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Possibilities and Challenges in Teaching Democratic Values

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ABSTRACT

Recent debates about the "lack of values," especially "respect," among the Filipino youth, their participation in the 2022 general election period, and the political distrust and polarization among citizens thereafter have renewed public interest in the role of schools in fostering democratic values among students. Complementing the literature on Civic Education, which highlights the role of Social Studies in basic education, this paper explored how "democracy" is conceived, promoted, and practiced in teaching Values Education among selected junior high schools in Luzon. The researchers sought to understand the perspectives and context of Values Education teachers in teaching democracy and relevant values among their students. After doing a thematic analysis of collected data, they learned that the participants primarily equated "democracy" with "freedom of expression." Hence, practices fostering freedom of expression were also taken as promoting democracy, such as class conversations, campus journalism, and clothing preference based on one's gender identity. This take on freedom appears to be a *condition* for another sense of democracy known to them as the "power to the people," wherein processes like voting, consensus -building, rights-claiming, etc. were taken as indicators of power-sharing. According to the participants, teaching democracy and the values related to it were mostly *implied* in all their lessons and school practices. Nonetheless, the researchers learned that democracy as a *topic* becomes directly relevant at the Grade 9 level of the Values Education Curriculum due to topics like political and civil society, rights and responsibility, and social justice. Amidst these processes, the participants argued that teachers have a crucial role to play in fostering a learning environment that allows for deliberation and "responsible" freedom of expression and provides positive role models for students. The study has also yielded accounts of school practices that undermine democratic values and limit agency among teachers and students, such as generational differences in value orientation, implicit power relations between teachers and students, and limited time alloted for the subject. Lastly, the study attempted to analyze the possibilities and limitations of those conceptions and practices in fostering democratic values in schools and society at large.

Keywords: values education, edukasyon sa pagpapakatao, civic education, democracy, democratic values

Introduction

Giving emphasis on the role of education in building a good society is not new. Students need to be educated not just to secure their future but also to be functional members of society. Many parents, educators, and decision-makers believe that *Values Education* plays an important role in making this happen. In fact, according to UNESCO, it encompasses all efforts to foster positive values in students to help them grow "in line with their own potential" (UNESCO, 2020, as cited in Karabacak, 2021, p. 271).

In schools, where spaces are designed for students to learn new things, explore their interests, and connect with others, Values Education can help instill in children *tolerance* and *respect* for ideas and beliefs different from their own (O'Connell, 2012, as cited in Karabacak, 2021, p. 271). Those dispositions are often associated with *democracy*, a "contested" (Quimpo, 2008) yet age-old governance system that gets its legitimacy from the "will of the people" under the conditions of "greater participation, equality, security and human development" (United Nations, n.d.). As a governance system, democracy features key elements like human rights, election process, rule of law, separation of powers, pluralism, opposition, and freedom of expression and assembly, among others (Becker & Raveloson, 2008; see also World Population Review, 2024). This dynamic system requires democratic values such as tolerance, respect for others' identities, and concern for the greater good that will allow citizens to coexist, work together, and minimize tensions in a divided, pluralistic society (Kahne & Westheimer, 2003, p. 40).

Teaching democratic values is vital in addressing societal problems in the Philippines, which, for Canuto (2022, p.2), is "arguably [related to] many Filipinos not involving themselves in democratic discourse and not asking questions about society, culture, and public policy." This "culture of silence" among Filipinos has been caused by factors like colonial mentality, elitist politics, state-led atrocities, traditionalism, patriarchy, and widespread poverty that continue to beset Philippine society (see Rabago-Visaya, 2018; Heydarian, 2021; Glorioso, n.d.; Areté Ateneo, 2021; Rodriguez, 1990). Although the present condition suggests a general atmosphere of political passivity and apathy among the population, others have argued that Filipinos are, in fact, showing various forms of political engagement and resistance in the realm of "everyday politics" (Kerkvliet, 2013), even during the colonial period (Santiago, 2015). One notable example of Filipinos *being* political is how they use social media to express inquiry, support, criticism, and antagonism toward public figures and viral issues locally and abroad. Despite the vibrant activities of Filipinos online, public opinion expressed on social media is criticized for being shaped by algorithms, public relations (PR) campaigns, and various "influence operations" (Ong et al. 2022; Ong and Cabañes, 2018), which may *not* be a good metric of what is happening on the ground. Bunquin (2020), for example, reported that despite his young respondents' high usage of social media, their political participation is low, and most do not talk about politics due to their deficient "political communication networks." This goes back to the earlier statement that many Filipinos do not typically engage in political and democratic discourse.

The tendency to avoid politics can also be observed in school settings (e.g. Odulio, 2022) where dominant values, attitudes, and power relations are often reinforced (Demaine, 2003; Weiss, 2021), such as when state officials remind teachers and personnel to stay "non-partisan" especially during elections (see Montemayor, 2019; Bautista, 2021; Department of Education, 2018) and when the "culture of obeisance" embedded in the system impedes both innovations and dissent (Bautista et al., 2009, pp. 34-35).

However, just like any other human activity, schools can also be sites of contestation and transformation. The Brazilian pedagogist Paulo Freire (1970/2005) understood this and described how typical education settings *oppress* their students in teaching, resembling the colonial relations experienced by his people. According to him, the "banking method" in schools dehumanizes students by turning them into *objects* incapable of thought and action—a storage of deposits (Freire, 1970/2005, p. 72), "an empty vessel to be filled" (p. 79). Thus, "[a]ny situation in which some individuals prevent others from engaging in the process of inquiry [—of thought and dialogue—] is one of violence" (p. 85). To address this problem, Freire promoted the process of *"conscientização"* (conscientization)

in education to foster a meaningful *dialogue* between the "teacher-student" and the "students-teachers" regarding their context and shared problems. Freire hopes that this awakening moment *must* lead to "action"; otherwise, one ends up with mere "verbalism"—thus, his call for "*praxis*" (Freire, 1970/2005, pp. 83, 87).

Although conscientization leads one to direct political action, which one may opt to engage or not, it teaches educators the importance of *orienting* students to actions that can change the world. Taken altogether, these qualities of inquisitiveness (reflection, critical thinking), dialogue, and action are *opposites* of the culture of silence mentioned above. Fostered rightly, they should instill in the students principles of *accountability* between citizens and duty bearers even at the local level (see Cabo, 2007) as a condition of *good governance* in a well-functioning democracy (UN, n.d.; Asian Development Bank, 2005). Students as citizens can only demand accountability—and promote it among themselves—if they are capable of speaking truth to power, open to other perspectives, aware of competing values and interests involved, and mindful of the *common good*—things that could be learned and reinforced in schools, especially in subjects like Values Education. This becomes a big challenge for schools to nurture democratic citizens so that democracy, a concept related to freedom and equality, can work (Kahne & Westheimer, 2003, p. 34-35).

Recently, the teaching and instilling of moral values in schools have been given special focus by government officials in the Philippines. In 2020, the GMRC and Values Education Act or RA 11476 was signed into law. Replacing the current *Edukasyon sa Pagpapakatao* curriculum in the K-12 system, the law mandates the integration of Good Morals and Right Conduct or GMRC into the activities of kinder-garten students. This involves inculcating in them "universally accepted basic social values and etiquette," "human dignity," care for oneself and others, "respect," "discipline," "obedience," and "above all, love for country." The law also requires a separate GMRC subject for Grades 1-6, which will now be given the same time allotment as other core subjects in the curriculum (i.e., from 30 mins daily to 50 mins). Later in the curriculum, GMRC will be integrated into separate Values Education subject from Grades 7 to 10, also with the same time allotment as other core subjects (i.e., from 120 mins weekly to 240 mins). According to the law, Values Education "shall encompass universal human, ethical, and moral values… [and] shall inculcate … the observance of respect … intercultural diversity, gender equity, ecology and integrity of creation, peace and justice, obedience to the law, nationalism, and global citizenship," among other values mentioned. By the time the students reach Grades 11 and 12, Values Education will cease to be a separate subject but will be integrated into all the subjects of the senior high school curriculum (INQUIRER.net, 2020). Thus, in total, students are exposed to more than 10 years of values inculcation at the basic education level, indicating the crucial role of Values Education in producing the type of citizens the Philippine society wants to have.

