



# Integrating On-Site, And Digital Pedagogies in the Faith Formation of Small Christian Communities: A Literature-Based Review

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| ARTICLE INFO                                                                               | ABSTRACT                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              |
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| <b>Published Online:</b><br><b>06 March 2026</b>                                           | This study was prompted by findings from a previous research investigation, where participants identified time and financial constraints as the primary barriers to attending LUMKO faith formation workshops. <a href="https://doi.org/10.47191/rajar/v11i3.16">https://doi.org/10.47191/rajar/v11i3.16</a><br>Recognizing this challenge, the researcher explored alternative pedagogical approaches for faith formation in Small Christian Communities (SCCs), beyond traditional face-to-face methods. The study examined the potential of digital technologies and social media as tools for addressing accessibility and engagement concerns.<br>To systematically evaluate existing approaches, the researcher employed a literature-based methodology, examining three broad styles of literature review (systematic, semi-systematic, and integrative). Based on the study objectives, the integrative literature review approach was selected, allowing for a comprehensive synthesis of diverse perspectives. The review was designed, conducted, and analyzed, culminating in a structured write-up that presented insights from successful online past practices as effective faith formation strategies for the future in the Catholic Church in Kenya. |
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| <b>KEYWORDS:</b> LUMKO workshops, Small Christian Communities, Faith formation pedagogies. |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       |

## CHAPTER ONE

### INTRODUCTION

#### 1.1 Background and Context of the Study

This research was triggered by responses from participants in a study published in March 2025. Participants indicated that their inability to participate in on-site faith formation workshops was due to lack of time and money, because of their family responsibilities, employment requirements and economic constraints. To mitigate these time and money challenges, the researchers sought alternative ways of facilitating LUMKO workshops. LUMKO East Africa are 'Waumini' Pastoral Program Workshops. They build a participatory Church, by training leaders to implement the communion ecclesiology of Vatican II. Hence turning Catholic parishes into outreaching, missionary-minded communities (Hewitt, 2016).

The integration of technology into modern education has transformed traditional learning pedagogies, offering various opportunities for accessibility and engagement. Online education traces back to 1982, when the Western Behavioral Sciences Institute used computer conferencing for distance education. It gained significant momentum during the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020.

Educators worldwide were compelled to incorporate digital tools into instruction. Despite initial challenges, COVID-19 acted as a catalyst for the online programs, because use of modern technology in most organizations has continued after the pandemic (Hussain, Qureshi, & Malik, 2024; Mushtaha et al., 2022).

This study highlights the integration of on-site, and digital pedagogies in forming the faith of Small Christian Community (SCC) members. This approach is also known as blended learning, when the same individuals learn both in person and online. It is known as hybrid learning when some learners participate in person and others participate online. Blended and hybrid teaching and learning are popular because of their flexibility, convenience and ability to cater for different learning styles. Learners can engage with digital content and online activities at their own pace. The youth and professionals in SCCs can richly benefit from these approaches.

The purpose of integrating on-site and digital pedagogies in faith formation is to ensure that all SCC members (adults, youth, children), can access faith formation at a friendly cost, time and location convenience. This requires digital

infrastructure put in place, pastoral agents trained and to content redesigned to suit the online pedagogies.

The internet has revolutionized communication; its flexibility, interactivity, and inclusivity provide opportunities for busy Kenyans to fulfill their duties as well as nurture their faith. However, despite its undeniable benefits, digital technology also presents challenges. Finding solutions to these challenges will prevent abuse and corruption of the faith formation content.

### **1.2 Statement of the Problem**

According to Vatican statistics, the global Catholic population increased from approximately 1.39 billion to 1.406 billion between 2022 and 2023. In Africa, the number of Catholics increased from 272 million in 2022 to 281 million in 2023. The Democratic Republic of Congo has 55 million baptized Catholics, followed by Nigeria with 35 million; Uganda, Tanzania, and Kenya also register significant figures. In contrast, there are fewer priests globally. At the end of 2023, there were 406,996 priests, with a decrease of 734 compared to 2022 (CatholicVote, 2025).

The Kenya national housing census in 2019 recorded 10.6 million Catholics (Kenya National Bureau of Statistics, 2019). According to the Catholic Church official records, there are over 18 million baptized Catholics in Kenya (nearly 40% of the country's population). In 2020, there were over 3,644 priests working across more than 1,100 parishes (CatholicVote, 2025). Currently there are 26 Catholic jurisdictions in Kenya; 4 Archdioceses, 21 Dioceses, and 1 Military Ordinariate (Kenya Conference of Catholic Bishops [KCCB], 2025). The Archdiocese of Nairobi alone has 120 parishes with over 4,000 Small Christian Communities. It serves an estimated population of well over 7.1 million people where 4.03 million are Catholics (Archdiocese of Nairobi, 2025). These statistics highlight an imbalance between the demand and supply of pastoral service. For such a large population, available ordained ministers and pastoral agents are not enough to sufficiently meet faith formation needs of Catholics in and outside of SCCs. This insufficiency presents a crucial gap.

