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2024

## Jesuit B-Schools: Powering Regional Socio-Economic Development and Problem Solving Through Analysis & Application of Best Global Practices

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### Repository Citation

del Pino Ramos, María; Zhuplev, Anatoly; Rincón, Jose; and José Vazquez, María, "Jesuit B-Schools: Powering Regional Socio-Economic Development and Problem Solving Through Analysis & Application of Best Global Practices" (2024). *LMU Librarian Publications & Presentations*. 147.  
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**Jesuit B-Schools: Powering Regional Socio-Economic Development and Problem Solving  
Through Analysis & Application of Best Global Practices**

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### Abstract

Our exploratory research and development (R&D) project is a joint undertaking by two Jesuit institutions, Loyola Marymount University (LMU), U.S.A., and Universidad Loyola Andalucía (ULA), Spain. We aim to leverage collaborative potential of Jesuit B-schools to facilitate regional socio-economic development (RSED) and growth through the analysis and application of best global practices. Many universities have rich intellectual potential and information resources that are often underutilized. Our undertaking strives to engage these resources to foster positive impacts on RSED and problem-solving. The project aligns with Jesuit educational values and aims to redirect the creative power of the young generation from dependency toward positive values and meaningful socio-economic engagement.

While progress and growth happen through innovation and imitation, much of the effort and resources are often dedicated to innovation without sufficient analysis of existing best global practices and their regional/local applications. Our joint project leverages Jesuit values and educational principles, such as academic excellence, experiential learning, and community service, to position Jesuit B-schools/universities as the catalysts of regional transformation nationally and internationally. We also aim to bridge the gap between the real world and academia by engaging intellectual power and information resources across Jesuit universities to facilitate regional socio-economic development and growth.

Our joint project will identify several regional/municipal socio-economic problems or development priorities of common nature in Southern California (SoCal), U.S.A. and Córdoba, Spain, respectively. Tentatively, we identified the following common socio-economic problems/priorities: for SoCal: access to healthcare; crime; housing affordability/ homelessness; poverty/income inequality; racial/ethnic inequality; for Córdoba: access to healthcare; aging population; lack of economic opportunities; poverty/income inequality; unemployment. We plan to conduct a teamwork project in which students at both universities will conduct a comparative study of best practices worldwide associated with socio-economic problems/ development priorities of common nature selected. Based on their analyses and identification of best global practices, we will organize an online seminar in which LMU and ULA students would interact and exchange their ideas. From their analysis and exchange of information with students from the other university, they will be able to develop and offer policy recommendations or strategic recommendations to respective governing bodies/government agencies in the selected regions.

Our pilot project initially involving problem-solving and development on limited scale and two countries can be further expanded to larger-scale projects and multiple countries, prioritizing the Europe/U.S./Latin America (North-South) connection supported and guided by the Jesuit network.

Successful implementation of our framework will facilitate efficiencies in the use of public resources in addressing socio-economic problem solving and development priorities of mutual interest. It can be aligned with the UN sustainable development goals and contribute to socio-economic progress and growth through the application of best global practices. LMU, ULA, and other institutions that are part of the International Association of Jesuit Universities (IAJU) can make an impact in bringing together academia and local community by leveraging intellectual

resources to foster socio-economic development, innovation and supporting the needs of local communities.

**Keywords:** best practices, B-schools, Jesuit educational model, higher education, regional socio-economic development, innovation.

## **Jesuit B-Schools: Powering Regional Socio-Economic Development and Problem Solving Through Analysis & Application of Best Global Practices**

### **Introduction**

Since the times of Ignatius Loyola, the founder of the Jesuit society, Jesuit B-schools have been an essential segment of higher education in Europe, America, and other parts of the world. An organic part of this system, Jesuit B-schools have come of age and are currently facing developmental opportunities and challenges in the emerging post-COVID strategic environment. They are also strategically redefining their collaboration, differentiation, and competitive approaches in and outside Jesuit higher education in a comparative context of secular B-schools.

Our exploratory R&D project is a joint undertaking by two Jesuit institutions in the U.S.A. and Spain. We aim at leveraging a collaborative potential of Jesuit business education to facilitate regional socio-economic development (RSED) and growth through the analysis and application of best global practices in our respective regions of SoCal (U.S.A.) and Andalusia (Spain). Universities possess high intellectual potential and rich resources of knowledge that are often underutilized by regional communities in the real world. Our project strives to leverage these resources through educational R&D projects applied toward RSED and problem-solving. The project is grounded in Jesuit educational values, and meaningful interdisciplinary scholarly and developmental socio-economic engagement for students and faculty in the participating Jesuit B-schools.

We commence by discussing knowledge as a tool that can empower B-schools' potential and facilitate bridging an existing "ivory tower" gap between academia and real world in the local and regional context. Academic arena should also provide opportunity for the developmental type of work amounting to "R&D" with positive applied impacts regionally, nationally, and/or worldwide.

We further discuss the concept of innovation and compare the pros and cons of innovation vs. imitation, two major forms of R&D. Much of the general effort and resources in RSED are dedicated to innovation without paying sufficient attention to comparative analysis of existing best global practices and their regional/local application. In the pre-Internet era, such comparative analysis of best practices has been constrained by geographic, technological, economic, and other logistical boundaries. The current environment driven by technological advances (IoT, imaging, AI, etc.) mitigates many of these obstacles, thus increasing the appeal of comparative applied research, improvement, imitation, and local application of best practices worldwide. It becomes much easier, time and cost-efficient, affordable, and impactful.

