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Original Article

Faith-Based Organizations as New Frontiers of Religious Education: Program Initiatives and Engagements Strategies

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Abstract

Faith-based organizations have emerged as significant actors in promoting active engagement in pressing social issues within Asia, particularly in the Philippines, encompassing interfaith dialogue, human rights, and ecological concerns. Despite the increasing global recognition of this 20th-century phenomenon, their specific roles within diverse contexts remain underexplored. This study posits that as FBOs address societal challenges, they inherently contribute to shaping the faith and convictions of their stakeholders, a process closely aligned with religious education typically conducted in formal educational settings. Through parallel case studies of SILSILAH, Rise Up, and the PMPI, this research aims to demonstrate that FBOs are evolving into innovative and vital spaces for religious education, transcending traditional methods and institutions. Employing a qualitative research methodology, the study utilizes content analysis of the organizations' Facebook pages to glean relevant data shared with members and the public. The findings suggest that the FBOs under study demonstrate significant potential of FBOs as bridging institutions that enhance and extend RE beyond traditional boundaries. Furthermore, the three FBOs demonstrate the capacity to merge faith-based values with social action, converting principles of peace, justice, and stewardship into tangible projects and initiatives that tackle societal problems. The analysis indicates that when RE is situated within the operational frameworks of FBOs, it transitions from traditional didactic methods to a more comprehensive and relational approach to faith formation. RE can enrich the evangelical mission of FBOs, and vice versa, infusing faith with vitality and inspiring action within individuals and communities.

Keywords: Content Analysis, Faith-Based Organizations, Philippine Misereor Partnership Incorporated, Rise Up for Life and For Rights, Religious Education, SILSILAH Dialogue Movement

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Introduction

We live in a contemporary era marked by the manipulation and deformation of concepts, such as freedom and justice, combined with the prevalence of ecological crises, poverty, human rights abuses, and moral deterioration at all levels of society. All of these are happening against the backdrop of “walled culture”, which Pope Francis described in his encyclical *Fratelli Tutti* as a state of individualism in which selfishness and apathy towards the common good prevail among people in society (FT, 27). With the complexity and global scope of social issues, isolation and exclusion are supposedly the least likely to occur; however, a “culture of encounter” characterized by solidarity, risk-taking for one another, inclusivity, and service (FT 127, 227-232) is more likely to emerge. In this context, Pope Francis exhorts everyone to emulate the Good Samaritan, who opted not to be a mere bystander in the situation of injustice but a concerned citizen helping the person suffering and directing efforts towards the common good (FT, 70-71).

Interestingly, some interpretations of the parable claim that there are two good characters in the story, other than the Samaritan — this is the figure of the innkeeper upon whom the Samaritan entrusted the wounded robbery victim. The innkeeper is also viewed as a good character because of the mutual trust, solidarity, and service forged with the good Samaritan. Longenecker (2009) asserts that the good Samaritan’s action of justice and charity cannot be completed without the innkeeper’s supportive role. This reassessment suggests a broader understanding of the parable, with the innkeeper representing the Church in partnership with Jesus Christ, as the good Samaritan, together forming a community in collective action and care for a victim, representing the oppressed and marginalized (Longenecker, 2009). Since the Church is not just the hierarchy but the whole people of God, the innkeeper can represent the Faith-Based Organizations (FBOs) that work for justice and the common good in solidarity with the church and society. Since the innkeeper’s role is ignored in many interpretations of the parable (Longenecker, 2009), so is the discernible lacuna in scholarly investigations regarding the role of FBOs in addressing today’s social issues for social transformation (Bollinger, 2016). This study posits that as these organizations address societal issues, they become instruments in informing, forming, and transforming the faith and convictions of all their stakeholders, a process closely aligned with Religious Education (RE) typically conducted in formal educational settings only.

