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Professional Formation of The Young in Salesian Youth Ministry

by Fabio Attard, SDB
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The topic of professional formation within the Salesian world is to be read in the light of the early experience of Don Bosco. One will not understand either the vision or the value of Salesian professional training as a whole if one overlooks this fundamental phase which Don Bosco lived and was able to help germinate and blossom. Various studies shed light on this original experience of Don Bosco. This material is an indispensable tool that helps us to acknowledge today's challenges without feeling that we are straying from those pastoral and charismatic roots that even today remain the basis for the corresponding value of the Salesian educative-pastoral program.

There follow three parts that express three complementary aspects, none of which is more important than the others. On the contrary, more than ever before, these three elements must go together. We will first look at Don Bosco's initial vision of professional training and why he saw this field as a privileged place. Then, we will see what were the basic principles in his educational program in this area, and also how it fits in with his wider vision of the Preventive System as he lived it at Valdocco. And lastly, we will spend time considering the program of the Salesians of Don Bosco today and how Don Bosco's heritage continues being the soul of the Salesian educative-pastoral experience there where we are present.

Professional Training in the Experience of Don Bosco

At present, the Salesians of Don Bosco have 826 professional schools in different parts of the world. The centers offer vocational training at various levels, of the several social categories, in every possible sector. These Salesian professional centers integrate well in many countries, within diverse cultures, religions, and social customs. Consequently, it is right to ask 'How did this all start?'

This question is not one that can be satisfied with a simple historical answer. Instead, it places us in contact with the origins that today still help us hold onto the same objectives, strengthen and perfect our educative-pastoral

strategies, and finally update our ability to read and respond to the challenges that every young person encounters today in his or her quest for a better future.

This article would like to recall those origins that must be examined not just with hindsight, but also through our focus on those choices that resulted from the dialogue entered with the reality of those times without being close-minded. As we shall see further on, by placing the young person at the center of his attention, Don Bosco's heart wanted nothing but happiness for the young, both in this world and in the next. Along with physical health, education, culture, and decent wages, his vision included the good of their souls. Don Bosco maintained a balance in the unified program that he offered to both the young and to all those who joined him, for the welfare of the young and the joy of his collaborators.

Don Bosco's Attentive Process Towards Professional Training

To understand better the origins, we must for a moment plunge into the history and remember those beginnings that for us Salesians continue to be a source of inspiration. In his book *Prevention not Repression*, Fr. Pietro Braido writes:

Don Bosco spoke and wrote about his projects on behalf of youth and his pedagogical approach to the most diverse range of people: collaborators, cooperators, benefactors; popes, cardinals, bishops and priests; authorities, politicians, financiers, civil servants, managers of state and local corporations... He also looked at various possibilities for applying the Preventive System in education: in prisons, with Urban Rattazzi, Minister for Justice in 1854; in recovery institutions, with the Italian Minister for the Interior in 1878; in the classroom, with Francis Bodrato, school teacher in 1864; in private educational institutions and families via the Salesian Bulletin. However what he gave us, the writings he left us, the experience he handed down to us, refers more explicitly to the very many institutions that he himself founded, ran or led. We can divide them into two main categories: 1. Institutions of an open nature such as recreation parks, daily and weekend oratories, youth centres, Sunday and Night schools, other schools of various levels and degrees, popular and youth press, missionary residences. 2. Comprehensive (in the sense of offering overall care) institutions such as homes, hostels for young workers or students, technical schools for the technical and professional training of youth, boarding schools for students and ecclesiastical seminaries.¹

This first consideration underlines the primacy of Don Bosco's pedagogy. His preventive system of education was an experience of attending to the

1. Pietro Braido, *Prevention, not Repression: Don Bosco's Educational System*, trans. Julian Fox and Vinicio Zuliani (Bengaluru: Kristu Jyoti Publications, 2013), 248. Editor's

young, whatever their situation. He addressed his primary concern towards those who were most disadvantaged, towards those who had no hope of improving their condition, or no help within their reach.

It was a humble and poor beginning. To begin with, all he had to give them was food, lodging together with assistance to those who were employed by craftsmen in the city. These were the first steps in a journey that included legal contracts and constant formative concern.