Besides the Catechetical instructions in preparation for the sacraments of initiation which all aspiring Catholics receive, majority of lay Catholics in Kenya also need theological knowledge, and skills that ordained clergy are exposed to. The researchers have experienced well-meaning Catholics, who seem well connected through digital technology for purposes other than faith. Their excuses for not belonging to SCCs are varied, including family and job responsibilities. The laity are asking genuine questions regarding faith that need informed answers. A purposeful online program using the LUMKO approach to faith formation could fill in this gap if embraced.

### **1.3 Study Goal and Objectives**

The goal of this study is to explore the integration of on-site and digital pedagogies for the faith formation of Small Christian Communities (SCCs) in Kenya; examining how blended teaching methods can enhance or challenge faith development in these communities. The objectives are:

- i. To critically examine the theoretical foundations underpinning the use of on-site and digital pedagogies in faith formation.
- ii. To assess how the integration of on-site and digital pedagogies impacts the engagement and participation of members in Small Christian Communities in Kenya.
- iii. To highlight challenges that pastoral agents face in implementing integrated approaches to faith formation in Small Christian Communities, and propose solutions for them.
- iv. To recommend how the integration of on-site and digital pedagogies can accommodate the diverse preferences and learning needs of Small Christian Community members.

### **1.4 Significance of the Study**

This study is importance in the evolving landscape of faith formation, because digital technologies are woven into daily life, exploring how on-site and digital pedagogies can be integrated is timely for pastoral and theological education. It examines how a blended pedagogical approach can enhance spiritual growth for SCCs using the LUMKO methodology and content that has onsite proved effective, it addresses generational and contextual diversity among community members, promoting more inclusive and meaningful engagement. By grounding its investigation in the Kenyan context, the study highlights challenges related to infrastructure, digital literacy, and community dynamics. It also proposes actionable solutions that pastoral agents use to mitigate challenges. This study could serve as a resource for developing targeted training programs, tools, and strategies to strengthen pastoral outreach and communication, and it makes a scholarly contribution to the fields of pedagogy and pastoral theology by offering a nuanced understanding of how faith-based learning can thrive at the intersection of tradition and innovation. It provides a framework for future research and policy formulation, guiding, dioceses, and other faith-based institutions in their efforts to remain spiritually vibrant and pedagogically responsive in a changing world.

### **1.5 Limitations of the Study**

It was beyond the scope of this study to collect primary data which would have perhaps shade more light on what is actually happening on the ground in relation to the implementation of digital pedagogies. Given the availability of resources, and the confirming literature that it is working, the researcher hopes to do a pilot project to test the LUMKO methodology and content on line.

## 1.6 Theoretical Frameworks

This study was based on three theories that emphasize the role of transferable skills in empowering individuals, fostering community engagement, and lifelong learning.

- 1.6.1 **The Kretzmann and McKnight's Asset-Based Community Development (ABCD)** framework, focuses on leveraging existing strengths within communities, fostering active participation, and empowering individuals. ABCD framework is chosen for this study because the researchers' primary goal is to identify and mobilize the existing strengths and assets within SCCs rather than deficits to improve training outcomes.
- 1.6.2 **The Mezirow's Transformative Learning Theory** addresses varied learning needs, ensures adaptability and growth of individuals. It helps individuals to critically reflect on their experiences, leading to meaningful shifts in theological understanding and ministerial skills.
- 1.6.3 **Paulo Freire's Theory, Pedagogy of the Oppressed**, Freire believed that education was a means to building a “critical consciousness” that would enable people to create change in their lives.

## 1.7 Conceptual Frame Work (explained).

Faith formation for SCC falls under Practical Theology. A theological paradigm that guides religious systems is engaging the intellect to study the nature and relationship of God and the world. Practical theologians approach is aware of the diverse cultural, social, and political factors that influence religious practices and beliefs. Practical theologians must decide how to interpret and apply normative sources, such as sacred texts, traditions, and religious experiences. This involves understanding the historical context of these sources and determining how they inform contemporary practice. Practical theologians must consider the relationship between theological reflection and practical action (praxis). This includes understanding how theological insights can be applied to real-world situations and how practical experiences can, in turn, inform theological understanding. (Nell, 2015).

## 1.8 Definition of terms

**Vatican** means the hill of the Papal palace in Rome. It is a sovereign city-state (the smallest in the world) inside Rome in central Italy. It refers to papal authority and its cultural collections.

**Small Christian Communities (SCCs)** are grass root churches in a Catholic Parish, constituted by grouping 10-15 Catholic families living in the same neighborhood. These groupings meet to share faith and support each other in living out the gospel values in every life. Each SCC is a microcosm of a parish church because families therein have different gender, age, experiences, levels of social,

intellectual, spiritual, and economic development (Orobator, 2013).

**LUMKO** in Khosa (A south Africa language “ublumko” means wisdom. The Missiological Institute trained pastoral agents in pastoral skills and methodology offered new wisdom; a catechetical approach that started with life questions and got answers from the gospel.

**Remote Learning** is online learning; hybrid learning under remote learning is when the instructor has different learners (some online, other onsite), and blended learning also under remote learning is where the instructor has same learners on-site but integrating his/her methodology with internet content.

