Exploring the Benefits of Applying Jesuit Pedagogy to Business and Economics Modules.

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WP 2013 – 01

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Abstract
This paper identifies key characteristics of Jesuit pedagogy, expounds why Jesuit pedagogy is relevant not only to religious students but to all learners, and explores the benefits of applying these active learning teaching methods to business and economics courses. We review teaching effectiveness before and after a Jesuit pedagogical augmentation to a statistics module. Analysing a case study approach, the resulting evidence is strong support for the inclusion of Jesuit pedagogical foundations that are traditionally absent from non-humanities based modules.

JEL Codes: A20, A22, A23, A29

1. Introduction
Economics and business courses have their fair share of equations, models, and assumptions to boil down a complex world into something more manageable. We spend such tremendous effort teaching these advanced topics that often we do not devote enough class time to the larger questions of equity and fairness. Can we say with certainty that we are teaching our learners to fully consider the ramifications of the decisions that they will make in the real world? After focusing on detailed scenarios and equations, are learners then able to extrapolate the information and see the big picture? It is no longer enough to teach students what to do and how to do it; the responsible instructor should explore the question of why as well.

Utilising a case study approach, this paper advocates the inclusion of Jesuit pedagogical methods to increase teaching effectiveness. We will discuss what Jesuit pedagogy is and its relevance, review how a specific statistics module was previously taught, discuss the pedagogical additions made during the case study, and how these augmentations allowed the course to further embody the spirit of the Jesuit tradition, therefore enhancing the students’ learning experience.

2. Fundamentals of Jesuit pedagogy
Jesuit pedagogy is a call to human excellence and the fullest possible development of the whole person: intellect; feelings; head; and heart. It seeks to uncover and explore relationships, insights, conclusions, problems, solutions, and implications in the constant quest to understand what it
means to be human. The tradition is not limited to certain areas of education; rather it is ubiquitous, comprehensive, and can be applied to any discipline. Jesuit pedagogy incorporates techniques from a variety of sources in order to contribute to the intellectual, social, and moral formation of the whole person. No two people will give you an identical description of Jesuit pedagogy because its applications are vast. The methodology is flexible and evolves over time to stay current and relevant. (Colloquium 2009)

The approach originated from the teachings of St. Ignatius of Loyola, who was the founder of the Society of Jesus. Forty three years after his death, Jesuits in Rome issued the Ratio Studiorum in 1599, which provided a statement of principles and objectives for the Jesuit colleges around the world. It encourages a process by which teachers and learners go through a lifelong pursuit of competence, conscience, compassion and commitment together. Since its creation over four hundred years ago, the Ratio Studiorum has continued to inspire and direct teaching. Unmistakably, education was much different in the 16th and 17th centuries. One of the reasons that the Ratio Studiorum is relevant to this day is due to the fact that its lessons were meant to endure and evolve as education and learning evolved; it was created to be a living document. Just as learners have changed, Jesuit pedagogy has also been allowed to adjust where needed over time, making it an important inclusion in the study of education.

There are five main teaching elements in Jesuit education: context, experience, reflection, action and evaluation. Context reminds the teacher that it is important to know a learner’s environment, background, community, family life, friends, etc. in order to teach effectively. Cura personalis, meaning personal care for the individual, is a vital component of Jesuit education. As we are products of our individual circumstances, educators need to understand the environments in which their learners grow, live and thrive.

Experience involves examining the most effective, and often entertaining, way to actively engage learners in the teaching and learning process. For the Jesuits this often means dramatic performances or public debates. Whatever the precise teaching method, educators should create conditions in which the learners can realise the connections of their education to their own experiences in order to better understand the subject matter being taught.

Once learners have ascertained the information in lecture, it is an imperative part of pedagogy that they reflect upon what they have learned. Instructors need to direct learners to undertake personal reflection. Revising, studying, journal writing, blogging, meditating on what was taught allows learners to aim to achieve a deeper comprehension. Learners who have reflected and truly digested the material are more likely to link topics from within and outside of the module being tested, use more outside examples, and give more thoughtful answers to questions.

Action illustrates how teachers can compel learners to move beyond knowledge and to take action. Being able to communicate a subject to learners not only so that they will be able to comprehend the material but more importantly so that the learners will be moved to act on the information is what teachers should aim to accomplish. As ‘men and women for others’, Jesuits want to develop learners who will also be altruistic.

