

**Institute For Christian Teaching
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**TEACHING BUSINESS COURSES FOR DEVELOPMENT IN EASTERN AFRICA:
A CHRISTIAN PERSPECTIVE**

by

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**Teaching Business Courses for Development in Eastern Africa:
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The field of business studies is a relatively new discipline which was introduced in both the secular and Christian tertiary education in Africa about 20 years ago. However, this field of study has gathered momentum and is attracting a large number of students, both in the secular and Christian colleges and universities.

There is no doubt that businesses play a vital role in all societies, and increasingly in the developing countries. It is in this context that colleges and universities are offering business degrees, which are proving popular.

For marketability, the business courses that are taught in Christian colleges are similar, if not identical to those taught in the secular sector. Given this fact, many people wonder if it is necessary to have the duplication. It is accepted that there are common core subjects in every business degree, but whether unanimity is essential for transferring basic business concepts such as development is questionable.

Tension between business and Christianity seemed to have existed for centuries. St. Augustine, a fifth century Christian Bishop, wrote that "business in itself is evil". St. Jerome too once said that "a merchant can seldom, if ever, can please God" (Chewning, 4).

The purpose of this paper is to show how business can be taught with a Christian bias for the benefit of humankind. It will demonstrate a view of development that is beneficial to the

people of developing countries in Eastern Africa. Furthermore, it will attempt to show that effective business practices do not have to go hand in hand with the hallmark of the established business world of - "dog eat dog," to enhance upward mobility.

The Need for Business Education

Christian colleges in Africa are playing a very vital role in the area of human resource development and will continue to do so in the foreseeable future. An important component of society's development is skilled manpower. Christian colleges can contribute to this development in their own limited, but meaningful ways.

It would be good if the African Adventist institutions could build up their own business curriculum, supported by a strong local financial base and depend less on external funding. This would have several positive effects, such as: self worth, self reliance and strong bargaining power when decisions are being made.

Those of you who attend committees of the Seventh-day Adventist (SDA) institutions may have noticed the fact that many times many of the critical issues that are discussed in the meetings have in one way or another to do with management, finance or money related issues. Even if the agenda has virtually nothing to do with money, somehow decisions often times revolve around money. If management, finance and money are some of the major problems our institutions face, certainly we need to

have qualified, competent and honest people trained in the business field to solve these problems in an efficient manner; and what a better way could there be than to educate people in the system who understand the system well.

A dynamic organization like the Seventh-day Adventist church which has many schools, missions and hospitals all over Africa could offer a more meaningful service to its church members if the "organized work" in Africa is managed by ethical, professional and competent business graduates.

It is not just the church that needs such people but the whole of Africa needs them. Africa needs true development and Christian business education can significantly contribute toward this noble objective.

As Christians, we are called to serve the Lord in everything we do. Knowing and understanding Him from various disciplines can be enhanced if Christian colleges offer not just religious, but secular courses like business education. Students exposed to various disciplines can be well balanced, broad-minded and can better develop their faculties.

All the powers of the mind should be called into use and developed, in order for men and women to have well balanced minds. The world is full of one sided men and women who have become such because one set of their faculties was cultivated, while others were dwarfed from inaction. They overstudy, while they neglect that which pertains to practical business life. (White, 37,38)

The different disciplines of Christian colleges are so vital in making a complete and wholesome program, and no discipline is

more important than the other. Each is an integral part of the whole.

In I Corinthians 12 Paul emphasizes the importance of the variety of spiritual gifts. The Phillips translation says that:

God has arranged all the parts in the one body, according to His design. For if everything was concentrated in one part, how could there be a body at all? The fact is, there are many parts, but only one body. So the eye cannot say to the hand, 'I don't need you!' Nor again can the head say to the feet 'I don't need you!' On the contrary those parts of the body which have no obvious function are the more essential to health; and to those parts of the body which seem to us less deserving of notice we have to allow the highest honor of function. The parts which do not look beautiful have a deeper beauty in the work they do, while the parts which look beautiful may not be at all essential to life.

Hence, we cannot say that the church can do without the business, finance or management personnel; for they too are an essential and integral part of the body of the church.

Christian colleges need to be well balanced and have a variety of disciplines that support and complement each other in order for them to approach education from a wholistic point of view. Clear instruction is given to us that "Of many who have received higher education, God declares 'thou are weighted in the balances and found wanting....' Wanting in the knowledge of practical business, wanting in the knowledge of how to make the best use of time, wanting in the knowledge of how to labor for Jesus!" (White, 468). We certainly do not want the Lord to find us wanting. The remedy for this is to approach the whole issue of education from an integrated point of view.

