



Living the Dominican Charism in Education in the Philippines

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Abstract: Living the Dominican Charism in Education brings a coherent framework that can help stakeholders in a Dominican learning institution as well as other educational institutions. The concerns, consciousness, thoughts and observations of people involved in Dominican learning institutions reflect the dimensions of living the Dominican charism. In order to better understand the processes of Living the Dominican Charism in Education, discussion will dwell on the following: 1) Education, The Dominican Charism and Mission, 2) The Nature of the Dominican Education, 3) Facing the Challenge of Living the Dominican Charism in Education, 4) Incarnating the Dominican Charism in Education and 5) Modeling the Educative Outcomes of the Dominican Charism in Education. In the end, employees and lay partners in education undergo the rich experience of growing and becoming fully aware of the role of Dominican charism in Dominican learning institutions.

Keywords: *Dominican Charism, Dominican Mission, Incarnating the Dominican Charism, Educative outcomes*

Introduction

Does Catholic education still make sense today? A society that highly regards the value of education gauges its citizens' civic character from the core principles of their educational system. "Education is believed to be responsible for the cultivation of a civilized society" (Oak 2008, 29). People's civic character mirrors their education. "They have the skills and mindset necessary for democratic citizenship because education cultivates people to have civic character" (Berkowit, 2008 p.106). This proves that the educational mission of learning institutions is at the heart of the matter. This concern does not exclude Catholic sectarian schools' focus on their

educational mission. The crucial role of education in Catholic learning institutions has always been esteemed as Breeden (2002 p.14) mentions:

Education has long been one of the pillars for the bridge between Christian faith and the world, fostering the development of reason, giving meaning and order to human life and facilitating an appreciation of the ultimate reality.

The temptation for the educational mission to divert its proper attention from a single-minded focus is a paramount concern in modern times. More than ever, “Catholic colleges and universities, are questioning what the mission of the college or university should now be” (Prusak 2006, 22). It is close to “becoming more ambitious academically, when the interest in religious and humanistic education steadily decreases the attention of the faculty hence making the institutions’ Catholic character no longer a matter of course” (Prusak p.22). Allen (1998 p.7) cites an issue by saying, “A Catholic school’s core purpose should be faith development, not just delivering a good education.”

The letter of the Master of the Order of Preachers to the concluded Ninth Provincial Chapter of the Dominican Province of the Philippines in early 2008 carried a message on the importance of the present educational ministry of the Filipino Dominicans. The concise yet definitive words of the Master of the Order are stated as follows:

Many people in the Philippines put their trust in the brethren; many entrust their children to be educated in your colleges, many come to your universities to study and many are involved in the common project of teaching and administering those institutions. You rightly stress that those who come to learn are not all simply in search of a professional qualification but to seek to benefit from a ‘Dominican Philosophy of Education and the vision-mission statement of our educational apostolate...’ In order to respond to what ‘we are expected to be,’ you are to undertake a re-evaluation of the educational ministry of the Province. We commend your determination to undertake this exercise (Acts of the Ninth Provincial Chapter of the Dominican Province of the Philippines, 2008 p.v).

It would be beneficial to see the Filipino Dominican friars’ involvement in Catholic education as they address the Catholic education’s present state and its faithfulness to the duty for which its educational mission is anchored on. This paper then tries to uncover expressions of the stakeholders on their understanding and experiences based on their dynamic encounter with the Dominican Mission of Education.

The emergent categories and their conceptual interrelationships can provide insights to educational leaders within and beyond the Dominican learning institutions as to the importance of the clarity of their educational mission's core purpose, their present meaningful practices and their needs that have to be addressed based on the stakeholders' experiences; thereby enabling educational leaders to relate meaningfully to a thought that says, "As Catholic educators we possess immense spiritual and intellectual wealth that can be drawn upon from the universal Church's layers of teachers and saints" (Fox 2000, 67). The in-depth understanding of the Dominican educational mission can pave the way to a renewed vigor of envisioning the OP schools' future directions, meaningful existence, untiring commitment.

Whence, *Living the Dominican Charism in Education* will be discussed in five parts: 1) Education, The Dominican Charism and Mission, 2) The Nature of the Dominican Education, 3) Facing the Challenge of Living the Dominican Charism in Education, 4) Incarnating the Dominican Charism in Education and 5) Modeling the Educative Outcomes of the Dominican Charism in Education.

I. Education: The Dominican Charism and Mission

Articulating the Dominican charism in education in relation to the Dominican mission of education was the first major category expressing the stakeholders' understanding of the educational mission of the Dominicans in the Philippines. It was the process of consciously expressing the essentials that consisted of the purpose, nature, essential elements in relation to the Dominican charism found in the educational mission of the Dominicans.

Education and the Dominican Charism

The Dominican mission of education originates from the Dominican charism. "Any Dominican approach to education must be rooted in and reflect St. Dominic's spirit and vision" (Kelly OP & Saunders OP, 2007 p.5). One of the stakeholders stated, "Dominican education is a charism-based education." Another said that, "(OP Education) ... flows from the charism of the Order."

The vision-mission statements of some five Dominican learning institutions show the basic identity of these learning institutions. They are not only Catholic schools and apostolate but **Dominican in identity**, an identity that springs forth from the charism of the Order of Preachers. The Filipino Dominican Philosophy of Education was clear about this fact when it stated, "Education is a form of preaching ministry borne out and nourished by the pillars of **Dominican life/charism: study, prayer, community life, service.**"

The basic understanding of charism is explained thus, etymologically from the Greek word *Karis* which means grace and the word *ma* as concrete result of an action. In other words, *it is putting into motion or action the grace or gift given to us by God merited by Jesus Christ on the Cross brought forth by the Holy Spirit (Perfectae Caritatis, 1-3, 1965)*. This is rooted in St. Paul's Letter to the Romans when he said:

Just as each one has one body with many members, and all these members do not have all the same function, so in Christ we who are many form one body and each member belongs to all the others. We have different gifts according to the grace given to us. If a man's gift is prophesying, let him use it in proportion to his faith. If it is serving, let him serve; if it is teaching let him teach; if it is encouraging let him encourage... (Rom. 12:4-8).

There are different graces or gifts given to us for different kinds of functions but only one source. The Dominican charism springs from its founder – St. Dominic de Guzman, who by the measure of the grace or gift given to him made that gift dynamic, brought it to fruition and shared that gift with his community of followers. “When external activity is accompanied by a form of life that is faithful to the Gospel and the Spirit, the mission acquires true consistency and becomes credible” (Garcia Paredes CMF, 2006 p.86). For the Dominican Order, one of the acts that bring consistency and credibility to their charism to preach is through their Dominican Mission of Education. It is a mission or may be an “external activity” faithfully flowing from the grace of charism of the Order.

The Dominicans' involvement in education or the apostolate of learning is something that is not strange to them. *Study*, being an essential part of their life and therefore of their charism had been evident in their long and rich intellectual tradition with their involvement in educational institutions since the establishment of the first universities in Europe in the twelfth century - they being students as well as professors. Fr. Hinnebusch, OP (1965 p.105), a well known historian of the Dominican Order confirms this in one of his classic books about the Order which says:

This was something new in the history of religious Orders. For the first time in a thousand years of monastic history, a religious Order incorporated into its rule sections dealing with the academic life. A deep significance attaches to this fact. By writing these laws into the constitutions, St. Dominic sanctified study and learning. The regulations dealing with study stand side by side, on the same footing, with the rubrics dealing with the conventual Mass, the Divine Office, prayer, and preaching. These laws made study a sacred

obligation for every Dominican, an obligation that binds with the same force that prayer binds.

The statement above shows the clear standing partnership of the Dominicans with colleges and universities, since Dominicans have the charism of preaching, which requires an intellectual and academic preparation. One Dominican said:

The writings about the Dominican Order attest that the Order of Preachers (Dominicans) was the first religious Order/religious congregation to be established by the Church with an academic mission (Camayudo OP 2005, 19).

Thus, it can be said that the educational mission of the Dominicans inasmuch as it is rooted in their charism also heightens the dynamic links with their academic mission.

Education and The Dominican Mission

The main objectives or goals of the educational mission of the Dominicans in relation to the Dominican charism are spelled out as *evangelizing*, *integral development of the human person* and *providing life-skills*. *Evangelizing* is the primary and common understanding of the stakeholders that the educational objective of the Dominicans is to preach the Word of God. *Integral development of the human person* is one expression where the stakeholders believe that they are being formed holistically as daughters and sons of St. Dominic. *Providing life-skills* pertains to the purpose of education where stakeholders are prepared and equipped with needed skills to face the realities of the world.

1. Evangelizing

Educational apostolate is one of the four main priorities of the Dominican Province of the Philippines – with promotion of Justice and Peace and Care for Creation, Mission and Higher Theological Reflection as the other three (Acts of the Provincial Chapter of the Dominican Province of the Philippines). To attend to these four priorities means to address the mandate of evangelization. “The mission of the Order of Preachers is evangelization – spreading the gospel of Christ, the good news of the Reign of God, specifically by preaching” (Woods OP 1998, 23). Basing it on the definitive Apostolic Exhortation of Pope Paul VI, *Evangelii Nuntiandi*, 11 (1973) on the proclamation of the Gospel to the people of today, it says:

Christ accomplished this proclamation of the kingdom of God through the untiring preaching of a word which, it will be said, has no equal elsewhere: Here is a teaching that is new, and with

authority behind it.[26] And he won the approval of all, and they were astonished by the gracious words that came from his lips. [27] There has never been anybody who has spoken like him.[28] His words reveal the secret of God, His plan and His promise and thereby change the heart of man and his destiny.