**Learning Management System** is a software that supports delivery, management. and tracking of blended learning progress.

**Video Conferencing tools** include screen sharing, breakout rooms). **Gamifications** are games tapping into learners' natural desire for interaction and achievement. **Online collaboration platforms** include service providers like zoom, google, microsoft.

**Algorithms** are systems in computer science programming. They dictate how computer tasks are executed.

**Synchronous Learning** requires live attendance, real time interaction virtually or physically. **Asynchronous Learning** is flexible, learners can access course material, complete assignments and engage with peers at their pace, and for a long period.

**Synod** comes from Greek words *syn* and *hodos* meaning “together” and “path”. To walk together the path of the Lord Jesus Christ. The phrase evokes the encounter of the resurrected Christ with the two disciples on the road to Emmaus. (Luke 24:13-35). Only a pope or bishop convenes a synod because synodality includes the charism of apostolic succession and the need for bishops to lead by virtue of their episcopal ordination (Desmond, J. F., 2022).

## CHAPTER TWO

### LITERATURE REVIEW

#### 2.1 Introduction

Literature review is a critical recap of what has already been researched on. It helps the researcher to know what is already known about his/her research topic, and how other researchers have approached it. It also gives readers a critical overview of what the researcher found out. Literature review can be organized chronologically, methodically, thematically or theoretically.

#### 2.2 Literature-based Review as Methodology

Literature-based review as a methodology is a structured approach to analyzing existing research and scholarly works on a particular topic. However, instead of conducting new experiments or collecting original data, this method synthesizes and critically evaluates previous studies

to identify patterns, gaps, and trends in knowledge study (Onwuegbuzie, A. J., & Frels, R. (2016). Literature-based review serves multiple purposes, such as; providing context for a research study by summarizing existing findings, identifying gaps in knowledge that future research can address, developing theoretical frameworks based on established concepts, and informing research methodology by analyzing past approaches.

Literature-based review as a methodology was first reviewed. The researcher established that there are three broad types of Literature-based review methodologies; the Systematic, semi-systematic, and integrative reviews (Munn et al. 2018; Snyder, 2019). Systematic reviews have predefined criteria for which studies and which articles to include in the study; are highly rigorous in answering specific research questions by evaluating and synthesizing evidence from multiple studies. Good for more precise topics addressing the feasibility, appropriateness, meaningfulness or effectiveness of a certain treatment or practice. Scoping and Mapping are examples of these experimental reviews. Used in quantitative empirical study.

Semi-systematic reviews are suitable for a broader study topic that has been conceptualized differently in diverse disciplines. They address exploratory research questions aimed at mapping key concepts, theoretical approaches and themes types of evidence, and for identifying knowledge gaps in research related to a defined area. Descriptive and Realist reviews are examples of semi-systematic review. Used in qualitative studies (Colquhoun et al. 2014).

Integrative reviews have the intentional inclusion of literature from diverse sources (e.g. published and grey literature, and methodologies (e.g. qualitative and quantitative) to address the aim of the study (Broome, 2000; Hopia et al., 2016). Here researchers reviewed and organized findings from diverse data sources, in multiple disciplines, to develop holistic understanding of the topic. Critical and Narrative reviews are examples of integrative review (da Silva et al., 2020; Whittemore & Knafl, 2005). The Narrative review under integrative reviews was used in this study.

## CHAPTER THREE METHODOLOGY

### 3.1 Introduction

This study used a desktop review; analyzing secondary data from peer-reviewed articles, theses, and books. When effectively done, review as a research method can create a firm foundation for advancing knowledge and facilitating theory development (Webster & Watson, 2002), can clarify what the collected knowledge is pointing to, so it helps the author to build his/her research on flawless assumptions (Snyder, 2019). This method enabled a thorough synthesis of existing literature on the integration of on-site, and digital pedagogies in the Faith Formation of Small Christian Communities. This study used an integrative

literature review method, which allowed the researchers to organize findings from multiple disciplines. The study theories also guided the researchers to know what to look for in the literature read. The research goal and objectives were answered by integrating findings and perspectives from existing literature. The synthesis of research findings uncovered areas that need more research. The study was cost-effective as it did not require primary data collection. Ethical principles, including proper citation and objectivity, were followed. Efforts were made to reduce bias and ensure a balanced representation of the evidence.

### 3.2 Reviewed Documents.

The following documents were reviewed: Vatican documents on the laity in the Church *Lumen Gentium* Published 1964, The Decree on the Apostolate of the Laity *Apostolicam Actuositatem* published in 1965, Historical Use of Mass Media in the Catholic Church *Vigilanti Cura* published in 1936, *Miranda Provisus* (1957), *Inter Mirifica* (1963), *Communio et Progressio* (1971), The Church and Internet (2002)). A brief history of the LUMKO Institute (1962-1999) by Anselm Prior OFM. Synod on Synodality final report (2024), and other relevant studies on online pedagogies. Key insights gained, and identified gaps in research were summarized in the following themes.

