

**PEDAGOGICAL APPROACHES IN MANAGEMENT
EDUCATION TOWARDS CHALLENGING
SOCIAL INEQUALITY**

(THE LIBA EXPERIMENT)

**By
DR. LOUIS XAVIER S.J.
On
12.7.2000**

**In
Fourth International Symposium
At
Puebla, Mexico**

**DIRECTOR
LOYOLA INSTITUTE OF BUSINESS ADMINISTRATION (LIBA)
LOYOLA COLLEGE, 1, STERLING ROAD
POST BOX NO. 3301, NUNGAMBAKKAM
CHENNAI – 600 034, INDIA.**

PHONE: (0091-044) 8280088 / 8283183

FAX: (0091-044) 8283183

EMAIL: liba@giasmd01.vsnl.net.in

**PEDAGOGICAL APPROACHES IN MANAGEMENT EDUCATION
TOWARDS CHALLENGING SOCIAL INEQUALITY**

(THE LIBA EXPERIMENT)

(Dr. LOUIS XAVIER S.J.)

1.0: Introducing LIBA

The Loyola Institute of Business Administration – LIBA was established in 1979 in Chennai, India thanks to the long term vision of the Society of Jesus. It was established as the result of the Jesuits identifying the need to establish an institute that would provide quality and ethics-based management education. The institute offers a three year part time programme for working executives and a two year full time programme – both leading to the Post Graduate Diploma in Business Administration (PGDBA) equivalent to MBA. LIBA is an academic institution

wedded to the promotion of national development by educating and training future entrepreneurs and managers who will be professionally competent, ethically conscious and have a compassionate concern for the welfare of the weak and underprivileged in society.

2.0: Background : Certain Premises

It is no wonder that the institute given its identity and mission has consistently striven to address the problem of poverty alleviation and social inequality. We are convinced that this problem cannot be kept outside the purview of management education. This conviction is the result of six years of reflection that has crystallised around certain premises.

2.1: The first premise is that management students do not pay conscious attention to the fact of social inequality though it has been documented at length by the UNDP's Human Development reports that 'the wealth of nations' in 50 years, has increased sevenfold from \$3 trillion to \$22 trillion, but has remained highly concentrated among a small group of nations and within each nation, among an elite.

(UNDP Human Development Report : Oxford University Press 1992, PP 35 & 15)

2.2: The second premise is that we have to seriously address this problem of social inequality because prosperity in the world can be achieved only through common human solidarity and not by a few rich at the expense of the many poor. Those who are insensitive to this problem of inequality are sowing the seeds of unrest. If we prosper, we could only prosper as one common human family. This has been stated in the remarkable pastoral constitution of Vatican II, "Gaudium et spes" which dealt with the relationship between the church and the contemporary world. The document states, "The people of the poorer nations are acutely conscious of being deprived of the world's goods through injustice and unfair distribution and are vehemently demanding their share of them. These claims are but the sign of a deeper and more widespread aspiration. Men and women, as individuals and as members of society are craving for a life that is full, autonomous, worthy of their nature as human beings". (Gaudium et spes, 9 Passim)

2.3: The third premise is that given this problem of social inequality and the urgent imperative to solve it, the problem cannot be solved merely by the trickle-down approach. One cannot assume that the benefits accruing from creation of wealth as a result of liberalisation and globalisation will automatically trickle down to the poor in society. On Sept 19, 1998, Dr.M.S. Swaminathan, the world renowned agricultural scientist while delivering the A.L.Mudaliar endowment lecture 'on science and sustainable development' makes the following remarks on Indian situation : "The experience in recent years has shown that neither in economics nor in environment protection, the trickle down approach worked, particularly in helping the poor. Globally and nationally, the rich poor divide is growing and today in India we have as many people below the poverty line as the

entire population of the country in 1947".

("A.L. Mudaliar Endowment Lecture" : Madras University Publication, Nov 1998, P 12)

2.4: We now move on to the **fourth premise** : The basic problem of business today is to build up structures that would ensure a fair distribution of the goods and services to all and not to a relatively small elite. To apply all efforts to meet this challenge is the true social responsibility of business and business education. Amirtya Sen, the noble laureate in economics, emphasises that mere liberalisation and globalisation will not reduce the prevailing unjust inequality, unless "the educated and the elite, the corporate houses and policy makers consciously undertake public action for the poor and for social opportunity."