In this study, FBOs refer to all organizations that are either value-based or have a religious identity or both, engage in spiritual and/or social intervention services or undertake advocacy based on religious beliefs and values of a faith and spiritual tradition for transformational ministry in the Church and society (Ferris, 2005; Harden, 2006). Transformation in the Christian context consists of personal spiritual growth and social development, the two sides of the same coin, which FBOs are committed to nurturing and fostering through advocacy work and faith formation initiatives. On the other hand, RE refers to the intentional teaching and learning processes that extend beyond the basic elements of faith and traditions in more systematic and specialized courses, acquiring knowledge, skills, and competencies necessary for Christian growth and development (Congregation for Catholic Education Circular Letter, 2008; COINCAT, 1990, 32). Subsequently, this study delves into the inquiry on the complementarity of FBOs and RE or their role in the

faith formation of people in public life beyond the borders of their parishes and Catholic schools. Through parallel case studies of selected local social justice-oriented FBOs, namely SILSILAH Dialogue Movement, RISE UP for Life and For Rights, and the Philippine Misereor Partnership Incorporated (PMPI), this research aims to demonstrate that FBOs are evolving into innovative and vital spaces for religious education, transcending traditional methods and institutions. Given these considerations, these parallel case studies seek to address the following salient research questions:

1. What insights may be derived from the FB pages containing organizational introductions, program initiatives, and engagement strategies informing us of the identity and characteristics of the selected local FBOs?
2. In doing the content analysis of the selected local FBOs, to what extent is religious education situated within their operational contexts, leading to dynamic and transformative processes that extend beyond traditional academic exercises?
3. How do these selected local FBOs equip their members and the public with the knowledge, skills, and dispositions to navigate complexity, embrace diversity, and promote justice and peace in a rapidly changing world through religious education?

Delving into these diverse questions, this research aims to engender valuable insights into the academic community. Simultaneously, these insights may motivate religious educators, catechists, policymakers, and faith leaders to tap the inherent potential of FBOs as a new, vibrant frontier of religious education by their capacity to inform, form, and transform people and society.

Methodology

The study focuses on three local FBOs, namely SILSILAH, RISE UP, and PMPI. While acknowledging the constraints of generalizing from a limited sample size, the selection of these three local organizations was predicated on their social justice advocacy, religious identity or affiliation, robust Facebook presence, and faith formation initiatives, especially in the post-pandemic period, in collaboration with the Church and broader society. Having this data triangulation helps ensure the validity and reliability of the findings as the data are culled from three different sources to gain an understanding of social justice advocacy movements and their interrelation with Religious Education in Asian contexts, particularly in the Philippines.

Employing a qualitative research methodology informed by Church documents that define religious education, the study utilizes content analysis of the Facebook page of each of the identified organizations to glean relevant data shared extensively with members and the public. Content analysis facilitates the systematic and objective extraction of information and concepts from textual or visual data analysis to identify patterns, themes, and meanings (Carley, 1993). Because these organizations maintain a robust presence on Facebook, their pages are rich with information. This includes the introduction of the organization, formation program initiatives, and their current engagement strategies. Instead of employing a field study

methodology that involves direct exposure experiences, encompassing interviews, surveys, and focus group discussions, to develop familiarity with these three selected local FBOs, this study has opted for an analysis of their FB pages.

The methodological rationale for examining FB pages is grounded in acknowledging social media platforms as critical infrastructures for contemporary communication and engagement. An FB page is a public profile created by businesses, organizations, brands, celebrities, and other entities to establish a presence on the FB platform (Mochon et al., 2016), which likewise serves as a communication hub, engagement tool, along with a source of insights and analytics about their audience and content performance. An FB page often contains many posts, which are content shared by the owner or holder (an individual or organization) in various formats, including text, images, videos, and links (Spry, 2020). According to Damien (Spry, 2020), FB posts can be classified into four types, based on their apparent function and purpose: outward-facing publicity, inward-facing publicity, engagement, and the audience itself. Outward-facing publicity post is about the content that usually involves the provision of information, publicity for events, branding exercises, or the posting of trivia targeting the general or a mere section of the public using the popular language, topics, or themes; conversely, inward-facing publicity is about posts that contain information and publicity valuable within the community for internal interests; engagement posts foster interaction, discussion, and debate as well as making connections with the general public; and finally, the audience posts refer to the participation of the FB user themselves as “prosumers”, being not only consumers or recipients but also producers of content by way of sharing and writing contents, along with influencing opinions and conversations (Spry, 2020). This post-classification is utilized in the content analysis of the FB page to determine the FBOs’ nature, initiatives, and engagements, manifesting the marks of RE beyond the ordinary settings where they normally occur.