One of the reasons why some Christians feel that business and Bible religion are a world apart, incompatible and have nothing in common is because Christian educators have compartmentalized education. Consciously or unconsciously, we have created in our minds compartments for education, religion, business, science, etc. and have erected strong walls around each compartment in such a way that one compartment has nothing to do with the other. In order to facilitate learning, such barriers should be removed, and students should be encouraged to draw from diversified, yet related disciplines and experience the depth of true education. If real life experiences are related, why can't the teachings of various disciplines be related?

Contribution of Religion to Business

In Africa during the colonial period, when black people did not have any access to any kind of education, it was the "mission" schools that trained them. Currently, some of the mission-trained Africans are playing a significant role in the development of the continent.

Rightly understood religion has supported and positively contributed and continues to do so to businesses in many ways. It is religion that built the "pyramids, the temples, the cathedrals" and it is the religious practices that stimulate the production and consumption of "incense, prayer rugs, images and vestments" (Fairchild, 360).

Religion throughout the ages has contributed in the development of human resources by ways of educating men and women that planned and led societies. Religion in many ways "...impacts on the minds of economists and shapes their beliefs, customs and practices" (Fairchild, 360).

History tells us about the Judeo-Christian work ethics in the USA, the protestant churches in the United Kingdom, the Puritan morality, "...their vocation orientation, their frugality, temperance and simplicity" and how all these led to increase in production and accumulation of capital in these countries (Fairchild, 363).

Again, economic history of nations tells us that it was during periods of "conversion" when society was willing to try new faith, and new ways of life, that people were more open minded and receptive to try to produce new goods and services or to use new modes of production (Fairchild, 363). Here again we find another proof that religion is supportive of development.

DEVELOPMENT

If there is any dream anyone coming from a developing country would like to see fulfilled, it is the dream of development, because development is the most effective weapon against poverty and inequality.

For one to understand development fully, he/she has to know underdevelopment well. Goulet (23) vividly describes the life of the masses in many underdeveloped countries:

Underdevelopment is shocking: the squalor, disease, unnecessary deaths, and hopelessness of it all! No man understands if underdevelopment remains for him a mere statistic reflecting low income, poor housing, premature mortality or underemployment. The most emphatic observer can speak objectively about underdevelopment only after undergoing, personally or vicariously, the "shock of underdevelopment." This unique culture shock comes to one as he is initiated to the emotions which prevail in the "culture of poverty." The reverse shock is felt by those living in destitution when a new self-understanding reveals to them that their life is neither human nor inevitable ... The prevalent emotion of underdevelopment is a sense of personal and societal impotence in the face of disease and death, of confusion and ignorance as one gropes to understand change, of servility toward men whose decisions govern the course of events, of hopelessness before hunger and natural catastrophe. Chronic poverty is a cruel kind of hell, and one cannot understand how cruel that hell is merely by gazing upon poverty as an object.

Common questions asked by many people coming from developing countries are - Is development synonymous with economic growth? And if our countries grow economically can we have a more prosperous and materially comfortable kind of life? Economic growth is measured in terms of increase (growth) in the gross national product (GNP). Using a mathematical illustration, economic growth could be defined as a subset of development. It is the narrow definition of development, because a country's GNP per capita income could double without the elimination of poverty, unemployment and inequality, and that is not development (Todaro, 86).

Traditionally economists were convinced that development was the ability of a stagnant economy to turn around, generate and sustain an annual economic growth or gross national product (GNP) of 5% - 7% or more, and this growth was expected to bring a "trickle down" effect to the masses in terms of employment, elimination of poverty, and narrowing down the inequality gap.

Moved by the above mentioned economic theory and their enthusiasm to be classified as developed countries, in the 1960s and 1970s many developing countries managed to achieve impressive economic growth rate of 5% to 7% or even more. Yet, poverty, inequality and unemployment were very rampant in those countries whose economies had grown significantly (Todaro, 86).

Traditional economic theory again says that - as a country develops, the share of agriculture's contribution to national economy declines; while the contribution of the manufacturing and service industries increases, which is known as the industrialization process.

Many developing countries in their desire to be known as developed countries, introduced rapid industrialization. Agriculture and the environment were not given primary consideration. Such wrong policies ended up making previously self-sufficient countries in cereal production to be net food importers. It is true that rapid industrialization brought about increase in the GNP of the countries concerned. However, poverty, unemployment and inequality were still rampant. Once again development for these countries remained illusive. This

was the period that many clamored for the "dethronment" of GNP as a measure of development (Todaro, 87, 88).

The dissatisfaction with the traditional capitalist economic theories was one of the reasons that led some African countries to experiment with socialism, a system that by and large excluded God from their development agenda.

