

PRINCIPAL ORIENTATIONS IN THE EDUCATION OF THE YOUTHS AT ARAVACA

Introduction

The La Salle University School for Teacher Training in Aravaca, Madrid, is a school which has its prime purpose the training of teachers who will teach in Primary Schools: in our case, teachers intended for children between 5 to 14 years of age.

This school, named La Salle and forming part of the Madrid District, has a total of 627 students. Of the 30 professors on the faculty, 9 of us are Brothers of the Christian Schools.

The students who study in our school are between 19 and 22 years and they have the choice, within the common three year program, of one of the following five specializations: Sciences, Philology, Social Sciences, Pre-schooling, and Special Education.

If the general objective and reason for existing of these University schools in Spain is the preparation of a faculty which is going to impart an education to children between 5 and 14 years of age, then it is easy to deduce that the general objective and, at the same time, the specific objective of our school, is the *Education of authentic Christian educators according to the charism of Saint John Baptist de La Salle and the present orientations of the Church and of the Institute.*

In this form, our specific objective contains, assumes, and embellishes the general objectives of these official schools in Spain, and for us is converted into an adequate indicator and into a fountain of inspiration of the *orientations of This School.*

In summary, they would be the following:

1. The student is the nuclear point of our educative style

We concentrate essentially on the person of each student as being unique and unduplicatable. We strive to know him and to help him in discovering himself and in knowing himself profoundly. From this the acceptance and appreciation of his own person and the self-confirmation of his aptitudes and professional motivations will arise.

So that this orientation will not remain merely speculative, the school administrators, free of charge, administer a battery of tests to any students who want them. These tests are quickly corrected and interpreted, and are explained to the interested parties through a personal interview with the psychometrician of the school.

In addition to this technical service rendered to the person of each student, the School offers a Tutor-Guide who can guide him in orienting himself and can help him in his studies as well as in his personal life, and eventually in his career.

Prior to his admission into the School, each student is

accepted as an individual person because of a personal admissions interview in which he explains his philosophy of life as well as the main thrusts of his activities.

2. Liberty, responsibility, two essential values in integrating our student as a future teacher-educator

Once our student recognizes and assumes his own personal "I" and discovers and accepts his vocation as a teacher and educator, there is a line of activity which summons him into the dynamics of the School: the balanced combination of the LIBERTY-RESPONSIBILITY binomial. Here is the program which is presented to him as a challenge and which commits him in his being and his work: I am a free person called upon to enlighten free persons. On my self-formation depends, to a great extent, the process of integrally perfecting many pupils who await and need the motivating influence of my person as a teacher.

The response to this real and hopeful commitment is called responsibility.

Toward this end, the School creates areas of liberty and endeavours to make each student aware of his person, his vocation, his future mission; of his time, his personal and group work; of the methods used, and of the materials at his disposal; of the explanations of the professors and of his own personal research and discoveries; of the observation and acquisition of experiences of every type, etc. etc..

A student in our school who knows well who he is, who discovers and interiorizes the true goals and his life and who commits himself to them, from his own personal identity and with his destiny is a person who makes of his liberty a permanent act of responsibility.

3. Discover and identity oneself with a world of a hierarchy of values

Every human person, and for that reason the teacher-educator, comes from a society structured by norms born of a philosophy and sustained by an order of values.

A question spontaneously arises: is our School identified, in its task of formation, with the world of values which defines and propels society today?

Also are we convinced that the mission of the School is the training of teachers whose task is, or is going to be, to forge the men of a new society.

Each year our students reach the conclusion that discrepancies and even contradictions exist between those values maintained and put forward by society and the principles and values which they discover and consider to be creators of a more just and beautiful society. How can we succeed in making the necessary re-adjustment?

Here arises the great unknown which has to be discovered and which constitutes the challenge for the School. Yes, we must prepare men, but for which type of society?

In order to respond to this interrogation, our School endeavours to form future teachers motivating and helping them to *observe* and *analyze* situations, to *reflect* deeply on what they hear and what they read, to develop a *critical sense* with regard to theories, events, and conduct, to hold respectful but open *dialogue* with all, etc. etc.