The final central characteristic of Jesuit pedagogy is evaluation. Depending on the educational discipline, there are various ways to assess learners’ progress in mind, heart, and spirit. While examinations continue to have their place, Jesuit pedagogy aims at evaluating growth of the whole person and not just academic knowledge gained. Furthermore, intelligence can be measured differently. For example, some students might have excellent communication skills and would deliver
a stellar presentation, while others might suffer from stage fright but would perform best on a written exam.

Jesuit pedagogy makes its educational contribution by transforming instructors into better teachers. It aims to enrich the structure, effectiveness and content of what we teach. Jesuit education personalises learning and assists teachers in motivating learners by relating the subject to their own experiences, integrating learning experiences in school with those of the home and community. It stimulates students by involving them as active participants in the teacher-learner process and attempts to bring the two groups closer together. The teaching methodology promotes close cooperation, personal interaction, and mutual sharing of reflective dialogue between students as well as the formation of human relationships with people in general. Jesuit pedagogy encourages a path of meaningful life, leadership and service. It strives to give learners lifelong advancement and expansion of their imagination, intellect and feelings, and encourages constant growth through new experiences. Adaptable to a multitude of different learners – adults, part-time, online, and more traditional students – Jesuit pedagogy allows itself to evolve to suit the needs of society and stay relevant.

3. Is Jesuit pedagogy relevant today and applicable to all students?

Some might wonder if Jesuit pedagogy has a place in modern, mainstream education. It is important to understand why we should still appreciate the Jesuit model. Understandably, people can often fail to see a direct relationship between Jesuit pedagogy and business or economics courses.

A large amount of the recent literature on effective learning and teaching methods use themes and phrases similar to those presented in the Ratio Studiorum. Whether they are conscious of it or not, numerous authors have already incorporated many of the ideas presented in the centuries old text. The Jesuits’ traditions and teaching methods have been reflected upon by numerous pedagogy scholars. Given the prevalence of similar themes and ideas, it is indisputable that the origins of Jesuit pedagogy are still very relevant today.

Even if Jesuit pedagogy is germane, is it applicable to experiences outside of the Jesuit realm of learning? Why should teachers and learners from other faiths or secular backgrounds embrace a Jesuit paradigm? While the Jesuits are a religious order, their teaching practices do not have to have an explicitly holy aim. In fact, there is often no religious component to their instruction. Jesuits are men of science who undertake a lifelong commitment to education and learning; while the two may overlap, Jesuits are able to separate their pursuit of education from their religion. Certainly, one can use the methodology effectively for religious studies; however, Jesuit pedagogy is first and foremost a way of learning. Unless informed, most learners would probably not realise that religious figures developed this teaching method. Jesuit pedagogy is a comprehensive and creative way of learning; secular and pious learners alike can benefit from its study.

4. Teaching principles prior to Jesuit pedagogy implementation

The previous teaching methods employed were of the more traditional fashion, similar to how most lecturers were instructed themselves as undergraduates. The syllabus for this particular statistics

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1 See Courts (1993), Fink (2003a), Fink (2003b), and Ihssen (2011) for a few of many noteworthy examples.
2 For instance, your author was taught evolution by a Jesuit.
module was conventional: two exams, one final, and homework to do outside of class. Lectures were devoted to just that – lecturing. Other than the occasional question, there was no dialogue between the students and the lecturer about the information presented. The module was not as engaging as it could have been nor did it promote active learning.

Courts (1993) cautions that students will not be confident in their ability to solve problems on their own if they are not self-directed learners. If not actively engaged, the authors found that students felt that they were not learning as much as they should be and that their teachers did not care about them or encouraging their learning. As a result, students will not fully engage in learning something that they see no reason for studying. The pervasive phrase ‘when will I use this again’ comes to mind. Passive lecturing to students cannot lead to an optimal learning environment.

