

*Reflective Pedagogy: Making Meaning in
Experiential-based Learning to Live Together.*

Wilson Sevilla Chua, Ph.D.
Far Eastern University, Philippines

Abstract

This qualitative research study seeks to gain knowledge into the students' conceptions of FEU Core Values through the treatment of the concepts in Rizal Course and reflective pedagogy. The participants were 42 students of Internal Auditing, 4th year level.

The strategies included students' reflections in written form and the used of KJ method in examining the data. There were 252 reflections made by the students' from prelims up to finals. Of which 134 insights from the reflections were extracted, analyzed and categorized according to FEU Core Values and subsequently, into reflective levels of consciousness (kamalayan), self (sarili), and others (kapwa).

It also determined if the reflective pedagogy can be applied around the framework of values education and experiential learning. Albeit, if Rizal Course will be able to enhance the articulation of the Core Values of FEU among Internal Auditing Senior Students.

The study revealed that students attached varying levels of importance to FEU Core Values and the reflective levels through Rizal Course, highly enhanced the students' conceptions of FEU Core Values.

Concomitantly, findings indicated that through the insights of the students, it made them realized that reflective writing became their personal response to experiences, opinions, events or new information; to their thoughts and feelings; to explore their learning; to gain self-knowledge; to achieve better understanding of what they are learning; to make meanings of past and present experiences, and above all, to live out the core values of FEU in their everyday living.

“Values are the ideals that give significance in our lives; that are reflected through the priorities that we choose; and that we act on consistently and repeatedly.”

Brian Hall

Introduction

We need to educate towards an institution that prepares the students, faculty and administrators to become responsible, free and mature person, equipped not only with suitable skills and expertise, but also with deep human values and attitudes – an ability and willingness to be true, good and beautiful persons with dignity and honour.

Apparently, it is not enough to know the values; students must want it, so that they will act on it without any prodding from others. Understanding and appreciating the meanings of the values will make the students strive hard to integrate the values in their everyday lives.

Thus, there is a need for educators to find ways to make the students develop capacities for decision-making and cultivate qualities necessary for an active and intelligent participation in the community as a whole.

There is also a dire need to make a major shift in our educational and personal paradigms, a redirection of the students' ways of thinking, feeling and acting through reflection. Reflective pedagogy renders the students with necessary knowledge, competencies, and values to deal effectively with the challenges brought about by a rapidly, complex, and conflicted world.

Value of critical reflection as a pedagogical approach in FEU is to enhance students' conceptions of its Core Values and how to live it out in the context of their lives.

Statement of the Problem

The main purpose of this research is to realize through phenomenological study the effectiveness of the reflective pedagogy in order to learn, re-learn and un-learn meanings of students' experiences when related to the concepts learned from Rizal Course and eventually, through their personal experiences, enhance their understanding and appreciation of FEU's Core Values.

Specifically, the paper sought to answer the following questions:

1. How can the reflective pedagogy be used around the framework of values education and experiential learning?
2. How can Rizal Course enhance the articulation of the core values of FEU among Internal Auditing Senior Students?

Background of the Study

This paper explores and analyzes the design and use of reflective pedagogy in a course on Rizal in articulating the FEU's core values among Internal Auditing Senior Students. The purpose of the phenomenological study is to develop students' self-awareness through reflection and to take positive steps to learn and appreciate their inner leadership values in relation to FEU's Core Values.

Such reflection assists students to explore self-awareness and describes the journey of the student's most significant learning. Reflection process provides students with useful methods for reviewing and critiquing connections between classroom learning and practical experience.

In recent years an understanding of reflective approach to learning has emerged. The need to reflect on self as a means of self-development is widely endorsed in schools of education globally. The use of student narratives from their reflections on their experiences, with their consent, illustrates the power of the reflective method to pursue lifelong learning.

Reflection is a pedagogical approach and essential part of education for sustainability. It challenges the way students interpret the world and how knowledge and opinions are shaped by personal experiences and social influences. Personal experiences and observations as they relate to course content are linked.

Reflection can serve as a method for enhancing understanding of course content, a strategy for making meaning, and a means for illuminating and critiquing student understanding.

FEU's core values are Fortitude, Excellence and Uprightness. These core values are part and parcel of the vision and mission of the university. They are the values that students should be able to acquire and integrate and later will form part of their work ethics when they graduate.

By fortitude students are able to remain focused amidst pressures and difficulties to achieve goals and objectives. Students manifest flexibility and adaptability to change, as well as showing the best of themselves in the worst of times.

