

Digital Empowerment and Transformational Literacy through Service-Learning: The Case of Jesuit Worldwide Learning (JWL) and Catholic University of Eichstätt-Ingolstadt (KU) Service-Learning Projects

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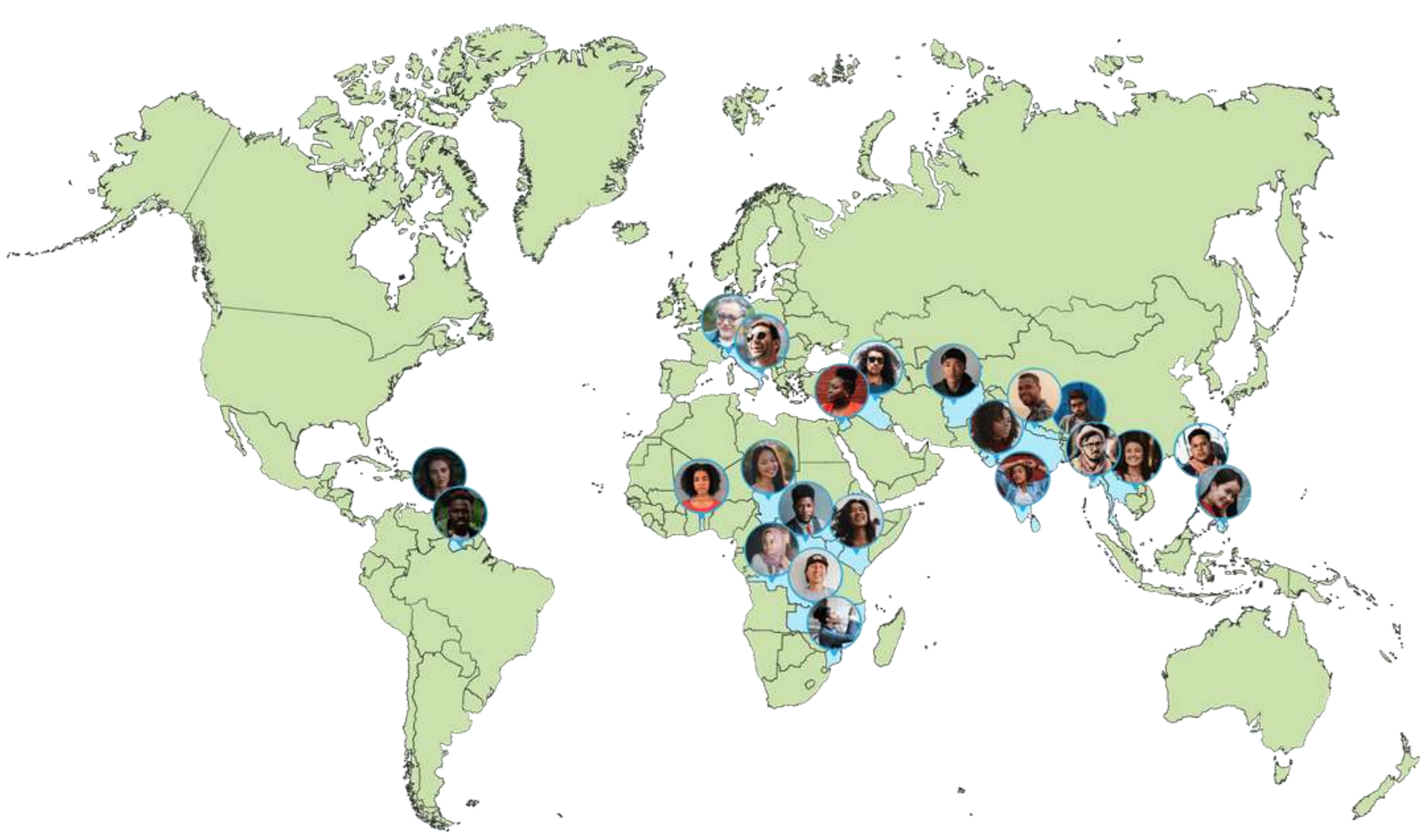
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Jesuit Worldwide Learning
Higher Education at the Margins