All courses could benefit from Jesuit pedagogy; however, it is crucial for business, finance and economics courses to have an Ignatian influence. The Society of Jesus has always sought to instil students with values that transcend the goals of money, fame and success. They want our graduates to be leaders concerned about society and the world in which they live; leaders who will be charitable, altruistic and ‘men and women for others’. (Kolvenbach 1989a) Father Kolvenbach, a Jesuit and Jesuit theorist, elaborates and asks the following vital questions:

Do we challenge the leaders of tomorrow to reflect critically on the assumptions and consequences of ‘progress?’ Do we challenge them to ponder both the wonderful possibilities and the limits of science? Do we help them to see that often significant civil financial decisions are not merely political manifestos but also moral statements? (Kolvenbach 1989a, 6)

These are all important questions to any student; however, they are particularly important to business and economics students. The world of business is often driven by stock prices, profit and cost structures with little or no regard for people or moral implications. Jesuit pedagogy attempts to produce inquisitive, responsible, life-long learners, ones who are able to blend the best of business with humanity and benevolence.

While there was great room for improvement to the module in question, the original teaching approach was not entirely devoid of Jesuit influence. The fundamental teaching ideology employed was to teach students to teach themselves. Students should not come to lecture to write down everything presented and then solely reiterate the notes on exam day; testing in this manner is a memorisation exercise rather than an intellectual one. Rather, we emphasised to students that a significant portion of the learning process happens on their own time. The idea of teaching to create teachers is itself a Jesuit concept. “The task of a teacher is to help each student to become an independent learner, to assume the responsibility of his or her own education.” (Duminuco 2000, 182) Individual reflection also produces a greater sense of personal accomplishment than if the teacher explained concepts at great length. (Duminuco 2000, 273) Professor Newman, a Jesuit theorist, also touched upon the idea of learning how to learn in his essay. He wrote that learning facts is mediocre; on the contrary, learning to think and reason is divine. The end result desired was to enable the learners to be able to teach themselves in the future; learning how to learn is imperative. (Newman 2001)

Jesuit pedagogy is difficult to define as its manifestation varies with every course and every instructor. “Pedagogy is the way in which teachers accompany learners in their growth and development. Pedagogy, the art and science of teaching, cannot simply be reduced to
methodology.” (Duminuco 2000, 240) While the implementation of Jesuit pedagogy is flexible, the goal of it is more defined:

The ultimate aim of Jesuit education is... that full growth of the person which leads to action... This goal of action, based on sound understanding and enlivened by contemplation, urges students to self-discipline and initiative, to integrity and accuracy. At the same time, it judges slip-shod or superficial ways of thinking unworthy of the individual and, more important, dangerous to the world he or she is called to serve. (Kolvenbach 1989b, 167)

The flexibility permitted by Jesuit pedagogy allows us to aim for this end result regardless of the module or discipline studied.

5. Pedagogical additions made to the module

The first amendment made to the module was to assign a one-page response paper. The paper asked the learners to choose from four articles, all of which utilised statistics. After their selection, they were asked to discuss the ‘uses and abuses’ that the article employed. The assignment was worth a token 10 per cent of their final examination (the exam was 35 per cent of their overall mark).

The learners had the option to choose articles from the New York Times, The Journal News, which is a local paper, The Economist, and The Ram, which is the university newspaper. The assignment was to write a reaction to the article, discussing the statistical merits, how statistics added to what was written, as well as if statistics were used in a misleading or confusing way. Below are some of the questions the learners were asked to consider:

1. Has statistics contributed to the discussion? In what way?
2. Does the article leave you asking more questions than before you read it (is this a positive or negative outcome)?
3. Were the statistics misleading, dubious or confusing?
4. Is any important information or data missing?

After returning the papers, our lecture time was devoted to evaluation, reflection, and discussion. Similar to Leamer (1983), which demonstrates how a researcher’s experience can affect how he specifies a model and draws conclusions, the learners were asked searching questions to steer their discussion towards how statistics can be interpreted in a variety of ways. Given our experiences and perceptions, a statistic can mean very different things to different people, as the class discovered. The probing questions asked by the lecturer, as well as other learners as the discussion progressed, assisted the group to come to a deeper understanding of the articles and the use of statistics in each.

We discussed how the assignment furthered our understanding and appreciation of statistics as well as how this assignment showed them how statistics has enhanced their ability to decipher information in a more analytical manner. “Intellectual formation includes a growing ability to reason reflectively, logically and critically.” (Duminuco 2000, 176) Jesuit education tries to instil in students an ability to understand reality and to evaluate it critically.