The evangelizing task of the Dominicans through education is not a sole agenda of the Order but a participation in the whole evangelizing task of the Church. “What differentiates then the task of Catholic education is its sharing in the evangelical task of the Church” (Lana OP, 2006). To expand this thought further, the evangelizing activity in which the Dominicans share with the whole Church through education does not only focus on the spiritual dimension of the Filipinos than almost all aspects of his human situation at present. Fr. Lana, OP describes this with these words:

The reason why education can be a potent means of evangelization in our country is the strong trust that Filipinos have in education. Many Filipino people are mired in poverty and, and as an answer to this social problem, the Church has taken as its main thrust the preferential option for the poor. In this country, there is a great expectation that education in whatever form adds value to the individual, socially, economically and politically.

Education, then, which becomes a potent means for evangelization, is helpful to a Filipino whose dire needs are evident socially, politically and economically.

To be involved in education in the context of the Dominican priorities is to be involved directly in the evangelizing task of the Dominican Order. One of the entries in the observation notes of the researcher says something about the foremost university of the Dominicans in the Philippines (UST), “The gigantic cross on top of the classic neo-gothic inspired main building of UST symbolizes the evangelical mission of the university.” Such objective was identified by some of the stakeholders when they said, “OP institution has the mission of spreading the Catholic Faith/Word of God.” Another Dominican said that, “OP schools are the means for the evangelization of a society.” To educate then, is to evangelize. “It is a conviction of faith for us, Catholics to see the work of education as central to its mission of spreading the good news of Jesus Christ regularly” (Legaspi OP DD 2008, 4).

Re-visiting the documents of the Dominican Province of the Philippines, the Filipino Dominican Philosophy of Education expresses this particular objective where it says, “Education is among the most important means of evangelization.” This is also stated in the vision-mission statement of the Dominican Education Apostolate where “education is promoted as a form of evangelization...”

Evangelization becomes a regular undertaking in a Dominican learning institution as far as programs, curricula and religious activities in the campuses are concerned.

2. Integral Development of the Human Person

The evangelizing factor brought about by the Church through the Dominicans in education promotes the integral human progress of the person. This was affirmed by the stakeholders when they said, “To educate means to educate the whole person. It is not just teaching academically.” Another statement was added, “Dominican education means to develop the whole person.”

The late Archbishop of Manila, Jaime Cardinal Sin (1996 p.9) in addressing one the first general assemblies of DOMNET– Dominican Network of Schools, Colleges and Universities, spoke of the solidarity that Dominican learning institutions should focus on imbued with their Dominican charism, with these words:

It is so right that you, who are all inspired by the unique charism of St. Dominic de Guzman and guided by the shared mission of promoting the integral formation of youth, should seek to be in solidarity with one another.

Dominican schools foster solidarity and, with one aim, to promote the holistic or total development of the human person as a Christian. “Commitment to personal development and growth in personal freedom are priorities for educational efforts claiming consistency with the goals of Catholic education” (Kely 1999, 12). The statements of the vision-mission of the five Dominican learning institutions show this “total development” element as one of their main thrusts and objectives. Stakeholders’ formation is not only for one sided progress of their existence as human beings but the complementary and simultaneous development of the totality of their being to be useful and of efficient service to others. “The Christian educator aims to form the total human person, to fashion him for life in the Christian and societies of which he is a member” (Hinnebusch OP 1968, 72).

Fr Castillo, OP (1986 p.70) once a Rector of the University of Santo Tomas, Manila, expressed this convincingly in one of his addresses to the Academic unit of the University:

If you work on the assumption that you wish to uphold the highest of ideals and most crystal of expectations, then you must be working for the total formation of the whole man which is the end goal of the University.

There may be fields of specializations for each academic unit in learning institutions that may propel a drive for excellence independently from one another - intellectually, physically, spiritually, socially, economically, psychologically and the like, but they can only see themselves as individual units that need to complement each other to form an integral humane and Christian individual and community. Dominican learning institutions cannot do otherwise. Catholic education is integral formation as expressed in these words:

I am certain that nobody would object if I say that Catholic educational institutions adhere to the conviction that the goal of education, particularly Catholic education, is the integral formation of the human person (Lana OP, 2002).

This fact is also confirmed in the Filipino Dominican Philosophy of Education, when it says, “For the person, education is meant to bring out his/her total and integral development.”

The most recent Provincial Chapter of the Dominican Province of the Philippines highlighted the importance of this objective by stipulating it as one of the ordinations in the Acts of the Provincial Chapter on the Educational Apostolate area. The Board of Education should make the necessary comprehensive plans that should include, b.) **Holistic training program for lay personnel and common training program for lay administrators.** Integral development of the human person is not an exclusive objective of an OP school for student stakeholders alone but also for the employees and school personnel.

3. Providing Life-Skills

Besides evangelization and integral development of the human person, Dominican Mission of Education envisions also itself to provide the needed skills for its stakeholders particularly students in facing the challenges of life. The stakeholders know they will soon face the real world that would challenge them to put into practical use what they have learned in school in order to survive. As one stakeholder mentioned, “The school prepares students for the real battle of life.” Challenges in the real world have something to do with their professionalism, technical know-how, practical knowledge and good use of common sense. “Moreover, students are challenged to cope with the demands of the times triggered by a global, highly technological and materialistic culture...” as the statement of the Filipino Dominican Philosophy of Education would express. Such skills needed to face the reality of the world are geared towards making the stakeholders “successful professionals in their chosen fields of endeavor,” “competent and compassionate professionals,” “responsive, contemplative and innovative leaders” as stated by the vision-mission of Dominican learning institutions.

Kelty (1999 p.16) explains further the need for Catholic schools like the OP schools to provide life-skills preparation:

These developments permit a reframing of Catholic educational philosophy so that this philosophy directs its energy to personal development, remains open to the possibilities of new knowledge, reinforces its view of history and human destiny with metaphors of hope, and prepares graduates who are motivated to work for justice.

It is in this way indeed that the Dominican Mission of Education attempts to provide life-skills to its stakeholders as one Dominican said, “OP education is a preparation for one to face real life challenges.”

The preaching of our salvation based on the message of Jesus Christ, the integral development of the human person and to provide life-skills are the glaring objectives of the Dominican mission of education as expressed by the stakeholders.

II. The Nature of the Dominican Education

The Dominican Order being a Catholic religious order concretizes its mission that is Catholic in nature and is explained by three sub-categories such as, *Conservatism due to Orthodoxy*, *Catholic practices* and *other Catholic elements* also explain it.

1. Conservatism due to Orthodoxy

Conservatism due to orthodoxy is a concept, as understood by the stakeholders, on the Dominican educational mission’s “conservatism” because of its emphasis and faithful adherence to the official Catholic teachings. “Flowing from that fidelity, the Catholic school has the task of transmitting to students, by various means, the specific norms, values, and beliefs of the Catholic Faith” (Donlevy 2002, 105).

Dominicans have always been associated with Catholic orthodoxy. Fr. Felicísimo Martínez, OP (1988 p.53) recalls a piece of Dominican legacy and tradition in the Order of Preachers when he wrote:

The main issue of Dominican study is theology, sacred Doctrine. Our mission is to throw a theological light on the *quaestiones disputatae* of our world. This does not mean that every Dominican should be a professional theologian; it does mean that whatever his specialty may be, he must relate it to theology. Evangelizing is not possible without reference to Sacred Doctrine. Therefore it is wrong to think that only certain specialists are obliged to dedicate themselves to the study of theology. Every Dominican has this obligation, although some

could be more specifically devoted to this occupation. Theological reflection on the whole is a task of every Dominican community.

Although some have been suppressed or officially suspended by the Catholic authorities due to some ideas and theological reflections that deviate from Catholic teachings in the eight hundred years existence of the Order of Preachers, some have been acclaimed after sometime by the Church accepting their thoughts to be theological trailblazers in the context of the Church in the modern times. They are the likes of Schillebeeckx, Pohier, Gutierrez and Fox.

Edward Schillebeeckx, a Dominican theologian of the Dutch bishops during the Vatican Council II; Jacques Pohier, a French Dominican whose theological reflections on Christ's resurrection became unacceptable to Church officials; Gustavo Gutierrez, the father of liberation theology who later on joined the Dominican Order; and Matthew Fox, an American Dominican whose creation theology proved to be too much to be in consonance with the Catholic church's theological teachings. Nevertheless, Catholic orthodoxy remains to be an agenda of anyone who would assume a high office especially with a position that has to do with being head of a Dominican learning institution.

Fr. Virgilio Ojoy, OP as quoted by Perdigon (2001p.52), in his acceptance speech as the sixth Rector and President of Aquinas University of Legazpi City, said:

We could start dreaming of Aquinas University as a great University- as great as the University of Santo Tomas or the world renowned Catholic University of Louvain, Belgium - faithful to the Lord's and the Church's teachings.

