

How to Use the CST Learning Modules: A Facilitator's Guide

Introduction

This guide to *Faith in Action: Catholic Social Teaching on the Ground* Learning Modules is for the use of facilitators, trainers, and educators primarily. General readers who are interested in the Church's social teaching as contextualized in particular sectors and on specific issues are likewise invited to learn more about it through the modules and may find this brief guide a useful place to start.

It gives a brief description of the module contents, provides an overview of the pedagogy behind how the modules were developed, explains the learning process, and presents pointers on how to use the learning materials. It also brings to light practical concerns that may arise in the conduct of the modules.

Contents

Faith in Action: Catholic Social Teaching on the Ground contains eight modules. It is bookended by a general introduction to Catholic Social Teaching or CST (module 1) and a re-appropriation of CST in Philippine realities (module 8). Modules 2 to 7 discuss the social teaching of the Church on political participation, promotion of peace, care of creation, workers and human labor, women in church and society, and the socially excluded. The whole volume comes with songs and film documentaries that have been developed around themes that the modules themselves take up and address.

The materials have been designed so that facilitators acquire a grasp of the fundamental ideas and concepts that make up

Catholic Social Teaching, which will then help them to deliver the content systematically. Moreover, the activities are meant to enable participants to engage with the content both cognitively and experientially. Thus this guide sets its twofold task as enabling both facilitators and participants appreciate Catholic Social Teaching's theoretical component, and to discern its pastoral and social implications and concrete challenges.

Pedagogy

The pedagogy of these learning materials is founded on what is referred to as “popular education,” a set of principles and methods of learning which draws heavily on the participants’ experience (hence, learner-centered) and their direct involvement in the process of knowledge acquisition (therefore, participatory). Its theoretical and practical finer points are spelled out in some popular books like Paulo Freire’s *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (1970) and *Cultural Action for Freedom* (1972) or Ivan Illich’s *Celebration of Awareness* (1970) and *De-schooling Society* (1971).

In our context, the nonviolent community organizing movement resorted to popular education in order to counteract state censorship during the martial law years (1972–1986). Through “national situationers” that countered press releases from the state-controlled media, alternative classes in universities, and teach-ins among workers on strike, for example, popular education, or pop-ed, was both an entry point for organizing, and a strategy for consciousness-raising.

When the Marcos dictatorship fell, non-government organizations (NGOs) set up popular education offices and foundations to sustain gains from the restored, albeit still formal, democracy. Historically, therefore, popular education has been closely linked with community organizing and development efforts at the grassroots level which includes a large segment of base Christian communities initiated by the Catholic Church.

To better appreciate popular education as framework of the course and how it is used in the modules, let us look at its basic components:

Method

Content, *context* and *method* (CCM) are interrelated in any learning process considered “popular” or people-based. In the modules, one will note that much of the content is derived from the Catholic social tradition. Hence, its origins may be traced to as far back as the time of the Hebrew prophets, through the development of the Judeo-Christian Tradition, until the emergence of the Catholic social encyclicals.

But the advent of the Catholic social tradition and its subsequent evolution has also been heavily influenced by the situation it has arisen from, not only as trigger, but as response to it as well. *Content* is therefore in constant conversation with the *context*.

The *method* of learning has to ensure that this dialogue is sustained throughout the entire process. The method must also recognize that the relationship between content and context is not unidirectional. Content is made more relevant and responsive to the context, but the context may also pose questions and challenges that could lead to a recasting of the content. This interaction between *content* and *context*, mediated by a *method* appropriate to such a dynamic between the two, lies at the heart of popular education.

The use of the *See-Judge-Act* framework which is discussed in module one is a parallel process. Since it is more attuned to the spirituality of the Catholic Social Teaching and the worldview, vocabulary and faith-life experience of participants, this framework has been adopted throughout the modules.

Approach

Made popular by a training NGO in the Philippines (*Education for Life Foundation*), the “three one-thirds” approach to learning is a pedagogical metaphor. It maintains that an authentic learning process draws on three sources and each makes a relatively equal contribution to the process.

The first “third” is learning through the facilitator. He or she is well-prepared for the task and creates favorable conditions for the participants to benefit from the learning process. The second “third” refers to what participants learn from each other or from the

experiences, realizations and insights of fellow participants. In the tradition of popular education, learning from each other takes place both in the contexts of formal study sessions and informal exchanges and interactions. The final “third” refers to what one learns from one’s own experience. Considered to be the most difficult, this component requires that both facilitators and participants examine their own selves to uncover any assumptions, presuppositions and biases which might get in the way of genuine learning.

The three thirds together make the learning process whole and complete. Much as a stool will be rendered useless if a leg was missing, so will learning be insufficient and inadequate, if not inauthentic, should one of these three were lacking.