Thus, although not without difficulties, the student will come to discover and further his own hierarchy of values, obliging him to *define himself* and *assert himself*. Relatively soon, he will come to the conviction that his profes-

sion is not private but public, that his teaching is worth little if it is not going to be accompanied by his personal witness and that his influence on the students will be infinitely greater by what he IS than by what he merely says or teaches.

Materials such as Anthropology, Philosophy, Pedagogy, Theology, etc. in their content as well as in their type of work on one side, and all types of visits to Centers and Organizations, personal work of a reflective nature and various experiences on the other, are the means by which the School collaborates with the students in the acquisition of axiological principles which will rule his life and educational undertakings.

4. The educator cast in the lasallian mold

In reality this objective has its framework in a previous setting. But so that it would be a particular feature which would define the proper characteristic of our School, I have wished to underscore it and give it its own personality.

The specific end of this School, the Statutes state, "is to train professionals in education, based upon a Christian concept of man and of life".

In the very first interview granted to the future student, he is informed of this and the school is presented to him as a School of the Catholic Faith.

By the manner and focus which is given to each discipline, by the respectful and friendly guidance and instruction given to each person, by the availability and spirit of answering the needs of each one who seeks help and accompaniment in his problems, etc., the School endeavors to present its Christian character. In all things there is love and service.

The subjects of Theology and Catechetics, presented at the informational and catechetical levels, work of individual maturation such as "My fundamental option", are some of the ways which are offered as means of fostering thought and commitment.

Every year, within the school, there is a convocation, by way of invitation for the students who so wish to be able to join Christian study groups with apostolic and social polarization.

The Vocational program, the Eucharistic celebrations and the celebration of the Word at the various liturgical seasons, etc. are some of the means the School offers to its students to awaken, cultivate, and testify to their faith and their Christian commitments.

In spite of these activities, so in keeping with the identity of the School, we are convinced that religious formation and Christian commitment are generated within the inner soul of each person as a personal response to the action of the Spirit.

We attempt to succeed in casting the students into a Lasallian die essentially by our contagious witness and our personal form of existence, in our life and teaching.

In all its forms, the figure of La Salle appears as much in the subject of pedagogy as in the Lasallian cultural week which we organize to celebrate the feast of Saint John Baptist de La Salle, special Patron of all teachers.

5. Pedagogical methodology embodied in a serious and family organization

In the School there is a climate of work invested in a festive atmosphere of acceptance and friendship. This close relationship and pleasant and friendly treatment among teachers and students is one of the distinctive characteristics of the School. I think that this easy and friendly communication facilitates not only dialogue and understanding but also serious and satisfying educational work.

The methodology which is followed is a mixture of the Traditional with the New School. The magisterial classes are carried on simultaneously in personal and group work. There are themes which are developed personally as well as group activities under the orientation and supervision of the professor. Small nuclei of scientific investigation and physiconatural experiences as well as working and cultural visits and excursions is only an indication of some of the activities which we undertake and which run the gamut of *different methodologies* for the training and education of these youths.

What we are trying to achieve in this variety of methodologies is to succeed in having our students undergo diverse personal experiences so that they can successfully make them a part of their personal lives and then communicate them in a creative way during their teaching activities.

6. Obstacles in the formative process

A situation which dims and militates against the objectives which the School proposes is the lack of job openings for those finishing the course of studies.

The deep motivation and desire to work which is found in our students who go on dedicating the best years of their lives to the task of education, are all too frequently frustrated by their inability to find work which is consonant with their preparation and vocational capabilities. For this reason, a sufficient number of them follow their studies in the University, to which they have access, in the fourth year of their career, by means of preparatory courses.

Final summary

It is time to state that these orientations or lines of action which have been briefly described, strive to achieve a *UNITY* in the process of the educational activity. That is to say: the building, the faculty, the methodology, etc. are the instrumental means which help each student achieve his educational formation according to the model of the man and the society which the School presents to him.

The student is the focal point of all that the School does. He is the principal agent of his own formation. Everything converges on him; but it is he who must make the selective synthesis in order to arrive at the desired integrating *UNITY*.

Here you have, in its more outstanding features, the dynamics of this Lasallian University School which, like other Lasallian Schools, strives to realize, here and now, the charism of Saint John Baptist de La Salle: to educate youth in the spirit of Christianity.

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