

KEYS



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Service-learning in Catholic Higher Education

UNISERVITATE COLLECTION

Institutionalization of Service-Learning in Higher Education

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Service Learning a Pathway for spirituality
life in Tangaza University College, Nairobi,
Kenya

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

14. Service Learning a Pathway for spirituality life in Tangaza University College, Nairobi, Kenya 281

Tom Kearney and Judith Pete

Tangaza University College, Nairobi, Kenia



Br. Tom Kearney CFC

An Australian Christian Brother, has lived in Africa since 1995. He has ministry experience as a community based counsellor, as a formator, a lecturer, and an administrator at Tangaza College, as well as the District Leader of the Christian Brothers in East Africa. His involvement in these ministries and his background in Psychology and Spirituality studies, has made him aware of the personal issues and dynamics of the struggle through life and the various unjust social arrangements, which have kept people in their social situations. His working with these people, especially those at the margins, has created an awareness of the need to have a developed Spirituality which is able to take account of the realities of life—relationship to the world, to the people in the world, to self and to God—and to be able to reconcile these with Christian beliefs. He discovered the need to have well integrated leaders in ministry who would be able to work with their people to transform society as the way to address the undesirable inequalities. His commitment is to assist his students to develop themselves through putting their knowledge and skills at the service of the people they serve, hence, his interest in Service Learning at Tangaza University College.



Judith Pete

For more than 12 years now, she has been an Educator at Higher Learning Institutions in East Africa. She was the Regional Director for Africa for Research on Open Educational Resources for Development (ROER4D) www.roer4d.org. for 5 years and is currently the Uniservitate Regional Coordinator for Service Learning Hub for Africa at Tangaza University College. www.uniservitate.org. She holds a PhD in Management Science and Technology from Open University in Netherlands and MBA in Financial Management from Catholic University of Eastern Africa. Her PhD Thesis was on “Open Educational Resources Differentiation: A cross-country study on differentiation in access, use and sharing of (Open) Educational Resources at universities in Kenya, Ghana and South Africa”. She has a lot of passion in Educational Technologies, Service Learning, Community Engagement, Social Transformation, OER and Climate Change matters.

14. SERVICE LEARNING A PATHWAY FOR SPIRITUALITY LIFE IN TANGAZA UNIVERSITY COLLEGE, NAIROBI, KENYA

Br. Tom Kearney, CFC and Judith Pete

Tangaza University College, Nairobi, Kenya

Abstract

Spirituality is the foundation for what we do as a Christian institution for higher learning. It comes from the soul; it embraces all religions, and is the experience of seeking to understand our purpose and role as humans in this world. It shapes beliefs, values, and attitudes of the person, which in turn affects our choices and behaviours. It is the way we comprehend and choose to live out our deepest meanings and values. Service Learning at Tangaza University is based on linking Faith, Theory and Practice. The collaborative view was to provide theological education and priestly formation for the ministries consistent with their charisms. Over the years, Tangaza Board of Governors made up of 23 congregations, saw the need for the formation of both non-clerical religious and lay people, both Catholic and other faiths to expand the ministry of the Church in the world, approved other Institutes, which have been integrated to TUC; training for ministry in theology, education, social transformation, spirituality & religious formation, social communication, youth ministry and catechetics, leadership and management, it is governed in accordance with the norms of the Catholic Church.

Fruits of Service Learning has been witnessed over the years at Tangaza University College; this is as a result of what students graduating from the university develops as the fruits of their study at the university. The Case Study of Mirror of Hope founded by a graduate of Institute for Social Transformation and Friends of Love Kibera (graduate school of education) is a clear indication of that fruit among many others and the foundation of University "Mtaani" shows how the initial seed and vision of the Community Based Organisation developed as a result of the response to the discovery of problems encountered in changing lives of the people living in slums and other informal settlements across Africa and beyond.

Introduction

At Tangaza University College, Spirituality is the foundation of our actions. Human beings claim to be of significance, to be made in the image of God (Genesis 1:27). Not only

do we often feel tired, angry, and even happy, but we are able to think, be aware, and recognize needs beyond just survival, “We want to live”. There is a spiritual dimension to the way we live our lives. We are constantly seeking for connection, for meaningfulness, for fulfilment, for completion.

Life is not just an experience we live and that is it. We desire to have a meaningful and purposeful life. We search different roads and there are many paths to the realization of our purpose for being in this world. Meaningfulness seems to come from the way in which we are connected – to our neighbors, to the created world in which we live, to the Transcendent Being, and even to ourselves.