This study primarily draws from the FB pages of SILSILAH, RISE UP, and PMPI, as social media platforms are now widely utilized by individuals, institutions, and communities for various purposes, including business and marketing (Spry, 2020). Accordingly, their FB pages serve as platforms for dialogue, interaction, and the swift exchange of information among members and a wider audience. Simultaneously, they function as marketing tools, providing insights into an organization's priorities, activities, and values. Thus, FBOs' FB pages offer a glimpse into their mission, values, programs, and strategies that connect faith with pertinent social issues, and how these organizations shape and reshape the faith of the people within their community and those they serve.

Results

FBO's Identity and Core Principles in FB Introductions

According to the Silsilah Dialogue Movement (<https://www.facebook.com/silsilahdialogue>), their mission, as articulated on their FB page introduction, is to “promote harmony and peace of interfaith communities and focuses on four pillars of Dialogue: God, Self, Others and Creation”. The key themes are harmony and peace, interfaith dialogue, and the four pillars of dialogue. On the other hand, the Rise Up For Life and For Rights (<https://www.facebook.com/RiseUpForLifeAndRights/>) FB page introduction states

that it is an ecumenical alliance to respond to the upsurge in Drug-Related Killings because of a state policy called the war on drugs. Still on another FB page, The Philippine Misereor Partnership Incorporated (<https://www.facebook.com/philmisereor/>) introduces itself as "a network of more than 230 social development and advocacy groups — Non-Government Organizations, People’s Organizations, the Church’s Social Action Centers or Pastoral programs of Congregations — working for sustainable development, justice, peace, and integrity of creation (<https://pmpi.org.ph/about-us/>). Essentially, all three organizations are predominantly lay-led organizations operating in close collaboration with the Catholic Church.

Examining all the FB introduction posts, they can be considered outward-facing publicity posts because their primary function is to convey the organization's purpose, goals, and core principles, thus targeting a diverse audience, irrespective of their background or affiliation, and in a language accessible to all. The introductory posts serve as a branding exercise, thereby communicating the organization’s identity and what it stands for. It aims to create a certain image and perception of the organization in the public’s awareness. Interestingly, these intro-posts also fall under the purview of inward-facing publicity posts, as they reinforce a sense of shared identity and purpose among organization members, volunteers, and partner institutions, reminding them of their collective commitment to the organization's identity and goals. In sum, the FB pages’ introduction posts reflect an overlap of inward and outward publicity types.

FBOs Program Initiatives and Engagement Strategies

The table illustrates some significant activities and strategies shared on Facebook by the FBOs under study:

Table 1. FBOs Program Initiatives and Engagement Strategies

SILSILAH Dialogue Movement (Activities 2024-2025)	RISE UP for Life and Rights (Activities 2024-2025)	Misereor Partnership Inc (Activities 2025)
Dreaming Together	White Ribbon Campaign	Tindig Kalikasan
Harmony Youth Day	An Audience with Church Leaders Save Pasig River Forum	
CEAP JEEPGY Conference	Statement Vs Duterte Interim	Farmers& Fisherfolks Month Release
Tulay Bata Program	Statement of EJK Victims’ Families	Green Faith Podcasts
Silpeace Formation Program	Video on Call for Justice	Lobbying for RoN Bill
Praying the Harmony Prayer	Gathering of Victims & Advocates	HR Community, Culture & Conservation
Parent-Teacher Formation	International Women's Defenders Day	HREmpowering the Youth through Media & Informed Voting