To promote and practice faithfully the teachings of the Catholic Church has always been the concerns of a Catholic learning institution much more of Dominican schools. One stakeholder explained further that, "Dominican education has a background of conservatism; that is, always aligned to the official teachings and ideals of the Catholic Church." Another participant expressed that concern in almost the same tone, "It is known to be conservative because it is anchored on the official teachings of the Church." One can confirm this by browsing the curriculum and academic programs of the OP schools and also the over all activities being held in campuses.

An extant literature quoted below would say that it is also the duty of the Catholic learning institution to dedicate her scholarly activities in helping the Church cope with modernity and find solutions to problems that can confuse and baffle the Church towards progress in the modern world. This concern has been expressed in these words:

It also means a special attentiveness and fidelity to the concerns and teaching of the Supreme Pontiff and the Magisterium of the Church as shown by a scholarly and institutional responsiveness to the current concerns and the agenda of the Church in the modern world (Hornedo, 1995 p.60).

Following the thoughts explained above, striking the balance between creativity and openness to other ideas *vis-à-vis* orthodoxy is the key that should be found among Dominican learning institutions. The spirit of this thought as related to the basic mission of the Order of Preachers and it can be said, thus:

We can learn the following lesson from Dominican tradition: theological reflection and orthodoxy has been strong in our communities in so far as they have had the ability to establish dialogues between the Christian message and various cultures and ideas. Theology has been creative and prophetic in the Order inasmuch as Dominicans let themselves be questioned by other cultures and philosophies and establish a critical dialogue with them (Martinez OP, 1988 p.53).

In other words, creativity, tolerance and relevance of one's own existence should always be in constant interplay and in dialogue with Catholic orthodoxy.

2. Catholic Practices

"Religious practices such as the devotion to the Blessed Virgin Mary and other sacraments are being inculcated to the students," based on one of the statements coming from the stakeholders. An entry in the observation note of the researcher states, "Catholic religious practices are common occurrences in a Dominican campus."

Essential sacraments and devotions taught and practiced in the daily lives of Catholic stakeholders to enumerate in detail are: the celebration of the Eucharist, confessions, confirmation and devotion particularly to the Dominican saints are held regularly. To affirm this concretely a Dominican said, "Religious practices which are marks of being Catholics are carried on." Catholic practices are not just items in the daily activities of OP schools inasmuch as they are the expressions of the identity of the kind of education they offer - Catholic education.

3. Other Catholic Elements

Other Catholic elements, which serve as articulation of the nature and identity of OP education where also identified by the stakeholders. Expressions like "There is emphasis on being Catholic," "Emphasis on Catholic character and duty," "An

education rooted in rich Catholic faith and tradition,” add a deeper identifying marks on the nature of OP education as a Catholic education. After all, trying to read and compare all the vision-mission statements of OP schools, they are not remiss in stating the important identifying character they all possess, that of being Catholic learning institutions. One cannot dismiss the fact that stakeholders come to OP schools because of the Catholic dimension involved. “We should take those who want our schools because of their Catholic vision” (Allen, 1998 p.6). One says, “Observing and analyzing each of the vision-mission of the Dominican schools, one common word that is always mentioned in their statements is that of being a ‘Catholic institution’ or a ‘Catholic University.’”

III. Facing the Challenge of Living the Dominican Charism in Education

Facing the challenge of living the Dominican charism in education requires the stakeholders to live the Dominican charism in education. Elements related to the Dominican education and Dominican charism itself could have missing fervor and emphasis on the actual lives of the stakeholders. In a way, such stakeholders are still in the process of trying to imbibe the Dominican charism in education. The concretization of the Dominican charism and elements in the lives of the stakeholders serve as a challenge to be faced in the educational mission of the Dominicans, such as *call to responsiveness, call to live the truth and call to share OP life/charism.*

1. Call to Responsiveness

Based on the statements of some stakeholders, there are three major areas that the Dominican learning institutions are being called to respond. Responding to these areas means integrating them into the lives of the stakeholders in an attempt to live the Dominican charism in education. These areas are absent in the educational approaches and lives of OP schools or if they are present much is to be desired for them to get actualized. They are: *social involvement, expertise in education and modernization/innovation.*

1.1 Social Involvement

Social involvement is the stakeholders’ strong opinion that Dominican learning institutions imbued by Dominican mission of education should get involved and have active participation in resolving social issues. Dominican schools should have an official statement or a stand as an educational institution on social issues hounding the present Philippine society. The Philippine Dominican Province has justice and peace as one of their four priorities in their ministry of evangelization in the Philippines (Acts of the Provincial Chapter of the Dominican Province of the Philippines). Educational apostolate is a potential vehicle for realizing this. A

stakeholder challenged the Dominican schools when he said, “Our schools should start from what people in society need and they can help them in improving their lives as Christians and as Filipinos.” Based on one of the entries of the observation notes of the researcher, such challenge was apparent:

Efforts to educate the less fortunate is a recently established program by this school through its Re-Entry Education Agenda for the Poor (REAP). Those who graduate from this basic education program get the same diploma as other fortunate students who can afford to study in this Dominican school. Attempts to re-commit itself to give education to the less fortunate is being undergone but still with much concerted effort on the part of all the members of the community. Commitment to this cause still has a long way to go for sustainability and continued service.

Educating the poor sector of society and being involved in their plight are two of the main solutions to end their suppression and what seemed to be a perpetuated abuse on their lives by the moneyed and powerful. Education should always be envisioned with this end in mind. On the other hand, “We have to imbue our students with profound sense of service to others and to form them as agents of change and liberation in modern society,” (Kelty 1999, 6) but it is admitted that knowing the plight of the marginalized in society and one’s commitment as an educational institution to them and to the present stakeholders, seem to be a difficult task for Dominican learning institutions. This is expressed in one of the addresses of Fr. Lana, OP (2002) who was once a Rector of the University of Santo Tomas:

We aim to help address this malady by generating deeper awareness through our research and teaching, which eventually has to be translated into a committed action. But again we have to admit that we in the university have not been in touch with the realities that smack up the ever-growing gap between the so-called rich and the poor.

The commitment to respond to social issues is not that evident and serves instead as a challenge to responsiveness in Dominican learning institutions. One stakeholder affirmed this when he said, “We are not at the forefront when it comes to social issues; it should be started by the school, students and teachers; it is not yet that evident.” This initiative would lead to what Prusak (2006 p.23) said as, “The moment in awakening students from their dogmatic slumber to the possibility of loving and even living for truth.” The statements quoted below recounts an event of what seemed also to be a slow start of the Dominican commitment to social issues, wherein:

The president of De La Salle University, commending the UST stand that was printed in two dailies recently, was amazed with

these greetings: “At last, the sleeping giant has finally awakened!” I didn’t know how to react to what he had said, even as I was at that time beaming with pride for the Thomasian faculty, administrators, students and employees who have joined us in our strident chorus in denouncing the bad elements that have crippled our country, and in clamoring for the need for a transformation in our society today (Lana OP).

It is supposed to be the commitment of the Dominicans and the local Church to have a preferential option for the marginalized sector of Philippine society. “Church authorities challenge schools to be ‘ecclesial’ rather than just ‘Catholic’” (Allen 1998, 6). To have a dynamic response to social issues is not just a social commitment for humanitarian purposes but has an evangelical dimension based on the Gospel values that Dominicans preach. A challenge to the Dominican schools by one of the stakeholders was, “As preachers, we should address a particular situation in the Church and society.” Dominican learning institutions’ faithfulness to their charism and mission in their educational ministry entails action that makes their words and preaching concrete. This tall order for the Dominicans is said through the words of Fr. Alarcon, OP when he wrote:

It is therefore, rooted deeply in its foundation that the less fortunate and deprived members of society were receiving preferential attention in the institution. That is the heart of the Dominican charism: that the recipients of the fruits of our intellectual and spiritual labors are those who are emotionally, intellectually, economically, and spiritually deprived. The help that we give them is also the help of the Church. And our students, our graduates who will be working later on in the Church must experience these, too (Torreliza 2006, 99).

There are some serious questions that the educational mission of the Dominicans manifested in their learning institutions have to reflect on. This lethargic response of Dominican learning institutions to civic and social issues was already noticed by Fr. Leonardo Legaspi, OP as he assumed office as the first Filipino Rector of the University of Santo Tomas in 1971 as quoted by de Veyra (2006 p.8):

That (UST) as a Catholic academic institution has not produced a tangible measure. A Catholic generation that is suffused with civic orientation as to be actively committed after 360 years of existence is, to put it much too gently, highly disturbing.

Their being Catholic and Dominican learning institutions at that, is at the heart of the matter, pertaining to the dynamic response to social issues category. These questions are also asked by Fr. Alarcon, OP in one of his writings as quoted by Torreliza:

Are our schools morally Catholic because they are run by religious, or do they begin and end their classes with prayers, and do they have regular classes in religion? What about our social consciences in our evangelization thrust in the wake of large populations trying to seek entry to our schools but find policies of admission and retention too stringent, not to mention our tuition fees which are slowly becoming prohibitive (p.104)?