- Findings from *Lumen Gentium*
- *Apostolicam Actuositatem*: A response to *Lumen Gentium*
- LUMKO: A response to *Lumen Gentium*
- Successful online evangelization strategies
- Synod on Synodality: A response to *Lumen Gentium*
- Findings on the historical use of Mass Media in the Catholic Church.
- Communication Ethics
- Remote Learning: Blended/hybrid Teaching Methods
- Frameworks for Integrating On-Site & Digital Pedagogies

## CHAPTER FOUR FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

### 4.1 Introduction

In this chapter, the researchers looked into the meaning, importance and relevance of integrating on-site, and digital Pedagogies in the faith formation of SCCs in Kenya. The results indicated that combining in-person faith formation and digital instructions, can enhance accessibility and engagement for SCCs, that technological infrastructure limitations were obstacles in transitioning to hybrid models, that effective instructional strategies, would mitigate these challenges, and that platforms such as WhatsApp, Facebook, and YouTube could facilitate peer-to-peer learning, enabling sharing, reflections, and teachings to a wider audience. However, ethical concerns regarding misinformation, distraction, and diluted theological discussions were possible,

hence quality training of influencers overseen by Church leadership and mitigating cyber threats would support the implementation. SCCs can indeed apply historical lessons, such as structured faith broadcasting, online catechesis programs, and Catholic digital libraries, to modernize faith formation while preserving core spiritual traditions.

#### 4.2 Findings from *Lumen Gentium*

Until the Second Vatican Council (1962-65), Catholics spoke of “having a vocation” only with reference to priests and religious (Cummings, T., 2016). In the Dogmatic Constitution on the Church *Lumen Gentium* (The light of the nations) by Pope Paul VI in Nov.1964, Council Fathers reminded Catholics that the laity have a vocation as well. *Lumen Gentium* outlines the origin, identity, nature, role, and structure of the Church. It shifts the focus from seeing the Church as an ‘institution’ led by the Pope, to seeing it as ‘the People of God, a community’. *Lumen Gentium* describes the Church as an instrument of God’s love and communion with humanity. It emphasizes the universal call to all the baptized People of God, to share in Christ’s roles of priest, prophet, and king, to actively participate in the Church’s mission through their daily lives, bringing the Gospel to all spheres of society. It encourages the laity to engage in the apostolic work of the Church, to live the gospel, typically within the context of marriage, family life and secular employment; bringing Christian values into the world. It recognizes the equal dignity of all members of the Church (LG #1-4).

#### 4.3 *Apostolicam Actuositatem*: A response to *Lumen Gentium*

*Apostolicam Actuositatem* was Vatican II’s Decree on the Apostolate of the Laity, promulgated by Pope Paul VI on November 18, 1965. It focused on the role of the laity in carrying out the mission of Christ, not just as followers but as witnesses of Christ in the world. To serve mankind through everyday things; in culture, family values, economic order, right approach to science & technology, charitable works & social aid – inspired by a love of God & neighbor. To counter the growing influence of secularism by reaching those pastors cannot, civil authority & the legal justice, and to bear witness to Christ by cooperating with Christians & non-Christians. To transform societal culture according to Christian values particularly in areas regarding human dignity, and social justice. To uphold Church teachings on human sexuality and family life which is a vital cell of society. The spirituality of the laity is enshrined in active participation in liturgy, family life, detachment from riches (following Christ in poverty), charitable activities, enduring persecution, friendship, and associations. For them to effectively observe such fraternal charity locally and universally, they need training, and faith formation. The Church should have special Centres and documents, including training for parents who have a task to train their children (Schumacher, M. M., 2017). The question

is, much as what *Lumen Gentium* (a principal document of Second Vatican Council) says is true, how many Catholic laities understand that they already possess this special privilege? This is a gap that robust e-learning to complement the traditional on-site faith formation pedagogies could solve.

#### 4.4 LUMKO: A response to *Lumen Gentium*

It is expected that after a significant convocation such as the Second Vatican Council (1962-1965), the Church leadership, and religious congregations reflect on the mandates and respond. A response made by German Catholic missionaries to South Africa (Fritz Lobinger, and Oswald Hirmer), was to found the LUMKO Missiological Institute. By then, many priests were still working out of a “providing” model of Church. The LUMKO vision was the translation of the theology of the Second Vatican Council into pastoral practice (Lumko archives I,26:2). The Second Vatican Council envisioned a Church in which the laity would share responsibility with the clergy for advancing God’s Reign. The Vatican II spirit of *aggiornamento* introduced by Pope John XXIII found expression in popular concepts like “the People of God” and “the Body of Christ”. According to Lobinger (1991), the key to a changed ecclesiology was the training of lay church leaders, using well prepared instructional materials with simple instructions for the facilitators. Fortunately, the well prepared instructional materials with simple instruction manuals for learners and facilitators have proved effective for the onsite LUMKO workshops for the last Thirty-Four (34) years in Kenya. The challenge is to get the same working online.

