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Service-learning pedagogy and the teachings of the Catholic Church

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The social responsibility of Catholic
Institutions of Higher Education
in the teachings of the Church

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4. THE SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY OF CATHOLIC INSTITUTIONS OF HIGHER EDUCATION IN THE TEACHINGS OF THE CHURCH

Xavier Alphonse, S.J.
Loyola College, India

Abstract

The Educational scenario in Asia particularly in India is complex. The present higher educational system focuses on quality, excellence, competition, responding to the job market. There is a struggle between the upper castes and lower castes concerning social concern and transformation of society. The social and religious agenda becomes political party oriented not people oriented. The social teachings and values of the church in Catholic Higher Education Institution (CHEIS) becomes antidote and an alternative expressing counter culture in favour of the poor. Vision and Mission of Catholic education is to teach the students to live, to discover the deeper meaning of life and of transcendence, to learn to interact with others, love creation, think freely and critically, find fulfilment in work, plan their future, or in one word to learn 'to be'. It is in and through education and service-learning that one can hope for a more human and humane future and a more harmonious society. To be unselfish in service and concerned for the welfare of the poor and oppressed, to become agents of social change in one's own situations. The Catholic Bishops Conference of India (CBCI) has absorbed the social teachings of the Universal church and formulated

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the policy for the whole country in 2007. Catholic colleges form an integral part of Indian Higher Education. The Response of Catholic education and its social responsibility in influences the various social realities of the country, as will be shown in this chapter.

Introduction

The chapter will have four parts: 1. The Church teaching, education and solidarity emphasizes that the Catholic teaching should lead to a process of education that can pave

the way towards the building of a community characterized by solidarity, brotherhood and fraternity. 2. The Indian experience responds to the serious and threatening situation of conflict at different levels leading to communal tension and violence which destroys the respect for human dignity and makes the community vulnerable and self-destructive. 3. The conclusion provides the service learning model taken from one of the leading Jesuit Institutions in South India which has worked out in practice to the students and staff to initiate the catholic social teaching as well as the social responsibility exhibited through praxis at the grass root level. 4. The bibliography refers to all the documents used and quoted in the text.

1. Church teachings, education and solidarity

A quick attempt is made in the first part of the paper to give a comprehensive picture of the Catholic Social teaching from the encyclicals documents of the Church and Papal teachings.

Catholic social teaching is a central and essential element of our faith. Its roots are in the Hebrew prophets who announced God's special love for the poor and called God's people to a covenant of love and justice. It is a teaching founded on the life and words of Jesus Christ, who came "to bring glad tidings to the poor (...) liberty to captives (...) recovery of sight to the blind"(Lk 4:18-19), and who identified himself with "the least of these," the hungry and the stranger (cf. Mt 25:45). Catholic social teaching is built on a commitment to the poor. This commitment arises from our experiences of Christ in the Eucharist.

Catholic social teaching emerges from the truth of what God has revealed to us about himself. We believe in the triune God whose very nature is communal and social. God the Father sends his only Son Jesus Christ and shares the Holy Spirit as his gift of love. God reveals himself to us as one who is not alone, but rather as one who is relational, one who is Trinity. Therefore, we who are made in God's image share this communal, social nature. We are called to reach out and to build relationships of love and justice.

Catholic social teaching is based on and inseparable from our understanding of human life and human dignity. Every human being is created in the image of God and redeemed by Jesus Christ, and therefore is invaluable and worthy of respect as a member of the human family. Every person, from the moment of conception to natural death, has inherent dignity and a right to life consistent with that dignity. Human dignity comes from God, not from any human quality or accomplishment. Our commitment to the Catholic social mission must be rooted in and strengthened by our spiritual lives. In our relationship with

God we experience the conversion of heart that is necessary to truly love one another as God has loved us.

Central to our identity as Catholics is that we are called to be leaven for transforming the world, agents for bringing about a kingdom of love and justice. When we pray, “Thy kingdom come; thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven,” we are praying for God’s kingdom of justice and peace and committing ourselves to breaking down the barriers that obstruct God’s kingdom of justice and peace and to working to bring about a world more respectful of human life and dignity.

The Church’s social teaching is a rich treasure of wisdom about building a just society and living lives of holiness amidst the challenges of modern society. It offers moral principles and coherent values that are badly needed in our time. In this time of widespread violence and diminished respect for human life and dignity around the world, the Gospel of life and the biblical call to justice need to be proclaimed and shared with new clarity, urgency, and energy. The main themes, challenges and orientations of Catholic Social Teaching are (USCCB, 2011):

Call to Family, Community, and Participation: in a global culture driven by excessive individualism, our tradition proclaims that the person is not only sacred but also social. How we organize our society, in economics and politics, in law and policy, directly affects human dignity and the capacity of individuals to grow in community. The family is the central social institution that must be supported and strengthened, not undermined. While our society often exalts individualism, the Catholic tradition teaches that human beings grow and achieve fulfillment in community. We believe people have a right and a duty to participate in society, seeking together the common good and well-being of all, especially the poor and vulnerable. Our Church teaches that the role of government and other institutions is to protect human life and human dignity and promote the common good.

Option for the Poor and Vulnerable: in a world characterized by growing prosperity for some and pervasive poverty for others, Catholic teaching proclaims that a basic moral test is how our most vulnerable members are faring. In a society marred by deepening divisions between rich and poor, our tradition recalls the story of the Last Judgment (Mt 25:31-46) and instructs us to put the needs of the poor and vulnerable first.

