronically. These schools' flagship projects are in global and multicultural education. Human rights education is integrated into the global education program.

### Research Findings

#### Teacher training, and pilot testing of instructional materials

Instructional materials for first-year high-school social studies students were evaluated to find out if students gained knowledge and awareness of human rights and democracy.

Results revealed that the peace and human rights advocates best known to students are Mother Theresa (73%), Mahatma Gandhi (62%), Martin Luther King (56%), and Nelson Mandela (49%). Respondents barely knew Gro Harlem Brundtland (6%), Graca Machel (10%),

Rigoberta Menchu Tum (16%), and Aung San Suu Kyi (19%).

The human rights violations least known to them are xenophobia (8%) and ethnic cleansing (12%). The respondents have a fairly good understanding of the meaning of tolerance (82%), sexism (77%), and racism (73%). Few (3%) could mention a human rights NGO in the Philippines. Among the human rights violations during the Spanish period, the respondents were only familiar with the case of Sisa (74%).

More than 87% of the respondents could identify at least three human rights contained in the Declaration of Human Rights. Of the respondents, 71% are familiar only with civil and political rights, and 63% with social and economic rights. About 92% strongly agree that women rights should be recognized and that women can lead in politics and business, not just in home management. About 89% strongly agree that peace can be achieved for all if human dignity is respected. Many (96%) recognized the right of education for all without discrimination and believed that it should be supported by the Government and private sector. Respondents disagreed widely on helping the Government make education accessible to all even if it means raising taxes: about 37% were ambivalent, 33% generally agreed, and 30% disagreed. Almost all respondents recognized the rights of children (97%) and indigenous people (92%), and most (89%) do not perceive foreigners as enemies.

Nine secondary schools completed the training of teachers to teach human rights and to use the modules, and submitted pre- and posttest results. Table 1 shows the scores of the students, mean and difference, and t-value.

There are significant differences between pre- and posttest scores. Overall the use of the module helped the students obtain higher scores in the test ( $t=3.25$ ,  $df=407$ ,  $p<.01$ ). This shows that modularized instruction improved students' knowledge of and attitudes toward human rights and democracy. The differences, however, were variable.

**TABLE 1. Mean Scores of Students in the Pilot Testing of UNESCO Instructional Materials**

	School	Mean		Difference	t-Value
		Pretest	Posttest		
ASP	1. Divine Word College	8.86	23.47	14.6	19.8
	2. Toloma National High School	11.78	26.78	15.0	22.98
	3. Davao City National High School I	7.2	30.69	23.5	33.92
	4. Davao City National High School II	7.54	12.4	4.9	7.42
ASP	5. Cebu Institute of Technology	14.63	17.04	2.4	5.78
ASP	6. Philippine's Women's University	13.24	23.72	10.5	14.91
	7. Gothong Memorial National High School	6.13	25.76	19.63	30.19
ASP	8. St. Theresa's College	10.25	25.81	15.56	26.07
	9. Gothong High School	6.15	19.27	13.12	12.63
	Grand Mean (Overall)	9.36	28.61	19.25	3.25

P < .001

Their mean differences range from 2.4 to 23.5. The school that registered the smallest gain (Cebu Institute of Technology) also obtained the highest pretest average, and the school with the highest gain (Davao City National High School I) started low. This suggests that the UNESCO materials have benefited learners who know less about human rights and democracy, except at Davao National High School II, where differences in pre- and posttest scores were low. Posttest results of 50 as the highest possible score and 30.69 as the highest mean suggest that the use of the modules is not enough to obtain the desired results.

Obtaining an ideal score, however, cannot be attributed solely to the use of the modules. The pilot testing did not cover other teaching-learning situations. To account for the variance of the results, elements other than the materials employed should be considered: teacher factor, classrooms, and school systems, for example.

### Conclusion

The following can be inferred:

- The modules are effective.
- For students with less information, the modules were even more useful.

- Causes of variability in the test results may be explored to identify the modules' weaknesses or strengths.
- The teacher factor (training of teachers) may be seen as contributing to the modules' success. The creative use of a variety of teaching strategies such as the use of alternative folk music was welcomed by teachers and students.
- Either more modules need to be prepared or more time devoted to integrating concepts of human rights and democracy into the secondary-school social studies curriculum. Deepening teachers' knowledge and skills may help raise the students' scores.
- The results convey a "prophetic positive effect" of use of modules to supplement regular instruction using a basic text. Use of modules, therefore, should be encouraged.

### Other UNESCO Initiatives

International Workshop, Incheon, South Korea

Thirty-five educators from 17 Asian countries joined a four-day teacher-training workshop on education for peace, human rights, democracy, sustainable development, and in-

ternational understanding held at the Asia-Pacific Center of Education for International Understanding (APCEIU), Inchon, South Korea, on 10–13 July 2001. The seminar-workshop, which was sponsored by UNESCO Korea, APNIEVE, and APCEIU, gave Asian educators the chance to try out the modules.

#### Youth training

The UNESCO National Commission through the UNESCO Clubs conducted a seminar-workshop on setting up community-based UNESCO Clubs to strengthen the UNESCO Youth Network in four remote provinces—Alicia, Isabela; Basco, Batanes; Boac, Marinduque; and Sorsogon, Sorsogon. Joining the program were 162 Sangguniang Kabataan or SK (Youth Council) officers and members. The seminar-workshop taught the youth leaders about UNESCO's thrusts and programs. The SKs are expected to promote peace, human rights, world heritage, environmental education, and literacy and citizenship education.

#### “What Education for What Citizenship?” Project

The Philippines was part of the 34-country cross-cultural project on citizenship education in 1995, which used representative samples of students, teachers, and parents. The survey-questionnaire had a strong human rights and democracy component and was administered to 10 randomly selected Philippine high schools to find out the degree of awareness of teachers and students on citizenship issues. In 1996 the second phase of the project was launched to evaluate the most striking survey findings to develop curricular and pedagogical strategies for citizenship education. This initiative was praised by CIVITAS International, a global network of educators calling for renewed interest in citizenship education, and by the international conference on democratic citizenship held in South Korea on 16–17 October 2001.

#### ASPnet Transatlantic Slave Trade Project

The project aims to “break the silence” surrounding a largely untold, tragic chapter in human history, during which, for four centuries, millions of Africans were enslaved and shipped to the US. The project is part of UNESCO's Culture Sector's Slave Route Project (Department of Intercultural Dialogue and Pluralism) and is the first international attempt to mobilize schools to develop new approaches to teaching the causes and consequences of the slave trade, the need to eliminate stereotypes and prejudices, and the need to ensure mutual respect and intercultural dialogue between young people, by developing resource materials (traveling exhibitions, videos, posters, CD-ROMS). The project, with some 100 schools (8 from the Philippines) participating, also seeks to raise awareness about the need to eliminate modern slavery.

#### Concluding Remarks

The various initiatives of schools active in UNESCO ASPnet are our modest contribution to the United Nations Decade for Human Rights Education (1995–2004). The research findings on the use of human rights modules in selected secondary schools are valuable for improving human rights education programs in schools. Pioneering efforts in human rights education are underway in some pilot schools, auguring well for the expansion and strengthening of the programs.

Much remains to be done to heighten human rights awareness among educators and students. If the innovative and creative practices of some ASPNet schools are our benchmark, however, we are optimistic that much can be accomplished, and that we will slowly but surely promote human rights in the Philippines through education.