

Community living in the Catholic Higher Education Institution as key component of the formation of agents of social transformation.

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Introduction

Social transformation is a necessary part of the Church's mission to help bring about the reign of God in the world. Catholic Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) take their inspiration and guidance from the Gospel of Christ, and have an obligation to help the Church to better understand and attend to the need for transformation in the social settings in which they are active. Such institutions may approach the task in multiple ways, key among which is the formation of the agents of the said social transformation.

Social transformation is here understood as a process by which a critical mass within a community commits itself to constantly discerning, agreeing and renewing the living of their values. Such commitment is not static, nor is it a destination that can be reached once and for all. It is, rather, a way of engaging the processes of history through which the community lives. Social transformation raises questions touching on universal principles of human dignity and eco-justice, but needs to be applied locally. It is not enough to subscribe to general principles. We need to be committed to an ongoing effort to understand and live these with due regard to the social and cultural realities of the particular situation in which we find ourselves. Resilient and focused leaders are needed. A Catholic HIE, such as Tangaza University College, aims to contribute to the formation of such leaders, the agents of the hoped-for social transformation.

This paper underscores that the mission of formation of the agents of social transformation is primarily a communitarian one. A conscious and cultivated community approach is necessary as a component of the overall formation of graduates who will participate actively, with an evangelical spirit, in communities that, with their contributions, will become increasingly open to transformation. This paper focuses on the community in the HEI as a locus of preparation of the agents of social transformation in future ministerial settings. In brief, it posits that the Catholic HEI itself needs to be a community open to social transformation in order to succeed in its mission. While this paper takes Tangaza University College as its example of a HEI, it is hoped that the reflections it poses are applicable to many African Catholic and indeed Christian HEIs. The paper uses the terms “Catholic” and “Christian” interchangeably.

Tangaza University College is committed to preparing agents of social transformation in line with the Gospel. As stated in the mission statement of the College, it is anticipated that these agents will minister in various social and ecclesial settings since the College “reaches out into the world”. For a person to be an effective agent of social transformation, ongoing personal transformation is essential. In tandem with social transformation, personal transformation is the genuine and continuous openness of an individual to choices that lead him/her to be more open to the fullness of life. Such fullness of life includes, but is not limited to, personal development and service to society. It is presumed that the career of the student in the College is organized to facilitate openness to such personal transformation. To this, the quality of community life lived in the college inevitably makes an impact, whether positive or negative. It is therefore imperative that the community life of the College be the subject of reflection and action in the self-assessment and self-improvement plans of the College.

On this occasion of the Silver Jubilee, it is an opportunity to look back on various ways in which the College community has grown, at the numbers of students, and at faculties and

programs in the College. It is also an opportunity to assess the inner life and culture of the College insofar as this can be done. A look at the community life lived in the college and its impact on members of the College, can be fruitful in positioning curricular choices in the future. To contextualize our subject, we can begin with a look at some of the cultural, historical and socio-economic background, and at the opportunities and impacts of these on community living in Africa and in HEIs there.

Background and Context

Tangaza University College is a Christian HEI located in Africa and serving a primarily African clientele. While the College is heir to many traditions, African and Christian traditions are particularly important. Both of these traditions underscore the place and power of community in the integral formation of their members. There is no stage in the formation of the African person at which the community is relegated to the background; indeed the community is seen as the setting and the agent of the formation of the individual. The community is also – in its turn – the beneficiary of the education of the individual. Formation is by the community, and for the community.

Christian tradition too, from its earliest days offers many examples of the centrality of the community in the formation of Christians. The New Testament records this important focus on the community, where it presents Jesus as devoting his last days to the moulding of the community of disciples to whom he leaves a legacy of unity based in love (John 17). The great commission to the world is given to the gathered community of disciples (Mathew 28:16-20). The first outpouring of the Holy Spirit affecting the Christian community is presented as a communal experience (Acts, 2). Indeed, even numerous experiences of individual mission and grace are borne witness to by the community, as evidenced in the conversion of Saul of Tarsus, and the special mission of Peter (John 21: 15-19), among others.

Observing that education in African communities was focused both on social responsibility as well as individual initiative and industry, Gyekye (1996) regrets that modern trends tend to favour individualism at the cost of communality. He recommends that African communities today deliberately opt to ensure that essential communal dimensions are not lost. The HEI is, in the first instance, a community. It is, thus, a prime locus for the implementation of this choice, central to African and other human traditions. The character of the community in the HEI impacts on what the people therein experience and become. Thus the HEI is an opportunity to cultivate the characteristics that mark out its members and its values.