We argue that leveraging Jesuit educational values and principles such as academic excellence, experiential learning, and community service, can and should position Jesuit B-schools as the catalysts of positive regional transformation nationally and internationally, through Jesuit alliances. Such approach will facilitate bridging the gap between the real world and academia by engaging intellectual power and rich information resources across Jesuit universities to facilitate RSED and growth. It will also generate positive effects for Jesuit business education itself by facilitating meaningful student R&D projects with constructive impacts on student internships

and job placement, as well as Jesuit B-schools' regional, national, and international visibility and recognition.

Methodologically, we plan to jointly identify several municipal or RSED problems/priorities of common nature in the regions of SoCal and Andalusia and to conduct a comparative study of best practices worldwide involving student research associated with the selected socio-economic problems or development priorities of common nature. Based on our analysis, we aim to develop and offer policy recommendations or strategic development/ problem-solving recommendations to respective governing bodies/ government agencies in our regions.

After critical retrospective review and improvements, a pilot project like this can be scaled up to include multiple RSED projects and countries, prioritizing Europe/U.S./Latin America, and/or other regions that best represent the Jesuit network's priorities for development and growth.

We argue that a successful implementation will facilitate efficiencies in the use of public resources in addressing RSED priorities of mutual interest. It can be aligned with the UN sustainable development goals and contribute to socio-economic progress and growth through the application of best global practices. Jesuit institutions can make an impact in bringing together academia and local community by leveraging intellectual resources to foster socio-economic development, a culture of innovation and supporting the needs of local communities.

### **Knowledge Is Power: Bridging the Gap Between Academia and Real (Business) World**

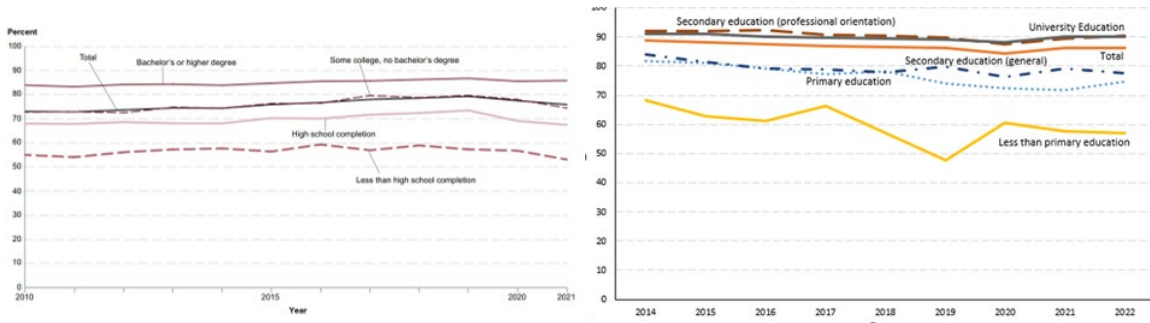
Knowledge is power: the creation of new knowledge through fundamental and applied research and dissemination of existing knowledge through teaching and learning is the core segment of universities' strategic mission and purpose.<sup>[1]</sup> It facilitates organizational development and growth through research driven academic discourse and interest in practical socio-economic fruits of innovation and imitation in R&D. Individuals also advance their career and entrepreneurial growth, socio-economic prosperity and mobility by leveraging their knowledge and skills. Figures 1-2 and Table 1 illustrate the power and impact of education, its scope, and comparative societal costs.

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<sup>1</sup> When Francis Bacon, medieval thinker, published in his work, *Meditationes Sacrae* (1597), the "knowledge itself is power," saying most likely meant to transmit the idea that having and sharing knowledge is the cornerstone of reputation and influence, and therefore power; all achievements emanate from this. Apart from institutional power associated to knowledge, it also facilitates organizational development and growth through innovation and imitation. Individuals advance their career and entrepreneurial growth, socio-economic status, and mobility by leveraging knowledge.