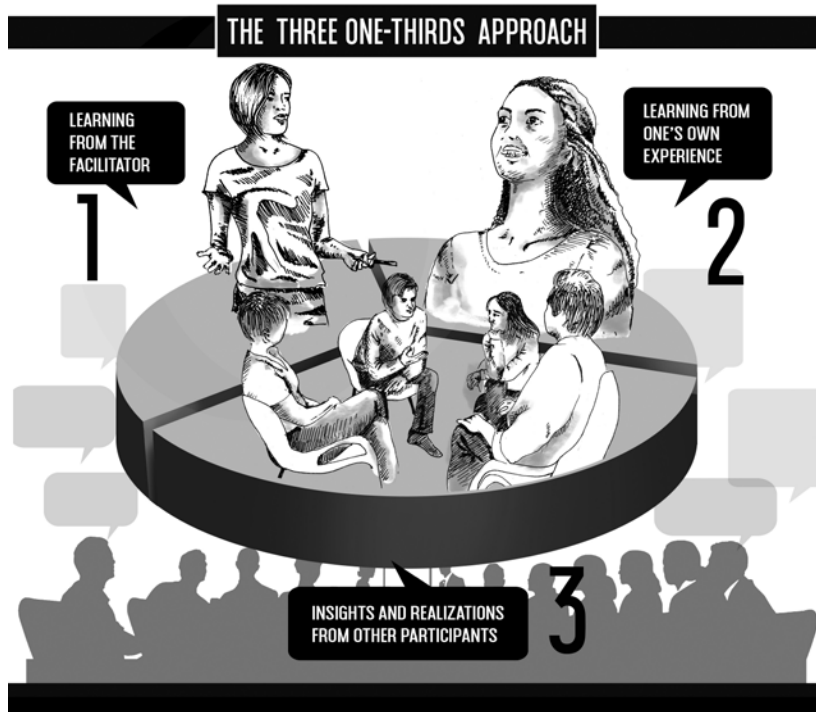
In this pedagogical context, the Catholic Social Teaching therefore is not viewed as a body of abstract and unchangeable ‘truths’ from the Magisterium to be passed down to the Christian faithful. Its content, understood within the context from which it came, is made to interact with the faith and life experiences of people on the ground through the work of the facilitator. It is this process of dialogue between the participants and facilitators engaging with the Catholic Social tradition that makes the so-called “best-kept secret of the Church” a real and actual part of the people’s life and spirituality on the ground.

Process

The two basic components of pop-ed—CCM and the “three one-thirds” approach to learning—are captured in the Activity-Discussion-Input-Discussion-Synthesis or ADIDS process in one fell swoop. Each of the modules has a general introduction outlining its objectives and methods to be used, with a focus on a series of activities meant to encourage fruitful participation around the sector/issue/subject matter. One will note that these learner-centered activities generally follow the sequence of Activity-Discussion-Input-Discussion-Synthesis.

Activity

As a major component of each module, the activities have been carefully thought through to both present the content of the module and elicit participants’ involvement as a way toward greater understanding. Each participant has his or her own history and



background and is not a *tabula rasa*. S/he does not start from scratch. Even if it is a their first time to join such an activity, and even if their answers may not be what is expected, they eventually undergo the process of being part of a learning activity. What is more important is that an occasion is created for the participant to think through and reflect on an issue, question or answer and to join a collective undertaking towards knowledge discovery. If handled responsibly, the participant gains self-confidence and feels worthy as a learner in a process that does not disqualify her/him simply because s/he is “undereducated” or a non-expert.

Discussion (Processing of Responses)

Each *activity* is followed by a *discussion* or *processing of responses*. The discussion that is handled well is not to pinpoint errors or flaws; instead it is to encourage participants to *think, discuss* and *take an active part in the learning process*. At the same time, the results of the activity are also meant to provide a transition to the input. In so

doing, the participants do not feel alienated from the input which, in traditional contexts, is deemed the monopoly of the teacher. Since they have a stake in grappling with the module *via* the activity and so long as the discussion recognizes their contribution, the participants will not find it difficult to locate themselves even in the next moment.

Input (Gaining a Deeper Insight)