1. Education: Addressing Global Challenges and Promoting Solidarity

The present times witness humanity grappling with myriad global issues such as poverty, wars, and societal divisions. The key to addressing these challenges lies in providing every child and young adult with quality education. Jesuit Worldwide Learning (JWL) exemplifies this mission, delivering top-tier tertiary education to marginalized individuals due to poverty, displacement, or other barriers. Established in 2010, JWL facilitates online academic programs for refugees and marginalized populations, aiming to make them catalysts of positive change. Their efforts resonate with Pope Francis's vision of a globally connected educational network. Achieving its objectives, JWL partners with global institutions, ensuring international validity for its credentials. The Catholic University of Eichstätt-Ingolstadt (KU) joined this cause in 2019, drawing from the Apostolic Constitution, Veritatis Gaudium. Their collaboration with JWL emphasizes the Catholic education ethos, addressing the needs of underserved communities and emphasizing mutual responsibility. By using innovative teaching methods, KU aims to reach the marginalized, aligning with the principles of Veritatis Gaudium. Central to KU and JWL's initiative is service-learning, reflecting the modern understanding of education as fostering community and global responsibility.



2. Empowering Global Educators for Societal Change

The KU-JWL initiative aims to create a global classroom that goes beyond traditional boundaries. While the initiative impacts students from countries like Afghanistan, Myanmar, Iraq, Kenya, and Sri Lanka, the learning extends beyond academic content to serve the larger community. A standout element is the "Learning Facilitator" program, which started in 2019 with 31 individuals from places like Herat, Bamyan, and Kakuma refugee camp. This program fosters the development of not just academic capabilities but also social skills and innovative lesson planning. Structured over three 8-unit courses across 24 weeks, the curriculum encompasses topics like learning facilitation, planning for impactful learning experiences, and practical applications of teaching. Emphasizing a blended-learning approach, the program leverages both offline and online resources, integrating them with collaborative sessions at local learning centers. The offline app, designed specifically for JWL by Seitwerk GmbH, ensures uninterrupted learning. Onsite sessions further provide opportunities for students to engage in collaborative learning, discussions, and problem-solving. A distinguishing feature is the program's ability to connect students globally, promoting multicultural interactions and academic rigor through web conferences with lecturers from the Catholic University of Eichstätt-Ingolstadt.

3. Empowering Communities Through Service-Learning in the "Learning Facilitator" Program

The "Learning Facilitator" program mandates students to develop educational projects in partnership with local communities hosting JWL centers. Initiatives encompass health education, empowerment through tailored courses for mothers, adult literacy, digital literacy, language courses, and environmental drives. These projects are catalysts for community improvement and avenues for student growth, enhancing skills such as problem-solving, critical thinking, and communication. Immersion in these projects also nurtures empathy and a commitment to social justice. The mutual benefit of Service-Learning builds lasting bonds between JWL and communities, fostering sustainable growth. Both students and communities have lauded the transformative potential of this component, with many students describing their experiences as pivotal. The program has had an expansive reach since its beginning, impacting over 1,000 participants across numerous countries, with prominent student groups from Kakuma, Kenya, and Afghanistan.

