Leveraging Colegios Mayores for Character Development

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Abstract

Colegios Mayores are the Spanish version of the European Colleges, a relatively unknown and long-standing innovation in higher education to serve the socialization of future ethical leaders of society. Over nearly a millennium, they have existed at universities across Europe. In part, they represent a brilliant and extremely innovative approach to this task, by relying on democratic structures, long before democracy reemerged in Europe since ancient Greece. To capitalize on the promise and legacy of Colegios Mayores, it would be advantageous to build upon contemporary knowledge and practice in nurturing the development of ethical character and just leadership. The models PRIMED for character education and Kohlberg's Just Community approach to moral education are proposed for this endeavor. First, we introduce and describe the common elements of the nature, mission, and practices of Colegios Mayores, and then apply these two models as prescriptions for the optimal developmental format of Colegios Mayores to serve its educational purpose.

Keywords: Colegios Mayores, Character Education, Character development, Moral education, PRIMED model, Just Community, Higher education, Value-driven community, Non-formal education

Leveraging Colegios Mayores for Character Development

I protest to you, Gentlemen, that if I had to choose between a so-called University, which dispensed with residence and tutorial superintendence, and gave its degrees to any person who passed an examination in a wide range of subjects, and a University which had no professors or examinations at all, but merely brought a number of young men together for three or four years, and then sent them away as the University of Oxford is said to have done some sixty years since, if I were asked which of these two methods was the better discipline of the intellect,—mind, I do not say which is morally the better, for it is plain that compulsory study must be a good and idleness an intolerable mischief,—but if I must determine which of the two courses was the more successful in training, moulding, enlarging the mind, which sent out men the more fitted for their secular duties, which produced better public men, men of the world, men whose names would descend to posterity, I have no hesitation in giving the preference to that University which did nothing, over that which exacted of its members an acquaintance with every science under the sun. (Newman, 1982, p. 145)

Shortly after the origin of the first universities (Bologna 1088, Oxford 1096, Paris 1150, Cambridge 1209, and Salamanca 1218) prominent personalities of the nobility and the Church, wishing to contribute to the development of their nations, began an institution intended to provide higher education access to citizens lacking the necessary economic resources for this endeavor. This is the origin of the *collegial movement* that gradually spread throughout Europe giving birth to university colleges (de Lario, 2019).

The Spanish version of these colleges is called Colegios Mayores. Since their origin, they have been aimed at preparing citizens who would occupy positions of responsibility in the State, with special emphasis on the civic and moral development necessary to serve

society (Carabias, 1993, 2005, 1992; de Lario, 2019). In their long history they have been subject to periods of splendor, transformation and crisis, even being dissolved temporarily by the State authority in the 19th century. The first Colegio Mayor, *San Clemente de los Españoles*, was founded in the University of Bologna, in Italy, by Cardinal Gil de Albornoz in the 14th century. The Cardinal's desire was to enable young Spaniards to access higher education and prepare them to serve in positions of state administration. To this end, he gave the Colegio Mayor an endowment destined to finance promising students to access university studies, and not only those who were wealthy or belonged to the higher nobility.

Moreover, precisely because these students were destined to assume governance responsibilities, he established that the Colegio Mayor should be run by the students themselves, reasoning that this would serve as preparatory training for their subsequent performance as public servants. The president of the Colegio Mayor was a student elected by a student council, following a "a unique system of democratic functioning exceptional in the history of the Middle Ages" (Carabias, 2018, p. 29).

This model of institution was imported to Spain, where several personalities of the Catholic Church founded similar Colegios Mayores. The first six Colegios Mayores founded in Spain are: Colegio de San Bartolomé, founded in Salamanca in 1401; Colegio de Santa Cruz, founded in Valladolid in 1486; Colegio de San Ildefonso, founded in Alcalá de Henares in 1499; Colegio de Santiago el Cebedeo, founded in Salamanca around 1500; Colegio de San Salvador, founded in Salamanca in 1517; and Colegio de Santiago, founded in Salamanca in 1521. Nowadays, there are over 130 Colegios Mayores distributed all across Spain. Some of them continue in the spirit of leveraging their original democratic structure for student socialization, while others have morphed into a less participative and even authoritarian approach (Zubieta, 1992).