The lecture involved a lively discussion regarding one particular article on incarceration in the United States. The article reported the discrepancy between African American men incarceration rates compared to the rest of the male population. In the United States, one in three African American
men is incarcerated at some point in his life. The non-African American learners admitted that they highly doubted this statistic and thought it was a mistake in the article. They probed the internet for reliable information to refute the claim and were shocked to find it was in fact true. On the whole, the African American learners were familiar with this dismal statistic and were surprised at the disbelief of their classmates. Their response papers focused more on the causes of higher incarceration rates rather than elucidating shock and incredulity as the non-African American students expressed. It rapidly became clear to the learners that their own personal experiences affected their perception of the article and the statistics utilised. They realised that even something as objective as a statistic can be interpreted in a myriad of ways and evoke different emotions from different groups of people. Jesuit education is often described as the formation of multiplying agents and ‘men and women for others’. (Duminuco 2000, 171) Our classroom discussions persuaded the students to consider other people’s point of view as well as develop interest in further research and foundations.

What specifically makes assigning a paper to a class Ignatian or an example of Jesuit pedagogy? Father Duminuco elucidates that, “It is the teacher who creates the conditions, lays the foundations and provides the opportunities for the continual interplay of the student’s experience, reflection and action to occur.” (Duminuco 2000, 247-8) The intention of the response paper was to engage students in these three areas of Jesuit pedagogy.

Experience is the manner in which teachers create conditions whereby students can gather and recollect the material given their own experiences. “Experience to Ignatius meant ‘to taste something internally’... This calls for knowing facts, concepts, and principles.” (Duminuco 2000, 254) The best way to engage students as whole persons in the learning process is for the teacher to serve as a guide and to create conditions by which learners may draw on their own experiences in order to refine what they already understand about the subject matter at hand. (Kolvenbach 2005) Combining this cyclical method of referring to prior feelings, thoughts and experiences and the course material is how students are able to process the knowledge gleaned and form it into truth. The articles assigned enhanced the students’ experience by introducing human interest factors, a self-study activity, cooperative learning, and small group exercises.

The second aspect of the paradigm that the response exercise explored was reflection. Personal reflection can take many forms: mentoring; student journals; Ignatian style repetition; seminars. However, the main reflective methods that the assignment elicited were contemplating case studies and participating in debates. The purpose of reflective exercises is to more deeply understand and internalise what one has learned. By using one’s imagination and feelings one can ascertain the fundamental meaning of what is being studied and to appreciate its inferences in the continuing search for the truth. (Kolvenbach 2005) The article dialogue allowed the students to further understand the meaning and significance of what they are studying and how statistics relates to different aspects of their lives.

The capstone to the pedagogical exercise was the concept of action. The process involves two steps: pondering truth and then taking necessary action. Teachers provide the opportunities to challenge students and test the imagination that will allow the students to choose the best course of action given what they have learned. (Kolvenbach 2005) Action can take many forms: projects; service experiences; career choices; and further study. Students found themselves doing additional research to familiarise themselves with the issues in their particular article. Learners who read the article regarding the United States prison system were particularly moved to action. The class was stunned

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3 The Economist: ‘A Nation of Jailbirds’ April 4, 2009
and upset to learn that there are four times as many mentally ill people in prison as there are in mental hospitals. Many students decided that they would write to their congressman to express their revulsion. “The teacher’s gentle questioning may point to the need for more adequate decisions or commitments, what Ignatius Loyola called the magis.” (Duminuco 2000, 262) The magis, or the more, means to go above and beyond what you currently know, understand and believe and achieve more in the pursuit of truth.

6. Results from course augmentation

The outcome from the augmentation was highly successful in many areas, which is particularly novel because we introduced a writing assignment to a course that, in this specific university, normally has no writing component. Newman elucidates what the educational process should resemble:

It is not the mere addition to our knowledge that is the illumination; but the locomotion, the movement onwards, of that mental centre, to which both what we know, and what we are learning, the accumulating mass of our acquirements, gravitates. And therefore a truly great intellect... is one which takes a connected view of old and new, past and present, far and near, and which has an insight into the influence of all these on another; without which there is no whole, and no centre. It possesses the knowledge, not only of things, but also of their mutual and true relations; knowledge, not merely considered as acquirement, but as philosophy. (Newman 2001, 6)

The response paper augmentation seems to have enhanced the learning experience of the class. The quality of the papers was very high and many showed deep insight and thought. The learners wrote about the positive, and negative, contributions that statistics had in their selected article. They reported that most of the statistics allowed them to further understand and reflect upon the material presented, which extended their learning process. Learners also showed critical thinking, questioning if there was any bias behind any of the statistics depending on the argument presented in the article.

