

HOW JESUIT IS THE ATENEO DE MANILA UNIVERSITY GRADUATE SCHOOL OF BUSINESS?

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Abstract

The Ateneo de Manila University is a Filipino Catholic Jesuit university that has two business schools, the undergraduate John Gokongwei School of Management located in Loyola Heights, Quezon City, and the Ateneo Graduate School of Business (AGSB) located in the heart of Makati City, the central business district of Metro Manila. While the undergraduate business school can boast of a distinctly Jesuit character in its program because it shares the same liberal arts core curriculum with the other schools (School of Humanities, School of Science and Engineering, and School of Social Sciences) in the same location and because its students are full-time students, the AGSB being a professional school, does not have a liberal arts core curriculum and its students are part-time students. The purpose of this paper then is to examine the Jesuit character of the AGSB, how it implements its mission and the challenges it faces in the context of the country mired by poverty and corruption.

To answer the inquiry, the paper cites the sources of Ignatian Spirituality in education, derives several characteristics of Jesuit education, and examines how the AGSB implements these characteristics in its mission-vision, faculty, curriculum, studentry, ethics center, and other supporting activities.

The paper concludes with some recommendations.

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To answer the inquiry, this paper is divided into four parts: the Ignatian Spirituality in Education, a brief history of the AGSB, how the AGSB implements its mission, and conclusion and recommendations.

Ignatian Spirituality in Education

The sources of Ignatian Spirituality in education are the *Spiritual Exercises* of St. Ignatius of Loyola, the *Ratio Studiorum*, the 32nd General Congregation, and the address of Fr. Pedro Arrupe, S.J., to a gathering of Jesuit Alumni of Europe in Valencia, Spain, on 31st of July, 1973, titled “Men (and Women) for Others.”

The *Spiritual Exercises* is a manual for retreats which every Jesuit has to go through, started by its founder in the course of his own spiritual journey from his conversion in the castle of Loyola to the illumination at Manresa and the founding of the order. The *Spiritual Exercises* begins with the Principle and Foundation:

Man is created to praise, reverence, and serve God our Lord, and by this means to save his soul. All other things on the face of the earth are created for man to help him fulfill the end for which he is created. From this it follows that man is to use these things to the extent that they will help him to attain his end. Likewise, he must rid himself of them in so far as they prevent him from attaining it.¹

The *Spiritual Exercises* is a more like a teacher’s manual than a textbook in “preparing and disposing our soul to rid itself of all its disordered affections and then, after their removal, of seeing and finding God’s will in the ordering of our life for the salvation of our soul.” (By “soul” is meant the total person.)

The *Ratio Studiorum* or Plan of Studies of 1559 was a codification of the best practices of what several generations of Jesuit teachers and administrators had learned by experience, observation and reflection. Like the *Spiritual Exercises*, the *Ratio Studiorum* served as a guide for school administrators and teachers for the Jesuit *collegium* (secondary school) of the seventeenth century. It was modeled after the method of the University of Paris, where Ignatius studied and formed the first companions. The Parisian model worked on the progression of studies from the lowest level to the next, and followed the general rule of *pauca praecepta, multa exempla, plurima exercitatio* (a few precepts, several examples, and a great deal of exercises). The relation between teacher and student is to be modeled on the relationship between the director of the *Spiritual Exercises* and the person making them.² Without mentioning the term, the *Ratio Studiorum's* pedagogy was student-centered.³

The 32nd General Congregation of Jesuits held in Rome in 1974 and 1975 translated the traditional two-fold goal of the Society, “defense and propagation of the faith, and salvation and perfection of souls,” into “service of the Faith and the promotion of Justice which it includes,” and “total and integral liberation of man leading to participation in the life of God.”⁴ To implement this new thrust of the Society, the Philippine Province issued a policy paper on the educational apostolate, acknowledging the basic structural injustice in contemporary Philippine society, where wealth, power and access to quality education and public services are concentrated in one small segment of the population, while the vast majority “are deprived of the material and spiritual resources necessary for human development.”⁵

14 It is hardly likely that those on top of this structure, its principal beneficiaries, will change it of their own accord. They must be helped to do so by organized pressure from below....

18 In order that the intended reform of unjust social structures may be radical and yet exclude violent revolution, a certain responsiveness to pressure from below must be generated at the top: at the level where the key decisions affecting national policy are at present being made almost exclusively.

19 Hence, another element in the overall strategy, one which our educational institutions are particularly well situated to contribute, is the development of leaders at the top who are genuinely responsive to and effectively supportive of the aspirations of the masses.

