

Listening, Leadership, and Livelihood among Grassroots Women: Managers Learning Social Teachings of the Church in a Catholic University

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(This work is dedicated to the memory of Regina B. Estoquia, my teammate and community organizer of fishing village women. Reggie died June 11, 2003 after spending the morning with Marilyn, a fishing village leader visiting the University. Reggie is highly regarded for her generosity to the poor and her speaking out “uncomfortable truths”.)

Abstract

This is a proposal to use an action-research model as a vehicle to help graduate management students learn more about the social teachings of the Church (CST) in a Catholic university in a developing country.

The Triple L model focuses on rural women who suffer from physical, cultural, and political disadvantages in their search for themselves and their families to “know more, have more, and be more”. The model’s elements and their rationale are:

- Listening: central to the model because the human person is the subject of the study. Participation of “excluded” women and their growth in social power is the ultimate goal.
- Leadership: shared leadership is a strategic interest among women who suffer from subordination.
- Livelihood: earning additional cash is a practical need among low-income women.

By integrating managers in applying the Triple L Model among grassroots women, it is hoped that the following goals of student formation will be realized:

- Encounter-dialogue: foster interaction between grassroots women and managers e.g. focus group discussions on basic consumption needs of rural households/paid work profile
- Enabling skills: managers teach productive skills like soap or business plan making
- Embodying ideals of service: managers through their encounter-dialogue could be motivated to change their lifestyles, develop their professional skills for service, choose “altruistic” careers or commit their lives to social transformation through volunteer work with grassroots communities/political advocacy.

Outline:

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7. Grassroots Women and Managers on the Road to the Splendor of Truth

1. Impulses for the Study

Learning by experience is a principle in adult education. This is the premise behind this proposal based on teaching first semester MBA students as well as field research in the last five years. The proposal is for management students to initially enter into an encounter-dialogue with poor women in an atmosphere based on reciprocity. In exchange for valuable information the women provide, managers or future managers listen to them, impart leadership skills, or train them in livelihood. In a way, the methodology is akin to the service learning method discussed by Miles, Gooding, and Brown S.J. during the 1997 International Management Symposium.

While teaching “Principles of Economics and Finance” to MBA students who come from non-business courses e.g. philosophy, pharmacy, or journalism, I assigned them to do field research on the chronic problems of the Philippines: poverty, growth, and equity. They were to apply concepts to a first hand experience about the assigned themes. The concepts include scarcity and choice, markets, and the role of government. It was so inspiring to hear their field research reports with topics ranging from livelihood for the handicapped through an NGO, family profile and allowances received from government by village health workers to management by local government of a city market and the subsequent evaluation by stall vendors.

The enthusiasm of my students has convinced me of the efficacy of a direct experience to learn more about big themes and elegant concepts. The impulses of this proposal are in the Catholic social tradition of observing, judging, and acting:

- **Observing** Inequality marks Philippine society. Thirty-four families control rural economies and politics (McBeth 1989) where two-thirds of the population resides. As of 2000, 4 million children out of 24.8 million with ages 5 to 17 work and from these, sixty per cent work in hazardous environment. In the agricultural sector, women are estimated to comprise only 26 per cent of the labor force despite their multiple tasks.
- **Judging** The Gospel and Catholic Social Teaching has been unequivocal: the person lies at the center of creation, endowed with dignity. No one should ever live in dehumanizing poverty or suffer indignities at work or in society because such violates the Divine Image in each creature. Jesus is our model of compassion - to feel from the guts what another person is going through (cf. Nolan 1974).
- **Acting** Out of an “enlightened self-interest”, managers need to know more about the poor, as they are consumers, workers, and producers. The “*masa*” (masses) have taken center stage, headlines a published article in the Philippine Daily Enquirer about the 17th Ad Congress in the Philippines last November 2001. Their sheer numbers in the Philippines demand that managers now and in the future know them more. Management students could ask the poor about their consumption needs, their labor skills and paid work profile, or their economic activities. The proposed encounter-dialogue between management students and the poor, exemplified by women, will be characterized by Catholic Social teaching: the centrality and dignity of the human person, solidarity, and common good.

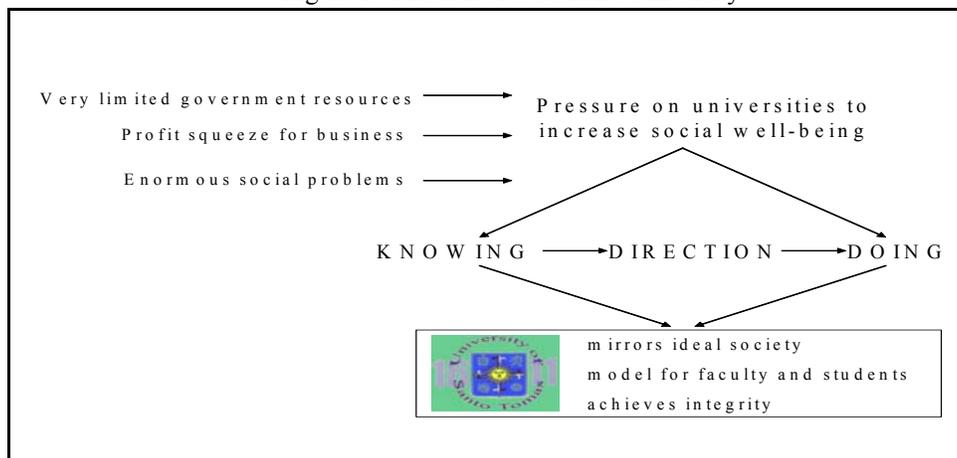
Most market research and consumer surveys in the Philippines identify women in their role as decision-makers on household consumption as respondents. While this is true, the focus on women here is rooted in the Gospel call to give preferential attention to those who are “least”. Poor women are poor twice: they are poor, deprived of basic needs and they are women, suffering from subordination despite their contributions. On the average, women are less privileged than men (Giddens 1995).

2. A Catholic University: Rootedness in Reality, Social Responsibility and Student Formation

“Born from the heart of the (Catholic) Church,” the university shares in the mission to preach the Good News to the poor. The poor are the “anawin,” those who lack what they need.¹

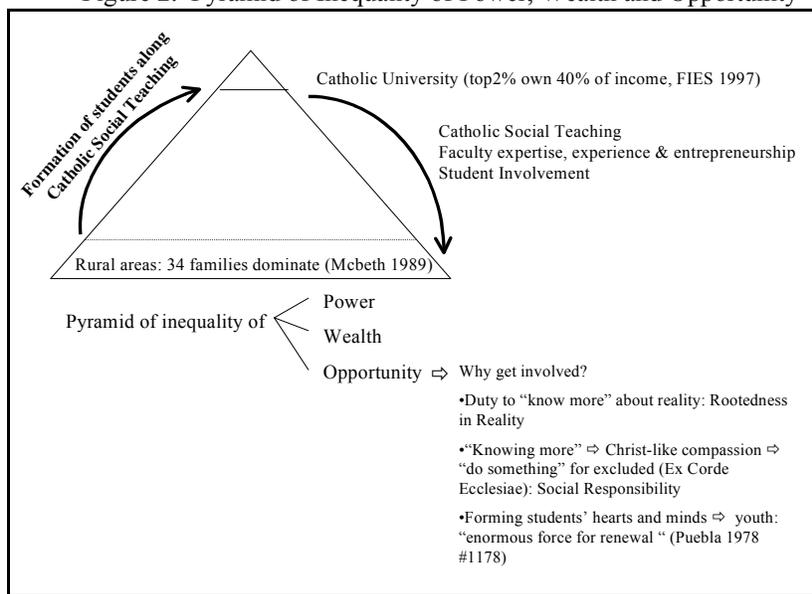
A Catholic university in the Philippines sits on top of a pyramid of inequality of power, wealth, and opportunity. Wealth has been kept in pockets of families who have acquired land during the Spanish times or who have accumulated such through hard work, consolidation, or the legal maneuver of land titling and registration. Those who have

Figure 1. Mission of a Catholic University



wealth have preserved such by acquiring power. Or vice-versa, those who have political power have acquired wealth through family dynasties, where at one point in time, the wife would be the provincial governor and the husband, the district legislator. It is therefore easy to see that opportunity would be closed to many in this setting.