All hope is not gone for the educational mission of the Dominicans to be at the forefront of social issues and involvement. Through the initiative of the Board of Education of the Dominican Province of the Philippines, efforts to reinforce civic and social consciousness in all OP schools had been planned. Such issues and concerns raised were the following: **Indigenous people advocacy, free education for the marginalized, integration of justice, peace and care of creation in the curriculum, faith building among urban poor, social issues advocacy** and the like. Hopefully, as years go by, these plans will truly materialize with significant effects.

Thus, it can be surmised that, Dominican learning institutions can contribute much by responding dynamically to the needs of society through social involvement and by making themselves vehicles or instruments for the same purpose.

1.2 Expertise in Education

Expertise in Education Category refers to the call by the stakeholders on the Dominican Mission of Education to make its key leaders become experts in their role as educators. This will eventually contribute to the desire to make Dominican learning institutions' drive for excellence real.

It is no doubt, that the Dominicans hold the record of running the oldest Catholic learning institutions not only in the Philippines but also in Asia – The University of Santo Tomas, and the *Colegio de San Juan de Letran*, both in Manila. Below narrates a short foundation history of the two institutions:

Founded on 28 April 1611, through the initiative of the third Archbishop of Manila, Miguel de Benavides, OP the University of Santo Tomas was originally conceived to be a seminary-college. Located in *Intramuros*, it was first called *Colegio de Nuestra Senora del Santissimo Rosario*, and later renamed *Colegio de Santo Tomas*, in

memory of the foremost Dominican theologian, St. Tomas Aquinas (Student Handbook, 2008 ed.).

Colegio de San Juan de Letran emerged from the fusion of two similar institutions both located in *Intramuros*. The first was founded in 1620 by Don Juan Geronimo Guerrero, a Spanish Officer who transformed his hermitage home into an orphanage called *the Colegio de Ninos Huerfanos de San Juan de Letran*. Its purpose was to educate and mold orphans into good Christian citizens. At about the same time, another institution by the name of *Colegio de Huerfanos de San Pedro y San Pablo* was established by the Dominican brother Diego de Santa Maria at the convent of Sto. Domingo (Student Handbook, 2007 ed.).

These learning institutions have become part of the unfolding history of the Philippines that had passed through the three main regimes that colonized her. This simply shows the long standing involvement of the Dominicans in the educational task in this country. However, excellence is not always a product of time alone but assiduous preparation for people to be experts in their field through constant study. This was affirmed by one of the stakeholders with the challenge when he said, “Dominicans have been involved in education for a long time now; we are expected to be experts on it.” This cannot be undermined with the letter of the Master of the Order of Preachers – the highest official of the Dominicans – Father Carlos Azpiroz Costa, OP quoted in the Acts of the Provincial Chapter of 2008 he says:

Your ministry in the field of education demands a constant supply of teachers and your recognition of this need in the strategic planning of the Province is to be commended (Acts 161,165) but it is also to be stressed that study is to be an integral part of the contemplative and evangelical life of all the brethren (LCO 83). (Acts of the 9th Provincial Chapter of the Dominican Province of the Philippines, 2008 p.vi).

Academic and experiential preparations of potential Dominicans and lay leaders who will hold key positions in Dominican schools are a must. This is a serious concern that cannot be discounted especially if the following elements are involved as mentioned by Fr. Alarcon, OP in one of his pieces and quoted by Torreliza (2006 p.103):

If you talk about *Leadership* in Dominican Schools, we are practically dealing with – *Leading* which is to show the way; *Breaking horizons* which is to confront old practice; *Exploring* which is to prove and

prove; *Finding new solutions* which is to discover new ways of using old habits; *Problem-seeking* over and above problem solving.

The educational leaders and personnel should not land on this form of ministry just because none of them are qualified to fill the position. Although among the religious, due to lack of human resource, this is easier said than done. Long years of study and school ministry experience are indispensable elements for the success of a Dominican learning institution. The quoted statement below says why it is so:

I'd like to say that the priest-administrator must be an experienced teacher capped with above-passing mark success. It is never enough for him to have taken philosophy of education, methods of teaching and so on. For what will he discuss during faculty meetings? Jokes and fund drives? (Castillo OP 1986, 94).

Mark for success in attaining educational expertise involves unlearning previous practices. Somehow the old paradigm in heading an educational institution which makes educational leadership appear like a divine mandate – just to serve the pastoral needs and attend to the moral formation of the stakeholders- would not anymore suffice. It is more than that. “Over all professional development for the Dominicans and their lay counterparts should be practiced...” as one of the challenges of one of the stakeholders goes. It involves knowledge gained from serious academic and practical preparation to run an institution, manage its people and academic programs. The truth of this matter is expressed thus:

This thrust dismisses the myth on the part of priests and religious that ordination and profession of vows would make them good administrators. We need to develop professional expertise to be able to run our schools competently and efficiently. For this, there is no substitute for adequate training and valuable experience in educational management (Lana OP, 2006).

There is really a need to have a second look at how Dominican learning institutions are managed and run today and in the future. Things have become more complicated than one has ever imagined. This was affirmed by a stakeholder when she said, “Knowledge in educational systems move fast. We have to be updated.” Dominicans should be up on their feet to meet some disturbing demands.

Thus, “The demand for the administration of an institution has not only extrapolated. It has changed. It has changed into three demanding E's: *Expertise, experience and excellence*” (Castillo OP 1986, 91).

1.3 Modernization/Innovation

Modernization/Innovation Category refers to the stakeholders' call on the Dominican Mission of Education to respond to modernity and become innovative. It is responding to new ways of thinking, to apply new paradigms, be creative and employ new practices that can contribute to the over all progress of schools, their stakeholders and their contribution to society in general. Naughton (1996 p.103) would express this kind of sentiment by saying:

Once a Catholic University becomes intellectually rigid, religiously dogmatic, or morally intolerant, it will not only fail to contribute to the wider culture, but it will also lose its identity as a Catholic university by failing to engage in its mission of learning.

To be open to new ideas, innovation and to be abreast with modernity in the context of education would mean to find one's relevance in the world at present. As one stakeholder would opine, "OP education should be innovative in the field of education to meet the demands of new ideas, practices, technology and the new professions." One has to find his or her way immersed in the concerns and issues of the present times. This was confirmed by one of the stakeholders who said, "It is high time for Dominican schools to be innovative, attuned and updated to the modern world without giving up their character as Catholic institutions." However, there is one quoted thought that would not fully agree with the kind of traditionalism associated with Dominicans. Fr. Lana, OP (2006) quoting Manuel L. Quezon, once the President of the Philippine Commonwealth and an alumnus of Letran - Manila and the University of Santo Tomas said:

M.L. Quezon admired Fr. Valentine Marin, OP because of his liberal ideas: "He was one of the most liberal-minded priests I have ever known in my life." It is interesting to note that even during his time (schooldays of M.L. Quezon in Letran and UST), the Dominicans had already shown openness to the changing times, which goes to show that not all Dominicans were perceived to be stereotyped conservative, rigid and stern friars.

There may be some instances that disprove the stereotyped old fashioned ways found among Dominicans running Dominican learning institutions. The challenge remains the same based on this study that, openness to innovation and to be attuned to modern times is posed as a challenged to the Dominican mission of education concretized in Dominican learning institutions.

As one stakeholder challenging Dominican learning institutions said, "OP education should be aggressive, creative and imaginative to be adjusted to a modern

society.” The tolerance of St. Dominic to innovative and creative ideas stands in contrast to what might become to a stagnating spirit as expressed below:

New charisms, new ideas, are sometimes seen as threats to our security. They deaden our spontaneity. Slowly we lose the ability to be creative and to make a creative response to the “signs of our times.” We are no longer capable of creating a typical Dominican strategy for our day, and are in danger of becoming irrelevant (Roche OP 1988, 80).

St. Dominic looked at the present with all its possibilities and challenges; the Dominicans today, must look at the present with all its possibilities and challenges too. All these possibilities and challenges will pass unnoticed if there is no effort to be open to new ideas and ways of thinking. Dominicans should always remember that, “Out of this twofold movement the Dominican Order was born: *To be present to God* and *to be present to the world* are the qualities which have characterized the Dominican spirit throughout the history of the Order” (Roche OP 1988, 80). To summarize this idea on St. Dominic’s openness to challenges and possibilities with indomitable spirit, Hinnebusch, OP (1965 p.107) - one of the authorities in Dominican history and legacy- had written in one of his classic books the following:

He did not want the Order to stagnate. “Seed which is hoarded becomes rotten: when scattered it germinates,” was his dictum when he daringly sent his sons to every corner of Europe to open new frontiers in the history of religious Orders. Dominicans must keep moving and remain abreast of the times. If Dominic were living today, he would make changes in harmony with the twentieth-century developments.

The call for OP mission of education to responsiveness is a call towards relevance in the modern world. This can be shown by being socially involved, driven to excel and by becoming experts in education.

2. Call to Live the Truth

The challenge to live and impart to others the *Truth* as an essential element of Dominican charism has become evident in the expression of the stakeholders. The educational mission of the Dominicans through their schools is to respond to this clamor by intensifying the presence and living of *Truth* if it is there or to make it present and dynamic if it is absent.

