

The Ignatian Pedagogical Paradigm

IN THEORY AND IN PRACTICE

Ignatian Pedagogy is rooted in the Spiritual Exercises devised in the 16th century by Saint Ignatius of Loyola, the founder of the Society of Jesus. It is founded on the belief that Jesuit education goes beyond the mere transmission of information from professor to student toward a transformational experience that affects the student on all levels—cognitive, certainly, but also emotional and behavioral. The idea in this paradigm is not to limit this kind of learning to special “Ignatian courses” but to consider the possibility that it might be relevant across a wide range of disciplines and classes.

The Ignatian Pedagogical Paradigm consists of five elements, in which everyday terms have specific meanings.

Summary explanation:

How you might engage these components in class:

CONTEXT

In planning their courses, faculty reflect on the current context of the world, community, and campus as the backdrop for the students’ learning. They also reflect on the context of their students’ lives. *Cura personalis*—personal care and concern for the individual—invites teachers to become conversant with the life experience of the learner and to pay careful attention to the dynamics of the classroom environment.

Find out who your students are, perhaps through in-class surveys or required office hours meetings or just through informal conversation at the beginning and end of class—not just their academic performance in the class, but their larger interests and life situations—and invite their previous experiences into class.

EXPERIENCE

Whether students are doing community-based learning, completing a math problem set, or analyzing a text, they are meant to do more than absorb the facts; they are meant to actively engage the material in a holistic way. The process (*how*) of the learning becomes as relevant as the content (*what*) of learning.

Make class experiential by promoting active learning and also by asking students to engage with the material on an emotional, personal, and societal level, asking how they feel about what they’re learning and how it might be relevant to them and to the world.

REFLECTION

Students engage in a process of reflection and meaning-making on their integration of new ideas and concepts. This is an opportunity for deeper insight to arise, and for the students to grapple with their affective response to what they have learned and how it moves them to act.

Build opportunities for reflection into the course, whether through student journals, mid-semester course and self-evaluations, reflective papers, group discussions and debriefs, or any other method that asks students to think about what they’ve learned and what it means to them.

ACTION

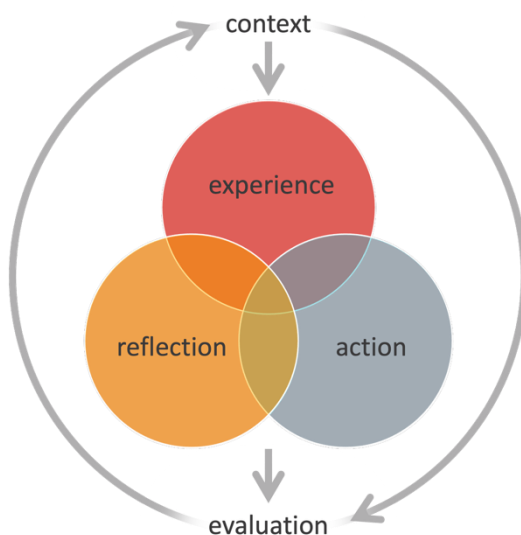
This element involves discernment about a variety of domains: the learning experience itself (e.g., picking an essay topic, taking on an issue to study further), the student's personal life (e.g., implementing a solution for a personal problem, taking up an extracurricular activity), the student's professional future (e.g., signing up for a related class, applying for a particular internship, seeking out information about one career or another), and, ideally—this is crucial in Ignatian pedagogy—the larger world (e.g., opportunities for advocacy, embodying a new consciousness, working for the greater good of society and humanity).

Allow students to articulate possibilities for action based on course material or even to take actions in class, including community engagements, designing projects, guiding discussions, and advocating for change.

EVALUATION

Ignatian pedagogy aims at evaluation which includes but goes beyond academic mastery to the learners' well-rounded growth as persons. It may involve students' evaluation of their own learning, or inviting students to reflect on the growth they've seen in one another. It invites the faculty member to reflect on how the learning process is unfolding for both teacher and student.

Find opportunities to gauge how well you are engaging learners in your course, how well they are developing their skills and knowledge base, as well as their behaviors and attitudes. Take time to evaluate your own learning and development, too. Create circumstances that promote a developmental attitude among all and focus on the goals of formation and continual growth.



Overall, consider that you influence students not only through what you teach them and what they learn but also through the humanity you model for them. If you demonstrate an interest in the meaning of the course material and the process of uncovering it, they are more likely to follow suit.