“Spirituality is the way we comprehend and choose to live out our deepest meanings and values. It is living in the heart, speaking and sharing from the heart. It calls for ‘awakeness’ to the movements of the human spirit, primarily within oneself, and, in the second equally important movement, within the human community. It also entails both listening to the heart, to one’s own inner movements, and listening to the heart to correctly discern the movements in the heart of another, and those in the corporate heart of the community. Spirituality defines the way to make the journey of life, not its destination. It is existentially an endeavor, not an accomplishment. By its nature, a lived spirituality is always self-transcending.” (Churu B.W. 2009, 231)

It is therefore a clear indication that Spirituality shapes our beliefs and attitudes, which help to set priorities and values that influences our relationships, shape behaviours and influence choices. Spirituality comes from our essence of being Human. It is the driving force that comes from our belonging in this world, from the way we understand our connection with other people, the creation itself, and the Supreme Being. Our faith tradition, our religion,

We develop our spirituality by making decisions about our behaviour in the various situations we encounter.

is the way we nourish this spirituality through our meditation, prayer, worship, and moral living. We develop our spirituality by making decisions about our behaviour in the various situations we encounter.

Is Spirituality underpinning Tangaza University College?

TUC spirituality is founded on the belief that we are all created in the image of God (Genesis 1: 26–28). This Biblical passage explains the source of human dignity that must be

upheld, protected and defended by all caring human beings. This fundamental message of Sacred Scripture contains the element that characterizes and distinguishes humans from all other creatures.

Christians believe that Jesus is the role model of a credible way for living as God desired. According to Nolan (2006, p. 21), the “Spirituality of Jesus is about the experiences and attitudes behind what he said and did, what fired him and inspired him”. In order to discover the spirituality of Jesus we need to ponder his life and motivations, his values and behaviours. We need to be familiar with the gospel he preached and lived. To become familiar with the spirituality of TUC we need to look carefully into its life and the way it lives. Spirituality is the fundamental relationship linking us to the Most High.” So, what can we notice about the spirituality and soul of Tangaza?

TUC, as proudly Catholic, expresses its belief in a Creator responsible for all beings on earth and to whom we are responsible for how we have cared for the world given to us. *Tangaza Fumbo la Imani*, (Proclaim the Mystery of Faith—Life, Death and Resurrection of Jesus) is our

We are encouraging our students to be the best people they can be, so as to cooperate in making God's creation, our world, the best it can possibly be. This is the basis of TUC Spirituality: why we do what we do.

understanding of what makes life meaningful to this community. We are encouraging our students to be the best people they can be, so as to cooperate in making God's creation, our world, the best it can possibly be. This is the basis of TUC Spirituality: why we do what we do.

If Spirituality is the personalizing of the meaning of life, then it gives us the reason for doing what we do. It helps us to identify what is good in the situation we find. The God that Jesus reveals is a God who, by His nature, is Compassion. As the source of all life, God, in compassion, shares Life with all of creation—spirit life, human life, animal life, plant life. God's Mission is to sustain this Life. Jesus came to continue that mission and hand it over to us. He taught us God's compassion and God's passion for Justice.

Compassion and Justice become key values for Social Transformers as they work for liberating God's people from sinful social structures. Compassion manifests itself by working in solidarity with God's people, especially the most marginalised. We do this by voluntarily disregarding self-interest and attending, wholeheartedly, to the needs of others. What is required is a spirituality, a way of thinking about life, based on Compassion and Justice, which embraces a hopeful anticipation that things will become better for the human race.

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TUC Spirituality is one that prepares staff and students for this hope. This calls for a spirituality of stewardship, which is the strong message in *Laudato si'* by Pope Francis (May 24th, 2015).

TUC approaches its Mission of preparing Ministers for the service of humanity supported by a spirituality geared to service. Whether a unit is being taught in the School of Theology, the School of Education or the School of Arts and Social Sciences, it is being taught to assist the student personally with insights, ideas, skills and practices which inspire and enable the student to make a difference, to be an agent of social transformation wherever they may be living. It is being taught within Tangaza University College, which then means that it must be aligned with TUC Vision, Mission, Values, Goals, and Strategic Plan.

