

Article

Not peer-reviewed version

Ignatian Leadership: A Hermeneutic Look at the Genesis, Development and Validity of Its Transformative Praxes

[José María Villanueva Núñez-Lagos](#)*, Ana García-Mina Freire, [Gonzalo Aza Blanc](#), [José María Guibert Ucin](#)

Posted Date: 3 April 2025

doi: 10.20944/preprints202504.0182.v1

Keywords: Ignatian Leadership; Ignatian spirituality; organisational management; leadership model; personal transformation



Preprints.org is a free multidisciplinary platform providing preprint service that is dedicated to making early versions of research outputs permanently available and citable. Preprints posted at Preprints.org appear in Web of Science, Crossref, Google Scholar, Scilit, Europe PMC.

Copyright: This open access article is published under a Creative Commons CC BY 4.0 license, which permit the free download, distribution, and reuse, provided that the author and preprint are cited in any reuse.

Article

Ignatian Leadership: A Hermeneutic Look at the Genesis, Development and Validity of Its Transformative Praxes

José María Villanueva Núñez-Lagos ^{1,*}, Ana García-Mina Freire ², Gonzalo Aza Blanc ²
and José María Guibert Ucin ³

¹ Faculty of Human and Social Sciences, Comillas Pontifical University, 28108, Madrid, Spain

² Department of Psychology, Comillas Pontifical University, 28108, Madrid, Spain

³ Department of Industrial Organisation, University of Deusto, 48007, Madrid, Spain

* Correspondence: jmvillanueva@comillas.edu

Abstract: This study explores the genesis, evolution, and contemporary relevance of the Ignatian Leadership as a transformative model that combines corporative management principles with the spirituality of Saint Ignatius of Loyola and the organisational tradition of the Jesuits. Using a qualitative approach, we carried out an exhaustive review of 54 documents and interviews with experts, thus incorporating different phenomenological perspectives. The results reveal that this leadership was founded to renew the apostolic mission of the Society of Jesus, modernise its educational management approach, and empower laypeople and Jesuits in managerial roles. The model is based on Ignatian spirituality, particular with regard to the principle of discernment, and focuses on serving others and contributing to the common good. Over time, it has transcended the Jesuit sphere, becoming a model that can be applied in various contexts, one that promotes counter-cultural practices, organisational transformation and contemporary forms of leadership. This shift of focus not only paves the way for institutional change but also guides individuals towards a more authentic and meaningful life.

Keywords: Ignatian Leadership; Ignatian spirituality; organisational management; leadership model; personal transformation

1. Introduction

Ignatian Leadership draws inspiration from the life and spirituality of Saint Ignatius of Loyola to seek the wisdom of this charism and bring the rich organisational tradition of the Society of Jesus to individuals, companies and modern-day organisations. This discipline combines the use of certain tools and entrepreneurial strategies related to organisational management (represented by the term “leadership”) with the spiritual foundations and practices of the Jesuits (inherent in the adjective “Ignatian”). These elements have allowed it to become a unified and transformative model (Guibert SJ., 2022).

Even though Saint Ignatius, in his time, was not acquainted with the terms now considered fundamental in the field of leadership and organisational management (talent management, transformational leadership, empowerment), his writings and way of developing and governing the Society of Jesus suggest that he possessed an intuitive understanding of these concepts and others (Bustinduy, 2014; Darmanin, 2005). Following a deep process of personal transformation, Saint Ignatius identified key principles of leadership and organisational culture that would go on to influence the development of the Jesuit Order, the global expansion of the Society of Jesus’

educational network,¹ (currently more than 2700 institutions worldwide). The Order's most prominent member today, Pope Francis, has himself been referred to as an example of a leadership marked by freedom and service (Lowney, 2013).

For these reasons, many voices outline the various effects of Ignatian Leadership when applied in different contexts, organisations, and individuals. Its conceptual development abides by a gradual process, shaped by the dialogue between management techniques and the Ignatian charism. The Spiritual Exercises of Saint Ignatius as a personal and individual experience, in combination with more organisational texts such as The Constitutions of the Society of Jesus and Ignatius' own correspondence concerning the management of various business projects, form the central base of this development (Guibert, 2016a).

That being said, the semantics involved, along with the systematisation and adaptability of its application, continue to call for studies that investigate their origins and periods of change. From this perspective, this research article contributes to the exploration of new interpretations on the social, managerial, ecclesiastical and Jesuit motivations and praxes that can explain and argue the validity of Ignatian Leadership in contemporary individuals and organizations.

2. Methodology

Our research framework was based on the interpretive paradigm in order to set out a methodological process composed of three phases: 1) the exploration and recovery of existing literature,² 2) an exhaustive and interpretative analysis of published and unpublished documents,³ and 3) the conducting of in-depth (semi-structured) interviews. The first step in this methodology was to explore the sources of information, retrieve documents and create an evidence base using the WOS, Scopus, EBSCO, Atla (Atla Religion Database and AtlaSerials), and Dialnet databases. For our database queries, we used key words in Spanish and English: *Liderazgo Ignaciano* (Ignatian leadership) and *líder ignaciano* (Ignatian leader).

As part of our literature review, we identified 248 articles that, in principle, met our selection criteria; however, a more in-depth reading allowed us to sift through this volume and discard 101 duplicate documents. After reviewing the remaining 147 documents, we proceeded to a second screening phase, resulting in the selection of 54 relevant documents. Our selection included a diverse variety of literature, such as scientific and informative articles, monographs, book chapters, conferences, lectures, journalistic articles, study programmes and doctoral theses. Furthermore, the bibliography of selected documents allowed us to ensure traceability and locate and consult additional documents. Due to the complicated nature of the methodological approach, we established a cooperative alliance with another researcher, with whom we agreed upon the inclusion and exclusion criteria as well as the observation of regulatory methodological criteria (Guba, 1989).⁴ Cohen's Kappa coefficient, with a score of 0.94, demonstrated a high level of reliability, revealing an optimal coherence between researcher and collaborator.

As part of our methodological journey, we reached out to the Secretariat of Education of the Curia of the Society of Jesus in Rome and with other Jesuits contributing to the development of

¹ Statistics published by Jesuit Universities on 12 September 2020 reveal that during that same year the Jesuit educational network had reached figures of 3.3 million students and more than 100 million former students. Reference.