(Noble Prize for a great economist by V.K. Ramachandran. PP 7 & 9 : Frontline : Nov 6, 1998)

This implies a radical departure from a value system which is precisely responsible for the gross inequalities we witness today. We feel that we will be failing miserably in our duty as a management school, if we focus on developing merely the academic excellence and technical competence of our students and not make some efforts towards making our students men and women of social concern and agents of social change. Our agenda will be to raise their level of social awareness and then prompt them to bring their managerial expertise, power and position to serve the poor. A formidable agenda indeed!

It is what Peter Drucker views as the new role of management: "Management is the central resource of the developed countries and the basic need of developing ones. From being the specific concern of business in the economic sense, management and managers are becoming the organs of development of the society around them. Management will increasingly be concerned as much with the expression of basic beliefs and values as with the accomplishment of measurable results. It will progressively stand for the quality of life of a society as much as for its standard of living."

(Peter Drucker : The new realities as quoted in Bulletin and Prospectus [2000-2001] : LIBA publication : Jan 2000)

This basic belief has been built into the mission statement of our institute : "The management education would be directed towards the management of the life and resources of the country so as to result in a just economic and social order ensuring a more human quality of life for all, especially the underprivileged majority. Hence basic beliefs and values become as important to management as quantifiable criteria of effectiveness and efficiency". (Ibid, P 1)

3.0: Pedagogical Approaches

With this objective in view, we have adopted certain pedagogical approaches in management education towards challenging social inequality. I could mention in this presentation, six such attempts. Of these approaches towards challenging social inequality, some are traditionally pedagogical confined to the class room curriculum and teaching while quite a few of them are non traditionally pedagogical – i.e. outside the conventional domain of class room teaching. Yet we consider these latter approaches too as equally important.

3.1: Curricular Interventions

Social responsibility of business has become an integral part of the 3 credits ethics course in the curriculum. The course itself has now adopted the name "Ethics and Social Responsibility of Business". The course deals at length with current issues of social inequality both nationally and internationally. Students are encouraged to go beyond mere symptoms of social ills and come to grips with their underlying causes by making them realise the wrongs of the social and economic structures of society, their power over people's lives and what power people themselves can exercise over these structures. Apart from the above mentioned course on 'ethics and social responsibility of business' there are other courses in the curriculum which address the problem of social inequality. I could just mention them here : These courses are Indian Social Environment; Geo Political Environment; Dignity of Labour, Labour Welfare and Labour Law. These courses where students actively participate through case study, seminar presentations and discussions help to raise the level of their awareness regarding social inequality and their responsibility to do something about it.

To identify the involvement of students we adopt a pedagogic strategy called the pedagogical spiral which is a modified version of the Ignatian Pedagogical Paradigm :

We begin with sharing of experiences on a particular contemporary societal issue such as dowry death, female infanticide, suicide of cotton farmers in a particular district, draught situation etc. Students are then made to reflect in groups on these issues with the help of some prompt questions and analyse the underlying causes. This reflection will lead to certain decisions resulting in action – either interior choices (leading to change of attitude) or external action (wanting to do something to change the situation). This will be followed by an evaluation at the end of the class to see whether the old reality originally perceived by them has taken on a new meaning and dimension and to see how far the pedagogical process itself has been effective.

At the heart of the spiral, is the faith vision. It is the faith vision that brings added meaning and vitality to the pedagic approach. The basic elements of the faith vision are that God is at work in the individual working towards his fuller development (personal humanism) and that He is equally at work in mankind trying to establish a society of justice, peace and love (social humanism). The reality of God's presence and His working in oneself and mankind can be

substantiated by scriptures not only from christianity but also from other religions. As the teacher engages the students in the pedagogical spiral and moves from the old reality to a new reality – he attempts in every possible way to nurture the faith vision of students by referring to scriptures and invites students to an interreligious dialogue encouraging them to draw inspiration from their own scriptures. It calls for an attitude of being rooted in one's own faith and remain at the same time open to other faiths. It may end up sometimes in some genuine prayer. The faith vision may draw sustenance not only from scriptures but also from certain relevant extracts of the papal encyclicals and social teachings of the church.

