

A Philosophical Sketch Towards Inclusivity: Unpacking the Philosophical Parts of the Curriculum Guide of Good Manners and Right Conduct - Values Education in the K-10 Program of the New MATATAG Curriculum

Fleurdeliz A. Albela¹
University of Santo Tomas
faalbela@ust.edu.ph
<https://orcid.org/0000-0001-8186-2275>

Abstract

This paper is an initial effort to philosophically determine the significance of inclusivity in the teaching of Good Manners and Right Conduct (GMRC) - Values Education (VE) subject under the K-10 program of the Matatag Curriculum. The inquiry will begin by determining how inclusivity is situated from the ground principles of the new educational agenda as per its general shaping paper up to the curriculum guide of the GMRC-VE subject. It is in this unpacking where I will argue that philosophy, both in theory and as a method, plays an important role in developing content and implementing teaching and learning of this subject that is expected to influence citizen education and nation-building.

Keywords: Good Manners and Right Conduct, Values Education, MATATAG Curriculum, Inclusivity, Philosophy, Ethics

The Department of Education of the Philippines, in 2023, enhanced its K to 12 Basic Education program by introducing the MATATAG Curriculum. In DepEd Memorandum No. 054 (2023), the curriculum is described to be more straightforward in implementing learning and achieving the goals of nationalism and social order, having, “decongested curriculum, focused on foundational skills, balanced cognitive demands, clearer articulation of the 21st century skills, reduced learning areas, intensified Values Education and Peace Education and on a par with international standards. (section 3.)” In its General Shaping Paper (DepEd, 2023), the MATATAG agenda intends to improve access, equity, resiliency and well-being through

¹ **Fleurdeliz R. Altez-Albela, PhD** is a Full Professor affiliated to the Department of Philosophy of the University of Santo Tomas. She teaches philosophy subjects in the Faculty of Arts and Letters, Ecclesiastical Faculties and the Graduate School; and also a faculty researcher under the Research Center for Theology, Religious Studies and Ethics of the said university. She serves as Associate Editor to KRITIKE: an Online Journal of Philosophy (<https://kritike.org>) and Managing Editor to Philosophia: International Journal of Philosophy (Philippines) (<https://www.philosophia-pnprs.com>). She has been publishing research projects on the philosophy of Emmanuel Levinas, phenomenology, ethics, hermeneutics of local culture, and critique of pedagogy and education.

a curriculum that focuses on, “foundational skills and embedding peace competencies, building more resilient schools and classrooms, strengthening inclusive education programs (2),” and goes beyond its curricular concerns by also, “advocating for teachers’ additional benefits and providing professional development (2)”. It is in such a manner where the agenda is believed to improve access, equity, resiliency and well-being (2). It is also notable that the agenda’s nomenclature also stands for its foundational verbs, or what one may consider as main tasks (2):

- **MA**ke the curriculum relevant to produce competent and job-ready, active and responsible citizens,
- **TA**ke steps to accelerate delivery of basic education facilities and services
- **TA**ke good care of learners by promoting learner well-being, inclusive, education and positive learning environment
- **GI**ve support to teachers to teach better.

In recognizing this agenda’s promising scheme to provide holistic care to all educational stakeholders, this paper aims to examine the MATATAG agenda in promoting inclusivity and add a philosophical component to the discussions about this new agenda and curriculum. In this era of fostering global goals of sustainability and peace, emphasizing inclusive education through a philosophical lens is essential, as it serves as a positive force that cultivates empathy, tolerance, and equal opportunities. It dismantles stereotypes by acknowledging that every individual, whether a learner or a teacher, is unique and can contribute to education in their own ways. Education is often considered society’s equalizer for its role in promoting intellectual and personal growth (Jardinez and Natividad 2024, 57). This aligns with the United Nations’ 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (2017), which underscores the significance of inclusivity in achieving SDG4 - Quality Education. The agenda emphasizes that countries should “take steps to prevent and address all forms of exclusion and marginalization, disparity, vulnerability, and inequality in educational access, participation, completion, as well as in learning processes and outcomes (4).”

This philosophical sketch will concentrate on how inclusivity is present in content and as procedure in teaching of the subjects Good Manners and Right Conduct per its existing curriculum guide in grades 1 and 4, and Values Education for grade 7. By this unpacking, I intend to create a structure where critical and constructive evaluation may be done by those who wish to contribute to developing how philosophy may be effectively delivered to basic education students.