² Our methodology is based on the Scoping Review method proposed by Arksey and O'Malley (2005), used to explore concepts and meanings and interpret evidence bases of specific areas of knowledge.

³ Regarding unpublished documents: communications and e-mails from Jesuit experts not included in databases.

⁴ Credibility, transferability, dependency and traceability. We followed these four principles to guarantee the scientific rigour of our study.

Ignatian Leadership such as Bernard Peeters SJ and Carlos Vásquez SJ, who allowed us to gain access to and review original unpublished documents (guidelines, minutes of congresses and other relevant internal documents). We examined publications such as *Educatio*, SJ News and the annual publication of the Society of Jesus, which collect information on collaborations between Jesuits and laypeople and training courses in administration and executive management from an Ignatian perspective. We also reviewed speeches and writings by Pedro Arrupe SJ. and Peter-Hans Kolvenbach SJ., former Superiors General of the Society of Jesus.

In addition to the literature review, five in-depth, semi-structured interviews were conducted with expert informants in Ignatian Leadership from around the world, who provided new information based on their own interpretative and experience-based analysis. In addition, they subsequently offered their own perspective on the conclusions, statements and reflections put forward in this study; this helped to strengthen the article's pluralistic approach.

3. Genesis, Context and Transformative Praxes

3.1. Ignatian Identity in Lay Managers

The concept of Ignatian Leadership emerged in the latter third of the 20th century in different parts of the world simultaneously, in response to a need to renew the government, identity and processes of Jesuit apostolic centres and schools (C. Vásquez SJ., personal correspondence, 15 July 2022).⁵ Three main factors led to the birth of this discipline, which was catalysed, from the very beginning, by a set of social, administrative, ecclesiastical and Jesuit circumstances.

The first factor was the need among lay teams (who occupied management roles in Jesuit schools) to acquire in-depth knowledge of the Ignatian spirit, in the aim of working in coherence with the mission of the Society of Jesus. The increasing numbers of laypeople occupying management positions was partially due to the impetus given to the figure of the layperson following the Second Vatican Council (1962-1965), which pushed for greater participation and responsibility of laypeople in mission and leadership positions within the Catholic Church and the Society of Jesus (Lagos, 2020; Montes, 2014). This occurred in conjunction with the continued reduction in religious vocations that led to a continued decrease in Jesuit presence in schools, a trend that continues to this day (Kolvenbach SJ., 1999), explained by the drop we have seen in Jesuit numbers, which have fallen from 36,000 in 1970 to 26,000 twenty years later and, according to the last census, to 14,195 in 2023.⁶ This decrease gave rise to various concerns and questions within the Jesuit Order regarding the guarantees of Christian and Ignatian identity in its educational institutions.

3.2. Corporate Capacity-Building of Jesuits and Laypeople

The second factor that contributed to the emergence of Ignatian Leadership was the growing demand for the professionalisation and modernisation of management in Jesuit educational institutions to respond to new educational policies and quality standards imposed by evaluation systems (E. Ocampo, personal correspondence, 13 March 2024; Codina, 1999). During the last few decades of the 20th century, these standards intensified in response to the educational reform measures implemented around the world to improve education quality, modify curricula, innovate teaching methods and assessment systems, and improve teacher training (Fullan, 2015).

The accumulation of these needs resulted in the conception and development of training programmes combining corporate management and organisational psychology content and tools with the spirituality and operational tradition of the Society of Jesus (E. Ocampo, personal correspondence, 13 March 2024). We find examples of such initiatives in the Jesuit Programme for

⁵ Information taken from an interview held 15 July 2022, conducted by Carlos Vásquez SJ., within the scope of the study.

⁶ Data collected from official Jesuit websites and the 2023 *De statu Societatis Iesu*.

Secondary Education Administrators of Fordham University, founded in 1978, and in similar programmes in Spain and certain countries in Latin America (Duminuco SJ., 1996).

It was within this context that the culminating moment of the Second Vatican Council and the beginning of Father Arrupe's term as Superior General focused attention on the Council's mandates for reform, as well as the need to permanently integrate faith in God within the ongoing fight against injustice (Madrigal, 2016). This led to a process of deep reflection within the Jesuit Order on their apostolic endeavours and their role in these activities (Montes, 2014), which undoubtedly explains the emergence of Ignatian Leadership as a model initiative of apostolic transformation in response to the demands for ecclesiastical and Jesuit renewal.

3.3. Further Explorations of Leadership Based on the Charism Itself

The third factor that influenced the genesis of Ignatian Leadership was the Jesuit aspiration of offering their students a leadership style based on Ignatian spirituality, rooted in serving others and achieving the common good (D. McCallum SJ., personal correspondence, 17 November 2023). Hence, at the end of the 20th century, an era marked by individualism, secularisation, inequality, the decline of major ideologies and the rise in experiences of existential ennui, the Jesuits felt impelled to offer their students a committed, meaningful way of life (Lipovetsky, 1983). In his address at the 1973 International Congress of Jesuit Alumni of Europe, Arrupe SJ. explicitly urged the Society to educate students with a greater sense of justice, to educate "men for others"; that is, to prepare them for service and to drive transformative change (Arrupe SJ., 1973).

The Order began to question the types of leaders they were training, as although these individuals were highly competent, they were not bringing about the positive social change expected of them. In 1986, the document *The Characteristics of Jesuit Education* highlighted that the traditional aim of this education was to train leaders to occupy positions of responsibility in society and exert positive influence over others, but he recognised that this ambition had led to excesses that needed to be remediated. Accordingly, the document states that the purpose of Jesuit education is "not to prepare a socio-economic elite, but rather to educate leaders in service" (International Commission on the Apostolate of Jesuit Education, ICAJE, 1986, p.36). Jesuit schools and universities were therefore asked to place special emphasis on the pursuit of the common good within their syllabus.

In Latin America, at a time when the region was stricken by inequality and poverty, we also saw the emergence of a strong desire to develop a type of leadership that would place the focus on building a more egalitarian society, something that would extend beyond the individual promotion of "successful individuals in failed societies" (Gorostiaga, 1999, p.12). Inspired by such ideas, Father Kolvenbach, Superior General of the Society of Jesus from 1983 and 2008, insisted on the importance of training leaders who would fight injustices and devote themselves to service; in his words, the need was to promote students "ready to be leaders concerned with society and the world [...] leaders-to-serve" (Kolvenbach, 1989, p.81).

