

Pedagogical models for training
(A third world experience)

- Fr.Dr. LOUIS XAVIER, SJ.

1.0 Introduction

1.1 The need to understand business as a calling:

The purpose of the business organisation is the service of the whole society as understood in CST.

In fact, the purpose of a business firm is not simply to make a profit, but is to be found in its very existence as a community of persons who in various ways are endeavouring to satisfy their basic needs, and who form a particular group at the service of the whole of society (CA 35, 43)

1.2 The calling rooted in our faith vision:

God is at work in every individual (personal humanism) and also in the society (social humanism) (Eph: 1 : 8 – 10); In the context of this faith vision, everyone engaged in business views his own business as ‘calling’ from God to collaborate with him in the building up of his fellow men and a better society. The pedagogical model proposed in this paper is contextualised in this faith vision.

1.3 The present day imperatives

Today human life is under serious threat in every culture and continent due to the separation of social interest from self and group interest as reflected in the way business corporations are generally conducting themselves under the New world order. Globalisation and neo liberalism are making life miserable for millions of people in the developing economies and hence become powerful instruments of neo-colonialism and modern slavery. What John Paul II calls “the idolatry of the market” (CA 40) is becoming a reality.

Man’s situation in the modern world seems indeed to be far removed from the objective demands of the moral order, from the requirement of justice, and even more of social love.
(RH 16)

1.4 Objectives of the Presentation:

In such a situation where competition and survival of the fittest dictate the law, there is an imperative need to promote the understanding of business as a calling which understanding will enable managers to transcend themselves for the common good. Business schools provide an excellent opportunity to promote such an understanding among prospective managers in the classroom and are also strategically placed to provide an ongoing formation in this direction to those who are already managers.

The objectives of the paper are:

- ❖ To present some pedagogical models that have been tried out in this direction – both inside the classroom and outside it.
- ❖ To report on the perceived effectiveness of such models.
- ❖ To make recommendations for greater effectiveness.

2.0 Pedagogical models

2.1 Inside the classroom:

The ambience of teaching business ethics provides an excellent opportunity. The main purpose of the ethics in the business curriculum is to bring about certain attitudinal changes in the learner. The course has to go beyond mere instruction or transmission of knowledge and aim at transformation of the learner. For this purpose an integrated pedagogical framework consisting of the five steps of context – experience – reflection – action – evaluation is adopted.

Once the matter is situated in a relevant **context** (student, societal, institutional and teacher's), and attempts are made to draw upon learner **experience**, he must then be involved in the process of **reflection**. At this level of Reflection, the memory, the understanding, the imagination and the feelings are used to capture the meaning and the essential value of what is being considered and to appreciate its implications in the ongoing search for truth and freedom. The goal of reflection is to grasp meaning fully – not merely the deep intellectual understanding of the subject but also its human meaning and significance. It is through the process of reflection, that learners begin to appropriate values for themselves (In this case business as a calling) and begin to form their own opinions, feelings and attitudes. Reflection is followed by **Action** which refers to interiorised choices by which in the light of meanings perceived and judged, the student decides to make the truth his or her own. He decides that he could and would contribute intelligently and effectively to the welfare of the society. Action is followed by **Evaluation** whose main purpose is to provide effective feedback that will make the teacher explore alternative methods of teaching.

Salient features of the pedagogy:

This pedagogy is based on a comprehensive world vision rooted in faith. As stated earlier, it is the view that God is at work both in the human person (personal humanism) and in society (social humanism) striving for their development and the pedagogy only facilitates such a development by accompanying the learner.

This pedagogy aims at human growth which involves understanding, imagination and conviction. This is made possible by the involvement of the whole person, his mind, heart and will in the learning process.

It follows a logical and sequential process. Logical because it is rooted in a unifying world vision; Sequential because it ensures growth through steps of context – experience – reflection – action which through evaluation ensures the repetition of the same process in a cyclic fashion and ensures further growth.