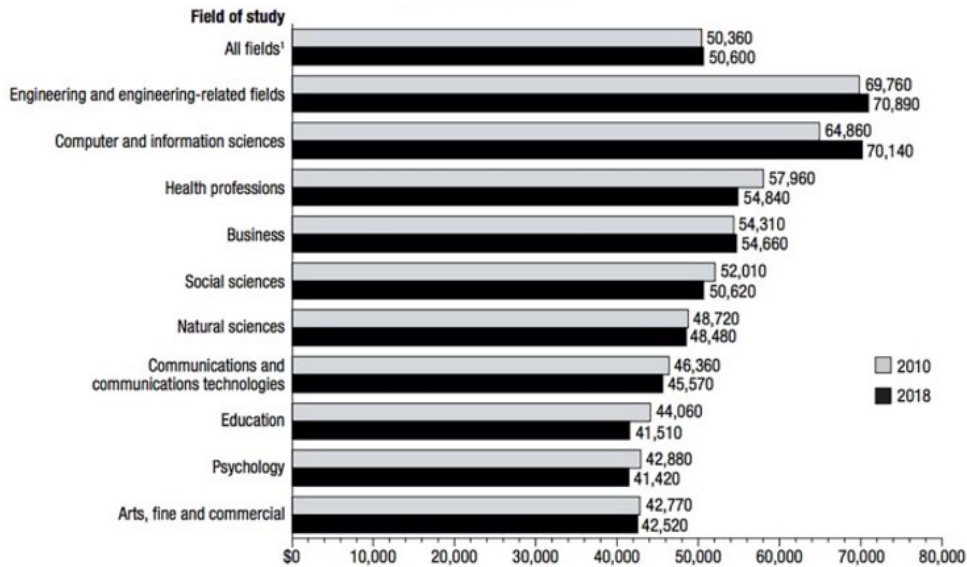
**Figure 1**

*Employment rates of persons 25 to 34 years old by educational attainment in the U.S.: 2010-2018 (left) and in Spain – 2014-2022 (right)*



**Figure 2**

*Median annual earnings of 25 to 29 bachelor's degree holders by field of study in the U.S. (in constant 2018 dollars)*



**Table 1**

*International comparisons of higher education: OECD, U.S. and selected European nations.*

| Country      | National share of the population 25-64 years old who attained a postsecondary degree, by the highest degree attained, 2021 |                        |                        | National expenditures on postsecondary education, 2018 |                        |         |       |
|--------------|--|------------------------|------------------------|--|------------------------|---------|-------|
|              | Bachelor's or equivalent   | Master's or equivalent | Doctoral or equivalent | Per FTE student in 2019 in const. 2021 USD             | As a percentage of GDP |         |       |
|              |  |                        |                        |  | Gov't                  | Private | Total |
| OECD average | 18.9   | 13.9                   | 1.3                    | \$18,418   | 0.9                    | 0.5     | 1.5   |
| U.S.A.       | 25.1   | 12.4                   | 2.0                    | \$37,417   | 0.9                    | 1.6     | 2.5   |
| France       | 11.6   | 13.7                   | 1.0                    | \$18,822   | 1.1                    | 0.3     | 1.5   |
| Germany      | 17.5   | 11.3                   | 1.7                    | \$20,344   | 1.0                    | 0.2     | 1.3   |
| Spain        | 16.8   | 16.3                   | 0.9                    | \$14,434   | 0.8                    | 0.4     | 1.3   |

Source: Digest of Education Statistics, Ch. 6 International Comparisons of Education. Tables 603.30, 605.10, 605.20. [https://nces.ed.gov/programs/digest/2022menu\\_tables.asp](https://nces.ed.gov/programs/digest/2022menu_tables.asp)

The educational and R&D potential of academia and B-schools is significant. These institutions serve as centers of knowledge creation and dissemination. They are critical for the growth and development of individuals and societies. Meanwhile, scholarship and job creation in their respective localities, universities consume regional resources (public and private land, water, energy, etc.), generate environmental and infrastructural impacts, but make limited tax and direct contribution to the RSED. Therefore, the consumption of regional resources and the contribution to regional economic development by colleges, universities, and B-schools must be taken into in a balanced analysis.

### SoCal Region

In 2022, California had a population of 39 million, having declined an annualized -0.1% over the five years to 2022, which ranks it 45<sup>th</sup> out of all 50 states in the U.S. by growth rate. California's gross state product (GSP) in 2022 reached \$2.9 trillion, with growth of 2.9% over the 5 years to 2022. Businesses in California employed 21 million people (nearly 54% of the state's total population) in 2022, with average annual employment growth over the past five years of 0.7%. The top three sectors by total employment are Information, Manufacturing, Real Estate and Rental and Leasing, while the unemployment rate in 2022 was 4.3% (California – State Economic Profile, 2023). Boasting of his state's robust economic growth, California Gov. Gavin Newsom recently declared that “California's values and entrepreneurial spirit have powered this ascent to becoming the 4th biggest economy in the world” (Office of Governor Gavin Newsom, 2023).

SoCal is a large socio-economic agglomeration clustered around Los Angeles, home to more than 100 academic institutions in SoCal/Los Angeles County. Most of them enjoy strong national and international educational reputation, intellectual and creative potential, and vast library resources. While accounting for a sizeable state and regional funding (some nationwide



illustrations for the U.S. are provided in Table 1), universities and colleges have room in making greater intellectual contributions through applied R&D with constructive RSED impact.

**Table 2**

*Total Revenues of Degree-granting Postsecondary Institutions of Higher Education in the U.S., by Source of Funds: 2017-18, Percentage Distribution*

| Sources of Funds                     | Public Institutions, total revenues= 100% | Private Institutions            |                                  |
|--------------------------------------|---|---------------------------------|----------------------------------|
|                                      |   | Nonprofit Total revenues = 100% | For-Profit Total revenues = 100% |
| Educational activities and other     | -   | 8.1                             | 3.5%                             |
| Investment return, gifts and other   | 16.9*                                     | -                               |                                  |
| Investment return                    | -   | 18.3                            |                                  |
| Hospitals                            | 13.1                                      | 11.8                            |                                  |
| Auxiliary enterprises                | 7.1                                       | 7.4                             | 1.1                              |
| Private gifts, grants, and contracts | -   | 12.3                            | -                                |
| Local governments                    | 6.8                                       | 0.9*                            | -                                |
| State governments                    | 22.9                                      | -                               | 0.2**                            |
| Federal government                   | 13.3                                      | 10.6                            | 1.7                              |
| Tuition and fees                     | 19.9                                      | 30.5                            | 9.5                              |
| <b>Total revenues, \$ billion</b>    | <b>\$408.9 b</b>                          | <b>\$248.5 b</b>                | <b>\$13.2 b</b>                  |