In 1993, 46 deans of Jesuit Business Schools from around the world congregated for the first time at the ESADE in Barcelona in the aim of discussing how to train business leaders with a strong focus on ethics, and how to use the potential strength of this network of international business centres to influence the course of the global economy. This symposium represented an effort to promote an educational framework inspired by the Jesuit model that would incorporate Christian social thought and Ignatian spirituality business leader decision-making (*Centro Internacional de Actividades Educativas S.J.*, 1994).

The desire for a different kind of leadership was part of a larger movement that, between the 1980s and the 2000s, sought out new management models capable of tackling contemporary challenges, constant global change and public scandals in the political and corporate spheres. In response to this state of affairs, a variety of innovative theoretical models started to emerge and gain popularity, including transformational leadership, service leadership, ethical leadership, authentic leadership and adaptive leadership. This interest in a leadership within the Society of Jesus also

manifested itself in various publications such as the thesis of North American Jesuit Joseph O'Connell on leadership and decision-making in learning environments (1977), the Christian leadership trilogy by Indian Jesuit Anthony D'Souza, *Leadership: A Trilogy on Leadership and Effective Management* (1989), and the works of Maltese Jesuit Alfred Darmanin, *Developing Leadership Skills: A Training Manual for Leaders* (1992).

Taking these contextual elements into account, we see that Ignatian Leadership evolved from a concern for management and organisation of Jesuit education, manifested in the education of students in conjunction with the development of a distinctive and counter-cultural leadership style, to something that embraces the entire Jesuit apostolate. Consequently, the emergence of Ignatian Leadership may be interpreted as the Society of Jesus' adaptive and global response to the need for modernisation in the apostolate as a whole (Guibert SJ., 2022). In the words of Ruiz Pérez SJ., Ignatian Leadership addressed the intuitions and challenges of the Jesuit order and generated another frame of reference that would "modernise our apostolates, internal governance, and management and transform our institutions, applying Ignatian spirituality to the modern world" (F. McCallum SJ., personal correspondence, 19 April 2024). Our study also confirms a growing awareness of the potential of spirituality and Ignatian praxis in the configuration of a leadership that could be referred to as Ignatian.

4. Major Milestones in the Construction of Ignatian Leadership

4.1. Ideology and Precursor Documents of Ignatian Leadership

The term "leadership" was not, of course, used by Saint Ignatius of Loyola, nor does it figure in fundamental texts such as his *Spiritual Exercises* or the Constitutions of the Society of Jesus. Neither is the term commonly used in or associated with the Jesuit tradition (Guibert SJ., 2016b). Historically speaking, any references to leadership in the Society of Jesus have been made using terms such as "governance," "modus operandi" or "ministry" (Guibert SJ., 2017).

Despite the lack of registries explicitly documenting the first use of the term Ignatian Leadership, its genesis can be traced back to the 1970s and 1980s, when the term "apostolic leadership" was used. Later, in the 1990s, we saw the rise of expressions such as "Ignatian educational leadership," "Ignatian apostolic leaders," "Saint Ignatius style of leadership," "Jesuit style of leadership" or, simply, "Ignatian leadership." These expressions, however, were not frequently used, as the topic of leadership was not yet at the forefront of the Jesuit Order's concerns. For these reasons, it is important to differentiate between the terms Ignatian and Jesuit, which are sometimes used and interpreted as synonyms despite not referring to the same reality or meaning. While Jesuit leadership specifically refers to the leadership style practised by members of the Society of Jesus, Ignatian Leadership includes all people and organisations who wish to live, lead and take inspiration from this charism (Tang, 2011).

The first piece of literature identified as part of our study that makes explicit reference to the concept of Ignatian Leadership was coordinated by O'Connell, entitled *Ignatian Leadership in Jesuit Schools. Resources for Reflection and Evaluation* (1995). In this manual, Ignatian Leadership is linked to the *Spiritual Exercises* and to the ability to shape leaders who, following Jesus' example, will live a life of service to others and choose to do the greatest good possible (O'Connell SJ., 1995). The publication provides leadership-related resources to help management teams in Jesuit schools in the United States of America.

The first time the word "leadership" was used at the highest governance level of the Jesuit Order was in 1995, in the decrees of the 34th General Congregation "United with Christ on Mission." This document emphasises the capacity of laypeople to hold positions of greater responsibility in the Order's apostolic institutions (Decree 13: "Cooperation with the Laity in Mission," and Decree 19: "Parish Ministry"), praises the past and present leadership of women (Decree 14: "Jesuits and the Situation of Women in Church and Civil Society"), and encourages further cooperation between provincials (Decree 21: "Interprovincial and Supraprovincial Cooperation"). In the same vein, the

document stressed the need for maintaining the identity of these centres and the proper screening of managers (both lay and Jesuit), and demanded that training programmes be designed and implemented for these leaders, especially for Jesuit provinces unable to develop training programmes using their own resources (Decree 18: "Secondary, Primary and Non-formal Education").

4.2. Ignatian Leadership Training Programmes and International Popularisation

After the issuing of these decrees, the Jesuit Order's Education Secretariat, led by US Jesuit Father Duminuco SJ., noted that Spain, some Latin American countries and the United States of America had implemented such courses. However, it was found that many other regions in Africa, East and South Asia, Eastern Europe, and some other Latin American countries required similar programmes (Duminuco SJ., 1996).

The usual university courses in organisational management were professionally sound but did not integrate the Ignatian dimension, so they would proceed to seek out a programme that would synthesise sound professional management training with Ignatian spirituality for laypeople and Jesuits in educational management positions (Duminuco SJ., 2000). For these reasons, in 1996, the International Jesuit Education Leadership Project was launched. It ended up spanning 14 years and trained a large number of Jesuits and laypeople in leadership specifically based on Ignatian principles (Duminuco SJ., 2000).

This led to the construction of an international network of training programmes implemented in the United States of America, India, Hong Kong, Italy, Brazil, Poland, Indonesia, Australia, Taiwan and various African countries. These training sessions were also attended by staff from neighbouring countries. The training courses created as part of the International Jesuit Education Leadership Project, under the impetus of Fr Duminuco SJ., played a crucial role in catalysing and invigorating this vision of leadership within Jesuit institutions across five continents.