All these indicate that Values Education is considered an All these indicate that Values Education is considered an important aspect of building a better society with regard to nurturing democratic values among its young members, with some groups even treating it as an *antidote* to social ills. Hence, it is worth asking how Filipino *Values Education* teachers view democracy and its associated values in relation to the values education subject they are teaching. Specifically, the research aims to answer the following questions:

1. What is democracy for Values Education teachers?
2. What is the relevance of democracy to Values Education?
3. What is the role of teachers in democratizing or promoting democracy in society?

Methodology

To answer those questions with an openness to the complexities and nuances that the concepts may have among practitioners in education, the researchers subscribed to the *Social Constructivist* paradigm (Creswell, 2009, p. 8) in data gathering and analysis that highlights the meaning-making processes involved between the participants and researchers as they attempt to interpret their conditions, experiences, and practices. At its core, the social constructivist paradigm argues that our knowledge of the world and the practices and institutions we are all part of are *socially constructed*—meaning, they are all interpreted, created, maintained,

transmitted, and changed by both past and present generations to bring out the social world we are all familiar with (see Berger and Luckmann, 1966). This is a paradigm that recognizes the agency of both actors and researchers in making inquiry receptive to various interpretations and nuances of the social world. Applied to research, this paradigm *privileges* the perspectives of the participants (teachers in this case) more than the researchers in *defining* the phenomenon they have experienced (see Lincoln et al., 2011). Research questions pursued under this paradigm become "broad and general so that the participants can construct the meaning of a situation" (Creswell, 2009, p. 8). Hence, in following this paradigm, data-gathering techniques like interviews become less structured, open-ended, and highly subjective, and the quality and richness of data depend on both the skill, training, or background of the researchers and the cooperation and openness of the participants. In light of these reasons, the findings of this research can be taken as an *inconclusive* and *partial* assessment of what was happening on the ground since the study's cases were limited and their experiences and interpretations were bound by context, time, and orientation at the time the data were gathered. Nonetheless, the perspectives shared by the participants and the interview quotes shown below should be sufficient to give the reader a grasp of the many issues involved in teaching democratic values in Values Education.

This presentation is based on an ongoing study on the relevance of *democracy* in teaching Values Education-related subjects in junior high school, such as Values Education (VEd), *Edukasyon sa Pagpapakatao* (EsP), *Christian Living Education* (CLE), and *Religious and Values Education* (RVEd), among other forms. It is also based on a paper that was submitted in 2023 to a graduate class at the UP College of Education that has been improved by the researchers since then.

To answer the research questions, the researchers interviewed faculty members teaching Values Education-related subjects at the junior high school level. Identity and background categories like gender (male, female, straight, gay, etc.), age, social class, ethnicity, educational attainment, and workplace context (e.g., public, private, rural, urban, grade level, etc.) were not considered in the selection of participants because the project was exploratory and the researcher at that time did not think that those factors could influence their data. The only criterion they set for a possible participant was if they were teaching Values Education in junior high school. After securing approval from authorities (i.e., course instructor, division office, principals, head teachers), the researchers proceeded to invite possible participants first among their networks and then in schools nearby. From May to September 2023, Patriz was able to interview seven (7) teachers from the national science high school, private sectarian schools, and a public high school, all in Region IV-A. In addition, John interviewed four (4) teachers from public high schools in NCR. Overall, the researchers had eleven (11) participants: most were female (6), teaching at the grade 9 level (5), and affiliated with the public school system (9). The researchers also learned later that most participants who accepted their invitation were teaching at the Grade 9 level because their head teachers or principals thought that they were the most fitting participants for the study.

The interviews were conducted during schedules that were most convenient for the participants. Before the interview, they were shown the guide questions and the *Participant Information Sheet* which made them aware of what might transpire during the session. Interviews were done either face-to-face or via Zoom and were recorded with the consent of the participants. After securing the interviews, the researchers transcribed their responses and through a Google Sheet, identified recurring and similar answers by *coding* or tagging pieces of data according to what they meant to the researchers (Charmaz, 2006; Corbin & Strauss, 2008), similar to the process of *Thematic Analysis* which is done by repeatedly asking the question "What is this expression an example of?" (Ryan & Bernard, 2003, p. 87).

After coding, the researchers arranged the codes on Jamboard according to their level of generality, sameness, differences, and relevance in answering the research questions. This process resulted in an outline that guided the researchers in organizing and presenting the data that will be shown next. In addition, the researchers also analyzed the curriculum guides of some of the participating schools, as well as several government documents (e.g., laws, IRR, DepEd memos) to further support their observations and arguments in the paper.

Table 1

Participants' Demographic Data

Participant	Sex	Grade Level	Subject	School Type	Region	Mode of Interview
P1	F	9	VEd	Public HS (SH)	R4A	Onsite
P2	M	10	VEd	Public HS (SH)	R4A	Onsite
P3	F	7, 8	EsP	Public HS (RH)	NCR	Zoom
P4	F	9	EsP	Public HS (RH)	NCR	Zoom
P5	M	9	EsP	Public HS (RH)	NCR	Zoom
P6	M	9	EsP	Public HS (RH)	NCR	Zoom
P7	F	7, 8	VEd	Private HS (PS)	R4A	Zoom
P8	M	Head	EsP	Public HS (RH)	R4A	Onsite
P9	M	Diff levels	RVEd	Private HS (PS)	R4A	Zoom
P10	F	9	EsP	Public HS (RH)	R4A	Onsite
P11	F	10	EsP	Public HS (RH)	R4A	Onsite

Note: SH for science high school, RH for regular high school, PS for private sectarian high school

Results and Discussion

The research's purpose is to understand the relevance of *democracy* as a concept in teaching Values Education in whatever form it may appear in secondary schools at the present (i.e., Grades 7–10)—be it "Values Education" (VEd) as in the case of the national science high school system which focused on the school's foundational values (Philippine Science High School System, 2021), "Edukasyon sa Pagpapakatao" (EsP) as offered in the public school system following the K-12 Basic Education Program since 2012, "Christian Living/Life Education" (CLE) or "Religious and Values Education" (RVed) as offered in private sectarian schools, and similar values, moral, or character-formation subjects in other private schools.

Previous forms of Values Education in the public school system include "*Edukasyon sa Pagpapahalaga*" (EP) from 2002 to 2012 (Barnachea, 2013), and the "Character Education/Good Manners and Right Conduct" (GMRC) for elementary students from 1991 to 2002 (Llego, n.d.; Department of Education, Culture, and Sports, 1991; Department of Education, 2002, p. 6). However, the current EsP or *Edukasyon sa Pagpapakatao* has been criticized for not being significantly different from its predecessor, *Edukasyon sa Pagpapahalaga* (EP), but just a change of name[1].

Recently, there has been a public clamor to bring back GMRC in the basic education curriculum in response to a supposed growing number of students and children who lack "decency" and "respect" and, as Senator Juan Zubiri put it, a "rising criminality and moral values degradation" among young members of society (Concepcion, 2020). Hence, Republic Act 11476 became law in 2020, "institutionalizing" GMRC and Values Education in the K-12 Curriculum. Although lessons in

[1] For example, one public high school published on their website these words: "Although its name has been modified, the core values and basis of teachings did not change" (San Bartolome National High School, n.d.).