Excellence for students means to know oneself, be open to feedback, maximize learning, apply competency, accept new challenges. Students embrace excellence in themselves and in their work.

Students value integrity and honesty. To be accountable for their performance and behavior and contribute to the advancement of Philippine society and the global village are their desired values. They are expected to do the right thing despite the odds. Sincerity and consistency with their thoughts, words, and deeds should govern their lives. All of these qualities exemplify what uprightness is.

Rizal subject is replete with values derive directly from the literary writings of Dr. Jose P. Rizal such as novels, poems and essays. The students must not only learn the biography of Rizal, but also be aware of Rizal's greatest legacy to Philippine development as seen in his personal, social, political, cultural, educational and religious values, for which he is even ready to die for.

A phenomenological approach enabled teacher to study in considerable depth the students' experience from their perspective. Students kept wrote essays including detailed accounts of their experiences.

Of the main reasons for choosing this approach are the following:

First, that phenomenology promotes and makes possible new ways of looking at old phenomena (learn). Phenomenology eliminates, insofar as possible, presuppositions and traditionally held assumptions (un-learn), thus, it enables the students to "see" anew (re-learn).

Second, phenomenology provides a more original "seeing" and, hence, initiates previously unnoticed possibilities and allows one to observe or describe new and different relationships.

Third, a phenomenological method furnishes a way by which to study education as a field of theory and practice. Phenomenology makes it possible to grasp the essential features of education, as given in immediate experience. That is, it can capture basic structures in their arising and bring them to presence in time. A phenomenological approach enabled researchers to study in considerable depth the students' experience from their perspective based on their understanding of consciousness (kamalayan), self (sarili) and others (kapwa).

Review of Literature

Often there is a requirement to reflect on practice, which can be traced back to the work of John Dewey (felt need) and Donald Schön (reflective practice), both of whom put forward the notion that reflection is a critical underpinning of growth and learning. Indeed, Dewey (1934) argued, "all direct experience is qualitative, and qualities are what make life-experience itself directly precious. Yet reflection goes behind immediate qualities, for it is interested in relations . . . (p. 293).

We can do something yet not be aware of how various elements are interrelated and this lack of awareness can impede immediate understanding and growth.

Use of reflective method in higher education is grounded in adult learning theory (Knowles, 1983; Mezirow, 1998; Rogers, 1982), experiential learning theory (Dewey, 1933, 1938; Kolb, 1984; Vygotsky, 1934/1986), and lifelong learning theory (Boud, 1999, 2001; Brookfield, 1998; Knowles, 1983).

Drawing from Dewey's (1938) notion of active learning, Kolb (1984) advocated for experiential learning as an important means for ensuring meaningful and lasting educational

outcomes. Pearson and Smith (1985) highlighted the instructional benefits of structured and directed methods for students to revisit designated experiences.

Kolb (1984) recognized that reflection was a necessary part of engaging the learner, thus suggesting that reflective writing can produce meaningful or purposive learning. Rogers (1982) also conceived ideas 2010, Volume 33, No. 1 59 that supported the use of reflective writing as tools for learning, personal growth, and professional development. According to Rogers, "The only learning which significantly influences behaviour is self-discovered, self-appropriated learning" (p. 223).

Vygotsky as translated by Kozulin (1934/1986) highlighted the connections among thoughts, feelings, and actions, emphasizing the importance of reflection in learning. Others (Boud, 2001; Brookfield, 1998; Goldsmith, 1996; Moon, 1999) identified reflective method as an especially successful strategy for encouraging the students to hone and practice reflective skills and to develop introspective abilities.

Kember and Leung (2000) described a taxonomy of reflection and noted the value of critical reflection, or the level at which students reflect about their reflections (a meta-reflection of sorts).