Figure 2. Pyramid of Inequality of Power, Wealth and Opportunity



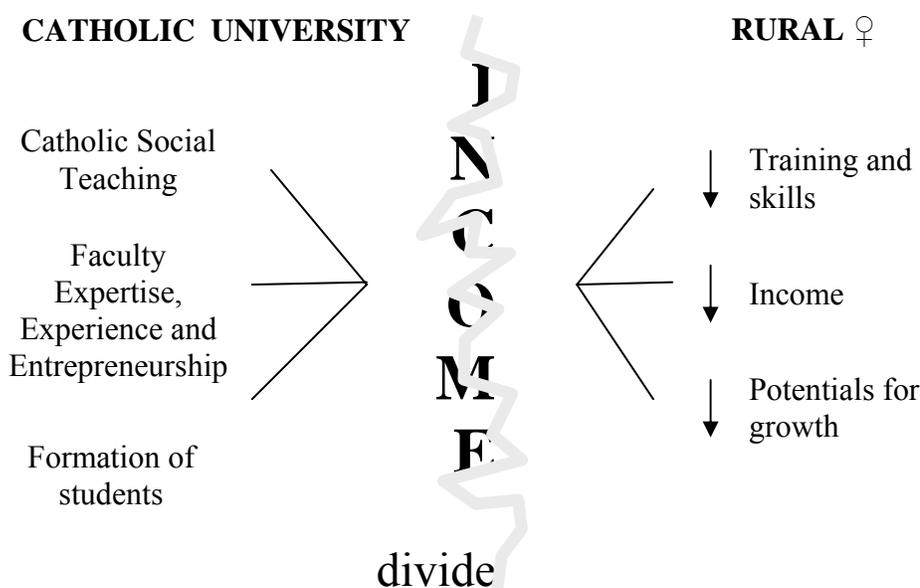
As an institution, a university would then belong to the elite. Here, then is already a conflict of interest. Should the university continue on a path as a paragon of society's ideals - learned citizens using the most up-to-date scientific technology and pushing the frontiers of knowledge? Yet, outside the university gates, scavengers park their pushcarts utilized as gathering tools by day and sleeping quarters by night.

There has to be a meeting point, a convergence of academic musings about an ideal society and the realities of deprivation of people we meet and yet excluded from our consciousness, decisions, and actions.² Albert Cecil Pigou said it is not after reading economic treatises but rather after seeing the misery of the slums of London that the economist is moved to action (Pigou as quoted in Meier 1984). It is the heart that suggests the problems and the head, the solutions, adds Pigou.

There would, then, be three reasons why a Catholic university should be involved in society's woes:

- She has the duty to know more about society. When a university generates and transfers knowledge, it is assumed that she is in touch with reality. It is an obligation of the university to be rooted in reality. The patterns of inequality in the Philippines have been transferred from one generation to the next. The top two per cent have consolidated and even enlarged their share of the stagnant or shrinking national product at the expense especially of the poorest forty per cent (NSO 1997 Family Income and Expenditure Survey). Out of 100 Filipinos living in poverty, seventy-two live in the rural areas (National Anti-Poverty Commission 1999). Among the poor, women face more economic, physical, and cultural barriers. Government data-gathering methods often leave out women's work and contributions towards economic development. Studies on women in farming and fishing communities indicate the multiple roles they play as income earners and caregivers (Miralao 1980; Illo and Polo 1990; Rutten 1993; Bunuan 2001; Loanzon 2002). Hence, rural women are a priority group whose contributions to development could be secured by the university.

Figure 3. Mission and Resources of a Catholic University in the City versus the Situation of Deprivation among Rural Women



- Knowing more about society entails doing something about this pyramid of wealth, power, and opportunity. A Catholic university, born out of the heart of the Church (*Ex corde ecclesiae*), has to unite her knowledge about society with action on behalf of those who possess no resources, are excluded, and are locked out of income opportunities. While the Catholic Church is the expert on humanity (Pope Paul VI), the Catholic university (should be) concerned with the very future of humanity (Pope John Paul II). Since a Catholic university aspires to be Christ-centered, she must have the compassion that distinguished the approach of Jesus towards the outcasts, orphans, and widows. This Christ-like compassion obliges the university to share her wealth of human and physical resources with the “least”.
- Student formation continues to be the main task of a Catholic university. Young students represent “an enormous force for renewal” (*Puebla Document* 1979 no. 1178).³ In forming young hearts and minds in today’s globalizing societies, the university swims against many contemporary currents of materialism, consumerism, or pursuit of self-interests. It is therefore very likely that Catholic university students especially at the graduate level are an economic elite seeking to reinforce their already privileged position. Their degrees ensure them entry into an even narrower circle of professional elite. Given this context, it becomes imperative for a Catholic university to provide her students the opportunities to be in touch with the reality of the common citizens, thirty-four per cent of whom are considered “poor” (National Anti-Poverty Commission 1999). In gradual, overlapping, and interactive phases, students need to be led towards a compassion with the “least” through:
 - Encounter-dialogue;
 - Practice of enabling skills in their future profession which help the low-income groups; and
 - Efforts to embody the ideals of Christian service through their lifestyles, career choices, and lifelong commitment to social transformation through volunteer services, political action/advocacy, and the like.

In forming her students, the Catholic university enables them to unite their own “knowing” and “doing” on behalf of those who most need their professional services.

Development means the “blossoming of human potentials to their fullest” (cf. Seers, 1967). It is hoped that both university students and grassroots women are mutually benefited by their encounter-dialogue.

3. Managers learning Social Teachings of the Church in a Catholic University

Catholic Social Teaching (CST) “proposes a set of principles for reflections, criteria for judgment, and directives for action” (Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace 2000:10).⁴

Catholic social teaching represents a distinct way of influencing social behavior and structures, according to Carrier. The most fundamental fact about society is change. CST is likewise a continuous, dynamic, and open process, reflecting changing society.

In CST we find “moral principles and hopes that Christian communities will serve as mediators in discovering concrete solutions adapted to local realities”(Carrier 1990: 43).

Hence, it is the Church’s “best kept secret” as we seek to form students who are “outstanding in learning, ready to shoulder society’s burdens and to witness the faith in the World” (*Ex corde ecclesiae*, no.9).

In the process of development, which requires more technicians, “even more necessary is the deep thought and reflection . . . in search of a new humanism . . . embracing the higher values of love and friendship, of prayer and contemplation ” (*Populorum progressio*, no. 20). Therefore, managers who could be technicians given the high degree of specialization of modern business, need to learn more about CST:

- More than any sector in the prevailing market model, business decides the quality of lives of people. It determines the types and quantities of goods and services consumers could enjoy, who will be employed and the incomes they will receive, or who could be producers of inputs into the important or dominant industries. Hence, managers are key to social well-being. They have to be competent since “when there is no wealth generated”, misery is only distributed (Mele 2000). Earlier, Friedrich List had remarked: “Society’s well-being and its overall wealth are determined not by what society can buy but what it can make”.⁵ However, powerful finance, rather than actual production, holds sway in the dominant market model of today’s global economy. Michael Camdessus, former IMF chair opines that there are “. . . plenty of risks . . . very familiar in Asia, like instability in financial markets, risks of marginalization of the poorest. . .” Therefore, managers have to be compassionate since “True proficiency in human activity is also a matter of spiritual acumen” (Miles, *et al* 1997).
- In a market economy, consumers reign insofar as they are able to register their money votes. Yet, the market model breeds inequalities. The lesser money votes, the lesser purchasing power. It is thus easy to see how the poor are excluded. It is the duty of Christians to expose perversions of the market.⁶ The “over-reliance on the open, free market forces” is contradictory to equity.⁷

The problem of equity leads to exclusion. Rural folks are most often excluded since they have “less education, less access to land, credit and social services” (Gonzales in Sta. Ana III 1998:167). Among the poor, a distinct economy exists where “The hungry feed the starving.”⁸ In their exclusion from the market economy, they have initiated survival strategies, where women are part of the solution.⁹

- The turbulence and competitiveness in business, global and local, requires human values. Today, space and time play no role while globalization and speed go together (Wichterich 2000). “Turbo-capitalism” marks the world where products, services, and news as well as capital and labor power attain a new level of mobility and acceleration.¹⁰ In the finance market of shares, currencies, and derivatives, \$3 billion moves on a dealer’s screen in e-mail time. Indeed, a Wall Street digital ticker tape rings true: “The world puts its trust in us.”

