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The Fifth Vow:

*Ignatian Pedagogy and the Impact
of the "Constitutions," "Ratio Studiorum," and "Spiritual Exercises"
on Liberal Education in the Sixteenth Century*

ABSTRACT: This article analyzes the development of colleges and universities as a ministry of the Jesuit Order, as well as their influence on the spread of liberal education in sixteenth-century Europe. On the basis of the *Constitutions*, *Ratio Studiorum*, and *Spiritual Exercises*, it first analyzes school administration, then pedagogy, and finally curriculum. The author argues that the uniformity of Jesuit institutions and the desire to educate the "whole" student – mind, body, and spirit – led to the rapid spread of Jesuit schools throughout the world, fueled the Counter-Reformation, and inspired the next generation of scholars.

KEYWORDS: early modern history; sixteenth century; Europe; Society of Jesus; Jesuits; Ignatius of Loyola; *Constitutions*; *Ratio Studiorum*; *Spiritual Exercises*; pedagogy

Introduction

Soon after receiving their Master of Arts degrees from the University of Paris, ten dedicated young men arrived in Venice in 1537, seeking ordination and an opportunity to live as Jesus had on a pilgrimage to the Holy Land. Unable to obtain passage to the East, these ten decided to put their fate into the hands of Pope Paul III, and on September 27, 1540, the papal bull *Regimini militantis ecclesiae* ("For the Government of the Church Militant") gave approval to the foundation of the *Societas Iesu* or "Society of Jesus" (Jesuits). In addition to the typical monastic and mendicant vows of poverty, chastity, and obedience, the Jesuits took a fourth vow, a dedication to take "missions anywhere in the world."¹ Yet, almost immediately after their foundation, the Jesuits also began to implement what I would call their fifth vow, namely a dedication to formal education as a ministry of their Order.

The Society of Jesus recognized that it needed a way to educate its younger members to ensure that they could handle the intellectual requirements for the "help of souls."² Being learned men themselves, the founders of the Order decided that their members had to undergo similar academic training if they, too, were going spread the word of God, and they began enrolling their novices in local colleges and universities.³ From 1542-1544 on, the Order sought endowments to purchase "houses" near prominent universities where young Society members, called "scholastics," could live free of charge while obtaining

¹ John W. O'Malley, *The Jesuits: A History from Ignatius to the Present* (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield, 2014), 4.

² O'Malley, *Jesuits*, 8.

³ John W. O'Malley, "Historical Perspectives on Jesuit Education and Globalization," in *The Jesuits and Globalization: Historical Legacies and Contemporary Challenges*, ed. Thomas Banchoff and José Casanova (Washington: Georgetown University Press, 2016), 147-166, here 149.

their education.⁴ Finding their education lacking, Jesuits in Padua (Italy) started to supplement their lessons by teaching the younger scholastics by means of the “Parisian method” (*modus Parisiensis*) which they had learned while at the University of Paris.⁵ Almost simultaneously, in 1543, Jesuits in Goa (India) were teaching humanities and Christian doctrine to Portuguese and Indian youths with a fair amount of success.⁶ By 1545, those two types of Jesuit institutions were joined by a third, when the Duke of Gandia, Francis Borgia, founded a college where Jesuits were employed to teach both Society members and lay students (externs).⁷

Recognizing the importance of education was not a new idea. Colleges and universities were already well established throughout Europe by the 1540s, and the Jesuits were not even the first religious Order to establish their own system of education.⁸ What made the Jesuit schools so unique, though, was their ability to adapt the pedagogical principles of the schools already in existence into a uniform system of educating both laymen and Society members. Utilizing the best teaching practices of the Humanist and Latin schools, the Jesuits formed a new brand of education that permanently changed the culture of early modern Europe and the Society itself.

⁴ While these houses were common, it was clear that the Jesuits at this time preferred to establish their own institutions of learning as Juan de Polanco, Ignatius’s secretary, wrote after Ignatius’s death: “Our father’s intention is that, especially in these initial stages, the colleges must multiply rather than the houses.” Quoted in John W. O’Malley, *The First Jesuits* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1993), 201.