2.1 Intensifying the Truth

The call to respond to live the *Truth* by intensifying the way it is lived becomes more demanding when stakeholders say that, “OP institutions do not emphasize well the motto Truth; it should be given more emphasis/should be reinforced;” and when another says, “Truth should be emphasized in Dominican institutions in all aspects of education.” Truth is one of the ideals written in the vision-mission statements of OP schools and its emphasis is rooted in the profound love of St. Dominic for Truth. It is in this way that Dominican learning institutions are called to pursue and live the Truth in a way that the founder of the Order of Preachers had embraced and lived it. In the classic book of Hinnebusch, OP (1965 p.101) on Dominican Spirituality, he described the utmost dedication of St. Dominic to Truth referred to by the Dominicans, in which he wrote:

St. Dominic had a deep appreciation of learning, study, and teaching. So profound was his love for *truths* of the faith that he spent his entire life proclaiming them and was anxious to die for them. He wanted to spread the TRUTH of the faith to the ends of the earth.

To hear from stakeholders that Truth was not evident in OP schools, since its presence was not felt, one would conclude that there is a form of inadvertence on the part of OP schools. “Catholic schools are supposed to be concerned with revealed truths and ultimately with the sacramental truth” (Breedon, 2002 p.143). Although, recently through the General Assembly of Dominican Education Apostolate, concrete steps in responding to such issues pertaining to the intensification of Dominican ideals, the teaching of charism to stakeholders has already been planned and will soon be executed. The emphasis on understanding and the way to live the *Truth* in the context of Dominican education would surely be discussed it being the highest pursuit of Dominican preaching- St. Dominic de Guzman. Besides, some hope of pursuing this interest in *Truth* and understanding it in the context of our present realities had already been realized through one of the statements found in the document the Dominican Network of Schools, Colleges and Universities (DOMNET). It was entitled “**DOMNET Youth for Truth.**” It spoke about the crises of truth in our country and the Filipinos’ thirst to find the truth in all the ordeals that hound the Philippine government and society. The Board of Education raised also this concern by inquiring about how this Dominican object of preaching, i.e. *Truth*, be contextualized and become an interesting topic among stakeholders. The board proposed something like, “**Ways to translate ‘Passion for Truth and Compassion for Humanity’ be integrated in the syllabi.**”

The truth that one searches for is seen to be very essential and relevant. It finds its culmination in the “*TRUTH* of faith” and that is God himself” (Hinnebusch OP, 1965).

3. Call to Share OP Life/Charism

There was a perceived need according to the statement of the stakeholders for the OP life/charism to be shared. OP life/charism should be shared through the lives lived by the Dominicans where OP life/charism is manifested. Sharing this particular life and charism, would lead towards inviting lay stakeholders to also live by it. On the other hand, stakeholders opined that OP life/charism should also be integrated into the programs and activities of the school.

Integrating the Dominican life and charism in school programs and activities is equal to making Dominican charism alive in the Dominican learning institutions. Thus, two sub-categories emerged: *concretizing OP life/charism* and *integrating OP life/charism in programs/activities*.

3.1 Concretizing OP life/charism

Call to share OP life/charism by concretizing it in life is the articulation of the stakeholders for the Dominicans to intensify Dominican presence in their educational mission. One stakeholder spoke on that call to responsiveness when he said, “Charism of OPs should be incorporated in the curriculum and also in real life.” It was another way of saying that Dominican presence must be strongly felt in the Dominican learning institutions through the good examples shown by the Dominicans and through school programs and activities.

Concretizing Dominican life in Dominican learning institutions is a life that should be lived, shared with and witnessed by people. This is better said in the thoughts of Fr. Lana, OP (2002) who once wrote:

It has always been my impression that the motto *Contemplare et contemplata aliis trader* is a process-oriented statement that remains empty unless enriched by the content (which deals with *what are we to contemplate* and *to whom to share the fruits of our contemplation*) which must be continually discerned in the light of the present-day social realities.

To witness Dominican life is close to bringing the Gospel message to people. It will not be far from making the whole mission of the Church understood by the stakeholders by the concrete elements of Dominican life lived by Dominicans in schools. After all, Dominican life is just one of the richest expressions of the gifts of God to his people. To be faithful to Dominican life is to be faithful to the overall life of the Church. Fr. Alarcon, OP as quoted by Torreliza (2006 p.98), writes of this wonderful thought as follows:

If we are to march forward, we have to make our students know and experience Gospel values. They must experience what it is to be a Church of the poor, and what it is to be a Church in mission. If we are successful doing this, then we have lived up the Dominican charism for the love of the Church.

The realization of this statement can take place only if the Dominicans themselves are immersed with their stakeholders. One of the stakeholders stated, “OPs should be found/seen among their stakeholders.”

The call to concretize OP life and charism has been proven to be as important as any other religious congregations involved in education as explained by Fox (2000 p.67):

I fear as the teaching religious orders decline, the records of the unknown women and men who gifted the Church with such magnificence will be lost. Future generations will lack the memory of the universal Church’s creative and inspired men and women. We ought not to let this happen. The reward of our interest will be found in the fascinating characters we will meet and the gratitude that will fill our hearts.

The Board of Education tried to exert effort to concretize and perpetuate the legacy of OP life and charism when it discussed one of the approaches to intensify it through a feedback called “**the visibility of the religious in our campus.**” Steps in responding to this call to share OP life/charism are underway through the recent statement on the Acts of the Ninth Provincial Chapter of the Dominican Province of the Philippines, where in “**OP schools are ordained to unify a course in theology that discusses life and history of the Order of Preachers.**” The recent statements of the General Assembly on Dominican Education Apostolate spoke of the same urgency to respond by discussing OP life and charism and their context in the modern world.

3.2 Integrating OP life/charism in the Programs/Activities

Call to share OP life/charism should be responded to also by integrating OP life/charism in the programs/activities of the school. One example is given by a stakeholder when she said, “OP charism should be incorporated in the curriculum,” and another one also mentioned that, “Charism of the OPs should be integrated in the teaching and learning process.” In a way, this was affirmed in one of the meetings of the Board of Education when it was observed as recorded that, “There seems to be no Dominican flavor in our general education subjects.”

There is one concerted effort among DOMNET (Dominican Network of Schools, Colleges and Universities) members to bring into reality the dream to orient stakeholders properly on what the Dominican Order is and what their educational mission is all about by integrating the Dominican elements such as charism, history and spirituality in the learning textbooks of Dominican schools, stakeholders especially students and in the overall activities of the schools. One of the stakeholders agreed to this idea when she said, “All Dominican schools should have one curriculum when it comes to religion class and imparting OP charism.” This, at least, is an initial step towards making stakeholders gain the basic knowledge of what Dominican life is and eventually imbibing the values that flows from its charism. The following statement from an OP document rightly puts it:

Textbooks written by a team of authors from DOMNET schools remain a part of the DOMNET dream for the coming years. The idea is to integrate the Dominican charism and the elements of the Dominican philosophy of Education in the learning and formation of this (Lana OP, 2002).

This effort was given emphasis in the statement of the Ninth Provincial Chapter of the Dominican Province of the Philippines as found in the Acts of the Provincial Chapter. One of its ordinations says, “**common and unified course in religion and theology subjects shall include topics on the history of the Order of Preachers and the priorities of the Province.**” Likewise, there were documents found in the General Assembly on Dominican Education Apostolate which stated as follows: “...to know better the Dominican Order as programmed in school curriculum and appreciate its heritage.” The Board of Education adds weight to this concern in one of its recommendations as follows, “We recommend that the Dominican Province in Philippine schools and UST develop a common project for textbook and learning materials in religion and theology that is **distinctly Filipino and Dominican in Orientation;**” to be specific, it was recommended that it must have a “self-generated ‘**tatak – Dominican textbooks.**’”

IV. Incarnating the Dominican Charism in Education

Incarnating the Dominican charism in education is the conscious expression of the stakeholders about the positive actualization of the Dominican charism and the elements in the educational mission of the Dominicans. Understanding their experiences and encounters with the Dominican educational mission enabled the stakeholders to identify learning programs, practices, and instructions dynamically presented to them as manifestations or concretization of the identity of Dominican life and charism. Dominican charism finds its concretization in the lives and

practices of the stakeholders in the Dominican learning institutions. Incarnating the Dominican charism in the schools serves as the school's distinguishing mark. It forms its stakeholder to have a unique quality of being Dominican and Catholic at the same time and is supported by the concepts such as, *religious formation approaches*, *essential teachings approaches*, *Living Truth approaches* and *Sharing OP life/charism approaches*. They are the refining gems as stakeholders undergo the process of actualizing the Dominican charism in their lives. They are aware of the importance of living the Dominican charism as a defining and shaping factor of their lives.

1. Religious Formation Approaches

Religious formation approaches were affirmed positively by the stakeholders as one of the vital signs of living the Dominican charism. Its concretization is perceived to be present both in the *curricular* and *extra-curricular* aspects of education programs of the OP learning institutions.