The address of the Father General Pedro Arrupe, S.J., in 1973 interpreted the social trust of the *Ratio Studiorum* in admonishing Jesuit schools to form “men-for-others; men who will live not for themselves but for God and his Christ...men completely convinced that love of God which does not issue in justice for men is a farce.”⁶ Justice in the concrete for Fr. Arrupe, S.J., means living a simpler life style, not profiting from injustice, and if capable, changing the unjust structures of society.

From the above sources, four important characteristics of Jesuit education can be singled out: Finding God in all things, *Magis* exemplified in the motto *Ad Majorem Dei Gloriam* (For the Greater Glory of God), *Cura Personalis* (Personal Care), and Education in the Service of the Nation (and the World).

Finding God in all things stems from the *Spiritual Exercises*, notably the “Foundation” and the Meditation on the Incarnation. It simply means that God is to be found in all things, that “nothing is completely secular for everything human is divine.” Jesuit spirituality is engagement in the world, for there is nothing in the world that is not touched by God’s presence. The distinctive character of Jesuit educational institutions is the combination of professional education with humanistic or liberal education, the training of character, which should lead to the transcendent.

Magis is the striving and passion for excellence, expressed in the three questions of the founder: What have I done for Christ? What am I doing for Christ? What *more* can I do for Christ? It is also in the prayer before each meditation: “Lord, grant me the grace to see Thee *more* clearly, to love Thee *more* dearly, and to follow Thee *more* nearly.” *Magis* should be understood not quantitatively but qualitatively, and beyond rationality to the level of the heart. *Ad Majorem Dei Gloriam* is a popular motto in many Jesuit educational institutions.

Cura Personalis is the personal attention given by the mentor to the student for his total and integral liberation in the same way that God deals with each one of us personally, as experienced by St. Ignatius himself, and by the retreatant when he goes through the *Spiritual Exercises*. The *Ratio Studiorum* speaks of “*personalis cura alumnorum*” translated as “personal care of students” which in reality means that professors should be personally interested in the intellectual and spiritual progress of their students, in all the aspects of each student’s total human development.

Education in the service of the nation and the world means that education is never an end in itself but an apostolate. The social dimension of education is evident in the motivation of St. Ignatius in writing the *Spiritual Exercises* (that others may be led to God), in the meditation on love, in the works of charity in the *Ratio Studiorum*, and most prominently in the trust of Jesuit educational institutions to form men and women for others.

A Brief History of the AGSB⁷

The long history of the AGSB can be divided briefly into five periods: the Preparatory Years, the Foundation and Beginning Years, the Turbulent Years, the Survive and Maintain Years, and the Revitalization Years.

The Preparatory Years, 1960-1966, were the Graduate School years of the University, where the Master of Arts degree in Business Administration and the Master of Arts degree in Economics were offered under the Ateneo Graduate School of Economics and Business Administration.

The AGSB was founded in 1966, a departure from the traditionally known liberal education of the Ateneo, an entry into the world of professionals. The early years were marked by ensuring the AGSB's survival and the running of day-to-day affairs. The question of whether the AGSB was in line with the educational trust of the Ateneo as a Jesuit University was neither raised nor addressed.

Turbulence began in 1981 and ran through the next four years. The tri-semester program and Middle Manager Program were introduced. Internal conflicts among faculty and administrators arose, culminating in the University Board of Trustees' decision to close the School. The decision, however, was retracted due to protests from various groups. For a year, no new admissions were accepted and an officer-in-charge was assigned to oversee the AGSB.

The Survive and Maintain Years (1985-1993) was characterized by efforts to keep the School survive. The situation became problematic in 1992 when the Dean was preparing for a new assignment. A small group in the School tried to control, to run the school in their own way to the detriment and demoralization among the faculty. The University President intervened and appointed a new Dean.

The new Dean was Dr. Alfredo Bengzon, himself a graduate of AGSB, who served as the Secretary of Health of President Corazon Aquino in her ascendancy in the People Power Revolution of 1986. Under his leadership, the AGSB began to ask the question: What is so Ateneo about the AGSB? Thus the question of identity, the Jesuit character of the AGSB, was raised.

It took about twelve years for the AGSB to ask and answer the question, "What is so Ateneo about the AGSB?"

Implementing the Mission

In implementing the mission, we inquire into the four components of the AGSB: the faculty, the curriculum, the student activities, and the ethics center.