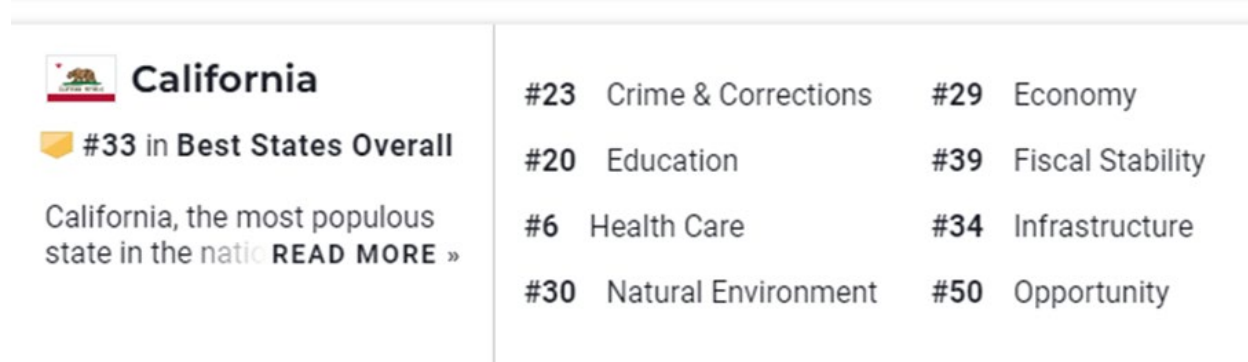
\*Educational activities, investment return, gifts, and other activities combined

\*\*State and local government combined.

Source: Zhuplev and Blas, 2022.

Having extensive university network with its vast R&D power, it has been widely recognized that California is in need to improve its business climate and attractiveness in a competitive marketplace as it has been losing business and people relocating to other states, often Texas and Florida. For instance, the 2023 annual U.S. News & World Report ranks California at a #33 out of 50 states nationwide. Apart from a respectable #6 national ranking in health care, other California's rankings are weak, including a dismal #50 out of 50 in opportunity.

**Figure 3**  
*California’s National Rankings (out of 50 states)*



Source: US News & World Report <https://www.usnews.com/news/best-states/rankings>.

Many RSED policy and strategic priorities in SoCal and other regions can be addressed by comparative analysis, identification, refinement, and application of best business, socio-economic, or industrial practices worldwide, nationwide, and regionally prior to engaging in costly and time-consuming brand-new innovations and initiatives.<sup>2</sup>

**Andalusia** is the most southern region in Spain. With a total population of 8.5 million people, it is the most populated region of the country. Andalusia’s growing economy trying to converge with the average socioeconomic development levels of Spain. Its GDP in December 2021 was €160 billion. Some of the last socioeconomic indicators, released by the Andalusian Statistic Institute, revealed that the GDP in Andalusia grew 3.6% in the first quarter of the current year, against 3.8% in Spain nationwide. Another interesting indicator is the unemployment rate. In Andalusia, the unemployment rate was 18.3% in the first quarter of 2023, compared to 13.3% in Spain nationwide. Especially relevant is the unemployment rate among women: 21.8% in Andalusia and 15.1% in Spain nationwide. Concerning international trade insertion, it is particularly interesting to say that Andalusia’s exports decreased 2.7% in the beginning of 2023 but increased 9.7% in Spain nationwide. The life expectancy at birth is 81.49 years old in Andalusia, while it is 83.07 in Spain.

Education is a definitive driver of regional development. The higher education sector in Andalusia is constituted of 10 public and 1 private universities. This private university is Loyola Andalusia. The total number of undergraduates per year is approximately 210,000 individuals, and the number of graduates who enter the labor market is about 30,000 persons, about 21% of