⁵ Christopher Carlsmith, “Struggling towards Success: Jesuit Education in Italy, 1540–1600,” *History of Education Quarterly* 42, no. 2 (2002): 215–246, here 231. Gabriel Codina describes the *modus Parisiensis* as this: 1) Good order in the studies, arranged in a systematic and progressive form; 2) Separation and gradation in the studies of the subject matter; 3) Settled duration of course and examinations for the mastery of each of them; 4) Insistence on the necessity of establishing good foundations before going ahead; 5) The division of students into classes, according to their levels of knowledge; 6) Abundance and frequency of exercises, with great activity on the part of the students; 7) The use of emulation; 8) Strict discipline and regimentation of student life; 9) Study of the liberal arts with a humanistic and Renaissance content with a Christian inspiration; and lastly, 10) Insistence upon joining virtue with letters. See Gabriel Codina, “‘Our Way of Proceeding’ in Education: The *Ratio Studiorum*,” in *Ignatian Pedagogy: Classic and Contemporary Texts on Jesuit Education from St. Ignatius to Today*, ed. José Mesa (Chicago: Loyola Press, 2017), 103–127, here 107.

⁶ George Ganss, *Saint Ignatius’ Idea of a Jesuit University*, 2nd ed. (Milwaukee: Marquette University Press, 1956), 21.

⁷ Ganss, *Saint Ignatius’ Idea*, 23.

⁸ Jozef Ijsewijn and Jacques Paquet, eds., *The Universities in the Late Middle Ages* (Leuven: Leuven University Press, 1978); James M. Kittelson and Pamela J. Transue, eds., *Rebirth, Reform, and Resilience: Universities in Transition, 1300–1700* (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1984); Robert Black, *Humanism and Education in Medieval and Renaissance Italy: Tradition and Innovation in Latin Schools from the Twelfth to the Fifteenth Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001); Ronald B. Begley and Joseph W. Koterski, eds., *Medieval Education* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2005).

The primary-source documentation for research on Jesuit education is rather daunting. By 1565, the Society numbered around 35,000 members, and they endeavored to maintain constant communication through a system of regular reports with the Jesuit leadership in Rome; this has been compiled into the more than 125 volumes of the *Monumenta Historica Societatis Iesu* (“Historical Monuments of the Society of Jesus”) including twelve volumes of the letters of Saint Ignatius.⁹ For the purposes of this article, the essential texts can be found in Part IV of the *Constitutions* (1556),¹⁰ which laid the foundation for the Jesuit educational mission; the *Ratio atque Institutio Studiorum Societatis Iesu* (“The Method and Manner of Studies of the Society of Jesus;” 1599),¹¹ which is the amalgamation of the best teaching practices of a variety of educational systems into a codified set of rules for Jesuit institutions to follow; and the *Spiritual Exercises* (1548),¹² which outline the intrinsic spiritual retreat meant to help students become closer to each other and to God. In addition to these three texts, letters from various Jesuit leaders provide contextual and intellectual understanding of the formation of Jesuit educational institutions.¹³

Scholarly interpretations of Jesuit education are abundant. Because education formed such an integral part of the Jesuit mission, any scholarly attempt to examine the Jesuits’ role in society devotes at least one chapter to their establishment of schools throughout the world.¹⁴ In 1933, Edward A. Fitzpatrick

⁹ O’Malley, *First Jesuits*, 2. For a translated version, see Ignatius de Loyola, *Ignatius of Loyola: The Spiritual Exercises and Selected Works*, ed. George Ganss et al. (New York: Paulist Press, 1991). For the actual letters, see *Monumenta Ignatiana: Scripta de S. Ignatio* (Rome: Monumenta Historica Societatis Iesu, 1934-1977). Much of the Jesuit primary-source material has been digitized and is available online at the [Archivum Romanum Societatis Iesu](http://www.archivum-romanum-societatis-iesu.org/), accessed May 18, 2019.

¹⁰ Ignatius de Loyola, *The Constitutions of the Society of Jesus*, ed. George Ganss (St. Louis: Institute of Jesuit Sources, 1970), hereafter *Constitutions*. All subsequent citations of the *Constitutions* refer to section and paragraph numbers, not page numbers.

¹¹ For the purposes of this article, I rely on the *Ratio Studiorum* reprinted in Edward A. Fitzpatrick, ed., *St. Ignatius and the Ratio Studiorum* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1933), hereafter *Ratio*. All subsequent citations of the *Ratio* refer to page numbers.

¹² Ignatius de Loyola, *The Spiritual Exercises of Saint Ignatius: A Literal Translation and A Contemporary Reading*, ed. and trans. David L. Fleming (St. Louis: The Institute of Jesuit Sources, 1978), hereafter *Spiritual Exercises*. All subsequent citations of the *Spiritual Exercises* refer to paragraph numbers, not page numbers.