Development should be conceived of as a multidimensional process involving major changes in social structures, popular attitudes, and national institutions, as well as the acceleration of economic growth, the reduction of inequality, and the eradication of absolute poverty. Development, in its essence, must represent the whole gamut of change by which an entire social system, tuned to the diverse basic needs and desires of individuals and social groups within that system, moves away from a condition of life widely perceived as unsatisfactory and toward a situation or condition of life regarded as materially and spiritually 'better.' (Todaro, 88)

Development needs to be God centered and people oriented. Its emphasis should be on the improvement or development of the quality of human life, instead of on the "development of things" (Owens, xi).

Economic development to people living in developing countries could be best understood in terms of elimination of poverty, inequality and unemployment within the context of a growing economy; and it takes at least three of the following "core values" into consideration:

Ability to Provide Basic Needs

The most basic, fundamental, and logical point of starting development is by satisfying the basic needs of human beings. There are certain things that life cannot do without and these include food, shelter, health services, some kind of employment, and these days even education has become one of the most basic needs of people coming from developing countries (Todaro, 89).

When people have satisfied the above mentioned basic needs, they would aspire for the higher needs, such as further improvement of their quality of life.

"Freedom From Servitude: To be Able to Choose"

The next step of development refers to a situation where the masses in a country rise above their basic needs satisfaction, where they have choices in the types of goods and services they want to consume, where shortages, scarcities and abrupt increases in the prices of goods and services are eliminated, where all those who are willing and able to work are gainfully employed, and when they experience job satisfaction and job security. When the masses, particularly the bottom 40% of society, move towards a materially and spiritually fulfilling and uplifting kind of life, when the general level of living of a nation has risen to the point that poverty, inequality, and high unemployment problems have been eliminated - in short, when an entire population experiences socioeconomic security.

Self-Esteem

Development is not just measured in terms of the goods and services or material things a nation produces and the equitable distribution of these goods and services (material dimension) but also in terms of nonmaterial dimensions like self-esteem, when people have a fair and equal chance of self-improvement, when they individually or collectively are proud of their identity, when they feel dignified, respected, recognized and appreciated. When people coming from developing countries do no longer feel inferior and indebted to people coming from the industrialized countries, when people are free to express their feelings individually or collectively - in short, when people achieve what psychologists call self-esteem - then there is development, and that is why development is multifaceted and multidimensional (Todaro 89).

Finally development is achieved when it is integrated development in opposition to enclave development. It is achieved when an entire society instead of certain groups, sexes, clans, tribes religious groups move toward a materially prosperous politically and socially conductive and spiritually uplifting kind of life (Todaro, 88). The writer is convinced that Christian education could contribute to development in some limited, but meaningful ways.

It is important for Christian colleges in Eastern Africa to strengthen their secular curricula and make them relevant to their needs and aspirations. Futhermore the Christian colleges

must integrate business with the Bible to excise the unChristian behaviors that are found in business practice. The writer suggests six ways in which faith and learning can be integrated with the teaching of business in Christian colleges and universities.

1. The most powerful sermon behind any subject, whether the subject is considered religious or secular, is the teacher. After Christianity has permeated and shaped the Christian teacher's world view, goals and values, these values that are part and parcel of the Christian teacher's life cannot be left behind when he/she goes to teach business subjects.

Christ, the great Teacher, lived in harmony with His teaching and His lessons were fulfilled by precept. He was a carpenter, yet there is no record in scriptures that says He mistreated workers, overcharged customers or any negative criticism on how He managed His day to day business activities.

The business teacher too, needs to live a "transparent" life that is worth emulating by students.

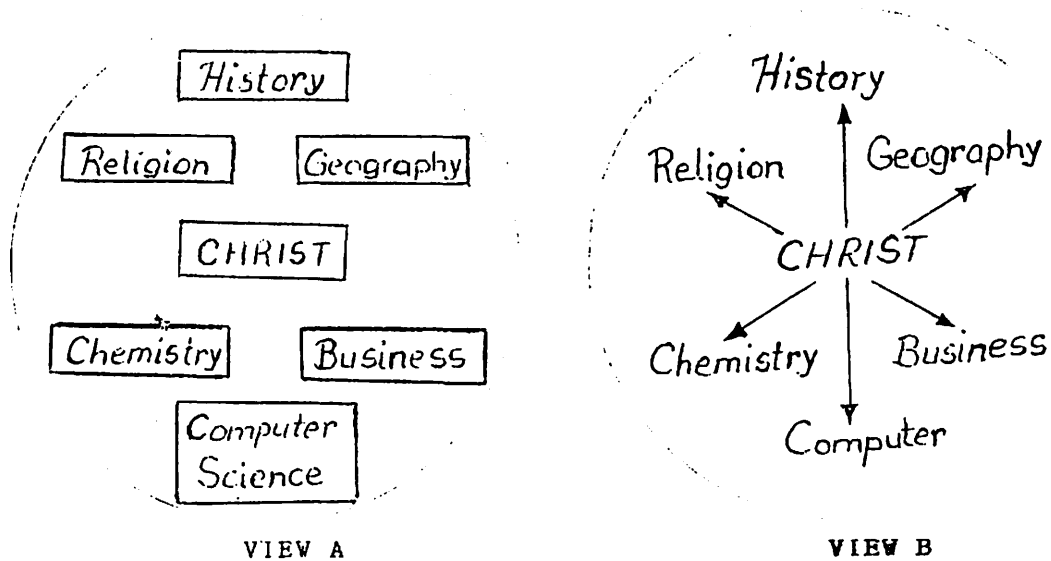
In order for the teacher to integrate Christian beliefs into his/her teaching effectively he/she should first know the source of the truth, both in word and in action. Gabelein (37) Supporting this says that;

