



School Pastoral in Preparation for Priesthood Duties: Strengthening the Pedagogical and Spiritual Competence of Students of the Faculty of Philosophy

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Article Info	ABSTRACT
Corresponding Author: Laurentius Tinambunan	School pastoral is an important part of the formation of prospective priests because it brings together the learning of philosophy and theology with concrete experience accompanying students. This Community Service activity was carried out in the context of the Education and Student Orientation (ORDIK) for new students of the Faculty of Philosophy, Catholic University of Saint Thomas on August 7-11, 2023. The material "School Pastoral as Preparation for Priesthood Duties" was delivered by Dr. Laurentius Tinambunan and attended by 80 level I students who were recorded on the attendance list. The activity aims to strengthen students' understanding of school pastoral as a form of Church service, improve pedagogical and communication readiness, and foster teaching spirituality as part of priesthood duties. The approach used is educational, reflective, participatory, and contextual through scientific lectures, interactive discussions, case studies, learning communication exercises, pastoral reflection, and written evaluation. The results of the activity show the development of the school's pastoral paradigm as a work of evangelization, an increase in pedagogical insight, an increase in readiness to face the classroom, a growing awareness of the importance of dialogue and student assistance, and the formation of a commitment to carry out pastoral practices as a service. The validity of the implementation is verified through assignment letters, ORDIK schedules, attendance lists, event minutes, and resource person certificates. This article presents the results descriptively because the activity document does not contain individual pre-test and post-test scores. Keywords: priesthood formation, prospective priest students, school pastoral, pastoral pedagogy, Catholic education.

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INTRODUCTION

The formation of prospective imams requires an integral coaching process. Mastery of philosophy and theology must go hand in hand with human maturity, communication skills, sensitivity to the situation of the people, and willingness to serve. In this context, school pastoral is a strategic learning space because students are directly confronted with students, school culture, class dynamics, and the need for the proclamation of faith that must be conveyed clearly and relevantly. Catholic education itself is not only oriented to the transfer of knowledge, but to personal formation, a culture of encounter, and a living

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witness that is consistent with the identity of the educational institution (Congregation for Catholic Education, 2022).

School pastoral care is also closely related to the task of teaching and assisting the faith. The Directory for Catechesis document emphasizes that the proclamation of the faith requires the ability to recognize contexts, use understandable language, and build educational processes that touch the concrete experiences of participants (Pontifical Council for Promoting the New Evangelization, 2020). Therefore, prospective priests who carry out school pastoral practices are not enough to master religious material. They need to learn to design learning, manage interactions, listen to questions, and help learners connect faith to everyday life.

This need is even more important when the service is directed to young people. *Christus Vivit* describes young people as active subjects who need to be listened to, accompanied, and involved in the process of faith growth, not just as recipients of one-way messages (Francis, 2019). A dialogical pastoral approach requires prospective servants of the Church to be present with empathy, to understand the language of the younger generation, and to be able to create a safe space for questions and the search for meaning.

On the other hand, modern education faces rapid social, technological, and cultural changes. UNESCO affirms the need for education built through cooperation, solidarity, dialogue, and responsibility for a shared future (International Commission on the Futures of Education, 2021). In the context of schools, this change requires educators and pastoral assistants to have adaptive skills, digital literacy, communication skills, and sensitivity to the diversity of students' backgrounds.

The main challenge for prospective priest students is the gap between theoretical knowledge and classroom practice. Research on the education of prospective teachers shows that lectures can provide a methodological basis, but students still need contextual experience, reflection, and mentoring to be able to face complex classroom realities (Yin, 2019). Korthagen (2017) also emphasized that professional learning involves cognitive, emotional, motivational, and personal identity dimensions. Thus, school pastoral debriefing needs to touch not only what must be taught, but also how prospective ministers understand themselves, their callings, and their relationships with students.

Effective coaching should provide opportunities for participants to actively learn, collaborate, practice skills, get feedback, and reflect. These elements are characteristic of professional development that have an impact on practice change (Darling-Hammond et al., 2017). In the debriefing of prospective priests, this principle can be applied through case studies, communication simulations, reflection on experiences, and the preparation of service commitments.

The spiritual dimension remains the basis of the entire process. *Gaudete et Exultate* places holiness in concrete actions, service, patience, and involvement in daily life (Francis, 2018). Therefore, pedagogical abilities are not separated from spirituality. Teaching religion in schools needs to be understood as a service that requires example, humility, discipline, and a willingness to continue learning.

In addition, educational services need to be developed in the spirit of togetherness. The synodal document emphasizes communion, participation, and mission as a way for the Church to walk together (General Secretariat of the Synod, 2021). In school pastoral, this spirit is seen in the cooperation between students, supervisors, teachers, school leaders,

and students. A coaching model that is only individual-centered will find it difficult to answer field problems without a structured mentoring network.