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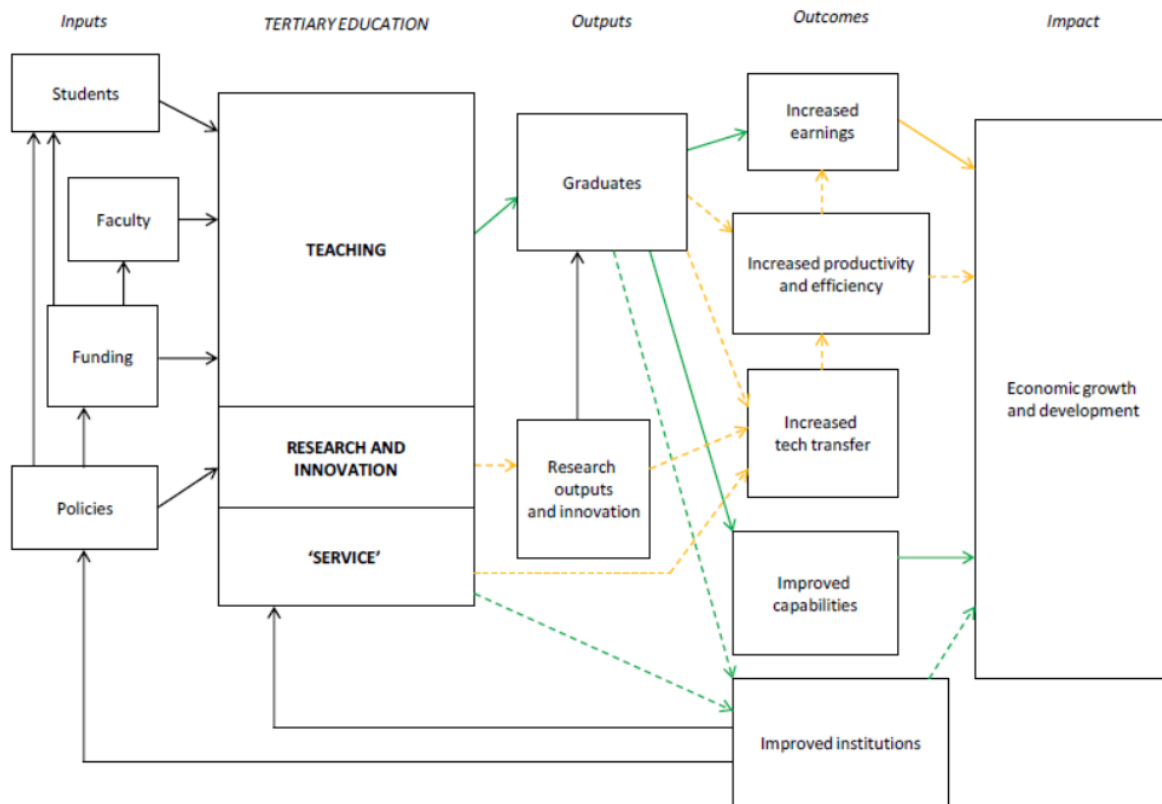
<sup>2</sup> For instance, the Los Angeles metro area population as of 2023 was approximately 12 million people with the number of homeless people near 69 thousand. In contrast, the metropolitan area of Madrid, a home to 6,7 million people had only 2,800 homeless people. While the number of homeless in Madrid is significant in absolute terms, it is still vastly lower compared to Los Angeles in a relative context, as a share of the metropolitan population. Perhaps, Los Angeles could learn from Madrid’s policies and best practices in addressing this acute socio-economic problem.

the total graduates in Spain. Linking this information to the unemployment rate previously cited partially explains a painful brain drain trend in this region.

The regional government defined a *Smart Specialization Strategy for Sustainability in Andalucía 2021-2027, S4 Andalusia*. It is destined to be an essential instrument of planning, execution, development, and evaluation of public actions in terms of Research, Innovation, and Industrial Transition, with a transversal perspective of fighting and mitigating climate change. Some of the economic sectors prioritized in this strategy are aerospace, agri-food and nutrition, biotechnology, energy and sustainability, tourism, logistics and transportation, metal-mechanic, mining, chemistry, and technology, and digital industry. However, a recent study by the Independent Authority of Fiscal Responsibility (AIREF, 2020) found that the degrees offered in the Andalusian System of Universities are mainly generalist. Five degrees present in the nine largest public universities enroll about 23.9% of the total number of undergraduate students. They correspond to Primary education (6.22% of total students in higher education in Andalusia); Law (5.84%); Business Management (4.99%); Early Childhood Education (3.61%) and Psychology (3.23%). We can say that this offer is completely disconnected from the public regional innovation strategy. In addition, the AIREF reported that the presence of university graduates in the total active population in Andalusia is 7.3 points smaller than the proportion of this group in the whole of the Spanish active population. Putting these data under perspective, the higher education sector in Andalusia might have a limited role in the definition of public policies geared to the development process of the region.

In 2014, Oketch et al. published a meta-analysis, commissioned by the Department for International Development (DFID). The study revealed two interesting conclusions, based on scientific evidence. First, the returns of higher education have historically been underestimated. There is scientific evidence of the high economic impact of higher education, even above that of primary education. However, it is important to not forget that a good higher education is not possible if primary education is not of adequate quality. And primary education will not be of good quality if its professionals are not sufficiently trained and do not have the necessary quality to send well-trained children and young people to higher education. Second, the impacts of higher education go beyond those most directly related to the training provided. Other important impacts on higher education graduates and the society have been observed, related to their health level, gender equality and democracy, institutional strengthening, and the training of professionals in key areas, such as education and health. These impacts go beyond economic growth and are as important as this one (evidence is also found in King and Palmer (2013), who strongly defended the inclusion of attention to higher education in Objective 4 of the Sustainable Development Goals).

Oketch et al. (2019) included an interesting conceptual map of higher education's impact on socioeconomic development (Figure 4).

**Figure 4***Conceptual map of higher education's impact on socioeconomic development*

Source: Oketch et al. (2014)

This cause-effect conceptual map of higher education's impact on society revolves around the three missions of higher or tertiary education: teaching, research and innovation, and service.

