

Reflective-Based Moral and Spiritual Growth Module for Higher Education Students

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ABSTRACT

This study examined the instructional needs, key components, and stakeholder perceptions involved in developing a Reflective-Based Moral and Spiritual Growth Module for higher education students. Specifically, it determined the instructional needs and gaps that must be addressed in designing the module, identified the key components that should be included, and tested whether significant differences existed between teachers' and students' perceptions of the module components. The study used a developmental research design with descriptive and inferential quantitative procedures. Data were gathered from students, teachers, guidance or spiritual formation personnel, institutional values and holistic development personnel, and curriculum or course-integration respondents from selected higher education institutions in the Caraga Region. A researcher-made questionnaire was used to obtain the respondents' perceptions on instructional needs and module components. Weighted mean was used to describe the level of need and necessity, while an independent-samples t-test was used to determine significant differences between students' and teachers' ratings of the key components. The findings revealed that all stakeholder groups rated the instructional needs and gaps as very much needed, with curriculum and course-integration requirements obtaining the highest overall mean. The key components of the module were also rated highly necessary by both students and teachers. Results further showed significant differences in moral dilemma story cards and facilitation and debriefing guides, while no significant differences were found in reflection-based learning activities, spiritual reflection, and assessment, monitoring, and feedback tools. The study concludes that the module should be designed as a structured, reflective, values-based, and facilitation-supported instructional resource.

Keywords: Reflective Module, Moral Development, Spiritual Growth, Higher Education, Values Formation

INTRODUCTION

Moral and spiritual formation is a concern in higher education because students are expected to be developed not only intellectually, but also morally, socially and spiritually. The role of education is to help learners to make sense of values, to look at their own experiences, to make decisions for themselves and create a space for a greater sense of purpose. This concern is pertinent to the Philippines where moral values and the love of God were a constitutional requirement for education, and where holistic learning in higher education outcomes includes moral, ethical and civic formation (Official Gazette of the Republic of the Philippines, 1987; Commission on Higher Education [CHED], 2013). More recent research and practice focus on the importance of organizing moral and spiritual education, reflecting on it and linking it to the real world. The process of moral and spiritual development is not only limited to the transfer of values and religious ideas, but also the process of gradual development of ethical thinking, moral consciousness, responsibility, integration of religious convictions and moral development of the personality (Cena & Bual, 2021; Macalam et al., 2025; Silva, 2025). In higher education students are frequently faced with personal, academic, social and spiritual issues that are beyond the scope of merely content teaching. This is why structured reflective learning can aid the learner to understand his or her experience, clarify values and beliefs, and apply them in real decisions.

Experiential and reflective learning were the bases of the study. According to Kolb's Experiential Learning Theory, learning occurs when learners have an experience, reflect on it, conceptualize it and then apply it (Kolb, 2015). A perspective that lends support for the use of guided reflection activities, moral dilemma cases, journaling prompts and debriefing processes to support students in their process of transforming experience into moral and spiritual insight. In addition, the ADDIE model also serves as a structured process for analyzing, designing, developing, implementing and evaluating instructional materials, which is suitable for designing and improving educational resources (Branch, 2009; Spatioti et al., 2022). Although the importance of high education students' moral and spiritual formation is recognized, there are no readily available, contextually relevant, structured and validated instructional materials that can assist in the moral reasoning, values formation, spiritual awareness, reflective thinking and character development of these students. Reflection activities can be a part of the classroom or formation process, but they can be short, vague, and challenging to assess without cues, facilitator guides, and assessments. To address these concerns, this study centered on the instructional needs, key components and stakeholder ratings that should be considered in developing a Reflective Based Moral and Spiritual Growth Module.

Research Questions

1. What instructional needs and gaps must be addressed in designing the module based on the perspectives of:
 - 1.1 students;
 - 1.2 teachers;
 - 1.3 guidance/spiritual formation personnel;
 - 1.4 institutional values and holistic development programs; and
 - 1.5 curriculum and course-integration requirements?
2. What key components should be included in the development of the module in terms of:
 - 2.1 reflection-based learning activities and modules;
 - 2.2 moral dilemma story cards and case scenarios;
 - 2.3 spiritual reflection prompts and journaling tools;
 - 2.4 facilitation and debriefing guides for teachers; and
 - 2.5 assessment, monitoring, and feedback tools?
3. Is there a significant difference in the key components that should be included in the development of the module as perceived by teachers and students?