1.1 Religious Formation Approaches in the Curricular aspect of education

Catholic educational institutions, even Dominican learning institutions face several influx of idealism in the modern age here in the Philippines. "Today however, given the diversity of confessions, de-Christianization, and religious agnosticism or atheism in general, religious dimension and contact are being removed from us" (Garcia Paredes CMF 2006, 53). Some may have even been a threat to Catholic education. But just the same, stakeholders in Dominican learning institutions could not pass through the gates of these schools without getting educated formally along their faith or Christian religion. One stakeholder attested, "There was religious education on all levels." This was something affirmed by De Ramos (2000 p.352) who cited Fr. Silvestre Sancho, OP as early as 1936: "As a part of his program being Rector Magnificus, Fr. Sancho, OP gave greater impetus to the courses in Religion as a requirement for graduation and especially as boost to the aim of the University for Christian citizenry." Fr. Sancho, OP might have spoken about the University of Santo Tomas, but this is a concern not only of that University as such but all Dominican schools as far as their religious formation found in the curriculum is concerned.

One stakeholder who related that, "Catechetical teaching on our faith is something felt." This simply showed that formal religious education was something implemented seriously by OP schools. This importance was articulated by Breeden (2002 p.16) by saying:

Catholic higher education is the restoration of theology to the pinnacle of the curriculum, a ranking he believes appropriate because

theology straddles the world of accepted academic pursuits and the realm beyond that exceeds the grasp of art and science.

Continuous attempt to improve religious formation/education approaches was tackled through the recent General Assembly on Dominican Education Apostolate. A plan to have a **unified list of learning competencies on religious education** and to formulate a **unified curriculum on religious education** among others for the OP schools is underway. Emphasis on this area proved its importance as highlighted in one of the meetings of the Board of Education that said, “We are supporting the idea that because we are Dominican Schools, **Religion should be at the heart of the curriculum.**”

1.2 Religious Formation Approaches in the Extra- curricular aspect of education

Consistency in providing religious formation on the stakeholders is not only within the realm of the curriculum. Active religious formation outside the curriculum is also given equal emphasis according to stakeholders. “There should always be a manifestation of importance of enduring symbol of faith when ambiguity is the hallmark of everyday experiences” (Breedon 2002, 16). As one participant stakeholder on this study expressed, “There is religious formation on students and employees through spiritual talks, conferences, recollections, retreats...” Yearly calendar of religious activities and programs by OP schools confirmed this. Religious affairs departments of each OP learning institutions are considered the key to the active religious formation of stakeholders outside the academic curriculum. They serve as the center for vibrant religious practices and religious formation. This was affirmed by one of the stakeholders when she said, “There is chaplaincy for each department to give more focus on the religious formation of students and employees.” It is in this way that, “Within the school community, the norms and values of students in the faith are formed by those who teach and interact with them, including fellow students” (Donlevy 2002, 103).

Thrusts and objectives of schools may change due to so many factors or influences. Approaches, paradigms and philosophies of learning institutions may shift in order to be relevant to modern times, but there will always be essential elements why a learning institution exists and its reasons cannot be altered. This is told about the University of Santo Tomas when De Ramos (2002 p.353) said:

And because of the situation it found itself, UST has been making so many changes, but without academic detours that never kept it away from its basic aims of a.) imparting to its students high level both civic and sacred sciences and promote b.) moral, educational, and cultural formation.

If this was true of the University of Santo Tomas, it is also very true of all Dominican learning institutions under the Dominican Province of the Philippines, as reports/data proved such. “If a Catholic school does not provide ways to address faith and work, it will become deficient in contributing theological and spiritual insights to an increasingly secular world” (Naughton 1996, 123).

Thus, being a Catholic learning institution, a Dominican school does not only orient its stakeholders according to the programmed Catholic education found in the curriculum but also to the formative approaches to religion outside the curriculum.

2. Essential Teaching Approaches Category

Stakeholders affirmed the necessity teaching approaches in living the Dominican charism which are integrated with Catholic education. *Moral/ethics education* pertains to the Christian Catholic living that is supposed to be governed by moral principles. It is imbued by the Gospel values found in the scriptures that need to be learned. *Reflective education*, on the other hand, pertains to educated rationality to help man make right judgment for himself.

2.1 Moral/Ethics Education

“The business of the University is the mental and the moral discipline, growth and maturity of its faculty and students (Castillo OP 1986, 3).” Many parents send their children to Catholic learning institutions because of this set of values aimed at shaping them to become good citizens, good professionals and good Christians. This is without discounting the fact that many professionals especially educators want to be employed, too, in Catholic schools for the same reason as supported by the content of the curriculum programs and religious formation programs for the stakeholders. A stakeholder attests that “OP school stresses on forming morally upright persons.” This was affirmed by Fr. Salinas, OP cited by Perdigon (2001 p.7):

Teeming crowds of young people flock to this University (Aquinas University) with the persuasion that higher education and Christian moral teaching will equip them with the increased capability to be useful not only to themselves but also to their fellowmen.

It is a very important duty for Dominican learning institutions to faithfully carry on this commitment for their stakeholders, knowing that the total effect and result of this is invaluable for the individual, as Christians and Catholics at that, their families and to the society as a whole. Fr. Jesus Castanon, OP in one of his writings in the 1950s and as quoted by de Ramos (2000 p.161), expressed this imperative commitment for the students at the University of Santo Tomas by saying:

We are bound to give them the best possible instruction in every course. They have a right to it. They pay for it. We must educate them religiously, and therefore, morally, for we hold that genuine, true morality is based on religion. This is our task. This is our duty towards them all. This, I believe, is the greatest burden placed upon me and my collaborators.

Usefulness to their fellowmen and country as moral leaders and ordinary citizens especially in a period of moral relativism and so much ethical decadence, as well as faithfulness to their Christian Catholic faith, is what Dominican learning institutions want their stakeholders to be armed with when they face the battle of life as young citizens and professionals. One stakeholder expressed that “There is emphasis on what is right or wrong. “For as long as the stakeholders are in school, whether engaged in philosophy or biology or any form of tasks, there are moral questions that need to be examined” (Murphy 2006, 22).

Initiatives as part of the program of the moral/ethical formation of students particularly, to tackle heated moral/ethical issues in modern times are undertaken by the research center of the University of Santo Tomas in Manila. They are stated in the following:

Among its research endeavor, the Center aims to develop models of ethics-based curriculum and instruction applicable to the Faculties and Colleges of the university. It shall conduct seminars and colloquia that would engage the professionals and practitioners in the field in active exchanges and conversations, and produce publications that would disseminate a wide range of moral/ethical issues relevant to the contemporary times (Lana OP, 2006).

De la Rosa OP, (1996 p.122) strengthens this dimension when he spoke of the effects of these programs on the student:

He becomes responsible by being entrusted with responsibility within the limits of his capacity. He is gradually introduced to moral actions and his conscience is formed. Education is, therefore, the progressive assignment of responsibility enabling a person to gradually act responsibly towards himself, others and God.

In the words of Murphy (2006 p.23), “That is how morality and education marry, becoming so intermingled that one automatically views morality as necessary component of any academic inquiry.” In the end, the person to be shaped becomes not only an ideal man or woman worthy of the temporal goodness that adopts him or her, but of the state where God calls him or her to be as a believer and a disciple of

the Good News that intends to save him or her. Fr. Ramon Salinas, OP as quoted by Perdigon (2001 p.4) speaks of this transformation of the human person as a moral being to be shaped and for what purpose:

It is our goal to take man as he is and transform and elevate him intellectually and morally so that he may play his part worthily as a citizen of the City of God and as a citizen of the city of man.

Forming persons to become morally upright begins with the fundamental moral principles in which the stakeholders affirmed positively as they are taught inside as well as outside the classroom.

2.2 Reflective Education

Being reflective means the habit of thinking seriously before resorting to action. As one stakeholder relates, "Thinking before you act is learned in school." On the other hand, another says, "Students are taught to be reflective on situations they are in before making/arriving at a conclusion." Analyzing deeper the incidents gathered, this particular concept relates to the important decisions or choices people make in their lives. They think critically and weigh things rationally before they decide. This is one of the good outcomes brought about by the philosophical learning and training integrated in the curriculum. "Our universities and colleges should first free the students to be intelligent, reflective and compassionate human beings" (Prusak, 2006 p.23). Curriculum offered in an OP institution has sufficiency of courses that educate or train stakeholders to have a reflective thinking as far as the documents on curriculum and philosophical courses are concerned. One stakeholder supported this claim when he said, "Students are taught to think rationally and logically before making important decisions in their lives; this is because of the Thomistic philosophy which is incorporated in the curriculum." However, matters on moral decisions are also explained by this concept wherein the stakeholders become reflective by spending time on the situations they are in and ask of themselves, "What does this situation tell me in the light of the Gospel values?" The concept on inculcating fundamental moral principles relates and explains the concept of being reflective as regards being engaged in moral decisions. "Reflective education helps a person's conscience that resides in his/her personal interior temple where in the natural law exists and where God resides as a counselor (Donlevy 2002, 105)."

3. Living Truth Approaches Category

Truth being an important part of the ideals and charism of the Dominicans, was perceived to be dynamically lived by the stakeholders. It is being lived on two counts: by integrating it in programs and school statements and by efforts at intensifying the way it is being lived. *Integration of Truth in programs and statements* pertains to

the presence of Truth in the curriculum, academic and orientation programs as well its presence in the official statements of the school like vision-mission statements, information and orientation contained in handbooks. *Intensified living of Truth* pertains to the intensified importance and attention given to it in the way it is being lived.