Application for Involvement in *Uniservitate* Project

Our TUC motto —Teaching minds, Touching hearts, Transforming lives— already gives the attraction TUC had for the *Uniservitate* Project. Such a project would be the next stretching development that was already consistent with what we at TUC were trying to do. Cooperating with those who are doing the same obviously affirms and strengthens the approach to Service Learning.

The further challenge in being selected as the regional hub for Africa has placed upon us a responsibility to reflect more deeply on our incipient ideas about forming ministers who would be inspired to use their knowledge and skills in their ministry performance for the sake of the community wherever they served.

Both of these, the application and the selection, challenged TUC to consciously look at what in fact it was doing and to consciously document initiatives and results, and to systematically make efforts to conscientise the whole College and community towards this approach. This really is the challenge of institutionalization.

Having begun the journey, the energy to formalise the processes has challenged TUC to go even further to research the impact of such learning on the graduates, and to our amazement, we found many alumni moving along the path of their own spirituality and application of their skills to enhance the lives of the people they serve.

We hope that we may share this journey with our colleagues in the Regional Hub and that we too might learn from their experience of such initiatives that will further encourage the relevance of this expanding initiative. The early visits and trainings have been energising our efforts.

A Relevant Tangaza University College Spirituality for Service Learning

The spirituality of the Tangaza University College must be relevant to the members of the community it serves. The African continent of 50+ countries, with thousands of ethnic identities, makes unity a huge challenge. Africa (and Kenya) struggles with the realities of poverty, division, socio-economic and political exclusion due to ethnocentrism, and bad governance which has often led to a culture of violence and hopelessness. This is exacerbated by a heritage of religious traditions, both traditional and revelational, and rigid patriarchal structures, which exclude women.

What kind of spirituality should be embraced and manifested by a Catholic Institution, which forms pastoral agents, social ministers, educators, leaders and business entrepreneurs preparing to serve in such a challenging context?

Tangaza lists a preferential option for the poor among its values. This is shown not just in a spirituality of inclusivity and in policy statements but also in the assistance rendered through the various institutes and the department of Student Life which advise and support students. TUC is among the first University Colleges in Kenya that has admitted students who are both visibly and physically impaired and has an identified office to assist them. Located in a continent with rigid patriarchal structures, TUC deliberately promotes gender parity at all levels. Inclusivity has become the norm and the distinction of the college. The college also has many women students, and women in leadership as well as in teaching positions.

TUC is also located within an environment of religious plurality calling for religious dialogue. Members of TUC are, therefore, deeply influenced by, and steeped in a spirituality of inter-faith dialogue. Although a fully Catholic institution, the college admits students, employs lecturers and workers from all faith communities. The college also offers scholarships to students regardless of their religious affiliations. Atheists and traditional religious believers are all welcome! In order to show our hospitality and reception of peoples of diverse religious orientations, TUC has instituted the Institute for Interreligious Dialogue and Islamic Studies (IRDIS) and offers a special room set aside for use by Muslim members. The college also boasts of the Tangaza Maryknoll Centre for African Studies (TAMCAS),

to demonstrate respectful study of African cultural practices and values. The college is convinced that in a world of religious pluralism, inter-faith dialogue is not optional but compulsory.

Service Learning at Tangaza University College (TUC) promotes a culture of Community Engagement within the University; it promotes the integration of Community Engagement in our teaching and learning within the Institutes and the classroom, in developing research and promoting outreach within the various Institutes.

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TUC Strategic Goal 4 stresses that we are committed to teach and live the Catholic Social Doctrine and provide spiritual support to the members of Tangaza Community. The main aim is to foster mission orientation and spirit among all TUC stakeholders. (see TUC Spirituality for Service Learning p. 1-2)

Tangaza University College empowers the marginalized groups/communities to secure and develop their own resourcefulness for solving their problems and achieving their goals; and raises financial resources to support University Education for all.

Fruits of Service Learning in the graduates and Society

The fruits of such Service Learning in Tangaza can be seen through many examples of graduates who have developed their own socially transforming initiatives in their local communities. They have, consciously or unconsciously, been influenced by their experience in Tangaza University College. One of these is Thomas Nyawir, a graduate from the Institute for Social Transformation:

The fruits of such Service Learning in Tangaza can be seen through many examples of graduates who have developed their own socially transforming initiatives in their local communities. They have, consciously or unconsciously, been influenced by their experience in Tangaza University College.