The literature on this institution is very scarce. Several studies can be found on Colegios Mayores from an historical (Carabias, 2013; de Lario, 2019), sociological (Zubieta, 1992), administrative-accounting (Robles, 2010), or interpersonal skills development perspective (Oliva, 2010), among others. However, there are no studies of this institution from an educational approach, except for a couple of monographic texts from the mid-20th century (Lascaris, 1952; Suárez, 1966). Moreover, part of these latter texts are no longer valid due to the evolution of the institution in recent decades.

Many websites of Colegios Mayores already describe to some level their nature, mission statement, and practices. However: 1) what is written in the websites often lacks coherence or rigor, and often does not include enough details to understand how Colegios Mayores educate; 2) there is no document describing the identity of Colegios Mayores from an educational perspective that has been published in an academic context; and 3) there is no document describing the nature, mission and practices of Colegios Mayores in English, which would help to introduce this institution to the international community.

In this sense, what is needed is a study that describes the identity of Colegios Mayores from an educational view, and how they can be relevant to promote the development of character. This article aims to leverage the character development potential of this institution by: 1) describing the common elements of their nature, mission, and practices, in order to define a first approximation to the identity of this institution from an educational perspective; and 2) using the PRIMED and the Just community models as prescriptions for Colegios Mayores to build upon contemporary knowledge and practice in nurturing the development of ethical character and just leadership.

First approximation to the educational identity

There are 125 Colegios Mayores recognized by the Council of Colegios Mayores of Spain (CCMS), distributed all over the country. There are many aspects in which these centers can differ from one another:

- They can be private or public.

- They can be single-sex or coed.

- Their residential capacity can range from a few dozens to several hundred.

- They can be lay or have a religious orientation.

- They can include university teachers as residents or not.

- They can have a budget dedicated to education or not.

- They can follow an education program or not.

- Their monthly fee can be almost free or over a thousand dollars.

- They can have a staff responsible for education or not.

- They can be of recent foundation or go back to the 14th century.

Even though Colegios Mayores can be very diverse from these perspectives, there are other more numerous and significant aspects in common that can build up an identity shared by all the centers of this institution. This first section includes the description of: 1) six characteristics that are common and help define the nature of this institution; 2) a common mission statement in a recent declaration signed by the members of the CCMS; and 3) six practices that can be considered as the most representative of Colegios Mayores.

Nature

A Colegio Mayor is like a university residence in the sense that both offer housing, catering, and domestic services, as well as common or shared facilities that may include

living rooms, study rooms, assembly halls, sports courts, dining rooms, etc. However, there are other factors that differentiate these two institutions.

After reviewing the previous and the actual legislation, and the documents of the CCMS, we conclude that Colegios Mayores are: 1) non-profit higher education centers, 2) necessarily integrated in a university, 3) which provide non-formal education 4) to a diverse variety of colegiales[1] 5) that belong to a value-driven community 6) in a residential context. These six common features can describe the nature of most Colegios Mayores today.

Non-profit higher education centers

The last specific legislation regulating Colegios Mayores was issued almost 50 years ago in the Decree 2780 (Ministerio de Educación y Ciencia, 1973), and must be interpreted in accordance with the provisions of the current legislation (Jefatura del Estado, 2001). Nonetheless, the Decree 2780 still inspires the identity of most Colegios Mayores and many of them include its articles in their own Statutes to describe their nature, ends, or organization, among others. This decree indicates that Colegios Mayores were considered charitable-educational foundations, with the right to the tax benefits of non-profit organizations (Art. 6, n. 5). Also, the most recent law on the tax regime for non-profit organizations and tax incentives for patronage stipulates that Colegios Mayores are exempt from corporate income tax (Jefatura del Estado, 2002, Art. 7, n. 7).

Nowadays, Colegios Mayores are legally recognized as "higher education centers that, integrated into the University, provide residence for students and promote their cultural and scientific formation, projecting their activity to serve the university community" (Jefatura del Estado, 2001, Provición adicional 5ª). They have an imperative of economic viability, but

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[1] *Colegiales* is the Spanish term for the members of the Colegio Mayor community. They can either be undergraduate or graduate students, or even university professors.

their main objective is neither the generation nor the distribution of profits, since their

purpose is eminently social. To be recognized as a Colegio Mayor, the CCMS demands a

commitment from every center to reinvest the benefits generated each cycle in the

improvement of their educational programs and facilities (Consejo de Colegios Mayores

Universitarios de España, 2021).

Necessarily integrated in a university

State law relating to universities (Jefatura del Estado, 2001; Ministerio de Educación

y Ciencia, 1973) and university regulations in Spain place special emphasis on the existence

of a link between the Colegios Mayores and the university in which they are integrated. It is

precisely this relationship that allows their classification as *university centers* in accordance

with the Spanish university legislation.

