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Don Bosco: A Living Harmony of Leadership and Management Qualities

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This study of Don Bosco in a perspective of organizational virtues is intended to be in a circular hermeneutic relation with the present period of transformation in which the Salesians of Don Bosco find themselves. From the 1970's to the present day, the organizational methodology of the Salesians has been substantially influenced by the Management by Objectives model (MBO), which had been inspiring the curriculum design theories of the sixties. Among the education theorists who have had the greatest impact on the formulation of the Salesian Educative and Pastoral Project, we find Ralph Tyler, Leslie Briggs, Robert Gagné, Robert Mager, Hilda Taba and, above all, Lawrence Stenhouse, who influenced Juan Edmundo Vecchi the most.¹ It is to the latter, who was the Counsellor for Youth Ministry in the Congregation from 1978 to 1990 that we owe the main ideas leading to educative-pastoral planning.

The limits of planning by objectives and how to go beyond

Planning and Managing By Objectives became universally known thanks to Peter Drucker's book *The Practice of Management*,² and which he further developed in his later books.³ The MBO insisted on involving managers in the decision-making process of establishing objectives as a team, thus bypassing the traditional tasks usually entrusted to the hierarchy.⁴ Besides being an instrument of management suitable for many profit and non-profit

1. See author's deeper analysis in Michal Vojtáš, *Progettare e discernere. Progettazione educativo-pastorale salesiana tra storia, teorie e proposte innovative* (Rome: LAS, 2015).

2. See Peter F. Drucker, *The Practice of Management* (New York: Harper & Row, 1954).

3. See Peter F. Drucker, *Management: Tasks, Responsibilities, Practices* (New York: Truman Talley Books, 1986).

4. See Morgan Witzel, *A History of Management Thought* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2012), 177-197.

organizations, MBO, according to Drucker, is also a philosophy of action that transforms real needs into action goals - objectives. The human being is seen as a free being who chooses to achieve a series of goals not imposed by someone else, but rather those reflecting real needs. The eventual attainment of the objective is obtained above all through determined effort and self-control.⁵ Other management studies have further developed some peculiar aspects of the MBO theory. As an example, we can mention the pioneer publications of Edwin A. Locke, that had an influence on management in the 70's. His theory prefers a psychological perspective on planning and sees motivation and effectiveness as directly related to objectives that have to be specific and urgent.⁶ Later Locke and Latham elaborated a more sophisticated aspect of planning in the *goal setting theory*.⁷ Other lines of thought from the 80's bring further development to the MBO introducing SMART objectives which have five characteristics: *specific, measurable; assignable; realistic; time-related*.⁸

Halfway through the 80's, different management theorists begin to detect the social, political and economic changes, and start to design the passage from the management paradigm of the industrial society to the shared leadership paradigm related to the interconnectedness of the information society. The transition is well noticeable in the extensive documentation in the 1990 edition of Bass and Stogdill's *Handbook of Leadership*.⁹ It must be noted that this paradigmatic shift is in no way meant to indicate that leadership is superior to management; rather it speaks to their differences and to how they are a complementary dual concept. This complementarity is

5. See Drucker, *Management*, 303-304.

6. See Edwin A. Locke, "Toward a theory of task motivation and incentives," in *Organizational Behavior and Human Performance* 3 (1968): 157-189.

7. See Edwin A. Locke and Gary P. Latham, *Goal setting: A motivational technique that works* (Englewood Cliffs NJ: Prentice Hall, 1984); Edwin A. Locke and Gary P. Latham, "Building a practically useful theory of goal setting and task motivation. A 35-year odyssey," in *American Psychologist* 57, no. 9 (2002): 705-717.

8. See George T. Doran, "There's a S.M.A.R.T. way to write management's goals and objectives," in *Management Review* 70, no. 11 (1981): 35-36 and Ken Blanchard, Patricia Zigarmi and Drea Zigarmi, *Leadership and the one minute manager: Increasing effectiveness through situational leadership* (New York: William Morrow and Company, 1985).

9. See Bernard M. Bass, *Bass and Stogdill's, Handbook of Leadership. Theory, Research and Managerial Applications* (New York: Free Press, 1990).

the understanding of John P. Kotter and Warren Bennis, two of the foremost scholars in the area of management and leadership during those years.¹⁰

LEADERSHIP	MANAGEMENT
people oriented	task oriented
spontaneity and serendipity	structure and formality
empowerment	control
principles and purposes	techniques and practices
transformation	transaction
discernment	measurement
goals – do right things	methods – do things right
goals – direction and effectiveness	methods – speed and efficiency
act upon the systems	operate within the systems

The above outline presents a series of binomials¹¹ inspired by the synthesis of Stephen R. Covey, an influential author of the 90's.¹² They illustrate several interdependent aspects between leadership and management. It seems we have passed from a paradigm which sees “leadership as management” to one which understands “leadership as interdependent with management.” Leadership and management are seen as two poles in the world of an organization, because there exists an equilibrium between concern for persons and concern for the systems and tasks. Even though the distinction between leadership and management as interdependent aspects can run the risk of becoming

10. See John P. Kotter, *A Force for Change: How Leadership Differs from Management* (New York: Free Press, 1990); Warren Bennis, *An Invented Life. Reflections on Leadership and Change* (Reading MA: Addison-Wesley, 1993); Warren Bennis and Joan Goldsmith, *Learning to Lead. A workbook on Becoming a Leader* (Reading MA: Addison-Wesley, 1997), 9-10.

11. In this study a binomial is to be intended as an interrelated synergic contrast of two terms which express two poles of approach to a question.

12. See Stephen R. Covey, *The 8th Habit. From Effectiveness to Greatness* (New York: Free Press, 2004), 364.

a mere *cliché*, presuming to resolve all organizational problems, it remains a valid theory that can exert influence in the area of organizational studies.¹³

This paradigm shift was not explicitly perceived in the Salesian Educative-Pastoral Project (SEPP) methodology which still refers to the 80's management by objectives logic implemented by Vecchi. The possible implementation of this paradigm shift could lead to a balance between the importance of planning (management reasoning) together with the importance of government and motivation (leadership reasoning). There must be an equilibrium between the need for clear and shared objectives (management) and working side by side with the others with a real integration of their insights (leadership). Without leadership, accompaniment and communal discernment one would most likely arrive at insignificant objectives. The practice and organizational theories of the past thirty years confirm the inadequacy of the organizational model which aims at realizing goals merely through self-control. There is clear need of deep spiritual motivation along with the dynamics of communal corresponsibility.

Consecrated life and managerial-organizational research

Leadership and management are not unknowns in the world of consecrated life. There are many studies which deal with this topic and the points of view vary. We will recall just some authors who understand that the binomial *leadership – management* as seen in religious orders has much to say to the secular world.