Not only did the writing assignment produce meaningful at home reflection, the classroom discussions were topical and evocative. It was thrilling to see students eager and excited about statistics and actively engaged. “A major challenge to a teacher... is to formulate questions that will broaden students’ awareness and impel them to consider viewpoints of others.” (Duminuco 2000, 258) By each student sharing his perspective and what he took away from the paper, the rest of the class was able to learn from each other’s experiences and different points of view.

Fink (2003b) describes some desired goals that students should attain from effective learning. The ability to retaining information, transfer knowledge gained to unique situations, develop problem solving skills, and acquire motivation for additional learning are key attributes that effective learners share. Fink expounds that there are necessary elements in order to develop such learners; students should be extremely engaged in their learning and participate in classes with high energy levels. If this environment can be achieved, the impact on learners will be significant, lasting and will better prepare them to for the world.

Since the final aspect of the five pedagogical paradigms is evaluation, it would be imprudent to simply repeat the same assignment without an assessment process. Therefore, the students were asked to provide feedback for the assignment. As previously mentioned, the reviews were extremely

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4 The Economist: ‘A Nation of Jailbirds’ April 4, 2009
positive. They were enthusiastic about being assessed with a writing task rather than solely have examinations. As this was a one-time augmentation, consisting of only sixty students, it would not be sensible to try and prove econometrically that the addition of the coursework improved student assessment results. Without suitable data to back up the exposition that the augmentation was successful, we need to base assessment on student reaction to the inclusion of the paper; the student feedback was entirely and overwhelmingly positive. The course in which the response paper was added contained no subjective grading; their papers were already considered and exams were graded blindly. Students gained nothing from not speaking their minds or concealing the truth. The fact that they were asking for additional coursework speaks volumes. The learners said that the reflection paper enhanced their learning experience and allowed them to further understand lecture material. In the end, is not students’ enthusiasm for their coursework the ultimate objective for which we are aiming? Furthermore, some students do not perform well on exams; this gives us another medium of assessment. It would be foolhardy to discount the results we do have and it is our hope that additional research will follow. It is not traditional for economics courses to include reflection papers, and the case should be made for their inclusion.

7. Implications for other related courses

If one can effectively incorporate a reflection assignment into a statistics course then there is no reason why you could not also extend Jesuit pedagogy to other economics and business courses. Statistics is a very factual, positive rather than normative subject; the content of economics and business courses is often quite distance from that of humanities courses, where Jesuit pedagogy ideas are often already included. Therefore if statistics can benefit from an augmentation, we would argue that most courses which are taught in the traditional format can also gain from a Jesuit pedagogy addition. Moreover, course additions such as games, debates, or employing the Socratic Method may also be quite beneficial.

The reflection paper allowed the class to apply the theories that they had learned in lecture to real-world scenarios. Overwhelmingly, the learners said that the assignment allowed them to appreciate and further understand what we did in lecture. If pedagogical additions can promote deeper and more thorough learning then we would do our learners a disservice if we did not include some form of these augmentations in every module. Not only are certain fields of economics in peril due to the recent crisis, but it is also much more difficult for our graduates to attain gainful employment.

Anything we can do to assist students with the learning process, making them better prepared for life after university, is imperative and our responsibility.

Pedagogical additions do not have to take the form of a reflection paper. Other augmentations could include debates, diaries, blogs, online discussion question and answer sessions, presentations, and contests to name a few. No matter what subject, every teacher could find at least one addition that would fit into his module.

8. Conclusion

The study of Jesuit pedagogy provides the ability to expand one’s own views of teaching principles. In true Ignatian fashion, there is an infinite amount of knowledge one can acquire in the field of Jesuit pedagogy and a lifelong study of the subject should be pursued by concerted lecturers. This paper presents a case study augmentation of Jesuit pedagogy principles to a statistics module. Based on the learners’ responses, the inclusion of more active pedagogy would be a great benefit as they would become more inquisitive, probing and interested in the subject matter.
Although this paper provides compelling support for the inclusion of Jesuit pedagogy in business and economics modules, there is much room for further research. A reflection paper is one of the many extensions that could be added to a module and there are numerous other options to try implementing. Certain changes may work better than others depending on the learners and the field of study. Finally, a study that utilises data from a course augmentation would lend further support of the inclusion of Jesuit pedagogical principles.

References


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