Faculty. The first thing that Dr. Bengzon did when he took over the deanship of the AGSB was to engage the faculty in one-on-one meetings with the faculty on the question of what is so Ateneo about the AGSB. In the recruitment process, the AGSB does not advertise but follows the way missionaries and revolutionaries are recruited. "Somebody here knows them well and recommends them; somebody who knows them and believes them to fit in our culture. They are then interviewed by the cluster heads, then by the dean and associate dean. If they pass the interviews, then they're in."⁸

To instill in the faculty the commitment to teaching and establish a common ground for the mission, the faculty participated in a weekend experience of the Colloquium on the Ministry of Teaching. The Colloquium on the Ministry of Teaching was a brainchild of the New York Province of the Society of Jesus in 1980, brought to Southeast Asia in

1981, subsequently adopted and localized by the Philippine Province, and given to all Jesuit schools and eventually to other member schools of the Catholic Educational Association of the Philippines. The Colloquium is a shared experience of the ministry of teaching. A very moving session of the Colloquium was when participants shared their experiences of God active in their lives.

Faculty conferences are held every year, each year's theme building on the previous ones. Through the conferences, the faculty is taken through the different parts of the Ignatian spirituality. More than a team-building exercise, the conferences serve as a continuing formation of the faculty into the Ignatian spirituality. "It was in these faculty conferences that the mission-vision of the school was crafted, developed, and eventually lived out. And it changes from year to year, not in the sense of throwing everything out, but building on previous faculty conferences so that you could almost look at it as journey; and each time we meet we're raising the bar in terms of intellectual excellence, bonding among the faculty, and passion for what we're doing."⁹

It was in the 2004 faculty conference that the value proposition, "Business is not just for profit alone but also for nation-building," was arrived at. The Vision of the AGSB is "To be a leading management educational institution in the Asia Pacific region for the business practitioner seeking to become a professional and ethical business leader committed to nation building." The Mission Statement ends with "We will strive to bridge the external and internal gaps in our communities and in our country so that our people may achieve a just and good life." "Our country is our business" has become the battle cry of the AGSB.

During the same conference, the *Mulat Diwa* Program ('*mulat*' means 'awareness' and '*diwa*' means 'spirit') was launched to the faculty, aimed at raising awareness to the value proposition. At the 2005 Faculty Conference, the value proposition was integrated into the curriculum, "not as an 'add-on' to the courses but as the foundation for all courses."¹⁰

99% of the faculty are practitioners in their field. To equip them to be good mentors, the faculty went through seminar-workshops on facilitation, the case-study method, and business ethics. They are organized in clusters according to the subjects they teach. In the cluster they designed a common syllabus, implement the decisions of the faculty conferences to their subject level, share ideas and practices. A modest honorarium is given to faculty who write case studies based on their experiences.

The AGSB views its faculty not as lecturers but as facilitators. As much as possible, no faculty handles a class of more than 30 students. This makes it easier for the professor to connect with his/her students as unique individuals, practicing *cura personalis*. "Professors take pains to see to it that students receive not just the kind of skills that will have them excel in the workplace, but also the values and leadership attitude that will embolden them to make a difference wherever they are."¹¹ Not a few professors hold after-office consultations and extra sessions without extra pay. Some form familial bond that grow into friendship lasting for years.

“So serious is the AGSB about providing *cura personalis* that professors are evaluated not only by their ability to competently deliver on their subject matter but also on how they relate to their students.”¹² Towards the end of every semester, every faculty is evaluated by his/her students. The evaluation includes the following interaction points: “ability to treat students as co-professionals, ability not only to focus on the content of the course but also to include ethical dimensions, ability to make the class feel relaxed and at ease, ability to listen to students questions and respond to these to the best of their ability.”¹³

Curriculum. The AGSB offers four degree programs: MBA Standard, MBA Middle Manager, MBA Regis, a tie-up with Regis University in Denver, Colorado, and the MBA with specialization in Health. The programs are “open to potentials and to realities—to the management trainee as well as to the president of a company.”¹⁴ Aside from passing the entrance exam, the applicant to the program must have a year or two of working experience. Once accepted, s/he goes through an orientation program peppered with Jesuit buzzwords: *lux in Domino, ad majorem Dei gloriam, primus inter pares, cura personalis, magis*, men and women for others. The highlight of the orientation is the story of Dean Alfredo R.A. Bengzon, his struggle against the Marcos regime and his stint as Secretary of Health under President Cory Aquino. “The story is a microcosm for the grand vision of the AGSB which sees that the purpose of business goes beyond generating profit, it must contribute to nation building.”¹⁵

In the classroom, the student is treated more a client than a learner. The client as a learner is central to every program. The inter-active method of instruction is emphasized, following the Jesuit Bernard Lonergan’s structure of knowing: experiencing, understanding, judging and action.