METHODOLOGY

This study used a quantitative descriptive-comparative research design. The study was descriptive since it identified the instructional needs and gaps that need to be addressed in the design of the module, and the key components that need to be incorporated in the development of a Reflective-Based Moral and Spiritual Growth Module for higher education students. To examine if there were significant differences between teachers' and students' perceptions of the key components in the module, the comparative component was used.

The study was carried out in the selected higher education institutions of Caraga Region. The respondents were the students, teachers, guidance and spiritual formation staff, institutional values and holistic development staff, curriculum or course-integration coordinators from the participating institutions in Agusan del Sur and Surigao del Sur. The total number of respondents involved in the study was 171, among which 118 students, 38 teachers,

5 guidance and spiritual formation personnel, 6 institutional values and holistic development personnel and 4 curriculum/course-integration coordinators. A researcher made questionnaire was used for data collection which was based on the study objectives. The instructional needs and gaps were rated on a five-point scale: 5 = Very Much Needed; 4 = Much Needed; 3 = Moderately Needed; 2 = Slightly Needed; 1 = Not Needed. The key components were rated using another 5-point rating scale: 5 = Highly Necessary, 4 = Necessary, 3 = Moderately Necessary, 2 = Slightly Necessary, and 1 = Not Necessary. It was validated before the collection of data, both in terms of face and content.

The researcher obtained permission from the respective institutions before data collection and provided the respondents with information on the purpose of the study. Informed consent and voluntary participation were ensured. The questionnaires were given to the eligible respondents according to their roles in the study. Completed responses were reviewed, coded, categorized and analyzed. Weighted mean was used to determine the instructional needs and gaps and the level of necessity of the key components. An independent-samples t-test was performed to check if there was any significant difference between the perceptions of the key components of teachers and students. The level of significance was 0.05. The study only covered selected HEIs in the Caraga Region and self-reported perceptions of stakeholders.

RESULTS

The results are presented according to the three research questions of the study. Weighted mean was used to describe instructional needs and the necessity of module components, while an independent-samples t-test was used to compare teachers' and students' perceptions.

Table 1: Summary of Instructional Needs and Gaps in Designing the Module

Respondent Group	Overall Mean	Adjectival Rating	Interpretation
Students	4.295	Very Much Needed	Instructional needs and gaps are considered essential and highly necessary.
Teachers	4.498	Very Much Needed	Instructional needs and gaps are considered essential and highly necessary.
Guidance/Spiritual Formation Personnel	4.200	Very Much Needed	Instructional needs and gaps are considered essential and highly necessary.
Institutional Values and Holistic Development Personnel	4.534	Very Much Needed	Instructional needs and gaps are considered essential and highly necessary.
Curriculum and Course-Integration Respondents	4.725	Very Much Needed	Instructional needs and gaps are considered essential and highly necessary.

Table 1 shows that all stakeholder groups rated the instructional needs and gaps as Very Much Needed. The curriculum and course-integration respondents obtained the highest mean, followed by institutional values and holistic development personnel, teachers, students, and guidance/spiritual formation personnel. This indicates strong stakeholder agreement that the module requires clear curricular guidelines, structured reflective activities, monitoring tools, facilitation support, and context-sensitive resources.