The main activities of Lumko are; conducting courses, writing and publishing materials, and research work. Through these activities, Lumko assists the Church by training pastoral agents in Christian leadership, by incarnating the Christian message into local cultures, and by training in life skills such as cross cultural communication. Trained pastoral animators would in turn empower other believers to own the Church and to commit themselves to participation and co-responsibility. The trainees were led through personal reflection and group sharing to develop a faith relationship among themselves. This method of learning enables them to see leadership as a call to draw others into partnership (Anselm, 2014).

The LUMKO workshops train in the following broad areas: Building Community, Social Awareness, Training Leaders, Spiritual Formation, and Catechesis. Each broad area has its suitable instructional materials and methodology. Skills training of local leaders for Community ministries such as: Training Assistant Ministers of the Eucharist (Lobinger 1976a), Leading the Community Service in the absence of the priest (Lobinger 1976b) and Training Readers (Nordkamp 1979). Awareness programme entails co-responsibility (Lobinger 1979a), self-reliance (Lobinger 1980a), social action and community building (Prior &

Lobinger 1983). Learning the language and the culture of the people ministered to is important. Catechetics and homiletics are important tools in pastoral ministry. The use of simple language, posters in teaching, evaluation, and feedback to improve quality are priority in in LUMKO workshop.

LUMKO materials are designed in such a way that they lead people in a growth process: For emergent leaders; build a local church where the average member is involved in searching for God’s plan in our times and where the community as a whole works for justice and development. LUMKO materials encourage non-dominating leadership in the communities; discourages status-seeking and encourage community mindedness, discourages monopolies and encourage team work, discourages privileges and encourage rotation of office (Lumko Archives I,26:2). The vision has to move from one of ‘providing leadership’ to one in which all are called to actively participate in the Church’s mission to the world.

Lumko publications also have a strong emphasis on awareness raising; enabling people to look at their present situation, to see what they can do to change it for the better. Paulo Freire calls this “problem-solving education” unlike the “banking system” where rote learning happens. Freire proposed that the instructor and the learners engage in a reflection process together about life situations important to them. They become “critical co-investigators”. The instructor presents material to the learner for their consideration, and re-examines his/her own earlier considerations as the learners express theirs. This process awakens consciousness, critical thinking and reflection that brings new understanding and enables people to become fully themselves” (Lobinger, 1972:53-54). Lobinger (1991), felt that training the laity to operate successfully as parish leaders, would transform their passive role into responsible active participants, they would stop looking up to the ordained ministers as providers. Ordained ministers in turn would become less burdened with pastoral ministries.

The ecclesiology of Lumko, grew out of an attitude of openness to outside influence and a respect for the efforts others were making to renew the Church. Learning from others gives insights to be pondered. Good ones may be adopted, others can be disregarded, but having an attitude of critical openness is important. It means learning to listen. This gift of listening exposes one to the movement of the Holy Spirit both within and outside Church structures. One of the ways in which this listening is operating today is in the Small Christian Communities. Taking in the experiences of members of these communities will inform new initiatives needed to help them overcome their problems and reach higher levels of growth (Anselm, 2014).

Going forward, LUMKO workshops that have been offered on-site for the last 34 years, will adopt selected digital pedagogies so as to meet needs of diverse categories of Catholic faithful’s (particularly digitally literate youth and

professionals). According to Healey, J. G. (2013), these digital pedagogies will enable many SCCs to become truly local, that is, self-ministering (self-governing), self-propagating (self-spreading), and self-supporting (self-reliant, and self-sustaining).

#### 4.5 Successful Online Evangelization Strategies

Some Catholic communities that have successfully implemented online evangelization strategies include, Vision 20/20 initiative (Diocese of Davenport, Iowa). Parishes here have embraced social media, online catechesis, and virtual events to connect with believers. Catholic Creators on Social Media includes clergy and laypeople who use platforms like Instagram, TikTok, and You Tube to share faith-based content. Examples include *Desirae Sifuentes* (Uncatechized Catholic). Emily Wilson engages audiences with catechesis and faith encouragement. Fr. Matthew P. Schneider discusses offline models that have been successfully applied to online evangelization. Locally, there is AMECEA online news, Capchin TV, Radio Waumini, The Seed Magazine online, Daily Bread Family International by Fr. Eustace Siame SDB, and others reliable influencers.

#### 4.6 Synod on Synodality: A response to *Lumen Gentium*

For Pope Francis, “synodality is a way of communicating and relating. It is the way he sees the three parts of the Church (the People of God, the College of Bishops, and the Bishop of Rome, the Vicar of Christ) in constant exchange together, all three parts listening”. An answer to the question, “How can the faithful, laity and clergy alike, more fully embody the vision of the Church laid out in *Lumen Gentium* by the Second Vatican Council?” (The Catholic, 2020). Pope Francis, insisted that we must acknowledge the frustration and impatience of many people who frequently remain on the fringes.” The more the Church adopts synodality as a path of accompaniment to those on the “peripheries, (those who no longer attend church, non-Catholics as well as the poor, disabled and elderly), the more deeply its members will undergo a conversion of heart and become less preoccupied with perceived threats to “norms and canons”, and that “Without real participation by the People of God, talk about communion risks remaining a devout wish,” (Desmond, 2022).