GMRC and Values Education have been present in previous and present curricula of the Department of Education (Department of Education, 2020), the new law seeks to strengthen these programs by giving these subjects the "same time allotment as other core subjects" and by professionalizing its teaching force (RA 11476). Time allotment for EsP under the present K-12 curriculum is 30 minutes daily in Grades 1-6 and 2 hours a week in Grades 7-10, compared to 50 minutes daily for each core learning area in elementary and 4 hours a week for each core subject in junior high school (Barnachea, 2013). However, its implementing rules and regulations are still in the process of cascading since its legislation three years ago (Senate of the Philippines, 2021; FOI, 2021), thereby making EsP or *Edukasyon sa Pagpapakatao* still present in the K-12 curriculum and the most dominant form of Values Education in the country, especially in the public school system.

As one may notice, these changes in *nomenclature* and how Values Education has been approached in different curricular and organizational contexts (i.e., public vs. private, autonomous vs. dependent, elite vs. regular, secular vs. sectarian, etc.) warrant an investigation aside from the way democracy is being understood, taught, promoted, or practiced in those subjects. However, because of time constraints, the researchers were only able to consider its present forms and interview selected teachers in CALABARZON and NCR. Hence, the findings and discussions below are non-conclusive and may only serve as a preliminary assessment of how democracy and related values are taught in Values Education in those schools.

After doing coding and thematic analysis, the researchers were able to identify six (6) emergent themes from the interviews that also shaped the way our data and discussions were presented below: The first two pertain to how the participants understood democracy, the next two relate to how democracy is found and applied in teaching, the next tackles school activities and practices that promote democracy, and the last involves a discussion on the constraints that undermine democratic values in teaching the subject and limit the agency of both teachers and students. As part of the research protocol, the names of the participants and their organizations were anonymized and coded (e.g., P1 for Participant 1, M or F for sex, SH for science high school, RH for regular high school, PS for private sectarian high school, and G7 for Grade 7).

The Meaning of Democracy for Teachers

When asked what *democracy* meant for the participants, some of them were a bit puzzled about what kind of answer the researchers were trying to get and how to answer the question. Similar to Edda Sant's (2019) observation about "democratic education" being a "nodal point" (p. 655) or "floating signifiers" (Laclau, 2007 as cited in Sant, 2019, p. 658) where different *discourses* or ways of talking and thinking (Collins, 1994) meet and try to define the concept—thereby causing a multiplicity of what it means and what it entails, along with the confusion—*democracy as a concept has several meanings depending on which intellectual tradition one is coming from, as well as the person's experiences while living in an actually democratic society* (i.e., democratic in name, at least). Hence, after assuring them that there were no right or wrong answers and that the researchers were more interested in what they thought about the concept, the participants started defining democracy in terms of (1) freedoms, especially *Freedom of Expression*, and (2) where power resides.

Freedoms, Especially Freedom of Expression

Most of the participants (3 out of 5) defined democracy as a condition wherein people, in their context their students, can express their *will*, opinion, belief, choice, experience, and gender identity without fearing discrimination and exclusion.

> "*Para sa akin ang demokrasya ay pagpapahayag ng sarili mo bilang isang taong malaya na kaya mong sabihin yung gusto mong sabihin na hindi ka madi-discriminate. Though meron tayong iba't ibang pagpapahalaga, maaaring yung mahalaga sa akin ay pagdating sa iyo ay hindi. So, dun nagkakaroon ng conflict ang bawat tao sa pagpapahalaga." (P2, M, SH, G10)*

> [For me, democracy is about expressing yourself as a free person, where you can say what you want to say without being discriminated against. Though we have different values, it's possible that what's important to me might not be to you. So,

this is where conflicts arise between people because of differing values.]

Other freedoms mentioned include the freedom to enjoy children's rights, obtain an education, build a family, choose a job, know what is right from wrong (P6, M, RH, G9), and participate in community life (P8, M, RH, Head).

Participants, however, did not take this freedom as absolute; it has limitations. Particularly, they qualified it with concepts like "responsibility" and "respect" (P1) as sometimes students get "entitled" (P3).

> "*Dapat makita ng mga bata ang kanilang limitasyon sa paggamit ng demokrasya. Iba na kasi ang takbo ng buhay ng mga kabataan ngayon. Pag binigyan mo sila ng sobrang kalayaan… maaring maligaw sila ng landas. Pero kung tinuturo mo na [as] values teacher ang democracy, magka-karoon siya ngayon ng limitation kung paano niya ito gagamitin sa pang araw-araw na buhay hanggang sa makapagtapos siya ng high school. Alam niya kung paano niya pipigilan ang sarili sa paggawa ng mabuti at masama.... Ang teacher ay guide [na] magbigay ng limitation sa demokrasya na kanilang tinatamasa." (P8, M, RH, Head*
>
> [Children should see the limitations in exercising democracy. The way of life for the youth today is different. If you give them too much freedom, they may lose their way. But if you are teaching democracy as a values education teacher, they will now have a measure of how to use democracy in their daily life until they finish high school. They will know how to control themselves when deciding whether to do good or bad…. The teacher is a guide who provides limitations to the democracy that young people enjoy.]

Participants associate these limitations in freedom with the need to consider others' welfare or *kapwa* as one lives in society, and even use life experiences to show how they live the talk as they relate it to teaching:

> "*Alam mo sa 30 years kong pagtuturo ng Values Education, nahihirapan akong mabuhay parang pag may ginagawa ako, iniisip ko madadali yung values ko. Kasi 30 years ko nang [isinasa]buhay ang Values. Siya ang tinuturo ko. Nagturo naman rin ako ng English. Kaya diyan sa mga topic na prinsipyo prinsipyo, hindi itong [information] ang mahalaga sa akin, hindi yon ang mahalaga. Ang mahalaga sa akin ay makipagkapwa. Ang mahalaga ay yung pagiging tao. Yung mismong sarili; yung sense of responsibility." (P10, F, RH, G9)*
>
> [You know, in my 30 years of teaching Values Education, I struggle since when I do something, I ask whether my values would be compromised. I've been practicing those values for 30 years. That's what I teach. I have also taught English. So, on the topic of principles, it's not the information that matters to me. What's important is *pakikipagkapwa.* What matters is being human. It's the self; it's about having a sense of responsibility.]

These perceived limitations of individual freedom and how they relate to one's responsibility with others reflect the communal orientation of East-Asian value systems against the individualistic orientation of the West (Yu and Lu, 2000). In the Philippines, this value system has centered on *kapwa* that embraces both the "outsider" and the members of one's group as extensions of the self— "an inner self shared with others" (Enriquez, 1992/2008, p.52) based on the recognition of "shared identity" (p. 54). This *kapwa* in the Filipino psyche can be a mobilizing force for collective action in pursuit of social justice, peace, and unity (pp. 60-68).

In general, this cultural background shapes the role of Filipino teachers in providing guidance and instilling values and discipline among their students. This role relates to how collective morality and values are fostered in schools *as their function* in society, such as DepEd's prioritization of *Maka-Diyos, Maka-tao, Makakalikasan,* and *Makabansa* as its core values.

Durkheim (1925/1961) explains the function of schools and how acting morally relates to the collective interests:

> To act morally is to act in terms of the collective interest…that a moral act must serve some living and sentient being and even more specifically a being endowed with consciousness. Moral relations are relations between consciousness. Above and beyond me […and] other individual human beings, there is nothing else save that sentient being that is society…that the domain of the moral begins where the domain of the social begins…. (pp. 59-60)
>
> It is the business of the school to organize [the penetration of the child's consciousness] methodically. An enlightened mind must select from among the

> welter of confused and often contradictory states of mind that constitute the social consciousness; it must set off what is essential and vital; and play down the trivial and the secondary. (p. 278)

However, while these teacher perspectives highlight the importance of moral instruction, they also point to a potential drawback: the tendency of values education to overly focus on obedience and discipline. This approach may unintentionally "silence" students (Freire, 1970) and hamper their critical thinking by prescribing how they should think instead of encouraging them to discover their own path in society. Thus, the challenge lies in balancing the communal emphasis on shared values with the need to foster individual agency and critical thinking.