The most interesting and revealing aspects of the framework are not outputs (immediate results), but outcomes (medium-term results) and long-term impacts. As the report "Mapping the World of Higher Education and Research Funders: Actors, Models, Mechanisms and Programs" (Hydén, 2010), prepared for the Danish Development Research Network and Universities, Denmark, what is difficult to measure are precisely those long-term impacts of university action, due to the difficulty of isolating the chains of impacts in a complex reality. According to the cause-effect framework, the outcomes of tertiary education would be the increase in personal income, the increase in productivity and efficiency, the transfer of knowledge, and the improvement of capacities and institutional strengthening. Other results that were detected in this meta-analysis were but not limited to: an increase in research results, increased relations with industry, increased diversity of people accessing tertiary education, improvement of students' learning abilities and, finally, increasing contacts between the university and the community. Those outcomes would ultimately lead to economic growth and development.

### **Jesuit Values and Educational Principles**

In the outset of Jesuit education, Ignatius of Loyola and his early Jesuit companions from The Society of Jesus created and published the founding document of Jesuit education called Ratio atque Institutio Studiorum, also known as the Ratio Studiorum from 1584 to 1599. The Society of Jesus, or the Jesuits, is a religious order within the Catholic Church known for its commitment to education and social justice. Lozano (2017) notes, this final academic document was published in 1599, and systematizing the Society of Jesus' pedagogical model at that time, certainly represents an innovative and detailed proposal on how to organize and carry out education (p. 799). Not only did this document allow Jesuit educators, institution administrators, and leaders to collaborate with one another internally, but it also allowed them to work with one another on the local, regional, and global levels. It was a carefully thought-out, detailed "strategic plan" that, promulgated as an official code, helped to assure the delivery of certain goods year after year to generations of students (Pavur, 2005). When the final Ratio was published in 1599, there were 8,272 Jesuits living and working throughout the world (Duminuco, 2000). In order for Jesuit education to withstand the test of time, Ignatius of Loyola knew that a strategic plan needed to be written and put into place for the Jesuit learning community to use as a guide.

Today Jesuit education is grounded in values and principles that model the way Jesuit institutions approach teaching and learning. O'Connor & Myers (2018) point to the Spiritual Exercises written by Ignatius of Loyola where the universal mission of Jesuit higher education was initiated; to serve as a transformational force in the world, a force that respects the dignity of the human person and which promotes the greater good of the human community (p. 125). O'Connor & Myers (2018) recommend business students excel in three areas, cognitive complexity and flexibility, emotional and social competencies, and spiritual depth in order to develop into well-rounded leaders (p. 130). Plante and Plante (as cited by Plante, 2020) establish four developmental tasks that college students must go through and experience to transition from youth to full adulthood and they are the "four I's," identity, independence, intimacy, and impulse control. The Ignatian Pedagogical Paradigm (IPP) is a learning process that emphasizes five steps and is used by educators to develop curriculum and classroom lessons for students: context, experience, reflection, action, and evaluation (O'Connor & Myers, 2018).

Here are some key Jesuit values and educational principles practiced in Jesuit business schools:

**Cura personalis:** Jesuit education is centered on developing the scholarly, spiritual, emotional, and physical dimensions of each student. This Latin phrase meaning "care for the whole person," is a call to individualized attention to the needs of the other, an appreciation for their gifts and insights, and a distinct respect for their circumstances and concerns (O'Connor & Myers, 2018, p. 125). Jesuit schools aim to provide individualized attention to each student, recognizing their unique strengths, weaknesses, and needs. By encouraging students to develop their whole selves, and to seek excellence in all areas of their lives, Jesuit business education can prepare graduates to be effective leaders who are committed to making a positive impact through socio-economic development in their communities, neighboring regions, and around the world.

**Gratitude and Magis:** Magis is another Latin term meaning "more" or "greater." Jesuit education inspires students to strive for greatness in all areas of their lives, to push themselves to be their very best, and to leave a positive mark on the world. Collins believes (as cited by

O'Connor & Myers, 2018), gratitude and a desire to contribute are the foundation of Magis: to go beyond, to give more, to ask oneself what would be great to do. These principles emphasize the significance of striving for excellence. In business education, this can translate to a focus on leadership development, emotional intelligence, and ethical decision-making. In the business classroom, this can mean encouraging students to think about how their business practices can contribute to the well-being of their neighborhoods, surrounding cities, and other parts of the globe.

**Faith that Seeks Justice:** Faith and social justice are connected, and education should be aimed at developing both. Kolvenbach, Nicolás and Potter imply (as cited by Plante, 2020), justice refers to the Jesuit mission of social justice, i.e., being especially attentive to and mindful of those who struggle with oppression, poverty, discrimination, and marginalization within society to be in solidarity and kinship with them and their struggles. Jesuit business education can promote a focus on sustainability, social responsibility, and ethical decision-making, preparing graduates to develop businesses that are not only economically successful but also contribute to the public interest.

**Men and Women for and with Others:** Jesuit education affirms the value of service and social justice. Students are encouraged to establish a sense of responsibility for the well-being of others, to be involved with their communities, and to contribute to creating a more just and equitable society. Plate (2020) believes that a self-centered and egotistical life is insufficient to be fully human and to be well and fully educated (p. 4). In Jesuit business education, this can translate to a focus on entrepreneurship and community development, preparing students to build businesses that address the needs of underserved communities and promote financial development in their regions. It can also promote a focus on responsible investment and impact investing, preparing graduates to make ethical and socially responsible investment decisions.