The initial conditions at the Faculty of Philosophy of the Catholic University of Saint Thomas show that second-level students have acquired the basics of philosophy, spirituality, and pastoral theology, but some do not have teaching experience, do not understand the psychological dynamics of students, and do not yet have confidence in managing the classroom. School pastoral practice also risks being seen as an academic obligation if it is not preceded by an orientation on the meaning of the Church's ministry and responsibility.

Based on these needs, the PKM activity with the theme "School Pastoral as Preparation for Priesthood Duties for Students of the Faculty of Philosophy of the Catholic University of Saint Thomas" was carried out as a debriefing before practice. Activities aim to: (1) strengthen the pastoral understanding of the school as part of the formation of the priesthood; (2) equipping students with basic pedagogical and communication skills; (3) fostering the spirituality of ministry and awareness of the task of teaching faith; and (4) prepare students to face school dynamics in a more confident, reflective, and responsible manner. The practical novelty of the activity lies in the integration of four elements, namely vocation orientation, pastoral pedagogy, contextual exercise, and commitment reflection.

IMPLEMENTATION METHOD

Location and Participants of the Activity

The activity was carried out at the Faculty of Philosophy of the Catholic University of Saint Thomas, especially in the Magna Hall and lecture hall, in the framework of ORDIK on August 7-11, 2023. The school's pastoral material was delivered by Dr. Laurentius Tinambunan to new students of level I. Based on the two-page attendance list, the registered participants amounted to 80 students. Assignment letters, activity schedules, attendance lists, event minutes, and resource person certificates are used as documents to verify the time, location, targets, materials, and involvement of the resource person.

Activity Approach

The program uses an educational, reflective, participatory, and contextual approach. An educational approach is used to provide a foundation regarding school pastoral and faith teaching tasks. A reflective approach helps students relate the material to their vocation and personal experiences. The participatory approach opens up space for dialogue and practice, while the contextual approach directs material to the school's real situation, student character, and classroom management challenges.

Methods Used

The methods used in this activity are:

a. Scientific lectures.

The material includes the pastoral nature of the school, the pastoral relationship of the school with the formation of the priesthood, the task of teaching the faith, the principles of educational communication, and the spirituality of service.

b. Interactive discussions.

Students expressed questions, hopes, and concerns about teaching practices. Discussions provide an opportunity to clarify concepts and develop solutions together.

c. Case study.

Participants analyzed situations such as passive classes, differences in learning abilities, critical questions about faith, classroom discipline, and the use of digital media.

d. Communication exercises.

Students practice opening the lesson, explaining brief material, asking spark questions, responding to students, and closing the learning with reflection.

e. Pastoral reflection.

Participants assessed motivations, attitudes, strengths, and limitations, then formulated a personal commitment to pastoral practice.

f. Written evaluation.

Questionnaires and reflections are used to identify understanding, readiness, benefits of activities, and further assistance needs.

Stages of Implementation

The implementation of activities is arranged in a series of preparations, debriefing, exercises, reflections, and evaluations. These stages are intended so that students not only receive the material, but also process it into readiness for action.

Table 1. Stages of Implementation of Activities

Stages	Main Activities	Method	Exterior
Preparation	Coordination and identification of needs	Team discussions and context analysis	A Map of Student Needs
Preparation of materials	Preparation of materials and cases	Document study and planning	Supply materials
Implementation	Orientation, lectures, and dialogues	Lectures and discussions	Conceptual understanding
Guided practice	Communication exercises and case studies	Simulation and feedback	Initial skills
Reflection	Motivation and commitment checks	Written reflections	Service commitment
Evaluation	Further benefit and needs assessment	Questionnaire and facilitator's notes	Follow-up recommendations

Analytical Instruments and Techniques

The activity instruments include presentation materials, case study sheets, reflection guides, evaluation questionnaires, and facilitator notes. The data was analyzed descriptively by grouping information into the themes of understanding, pedagogical readiness, communication, ministry spirituality, and follow-up needs. Because the source report does not contain individual pre-test and post-test scores, the article does not present percentage increases or statistical tests that are not supported by the data.

Flow of Activity Implementation

The program flow shows the relationship between needs identification, material preparation, supply implementation, guided practice, reflection, and evaluation. Each stage is directed to connect knowledge with readiness to carry out services in schools.