Such an approach finds itself in contrast with another tradition, that represented by a brand of Higher Education which Africa inherited from the West, along with other elements of Western education systems. This latter kind of higher education is the product of the Enlightenment and rationalistic over-thrusts in Europe that have a tendency to excessively emphasize the individual's own achievement. Admission, promotion and graduation requirements all hinge on individual achievement. While this emphasis has its place, HEIs in Africa, including Catholic ones, run the risk of paying little but lip service to community building and education for community. To do so would be to radically compromise the ability of such institutions to form graduate agents of social transformation.

Discussing similar concerns in an American setting, Professor E. L. Long has underscored the importance of deliberate effort to build community in the Catholic university.

We must overcome the assumption that while the training of the mind requires a deliberate sense of purpose, hard work, and the acceptance of discipline, community comes about through more casual efforts. Community is not arrived at easily, least of all by wishfully hoping for it to appear. Community requires having a shared purpose or

purposes and the wisdom to articulate those expectations through institutionalized forms and procedures (Long, 1992:51).

It is necessary that every Catholic HEI, whether in Africa or elsewhere, interrogate its community-building efforts. In doing so, the resources available for strengthening such efforts, as well as those that impede them, need to be adequately scrutinized. Challenges to community emphasis exist in all spheres of life in Africa today, including in the education sector. The welfare of the individual seems to be seen as opposed to, rather than complementary to, efforts for communal gains.

Many trends in higher education in Africa militate against the community emphasis, not least among which is the competitive nature of the brand of formal education that has become dominant in Kenya and many other African countries. In addition, there is a strong tendency for the student to be lost in an anonymous crowd, even in Catholic HEIs. This is a consequence of excessive commercialization of elements of university life, where every aspect of student life—from accommodation to food to clubs—attracts itemized fees. This forces students to pick and choose those areas of the life of the community that they can afford to pay for, thus measuring their involvement in student life with their financial possibilities. Another challenge is represented by the various modes of completion of studies, which puts students on individualized tracks.

The practice of having consistent student class groups is diminishing as individual students avail themselves of those courses that they can afford to pay for, or attend classes only in the evenings or at weekends. The individualized track, notwithstanding its advantages, tends to emphasize the academic career at the expense of aspects of community building, participation and accountability. Favouring consistent class groupings means providing opportunities for community-building over a reasonable length of time. Such an emphasis, however, will not bring

automatic fruits. Opportunities need to be appropriately utilized. Catholic HEIs cannot purport to educate agents of social transformation without exposing them to live community life, with its opportunities and risks. This realization leads us to the need for, and importance of, character formation.

Character Formation

One of the most important contributors to personal transformation is the formation of the character of the student. Without engaging the students consciously in the cultivation and development of personal character, it is unlikely that transformation will be sustainable. Key to the formation of character is the development, articulation and ownership of values. How can a Catholic HEI motivate values development and ownership in its students? Taking our cue from African traditional wisdom and the experience of Christian communities over the centuries, lived community is the most important factor in the cultivation and ownership of values by an individual. The supreme moral principle in African morality is responsibility towards others, care for them, helping and not harming them. Education in the African community, according to Gyekye (Ibid: 63) responds to this communal identity and obligation:

...in the communal society...bringing up children to feel that they have responsibilities towards others is part of the whole process of socialization. The ethic of responsibility, rather than the ethic of individual rights, is inculcated from the outset. Children are taught to be motivated in their actions more by their obligations to contribute to the welfare of the community than by consideration of their own rights.

On the occasion of its Silver Jubilee, Tangaza University College can fittingly ask itself whether it explicitly embraces the responsibility for shaping character, and if so, how it approaches the task. According to Professor Long (1992) there was a tendency in American

universities in the '90s to give up the ideal of having an impact on the character development of the students. They focused on academic, technological and economic well-being of the student and the societies to which they would send them. Given the unfortunately strong inclination of African HEIs to measure themselves, almost exclusively, against their counterparts in the North, it is necessary for African Catholic HEIs to interrogate themselves, following Long (1992:21), whether Catholic higher education in Africa has put aside the concern for character formation and yielded to the dominance of market pressure. Has it aimed solely at producing economically self-reliant and self-advancing graduates? Because of the pressure for marketability and economic success HEIs find themselves inclined to stress excessively competence at the expense of character. "But efforts to have competence apart from the cultivation of moral selfhood can make "the best and brightest" into merely the smartest and the most scheming" (Long, 1992:21). Obviously, it need not be the choice between the one and the other, but an integrated effort to ensure that neither is compromised.