In his book *Heroic Leadership: Best Practices from a 450-Year-Old-Company That Changed the World*,¹⁴ Chris Lowney, a former Jesuit, and now a consultant and manager, dwells at length particularly on the experience of the first generations of the Company of Jesus. He selects four fundamental principles of leadership implicit in the Jesuit “way of proceeding.” The author

13. See John P. Kotter, *Accelerate. Building Strategic Agility for a Faster Moving World* (Boston: Harvard Business Review Press, 2014) and Gareth Edwards et al., “Exploring power assumption in the leadership and management debate,” *Leadership & Organization Development Journal* 36, no. 3 (2015): 328-343.

14. See Chris Lowney, *Heroic Leadership: Best Practices from a 450-Year-Old-Company That Changed the World* (Chicago: Loyola Press, 2005). Editor's note: The author is using the Italian translation of the original publication – Chris Lowney, *Leader per vocazione. I principi della leadership secondo i gesuiti* (Milano: Il Sole 24 Ore, 2005).

proposes this model as a universally acceptable method, not restricted to the Company of Jesus. The Jesuit “heroic leadership” is founded on four pillars:

self-awareness: of one’s strengths, weaknesses, values and vision of the future, nurturing the habit of self-examination and of deepening their knowledge through the Spiritual Exercises;¹⁵

the spirit of initiative: which embraces the world ever in change and initiating changes. Firmly anchored in “non-negotiable” values and principles” the Jesuit cultivates that “indifference” which allows him to adapt to reality without losing his self-confidence;¹⁶

love: a concrete loving attitude towards all those involved in the mission: so everyone is disposed to “love their Superiors rather than fear them”;¹⁷

heroism: nourished by heroic ambitions which pour energy into themselves and others, that is, to “give birth to grand decisions and stimulate equally grand hopes.”¹⁸

The author’s starting point is John Kotter’s concept of leadership¹⁹ and compares him with other authors of books dealing with managerial sciences.²⁰ However, he makes it amply clear that his concept is different, that he speaks of participative leadership; of an inner source of leadership, of an ongoing formation of leadership and leadership understood as a way of life, not as a technique or a set of separate actions. The author also describes the quality of Jesuit organization comparing it with the already established traditions of the

15. See Lowney, *Leader per vocazione*, 113-127.

16. See Lowney, *Leader per vocazione*, 30.

17. George E. Ganss, trans., *The Constitutions of the Company of Jesus*, as quoted in Lowney, *Leader per vocazione*, 32.

18. William J. Young, ed. and trans., *Letters of St. Ignatius of Loyola*, as quoted in Lowney, *Leader per vocazione*, 34.

19. See John P. Kotter, *Leading Change*, as quoted in Lowney, *Leader per vocazione*, 13-14.

20. See the references made to leadership authors as Badaracco, Collins, Drucker, Goleman, Herzberg, Heskett, McGregor, and Zaleznik throughout the book of Lowney, *Leader per vocazione*.

Benedictines, Dominicans and Franciscans and considers their managerial structures insufficient.²¹

Craig S. Galbraith, a Benedictine Oblate, a student of management and co-founder of several businesses in the area of biotechnology, has a similar approach, as does Oliver Galbraith III, professor emeritus of San Diego State University. Both authors describe the Rule of St. Benedict from the point of view of leadership. They have produced a synthesis reducing it to 15 principles: common interest; selection and formation merit and seniority; focused ventures; innovation; ethics; stability; purposeful ritual; group reliance and respect; discipline; counsel; grumbling; leader example; humility and moderation; iron resolve.²²

The opposite approach is taken by the Maltese Jesuit Alfred Darmanin, professor of psychology and past-president of the Conference of European Jesuit Provincials, in his article on Ignatian spirituality and contemporary leadership.²³ He makes a list of the trends in contemporary theories of leadership, then looks for similarities with the organizational method spelled out by Ignatius of Loyola. In his article, he examines the following trends: shared vision-mission (Hesselbein); situational leadership (Hersey-Blanchard); transformational leadership (Burns); organizational culture (Schein); leadership-management (Kotter, Covey); organizational metaphors (Morgan); learning organization (Senge); and servant leadership (Greenleaf). In a subsequent article, Darmanin applies his analysis of managerial research to some of the material of the 35th General Congregation of the Jesuits. Besides bringing attention to the organizational structure, he insists on the need for leadership training within the Company of Jesus.²⁴

A fourth study of the relationship between organizational sciences and the life of religious institutes was that carried out by the Vincentian Family. This Family adopted and implemented the systemic change theory in the life of the Institutes of the Daughters of Charity, the Congregation of the Mission and the Vincentian Volunteer Work, the Association Internationale

21. See Lowney, *Leader per vocazione*, 139-146.

22. See Craig S. Galbraith and Oliver Galbraith III, *Benedictine Rule of Leadership* (Avon, MA: Adams Media Corporation, 2004).

23. See Alfred Darmanin, "Ignatian Spirituality and Leadership in Organizations Today," in *Review of Ignatian Spirituality* 36, no. 2 (2005): 1-14.

24. See Alfred Darmanin, "Governance in the Society of Jesus. What's New?" in *Review of Ignatian Spirituality* 39, no. 3 (2008): 75.

des Charités (AIC).²⁵ Robert Maloney, Superior General between 1992 and 2004, summarizes the essence of systemic change in the life and the pastoral activity of Vincent de Paul. This new development included changing social structures; integral evangelization as a witness, preaching and human promotion; holistic service; quality; organization; solid foundations as the basis for sustainability; transparency; education and job-training; networking; and advocacy.²⁶

Still another viewpoint is that adopted by Pat Smith, a Franciscan in Philadelphia (Pennsylvania) who takes up the idea of leader as proposed by Lowney and compares it to the experience of Francis of Assisi while drawing from other sources as well.²⁷

For Pat Smith, a leader is one who has a profound experience of and passion (love) for life coupled with a vision of the future. A leader is one who can successfully communicate this vision and who can inspire and motivate others to share in it and own it. A leader can assist others to achieve this vision, despite conflicts and obstacles that might have to be overcome.²⁸

Franciscan leadership is Gospel centered and familial, rooted in being (not in doing), springs from littleness, and requires continuous conversion. Unlike Lowney, Smith's article and other Franciscan publications are formation texts directed above all to the religious family and do not aspire to have a global organizational impact, unlike the Vincentian Family leadership model.²⁹

25. See "The Vincentian Family", in <http://www.aic-international.org/content.php?m=4&l=en> (accessed 1.3.2016).

26. Robert Maloney, "Ten seeds of systemic change in the life and works of St. Vincent", in <http://www.aic-international.org/pdf/publicationions/cahier13en.pdf> (accessed 1.3.2016).

27. See Margaret Carney and Joseph Chinnici, *Implications for Governance from Franciscan Christology*. Response to Zachary Hayes' presentation on Christology (Anaheim, LA: Franciscan Federation, 1995); Danielle Julien, "Clare's Model of Leadership", in *The Cord* 51, no. 4 (2001): 184-198; Pat Smith, "Franciscan Leadership: Mutual Love Generating a Future" (keynote presentation at the Franciscan Federation Annual Conference 2009), in [http://www.franfed.org/Keynote - AFC2009,PatSmithOSF.pdf](http://www.franfed.org/Keynote-AFC2009,PatSmithOSF.pdf) (accessed 1.3.2016).

