

PROCEEDINGS



UNISERVITATE
Service-learning in Catholic Higher Education

UNISERVITATE COLLECTION

I Global Symposium UNISERVITATE

October 29th-30th, 2020

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Voices of Youth

1.7

Texts extracted from Volume 1 of the Uniservitate Collection:
I Global Symposium UNISERVITATE

Uniservitate Collection

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I Global Symposium UNISERVITATE: October 29th-30th, 2020th / Andrzej Wodka... [et al.]; compilación de Mónica Sosa Caballero... [et al.]; editado por Elena Massat. - 1a ed. - Buenos Aires : CLAYSS, 2021.

Libro digital, PDF - (Uniservitate. 2 ; 1)

Archivo Digital: descarga y online

Traducción de: Cintia Hernandez ; Karina Marconi.

ISBN 978-987-4487-19-3

1. Trabajo Solidario. 2. Pedagogía. I. Wodka, Andrzej. II. Sosa Caballero, Mónica, comp. III. Massat, Elena, ed. IV. Hernandez, Cintia, trad. V. Marconi, Karina, trad.

CDD 370.71

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ABOUT US

Uniservitate

Uniservitate is a global programme for the promotion of service-learning (SL) in Catholic Higher Education Institutions (CHEIs). It is an initiative of Porticus and is coordinated by the Latin American Center for Service-learning (CLAYSS).

The programme's objective is to generate a systemic change through the institutionalisation of service-learning as a tool for Higher Education Institutions to fulfil their mission of offering an integral education to new generations and involving them in an active commitment to the problems of our time.

Porticus

Porticus coordinates and develops the philanthropic endeavours of the Brenninkmeijer family, whose social commitment stretches back to 1841, when Clemens and August Brenninkmeijer founded the C&A company, starting a tradition of doing good while doing business.

Several businesses, charitable foundations and philanthropic programmes joined Porticus and expanded through numerous family initiatives.

Since its foundation in 1995, Porticus has grown to become one of the most committed institutions working to address the challenges of our time, to improve the lives of those most in need and to create a sustainable future where justice and human dignity flourish.

Porticus has two goals that guide the way it works: to listen to and learn from the people it seeks to help, and to act on evidence that demonstrates what works.

CLAYSS

The Latin American Center for Service-Learning - CLAYSS - is a leading organisation for the promotion of service-learning in Latin America, and a worldwide reference. It promotes the development of service-learning in both formal and non-formal education, and advises policy makers, NGO leaders, communities, educators and students.

The UNISERVITATE Collection

The UNISERVITATE Collection is an editorial project of CLAYSS (Latin American Center for Service-Learning) in articulation with Porticus.

It is aimed at Catholic Higher Education professors and authorities, other educational institutions, specialists in Service-Learning, ecclesiastical leaders, as well as the general public interested in education and social change.

With the contribution and collaboration of outstanding international academics and specialists, its objective is to offer contributions from different regions and to share multicultural perspectives on topics of interest related to spirituality and the pedagogy of Service-Learning in the world.

Each digital book is published in English, Spanish and French, and can be downloaded free of charge from the Uniservitate website: <https://www.uniservitate.org>.

THIS PUBLICATION

This publication collects the proceedings of the I Global Symposium *Uniservitate*, held on October 29th-30th, 2020, in virtual form. The texts respect the order of the presentations made during the two days of the symposium.

The “Spirituality and service-learning” section also includes two presentations developed within the framework of the *Uniservitate* Training for Trainers Course.

All the texts have been minimally edited to facilitate their reading. At the bottom of some of the presentations there is a link to the slides used in each case. In addition, a link to the video recording of each of the panels has been included at the end of each chapter. All the audiovisual material of the event is available in Spanish, English and French on the YouTube channel CLAYSS Digital: <https://www.youtube.com/user/clayssdigital/playlists>

7. VOICES OF YOUTH



Mariano García

He is a member of the Spirituality and Research Team of Uniservitate, coordinator of the educational ministry of the Santa Rosa de Lima Institute and professor of Religion at the San Luis Institute in Buenos Aires. He was a national coordinator for the Episcopal Conference of Argentina (2015-2018) and was summoned by the General Secretariat of the Synod of Bishops as a consultant for the International Seminar on the Condition of Youth (Rome 2017) and as an auditor for the Synod of Bishops "Young People, Faith and Vocational Discernment" (Rome 2018).