The pedagogy does not rely on accretion of content. On the other hand, it is infusive and focuses on the learning process itself. It provides a framework of enquiry for the purpose of wrestling with significant issues and complex values of life and teachers capable and willing to guide the enquiry.

3.0 Outside the classroom

In spite of such pedagogical training, students may be sucked into competitive business environments that obliterate all sense of self-transcendence and commitment

to the common good. Hence supportive strategies are being put in place outside the classroom.

One is the need **for ongoing formation**: This ongoing formation is chiefly geared to the alumni who have been earlier exposed to the spirituality of Business. The ongoing formation programmes bring them together for an exchange of experiences as to how they are relating what they have earlier learnt in the class room to the actual work situations in which they find themselves at present. They compare notes through interactions and sharpen some of their earlier insights and respond with ‘creative fidelity’ to the profound changes taking place in today’s world. These programmes of ongoing formation oblige the participants to reflect as much on the changing business environment as on themselves so as to know how they can change themselves and update their earlier understanding regarding the need for ethical practices, their attitudes and methods of relating beliefs to practices. This would help them to face with renewed vigour the call of business and the calling of business.

These programmes chiefly combine prayer and reflection in a pluricultural context. The participants are encouraged at the beginning of each session to read from their own scriptures and pray in their own way through ‘bajans’ and ‘kirtanas’. During the course of the sessions, they are encouraged to relate to their own religious beliefs which help them encounter God in their own lives, in the lives of individuals and the world.

They are made to bring and share their experiences in the work place in the form of case studies, especially those experiences that challenge their earlier ones acquired as students – such as instances of harassment of women in work space, unequal pay for the work done chiefly by the ‘contingency’ labourers, corruption and pilferage, lack of participation by the work force, absence of organizational mission etc. A discussion of these contextualised experiences help the participants to clarify their values, firm up their convictions and decide on what they could do however small it may be, to change their business environment.

This coming together periodically (once a month) helps them get bonded together in a support group so that they feel mutually supported and sustained in their personal vocation as business men and women. This bonding is helped further through “fellowship outings” with the family members of the participants.

The other strategies adopted are seminars on themes related to social responsibility of business and retreats (especially in the manner of the 19th annotation of Ignatian spiritual exercises.) These retreats or recollections are conducted once a fortnight, on a continual basis from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. on Sundays. Those sections from the spiritual exercises such as – the Principle and Foundation, The Kingdom of Christ, The two standards, and the contemplation for obtaining love, have been found especially helpful to bring to focus, the commitment needed on the part of people engaged in business to live up to their calling.

The above ongoing formation programmes have been found to have a profound impact on executives who aspire to go beyond their own interest and strive for the common good.

4.0 **Moving from business as a calling to the calling of business**

There are two ways in which attempts have been made to move from business as a calling to the calling of Business:

One is entrepreneurial training with a social purpose for aspiring managers who wish to set up small scale industries. This would give an opportunity for a number of like minded people to come together with a common purpose to provide goods and services

for the well being of the community and employment opportunities to people drawn from the underprivileged sections of the society. There are two types of such entrepreneurial enterprises. One is encouraging entrepreneurs with sufficient resources and expertise to set up ancillary units for major manufacturing Industries with a social purpose. Our alumni who are top level managers help such entrepreneurs. The other type of entrepreneurial enterprise is to give adequate skills – training for those who come forward to set up small scale industries on their own. Here again while setting up such SSIS, care is taken that a social purpose is served – namely employment opportunities are provided for the unemployed.

The other way is to create forums of public awareness through the resources available in business schools towards ‘the calling of Business’. The Institution of Mother Teresa Award in LIBA (Loyola Institute of Business Administration, Chennai) is an instance. The award honours private limited companies with a social conscience and provides an opportunity for debate and discussion on the very concept of social responsibility of business among those engaged in business. This concept has moved from one of mere ‘Philanthropy’ to the involvement of the entire company personnel for the upliftment of the neighbourhood with a determined purpose.

