

## Integral Quality Education: Reflection update

When reviewing the official meaning of integral quality education in the document “Characteristics of Marianist Universities” I found several aspects or dimensions of the value. One refers to the content of what is taught in terms of being expansive in both theory and practice, liberal and professional. That dimension struck me as really no different than what you would expect from any reputable school. As I read further, the special Marianist “touch” became more apparent to me.

Another meaning of integral quality education relates to educating the whole person: physical, psychological, intellectual, moral, spiritual, and social. I interpret this value to integration from the perspective of what is happening to the student—that the student is changing in a holistic way as a result of their education. So rather than the content being the focus of the integration, the student is. As a person who teaches business and marketing, I had not given much thought as to how my students are affected spiritually or morally by what is taught. Now I think about it a lot and have revised course content, assignments, especially service-learning projects, and examples to facilitate such integration.

Yet another meaning of integral quality education is reflection, described as a “deeper level of integration” in the “Characteristics of Marianist Universities” document. Coming from a background of teaching at large public universities, I had never before considered anything like reflection about what I teach and what my students learn. Now reflection is an important of what I expect my students to do and what I expect of myself. I am finding that reflection is valuable to my students in developing their confidence, especially at this age when they are becoming independent adults, and their character, since they are thinking about how their education relates to what kind of a person they want to be. In a world with so much “busyness” this time-out for reflection is invaluable.

Finally, integration relates to integrating a variety of viewpoints from a diverse population of students. I have come to see racial/ethnic diversity in our student body as secondary to the diversity in preparation for college and in the variety of “exceptional situations” our students bring with them to Chaminade. So many of our students are struggling with complex family, work, medical, relationship, and other issues. I find it a challenge to be creative in figuring out how to make sure they are able to fit education in with all of the other aspects of their complicated lives. Bro. Jerry taught us that it is in the Marianist tradition to exhibit a “prudent tendency toward leniency.” What that has come to mean to me is that I try to bend to help my students be successful in their educational efforts without sacrificing quality.

I’m sure my reflection on the meaning of “integral quality education” will continue to evolve. Thinking about all of this is certainly “stretching” my teaching “muscles.”

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