Being a university center implies that they are an entity that contributes to fulfill the

educational mission of the university, such as academic colleges, schools, institutes, or

research centers. They are not conceived as a mere accommodation service, which would be

the function of the residence halls, even though they provide this service.

Colegios Mayores can become university centers either by *foundational nature* (those

founded by the university as a structural part of it) or by an *affiliation agreement* (those

founded by external public or private institutions that become integrated in the university by

an affiliation agreement) (Viguer, 2011).

Which provide non-formal education

Regarding the educational endeavor of Colegios Mayores, the CCMS (Consejo de

Colegios Mayores Universitarios de España, 2021) stipulates that they: 1) have a *formative*

project; 2) have facilities for socialization and learning; and 3) are places that transmit civic values.

These three conditions are problematic from several points of view. Considering the first, the CCMS never describes what a *formative project* is, although it is a term used and defined by similar higher education organizations. For example, Boston College uses the term *formative education*, derived from a Jesuit philosophy of education. Formative education is defined as the development of the whole human being, integrating "the intellectual, social, ethical, and spiritual development of students so they can discover their purpose and live their lives to the fullest"; and they do this through the "the academic, residential life, experiential learning, volunteer, and campus ministry experiences of our students in a holistic manner" (Boston College, 2021)

A formative project, or any other educational initiative, should include a description of the goals, practices, outcomes expected, and an assessment plan. Most of Colegios Mayores do not even have a document with their formative project and, when they do, it only includes a brief description of the activities they organize, but almost never how they are related to certain educational goals or outcomes, or with an assessment plan (Oliva, 2010). The second and third conditions are also ambiguous because they do not specify which or how many facilities are needed for socialization and learning, nor do they explain what being a *place that transmits civic values* means.

Nonetheless, making a first approximation to the activities and the practices that are most common to all Colegios Mayores, the best category that describes its learning experience would be *non-formal education*.

It is rather difficult to define the concept of non-formal education, mostly because what distinguishes it from other approaches "is the variety of forms it can take on in response

to the different demands and needs of different individuals or groups" (Hamadache, 1991, p. 113). Maybe the best way to define what non-formal education is would be to differentiate it from formal and informal education. The following table shows these differences in a school context:

Table 1

Differences between Formal, Non-formal and Informal Learning (Eshach, 2007)

Formal	Non-formal	Informal
Usually at school	At institution out of school	Everywhere
May be repressive	Usually supportive	Supportive
Structured	Structured	Unstructured
Usually prearranged	Usually prearranged	Spontaneous
Motivation is typically for extrinsic	Motivation may be extrinsic but it is typically more intrinsic	Motivation is mainly intrinsic
Compulsory	Usually voluntary	Voluntary
Teacher-led	May be guided or teacher-led	Usually learner-led
Learning is evaluated	Learning is usually not evaluated	Learning is not evaluated
Sequential	Typically non-sequential	Non-sequential

Adapting these nine non-formal learning characteristics to the higher education context of Colegios Mayores, and considering other descriptions of this approach (Butts, 1981; Dib, 1988; Hamadache, 1991), we can define the following non-formal education characteristics of Colegios Mayores as follows:

- It usually takes place in the facilities of Colegios Mayores, and not at the university academic colleges or schools. However, it is possible that university academic colleges or schools organize some of their formal-education initiatives in the facilities of Colegios Mayores.

- Its practices are usually supportive, although some responsibilities and tasks of service may be considered repressive.

- It is structured, in the sense that there is a set of traditional practices that are common to most of the centers. Nonetheless, it involves flexible educational processes, capable of adapting to the needs and interests of students. These processes can be considered *open systems*, in which students have a measure of flexibility and autonomy to choose what they want to learn or develop and how they want to do it.

- It is usually prearranged, although there is room for the novelty and spontaneity of initiatives that can arise each year depending on the interests and needs of the colegiales.

- Motivation is mainly intrinsic. Colegiales freely decide to be part of this community and assume responsibilities because they consider this to be good. Spanish universities do not require their students to reside in or be affiliated with a Colegio Mayor.

- It is voluntary. The authorities of the Colegio Mayor cannot force anyone to do something they do not choose on their free will.

- It is usually guided or learner-led.

- Learning is usually not evaluated, although there is clear intent to assess the development of character, competencies, and skills. However, this is rarely practiced.

- It is typically non-sequential, although there are certain roles and responsibilities that can only be acquired with a certain number of veteran years.