By 1853 there already appears a progressive organization, in and among the workshops, along with attention given to moral, religious, educational and economic development. This was the leitmotiv of Don Bosco's life up to his death, and we find it in one of his conferences given to the Cooperators in 1882:

There are night schools for young artisans who are occupied all day at their jobs and are unable to study. There are free day schools. There are charitable institutions that help to place the youngsters under upright masters and care is taken so that they encounter no danger to religion and morality. However, this is not enough ... the abandoned child needs a home, a roof, a shelter. So there is no doubt that what abandoned youngsters need, is charitable hospices. There they are given all that is necessary for life; there in the appropriate setting, they are trained in the skills of a trade so that one day they can earn their keep.²

We can see how at the end of his life Don Bosco himself was able to recognize the development of an all-embracing educative project, that is,

note: Fr. Fabio Attard's article was originally written in Italian. The author quoted from the Italian edition of the book by Pietro Braido. In this translation of the original article by Fr. Attard, the citations are taken from the English edition of Braido's book, published in 2013.

2. Conferenza ai Cooperatori a Genova del 30 marzo 1882, in *Bollettino Salesiano* 6 (1882), n. 4, Aprile, 71. The emphasis is of the author. Editor's note: As stated above, this article was originally written in Italian. Hereafter, we will reproduce the original text in Italian as cited by Fr. Attard. The English text reproduced in the main text, is the text of our translator. "Vi hanno i così detti patronati, mediante i quali si ha cura di collocare i giovanetti presso a padroni onesti, e si attende che non vi corrano pericolo né per la religione né per la moralità Ma questi mezzi talora non bastano ... ma occorre una casa, occorre un tetto, occorre un ricovero pel derelitto. Ed ecco appunto la necessità degli Ospizi di carità pei giovanetti più bisognosi. Ivi sono provveduti di quanto è necessario alla vita; ivi gli uni in appositi laboratorii sono avviati all' imprendimento di un' arte, perché possano un giorno guadagnarsi un pane onorato."

an increasing importance given to the social, technical and professional formation blended well with the religious and moral aims in life:

Once an artisan has received the useful and pertinent knowledge necessary for exercising his skill, I believe that he is sufficiently prepared to be considered a benefit to society and religion, and has the right to be respected as much as any other.³

In a very concise way, we can extract two important points. First, application of the Preventive System will benefit everyone wherever they are and in whatever stage, they are found, in particular among the neediest. This pastoral approach is like an arcade that embraces and expresses Don Bosco's educative and pastoral dream. Secondly, it is not by chance that the first group which begins to establish its identity within the oratory experience is precisely that of the young artisans, which becomes the testing ground that will open the way for the 'Preventive System' to be applied and lived in a variety of ways.

The Social Context: Needs and Solutions

As a young priest, Don Bosco lived at a time when the educational system still did not allow for any possibility of social mobility. He saw that if the young artisans were trained, they would not be left abandoned. He also saw that poverty was not a reason for not attempting to get ahead in life. Even those who were born with limited intellectual capacity were given the opportunity for learning a trade. Don Bosco was convinced that training in any trade was a key which opened new horizons, broke the chains of the vicious circle of poverty and misery.

Arthur J. Lenti dwells on this and states that the creating of trade schools was motivated for practical reasons.⁴ For some youngsters there was no other path to a better future: they were poor and in dire need. Now they were learning a trade that would guarantee them a decent living. Even though initially the accent was placed on this economic factor, little by little, as mentioned before, Don Bosco himself insisted that this initiative evolve hand in hand with a world which at the time was in full industrial development.

3. *Bollettino Salesiano* 5 (1881) n. 8, Agosto, 16. "Quando un artigiano possiede le cognizioni utili ed opportune per ben esercitare l'arte sua ... , costoro, dico, sono dotti quanto è necessario per farsi benemeriti della Società e della Religione, ed hanno diritto ad essere rispettati quanto altri mai."