28. Smith, "Franciscan Leadership," 1.

29. See Philip O'Mara, *The Franciscan Leader: A Modern Version of the Six Wings of the Seraph*. An Anonymous Franciscan Treatise in the Tradition of St. Bonaventure (St. Bonaventure, NY: Franciscan Institute Publications, 2013); David D. Ream and Thérèse A. Ream (eds.), "Handbook for Secular Franciscan Servant Leadership", in <http://www>.

Leadership-management lived and embodied in the various phases of Don Bosco's life

In the following paragraphs, which will be framed from a phenomenological approach, we will examine the life of Don Bosco with the help of the binomial *leadership-management*. Our aim is to uncover the presence of and the key to understanding how he was able to unify these two perspectives in his life. By *leadership* we understand a type of human activity which is directed towards persons, searching for direction and ultimate goals with the help of principles and criteria. Emphasis is placed on methods of transformation, empowerment, informality and action brought to bear upon systems. *Management*, on the other hand, is that complementary aspect of human activity focused on things and objects using formal and structured methods, efficient customs and techniques, relying on the strategy of control, measurement, and action within existing systems.

The various "worlds" in the life of Don Bosco

Every person exists in a physical, cultural and spiritual setting and carries with himself the paradigms that have been handed on to him during his formative years. These physical, cultural and spiritual systems are the "worlds" in which Don Bosco's personality developed, and they constitute the coordinates within which his activity took place. These "worlds" that have now become a part of the person, usually carry a tension among various elements as they relate to each other. The tension between "worlds" or their components can stimulate the development of the person or, if handled improperly, can paralyze its growth. As regards the managerial style in Don Bosco's activity, we shall examine above all the aspects related to how he responded to the reality in which he found himself. His leadership style, on the other hand, will appear within his skills of coordination for an ideal future that molds a purposeful horizon while accomplishing the managerial challenges of a single day. With that said, it is in this perspective we intend to outline Don Bosco's multifaceted relationship with his socio-cultural milieu.

1. The rural world of Piedmont during the Restoration was the first context in which Don Bosco was born. Pietro Braido describes it in relation to his style of leadership and management:

From this *humus* thrive the psychological and mental roots of a man and priest, frugal in the handling of large amounts of money that would pass through his

hands, firm and cautious in business, modest and prudent, clever in making himself well-liked and efficacious in soliciting funds. Resolute and flexible in realizing his projects ‘for the greater glory of God and the salvation of souls,’ as he might have heard in sermons and catechetical and moral instructions.³⁰

Don Bosco, true to his roots, managed to combine prudence with a wealth of wisdom, of anecdotes and experiences drawn from his Piedmontese lore, all of which could be summarized as “an austere school of entrepreneurship together with trust in Providence.”³¹ When it is a person’s actual way of life, the binomial *manual labor – trust in Providence*, could very well be a suitable description of the management-leadership combination within a rural setting.³² This binomial reveals the interdependence between both elements and prevents falling into forms of fatuous providence reliance or a kind of practical Pelagianism. Pietro Stella has synthesized this mentality that appears in Don Bosco’s writings using his words: “God dominates human events, even though human beings are the actors.”³³

2. The world of the working class and that of Christian humanism, assimilated during years of study in Chieri, are two other coordinates of Don Bosco’s relating to the reality. The ability to contemporarily combine his craftsmanship with his studies nurtured in him a strong mindset: the hard work, needed for managing the tasks of each day, was just as necessary as the knowledge that broadened the horizons of life and gave sense to the day. However

both cultures [...] would continue to be two distinct worlds in Don Bosco’s personal and institutional mindset. Also, the youngsters he was educating were

30. Pietro Braido, *Don Bosco: prete dei giovani nel secolo delle libertà*, 2 vols., 2d ed. (Roma: LAS, 2003), 1:111-112. “In questo humus affondano le radici psicologiche e mentali di un uomo e di un prete parsimonioso con il molto danaro che avrebbe avuto tra mano, sicuro e cauto negli affari, semplice e prudente, abile nel rendersi accetto e ottenere, tenace e flessibile nell’attuazione dei suoi progetti “a maggior gloria di Dio e salute delle anime”, come poteva aver sentito nelle prediche e nelle istruzioni catechistiche e morali.”

31. Braido, *Don Bosco: prete dei giovani*, 1:118. “una severa scuola di intraprendenza e, insieme, di affidamento alla Provvidenza.”

32. Regarding Don Bosco’s affinity with rural environment, see Pietro Stella, *Don Bosco nella storia economica e sociale (1815-1870)* (Roma: LAS, 1980), 11-27; Pietro Stella, *Don Bosco* (Bologna: Il Mulino, 2001), 23-26; Braido, *Don Bosco prete dei giovani*, 1:112-121. For the binomial providence – human history in Don Bosco, see Pietro Stella, *Don Bosco. Religious Outlook and Spirituality* (New Rochelle, New York: Salesiana Publishers, 1996), 45-86.

33. Stella, *Don Bosco. Religious Outlook*, 53.

from different socio-economic origins and had different life aspirations, yet they shared common life in a brotherly and organized society, each one in the hands of Providence.³⁴

The joining of these two worlds of the working class and of Christian humanism, created the solid communion of lay Salesians and clerical Salesians in the Congregation.³⁵

3. The world of formation that Don Bosco received in the Chieri Seminary and at the *Convitto Ecclesiastico* in Turin left in him the imprint of an austere spirituality of salvation as well as a benign spirituality of love. The years in the seminary were marked by an insistence on saving one's soul. The theology taught at that time was abstract. However, it left in young Bosco some theological notions that stayed with him throughout his life: examining all things in the light of eternity, being accountable before the Divine Judge, awaiting either eternal life or eternal death; and also adhering to the relationship between Divine Law and freedom as understood by moral probabiliorism.³⁶ The formation imparted at the *Convitto Ecclesiastico*, besides practical pastoral experiences, introduced the young priests to a spirituality founded on love as exemplified in the lives of St. Philip Neri, St. Francis de Sales, and St. Vincent de Paul. It proposed solutions to moral problems which promoted the Glory of God and the good of the person.³⁷ As he begins his mission as an educator of the young in Turin Don Bosco realizes that he must mesh together several different points of view.

The seminary and the Convitto [...] had instilled in him a basic structure which, given his uncommon intelligence and innate realism, made it possible for him to make the right choices at the beginning of his ministry to the young. The Convitto has induced an evolution in his ecclesiology, in the practice of cer-

34. Braidò, *Don Bosco prete dei giovani*, 1:125. "Le due culture [...] però avrebbero continuato a rappresentare per la mentalità di don Bosco, personalmente e istituzionalmente, due mondi distinti, per destinatari altrettanto differenti nelle condizioni economico-sociali e le legittime aspirazioni, pur in comunione di vita in una società amicale e ordinata, secondo scontati voleri provvidenziali."