Table 2: Key Components to be Included in the Development of the Module

Indicators	Students Mean	Students Rating	Teachers Mean	Teachers Rating	Grand Mean	Overall Rating
Reflection-based learning activities and modules	4.427	Highly Necessary	4.611	Highly Necessary	4.519	Highly Necessary
Moral dilemma story cards and case scenarios	4.368	Highly Necessary	4.626	Highly Necessary	4.497	Highly Necessary

Spiritual reflection prompts and journaling tools	4.381	Highly Necessary	4.453	Highly Necessary	4.417	Highly Necessary
Facilitation and debriefing guides for teachers	4.414	Highly Necessary	4.605	Highly Necessary	4.510	Highly Necessary
Assessment, monitoring, and feedback tools	4.380	Highly Necessary	4.568	Highly Necessary	4.474	Highly Necessary
Overall Mean	4.394	Highly Necessary	4.573	Highly Necessary	4.483	Highly Necessary

Table 2 presents the key components that should be included in the module. All components were rated Highly Necessary by both students and teachers. Reflection-based learning activities and modules obtained the highest grand mean, followed by facilitation and debriefing guides for teachers. These findings show that respondents valued a structured, guided, and reflective format rather than a purely content-based module.

Table 3: Significant Difference on the Key Components as Perceived by Students and Teachers

Source of Variation	Computed t	p-value	Decision	Conclusion
Reflection-based learning activities and modules	1.840	0.071	Failed to reject Ho	Not Significant
Moral dilemma story cards and case scenarios	2.870	0.005	Reject Ho	Significant
Spiritual reflection prompts and journaling tools	0.660	0.511	Failed to reject Ho	Not Significant
Facilitation and debriefing guides for teachers	2.040	0.046	Reject Ho	Significant
Assessment, monitoring, and feedback tools	2.000	0.050	Failed to reject Ho	Not Significant

Table 3 shows that there were no significant differences between students' and teachers' perceptions in reflection-based learning activities, spiritual reflection, and assessment, monitoring, and feedback tools. However, significant differences were found in moral dilemma story cards and facilitation and debriefing guides. This means that students and teachers generally agreed on most components, but differed in the emphasis they placed on practical classroom materials and facilitation support.

DISCUSSION

All the stakeholder groups indicated that the instructional needs and gaps were Very Much Needed, implying that different stakeholders who are involved in the formation and teaching of students are strongly supportive of the development of the module. The high rating from curriculum and course-integration respondents suggests that the module is not just an optional activity but a structured material which could be included in course outcomes, syllabus design, reflective activities and assessment processes. This reinforces the idea that intentional classroom integration is a better way to make moral or spiritual education more effective than when it is delivered as stand-alone activities (CHED, 2013; Silva, 2025).

Teacher ratings also indicate that teachers require well-planned lesson materials, ready-made reflection questions, moral dilemma cards, journaling materials, assessment guidelines, and facilitation support. This is in line with the literature, which highlights that in higher education, reflection can be rather superficial if there are no explicit cues, guidance and feedback structures in place and ready for both learners and teachers (Chan & Lee, 2021). Therefore, the module will enable the teacher to promote reflection without having to make moral judgements on the student. Rather, it should offer safe and facilitated experiences for learners to explore experiences, values, and choices.

All the key components were rated as Highly Necessary, thus providing an affirmation for the proposed module to be multidimensional. The respondents were aware of the value of the reflection-based activities, moral

dilemma cases, spiritual prompts, facilitation guides, and assessment tools. The result is consistent with Kolb's Experiential Learning Theory that states that learners convert experiences into learning by reflecting on and applying them (Kolb, 2015). Reflection based learning proved to be the most powerful of the elements as it directly relates to the purpose of this study: to facilitate the students' experiences to be processed, to allow them to clarify their values and to integrate the moral and spiritual insights they gained with their daily lives.

There are some big differences between the moral dilemma story cards and the facilitation and debriefing guides, suggesting that some aspects may be valued more by students than by teachers. Moral dilemmas can be seen as challenging and interesting learning materials by students, and as a way to facilitate, process and assess by teachers. Additionally, teachers can focus more on debriefing guides as they play a pivotal role in conducting discussions that are sensitive and ensure reflection translates to meaningful learning. Based on these findings, the following implications for module development can be drawn: module development should take into account the needs of the learners and the teacher in facilitating the module.

In general, the results indicate that a reflective content module based on moral and spiritual development should be structured, hands-on, and be supported by facilitation. It must also contain relevant pupil activities, teacher guides, assessment materials and processes and feedback/monitoring processes. The findings also reveal the need to base the process of module planning on theoretical considerations, but also on students', teachers' and institutional needs.