4. See Arthur Lenti, *Don Bosco: History and Spirit* (Rome: LAS, 2007-2010), 3: chapter 3.

It was not enough to give the youngster a job. Don Bosco did not want to see the lad spend his life shackled to his job. One was not to be trained to serve a system; rather formation was intended to make one aware of his dignity. Access to training meant access to education, which in those days was available only to a few while others saw no opportunity to better their lives. Lenti says that this way the social caste system would remain intact.

After many years, towards the end of Don Bosco's life, this new idea was caught up in the wave of a new industrial world in rapid development. He threw himself into this venture that was becoming a veritable womb of integral human formation, providing the young with an education that gave them the proper tools needed to confront life's challenges.

We see how Don Bosco, aware of the needs of society, tries to establish a dialogue that has as its goal the promotion of poor youth. A dearth of means was no excuse for doing nothing. What little good could be accomplished was always both an answer and a help for needy youth.

The Profile of the Educator

When evaluating an educative-pastoral initiative along with a discussion on the world that is in constant change, it is equally important to study the person of the educator. How did Don Bosco perceive the person of the educator? How did he envision the preparation for such a decisive role? Were instruction and content sufficient for one to eventually seek employment? Was finding a job, sufficient?

In a few words Pietro Braido synthesizes Don Bosco's image of the educator:

His socially-directed educational system demanded the continuous and active presence of the educators among the boys and the sharing of their lives and interests. Ascetic, cultural and professional formation could never have had an adequate development apart from the educative community. The formation of priests and brothers who wanted to consecrate their entire life assisting full-time in educating the young would not have occurred unless within the educative community or with a close connection with it. Experience, made more meaningful by the daily contact with the young and with co-workers, guided by the rector who is the 'educator of the educators', had to stand as a qualifying factor in the educational maturing of Don Bosco's Salesians. Naturally, this maturing

process had to be supported by a process of cultural, philosophical, theological and basically professional formation.⁵

Here lies the foundation of Don Bosco's entire educative work. There are two elements which help us understand how the figure of the educator is not just an individual having his experience, nor a totally detached person. The educator is, in fact, one who through his 'formative' presence among the young opens the door to a myriad of values, first mentioned then talked about, observed because they were lived. Furthermore, the educator is not just another 'somebody' but one who is part of an educative community, which as a body constitutes the spinal column of the educative project on behalf of the young. It is within this polarity, namely the intermingling of youth and educative community, that the indispensable cultural and professional formation finds its authentic place in Salesian education.

Braido's closing comment serves as an existential hinge uniting the life of Don Bosco with what we are called to today. His experience is a beacon that lights our way. If we do not often return to Don Bosco, to his initial experience, in a critical and intelligent way, we run the risk of losing the charismatic and pastoral nourishment which would make our educative project even more complete. Don Bosco's vision was creative and clear taking into account both the exterior world together with the world within the hearts of the young. It was vision that read the signs of the times as well as the longings in their hearts. This was his vision:

This was an intuition in tune with Don Bosco's sensitivity, his vast visionary capacity, which included realism enveloped by the passion to achieve grandiose projects which youth needed. For these visions and these tasks, these dreams, the simple traditional formation process, however necessary, was not enough and not even a simple traditional pedagogy was enough for such visionary scenarios. The educator, whose heart was as wide as the sand on the seashore, had to be much more than a simple priest, religious, instructor and educator, and much more than a pedagogue or social activist. The new priest or religious or educator had to develop in contact with a living experience, a reality full of pressing needs such as misery and abandonment, with a great sense of humanity and a steadfast faith inflamed by charity, all of which was to be achieved along with an overflowing passion and sensitivity.⁶

5. Braido, *Prevention, not Repression*, 265.

6. Braido, *Prevention, not Repression*, 266.

Fundamental Elements of the Salesian Educative Project

In the forward to the study on technical schools and Salesian technical centers, the then Rector Major Fr. Juan Edmundo Vecchi states the following:

The Salesian professional school is a place where one can touch firsthand the pedagogy of Don Bosco's system in its entirety. The youngster is welcomed as he is and is guided through a variety of events according to his level of maturity ready to assume responsibility for his self-realization and living the life of an honest citizen and a good Christian.⁷