35. See Braidò, *Don Bosco prete dei giovani*, 1:329-361, and Luciano Pazzaglia, "Apprendistato e istruzione degli artigiani a Valdocco (1846-1886)", in Francesco Traniello, ed., *Don Bosco nella storia della cultura popolare* (Torino: SEI, 1987), 39-46.

36. See Pietro Stella, *Don Bosco. Life and Work* (New Rochelle, New York: Don Bosco Publications, 1985), 45-54, and Braidò, *Don Bosco prete dei giovani*, 1:152-155.

37. See Braidò, *Don Bosco prete dei giovani*, 1:160-164; Stella, *Don Bosco. Life and Work*, 88-91 and Francesco Casella, *L'esperienza educativa preventiva di Don Bosco. Studi sull'educazione salesiana fra tradizione e modernità* (Roma: LAS, 2007), 45-49.

tain devotions and moral guidelines, which were further enriched through his personal readings. The encounter with the teachings of Alphonsus Liguori and with the reality of the youth in Turin enabled a substantial approaching of his methods to the Salesianity understood in a broad sense. This approach, more practical rather than theoretical, included the blending of Philippian and Vincentian spiritualities.³⁸

4. Some of Don Bosco's ingrained economic management methods belonged, on the one hand to the rural world of the Restoration, and on the other hand to the liberal society in the process of industrialization.³⁹ Stella describes Don Bosco's anti-planning mindset in the example of balancing his accounts. His works

were entrusted beyond understanding to "good will," deaf to the most elementary demands of statistics or scientific management [...]. Even in handling the finances, his practice reflected the organizational culture of the Oratory, lying between urban and rural life, between scientific and illiterate worldview. In many ways, Don Bosco's methods were those of the peasant family-like lifestyle but already showing some changes suggested by his experiences in the city. From his rural background, Don Bosco had assimilated certain habits, such as keeping oral accounts or assessment of even complex situations based on essential data situated within a horizon of his daily experience.⁴⁰

Very revealing was the reaction of the physician and writer Serafino Biffi who collected data for his report on youth correctional institutions, in which he summarizes Don Bosco's deep roots in the rural culture: "One might say

38. Braido, *Don Bosco prete dei giovani*, 1:185. "Il seminario e il Convitto [...] gli avevano creato strutture mentali di base che, data la non comune intelligenza e l'innato realismo, gli consentivano ampie possibilità di integrazioni fin dagli inizi del suo lavoro tra i giovani. L'evoluzione appare più visibile nell'ecclesiologia, nella selezione delle devozioni, negli orientamenti morali, radicalmente indotti dal Convitto e arricchiti con le letture personali. Quanto ai metodi l'impatto col liguorismo e colla realtà giovanile torinese favorivano un sostanziale accostamento, pratico più che culturale, col salesianesimo inteso nel senso più largo, inclusivo delle interconnesse spiritualità filippina e vincenziana."

39. See Stella, *Don Bosco*, 61; and Pietro Braido, *Prevention, not repression. Don Bosco's Educational System*, trans., Julian Fox and Vinicio Zuliani (Bengaluru: Kristu Jyoti Publications, 2013), 154-159.

40. Stella, *Don Bosco nella storia economica*, 371. "si affidavano fin troppo alle risorse del buon volere empirico e apparivano estranee alle sollecitazioni più elementari delle scienze statistiche e amministrative [...]. Il fatto è che anche nell'amministrazione finanziaria don Bosco si muoveva nell'ambito della cultura in cui s'iscriveva l'Oratorio, tra vita urbana e vita rurale, tra mondo scientifico e mondo analfabeta. Quella di don Bosco era per molti aspetti la gestione familiare contadina modificata da certi aggiustamenti suggeriti dall'esperienza in città. Del mondo contadino don Bosco aveva assimilate certe abitudini,

that a respected priest makes light of all that modern science has to say in this field. For him it seems that it is enough for a person to do good with pious intentions, leaving it up to Providence to care for the good seed to sprout, to grow and to bear fruit. When speaking of statistics, of making distinctions, of taking precautions, of regulations, he usually responded with a smile sparkling with surprise, incredulity, and compassion”.⁴¹ In the conclusion of his volume *Don Bosco nella storia economica e sociale*, Stella gives his summary of the organizing activity of the Founder of the Salesian Society:

Don Bosco played along with the capitalist economy, always aware of his civil rights. He became the owner of a growing movable and immovable property [...]. While the Marchioness Barolo financed her institutions with the steady income from her rent, Don Bosco based his finances on the funds available from private donations, public assistance, school tuition, workshops production and publishing activities.⁴²

If on the one hand, Don Bosco rejects the liberal frame of mind and certain progressive ideas, on the other he is to be considered a “modern saint.” This consideration stems from his entrepreneurship, his open methodological mindedness, and his distinct ability to motivate others in achieving a significant role in the society. It is also evident in his ability to ensure that the Congregation would stand on its own feet even to the point that others, such

come il conteggio orale e l'apprezzamento essenziale di situazioni anche complesse, ma i cui orizzonti erano percepibili in base alla propria esperienza quotidiana.”

41. Serafino Biffi, *Sui riformatori pei giovani*, as quoted in Stella, *Don Bosco nella storia economica*, 369. “Si direbbe che quel dabben uomo del sacerdote Bosco rifugga da tutto ciò che la scienza odierna suggerisce su questo proposito. A lui pare che basti compiere il bene e con la pia intenzione, incaricandosi la Provvidenza di far germogliare la buona semente, farla crescere e portar frutto. Allorché si parlava di risultati statistici, di distinzioni da fare, di precauzioni, di ordinamenti, egli rispondeva con un sorriso, nel quale lampeggiavano la sorpresa, l'incredulità e la compassione.”

42. Stella, *Don Bosco nella storia economica*, 398. “Don Bosco stette al gioco dell'economia capitalista in cui si trovò, muovendosi sempre sulla base dei suoi diritti civili. Divenne proprietario di una quantità sempre maggiore di beni mobili e immobili [...]. Mentre la marchesa Barolo finanziava le proprie istituzioni con le rendite programmabili dei beni fondiari di sua proprietà, don Bosco impostava la propria economia sull'erogazione finanziaria della liberalità privata e pubblica, delle scuole, dei laboratori, dell'attività editoriale.”

as businesses, the social media, and health services, would want to partner with her.⁴³

The four “worlds” mentioned above molded Don Bosco’s personality, his method of action (*human labor – Providence*), cultural coordinates (*classical studies – craftsmanship*), his spirituality (*salvation – love*), and his managerial style (*rural – modern*). In every one of these dimensions, there is a polarity enabling the existence of a tension which becomes the spark of Don Bosco’s synergy and creativity in his educative and pastoral ministry.