I would very much like to thank the youth from all parts of the world who, in these very trying times that humanity is living, have put their hearts, their heads and their hands at the service of those most in need. The youths have come out—among so many people—to collaborate, to contribute their time—virtually and in person—in the face of these times of pandemic. I would like to thank them very much and also those rectors, professors, religious men and women who have accompanied and motivated them. But I would also like to remind you that youth is not synonymous with immunity, so we must continue to take care of ourselves in order to be able to offer our service and also—obviously—to take care of all the people who are close to us.

I would like to recall that, in 2018, along with Oksana Pimenova and Sebastian Duhau, we finished a month of work together with Pope Francis and with cardinals and bishops—after two years of much listening to young people in different realities—to try to develop some guidelines that would allow us to rejuvenate our Catholic Church. After the synod, a document was issued and, after the document, Pope Francis issued a post-synodal exhortation called *Christ lives*. That is why, today, Sebastian from Australia and Oksana from Russia are joining me and we would like to share different contributions to this communion with you.



Sebastian Duhau

Bachelor of Secondary Education undergraduate, majoring in History and Social Sciences; retreat and programme coordinator for the Lasallian Mission Council. Former member of the Catholic Youth Council of Australia..

My name is Sebastian and I am from Australia. I want to say a huge thank you for having me today. I would love to share with you some of my own experiences of service but also some of the wonderful stories of people that I get to engage with on a daily basis. When I was 18 years old, when I finished school, I started university studying engineering. I had been so sure for so long that it was what I wanted to do. I was so passionate about engineering that I was sure that it was the career I wanted for myself and so I worked really hard during school to make sure that I could go to university. I eventually got the results that I needed and I started studying engineering at university and shortly after doing so, I started part-time activities in the ministry of youth at a high school nearby. It was very different from the school that I had gone to myself. I was there to be an older brother to the students, to support them through some difficult times, to spread joy amongst them, and to foster community around the school. I spent my days speaking to amazing young people with different backgrounds, lots of different life experiences, and really great stories to share.

I absolutely loved it and after almost a year of doing that, it became really obvious to me that engineering was not where I belonged, that my vocation, my calling, was something else. So I made the difficult decision to drop engineering. I still call that one of the most difficult decisions that I have ever had to make in my life and I say that because it felt like I was abandoning the career that I had planned for myself for so long. And shortly after that, I took a little bit of a break and I started studying Theology and teaching as well, which is what I am doing now. I have spent a long time over the past few years trying to reflect on that decision and think about what changed within me to make me want to stop studying engineering and there are a few people that have explained that far better than I could ever explain it, I think.

Mahatma Gandhi says that “the best way to find yourself is to lose yourself in the service of others” and Dieter F. Uchtdorf says that “as we lose ourselves in the service of others,

we discover our own lives and our own happiness.” Those are two very good explanations and here is my attempt at one. I think that any experience of service involves an encounter with another person, another life, and more often than not, the encounters that we have in that service are with people whose stories are very different from our own. I think that any time that we authentically and lovingly encounter someone that’s different to ourselves, two things happen. Firstly, we encounter the person of Christ in the other and, secondly, it is impossible not to learn something about ourselves in that process. I wholeheartedly think that the more that we learn about ourselves, the closer we get to being the best ver-

I think that any time that we authentically and lovingly encounter someone that’s different to ourselves, two things happen. Firstly, we encounter the person of Christ in the other and, secondly, it is impossible not to learn something about ourselves in that process.

sions of ourselves, the closer we get to being who we were created to be.

I also want to say that my ministry hasn’t ended but, a few years later, now, I work full time in it and part of my role actually involves providing amazing young people with

opportunities to serve in different ways and accompanying them through their experience of service. I would love to share with you a couple more stories of these people that I get to work with. They’re all very passionate and amazing people and it does not really do these people any sort of justice but it is what I can do right now.