Solidarity: our culture is tempted to turn inward, becoming indifferent and sometimes isolationist in the face of international responsibilities. Catholic social teaching proclaims that we are our brothers’ and sisters’ keepers, wherever they live. We are one human family, whatever our national, racial, ethnic, economic, and ideological differences. Learning

Catholic social teaching proclaims that we are our brothers' and sisters' keepers, wherever they live. We are one human family, whatever our national, racial, ethnic, economic, and ideological differences. Learning to practice the virtue of solidarity means learning that "loving our neighbor" has global dimensions in an interdependent world.

to practice the virtue of solidarity means learning that "loving our neighbor" has global dimensions in an interdependent world. This virtue is described by John Paul II as "a firm and persevering determination to commit oneself to the common good; that is to say to the good of all and of each

individual, because we are all really responsible for all" (John Paul II, 1987, SRS, 38).

Care for God's Creation: on a planet conflicted over environmental issues, the Catholic tradition insists that we show our respect for the Creator by our stewardship of creation. Care for the earth is not just an Earth Day slogan, it is a requirement of our faith. We are called to protect people and the planet, living our faith in relationship with all of God's creation. This environmental challenge has fundamental moral and ethical dimensions that cannot be ignored.

This teaching is a complex and nuanced tradition with many other important elements. Principles like "subsidiarity" and the "common good" outline the advantages and limitations of markets, the responsibilities and limits of government, and the essential roles of voluntary associations. These and other key principles are outlined in greater detail in the Catechism. The above themes are built on the foundation of Catholic social teaching: the dignity of human life. This central Catholic principle requires that we measure every policy, every institution, and every action by whether it protects human life and enhances human dignity, especially for the poor and vulnerable.

These moral values and others outlined in various papal and Episcopal documents are part of a systematic moral framework and a precious intellectual heritage that we call Catholic social teaching. The Scriptures say, "Without a vision the people perish" (Proverbs 29:18). As Catholics, we have an inspiring vision in our social teaching. In a world that hungers for a sense of meaning and moral direction, this teaching offers ethical criteria for action. In a society of rapid change and often confused moral values, this teaching offers consistent moral guidance for the future. For Catholics, this social teaching is a central part of our identity. In the words of John Paul II, it is "genuine doctrine" (John Paul II, 1991, CA, 5).

We believe the Church's social teaching is integral to our identity and mission as

Catholics. This is why we seek a renewed commitment to integrate and to share the riches of the Church's social teaching in Catholic education and formation at every level. This is one of the most urgent challenges for the new millennium. As John Paul II has said, "A commitment to justice and peace in a world like ours, marked by so many conflicts and intolerable social and economic inequalities, is a necessary condition for the preparation and celebration of the Jubilee" (John Paul II, 1994, TMA, 51).

The Renewal of Catholic Social Teaching in the Age of Pope Francis

Pope Francis has expressed a new sensitivity to the poor that no previous pope has been able to communicate. Given that he took his name from St Francis of Assisi, the first peacemaker, Father Massaro says this has come as no surprise: "his style is refreshing (...) He makes gestures that are very authentic and speaks with spontaneity (...) he visits homeless shelters, prisons and refugee camps and has a natural rapport with people of all kinds" (2019).

Fr Massaro (2019) also reviewed the nine principles of Catholic social teaching, and linked them to the teachings of Pope Francis: 1) Human Dignity and Rights, 2) Solidarity, Common Good, Participation, 3) Family Life, 4) Subsidiary and the Proper Role of Government, 5) Property Ownership: Rights and Responsibilities, 6) Dignity of Work, Rights of Workers, Support for Labor Unions, 7) Colonialism and Economic Development, 8) Peace and Disarmament, 9) Option for the Poor and Vulnerable. He added that globalization and the environment have also become areas of concern in recent years. Then reviewed six specific ways that Pope Francis has renewed Catholic social teaching over the past six years that coincide with the chapters in his book, *Mercy in Action* (2013):

1. *Economic justice – The dangers of economic inequality impact all societies around the world. Pope Francis believes in the need to redistribute wealth and speak out against unregulated markets that concentrate wealth at top. He also says that we have an obligation to remind billionaires to practice philanthropy.*
2. *Labor justice – The Church has been a good partner for the labor movement, supporting workers' rights around the world. Pope Francis has addressed labor leaders in this regard.*
3. *Environment – Pope Francis has been the 'green pope', promoting ecological justice and sustainability, and speaking out against climate change.*
4. *Family life – Pope Francis has recognized the challenges facing families and has addressed how the Church can offer support for families in distress, encouraging reconciliation instead of punishment.*
5. *Migrants – Pope Francis has been sensitive to the needs of the 90 million migrants, refugees and asylum seekers around the world and has made visits to refugee camps.*
6. *Agent of reconciliation – Pope Francis has continued the Church's long tradition of peace*

advocacy, focusing on peace building and conflict transformation to reconcile all people. His actions are informed by Jesus, ‘Prince of Peace.’ (Massaro, 2019)

Father Massaro applauds Pope Francis for opening the door to new ways of looking at the Church’s stance on social justice issues; all the above items referred are pointers to service-learning and are different dimensions of social responsibility that applying to Catholic Higher Educational Institutions.

Pope Francis and the key themes of Catholic Social Teaching

The encyclical *Laudato Si’* (Pope Francis, 2015) incorporates a number of the regular themes of Catholic Social Teaching including its promotion of solidarity, stewardship and the common good; preferential attention to the poor and preserving human dignity. The tradition—and this latest contribution to it—details the conditions of authentic human development and implores economic systems in service of people, not the other way around (Clarke, 2015).

