A New Inspired Paradigm for Jesuit Business Education

Draft for Discussion

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A NEW INSPIRED PARADIGM FOR JESUIT BUSINESS EDUCATION

A. Introduction—the State of Affairs

“Business is a noble vocation, directed to producing wealth and improving our world. It can be a fruitful source of prosperity for the areas in which it operates, especially if it sees the creation of jobs as an essential part of its service to the common good.” — Pope Francis, Laudato Si’ 129.

Despite significant progress in recent decades, extreme poverty persists and environmental degradation continues. Far too many lack access to the goods and services that are essential to survive and thrive—including nutrition, healthcare, education, decent jobs, clean water and sanitation, affordable housing, and clean energy. Tragically, it is typically those on the margins—including women, children, minorities, migrants and refugees, and indigenous communities—that find themselves most excluded from the benefits of the market system. At the same time, inequality in income and wealth remains high both within and between countries. In most developed countries, the majority of income and wealth gains have accrued to a narrow group of individuals at the top. Some of these individuals have also been able to influence political systems and corporate governance in ways that perpetuate the cycle of inequality.

The nature of work is rapidly changing. Outsourcing, artificial intelligence, and automation are replacing work formerly done by humans. Labor market

1 These issues are central to the papacy of Pope Francis. He has spoken forcefully against financialization, exclusion, and environmental devastation. In Evangeli Gaudium, he asks us to say no to “an economy of exclusion, the new idolatry of money, a financial system which rules rather than serves, inequality which spawns violence.” In Laudato Si’, he calls for a new form of economic progress based on integral and sustainable human development. “We are faced not with two separate crises, one environmental and the other social,”, he notes, “but rather with one complex crisis which is both social and environmental.” Accordingly, “strategies for a solution demand an integrated approach to combating poverty, restoring dignity to the excluded, and at the same time protecting nature.”
disruptions like these feed into rising inequality, as more and more workers face futures of anxiety, and while the gains from technological progress could provide widespread societal improvements, instead they all too often accrue to those at the top of society.

Universities and, in particular, undergraduate and graduate business schools play a crucial role in addressing these challenges and building opportunities for positive change. Their responsibility, at a minimum, is to help raise student awareness, to help provide a framework for reflection on the role each student plays in being part of the solution, and to support students and faculty as they develop concrete ways in which they can become part of the solution to these challenging issues. As J. Matthew Ashley extrapolates from Pope Francis’s writing, the Jesuit University, and in particular the Jesuit business school, can be an instrument of mercy that will provide a powerful impetus to action to understand the world and change it.2

We must not be naïve about the complexity of these challenges. The world is more interconnected than ever before, which often provides incredible opportunities to make both positive change and lasting destruction. The fourth industrial revolution is proceeding at a dizzying pace. Indeed, some have referred to this as a “VUCA moment”—a moment characterized by volatility, uncertainty, complexity, and ambiguity. This makes the reform we need harder to achieve, but even more of an imperative.

The movements for sustainable development, just resource allocation, and humanistic management practice and policies – and the growing sensitivity toward the effects of business practices on the quality of life and the potential of local communities – give us hope that business may be the surest and best hope for addressing the urgent problems of our day. The corporate social responsibility movement has affected businesses of all sizes. Other movements such as the triple bottom line, the Global Reporting Initiative, and the United Nations Global Compact with Business are calling attention to the fact that we cannot continue to do “business as usual.”

Corporations throughout the world are changing the way they do business, and shifting what they measure and report as elements of business performance. Organizations like the Sustainable Accounting Standards Board are creating frameworks for these reporting metrics. The OECD Guidelines for Multinational Enterprises and the UN Guiding Principles on Human Rights provide important frameworks that can be incorporated into our curriculum.³ The recent statements of the Business Roundtable⁴ that put aside the Shareholder Primacy model can also provide additional context for the curriculum.

B. Hungers

This shift links directly to what our students are demanding. We believe that what motivates students at the deepest level are what we might call “hungers” or “desires” that drive and inspire their idealism and their sense of hope. They need to be equipped with the skills to survive in today’s economy, but they also yearn for integral human development -- the development of the whole person.

These are the hungers that Jesuit business education hopes to stir and to meet:

- **A Hunger for Integrated Knowledge:** Students today appreciate having so much information at their fingertips, and yet they long for a more robust formation that integrates their intellectual, affective, and volitional capacities and helps them to appreciate how the varied subjects and disciplines fit together to reach greater depth of understanding;

- **A Hunger for a Moral Compass:** Students today experience the limitations that accompany a moral discourse that focuses almost exclusively on individual rights while almost ignoring the responsibilities we have to each other. Our students are not looking for recipes, but instead display a desire to acquire an ethical foundation and a method for moral discernment;

- **A Hunger for Community:** Students today value building meaningful communities with genuine connectedness, and which incorporate engaged civility; they display a new strength of passion and commitment to use their gifts and talents for others; there is a sense among them that they have

