

Statement of the Task Force on: Education of the Marginalized

Higher Education at the Margins: Learning Together to Transform the World

Context:

Jesuit higher education is empowering. The God of the Bible stands with the poor, orphans, widows, and foreigners. Yahweh stood by the poor and the suppressed. He brought out of Egypt the enslaved people with ‘mighty hand and outstretched arm’ (Deut 7:19) and made them a great nation. And Jesus took his stand with the poor and the marginalized. His mission was to proclaim good news of freedom to the unserved (Lk 4:18); and his kingdom belongs to the poor (Mt 5:3). In the parable of the Rich Man and Lazarus (Lk 16:19-31), Jesus names the poor as Lazarus (*whom God helps*) but no name is given to the rich man, in contrast to the world’s practice of recognizing and celebrating the rich and the powerful while ignoring and sidelining the poor.

In Jesuit history, at a time when education was the privilege of a few rich and powerful people, our Founder opened up the Roman College in 1551 (after the College of Messina in 1548) and offered education *gratis*. In his letter to the Jesuits at Padua (1547) he asserts, “Friendship with the poor makes us friends of the eternal King”. Fr Adolfo Nicholas invited the Jesuit educators in Mexico City (April 2010) to ‘reflection on the experience of reality together with the creative imagination to work toward construction of a more human, just, sustainable, and faith-filled world’ as the criteria for Jesuit education. He challenged us: “Can we not go beyond the loose family relationships we now have as institutions, and re-imagine and re-organize ourselves so that, in this globalized world, we can more effectively realize the universality which has always been part of Ignatius’ vision of the Society?” The call of GC 32 for ‘faith that does justice’ has evolved as ‘faith and reconciliation’ in GC 36: “Our educational apostolates at all levels, and our centers for communication and social research, should help form men and women committed to reconciliation and able to confront obstacles to reconciliation and propose solutions. The intellectual apostolate should be strengthened to help in the transformation of our cultures and societies” (D1/34). Jesuit education is individual formation of leaders for social transformation. And this transformation should permeate from the bottom of the social pyramid: Empowering those at the margins is transforming the society.

Reality and Challenges:

Looking at the world today we see how abject poverty, injustice, discrimination, war, and suppression result in systematic violence against the dignity of men, women, and children. The end result from the world of conflict and suppression, persecution, violence, natural disaster and the scourge of poverty is refugees, migrants, internally displaced, economically, socially, and religiously marginalized. This end result needs response as a testament to the innate desire for happiness and dignity of every human being. The key to reform the society is empowering education that gives hope even amidst hopeless situations and courage to break through the dominating and oppressing fetters of suppression and discrimination.

Pope Francis has recently introduced a world day of the poor. In his homily (19th Nov 2017) he says: “No one can think that he or she is useless”. Narrating the parable of

the talents (Mt 25:4-30), he underlines that “the one who adds new talents is truly faithful because he sees things as God does”. He adds: “Omission is also the great sin where the poor are concerned... (*since*) in the poor, we find the presence of Jesus... they are the ones who open to us the way to heaven; they are our ‘passports to paradise’... what matters is not what we have but what we give”. We should not become, as Pope Francis would say, part of ‘Globalization of indifference’. The poor need to be loved not in mere words but in meaningful action. In his message for the World Day of Peace on January 1, 2018, addressing ‘migrants and refugees’, he stressed among his four ‘mileposts for action’ the “importance of ensuring access to all levels of education for children and young people.”

Our Response:

In the Spiritual Exercises, at the end of the very first exercise (SpEx 53), one is asked to reflect, in the presence of the Crucified Jesus. And today we have the crucified people amidst us as the focus of our mission.

Jon Sobrino (Cf *Witnesses to the Kingdom*) reflects on the ‘crucified people’ who are the people dying innocently and defenselessly as a result of injustice; the poor and the victimized majorities filled with misfortunes ending in slow death of poverty or the violent death of massacres due to religious fundamentalism, economic injustice, political suppression, social exploitation etc. The refugees, the internally displaced, the migrants, and those at the margins are crucified every day as the most vulnerable. We, as members of Jesuit Institutions of higher education, should ask ourselves:

What have we done so far?

What are we now doing?