Jesuit values and educational principles are a natural fit for impactful business education, regional socio-economic development, and problem solving. Jesuit schools often have a meticulous academic curriculum, but also place a strong emphasis on character development, service learning, and extracurricular activities that promote personal growth and development. Jesuit educators seek to build an environment that supports the learner through challenges, and engagement, while also encouraging them to develop a sense of direction and dedication for their lives and their endeavors. By fostering a sense of interest and concern about the world, Jesuit business education can help learners to think originally and imaginatively about how to answer complicated problems and bring value to their local communities, regions, and the rest of the world. The Jesuit values and educational principles can be a natural fit for Jesuit business education with the 17 sustainable development goals (SDGs) set by the United Nations. In business education, this can mean encouraging students to look beyond the traditional limitations of their academic areas and explore how business can be used as a force for social and environmental good.

### **Innovation and Imitation in Regional Socio-Economic Development and Growth**

Innovation and imitation are two distinct approaches in R&D and two ways in solving problems and generating new ideas for RSED and growth. Innovation can drive economic growth by

creating new industries, jobs, and opportunities, also leading to social and environmental benefits by addressing societal challenges and improving quality of life. Regions that are able to cultivate innovation may attract investment and talent, creating an ethical cycle of growth. Meyer and Lee (2022) define innovation as the integration and application of both new and existing technologies to solve specific problems (p. 1). On the other hand, imitation plays an important role in socioeconomic development by allowing regions to learn from successful practices and technologies developed elsewhere and apply them in their own context. Niosi found (as cited by Banu et al., 2015) that imitation can be creative by bringing new or improved products or processes inspired by competitors; creative adaptations; cross-industry innovation; simplifying the original product; and repositioning the original product to a different segment. The author also found that imitation could be disruptive with counterfeits, clones, and other forms of illegal replication of an innovation. By copying existing successful ideas, products, or processes, imitators can avoid the costs and risks associated with developing new ideas from scratch. Lai et al., (2010) found that theories of organizational learning argue that organizations imitate other organizations so that they could adapt to the changing environment for survival and competitiveness (p. 204). Imitation can be a valuable strategy for regions that are trying to catch up with more developed areas. By imitating successful practices and technologies, regions can quickly improve their productivity and competitiveness. One advantage of innovation is that it can create entirely new markets, products, or services. Innovative ideas often disrupt existing markets and create new opportunities for growth and development. However, innovation can also be costly and risky. Developing new ideas and bringing them to market requires significant investment in research and development, and there is always a risk that the new product or service may fail to gain acceptance in the market. In contrast, imitation is often less risky and less costly than innovation.

Comparative analysis and application of best practices involve studying and learning from other regions to identify successful strategies and techniques that can be adapted and applied to one's own region. This approach combines elements of both innovation and imitation. It allows regions to learn from the successes and failures of others, and to apply those lessons to their own situations, without having to develop entirely new ideas or products.

One advantage of comparative analysis and application of best practices is that it can help regions to identify and adopt proven strategies and techniques more quickly and with less risk than developing new ideas from scratch. However, comparative analysis and application of best practices also have limitations. For example, the strategies and techniques that work for one region may not work for another, due to differences in culture, market, or other factors. Additionally, this approach may limit the potential for true innovation and original thinking. Comparative analysis and application of best practices can provide a valuable middle ground between these two approaches, allowing regions to learn from the successes and failures of others, while also pursuing their own unique ideas and solutions.

### **R&D+innovation: The University in Spain**

One of the most relevant objectives of the university is knowledge-transfer and this depends mainly on its capacity for innovating. In 2020, 18,5% of total patents in Spain were obtained by Andalusian universities and in the last ten years, 14% of spin-off enterprises in Spain were

promoted by universities in Andalusia. Concerning R&D contracts, Andalusian universities generated 15% out of the total in Spain.

**Table 3**

*Academic characteristics of Andalusian universities (above). Indicators of knowledge-transfer of Andalusian universities to the region (below).*

| University       | Degree rate (undergrad.) | Success rate (undergrad.) | Degrees taught in a foreign language (undergrad.) | Publications/faculty | Degrees taught in a foreign language (master) | Foreign faculties |
|------------------|--------------------------|---------------------------|---|----------------------|---|-------------------|
| Almería          | 3                        | 3                         | 1   | 1                    | 2   | 3                 |
| Cádiz            | 3                        | 2                         | 3   | 2                    | 2   | 3                 |
| Córdoba          | 2                        | 3                         | 3   | 1                    | 3   | 3                 |
| Granada          | 3                        | 2                         | 3   | 1                    | 2   | 2                 |
| Huelva           | 3                        | 3                         | 3   | 2                    | 3   | 3                 |
| Jaén             | 2                        | 3                         | 3   | 2                    | 3   | 3                 |
| Loyola           | 2                        | 2                         | 1   | 2                    | 3   | 1                 |
| Málaga           | 2                        | 3                         | 2   | 2                    | 2   | 3                 |
| UNED*            | 3                        | 3                         | 3   | 2                    | 3   | 3                 |
| Pablo de Olavide | 2                        | 1                         | 2   | 2                    | 2   | 2                 |
| Sevilla          | 3                        | 3                         | 2   | 2                    | 2   | 3                 |

*Note.* 1: High-performance group. 2: Medium-performance group. 3: Low-performance group. 4: no data available. \* UNED: Universidad Nacional de Educación a Distancia.