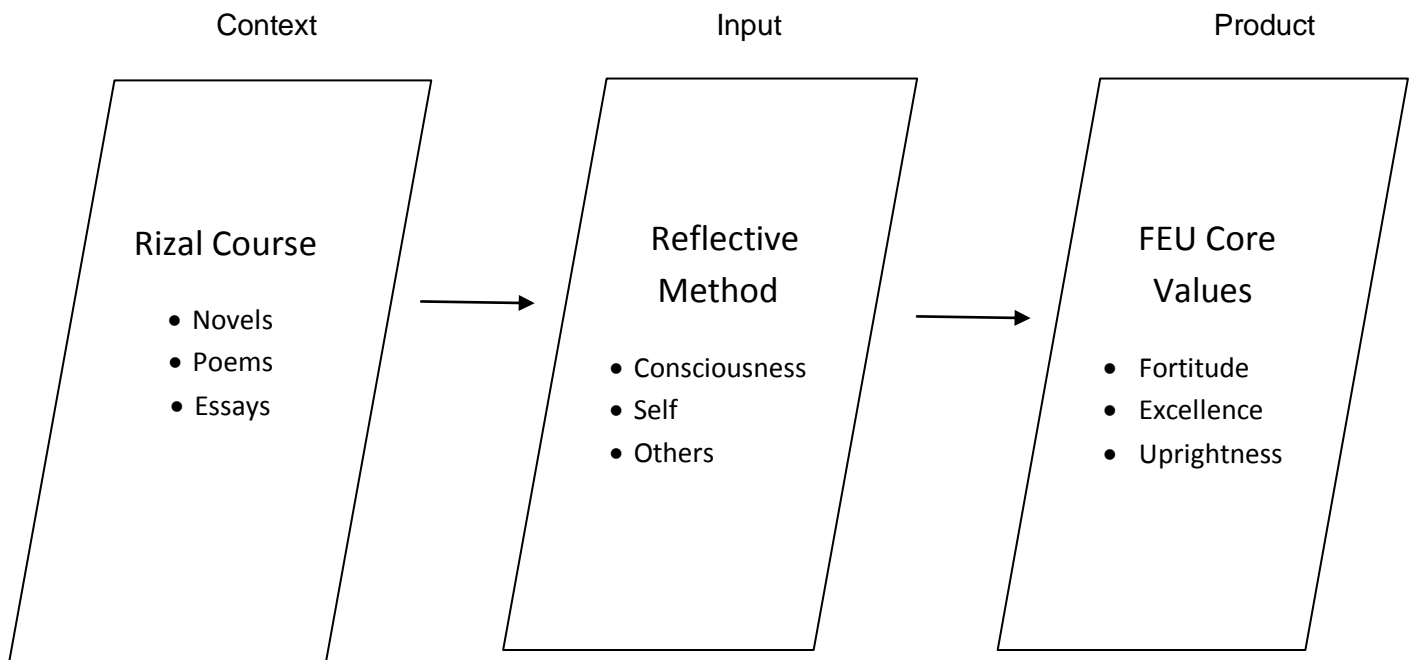
Hatton and Smith (1995) described how the written word can serve as evidence of reflection, and they identified four levels of reflection disclosed through writing: descriptive writing, descriptive reflection, dialogic reflection, and critical reflection.

The related literature points to the significant contribution of reflective method as pedagogical approach in values education and meaningful, lasting educational outcome. In reflection, the thinking involves looking for commonalities, differences, and interrelations beyond their superficial elements. These relationships and linkages are useful tools for the students to

create or re-create meanings out of their ordinary personal experiences and eventually, the formation of insights.

Experiential learning is best captured by the existentialist philosopher, Soren Kierkegaard when he said: “Life must be understood backward. But it must be lived forward.”

Conceptual Framework



Rizal’s literary works are content-wise values laden. His novels poems and essays are replete with tremendous amount of values that exalt human dignity, justice, virtues among others. His persistent socio-political values in his literary masterpieces are the main focus of this phenomenological study.

The reflective method will be the process through which the students will be linking recent experiences to earlier ones in order to promote a more complex and interrelated mental schema called insights.

Insights based on consciousness, self and others will eventually produce the connections to FEU core values.

Rationale/ Purpose of the Study

Intended output of the phenomenological study is to show the relationship of student's values vis-a-vis FEU's Core Values. It is also expected to benefit the following end-users:

School Management

Results of the study will provide the management of FEU with a basis for true, effective and efficient integration of FEU's Core Values among its graduates.

Faculty

The research will guide the faculty on how it can more appropriately align its instructional decisions and class activities in inculcating values in general and FEU Core Values in particular.