A consistent theme in Catholic Social Teaching, solidarity is usually meant to suggest a mystical, merciful connection among all the world’s people that overcomes the separation of borders, class, language and faith. At times, especially regarding issues around the environment and sustainable economic development, it has been broadened to include the idea of an inter-generational solidarity that acknowledges this generation’s obligation to the next, that bequeaths to them a world at least as unspoiled and bountiful as the one it inherited. Pope Francis puts this concept to work in *Laudato Si’* (LS), the notion of the common good also extends to future generations: “The global economic crises have clearly demonstrated the baneful effects of disregard for our common destiny, which perforce includes those who come after us” (Pope Francis, 2015, LS, 159). He adds,

“We can no longer speak of sustainable development apart from intergenerational solidarity. Once we start to think about the kind of world we are leaving to future generations, we look at things differently; we realize that the world is a gift which we have freely received and must share with others (...) Intergenerational solidarity is not optional, but rather a basic question of justice, since the world we have received also belongs to those who will follow us. (Pope Francis, 2015, LS, 159).

But in *Laudato Si’*, Pope Francis broadens the idea to promote a kind of planetary solidarity with the earth, its inhabitants and the whole of creation: “Nature cannot be regarded as something separate from ourselves or as a mere setting in which we live” (LS, 139), he writes. Human beings have the responsibility to “‘till and keep’ the garden of the

world (cf. Gen 2:15)” (LS, 67), knowing that “the ultimate purpose of other creatures is not to be found in us. Rather, all creatures are moving forward, with us and through us, towards a common point of arrival, which is God” (LS, 83).

For Catholics authentic development accepts the importance of sustainable systems, but extends toward a holistic understanding of the interaction of economies and the rights and dignity of people. Authentic development includes attending to the spiritual and material fulfillment of the primary focus of economic systems, the human person and his or her dignity and full self-expression. “Social love is the key to authentic development,” Pope Francis says in paragraph 231, adding in a quote from the Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace,

In order to make society more human, more worthy of the human person, love in social life—political, economic and cultural—must be given renewed value, becoming the constant and highest norm for all activity (...) social love moves us to devise larger strategies to halt environmental degradation and to encourage a ‘culture of care’ which permeates all of society. When we feel that God is calling us to intervene with others in these social dynamics, we should realize that this too is part of our spirituality, which is an exercise of charity and, as such, matures and sanctifies us (LS, 231).

Laudato Si’ often puts standard themes of Catholic Social Teaching to novel use. It argues for a judicious, sustainable use of the world’s resources, not just because that best responds to the crisis of climate change, but because care of creation itself acts as an expression of solidarity with the poor in the developing world. This is a key interweaving that Francis consistently employs, in this instance refuting the suggestion that good environmental stewardship and protecting the human dignity of the world’s poor create clashing interests. Francis argues that this is a false trade-off, that the global poor are materially harmed by the degradation of the planet and protected in conjunction with care of creation. Peace, justice and the preservation of creation are three absolutely interconnected themes. He writes,

‘which cannot be separated and treated individually ...’ Everything is related, and we human beings are united as brothers and sisters on a wonderful pilgrimage, woven together by the love God has for each of his creatures and which also unites us in fond affection with brother sun, sister moon, brother river and mother earth (Pope Francis, 2015, LS, 92).

Francis demonstrates the interconnectedness of both the problem addressed by *Laudato Si’* and a hoped-for cure—a conversion of heart and practice. In 158, he writes,

In the present state of global society, where injustices abound and growing numbers of people are deprived of basic human rights and considered expendable, the

principle of the common good immediately becomes, logically and inevitably, a summons to solidarity and a preferential option for the poorest of our brothers and sisters. This option entails recognizing the implications of the universal destination of the world's goods... it demands before all else an appreciation of the immense dignity of the poor in the light of our deepest convictions as believers (Pope Francis, 2015, LS, 158).

Having developed the main themes of Catholic social teaching in *Laudato Si'* we will now reflect on the role of Catholic higher education institutions and their contribution to solidarity building. The Apostolic Constitution of the Supreme Pontiff John Paul II on Catholic Universities (*Ex-corde Ecclesiae*, 1990) develops a number of characteristics which should identify Catholic institutions of higher education and which are presented in summary below.

Nature and Objectives: every Catholic University, as a university, is an academic community which, in a rigorous and critical fashion, assists in the protection and advancement of human dignity and of a cultural heritage through research, teaching and various services offered to the local, national and international communities. It possesses that institutional autonomy necessary to perform its functions effectively and guarantees its members academic freedom, so long as the rights of the individual person and of the community are preserved within the confines of the truth and the common good. *Ex Corde Ecclesiae* affirms:

Since the objective of a Catholic University is to assure in an institutional manner a Christian presence in the university world confronting the great problems of society and culture (16), every Catholic University, as Catholic, must have the following essential characteristics: 1. a Christian inspiration not only of individuals but of the university Community as such; 2. a continuing reflection in the light of the Catholic faith upon the growing treasury of human knowledge, to which it seeks to contribute by its own research; 3. fidelity to the Christian message as it comes to us through the Church; 4. an institutional commitment to the service of the people of God and of the human family in their pilgrimage to the transcendent goal which gives meaning to life. (John Paul II, 1990, ECE, 13)

The mission of service of a catholic university: the basic mission of a University is a continuous quest for truth through its research, and the preservation and communication of knowledge for the good of society. A Catholic University participates in this mission with its own specific characteristics and purposes.