In a teleconference held in April 2003, the World Bank announced cuts in the forecasted growth rate of the East Asian region following the outbreak of the Iraqi war and SARS (Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome). In Southeast Asia, Malaysia and the Philippines growth rates were downgraded. The uncertain repercussions on the Philippines in terms of exports, oil prices, remittances, and access to global capital were cited.¹¹

The World Bank says that the Philippines must work hard to meet its fiscal targets for 2003 since it exceeded its first quarter deficit ceiling due to overspending (Philippine Daily Inquirer April 25, 2003, p. B5). The International Monetary Fund echoes this outlook for the Philippines, which has been trying to curb its fiscal deficit, mainly due to tax collection problems (Philippine Daily Inquirer April 11, 2003, p. B6). Global uncertainties could affect remittances and investments as well as lead to weaker prospects for electronic exports, the IMF adds.

In the face of all of these, what Leo XIII wrote in 1891 is still real and urgent today: “Some opportune remedy must be found quickly for the misery and wretchedness pressing so unjustly on the majority of the working class” (*Rerum Novarum*, no.3).

- The sin of omission is related to privilege.¹² Particularly in developing countries marked by mass poverty and inequality, it would be a sin of omission for managers to be aliens in their own country. How can managers become “development rays” in their own settings? What would give legitimacy to their enjoyment of the best minds in the graduate school? What would be the social return on the investment in their training and education? Their service to the least would be the source of legitimacy for their enjoyment of privileges in a society of want.

Despite sophisticated expertise among Filipino professionals in international finance and information technology, there are “no creative solutions to delivering financial services to the hundreds of thousands of entrepreneurial poor”¹³

- The educative moment in the education towards social justice, compassion, and solidarity is the action itself (*Ex corde ecclesiae*). Hence, management students should have a practical experience in evoking these values in CST. Managers or future managers must be shown ways to fulfill this duty and must be properly formed through experience to carry out its demands (Miles et al 1997:3). Formation and instruction must go hand-in-hand (*ibid.*:4). Active solidarity, a union of mind, heart, and resources (cf. John XXIII in *ibid.*), between managers and grassroots women, must be fostered. In the Second Plenary Council in the Philippines held in 1991, we heard that no one is too rich so as not to need anything and no one is too poor so as not to be able to give something. Listening to excluded rural women among managers would be akin to prayer, to listen with the heart.

It is an experience of incomparable value to have (the) learned to see the great events of history from beneath: from the viewpoint of the useless, the suspect, the abused, the powerless, the despised, - in a word, from the viewpoint of those who suffer.¹⁴

Given all this, the best way for managers as adults to learn CST is through action, in their own encounter-dialogue with rural women. Managers need to know grassroots women in their multiple and simultaneous roles as consumers, producers, and workers.¹⁵

- Inequality marks Philippine society. Dualism exists. There is a dichotomy between the high-tech, high-skilled sector anchored on the global economy with the low skilled, self-initiated economic activities among those who have to survive. The urban bias is clear. Poverty gaps in urban areas are generally lower than those in the rural areas except one in Northern Luzon (FIES 2000). The national poverty incidence of 2000 is 34 per cent while the poverty incidence from 1985-1997 in the rural areas was consistently higher than the national average at 44 per cent.

Economic policies retard growth by discriminating against agriculture and discouraging investment in human capital.¹⁶ Corruption exacerbates the situation when civil servants, mostly poorly paid, go after rent-seeking activities (cf. WB Study on Corruption in the Philippines, May 2000). Lifestyle checks have been a way to expose government officials employed as tax collectors.

- In Philippine society, permeated by deeply religious values, it is a challenge how such could be reflected in business and politics.¹⁷ *Ex corde ecclesiae* stresses humanity’s openness to the transcendent. The Church shoulders the burden of the cross in the ordinary circumstances of human life (Miles et al 1997:5).

Human activity, rightly conceived, is always religious activity since we are always obligated by God’s laws and called into communion with God.¹⁸

To prepare persons to conduct business affairs well and to lead others to do the same, we must excite the longings of the soul and teach our students to be skilled in its distinctive language (*ibid.*).

When managers have an experiential knowledge of grassroots women, they could follow Gandhi: “You have to be the change we want to see in the world.” When managers or future managers hear “the cry of the needy”, then they participate even in brief moments in the lives of grassroots women and their families:

. . . If the participatory ideal could, in simple terms, be redefined by such qualities as attention, sensitivity, goodness or compassion, and supported by such regenerative acts as learning, relating and listening, are not these qualities and gifts precisely impossible to co-opt? Are they not, also, the same which always help flower, in others, their potentialities of inner transformation? . . . (Rahnema in Sachs 1992:129).

In the vast income divide among managers and grassroots women, the concern and interest managers could show their social “inferiors” would be affirming of their worth and encouraging of transformation in a society where they are often excluded.

4. Focus on Grassroots Women in the Rural Areas

Three of every four families Philippines are in the rural areas. Poverty gaps in urban areas are lower than those in the rural areas. Only Region II showed otherwise with its urban poverty gap of 9.8%, higher than in the rural areas of 8.4% (Family Income and Expenditure Survey – FIES, 2000).

The inequalities experienced by women are seen as inextricably linked with unequal social, economic, and political structures both at the national and local levels (Asia-Pacific Centre for Women and Development (APWCD) 1979:29). In countries where incomes are unequally distributed, there is likely to be more inequality between women and men.

The free market model has had an adverse impact on women (Women’s International Coalition on Economic Justice (WICEJ) 2000/APCWD 1979), particularly in developing countries:

- “Economic markets superimposed on vast power differentials cannot operate in a just and equitable way” (WICEJ 2000).
- In the industrialization model attached to the market economy, women are seen as secondary earners, hence vulnerable to unstable employment, low and irregular wages, and locked into “low-growth” potentials.

Globalization, heralded as the triumph of the market model, has likewise negative consequences on women. Women have been seen as the “*letzte Kolonie*.”¹⁹ It is their backbreaking, debilitating work that enables global electronics and garments firms to subdivide work across continents and reap high levels of profits. Older, married women are pushed to initiate their own income opportunities because such firms prefer younger, better schooled and skilled women.

Related to globalization, Philippine migration data in 2002 reveal that 49 per cent are women while 51 per cent are males. Most women migrants are in less skilled occupations like domestic helpers while men are plant and machine operators and assemblers. Typical women migrants work in HongKong while men work in Saudi Arabia.

For farming women, globalization of agricultural transactions has led to the transfer of traditional tasks like seed selection done by women to global firms.²⁰ Margaret Mead laments the Euro-American tendency to emphasize the harvest before it leaves the field, scientific agriculture, which is the domain of

men. This leads to the neglect of the harvest after it leaves the soil, home economics and nutrition, which are the province of women.

Yet, rural women contribute to development both through their unpaid and paid work. These include child rearing, community mobilization, income generation, and social mediation. The UN 1999 Report on Globalization, Gender and Work highlights the disadvantages of rural women: lack of access to information, technology, and credit. In addition, spatial restrictions constrain women's choice of paid work: home-based, whenever possible. For instance, women are in small-scale trading and therefore earn less as compared to large-scale trading farther from home.

The potential contributions of women to development could be greater, especially if they participate in market activities. These data, which suggests women's exclusion, are true of Filipinos (National Statistics Office - NSO, 2002):

- The labor force participation rate is 50 % for women and 84 per cent for men, as of January 1999. Sixty- three per cent of males are in the labor force in contrast to only 37 per cent of women, as of January 1999.
- Unemployment rates among women were consistently higher than those of men in 1996-2000, with the exception of 1999 and 2000.
- Women constituted most of the unpaid workers at 53 per cent (National Commission on the Role of the Filipino Women(NCRFW) 2000). This is evident in the agricultural sector, where men comprised 75 per cent of workers while women were only one-fourth as of 2002 (National Census and Statistics Office). The more "invisible" women are, the lesser priority in government resources. Hence, the contributions of rural women need to be recognized and secured.

Table 1. Percentage of Employed Persons by Major Occupation Group as of Jan. 1999

Major Occupation Group	Women (%)	Men (%)
Professional, Technical & Related Workers	71.96	27.10
Administrative, Executive & Managerial Workers	29.41	70.59
Clerical & Related Workers	59.26	40.74
Sales Workers	69.34	30.66
Service Workers	63.87	36.13
Agricultural, Animal Husbandry & Forestry Workers, Fishermen & Hunters	25.41	74.59
Production & Related Workers, Transport Equipment Operators & Laborers	20.9	79.1

Source: National Statistical Coordinating Board

Table 1 shows that professional, technical and related workers are almost three-fourths women. However, they receive about fifty per cent less income per peso than men on the average (NCRFW).