What ought we to do? - in redressing injustice; in establishing peace and harmony in a world torn with war and destruction; in caring for our common home and in accompanying God’s people in solidarity?

We need to think and act from the perspective of empowering these crucified people. Without the educated voices of those at the margins, over 61 million strong, we are all impoverished. We cannot find solutions without their voices. People at the margins have a need, and when they are served by higher education we all gain – they access new knowledge and we learn from them. As John Paul II put it: We are Easter people and Alleluia is our song.

Education is the first step out of misery and suppression and at the same time a social grace. Higher Education is the need of the hour to empower the underserved communities to form leaders for social transformation.

Need of the Hour:

Jesuit Institutions of Higher Education should not only offer education to those who come to us, but we should also go in search of those who need access to education (as the Shepherd in search of the helpless sheep, Lk15:3f). People at the margins could be living in the vicinity of our institutions and in the same local surroundings (such as resettled refugees, asylum seekers, those who are too poor to have access to higher education etc). To empower and learn together with the poor and those at the margins who live in our communities, consider how your institution could:

- i. Take education, with a blended model (with online teachers and onsite tutors) to those who are normally unable to have access to higher education;

- ii. Collaborate to create global, virtual, immersive learning environments through which Jesuit higher education can be delivered in a manner that is scalable, sustainable, and transferable;
- iii. Promote human dignity and gender equality through specific curricula focused on women and children;
- iv. Design higher education courses, as per Ignatian pedagogy, in the context of those at the margins, and produce them effectively in order to transform the society;
- v. Make effective and innovative use of virtual learning environments and tools of technology that support learning, such as tablets, e-readers, and mobile phones;
- vi. Bring the poor and displaced in to the university setting so all can learn together; and
- vii. Engage collaborative research for the university and those at the margins to study together the root causes of poverty and human displacement and to seek viable solutions.

The expected outcome of Jesuit education is critical thinking and leadership formation for social transformation. This is the outcome of the Ubuntu principle: As the cumulative product of the society, I should make my contribution for the betterment of the society, especially to create a society of harmony, dignity, and equality.

Focus:

In his talk to the International Federation of Catholic Universities (04 Nov 2017), Pope Francis underlined the responsibilities of Catholic Universities towards the refugees and the migrants in a globalized world. He indicated three areas of focus, namely “research, teaching, and social promotion in order to bring about the construction of a more just and humane world”. We need “to do further studies into the root causes of forced migration with the aim of identifying viable solutions”. He recommends distance education for those who live in refugee camps and scholarships for those who get resettled. The outcome of such education should be “political leaders of the future, entrepreneurs, and artists of culture”. He also offers a concrete proposal of immersion programs in refugee camps for our students and efforts on the part of university administrations to be of service to the “asylum seekers and newly arrived migrants”.

While Superior General, Fr Nicholas, reminded the Presidents of Jesuit Universities in the US that their success was noteworthy, but that they were at risk of being too elite, of leaving the poor behind. How can Jesuit Universities respond to the call of Pope Francis, and to the message of Fr. Nicholas? The following models could be considered.

Models:

To realize education that transforms the society we have, within the Society educational spectrum, several effective models for consideration: With the vision of ‘Learning Together to Transform the World’, the mission of Jesuit Worldwide Learning (JWL) is to provide ‘tertiary learning to people and communities at the margins of societies – be it through poverty, location, lack of opportunity, conflict or forced displacement.’ The formative education is Ignatian in pedagogy with an embedded social service component. At present Jesuit Worldwide Learning (JWL founded in 2010 – Website: www.jwl.org) is offering three types of effective programs: Global English Language program; Professional Certification program; and

the Academic Diploma program in Liberal Studies, awarded by Regis University in collaboration with Jesuit Universities in the USA, Asia, Europe, and Africa, and soon, baccalaureate degrees from Creighton University, and other mission-centric universities. JWL collaborates with Jesuit Provincials, and with partners such as JRS in refugee camps (in Kenya, Malawi, Chad, Northern Iraq, Afghanistan, and other locations), and has expanded higher education offerings to people internally displaced, migrants, Tribals, Dalits and others at the margins in Sri Lanka, India, Myanmar, Nepal, the Caribbean, and a growing number of other locations.