In 1999, the concept of Ignatian Leadership was mentioned once again in the Jesuit *Education Secretary Report on Secondary Education*. This paper highlighted that principals who came from a Jesuit background were well-versed in Ignatian spirituality but lacked management skills, while those without a Jesuit background possessed management skills but not been educated in Ignatian spirituality. The challenge was to unite both of these elements under the umbrella of Ignatian Leadership (Society of Jesus, 1999).

4.3. First Conceptual Approach by a Superior General of the Society of Jesus

The first reference to Ignatian Leadership made by a Jesuit Superior General highlighted during our review was made by Father Kolvenbach SJ. in 1999, during the Annual Meeting of the Congress of the Directors of Jesuit Secondary Schools of Europe (JECSE), entitled *Ignatian Leadership in Our Schools*, in the aim of conducting a thorough review of the authenticity of Jesuit schooling's identity and mission. Kolvenbach SJ. commended the choice of Ignatian Leadership as the theme of the Congress, as the identity and future of European Jesuit schools largely depended on the measures taken to provide this leadership training. The Jesuit Superior General thus acknowledged the decline in the number of Jesuits and the increasing involvement of laypeople in the management of educational institutions, stating that Jesuits no longer played, nor would they be able to play going forward, the leading role they once had. The important thing was that whoever managed and worked with the schools, Jesuit and laypeople alike, embodied the spirit of the Jesuit Order and channelled it through their practice (Kolvenbach SJ., *The Jesuit Mission*, 1999).

During his speech at the Congress, Fernando Lapuente SJ. made a comparison between Ignatian Leadership and transformational leadership, highlighting its core elements: mission of the organisations, personal reflection, collective discernment, accountability, care for others, lifelong learning and teamwork (Lapuente SJ., 1999).

4.4. First Structural Definition A Paradigm of Institutional Management and Way of Life

In the year 2000, Vásquez SJ. wrote *Liderazgo Ignaciano, Observaciones para Comprenderlo y Autoevaluarlo* ("Observations for Understanding and Self-Assessing Ignatian Leadership") in which we find - for the first time - a structured definition of Ignatian Leadership that extended beyond the institutional management model to approach Ignatian Leadership as a way of life. In one passage of this publication, the author defines Ignatian Leadership as:

[...] a lifestyle that, dedicated to the mission of Jesus Christ, draws inspiration from the *Spiritual Exercises* to direct and complement the process of human development in the pursuit of integral excellence, both of the individual and the community, by educating men and women for others, with others (Vásquez SJ., 2000, p.6).

Vásquez SJ. sets out the principle's main characteristics, based on the life of Saint Ignatius, his *Spiritual Exercises* and a form of leadership based on the availability, detachment, *magis*, discernment, accountability, personal accompaniment, love for others and oneness with God. Furthermore, his definition is accompanied by a self-assessment questionnaire to assess practical applications of Ignatian Leadership in educational institutions.

One year later, Vásquez SJ. published *Claves del Liderazgo Ignaciano*, ("The Keys to Ignatian Leadership") in which, basing his work on the Jesuit Constitutions, he establishes a parallel between the structure of the Society of Jesus and modern-day organisations, highlighting the overlaps between contemporary organisational theories and the structure Saint Ignatius applied to the religious order. In this publication, he points towards some constitutive aspects of the Society of Jesus that may be useful within organisations: it has a single mission that has remained unchanged since its origins, it dedicates itself to this mission, and it can be applied flexibly and in multiple ways "according to time, places and people" (Vásquez SJ., 2001, p.7).

Although the concept of Ignatian Leadership was generally well received, it has nonetheless had its detractors within the Society of Jesus, who viewed it as overly concerned with corporate and psychologising criteria or as a US import (Guibert SJ., 2014; Ruiz Pérez, 2024).

4.5. Introduction of the Concept in Jesuit Universities

Applications of Ignatian Leadership began to expand from secondary schools to Jesuit universities by the late 1990s and early 2000s. In the 2000 report by the Secretary of Education, plans are mentioned to launch projects targeting the development of Ignatian Leadership in Jesuit higher education. Two years later, Vásquez SJ., gave a lecture at the Seminar of the Association of Universities Entrusted to the Society of Jesus in Latin America (AUSJAL) on the topic of Identity and University, at the Catholic University of Uruguay, in which he linked Ignatian Leadership with the critical process of maintaining the identity of Jesuit universities (Vásquez SJ., 2002).

Ignatian Leadership thus proceeded to broaden its conceptual framework and scope of action to suit new educational contexts, proving that this leadership style was not only limited to people in managerial or responsibility-bearing positions, but could also be of use to the entire education community, whatever the role.

Another major milestone in the university sphere was the creation of the Ignatian University Leadership Training Programme for Latin America in 2002, an initiative led by the Universidad Javeriana in Colombia and coordinated by AUSJAL. This programme, the first edition of which was implemented in 2007, became an all-encompassing experience aimed at promoting the personal development, strengthening of faith and social commitment of Latin American students in Jesuit universities through immersion in working class urban communities, spiritual retreats and practical leadership workshops. Students from 16 Jesuit universities, belonging to 12 countries⁷, appreciated

⁷ As of July 2024, the total number of students graduated up to July 2024 has reached 4699, according to the information provided by the coordinators of the Ignatian University Leadership Training Programme for Latin America (Coordinación del Programa de Formación en Liderazgo Universitario Ignaciano para América Latin).

how this experience helped them to reflect on the role of God's calling in their lives and how to contribute to the social good. This programme exemplifies Ignatian Leadership as a comprehensive paradigm for transforming one's own existence (Izquierdo, 2010).

4.6. Publication of the Book *Heroic Leadership* by Lowney

The increased accessibility and popularisation of Ignatian Leadership among people of different faiths and religious and non-religious companies and organisations was brought about in 2003 with the publication of *Heroic Leadership: Best Practices from a 450-Year-Old Company That Changed the World* by Chris Lowney, who was a Jesuit novice for several years before becoming a managing director at JP Morgan. In this successful book, Lowney applies Ignatian spirituality and the best practices of the Society of Jesus, to modern personal and organisational leadership, identifying four key pillars: self-awareness, ingenuity, love and heroism. The various challenges encountered by Lowney at JP Morgan pushed him to consider the use of Jesuit wisdom in a corporate context. For these reasons, Lowney, confident in the potential popularity of the Jesuit premise, confesses that he wrote the book "in a totally intuitive and informal manner, in an attempt to apply Ignatian wisdom to the secular and corporate world" (C. Lowney, personal correspondence, 28 February 2024).