Service to Church and Society: through teaching and research, a Catholic University offers an indispensable contribution to the Church. In fact, it prepares men and women who, inspired by Christian principles and helped to live their Christian vocation in a mature and responsible manner, will be able to assume positions of responsibility in the Church. Moreover, by offering the results of its scientific research, a Catholic University will be able to help the Church respond to the problems and needs of this age.

A Catholic University, as any University, is immersed in human society; as an extension of its service to the Church, and always within its proper competence, it is called on to become an ever more effective instrument of cultural progress for individuals as well as for society. Included among its research activities, therefore, will be a study of *serious contemporary problems* in areas such as the dignity of human life, the promotion of justice for all, the quality of personal and family life, the protection of nature, the search for peace and political

University research will seek to discover the roots and causes of the serious problems of our time, paying special attention to their ethical and religious dimensions. If need be, a Catholic University must have the courage to speak uncomfortable truths which do not please public opinion, but which are necessary to safeguard the authentic good of society.

stability, a more just sharing in the world's resources, and a new economic and political order that will better serve the human community at a national and international level. University research will seek to discover the roots and causes of the serious problems of our time, paying special attention to their ethical and religious dimensions. If need be, a

Catholic University must have the courage to speak uncomfortable truths which do not please public opinion, but which are necessary to safeguard the authentic good of society.

Cultural Dialogue: by its very nature, a University develops culture through its research, helps to transmit the local culture to each succeeding generation through its teaching, and assists cultural activities through its educational services. It is open to all human experience and is ready to dialogue with and learn from any culture. A Catholic University shares in this, offering the rich experience of the Church's own culture. In addition, a Catholic University, aware that human culture is open to Revelation and transcendence, is also a primary and privileged place for a fruitful dialogue between the Gospel and culture. What the Pope says about Catholic University is very much applicable to Catholic Higher Educational Institutions all over the world. Pope Francis alludes to the need for the Church and Catholic institutions of higher education to go out to the peripheries, understanding society as a polyhedron:

The Church is called to come out of herself and to go to the peripheries, not only geographically, but also the existential peripheries: the mystery of sin, of pain, of injustice, of ignorance and indifference to religion, of intellectual currents, and of all forms of misery (Bergoglio, 9 March 2013).

(...) Here our model is not the sphere, which is no greater than its parts, where every point is equidistant from the centre, and there are no differences between them. Instead, it is the polyhedron, which reflects the convergence of all its parts, each of which preserves its distinctiveness. Pastoral and political activity alike seek to gather in this polyhedron the best of each. There is a place for the poor and their culture, their aspirations and their potential. Even people who can be considered dubious on account of their errors have something to offer which must not be overlooked. It is the convergence of peoples who, within the universal order, maintain their own individuality; it is the sum total of persons within a society which pursues the common good, which truly has a place for everyone (Pope Francis, 2013, EG, 236).

2. The Indian experience

After a description of the Catholic social teachings we come to this local situation in India about service-learning and its contribution by Catholic Higher Education Institutions to their identity and mission.

All India Catholic Education Policy

In 2007 the Catholic Bishops' Conference of India (CBCI) clearly articulated the education policy in the country, highlighting the importance of the Social Doctrine of the Church in responding to global issues and challenges in the local situation and context.

This policy document was enthusiastically welcomed and unanimously approved by the CBCI Standing Committee in its meeting of 26th April 2007 in view of its promulgation by the Catholic Bishops' Conference of India. This Catholic Education Policy is of the whole Church in India and meant for the entire Catholic Community.

Catholic Education Policy seeks to clarify and stress the essential mission of Catholic education in India today. For this, it mainly draws inspiration and substance from the documents of the Congregation for Catholic Education, the statements of the General Assemblies of the CBCI, and specifically the CBCI mandate of February 2006 to evolve

an Education Policy that focuses on providing quality and relevant education to the marginalized, especially the children of our *Dalit* (Dalit refers to lower caste) and *Tribal* (Tribal refers to native people particularly in Chota Nagpur) brothers and sisters.

The aim of the policy: the policy highlights our duty to give serious attention to and deepen the authentic **spiritual formation** of all our students and **nurture the faith culture** of Christian believers. It also broadens the narrow focus on personal academic development and emphasizes the holistic and fuller development that meets the challenge of modern culture and society, and its demand for higher levels of competence.

The policy advocates the equally essential social and **societal transformation and responsibility**, as a major goal and mission of our education. Being Christian is essentially an invitation to become a person of faith, hope and love. It is a summons to form *communities of solidarity, and of justice and equality*, at the service of all people, especially the poor and the marginalized. As the CBCI proclaimed in 2000, we are committed to “**a new society built on justice, peace**, love and harmony: a civilization of love. And we share our hope with all our brothers and sisters” (2.VII).

A key focus area in this policy is on the need for our Catholic institutions to contribute actively to the betterment of India and its people, by sharing in **nation building**. Developing micro models of communities of solidarity across the many borders that presently divide us—like caste and creed and culture—and make us less human is therefore a major objective of the policy. Jesus showed us the way by proclaiming the Kingdom of God on earth by breaking down age-old barriers of mind and heart, and all types of exclusion and discrimination. In our apostolate of education, our goal, both as individual institutions and as members of corporate bodies (the diocese/religious congregation/Church in India), is to build *inclusive human communities*.