¹³ Ignatius de Loyola, *Letters of St. Ignatius Loyola*, trans. William J. Young (Chicago: Loyola University Press, 1959); Juan de Polanco, *Year by Year with the Early Jesuits (1537-1556): Selections from the Chronicon of Juan de Polanco, S.J.*, ed. and trans. John Patrick Donnelly (St. Louis: Institute of Jesuit Sources, 2004); *Jesuit Writings of the Early Modern Period, 1540-1640*, ed. and trans. John Patrick Donnelly (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing, 2006).

¹⁴ Much has been written about the early history of the Jesuits; see especially O’Malley, *First Jesuits*. For further reading, see René Fülöp-Miller, *The Jesuits: A History of the Society of Jesus*, trans. Frank S. Flint and Dorothy F. Tait (New York: Capricorn Books, 1963); Joseph de Guibert, *The Jesuits: Their Spiritual Doctrine and Practice: A Historical Study*, trans. William J. Young (St. Louis: Institute of Jesuit Sources, 1964); James Brodrick, *The Origin of the Jesuits* (Westport, CT:

studied the role of Saint Ignatius in the development of the *Constitutions and Ratio Studiorum* in *St. Ignatius and the Ratio Studiorum*, and soon after, in 1938, the prominent Jesuit education professor Allan P. Farrell reevaluated the *Ratio Studiorum* in *The Jesuit Code of Liberal Education* and detailed its development as well as its connections to contemporary education.¹⁵ In 1956, George Ganss, a Jesuit classicist, wrote a useful history of Catholic education in *Saint Ignatius' Idea of a Jesuit University*, and posited that it was Ignatius's goal to not only establish secondary education but higher education as well, which is neglected in most scholarly examinations of Jesuit education.¹⁶ The chief Jesuit scholar referenced in this article is John W. O'Malley who has written numerous books and articles on the Jesuits and their contributions to education.¹⁷ Essays by both O'Malley and Thomas Banchoff in *The Jesuits and Globalization: Historical Legacies and Contemporary Challenges* (2016) outline the Jesuits' global approach to education and its legacy.¹⁸ Lastly, an article by Christopher Carlsmith, "Struggling towards Success: Jesuit Education in Italy 1540-1600" (2002),¹⁹ and Vincent J. Duminuco's

Greenwood Press, 1971); Louis Châtellier, *The Europe of the Devout: The Catholic Reformation and the Formation of a New Society*, trans. Jean Birrell (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989); Jean Lacouture, *Jesuits: A Multibiography*, trans. Jeremy Leggatt (Washington: Counterpoint, 1995); John W. O'Malley, Gauvin Alexander Bailey, Steven J. Harris, and T. Frank Kennedy, eds., *The Jesuits: Cultures, Sciences, and the Arts, 1540-1773* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1999); Mordechai Feingold, ed., *Jesuit Science and the Republic of Letters* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2003).

¹⁵ Fitzpatrick, *St. Ignatius and the Ratio Studiorum*; Allan P. Farrell, *The Jesuit Code of Liberal Education: Development and Scope of the Ratio Studiorum* (Milwaukee: Bruce Publishing, 1938).

¹⁶ Ganss, *Saint Ignatius' Idea*.

¹⁷ John W. O'Malley, "Some Distinctive Characteristics of Jesuit Spirituality in the Sixteenth Century," in *Jesuit Spirituality: A Now and Future Resource*, ed. John O'Malley, John W. Padberg, and Vincent T. O'Keefe (Chicago: Loyola University Press, 1990), 1-20; John W. O'Malley, "How the First Jesuits Became Involved in Education," in *The Jesuit Ratio Studiorum: 400th Anniversary Perspectives*, ed. Vincent J. Duminuco (New York: Fordham University Press, 2000), 56-79; John W. O'Malley and Gauvin Alexander Bailey, eds., *The Jesuits and the Arts, 1540-1773* (Philadelphia: Saint Joseph's University Press, 2005); John W. O'Malley, "The Distinctiveness of the Society of Jesus." *Journal of Jesuit Studies* 3, no. 1 (2016): 1-16. See also Christopher Chapple, ed., *The Jesuit Tradition in Education and Missions: A 450-Year Perspective* (Scranton: University of Scranton Press, 1993); George W. Traub, ed., *A Jesuit Education Reader: Contemporary Writings on the Jesuit Mission in Education, Principles, the Issue of Catholic Identity, Practical Applications of the Ignatian Way, and More* (Chicago: Loyola Press, 2008); Christopher Chapple, ed., *The Jesuit Tradition in Education and Missions: A 450-Year Perspective* (Scranton: University of Scranton Press, 1993).