Their exclusion from the market or inclusion at the margins are suggested by nutrition data. More women are at risk from iron deficiency anemia. Fifty-one per cent of pregnant women and 46 per cent of lactating mothers are suffering from this type of anemia (Manila Times, March 24, 2003: p. C1).

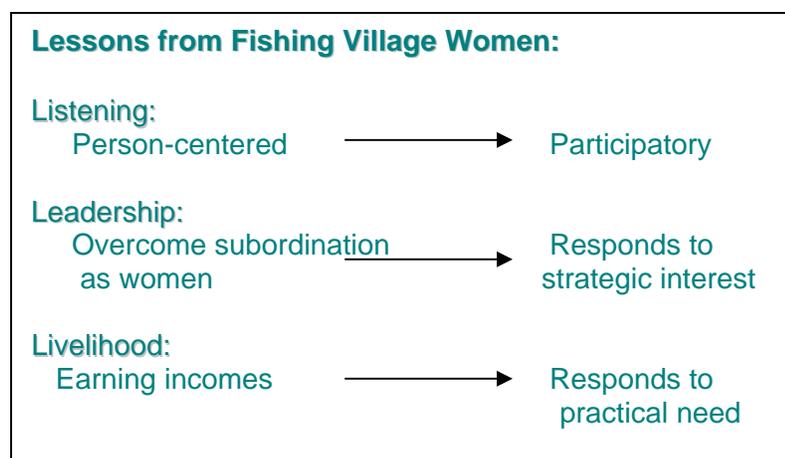
Given the disadvantages of women under the market economy and globalization, there is focus on women. Philippine data shows further marginalization of rural women; hence, we choose to focus this study on them.

5. Managers listening to and training Grassroots Women in Leadership and Livelihood: The Triple L Model

The dignity of the person is manifested in all its radiance when the person's origin and destiny are considered created by God. For this very reason every violation of the personal dignity of the human being cries out in vengeance to God and is an offense against the Creator of the individual (*Christifidelis laici* no. 37).

Participation in an action-research team is the most ideal vehicle by which management students could interact meaningfully with grassroots women. Since faculty research associates likely teach in the graduate school, the link is facilitated.

The Triple L model of action-research is based on previous experience with grassroots women. Listening, leadership, and livelihood training are the elements that comprise an integrated approach to action-research with grassroots women.



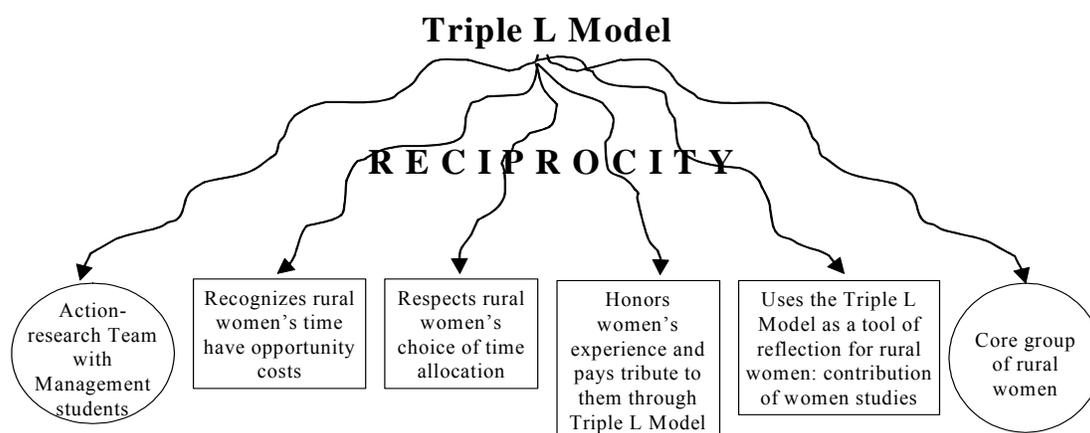
Triple L model: assumes

- Interdisciplinary team ⇔ totality of the human person
- Organizing the poor is a prerequisite to alleviating poverty (UNDP 2000)
- Community-based since
 - o Economics: problems are best solved at their locus
 - o Sociology/Political Science:
 - a. Local communities combine economic imperatives with social benefits (Dahrendorf 1995)
 - b. ...produce development that is autonomous, low-profile, low cost (Saniel in Talisayon 1990)
 - c. ...provide meaningful solutions and able to surf over waves and threats (Rahnema in Sachs 1992)
 - o Catholic Social Teaching: Subsidiarity – as close as possible to individual initiative in local communities (Henriot, De Berri and Schultheis 1989:21)

The Triple L model is premised on the requirement of reciprocity between the management students as part of an action-research team and the grassroots women. The researchers need data and the women provide the data e.g. consumption habits, income sources, or profile of paid work. Ergo, how could women be compensated for their time and effort in participating in the research? To pay with money would be a short-term solution and is fraught with three dangers:

- It might be culturally offensive, to the extent of degrading or insulting an already “inferior” class: rural and women;
- It might unduly create a sense of dependence among a low-income group; and
- It might result in biased study results.

Figure 4. The Triple L Model and the Reciprocity Premise



Reciprocity recognizes that contrary to popular thinking, rural women's time have opportunity costs. They could very well use the time they spend with the action-research team in other ways: unpaid work in the household or the family farm, care of family members, or for some, the luxury of leisure. Reciprocity respects the rural women's choice of time allocation.

It is really a challenge for the action research team together with management students to form a core group of women with whom to continue the iterative, arduous action-research process. It is precisely for this reason that each session with the women includes three distinct yet overlapping parts:

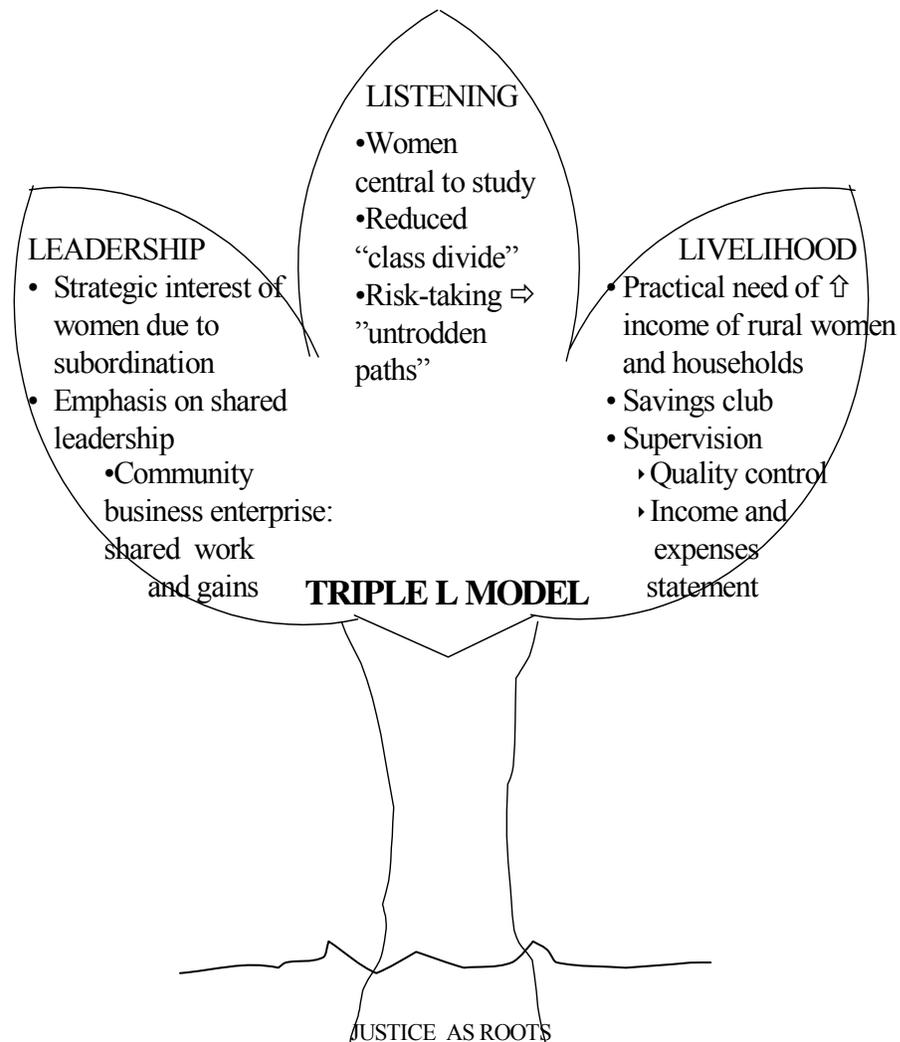
- a. Listening through focus group discussions, structured and unstructured interviews, administered questionnaires, home visits, or individual life stories;
- b. Leadership skills training as a prerequisite to organizing a core group among the women with an emphasis on shared leadership and ultimately, social power among rural women who are excluded from the economic and political system;
- c. Livelihood skills training as a support to the universal desire and toil of women to put more food on the family table, secure family health, and improve the quality of family relationships.