Aside from associating *freedom of expression* with democracy, the previous quotes also indicate a *diverse* set of students holding different beliefs, values, gender identities, and life experiences. This diversity may cause "conflict" among actors, especially if one feels "disregarded" or "discriminated against" when holding a belief or identity that differs from the rest. Later, we will see how *this* condition has necessitated EsP teachers to perform teaching strategies that recognize student diversity and prioritize *consensus-building* among their students—if not *toleration* by "respect," should differences prevent them from reaching the "common good."

Interestingly, the previous quotes also shed light on the *communicative* aspects of democracy and education wherein differences of ideas and identities are recognized, and, at the same time, actors are encouraged to participate in discourse and collective work (Englund, 2000). These conditions relate to what Sant (2019) identified as *deliberative* and *participatory* discourses to democratic education, wherein "reason and inclusivity are key features" (p. 667) and "action and praxis" (p. 672) are possibilities.

Power in the People

One of the most common ways to define democracy is to invoke the etymology[2] of the term and from there conclude its most basic feature, which relates to where power rests: the people. Some participants started their answers there and mentioned that they were living in a democratic society where elections were periodically held. They then continued with how Values Education is important in realizing democracy's potential in fostering civic virtues among students as *future* voters.

> "[A]*lam naman nating lahat na tayo ay nasa democratic country kung saan yung mga tao, usually nasa atin yung decision-making. And in order for us to do it right, kailangan maturo talaga yung fundamental values which is yung konsepto ng justice, konsepto ng pagrerespeto, ng equality, and ng mga freedom. In order for us to work in a democratic country, kailangan tayo mismo, innate yung mga values na yun, na tinuturo sa values education."* (P4, F, RH, G9)

> [We all know that we are in a democratic country where people usually have decision-making power. And for us to do it right, we really need to teach fundamental values such as justice, respect, equality, and freedom. For us to work in a democratic country, we need these values, which are taught in values education.]

These statements show that teaching Values Education can serve as a *preparation* for students to become functional citizens in the future. In part, this is because the curriculum guides for VEd and EsP have included topics on civic virtues like truth, justice, respect, equality, common good, and rights (more on this in the following section). Of particular interest is how P4 relates those virtues with decision-making in order for people (or students) to "do it right" and be able "to work in a democratic country." This statement implies three things: (1) democracy requires certain values that need to be internalized ("innate") so that individuals may function properly ("do it right") in a democratic system—the process of *socialization* or becoming a member of a group by internalizing its values, norms, rules, processes, etc.; (2) a working democracy involves adult citizens who have internalized those values, use their decision-making capacity in the "right" way, thereby making the whole system work for the common good; and (3) the internalization

[2] From the Greek *dēmokratía—popular government: dēmos–"common people" or "citizen" and kratos– "rule, strength" or "power" (Online Etymology Dictionary, 2021; see also World Population Review, 2024).*

of those values are necessary in order for citizens to "work"—to collaborate, to cooperate, to be functional, to yield positive results—in a democratic setting. All these nuances lead to the importance of *value internalization* and *right disposition* in a democratic society: once these values are internalized, they orient decision-making capability and opportunity toward things that "work" in a democratic society. These observations echo John Dewey's (1939) concerns about the potential of education in democratizing society through the "possession and continual use of certain attitudes" to defend democracy and make it work beyond its legal guarantees. As Dewey (1939) puts it:

> …we have had the habit of thinking of democracy as a kind of political mechanism that will work as long as citizens were reasonably faithful in performing political duties…[but] it is not enough; that democracy is…a personal way of life; that it signifies the possession and continual use of certain attitudes…. Democracy is a way of life controlled by a working faith in the possibilities of human nature…exhibited in every human being irrespective of race, color, sex, birth and family, of material or cultural wealth. This faith may be enacted in statutes, but it is only on paper unless it is put in force in the attitudes which human beings display to one another in all the incidents and relations of daily life.

In a similar vein, Durkheim (1925/1961) talked about the importance of instilling social values as a *basis* of action in society by shaping dispositions (p. 134) and, despite not being the panacea for all social problems, how schools must not abandon this function as their contribution for the common good. In Durkheim's (1925/1961) words:

> I do not mean that education alone can remedy the evil—that institutions are not necessarily demanding legislative action. But that action can only be fruitful if it is rooted in a state of opinion, if it is an answer to needs that are really felt. Thus, [...] the school [is] to instill in the child a social sense [...] a natural function from which the school should never withdraw [...] (p. 236)

Going back, the statements of the participants also reveal how teachers are *future-oriented*: their lessons and approach to teaching are *preparations* for a future condition that is about to come (i.e., their students as voters and as decision-makers); therefore, the teachers felt the need to teach fundamental values as they are orienting the attitudes of *future* adult citizens, or, as in the case of students of the science high school, scientists.

> "*Kasi di ba as future scientist, pag ikaw ay naging scientist, magbibigay ka ng resulta o data para sa mga tao. So, dapat yung data na ibibigay mo ay tama at sigurado. Kumbaga, love for truth. Ano ba ang mas madali sa atin, ang magsinungaling o ang magsabi ng katotohanan? Base sa mga sagot ng mga bata nung tinuturo ko, mas madali para sa atin ang magsabi ng totoo. Yun po ang sagot ng karamihan. Yung iba, may depensa, 'Sir, nagsasabi po kami ng kasinungalingan kasi may gusto po kaming protektahan. Meron kaming pinaglalaban.' So, doon papasok yung democracy. May kanya-kanya tayong pagmamahal sa katotohanan pero, still, ano ba yung tunay na kahulugan ng katotohanan? So, dun po lalawak yung ating discussion."* (P2, M, SH, G10)
>
> [As a future scientist, you will provide results or data to people. So, the data that you're going to provide must be accurate and certain. In short, you should have the love for truth. Which is easier for us, to lie or to tell the truth? Based on the answers of my students, it's easier for us to tell the truth. That's what most of them said. Some students argued, 'But Sir, we tell lies because we need to protect something. We're fighting for something.' So, this is where democracy comes in. We have our own love for truth. But one may ask: 'What does truth really mean?' So, this is where our discussion will expand.]

As mentioned, education here is treated as a *preparation* for a future role. Aside from it, what is interesting about the previous quote is how it narrates the experience of a teacher who needs to teach the value of truth but, in the course of teaching it, has made truth an epistemological problem for his students (i.e., What *is* truth?), promoting critical thinking (e.g., What is your basis in telling the truth?—*"dapat yung data* [or facts, findings, statements, etc.] *na ibibigay mo ay tama at sigurado"* [the data that you provide should be accurate and certain]), and recognizing that truth maybe differently conceived in relation to the things being valued (e.g., *"may gusto kaming protektahan"* [we want to protect something]), thereby

opening the inquiry for further discussion—a site where "democracy" comes into play (the recognition that there are multiple perspectives on the topic and that there is a *need* to talk about them, which relates to the *freedom of expression* mentioned above). The quote also shows how truth can be distorted in the course of protecting personal interests—*'Sir, nagsasabi po kami ng kasinungalingan kasi may gusto po kaming protektahan'* [Sir, we tell lies because we want to protect something]—which also implies an underlying *threat* (potential harm) and the power relations that may influence interlocutors in truth-telling, making the protection of freedom of expression all the more important.

By relating democracy to freedom of expression, the participants have recognized the diversity of their students, the validity of their perspectives, and their potential to contribute in a discourse (cf. Putnam 1991, p. 217 as cited in Englund, 2000, p. 309), thus making this kind of communication "educative*"* for both teachers and students (Dewey, 1985, p. 8 as cited in Englund, 2000, p. 308). This free play of ideas, feelings, and talk under the banner of *freedom of expression* fosters an environment where people, should they need to decide on a certain matter, *hold* the power to shape their collective destiny—a power often reduced to *voting* in a *formal* democracy (or *"polyarchy";* see Steger, 2014, p. 33) but largely unharnessed for its full potential (e.g., "deliberative" and "participatory" discourses on democracy; see Sant, 2019, pp. 668-670, 672-674).