World Interfaith Harmony Week	Duterte Network	Panagutin Campaign	Lakad Hubileyo ng Pag-Asa
Media Center for Dialogue/Peace	Sama-Samang Undas ng Pamilya	Rights of Nature, Anti-Mining	
Dialogue with Creation Partners	Rise Up Candle Lighting	Statement on Mining Moratorium in Palawan	

As we go into some data culled from the table above, SILSILAH has “Dreaming Together” video documentary, in celebration of the 40th anniversary, which highlights the testimonies of its members, partners, and beneficiaries, across all ages, on how the organization has influenced and changed their lives in countless ways. SILSILAH also facilitates the CEAP JEEPY Conference, offering exposure trips and immersion experiences for students and teachers from member schools of the Catholic Education Association of the Philippines. SILSILAH has established partnerships with government, private, and religious institutions, offering education and experiences focusing on how peace and mutual understanding can be achieved through dialogue. In another initiative, SILSILAH has actively promoted its "Harmony Prayer for Peace" program through its FB page, teaching prayer in schools and various instances, showcasing interfaith leaders, professionals, and youth among diverse religious communities, uniting in prayer for peace, mutual understanding, and reconciliation. Another is the "Summer Peace Camp," a component of the Silpeace formation Program, an initiative bringing together young people from different religious backgrounds in a week-long camp to promote a culture of dialogue, understanding, and friendship. Silpeace is the youth arm group of SILSILAH. The inculcation of the skills for peace and dialogue commences early among their members and beneficiaries with the “Tulay Bata” program, which aims to form the youth as agents or “bridges” of peace and harmony in society.

RISE UP posted on its FB page the "White Ribbon Campaign", one of its most recent activities with families of EJK victims, entailing the tying of white ribbons in public places, urging the government to end all forms of violence and human rights violations. It also posted the "Sama-Samang Undas ng Pamilya", a yearly gathering of families and friends of victims of extra-judicial killings, in remembrance of their loved ones, keeping their memories alive and renewing their commitment to seeking justice. RISE UP also posted about their “Duterte Panagutin Campaign Network”, a series of statements for Justice, and a video documentary about victims and survivors of human rights violations during the Duterte administration. All of these express a strong clamor for justice and an end to impunity. Through these activities, RISE UP extends legal and psychosocial assistance to victims and families, and human rights education programs. Moreover, the visit with Church leaders and candle lighting helps the EJK victims’ families heal from the psychological trauma of losing loved ones, even the possibility of reconciliation, while remaining steadfast in their commitment to pursue justice and accountability. RISE UP’s active social media presence and engagement signify its active role in disseminating information, mobilizing support, and advocating for policy changes related to human rights issues.

PMPI, for its part, posted on its FB page “Tindig Kalikasan”, a town hall forum in collaboration with its network of organizations, to know the policy focus of the senatorial candidates and partylist groups for the 2025 midterm election, assessing

their ecological stances and commitment to environmental justice. PMPI also disseminated information about the “Save Pasig River Forum,” emphasizing the critical need to revitalize the Pasig River and safeguard the entitlements of communities reliant on it. Another posting was about Farmers' and Fisherfolk's Month, promoting sustainable agriculture and fisheries, advocating for the rights and welfare of farmers and fisherfolk, and supporting their role in food security and environmental protection. “Green Faith podcasts” on faith-based environmental advocacy are PMPI’s regular posting on its FB page, featuring discussions with religious leaders, theologians, and activists on addressing climate change and promoting ecological justice. PMPI and its network collectively advocate for the enactment of the Rights of Nature Bill, intending to foster public recognition of the intrinsic rights of ecosystems and natural communities. This legislative push aims to protect and restore the environment, ensuring its sustainability across generations. They also become the voice from the peripheries by issuing statements on the mining moratorium in Palawan, citing its ecological importance and the rights of indigenous communities.