Reciprocity honors women's experiences and pays tributes to them through an integrated approach of listening, leadership, and livelihood skills training. The fusion of qualitative data through focus group discussions as well as quantitative data from government archives on municipal sources of income and community development reports by NGOs provides a wholistic perspective to the project.

Moreover, the Triple L model is an attempt to make the action-research process a tool of reflection for rural women. It is very seldom that rural women are able to have the opportunity to look closely as individuals or as a group at the deeper meaning and patterns of their lives.²¹ Rooted in grassroots women's reflection, political advocacy from action-research would bear more fruit by being more effective and efficient.

The three elements of listening, leadership and livelihood skills training will now be discussed.

Figure 5. The Three Elements of the Triple L Model



- **Listening**

Listening precedes both leadership and livelihood training. Listening places women as persons as central to the study. Action-research in this case places their way of looking at the world, aspirations, and dreams as the raw data from which to weave further steps of gathering data, formulating decisions, and implementing action plans. As St. Thomas said, “We listen to the ones we love.”

Listening is a sine qua non for action-research with grassroots women since often the shame of being poor unables them to utter a word in the presence of those they consider superior to them. This is very true of managers who belong to the “elite” by virtue of their higher level of schooling and better paid occupation.

One way to overcome this “class divide” between elite urban student researchers and low-income rural respondents is to acknowledge to the women that they are the resource persons and it is the research team who are the learners especially in this action-research phase of listening.

Listening is risk-taking for the university research team. Often, people in depressed communities suffer from a “survey fatigue” borne out of repeated attempts to establish baseline data before any step towards action-research is undertaken. Sensitivity and respect for grassroots women requires that the university team literally come with open minds, hearts, and hands. Their expertise should be directed towards the realities of rural women.²²

- **Leadership Training**

Leadership training is particularly a need of women who endure subordination. Participation is only possible if women feel self-confident enough to voice out their opinion. Often they are silenced by their shame at being poor or the cultural label that they be confined to the “Kinder, Kuche, und Kirche” (children, kitchen, and church). The women have to come to a deeper realization of their individual self-worth and affirmation of their personhood. Then they get to know how different or alike they are to other women. This shared humanity is the basis for working together with other women: they face the same daily problems of material survival. Yet if they cooperate, rather than compete, they could have common and creative solutions to similar problems.

The emphasis will be shared leadership: each woman is a leader in her own right. The one who is sensitive to group needs and provides such at the appropriate moment is a leader. Hence, all members in a group at one point or another emerge as a leader. Task and maintenance functions of a group are shared. “Task” functions refer to initiatives by individual members or a group of members to move the goals of the group forward. “Maintenance” functions refer to keeping the “spirit of the group” alive.²³ The conventional concept of the leader as the dominant figure ceases.

Elements of leadership training include:

- deeper realization of the self, building up self-esteem, and self- confidence;
- better relationships with others, developing skills at cooperation, and team-building;
- broader understanding of the dynamics in a community and a nation, taking into account local resources and national as well as global economic, political, and cultural forces;
- longer-term view and concern for the environment and human dependence on the earth’s resources; and
- renewed recognition of the relationship between creatures and the Creator embracing creatures in a web of compassion (cf. Galtung 1995) and relations of justice

- **Livelihood training**

Livelihood training is the most attractive aspect of the Triple L model among grassroots women. Filipinas, who comprise the majority of members in primary cooperatives, join because they are motivated by the possibility of gaining credit for family use (Illo and Uy 1990). Rural women in the Visayas, Southern Philippines weave mats and hats for subsistence incomes to tide over family needs (Rutten 1993). Earning incomes is paramount especially for women in low-income households. They engage simultaneously in diverse and multiple survival strategies.

The university research team with management students motivates the core group of women they have trained to organize a community business enterprise. A prior step is a mutual savings club, from where the members could gradually accumulate savings to be used as their finance capital for the business. To ensure success, the managers closely monitor quality control of production as well income and expense statements.

The criteria for choice of what livelihood skills to teach low-income women would be facilitated by a familiarity with the basic needs of their families. They need food, clothing, and shelter; their daily expenses include items like soap that their family requires for personal hygiene or sanitation in the household. Producing food and soap for the numerous poor would satisfy the basic needs for nutrition and hygiene, befitting their human dignity.

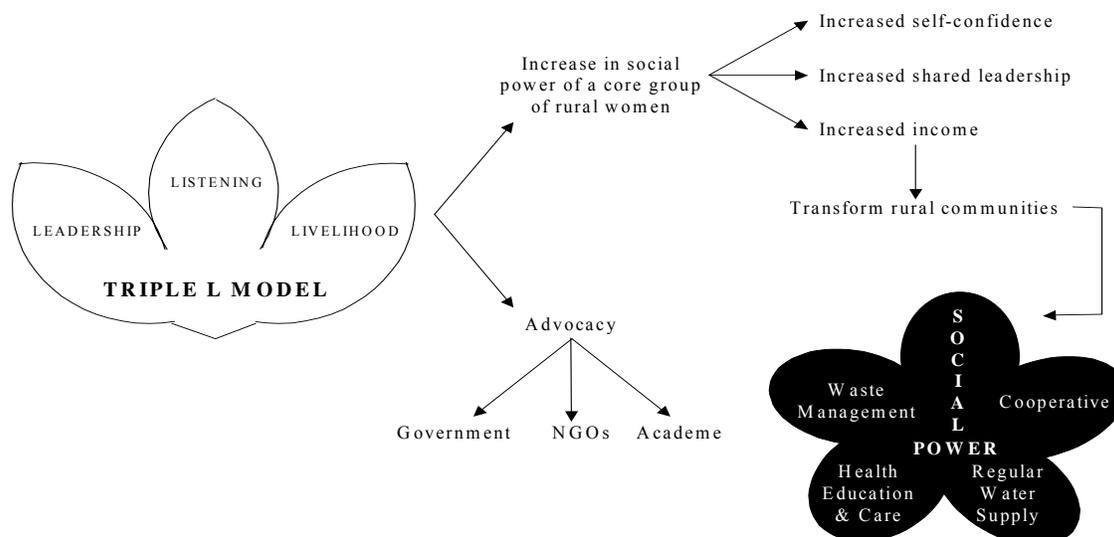
An example would be the processing of salted eggs done by fishing village women. The salted eggs business was a success since it filled the need of fisher folks for not-so-perishable food when they would be in the deep sea late evenings and early mornings. Eaten with rice cooked in their boats and tomatoes when cheap and available, fisher folks consider this a hearty meal.

The proposed model then combines the strategic interests of women by overcoming their subordination at the economic, political, and cultural spheres while at the same time responding to their practical needs of satisfying the basic consumption items of their families by earning incomes.

The goal of the Triple L model is an increase in social power²⁴ of a core group of rural women as indicated by improved self-confidence, shared leadership, and increased income mainly expressed through a community business enterprise. This social power of women will then help transform rural communities.²⁵

Experience with fishing village women bears this out (Loanzon 2002). As the women grew as a community based on more “humane work”, they initiated or co-sponsored projects for their entire neighborhoods such as waste management or health education and care days. Indicators of success of the women included their own male spouses asking to participate in livelihood schemes and leaders of neighboring villages requesting the university research team to organize such core groups of women in their areas.

Figure 6. The Triple L Model: Social Power towards Self and Community Transformation among Rural Women



However, this is an immediate goal while the ultimate goal is to influence government policy and decision-makers, NGO leaders and managers or similar academic communities to do more for the “least” via farm to market roads or person-centered and community-based development initiatives. To do this, the university advocates the cause of rural women and their families. She documents her experience with the help of management students with rural women through books, journal articles, and monographs. She initiates or participates in public fora to disseminate her experience, anchored in Catholic Social Teaching.