As in any non-formal education model, its success lies in: 1) the initial interest and motivation of the colegiales, 2) the quality of the educational resources, and 3) the capacity to provide colegiales with institutional support (Dib, 1988). On the other hand, it is important to assess the capacities and needs of students to design a program that effectively fits them. It is important to consider that without certain development of the habits necessary for learning autonomy, any non-formal program will be in jeopardy.

Finally, Colegios Mayores do not exclusively deliver non-formal education. They can also include some initiatives that can be categorized as *formal education*, like a classic university course delivered in the facilities of the Colegio Mayor. There are also other initiatives that can be considered as *informal education*, like participating in contests, visiting museums or scientific fairs, attending lectures and conferences, or reading sessions, among others. These are different from the non-formal initiatives because: 1) they do not necessarily respond to an organized or systematic view of education; and 2) usually there is no tracking of participation over the performed activities.

To a diverse variety of colegiales

Colegiales is the Spanish term for the members of the Colegio Mayor community. Colegiales can be divided into two categories: *residents* (colegiales that reside in the Colegio Mayor) or *ascribed* (colegiales that do not reside in the Colegio Mayor). They must necessarily be part of the university community. Most colegiales are undergraduate or graduate students. However, many Colegios Mayores include university professors or staff as colegiales integrated as an equal member of this community.

Each Colegio Mayor has a Director, who is usually appointed by the President of the university to which it is integrated. Among the functions to be performed by the Director, two are particularly relevant for acquiring or renewing the *colegial* status:

1. At the beginning of each academic year, the Director studies the list of candidates who have applied for colegial status in the Colegio Mayor. These must express their commitment to be part of this community, knowing beforehand the practices dedicated to achieving the mission of the Colegio Mayor. The Director then selects those considered most suitable to be part of the community, considering the number of places available. The colegial status must be renewed by the director annually.

2. At the end of each academic year, the Director must decide whether or not to renew the colegial status of those members of the community who have expressed the desire to renew it for the following year. This decision is made based on the commitment shown with the mission of the community throughout the year, observed in the level of involvement in the practices of the Colegio Mayor. The Director can either make these decisions based on his/her own judgement, make them jointly with the senior colegiales, or even designate an impartial committee that represents the community and follows a public, fair, and objective protocol.

That are part of a value-driven community

Peck (2010) defines community as a group of two or more people who, regardless of their backgrounds, have been able to accept and transcend their differences, enabling them to communicate openly and effectively, and to work together toward common goals, while having a sense of unusual safety with one another. In this sense, the goals, which can also be conceived as the mission, towards which all the members are working together, can be considered as a crucial element that distinguishes one community from another.

In the case of Colegios Mayores, the mission shared by all the members of the community is driven by a set of values, which can either be categorized as civic, moral, performance or intellectual. Even though each Colegio Mayor has its own mission and set of values, all of them aim to educate citizens committed to improving their society. The common elements to the mission and values of Colegios Mayores will be discussed later in the paper, in the 'Mission' section.

In a residential context

Even though some colegiales do not live in the residential complex (ascribed colegiales), the vast majority reside in Colegios Mayores (resident colegiales). Because of this, it is arguable that the learning and development experiences of Colegios Mayores usually take place in a residential context.

Colegios Mayores usually provide basic residential services, such as catering, housekeeping, or laundry. They may also have facilities and resources that allow the residents to take on these tasks. Regarding the configuration of the residential complex, they usually have an area with rooms (almost always individual) and other areas with facilities for common use. For example: dining room, living room, study room, sports courts, auditorium, or work rooms, among others.

Mission

Almost every Colegio Mayor has a mission statement and a set of values (Oliva, 2010). In the 2018 annual meeting of the CCMS in the University of Salamanca, the assembly composed of representatives of all Colegios Mayores worked together to build a common declaration for all the 125 centers. This is known as the Declaration of Salamanca (Consejo de Colegios Mayores Universitarios de España, 2018, pp. 135–136) which includes

a brief description of what Colegios Mayores are and what is their role in universities and society in general. In this declaration we can extract the following mission statement:

Strengthen the civic spirit of the colegiales, promoting values as freedom, participation, equality, solidarity, coexistence, responsibility, tolerance and democracy with a critical and respectful attitude, encouraging their commitment to society and instilling an open and constructive attitude towards the great challenges of the future.

