Nurturing Leadership Among Underprivileged Youth: A Program For Self-Formation For The Least, The Last, And The Lost

培养弱势青年的领导能力：一项自我形成计划 为了最卑微、最容易被忽略和最失落的群体

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Introduction

According to Kolvenbach (1986), the purposes of Jesuit Education are embedded in three characteristics.

- To promote dialogue between faith and culture.
- To include a religious dimension that permeates the entire education.
- To assist in the total formation of each individual within the human community.

In the same vein, Jesuit higher education aims to nurture its students in whole-person development, hoping that students can change the world to be a better place for domicile (AJCU, 2020). For instance, the aim of higher education at one of the famous Asian Jesuit universities, Sogang University, is to teach individuals the essence of life vocation and the adoration of the Mighty God (Kim, 2008). Sogang University advocates humanity, whole-person development, and truth (Sogang University, 2020). Similarly,

Sophia University, a prestigious private Jesuit university in Japan, also champions whole-person development, the values of Catholicism, and truth (Sophia University, 2020). In other words, both Sogang University and Sophia University treasure Jesuit traditions, Catholicism, and self-formation (Sogang University, 2020).

Self-formation has an indispensable role to play in both western and eastern cultures. Marginson (2017) stressed the significance of self-formation in higher education across various cultures throughout their history. The essential concepts of self-formation comprise the German *Bildung* tradition (Biesta, 2012), and Confucian self-cultivation (Zhao & Deng, 2016; Sun, 2008), as well as self-forming freedom (Sen, 2000), socially-nested self-formation (Ashwin and McVitty, 2015), and pragmatism (Konrad, 2012; Kivela et al., 2012; Kivela, 2012; Kontio, 2012).

Self-forming Freedom as a Purpose of Higher Education

Sen (2000) suggests that the individual's determination is of the utmost importance in self-formation, and the individual is the "change agent," who can control his or her well-being and capabilities. There are three essential facets of freedom. The first facet is called "control freedom," which means the individual is free from constraint. The second facet is called "freedom as power," which describes the individual's capacity to take action. The last facet is called "agency freedom," which expresses one's will to act (Sen, 2000).

Further, Foucault (2010) points out that an individual's reflexivity is the mediator of the Higher Education Institute (HEI) and the change agent. Higher education can increase the capacity of the individual for reflexivity. After studying at an HEI, individuals have more confidence to trust others and manage themselves. Throughout the transformational self-formation process, there is a real struggle to drive oneself by oneself (Ball,

2017). The transformational process shows how an individual can become a different person that the individual was not (Ball, 2017). Another issue is the individual is free from the state's decision but by his or her own decision. Self-formation is similar to the French word "*autoformation*" in adult education in France. Still, the latter adds the critical value of emancipation, which explains that self-formation is not a one-off educational process but a continual, life-long process, and everyone has the right to undertake *autoformation* throughout one's life (Eneau, 2017).

Self-cultivation is a Purpose of Higher Education

Self-cultivation has been adopted in both Chinese culture (Zhao & Deng, 2017) and Western culture (Biesta, 2002; Biesta, 2012). According to Zhao and Biesta (2011), traditional Confucian self-cultivation is a life-long process, resulting in self-perfection. Besides, self-cultivation is also the pre-requisite for performing and bearing social obligations (Zhao & Deng, 2017). As clearly depicted in the Confucian classic, *The Great Learning*, there are three objectives (三綱) and eight steps (八條目) to cultivate oneself. The three goals include "manifesting one's bright virtue, loving the people, stopping in perfect goodness" (*The Great Learning*, trans. Muller, 1992) (在明明德、在親民、在止於至善). The eight steps are to investigate things, extend one's knowledge, make one's intention sincere, correct one's mind, cultivate one's personal life, regulate one's family, govern one's state, and settle the world at peace and harmony (*The Great Learning*, trans. Muller, 1992) (格物、 致知、誠意、正心、修身、齊家、治國、平天下).

To put self-formation into practice, I have proposed that Macau's University of Saint Joseph set up a "Self-formation Center for the Underprivileged," and the details are explained in the next section.

Initiative for Self-formation for the Underprivileged

Here is the strategic plan: In collaboration with The Caritas Institute of Higher Education, the University of Saint Joseph can set up a "Self-formation Center for the Underprivileged." Its aim: We assist talents from the underprivileged of society to become empathetic and passionate about building a better future for the community and protecting our natural environment and its resources.

Benefits of the Initiative

1. The Center can significantly assist students from low-income families to climb the social ladder and get into the most outstanding universities in the world through our online educational or preparation programs.

2. By using the online platform, there is a golden opportunity to help promote the equality of education to the most impoverished areas in mainland China, Macau, and Hong Kong.

3. Self-formation can be facilitated by broadening students' social network and capacity through our exchange programs, mentorship programs, and gap year work-experience programs.

4. Reciprocity and sustainability: There is an obligation for all selected talents. After training in our Center for a year and graduating from the training program, they promise to come back to work as mentors to help teach the mentees. This program will ensure the sustainability of the program. Mostly, we will use volunteers to promote the program. There will be professional training for the mentors.

Strategies of the Initiative

1. Target lower band secondary schools: Caritas schools are the prospective target schools for the Initiative as these schools' priority is to serve the 3 "Ls" students, i.e., the least, the last, and the lost.

2. Invite donors for donations to set up and maintain the learning platform.

3. Provide students with gap year work experience in another country, particularly getting involved in protecting the natural environment and its resources.

4. Provide students with virtual tours to different universities. Students will be instructed by real tour guides to learn to protect the natural environment and its resources of the respective universities.

5. Provide exchange opportunities for every student.

6. Invite elite universities to join the mentorship program.

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