3.2: Study Conferences and Seminars

Apart from the above curricular interventions, both in content and methodology, we have a number of study conferences and seminars that discuss in depth the problem of social inequality and the need for social responsibility. A significant feature of these study conferences is that the students themselves present papers on specific areas of social inequality and social responsibility and the great number of invitees from corporate houses interact with the students. These interactions result in mutual enrichment. Here are some titles of study conferences that bear immediate relevance to the topic on hand : Liberalisation – The tasks ahead; Ethics in Advertising; Symposium on the Flipside of the Market Economy; The Multinationals – A Paradigm Shift; Ethics and Social Responsibility of Business; Ethics in I.T. Industry; The impact of globalisation on Indian Economy.

Here I list a few of the findings that have emerged from our discussions and which pertain to the problem of social inequality : People today implicitly repose their faith in market economy known as `neo liberalism' which is the conscious driving force of today's globalisation. This market economy has on the face of it produced certain beneficial results and holds out certain opportunities too. But as a result of our study conferences and seminars we perceive that certain features of this phenomenon of globalisation propelled by market economy widens the gap between the rich and the poor because of the following reasons :

- It puts economic growth rather than the full harmony of all men and women among themselves and with creation as the economy's *raison d'être*.
- It restricts state intervention to the point of taking away any state responsibility for the minimum goods that every citizen deserves as human being.
- It privatises businesses according to the argument that the state is always a bad administrator.
- It opens borders to merchandise capital and financial flow without restrictions, leaving the smallest and weakest entrepreneurs without sufficient protection.
- It insists that economic growth will raise income levels and resolve the situation of the less favoured.

- It motivates private investment by eliminating the obstacles that protective labour legislation could impose.

(Proceedings of the seminar on "Social Responsibility of Business" – LIBA publication Sept 1996, P 22)

The above features of neo liberalism have raised among us certain questions :

- What is the true test of the success of liberalisation? Is it the increase in the volume of investment made by the private sector regardless of employment generation or the growth of the economy along with perceptible empowerment of the poor?
- Should the country adopt a total switch-over to the market involving the abandonment of the role of the state as the guardian of the poor ?
- Can corporate business behaviour be assessed merely in terms of the profit record without regard to the willingness of firms to play the role of responsible `corporate citizens`?
- For ensuring sustainable development, apart from a system of laws designed to protect the environment – rivers, the forests and the bio-diversity, what more is there to be done? (Ibid, P 43)

Our study conferences and seminars grappling with the challenges posed by social inequality have not only generated much lively discussion and resulted in some publications but also have helped to raise the level of the consciousness of our students that they have to play the role of responsible `corporate citizens`.

3.3: Exposure to Societal Inequality (The Mini Project)

I must mention another unique pedagogical approach – `the mini project` at the end of the first year of the three year part time management programme. Students attending this programme are working executives. They are to undertake this mini project during their summer holidays among the poor and the marginalised in the society. The objective of this project is to sensitize students to the concerns and needs of the poor by interacting with them and collecting data on their living conditions. Here are a few titles of the project work already done: Rehabilitation of children of leprosy patients, child labour in construction industry; child labour in auto mechanical workshops, the lot of children engaged in rag picking, the problems and work environment of vegetable and fruit vendors in Chennai, the working conditions of the house maids in Chennai, railway porters, autorickshaw drivers and the emotional problems of the handicapped in society. I have mentioned a few titles. These exercises take the students out for a while from the airconditioned environment of their offices and the rate race of competition. It makes them come face to face with the poor and the underprivileged in society and discuss with them their problems and hardships as they go about making a survey of their work environment and collect data about their living conditions. After making certain preliminary inferences, they discuss their findings in groups and try and analyse the causes of poverty and social inequality and evaluate the present day poverty alleviation programmes and make certain specific recommendations some of which even reach the decision making centres in the

government.

3.4: Management Development Programmes

We also involve our students together with their faculty in organising and conducting various management development programmes. A good number of our programmes have a special focus as stated in the institute's prospectus : "At the moment, professional management is more readily available to industry and business. It is imperative that it be brought to the service and small scale sector, public systems, service sector and community building." (Bulletin and Prospectus [2000-2001]. LIBA publication, Jan 2000)

In keeping with this objective, a number of specific management development programmes are conducted with a view to place management expertise at the service of certain undermanaged sectors. Some such programmes are behavioural skills for transport workers, programmes for supervisors of para medical workers among the leprosy patients of Damien Foundation, Managerial skills for the personnel in caritas and voluntariat – both voluntary service organisations, managing schools in the 21st century – Issues and perspectives, managerial skills for non government service organisations, empowerment of women through micro enterprises and training in spiritual leadership. The students in the above programmes interact with the personnel drawn from these various service sectors and learn from them at first hand the conditions and problems of the people they work with and how best one could reach out to the unreached in the society.