3.1 Integration of Truth in the Programs/Statements

Truth is a word popularly associated with the Dominicans because it is rooted first in the charism of the founder himself, as was attested:

Dominic so valued revealed TRUTH that he always carried the Gospel of St. Matthew and the epistles of St. Paul... Members of the Order must enter their apostolate with a love for TRUTH. All truth is one, but in our poor human way we can only understand it by dividing it into subjects of study. All truth is a reflection of God, the first TRUTH (Hinnebusch OP 1965, 101).

“The single word *Veritas* or ‘Truth’ is often inscribed over the Dominican seal, summarizes in its own way, the goal and ideal of the Order (Woods OP 1998, 25),” but what kind of truth is this referred to by the Dominicans? Woods, OP would give a concise yet a clear understanding of this very important word (Word):

Thomas Aquinas would write three volumes of the meaning of truth in this light, as for him, as for all Dominicans, the chief instance and perfect exemplar remains Eternal Truth, expressed substantially and historically in Jesus Christ.

The word “truth” is always with a capital “T”- the *Truth* of salvation and the *Truth* himself, Jesus Christ whom the Dominicans, with all the elements/charism of being a preacher have to preach. “Truth is lived first by running the Ecclesiastical Faculty (Truth of our faith and salvation being taught) ...” as one stakeholder would express it. It is in this context that religious education programs and curriculum take their foremost importance in an OP school. It is theological first and foremost in meaning and direction. Part of the way to live it is also by integrating it in the school official statements and orientation materials. As one stakeholder had mentioned, “*Veritas* or Truth is present in all kinds of programs prepared for students, in the day to day operations of the office and in handling funds.” To give further example, the vision-missions of the five Dominican schools involved in this research mention explicitly that *Truth* is an essential part of the institutions’ pursuit and identity. Found also in the observation note of the researcher, it is written that, “the other common printed word in the vision-mission statements of all Dominican learning institutions is the word ‘TRUTH.’”

Hornedo (1995 p.67) would say, “Academicians involve the highest standards of intellectual preparedness and formation for the preservation, advancement and transmission of the *Truth*.” *Truth* that is taught about their faith is also the *Truth* that they share with other people.

Archbishop Leonardo Legaspi, OP, DD (2008 p.14), mentioned in one of his recent addresses to the DOMNET (Dominican Network of Schools, Colleges and Universities) about one of the main focuses of Dominican schools is that, “Now is the time to plant the mustard seed of Truth in our youth.” One of the efforts to promote Truth as one of the ideals of the Dominicans takes place through the concerted effort of the Dominican Network of Schools, Colleges and Universities in the revered tradition of the Dominicans: to deepen the Truth of faith and live it.

3.2 Intensified living of Truth

Truth in the context of Dominican education and life has always been at the center stage of Dominican education. A stakeholder affirmed this when she said, “OP schools give emphasis on Truth; Truth means God.” This is important in the modern age with the proliferation of secular ideologies and philosophies wherein, the “*Dechristianized* world indicates that the job of teaching the *Truth* is directed largely to a society that has reverted to non-Christian values (Hornedo 1995, 62).”

The *Truth* that is preached by the Dominicans in their learning institutions is the *Truth* from which all other scientific, philosophical, moral/ethical truths through intellectual labor, from all academic disciplines, are brought to completion and perfection. The reason why one stakeholder said, “Truth is given emphasis in OP schools.” All truths should be complemented and find their coherence and fulfillment in the Supreme Truth – God. “Because all truth is a reflection of God, the first *Truth* (Hinnebusch OP 1965, 117). Hornedo (1995 p.64) expressed briefly what is meant to be a collaborator in a Dominican learning institution by saying:

Being Dominican co-workers refers to our mode of preparing ourselves professionally for the task of transmitting or broadening the truths of our own particular disciplines.

Emphasis on *Truth* in relation to other disciplines and *truths* cannot be clearer than that quoted idea. Thus, Dominican schools should become places where emphasis and collaboration in pursuit of *Truth* through the different truths discovered in each academic discipline happens. It is the main concern which stakeholders should primarily learn, nurture, embrace and articulate. De Ramos (2000 p.243) quoting Fr. Jesus Diaz, OP the last Spanish Rector of the University of Santo Tomas in one of his writings emphasizing why Truth was of utmost importance, said that:

The University of Santo Tomas is not a place for timid scholars, that it is a place of dialogue with the students and the Faculty, in pursuit of truth and the cultivation of *TRUTH*.

Integrating *Truth* in programs and statements and giving an intensified emphasis on *Truth* proved to be important approaches in living the *Truth* as expressed by the participants.

4. Sharing OP Life/Charism Approaches Category

A number of stakeholders perceived Dominican life/charism as vibrantly alive in the educational mission of the Dominicans. It is being shared, first, by *living it* (*Concretization in life*) as witnessed by stakeholders and, second, by *integrating it in the school programs/activities*. Living and sharing the Dominican life and charism becomes real through the dual efforts of Dominicans and lay counterparts living and sharing it.

4.1 Concretization of OP life/charism

Dominican life/charism is shared with stakeholders by the way Dominican themselves live their lives. One stakeholder said, “Life of the OPs themselves is witnessing and preaching.” To deepen the knowledge and imbibe OP life and charism further, the General Assembly on Dominican Education Apostolate held a conference with a goal of re-orienting lay educators and administrators on OP life, tradition, history and basic elements of OP charism.

One entry in the observation notes of the researcher spoke about the spirit of sharing OP life in these words:

All Dominican learning institutions have either the image or statue of the founder – St. Dominic of Guzman – walking with the gospel of St. Mathew on his left hand and with the right hand spread in the air as though preaching. Such image or statue of the founder is inspiring in a sense that he gives emphasis on the importance of life of preaching and as though enticing everyone who sees him to do the same.

The Church document *Mutuae Relationes* (1978) (directives for mutual relations between bishops and religious) explains the rationale for the need to share and live the gift of charism of the religious life through the following:

That charism is an experience of the spirit transmitted to their followers to be lived by them, to be preserved, deepened, and constantly developed in harmony with the Body of Christ continually in a process of growth (MR 11).

Charism is lived and shared inasmuch as it is a form of life and mission to fulfill. The basic highlights of Dominican charism that is lived and shared can be identified in the following statement:

Dominican tradition has to say about such things as prayer, study, common life, religious celibacy, poverty, Christian wholeness, freedom, obedience and discipline (Tugwell OP 1979, x).

In a way, this was affirmed by one of the stakeholders who expressed that, “OP character/charism present in an OP education is the atmosphere of serious study, moments of prayers and religiosity.” For the educational mission of Dominicans to flow from the fountain of their charism means a task of sharing the fruit or the attainment of their charism with their stakeholders in their educational apostolate or ministry. Fr. Castillo, OP (1986 p.106) articulates this well in one of his writings when he said:

The commitment to intellectual life of a Dominican inevitably makes him an educator on two counts: 1.) the intellectual goods must diffuse by itself if at all; it is goodness, according to St. Augustine’s definition 2.) *Contemplare et contemplata aliis tradere*, ‘to contemplate and to share one’s contemplation to others,’ is a reinforcement, a restatement of the very essence of the Dominican life.

Living the charism is the best way to share it with other people. This could remind them further of the gift God has given to the Order and the way that the life and charism’s vibrant presence be felt.

4.2 Integration of OP life/charism in the Programs/Activities

It was the expression of the stakeholders saying that Dominican schools share OP life/charism through its integration in the school’s programs and activities. One stakeholder articulated, “OP orientation program for freshmen is being carried-out for them to get familiar with the Dominicans.”

Dominican life/charism is also expressed in the popular motto found in many seals of the Order. The three words cited below serve also as main pillars by which the Order of Preachers abides as their principle of life, mission and spirituality:

Ordinarily emblazoned on a banner surrounding the shield are the Latin words *Laudare, Benedicere, Praedicare*: ‘to Praise, to Bless, to Preach.’ This threefold Latin motto points to the main elements of our life, our mission, and therefore our spirituality (Woods OP, 1998 p.25).

This statement was affirmed by a stakeholder when he said, “To praise, to preach, to bless are OP charisms whose presence is seen in PE programs, care for creation and extension programs by making stakeholders praise, bless and preach God’s goodness to everyone.”

It has always been part of the religious programs and curriculum of the Dominican schools to integrate Dominican life in general that speaks of the history of the Order of Preachers and its significance in the life of the Church; the significance of the lives of the Dominican saints as related to the lives of modern Christians; the particular charism of preaching and *Truth* which is its object; the Dominican ideals of community life; and the importance of study, prayer and ministry.

For instance, the campus ministry of Letran College made this concern as one of the main areas in the department as seen in their organizational structure. The document explains further, “**Dominican Empowerment** is the deepening of the understanding of what it means to be a Dominican in the modern world and better appreciate its heritage.” One of the stakeholders also related that it contributes to the deepening of the stakeholders’ orientation and knowledge on the Dominicans, “The month of August is the assigned month to celebrate St. Dominic’s feast and celebrate the highlights of the history and important events in OP life and history.” However, orienting the stakeholders on OP life/charism through school programs and activities is something that is not only offered to the new members of the school but offered to everyone. Efforts to share OP life/charism with stakeholders can be seen through the programs integrated in school activities.