In this context, Catholic higher education in Africa needs to have a long and honest look at the issues that graduates of Western Education on the continent face. Many of these seem to be lost in the maze of institutionalized corruption, playing their roles to perpetuate rampant poverty and the betrayal of justice in society. They are the products of the education sector and make a substantial contribution to the African predicament. The education sector is not innocent of all responsibility for the sorry state of affairs in which the continent finds itself. Yet if the continent is to have hope of a different kind of a future, it will not be by repeating the same education formulas, devoid of personalized value formation emphasis, in the vain expectation of better results. It is here that Catholic Education and in particular Catholic HEIs must bring their contribution to creating different kinds of educational experiences and expectations. Among

these, the moral profile needs to assume a higher premium, and ways to support its development should be among the first points of focus of the research agenda of African Catholic HEIs.

A good place to start from Tangaza University College might be a review of the quality of community leadership being exercised by alumni of the College. There is information about some outstanding Tangaza alumni. But the criteria long which they are said to be assessed have not been refined. No study – to my knowledge – has been carried out on their contribution to social transformation. Such research would be challenging, yet vital to the self-appraisal of the college and its achievements.

Advantage ought to be taken of the fact that most students join the HEI at a pivotal stage – when intellectual and moral direction is being crystallized and personalized. It is the age of idealism. Parental and family support is no longer immediately available for most, and most young people have not yet established a new stable community of important others, whether this be a new family or “other.” Such development can take the better part of two decades for most HEI students today. Though many enter into marriage, such relationships are still delicate, with couple and family identity still being formed. The character of the HEI community has often been the rock of stability for young people in this crucial stage. If the HEI can provide a clear communal identity it can be critical to a successful negotiation of the process of individual integration involved.

A great benefit of the Institutes’ organization of Tangaza University College programmes is that these form an immediate small family for students. Tangaza institutes each have origin in the tradition of a particular religious congregation, such as the Comboni Missionaries for the Institute of Social Ministry in Mission, and the De la Salle Christian Brothers for the Christ the Teacher Institutes for Education. The very founding and leadership of these Institutes in the same spirit as the founding or sponsoring congregations helps to create a sense of belonging for the

students, which goes beyond the need to fulfill academic requirements of programmes. Students identify more quickly and strongly with their Institute than they might in generalized academic departments. Often alumni have vouched for the sense of belonging and direction that an Institute provided for them when they were Tangaza students. In addition to the academic embedment of the students within a discipline community, there is a spirit of association and family, usually built around the spirituality of the sponsoring congregation. The sponsorship of Institutes by Religious congregations is a mark of the life of the College that is held dear. In the efforts for greater collaboration across Institutes in the College, the strength of the Institute affiliation for academic staff and students has wisely been identified as a value to be safeguarded.

Some of the students from religious communities in Tangaza also benefit from the communal identity of those religious communities. Yet Tangaza gives them a HEI experience, among the first opportunities they have to test out the sense of coherence of their religious identity in a wider world. That this 'wider world' is a context that is not too amorphous is valuable. The College gives them useful service as a wider community of clearly defined and claimed values.

Care for character formation in the curriculum of the HEI is based on recognition that, as Pelikan (1992:21), observes" ...knowledge and virtue are not identical, and the expulsion of ignorance by knowledge will not be enough to deal with the spiritual realities and moral challenges of the future". Indeed, learning today is understood to be a function not just of the cognitive mind, but a construct of composite experiences of emotional, physical, spiritual, and cognitive nature (Merriam, 2008:95). Thus the whole learning environment as such is to be taken into account in evaluating learner-facilitation experiences. Intellectual formation in the HEI should challenge their thoughts, but also propose to young adults concrete, institutionally

recognized values against which to confront the views they have witnessed elsewhere. It proposes to them a tradition, a structure of values and meanings within which the agent of social transformation is socialized. Tradition, as such, offers learners a hypothetical explanation of reality. This becomes a lived basis from which to engage further steps in the search for deeper meaning. To make meaning, learners need to be involved in the praxis of what they learn. The idea that they need first to understand in order to become committed, is fallacious. In fact, true understanding depends on the living encounter with persons committed to the tradition or the values exposed.