Practices

An important aspect of the organization and implementation of Colegios Mayores' educational practices is their non-formal character, described in a previous section. These practices do not include a fixed content or demand mandatory participation with a formal assessment. It is true that all those who wish to renew their colegial status at the end of the academic year must have shown their commitment to the mission of the community, which can be assessed, at least in part, by observing their degree of involvement with the practices of the Colegio Mayor. In this regard, some centers spell out in detail the minimum requirements necessary to renew colegial status, while others simply state that it is up to the Director's discretion. In any case, the way in which these practices are implemented and assessed is not a formal one.

Also, not all these practices are intended for all colegiales. There are some activities or roles in which any colegial can participate, while others are only accessible to veteran colegiales, depending on their seniority. In this sense, every year offers new opportunities to assume higher responsibilities or levels of involvement. In this sense, veteran colegiales have access to learning and development experiences that are not available in the first years. To complete the cycle in a Colegio Mayor four or five years are needed, depending on each center, and each year offers new possibilities for the colegiales.

A construct that may help to understand the development and learning intended through these practices is that of *communities of practice*. Hoadley (2012) defines it the following way:

> A community of practice is an important theoretical construct that underlies a particular model or learning, namely, learning in which people, through a process of legitimate peripheral participation, take up membership in an identity with a community that serves as the home of these shared practices. While knowledge communities can take many forms (communities of interest, knowledge-building communities, Delphi groups, etc.), communities of practice typically have a degree of informality (low to moderate institutionalization, making them a community and not an organization), and high connectivity (rather tight social relationships between members of the community, and a relatively high degree of identification with the group). (p. 299)

Colegios Mayores can be considered as communities of practices in which the main goal is not the *technical* learning of the shared practices, but the human development that is achieved through the performance of these practices as a member of a value-driven community. Hoadley also highlights three profound educational implications for any community of practice learning process:

1. Learners must have access to experts and must either perceive themselves to be members or aspire to membership in a community in which expert practices are central.

2. If learners are to inculturate themselves by joining a community of practice, it must already exist, with some sort of common history and an identity.

3. There must be space in an educational system for legitimate peripheral participation that helps learners to enter the community and gradually take up its practices.

These three conditions are present in Colegios Mayores in a peculiar way. First, veteran colegiales would be the experts, while the new colegiales are the learners, even though the veteran colegiales are also learners. The most relevant aspect of their veteran expertise is not the technical knowledge of the practices, but the *way* in which they perform these practices, a way that is informed by the values that drive the mission of the community. The context of the practices offers an ideal scenario for veteran colegiales to model this expertise in their interactions and relationships with new colegiales, impacting their development. Secondly, joining the community of a Colegio Mayor entails becoming a member of an already existing community of practice that has a common history and an identity. The only necessary requisite would be to have a certain number of colegiales in at least their second year that can become the veteran experts who receive the new colegiales and introduce them to the mission and practices of the community. Every Colegio Mayor has second year colegiales, and many of them have third, fourth, fifth, or even more. Some university students are colegiales during their undergraduate and/or graduate years, and some professors can be colegiales indefinitely. Finally, the non-formal education context of Colegios Mayores offers an ideal scenario for legitimate peripheral participation that helps new colegiales to enter the community and gradually take up its practices.

In this sense, being part of a community is not only a way to describe the nature of this institution, but also the primary means for pursuing its ends.

After this brief introduction to the way in which educational practices are implemented in the context of Colegios Mayores, the next step is to list and describe what these specific practices are. Chapter VI, article 25 of the Decree 2780 (Ministerio de Educación y Ciencia, 1973) states that the educational tasks of Colegios Mayores: 1) have to be programmed in accordance with the University Board of Directors; and 2) students have to

actively participate in their organization. These educational tasks focus on diverse areas, such as civic, moral, social, cultural, academic, religious, sports, among others. Many Colegios Mayores' websites describe many activities performed as part of their formative project, but it is very rare to find any description on how they are aligned with certain educational goals that respond to their mission statement. A preliminary scan of the formative projects of Colegios Mayores identifies at least six common practices: Collaborative governance, Tertulias, Service roles and tasks, Retreats, Colegial Initiatives, and Peer mentoring.

Collaborative governance

This practice consists of colegiales participating in the governance of the Colegio Mayor through decision-making and stewardship tasks in a democratic way, following the mission and values of the community and contributing to its common good.

This practice dates to the very origin of Colegios Mayores in the 14th century and is one of their most notable characteristics. At that time, the involvement of colegiales in the government of the institution had two main motives: to guarantee the institutional independence of these centers from political or similar influences, and to train students to assume governance responsibilities in the future.