The inquiry will begin by determining how inclusivity is situated from the ground principles of the new educational agenda as per its general shaping paper up to the curriculum guide of the GMRC-VE subject. It is in this unpacking where I will argue that philosophy, both in theory and as a method, plays an important role in developing content and



implementing teaching and learning of this subject that is expected to influence citizen education and nation-building.

MATATAG Curriculum, RA 11476 and GMRC-VE

The MATATAG curriculum promotes explicitly the intensification of values development by a more holistic curricular development that balances competence and character (DepEd General Shaping Paper 2023, 30) by designating the learning area of Good Manners and Right Conduct (GMRC) and Values Education (VE), with the curricular goal to “produce Filipino youth who decide with responsibility and accountability, act with right conduct and the inclination to do good, and live their daily lives with love for God, people, environment, country and the world habitually mindful of the common good (7).” This is also supported by law through the Republic Act No. 11476, signed in June 25, 2020, otherwise known as GMRC and Values Education Act, which replaces the Edukasyon sa Pagpapakatao (EsP or Values Education) curriculum with Good Manner and Right Conduct (GMRC) - Values Education (VE), which intensifies the teaching of human values in connection to human dignity and rights, responsible citizenship and patriotism (Section 2).

This learning area is extensively delivered across all grade levels with the prerequisite of Kinder education grounded in basic recognition of selfhood; GMRC is being offered from grades 1 to 6 and VE from grades 7 to 10, given the same time allotment as with other core subjects.

In this law, GMRC is defined to inculcate, “the concepts of human dignity, respect for oneself, and giving oneself to others in the spirit of community...” under a curriculum focused on the basic tenets of GMRC: “caring for oneself, giving concern for others, according proper respect to people, upholding discipline and order, cultivating sincerity, honesty, obedience and above all, love for country (GMRC and VE Act 2020, Section 4a).”

Values Education, on the other hand, is defined as a separate, core subject. The law defines VE as (Section 3b1-2):

1. The process that provides young people internalization of values which aims at the students’s grasp of underlying principles, together with the ability to act on those principles, and the settled disposition to do so;
2. Different pedagogies, methods or programs that teachers and/or educators use to create learning experiences for students when it comes to valuing processes, value positions and value judgment; and
3. Learning about self and wisdom of life in a self-exploratory, systematic and scientific way.



A critical look finds sub-section 1 ambiguous, which is supposedly about the subject's main learning goal. One might ask how a learner may "internalize values which aims as the student's grasp of," undefined "underlying principles". Nevertheless, a clearer path might be provided by some core principles that are presented by DepEd in slogan form: Maka-Diyos (for God), Makatao (for humanity), Makakalikasan (for the environment), at Makabansa (and for the nation). To clarify such ambiguity, there might also be a need to revisit the 1988 order issued by the Department of Education Culture of Sports which states how the Values Education Program is supposed to align to the constitutional ideal of promoting, "a just and humane society... which calls for a shared culture and commonly held values such as truth, justice, freedom, love, equality and peace (DECS 1988, 4)." Addition to what may clarify the new definition for Values Education is the new curriculum guide (DepEd CG GMRC-VE 2023, 9), through GMRC-VE's Rationale or Big Ideas. Generally, these subjects are geared towards the teaching of human dignity, responsible decision-making, siding with the good, love or God, family, and fellowman, love and care for the environment, patriotism, global solidarity, and the common good. These big ideas are given the spiral progressive approach where themes are sustained and continuously taught from grade 1 to 10, proven by vertical articulation which shows the progressive alignment of the topic to the progressive targeted learning skills, and horizontal articulation which demonstrates how these learning areas and targets also align with other subjects in the MATATAG curriculum (DepEd CG GMRC-VE 2023, 10-11).

As a side note, it is interesting to mention that an open door to offer Values education in Senior High School is provided by Section 5 stating, "Values Education shall be an integral and essential part of the DepEd's K to 12 basic education curriculum," which perhaps expects a deeper and philosophical teaching delivery as it, "shall encompass universal human, ethical and moral values among others."

Connecting the Dots: GMRC-VE, Philosophy, and Inclusivity

GMRC-VE claims to be motivated by the need to address the cognitive, socio-emotional and moral development of Filipino youth (DepEd CG GMRC-VE 2023, 3), while adhering that children should comprehend concepts related to valuing and correctly express them in their day to day lives. With embodying what they learned about values education, young people also learn to share in the task of addressing local and global concerns as responsible citizens.