Vecchi then leaps into what will ever be for us the charismatic experience of the origins:

Don Bosco's opting for education, immediately took a concrete form in which intellectual growth went hand in hand with practical, social and religious growth. Don Bosco visualized his Salesian, in short sleeves, working hand in hand with lay persons and the young, with the professional training which accompanies the human and Christian growth of the young. In this way, the Salesian led the youngster to God.⁸

This way of perceiving the Salesian, lead us to the first fundamental element of the Salesian educative project: work alongside with both the youngsters and the educators having in mind an all-encompassing goal: intellectual and professional input together with a hands-on activity, and social and religious formation. This overall grand scheme is not an ideology, much less a theory: it is the daily setting in which the educative/pastoral community commits itself to not only appreciate what the young enjoy but to love the young, their present and their future. To educate goes beyond merely transmitting information. Work is much more than mere production.

7. Juan E. Vecchi, writing the Foreword, in Luc Van Looy and Guglielmo Malizia (edd.), *Formazione professionale salesiana. Proposte in una prospettiva multidisciplinare* (Rome: LAS, 1998), 5-7. "Il centro professionale salesiano è un luogo dove si tocca con mano la pedagogia integrale del Sistema di Don Bosco. Il giovane viene accolto com'è e portato attraverso una varietà di interventi a un tale livello di maturità da assumere responsabilmente le sorti della propria autorealizzazione e vivere come onesto cittadino e buon cristiano."

8. Juan E. Vecchi, writing the Foreword, in Luc Van Looy and Guglielmo Malizia (edd.), *Formazione professionale salesiana. Proposte in una prospettiva multidisciplinare* (Rome: LAS, 1998), 5-7. "La scelta educativa di Don Bosco si era subito espressa in una proposta in cui la crescita intellettuale va di pari passo con quella pratica, sociale e religiosa. In maniche di camicia, lavorando insieme a laici e giovani, con la competenza professionale che accompagna la crescita umana e cristiana del giovane, così vedeva Don Bosco il salesiano che introduceva il giovane a Dio."

There is an additional and immediate value in walking with the young, an authentic objective personified in the educator, a goal that is attainable: “the border between scientific information and personal formation lies precisely in the ability to spur persons towards shared objectives.”⁹

The second fundamental element is the brotherly atmosphere, solidarity, and faith. A healthy and mature climate will always be of primary importance, a resource for the formation of the young. In a culture which champions individuality, gives little attention to a sense of togetherness, and gives little attention to the weak and the poor, one must create moments that nurture awareness of the group, moments that speak of the future and hope. This awareness of others would be the mature fruit of a culture of communion that a person inhales in such a professional school setting.

Within this context, we move on to the third fundamental point: the link between the school and the world of labor. From the very beginning Don Bosco welcomed youngsters to Valdocco, and once he had found employment for them, he would keep in touch with them. Today this step is even more indispensable. To find a job implies finding a path leading to dignity, hope for the future. This responsibility has become more of a challenge that must be not be underestimated when involving those who have little chance to succeed in finding the means and environments needed for their development.

The fourth fundamental element is the figure of the educator in every technical school and professional training center:

The educator/teacher must blend human values, professional training, religious formation and the Salesian style of education if he expects to influence the young for the better. Not only does he commit and dedicate himself to the formation of the young, but he also develops the keen awareness of belonging to an educative community which shares a specific view of existence; the understanding of an educative mission as a communal effort composed of different elements and the way to provide quality formation.¹⁰

A fifth element is an openness to change. In a world that is in constant flux, if one is to be in dialogue with it, then one must be in touch with the

9. Juan E. Vecchi, writing the Foreword, in Luc Van Looy and Guglielmo Malizia (edd.), *Formazione professionale salesiana. Proposte in una prospettiva multidisciplinare* (Rome: LAS, 1998), 5-7. “...il confine tra la informazione scientifica e la formazione sta proprio in questa capacità di spingere le persone verso obiettivi condivisi.”