Don Bosco’s childhood and formation (1815-1841)

From the day of his birth until his residing in the *Convitto Ecclesiastico* in Turin, John Bosco adopts cultural and spiritual standards for his educative-pastoral style, which then mature in the following years. When he began his studies, immersed in the cultural environment of the Piedmontese countryside, “he had to adjust to the experience of ‘two cultures’.”⁴⁴ He writes in the *Memoirs of the Oratory*: “The walk to and from school afforded me some time to study. When I got home, I would take the hoe in one hand and my grammar in the other.”⁴⁵ Study and the books in hand, a symbol of the ideal future and the practical struggles of the waiter, the tailor, and the bookbinder, become the forces that are a part of young Bosco’s everyday life.⁴⁶ From the perspective of our article, one can say that the dynamic principle operating in this period of his life was the binomial: *duties – vocation*. John’s priestly vocation at such a young age constitutes the essence of leadership he

43. See Pietro Bairati, “Cultura salesiana e società industriale”, in Traniello, *Don Bosco nella storia della cultura popolare*, 331-357; Francesco Motto, *Start afresh from Don Bosco* (Roma: s.e., 2006) 29-31 and 34-35. Don Bosco in terza pagina. La stampa e il Fondatore dei Salesiani, ed. Giuseppe Costa (Messina: Istituto Teologico S. Tommaso, 1991).

44. Braido, *Don Bosco prete dei giovani*, 1:120. “dovette fare di nuovo pratica esperienza delle ‘due culture’.”

45. Giovanni Bosco, *Memoirs of the Oratory of Saint Francis de Sales from 1815 to 1855. The Autobiography of Saint John Bosco*, trans. Daniel Lyons (New Rochelle, New York: Don Bosco Publications, 1989), 41.

46. See Stella, *Life and Work*, 23-26; Secondo Caselle, *Giovanni Bosco a Chieri 1831 – 1841. Dieci anni che valgono una vita* (Torino: Edizioni Acclaim, 1988), 24–25; 46; 79; 84-85; and 121. See also Marco Bay, *Giovanni Bosco a Chieri 1831-1841. Scuola pubblica e seminario* (Roma: LAS, 2010).

exercised throughout his entire life, broadening the horizon of his vision in which he effectively placed the managerial duties of study, work and prayer.

The harmony and the blending of both components are apparent in his proactivity, his passion, and his joy which were elements of a successful though difficult synthesis. “Reading became a passion. John’s relish for literary works deprived him of sleep, but it also encouraged reflection and introspection.”⁴⁷ His proactivity was visible not only in his love for study but also in his determination to be quickly promoted to the advanced classes.⁴⁸ The glue that bonded all of the above was the cheerful attitude that characterized all of his activity as a sign of his inner serenity. Linking the fulfillment of one’s duties with the cheerfulness of a youth group, which he founded in Chieri and was known as *the Society of Good Cheer*, became a paradigm for the future. This duty-cheerfulness link will be part of his educational method⁴⁹ as we can see it testified in the biographies of Dominic Savio, Michael Magone, and Francis Besucco.⁵⁰

Don Bosco’s daily bread was study, work and prayer guaranteed by the structures of public education, of the Chieri seminary and the Convitto in Turin. “Cultural, moral and religious formation were mandatory,”⁵¹ not only in the Seminary and the Convitto but also in the secondary school in Chieri as dictated by the School Regulations of 1822, a fruit of the Restoration based on the *Ratio Studiorum* of the Jesuits. John lived each day as prescribed by the regulations⁵² spurred on by the lists of resolutions that became his first experience of planning. We may recall the bits of advice given by his mother Margaret on the occasion of his First Communion, the seven

47. Stella, Don Bosco. *Life and Work*, 26. See also Braido, *Don Bosco prete dei giovani*, 1:127.

48. Braido, *Don Bosco prete dei giovani*, 1:126 and Francis Desramaut, *Don Bosco en son temps (1815-1888)* (Torino: SEI, 1996), 49-50 and 56-57.

49. See Braido, *Prevention, not repression*, 233-251 and 307-319. See also José M. Prellezo, *Sistema educativo ed esperienza oratoriana di don Bosco* (Leumann (TO): LDC, 2000), 69-77.

50. See Giovanni Bosco, *Vite di giovani. Le biografie di Domenico Savio, Michele Magone e Francesco Besucco. Saggio introduttivo e note storiche*, ed. Aldo Giraudo (Roma: LAS, 2012), 61-62; 19-120; and 195-196. See also Aldo Giraudo, “Maestri e discepoli in azione”, in *Bosco, Vite di giovani*, 27-28.

51. Braido, *Don Bosco prete dei giovani*, 1:129. “Formazione culturale, morale e religiosa apparivano indissolubili.”

52. See Bosco, *Memoirs of the Oratory*, 71-73.

resolutions along with the advice of his Mother when he donned the cassock, his decisions during his stay in the seminary, the nine resolutions prior to his ordination and the three resolutions for priestly life in 1842.⁵³ Braido describes the relationship between his proposals and existing regulations: “To a certain degree, the seven resolutions reflect the rules prescribed for students as found in the Regulations for schools as of 1822.”⁵⁴ So, Don Bosco’s first method of planning consists, in brief terms, in the fulfillment of one’s daily duties as required by existing regulations and in selecting a few chosen ones as personal resolutions.

A second way he planned his future and his life went beyond the day-by-day reality and was connected to his vocational decision. His future and life’s discernment and advancement along this second path were not of immediate realization. In the mindset of the time, the vocational choice was given an exaggerated importance even to the point of seeing it as decisive for one’s salvation or damnation. This setting combined with the conviction that everything was already predisposed by God caused John quite a few moments of anxiety.⁵⁵ There were two steps for a managerial handling of the vocational dilemma: following the route of obedience and/or the path of logic. As to obedience to his confessor Giuseppe Maria Maloria, esteemed as the most learned ecclesiastic in Chieri, John would have expected more concrete advice that would have helped him decide on his vocation.⁵⁶ Young Bosco was pleased with his guide⁵⁷ and would continue to go to him for confession while in the seminar. However, he was not satisfied with his advice with regard to vocational discernment: “In this matter everyone must follow his own inclinations and not the advice of others.”⁵⁸ There might be many reasons why Maloria was not more concrete; the fact was that John simply could not blindly obey the judgement of another person. The remaining alternative was to make a well-thought-out choice. Several elements came

53. See Bosco, *Memoirs of the Oratory*, 32-33; 122-123; 144-146, and 172. See also Francesco Motto, ed., *Memorie dal 1841 al 1884-5-6 pel Sac. Gio. Bosco a’suoi figli salesiani (Testamento spirituale)* (Roma: LAS, 1985), 21-22.

54. Braido, *Don Bosco prete dei giovani*, 1:138. “I sette propositi rispecchiano, in parte, prescrizioni agli studenti contenute nel regio Regolamento per le scuole del 1822.”