The Final Document of the 2024 Synod on Synodality, emphasized the need for the Church to be more inclusive and responsive to the sufferings of people around the world; to encourage greater participation and recognition of lay people in the Church, to address needs of marginalized groups, to promote unity among different Christian denominations, and to explore even controversial issues. It also highlighted the importance of digital tools in evangelization; the need to engage with digital culture and use modern communication platforms to foster participation, communion, and mission. However, it cautioned that in digital evangelization, online spaces should reflect values of

the Church; transparency, inclusivity, and meaningful dialogue (Desmond, 2022).

Does the reminder in the Synod on Synodality, mean the Church has not been empowering the laity since Vatican II? Not at all. This is a question of the harvest being plenty with fewer laborers. An indicator that despite the interventions by parishes, the Church is on a life long journey towards empowerment, as long as life continues, laboring by the Church will never be enough, never end, but will always be relatively fruitful.

#### **4.7 Findings on the Historical Use of Mass Media in the Catholic Church**

In 1382, the first complete English-language version of the Bible, credited to John Wycliffe, was translated. Later, the Bible Society translated and printed scripture into many world languages (Wycliffe Global Alliance, 2024). In 1450, the first European printing press was invented by Johannes Gutenberg. A few decades later the Reformation began, and while printing did not cause the reformation it did make the reformation possible by enabling the rapid spread of reformist ideas (Mark, J. J. (2022).

Pope Pius XI (1936), in a document entitled *Vigilanti Cura*, addressed the moral responsibilities of cinema. Pope Pius XII's (1957), in the encyclical letter *Miranda Prorsus*, recognized mass communication as a powerful tool for evangelization and societal influence. The Second Vatican Council (1962-1965) recognized media as a tool for spreading the Gospel. Vatican II document *Inter Mirifica* (1963), emphasizes the Church's commitment to using media for spreading the Gospel and fostering community. Pontifical Commission for Social Communications (1971), in a document entitled *The Pastoral Instruction Communio et Progressio*, expanding on *Miranda Prorsus* reinforced the Church's commitment to using media for faith outreach. The Eternal Word Television Network (EWTN) was founded by Mother Mary Angelica, and began broadcasting on Aug.15<sup>th</sup> 1981, from a garage studio in Irondale, Alabama. (Hathaway, J. C., 2023). The Pontifical Council for Social Communications (2002), reports that the Vatican launched its official website in 1995, marking its entry into the digital age. Catholic blogs and online forums gained popularity, allowing believers to discuss faith-related topic. The Vatican launched official Twitter accounts. Pope Benedict XVI and Pope Francis actively embraced social media. Pope Francis actively used Twitter and WhatsApp to engage with believers.

The COVID-19 pandemic (2020), made online interactions a mandatory option that has outlived it. Today, Catholic influencers and digital ministries have flourished, using platforms like YouTube, Instagram, and TikTok to spread the Gospel. It uses websites, apps, and social media to connect with communities. Unlike traditional forms of mass media (television, radio, and print), the internet has unique characteristics and channels. According to Napoli P. M.

(2015), “digital interactive media have transformed audiences from passive consumers into active participants; both as constant creators and as data sources for producers, that audiences now serve as constant producers, capable of producing content of significant value to other media consumers and to advertisers”. Indeed, many smart phone users consume, control, create media of their own and track consumer responses.

*Waumini* Communications, an entity responsible for social communications for Kenya's episcopal conference, reaches about 5 million people through Television (Capuchin TV), Twelve (12) radio stations distributed in dioceses across the country (radio *Waumini*, *radio Maria*, *Ukweli*, *Tumaini*, *Imani*, *Upendo* etc.), and various print and online publications. (ZENIT Staff, 2015). The Seed published by Consolata Missionaries, is a leading Catholic magazine in Kenya. As a tool of evangelization, the magazine is religious oriented and dedicated to reaching out to all Christians. It is intended as a great companion in the journey of faith; a guide to an attractive, Christ-oriented lifestyle, an enriching means of discussing God and all facets of Christian life. It covers the Church in Kenya, across the continent and globally, including a wide range of news, especially of humanitarian and social interest. (The Seed Magazine, 1988). Paulines publications and New People magazine also play a significant role in getting theologically correct content for Catholic faithful and beyond.

##### **4.7.1 Remote Learning**

Remote learning is where the learner and the instructor, or information source, are not physically present in a traditional classroom environment. Remote Learning accommodates various learning styles; can occur synchronously or asynchronously, with self-paced learning activities that take place independent of the instructor (Bradley V. M, 2021). It makes personalized and adaptable learning experiences tailored to learners' unique requirements and preferences possible. Information is relayed through technology, such as discussion boards, video conferencing, and online assessments. Remote learning instructors must beware of different learners' preferences and methods of processing information; visual, auditory, and kinesthetic. Learners in this context benefit from multimedia materials, including movies, audio recordings, and interactive simulations (Picciano, 2017).

