

Universities Collaboration with the Church: Experiences from AMECEA region

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Introduction

- Right from the middle ages the church appreciated education as a key factor for human and societal development in all se
- The church employed endless efforts to establish institutions of higher learning.
- They are hubs for creating a culture where human beings embrace knowledge and skills, new ways of doing things, new ways of challenging social structures and systems that are oppressive in the society, and creating a just and peaceful societies.
- Various Roman Pontifs have vested enourmous efforts in the Social Teaching of the Church to highlight the importance of institutions of higher learning in the provision knowledge through, Research, Teaching and Community service
- John Paul II, affirmed that Every Catholic University, as a university, is an academic community and 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.

Cont

- Universities are expected to generate responsible human beings
- They are also to support the growth of the catholic church and the development of Christian culture and human progress (Ex Corde Ecclesiae no 11)
- Catholic Universities must therefore collaborate with the church to promote and enhance sustainable development in the world

Cont

- ***Have the Universities been involved in any collaborations?***
- ***Have they recorded any successes?***
- ***What methods have they used to engage?***
- ***What challenges do universities face?***
- ***Do we still have some opportunities that we can explore?***

CUEA'S EXPERIENCE

- CUEA is an AMECEA institution which is steeped in Community as service as core part of its mission.
- The Catholic University has been engaged in different collaborations within the AMECEA (AMECEA, Conferences, dioceses and parishes).
- These collaborations have capacity build different adocates of social justice and agents of evangelization within the AMECEA region.
- This has been possible through CSJE whose mandate is guided by the CST, Department of Patoral Theology, Institutte of Canon Law, Faculty of Science and School of bussiness

Successes,

- CUEA in collaboration with AMECEA secretariat has been able to capacity build the different dioceses on the issues of leadership and conflict management, The initiative was born from a research conducted by the AMECEA / CUEA through the support USCCB
- In collaboration with AMECEA secretariat developed Child Protection Standards to be used by AMECEA member conferences to develop child protection policy where they do not exist or improve those that have.
- Worked together with the AMECEA secretariat to collect data on the forthcoming synod of bishops on Youth, Faith and Vocational Discernment
- CUEA through the CSJE has been involved in the dissemination of CST through radio programmes with the Catholic Radio, and through seminars and workshops
- Research on the issues of environmental conservation through Collaboration with Alliance of all religions. Through this research a manual for catechists and seminarians on environment was published.
- As a university we have Contributed to SDGs debate courtesy of SECAM Justice and Peace commission

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- Engaged in Universal Periodic Reviews of different countries eg Uganda, Kenya. These reviews put the countries on their toes because they focus on human rights violations
- Interfaith faith dialogue which focus on issues that are of religious nature that may have affect justice and peace in the region
- Through the Department of Pastoral Theology a number of dioceses have been supported in the development of their pastoral plans

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- The institute of Canon Law has taken initiatives of explaining pontifical and Curia documents that are of legislative nature to the parishes, dioceses and the universities through seminars, workshops and trainings
- Holds seminars and trainings on selected themes for qualified assembly eg formators, canonists etc.
- Have been involved in advocacy on cases of ecclesiastical interest by representing persons who have been accused of canonical cases such as clergy, religious and they also represent the laity in matrimonial cases
- They collaborate with the diocesan tribunals on various topical aspects in administration of justice and provide guidance to the judicial vicar and especially on areas where they may be challenged

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- The Faculty of Science engaged with Holy Cross Parish in empowering the community to be self-reliant through detergent making, organize computer literacy classes and sponsor annual mathematics contexts
- Through the faculty of commerce we have offered financial management support and skills to different parishes and the communities to begin income-generating projects
- Faculty of Education has been working with KCCB in research and trainings

Methods used in collaboration

- Face to face training of the key agents of evangelization in the diocese for capacity building
- Research and publication which focus on topical issues and since universities have the expertise they use their expertise to respond to the issues This has been possible through the support of different organization.
- Community service or engagement so that the universities do not remain as ivory towers but their existence is felt in the community. The presence has been felt through initiation of different micro projects that support the women and the most vulnerable
- Consultancy whereby some of the staff have been engaged in policy formulations such as Justice policy in Ngong and Maralal diocese
- Convening workshops and forum that speak to the needs of the people eg chastity and interfaith forums
- Radio Programs
- Provision of scholarships to agents of evangelization especially in the area of Justice and Peace, and church Management and leadership

Challenges of collaboration

- Mobility of the staff
- Limited financial resource both from the universities and the institutional church. in many instances we depend on donor funding because the universities do not provide resources. Unfortunately due to the dwindling donor funding and fatigue, universities face a lot of challenges
- Secularization of the universities-the society wants marketable course and this makes the universities not focus on church related issues
- Commercialization of the universities as the universities are run on business and competitive nature. The universities tied to tuition fees do not value when there are no enough students. Outreach bring money

Opportunities

- Policy development on different issues eg educ, Justice and peace, health etc
- Policy briefs
- Capacity building in various fields
- Research on the social issues of interest to the church
- Provision of scholarship to train in different disciplines that are secured by the universities
- Provision of different expertise to support the institutional church eg financial managers, lawyers who are trained in the Catholic universities with sound morals
- Moral and spiritual formation from the institutional church
- Provision of chaplaincy that support the holistic development of the university community

Conclusion

- Since the church has been in the forefront in setting up universities, the universities have a responsibility to give back to the church
- Universities must explore the opportunities available in their countries and engage for the church to benefit
- The institutional church has a firm structure that touches the grassroot and especially in the area of social justice. Universities could take advantage of these structures and provide their expertise in solving the problems that affect humanity.