It is also mentioned in the curriculum guide (CG) that the subject's general content is philosophically guided by personalism and virtue ethics. By personalism, the CG pertains to how human nature is rooted in relations that one creates (i.e., develops) such humanity by being with others. This personalism appears to be supported by the teaching of virtue, or good habits, with the forethought that children may not yet fully grasp the idea of human nature



according to Personalism. The philosophical support of Virtue Ethics therefore comes into the picture as learning may start by inculcating the pursuance of good deeds (mabuting gawi - habit) and the avoidance of vices (umiwas sa bisyo o masamang gawi), so that the learners may be oriented towards becoming better individuals. According to the CG, virtue building will allow the child to eventually understand that one should do what is good not only because it is expected but because one is a human person that embodies dignity and is naturally inclined to the good; that we are dignified as we are uniquely connected to our fellow human beings, to God and the universe. This eventual understanding is developed as learners grow to acquire the skills of critical and reflective thinking and responsible decision-making (DepEd CG GMRC-VE 2023, 4).

This philosophical grounding which represents the development of content is advanced by GMRC-VE's five approaches to theories: anthropological, psychological, sociological, philosophical and technological (DepEd CG GMRC-VE 2023, 5). These five are now presumed to influence the method of learning delivery. For this paper, it is most relevant to focus on the philosophical approach, which mentions Matthew Lipman's Community of Inquiry (DepEd CG GMRC-VE 2023, 6) that is grounded in John Dewey's philosophy of education that roots learning to experience and is nourished by communication and collaboration. Lipman's theory advances that children are capable of learning from each other and, as a community, may develop multidimensional thinking skills that cover the critical, creative, collaborative, and caring aspects of thought. These characteristics of Lipman's Community of Inquiry have been present even in the initial definition of Values Education as per the Department of Education, Culture and Sports (DECS) inception of the program in 1988. This description is observed to involve other stakeholders of learning such as parents aside from the teacher and the learner:

Values education as a part of the school curriculum is the process by which values, attitudes and habits are formed as the learner interacts with his environment under the guidance of the teacher. It involves different kinds of teaching-learning process. First, in terms of subject matter, values has direct and immediate relevance to the personal life of the learner. Second, the process involves not just cognitive but all the faculties of the learner. The teacher must appeal to the heart and the total human person instead of only to the mind. And third, one learns values the way children learn many things from their parents. Children identify with parents, and this identification becomes the vehicle for the transmission of learning. Hence, the teacher's personal values play an important role in values learning (DECS, 1998).

It is then noticeable that aside from the philosophical anchors brought by personalism and virtue ethics to lesson content, GMRC-VE also acknowledges the significance of philosophy to method by emphasizing that the learning approach (i.e., the teaching of



personalism and virtue ethics) should progress in a democratized setup; through conversations and exchange of questions and answers in the backdrop of freethinking. If such, teaching GMRC-VE should be both grounded in theory content processed by experience shared and understood in the spirit of truth-seeking. Since the philosophical approach is connected to the four others, it is important to be mindful of how this collaborative learning should occur while being conscious that other participants in the community do also have their own learning circumstances; such varieties in forms of experiences, phases of moral and psychosocial development, as well as with (technological) access to learning sources and learning itself.

It is in this technological regard that inclusivity is methodologically emphasized as a very important part of learning GMRC-VE. This is initially anchored on the idea of digital citizenship by Karen Mossberger, Caroline Tolbert and Ramona McNeal (2008) which aims to have fair and equal opportunities to internet access and communication technology, harness technological skills and learn how to recognize and respect human rights in the use of email, social media and other websites. The curriculum guide also mentions the influence of Harrison and Pollizo's (2021) *Cyber Wisdom* on how recent digital practices may also develop good habits and practical wisdom that can give accountability to the learners who are also global and digital citizens. Deriving practical wisdom from Aristotle's *phronesis*, technological users get to relate to one another while being mindful that one should always be capable of emotional control, ethical discernment and action while using the internet (DepEd CG GMRC-VE 2023, 8). The influence of such technological accountability is important not just in teaching scientific and technical courses, but more specially in GMRC-VE because processing ideas on human development and character building by using digital media proves the significance of learning philosophy in the midst of our contemporary time, guarantees ethical guidance by learning personalism, morality and virtue ethics in the use of technological media, and paves the way for more human engagements that cultivate both human values and virtues.