Blended teaching and learning is where instructors combine in-person instruction with online platforms like video clips, breakout rooms. Learners complete some components online and others in person. It requires a robust technical infrastructure; learners must have access to a dependable internet connection, proper hardware, and software tools. They must have adequate and immediate technical support during the lesson. Institutions offering blended learning must have clear rules and policies to support online courses, provide sufficient financial and technological

support to instructors and learners, and should invest in a safe/ user-friendly learning management systems that enables seamless communication, material distribution, and evaluation system. Institutions should also set up systems for assessing the efficacy and quality of online courses and programs (Nuankaew *et al.*, 2023). Faculty support and training are crucial for effective deployment of a blended pedagogy. Instructors must acquire the relevant skills and expertise; have training programs on pedagogical techniques, and technology resources.

Hybrid learning is where some learners participate in person and some participate online. Instructors teach online and in-person learners at the same time using technology like video conferencing where learners can post questions and get answers while others will raise hands and have their questions answered, livestreaming of input to benefit those in-person and those online.

#### **4.7.2 Opportunities in Online Teaching/Learning**

Opportunities in online learning include; access to instructional materials at any time and from any location. Online communities and discussion forums can be created through cloud computing, blogging, podcasting etc. to facilitate communication and collaboration around specific topics. It is convenient for learners with family and employment obligations (Ahmad *et al.*, 2022). Can be tailored according to each learner's unique requirements and preferred learning methods, which increases learner engagement and encourages greater material comprehension (Picciano, 2017). Virtual interaction with people from diverse backgrounds, exposes learners to many viewpoints, cultures, and gives them a global perspective. Participating in group projects and peer-to-peer learning activities, enhances the learning process and makes complicated topics more exciting e.g. movies, simulations/imitations, and interactive modules (Yeh and Tsai, 2022). Online resources such as interactive discussions, guided video lessons, and virtual spiritual mentorship can ensure that faith formation remains ongoing, even beyond traditional gatherings. Engaging with selected digital platforms can foster self-driven exploration of faith concepts by SCCs. Online Catechism sessions, live-streamed Eucharistic celebrations, and virtual Bible studies are helpful for many visual learners. While digital platforms offer continuous theological engagement beyond physical gatherings, in-person engagement fosters relational bonding, experiential learning as well as spiritual depth.

#### **4.7.3 Challenges in Online Teaching/Learning**

Despite digital tools making teaching and learning more engaging and accessible, there are challenges such as ethical dilemmas, disruption of traditional values, and potential superficiality. Online teaching and learning requires suitable technical infrastructure and access to dependable internet connection which is difficult in rural areas. They need sound teaching methodologies and course designs that encourage participation and interaction in the online

environment. Instructors must present accurate information with the depth of knowledge required, must deploy cutting-edge instructional strategies to keep learners motivated and actively engaged, such as gamification or project-based learning, otherwise it remains superficial (Algayres *et al.*, 2022).

Due to the absence of face-to-face engagement and physical presence, connections, community building, and social contact among learners is challenged. The internet has been linked to social isolation, because users tend to substitute online interactions for in-person connections (Smoyer *et al.*, 2020). SCCs by description are neighborly groupings of Catholic faithful. Clear instructions have to be given to encourage the physical presence as much as possible (it is primary), then provide digital options to supplement and to support those unable to attend gatherings in person. Technological literacy will be a barrier in integrating digital platforms, so this gap must be breached by both instructors and learners. There are cyber-attacks and data breaches so internet users must learn to protect their online presence (Firth *et al.*, 2019).

#### **4.7.4 Communication Ethics**

The word *ethical* echoes what Aristotle called *ethos*, the communicator's good character and reputation for doing what is right. An ethical communicator considers the welfare of his or her audience and is guided by moral principles and standards. An ethical communicator strives to do what is right and understands his or her responsibility to keep society civil (Coleman, King, & Turner, n.d.). Communication ethics is relevant across contexts and applies to every channel of communication, including media. Human worth and dignity are fostered through ethical communication practices such as truthfulness, fairness, integrity, and respect for self and others.

(National Communication Association, 2025).

Social media has the capacity to degrade, spread hatred and intolerance, to control freedom of expression, and deny freedom of diversity of perspective. How often do we witness fake news or misinformation due to ease of access to online information? Politicians use social media for name-calling and character assassination of their rivals. However, we have also experienced those who courageously express their personal convictions in pursuit of fairness and justice through social media. It is therefore up to each social communicator, depending on the purpose, to put ethical principles into practice. Focused users of digital platforms need to assess the credibility of online sources (Coleman, King, & Turner, n.d.).

The Church emphasizes responsible media use, ensuring that communication aligns with moral and spiritual values. In 2023, the Vatican released a document entitled, 'Towards Full Presence: A Pastoral Reflection on Engagement with Social Media', it offers guidance on digital interactions (Dicastery for Communication, 2023). The final

report of The Synod on Synodality (2024), highlighted the importance of digital tools in evangelization; the need to engage with digital culture and use modern communication platforms to innovatively foster participation, communion, and mission. However, it cautioned that in digital evangelization, online spaces should reflect values of the Church (transparency, inclusivity, and meaningful dialogue).