Rural women are burdened with multiple burdens that often could be lightened by better infrastructure, e.g. roads from farms to markets, water system, etc or more immediate help. Therefore, there is a need for advocacy at two levels: public finance with growth and equity (Palmer 1994) as well as direct productive assistance (McKee 1989).

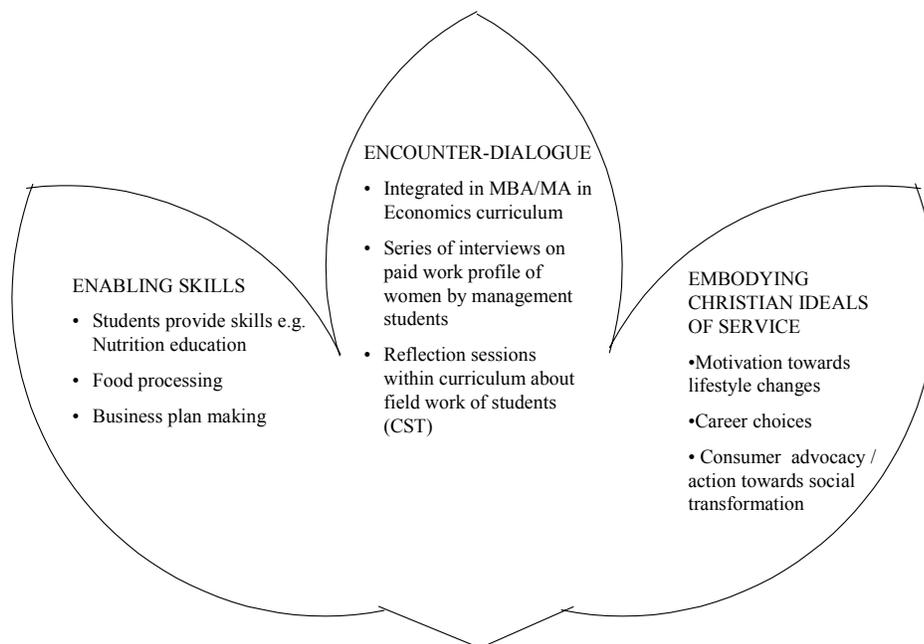
6. Formation of Management Students: Encounter-Dialogue, Enabling Skills, and Embodying Christian Ideals of Service

For students to be truly “outstanding in learning yet ready to shoulder the burdens of society”, the university has to adopt an integrated approach. This approach ranges from a service-oriented curriculum to an equally service-oriented faculty. The faculty has an indispensable role in student formation towards ideals of Christian service.

The phases of Encounter-dialogue, Enabling skills, and Embodying Christian ideals of service represent modes of interaction with grassroots people as well as phases of development of the requisite virtues of compassion and solidarity. The modes will be distinguished by these factors: time dimension, the degree of interaction between the university students and the community, or the expected outcome of such interaction.

Managers or future managers likely possess precisely the skills, knowledge, and attitudes that could help rural women transform themselves and consequently, help improve the quality of lives of their families and communities.

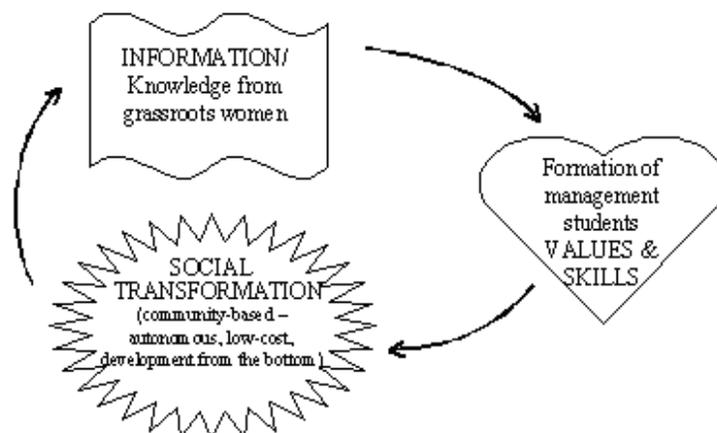
Figure 7. Modes of Student Interaction with Grassroots People



The subjects the management students are taking will determine these modes of interaction. All the modes likewise presuppose an orientation to prepare the students to interact with a group that is unfamiliar to most of them. General characteristics of the community will be outlined and the students especially cautioned neither to show disdain nor to "feign affection". A common humanity will be emphasized as well as respect for the human dignity of the materially deprived. This is to minimize any adverse consequences on both the students and the community.

- Encounter-Dialogue:** Although this is the first phase of interaction, it is perhaps the only contact possible for those at graduate level. Encounter-dialogue, depending on the subject and time allocation, could still be a fruitful starting point. An example would be that management students be required to do field research e.g. the paid work profile of grassroots women.
- Enabling Skills:** Depending on their undergraduate disciplines, students themselves provide skills to enable rural women to help themselves and their families. Those with undergraduate degrees in Finance could give bookkeeping training; those in Human Resource Development could transfer leadership skills while those in pharmacy could teach herbal medicine preparation.²⁶

Figure 8. Virtuous Cycle of Encounter-Dialogue between Grassroots Rural ♀ and Catholic University Management Students in a Developing Country



- c. **Embodying Christian Ideals of Service:** As a result of their interaction with a low-income rural community, the ideal outcome would be a heightened sense of compassion among the students. Translated into action, this awareness could lead students to modify their lifestyles as an expression of their compassion and solidarity with those who have so much less. Eventually, this compassion could motivate them as managers to utilize their professional skills at the service of the “least”. This could range from the radical mode such as their career choices or on a part-time basis like volunteer services in the community service areas of the university, NGOs or government institutions like rural health units. What is important is that the students are more aware of the living conditions of the poor and are acting upon this knowledge. Their “knowing” leads them to “doing” their share to mitigate the dehumanizing effects of poverty rooted in inequality through their professional skills.

The most ideal vehicle for the participation of managers and future managers in an initial encounter-dialogue with grassroots women is through an existing action-research process of the University. Action-research is an ongoing approach at the Social Research Center (SRC) of the University of Santo Tomas.

The research center has undertaken action-research projects by:

- initiating its own project in areas where the university already has previous links
- integrating its action-process in existing community development projects of different colleges/faculties in the university²⁷

In both instances, the research team has pioneered in what I have later formulated as the Triple L model of listening, leadership, and livelihood.

As a research associate of the center, I made arrangements to join the Faculty of Nursing for an action-research project. Together with a lecturer in economics and an economics alumna-volunteer, we travel to Tagaytay, Cavite in Southern Luzon two Saturdays a month. There we try to undertake the listening-leadership-livelihood approach with rural women who are both farmers and traders. This is just a component of a comprehensive Faculty of Nursing project that includes health and nutrition education, involving nursing students.

In the same way that undergraduate nursing students are involved, graduate level students who are managers and future managers could be involved. This means having two Saturdays free a month. For a four-month semester, this means that the students would have interaction with grassroots women at least

for nine Saturdays. Ideally, each three-hour session with the grassroots women, per the design of the action-research project, integrates the three overlapping elements of listening, leadership, and livelihood.

A “dream” outcome of the proposed encounter-dialogue between business managers and unemployed rural women would be an inventory of university community needs which can be supplied by rural women’s enterprises, e.g. processed food, sewing products (uniforms, rags).