JWL uses on-line technologies and on-site learning support in its global blended learning model, and others offer effective partnership and on-site models:

Loyola University of Congo (ULC) is located in the hill city of Kimwenza where professors and students go out to learn in the community with the people. Successful outcomes include The Oyster Mushroom Project started in 2016. Two students, one from Agroalimentary and one from Agroforestry, taught poor farmers in the region how to grow oyster mushrooms. Through the project, the farmers now reduce hunger and malnutrition and contribute to food security. When informed about the success of the production of mushrooms, the Ministry of Agriculture asked ULC to organize a national training with the financial support of the Korean International cooperation Agency in DRC. Research is now being done to guide an industrial production of oyster mushrooms. Faculty and students in agriculture continue to share scientific technology with the farmers, and with the farmers are learning ways to contribute directly to the Sustainable Development goals of 2030.

Arrupe Jesuit University in Harare embraces that the university itself is planted at the margins with the poor. Many in the community are deprived of clean water and other human rights, so in solidarity the University follows a model of fusion of margins. Students, with guidance of the faculty, have been immersed to live with and work among refugees in countries such as South Sudan, Northern Uganda, Ethiopia, Malawi, Zimbabwe, and South Africa for periods of between six weeks and two months. An annual Cultural Night was organized by the students and the proceeds helped to build a classroom for poor children in a community of displaced/dispossessed persons. Students are engaged with the youth at various universities and tertiary institutions sharing spiritual guidance and the Spiritual Exercises in daily life. Other works at the margins include fighting against human trafficking, and teaching youth mathematics.

Pontificia Universidad Javeriana, Colombia, has developed different actions to incorporate education with the communities at the margin: *Misión País Colombia* (Colombia National Mission), is inspired by Ignatian spirituality. This undergraduate volunteer program accompanies communities through sustainable and self-managed projects. Students, professors and administrators participate in planning projects of collective learning, social transformation and non-formal educational activities. Undergraduate students engage in a program of Social Practices to face societal realities, and to promote social transformation in communities at the margins through long-term processes. This program fosters students' social commitment to the transformation of Colombian society's acute economic, political and cultural reality.

Javeriana University has promoted an interdisciplinary research perspective that strives to understand and intervene in social processes of social change. Research has encouraged the incorporation of community members, including children and youngsters, as active participants in the research processes. Studies from Rural Development, Social Sciences, and Education Departments have taken up a collaborative research approach that allow children, youngsters, community members, and researchers to construct knowledge about their situation while fostering their capacity of being critical and agents of change and promoters of new dynamics of interaction in their marginalized contexts.

In 2015, Loyola University Chicago developed Arrupe College to open access to a Loyola AA degree for the city of Chicago's most vulnerable. The vulnerable included the poor, illegal immigrants, young women living in danger, or those with no means to travel safely at night. Students pay a modest tuition fee with the majority of cost covered by generous benefactors and student financial aid.

Other Jesuit organizations such as JRS (founded in 1980 – Website: www.jrs.net) and Fe y Alegria (founded in 1955 – Website: www.feyalegria.org) offer primary and secondary, and vocational training to the poorest sectors of society.

Action Plan:

Jesuit Universities and affiliated institutions have the means to implement the call to action from Pope Francis and Fr Nicholas. On a global level there is need to draw an action plan to be effectively implemented:

- i. Academic: Initiate and collaborate on a comprehensive plan to meet the higher education needs for refugees, the forcibly displaced, the asylum seekers, the poor in the neighborhood of the university, and others at the margin, who do not have access to our university education. The curriculum and pedagogy could be designed keeping in mind that the needs of those at the margins are also our needs. Through use of the virtual learning environment, it is possible to establish highly interactive global classrooms to reach those unserved or underserved by higher education.
- ii. Research: Engage in social and scientific research to study the root causes of forced migration, marginalization, as well as discrimination and suppression in any form and study viable solutions to integrate all those at the margins into the society;
Participate in the JWL global research initiative, join the AJCU Faculty Migration Directory, or create a research collaborative, inclusive of those at the margins, to study global issues, to share research tools and resources, and to disseminate research findings broadly in multiple languages.
- iii. Financial Assistance: Offer financial support for scholarship to the refugees and internally displaced who have resettled, been repatriated, or reintegrated, and the poor at the margins so they can further their studies and contribute in meaningful ways to the world. Through endowments or scholarships those at the margins could be invited into our institutions of higher learning for effective learning.
- iv. Immersion Programs: Adopt a learning center at the margins where students from the home location and students who are refugees or internally displaced study together in-person and on-line. These immersion experiences would bring students from the home location to refugee camps or to centers serving the internally displaced. Communities would benefit from the immersion where