3.5: Proposing Role Models (Mother Teresa Award)

The presentation of the Mother Teresa Award for the corporate citizen every year is a venture in keeping with out institute's strong and sustained social orientation. Through this award, we propose annually to draw the attention of our students, the corporate world and the general public to a business enterprise as a role model in responsible citizenship. The award function consists of two parts:

- The presentation of the award
- The Mother Teresa memorial oration.

This is the second year of conferment of the Mother Teresa Award. The Mother Teresa memorial oration on 'The human dimension of development' was delivered by the renowned administrator and economist Shri. Monek Singh Ahluwalia.

A few words about the concept of corporate citizen, the criteria and the process of selection for the award :

(Mother Teresa Award Function : Report of the award committee : Prof. S. Swaminathan. LIBA publication : April 1999)

The Concept of Corporate Citizen : As conceived by the award committee, a model corporate citizen is a company which is professionally managed with a persistent focus on its business mission blending with a social vision which reveals its abiding concern for the economic upliftment of the disadvantaged sections of its neighbourhood community.

Eligibility and Criteria for the Award : Listed companies with manufacturing as their principal activity and with an annual turnover not exceeding Rs.1000 crores, are eligible for consideration for the award. There are seven distinct criteria which guide the award committee in the process of selection of the awardee for the year. These are :

- Commitment to quality and customer satisfaction.
- Pursuit of value addition for shareholders as a consistent goal.
- Harmonious industrial relations with employee welfare as its strong foundation.
- Direct sponsorship and active involvement in permanent projects which promote the social and economic empowerment of the poor, the disabled and the deprived sections of its neighbourhood.
- Concern for environment protection including adoption of eco-friendly technology.
- Promotion of ancillary units with emphasis on training and development and on employment generation.
- Explicit recognition of social responsibility in the mission statement of the company.

The Process of Selection : LIBA releases a national press advertisement in November each year inviting nominations for the award from companies all over India. The students and faculty of LIBA, independently researching into the data base on companies in India, prepare a list of about 100 companies. This list along with the responses received from companies to the advertisement are studied in depth by the faculty and students and some 20 companies are proposed to the award committee for consideration. From among these, after obtaining some further information and clarifications, three companies are shortlisted by the award committee and high level presentations are made by senior executives on behalf of their companies before the members of the award committee, faculty and students. At this stage, faculty and students freely interact with these executives on the range of their corporate activities bearing on the welfare of their neighbourhood communities. The award committee receives very encouraging cooperation from the companies shortlisted for the award and from faculty and students at different stages during its work.

We consider the process of selection and the award ceremony itself as an important learning opportunity for the staff and students of our institute and our friends from corporate houses on ways and means of reaching out to the poor of the neighbourhood and thus contribute something however small towards the creation of a just and equitable society.

3.6: Ongoing Formation : The Forum for Professionals

In his post-synodal apostolic exhortation 'Ecclesia in Asia', John Paul II states the following : "Specialization in various fields has left most of the catholic professionals only with the minimum knowledge of catechism learnt in school and have not afforded them with opportunities to deepen their faith, leave alone becoming conversant with the social doctrine of the church. Therefore, there is a felt need for especially lay men and women with responsibilities in public life, to be well informed in these teachings (social doctrine) so that they can inspire and vivify civil society and its structure with the leaven of the Gospel'.

(Ecclesia in Asia : Published by the Catholic Bishops' Conference of Malaysia – Singapore – Brunei, Nov 1999, P 98)

Keeping this exhortation of the Holy Father in mind, we have started the Forum for Professionals which meets every first Sunday of the month. Its members are mostly Catholic – alumni of our institute and a few other working professionals.

Our monthly meetings contain the following agenda :

- A short presentation on a specific social doctrine of the church followed by discussion.
- Bearing testimony to their faith witness among their own counterparts, their clients, customers and beneficiaries.
- How to lobby in higher circles for justice, peace and human development on some current social and moral issues.
- Eucharistic liturgy which takes up in prayer the proceedings of the day.