#### **4.8 Frameworks for Integrating On-Site & Digital Pedagogies**

To successfully deploy blended teaching and learning for SCCs, pastoral agent need to develop the interest of becoming online influencers. They need to beware of the competitive, and fragmented media landscape. According to Eifert C. (2021), one needs strategy; to set goals and stick by them. To determine what one's primary message is going to be and to protect it from other versions of it by media marketing teams. To have a unified idea that everyone on your team can recognize, rally behind and relate to whenever they encounter it.

Pastoral agents can learn digital marketing, start a website, and commit to updating their blog daily, weekly, or monthly. Have a brand and brand values connected to your goal; each data posted should point meaningfully to the goal and objectives, should be consistent and intentional so as to win trust of their followers (López et al., 2022). Last but not least, identify online platforms that allow tailored communication like Facebook, Instagram, and YouTube. These collect the users' data, use trackers and leverage algorithms to show users content based on their preferences, behavior, and interactions with previous posts. This protects the content and its users from cyber threats (Teachers Institute, 2023).

## **CHAPTER FIVE**

### **SUMMARY, CONCLUSION, RECOMMENDATIONS**

#### **Summary**

Findings related to the goal of this study which was to explore the integration of on-site and digital pedagogies for the faith formation of SCCs in Kenya. Reviewed documents indicated that the Catholic Church leadership has historically moved with the signs of the times with regard to social media. They also revealed that ordained ministers are few compared to the population they minister to. To develop effective partnership with the laity is a solution, yet the laity need training in skills for ministry. Their ignorance of Catholic Social Teaching keeps them passive recipients, and keeps ordained ministers' perpetual providers. Documents also showed that training requires good planning, content creation and effective methodologies that observe communication ethics. Modern technology is relatively recent. Catholics like many other learners will need support by Church leadership in fixing digital infrastructure, identifying enthusiastic/ethical influencers who can create digital literacy communities, and maintain clarity that digital pedagogies

complement rather than replace interpersonal connections in SCCs.

#### **Conclusion**

This study successfully explored the integration of on-site and digital pedagogies in the faith formation of Small Christian Communities (SCCs) in Kenya. It examined how blended teaching methods can enhance or challenge faith development in these communities. The theoretical foundations underpinning the use of on-site and digital pedagogies in faith formation were examined in all the reviewed literature and found relevant. Major challenges included limited clergy resources, the need for accessible theological education, lack of suitable technical infrastructure and access to dependable internet connection especially in rural areas, skills in sound teaching methodologies, and course designs that enable participation and interaction by the learners were addressed.

The following solutions were proposed; digital infrastructures to be budgeted for and be fixed in Dioceses and Parishes for faith formation, pastoral agents to be well trained, online courses to be well designed, the selected platforms to include pedagogies that create interactive spaces where learners can connect, share, and support each other. To accommodate diverse preferences and learners, interventions such as preparing content for the different cadre in SCCs were suggested. The integration of on-site and digital pedagogies in SCC faith formation presents an opportunity for transformation, ensuring that faith formation remains accessible, inclusive, and reflective of contemporary realities. While digital engagement facilitates theological reflection beyond physical church settings, structured guidance from pastoral leaders was found essential in maintaining doctrinal integrity and ethical digital communication.

The study underscores that faith formation must evolve, embracing technology while preserving traditional spiritual practices. Small Christian Communities must ensure that digital tools supplement rather than replace authentic communal faith experiences.

#### **Recommendations**

The researchers recommend that Church leadership (including religious congregations) should prioritize fixing technical infrastructure with dependable internet connection, to enable Catholic faithful to interact with faith related online content. The Church can develop Parish-guided Social Media Platforms, ensuring that theological discussions remain guided by Church teachings

Training of pastoral agents (priests, catechists, religious men and women) in information technology should be availed to empower them. They can in turn design and offer digital Catechesis, using structured video lessons, podcasts, and interactive discussions to reinforce spiritual growth. They can also ensure that ethical standards (respect, truthfulness and meaningful engagement) are maintained.

Some able members of SCCs are already on WhatsApp, Tiktok and other platforms. To fully harness the benefits of digital integration in the faith formation of SCCs, these can be encouraged to gain proper digital literacy, to support interactive online faith discussions, and reading of Church documents. Training in media literacy (mindfulness) is also needed; it means being able to access, analyze, and evaluate all content encountered, being selective of what to see, watch and read guided by informed moral values.

Fully trained pastoral agents (Priests, some religious) can ensure that theological accuracy and meaningful faith dialogues prevail. By embracing hybrid and blended pedagogical frameworks, those members of the Church who have no time for physical meetings, and those who for various reasons have felt out of place in the Church can still be spiritually enriched through online communities.

Workshops on service oriented skills should be regularly given, the faithful should be regularly reminded about the meaning of their baptism, calls/invitations should be made regularly regarding service as a duty and responsibility of any baptized Christian, so that those moved to serve the Church in specific capacities can avail themselves, get good orientation in the ministry and begin serving.

Dioceses can apply structured digital evangelization, ensuring doctrinal integrity while maintaining accessibility, this can be done by creating theologically sound content to be taught online and on-site (Usselman, 2020). Make more creative use of available Radio and TV stations, parish-led faith publications, podcasts, and online forums.

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