students engage together in projects to better the world. University students and faculty could be encouraged, through outreach programs, to teach the poor children in their neighbourhood. They could learn, as well, from them values of social, religious, and cultural sensitivity, understanding, and appreciation.

- v. Advocacy: Advocacy to welcome, to protect, to promote, and to integrate women and men at the margins, especially the asylum seekers, into society should be promoted by every University and College. Institutions of tertiary education should be actively involved in advocacy for the rights and dignity of those at the margins; and they should make all efforts to promote political as well as entrepreneurial leadership. This advocacy should contribute to the formation of the whole person (Integral Human Development) and should generate opportunities for employment through existing work or through the creation of new businesses. Special considerations are needed to bring women into tertiary education so that communities can benefit from their informed voices.

Higher education is the bridge between the margins and the universities. There is need for effective and shared responsibility. We need mission aligned Universities and Colleges to offer the highest quality tertiary education, on-line education, and to issue certificates/ diplomas/ degrees at our learning centers around the world.

Outcome:

Already we could see the desired fruits from the JWL alumni/ae who have graduated from the professional or academic (diploma) programs. To inspire our work there are hundreds of examples such as these:

- Suad, who fled Somalia with her family, graduated from Regis University through the JWL program and became the first woman teacher and then the first Headmistress of a primary school in Kakuma (Kenya) refugee camp;
- Charles, who fled Democratic Republic of Congo after his father was assassinated, says: The only thing my father left me with was this advice before he died - 'I don't have anything to give you, but I ask you to continue with your education. Education will be your mother and father when I am no longer there.' Charles is now in Dzaleka Camp (Malawi) and as a student with JWL diligently following the advice of his father;
- Gustav, after successfully completing the JWL diploma program in Kakuma refugee camp (Kenya) is pursuing higher studies in media at Sogang University, Seoul;
- Lorena, a displaced child from the south of Bolivar, and her mother found a new home in Altos de Cazuca in Bogota (Colombia). Lorena asserted: We were displaced, but now here we have a house. So we are not displaced anymore! She has transformed her perspective about the displacement experience. And education opens up new possibilities to be fully integrated with the local community.

Collectively and in partnership, Jesuit Higher Education should empower those at the margins and form them as leaders with social responsibility. Jesuit Universities, in companionship with people at the margins, should lead the world to find solutions so that all at the margins, especially women, and children of the world feel at home with dignity and equality. This would be our challenge as well as our privilege.

Let us evermore now and then ask ourselves:

What have we done? – What are we doing? – What could we do? - for these least in the society to become the best in the society; and to empower people at the margins to transform the society.

Conclusion:

In this mission to empower those at the margins through higher education, all Jesuit universities, in the light of ‘faith that does justice’ (GC 32) and ‘faith and reconciliation’ (GC36), are invited to:

1. State the University commitment to implement the call of Pope Francis and include specific actions in the University annual and strategic plan to address how those at the margins can access them;
2. Support faculty members, for example through a course release or credit toward tenure and promotion, to offer their expertise in the education of people at the margins;
3. Reach out to the people at the margins to offer academic and/or skill-based education such as in agriculture, environmental education, social work, and health care;
4. Take an active part in research to study the causes of social conflicts and miseries and explore viable solutions – This could also help to evaluate the impact of Jesuit education that empowers people at the margins; and
5. Design a ranking of our universities to recognize those who engage in academic and social commitment with those at the margins.

Our education should ultimately make us all more fully human in the eyes of God, and build up people who live in harmony and peace. The Task Force thanks you for your consideration of this statement, and we look forward to the ways you will shape the discussion during the meeting.

With appreciation,

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