It is the right of young people to receive tradition with the authority presented by living witness (Guissani 2001:53-54). Their daily experience of life in the prevailing socio-economic and contemporary cultural realities do not offer them much hope and purpose; indeed the very absence of these creates a moral vacuum. With religious and family groups often failing to offer input and rationale on traditions, the vacuum is deepened. A sense of inspiration and purpose witnessed to in the HEI can help increase hope and joy, as well as resilience and motivation. These are all qualities that will be in great demand in various ministerial settings.

If the values taught are also lived in the HEI, the students will be strengthened to develop the habits of vigorous thought and careful discernment that will allow them to uncover the subtle lies that the world entices them to live by. This will challenge and enable them to think concretely along proposed principles and values. Ultimately, it will open the path for them to take charge for their own character formation and their own ongoing transformation (Lent 1994, in Hesburgh, 1994:145). If, on the contrary, a dichotomy is experienced between theory and life, patterns of unpredictability are ingrained in young people. According to Guissani (2001), learning of theories without real experience or the creation of meaningful connections establishes patterns of uncertainty. Skepticism becomes a perennial illness of youth, emphasizing the

uncertainty and lack of confidence that they are victims of. Young people need a strongly held standpoint from which to wrestle with the doubts that can assail them. A society or community that witnesses to skepticism cannot convey faith to its youth.

Casual observation shows the presence of the aforementioned dichotomies in Catholic HEIs. Some faculty members, staff and students complain about where the Institution does not measure up to their aspiration for caring community in the HEI, but more often than not, such persons are regarded as misfits. Structures that facilitate community – building conversations are yet to be given the support they deserve.

Awakening to these realities opens the Catholic HEI to certain demands for its academic and non-academic discourses. The latter are often overlooked. Accompaniment of students in these is minimal as students are moved along the “production line” that the HEI often appears to offer. Accompaniment of students in non-academic discourse is even more diminished for those students who have opted for evening and week-end modes of completion. In these cases, the student career is truly reduced to academics only. As the College and other HEIs wrestle with the demands for inclusion of non-traditional students using non-traditional modes, it is crucial that these concerns do not get totally overshadowed. There is ample room and great demand for creating opportunities for students, academic, and other professional staff to interact on planes other than academic, but with enough serious issues at hand to demand the employment of rigorous thought.

The 20th Century thinker, Alfred North Whitehead, considered one of the chief duties of the University to be the increase both of knowledge and the zest for life (Pelikan, 1992:103). The zest for life is understood as a dynamism that fires up the students to act from conviction, changing their concrete realities for the better. The process of building and sustaining such zest involves nurturing the ability to refine and develop more reliable beliefs, to explore and validate

them, and thus to make informed decisions (Taylor, 2008). This process is fecund and, according to Taylor, fundamental to the adult learning experience. I hold that for the 'zest for life' to be lasting, it needs the foundations of values well tested and deliberated in the context of community. Learners can thus acquire the experience of processing their values and the implications thereof, a skill they will need all their lives as they confront choices for integrity. It is the foundation of critical orthopraxis, allowing learners to experience the necessary dialogue between different beliefs and values, in the choices and assessment of purpose. To be sustainable, ethical living in the global context will demand these foundations, skills and aptitudes, especially of leaders.

Beyond the cognitive awakening to, and appreciation of, values, there can be no substitute for the transformative impact of the experience of love and compassion which can be lived in community. Transformation involves more than intellectual progress. It is mediated through the gift of others to the self. The next section attends to the place of care and compassion that a community can offer its members.

Care and Compassion

Pope Benedict XVI (2005) in his inaugural speech as Pontiff, referred to the predicament of what he called the ever-expanding deserts of the world:

And there are so many kinds of desert. There is the desert of poverty, the desert of hunger and thirst, the desert of abandonment, of loneliness, of destroyed love. There is the desert of God's darkness, the emptiness of souls no longer aware of their dignity or the goal of human life. The external deserts in the world are growing, because the internal deserts have become so vast.

In Africa there is ample evidence of the expansiveness of deserts. Not only are climatic conditions most abrupt, extreme and severe in their effects, but social, cultural and economic

deserts are ever expanding. Life in Africa is fragile for most of the population. There is little sense of material stability, even for those who have received education and have means of livelihood. Consequently, there is the tendency to live life defensively. Those with means amass property disproportionately, due to an ingrained sense of insecurity, and sharing it becomes the exception rather than the norm.