Teaching Democracy in the Classroom

After asking the participants what they mean by democracy, the researchers proceeded with questions inquiring about the relevance of democracy to Values Education and how they teach it in class. Just like in the previous question, this inquiry has generated various responses which, based on the answers of the participants, appeared to be related to their grade levels and the curriculum they were implementing. After analyzing their answers, the researchers were able to identify two recurring themes pertaining to how democracy is approached in the subject: approach in Values Ed varies according to (a) *grade level and type of school* and (b) *the role of the teacher* as a promoter of democracy in Values Education classes.

Approach in Values Ed Depends on Grade Level and Type of School

During interviews, the researchers noticed that when participants were explaining the relevance of democracy to Values Education, they tended to qualify their answers according to the grade level they were handling. This cued the researchers to review the curricula that the participants were following and identify if there were significant differences between them.

The Values Ed curriculum of the national science high school starts by instilling the school's values (i.e., Patriotism, Integrity, Service, and Youth Leadership) in relation to "essential truths of nature of man" and "ethical standards governing the universal moral values," and from there builds on applying those virtues from the self to the world in preparation for the students' future career as science practitioners and researchers (Philippine Science High School System, 2021).

In contrast, the Edukasyon sa Pagpapakatao (EsP) appears to have a more general orientation towards a holistic development based on *personalism* and *virtue ethics* (Department of Education, 2016, p. 3), regardless of the future career students will take later on. From kindergarten to Grade 10, the themes or competencies listed below are being honed among students (p. 12) using different "standards" according to grade level (p. 7-8).

a. *Pananagutang Pansarili at Mabuting Kasapi ng Pamilya;*
b. *Pakikipagkapwa-tao;*
c. *Paggawa Tungo sa Pambansang Pag-unlad at Pakikibahagi sa Pandaigdigang Pagkakaisa;*
d. *Pananalig at Pagmamahal sa Diyos at Paninindigan sa Kabutihan.*

Hence, although the approach is an "expanding spiral" (p. 3)—meaning, those four themes or competencies will be touched upon at every grade level as the student proceeds in junior high school—Grade 7 will focus on the self (p. 91), Grade 8 on family and social relationships (p. 105), Grade 9 on society and work or career (p. 123), and Grade 10 on being human ("*pagkatao ng tao*") and morality (p. 138).

Another approach in Values Education that is very different from public schools pertains to how it

is being implemented in private schools. One participant, for example, explained how their church's *social teachings* matter more as a basis for teaching the subject rather than the materials coming from the Department of Education. This participant also considered his job as a *mission* to demonstrate the values of Christian life through teaching, for example, how the love of God liberates, restores, and communes, and how it becomes a source of values not only for daily living but also for the maturity of one's faith:

> "*We do not follow the mandate ng Deped…sa Values Education since we are a private, sectarian educational institution. Tapos nga yung IBED* [Integrated Basic Education Department] *meron siyang LEVEL 3 accreditation ng PAASCU so we have a certain degree of autonomy to mandate a subject so yung school-mandated subject for senior high school is religion and values education. So, sa ngayon ang focus niya ay social teachings of the Church* [...]" (P 9, M, PS, G11)

> [We do not follow the mandate of Deped…in Values Education since we are a private, sectarian educational institution. And since the IBED (Integrated Basic Education Department) has a LEVEL 3 accreditation from PAASCU, we have a certain degree of autonomy to require a subject. The school-mandated subject for senior high school is religion and values education. Currently, its focus is the social teachings of the Church (…)]"

Hence, as shown in the previous discussions, Values Education will be taught *differently* according to the nature of the school (i.e., public vs. private, secular vs. sectarian), the curriculum being followed, and the grade level involved.

As for the *Edukasyon sa Pagpapakatao* (EsP), which is the most dominant form of Values Education in the country, *the emphasis on democracy and its framing will vary depending on the grade level involved*—with Grade 9 topics being the closest if one understands democracy not just as "freedom of expression" during class discussions or extra-curricular activities at school, although concepts like freedom of expression, participation, decision-making, and responsibility are being touched upon throughout the EsP curriculum. To wit, Grade 9 topics in EsP include the *common good, political society, subsidiarity and unity, economic society, civil society, rights and responsibilities,* and *social justice,* among others (Department of Education, 2016, pp. 123–131).

The Role of Teachers in Promoting Democracy

When asked about the role of teachers in promoting democracy, some participants answered that their primary role is to teach *principles* and *virtues.* One participant (P4) said that *teachers must be able to achieve the identified MELCs* (Most Essential Learning Competencies) after every lesson. Another participant said that the role of the teacher is to *make each student apply the important virtues they need* in their future profession and role in society. Most participants, however, gave importance to the teacher's *role in creating an inclusive learning space* where students can freely express their opinions and participate in class discussion:

> *"[S]abi nila, 'Ma'am kasi sa bahay hindi namin ma-voice out kasi yung mama, papa namin inaasar yung isang kandidato na hindi raw matalino hindi raw magaling…. Dito ba ma'am masasabi namin?' Sabi ko, 'Oo naman. Gusto kong malaman ninyo na yung klase na ito ay safe na lugar para masabi ninyo ang opinyon ninyo na hindi kayo nadidiscriminate na 'Bata lang kasi kayo eh.' I think yun rin yung nagiging role nating mga teacher na '[Karapatan] nyo yan, okay lang na magsabi as long as wala kayong tinatapakang ibang tao.'"* (P4, F, RH, G9)

> [They said, 'Ma'am, at home we can't voice our opinions because our parents ridicule this one candidate as unintelligent and incapable. Can we speak our minds here in the classroom?' I said, 'Yes, of course. I want you to know that this class is a safe space for you to share your opinions without being dismissed with comments like 'you are just kids.' I think that is our role as teachers: to encourage them to speak as long as they are not stepping on someone else.]

The quote above highlights the reality that the recent national election and the political developments leading to it have been divisive for the country (see Ong et al., 2022; Gutierrez, 2022; Curato, 2018). This has been a source of stress for many Filipinos, especially those whose families have been seriously fractured by political disagreements. For instance, Miller and Cabato (2022) reported how Martial Law survivors have cut ties with friends and scolded their children for supporting President Bongbong Marcos. Many Marcos supporters were exposed to disinformation

and believe that Marcos Sr.'s presidency was a golden age for the Philippines, even when they themselves lived during the Martial Law era. These realities show the weaknesses of Philippine democracy, where family members of ousted leaders and dictators still get significant government positions despite their questionable backgrounds. They highlight the need to deepen democracy and transform it into a condition where change becomes participatory and comes from the ground (Quimpo, 2008, p. 20). Nonetheless, what Values Education seems to teach students is how to navigate spaces made precarious by such political differences:

> *"As a teacher, I promote* [a] *democratic environment in which students can constructively interact with others and where people can agree to disagree on issues within* [a] *particular topics…I also let my students* [sic] *lead as a leader in their classroom*[s] *so that I can see how they lead and become a good leader to others. In that way, I let them* [sic] *share their realization and learnings in their leadership. I also let my student[s]* [sic] *think critically in every situation we encounter."* (P7, F, PS, G7,8)

The teacher should also help the students realize that people may have different opinions and they should be open to those who hold an opinion different from theirs.

> *"In relation to democracy, though mayroon tayong pagkakaiba base sa ating mga pagpapa-halaga. Ang role ng teacher ay maunawaan ng bawat tao na mayroon pagpapahalaga tayo, mayroong pagkakaiba-iba. Na hindi kailangan na kapag ang isang tao ay may kakaibang perspektiba sa buhay ay dapat na itong i-exclude sa lipunan. Dapat tinatanggap natin ito at maging open sa mga posibilidad at paano masosolusyunan yung bawat problema."* (P2, M, SH, G10)
>
> [In relation to democracy, we have differences in terms of values. The role of the teacher is to make everyone understand that we have our own values and we're different; that we should not exclude someone who has a different perspective in life. We should accept it and be open to the possibilities and how to solve each problem.]