Our educational mission, in the context of India today and the India of tomorrow, is the *re-creation of human lives, communities and the wider society*. In the past, there have been many Christian contributions to the society in India. Our present challenge is to build a New Society, to make another India possible, in collaboration with all people of goodwill and their institutions and organizations. At this critical juncture, all must work unitedly with the marginalized to build up a better future for our country. Education has to enable the millions who have no name or face or dignity and whom society treats as non-persons, to regain their dignity and self-worth. The spirituality of communion and service that energized Jesus and gave His life colour, energy and direction, urges us to wholeheartedly dedicate ourselves to this mission.

The Contexts and Challenges for this policy:

Education is the key to empowering the marginalized so that they can enjoy their God-given dignity (...) As Church, in imitation of Jesus who made a preferential option for the poor, we commit ourselves to focus particularly on the marginalized in order to enable them to take their rightful place in the life of the country and their contribution to the progress of the nation (CBCI, 2006, pp. 7-8).

Our institutional services must cater increasingly to the poor and there must be reservations both in admission and in employment for the Dalits and Tribals (CBCI, 1998, 5.6).

The International Context: in our knowledge-intensive and technology-driven world, where possession of appropriate competences is absolutely necessary, the majority of the nations and their peoples have become marginalized. It has resulted in the *present international social order that is extremely unjust*, since it has created a very unequal world society, with a very large degree of exclusion and consequent marginalization. Side by side with great progress, we also witness today massive poverty, inequalities and injustices in many fields of life. Fortunately, in the meanwhile, human aspirations for *equality* and *participation*, for human dignity and freedom have also grown in great measure.

The Indian Scenario: within our country, we mirror in many ways the above-described international situation and conditions. Here too we notice an affluent minority, along with a growing middle class with high aspirations, and a significant percentage of the remaining 30-40% or more who are poor, many of them very poor. These are the ones who have been marginalized in varying degrees and who suffer from many kinds of deprivations. While we have an abundance of relevant policies, legislations and schemes to remedy these inequalities, practical actions to implement them have been few and have remained largely ineffective. Hence in spite of these policies and the clear guidelines of our Constitution, even the basic rights of the common people, such as education, health care, housing and basic rural infrastructure remain unfulfilled. Decisions favouring the big industries within the country and the multi-national companies from overseas, have resulted in a great deal of displacement of tribal communities and in the forced migration of the rural people to the cities in search of livelihood and the hope of better living conditions, who often find themselves in worse situations. As in the global context, in India too money and market are emerging as the sole points of reference for the maximization of profits, forcing every other consideration and value to yield to the demands of economic growth and the progress of a small minority. The local situation in India is ridden with Caste and Communalism: "Discrimination against anybody on the basis of caste is a sin against God and humanity" (CBCI, 1998, 4.2).

Another crucial challenge is the growing assertion of ethnic, regional, cultural and religious identities. There is more and more intolerance, various forms of communalism, tensions and divisions and even violence as a result. A call to mutual understanding and warm collaboration is timely.

The Educational Context: in today's context, relevant education is an essential resource for life and living. *The presence or absence of this critical resource is a basic divider of our Indian society today.* India had the distinction of having the insight that it is knowledge that liberates us (*gyana marga mukti marga – way through meditation is the way to salvation*). But knowledge had remained the prerogative of a few in ancient Indian societies. The unavailability of this essential resource, namely, a good 'quality education', continues to deprive the poor of availing of the many opportunities in life even today. As a consequence, a significant third of our population is sidelined and marginalized, while there is such an over-abundance of both knowledge and affluence with the few rich and the powerful in India.

In spite of significant progress since Independence, the educational situation in India remains rather dismal even today. In 2001, India had about one third of the world's illiterates — almost 46% and 35% of its female and overall population in the 7+ age group respectively, that is 296.2 million persons. Less than 11% of students enrolled in grade-one pass a Public Examination. More than 80% who fail in a Board Examination fail in Mathematics and Science (CBCI, 2007, p.7).

The Church's Concern for the Marginalized: the Church sees education as an agent of transformation not of the individual person only but also of society. That is the critical reason why the Church has initiated this new policy of education as an effective instrument for the transformation of our unequal society. The basic cause for the continuing gross inequality in India is the very low level of educational attainments among a large percentage of our priority groups, namely *Dalits* (Dalit refers to lower caste), *Tribals* (Tribals refers to native people), women, and the deprived categories of the *OBCs* (Other Backward Castes).

It is in a multi-religious, multi-cultural and multilingual context that the Catholic educational institutions in our country have been imparting education, and thus serving all communities.

Vision, Mission and Goals of Catholic Education

The goal of education is to teach the students to live, to discover the deeper meaning of life and of transcendence, to learn to interact with others, love creation, think freely and

critically, find fulfilment in work, plan their future, or in one word, to learn 'to be'. It is in and through education that one can hope for a more human and humane future and a more harmonious society.

Special efforts should be made to enable students: (1) to think for themselves independently and critically; (2) to seek, extend and apply knowledge to the solution of human problems; (3) to continually strive after excellence in every field; (4) to become mature, spiritually aware men and women of character; (5) to value and judiciously use their freedom, combining with it a full sense of responsibility for actions; (6) to be clear and firm on principles and courageous in action; (7) to be unselfish in the service of their fellowmen and concerned for the welfare of the poor and socially oppressed; and (8) to become agents of needed social change in their own situations. (All India Association of Christian Higher Education, New Delhi, Declaration of Purpose, 1982).