Africa, only recently and violently propelled into global economics and culture, finds herself still a newcomer to the world of global negotiation. Most rules of economics, religious orthodoxy and the standards of social well-being by which the modern person is judged are determined elsewhere. African authenticity and experience is largely relegated to irrelevance. I hold that this crisis of meaning, relevance and value is lived acutely in the experience of every African student and every African person, consciously or otherwise. African communities and their value systems have fallen apart due to the strong influence of individualistic and materialistic measures of success. With the disintegration of the communities that protected, preserved and transmitted values, facades of unity, such as tribalism, become available for use by those keen to pursue selfish goals. The high values that constitute the rhetoric of the 'elite' in religious and political circles find little concrete expression, and most young people grow up in the jungle of the survival of the fittest, with little personalized accompaniment.

Despite such alienating realities, community still has the obligation to provide compassion and care for its members. Indeed the human condition makes the provision of compassion and care a universal need. Pelican (1992) holds that personal caring is part of the deepest traditions and higher ideals of the university. Social transformation itself cannot be without compassion. To produce active agents of social transformation, the HEI has to deliberately and reflectively facilitate the living of the very values found to be absent in society.

In Christian tradition compassion is at the core of the meaning of shared life. The icon of the woman who was a sinner in the Gospel of Luke (7:36-50) and the explanation of Jesus for her actions is perhaps one of the best expressions of the necessity of compassion and care in the Christian community. Only those who have experienced compassion are capable of transformative relationships and action. Social transformation will not happen without compassion. Many false starts are bound to be experienced, and the courage to start again will be built with, among other gifts, the tolerance of and openness to other possibilities. Accordingly, Catholic HEI s can be communities in which compassion is lived genuinely. Some of the most memorable experiences for members of the Tangaza community are the sense of solidarity with the bereaved, those ailing and students without means of livelihood.

The College 'student support services' found first in the Institutes and by extension in the College Counseling Department are cherished by individual students who avail of them, as well as by cohorts of students who share in them as helpers at any level. Opportunities to celebrate talents and cultures in festivals of various kinds are not overlooked, and these too play their role in increasing the sense of togetherness and belonging. Caution has, however, to be exercised, that the competitive dimension which adds enthusiasm to the participants does not overtake the family and collegial energy that these festivals are intended to build and celebrate.

In Catholic leadership, including HEIs, the manifestation of rightness can all too often supersede the value of shared living of proclaimed values. A heavy tradition of hierarchical organization of power can make leaders be more attentive to keeping the semblance of greatness than to bending to the processes of reconciliation and mutual understanding. The young adults who form the greater part of the student body are wary of all that speaks of insincerity. Transformation comes out of vulnerability, lived compassionately and genuinely.

In the next section, the role of community in the academic life of the Catholic HEI is briefly highlighted, looking at its benefit to teaching staff members, students and the communities with which the HEI collaborates.

Intellectual Community and Academic Excellence

The core business of the HEIs is academic: research and the formulation and propagation of knowledge. There can be a mutually beneficial relationship between academic ventures and community-building in the HEI. The academic ventures of programme planning, organization, delivery, and evaluation can especially benefit from interdisciplinary approaches, which of necessity call for communal thrust. This in turn can play a major role in creating an atmosphere of academic excellence and promoting the student as scholar.

In Tangaza University College, the integrative courses or requirements such as the integration papers and long essays play a role in requiring a creative and personalized development of the student as a learner as well as a potential agent of social transformation. Still, there is scope for an increase in interdisciplinary practice. Such practice can allow the academic staff to model interdisciplinary awareness and approaches, locating their courses in the context of the whole project of achieving overall goals that are corporately determined.

Preparing students for comprehensive examinations or long essays and projects, which ideally are syntheses of the students' learning in the various disciplines, gives faculty members the possibility of modeling interdiscipline. In these and other academic settings, faculty members can take the opportunity to act cooperatively in the facilitation of learner achievement. There are also the possibilities for cooperation among faculty members in teaching, research and community service, which provide fronts for the building of intellectual community. It should be understood that "[i]f each excellent professor interacts only with his or her students but not with another faculty, then there is no intellectual community" (Lent 1994:147). The challenges of the

African continent, to which academic programs in Catholic and other HEIs must respond if they are to be relevant, demand multidisciplinary approaches. These will be better served by genuine academic communities. Some faculty planning sessions and programme development ventures in Tangaza University College have profited from this kind of collaboration between academic staff.