Lowney was not aware of the development of Ignatian Leadership and, as such, there is no explicit mention of the term in his book, in which he opts instead for the expression "Jesuit-style leadership" as the concept was more familiar to US readers.⁸ In the interview carried out in 2024, Lowney shared that he had never heard the term "Ignatian Leadership" nor had he been aware of the existence of a leadership style related to the Jesuits. He maintains that "there are maybe documents that address the concept, but I never read them nor had I ever heard of the idea. I never thought I was contributing to a field known as Ignatian Leadership" (C. Lowney, personal correspondence, 28 February 2024).

In his book, he stresses that every person is a leader, at least of their own life, contributing to the developing discipline known as workplace spirituality, based on the argument that spiritual principles and values can be integrated into the workplace environment. He also extended the possibility, discussed internally in the Society of Jesus, that Ignatian Leadership could be applied to people and businesses of all kinds, regardless of whether they are religious or not.

This link between Ignatian Leadership and the corporate world was strengthened in 2005 with the publication of an article by Maltese Jesuit Alfred Darmanin SJ., entitled "Ignatian Spirituality and Leadership in Organizations Today," in an issue of *The Review of Ignatian Spirituality* (CIS) dedicated to leadership and Ignatian spirituality. Darmanin SJ. (2005) identified the parallels between the principles of Ignatian spirituality and modern leadership in organisations. It is true that the shared purpose that guides Jesuits, forged through the common and comprehensive formation of its members, finds its equivalent in the corporate goal of uniting teams under a shared vision and mission. Likewise, the common discernment that underpins Ignatian spirituality resembles the decentralised and participatory decision-making we find in contemporary organisations.

4.7. Ignatian Leadership as a Transformative Tool

⁸ When Lowney sent the manuscript to various publishers, he was pitching the book under the title *The First Modern Multinational: Jesuit Lessons in Leadership*. However, Jesuit publisher Loyola Press suggested he change it to *Heroic Leadership*. Despite his initial objections regarding the omission of the word "Jesuit" and the reference to only one of the four pillars he outlines in the book, Lowney eventually agreed to the new title. The Spanish translation, however, did in fact include the word "Jesuit" in the title, *El Liderazgo al Estilo de los Jesuitas* - "Jesuit-Style Leadership" (Lowney, personal conversation, 2024).

The 35th General Congregation of the Society of Jesus, held in 2008, marked a significant step forward, calling on Jesuits and laypeople in leadership positions to undergo leadership training (Decree 5: Governance). This mandate was not specifically limited to Jesuit schools, but encompassed all projects run by the Society of Jesus in universities, social and pastoral centres, demonstrating the need for Ignatian leadership as part of a much wider scope of knowledge. Decree 5 of this Congregation emphasised that these training programmes must address areas such as management skills, communication, common discernment, leadership principles, skills required for effective membership of a board of governance, teamwork and principles of Ignatian leadership.

Following this decree, many courses, seminars and sessions were introduced, addressing the principle of Ignatian Leadership as a means of renewal within the Society of Jesus. Since then, this process of renewal has encompassed a number of significant apostolic areas, including:

- Laity: The shared mission of Jesuits and laypeople has become an increasingly prominent issue for the Society of Jesus during the last few decades, something which is expected to be very fruitful.
- Institutions and their governance: This leadership also encompasses the identity, strategy and modes of governance of the projects and institutions attributed to the Jesuit Order. Major initiatives are being carried out in these areas (Province of Spain, 2018 and 2021).
- Discernment and planning: Ignatian Leadership is also interrelated with other forms of Jesuit governance and life, specifically with regard to discernment and apostolic planning. Further highlighting the interest in this topic, the conference “Apostolic Planning for Renewal and Transformation” was held in December 2023 in Rome, convened by the Jesuit curia, under the direction of the Councillor for Discernment and Apostolic Planning. This event reveals that “Ignatian Leadership” is considered by the Society not only as a concept of study or a discipline to be included in school and university curricula, nor simply as something to be offered to external companies and organisations, but as an approach that should be further developed and applied within the Jesuit Order, its mission, its institutions, and its plans for renewal and transformation.

In this historical context, the concept of Ignatian Leadership inspired a growing, expansive wave of literary production. In 2010, Jesuits Byron and Connor published the book *Principles of Ignatian Leadership* which presents 21 ideas relating to Ignatian spirituality applied to organisations, touching on principles such as *magis*, humility, consideration, discernment and love. In this book, Ignatian principles - beyond belief and Jesuit practice - they propose a wider application of this leadership in all organisations, including complex, fully secular environments (Byron and Connor, 2016). This literary expansion of Ignatian Leadership also saw the emergence of prolific works by Spanish Jesuit José María Guibert SJ., whose contributions include papers, articles and texts such as *Liderazgo y Valores Ignacianos, Diccionario de Liderazgo Ignaciano o Liderazgo basado en la amistad* (“Ignatian Values and Leadership: a Dictionary of Ignatian or Friendship-Based Leadership”), in which he presents around fifty leadership recommendations based exclusively on the Society’s Constitutions.

Other authors such as Karel San Juan (2007), Dufresne, Botto and Steele (2015), Lozano (2017), Rothausen (2017), Broscombe (2017, 2018), Lagos (2020), and Go (2022), have delved further into the study of Ignatian Leadership, contributing various theoretical perspectives to periodicals such as AUSJAL, Manresa, Promotio Iustitiae, The Review of Ignatian Spirituality (CIS) and others. These contributions reveal conceptual and practical differences and similarities and help generate a higher volume of specialised literature.

On the other hand, the validity of the concept and significance of Ignatian Leadership is evidenced by the increase in research centres in Jesuit universities and business schools (Broscombe, 2017; Guibert, 2011; Tran and Carey, 2018), such as the Ignatian Leadership Institute at Loyola Marymount University in Los Angeles, and the inclusion of specific courses in Ignatian Leadership offered by many universities and educational institutions (Fernández, 2018).

To coordinate and strengthen these initiatives at international level, the International Association of Jesuit Universities (IAJU) created the Committee for Mission Integration in 2017, tasked with the strategic development of the Ignatian Leadership strand in teaching, research and

service across all Jesuit universities worldwide. Father David McCallum SJ. chaired this committee between 2018-2020, contributing to the integration and expansion of Ignatian Leadership in educational spheres and other areas of human knowledge and activity (Fernández, 2018).

