

CATHOLIC SOCIAL TEACHING IN HIGHER EDUCATION BUSINESS COURSES

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ABSTRACT

As organizations urge business students to be engaged in ethical activities, the use of Catholic Social Teaching (CST) principles offers an opportunity for business academicians to expose students to practical application of ethical theories. This paper discusses the results of undergraduate and graduate education of these concepts in business curriculum. The rationale for this endeavor is discussed.

INTRODUCTION

Clark (2007) cautions that "the goal of bringing Catholic social thought to business education is based on the dual goals of promoting the 'Catholic' mission of the university and improving the quality of business education as business education" (para.1). Indeed it has been remarked 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" (Epstein, 1998, para.17). Furthermore, business academicians have been warned that a dangerous outcome of the scientific model of business has been the failure to seriously discuss ethical questions throughout the business curriculum (Bennis and O'Toole, 2005). Yet, Sims (1997, cited in Hamilton and Bean, 2005) states that an effective leader has the ability to respect the follower's dignity and worth; this echoes a major Catholic Social teaching. Correspondingly, Garvey (2004) observes that the business professionals who are informed by Catholic principles can perceive their work as a vocation. Hamilton and Bean caution that leadership development programs need to consider the audience's underlying ethics. This view corresponds with Whetstone (2002) who highlights that a person's vocation in life responds to a person's recognized values. These values build from the Catholic Social Teachings.

Therefore, student perceptions of values are valid pieces of information in the assessment of different elements of their educational curriculum (Ozan, Karademir, Gursel, Taskiran, Musal, 2005). It has been stated that when making significant changes to curriculum design and implementation, the perceptions of students in the planning stages is beneficial so as to prevent concerns. Once a program is in-place, modifications can be made based upon student perceptions (DeMoranville, Aurand, Gordon, 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. There is limited research on Catholic Social Teaching in higher education business academia. Yet, the use of those principles is relevant to teaching the business view in a variety of courses, including human resource management and marketing. This paper discusses how a Catholic university's business program educates and forms students who can promote the common good through business, thereby fulfilling the university's mission whose focus includes to "educate students to think and act critically, creatively, and ethically as productive members of society

committed to transforming the world.” This paper will also discuss how a business professor's involvement in Catholic Social Teaching positively impacts this ethical approach to business curriculum.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The purpose of this paper is twofold.

(1) This manuscript will report the results of ongoing mixed methodology research conducted to explore the use of Catholic Social Teaching (CST) principles in undergraduate and graduate business pedagogy. Students in business courses have been surveyed through a questionnaire that asks students what their experiences have been in regards to CST in business education. The instrument asks which specific CST principles have been covered in their business pedagogy. The students were also asked which individual CST principles they perceive are relevant to undergraduate and graduate business education. It is anticipated that other Catholic institutions may participate in this study in the future.

For the mixed methodology phase of this paper, descriptive statistics of survey results are presented. Tests of equality are analyzed, and undergraduate and graduate comparisons are offered.

(2) This paper describes how CST principles are infused into the course content of three business courses' curricula. This will demonstrate how these principles positively influence how students evaluate businesses actions and their ramifications within an ethical model.

FINDINGS AND RESULTS

1) As noted by Garvey (2004), "management, business ... schools affiliated with Catholic universities must train business leaders who can strive for efficiency and profitability without losing their moral and social balance" (p. 43). It was anticipated that after business students have been instructed in the relevancy of Catholic Social Teaching, they will appreciate the correlation to future workplace issues and will appreciate the necessity of promoting the common good through their business careers. The chart below demonstrates that this initial assumption was accurate.

Exhibit 1			
CST Principles	Mean of Those Responding Positively to Principle's Relevancy		Mode (1=Yes, Relevant; 2= Unsure; 0=No)
	Undergrad	Grad	All Responses
Dignity of Human Person	89	90	1
Option for the Poor	89	73	1
Solidarity of the Human Family	73	63	1
The Common Good	89	87	1
Participation/Economic Justice	98	90	1
Dignity of Work	93	93	1
The Universal Purpose of Material Things/Stewardship of God's Creation	87	70	1
Social Nature of the Human Person	84	80	1

This chart shows that after instruction in Catholic Social Teaching and Thought the majority of undergraduate and the graduate students believed that all Catholic Social Teaching principles could be taught as a relevant topic in business education. The graduate responses were lower in a number of categories than the undergraduate students. This may be due to the fact that the undergraduate students are exposed to the CST principles in other non-business courses, whereas for most of the graduate students, this was their first exposure to the CST principles, per se.

The students were given a list of CST principles and asked which of these concepts were relevant to their course. As noted below the means were not significant. Yet, the dispersion of rankings according to the Bartlette test shows that the variation of responses was very significant. Therefore, students did appear to consider each individual category's relevance to business education and their responses were very meaningful. They perceived, to different degrees, that CST principles were relevant to the business curriculum.