Possible subjects for participation of management students (MBA and MA in Economics majors)²⁸ in university action-research are the following:

Table 2: Possible Subjects for participation of MA Economics and MBA students in university action-research

MA in ECONOMICS

Major Subjects:

Research Methodology
Public Economics/Public Finance
Labor Economics
Development Economics
Agricultural Economics
Project Planning & Evaluation
Managerial Economics

Cognate Subjects:

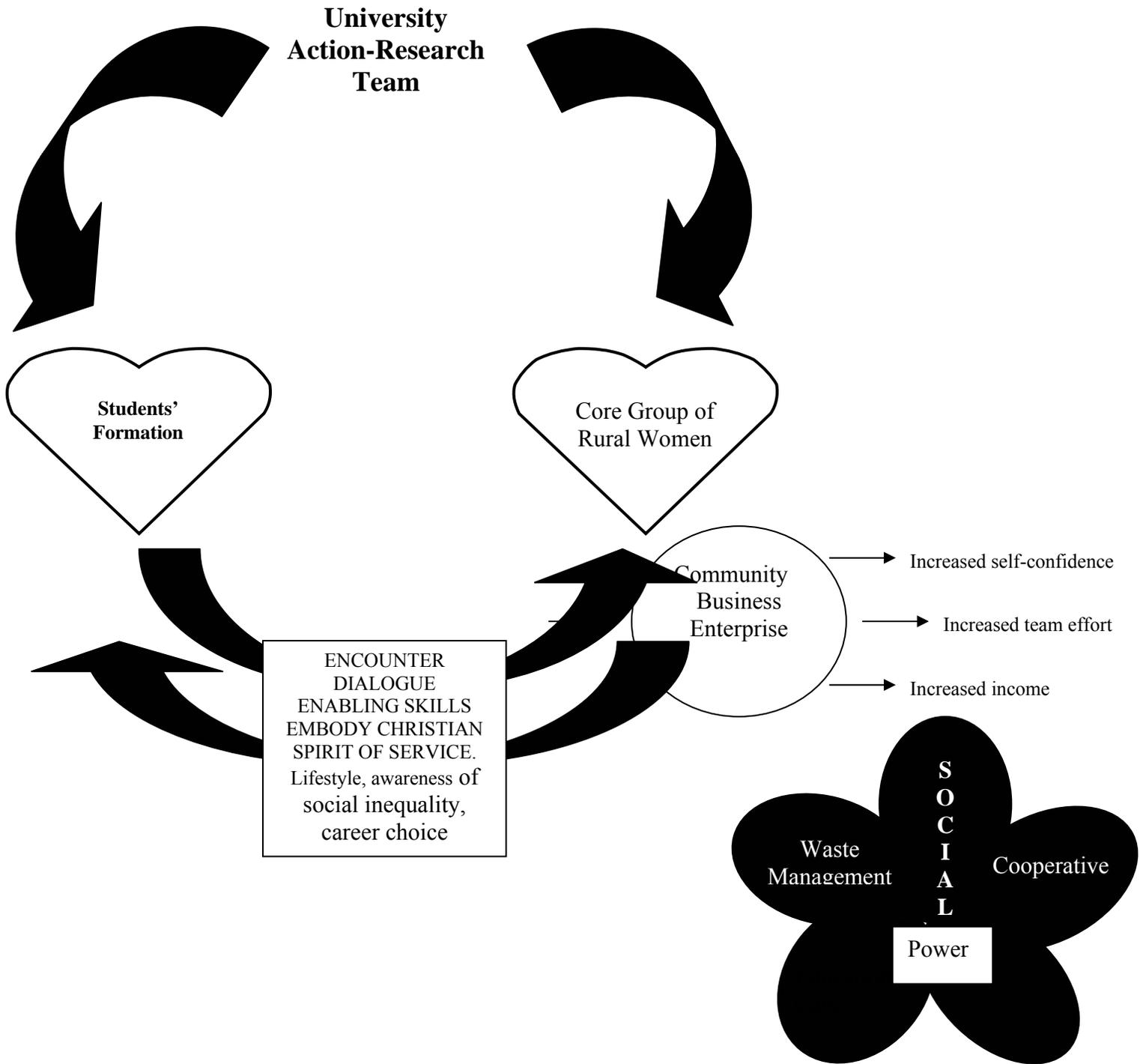
Environmental Economics
Sustainable Development
Health Economics
Social Philosophy
Christian Social Doctrines

MBA

Major Subjects:

Research Methodology
Management of an Enterprise
Philosophy of Business
Ethical Issues in Business

Figure 9: Process and Outcome of Interaction between Management graduate students and Grassroots women



7. Grassroots Women and Managers on the Road to the Splendor of Truth

... In the depth of the human heart there will always remain the yearning for truth.

This is proved by our tireless search for knowledge,
And even more by our search for the meaning of life –
Searches that do not free us from obligation
To ask the ultimate religious questions
(*Veritatis splendor*, no. 1 in Donders 1997: 203)

Veritatis splendor affirms: “the human person cannot be defrauded of the possibility conferred to enter, with all that is connected to his being historical, into the dialogue of love which God offers him” (Laghi 1994:281).

In responding to the need by grassroots women to be listened to, to be trained in leadership and livelihood skills while at the same time being formed by the experience of deprivation these women have to endure, managers “have heard the cry of the needy” and

become the apostles of beneficial and genuine development which, far from consisting in wealth which look into individual advantage or is sought for its own sake, is rather to be found in an economy adjusted to the welfare of the human person and in daily sustenance provided for all, the source as it were of fraternal charity and a clear sign of the help of Divine Providence” (*Populorum progressio*, no.86).

Figure 10. Fruits of Encounter Dialogue between Management Students and Grassroots Women in the Rural Areas

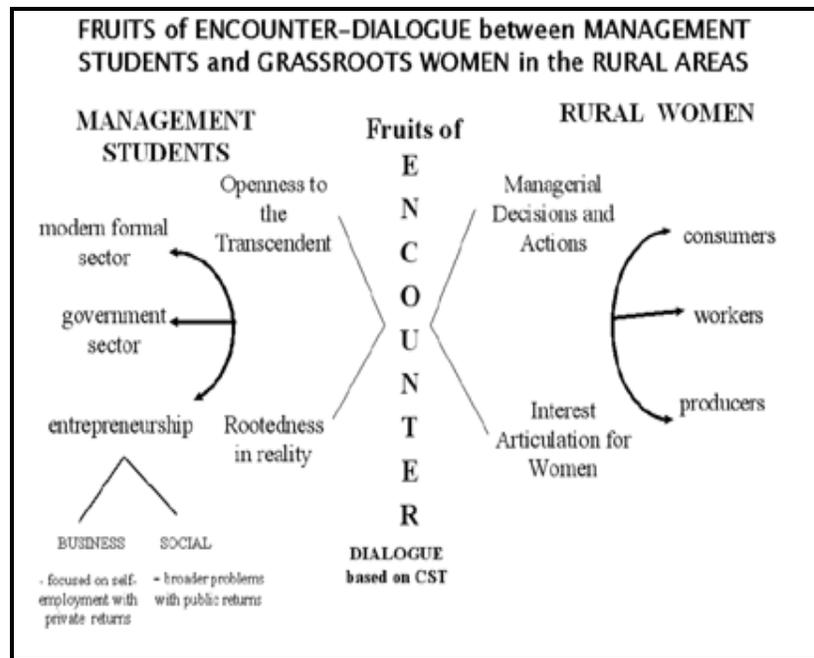


Figure 10 shows the fruits of encounter-dialogue. The fruits of the encounter-dialogue between managers and grassroots women based on CST are envisioned to be mutual.

- Managers become more rooted in Philippine reality. They become more open to the Transcendent in the highly competitive, stressful business situations. Whether employed in the modern global or government sector, managers equipped with CST and acquainted with the misery of the poor through direct experience ensure sustainability for the advocacy of a Catholic university for the needy. Whether management students turn out to be business entrepreneurs or managers of global firms, they are compelled by CST to produce goods and services responsive to the needs of the broad segments of the population. Socialized pricing or “pricing the product right” is a tenet for both good business acumen and social responsibility. Managers who have imbibed CST are more likely to engage in social entrepreneurship, whose “final ingredient” is ethical fiber.²⁹ Indeed,

. . . planned macro-changes (which are generally the *raison d'être* of development projects) are more the indirect result of millions of individual micro-changes, than of voluntarist programmes and strategies . . . (Rahnema, “Participation”, in Sachs 1992:128).

- The grassroots women benefit since managers who have listened to them could articulate their multiple interests as consumers, producers, and workers.³⁰ It is then expected that “enlightened and conscientized” managers decide and act to promote the interests of rural women and their families. Moreover, grassroots women would have acquired social power through the leadership and livelihood training managers have facilitated.

In the involvement of their management students with grassroots women, the university achieves the integrity of uniting “knowing” with “doing”.³¹ Ultimately, what the church and the Catholic university have to offer the world is a

True Christian anthropology, founded on the person of Christ, which will bring the dynamism of the creation and redemption to bear on reality and on the correct solutions to the problems of life (*Ex corde ecclesiae*, no.33).