¹⁸ O'Malley, "Historical Perspectives;" Thomas Banchoff, "Jesuit Higher Education and the Global Common Good," in *The Jesuits and Globalization: Historical Legacies and Contemporary Challenges*, ed. Thomas Banchoff and José Casanova (Washington: Georgetown University Press, 2016), 239-260.

¹⁹ Carlsmith, "Struggling towards Success," 215-246. See also Christopher Carlsmith, "Schooling and Society in Bergamo, 1500-1650" (Ph.D. thesis, University of Virginia, 1999).

“Ignatian Pedagogy: A Practical Approach” (1993),²⁰ provide the methodological framework and contemporary reevaluations of Jesuit pedagogy for this article.

A thematic analysis of the goals of Jesuit pedagogical principles allows us to see how the Jesuits were able to differentiate themselves from the various colleges and universities that were already in place throughout Europe, and it explains their ability to educate the “whole person” in a way that transcended religious, cultural, and economic considerations, accounting for the rapid growth and establishment of the Jesuits as an Order founded on the principle of educating the masses. This article argues that the uniformity of school administration, pedagogy, and curriculum established by the *Constitutions*, *Ratio Studiorum*, and *Spiritual Exercises* allowed for the creation and proliferation of the liberal education of the whole student – mind, body, and spirit – which led to the rapid spread of Jesuit schools throughout the world, simultaneously fueled the Counter-Reformation, and inspired the next generation of scholars.

I. School Administration

While colleges and universities had been well established throughout Europe by the 1540s, each school was relatively unique and utilized its own system of teaching and administration. With the global focus and centralized nature of the Society of Jesus, if education was going to be a major focus of the organization, a structure needed to be drafted for how education would fit into their mission for the “help of souls.” This led to the formal adoption of the *Constitutions*, making education the primary ministry of the Order and creating a uniform set of rules for school administration focused on enriching the whole student, whether Jesuit or lay person, in mind, body, and spirit.

With the increasing emphasis on education as a ministry of the Order, the founders drafted the *Constitutions* to begin the process of organizing school administration. Part IV of the *Constitutions* established the Society’s mission to “aid its own members and their fellow men to attain the ultimate end for which they were created [...] to know and serve better God, our Creator and Lord”²¹ by looking at:

First of what pertains to the colleges, and then of what concerns the universities. With regard to the colleges, we shall discuss first what has relation to the founders; secondly, the colleges founded, in regard to their material or temporal aspects; thirdly, what pertains to the students who will study in them, that is, their admission, well-being, progress in learning and in other means of helping their fellow men, and their removal from studies; fourthly, what pertains to the government of the colleges.²²

²⁰ Vincent J. Duminuco, “Ignatian Pedagogy: A Practical Approach,” *Jesuit Institute*, 1993, accessed May 18, 2019.

²¹ *Constitutions*, Part IV, Preamble, 1.

²² *Constitutions*, Part IV, Preamble, 4.

The first part, concerning the founders, played a significant role in the rapid establishment of Jesuit universities throughout the world.²³ The *Constitutions* make clear that the Rector, or president of the college, was to ensure that the founder and benefactors of a college were to be commemorated during an annual Mass and that the establishment of a new college should be celebrated throughout the Order.²⁴ Thus, a considerable number of people was praying for these benefactors, and they and their relatives would continue to have prayers said on their behalf well after their death. Establishing funding for institutions went hand in hand with the second part of the passage: if an institution was deemed a burden on the Society or not in the greater service of God, then it would be up to the General and the Society to determine whether to close the school. The third part dealt directly with the teaching and experience of the students, which will be addressed more thoroughly below. Lastly, the fourth part pertained to how the schools should be run and administered. The development of the *Constitutions* altered the structure of the Society to emphasize the need for education to “have good and learned men” in their ranks.²⁵

Modeled in a military fashion, the Jesuit Order was a highly centralized organization even in its administration of schools. In the educational hierarchy, the General of the Society in Rome reigned supreme with various provincial authorities in charge of certain regions below him, and with the Rector of the college or university below them. Each of these authorities had various consultants whom they could rely on for advice as well.²⁶ According to Edward Fitzpatrick, what is interesting about the structure of the *Constitutions* is that, while administration was strongly centralized, “there was very little real absolute direction of the administrative officer in his duties. The duties assigned to him were vested, it might be said, in his discretion. His prudent judgement was appealed to. It was definitely a hierarchical system where authority went with responsibility.”²⁷ This individual discretion given to Rectors and provincial administrators allowed for the flexibility and adaptability of their educational

²³ Following the first Jesuit school at Messina in 1548, the Jesuits established 245 schools by 1600, and more than 700 by 1700. See Carlsmith, “Struggling towards Success,” 218; O’Malley, *First Jesuits*, 208-209.