In sum, all FB posts on program initiatives and strategies are engagement posts since they reach their members and involve netizens in their advocacy. The FBOs’ FB posts transcend mere announcements; they are strategically crafted engagement posts designed to stimulate interaction and cultivate dialogue within the online community. The interactive nature of these posts provides the avenue for the audience to participate as prosumers, contributing their insights, perspectives, and experiences, thereby enriching the conversation and fostering a sense of collective ownership. While this study does not focus on the volume of “likes” of these engagement posts, the number of these FBOs’ followers speaks of their reach. Based on their respective FB pages, SILSILAH has around 4,500 followers, RISE UP has about 5,700 followers, while PMPI has approximately 9,600 followers. This figure, encompassing both members and non-members, young and old, signifies the breadth of the audience engaged through social media, representing potential participants in organizational activities, recipients of information, and contributors to online dialogues (Girsang & Kartikawangi, 2021).

Discussions

FBOs as a Continuum of Values Formation in Religious Education

From their FB page introductions alone, it can be inferred that the FBOs under scrutiny are value-based. SILSILAH adheres to the values of peace and interreligious dialogue, fostering understanding and collaboration among Muslims, Christians, and individuals from diverse cultures and faiths (Corpuz, 2025). RISE UP champions the defense of human rights, advocating for justice and accountability, and standing in solidarity with victims of oppression and violence. Lastly, PMPI advocates for ecological justice and environmental protection, sustainable practices, and policies that safeguard the well-being of both people and the planet. Both RISE UP and PMPI function as networks or alliances of social justice organizations, thereby fostering a stronger sense of community and solidarity. Each of the three local FBOs is committed to a certain set of values that are foundational or serve as the core principles of the organization’s existence.

Christian education is a commitment to the holistic development of the human person, including the formation of ethical values, rooted in Christ since in Him all human values find their unity and fulfillment, applied to daily lives and for the transformation of societies (GE, 1965; The Catholic Schools, 1977; The Catholic Schools in the threshold of the Third Millennium, 1997). It underscores value formation that is deeply rooted in faith, which serves as a guiding principle for individuals and communities to live out their beliefs in concrete actions and engagements. Values formation is integral in RE. Christian values significantly influence the development of individuals' character and moral compass. Within educational settings, the integration of these values can cultivate students into ethical, compassionate, and well-rounded individuals. By incorporating fundamental Christian principles, educational institutions can foster environments conducive to personal growth, moral integrity, and a strong sense of purpose.

This paper argues that religious education transcends traditional settings such as schools and parishes, with values also being learned and demonstrated through FBOs. The organizational introductions on FB highlight the values of peace, justice, and ecology, as espoused by these FBOs, which together form an interconnected triad unified by the central concept of human dignity. As FBOs, these values encompass a diverse set of principles and beliefs rooted in religious teachings, ethical considerations, and moral imperatives. The core tenets of Catholic Social Teaching include human dignity, the sanctity of life, a sense of communion, and stewardship. The involvement of young adults in FBOs forms a continuum of RE in schools, as values formation occurs in stages according to values clarification theory (Murad, 2014). Choosing an FBO in which to participate reflects the stages of prizing and acting on values, hallmarks of authentic faith-based values formation. Values clarification is a lifelong journey (Murad, 2014) that extends beyond formal schooling, especially for young adults seeking personal meaning and societal impact. FBO engagement facilitates the practical application of learned values and a deeper integration of faith into daily life, reinforcing the idea that religious education is not limited to schools but is a continuous process of growth and development.

FBOs as Partners for Continuing Holistic Human Development of Religious Education

RE is not just about imparting knowledge or doctrine but encompasses the holistic development of individuals, nurturing their spiritual, moral, intellectual, and social dimensions. Baring (2021) suggests that Philippine RE should focus on “living the faith” to help interpret new experiences, rather than just knowing or learning the faith, thereby reducing the gap between faith and life. In his earlier article, Baring (2011) cited the interfaith dialogue initiatives happening outside of schools, but RE within schools has not caught up with such development. Accordingly, Baring (2011) emphasized the importance of aligning religious doctrines with educational practices; the need to teach respect and acceptance of cultural and religious diversity in education as a step towards achieving peace in the Philippines. Conversely, this is what SILSILAH is doing with their program initiatives and engagement strategies (e.g., CEAP JEEPY Conference, Tulay Bata Program) that provide conferences, exposure trips, and immersion experiences to students and teachers of partner educational institutions, teaching them the Art of Dialogue, Culture of Peace, and

Paths to Peace. SILSILAH extends the rich contextual milieu and experiences that schools may inadequately provide to their students and teachers.