55. See Stella, *Don Bosco. Life and Work*, 28-30.

56. See Bosco, *Memoirs of the Oratory*, 110.

57. See Bosco, *Memoirs of the Oratory*, 72.

58. Bosco, *Memoirs of the Oratory*, 111.

into play: the appropriate time for making a decision (the last year of high school), the esteem he had of the dignity of the priesthood, his awareness of his weaknesses and the dangers of the world, and finally the question of finances. The real and rational result of this discernment logic was the application to join the Franciscans.⁵⁹

Although a rational decision was made, he was beset by anxiety and indecision, as was evident in the dream of the Reformed Conventuals. In this context of managerial logic and voluntaristic spirituality of salvation that produces anxiety, Don Bosco developed a further step of “planning”. This move was linked to trust in a vision of the future, with faith as the key, activating an inner motivational energy, giving inner peace that had no semblance with the rigidity of a cold, rational process.

This second method of planning for the future is connected to a leadership pole, that of *human action*, giving life a fundamental compass, and not only a set of criteria to be applied. This typically Bosconian way of envisioning his future life-path required a context of prayer to focus on the process of discernment with deeper attention. It can be described phenomenologically as the creation of a vision of the future entirely permeated by trust in Divine Providence.

We must understand that John entrusted himself to Providence while engaged in prayer: he was praying a novena with this intention in mind and received the Sacraments with great fervor. Then he sought once more advice with the help of his friend Luigi Comollo. The counsel given by a priest, the uncle of Luigi Comollo, was critical. He suggested that John enters the seminary where he might better come to know God’s plans for him.⁶⁰ Rather than being a final decision, this was an act of surrender to a slow lifelong process of discernment.

About the envisioning process lived by Don Bosco, the question of dreams is not irrelevant, as we have seen with the uncomfortable dream of joining the Conventuals. There was a more significant dream connected to his vocational discernment process which happened at the age of nine-ten years. Compared to the dream of the Conventuals this one was not only a signal of an uneasy dilemma but had a pro-positive message, a call, in fact. Stella writes about

59. See Braido, *Don Bosco, prete dei giovani*, 1:135, and *Bosco, Memoirs of the Oratory*, 110-111.

60. See *Bosco, Memoirs of the Oratory*, 111.

its importance: “This particular dream affected Don Bosco’s whole way of thinking and acting.”⁶¹

We agree only to a certain degree with Braido that “the dream at the age of nine or ten [...] was nothing other than his desire to become a priest”,⁶² because it reduces the richness of the envisioning process only to its result. And that result could be then planned and pursued in a rational-voluntaristic way. In critical moments of John’s life, we see instead a strong vocational dynamic at play. His vocational discernment was a more interior, passive and receptive process lived while listening and searching God’s will. In that sense the form of a dream is an ideal narrative form of the discernment process: passivity of the subject, visualization and story-evolving are common to both of them. In these events of Don Bosco’s life, we can find the roots of his leadership qualities: his identity as a disciple. Only an authentic follower can evolve into an authentic and inspired leader in the future. The process type of leadership initially comes in John’s vocation as priest and educator where the managerial aspect of his action is located, among other factors, in the context of the institutional regulations, pursuing his resolutions, are seen as part of the products of the discernment process.

There is a second use of dreams which is connected with Don Bosco as a leader. It will be seen in his educational and formational use of dreams in his later years. This kind of story-and dream-telling is essential because, in addition to offering material that is understandable, vivid and attractive in language, it also stimulates the motivations of the listeners. Don Bosco was a visionary type of leader, and his dreams should not be seen merely as a functional part of the story; they are the very expression of his identity and his mission. Only in that identifying sense are they transmitting the educative-motivational power to the young people, who were being formed by Don Bosco through those dreams. The intention of the narrator was not

61. Stella, Don Bosco. *Life and Work*, 10.

62. Braido, *Don Bosco prete dei giovani*, 1:114. “Il sogno di nove-dieci anni [...] non era altro che aspirazione a farsi prete.” It’s to be noted that Braido is more concerned about historical critics and the nature of Don Bosco dreams. Our aim is not to answer these questions; our purpose is to insert the dreams in the context of Don Bosco’s motivational and decision making processes. For a historical-critical approach to Don Bosco’s dreams, see Pietro Stella, *Don Bosco’s Dreams. A historico-documentary analysis of selected samples* (New Rochelle, New York: Salesiana Publishers, 1996); Braido, *Don Bosco prete dei giovani*, 1:373-376; Maurilio Guasco, “Don Bosco nella storia religiosa del suo tempo”, in *Don Bosco e le sfide della modernità* (Torino: Centro Studi “Carlo Trabucco”, 1988), 34 and Arthur Lenti, “I sogni di don Bosco. Esame storico-critico, significato e ruolo profetico-missionario per l’America Latina”, in *Don Bosco e Brasilia: profezia, realtà sociale e diritto*, ed. Cosimo Semeraro (Padova: CEDAM, 1990), 85-130.

to convince his audience to take a path that was technically within reach, but to follow and has others follow the same path traced by Providence to which he entrusts himself.⁶³

The link between the two methods of planning thus becomes essential.⁶⁴ The balance between ideals as expressed in visions and regulations that guide the day to day reality was attested to by Don Bosco fifty years later in a letter to Giovanni Cagliero: “Once again I beg you, do not pay much attention to dreams, et cetera. If they happen to clarify some moral problem or explain some of our rules, that is fine. Make use of them. Otherwise, see no value in them.”⁶⁵

on Bosco’s ability to create a harmonious synthesis between the management and leadership approaches to action is visible in the importance he gives to cheerfulness, as already mentioned, in his ability to build relationships and in his commitment to the welfare of others. The vision that guided him day by day did not consist only in the fulfillment of his responsibilities in his formative path in being a priest, but also in living already the mission in situations and with people he came to know in those environments. In his formative years, for instance, he assumes the role of an acrobat before repeating the homily; ⁶⁶ he teaches the catechism and tells edifying stories; he nurtures friendships in the Society of Good Cheer, with Guglielmo Garigliano, Paolo Braja, the Jewish boy Giona, and Luigi Comollo.⁶⁷ In his relationships, his leadership qualities were also evident. These relationships were also founded on the fact of being a follower of the priests such as Giovanni Calosso, Pietro Banaudi and Giuseppe Maloria. Already visible were the signs of his ability to create synergy while organizing

63. See Stella, *Don Bosco’s Dreams*, 71-76. It is worth noting how this trust in Providence is stressed especially when he recalls the difficult moments in his life, for example, the time he spent in Capriglio after the death of Don Calosso. See Stella, *Don Bosco. Life and Work*, 19-20.

64. See Motto, *Start afresh from Don Bosco*, 49-52.

65. “Lettera di don Bosco a mons. Giovanni Cagliero del 10 febbraio 1885”, in Braidò, *Don Bosco prete dei giovani*, 1:3. “Mi raccomando ancora che non si dia gran retta ai sogni etc. Se questi aiutano l’intelligenza di cose morali, oppure nelle nostre regole, va bene; si ritengono. Altrimenti non se ne faccia alcun pregio.”