However, the teacher must also intervene and serve *as a guide, mediator, and arbiter in* these learning spaces. One participant, for example, mentioned that teachers should not "impose" their beliefs on the students because these students have their own opinions and are *"palaban"* (unyielding). However, according to the participants, the teacher must mediate when something is "inappropriate" or when discussions become heated. In such cases, the teacher must explain to the students the possible "consequences" of their behavior or belief or must offer a middle ground to settle things. When disagreements remain unresolved after the discussion, this is where "respect" comes in—which is basically just an invitation to tolerate each other's standpoint without necessarily reaching an agreement.

> *"May iba-iba silang ideas. Kung mare-reconcile ko, ginagawa ko.* [Pero] *may mga student na they stand with their concepts. Hindi man nila tanggapin, the bottom-line is respect para may conclusion.* [Kailangan nilang makinig] *Para maintindihan nila ang pinaglalaban ng isa't isa. Minsan nagbabago sila ng isip pag nakarinig ng iba [ng opinyon]. Basta respect each others' opinion* [lagi]." (P11, F, RH, G10).
>
> [They have different ideas. If I can reconcile them, then I'll do it. But there are students who stand by their beliefs. Even if they won't accept a proposition, the bottom line is respect so that there can be a conclusion. They need to listen so that they can understand what each of them is fighting for. Sometimes, they change their minds after hearing others' perspectives. What's important is to always respect each other's opinions.]

Lastly, teachers also serve as *role models* for their students, especially when it comes to practicing the values they teach in class. This creates social pressure upon them not only to help observe the values and norms they teach in class but also to live a life that is consistent with those values. One of the previous quotes already mentioned a teacher treating his job as a *mission* for being Christian. Another participant even shared how teaching Values Education demands some form of consistency even in political behavior (P4) and family life (P10).

> "*Ikaw mismo maging model ka na bilang isang guro dapat–actually mahirap maging teacher na nagtuturo kang bawal ganito, pwedeng ganito pero dapat nakikita rin ng mga bata sa iyo kasi*

ayaw mo na ibabalik nila sa iyo na 'Ma'am bakit ikaw'.... Actually mahirap ding i-balance 'pag nagiging modelo ka kasi, tulad n'yan sabi ko last election, June 'yun eh, may nagtanong, 'Ma'am sinong binoto mo? Sinong binoto mo?' [Umimik?] lang ako, sabi ko, 'Basta ako sure ako talo binoto ko.' (laughs) *Sabi ko, 'Mukhang ano eh, ang laki ng lamang eh.' Sabi nila, 'Hala ma'am pink ka* [...] *Sabi ko, 'Eh syempre doon ako sa gobyernong tapat,' pero actually hindi okay magsabi kasi baka maimpluwensyahan mo 'yung mga bata pero for me that time parang tapos naman na, parang nag-tatanong lang naman ng opinyon saka gusto kong maiano ng mga bata na, 'Boboto according sa popularity?' Hindi ganon. You have to see everything about the candidate or about the person* [...]" (P4, F, RH, G9).

[As a teacher, you yourself should be a model. Actually, it's hard being a teacher who must instruct on what is allowed or forbidden, since they should see in you what you preach about and you don't want them to say, 'Ma'am, how about you?' Actually, it's hard to keep on being a role model because, for example, just like what happened last election. It was in June when someone asked me, 'Ma'am, who did you vote for? ' I just said, 'What I'm sure about is that the one whom I voted for lost the election' (laughs) I said, 'It looks like...the other candidate has a wide margin'. They said, 'Oh, Ma'am, so you're pink.' I replied, 'Of course, I want an honest government,' but actually I'm not allowed to say that because I might influence my students with my political beliefs. But for me at that time, it's like it's already over, they're just asking for my opinion and I just wanted them to understand not to vote for a candidate based on popularity. It shouldn't be like that. You have to see everything about the candidate...]

Activities and Practices Promoting Democracy in School

The participants were asked about the activities and practices that promote democracy in their schools. All participants cited practices or activities in their schools that allow their students to practice freedom of expression (e.g., class discussion, student orientation, parents meeting), while some mentioned activities that foster patriotism (e.g., flag raising, national monthly celebration observances) and solidarity with the marginalized (e.g., immersions). Participants mentioned how extracurricular activities enrich the schooling experience of students by exposing them to other groups and aspects of life, thus honing their critical thinking and communicative skills and fostering a sense of community among them. In addition, the students' *agency* is also emphasized in these examples as they mostly decide *how* to express themselves, *when* to engage in interaction, and *to whom* to direct their actions (see Emirbayer & Mische, 1998 for a more holistic take on agency).

Other participants also observed that students nowadays are bolder in expressing their gender identity at school. This might be the result of an increasing change in societal attitude towards the LGBTQ+ community (Abad, 2020), as indicated by recent DepEd reforms like the "gender-responsive basic education policy" (Bautista, 2022; Commission on Human Rights, 2022) and the non-mandatory wearing of school uniforms (Paunan, 2022). Specifically, the participants noticed how students are now free to choose the clothes and hairstyles they want and took those expressions as *manifestations* of democracy and freedom of expression. However, a participant also hinted at some tensions involved between parents and teachers who want norm-conforming behavior and students who want to express their identities and preferences.

"*Ngayong taon since nagbaba ng memo si VP Sara Duterte na hindi required ang mga bata na mag-uniform so itong mga parent nagkaroon ng connotation na kahit ano na lang susuotin ng mga bata. So, ito namang mga bata, most especially itong LGBT natin, nag-stick sila dun sa 'Hindi kami required mag-uniform. Pwede naming suotin lahat ng pwede naming suotin.' So, meron kami ritong mga estudyante na mga lesbian, nagsusuot sila ng pants, hindi sila nagpapalda. 'Yung mga beki naman namin, may mga time na nagsusuot sila ng crop top, at saka, itong last class picture may nakita akong beki na nakasuot ng palda, Grade 10. 'Yung kanilang mga buhok. Hindi namin sila mapwersang paputulan 'yung buhok nila. Mahahaba talaga 'yung mga buhok ng mga bakla sa amin dito."* (P3, F, RH, G7&8)

[This year, since VP Sara Duterte issued a memo stating that students are not required to wear uniforms, parents started to think that their children could wear anything. So, the students, especially members of the LGBT community, hold firm to the notion that they can wear anything. We have lesbian students here, and they wear pants

> instead of skirts. Our gay students sometimes wear crop tops. During the last class pictorial, I saw a Grade 10 gay student wearing a skirt. As for their hair, we can't force them to cut it. Gay students here have really long hair.]

Gender-related tensions in the country have been influenced by traditional institutions like the Roman Catholic Church, where the majority serves as its members; thus, it holds a "powerful political force" (Dressel, 2011) over social relations and issues in the Philippines. This makes the Church influential on how LGBT issues will be handled within organizations like schools. Religious groups restrain the LGBT community from fully expressing themselves as they believe that acknowledging their rights can lead to the legalization of same-sex marriage, divorce, euthanasia, and abortion (Human Rights Watch, 2017).

However, students are now more confident in expressing themselves even if other people like teachers are asking them to change. They know their rights and do not flinch, as one participant observed. This shows that *because students know their rights, they can assert themselves and act in the way they want even when faced with objections from people older than them.*

> "*Meron ngang bata* [...] *na nag-post sya sa Facebook* [...] *Actually Grade 9 'yung student eh. Actually lalaki s'ya pero 'yun nga, babae 'yung uniform n'ya tapos mahaba 'yung buhok n'ya. Pero ang bilib ako sa bata is that, may mga nag-question sa kanya, parang may mga teacher din na parang, pero hindi naman totally papahiyain tinanong lang na, 'Anak ganito ba, pwede bang panlalaki na lang muna since male ka naman biologically' ganyan. Ang ginawa ng bata hinarapan n'ya ng memo."* (P4, F, RH, G9)

> [There was a student who posted on Facebook… It was a Grade 9 student, a boy, but wore the girl's uniform and had long hair. What amazed me about this student was that, when teachers questioned her about her appearance and suggested that she should wear a boy's uniform since she's biologically male, the student showed them the DepEd's memo.]