Students

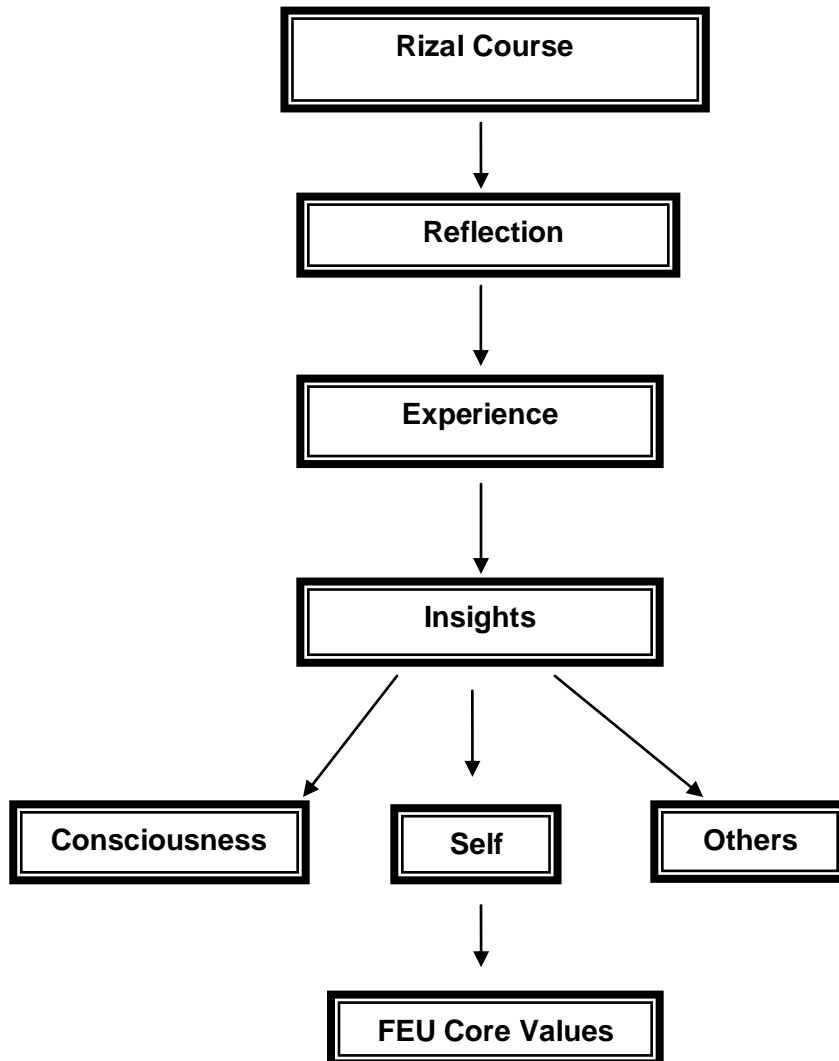
Equip with reflective tools the students will find their subjects interesting and more responsive to their not only academic but personal needs. Student-centered learning are considered conducive to lifelong learning.

Educational System

Product of this study will set standards for experiential learning across disciplines in higher institution of learning in the country, particularly the method of teaching on values education classes.

More significantly, the study will develop, validate and establish the pedagogical approach, thereby providing the Philippine Educational System with a reliable and valid method for teachers in basic, secondary and tertiary education related to values education.

REFLECTIVE METHOD



Reflective pedagogy is highly dependent on the quality of experience that the students will choose to use in the process of reflection. The concept/s learned from Rizal class discussion will be related to the students' personal experience through reflective writing/reflection paper.

It involves the students looking for commonalities, differences, and interrelations between the class concept and the particular personal experience they want to relate. In so doing, they may arrive at a meaningful interpretation based on their application of the concept taken up in class to their chosen personal experience; this is called to as insights. In other words, reflection is thought in action.

The insights can be considered as either shallow or deep. Shallow insights are product of less analytical and hasty generalization of experiences when related to concept learned in Rizal Class. On the other hand, reflection which emanates from a more analytical and explorative manners will yield a deeper self-understanding and self-appropriation.

Self-reflection in this context involves a constant questioning of one's own assumptions, and a capacity to analyze and synthesize information to create new perspectives and understanding.

In Philippine Context, Filipinos make sense of life events through *pagdanas* (to undergo or cope with what is actually going on) and *pagdama* (to affectively and rationally sense this event). The Filipino notion of experience --*karanasan* -- is very personal; reality must be personally encountered not through thought or imagination, but in an actuality.

Personal involvement (*pakikiisa*), immersion (*pakikisangkot*), relationship (*pakikitungo*, *kaugnayan*), undergoing something (*nagawa*) is essential and constitutive (De Mesa, 1991).

Method

Participants for this study were the Internal Auditing Senior Students of the Institute of Accounts, Banking and Finance. The class consisted of 24 females and 18 males a total of 42 members. The students ranged in age from twenty to twenty-three and are Filipinos. Writing reflection paper was required in Rizal Course. Topics of Rizal Course included Rizal's biography, novels, poems and essays. Each student was tasked to write 6 reflection papers within the Second Semester of School Year 2010-2011. The reflection papers stretched from prelim, midterm and finals.