Figure 1. School Pastoral Debriefing Implementation Flow

Documentation of the Implementation of Activities

Administrative documentation is used to ensure the suitability of the article with actual execution. Five types of documents are used as evidence, namely assignment letters, ORDIK schedules, student attendance lists, event minutes, and resource person award certificates. The document verifies the identity of the resource person, the time span of the activity, location, the school's pastoral materials, the number of participants, and the institution's endorsement. A summary of the functions of each supporting document is presented in Table 2.

Table 2. Administrative Documentation of PKM Activities

No.	Documents	Verification Function	Documentation
1	Assignment letter	Verify the assignment of Dr. Laurentius Tinambunan as an ORDIK resource person, the location of the activity, and the implementation range from August 7-11, 2023.	
2	ORDIK Schedule	Verify the arrangement of activities, place, time, and the relationship of school pastoral materials with the series of new student orientations.	
3	Attendance list	Verify 80 level I students who are registered as participants through their identification numbers, names, and signatures.	
4	Minutes	Verify the completion of ORDIK activities, the identity of the resource persons, and the material "School Pastoral as Preparation for Priesthood Duties".	
5	Resource	Verify the institution's recognition of Dr. Laurentius	

No.	Documents	Verification Function	Documentation
	person certificate	Tinambunan as a ORDIK resource person.	

The first document that underlies the implementation of the activity is the letter of assignment of the resource person as shown in Figure 2.

RESULTS OF ACTIVITIES AND DISCUSSIONS

Implementation of Activities

The debriefing activity was carried out as part of the ORDIK series for new students of the Faculty of Philosophy on August 7-11, 2023. The letter of assignment establishes Dr. Laurentius Tinambunan as a resource person, while the minutes record the material "School Pastoral as Preparation for Priesthood Duties". The initial session contained a briefing on the pastoral position of the school in the formation of priest candidates and the responsibility of students as representatives of the institution and servants of the Church. This orientation helps participants view the educational process not only as fulfilling academic demands, but as an experience of self-formation and preparation for ministry.

The material session then discussed student characteristics, pedagogical communication, learning structure, classroom management, the use of contextual examples, and relational ethics in schools. Students are invited to understand that the success of a school's pastoral is not only determined by the accuracy of the content, but also by the ability to create interactions that value students and encourage active engagement.

In the case study, students discuss situations that may arise while teaching, such as less active learners, classes that are difficult to control, critical questions about the teachings of faith, time constraints, and differences in students' backgrounds. This process helps participants develop problem-solving steps that consider learning objectives, participants' conditions, ethical communication, and coordination with teachers.

In the reflection session, students wrote down their motivation to follow the practice, their strengths, aspects that still need to be developed, and personal commitment. Reflection is directed so that teaching readiness is not only understood technically, but also as an attitude of serving, listening, learning, and being responsible.

Activity Achievements

Based on the implementation reports, evaluations, and reflections of participants, the activity produced achievements in terms of knowledge, skills, attitudes, and service readiness. A summary of the achievements is presented in Table 2.

Table 3. Achievement of Activity Results

Aspects	Initial Conditions	After-Briefing Outcomes	Makna Pastoral
School pastoral understanding	Tends to be seen as a curricular obligation	Understood as part of the formation and work of the teaching of the faith	Formation of service orientation
Pastoral pedagogues	Teaching experience is still limited	Understand the structure of learning, communication, and management of elementary classes	Improve practice readiness
Confidence	Some participants felt anxious about	Have an overview of the situation and alternative	Reduce initial uncertainty

Aspects	Initial Conditions	After-Briefing Outcomes	Makna Pastoral
	the class	responses	
Spirituality of ministry	Motivation has not always been linked to a call	Teaching is understood as service and testimony	Strengthening the integration of spirituality and action
Reflection and follow-up	Don't have a personal development plan yet	Compiling commitments and aspects that need to be accompanied	Become the basis of supervision

The first achievement is a paradigm shift. Students began to see school pastoral as a concrete exercise in carrying out teaching and mentoring tasks, not just administrative activities. This paradigm shift is important because initial motivation influences how students prepare material, build relationships, and evaluate experiences. The second achievement is related to pedagogical readiness. The materials and case studies provide a basic framework for designing learning, delivering structured explanations, and responding to classroom dynamics. Although one-day debriefing cannot replace the hands-on teaching experience, the activity helps students have a roadmap of action before entering school. The third achievement is increased psychological readiness. Open discussions about anxiety and possible problems make students realize that difficulties in the classroom are part of the learning process. They are encouraged to ask for guidance, receive feedback, and make incremental improvements. The fourth achievement is the strengthening of ministry spirituality. Reflection helps participants connect teaching skills with example, discipline, patience, and concern for student growth. The fifth achievement is the preparation of personal commitments that can be used as a basis for monitoring during practice.