Education has an acculturating role. It refines sensitivities and perceptions that contribute to national cohesion, a scientific temper and independence of mind and spirit – thus furthering the goals of socialism, secularism and democracy enshrined in our Constitution (Government of India. National Policy on Education, 1986, 2.2)

An Education that *humanizes* and *contextualizes*, by assisting the students to raise essential questions concerning the *meaning of life* and of their role in society, enabling them to become conscious of their responsibility to contribute to evolving a borderless society and to promoting the common good.

An Education that thus forms the young to evolve as men and women of *character, competence, conscience, compassion* and *commitment*, who will then contribute to the evolution of a *counter-culture* to the present ruthlessly competitive model, by promoting *collaboration* and *cooperation for the growth of all*, in a climate of mutual trust and sharing; and to the shockingly corrupt society, by fostering *uprightness in public life*.

We assume the responsibility for the education of the poor and the marginalized in our institutions, as an essential part of our contribution to build an inclusive and just society. In our Indian context the marginalized would include the *Dalits, Tribals, rural poor, slum dwellers, migrants, child labourers, un-organized labour*, etc. We make available to them well-qualified teachers, who understand their culture and background and are committed to them. By becoming self-empowered, they will then contribute to build a just, humane and democratic India.

Integral Personal Development of all Students: our objective is that our students become men and women of high levels of personal competence, conscience, compassion

and commitment. We realize that bringing this about through personalized accompaniment demands great dedication and selflessness on the part of all the stakeholders.

Service-learning: social sensitisation for societal transformation

Service learning is the means to reach out to the poor and also learning with sensitivity and compassion to serve the downtrodden. This learning is done in the CHEIS.

As a major contribution to build a new India and a new ethos, we plan and execute a good programme of social sensitisation of the students, an awareness and action programme to make them understand and become sensitive to the major social issues and inherited inequalities. Systematically done, as a part of a national campaign by our institutions, through a well-designed curriculum and experiential learning, it will empower our students “to create a society inspired by the Gospel values of service in love, peace rooted in justice, and fellowship based on equality” (CBCI, 2006, 2). We see this as our major contribution to develop a new culture and to build a New India (*Bharat Navanirman* – Rebuilding India anew) and a very relevant constituent of genuine education.

Education for Social Transformation entails a proper understanding of the dynamic functioning of society: the economic, political and social structures, the meaning systems (culture, religion, and ideology), their manifold and complex relationships, as well as the factors or laws of societal evolution. It also demands the acquisition of a purposeful vision for the future and the identification of effective means and strategies for social change. And most importantly, Christian students are made aware of the social teachings of the Church, especially those of the CBCI.

In addition, we identify and provide several opportunities to students while in school and even more in college to move into practical social action (service-learning) and so empower them to become stakeholders and enlightened leaders of future India, “who will be able to play a critical role in society and contribute to solve its economic, social and spiritual problems.” (CBCI, 1974, 48).

Our Contribution Through Higher Education: the most important indicator of a country’s progress is the state of its higher education. If all is well with the Universities, all would be well with the nation also. Higher Education does not merely pass on the heritage of the accumulated knowledge of the past but also creates new knowledge, and using technology makes numerous applications to enhance the quality of life and living. Since it is knowledge that is transforming the world, tertiary education has a major responsibility to contribute to the design and directions that the society will adopt.

Catholic colleges form an integral part of Indian Higher Education. In the present situation, Catholic colleges are faced more than ever before, with the challenge of providing leadership of thought and theories for taking the nation forward. Hence, it is not enough for them to be islands of excellence. By inserting themselves into the national mainstream of issues and concerns, they then become agents of change, and contribute to enhance the quality of life.

Higher education provides people with an opportunity to reflect on the critical social, economic, cultural, moral and spiritual issues facing humanity. It contributes to national development through dissemination of specialized knowledge and skills. It is therefore a crucial factor for survival (Government of India. National Policy on Education, 1986, 5. 24).

We have always laid special stress on values. Today there seems to be a serious crisis of values due to rapid changes in society. This has resulted in a good measure of confusion and value disorientation. Youth will therefore need to be provided space and time for value clarification. As part of society, college students cannot but be influenced by the rapid changes that are taking place. Whether students, staff, parents, priests or religious, they all are confronted by this value erosion. Mature discussion, within a democratic frame, would enable our youth and staff to examine major societal issues, like the environment, status of women, human rights, consumerism, corruption, work ethic, questions of peace and social harmony. Development and freedom are linked. Our colleges provide the ambience for humanizing education, within the diverse cultural contexts of our country. In terms of policy thrust and decision, we envisage the following:

- a) Equip young people to become honest citizens who are rooted in their culture, open to other cultures, and are capable of interpreting social processes, so as to take responsibility for bringing about transformation in society.
- b) Our institutions while remaining inclusive, reproducing a mini-India on the campus, will have a clear option for Catholics, for the poor and the marginalized.
- c) Re-organise courses and programmes to respond to the changed needs of the times.
- d) Promote research and publications in social and scientific fields and also in learning theories and technologies, since in our knowledge society, generation of new knowledge holds the key to progress and development.
- e) Network with other tertiary institutions and Universities for mutual exchange and enrichment.

- f) Focus on leadership development in various fields so that our students make significant contribution to the progress of the nation and its peoples.
- g) Accompany youth in the contexts of today in their pilgrimage of faith on issues of transcendence, which give meaning to life.