Since then, the legislation concerning Colegios Mayores, and their own Statutes, always include some type of governing body that incorporates colegiales in decision-making and encourages a collaborative style of governance. Nowadays, the CCMS states that Colegios Mayores should encourage co-responsibility in the functioning of the colegial life, following a democratic and deliberative structure (Consejo de Colegios Mayores Universitarios de España, 2021). All colegiales participate in the governance of their center, although seniority usually entails a greater responsibility and decision-making capacity.

The Director is very important in fostering this style of collaborative governance, and is included in the Colegios Mayores' legislation, establishing that he/she is ultimately responsible for the activity and operation of the center. Candidates for this position must meet the requirements of the Statutes of each Colegio Mayor and are appointed Directors by the authorities of the University in which they are integrated. Usually, they are Faculty members or University Staff, but in rare instances they may be students. Directors help to build and maintain a sense of community inspired by the mission of the Colegio Mayor and are responsible for the group welfare. Some Directors do this by being an equal member of the community, serving as experienced consultants, powerless to enforce rules just by themselves, not inculcating a particular ideology, but inspiring respect for universal values and principles. On the other hand, other Directors constitute themselves as authorities who enforce norms and make decisions on their own accord without necessarily relying on the other members of the community, leaving little room for colegiales to make decisions and assume governance roles. Directors usually have a team to assist them in their tasks, called the Steering Committee, that can either be composed of senior colegiales (students or professors) or external agents hired for this purpose.

Collaborative governance applies to virtually all issues affecting the life of the community: calendar planning, budget allocation, disciplinary matters, encouraging colegial initiative, the organization of activities, daily aspects and services provided by the Colegios Mayor, etc. It is important to emphasize that what is practiced collaboratively is not only the governance decision, but all the tasks involved in governance: meetings, drafting documents and protocols, personal conversations, accounting for responsibilities, leading teams of people, correcting faults, preparing reports, among others.

Participation in the governance of the community is accomplished through a series of structures that can be grouped into three categories: the Colegial Council, the Decanato, and the committees. First, the Colegial Council is the higher organ of governance participation, which consists of a meeting celebrated with a certain frequency (weekly, bi-weekly, or monthly) in which colegiales discuss and debate issues concerning community life, proposing and choosing solutions in a democratic way. Some Colegios Mayores include all colegiales in the Colegial Council, while others determine their level of participation based on their seniority. Second, the Decanato is a team, formed of three to five colegiales, chosen democratically by the Colegial Council on an annual basis. Decanato is responsible for organizing and leading the Colegial Council meetings and for organizing the third structure category: the Committees. At the beginning of each academic year, Decanato distributes colegiales into several committees in charge of assuming diverse responsibilities along the year, whether to fulfill necessary tasks for the colegial life, or to facilitate the development of colegial initiatives. Some of the most frequent Committees are:

- Cultural Committee.

- Social service Committee.

- Sports Committee.

- Academic Committee.

- Celebrations Committee.

- Order Committee.

- Professional Committee.

- Chaplaincy Committee.

- Relationships Committee.

Tertulias

The *tertulia* or informal gathering is a Spanish tradition that has its origins in the literary academies of the renaissance. They arose as informal and periodic meetings of people interested in talking about a certain topic –from politics and sports to any branch of the arts, science, or philosophy– to debate and be informed, or to share and contrast initiatives, news, knowledge and opinions. Despite being a widespread custom in Spain, the tertulia in the Colegios Mayores has certain peculiarities that distinguish it from the tertulias that occur in other contexts or institutions.

In the Colegio Mayor, tertulias take place when the colegiales gather in the living room, mainly after lunch or dinner, to have a moment of conversation for 20 or 30 minutes in which diverse topics arise in an informal way. They can either gather less than ten colegiales, or sum the whole community, which in some cases includes a hundred colegiales. All colegiales are invited to participate in tertulias, including students and professors of the most diverse careers, ages and backgrounds. However, the percentage of participation depends on many circumstantial factors of each Colegio Mayor. It is a true coexistence in diversity in which many points of view and ways of being are shared, enriching the formation, and nourishing the relationships among the members of the community.

There is no protocol or rigid functioning for tertulias, like pre-arranging the topics of conversation, or having people formally asking for the floor to participate. Rather, it resembles a family reunion in which spontaneity, initiative and experience are combined so that topics of conversation arise, without any rigidity or imposition, from which everyone can learn, enjoy, and participate. The *prearranged* aspect of tertulias has to do more with the *way* in which they take place and *how* colegiales should participate in order to achieve certain educational goals.