Students were oriented regarding the contents of the reflection paper. They were made to understand that their personal experiences are of primary importance. Format for the reflection paper were as follows: 1. Formal introduction of the concept/s discussed in class. 2. A well structured body which will represent their thoughts, experiences clearly and logically. 3. Insights derived from the application of concept to their experiences.

The 6 reflection papers of the students were the instruments which were analyzed and their respective insights were extracted and furthermore, the insights were clustered under two categories:

1. Fortitude – Excellence – Uprightness
2. Consciousness (*Kamalayan*) - Self (*Sarili*) – Others (*Kapwa*)

Reflective pedagogy and KJ (Kawakita, Jiro) method were employed to collect and analyze data in this qualitative study. The major sources of the data were the six reflections written by the students.

Based on the six reflections of forty-two students, the total number of insights amounted to one hundred thirty-four. Coded information was reconsidered in regard to the categories mentioned above by three other faculty members. Some insights needed re-categorizing, concepts of some categories were re-defined, better focused and compared.

Results

FEU core value of fortitude got hold of less than half (44%) of the total 134 insights that were extracted from the Internal Auditing students' reflections. In addition, only 29.1% of insights were acquired by excellence and uprightness obtained 26.9% (Chart 1).

In terms of fortitude, the values that the student's pointed out are courage under pressure, resilience, perseverance, discipline, strength of character in the face of adversity, steadfast amidst difficulty and commitment. Since the participants were mostly graduating students, it was expected that they had acquired the necessary experiences to survive the challenges outside of the confines of the University.

It apparently matched the definition of the Tamaraws as courageous, persevering, and determined. That they remain focused amidst pressures and difficulties to achieve goals and objectives. FEU graduates were flexible and adaptable to change.

On the other hand, excellence came up to 29.1% which was indicative of the students' values of maximizing learning, apply competency, accept new challenges, transformative, value and meaning of education to oneself, for others and a better future (Chart 1).

Uprightness constituted 26.9% of the insights of the students that revolved around the values of doing the right thing, accountable for behavior and results, social responsibility and practice good citizenship and religion (Chart 1).

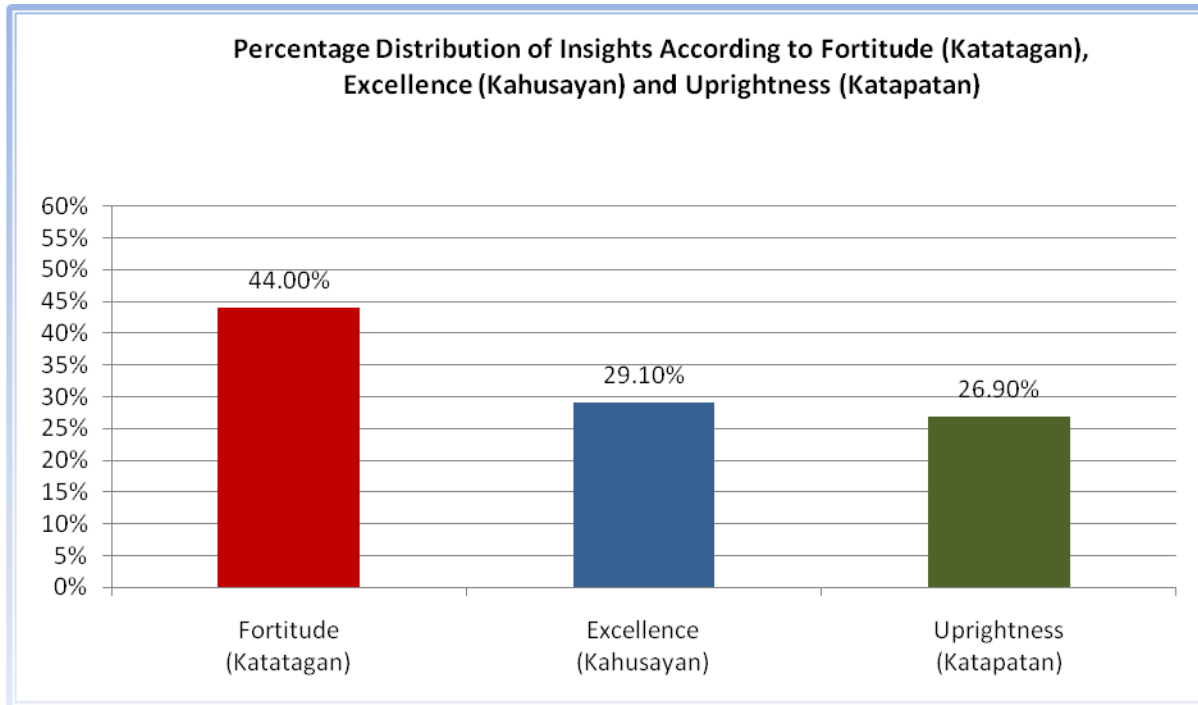


Chart 1

Concerning the second categorization, consciousness (*kamalayan*) got more than half 55.9% score in the area of fortitude, it means that the students at this point in time have their values in their level of consciousness yet, and still need to trickle to their own selves so as to facilitate its operation. Self (*sarili*) comprised 32.2% and ranked second after consciousness based on fortitude and was relatively nearer to the first category.

