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There is No Unique Jesuit Theory of Education


By James R. Kelly

In 1540 when Ignatius and his colleagues founded the Society of Jesus, the first teaching order, they made no mention at all of teaching in colleges. Their first ministries were among those not likely to be found in anyone's school's presbytery, prisons, hospitals, and battles. And for an order which felt identity was and is contemplative in action, it took a very long 42 years after they agreed—It had been their idea—to start a school in Messina, Italy, to give an official written account, in the *Batillos de Ignacio,* of what had become their primary apostolate. Moreover, the Jesuit is called upon to continue teaching students and young men in Jesuit institutions pedagogical actions—classroom practices, rules, curriculum.

We might say *A Jesuit Education Reader* is four and a half centuries late. But then, it takes a broadened sense of institutional crisis to produce a work of institutional contemplation. Worldwide, today there are nearly 200 Jesuit institutions of higher learning, and within each decade fewer Jesuits re-introduce examples of a contemporary spirituality and its underlying spirituality. Non-Jesuit perspectives already lead several American Jesuit Colleges and Universities. More telling, it is no longer an imperative for more than a few students at a Jesuit college to have had no Jesuit for their Card that premouse was ready in the retina. A Jesuit education reader is intended for university presidents, for teachers faculty and, indeed, for anyone seeking against some formidable cultural and academic pressures to make academic and research and scholarship an integrated vocation as well as a profession.

There’s much to admire in and just jump into this volume. We can begin with the basic: The editor immediately acknowledges that it is not a comprehensive reader of Jesuit contributions—which number less than a half a hundred among the others are several non-Catholics and even the president of Sociology Faculty—notwithstanding acknowledges that there is no unique Jesuit theory of education. A highly regarded scholar of Jesuit spirituality, Howard Gray, S.J., characterizes the Ignatian position of being “rigorous” to “complex” and “tricky” and explicitly questions the methodology’s purpose by asking, “can you initiate non-Jesuits, non-Christian, non-believers into a tradition that asks for appropriation” so that “they will want to appropriate its meaning and how they live and work?”

Indeed, in an appendix entitled “The way you speak Ignatian” the editor provides a 45 term glossary of Jesuit terms in English, such as *fide humana* can treat the following as a 90 percent correct persoonal language: “Finding God in all things Ignatian Jesuit values image monens and nuns for others, non-sinners, the service of faith and the promotion of justice the spiritual Exercises.” And, that honest again in the epilogue preceding the glossary Timothy Matunich cautions that the term that characterizes the Jesuit way of proceeding can quickly become a marketing name-brand that amounts to a Jesuit in name only that simply seduces a competitive educational excellence which in effect merely “subverts the privileges of an American middle-class lifestyle.” While it might be difficult to define the Jesuit approach to education is easy to fail. A Jesuit
While it might be difficult to define, the Jesuit approach to education is easy to fail.

Education lends itself to some deadly bashing. As we've seen in recent decades of critical sociology, there's a sense that Jesuit education is not relevant to the modern world. However, in his book "Practical Applications: Walking the Ignatian Jesuit Walk," Trilinear Tucker takes on this challenge.

Tucker's approach is to look at the Jesuit tradition through the lens of contemporary issues. He argues that Jesuit education, while not perfect, offers a unique perspective on the world that is often missing from other educational models. Tucker's book is a call to action for Jesuits to continue to challenge the status quo and to use their education to make a difference in the world.

For example, Tucker argues that Jesuit education should be more focused on social justice issues. He points to the work of Jesuits in different parts of the world who are using their education to help those in need. Tucker's book encourages Jesuits to continue this work and to use their education to make a difference in the world.

Overall, Tucker's book is a valuable resource for anyone interested in Jesuit education and its role in the modern world. It's a thought-provoking and inspiring read that challenges us to think about the role of education in our world today.