

PEDAGOGY FOR LIFE

Everyday experience shows us that the school of today shapes the society of tomorrow; revolutionary movements, of whatever stamp, set the conquest of young students as their primary objective.

The primordial task of the school is to form man as a person and as a social being. In the school, as a general rule, students discover their professional vocation when they are properly guided. It also is the job of the school to train them for the competent and responsible exercise of that profession.

From its beginnings, Lasallian pedagogy was careful to form the students for life, not just for school. So that what has just been said will not be a gratuitous assumption, we must go to the *Conduct of Schools*, De La Salle's pedagogical treatise, to listen to what it testifies.

WHAT DO YOU WANT TO BE?

If the student that came to the door of De La Salle's school is already a "young man", the Director is to ask his parents: "*What trade* do they want him to learn and in *how much time*?" (Cf. 3rd part, Chap. II, art. 2, page 242, French edition).

The consequences that this question imposed on the school are clear: it is obliged to program *contents* and *learning time* for this new student. When the *Conduct* specifies how the teacher "should classify the students that are learning to write in italicized letters and the different grades of arithmetic (Cf. 3rd part, Chap. III, art. 4, page 257), it then goes into detail with regard to *programs* and *learning time* for these pupils. (Ibid. page 257 and 11).

And in another place, it states: "The students will write in rounded letters and in italicized letters according to their aptitudes, age and *the profession which they want to enter* and the time during which they will attend class" (Ibid., 3rd part, Chap. I, art. 2, page 234).

ACCELERATED LEARNING

The schooling of small children was very deficient in the time of St. La Salle. His classrooms took in students whose chronological and intellectual ages were not in accord — children of six or seven mixed in with others of twelve or more years. What then to do? The answer was to fit or adapt the teaching to the present and future need of the students. "If a student is twelve years old or older, and has not yet begun to write, he may begin before he has learned to read in Latin — always under condition that he does read correctly in French, and, according to the judgement of the teacher, that he not be obliged to attend (other) classes so that he may learn to write well. (Cf. 1st part, Chap. IV, art. 1, page 47).

In exceptional cases, for reasons of age or in consideration of the future of the student, the schedule may be altered. "If some students may only attend classes for a limited time, and need to write more than the others, they can be authorized to write during the entire time of class, except when texts are being read aloud, during prayers and during the catechism lesson". (Cf. 1st part, Chap. IV, art. 2, page 52).

It will not be out of place to include something about the Sunday School in this section. It was begun by De La Salle for the human and spiritual promotion of young workers of twenty years and more. Maillefer writes in this regard that: progress was so fast that in a short time the (Sunday Schools) reached some 200 students who studied, according to their aptitudes and capacity, drawing, or arithmetic, or, for the least advanced, reading and writing". (Maillefer, page 193). There was a realistic view of the amount of *time* during which these schools could function, adapting to the schedules of the students and arranging the *contents* according to their *professional needs*.

Would it be rash to apply to this procedure of the Lasallian School the present-day term "*Accelerated Learning*"? And, why not, "*Personalized Education*"?

WITH A VIEW TO TOMORROW

The mystery of tomorrow is the engine that thrusts mankind forward. The stutoo, who is manbecoming, consciously or not strives to build a better world of tomorrow. The school, if it is going to respond to this fundamental human desire, must structure its content and methodology for that end.

The teaching that the Lasallian school imparts attempts to be practical and useful for the ones

for whom it is destined, not only during the learning period but, principally, for the morrow. Reading and writing took up the major part of the students' time and effort. For both of these activities the *Conduct* prescribes exercises that will redound to the advantage of the students when they leave the school.

For the spelling class, "they will be assigned to copy texts each day which contain information that will be *useful for them to know for the future*". (Cf. 1st part, Chap. IV, art. 3, page 55). A little further on it invites the students themselves to compose "letters, contracts... and other documents *which will be useful at some future date*". (Ibid.).

La Salle, the consummate psychologist, complains about parents for their negligence in demanding attendance at class. He particularly singles out the poor. To that effect he goes on to exhort his teachers with these lines that are worth a whole treatise in themselves: "The teacher must persuade parents of the obligation they have to see that their children receive instruction and of the serious harm they will cause the children if these do not learn to read and write, because they will never be of any use for future employment if they do not know how to read and write. (Cf. 3rd part, Chap. VI, art. 1, section 2, page 188).

There were at that time parents who would withdraw their children from school so that they could begin to earn something even though they were still too young and with little formal instruction. For these cases De La Salle recommended

that the teachers urge the parents in these terms: "Consider how much you are going to harm the child and how important it is for a worker to know how to read and write, for, however slow the child may have been for his studies, if he knows how to read and write, *he will be able to do anything*". (Cf. 3rd part, Chap. VI, art. 1, section 2, page 189). That is to say, he'll be able to make his mark in life.

What is more, the Lasallian school, in its desire for human and Christian *promotion*, went beyond the limited programs of the "*Petites Ecoles*" and of the "*popular schools*", because they imparted "all that had to do with commerce, finances, architecture, and mathematics; in a word, all that a young person ought to study, except Latin". (Tableau de Rouen, 18th century).

Maillefer, with the authority of an eyewitness, will conclude this exposition with a testimony that once again shows the solicitude of De La Salle and of his sons for the human and Christian destiny of their students. Referring to the Irish boys that were taken in and educated by the Brothers, he writes: "De La Salle put them in the hands of Brothers who would instruct them and impart the necessary knowledge to each one, according to his condition; so that, in a short while, all were able to competently handle *the different employments for which they were destined*". (Maillefer, page 135. *Cahiers Lasalliens*, No. 6).

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