66. See Stella, *Don Bosco. Life and Work*, 11-13; Braidò, *Don Bosco prete dei giovani*, 1:119; Bosco, *Memoirs of the Oratory*, 27-29 and 98-105.

67. See Braidò, *Don Bosco prete dei giovani*, 1:132-135; Stella, *Don Bosco. Life and Work*, 30-32 and 70-74; Bosco, *Memoirs of the Oratory*, 71-80 and 90-93.

events that combine enjoyable recreation with edifying storytelling or in leading youth groups such as the Society of Good Cheer within the paths of cheerfulness and duties.

In conclusion, it can be said that the fulfillment of Don Bosco's daily duties, managed within his set of rules and resolutions, had harmonized with the vocational aspect of his leadership as he lived within his desire to become a priest-educator. This desire was manifested in his dreams and in his efforts to involve others. The interdependence of these two poles of leadership – management, was noticeable as he combined the elements of joy, of passionate study and networking within discipleship (following) and friendship (sharing).

Encounter with the reality of the young in Turin (1841-1846)

During the first five years of his priesthood, Don Bosco's desire to spend his life for needy young people instigated different educative and pastoral activities. In 1846 all these found concrete synthesis in his full devotion to the Oratory of Saint Francis de Sales in the Valdocco quarter of Turin.

Observing Don Bosco's encounter with the reality of the young in Turin during the early 1840's, we can detect three underlying dynamics: the typical style of his presence among the young; the choice of prevention; and the total commitment to the educative mission.

In the first place, there is the decision to be with the young, to mingle with them, to take part in their world. This attitude is shown in two different ways. Not only does Don Bosco fulfill his ministerial responsibilities, such as catechizing, preaching, visiting the prisons of Turin;⁶⁸ he also feels comfortable in the informal world of the young. While in the Convitto

he also found the moral conferences and lessons in sacred eloquence congenial. Posing practical cases, they did not teach a theological system or a theory of the apostolate but the art of caring for souls. Situations from everyday life were presented, and then put to the test in such priestly activities as preaching, giving catechism lessons, and so forth.⁶⁹

Taking part in these formative courses offered at the Convitto, such as catechesis, preaching and prison ministry in Turin, was, in reality, a training

68. See Stella, Don Bosco. *Life and Work*, 91-99; Braidò, Don Bosco prete dei giovani, 1:205-208. And also, Bosco, *Memoirs of the Oratory*, 182.

69. Stella, Don Bosco. *Life and Work*, 98.

in pastoral management. However, his style of presence among the young went beyond that, directed towards the realization of his vision, open to “originality and creativity, hand in hand with his sensitivity towards the preferences of the young and for what was for their benefit.”⁷⁰

His style of leadership, reflecting what he saw in his dream, urged him to be totally involved with the young, without formal structures and supporting their aspirations. Pietro Stella speaks of “a growing apostolate to shops, offices and markets”⁷¹ carried on by a new generation of priests. Don Bosco, “starting from the catechetical experiences of the Convitto, felt driven to initiate new models of the oratory, which he wanted to consist of more than the usual methods of religious instruction or a school of Christian doctrine. It was the prelude to his final decision”.⁷² Before 1844 Don Bosco participated in every activity of the program at the Convitto, however, he also worked with a group of boys on his initiative.

In 1844 Don Bosco transferred to the Refuge and the little hospital or infirmary (Ospedaletto) of Marchioness Barolo, serving as an assistant to Father Borel. He was followed there by the group of youths who had gathered around him at the Convitto, and he did not send them away. Then and there he started the Oratory, which he named after St. Francis de Sales. If he did that with all due consideration, then it was one of the most carefully calculated and decisive steps he had ever taken in his life so far.⁷³

Then followed the months of the wandering Oratory from St. Peter in Chains to St. Martin of the Mills, then to the Moretta house and the Filippi fields.

There is a second dynamic operating here, namely how he responded to the needs of the young. Don Bosco did have an answer, even if it was initially only a part time solution. It consisted in the offering of activities in the festive oratory: friendship in an anonymous city undergoing a demographic and

70. Aldo Giraudo, “L’importanza storica e pedagogica – spirituale delle Memorie delle Oratorio”, in Giovanni Bosco, *Memorie dell’Oratorio di S. Francesco di Sales dal 1815 al 1855*, ed. Aldo Giraudo (Roma: LAS 2011), 47. “freschezza e la creatività operativa, unite alla sensibilità per i gusti dei giovani e per i loro interessi.”

71. Stella, Don Bosco. *Life and Work*, 105.

72. Braido, Don Bosco prete dei giovani, 1:166. “a partire dalle esperienze catechistiche del Convitto, si sentiva sospinto a praticare germinali forme di oratorio, che voleva essere più che semplice pratica e istruzione religiosa o scuola di dottrina cristiana. Era il preludio alla scelta definitiva.”

73. Stella, Don Bosco. *Life and Work*, 107.

early industrial expansion, religious instruction of the young who do not belong to a parish, healthy entertainment for the youngsters who spend most of their time at work, and evening schools for the unlettered.⁷⁴ All this reflect a managerial type of answer to a single dimensional need of the young that could be reduced to mere assistentialism were it not characterized by a deeper intention: education understood as prevention.

Don Bosco, in fact, inserted his activity into a rich tradition of prevention that shaped his times.⁷⁵ Leadership in the mind of Don Bosco, who saw the need for prevention, consisted in finding the causes of the problems that afflict the young that he met. Obviously, he was interested in psychological or educational individual causality, leaving behind the sociological or political solutions. So he observed the underlying structures behind the behavior of the street urchins and their gangs to develop a program of prevention.⁷⁶ His final mission as a leader was the choice of prevention-education that had managerial implications seen in his decision to abandon the pastoral work in the prisons and in the reformatory institutions as practiced by the Marchioness Barolo. He chose an uncertain long-term mission over a clear role in a system that provided a salary. Don Bosco wrote his thoughts during his visits to the jails:

On such occasions I found out how quite a few ended up once again in that place; it was because they were abandoned to their own resources. "Who knows?" I thought to myself, "if these youngsters had a friend outside who would take care of them, help them, teach them religion on feast days... Who knows but they could be steered away from ruin, or at least the number of those who return to prison could be lessened?"⁷⁷

Lastly, there is a third dynamic apparent in the life of Don Bosco in the early 1840's, and it was his ability to grasp the relationship existing between the education of the young and his identity. During his stay in the *Convitto Ecclesiastico*, Don Bosco, on the one hand, was totally involved in the various

74. Braido, Don Bosco prete dei giovani, 1:200-202.

75. See the good analysis by Braido in four chapters of his Prevention, not repression, 17-114.

76. See the two paragraphs "Prevenzione in senso socio-assistenziale" e "Prevenzione in senso pedagogico", in Francesco Motto, *Un sistema educativo sempre attuale* (Leumann TO: LDC, 2000), 22-30 and the paragraph "Fuggire il male e fare esperienza del bene", in José M. Prellezo, *Sistema educativo ed esperienza oratoriana di don Bosco* (Leumann (TO): LDC, 2000), 36-37.