By holding in rein the natural human tendency for greed and accumulation as reinforced by the market model, CST learned and enriched from the experience with rural women sets boundaries for authentic freedom enunciated by CST and confirmed by observation:

What is at stake in this generalized process of artificialism and individualism is the loss of our capacity for self limitation, that distinctive quality of humanity, alone capable of taking a certain distance and reflecting on its plight.³²

By setting boundaries on managerial behavior premised on the profit motive in developing countries, highly dependent on the dominant economies, the myth of development equality is shattered:

Development equality- catching up with the rich through economic activity – is thus a notion that goes against both common sense and economic science; it is a physical impossibility (assuming the Earth is the only planet we have) and a logical contradiction.³³

Table 3. Ideal Qualities of Graduates of a Catholic University

Outstanding in learning	→	Competence
Ready to shoulder the burden of society	→	Compassion
Witness to Faith in the world	→	Commitment

Hence, managers learn CST from their interaction with grassroots women and together they are companions in the road to the splendor of Truth: equal in dignity and hopefully, in equity of opportunity.

End Notes

¹ This definition is taken from Gustavo Gutierrez, *Theology of Liberation*. Orbis Books: New York, 1974.

² Ken Wilber elucidates on as many as 18 levels of consciousness according to Röpke (2002).

³ The Philippines is a young population with a median age of 15. Managers/Management students likewise tend to be young.

⁴ It is crucial at this point to clarify what Catholic social teaching is not. It is neither an ideology nor a social theory. It is also not a blueprint for building society (Carrier 1990:11). Pope John Paul II stresses it is a “category of its own” (*Sollicitudo rei socialis*, no.41).

⁵ William Pfaff in the Opinion Page, International Herald Tribune, Jan. 7-8,1995 quotes F. List. The Germans and the Japanese stress manufacturing, Pfaff adds.

⁶ In *The Political Economy of the Holy Spirit*, Sta. Ana, Kaiser, and Buchow elucidate on this issue (Geneva: World Council of Churches, 1990).

⁷ Please refer to the Alternative Copenhagen NGO Declaration, a counterpoint to the official commitments reached by governments at the World Social Summit, March 1995.

⁸ Ms. Babe, a Jamaican Higgler (vendor), described their contribution as such. This is quoted from Rita Beuter and Brigitte Späth, “*Der informelle Sektor: Eine Perspektive für Frauen? Beispiele aus Jamaika und Sambia*” in *Die Unsichtbare Stärke: Frauenarbeit in der dritten Welt, Entwicklungsprojekte und Selbsthilfe*. Jutta Berninghausen and Birgit Kerstan (eds.) Saarbrücken: Breitenbach Publishers, 1981.

⁹ Gertrude Mongella, UN convenor of the Fourth World Women Conference, was happy to point this truth out in the preparatory conferences prior to Beijing in 1995 (e.g. seminar in UNIFEM-Bonn, ca. 1994).

¹⁰ This term is coined by Edward Luttwak, a military strategist from the USA and was quoted in Wichterich (2000). Wichterich vividly describes globalization with its dizzying financial deals.

¹¹ Fourteen million coconut farmers and their families have been suffering under tumbling coconut prices down to P2 a kilo (\$1=P53). Quezon province, whose lifeblood is coconut plantations, has been named in a World Bank survey as of 2002 as one of the eleven poorest provinces in the Philippines. It belongs to the Southern Luzon region whose per capita income is consistently higher than the national average.

¹² Maria Haris asserts in the chapter on forgiveness in *Proclaim Jubilee* that a sin could also be that of omission. She related this sin to the possession of privilege, which is not shared. St. Vincent, moreover, tells us the “we pray that the poor will forgive us for the alms we give them.”

¹³ Christian Monsod, “Conference Framework” in Effective Governance: A Tri-Sectoral Concern: The Philippine Civil Society-Government-Business Conference (24 February 2000, Asian Institute of Management).

¹⁴ Dietrich Bonhoeffer is quoted in “Third World Debt: A Multidisciplinary Analysis” by Raymond Lemanski, Richard Liddy and William Toth. This article forms part of the Fourth International Symposium on Catholic Social Thought and Management Education held in 1997 at Puebla, Mexico sponsored by University of St. Thomas, St. Paul Minnesota, et al. The paper and related articles are available online at <http://www.stthomas.edu/cathstudies/1997>.

¹⁵ Parallel to youth development programs, management development program are only effective when there is a recognition of “the interrelationships among problems and link their goals to competency building, caring and civic responsibility (Meredith Lobel “White Paper” in Davis 2001:25).

¹⁶ Gerson in Bengwayan, 2003 <http://philpost.com/o200pages/nation0200.html>.

¹⁷ Timo Kivimaki notes this: it is a challenge how deeply religious values of the Filipinos could be reflected in their politics. *Conditions of Hegemonic Order and Strategies for National Development: The Philippine Experience*. University of Helsinki Institute of Development Studies, August 1995.

¹⁸ The explanation in this part is drawn from the work of Miles *et al* on “Service Learning . . .”, a contribution to the Fourth International Management Symposium on Catholic Social Thought and Management Education, 1997.

¹⁹ Maria Mies, Claudia von Werlhof, and Veronika Bennholdt-Thomsen have coined this term to express the exploitation of women by transnational firms (*Frauen, die letzte Kolonie*, Zurich: Rotpunkt Verlag, 1992)

²⁰ Margaret Mead in Tinker, Irene *et al Women and World Development*, New York: Praeger Publishers, 1976.

²¹ For adult learners, Paulo Freire has pioneered and popularized the “conscientization” approach versus the traditional “banking” method. The “banking” method assumes learners with “tabula rasa” minds. This is very much in contrast to Freire’s notion that adult learners are rich with life experiences that have to be evoked to optimize the learning process. The Triple L model is permeated by the Freire method.

²² “We felt love from the team”. This is how the core group of fishing women at one moment described their interaction with the university action-research team. More than any technical or material support the team could extend, their love for the grassroots women was most important. Compassion guides both competence and commitment.

²³ Task functions include summarizing, asking questions or giving information. Maintenance functions include relieving tension through a sense of humor, encouraging, or diagnosing difficulties within the group. *Training for Transformation* by Anne Hope and Sally Timmel (Intermediate Publications Technology 1984) is rich with team building tools for grassroots groups.

²⁴ In *Laborem Exercens*, John Paul II defines social power as the power of human work to create community. Hence, communities when properly formed, could possess social power and could transform their immediate environment and eventually, the larger society.

²⁵ Social power grows gradually and is born out of regular production meetings. The seeds are sown by shared joys and sorrows. Birthdays are celebrated and problems are faced and worked out together.

²⁶ In Lipa, Batangas and Tagaytay, Southern Luzon, where the action-research team joined the Faculty of Nursing, the nursing students gave nutrition education to children in the primary school with such creativity and enthusiasm. They drilled the children on vitamins effortlessly and gave out small token prizes as incentives for participating and learning.

²⁷ The University of Santo Tomas has twelve colleges and faculties, including the graduate school, which has their own community development projects. Since I served as community service coordinator for the Graduate School, I have learned that there is a wide range among these projects. I was very impressed with the wholistic approach of the Faculty of Nursing. After a series of visits to two of their community outreach programs, we chose Tagaytay, Cavite in Southern Luzon. It seemed to my research teammate and myself that the people in the community were “ripe” for the Triple L model of listening-leadership-livelihood.

²⁸ Under the current curriculum, both course offerings “enable students to build their careers as managers” (per course brochure of the University of Santo Tomas Graduate School, 2003).

²⁹ William Drayton, "The Citizen Sector: Becoming as Competitive and Entrepreneurial as Business." in *California Management Journal* 2002 as quoted in Davis 2000:7). More is demanded of social entrepreneurs since:

- Significant social change usually requires those affected to make several leaps of faith – which they won't do if they intuitively do not trust the champion of the proposed change.
- There are already too many unworthy public leaders in the world
- It is important for the profession to build a community where its leading practitioners can come together and share openly, which is only possible in an atmosphere of trust.

³⁰ Transformational leadership, as advocated by CST, is a must in the Philippines where a manager should serve as a keen perceptor of the situation and as strategic innovator. A close relation is the inspirational leader who is a weaver of dreams and alternately becomes a:

- missionary
- role model and value formator

servant (cf. Morato, Eduardo. "The Leadership Trilogy". *The Asian Manager*, Second Quarter 2001:51-55).

³¹ Conrado de Quiros asserts that there are two urgent things in the Philippines: food security and education. Food for the body and food for the soul: hopefully, managers can help grassroots women in both areas ("Two Things" in *Philippine Daily Inquirer*, June 4, 2003: A8).

³² Gerald Berthoud. "Market" in Sachs 1992: 86.

³³ C. Douglas Lummis. "Equality" in Sachs: 48.

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