10. Juan E. Vecchi, writing the Foreword, in Luc Van Looy and Guglielmo Malizia (edd.), *Formazione professionale salesiana. Proposte in una prospettiva multidisciplinare* (Rome: LAS, 1998), 5-7. “L’educatore-insegnante è chiamato a integrare in modo armonico i valori umani, la qualificazione professionale, il senso religioso e lo spirito-pedagogia salesiana per essere in grado di comunicare in modo educativo. Egli non solo

technology that stokes progress. One must dialogue with the thinking and the politics that govern this field that is the concern of everyone, even of the young and of governments and international political institutions. The welfare of the young and their yearning for a life of dignity challenges all of us to better our ability to face the future without fear and to trust in our abilities.

The sixth, and the final fundamental element is to have a clear anthropological vision based on religious values: to offer to the young an environment and experience of generous and limitless self-giving, to know how to accompany them and respect their convictions, their patterns and ideas. This is equivalent to being open to Gospel values. It is a place open to religious experience, a path enlightened by a scale of moral and spiritual values which enriches, not weakens, one's journey towards professional certification. In fact, "Salesian pedagogy is meant to ensure that every moment and activity are part of the educative process, where persons and curricula, structures and programs are in perfect harmony."¹¹

The Proposals Offered Today by the Salesians of Don Bosco

We have come to the conclusion of this study. During all these years the Salesian Congregation has given great importance to the fields of technical and professional schools. In these past decades, the Congregation has made a thorough study of her pastoral activity in conjunction with her educative system.

In this regard, the Twenty-Sixth General Chapter of 2008 (GC 26) has asked for a further study dealing with a "deeper understanding of the relationship between evangelization and education." This deeper study would serve "in order to put the Preventive System into practice, and adapt the frame of reference for youth ministry to changing cultural circumstances" (CG 26, n. 45).

This endeavor, which has involved the participation of every Salesian Community, has produced a synthesis of this long journey with the focus placed on the educative-pastoral program meant for every sector of Salesian

si impegna individualmente e si dedica al processo formativo dei giovani, ma acquisisce la coscienza viva di fare parte di una comunità educativa che condivide una determinata visione dell' esistenza. La realizzazione della missione educativa come comunità, integrata da componenti molto diverse, e il modo per realizzare un progetto formativo di qualità."

11. Juan E. Vecchi, writing the Foreword, in Luc Van Looy and Guglielmo Malizia (edd.), *Formazione professionale salesiana. Proposte in una prospettiva multidisciplinare* (Rome: LAS, 1998), 5-7. "La pedagogia salesiana vuole assicurare che tutto si svolge in un unico movimento educativo, dove persone e curricula, strutture e programmi si integrano armonicamente."

youth ministry. The volume *Salesian Youth Ministry. Frame of Reference*, presents the essential guidelines which have undergone a process of maturation during these past years.

The Frame of Reference looks at every sector of Salesian activity and offers the following reflections. First, the peculiar nature of the individual sectors, in our case the vocational and technical schools; second, the Educative and Pastoral Community (EPC); and third, the educative pastoral plan; fourth, the organic pastoral animation in each center. In synthesis, we offer the key guidelines that the Frame of Reference presents for professional training centers.

The first section deals with what is peculiar to the school and the Vocational Training Centers; the Frame of Reference traces the reasons that guided Don Bosco in his initial experience in Valdocco:

The Salesian Vocational Training Centre and the school came into existence in Valdocco to meet specific needs of youth and integrate them within an overall project of education and evangelisation of the young, especially those most in need. ... Ever attentive to the needs of the young, Don Bosco extended his commitment by developing the Salesian school. He sensed that the school was an essential tool for education, a meeting point between culture and faith. We consider the school as a privileged *cultural mediation* in education; an institution for the formation of personality which we cannot do without because it conveys a concept of the world, the human person and of history.¹²

The second section deals with the Educative and Pastoral Community. The *Frame of Reference* reaffirms the ever-urgent option that has its roots in the original experience in Valdocco:

The students are the primary players in the formation process: They participate in a creative way to develop and implement it at through its various stages; they grow in relational skills through their schooling and formation. By responding to the explicit need for young people to receive a serious cultural and vocational preparation...¹³

Here we find one of the pivotal elements of Salesian education which bears fruit in proportion to the creative and well-planned dedication of the educators. Let's go back to the *Frame of Reference*:

In the words of Don Bosco, educators create a "family" together with the young, a youthful community wherein the interests and experiences of young people are

12. Salesian Youth Ministry Department, Salesian Youth Ministry. *Frame of Reference* (Rome: Direzione Generale Opere Don Bosco, 2014), 197-198. Henceforth, *Frame of Reference*.