Teaching Virtues and Values where Inclusivity Align

The contemporary situation of learning human development, dignity, character and rights, through GMRC-VE both by content and method – in its every facet, tells the compelling need for inclusion. Per UNESCO's *Education For All (EFA)* movement (2010), inclusion is supposed, "to address and respond to the diversity of needs of all learners through increasing participation in learning, cultures and communities," that also entails flexibility, i.e., being open to, "changes and modifications in content, approaches, structures and strategies," to be able to cover and be accountable for all children of the appropriate age range to claim their right to have regular education (UNESCO, 2005). The curriculum guide of this new subject manifests its strong stress to teach inclusion as lesson contents and to implement



inclusion in its ensuring that these lessons are delivered to all learners regardless of their background.

In the spiral progression, four themes are identified to group the different social issues that are being discussed per grading period: Love of oneself, family and fellowmen, Love of God, Love of the environment and Love of nation and the universe. Sub-topics of each of the themes cover the topic of respect, recognition of diversity in beliefs and culture and the need for dialogue (DepEd CG GMRC-VE 2023, 26-27). At least three virtues/values stand out as consistent in the content: **respect, diversity and generosity**.

The curriculum guide (DepEd CG GMRC-VE 2023, 10-11) demonstrates the vertical alignment of the teaching of respect across all grade levels. Noticeable as well is the inclusion of the theme of diversity in several grades, to represent some sectors of the community, these are in grades 3 (PWDs), 5 (elderly), 8 (LGBTQA+), 9 and 10 (the indigenous, and the theme of cultural diversity):

Grade (Baitang)	Value to be Developed : Respect (Lilinangng Pagpapahalaga: Magalang)
1	<p>Topic: Making Proper Connection with Fellow Humans Learning Competency: To show respect by responding correctly in conversations.</p> <p><i>Paksa: Wastong Pakikipag-ugnayan sa Kapuw</i> <i>Kasanayang Pampagkatuto: Naipakikita ang pagiging magalang sa pamamagitan ng wastong pagtugon sa mensahe ng kapuw</i></p>
2	<p>Topic: Duties in Knowing the Rights of the (fellow) Child Learning Competency: To show respect by responding correctly in conversations.</p> <p><i>Paksa: Wastong Pakikipag-ugnayan sa Kapuw</i> <i>Kasanayang Pampagkatuto: Naipakikita ang pagiging magalang sa pamamagitan ng wastong pagtugon sa mensahe ng kapuw</i></p>
3	<p>Topic: Recognizing Persons with Disability (Recognizing and Connecting with Persons with Disability) Learning Competency: To show respect to Persons with Disability by making proper engagements.</p>

	<p><i>Paksa: Sariling Pagkilala sa mga Taong may Kapansanan o Persons with Disability (PWD)</i> <i>Kasanayang Pampagkatuto: Naipakikita ang pagiging magalang sa mga taong may kapansanan o Persons with Disability (PWD) sa pamamagitan ng wastong pakikipagugnayan</i></p>
4	<p>Topic: Duties in Recognizing the Rights of the (fellow) Child Learning Competency: To be respectful by participating in campaigns against bullying and violence</p> <p><i>Paksa: Sariling Tungkulin sa Pagkilala sa Karapatan ng Kapuwa-Bata Kasanayang Pampagkatuto: Naisasabuhay ang pagiging magalang sa pamamagitan ng pakikilahok sa mga kampanya laban sa mga pambubulas o mga gawaing nakasasakit sa kapuwa</i></p>
5	<p>Topic: Being with the Elderly Learning Competency: To be respectful when connecting to the elders regardless of their status in life.</p> <p><i>Paksa: Pakikipag-kapuwa sa mga Nakatatanda (Elders)</i> <i>Kasanayang Pampagkatuto: Naisasabuhay ang pagiging magalang sa pamamagitan ng wastong pakikitungo sa mga nakatatanda (elders) anuman ang kanilang estado sa buhay</i></p>
6	<p>Topic: Engaging with Authorities of the Community Learning Competency: To be respectful in knowing the powers and responsibilities of the community authorities.</p> <p><i>Paksa: Sariling Pakikipag-ugnayan sa mga Awtoridad sa Pamayanan Kasanayang Pampagkatuto: Naisasabuhay ang pagiging magalang sa pamamagitan ng pagkilala sa mga kapangyarihan at tungkulin ng mga awtoridad sa pamayanan</i></p>
7	<p>Topic: Human Dignity as Basis of Respect for Oneself, Family and Fellow Humans Learning Competency: To be respectful by participating in activities that promote common good (of oneself, family and fellow humans).</p> <p><i>Paksa: Dignidad ng Tao Bilang Batayan ng Paggalang sa Sarili, Pamilya, at Kapuwa</i> <i>Kasanayang Pampagkatuto: Naisasabuhay ang pagiging magalang sa pamamagitan ng pakikibahagi sa mga gawaing magpapabuti sa sarili, pamilya, at kapuwa</i></p>