²⁴ *Constitutions*, Part IV, 1, 1.

²⁵ Fitzpatrick, *St. Ignatius and the Ratio Studiorum*, 17.

²⁶ In addition to a Rector, there was typically a Collateral, a counselor of the Rector; a Chancellor in charge of records and degrees; a Secretary in charge of student registration and maintaining the seal of the Rector; a Notary to give public certification to degrees and other matters; two or three Beadles, non-society members who filled various roles from Doctor’s assistants to correctors in charge of punishment; a General Censor to keep the Rector and Provincial informed of all school matters; and lastly the Deans of each department and their respective Doctors and Masters: *Constitutions*, Part IV, 17, 1-8. See also Fitzpatrick, *St. Ignatius and the Ratio Studiorum*, 20.

²⁷ Fitzpatrick, *St. Ignatius and the Ratio Studiorum*, 20-21.

programs to fit the needs of their students while still upholding the Jesuit mission in a cohesive manner.

In addition to a governmental framework, the *Constitutions* also developed the framework for the treatment and care of individual students. What is especially striking about the *Constitutions* is their concern for the students' physical and emotional well-being. As Chapter 4 states:

Concerning the care of those who are in the colleges in matters which pertain to the bodily health [...] that the Scholastics do not study at times detriment of their health, and that they give sufficient time to sleep and to observe moderation in their mental labors. Thus it may be that they can persevere longer as well in learning letters as in exercising them for the glory of God.²⁸

It was recognized by the Jesuits that the methods being employed by other institutions at the time were not the most effective in creating the motivated, lifelong learners that the Jesuits sought to develop. While other religious Orders focused on lengthy meditations or depriving themselves of food or sleep, the Jesuits focused on the maintenance of the body as more important to the overarching goal of achieving an education to exercise their learning "for the glory of God."²⁹

In addition to maintaining a healthy balance of academic rigor and self-care, the Jesuits also refrained from corporal punishment of any of their students by members of the Order. Ignatius was adamant that "physical punishment diminished the respect for the one administering it and ruptured the bond of affection between Jesuits and those they were trying to 'help.'"³⁰ Discipline still remained an issue, so many schools chose to hire "correctors" whose job it was to mete out punishment, especially amongst unruly younger students. The Jesuits sought to encourage students to seek out learning and take care of themselves so that they could continue their studies and better serve God. While they still found ways to punish students for misbehaving, they were careful to not have punishment associated with the Order and with its overall mission of leading the students by example.

The establishment of school administration as laid out in the *Constitutions* firmly established the importance of education as a ministry of the Order. Chapter 10 of the *Constitutions* states,

In accordance with the Bulls of the Apostolic See, the Professed Society will hold the superintendence of the colleges. Since it cannot seek any gain for itself from the income nor avail itself of it, it is probable that in the long run it will proceed with greater integrity and a more spiritual attitude in providing for the colleges unto the greater service of God our Lord and for their good government.³¹

²⁸ *Constitutions*, Part IV, 4, 1.

²⁹ *Constitutions*, Part IV, 4, 1.

³⁰ See O'Malley, *First Jesuits*, 230.

³¹ *Constitutions*, Part IV, 10, 1.

There was a recognition that, as Ignatius writes, “From among who are at present merely students [...] in time some will depart to play diverse roles—one to preach and carry on the care of souls, another to the government of the land and administration of justice, and others to other occupations.”³² This recognition of the importance of their roles as educational administrators and also of the lasting legacy of their charge was key to the widespread success of Jesuit institutions.³³ By focusing on the development of the mind, while respecting the body, the Jesuits were able to influence the spirit of the students they taught.