This incident also reveals an important dynamic: some teachers only accepted the students' right to express themselves because they were bound by official school policies set by the DepEd. This suggests that, in some cases, educators understand democracy in a procedural sense—adhering to rules without critically engaging with the underlying issues involved.

What stands out, however, is that students know their rights, and they also know that they have a *voice* in their school's affairs. This voice is expressed in various platforms like social media and school newspapers and, at times, through petition writing. The school administration listens to them and, on some occasions, changes school policies in favor of the students, thereby meeting them "halfway" for a "win-win situation" (P4).

> "'*Yung mga bata kasi very vocal na sila* [...] *For example, they wanted to have a prom. Talagang nagsusulat na sila ng letter hindi lang 'yung basta basta sila na parang, 'Ay wala daw eh, ganito daw.' Parang they are trying their best na parang, 'Hindi, we can request, we can jot down reasons kung bakit gusto natin 'to ganon. And syempre hindi naman lahat napagbibigyan pero 'yung administration tinitignan nila parang nagme-meet halfway kumbaga win-win situation."* (P4, F, RH, G9)

> [Young people are very vocal now. For example, they wanted to have a prom. They really wrote a letter instead of accepting it as an impossibility. They are trying their best to petition as if they're saying, 'No, we can request, we can list reasons why we want this.' Of course, not everything will be granted, but the administration looks at the request to meet the students half-way, so it's a win-win situation.]

Most of the participants cited student government and classroom elections as school activities that also promote democracy among students. Students are free to run for a position as long as they do not have a bad record at the Guidance Office (P3). Participants argue that these activities serve as a *simulation* or preparation for their students as future voters.

> "[O]*f course SSG* [Supreme Student Government] *talaga so election, meeting de avance. So kahit parang simulation lang talaga s'ya compared sa totoong buhay, pero at least napa-practice, napo-promote* [ang democracy]." (P4, F, RH, G9)

> [Of course, SSG [Supreme Student Government], so there's an election, a meeting de avance. So, even though it's really just a simulation for real

life, at least democracy is being practiced and promoted.]

Challenges in Promoting Democracy in Values Education

Despite all the potentials mentioned in Values Education to promote democracy and democratic values among students, the statements of the participants have also revealed some factors that may actually constrain or undermine these efforts. One factor implied is the *generational difference* among teachers, students, and parents, which may cause misunderstanding and resentment between the actors involved.

> "*Diba nga ang mga millenials ngayon parang mga Karen talaga eh na, 'Hindi ma'am dapat ganito', parang mga ganon talaga sila mga palaban talaga. Talagang ipagpipilitan talaga nila 'yung mga karapatan nila na kung saan bilang isang guro na merong edad na rin na titignan mo rin 'Ilang taon ba 'tong kausap ko na to?' 'Ano na ba 'yung mga pinagdaanan nito?' 'Saan ba 'to kumukuha ng mga resources n'ya?' Kasi kung i-i-impose mo sa kanya na, 'Ay hindi ganito dapat 'yan,' lalo kayong hindi magkakaunawaan. Iba kasi 'yung demokrasiyang alam ng kabataan ngayon sa demokrasiyang alam naming mga Gen X. Magkaibang-magkaiba talaga."* (P3, F, G7,8, RH)
>
> [The millennials now are really like 'Karens'[3] saying, 'No, Ma'am. It should be like this.' They are really outspoken. They will really fight for their rights. As a teacher who is older, you will also look at them and think: 'How old are these students I am talking to?' 'What have they gone through?' 'Where do they get their resources from?' Because if you impose on them the things that shouldn't be done, then both of you will not reach a common understanding. The democracy that young people know today is different from the democracy that we, Gen X, know. It's really different.]
>
> "*Sabi ko, 'Mga anak, 'yung mga binoto ng mga magulang natin, sila 'yung may hawak* [sa kapangyarihan] *six years 'yan. Six years* [nasa college] *kayo. So dapat kahit hindi kayo nakaka-boto* [ngayon] *dapat may pakialam.' And ang good thing naman sa mga bata ngayon is very vocal. The problem is, sorry ha, in our system is the boomers. 'Pag nakita nilang medyo vocal 'yung mga bata, parang sasabihin na, 'pasaway', ganon or 'rebelde, aktibista' yung mga ganon."* (P4, F, G9, RH)
>
> [I say, 'My children, the ones your parents voted for are those who will be in power for six years. In six years, you'll already be in college. So, even if you can't vote now, you should still care.' And the good thing about young people today is that they are very vocal. Though, sorry to say, the problem in our system is the boomers. When they see that young people are vocal, they'll say they are rule breakers, rebels, activists, things like that.]

The quote above has also indicated the *implicit power relations between teachers and students,* which is also related to the traditional role of teachers as the "source" of truth, as authority figures, and as arbiters when conflict arises during class discussions (see previous theme on the role of teachers). This may actually influence how discussions are facilitated, whose viewpoints are heard, and what kind of truth will emerge during and after the discussion. The quote below reminds one of the "banking method" mentioned previously and how Freire (1970/2005) argued about its role in reproducing power relations in society, although here, the teacher is also aware of the importance of exploring other teaching approaches for the subject.

> *"I have to admit that na alam mo 'yung trabaho ng teacher na repetitive tapos ang dami mo pang chinecheckan, mga ganon. Sometimes, oftentimes, you fall into that pit na nagiging ano ka resource person ka. Salita ka ng salita. Then you teach them. I see to it naman na there are many instances na…. Very important na we try to explore approaches in teaching."* (P9, M, G11, PS)
>
> I have to admit that the work of the teacher is repetitive, and you have a lot of things to check, and all that. Oftentimes, you fall into that pit of becoming just a resource person. You keep talking and talking. Then, you teach them. But I see to it that there are many instances where…it's very

[3] "Karen" in recent popular culture refers to a *meme* of a stereotypical White privileged woman in the United States who unjustly asserts her position by demanding to speak to a person of authority (e.g., a manager) to "belittle" people of modest backgrounds (e.g., service industry workers, people of color) (see Nagesh, 2020).

important that we try to explore other approaches in teaching.]

The limited class time has also *weakened* the promise of Values Education as a promoter of democratic values. With only two times a week to meet their students and finish the designated learning competencies, which at times are compromised by unexpected class cancellations, teachers find it difficult to execute more thoughtful exercises in class and often turn to giving class assignments because they are "in a rush."

"*Sa amin kasi sa Values Ed twice lang namin silang nakikita. 50 minutes lang kami. Technically nakakapagturo lang kami 40 minutes kasi iikot pa 'yung bata galing ibang classroom tapos syempre magse-set up pa kami ng gamit, 'yung mga visual aids ididikit pa ng bata kung sakaling magre-reporting sila so technically 40 minutes. Syempre andun pa 'yung sermon pagkamakulit ang bata. Plus,* [...] *kailangan mong i-meet yung MELC na 'yon sa week na 'yon. Eh diba nga twice nga lang kami? Paano 'pag nag-declare ng walang pasok ng Monday? Eh di isang beses na lang namin mame-meet 'yung bata? Kaya may mga pagkakataon na kahit may time table kami na dapat ganito tapos na s'ya, wala kaming nagagawa, kailangan naming bilisan. Or either, hayaan na lang namin na i-review na lang nila. Parang ang nangyayari is, more on subject na lang kami, conceptual na kami, wala na 'yung valuing process because we are in rush. Alam mo nagtuturo kami ng pamamahalaga sa oras pero hindi na s'ya magawa kasi mahirap na s'ya."* (P6, M, G9, RH)

[We only meet our Values Ed students twice. We have 50 minutes. Technically, we can only teach for 40 minutes because the students come from another classroom. Of course, we still have to set up our class materials. If they will report in class, then they will have to prepare the visual aids. So, it's technically 40 minutes. Of course, reprimanding students also takes time. Plus, you need to meet the MELC for the week. We only meet twice, right? What happens when there are class suspensions on a Monday? So, we're only left with meeting the students once? That's why sometimes, even if we have a timetable, we can't do anything about it, we have to be in a rush. Or, we just let the students review the concepts. What happens is that we are just discussing the subject conceptually, but we can't engage it thoroughly because we are in a rush. You know, we teach valuing time, but we can't do it ourselves because, it's hard.]