Undergraduate Responses

Descriptive Statistical Test	CST Principles
Mean (F)	0.205
Variance (Bartlette)	0.000***

Significance: * $p \leq 0.05$; ** $p \leq 0.001$, *** $p \leq 0.0001$

Graduate Responses	
Descriptive Statistical Test	CST Principles
Mean (F)	0.6095
Variance (Bartlette)	0.000***

Significance: * $p \leq 0.05$; ** $p \leq 0.001$, *** $p \leq 0.0001$

2) This active research is focused on including Catholic Social Teaching and Thought principles into the Ethics lectures and exercises in undergraduate and graduate business curriculum. The courses are undergraduate human resource management, undergraduate marketing management, and MBA human resource management. In each course, this methodology includes a PowerPoint presentation on the Catholic Social Teaching principles. This is followed by an interactive discussion in the classes. This activity involves small group exercises in which students analyze possible implementation of each principle in topical issues and concerns. (Discussion questions that accompany pedagogical lessons plans for one undergraduate Human Resource Management course, for one undergraduate Marketing management course and for one graduate Human resource management course are provided in the Appendix.) These exercises lead to lively discussions by the students of ethical concerns that they have and how the Catholic Social Teaching principles provide a tool to analyze corporate and societal actions. Subsequently, the students assess the degree to which these actions are implemented ethically and responsibly by corporations. The professor who facilitates this process has found that this approach engages students more in the ethical considerations of the business functions than other methods implemented previously.

CONCLUSION

Given the results of the questionnaires and the in-class exercises conducted by the students, it demonstrates that Catholic Social Teaching principles can be taught in business curriculum. This outcome is appropriate, given Roche's (2003) observation that "a business program at a Catholic university seeks to educate knowledgeable professionals whose work is informed by moral principles" (p. 13). This paper's findings support the view that "managers trained in the Catholic social tradition will know that human persons were not created to serve the firm - regardless of the person's relationship to the firm - but that the firm exists to serve people" (Garvey, 2004, p. 43). Additionally, students in this study stated the relevancy of these concepts to their business education. This is an effective way to engage students in the analysis and assessment of corporate actions through an ethical lens. These pedagogical actions will be continued in the business curriculum that has been discussed in this paper. These endeavors support this university's Catholic mission-driven business education. If

possible, the author hopes to expand this research to other Catholic institutions to determine if the results are generalizable to a larger population.

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APPENDIX

(A) Catholic Social Teaching and Compensation Issues Undergraduate Human Resource Management Course

Issues:

- (1) Student ideas
 - What Catholic Social Teaching principles apply?
- (2) Confidentiality of pay increases
 - What Catholic Social Teaching principles apply?
- (3) Nepotism
 - What are the ethical issues?
 - What Catholic Social Teaching principles apply?
- (4) "Living Wage" -- World Food Day
 - What are the ethical issues?
 - What Catholic Social Teaching principles apply?
- (5) Profit over employee well-being
 - Examples
 - When is this manipulated unethically?
 - What Catholic Social Teaching principles apply?
- (6) Team vs. Individual rewards
 - Which Catholic Social Teaching principles might influence this reward structure in a company?
- (7) High CEO/average worker pay ratio
 - What are the ethical issues?
 - What Catholic Social Teaching principles apply?
- (8) Comparable worth
 - What are the ethical issues?
 - What Catholic Social Teaching principles apply?
- (9) Pay equity
 - What are the ethical issues?
 - What Catholic Social Teaching principles apply?
- (10) Base pay development
 - What are the ethical issues?
 - What Catholic Social Teaching principles apply?
- (11) Red circled employees
 - What Catholic Social Teaching principles apply?
- (12) When companies can't afford COLA.
 - What are the ethical issues?
 - What Catholic Social Teaching principles apply?

(B) Undergraduate Marketing Course

Ethics and Marketing: Catholic Social Teaching Principles as Guideposts

CST PRINCIPLE

MARKETING CONNECTION (Include textbook correlations, lecture connections, examples)

Graduate Human Resource Management Course

Small Group Discussion Topics:

- (1) Student suggestions
 - What Catholic Social Teaching principles apply?
- (2) Workforce composition issues
 - What Catholic Social Teaching principles apply?
- (3) Closing/ moving company facilities
 - What are the ethical issues?
 - What Catholic Social Teaching principles apply?
- (4) HR strategic ethical responsibilities
 - What are the ethical issues?
 - What Catholic Social Teaching principles apply?
- (5) Promotion of individuals
 - Examples
 - When is this manipulated unethically?
 - What Catholic Social Teaching principles apply?
- (6) US ownership of global manufacturing facilities
 - Which Catholic Social Teaching principles might influence this operating structure in a company?
- (7) Employee job satisfaction issues
 - What are the ethical issues?
 - What Catholic Social Teaching principles apply?
- (8) Compensation and benefit structuring
 - What are the ethical issues?
 - What Catholic Social Teaching principles apply?
- (9) Board of Directors responsibilities for Human Capital Concerns
 - What are the ethical issues?
 - What Catholic Social Teaching principles apply?
- (10) Stakeholders responsibilities
 - What are the ethical issues?
 - What Catholic Social Teaching principles apply?