The first person that I want to share about is Mirella. She is someone that has always loved people throughout her time in high school. She spent lots of time traveling around the world with her family while she was in school. She developed this love of travel, of culture and of being able to see new things and new sights and being able to experience culture in different ways. So when she finished school, it was only logical for her that she wanted to travel but instead of traveling normally she decided she was going to volunteer. She decided she was going to move to a desert community on the other side of Australia and spend a year there volunteering in this community. She spent a year there with kids and with elders, learning and being immersed in this new culture that was very different from anything she had ever experienced. After a year of doing that, when it was time for her to come home, she did not go home, she stayed in this community for another two years. After two years, she then came home, having learned lots more about herself and figured out where she wanted to go and what she wanted to do. She found herself with a new sense of purpose and eventually went to university and started studying teaching and I am very proud to say that she is soon to become a teacher, hopefully next year.

The next person that I want to share about is Matthew. He is very different, as well. He is someone who admits that he did absolutely nothing in school, he did not take advantage of any of the opportunities that were available to him. He did not enjoy school, he sorts of went to school in the morning and left in the afternoon and that was his experience. He wanted to be out of there as quickly as he could and for some reason along the line, he decided that he actually wanted to spend time volunteering after he finished school. So he applied for one of our volunteer programmes and spent a year again in a different community on the other side of the country and had such a profound experience that, after having no connection to any sort of faith or spirituality, he decided that he was going to get baptized while he was there. So he came home having this profound experience and then again decided to go to university to study science, something that he was really passionate about.

The last person I want to share about is again a different story, someone named Joel. He was one of the brightest people in his school community. He was ridiculously smart and could have done anything he wanted. When he finished school, he was going to get into university to study Law but, instead of going straight to university, he decided he wanted to spend time volunteering. He did so and for him, rather than changing what he wanted to do it actually just furthered his passion, furthered his understanding of himself, and he came back more excited than ever to study law and that is what he is doing now.

Now, all these stories are different and they are all experiences of people's service. I am very proud and pleased to say that I get to accompany all those people. I mean, hear their stories and be with them through their experiences of service but, essentially, the fact the experience of serving others transforms us for the better. It helps us to become better versions of ourselves and to come closer to discovering our vocation. I think, ultimately, more than gaining a qualification, more than just the simple side of education, I think that is what learning in school and in university is all about. I think that is what lots of people actually try to spend their lives trying to do: just finding out where we belong in the world and finding out where we have the most to offer.

Ultimately, that is what service does. It gives us that opportunity to learn more about ourselves and do so in a way that education does not, in a way that when we learn about ourselves hand in hand with education, it creates something beautiful and allows us to find our place in the world better than anything else could.

Finally, I just want to say thank you to each of you who are educators and each of you who engage people in service and see its wonderful effects and the transformative power it has to offer. I want to say that, as a young person, I have seen the ability that service has

to change people's lives and I am so fortunate that I get to do that with other young people. I want to say to the young people that might be listening that service is amazing and any time you take the opportunity to step out of yourself, step out of your comfort zone to try and do something different and authentically encounter someone in service, it will do amazing things for you and it will absolutely transform you in the best ways. Thank you for having me here today, I have really appreciated this and I am really looking forward to being more involved in all the things that you have to offer.



Oksana Pimenova

Deputy Director of Academic Affairs, Saint Thomas Institute (Moscow, founder JS).

Ministry of youth at the Archdiocese of the Mother of God in Moscow since 2018.

Political scientist (Russian State University for the Humanities, Moscow) and Psychological consultant (Higher School of Economics, Moscow).

Greetings to everyone and thanks to the organizers for inviting me to participate in the panel discussion. I deeply support the idea of developing service-learning in educational institutions so I am very happy to be here. When I got to know about *Uniservitate*, I was struck by the profound sense of this initiative. The truth is that most young people here in Russia today enter universities solely for the purpose of mastering a profession, in order to earn money, be competitive and be successful. So when I hear stories like this, I always ask myself: why do we need Higher Education? Why do universities exist? Is it the only purpose?

In my opinion, the development of service-learning can serve to update the educational system and be a revolutionary response to this paradigm. Together with Sebastian and Mariano, I took part in the Synod of Bishops on Young People, Faith and Vocational Discernment, and in my speech, I would like to draw attention to the ideas and proposals of the synod which can be useful and complementary to the renewal of the educational system and the development of service-learning.