V. Modeling the Educative Outcomes of the Dominican Charism in Education

Modeling the Educative Outcomes of the Dominican Charism in Education conceptualized two other higher level categories called a) *Sustained Education* with a category *Learning integrated in life* and b) *Character Education* with a category *Character building*.

- a. *Sustained education* refers to the education where stakeholders continue to apply and practice what they have learned in school. This pertains to the *religious practices* and *OP education* they continue to practice through *learning integrated in life*. The stakeholders have not only imbibed the technical know-how of their fields of studies but also the values related to their faith and Christian living. “Various school subjects do not present only knowledge to be attained, but also values to be acquired and truths to be discovered” (The Catholic School on the Threshold of the Third Millennium 14, 1997).

- b. *Character education* refers to the stakeholders' formed character through their education. Stakeholders have become *modest/humble, moral persons*, and possess *desirable attributes* through their *character building* "...due to their school that has freedom to proclaim the Gospel and to offer formation based on the values to be found in a Christian education" (The Religious Dimension of Education in a Catholic School 6, 1988).

Modeling the educative outcomes of Dominican Charism in Education means the process of identifying the manifested impact of Dominican education on the stakeholders as it shaped their character and life, and witnessed by people around them. What the stakeholders have become was brought about by their specific kind of learning through the Dominican charism lived in the Dominican learning institutions. These stakeholders embody and continue to live the spirit of Dominican life and charism obtained through education. People look at them as the icons of what Dominican education is all about.

There are two categories which complete this category, namely: *assimilated teachings* and *attributes of graduates and students*.

1. Assimilated Teachings Category

One of the learning outcomes identified by the stakeholders from the Dominican learning institutions was the assimilating effect on their stakeholders. They have internalized the teachings taught to them and have continued the practice in their daily lives. The lives of these stakeholders manifest the dynamic presence of the Dominican charism. They actually live it. This category thus, explains the imbibed practices in their religious formation and the integration in their lives of OP education.

1.1 Religious Practices/Teachings

The strong inculcating effect of religious practices on the stakeholders in Dominican schools and was confirmed by one of the stakeholders when he said, "Religious practices learned in school are still carried on by the stakeholders after they have graduated, for example hearing mass, the rosary, etc..." This could mean that religious practices conducted in school took a higher level in the religious consciousness of stakeholders. Thereafter, they do the same practices from a mature Christian perspective and for nobler reasons. Their utmost importance in the lives of the stakeholders is now better appreciated. As one of the stakeholders related, "I carry with me the religious practices and religious teachings I've learned." In other words, there was a transforming effect on the character of the stakeholders through their Dominican education. What might have been as an imposed practice has become a sustained religiosity.

1.2 OP Education

An alumnus said, “My OP education has influenced me even after college.” This gives Dominican schools their purpose and direction. Hornedo (1995 p.58) reinforced this when he said:

The academican has to ask himself/herself what the institution can give which no one else gives to its students; for if it gives nothing that other institutions are not already giving, it has no necessary reason for existence, no identity. Lack of felt identity in an institution can be fatal to its morale as a community, and devastating to its professional behavior.

To elaborate further his thought, he added, “What is it that we give our graduates so unique they could never have attained or achieved in any other way? Here at UST, it should be that Christian and *Dominican character or imprint*” (Hornedo 1995, 24) and must also be true, as a question to be asked by other learning institutions under the Dominican Province of the Philippines. This becomes formidable when one of the stakeholders said, “Even if students graduate, they still continue the practices of their Dominican education.” Thus, based on the statements of the stakeholders, there is something assimilated by the stakeholders that they consider distinctly Dominican.

1.3 Attributes of Graduates/Students Category

Graduates and students were perceived to have possessed certain attributes brought about by their education in OP learning institutions. They are in a way the intended “finished quality products” of the educational mission of the Dominicans imbued by their Dominican charism. The character they possess which is concretized in their lives reflect the over all outcome of the educational mission of the Dominicans.

1.3.1 Modesty/Humility

Modesty/humility of Dominican schools as perceived by the stakeholders has become conspicuous that it can no longer be contained as hearsay about the stakeholders of Dominican learning institutions, be they alumni or present students. One stakeholder affirmed this by saying, “Students in a Dominican school have an exaggerated modesty compared to other well-known Catholic universities; although they have an academic excellence.” The words of Fr. Tamerlane Lana, OP (2006) a former Rector, says it all, in confirming the modesty/humility category in one of his messages to the graduates of the University of Santo Tomas:

I do not exactly know how excited you are to be known by that title in the competitive world that you will find yourselves in, but I do hope you would not equate the title with the timidity or coyness that some people attribute to Thomasians because of the oft-mistaken impression that they have of us. Humble, quietly persevering in their work, certainly - but not timid or lacking in confidence. People say that Thomasian graduates are not noisy, as confident and as aggressive as the graduates of the so-called elite universities; but there are indeed commendable qualities that they find common among Thomasians: dedication to their work and their determined effort to improve in their performance.

The thoughts quoted above may be attributed only to the stakeholders of the University of Santo Tomas, but exaggerated modesty is also true of other Dominican schools run by the Dominican province of the Philippines. For one, the Dominican heading the educational apostolate of the Philippine Dominican Province supports also this concept by saying, "They are low key but competent; they do not brag on their achievements." It is a protruding reality that even school officials readily admit. Quoting again an incident as regards the practice of the University of Santo Tomas, which says:

Let us however admit that Thomasians are not fond of publicizing or broadcasting the many wonderful and great things about themselves – this is what the members of the executive committee drawing the strategic plans for the University had realized (Lana OP, 2002).

1.3.2 Moral Persons

Graduates and students were perceived to be moral persons. This speaks a lot of the character education that they have in OP schools as regards the moral aspect of their life. One stakeholder observed, "Students have strong ethical/moral orientation." A mark of success may be described on the moral education that OP schools provide. Educators in OP schools can make a sigh of relief and confidence knowing that their students and former students can hurdle the moral relativism and permissiveness that society faces today. Fr. Castillo, OP spoke of the same confidence as quoted by Dimalanta (2006 p.51):

When asked about his views on some issues of morality, he was not too pat and specific in his answer. All that he could say was that again, optimistically, even in the face of a relatively liberated generation, he could rest assure that the Thomasian youth, equipped with the right Catholic values in a Catholic university strongly founded on firm and steadfast traditions, would be able to combine this strength of faith and lively openness to the goings-on around him.

That confirms what one stakeholder had said, “Moral aspects of issues are imparted to me in making moral decisions asking, ‘Is it right or wrong?’” Graduates and students possess a good habit, “It is actually a reasoned reflection or inquiry on what is right or wrong, or what we call morally appropriate or not” as mentioned by Fr. Tamerlane Lana, OP quoted by Yuson (2006 p.96). Dominican learning institutions’ seriousness to provide moral education to form the moral characters of their stakeholders is evident through the numerous courses that are geared towards ethical, moral, and critical thinking education which in turn guides stakeholders to make sound human and moral judgments expected of graduates and students of OP schools who are supposed to be “Fully equipped with the right insights, the right blend of philosophy and science, idealism and realism; they knew exactly what was expected of them” (Dimalanta 2006, 51).

1.3.3 Possessing other Desirable Attributes

Besides *modesty/humility* and *moral persons* as attributes of OP grads/students, other attributes were also uncovered. Attributes such as “prayerful,” “apply rationalization,” “uphold truth” and “doctrinally sound” belong to one category called *possessing other desirable attributes*.

The emergence of these concepts as desirable attributes can be supported by the educative approaches confirmed in the Dominican Mission of Education. “Being prayerful” can be attributed to the strong religious formation (teachings and practices) they had, confirmed through the sufficient offering of religious teachings and practices of OP schools. The “applying rationalization” can be attributed to the seriousness in providing critical and reflective education as offered in the curriculum. The “Upholding truth” can be attributed to the perceived presence of living the Truth with emphasis by its integration in OP school programs and statements and by living it intensely. This can be seen through the documents imparting OP life and charism and, “The graduates and students being doctrinally sound” is attributed to the solid Catholic/religious teachings and activities found in the curriculum and school religious programs.

Conclusion

Educational policies reflect the educational mission of a school that touches its core philosophies, core identities, core values, core purposes and more importantly its religious charism. *Living the Dominican charism in education* means having the knowledge and the heart to live the articulated religious charism and essentials of the Dominican learning institution. For this, school administrators and faculty heads undergo training even formal education to enhance their leadership skills. Leadership

is imbued with values more than technical know-how in handling followers and administrative tasks. Further, the image or model of being a good shepherd comes into mind as regards the duty and responsibility of people involved in this area. It is an important task to guide those who still face the challenge of living the charism in the educational mission and also a responsibility to continue to build the strength of those who are already aware and live the Dominican charism in OP learning institutions. Thus, continuous orientation on the aspect of *living the Dominican charism in education* needs to be integrated in the program so that the personnel can become more aware of the articulated essentials of the mission of the school in relation to the Dominican charism and discover the meaning of living it. In the end, employees and lay partners in education undergo the rich experience of growing and becoming fully aware of the role of Dominican charism in Dominican learning institutions.