13. *Frame of Reference*, 200.

the basis of everything that comes under the heading of education. The teachers not only teach, but “assist”, work, study and pray together with the pupils. They are willing to be with the young, capable of empathising with them and their problems: “*Teachers in the classroom and brothers in the courtyard*” (Don Bosco).¹⁴

If pupils and teachers are called to see their role as part of a holistic educational project, it is equally important and urgent that the parents also participate:

Parents, directly responsible as they are for their children’s growth, dialogue with their educators; they play a personal part, through various opportunities for dialogue with the school/VTC¹⁵ in planning and evaluation, and planning leisure activities. Don Bosco’s Preventive System is inspired by the family and is practiced in a family atmosphere. It is part of our schools and our VTCs, serving as model of relationship and growth for parents in their dialogue with their children.¹⁶

Given these two foundational principles, the charismatic origins and the Educative and Pastoral Community, we move on to the third section: the educative/pastoral program. Here also the *Frame of Reference* stresses one of Don Bosco’s concerns as he visualized and proposed paths for the formation of young artisans. He begins by reaffirming that there is no dichotomy between schooling and professional formation:

The Salesian school/VTC are two related structures of systematic formation with their own characteristics. There is no true Salesian school that does not aim at preparing the young for work. Nor is there a true Salesian VTC which does not take into account the systematic development of culture. The educator’s task is the art of thinking about the contents of his/her teaching from the point of view of the holistic development of the young and their personal growth.¹⁷

To summarize, to educate skillfully in a Salesian manner, the following features are important:

a) Inspiration drawn from Gospel values and an invitation to faith: that is, openness and a deeper appreciation of religious and transcendent

14. *Frame of Reference*, 200.

15. VTC stands for “Vocational Training Centre”.

16. *Frame of Reference*, 201.

17. *Frame of Reference*, 201.

experiences. It reconsiders the Gospel message as it comes into contact with the variety of languages and the questions arising out of the local cultures;¹⁸

b) An efficient and quality education: give preference to those processes in which the educational experience is acknowledged – where its well-defined processes are assured. In a very general sense, education is “planned” (specific aims, defined roles, adequate experience) and a team effort: the Educative and Pastoral Community. With this in mind, Salesian schools and Vocational Training Centres offer an educational and cultural proposal of quality in which the young people are involved in an overall process of education in which, in addition to work-related skills, they also learn the rights and responsibilities of active citizenship;¹⁹

c) Salesian pedagogy: the Salesian school and the Vocational Training Centres reach their goals through Don Bosco’s style and approach to education (GC 21 no. 131). In practice, the following elements, provide the typical features of our educational centers. These components are: taking on board the integrity of the life of the young, emphasizing personal relationships in education based on trust, dialogue, and the presence (assistance) of the educators among the young; preparing them responsibly to assume active citizenship in family, life, civil society, and the Church community;²⁰

d) Social function and care for those most in need: the educators accompany the integration of young people into whatever situation they face and so help them to contribute to building up a more just society worthy of the human being.²¹

The fourth and final section the *Frame of Reference*, deals with systematic pastoral animation pointing out the main interventions together with the structures of participation and responsibility. The principal interventions were the following:

i) educational relationships based on reasonable demands, the value of daily life and on the educational accompaniment;

ii) the cultural setting, or approach, with its holistic reflection of the human person offering a complete anthropological vision inspired by Christian humanism. For example, the formation of human conscience, education to affectivity and socio-political education and specifically religious