First of all, I was deeply impressed by the opportunity, not just to observe, but to be a part of the Synod because it met my needs as a young person who wants to be fully in-

volved. On the one hand, they offered us the opportunity to speak and be heard, and on the other hand, sharing the life journey together formed the basis of my perception of the new pastoral care with young people, not just on an intellectual level but including all aspects of my humanity. I believe this method works, regardless of what field it is used in. The holistic conversion and the involvement of young people in the process of updating the educational system, more specifically in service-learning, not as passive participants but as active collaborators, can encourage and inspire young people and make them real protagonists of this change.

Secondly, despite the variety of topics discussed at the Synod, many of them eventually led to the question of how to build a relationship with young people in the modern world.

The holistic conversion and the involvement of young people in the process of updating the educational system, more specifically in service-learning, not as passive participants but as active collaborators, can encourage and inspire young people and make them real protagonists of this change.

Relationships are the key to the ability to pass on knowledge. I see that in this regard there are many directions and principles that can find concrete forms of expression in each country and culture. One of the main principles that I and I hope other auditors were able to experience at the Synod, was synodality. Synodality is the method or

approach that involves gathering and bringing into dialogue the gift of all members, starting with young people, to solve ancient and new challenges. Such involvement implies participation in the discussion of key issues and their implementation and, therefore, joint responsibility. Young people have a need to be co-workers and protagonists but they also need to be accompanied along the way by someone who respects their freedom and, at the same time, promotes their growth. This is also the kind of relationship with young people that I myself am looking for in the learning process.

Synodality includes principles such as participation, joint discernment and joint responsibility, listening, dialogue, going out to the periphery, holistic approach, moving from structures to relationships etc. All these principles are suggested to renew the ministry of youth but, as you can see, many of them are directly related to service-learning. For two years after the Synod, ministry-of-youth offices in different countries have been searching for the most appropriate ways to implement these principles in their realities. So I am sure that drawing attention to this experience can complement the process of updating the educational system and also find common ground with communities of young people

who implement the same principles for the opportunities that are available to them, including through education. So I think these are the main ideas I wanted to share with you. Thank you for your attention.

Mariano García

The orientation given by the Synod of Bishops had three main themes: young people, faith and vocational discernment. And, as Oksana rightly said, they are precisely the ones needed to be able to accompany in a true and profound way the lives of so many young people.

To close this great contribution, I want to tell you that this panel, whose title has been “Voices of Youth,” could also include the shouts of young people. Many times saying “voices” may sound peaceful, something we can be with and listen to. But young people also cry out against different issues they live with: poverty, injustices. And we can say that we are including all young people. In the same Synod there was also a lot of discussion about the term we use, because we saw that among young people there is a lot of diversity and plurality. Therefore, we can venture to say “youths,” “different stages” in youth itself. And all of them live—without a doubt—situations of great joy, but also of grief; they suffer because of injustices.

In this sense, there is something we certainly want: to be able to listen to these voices and these shouts. How nice it is—in the I *Uniservitate* symposium—also to be able to allow ourselves

In order to truly listen, we have to stop, we have to cancel our schedule to sit down to talk and listen to the youths, to listen to them closely.

to listen! The exercise of listening, which is much more than just hearing, to the lives of young people, and not only to the young people who attend our educational institutions

but also to those who will surely never go through them but whom we will meet at some point along the way through a project, a process, an outing to the community where the educational institution is located. But in order to truly listen, we have to stop, we have to cancel our schedule to sit down to talk and listen to the youths, to listen to them closely, to pause for a little while so many management activities, projects, deadlines, curricula, which do not allow us to listen to the life of young people in depth. A very important key in these times: to listen to each other without immediately generating an answer or an opinion, but to listen freely. Listening to them so that they can also feel that they belong to a home, to an educational institution with

a home-like atmosphere, with a home-like action. And they know this very well. Young people interpret this very quickly, they feel valued when someone listens to them sitting down, face to face, and without conditioning. It is important to make them feel that they are part of a home.

Service-learning reminds us that young people have to express their feelings, they have to think, evaluate, carry out the process and execute it.

Undoubtedly, listening leads to protagonism because they want to be there, they see the value of it. And service-learning reminds us –precisely– of the value of student protagonism, to the

point that for a project to be considered service-learning, it must include this component. By listening to them, making them feel at home, valuing them, we invite students to be protagonists. They want to be the protagonists in a transformation and that is why they are determined, because of this great sense of belonging. Therefore, it is real protagonism; it is not protagonism, however, when young students do what others have thought. Service-learning reminds us that young people have to express their feelings, they have to think, evaluate, carry out the process and execute it. That is real protagonism: not merely doing things, but sitting down, planning together with their tutors, educators and rectors.