It cannot be stressed enough that the self-critical scientific articulation and scrutiny of community-building efforts in Catholic HEIs can be useful not only to the institutions themselves, but as a contribution of service to community-building in society. Such scrutiny and documentation can allow the society to be more conscious of its possibilities, its opportunities, its threats and especially its apathy with regard to effort towards community-building. It can, in fact, be an eye-opener to those who are indifferent to real human concerns which characterize community life while at the same time transferring all responsibilities to statutory and other organizations. The need for self-critical appraisal is essential and meaningful for students who are intended to become agents of social transformation. It will help them to see whether the said transformation is operative or lacking in the very institutions that are endeavouring to assist them become agents.

In academic endeavour, the attitude of earnest collegiality can very profitably be extended to students. Aware of these possibilities, the Catholic HEI should make deliberate efforts to mitigate the impact of individualized track completion modes by including meaningful cooperative learning activities. Such activities should take reasonable lengths of time to enable communal work experience, reflection on the experience and drawing fruit from it. They should also be given such premiums as to make it clear to students that these are values for the HEI community. Indeed learning together ought to be a part and parcel of the teaching and learning

philosophy of every African Catholic HEI, and ways of embodying this philosophy more concretely ought to be on the research agenda of the Catholic HEI.

The HEI can become an active learning community, and a purposefully driven intellectual community. In addition it offers a place for the encounter of persons, a quality of companionship and a project of humanization to the benefit of all involved. In the development of some new programmes in Tangaza University College, student and alumni input has been sought and taken very seriously. Still, there is room for more on-going collaboration which might impact on the experience of collegiality from academic staff to the students.

Conclusion

A primary task of social transformation is the building and sustenance of the community of share meaning. Active and conscious participation in such building and sustenance begins by recognition of the presence or potential of community. It is an awareness of the fecundity of the interactive human experience in a concrete setting. It then continues in processes unique to each community. All, however, require appropriate organization, significant participation by the members and mechanisms for ongoing assessment of progress and for adjustments. The facilitation of these, in a nutshell, is the contribution that transformative leadership must make. The living community in the Catholic HEI recommended in this paper is not an easy task. Indeed this paper admits that the details of issues discussed here are subject for further study and research for Catholic HEIs in Africa.

There are many challenges to be faced in its implementation. Not least among these is the vulnerability that becomes part and parcel of the life of participating individuals. An authentic community calls for high levels of openness and availability of individuals to each other. In addition, living community may require the members to be willing to challenge prejudices based on ethnic, racial, age group and gender stereotypes. Cultivating appropriate language and spaces

for such challenges may be a long and demanding task. Does the HEI have a long enough range of vision within a department, a school or an Institute to gradually but deliberately grow the space and language for such levels of engagement? These and similar questions are bound to engage the endeavours of community building in the Catholic HEI.

The full measure of humanity requires an engagement of the whole person. This is evident because transformation, personal or social, cannot be the result of an alienated development. It is rather the fruit to openness to the action of God's spirit, which blows where it wills (John 3:8f). The development of self is an ongoing dialogical and interactive process that takes into account many facets. A nominal community of faith, such as a Catholic HEI, needs to be open and vulnerable to these actions of God's Spirit in its members and associates. In this way it renders itself capable of forming agents of social transformation. Openness to and dialogue with, the world, a good trend in itself, must not be allowed to lead to an inarticulate sense of identity of the Catholic HEI. Rather, every Catholic HEI in Africa must endeavour to delineate its values in clear terms. The profile of the graduate of a particular HEI should be evident to everyone in the HEI community, as should be its pedagogical framework. The pillars of the community life of the HEI should be specifically delineated and new members of the community can thus be inducted into a clear and distinct culture. Amorphous HEI identity, without specificities, can only accelerate the tendency for African Catholic HEIs to model themselves on the image of secular and foreign ones, without being distinctive about their particular gift for the African Church, the African society and beyond. The discipline of thinking and acting together in teaching and learning, research and publication, non-academic and community service events of the College publication, non-academic and community service events of the College and of Catholic HEIs in general, can very profitably be taken on board as one of the brand-marks of Catholic Higher Education in Africa.

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