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Q&A: Educator Pedagogical Approach

Cultural Nuances in International Social Work Practice: The Philippines

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Share your pedagogical approach with us.

My pedagogical approach is founded on my commitment to service, professional diverse experience, and spirituality. The first experience that sealed my calling in social work was when at 13, I volunteered to assist a [World Vision Philippines](#) caseworker in completing the applications of children (ages 4 to 7 years old) who were living in the slum areas of my town. I lived in the same slum community, by the Pasig River. Because I could go to school without interruption and had a basic command of “broken” English, however, I was able to interview these children and write their narratives of poverty and hope that allowed them to receive sponsorship from American families.

As I later pursued college and graduate social work studies, my community work with the fishermen of Laguna de Bay and the slum youths in an urban railroad setting prepared me for a higher calling of teaching social work. What followed was a series of diverse work experiences in various settings in the Philippines and the United States. From 1980 to 1983 I worked in the [Bataan Indochinese Refugee Camp](#)—where I also lived—in a program run by the International Catholic Migration Commission, sponsored by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR). Other experiences that shaped me as a social worker have included work with an Ethiopian community organization, the state prison system, and various public schools in New Jersey. Spirituality became the centerpiece of my service following the nuggets of wisdom of Paulo Freire’s (2018) conscientization; Allen Pincus and Anne Minahan’s (1973) framework of social change in social work practice; William Gordon’s (1993) insistence on dimensions of relationships in social work practice, not in the profession; Albert Bandura’s (1997) self-efficacy and intrinsic motivation; and finally, Abdul Baha’s (2014) work done in the spirit of service a form of worship.

When has self-care been most applicable in your experience as a social worker, and what do you do to achieve life balance?

Self-care requires tremendous self-awareness and self-authenticity. While I sometimes view self-care

approaches as flashpoints for conflict with some of my cultural beliefs, I take pride in addressing these conflicts with great effort. My professional experiences as a social worker in the prison system, in schools, and currently in the university setting have been the most challenging. My status as a female, Brown-skinned Asian immigrant, and Bahai in mixed suburban-rural and predominantly White Christian settings have sporadically contributed to anxiety and stress of performance and personal and professional network building. To alleviate some of these angsts, I work hard to practice age-old and well-researched interventions, such as mindfulness/meditation and tai chi. But the use of prayer is the essential core of my social work practice. Following Teilhard de Chardin's philosophy (Koelzer, 2013), I believe that we are spiritual beings having human experiences. I assess my social work footprint daily, being mindful that life struggles are a process that cannot be controlled, but can be managed.

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Guia Calicdan-Apostle, DSW, MSSW is an associate professor of social work at the [School of Social and Behavioral Sciences](#), Stockton University in New Jersey. She teaches race and diversity, cultural competence, social organizations and environment, and cognitive behavior therapy primarily at the graduate level. Her areas of concentration are spirituality and mental health, human trafficking, immigration, and cultural diversity. Dr. Calicdan-Apostle is the creator of the [Cultural Competence and Cultural Humility Collaborative](#), a multi-disciplinary resource on cultural competence in social work, business, education, nursing, and other allied health professions. More recently, she received a research faculty fellowship from Stockton's [Center for Learning Design](#), where she will pursue her interests in the efficacy of teaching methods using digital pedagogy and course design. Dr. Calicdan-Apostle is a university co-convenor of the Committee on

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