One example of how Ignatian Leadership was incorporated into the teaching syllabus can be seen at Comillas Pontifical University which, under the impetus of Jesuits Julio Martínez and Elías López, introduced a mandatory course module on Ignatian Leadership for all undergraduate students. As explained by Aizpun and Aguado (2019), by taking inspiration from the life of Saint Ignatius and using Ignatian spirituality as a guide, this course allows the student to explore their own identity and gain more inner freedom. Furthermore, the module provides opportunities to reflect from a faith-based perspective and explore God's calling. This aligns with the educational mission of Jesuit universities, which is to train the individual as a whole and encourage students to ask themselves the essential questions of "Who are we?" and "Why are we here?" (Kolvenbach SJ., 1991; Villa and Lemke, 1996).

Similar academic courses appeared during these years marked by moral relativism, the globalisation of superficiality (Nicolás, 2010), a lack of stable reference figures, and the struggle for long-term reflection and commitment; courses designed for the individual who is over-saturated with the numerous, constant stimuli of the contemporary world. This is the case of the Vocational Culture Project, backed by the Jesuit Universities of Spain, which encourages students reflect deeply on important existential questions ("Learning to serve", Apostolic Project by the UNIJES University Sector, 2021-2025), and promotes and reinforces the search for meaning pursued by students, whose lives and vocations may be traversed by very strong subjective, individualistic and superficial factors (Etxeberria, 2008).

It is also worth noting the Ignatian Leadership Training Programme (*Plan de Formación en Liderazgo Ignaciano*), implemented since 2011 by the Jesuit Province of Spain in Loyola and Seville. This programme, which lasts over a year, deepens the Ignatian charism and fosters collaboration between stakeholders in different sectors - pastoral, educational, and social – encouraging them to take on responsibilities in the governance of Jesuit institutions (Loyola Province, 2013).

These transformative Ignatian Leadership incentives have roused great interest in the concept, either in the interests of reforming organisations and companies or to bring about personal and spiritual change. Its strong Ignatian identity, its flexible scope of application, and its effectiveness in the face of complexity, make Ignatian Leadership a model apt for the creation of new, counter-cultural, committed, deep forms of 21st century leadership, based on the teachings of Saint Ignatius of Loyola and the organisational tradition of the Society of Jesus.

5. Final Thoughts

Our exhaustive literature review and the analytical perspectives of our interviewees come together to describe the phenomenological field that gave rise to Ignatian Leadership. This context is marked by the need for a paradigm shift at various points in history and by urgent calls for leaders committed to serving the common good. Against this backdrop of deep social and ecclesiastical change, a leadership model inspired by Saint Ignatius was born, evolved, and has now become the Jesuits' paradigm for apostolic renewal.

Subsequently, the Society of Jesus has successfully managed to unite its rich spiritual tradition with modern management principles. Efforts to unite Ignatian spirituality with organisational management centred around three main objectives: to train laypeople in leadership positions with an Ignatian identity, to professionalise educational management and to develop a leadership model focused on service, love for one's neighbour, and the common good. This study has established Ignatian Leadership as an inter and cross-disciplinary subject shaped by many, one that has given rise to various contributions, aspirations and actions from a wide range of physical and intellectual regions of the Jesuit world. Its influence has nonetheless extended beyond this scope, embracing other areas of human social activity. This ease with which it can be integrated into the secular world is a

key factor in its development, inspiring new adaptive ways of drawing on its spiritual and managerial strengths to tackle contemporary challenges faced by individuals and organisations alike.

For these reasons, based on the input from the study's interviewees and our interpretative analysis of Jesuit literature, we can conclude that the same transformative beliefs of Saint Ignatius that shaped his own leadership style live on to this day, in our increasingly complex and connected human ecosystem. Our present-day context is also marked by growing individualism that fractures and distances the self from its social and Christian mission. A hermeneutic approach to Ignatian leadership allows us to adopt a broader perspective, helping us to develop new visions imbued with a Jesuit identity and interdisciplinary approaches to restoring human coexistence in a wide range of cultures, organisations and contexts. However, this process of renewal requires us to invoke our own humanity by means of spiritual exercises and to lead in an Ignatian-inspired manner towards a free, committed and hopeful existence.

This study was not without its limitations, all of which can be evaluated and overcome by subsequent studies, including restrictions on access to Jesuit documents and difficulties in collecting bibliographical data from unpublished internal writings. Moreover, the scarcity of peer-reviewed journal articles on the topic of Ignatian Leadership may have reduced the diversity of perspectives and limited the depth of our literature analysis. Additionally, the interviews conducted may in some cases have been affected by the subjectivity of their testimonies and insufficient provision of information in key passages, which may have limited our theorisation.

Ignatian Leadership is an emerging field of study that requires greater systematisation and consensus due to the breadth and ambition of its objectives. At present, the field is made up of propositional texts and fragmented realities. In the years to come, it is essential that new studies come to the fore to evaluate the effectiveness of these training plans and the impact of the existing literature.

As Ignatian Leadership is an ever-expanding model, it offers immense potential for continued growth in a variety of fields, leading to the discovery of new meanings and applications. Its theoretical framework could inspire a wide range of future studies examining its applications in different realms of community life, not to mention in organisations and companies from different sectors, particularly those oriented towards the common good. It would also be valuable to conduct a systematic review of its theoretical conceptualisation, a comparative analysis of current educational programmes and a rigorous evaluation of the impact of Ignatian Leadership on the transformation of individuals and organisations.

Author Contributions: José María Villanueva: Design, Data curation, Formal analysis, Research, Methodology, Writing – original draft, Writing – editing and proofreading. Ana García-Mina: Design, Data curation, Formal analysis, Research, Methodology, Writing – original draft, Writing – editing and proofreading. José María Guibert: Writing – editing and proofreading. Gonzalo Aza: Writing – editing and proofreading.

Funding: This research received no external funding.

Institutional Review Board Statement: Not applicable.

Informed Consent Statement: Not applicable.

Data Availability Statement: No new data were created or analysed in this study. Data sharing is not applicable to this article.

Conflicts of Interest: The authors declare no conflict of interest.

