

## **CATHOLIC BUSINESS EDUCATION IN ASIA AND LATIN AMERICA**

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It is encouraging to read these scholars' reports of their perceptions and activities surrounding Catholic Social Thought (CST). These demonstrate the mission-driven influence on pedagogical content. Both of these experiences highlight what Saint Elizabeth Ann Seton meant when she stated, "I will prepare you [the student] for the world in which you will find yourself." Geert Hofstede's model for both of the geographical regions discussed in these paper shows that, generally, individuals have more uncertainty (risk) avoidance, lower power distance. Does this influence the business students and external stakeholders in these regions?

Additionally, I am struck by the changes that the regions the authors discuss have experienced. As noted by the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, "The Church's social teaching is a rich treasure of wisdom about building a just society and living lives of holiness amidst the challenges of modern society" (USCCB, Themes of Catholic Social Teaching, para 1). The authors challenge the reader to accept the rigors brought by spreading CST in these environments. This is influenced by the very nature of business education and the need to train for skills, knowledge, and also for the moral elements of the profession. As Naughton notes, "Yet a business is never simply a series of techniques. While the skills provide the matter of business, they do not provide the heart of its professionalism...practical wisdom, which entails technical competence, a rich moral end and practical experience" (p.11, 10). These authors' manuscripts make the reader consider the importance, as Bennis and O'Toole (2005) term it, the "soul of a profession".

In regards to Drs. Sanjuan and Fernandez-Fernandez' work, I am reminded of Epstein's (1998) remark that, "It is not an exaggeration to suggest that but for the 'Catholic contribution', the recent emergence of Business Ethics as an important field of teaching and scholarship both in the United States and Europe would not have occurred or would have taken much longer" (para.17). Should Catholic Social Thought and ethics be presented in a fundamentally different way at a Catholic rather than a secular university? The United States Conference of Catholic Bishops noted that "the EU and the USA enter a new phase in their evolving relationship" (USCCB, Bishops from Europe and the USA meet to foster partnership, para 4). This paper helps to bridge some of the prior knowledge gap regarding the coverage of business ethics in Catholic and secular business programs.

In regards to Dr. Han's work, the words of Hamilton and Bean (2005) that caution that leadership development programs need to consider the audience's underlying ethics appears very relevant. Han's view appears to correspond with Whetstone (2002) who highlights that a person's vocation in life responds to a person's recognized values. Therefore, the Asian Catholic business education programs have an opportunity to serve the community and its needs and in this way to become a role model of Catholic Social Teaching themes.

Both of these authors considered the external environment as it influences their programs. This corresponds with Roche's (2003) remark that "a business program at a Catholic university seeks to educate knowledgeable professionals whose work is informed by moral principles." (p. 13).

Change is inevitable. As Kennedy (2006) states, “organizations that endure, such as businesses, churches, and the like, must either find new goals once the old ones are achieved or focus on goals that can only be sustained, never completed” (p. 55). It has been stated that when making significant changes to curriculum design and implementation, the perceptions of students in the planning stages are beneficial so as to prevent concerns. Once a program is in-place, modifications can be made based upon student perceptions (DeMoranville, Aurand, Cordon, 2000). It is then incumbent upon business academicians to present the foundation of Catholic social tradition early in business courses to encourage students to see their future careers as vocations. The two authors’ work, to which I am responding, has respected the environmental impact upon their students and incorporates that sensitivity into their words.

It has been noted that the effective modern manager asks the right questions rather than offering the correct answer. These documents encourage the reader to consider a number of follow-up questions for further discussion and possible additional research. These include the following.

- How does the material in Dr. Han’s paper match the need presented in the paper with the need (as suggested by Naughton) to ground Catholic universities in its specificity?
- What are future issues that businesses will face and what impact will they have on Catholic business education?
- Should students and/or alumni be involved in making the changes proposed in these documents?
- What are the proper and effective pedagogical methods to teach the “heart” of the business profession?
- How can schools engage the stakeholder theory with Catholic Social Teachings?

I wish to congratulate and thank the Drs. Han, Sanjuan and Fernandez-Fernandez for the insights and information provided through their manuscripts.

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