18. See *Frame of Reference*, 201.

19. See *Frame of Reference*, 202.

20. See *Frame of Reference*, 202-203.

21. See *Frame of Reference*, 204.

formation; we believe that the religious dimension should be presented in the overall context of the knowledge which forms the basis of the formation of children and the young;

iii) as a teaching method we choose a personalized approach to what we offer by way of education and mutual collaboration;

iv) holistic education means rounding off school and training curricula with other complementary, freely chosen activities which support them. One of the pillars of the identity of the Salesian school and Vocational Training Centres, is a clear and comprehensive spelling out of explicitly evangelizing occasions: daily brief individual encounters or with groups (Good morning, Goodnight), formative and spiritual experiences, specific moments of prayer and celebration, time for celebrations. Such as days of gratitude, education to shared responsibility and as a sign of belonging;

v) it is important that the educators be always available for personal encounters with the students, offering them quality time and space;

vi) there is always a need for formation and updating our teachers in a way that links faith, knowledge, and life. It is this which marks out the Salesian school as being professionally competent; Therefore the formation of teachers should see to good professional pedagogy and Salesian educational style, a lived Christian spirituality; teachers who stand out for their human and welcoming personality;

vii) the components and interventions that make up the Salesian Provincial Educative and Pastoral Project of the school and Vocational Training Centres should be part of the broader and overarching Educational Project in line with governmental legislation. The Salesian Provincial Educative and Pastoral Project pastoral planning expresses and defines the identity of the Salesian school, as such it is the criterion for all choices and interventions regarding evangelization and is fully consistent with the culture of the educational curriculum as a whole.²²

The *Frame of Reference* spells out for us the structures for participation and shared responsibility both at the local level as well as at the provincial and national levels. Since these structures vary according to the countries and their school legislation, it is up to the Province to define concrete and appropriate organization procedures, internal functioning and responsibilities in its schools and Vocational Training Centres. We insist that the purpose of these structures of participation and shared responsibility be to create the ideal conditions for an ever greater communion, sharing and collaboration among

22. See *Frame of Reference*, 206-210.

the different components of the Educative and Pastoral Community, the collaboration among teachers, formators, students, and parents. *The Frame of Reference* presents guidelines for the Council of the schools' Educative and Pastoral Community for the teaching staff and the Pastoral Team, under the direction of the Pastoral Coordinator.

The leadership of the provincial-national team is meant to be a network of cooperation at different levels and presence of every sector – public and private entities, social partners and trade unions, as well as other national and international bodies in educational processes and work policies.²³

Conclusion

We have gone back to Don Bosco's experience that matured through the years. During the third and fourth General Chapters (held between 1883 and 1886) one of the topics under discussion was the education of the young artisans. The final document of the 1886 General Chapter produced a clear vision based on three objectives providing program and method. The objectives presented by that General Chapter can be synthesized as follows. *The religious/moral and the intellectual* objective, which includes the basic tools: "humanities, the arts, and sciences", design and the French language. *The professional* objective, that is, training the artisan in every aspect of his trade, not with mere theory but with hands-on experiences in such a way that he "must have learned various skills and become competent."²⁴

The above objectives mirror Don Bosco's vision, a vision that reflected his vocational choice and which bore his image, slowly taking shape, thanks to wise choices. He was convinced that if society was to be effectively renewed it needed a holistic proposal favoring the young, especially those who had little chance of success.

In addition to his option for education, he added the gift of convergence – involving various co-workers, each with his gifts: culture and faith, solid tradition and openness to what was new, involvement in society and commitment to the life of the Church. He had no doubt that instruction and formation, education and evangelization would have to walk hand in hand.

This unification between education and evangelization, reveals his genius and charisma: the ability to join pastoral charity and pedagogical wisdom. Through the latter, he knew how to infuse the former into the fields of education and culture, pedagogy and formation. As long as we remain faithful

23. See *Frame of Reference*, 211-212.

24. See Giovanni Bosco, *Deliberazioni del terzo e quarto capitolo generale della Pia Società Salesiana*, in *Opere Edite XXXVI*, Chapter III, deliberation 2, 18-21 [270]-[273].

to Don Bosco's original experience, we will, for the long haul, understand and offer solutions to the challenges presented by the field of education.