Discussion

1. School pastoral as an integration formation.

The results of the activities show that school pastoral can be a meeting point between intellectual, human, spiritual, and pastoral formations. The identity of Catholic education demands consistency between the values taught, the culture of dialogue, and the testimony of educators (Congregation for Catholic Education, 2022). For prospective priests, practice in schools helps to test the ability to translate theological knowledge into communicative language while building educational relationships.

2. Theoretical and practical gaps.

Participants' need for case studies and communication exercises corroborated the finding that prospective educators often have difficulty when it comes to applying campus concepts to real-world classroom situations. Yin (2019) shows that lectures provide a foundation, but practicum experiences still require contextual support and reflection. Therefore, debriefing before practice should be continued with supervision during practice and reflection after practice.

3. Active and reflective professional learning.

The lecture method alone is not sufficient to build readiness. Discussion, simulation, case studies, feedback, and reflection are important components of professional development (Darling-Hammond et al., 2017). Korthagen (2017) added that practice change is related to participants' identities, motivations, and emotions. These findings

explain why pastoral reflection sessions need to be maintained, rather than placed as separate additions to pedagogical material.

4. Youth assistance and dialogue.

Students need to understand students as individuals who are growing, have questions, and need assistance. Francis (2019) emphasizes the importance of listening to young people and walking with them. In the context of religious learning, dialogue does not mean reducing the rigor of the material, but helps learners understand the teachings through language, examples, and experiences that they can relate to life.

5. Teaching faith as service.

The Directory for Catechesis places evangelization as a living, contextual, and encounter-oriented process (Pontifical Council for Promoting the New Evangelization, 2020). *Antiquum Ministerium* also affirms the need for adequate formation for those who carry out catechesis duties (Francis, 2021). For prospective priest students, the principle directs the school's pastoral practice to serious preparation, example, responsibility, and self-evaluation.

6. Culture of encounter and synodality.

Discussion and cooperation activities with partner schools reflect the spirit of walking together. The preparatory document of the Synod places communion, participation, and mission as the framework for the renewal of the Church's life (General Secretariat of the Synod, 2021). School pastoral will be more effective if students, supervisors, teachers, and schools have regular communication and a clear division of responsibilities.

7. Spirituality and holiness in daily tasks.

Gaudete et Exsultate affirm that holiness is manifested through daily tasks and concrete service (Francis, 2018). The results of the students' reflections show that religious learning needs to be carried out with patience, discipline, humility, and a willingness to learn from experience. Spirituality thus becomes the force that shapes the quality of communication and pedagogical decisions.

8. The relevance of humanist education.

Education for fraternal humanism emphasizes relationships, solidarity, and shared responsibility (Congregation for Catholic Education, 2017). This principle is in line with the needs of schools that are not only looking for material presenters, but companions who are able to respect the dignity of students. This direction is also in line with the idea of education as a public and collaborative effort to build a shared future (International Commission on the Futures of Education, 2021).

Supporting Factors, Constraints, and Follow-Up

Supporting factors for the activity include faculty support, the relevance of the theme to student needs, participant involvement in discussions, and the existence of partner schools as practice spaces. Varied methods also help to keep participants engaged and allow the material to be viewed from both conceptual and practical perspectives.

The main obstacles are limited debriefing time, differences in student experience, the unavailability of documentation of individual evaluation scores, and the absence of follow-up data after practice. These limitations cause the results of the article to be stronger on process descriptions and qualitative outcomes than on quantitative impact measurement.

The recommended follow-up is: (1) compiling a brief module of school pastoral; (2) implementing microteaching before placement; (3) using a weekly reflection journal; (4) establish a rubric for observation with lecturers and teachers; (5) carry out evaluation meetings after practice; and (6) archive questionnaires, attendance lists, photos, and assessment results as evidence of activities and the basis for further research.

CONCLUSION

School pastoral debriefing activities make an important contribution to the readiness of students of the Faculty of Philosophy of the Catholic University of Saint Thomas before practicing at partner schools. The integration of priesthood duty orientation, pastoral pedagogy, case discussion, communication exercises, and reflection helps students understand that school pastoral is a process of self-formation as well as Church service. The results of the activity showed a paradigm shift regarding the meaning of practice, increased pedagogical insight, readiness to face classroom dynamics, strengthened confidence, and growth of ministry spirituality. These achievements support the view that the formation of prospective priests needs to connect theory with contextual experience and reflective mentoring.

Program sustainability requires microteaching, co-supervision with partner schools, reflection journals, post-practice evaluations, and more complete data documentation. The next implementation needs to use pre-test, post-test, observation rubrics, and follow-up interviews so that the impact of debriefing can be measured more objectively and can be compared between periods.

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