8	<p>Topic: Positive Outlook towards Sexuality Learning Competency: To be respectful of human dignity by encouraging schoolmates to imbibe a positive outlook towards sexuality.</p> <p><i>Paksa: Positibong Pananaw sa Seksuwalidad ng Sarili at Kapuwa</i> <i>Kasanayang Pampagkatuto: Naisasabuhay ang pagiging magalang sa dignidad ng sarili at kapuwa sa pamamagitan ng panghihikayat sa mga kamag-aral na isabuhay ang positibong pananaw sa seksuwalidad</i></p>
9	<p>Topic: Accepting Differences in Culture Learning Competency: To be respectful by recognizing differences in culture among fellow students, particularly while participating in school and community activities.</p> <p><i>Paksa: Pagtanggap sa Pagkakaiba-iba ng Kultura ng Kapuwa</i> <i>Kasanayang Pampagkatuto: Naisasabuhay ang pagiging magalang sa pamamagitan ng pagsasaalang-alang sa kultura ng kapuwa sa mga gawaing pampaaralan o pampamayanan</i></p>
10	<p>Topic: Accepting Cultural Differences across Generations Learning Competency: To be respectful by valuing diverse cultures and ways of living across different generations.</p> <p><i>Paksa: Pagtanggap sa Pagkakaiba-iba ng Kultura ng Iba't ibang Henerasyon</i> <i>Kasanayang Pampagkatuto: Naisasabuhay ang pagiging magalang sa pamamagitan ng pagpapahalaga sa mga mga gawi o paraan ng pamumuhay at kultura ng iba't ibang henerasyon</i></p>

**Table 1: Vertical Articulation of teaching the value of Respect
 (Originally in Filipino. Translations are mine.)**

In the existing curriculum guides for Grades 1, 4 and 7, respect (magalang), patience (mapagpasensya), prudence (maingat na paghuhusga) and generosity (mapagbigay) are the targeted values that operates in the spirit of inclusivity. This table can be a helpful guide:

Grade Level	Virtue/Value to be Formed	Grading Period/Quarter
1	Respect (Magalang)	1, 2,3,4
	Generosity (Mapagbigay)	3

4	Respect (Magalang)	1, 3,
7	Prudence (Maingat na paghuhusga)	1, 2
	Respect (Magalang)	1, 3

Table 2. Distribution of Values to be Formed in Lesson Content per Quarter (DepEd CG GRMC-VE 2023, 28-104)

The table above shows an extensive distribution of values that are within the theme of inclusivity. It is therefore evident in the curriculum guide that the Good Manners and Right Conduct - Values Education subjects of the MATATAG curriculum take inclusivity and inclusive education very seriously. This is guaranteed by the humanistic character of GMRC-VE, which employs methodologies that advance the human person’s holistic development — cognitive, affective and psychosocial or interpersonal, thereby leading to the realization and development of students’ autonomy (Khatib et al., 2013; Jardinez and Natividad, 2024).

Final Notes

The curriculum guide of GMRC-VE is a document that contains the promise of an efficient delivery, but it clearly has a long way to go. Given that the curriculum is only in its first phase and just started drafting and implementing in grades 1, 4 and 7, its best execution can only be done with a guide that has clear-cut goals and instructions. My honest observation includes the need to simplify the language used in the construction of the curriculum guide; probably converting its use of the Filipino language in a simpler and more straightforward vocabulary.

The curriculum may be further developed with a guide that takes on the challenge of incorporating philosophical content in implementing its pedagogical approaches, which then requires the preparedness of teachers in doing philosophy with the learners (Opiniano, Albela et al. 2021, 1260). While the common tendency is to simplify the content’s vocabulary and contextualize it in daily life experience, it would be helpful to acquaint the learners with basic philosophical key-words that can help in values inculcation, clarification, and analysis. Aside from letting the learners implement reflective and creative thinking by allowing them to express their thoughts and feelings, it will also be helpful to incorporate bite-sized theories. “Good and patient exposure to philosophy trains a student to understand and process information through critical thinking and, from there, come up with an individual perspective (Albela 2024, 283).” Such will prove that thinking of what it means to be human and ethical always proceeds with a scientific inquiry that is considered inclusive, open, and accessible to all, as long as it operates in the spirit of free thinking.

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