CONCLUSION

All the respondent groups rated that the instructional needs and instructional gaps to be addressed in the design of the module were rated as Very Much Needed. This suggests that stakeholders saw the need for a structured module that offers guided reflection activities, tools for journaling, material on moral dilemmas, space to share, assessment rubrics, monitoring tools, and facilitation guides as well as curriculum-aligned implementation procedures.

Secondly, the module contents that need to be incorporated in the module were highly necessary as rated by both students and teachers. These include reflection-based learning activities and modules, moral dilemma story cards and case scenarios, spiritual reflection prompts and journaling activities, facilitation and debriefing guides, a set of assessment, monitoring and feedback tools.

Thirdly, the test of significant difference indicated that generally, both the students and teachers agreed on most of the key components. However, significant differences were found in moral dilemma story cards and facilitation and debriefing guides. This means that there was a general agreement on the core parts of the module between both the teachers and the students, but some of the practical and facilitation related parts showed differences.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The results can be used as a guideline for the creation or enhancement of moral and spiritual formation materials at higher education institutions. The following activities, which were all rated Very Much Needed by all stakeholder groups, can be incorporated into the general education, formation, or student development programs of institutions: Structured reflection, moral dilemma activities, spiritual journaling, and values-based discussions.

Facilitation and debriefing guides may be provided to teachers to enable them to facilitate and debrief reflective and values-based discussions with sensitivity and confidence. There were significant differences between the facilitation and de-briefing guides, so teacher preparation needs to be considered in the implementation of the module.

Curriculum planners can tailor the learning outcomes, syllabus requirements, assessment rubrics and learning development programs for students. Clearly identifying curricular places may be helpful in ensuring that reflection-based moral and spiritual growth activities are not considered "extra" but rather an integrated component of enriched education.

Future studies may move beyond needs assessment and proceed with the development, pilot testing, and evaluation of the Reflective-Based Moral and Spiritual Growth Module. Experimental or quasi-experimental studies could be conducted to assess its impact on students' moral reasoning, ethical decision-making, values formation, spiritual development, and personal growth. Future researchers may consider making a module and test it in other higher education institutions, comparing implementation in public vs. private institutions, and evaluating the module with pre-test and post-test, narrative qualitative or longitudinal study designs. Future research could also calculate and publish the reliability coefficient for each instrument subscale further enhancing the methodological rigor.

LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

The study only involved the assessment of instructional needs and gaps, the identification of the key components of the modules, and subsequently the comparison of teachers' and students' perceptions of the key components. It was descriptive-comparative design therefore it could not establish the causal effects. It is, therefore, not an instrument for direct assessment of students' moral and spiritual growth, but rather as evidence for the planning of modules which can be used by stakeholders.

This study was conducted using self-reported perceptions of stakeholders which can be influenced by their experience, their institutional role, or their social desirability. The respondents were also from selected Caraga Higher Education Institutions, and thus, the results are subject to generalizability to other HEIs if the same HEIs are tested in broader and more diverse settings.

Ethical Considerations

The researcher observed ethical standards in the conduct of the study. Permission was secured from the concerned institutions before data gathering. Respondents were informed about the purpose of the study, the nature of their participation, and the use of the gathered data. Participation was voluntary, and informed consent was obtained. The anonymity and confidentiality of the respondents were protected, and the data were used only for academic and research purposes. No conflict of interest was declared. Sources used in the manuscript were properly acknowledged, and the findings were interpreted objectively. AI tools were used only for language refinement, organization, and formatting assistance, while the analysis, interpretation, and scholarly responsibility remained with the authors.

Conflict of Interest

The authors declare that there is no conflict of interest in the conduct, analysis, interpretation, and publication of this study.

Data Availability

The data supporting the findings of this study are not publicly available to protect the privacy and confidentiality of the respondents. Aggregated results are presented in this manuscript, and related data may be made available from the corresponding author upon reasonable request and subject to applicable ethical and institutional restrictions.

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