
IGNATIAN IDENTITY AND LAY'S COLLABORATION IN EDUCATION LEADERSHIP IN A MULTICULTURAL SOCIETY OF INDIA

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Abstract:

Jesuit institutions worldwide are discerning their Ignatian identity in a multicultural context of the world with decreasing number of Jesuits and importance given for Jesuit-Lay collaboration in Jesuit education system. The responsibility of promoting Ignatian identity falls upon institution leaders and educators; however, to fulfil this enormous task, they need to develop their identity as Ignatian educators. Based on Empirical study the researcher tries to compare the study with two frustums — one with the active Jesuit presence and the other without their presence — to explore the Ignatian identity of institutional educators in a multicultural society of India. The findings suggest that institutional leaders and educators develop their identity as Ignatian leaders in multiple ways. They exhibit a strong sense of belonging and commitment to Jesuit culture, values, and principles. At the same time, the researcher recommends an important implication for practice that the educators, especially those who come from non-Jesuit background, need to have an on-going Ignatian formation programme organized by the Director for Mission and Identity so that leaders and educators may continue to grow in their identity as Ignatian educators in a changing context of the world.

Keywords:

Ignatian Pedagogy, Spiritual Practice, Lay's Collaboration, Jesuit Mission.

Main Paper:

Although the work of the Jesuits today embraces a wide variety of apostolates, ministries, and civil occupations, they are probably most well known for their educational work. Since the inception of the order, Jesuits have been educators. The 20th century witnessed both growth and decline of the order. Following a trend within the Catholic priesthood at large, Jesuit numbers peaked in the 1950s and has declined steadily since. Meanwhile, the number of Jesuit institutions has grown considerably and an increase in voluntary lay groups inspired in part by the Spiritual Exercises [The spirituality practiced by the Jesuits, called Ignatian spirituality, ultimately based on the Catholic faith and the gospels, is drawn from the Constitutions, The Letters, and Autobiography, and most specially from Ignatius' Spiritual Exercises, whose purpose is "to conquer oneself and to regulate one's life in such a way that no decision is made under the influence of any inordinate attachment".

The Exercises culminate in a contemplation whereby one develops a facility to "find God in all things".] Present paper tries to state that though the Jesuits are facing challenges of the declination in their number but with the Lay's collaboration the institutions are flourishing day by day. Now the question is, "What is a lay?" It can be defined the laity as those persons who are neither ordained nor consecrated Christian religious. To be a lay person is, either being baptized and are neither ordained nor consecrated, there seems to be nothing remarkable or notable about being a lay person.

Collaboration implies – indeed requires – some sort of equality: one collaborates with one's peers; one delegates to one's subordinates. What sort of equality does true collaboration require? First, the collaborators must have equal responsibility for the end result. Second, the contribution of each of the collaborators should have comparable dignity. Third, there must be a real difference in competence or office and in gifts and talents on the part of the collaborators: one does not collaborate with oneself.

Collaboration is possible when the mission is common: no one is 'lay, ordained or religious' has greater responsibility for the mission than any other, and no one is 'lay, ordained or religious' has greater dignity in that work than another, unless by virtue, not of vocation, but of holiness. All are familiar with this "secular" understanding: each person, it is argued, has a unique "world view" that is based upon his or her "belief system"; a different "belief system" would produce a different "world view".

The competence required for excellence in business or the sciences or the arts is itself an argument against a merely subjective view of reality. Just like a skilled surgeon has genuine competence that is not the product of a "belief system" but of application to the medical arts, there is a reality that is the measure of secular competence, and that reality is common to all persons.

There are 8 major characteristics that define Jesuit education:

- Person-oriented
- Integral
- Value-based
- Pursuing excellence
- Adapting for relevance
- Towards a just society
- Participative and
- Faith-inspired

The Ignatian Pedagogy Process (I.P.P.) means to introduce into the classroom and school life an Ignatian Way of Teaching and Administering. The I.P.P. draws its inspiration from the dynamics of the Spiritual Exercises and has 5 important elements:

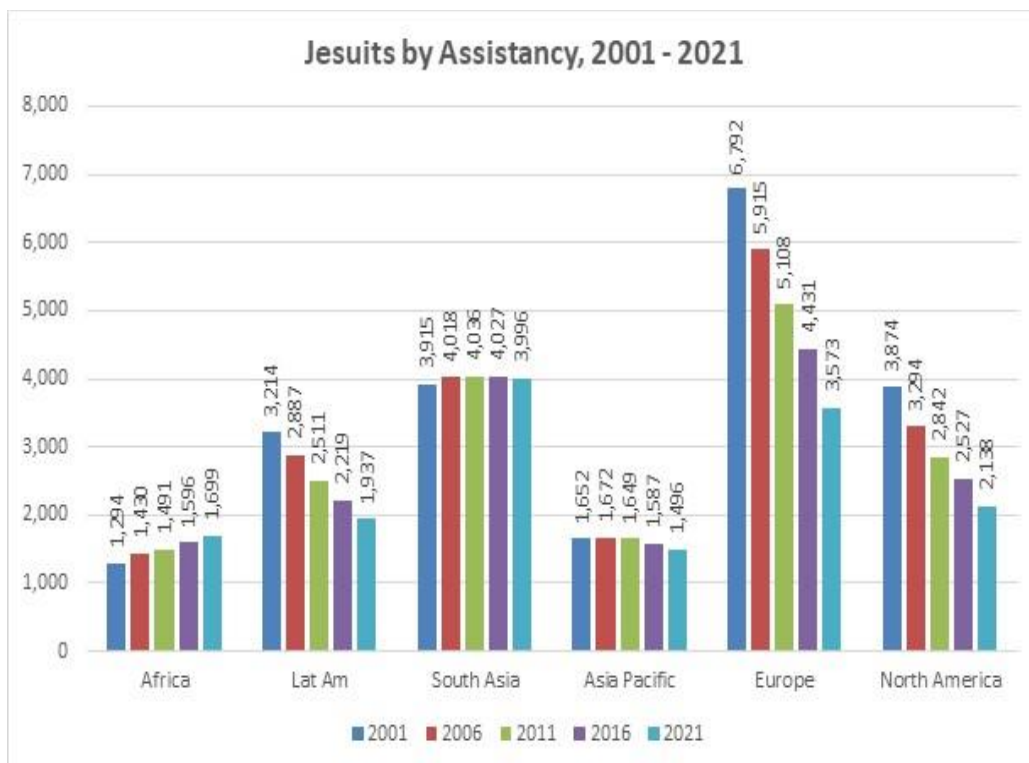
- Context
- Experience
- Reflection

- Action and
- Evaluation

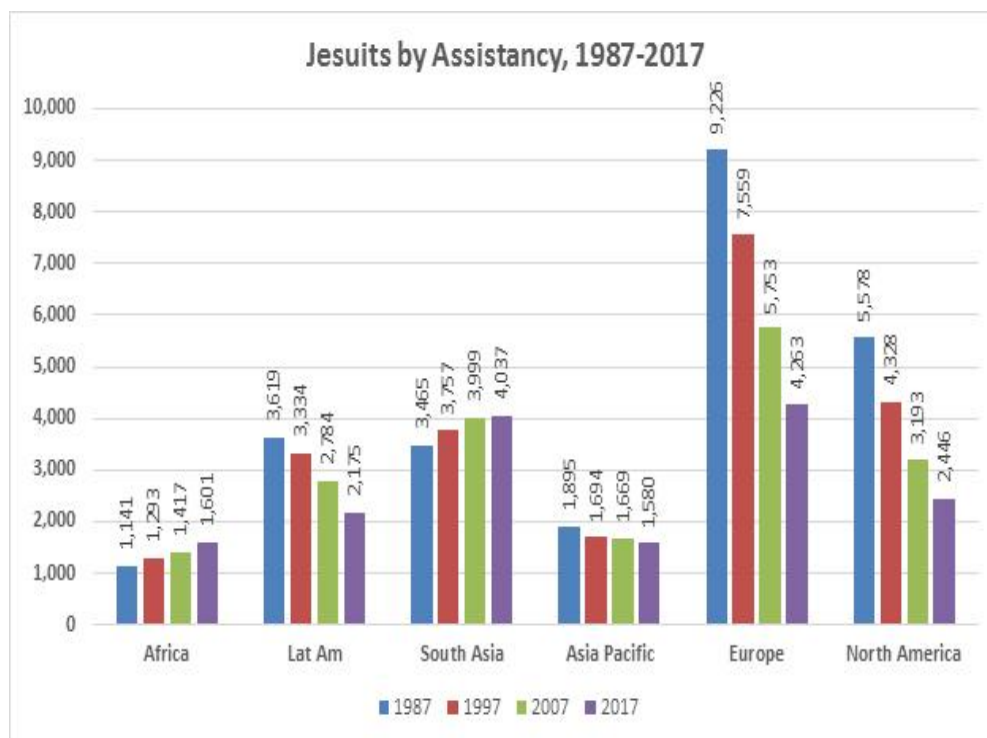
These are now applied to the ministry of teaching and learning. For administrative purposes the Society of Jesus is organized into 72 provinces and independent regions throughout the world. They then grouped into six geographic conferences or assistances:

- **Africa** – All of Africa and Madagascar except North Africa.
- **Latin America** – All of South America, Central America, Mexico, and the Caribbean.
- **South Asia** – India, Nepal, Sri Lanka, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Afghanistan, and Bhutan.
- **Asia Pacific** – Australia, Philippines, Indonesia, Korea, Japan, Vietnam, China, Malaysia, Thailand, Cambodia, East Timor, New Zealand, and Myanmar.
- **Europe** – Europe, Russia, Turkey, the Middle East, and North Africa.
- **North America** – United States (including Puerto Rico), Canada, Haiti, Belize and Micronesia

Since India comes under South Asia, we will consider the South Asia part from the graph shown below. The Data shows the total number of Jesuits at five-year intervals (2001, 2006, 2011, 2016, and 2021).



Also another data below shows the total number of Jesuits at ten year intervals (1987, 1997, 2007, and 2017)



Clearly it shows the declination in the South Asia region by 2019, 2020 2021 and 2022.

As of 1 January, 2022, there were 14,439 Jesuits in the world. They were broken down as follows: 583 novices, 2,587 scholastics, 837 brothers and 10,432 priests. However as of 1 January 2021, there were 14,818 Jesuits and in 2020, there were 15,306. It is really a challenge for the Jesuits to be the survival.

In the world, the Jesuits are responsible for 3,897 Educational Institutions in 96 countries. These Jesuit Educational Institutions engage the efforts of approximately 1, 34,303 teachers, educating approximately 29, 28,806 students. In India the Society of Jesus has founded 118 Primary & Middle Schools, 149 High Schools, 58 University Colleges, 22 Technical Institutes and 16 Business Administrations Institutes with 11,525 teachers, educating 3,34,538 students, belonging to every social class, community and linguistic group.

It has long been a staple of ministry for Jesuits worldwide, came a profound realization that collaboration with our lay colleagues and “people of good will” is no longer a nicety of ministry, but an absolute necessity. The simple reality is that it is now impossible to continue the mission set out for us without training, supporting, and depending on those who share the Ignatian vision.

The Ignatian vision is world-affirming. It assists in the total formation of each individual within the human community. It includes a religious dimension that permeates the entire education. It is an apostolic instrument that promotes dialogues between faith and culture. It pursues excellence in its work of formation and witnesses to the excellence. It insists on individual care and concern for each other. It emphasizes activity on the part of the student

and encourages life-long openness to growth. It is value-oriented. It encourages realistic knowledge, of the world in which we live. It is a preparation for active life commitment. It serves the faith that does justice, seeks to form men and women for others and manifests a particular concern for the poor.

It provides adequate Personal care and concern for others. It celebrates faith in personal and community prayer, worship and service. It stresses lay – Jesuits collaboration and relies on a spirit of community among administrators, teacher, parents, alumni and benefactors in an atmosphere that promotes community.

It adapts means and methods in order to achieve its aims most effectively with a common vision and a common goal. It assists providing the professional training and on – going formation that is needed especially for administrators and teachers.

Educational enterprise should have faith and justice dimension to bring about the social change. It means that the educated and the educators should be committed to faith and justice.

The Jesuit educational institutions shape students into agents of social change preparing them for concerted social action and thus paving the way to mass movement which will bring about the desired liberation.

They will in their admission policies actualize the preferential option for the poor by giving a privileged place to the weak who are poor economically and academically and form them as men for others stamped with the Ignatian hallmark of excellence and re-orienting itself in order to respond to the crying needs of today's society. They will also promote research in those branches of arts, sciences and relevant pedagogy which would help build a just social order.

To achieve these common goals:

For Jesuits

- An awareness and commitment to the vision.
- Involvement in neighbourhood ministry.
- Keep abreast of the changes on Higher Education.
- Commitment to higher education as a mission.

For Staff

- Training the staff to understand and accept the Jesuit vision and option
- Motivation to commit themselves to work for the poor
- Training in special skills related to integral formation
- Inclusion in planning and execution
- Encouragement in relevant research
- Provision for updating/on-going formation

For Students

- Courses on Personality Development
- Courses on leadership
- Courses on Human Rights
- Involvement in outreach neighbourhood programme
- Participation at various human rights issues
- Training in critical thinking
- Creating environmental awareness
- Training in civics and duties of a citizen
- Training in multi-religious tolerance
- Training to work as a team

The Jesuits are aware of the great structural constraints they work under and so they have real apprehensions as to how effective their educational institutions could be in bringing about the desired social change through social action. Yet, responding to the greater call to be pioneers and prophets, they engage themselves in this momentous task of liberation with a readiness to pay the price the kingdom demands.

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