The *GMRC and Values Education Act* of 2020 aims to rectify this by adding class time to Values Education that is similar to other core subjects in the K-12 curriculum, but this still needs to be implemented.

The class time problem has also been magnified in a school that is *overpopulated.* In this case, the school administration has decided to divide their classes into sets A and B, which makes their Values Education available only once a week, thus reducing most class activities into only "paper and pen."

"*Actually kung sa ibang school two days, sa amin isang araw lang s'ya per week. Although we want to provide 'yung malalaking activities kasi, imagine, 50 minutes lang kayo sa isang week. So more on activity namin nalilimit talaga sa paper and pen. Kaya ayon rin 'yung isa sa problema na limited 'yung time na nabibigay sa Values Ed na subject. Sa* [Name of school omitted] *na lang po, once a week lang."* (P5, M, G9, RH)

[Actually, in other schools, there are two meetings per class, but for us here, it's only one meeting per week. While we want to provide bigger activities for our students, just imagine having 50 minutes per week. So, most of our activities are really limited to paper and pen. That's also one of the problems of limited time in Values Ed.]

The rigid structure of the curriculum (e.g., MELCs) is also seen by some participants as a limiting factor in teaching Values Education effectively. The participants hoped that they could have more control in organizing its content to make it more relevant to the conditions of their students.

"Wala naman akong gustong idagdag. Siguro pagkakasunod-sunod lang kasi puno na kami sa content. 'Yung need kasi minsan ng mga bata, sa 4th quarter pa tinuturo. Halimbawa 'yung sex education, 4th quarter pa. May mga teenage pregnancy kami. Kung nagabayan sana mga bata, maiiwasan sana 'yun." (P11, F, G10, RH)

[There is nothing I want to add to the curriculum. But because we have a lot of content, maybe I would just want to change the sequencing of the lessons. Sometimes, the things that kids need are taught only in the 4th quarter. We have cases of teenage pregnancies. If the necessary lessons were taught to students earlier, maybe those early pregnancies could have been avoided.]

The lack of qualified faculty members specializing in Values Education has also been presented as a limiting factor in maximizing the promise of Values Education, wherein those who do not have Values Education training but are eyeing for permanent position in public schools may be temporarily assigned to teach Values Education (e.g., English, AP, Math teachers, etc.). Although the new law aims to rectify this by requiring non-Values Education teachers to obtain Values Education credentials during the transition period from 2022 to 2028, the result has yet to be seen.

These instances show how the dire situation of Philippine education impedes the students' growth as they are not given the opportunities to engage in activities that require them to think more critically and reflect on ideas. Given that these typically happen to less privileged students who go to public schools, the Philippine basic education system has just reinforced inequality and injustice among its young citizens (Canuto, 2022).

In addition, another factor that may also affect the potential of Values Education is tracking or sectioning among students, which involves giving different activities or instructions to sections of students depending on their perceived level of ability.

> "*Hindi ako nahihirapan sa mga iba kong activity. Doon sa case study, mahuhusay 'yung estudyante ko [sa science class]. 'Yung mga lower section na hawak ko titingnan ko kung kaya. 'Pag nakita ko di kaya ibaba ko nang konti. Same objectives same pero 'yung activity iba."* (P10, F, G9, RH)
>
> [I don't find facilitating my activities challenging. Regarding the case study, my students in the science class are doing well. For the lower sections that I handle, I'll assess first if they can manage the task. If they can't, I'll lower the level of difficulty a bit. The objectives are the same, but the activity is different.]

While this strategy seeks to ensure that all students can engage with the content at a level commensurate with their individual abilities, it also raises concerns about the potential impact of such differentiation on educational outcomes, not to mention the social stigma and negative expectations attributed to students in low-performing sections (Ableti, 2019).

Other limiting factors mentioned include the receptiveness of the school administration to change, limited parental involvement in the Values Education of their children, and the numerical emphasis in grading.

Conclusion

This paper explored how democracy and its related values are relevant in teaching Values Education by interviewing selected teachers from different schools in NCR and CALABARZON. After doing thematic analysis, the researchers were able to generate six themes that attempted to answer the research questions that prompted this study.

Regarding the relevance of democracy to values education, the researchers learned that it is largely applied *in principle* through class conversations and school activities that foster freedom of expression. Democracy as a topic varies in emphasis depending on the grade level and type of school where a particular form of Values Education is being taught, with Grade 9 in *Edukasyon sa Pagpapakatao* in regular high schools being the closest if one will treat democracy as a substantive topic by itself.

The interviews also yielded insights into what democracy means for Values Education teachers. The most common theme in the interviews was freedom of expression—be it in speaking, writing, clothing, or any form that allows students and teachers to express their thoughts and feelings. Part of the definition given was "power in the people" wherein decision-making, voting, rights-claiming, responsibility in expression, petitioning, student election, and even class management as a form of governance—those activities and practices in school that promote democracy—emerged as related activities where power is present and therefore must be shared with the people.

The role of teachers in democratizing society has also been explored, which includes designing inclusive spaces for learning where freedom of expression is practiced with responsibility, being a mediator or arbiter when conflict of ideas arises in class discussions, being a source of democratic values and principles, and being a role model of how those principles and values are being practiced in real life.

Lastly, this paper has also identified several limiting factors that may influence how Values Education can promote democracy and democratic values among students. These include the generational differences between students, parents, and teachers in value orientation; implicit power relations between teachers and students; limited class time allocated for Values Education; rigid structure of the curriculum; lack of qualified faculty members; tracking; receptiveness of the school administration to change; parental involvement; and numerical emphasis in grading.

The role of education in fostering democratic values such as freedom of expression, critical thinking, tolerance, and respect cannot be underestimated, given that children spend a significant period of their lives in schools. Both Durkheim and Dewey argued for the importance of shaping dispositions in schools if we want a socio-political project to succeed and last, such as *democracy.* Given the current state of Philippine politics, where elitism continues to abound despite repeated attempts to become socially inclusive, the current move to strengthen Values Education in the country presents a unique opportunity for educators to foster social values associated with democracy in that hope that they would predispose future generations to act, break the culture of silence, demand accountability even at the local level, and think for the common good. This is where the promise of teaching democracy in Values Education lies.

However, this political landscape influences how Values Education is taught, constraining opportunities for students to develop critical thinking skills and foster healthy social relationships in society. The academic freedom available to teachers and students can be restricted by societal pressures, inhibiting open dialogue. Compounding these issues are the classroom and teacher shortages and the restrictive curricula that undermine the quality of education. These are exacerbated by systemic corruption and elitism that divert resources away from addressing these critical needs of the education system. Taken together, the challenges faced by teachers of Values Education should be addressed using a "whole-society approach" that entails thorough social reforms and the participation of crucial stakeholders in the society.

Given that this study was done under time and monetary constraints, it is recommended that future studies on the topic will consider increasing the number of participants and the type of schools to be included in evaluating how democracy is related to and being taught in Values Education. In addition, the general scholarship will also benefit if researchers will be able to include the experience of schools in marginalized areas where state presence is weak, and the population is fairly homogenous.[4]

[4] Declaration of AI usage: The researchers used the free online version of *Grammarly to check grammatical errors while writing this article. Most of the corrections done by Grammarly involve deleting unnecessary spaces, improving punctuations and verb tenses, and adding missing articles.*

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