However, other (*kapwa*) was only 11.9% of the total insights for fortitude, implying that the student's sense of fortitude had small amount of influence to other people (Chart 2).

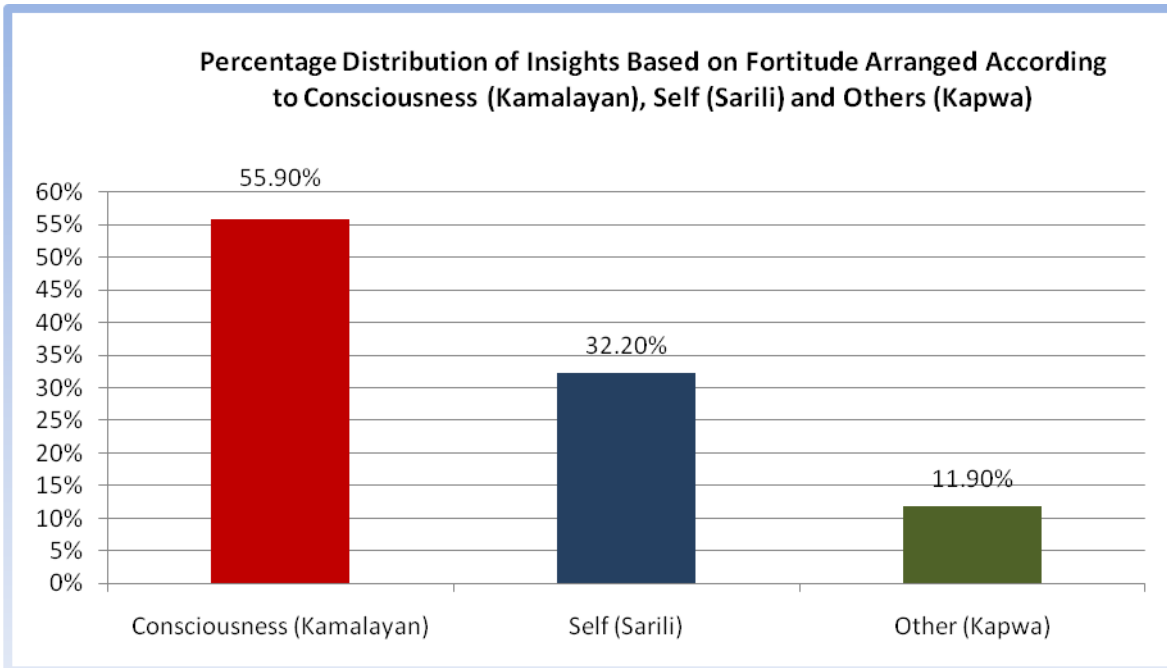


Chart 2

The same runned through within the category of excellence, the ranges were consciousness (kamalayan) 66.6%, self (sarili) 30.8% and others (kapwa) 2.6% (Chart 3).