Tertulias are a splendid occasion to get to know and treat others with kindness and sympathy. In these meetings colegiales learn how to know each other by listening and speaking in the context of the tertulia. This daily time together is especially necessary so that the Colegio Mayor does not become a kind of lodging where the residents do not know and care for their colleagues and end up being indifferent to each other. This is a special time of the day to *see each other's faces* and bring relationships up to date. Many aspects of participants are shown during tertulias: their most relevant character traits; their hobbies and interests; if they know how to relate to others; their opinions on profound issues; if they feel well; their capacity for empathy; if they know how to take an interest in the concerns of others; if they know how to behave in this context; etc. This knowledge is truly convenient for cultivating authentic and deep relationships, which are indispensable for generating a community in which everyone cares for one another.

Service roles and tasks

Another common practice in Colegios Mayores is assigning a role or a task to each colegial in which they provide a service for the community or contribute to the care and maintenance of the center facilities. Some of these roles and tasks include:

- Order and cleanliness of common areas.
- Taking photographs and videos of the activities.
- Gardening tasks.
- Serving and picking up coffee or snacks.
- Creating contents on the website or social networks.
- Care of electronic equipment.
- Library management.

These are small tasks that usually require about an hour per week. Although there is a detailed description explaining what is expected of each assignment, each student has a certain degree of autonomy that allows him/her to have initiative and creativity in carrying out his/her task and to bring novelty to the community life.

Retreats

This practice consists of dedicating a few hours or days to retreat from the ordinary life of the Colegio Mayor with a select group of colegiales in order to deepen or enhance some aspect of the community, such as its needs, its mission, or its values. In this sense, each retreat organization has its own particular purpose. Some of the most frequent are:

- General introduction to the mission, values, and practices of the community.
- Governance organization.
- Cultural or artistic.
- Academic.
- Religious or spiritual.
- Social service.
- Professional.

The participants, the location, and the duration of the retreats depend on the specific purpose of each one of them. Colegiales attending a retreat can be selected based on their area of study, seniority, community responsibilities, or common interests, among others. It may also be possible to include non-colegiales if deemed appropriate. In the case of location, retreats can be held either on the premises of the Colegio Mayor (in-site) or in another place specially chosen for the occasion (off-site). Finally, their duration can vary from a few hours to a couple of weeks.

Some retreats are expected to take place every year or every certain period of time, while others are organized depending on the circumstances and needs of each academic year. The design and organization of retreats, as well as who participates, is the responsibility of senior colegiales who must reflect on the convenience of having a retreat, its purpose, attendees, location, duration, budget, and other necessary resources, in addition to assuming the work involved to develop this kind of initiatives.

Colegial initiatives

This practice consists of listening to the voice of colegiales about the initiatives they would like to carry out and offering institutional support to implement them. It should be considered that it is not valid to propose any type of initiative, but only those that are aligned with the mission, needs, and values of the community. Institutional support can be provided in various ways: reservation of space at the Colegio Mayor or the University; receiving funding, in case the Colegio Mayor sets aside a budget line for this purpose; counting on the support and advice of senior colegiales in the organization and development of initiatives; etc.

Each academic year, the community must reach an agreement on how to distribute its resources and decide which initiatives should be taken forward, considering the circumstances of each academic year. The initiatives can either be done individually or collaboratively, depending on their nature. They can deal with a wide variety of subjects: social commitment, music, politics, literature, plastic arts, sports, philosophy, history, religion, physics, psychology, etc. Even though the topics and the contents usually vary every year, the formats in which these subjects are addressed tend to be constant. The most frequent and representative formats are:

- Social volunteering.

- Lecture, round table or colloquium with invited experts.

- Sports tournament.

- Club.

- Artistic activity or experience.

- Debate.

- Celebration.

- Conference, seminar or course.

- Cultural excursion or trip.

Peer mentoring

This practice consists of facilitating the opportunity for colegiales to establish a mentoring relationship with another colegial. Essentially, it is a cross-age peer mentoring system, in which the mentees can benefit from the advice and experience of a more senior mentor. The seniority difference can be small (in the case of a second-year student mentoring a first-year student, or in the case of a third or fourth-year student being mentored by a graduate student) or larger (in the case of a student being mentored by a professor).