The contribution of the Indian Catholic Church in the field of Education 2007: an Educational Institution that is established and administered by the Diocese, Religious Congregation or a Catholic lay person or organization to impart education based on the Gospel values and the ‘All India Catholic Education Policy’, is a Catholic Educational Institution. Our Mission is to enable students (CBCI, 2018):

To think for themselves independently and critically. To seek, extend and apply knowledge to solve human problems. To continually strive after excellence in every field. To become mature and spiritually aware persons of character and conviction. To value and judiciously use freedom with a full sense of responsibility. To be clear and firm on principles and courageous in action. To be unselfish in service and concerned for the welfare of the poor and oppressed. To become agents of social change in one’s own situations.

The following figure summarizes the main features of Catholic education in India:

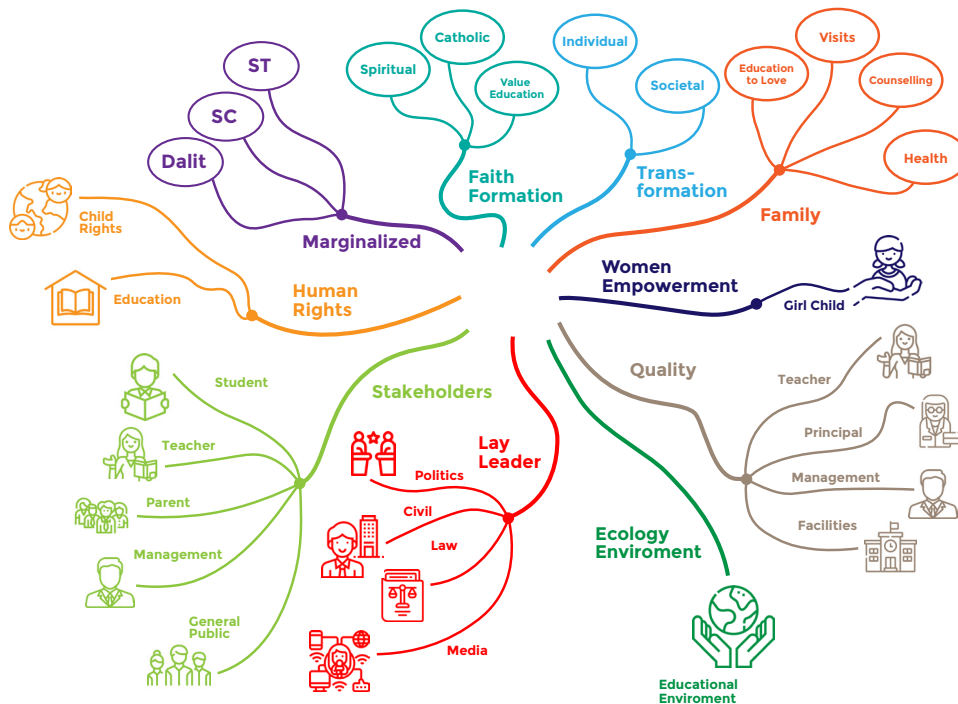


FIGURE 1: The salient features of the “All India Catholic Education Policy 2007” (CBCI, 2007)

The Practice of Social Teaching - A model of Service Learning

The Jesuit vision of higher education has never been simplistic or one-sided. It is about holistic development with a special focus on critical praxis that engages students in linking their academic excellence, character development and personal concern to the transformation of a society deeply troubled by inequality and injustice. The student who passes through Jesuit higher education cannot remain isolated from the economic, political and cultural fabric of his or her society. It is an integral part of higher education that he/she becomes aware of and involved in the everyday realities of society. The Jesuit ideal is that solidarity with the people can only be achieved through “contact” and “participation” in the daily life of the marginalized. It is therefore the firm conviction of Jesuit Higher Education that “personal involvement with innocent suffering, with the injustice that others suffer, is the catalyst for solidarity which then gives rise to intellectual enquiry and moral reflections”.

The Outreach programme is the extension programme of the Catholic Higher Education Institutions reaching out the slums, villages, migrants, refugees and places where people need help and succour. It could be regular on timely responding to Tsunami, COVID and other natural disasters.

The Outreach program draws its inspiration from the St. Joseph’s College vision of forming women and men for others (Bangalore, Karnataka, 2021). It provide students with a platform to explore and develop the art of critical thinking, the skill of leadership and techniques of meaningful interventions aimed at building a just equitable society. It further draws its roots from the Brazilian educator Paulo Freire’s Philosophy of Action – Reflection – Praxis (Freire, 1996).

It will orient the students with the skills required in community development and would sensitize them towards various issues of these marginalized groups and instill enough confidence and satisfaction for taking up the cause of the development of those groups.

The Programme aims to reach out the deprived groups and vulnerable sections of society and create opportunities for education, awareness and skill enhancement. It intend to create a learning process for faculty and students through exposure to community needs, problems, and issues. It hopes to reach out to the community by designing need based interventions and generating research.

Eventually it will facilitate networking and linkages of the community with NGOs, institutions, and government agencies for the effective service delivery and advocacy support. It also hopes to link up with the corporate sector within the parameters of

Corporate Social Responsibilities (CSR). This model is being successfully applied by many of the Catholic institutions of higher education in India and has provided a model for the Government of India.

The Structure and Process

There are two stages in the outreach Program

1. *The Preparation Stage:* in this stage students will be equipped with the required knowledge, through classes, talks and documentaries. In this process students will be able to identify students leaders and the leaders will also undergo a special training to lead the class for the outreach activity.
2. *The practical Stage:* in this stage, the actual out - reach begins and there will be a continuous evaluation, assessment of the experiences in the programme and on growing formation talks.