I would like to refer to what Oksana shared with us: to live out the concept of synodality. Service-learning as a pedagogy has been using this concept according to which the co-responsibility of a project is shared by everyone. How wonderful it is to live in a synodal atmosphere! To walk together, to do something for the community, with the community, where everyone sits at the same table: a missionary synodal Church. This call was strongly seen in the Synod on Young People: to live a missionary synodality, to go out and seek the encounter, to step—as Sebastian also said—out of our comfort zone. A Church which goes forth, encountering the plural, the diverse, those who are different, the community itself. It is about going forth to dwell where God is also dwelling: among the people.

To walk together, to do something for the community, with the community, where everyone sits at the same table: a missionary synodal Church.

Undoubtedly, this is a challenge, but service-learning also allows us to face it and plays an important role in fulfilling it, so that our educational institutions, our universities, can go

forth to encounter those who are different and see that the other is not the enemy but rather someone from whom I want to nurture myself and that it is someone who can be nurtured also by ourselves. It is a matter of building this multifaceted world in which to experience

communion in diversity. This is a great challenge. Going forth is not something we do alone, because we cannot invite young people to be ours either. Many times we monopolize young

Service-learning reminds us very well of the pedagogy of the master Jesus. That master who walked with the people, who listened to them, taught them, invited them and proposed to them the dream of transforming their reality.

people. “You belong to us.” “You belong to our university.” “You belong to our ministry of youth.” Young people belong to the world; they belong to reality. We must accompany them not to create islands, but to go forth, to be able to work in coordination with other spaces. Ministries of youth at the

diocesan, local, regional and national levels can also provide our university institutions with a great deal of knowledge along with other spaces—cultural, artistic, social—because those are also spaces where—as a Church and as magisterium—Pope Francis invites us to walk together with others to transform this world, this society, to be able to observe and look.

Service-learning reminds us very well of the pedagogy of the master Jesus. That master who walked with the people, who listened to them, taught them, invited them and proposed to them the dream of transforming their reality. Service-learning in its pathways, in its components, invites us and reminds us that we must look at reality, feel it, analyse it, discern it, plan it, in order to transform it and thus put those values into practice. Certainly, these pedagogies motivate young people because they are in constant search, and when they feel invited, when they belong to

Young people are still inviting us to dream.

a community, when they are motivated, when they are awakened to that integral, total vocation that they have in their

hearts, they respond in a brilliant way. We are witnessing this in these very trying times we are going through: the way in which young people—not only Catholics, but also young people of other creeds, even those who have good will and do not believe in something or someone—have gone forth to offer their time and their hands. Clearly young people are still inviting us to dream.

I would like to finish with a phrase belonging to a prophet who passed away very recently, Don Pedro Casaldáliga, bishop emeritus of Brazil, with many years of dedication. He once said, “At the end of the road they will ask me, ‘Have you lived? Have you loved?’ And I, without saying anything, will open my heart full of names.” I hope that each one of us, from the roles we have, approaching and bringing service-learning in solidarity to our communities, can continue to keep in our hearts the names of so many people, known and unknown, and that we can continue to nourish our hearts with so many lives.



In support of the Global Compact on Education

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

UNISERVITATE COLLECTION

“Only by changing education can we change the world”

Pope Francis

1 I Global Symposium UNISERVITATE

This first volume of the Uniservitate Collection is dedicated to the I Global Symposium Uniservitate, whose objective was to initiate a series of meetings within the framework of the Uniservitate programme, as a multicultural, global and plural space, based on the contributions of the pedagogical proposal of service-learning to integral university education. The event, held in October 2020, sought to facilitate the exchange between experts, authorities and professors from Higher Education Institutions from diverse cultural contexts around the world, on university community engagement and service-learning practices and programmes. The present Proceedings are a compilation of the reflections and experiences shared there.

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

<https://www.uniservitate.org>



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PORTICUS

ISBN 978-987-4487-19-3



9 789874 448719

Published in May 2021
ISBN 978-987-4487-19-3