Similarly, RISE UP and PMPI can complement formal RE by offering practical experiences, community engagement opportunities, and platforms for dialogue and reflection, all of which contribute to a more comprehensive understanding and embodiment of religious values and principles. While human rights and integral ecology are now reasonably discussed in schools, inasmuch as interfaith dialogue, integrating actual involvement with human rights, eco-justice, and interfaith movements in the RE curriculum helps bridge the gap between theory and praxis, facilitating faith formation and holistic development of students. For example, RISE UP's "White Ribbon Campaign" and "Sama-Samang Undas ng Pamilya" can provide students opportunities to encounter families of EJK victims, joining them in their clamor for the end of political impunity, all forms of violence, and human rights violations. This kind of encounter enables students to be part of a community, becoming the source of hope and courage for the families of victims in their pursuit of justice. Furthermore, PMPI's ecological advocacy, e.g., opposing destructive mining, supporting renewable energy, and promoting sustainable agriculture, would open avenues for students to witness and participate in concrete actions that promote ecological justice and environmental protection. PMPI is likewise involved in values education, emphasizing "rights of nature" in the context of integral ecology through (Green Faith) podcasts, Tindig Kalikasan (a townhall Forum), and lobbying for RoN (Rights of Nature) Bill for their network of organizations and partner schools to drum up the commitment for environmental justice. Like SILSILAH, PMPI and RISE UP extend RE by facilitating value formation, reinforcing Catholic Social Teaching through solidarity with the poor, and promoting justice and peace. Moreover, the three local FBOs are also involved in spiritual guidance and counseling for their members, volunteers, and beneficiaries, as in the case of SILSILAH with its Harmony Prayer for Peace (teaching prayer) and Silpeace Formation Program (Youth retreats); RISE UP with its Audience with Church leaders and Gathering of victims and HR advocates for solidarity and legal-psychosocial interventions; and PMPI with its Lakad Hubileyo ng Pag-Asa (a pilgrimage-advocacy) and Empowering the Youth through media and informed voting (a retreat for Environmental advocates and organizers).

The aforementioned initiatives and engagements present a holistic approach faithful to the overarching aims of education, which seek to develop individuals who are not only well-informed but also prepared to make meaningful contributions to society. This paper posits that RE extends beyond the confines of schools and churches to encompass families, communities, and other social institutions, such as FBOs, which significantly shape individuals' religious beliefs, values, and practices. These informal channels serve as valuable complements to religious education, thereby enhancing individuals' religious formation in diverse and meaningful ways. As the document "The Catholic Schools at the threshold of the Third Millenium, by the Congregation for Catholic Education(1997,) puts it: "The school cannot be considered separately from other educational institutions and administered as an entity apart, but must be related to the world of politics, economy, culture and society as a whole" (no. 16). Recognizing the role of FBOs bridges the gap between formal and informal RE, enabling it to be a continuous process of learning throughout one's life, beyond the confines of the school.