II. Pedagogy

While the Society did not invent their system of school administration nor their pedagogical methods, they found ways to incorporate existing best practices into their colleges and universities. Trained at the University of Paris in the Humanistic method known as the *modus Parisiensis*,³⁴ the Jesuits adopted various teaching methods to create something entirely new, namely the *Ratio Studiorum*. Through these “best practices,” the Society was able to attract and maintain students at a rate that other colleges and universities could not keep up with, earning them both praise and disdain from the educational community. It was their focus on educating the whole student—mind, body, and spirit—that ensured that Jesuit teaching methods had a major impact on liberal education.

Intentionally focused on school administration and school foundation, the *Constitutions* left much to be desired with regard to pedagogy and proper teaching methods. While the *Constitutions* laid out the three faculties, namely languages (Humanities), arts (philosophy), and theology, and stated that pupils would progress through each stage as they achieved mastery in each subject, usually around two to three years per faculty, they said little about *how* each subject should be taught.³⁵ Based on years of experience in colleges around the world, and written by six of the premier Jesuit educators, the first draft in 1591 and the second draft in 1599 of the *Ratio Studiorum* established the curriculum and pedagogy of the Society for adoption in all of its schools. According to Robert Rusk, “the *Ratio Studiorum* is one of the first attempts on record at educational organization, management, and method, at a time when it was unusual to even grade pupils in classes; and one is tempted to compare it, not always to the disadvantage of the *Ratio*, with the regulations of the modern school system which have only after some generations been evolved and

³² Letter from Ignatius de Loyola to Antonio de Araoz, December 1, 1551, quoted in Ganss, *Saint Ignatius' Idea*, 28-29.

³³ O'Malley, “Historical Perspectives,” 155, argues that with over seven hundred schools in operation worldwide by 1773, “no such network of schools under a single aegis had ever been known before.”

³⁴ For details on the *modus Parisiensis*, see above, note 5.

³⁵ *Constitutions*, Part IV, 10, 1.

perfected.”³⁶ What the *Constitutions* had initiated by making education the focus of the Society, the *Ratio* accomplished. It demonstrated a combination of the scholastic and humanistic traditions that had come before them “to ensure high standards and uniform practices in Jesuit schools in different parts of the world.”³⁷

A major emphasis of the *Ratio Studiorum* and indicative of the success of the Jesuit pedagogical model was the focus on student learning and *cura personalis* or the “care for the (whole) person.”³⁸ The *Ratio Studiorum* is basically a series of rules and best practices structured according to the hierarchy of school administration: Provincial, Rector, Prefect of Studies, Professors (according to subject), and so forth. Each topic opens with a description of the importance of its role in helping to achieve the mission of the Society and its role in helping save souls while undertaking the work of teaching.³⁹ For the Jesuits, teaching revolved around student learning, and each member of the school administration was responsible for some aspect of that learning with the goal of forming a student capable of better serving others.⁴⁰

To accomplish this goal, the methods of scholasticism and instruction were not enough. Methods of instruction needed to revolve around the development of students in service to others. Therefore, the Jesuits modeled themselves after the *modus Parisiensis* with the additional added structure of the character development tenets laid out in the *Spiritual Exercises*. In the Annotations to his work, Ignatius had laid out the duties and roles of the retreat instructors and participants, which would become the basis for the spiritual aspect of the *cura personalis* method of instruction adopted by Jesuit institutions:

The first Annotation is that by this name of Spiritual Exercises is meant every way of examining one’s conscience, of meditating, of contemplating, of praying vocally and mentally, and of performing other spiritual actions, as will be said later. For as strolling, walking, and running are bodily exercises, so every way of preparing and disposing the soul to rid itself of all the disordered tendencies, and, after it is rid, to seek and find the Divine Will as to the management of one’s life for the salvation of the soul is called a Spiritual Exercise.⁴¹

According to Edward Fitzpatrick, these Annotations meant:

1. There is such a thing as spiritual development, spiritual exercises, spiritual progress, spiritual ends.
2. The function of teacher or retreat-master “should necessarily be passive, following (only guarding and protecting), not prescriptive, categorical interfering,”

³⁶ Robert R. Rusk, *The Doctrines of the Great Educators*, 4th ed. (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1969), 76-77.

³⁷ O’Malley, “Historical Perspectives,” 159.

³⁸ Banchoff, “Jesuit Higher Education,” 239.

³⁹ *Ratio*, 121, 137, 143, 150, 155-190.

⁴⁰ Duminuco, “Ignatian Pedagogy,” 4.

⁴¹ *Spiritual Exercises*, 1.

