FUCE Workshop: 'Ethics and the Economy'

There was representation in this workshop from seven different nationalities and from nine different universities. The workshop began with each representative presenting how their own work linked to the theme under discussion. To examine the theme of 'Ethics and the Economy', the group decided to discuss associated issues under the aspects of research, education and concrete proposals for future development.

1. Civil Society

Following some discussion, the participants defined 'civil society' in terms of the network of relationships and associations which embed civic values and strive for the common good. Without civil society, it is impossible to establish and facilitate the common good.

There was a consensus that the relationship between the university and civil society is vitally important. The network of relationships that link the university to the local community is the basis and foundation for all university enterprise. Civil society is the locus in which the university carries out its education, research and engagement. Indeed, there was an agreement among participants that the university is an important 'actor' in the creation of civil societies. By its very nature, the university is an integral part of civil society and contributes to its development. It engages in a partnership with other 'social actors' and was described by some participants as a 'stakeholder' in civil society.

In this context, the university has a unique contribution to make because there is an opportunity within theuniversity for interdisciplinary discussion and collaboration.It was noted that the classical model of the Catholic university had undergone change in recent decades as it took more seriously this societal dimension.

It was expressed by a participant that students of economy learn the values of respect and civic responsibility through the adoption of a convention, promising to adopt an ethical attitude in the field of economy.

There was some discussion around the idea that the university is called to create links with different associations and trade unions. Some participants indicated that there were already some signs that civil authorities are asking universities to collaborate. One particularly interesting example was how staff and students of a university are engaging in the creation of an 'ethical bank' or 'credit union' to meet the financial challenges of the local people. Other universities are engaging in the work of creating sustainable communities (Canada) whereby the university is at the centre of the indigenous community.

A number of initiatives were outlined which explored ways to encourage students from low-socioeconomic backgrounds to acquire a third level education, from bursaries to an accumulation of a fund or pool of money to assist with their education.

There was a recognition that particularly in post-communist countries, this work of creating civil society is very difficult.It was noted that there are a number of challenges faced by the

university in this work of engaging in civil society. This is particularly true for those cultures where this is a more defined separation of Church and State. In France, for example, the capacity of the Catholic university to engage in civil debate is extremely limited. In such situations, the university can contribute in the following ways:

Research – Appropriate research at the right level facilitates discussion and provides a platform to introduce new ideas both at a national and international level.

Students - Individual students, through their own entrepreneurship can make a significant contribution to the local society.

There was a consensus that this work of engagement between the university and civil society is a long-term project and requires endurance and patience.

2. Leadership and Social Entrepreneurship

There was a consensus that the university can greatly contribute in the field of training for leadership. In discussion, it was suggested that a good way to engage in ethical reflection is within the context of envisioning students. The university is involved in the work of educating leaders through exploring ideals, enabling skills. The work of Loyola University was cited as an example of integrating 'Ethical Leadership in Business'. Another participant outlined how they had recently introduced a new pathway called 'Leadership of Creativity' to encourage students to be innovative and to develop their capacity as 'authentic leaders'.

The situation in Lyons was outlined as an example that a collaboration was carried out between the university and the local mayor of the city and a number of local firms to create opportunities for social links in the community. It was noted that such collaboration initiatives are not only beneficial for the students but they also become a locus for research. Other participants outlined how within their respective universities, students created non-profit organisations or were involved in developmental projects in the local community, exploring issues such as recycling or ecological 'smart cities'. It was suggested that these social entrepreneurship initiatives could be explored further as opportunities for interdisciplinary research.

In the field of social entrepreneurship, a number of participants paid tribute to various styles of 'emersion programmes' and 'experiential learning'. These situations allow students to apply their teaching and are opportunities for research.

A useful distinction was made between 'voluntary service which entails real responsibility' and voluntary service which does not involve leadership. It was suggested that the former approach to voluntary service is more beneficial.

It was noted that language was very important and that there were some negative connotations with 'community service' in some cultures. The relationship between the university and 'Catholic Identity' is different from country to country and in different cultures. The term 'experiential learning' was suggested as a useful alternative to 'community service'.

A participant noted that the Catholic University can make a more significant contribution to civil society either at the beginning of a project or when involved at the core of the work because they are able to bring something new to the discussion. It was noted that the Catholic university has a unique capacity to bring people together in such social projects, in interdisciplinary discussion.

A key concept outlined in the workshop was the idea of 'social conscience'. If the social conscience of students is nurtured, it will lead to concrete proposals for action. As such, emphasis upon the spirit with which we teach as well as the content becomes ever important.

There was consensus that the Catholic University needs to engage in holistic education, not only instrumental. Recognising that technology does not exist for itself, university also needs to educate students to identify problems, solve issues and explore the implications of such technology. A creative way to reinforce this social conscience was outlined by a participant whereby the university gives over 15 credits within the doctorate programme to the development of this social aspect. Within the context of this holistic education, it was noted that there is an inherent tension between business and university; business needs students who are trained to carry out various processes but universities needs to educate beyond an instrumental functionalism. The protection of languages, social sciences and classical subjects provides a counterbalance to the sciences.

If students are to be educated in authentic leadership, then the university needs to be an exemplar of leadership. In this context, the pastoral care of students was noted as a manifestation of such leadership.

3. Ethical Management of Technological Innovation

It was outlined by one of the participants that there exists a distinction between the 'ethics of technology' and the 'ethics of affairs'. The former is treated within the field of science and philosophy while the latter is sometimes examined in the field of business and economy. It was suggested that the synthesis of these two dimensions is important. Not only technological advancement but the management of technological advancement is essential. This synthesis will require specialists in both fields of study. Students and society need a literacy in technology but they also need a proficiency in the management of this innovation. Case study was suggested as a methodology to explore this interaction further.

4. Proposals for Future Development:
- The Catholic University should exhibit an openness to social engagement and community outreach.
- The Catholic University should recognise that it is a unique stakeholder and 'actor' in the public forum and brings to this relationship skills in interdisciplinary engagement, vision and authentic leadership.
- The Catholic University should explore the interconnection of programmes of study to highlight the social dimension.

Secretary Fr Eddie McGee   Chairman Fr Wladyslaw Zuziak