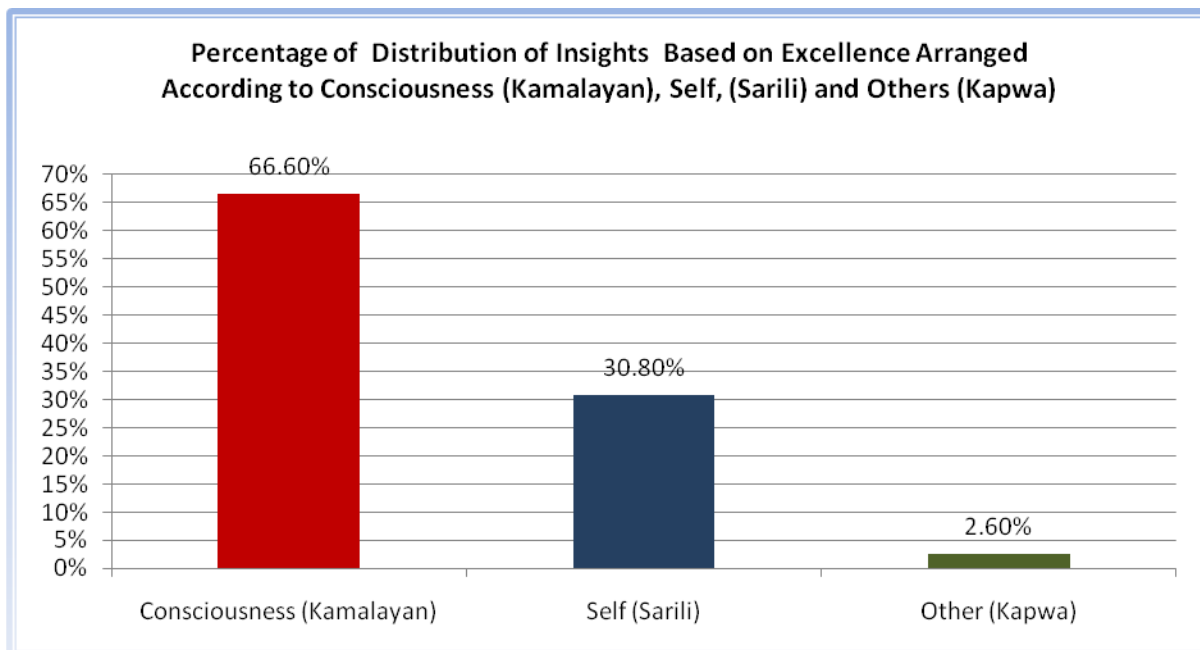


Chart 3

Pertaining to uprightness, although the highest was still consciousness, nevertheless, others (kapwa) contracted a score higher than the self which was 27.8% compared to self (sarili) which was 25% while consciousness (kamalayan) got 47.2%, consistently high (Chart 4).

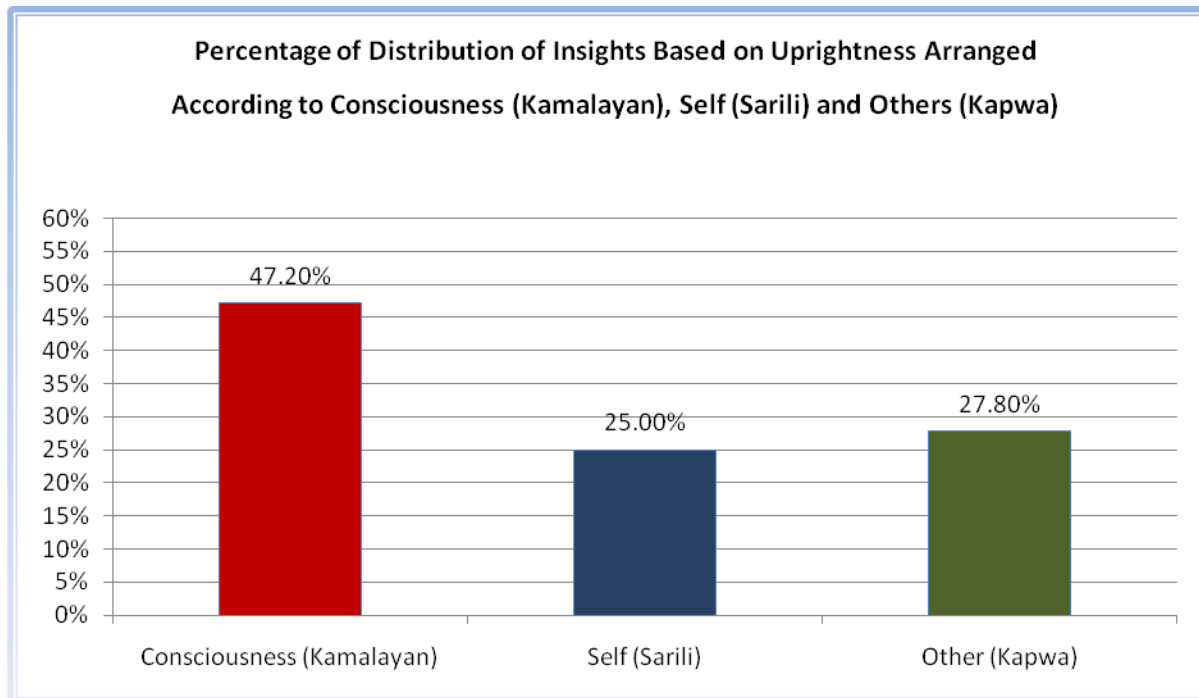


Chart 4

This discrepancy could be attributed to the immediate behaviour manifestation of student's social responsibility based on their insights and abide by ethical standards and values.