| University       | Internships in regional enterprises | Regional publications | Regional research funds | Joint publications with regional enterprises |
|------------------|-------------------------------------|-----------------------|-------------------------|--|
| Almería          | 1                                   | 3                     | 2                       | 2  |
| Cádiz            | 3                                   | 3                     | 2                       | 1  |
| Córdoba          | 2                                   | 2                     | 1                       | 1  |
| Granada          | 3                                   | 3                     | 1                       | 2  |
| Huelva           | 1                                   | 3                     | 4                       | 2  |
| Jaén             | 1                                   | 3                     | 2                       | 2  |
| Loyola           | 3                                   | 2                     | 3                       | 3  |
| Málaga           | 1                                   | 2                     | 1                       | 1  |
| UNED*            | 1                                   | 1                     | 3                       | 2  |
| Pablo de Olavide | 1                                   | 2                     | 3                       | 1  |
| Sevilla          | 2                                   | 3                     | 1                       | 2  |



*Note.* 1: High-performance group. 2: Medium-performance group. 3: Low-performance group. 4: no data available. \* UNED: Universidad Nacional de Educación a Distancia.

In the tables above we can observe that the Andalusian higher education sector is mainly allocated among medium and low performance levels. Loyola is considered a high-performance level in some respects like degrees taught in a foreign language and the number of foreign faculties. On the other side, it is low performance scored in masters taught in a foreign language. Besides, it is well positioned in the number of publications connected to regional matters and the number of publications by faculty.

### **Jesuit B-Schools, Regional Socio-Economic Development and Problem Solving**

In this context, groups of Jesuit B-school students led by the college faculty would conduct comparative studies of best practices resulting in R&D, strategic, policy recommendations for RSED grounded in the above studies as part of their course work or impactful faculty research. Aside from their intellectual contribution to RSED, Jesuit B-schools participating in such a program would benefit through aligning their educational curriculum and faculty research aligned with the industry and region, enhancing student job placement and career development, as well as advancing their branding and respective annual rankings through real life projects blending educational programs and R&D.

The development of this project aims to foster the role of students as agents of change. As students and citizens in the region of SoCal or Andalusia, they will combine these two roles to use the knowledge acquired on their campuses to analyze, diagnose, and propose solutions to the most important challenges their regions are facing in the meantime. The knowledge transfer channel from the universities to the regions will therefore be the students.

There are additional benefits in the process of engaging students in projects of knowledge transfer like the one we are presenting here. Considering that one of the universal apostolic preferences of the Society of Jesus is to accompany young people in the creation of a hope-filled future, with this initiative students will engage with the reality of the territories where they live and would propose solutions for problem-solving that might be affecting them.

The following procedure gives an idea of how we want to bring diagnosis and policymaking to class:

1. **Team formation:** the faculty in each class (one class at LMU and another class at ULA) is responsible for team formation, being each team composed of 3 students.
2. **Problem identification session:** The faculty at each institution will organize sessions to help teams identify the regional/municipal socioeconomic problems or development priorities in each region. In doing so, students will check the strategic plans of cities/regions, newspapers, and news that refer to what they perceive are the problems that the region faces. After identifying the problems, each class will create a list of socioeconomic problems to be compared with the list of the other class.

3. **Sharing session:** In this session, students from both classes will contact for the first time. Each class will have to make an introduction about their own city/region, and its main characteristics and present the list of challenges the region faces. The idea of this session is to find common and uncommon aspects of each region, establish which problems will be covered by each team and generate a collaborative environment between classes. The idea is to create parallel teams in each class. Parallel teams are teams in each institution that will be working on a similar topic. In this way, they will give and find support in the other team, and coordinate in their advances, among other benefits.
4. **Best practices sessions:** teams will conduct a comparative study of best practices worldwide associated with the problem selected. In order to do this analysis, we would design specific sessions to provide them with enough tools and critical analysis skills to detect and provide solutions.
5. **Research stage:** Each group must study which best practices worldwide are the most suitable to solve the selected problem. This stage implies analyzing which was the ex-ante situation, which measures were taken, and which outcomes were obtained. In addition, they must include a list of indicators that measures to which extent those best practices work.
6. **Joint seminar:** Based on their analyses and identification of the best global practices, we will organize an online seminar in which LMU and LUA students would interact and exchange their ideas with all the students. This seminar requires that parallel teams work together to decide on what to present about their topics. The aim of this session is to receive feedback from their peers, which will allow them to have a preliminary version of the policy or strategic recommendations to be given to respective governing bodies/government agencies in the selected regions.
7. **Wrap-up sessions:** the last sessions will help students prepare all the material that will be shared with agencies and governing bodies. This material will also be an important part of the course assessment.
8. **Presentations:** Students will present their findings in each home university. From this presentation, the top 5 will be chosen to give a talk in a final workshop with the associate university. From that session, one group for each university will be selected to present the outcomes to the institution.

### **Project Expansion**

Our regional pilot project could be further expanded to larger-scale projects and multiple countries, prioritizing the Europe/U.S./Latin America (North-South) connection supported and guided by the Jesuit network.

LMU, ULA, and other institutions that are part of the International Association of Jesuit Universities (IAJU) could make an impact in bringing together academia and local community by leveraging intellectual resources to foster socio-economic development, innovation and supporting the needs of local communities.

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