Reference

1. Aizpún, Ana y Aguado, Juan (2019). Jóvenes y Liderazgo Ignaciano. *Manresa*, 358(91), 29-42.
2. Arksey, Hilary & O'Malley, Lisa (2005). Scoping Studies: Towards a Methodological Framework. *International Journal of Social Research Methodology*, 1(8), 19-32. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1364557032000119616>
3. Arrupe, Pedro (1973). *La Promoción de la Justicia y la Formación en las Asociaciones de Antiguos Alumnos*. [Discurso de clausura]. X Congreso de la Confederación Europea de Antiguos Alumnos de la Compañía de Jesús. Valencia, España.

4. Broscombe, Sarah (1 de septiembre de 2017). *What is Ignatian Leadership?* <https://www.thinkingfaith.org/articles/what-ignatian-leadership>
5. Broscombe, Sarah (2018). Características del Liderazgo Ignaciano: Una Orientación que da Fruto. *Promotio Iustitiae*, 125, 13-17.
6. Bustinduy, Iñaki (2014). Actualidad y Vigencia del Liderazgo Ignaciano. *Capital Humano*, 285, 51-56.
7. Byron, William & Connor, James (2016). *Principles of Ignatian Leadership: A Resource for a Faith Committed Life*. Mahwah, New Jersey: Paulist Press.
8. Centro Internacional de Actividades Educativas S.J. (1994). Reunión Internacional de Presidentes, Rectores y Principales de Universidades Jesuíticas. *Education SJ*, 3, 1-8.
9. Centro Internacional de Educación S.J. (1997). La Pedagogía Ignaciana en Marcha. Profundizando Conceptos y Experiencias. *Education SJ*, 1, 1-20.
10. Codina, Gabriel (1999). *Cuatrocientos Años de La Ratio Studiorum 1599-1999*. Barcelona: Educatio SJ.
11. Compagnie de Jésus (17-22 mai 1999). *Rapport sur L'Education Dans la Compagnie*. Secretariat pour l'Education. L'ICAJE.
12. Comisión Internacional para el Apostolado Educativo de la Compañía de Jesús (ICAJE) (1986). *Características de la Educación de la Compañía de Jesús*. Madrid: CONEDSI. <https://jesuitas.es/es/documentos/category/7-educacion-educsi>
13. Darmanin, Alfred (2005). Ignatian Spirituality and Leadership in Organizations Today. *Review of Ignatian Spirituality*, 109, 1-14.
14. Duminuco, Vicent (1996). *Brief Description of the International Jesuit Education Leadership Project* (The Preliminary Plan). New York, USA: Personal Communication.
15. Duminuco, Vicent (2000). *International Jesuit Educational Leadership Project. Summary Report*.
16. Dufresne, Ronald., Botto, Karin & Steele, E. Springs (2015). Contributing to an Ignatian Perspective on Leadership. *Journal of Jesuit Business Education*, 1(6), 1-19.
17. Etxeberria, Xabier (2008). Fides - I: Cultivar la Dimensión Transcendente. *Revista de Fomento Social*, 252(63), 691-714. <https://doi.org/10.32418/rfs.2008.252.2048>
18. Fernández, José (2018). Management, Liderazgo Ignaciano y Filosofía Moral. *Revista Portuguesa de Filosofia*, 2-3(74), 473-508. DOI: 10.17990/RPF/2018_74_2_0473
19. Fullan, Michael (2015). *The New Meaning of Educational Change* (5.^a ed.). New York: Teachers College Press.
20. Gergen, Kenneth (1997). *El Yo Saturado: Dilemas de Identidad en el Mundo Contemporáneo*. (Trad. Leandro Wolfson). Barcelona: Paidós Ibérica.
21. Go, Johnny (2022). Leader, Community and Mission - the Triangle of Ignatian Leadership. *Horizons of Education*, 57(21), 107-115. DOI: 10.35765/hw.2022.57.11
22. Gorostiaga, Xabier (1999). En Busca del Eslabón Perdido entre Educación y Desarrollo: Desafíos y Retos para la Universidad en América Latina y el Caribe. *Estudios de Deusto*, 1(47), 11-54. [https://doi.org/10.18543/ed-47\(1\)-1999pp11-54](https://doi.org/10.18543/ed-47(1)-1999pp11-54)
23. Guibert, José (2011). Liderazgo y Valores Ignacianos. *Estudios Empresariales*, 137(3), 48-55.
24. Guibert, José (2014). Liderazgo Ignaciano, Ocasión de Renovación en Identidad y Misión. *Manresa*, 341(86), 317-328. <https://pedagogiaignaciana.com/biblioteca-digital/biblioteca-general?view=file&id=2785>
25. Guibert, José (2016a). Liderazgo ignaciano y gobernanza en las universidades de la Compañía de Jesús. *Arbor*, 192 (782): a364. doi: <http://dx.doi.org/10.3989/arbor.2016.782n6009>
26. Guibert, José (2016b). Liderazgo Ignaciano y Práctica Empresarial. *Estudios Empresariales*, 150-151, 49-60.
27. Guibert, José (2017). *El Liderazgo Ignaciano: Una Senda de Transformación y Sostenibilidad*. Cantabria: Sal Terrae.
28. Guibert, José (2021) *Liderazgo basado en la amistad. Cincuenta recomendaciones ignacianas*. Cantabria: Sal Terrae.
29. Guibert, José (2022). Construir Juntos: Aportes del Liderazgo Ignaciano a la Sinodalidad. *Manresa*, 373(94), 359-370.
30. Izquierdo, Jorge (2010). *Transformaciones en los Proyectos de Vida Profesional de Estudiantes de la Pontificia Universidad Javeriana Cali, Generados en el Programa de Liderazgo Universitario Ignaciano para América Latina*. (Tesis de Maestría, Universidad del Valle). <https://hdl.handle.net/10893/10114>