No man teaches out of a philosophical vacuum.
In one way or another every teacher expresses
the convictions he lives by, whether they be
spiritually positive or negative.

2. Learners' participation is important in all we teach. (Johnson, 78) suggests "I hear and I forget, I see and I remember, I do and I understand." Learning which is expected to last should permeate the learners' cognitive, affective, and psychomotor domains.

3. It is essential for the teacher to build relationships with his/her students so as to have a positive impact on them. Relationships may be formed through Christian love, listening, friendship and affirming students (Johnson, 67-71). Students are "drawn like magnets" to teachers, who not just talk about Christian love, but demonstrate it in action. And this could be best achieved by having personal interest in each student (Johnson, 71).

4. Business teachers could minimize the problem of subject compartmentalization by examining the following two views (views A and B).



In the secular View (A) the different disciplines are surrounded by strong walls. Christ, although in the center, is also surrounded by a strong wall. The different subjects are taught in such a way as though each has nothing to do with the other subjects. In this case even religion could be taught without making Christ the focal point of its content. However, in view (B) the strong walls or barriers around the different disciplines are removed, arrows point out from the center (Christ) to the different disciplines, indicating the fact that Christ is the source of all true knowledge, and that knowledge could be acquired even from seemingly secular disciplines. In this case students are placed in a situation where they can draw from diverse disciplines, making integration of faith and learning an easier exercise.

Gabelein (20) says that "All truth is God's Truth." Education that is influenced by Christ, who is the origin of all truth, should positively influence all the subjects that are taught in school.

On the part of the business teacher, having a good interdisciplinary knowledge can help in overcoming problems of subject compartmentalization and removing artificial walls that are erected around subjects.

"Christianity and business rightly understood are not two separate things, they are one. Bible religion is to be brought into all that we do and say" (White, 277).

5. Business education would be more meaningful if it had a practical dimension.

Business students could start development projects in their community and teach skills like adequate record keeping, financing and proper management of small businesses. Such activities can make students feel that they are part and parcel of their community.

Practical and relevant business cases that deal with ethical issues should also be part of the business curriculum.

6. It is important for us to represent the Lord in all our activities, whether the activities are considered religious or secular. White, (556) sums it all by saying:

The Christian in his business life is to represent to the world the manner in which our Lord would conduct business enterprises. In every transaction he is to make it manifest that God is his teacher. Holiness unto the Lord, is to be written upon day books and ledgers, on deeds, receipt and bills of exchange. Those who profess to be followers of Christ, and who deal in an unrighteous manner, are bearing false witness against the character of a holy, just, and merciful God.

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Ellen G. White Sources

Education

"That which lies at the foundation of business integrity and of true success is the recognition of God's ownership" (137).

"The accounts of every business, the details of every transaction pass the scrutiny of unseen auditors. Agents of him who never compromise with injustice and never overlook evil" (144).

Fundamental of Christian Education

"All the powers of the mind should be called into use and developed in order for men and women to have well balanced minds. The world is full of one-sided men and women, who have become such because one set of their faculties was cultivated, while others were thwarted from inaction. They overstudy, while they neglect that which pertains to practical business' life" (37,38).

Council to Teachers

"Christianity and business,' rightly understood, are not two separate things; they are one. Bible religion is to be brought into all that we do and say" (277).

Bible texts that emphasized the virtues of honesty, benevolence, integrity and stewardship:

Malachi 3:3	"Bring all your tithes and offerings...."
Proverbs 11:24,25	"He that gives freely grows richer"
Romans 12:8	"Let him give generously."
II Corinthians 8:9-15	Your benevolence should supply others' wants
I Timothy 2:2	Lessons of honesty
Luke 16:2	Stewardship