5.0 Perceived results

We find students trained in the concept of ‘business as a calling’ being immersed in environments over which they have little or no control. People working with them lack the Faith Vision which underpins ‘Business as a Calling and the Calling of business’. Their conduct is characterised by self-centredness and absence of genuine traditional values; It is in such a world that our alumni trained in business ethics and the social responsibility of business are challenged to promote their ideals.

Nevertheless, when business decisions affecting the lives of many, chiefly the poor are being made, they do exercise their influence over the decision making process in the organisation. One could point to the following striking instance: when Gujarat was shattered by the fury of the vast earthquake in recorded history over the past 50 years, the Confederation of Indian Industry (CII) and the Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FICCI) came forward to adopt villages that were most severely hit and called for volunteers from their member industries to undertake some urgent relief measures. Quite a few of our alumni were in the forefront of such relief work. Some of them were the first to arrive on the scene. They manned a free phone facility set up by CARE INDIA and CISCO that provided the most immediate emotional relief for people anxious for news of their families as well as access to medical assistance and advice. Most of them, when they shared their experiences, attributed their concern and commitment to the training they had earlier received.

The forums of ongoing formation in a pluricultural context among our alumni who are already practising managers are more effective than ‘the business ethics’ environment in the classroom where concerns of testing and examination do sometimes override concerns of formation. Here again we can quote a striking instance : The government in Tamil Nadu came up with a novel scheme of promoting Government – industry participation to improve public health in Tamil Nadu; They encouraged industrial groups based in the state to adopt Primary Health Centres (PHCS) in villages. Once again our alumni working in various industries successfully influenced their higher ups to participate in this programme for improving the health care of the poor people living in villages. One can point to atleast six such industrial groups which have been influenced by our alumni to take up such health care projects.

The perceived results of ‘the calling of Business’ through the impact exercised by forums of public conscientisation (e.g. Mother Teresa Award) are slow in coming. But if one could go by the increase in the number of entries from corporate houses since the institution of the award, we are more than gratified that the award is achieving its avowed purpose of raising the level of social awareness among the corporate houses and the general public. It is the fourth year since the award has been instituted; In its first year, the entries were just ten mostly confined to Tamil Nadu. But last year, the number of entries went up to ninety drawn from corporates all over the country.

More tangible results are achieved through entrepreneurial training of young enterprising managers who have set up helped set up small scale industries with a clearly articulated social purpose(The instances are cited in the original paper)

6.0 **Recommendations for greater effectiveness**

6.1 As regards incorporating “Business” as a Calling in the ethics curriculum in business schools, the teacher is a critical factor. Staff development programmes incorporating a deeper understanding and commitment to the unifying faith vision that underlies the pedagogy are essential.

6.2 We require mere objective measurements for assessing attitudinal changes on the part of learners;

6.3 We must also set up a network of institutions both within the country and abroad for exchange of expertise and experience among people who practice this pedagogy.

6.4 “Entrepreneurial training with a social purpose” calls for greater creativity, courage and resourcefulness on the part of entrepreneurs who have to face competition from multinational companies. The latter not only manufacture better quality products in the areas where our entrepreneurs are engaged but through better market networking, are penetrating into the remotest rural areas of the country.

6.5 A module on “*Business as a calling – The calling of Business*” with proper examples and exercises could be developed and included as part of the MDPS (Management Development Programmes) offered to Corporate houses.

7.0 **Conclusion**

Pedagogical training for present and future managers with regard to “Business as a Calling” as we understand it, is an arduous job chiefly when there is today such confusion and conflict of values among those serving the interests of the corporates. It is easy to give them a series of lectures on ethical principles and the social responsibility of business and have them discuss some case studies. But it is much more difficult to bring about attitudinal changes in people and to focus on their *growth* in a life of integrity, a life of justice and of loving service to our fellow men and women. To quote Fr. Kolvenbach, the General of the society of Jesus, “This is the Call of Christ to us today, a call to growth, a call to life, who will answer? Who, if not you? When, if not now?” (IP 156).

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