31. Kolvenbach, Peter (1989). En el Segundo Centenario de la Enseñanza Jesuítica en los Estados Unidos de América [Georgetown, 8 de junio 1989]. En Peter Kolvenbach, *Discursos Universitarios* (pp.74-86). UNIJES. <https://unijes.net/wp-content/uploads/2021/10/Kolvenbach-Discursos-Universitarios.pdf>
32. Kolvenbach, Peter (14 de noviembre de 1991). Congreso de Estudios Internacionales sobre la Pedagogía Ignaciana. [Discurso de apertura]. Messina, Italia. <https://www.flacsi.net/wp-content/uploads/2016/12/Kolvenbach-P.H.-1991-Congreso-Internacional-Pedagogi%CC%81a-Ignaciana-Messina.pdf>
33. Kolvenbach, Peter (20 de octubre de 1999). *Mensaje del P. General* [Mensaje escrito de aliento]. Congreso de Directores de Escuelas Secundarias Jesuitas de Europa, Rocca di Papa, Roma, Italia. <https://eduignaciana.tripod.com/docs.htm>
34. Lagos, Dagoberto (2020). *La «Caridad Discreta» (Co 582): Ayer y Hoy*. (Trabajo Fin de Máster, Comillas Universidad Pontificia). <http://hdl.handle.net/11531/48148>
35. Lapuente, Fernando (1999). *Síntesis sobre Liderazgo Ignaciano en Relación con las Orientaciones Actuales de la Compañía para la Transformación de la Cultura, la Evolución en el Campo del Diálogo Interreligioso y la Solidaridad Internacional* [Sesión de congreso]. Congreso de Directores de Escuelas Secundarias Jesuitas de Europa, Rocca di Papa, Roma, Italia.
36. Lipovetsky, Gilles (1983). *La Era del Vacío. Ensayos sobre el Individualismo Contemporáneo*. (Trad. Joan Vinyoli y Michèle Pendants). Barcelona: Anagrama.
37. Lowney, Chris (2013). *Pope Francis: Why He Leads the Way He Leads*. Chicago: Loyola Press.
38. Lowney, Chris (2021), *El liderazgo de los jesuitas. Autoconciencia, ingenio, amor, heroísmo*, Santander, Sal Terrae. [Original: *Heroic Leadership: Best Practices from a 450-Year-Old Company That Changed the World*, Loyola Press, Chicago, 2005]
39. Lozano, Josep (2017). Leadership: The Being Component. Can the Spiritual Exercises of Saint Ignatius Contribute to the Debate on Business Education? *Journal of Business Ethics*, 145(4), 795-809. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10551-016-3117-7>
40. Madrigal, Santiago (2016). Pedro Arrupe y el Concilio Vaticano II. *Estudios Eclesiásticos*, 356(91), 143-172. <https://revistas.comillas.edu/index.php/estudiosesclasticos/article/view/7021>
41. Montes, Javier (2014). *Líderes para la misión. Apuntes para un liderazgo apostólico desde la espiritualidad ignaciana*. (Tesina, Boston College School of Theology and Ministry).
42. Nicolás, Adolfo (23 de abril de 2010). *Retos para la Educación Superior Jesuita Hoy* [Sesión de conferencia]. Conferencia Redes para la Educación Superior Jesuita: Configurar el Futuro para un Mundo Humano, Justo, y Sostenible de la Compañía de Jesús, México D.F., México. http://www.sjweb.info/documents/ansj/100423_Mexico_ESP.pdf
43. O'Connell, Joseph (Coord.) (1995). *Ignatian Leadership in Jesuit Schools. Resources for Reflection and Evaluation*. Washington, D.C.: JSEA.
44. Provincia de España (2018). *Obras de la Compañía al servicio de la misión*, <https://infosj.es/documentos/category/161-proceso-de-planificacion> [consultado en julio de 2024]
45. Provincia de España (2021). *Buen gobierno ignaciano*, <https://infosj.es/documentos/category/161-proceso-de-planificacion> [consultado en julio de 2024]
46. Provincia de Loyola (2013). *Liderazgo ignaciano*, Bilbao [publicado en Guibert, 2017]
47. Rothausen, Teresa (2017). Integrating Leadership Development with Ignatian Spirituality: A Model for Designing a Spiritual Leader Development Practice. *Journal of Business Ethics*, 4(145), 811-829. DOI: 10.1007/s10551-016-3241-4
48. San Juan, Karel (2007). *The Spiritual Formation of Leaders Based on the Ignatian Tradition*. Washington: Gonzaga University.
49. Tang, Yong (2011). *Jesuit Leadership as Companionship in the Lord*. (Tesina, Boston College School of Theology and Ministry). <http://hdl.handle.net/2345/2502>
50. Tran, Dung & Carey, Michael (2018). Toward a Discerning Mind and Heart: An Ignatian Approach to Workplace Spirituality and Spiritual Leadership. In Satinder Dhiman, Gary Roberts, Joanna Crossman (Eds), *The Palgrave Handbook of Workplace Spirituality and Fulfillment* (pp.753-772). London: Palgrave Macmillan. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-62163-0_26

51. Universidades Jesuitas (12 de septiembre de 2020). *Mapeando el Mundo Jesuita de Universidades, Escuelas y Proyectos Educativos*. <https://unijes.net/2020/12/07/mapa-universidades-jesuitas/>
52. Universidades Jesuitas (2021). Saber para Servir. Proyecto Apostólico del Sector Universitario UNIJES 2021-2025. https://unijes.net/wp-content/uploads/2022/03/UNIJES_PASU-y-OE-2025-Saber-para-Servir_online.pdf
53. Vásquez, Carlos (2000). *El Liderazgo Ignaciano. Observaciones para Comprenderlo y Autoevaluarlo*. En Pontificia Universidad Javeriana Cali (Ed.), Documento de Trabajo del Diplomado sobre Pedagogía Ignaciana. Pontificia Universidad Javeriana Cali.
54. Vásquez, Carlos (julio de 2001). *Claves del Liderazgo Ignaciano* [Sesión de conferencia]. Santiago de Cali, Colombia. <https://pedagogiaignaciana.com/biblioteca-digital/biblioteca-general?view=file&id=179:claves-del-liderazgo-ignaciano&catid=8>
55. Vásquez, Carlos (junio de 2002). *Proceso de Construcción de una Identidad Ignaciana*. [Sesión de seminario]. Seminario AUSJAL sobre Identidad y Universidad. Universidad Católica del Uruguay, Montevideo, Uruguay.
56. Villa, Aurelio y Lemke, Carl (2016). El «paradigma Ledesma-Kolvenbach»: Origen y concreción en el ámbito universitario. *Arbor*, 192 (782): a358. doi: <http://dx.doi.org/10.3989/arbor.2016.782n6003>

Disclaimer/Publisher's Note: The statements, opinions and data contained in all publications are solely those of the individual author(s) and contributor(s) and not of MDPI and/or the editor(s). MDPI and/or the editor(s) disclaim responsibility for any injury to people or property resulting from any ideas, methods, instructions or products referred to in the content.