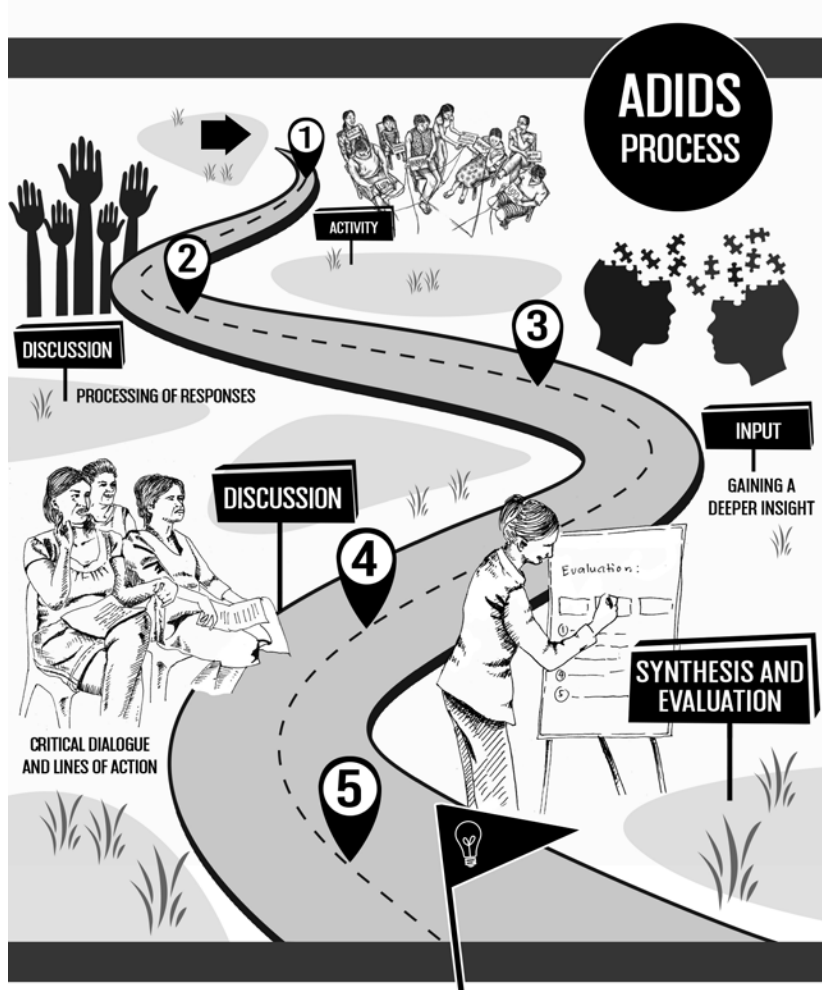
Giving *input* is not simply a transfer of ideas and concepts, similar to a lecture. It is aimed at situating the content in a broader and synthetic perspective, thus, making the participants gain a deeper insight. It is a delicate balancing act in that it seeks to get the content of the module across by being sensitive both to the nuances of the material, and to the participants' actual life situation and experiences. Moreover the initial steps (activity and discussion) may already have brought out questions and challenges of which the facilitator has to be aware.

Thus, the facilitator needs to prepare fully and be immersed in the Catholic Social Teaching—its beginnings and subsequent development, its essential content and the contemporary issues and debates surrounding them. Since CST is a complex body of knowledge with over a century's history, much effort was taken to present its context and main principles in the modules clearly and concisely. In addition to the main texts, the sources and supplementary reading materials are found at the end of module. Facilitators are expected to familiarize themselves with these materials as a way of preparing for meaningful and sensitive interaction with the participants.

Discussion (Critical Dialogue and Lines of Action)

The second round of *discussion* that participants are expected to actively join is meant to ensure that they have grasped the content of the module and that whatever it is they have learned can have an impact or influence on their everyday life, be it in the family, neighborhood, church community, or the larger society.

In the modules, effective learning is also expressed in the participants' critical input on the relevance and applicability of the Catholic Social Teaching on the ground. In short, the participants are not viewed as mere recipients of magisterial teachings. Through the reflections and experiences that they share with their fellow participants, they also actively shape the Catholic social tradition.



All modules end with some lines of action. The basic question each module asks is: “After having analyzed the situation and having reflected on the principles the Scriptures and Church documents have given us, what is our concrete response?” In the words of Vincent de Paul, the mystic of action, we say: “Following Jesus, what are we asked to do now? [*Quid nunc Christus?*]”

Synthesis and Evaluation

More than a comprehensive recall of the highlights of the module, the *synthesis* brings together the seemingly disparate threads and strands of the module (how one section or emphasis is related to the other), underscores the important points of the content, and

emphasizes action points for intra-personal, interpersonal, communal and societal transformation.

Making the Most Out of the Modules

While activities in each module have been designed with the objectives in mind, they are not written in stone. Facilitators are free to make them more responsive and appropriate to the situation of the participants, or replace them with new ones.

As earlier mentioned, the CST learning package comes with a selection of songs and short films corresponding to the themes tackled in the modules. It must be emphasized that the songs and documentaries, though related to the themes, are independent of the modules' content. As supplementary materials, they may be used at the start of any activity to set the mood or inspire participants. If the facilitator thinks that a particular film might pre-empt the module's flow, he or she may opt to show it instead as part of the synthesis. Moreover, song and film analysis can also replace some of the activities in the modules, if the facilitator thinks it to be more beneficial to learning.

We would like to look at these modules as aids to communal reflection and discernment of the social dimension of our Christian lives. If the Catholic Social Teaching is the response of the people to God's concrete challenges in a specific social context, then its study must start, end and be punctuated by prayerful moments and deep reflection. It is recommended that facilitators choose appropriate Scripture readings and organize creative para-liturgical activities as an integral part of the implementation of the modules. The songs and films may also be used to lead and invite participants to prayer, reflection and action.

While this brief guide was prepared to help facilitators use the CST learning package fruitfully, in the end they are encouraged to draw on their own resourcefulness and creativity in bringing forth participants' voices, in the process of meaningfully understanding and, more important, living out the Catholic Social Teaching.

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