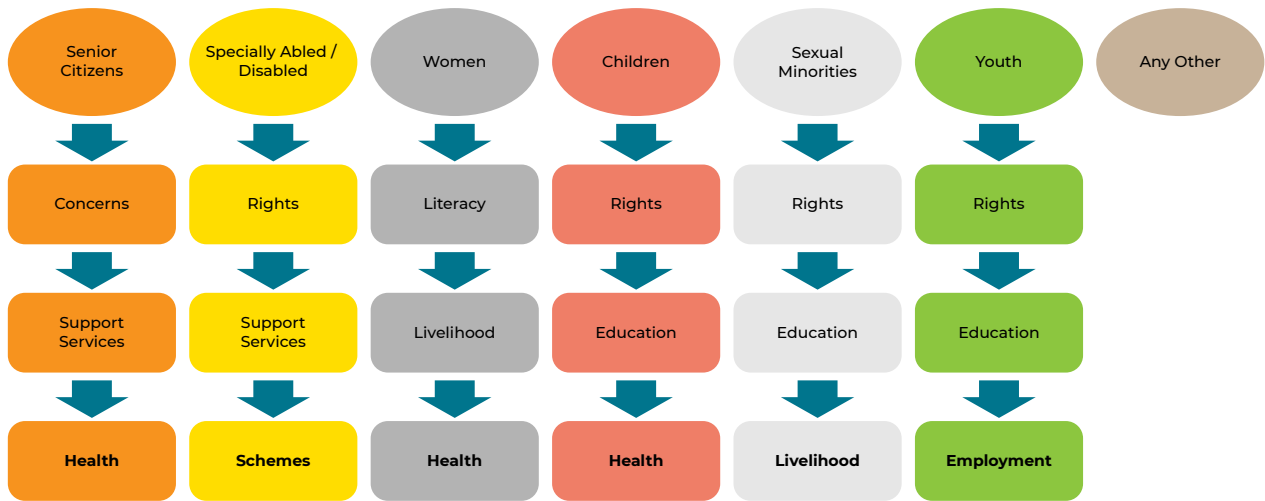
The Catholic Higher educational Institutions in India have absorbed and assimilated the social teachings of the church at the global and national levels. They have integrated them into their curriculum through service-learning to all the students. They have also evolved a few models of reaching out to the people especially the poor and marginalized. They have also included the same in their comprehensive evaluation and assessment of the students to confer their undergraduate and postgraduate degrees. I am happy to give below one such model:

TABLE 2: St. Joseph's College, outline of practical stage (Bangalore, Karnataka, 2021)

<i>Under graduate level</i>		<i>Posgraduate level</i>	
Task 1	Field visits	30 Hours	16 Hours
Task 2	Rural Exposure	4 Days	4 Days
Task 3	Documentation	5 Hours	2 Hours
Task 4	Public Events	5 Hours	2 Hours

The following chart describes the Programme's areas of work and their complexity. It outlines key dimensions of the service-learning programme and its implementation in a Catholic Higher Education Institution.

TABLE 2: St. Joseph's College, outline of practical stage (Bangalore, Karnataka, 2021)



The Service Learning Programme has different names like Science and Humanities for People's Development (SHEPHERD), Loyola Extension and Awareness Programme (LEAP), Student Training and Action for Neighbourhood Development (STAND), Rural Action Development and Research (RADAR).

3. Conclusion

The service-learning model creates awareness, sensitizes the students and helps them to build a just society. The entire theory and practical of service learning practised in India is based on the global perspective of the social teaching of the Church, the recent insights

The model of service-learning is emerging in India, during the last 30 years. The model has to be designed according to the different cultural and social situations of India without sacrificing the social teachings and social responsibility of the Catholic Church. The model is learning adapted by service minded groups of all religions to promote harmony and national integration.

of Pope Francis, the encyclical of Pope John Paul II (Ex-Corde Ecclesiae) the educational policy formulated by the CBCI (2007).

The model of service-learning is emerging in India, during the last 30 years. The model has to be designed according to the different cultural and social situations of India without sacrificing the

social teachings and social responsibility of the Catholic Church. The model is learning adapted by service minded groups of all religions to promote harmony and national integration.

The Indian experience elaborated sums up the Catholic social teaching and the social responsibility of the Catholic Higher Education Institutions. This model of service-learning demonstrates the choice of the Catholic Higher Education Institutions to involve themselves into the community thus building a community of care and compassion.

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In support of the Global Compact on Education

Uniservitate is a global programme for the promotion of service-learning in Catholic Higher Education. It aims to generate a systemic change in Catholic Higher Education Institutions (CHEIs), through the institutionalisation of service-learning (SL) as a tool to achieve its mission of an integral education and formation of agents of change committed to their community.

**“We will not change the world,
if we do not change education”**

Pope Francis

2 Service-learning pedagogy and the teachings of the Catholic Church

We are pleased to present the book *Service-learning pedagogy and the teachings of the Catholic Church*, a polyhedral text, born in different parts of the world, an expression of different voices and an invitation to reflect on Higher Education in view of a greater commitment to the universal human family. Its intention is to contribute to the generation of Higher Education Institutions (university and non-university, Catholic and non-confessional) capable of networking and generating life, of learning and generating meaning in their being and from their knowledge and doing, for others and with others, and not only cloisters that live for themselves. It is a text with a plural, global and diverse perspective, which opens up dialogue and builds bridges that contribute to achieving a more fraternal society.

Uniservitate is an initiative led by Porticus, with the general coordination of the Latin American Center for Service-learning (CLAYSS)

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