⁴https://mneguidelines.oecd.org/guidelines/

³The Business Roundtable is an association of CEOs from leading companies in the US.
found their voice as change agents, and now they long to participate more actively, creating more good in the world;

- **A Hunger for a Global Paradigm**: Having seen the limitations and the dangers of ethnocentrism and even nationalism, our students want to embrace a more cosmopolitan perspective; they see very clearly that each of us dwells in many communities, from the community of our birth to the community of the human family, and they believe that we have duties to each of these communities;

- **A Hunger for an Adult Spirituality**: Tired of the polarizing debates between a lifeless secularism, on the one hand, and a dogmatic fundamentalism, on the other, our students long for a spirituality that sustains and empowers, one in which there is ample room for both faith and reason—which in turn gives meaning to their lives (an expectation among millennials and post-millennials);

- **A Hunger for Meaningful Impact**: It is not enough to create a small, local impact. Instead, there is a desire for scale and to share and spread positive change. This drives the interrelated need for communication, diplomacy, integrated thinking, and collaboration;

- **A Hunger for Dignified Work**: Work is not just about earning one’s daily bread. In the words of Pope Francis, it is also “part of the meaning of life on this earth, a path to growth, human development and personal fulfilment.” Young people today have an appreciation for this dimension; and

- **A Hunger for Experiential Learning**: Jesuit Business Schools must adapt pedagogy to the learning styles of our 21st century students, while remaining grounded in an Ignatian approach, which emphasizes the learning process (context, experience, reflection, action, evaluation). Student learning outcomes are enhanced by immersive experiences and live cases.
C. A New Educational Paradigm for Jesuit Business Schools

To respond to these deep hungers in light of our current context, we need a renewal of Jesuit business education. This implies a new approach to shape the new leaders we need at a complex moment in history, with the aim of creating a just social order in which all can flourish.

If we continue to simply teach the same things in the same old ways, Jesuit educators will have failed in their responsibility to leave a better world to future generations. We have a responsibility not only to reform our curricula, but also to touch our students’ hearts and minds so that they can be a light to the world and use their skills and talents to address the grave challenges facing us all. While individual faculty members and schools have made progress, business education has largely failed to equip our students with the knowledge and passion needed.

The new educational paradigm has a number of elements to make it relevant, effective, and meaningful—and truly Jesuit:

- **Re-creating the economics, business, and finance curricula**—these subjects form the heart of a business education. These new curricula would be developed in light of the insights of Catholic social teaching, and would encompass anthropology, ethics, corporate social responsibility, governance, sustainability, and understanding of the current social reality. While accepting the validity of the market economy, they would stress that economic activity must serve the common good, especially by meeting the needs of the poor and the excluded. They would emphasize the universal destination of goods, as opposed to viewing private wealth creation and accumulation as the ultimate goal of business and the economy. In addition, they would stress that all private and public economic activity must be based on environmentally sustainable practices.

- **Use of the Ignatian pedagogical paradigm.** Ignatian pedagogy recognizes the importance of context, experience, reflection, action, and evaluation. Research reinforces the importance of this approach and the essential role of immersive community engaged learning. The Ignatian paradigm is one of holistic formation. It seeks to inculcate the right attitudes and values in our students, based on the premise that “becoming” is more important than
simply “knowing.” A “co-curricular” component, including direct contact with the poor and excluded, is central.

- **A vision of the essential skills needed for this new kind of leadership.** Jesuit business education must build on the important foundation of humanities and technical education and include the essential skills needed for a new kind of leadership. These new leaders must be formed in ways that view uncertainty and ambiguity as opportunities, relying on creativity, communication, and storytelling as important skills for bringing about positive change. At the same time, they must see leadership as an opportunity for service to others and the common good.

- **The role of key stakeholders.** This includes faculty, alumni, and the broader business community. Jesuit business schools must engage and inspire the faculty to develop and deliver these new business alternatives. Research on the impact of these changes as well as teaching of these new concepts must become widespread.

A Jesuit education in business is firmly based upon an ethical framework that emphasizes the fundamental questions of the dignity and the potential of the individual, the centrality of the common good, and the importance of social networks that affirm and support human flourishing. Each academic field—marketing, finance, accounting, management, human resources, etc.—acknowledges that the present approach to business education, with its emphasis on the profit motive while neglecting social good, contributes to a dangerous and unsustainable economy. Each academic field should then offer an alternative vision based on ethical principles and the promotion of virtue. What is best for all and for the planet? It is the responsibility of each faculty member, department and school to articulate their position vis a vis the Ignatian paradigm. Failing to do so is to, in effect, assume uncritically that the present unsustainable paradigm is the best we can offer to our students.
D. Questions for Further Discussion by the Task Force:

1. Is your school/faculty on board with the idea of developing a new economic paradigm?

2. Is your school/faculty on board with utilizing new pedagogical approaches?

3. What kind of curricular re-examination and faculty development is needed?

4. Does this vision adequately describe what your students and communities are calling for?

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