1. *Development of Mirror of Hope Community Based Organisation*

The foundational insight came from Thomas's experience of the value of his own Education. A generous benefactor had seen his potential and helped him to finish schooling. This opened up the world of possibilities for him. After his initial secondary schooling, he did initial studies in the area of Social Development and, after initiating Mirror of Hope as a very small personal initiative, he then completed his Bachelor of Arts Degree in Sustainable Human Development at the Institute for Social Transformation at TUC.

The seeds of Mirror of Hope were planted when he assisted a small number of impoverished children from the Kibera slums, to continue to develop themselves by going to primary school.

Tom's study, his placement and research developed further his insights into the impact of schooling and its potential for changing lives. So, the seed planted in that small gathering of very few children under the tree at the Guadalupe parish grounds in Nairobi began to grow like the mustard seed.

2. *School Sponsorship Programme*

While working as the Coordinator of a High School Graduates programme, Tom continued to pursue some benefactors/sponsors to assist him in sponsoring needy students to primary school. He convinced them that this would benefit these children individually, and then maybe, a greater number later. The first challenge for Mirror of Hope was the attraction of Sponsors to enable the identified students to complete their schooling.

Tom's study helped him to recognise that he needed to formalise and register the organisation as a Community based organisation to be able to solicit support from benefactors. This formality, and the offering of a small office space within the parish grounds by the parish priest, enabled Mirror of Hope to host visiting groups. MOH helped these international visitors to encounter the Kibera youth, to engage in small discussion activities, to be involved in cultural exchanges and educational activities, and even to eye-opening escorted visits through Kibera slum. These continuing activities developed a number of partnering programmes which assisted MOH to raise sufficient money to begin a more extensive programme of enriching the lives of their sponsored students and their families.

When students were attending school, they were usually safe, fruitfully occupied, so-

cially participating in life with their peers, being cared for, and learning according to the school experience and becoming qualified to participate fully in their communities after school. Tom soon noticed that the idle time of school holidays was a potential danger. His response was to begin organising for a holiday programme to support and enrich them by extra tuition and to keep them from dangerous activities.

3. School Holiday Programme

The second challenge for MOH was to maintain this nurturing school lifestyle during school holidays. The initial response was to provide for Holiday Tuition to consolidate and accelerate their learning. The sponsored students were also provided with a midday meal to continue their nourishment. Partnering with international groups such as Youth Out Loud, Global Immersion and Adventure Out Loud was helpful in providing financial support. When the Kenyan Government outlawed tuition in schools, the holiday programme was revised to move away from tuition to the development of study skills and personal development programmes, which assisted growing self-confidence. It also revealed another social issue, the plight of the mothers of these students.

4. Women's Empowerment Programme

Through the encounters with the students, MOH became aware of the struggles of their families. Most came from single parent (mostly mothers) families. These women struggled to find jobs, to put food on the table, and to provide for their children. The MOH response was to develop a Women's Empowerment programme. This programme initially provided some training in skills and production of goods, and then a marketing place for their sale. The beginnings of a solution seemed to emerge.

5. Personal Development of Sponsored Students

As MOH continued to work closely with the sponsored students over a greater period of time the potential of the students appeared and there was a need to encourage their skills to create possible employment opportunities.

Initially MOH partnered with various groups to support the Holiday programme, to introduce various workshops to promote healthy living, awareness of nutrition in diet, to assist the management of sexual behaviour and relationships, and development of leadership skills.

The next response was to offer mentoring of individual students through group and individual encounters. Senior students were engaged with junior students, opportunities were created to discuss age-related issues. Then more focus was needed on training potential mentors from the graduating students. As each challenge was being met, another began to appear.

6. Computer and Music Programme

As a response to the need for additional preparation for potential employment MOH sought to empower vulnerable youth using Information Communication Technology (ICT) by teaching them basic computer and graphic design. In partnership with NairoBits, a registered trust in Nairobi, the MOH Computer Training focused on equipping the youth with hands on IT and business skills that enable them to be “entrepreneurs” and come up with their own project ideas. In addition, the computer program runs employability skills workshops to increase the participant’s chances of securing employment.

Appreciating the abundance of music talent among the youth and the role that music plays in helping change lives, MOH also established a Music Program targeting children and youth to promote the performance of and appreciation of music. The MOH music programme focusses on mentorship, training and performance opportunities for the youth and children.

7. Savings & Internal Lending Communities

MOH has continued to work very closely with the women through its Women Empowerment Program that has over the years focused in equipping the women with the necessary skills to initiate their own businesses.