These meetings of ongoing formation have helped the professionals deepen their faith, transcend their own limited professional interests to make a contribution towards the betterment of society and live more fully their vocation and mission in the church and the world. We thus work towards the vision of Vatican II: "Let the catholic professionals realize that they need to open the doors of their Board Rooms or Chambers to Christ, the Lord of humanity to renew or sanctify the temporal order." (VA II A.A + CFL)

4.0: Observations and Comments

Having adopted these pedagogic approaches over the past four years, I could now bring in some of my observations and comments:

4.1: In this pedagogical venture of challenging social inequality, one cannot expect quick results similar to obtaining high grades in exams or a job placement. Human development is not easily perceived or measured. It is the result of long persevering and painstaking efforts on the part of those who have dedicated themselves to education as 'integral formation' and do not treat it merely as a

matter of academic excellence or technical competence. Yet from the personal testimonies of some of our alumni, we feel confident that our efforts are bearing fruit.

4.2: In dealing with young people, chiefly our students, we have become aware of a new way of looking at youth. Some aspects of change in our outlook can be described as follows :

- Seeing young people as **resources** not as problems.
- Journeying **with** the youth, not merely working for them.
- Youth are to be encouraged to **learn from their own experiences** not from readymade answers.
- A need to involve the youth more and more in **decision making process** chiefly in matters that vitally affect them.

4.3: A great obstacle in the way of forming students with a spirit of transcendence is the present day transnational culture brought about by globalisation and by the ever accelerating use of mass media. This transnational culture is linked to a system of values that promotes consumerism, greed, corruption and violence. Such a culture reduces greatness of men and women to their ability to generate monetary income. In this context, we are challenged to promote a different kind of culture with a different set of values which alone would help to reduce unjust social inequality : "A spiritual vision of the world in the face of materialism, a concern for others in the face of egoism, simplicity in the face of consumerism and the cause of the poor in the face of social injustice".

(The characteristics of jesuit education : Gujarat Sahitya Prakash 1987 – P 44)

This is no easy task. But the pedagogy we have adopted involving experience

reflection action evaluation does bring about a change in attitudes of people as could be seen from their gradual self, transcendence and service to the community.

4.4: It is easy to work with a homogeneous group of Catholics. But it is much more challenging to work in a pluri religious context. As I had mentioned earlier we have to be rooted in our own faith and yet remain at the same time open to other faiths and thus bear witness to communal harmony as individuals and institutions in a country of growing fundamentalism and communalism. Our involvement in issues pertaining to human rights and service to the

neighbourhood brings together students of diverse religious faiths. Such occasions provide us with an excellent context for praying together by drawing inspiration from the scriptures of different religions and mutually sharing the insights gained from our varied and yet rich religious traditions. "To be religious today is to be interreligious in the sense that a positive relationship with believers of other faiths is a requirement in a world of religious pluralism".

(34th General Congregation of the society of Jesus : Gujarat Sahitya Parakash : 1995, P 47)

4.5: In a communication to me dated 28 May 1999, Fr. Hans Kolvenback, the Superior General of the Society of Jesus has this to say about our pedagogical approaches : "Under your leadership, LIBA has become a management institute with a difference because of the importance you have given to ethical values, social transformation, preferential option for the poor and the catholic as well as jesuit character of the institution. I wish to thank you specially for this and to express my hope that this vitally important apostolic orientation will not only continue but also be strengthened in the years to come."

(Letter of Fr. Hans Kolvenback to Fr. Louis Xavier S.J. dated 28 May 1999, P 1)

5.0: Conclusion

Whenever we speak of evangelisation people generally think of `conversions`. I believe that evangelisation is not so much a process of adding to the number of christians by more or less authentic conversions. It is rather, seeing God at work in the world and actively cooperating with him in establishing His kingdom on earth. It is "building human communities imbued with kingdom values of justice, peace and love"

(South Asian Jesuit Assistancy : Kathmandu Statement, P 1)

or in the words of an Asian Theologian "building communities of love, fellowship, freedom, justice and harmony". If this is authentic evangelisation, we rejoice and are grateful to God that "our pedagogical attempts in management education towards challenging social inequality" are an integral part of this process of evangelisation.

Dr. Louis Xavier S.J.

Director

Loyola Institute of Business Administration (LIBA)

Loyola College, 1, Sterling Road

Nungambakkam, Chennai – 600 034.

India.

Phone : (0091 – 044) 828 00 88 / 822 00 88

Fax : (0091 – 044) 8283183

Email : liba@giasmd01.vsnl.net.in

Home Page: www.liba-loyola.com