FBOs as Educators and Agents of Social Change

The three local FBOs strategically design and implement program initiatives to foster spiritual growth, enhance connections with the divine, and empower individuals to actualize their beliefs. These engagement strategies are adaptable, catering to the specific needs of diverse communities. By nurturing intellectual, emotional, social, spiritual, and environmental dimensions through these initiatives, these FBOs facilitate integral human development. They enrich religious education by offering pathways for faith formation, values education, and spiritual growth, linking these elements to practical actions that promote holistic development. These FBOs also extend religious formation beyond formal schooling into adulthood (Ramírez, 2013). By providing ongoing faith formation outside traditional educational environments, they support lifelong religious growth that is responsive to individual needs (Ramírez, 2013). Through these deliberate strategies and initiatives, the FBOs under study show how FBOs can function as educators, delivering religious instruction, values formation, and spiritual guidance to individuals of all ages. Integrating FBO resources with school-based RE broadens the educational community. While parents and teachers bear primary responsibility for RE (The Identity of the Catholic School for a Culture of Dialogue, 2022, 41-45), a collaborative effort involving laypeople of religious FBOs is vital for nurturing a child's development, fostering a spirit of shared mission.

The program initiatives and engagement strategies employed by the three local FBOs underscore the importance of participatory methodologies, demonstrating their dedication to involving their constituents and the wider community in addressing societal problems. In essence, the convergence of faith-based values and social action is embodied in each of the FBOs' core principles, which translate their religious beliefs into tangible programs and initiatives that meet societal needs. A collaboration between social justice movements and the RE of educational institutions can integrate youth perspectives in creating practical solutions. This fosters a sense of ownership and empowerment, enabling them to articulate their concerns confidently, defend their rights, and actively contribute to a more just and inclusive society.

Conclusion and Recommendations

The preceding content analysis of the FB pages of the three selected FBOs highlights their considerable capacity as intermediary institutions that enhance and broaden RE beyond its conventional limits. These FBOs foster connections with various communities, including educational institutions involved in RE. Furthermore, the three FBOs demonstrate the capacity to merge faith-based values with social action, converting principles of peace, justice, and stewardship into tangible projects and initiatives that tackle societal problems. By engaging their members and the broader community, including schools, they emphasize participatory methods in advancing their goals. The analysis indicates that when RE is situated within the operational frameworks of FBOs, it transitions from traditional didactic methods to a more comprehensive and relational approach to faith formation. RE can enrich the evangelical mission of FBOs, and vice versa, infusing faith with vitality and inspiring action within individuals and communities.

Ultimately, the three FBOs under scrutiny empower their members, stakeholders, and the wider community with the requisite knowledge, skills, and attitudes to manage complexity, embrace diversity, and foster justice and peace through intentional faith formation initiatives, engagement strategies, and the promotion of values. Thus, RE, in its broadest sense, operates in this manner, making religious formation accessible to all, extending beyond the confines of schools and throughout all stages of adulthood.

The collaboration between FBOs and schools in religious education presents potential challenges. Firstly, the involvement of students in social justice movements could provoke government authorities, especially those with authoritarian tendencies. Such governments might exploit the often-ambiguous constitutional principle of the separation of Church and State to deter youth from participating in social actions organized by FBOs and religious institutions that are unfavorable to the government. Although the Philippines adheres to a tradition of “benevolent neutrality,” where the Church sector has historically engaged in political and social matters (Batalla & Baring, 2019), allowing religious organizations to express views on political issues, the collaborative approach between schools and FBOs may face difficulties in a highly politicized environment. The potential for students and teachers to be red-tagged by the government could discourage parents and school administrators, leading to the abandonment of the partnership. Secondly, given the multitude of FBOs in the Philippines, schools must exercise caution in vetting them for educational partnerships, considering their legitimacy, formation programs, advocacy, and mission to ensure their contribution to the holistic development of students.

Acknowledging the limitation of this study to an examination of three local FBOs, it is recommended that future research undertake another comparative analysis of diverse FBO models and approaches across various socio-cultural contexts. Furthermore, it is necessary to conduct impact assessments of FBO-led RE initiatives on individuals, communities, and society. Additionally, further investigation into innovative strategies for integrating FBO resources and expertise into formal RE curricula, while ensuring alignment with educational standards and objectives, presents a promising avenue for exploration. Pursuing these research directions will facilitate a profound comprehension of the transformative potential of FBOs as crucial collaborators in shaping the religious and moral development of individuals and communities.

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