3. To carry out that function, the master needs a personal knowledge of the student.
4. The nature of this process is one of self-education, through self-activity.
5. A certain passivity, or better, receptivity, is an immensely important germinal opportunity for soul development.
6. The process must be adapted to the age, education, capacity, and condition of life of the person making the retreat.⁴²

Fitzpatrick details that what made the Jesuit teaching method markedly different from the schools that had come before them was their focus on the character and self-education of the individual. The Jesuit model developed teaching methods that focused on a passivity of teachers in order to shift the responsibility of learning to the students. Traditional universities relied heavily on teachers lecturing and students reciting or memorizing what they had learned. What made the Jesuit pedagogical model different was their focus on *disputationes*, or student discussion about the material they were learning, in order to develop a deeper student experience and thus a deeper understanding of the implications of their learning. Through this method of teaching, Duminuco argues, students develop “a carefully reasoned investigation through which the student forms or reforms his or her habitual attitudes towards other people of the world.”⁴³

The *Ratio Studiorum*, combined with the character development of the *Spiritual Exercises* provided the uniformity and adaptability of the Society as an organization that was focused on education and whose emphasis on pedagogy and teaching methods was central to student success. This framework provided the structure that was needed to ensure that Jesuit teachers would focus on the *cura personalis* and develop the whole student through methods of experience and student-centered learning. While the pedagogy was borrowed from the *modus Parisiensis* and other humanist schools of the time, the curriculum and the way in which it was taught was uniquely Jesuit.

III. Curriculum

The *Ratio Studiorum* and *Spiritual Exercises* did not just establish Ignatian pedagogy, they also managed to refine and elaborate on the curriculum established by the *Constitutions*. Because of the codified nature of the *Constitutions* and *Ratio Studiorum*, all Jesuit schools, regardless of location, followed a similar curriculum for the education of mind, body, and spirit.⁴⁴ This curriculum provided for a secular as well as religious education, and it did so without any cost to the participants, making Jesuit colleges extremely popular throughout Europe.

The *Ratio* outlined a “graded curriculum” that focused on the humanities, philosophy, and theology, with pupils graduating to higher levels of education and classes based on their performance and readiness for the next course of

⁴² Fitzpatrick, *St. Ignatius and the Ratio Studiorum*, 41.

⁴³ Duminuco, “Ignatian Pedagogy,” 4.

⁴⁴ Carlsmith, “Struggling toward Success,” 222.

study.⁴⁵ According to Carlsmith, students entered the colleges between the ages of eleven and fourteen, and

the first three years were devoted primarily to the study of the grammars of Donatus and Despauterius. Students were promoted as soon as they demonstrated mastery of a particular subject or author. Following completion of the grammar courses, students devoted a year to poetry and history, followed by a year of rhetoric. These two years emphasized *eloquentia*, the ability to move and convince one's audience [...]. Exceptional students who had completed the five-year sequence could move on to a triennium [i.e., three years] of study that concentrated on philosophy (e.g., logic, metaphysics) and the natural sciences (e.g., mathematics, natural history). This blend of humanist and Christian elements set Jesuit education apart from its peers in the Catholic world and contributed to both popular acclaim and pointed criticism.⁴⁶

This method of promotion through courses of study was not unique to the Jesuits, but it formed the basis for the compendium of study for students in Jesuit colleges. Those wishing to enter the Society would also spend four years studying theology: two years of moral theology and two years of Sacred Scripture.⁴⁷ As a result of the diversity of the Jesuit curriculum, their colleges attracted a wide range of scholastics and externs alike, leaving tutors in other colleges and universities throughout Europe scrambling for pupils to teach.⁴⁸

The Jesuit curriculum has as its goal to equip students for their roles later in life in the service of their communities. Thus, the Jesuit curriculum began with an intensive study of languages, namely Greek, Latin, and the local vernacular.⁴⁹ This mastery of language allowed the Jesuits abroad to be the principal academics to develop “grammars and dictionaries of the respective indigenous languages” they encountered on their missions in foreign lands.⁵⁰ While other religious Orders tended to teach the indigenous peoples Latin, the Jesuits used their mastery of language to develop ways of better communicating with the peoples they encountered and learn the languages of the people amongst whom they resided. Thus, these early Jesuits learned the “importance of accommodation to times, places, cultures, and circumstances if they wanted their message to be heard.”⁵¹ This was especially important to the Jesuits, as their goal was not only to educate students, but to enable them to better facilitate the Society's mission of saving souls throughout the world.