Mentors can be undergraduate and graduate students, as well as professors, who are willing to provide this service in a selfless manner. They are usually people who are genuinely interested in helping mentees, and who have certain character traits that make them suitable for this task. On some occasions they may receive specific training to become mentors. Mentors for first year colegiales are usually assigned by the Director or by a specific committee on a proposal basis, trying to achieve a certain compatibility between mentor and mentee, like coming from a similar cultural background, or studying in the same college or school. Another option is to invite colegiales to choose or propose the person they would like

to be their mentor. In any case, mentor and mentee should especially have the desire to cultivate their relationship which, although it may have been born in a directed way, can become an authentic relationship, even a friendship.

The topics covered in mentoring are varied and depend both on what the mentee wants to discuss and the experience that the mentor can offer. These may be purely academic issues (study techniques, choice of subjects, work schedule, internships) or more personal ones (family, friendships, professional vocation, self-esteem). Mentees are free to choose the topics they wish to discuss, and their conversations must have the privacy necessary to develop this relationship in a climate of trust.

The frequency and duration of mentoring meetings may vary depending on the needs and preferences of the mentees and the availability of the mentors. Generally, they are 30 to 45-minutes meetings on a weekly, bi-weekly, or monthly basis. This does not preclude short meetings for support or long conversations to get to know each other at leisure. The formality of the meetings can also vary: they can take place in a more formal context (rigidity in the scheduling of conversations, in an office or meeting room, with topics planned in advance) or more informal (flexibility in the scheduling of conversations, taking a walk, open to the needs of the moment).

Prescriptions for Colegios Mayores

Given that, as we hope we have already established, Colegios Mayores were initially created to nurture the ethical development and leadership capacity of university students for the good of society, then we should be relying on contemporary knowledge about what actually works in education to achieve such goals. This second section very briefly introduce two relevant and evidence-based educational models that align closely with the original purpose and nature of Colegios Mayores.

PRIMED for character education

The PRIMED model is a set of six educational design principles based on the entire body of research on what works to nurture the development of holistic character in students (Berkowitz, 2021; Berkowitz et al., 2017). The six principles are:

- Prioritization: Making educating for character development an authentic and salient Priority in the mission, vision, policy, and practice of the school.

- Relationships: Intentionally and strategically nurturing healthy Relationships within and across all stakeholder groups.

- Intrinsic motivation: Nurturing the internalization of character and the Intrinsic motivation to be a person of character and avoiding extrinsic motivators.

- Modeling: All adults and other role Models embody and exemplify the character they want to develop in their students.

- Empowerment: Creating a culture and governance structure that Empowers all stakeholders, by inviting their voices, listening to those voices, and seriously considering what they have to say, so that each one has the possibility of making a significant difference.

- Developmental pedagogy: Takes a Developmental perspective in its educational philosophy and practice by educating in ways that support the long-term learning and character development of students.

For Colegios Mayores to leverage these principles, they would need to ensure that the ethical development and leadership capacity of students is an authentic Priority; e.g., in mission, in leadership, in resource allocation, etc. They would need to intentionally, strategically, and inclusively nurture the development of positive Relationships among all

colegiales. They would need to rely on methods that increase the likelihood of internalizing ethical and leadership values, using Intrinsic motivation. The staff and senior colegiales would need to commit to Modeling the kind of ethical character and leadership codified in the mission of the community. They would need to employ a pedagogy of true empowerment of all and maximize the opportunities for meaningful leadership of all colegiales. They would need to take a true Developmental perspective, employing methods and structures that are optimally likely to nurture the long-term positive development of all colegiales.

The Just community approach to moral education

The Just community (Power, 1988; Power et al., 1989) is an approach that aims to promote the moral development and moral responsibility of students through the organization, practices, and culture of the school, in which students actively participate in a deliberative democratic community guided by the moral value of justice. It began in 1974 with the opening of the Cluster School, a small school-within-a-school located in Cambridge, Massachusetts. After this first experience and others that followed, Lawrence Kohlberg, Clark Power, Ann Higgins-D'Alessandro, Fritz Oser, George Lind, and other colleagues developed the Just community approach as it is known today (Power & Higgins-D'Alessandro, 2008).

The purpose of the Just community approach is to nurture moral development through a democratic school committed to building a community that is fully just. This aligns closely with the approach of the original Colegios Mayores model. Where the Just community approach goes further is in both empirically supporting its effectiveness, and, even more relevantly, by creating specific democratic and just governance structures to support its purpose. Colegios Mayores can more rigorously adopt some or all of these structures, and in fact some already use parts or all of them.

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