Going forward, in partnership with the Edmund Rice Foundation Australia, MOH has adopted a Savings and Internal Lending Communities (SILC) methodology whose objective is to enable the economically active women to develop their own reliable financial services and to support community self-reliance and resilience. This, MOH believes will lead to social and financial sustainability, understanding and building trust, group formation and internal-lending.

8. *Partnership and Collaboration*

One of the key learnings Tom and many Tangaza Students have integrated is that of collaboration and partnership. He has been able to develop a number of supportive partnerships with overseas and local bodies, that have essentially been to provide an engagement with Kenyan youth. This has developed into inter-cultural discussions with the Kibera youth where the visitors gain from the experience of meeting people who see life from a different perspective and recognize their fortunate lifestyles. The Kenyan youth gain from the recognition and affirmation of their genuineness and dignity, and then from sponsorships which help them in so many ways. The two groups have worked together and even produced music presentations of their working together—We are the World by GI and MOH (Global Immersion and Mirror of Hope). <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aYWznNCaLo>

Many key people from such overseas groups have also contributed their expertise to an Advisory Board which assists in the management of the CBO. Tom's ability to integrate his learnings of Social Development has provided a good foundation for the development of Mirror of Hope, and it continues to serve its beneficiaries well and to grow stronger to meet further needs. And many of their beneficiaries are volunteering service to MOH and other allied groups in Kibera.

9. *University Mtaani (University in the Slums)*

Established in the year 2012 as an outreach programme, over the years, it has grown in molding the youth and women living in the slums within Nairobi on Civic and development education. The Diploma programme is based on adult learning principles and distance learning approaches(modules format) rolling over a period of 2 years. The program attempts to bridge the gap between outdated consciousness, attitude and behaviors of the average citizen. It is designed to empower marginalized citizen to demand for their own rights as spelled out in the new Constitution and to become conscious, informed, focused and pro-active agents of national development, in line with Kenya's Vision 2030.

10. *Friends of Love Kibera (FOLKS)*

Jeremiah was an education graduate whose primary role by his career was to simply teach at high school. He grew up in the slums and his late mother used to give food to

the needy children in their neighborhood. This struck him and he later initiated FOLKS. Friends of Love Kibera slums is a registered community based organization formed and led by women who focus on empowering women and girls. The organization is located in the heart of Kibera slums in Nairobi Kenya. The women do so in order to ensure all barriers that block women from expressing their freedom can be alleviated. Women focus on chang-

Friends of Love Kibera slums is a registered community based organization formed and led by women who focus on empowering women and girls.

ing policy to accommodate women, empowering young girls and children in general. Our organization focuses on issues such as women rights, gender related issues, environment and women's roles and leadership of women.

Conclusion

For Tangaza, Service Learning has become a pathway for the expression of their Spirituality in action.

The Spirituality that the alumni have taken on finds its expression in the amount of service that enriches the world through their various

projects for Social Transformation in their local communities. For Tangaza, Service Learning has become a pathway for the expression of their Spirituality in action. It impacts on the way in which the instruction impacts on the students. It has extended Tangaza in its outreach to the broader community by offering support to its graduates through The Leaders Guild, an introduction to tertiary studies to the dwellers of the informal settlements through *Mtaani* and even reaching out with spiritual support to the Catholic parliamentarians through CAMPSSI. All of these, and other initiatives, make a difference in the world in which we serve.

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Uniservitate is a global programme for the promotion of service-learning in Catholic Higher Education. Its objective is 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 offering an integral education and training of agents of change committed to their community.

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

Pope Francis

4 Institutionalization of Service-Learning in Higher Education

This work aims to discover and highlight all the wealth within the perspectives of the different actors participating in the institutionalization processes of service-learning in Higher Education. Through the description of various global cases of service-learning institutionalization, the book presents reflections, actions and experiences that outline conceptual elements and key features, seeking to contribute to the great global debate on how and to which purpose processes allowing for the integration of service-learning into the identity and culture of Higher Education institutions are launched and developed.

We introduce this fourth volume of the Uniservitate collection with the firm intention of allowing readers to experience, through its pages, a journey across the different continents and cultures, exploring stories as diverse as the contexts and actors behind them, and to take on the challenges and dreams that we believe the book suggests, with a forward-looking approach, for those interested in a Higher Education that is more engaged with the world in which it unfolds its actions.

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