In all the degree programs, Business Ethics and Leadership are core courses. “Thus far, AGSB is the only business school (in the country) where business ethics and the character formation of leaders are core courses. It will interest the jaded to know that these classes are among the most popular in school.”¹⁶ Included in the syllabus of Business Ethics for MBA Standard is Fr. Arrupe’s “Men (and Women) for Others,” which requires the client learner to answer the question, “How can I be ethical in business?” In all the other business subjects, the faculty is required to include an ethical component of the course.

Student Activities. The *Mulat Diwa* Program is the social awareness program for students. Launched in 2004 with a video documentary on poverty in the country, it seeks to awaken the student to the context of doing business and to connect to this reality. In 2006, the Student Council and class presidents went through a series of student leadership seminars to train them to be catalysts for the value proposition, “Business is not just for profit alone but also for nation building.” The value proposition was also launched to the public in 2006 through a Business Leadership Forum entitled “Our Country is Our Business.” In November of the same year, it was also launched to the alumni.

The *Mulat Diwa* Program in the classroom involves partnership with other organizations such as the organization of small and medium enterprises (SMEs) in the strategic management plan (required of all students); the Export Development Council for Finance classes students to mentor SMEs in the management of the financial aspects of the business; Hands on Manila, a non-profit organization dedicated to volunteer work; and the League of Corporate Foundations in developing the Corporate Social Responsibility curriculum for undergraduate BA program.

The annual Lenten lecture is another activity that invites students (and faculty) “to think about what they are doing as a career and a profession in the context of faith...How does one find God in the corporate world? How does one lead a prayer life in an engaged environment? What is God saying to us in the political and economic events in our country?”¹⁷

Other activities of the AGSB include raising funds and materials to build 56 Gawad Kalinga houses, the training of the Leaders for Health program, and the business faculty development of two schools per year.

Ethics Center. Assisting the Business Ethics course is the Gov. |Jose B. Fernandez Jr. Ethics Center, launched through an endowment from the family of the Jose B. Fernandez, a leading business figure and a former Central Bank Governor. The Center, in partnership with business and government seeks to help transform business and government in the country primarily by training professors to teach Business Ethics and Ethics in Government and secondarily by providing training and consultancy to business and government people. Since the Center’s primary task is to train faculty members to teach Business Ethics, Ethics in Government, it focuses its energies and resources on conducting training workshops in how to teach Business Ethics and Ethics in Government for Management and Philosophy teachers and how to integrate Ethics in the management subjects taught in both Schools of Business and Government. These training modules have also been brought to universities all over the country that AGSB has to capacitate as part of its mandate as a Center for Development for Management Education. To aid the teaching of Business Ethics and Ethics in Government, the Center has written local cases and is building up a small library of materials, focusing on the Asian experience. The Center also helps a few Philippine corporations in their campaign to establish an ethics culture among their employees. It has also conducted through the Ateneo School of Government, modules on Ethics, Power and Accountability for government officials, notably elected local executives, e.g. mayors, governors, local administrators, etc. The Center also invites leading business ethicists to speak to both business people and business teachers. In 2007, the Center invited leading American ethicist Patricia Werhane of the University of Virginia and De Paul University to speak on Moral Imagination.

Conclusion and Recommendation

The AGSB is on the right track in making it a Jesuit business school. Still a lot more can be done, like ensuring the Strategic Management Papers are relevant to the task of nation building. Further research is necessary to evaluate the impact of the programs on the graduates and their workplaces. Meantime, the struggle must go on. Ad Majorem Dei Gloriam!

End Notes

¹ *The Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius*, translated by Anthony Mottola, with an introduction by Robert W. Gleason, S.J. (Image Books, 1989), p. 47.

² Raul J. Bonoan, S.J., and James A. O'Donnell, S.J. (eds.) *The Jesuit Educational Tradition: The Philippine Experience*, Budhi Papers No. 9 (Ateneo de Manila University, 1988), p. 10.

³ *Ibid.*, p.22.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 23.

⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 58-59.

⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 25.

⁷ "Primus Inter Pares, A brief history of the Ateneo Graduate School of Business" *Frontline, Ateneo Professional Schools*, vol. 3, no. 1 (June 2007). pp. 52-54.

⁸ Ina Bonnevie Teves, "Leading Change, Raising Heroes," *Frontline*, p. 17.

⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 17.

¹⁰ *Frontline*, p. 40.

¹¹ Cora Llamas, "Together in the Trenches," *Frontline*, p. 38.

¹² *Ibid.*, p. 40.

¹³ *Ibid.*, p. 40.

¹⁴ Monina Allarey Mercado, "The Exuberant New Campus" *Frontline*, p. 8.

¹⁵ Ina Bonnevie Teves, "Leading Change, Raising Heroes" *Frontline*, p. 16.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 17.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 18.