Results showed that the topics discussed in Rizal Course class such as unity, service, values, education, virtues and youth extracted from Rizal's literary works (novels, poems and essays) had contributed a lot in making the students reflect deeper into its implications to their personal experiences and they came up with insights that are highly related to what FEU espoused as its Core Values.

This had proven that values can be integrated through reflective pedagogy and experiential data comprise *sense-based* data (other-kapwa), *affective* data (self-sarili) and *cognitive* data (consciousness-kamalayan) and that systematic attention to each of these strands can improve reflective learning, reflective practice and research based on reflective experience.

Use of reflective pedagogy has long been considered critical to facilitating meaningful learning through the insights which is considered as creation of meaning of the student's past and present experiences.

Confirming the adage that experience is the best teacher. Johns (1994), for instance, put forward that reflection begins with the description of the experience. Schön (1983) also places the experience as the key phenomenon around which reflection-in-action occurs. This is the reason by students' reflections should be experiential rather than informational. Without the involvement of experience, the examination of the students' beliefs, values, attitudes and assumptions would not take place and understanding the meaning of the experience will be sacrificed, hence, it will just be a cerebral exercised.

With regard to this, the second level of reflection should take its course, that of the mental activity that analyzes the experience. Moon (1999), for example, defines reflective practice as 'a mental process with purpose and/or outcome in which manipulation of meaning is applied to relatively complicated or unstructured ideas in learning or to problems for which there is no obvious solution' (p. 155). In the case of Rizal Course class the students' interrelate the concepts learned from class discussion to their own personal experiences leading them to the creation of new meanings and understandings of their past and present experiences.

Van Manen (1997) recommends that hearty reflection requires a process of mindfulness, which he describes as a 'quality of the behaviour of a person that links thought and action in a relationship between self and others.

Reflection, therefore, is as much a state of mind as it is a set of activities, with the end process being not so much resolution of an experience but rather a better understanding of it. This reinforces understanding rather than problem resolution as the learning outcome.

Hart (1990) has a more wide-ranging appreciation of reflection as 'both a process of completion and of opening up the view on the terrain of unexplored interpretations of experience and of possibilities for action'. This adds a fourth level to reflective practice: that of taking action to change behaviour as a consequence of extending oneself to others. This last dimension is also referenced by Johns (1994), noting how learning from situations can influence changed behaviour in the future for self and others.

Moon (1999), too, talks of transformation through changed action. Self-awareness of actions, then, becomes the key trigger for learning outcomes. Thus, in this study it is not enough that students' reflections should end up only in the sphere of consciousness (*kamalayan*), although, at least it had somehow entered into their minds, however, what is far more important is for the reflection to flow to the heart which is the center of the self (*sarili*) and gradually carried into actions to change and to help others (*kapwa*). Possibly, reflection will enter the head, in order to touch the heart and undoubtedly, trigger the hands to be mindful of others.

Reflective thinking facilitates students' recognition of the fact that they bring valuable knowledge to every experience. It helps them therefore to recognise and clarify the important connections between what they already know and what they are learning.

Conclusion

It appears that reflective pedagogy is an effective tool in interrelating subject concepts and student's personal experiences in creating a new meaning or insights and a means for illuminating and critiquing student understanding. Reflection papers are ways perhaps even more central to learning than elaborating established meaning schemes is the process of reflecting back on prior learning to determine whether what we have learned is justified under present circumstances. This is a crucial learning process egregiously ignored by learning theorists." (Mezirow, 1990:5)

Cecil Day Lewis stated, "We do not write in order to be understood, we write in order to understand." This philosophy lies at the heart of the reflective essay. It is on this premise that the reflection paper became the tool of the author for teaching values education and he finds it very efficient and effective in providing a platform for the student's voice and a chance for self-expression, makes it one of the most important forms of writing.

Through Rizal Course, students' conceptions of FEU Core Values are enhanced. Looking at the insights of the students', It made them realized that reflective writing becomes their personal response to experiences, opinions, events or new information; to their thoughts and feelings; to explore their learning; to gain self-knowledge; to achieve better understanding of what they are learning; to make meanings of past and present experiences and above all to live out the core values of FEU.

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Author's Note

Wilson S. Chua, Ph.D. is an associate professor of the Department of International Studies, Institute of Arts and Sciences and currently a Board Member of the UNESCO – Asia Pacific Network for International Education and Values Education (APNIEVE) Philippines and Department of Education Book Evaluator for Values Education.

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