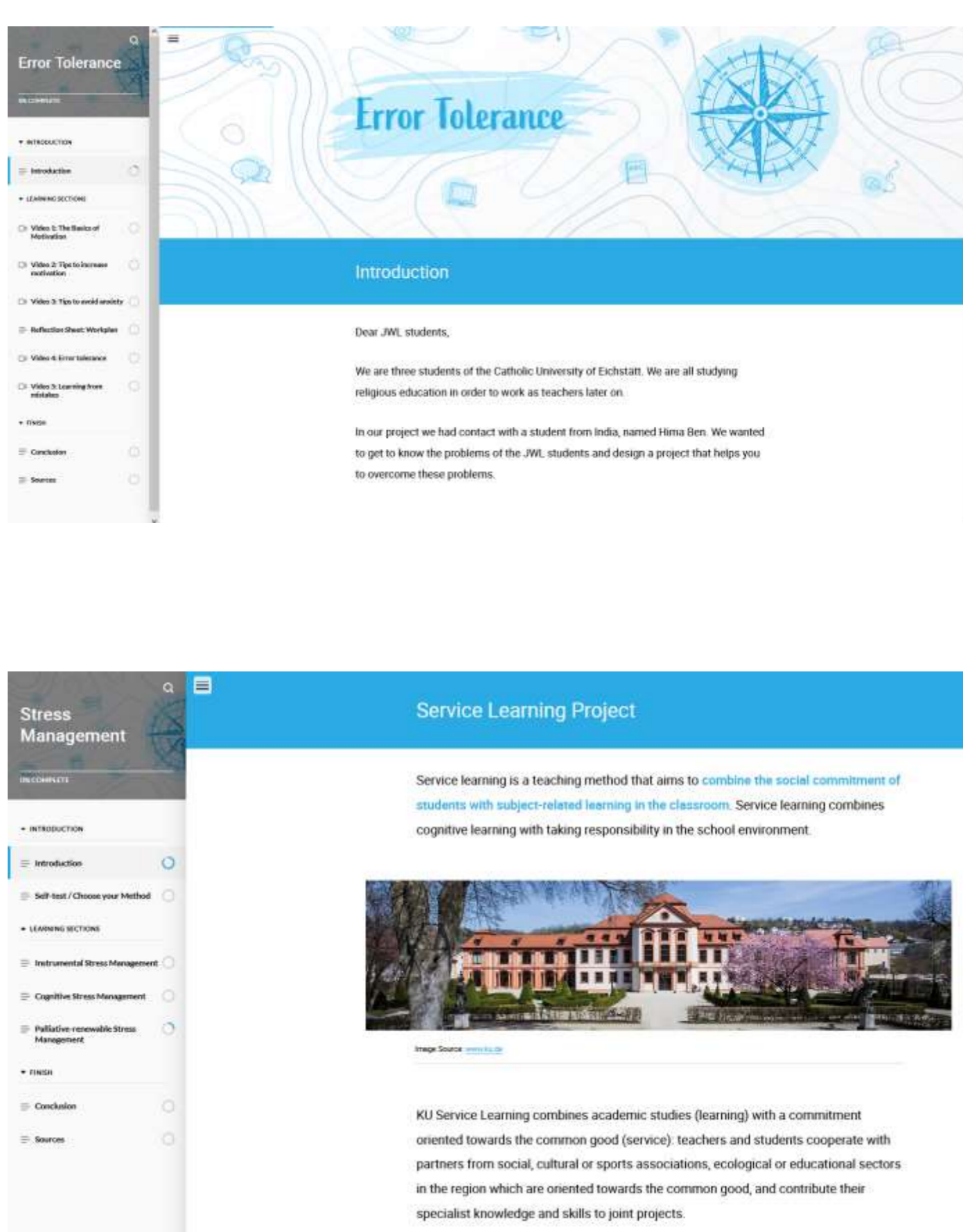


5. Conclusion: Empowering Through Education - A Collaborative Endeavor

The initiatives and modules highlighted in this poster underscore the commitment of KU and JWL to transcend traditional educational boundaries, emphasizing the pivotal role of collaborative and blended learning in contemporary pedagogy. Through the "Learning Facilitator" program, "Service Learning at the Margins" module, and holistic support initiatives, JWL students are not just recipients of academic knowledge; they are empowered to be change agents within their communities, effectively addressing local challenges with global insights. The synergy between KU and JWL students fosters mutual growth, bridging cultural, geographical, and digital divides. As KU students gain invaluable exposure to diverse educational landscapes and challenges faced by communities in crisis regions, JWL students receive holistic support, ensuring they are equipped both academically and personally to navigate complexities. Furthermore, the poster reaffirms the transformative power of education when it is paired with service, community engagement, and holistic well-being. The emphasis on blended learning, service at the margins, and life skills development sets a precedent for future educational endeavors, championing a comprehensive approach to learning. In essence, this collaborative endeavor between KU and JWL is not just about imparting knowledge but about nurturing global citizens committed to societal betterment and continuous personal growth.

4. Supporting Blended Learning through the "Service Learning at the Margins" Module

To address challenges in blended learning faced by JWL students, KU introduced the "Service Learning at the Margins" module. This initiative equips JWL students with tools and resources for blended learning and service projects. A key feature is the collaboration between JWL and KU students, where KU students mentor and support their JWL counterparts, expanding their own pedagogical horizons beyond the German educational system. Through platforms like Zoom, they create tailored educational content for JWL students and engage in critical discussions on educational equity and socio-economic disparities. Furthermore, beyond academic support, KU students also assist JWL students with life skills courses like time management, stress management, and setting life goals, emphasizing the importance of holistic well-being. The transformative engagement reshapes perspectives and nurtures well-rounded individuals.



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