The Jesuit curriculum did not just stress the importance of subject mastery and language learning, but also of teaching students how to live and how to earn a living after they left the college. According to George Ganss, by focusing on the

⁴⁵ For the various curricula and a sample student day in each, see Farrell, *Jesuit Code*, 342-353.

⁴⁶ Carlsmith, “Struggling toward Success,” 223.

⁴⁷ Farrell, *Jesuit Code*, 342-343.

⁴⁸ Carlsmith, “Struggling toward Success,” 230.

⁴⁹ *Constitutions*, Part IV, 5, 1.

⁵⁰ O'Malley, “Historical Perspectives,” 158.

⁵¹ O'Malley, “Historical Perspectives,” 158-159.

liberal studies of the Humanities the Society was preparing graduates (in the words of Ignatius) for a “road to economic betterment and the security without which a man can scarcely lead a fully human life, much less function as a social leader. Neither can a man without such economic security become a scholar, pursuing learning for its own sake.”⁵² By extending education to laymen free of charge, the Society was able to draw in people who might otherwise not have had access to education, to develop them into the next generation of civic and religious leaders. According to Thomas Banchoff, “the rigor of the *Ratio* was designed to build character as a means of furthering both the salvation of the soul and the improvement of society. Thus, Jesuit education incorporated what today would be called the ‘co-curriculum’, encompassing student organizations and activities such as theater and ministry to the local poor.”⁵³ Bringing in students from the local community, educating them according to a strict curriculum of the Humanities, philosophy, and theology, and then having them give back to their own communities taught these students how to be leaders and further extended the reach of the Society throughout the world.

Conclusion

The decision to establish a uniform set of rules for school administration, teaching methods, and curriculum enabled the Jesuits to create a system of colleges and universities that focused on educating the whole student—mind, body, and spirit. The *Constitutions*, *Ratio Studiorum*, and the *Spiritual Exercises* facilitated a method of attracting students from diverse backgrounds, educating them at no cost, and offering them the well-rounded moral and academic education needed to thrive in the early modern world, thus contributing to the Counter-Reformation and providing the next generation of scholars.

While there is much interest in the Jesuit educational model, there seems to be little research on individual Jesuit educators and their experiences. Given the wealth of primary-source material, scholars should be inclined to undertake cultural history examinations of Jesuit educators in the early modern period as they endeavored to implement the *Ratio Studiorum*. Carlsmith, O’Malley, and Farrell address many of the challenges of implementing the Jesuit educational system, but it would be beneficial in the post-structural sense to see how Jesuits themselves viewed and grappled with the problems they faced in the classroom and the communities they served.⁵⁴

⁵² Ganss, *Saint Ignatius’ Idea*, 163.

⁵³ Banchoff, “Jesuit Higher Education,” 243.

⁵⁴ See Carlsmith, “Struggling toward Success,” 219-220; O’Malley, *First Jesuits*, 227-232; and Farrell, *Jesuit Code*, 98-106. While all three of these studies mention the difficulties of establishing the Jesuit schools, there is little else in terms of scholarship that addresses the difficulties faced by the Society and the backlash from fellow scholars and communities alike as the Jesuits rapidly spread across Europe.

What is striking about the Jesuit pedagogical model is its lasting legacy and the qualities of liberal education that are still applicable today. The Jesuits based their adoption of the *Constitutions* and *Ratio Studiorum* on their personal experiences in education and only after years of experience as teachers of the Humanist curriculum. Their work represents a collection of best teaching practices that can almost be viewed as universals and that can be found in any pedagogical text today.⁵⁵ The Jesuits' desire to educate students regardless of religious, cultural, and economic considerations, and to educate the whole person, to take action in society to help one's neighbors, represents the democratization of educational ideals found in public education today. Focusing on the needs of their students, getting to know them as individuals, adapting the curriculum to fit their level of education, taking care of the students' physical and mental well-being, making their own role as instructors a passive one, and informing students of their role in the world are all qualities of great educators and things from the Jesuit pedagogical model that instructors today should strive to emulate to better serve their students.

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⁵⁵ The California Common Core State Standards share many similarities with the *Ratio Studiorum* especially considering the skills and content knowledge that students should acquire by grade level, as well as how teachers should teach and assess mastery of said instruction. See *California Common Core State Standards: English Language Arts and Literacy in History/Social Studies, Science, and Technical Subjects* (Sacramento: California Department of Education, 2013), [online](#), accessed May 18, 2019; print version, ISBN 978-0-8011-1740-4.