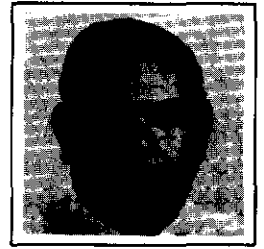


FEATURE ARTICLE



Andrew Gonzalez, F.S.C.

The Uses of Theory in Management Education

WITHOUT DESCENDING to platitudes and without belaboring the obvious, I have often been asked in public just how much management can be taught.

For someone connected all his life with an institution which has prided itself on excellence in business management and educational management and which co-founded the Asian Institute of Management, the self-questioning could border on professional heresy.

Perhaps a better way of framing it would be: What can management education really do? Or to put it another way, what are the limits of management as a field of study?

What a school does best is to discuss principles and to summarize the state of knowledge in a particular discipline. Thus, a school does well in explaining concepts and principles of economics, commercial law, human behavior. Schools likewise develop cognitive skills well: analysis, synthesis, extrapolation, listening creatively, and writing, reading, communicating, bookkeeping, and analyzing financial statements are the metiers of schools.

What a school cannot do is really to teach the management of man, how to get along well with people, with one's peers and with the ones working under one's

supervision. What a school cannot give is common sense and prudence and even shrewdness. One imbibes these within the home and within a tradition, almost by intuition.

Nor does a school develop initiative or leadership or entrepreneurship: it can talk about these things and preach their desirability; it can create an ecology where these traits will be encouraged and manifest themselves. I doubt, however, if they can really be educed. Most business school teachers are great conceptualizers and even great communicators; few are really role models of entrepreneurship.

Hence, a business and economics review such as the *DLSU Business and Economics Review*, written by the faculty and students of De La Salle, must of necessity remain in the realm of the theoretical, of principles and concepts and their predictive as well as experiential applications.

Within these limitations, however, business discussions and writings do have functionality; they are a necessary but not sufficient condition for the genuine education which comes from life itself.