77. Bosco, *Memoirs of the Oratory*, 182.

activities of the program of formation, but at the same time, he continued to question himself regarding the realization of his vocation as priest and educator. Pietro Braido states that during these years Don Bosco as “priest and shepherd, becomes more and more an educator and his ministry more and more directed towards the young.”⁷⁸ There was an evident vocational pattern in the recurrence of his childhood dream in 1844 with some new details: the lambs were transformed into shepherds, and there was the presence of a magnificent church. Pietro Stella sees behind it the development of the project, the need of collaborators and a place of worship for himself and his boys.⁷⁹ Don Bosco allows the transformation of his life, he discards other possibilities, committing himself to the work of the Oratory.

It was during these years that his new identity matured: “Don Bosco’s activity was [...] a conscious, willed ‘consecration’; a ‘mission’ with a precise objective: The full accomplishment of the salvation of the young.”⁸⁰ Don Bosco’s mission becomes clearer and more defined due to the synergy between the two factors of the binomial *formative activity – vocational choice* which is a reflection of the *management – leadership* dynamics. The study of pastoral theology and the many apostolic ministries available in the Convitto are the context where he developed the certainty of his educative and preventive vocation. There was an impossibility to manage the equilibrium between his option for the Oratory and the other pastoral activities as seen in the deterioration of his health in 1846. This difficulty and the lead of his recurring dream facilitated his unconditioned choice to dedicate himself totally to the preventive education of the youngsters of the Oratory.⁸¹

The three dynamics mentioned above point to a two-fold sensitivity in Don Bosco which could be described as a compatibility between a structured, linear, operative aspect with an informal, systemic, integral and mission-driven aspect of education/ministry. Pietro Stella states that already in these early years Don Bosco appears as a leader, an

Active, appealing priest, a kindly man of the people who was ready to participate in sports and games when the occasion arose. But he was already gaining a repu-

78. Braido, *Don Bosco prete dei giovani*, 1:185. See also Motto, *Start afresh from Don Bosco*, 69-73. “...sacerdote pastore, diventava sempre più educatore e la sua pastorale in misura crescente giovanile”.

79. See Stella, *Don Bosco. Life and Work*, 93-94; and Bosco, *Memoirs of the Oratory*, 209-210.

80. Braido, *Prevention not repression*, 166-167.

81. See Braido, *Don Bosco prete dei giovani*, 1:181-183.

tation as an extraordinary priest as well [...]; there was something singular about him, something that came from the Lord. He seemed to know the innermost secrets of conscience, he could switch from light-hearted jests to stunning private revelations, and he somehow made people appreciate the problems of their soul and their eternal salvation.⁸²

Development of the Oratory and the Adjoined House (1846-1863)

Pietro Braido describes the years between 1846 and 1852 as the “rapid take off of a diocesan institution that was virtually universal.”⁸³ The Oratory with its activities was an ingenious answer to a fundamental need that was part of the reality on the fringe districts of Turin. Don Bosco’s powerful vision of the holistic salvation of the young fueled several new activities of the Oratory marked by a strong creative tension between the ideal and the actual everyday reality. It was during this time that the Oratory gave birth to Sunday and evening classes, the hospice, and the sodalities.

After the difficulties of don Cocchi, Don Bosco took over the management of the Oratory of the Guardian Angel. Later on in 1852, the Archbishop confirmed Don Bosco as the Director of the three Oratories of St. Francis de Sales, Guardian Angel and St. Aloysius. The expansion continued, and it is in the next decade, between 1853 and 1863, that “most of don Bosco’s initiatives took firm root or reached full maturation.”⁸⁴ These were the golden years of his educational activity: the presence of Savio, Magone and Besucco marked the ideal Oratory and expanded the possibilities of his educative method. It was also a period in which the Congregation was founded; Don Bosco published his most innovative books and guided a series of construction projects at Valdocco. Finally, it was a time filled with extraordinary phenomena, which Don Bosco does not hesitate to publish.⁸⁵ Through all of this growth and

82. Stella, Don Bosco. *Life and Work*, 108-109.

83. Braido, Don Bosco prete dei giovani, 1:212. “il rapido decollo di un’opera diocesana virtualmente universale.”

84. Stella, Don Bosco. *Life and Work*, 119. See also Motto, *Start afresh from Don Bosco*, 73-75.

85. See Stella, Don Bosco. *Life and Work*, 119 and Stella, *Don Bosco nella storia economica*, 1980, 71-100.

expansion Don Bosco developed a more evolved and deeper sense of balance.

Don Bosco's decision to work full time among the youngsters in the Oratory carried with it an underlying uncertainty about his role as a priest. Pietro Stella writes:

In the 1840's the composition of boys visiting the so-called oratories in the Vanchiglia district and in the fields of Valdocco reflected both the influx of young seasonal workers, not yet anchored in the city, and the sons of the working class who already for years had lived in the growing outskirts of the city [...]. Don Cocchi and Don Bosco did not compete with other clerics in the area of the traditional ecclesiastical roles; yet responding to the urgent critical situation and accepting the risk of an uncertain future, they proved able to successfully solicit subsidies and other resources which the clergy would have been unable to gather.⁸⁶

Don Bosco, unlike Father Cocchi, knew how to balance the situation of uncertainty which arose from his educational vision thanks to his practical managerial style and the growing number of collaborators who believed in his ideal.⁸⁷ The balance between the uncertainty in following his bold dream and his prudent management was the primary and fundamental dynamic during this period of expansion. Braido states clearly: "Don Bosco had acquired the patience of the farmer. He could harbor grand dreams, but he knew that they would become a reality only a step at a time and as long as the means and the people were available."⁸⁸

A second dynamic results from the teamwork with other priests and lay persons. In Turin of that period a new class of students and priests was born. They were no longer tagged as nobility or common people, instead, they were

86. Stella, *Don Bosco nella storia economica*, 394-395. "Negli anni '40 la concentrazione di giovani nei cosiddetti oratori in Vanchiglia e sui prati di Valdocco rispondeva sia alle movenze di giovani che la mobilità stagionale non aveva ancorati diversamente alla città, sia a quelle delle classi giovanili dei ceti popolari da lungo tempo residenti e in incremento nei borghi periferici [...]. Don Cocchi e don Bosco non si opposero in concorrenza con altri del clero in ruoli ecclesiastici convenzionali, ma accettando il richiamo dell'urgenza emergente e il rischio dell'impiego incerto, convogliarono su di sé sovvenzioni e sostegni che diversamente il clero non sarebbe riuscito a mobilitare."

87. Giorgio Chiosso, *Carità educatrice e istruzione in Piemonte. Aristocratici, filantropi e preti di fronte all'educazione del popolo nel primo '800* (Torino: SEI, 2007), 199-200 and 207-212.

88. Braido, *Don Bosco prete dei giovani*, 1:235. "Don Bosco era assuefatto alla pazienza contadina. Poteva sognare progetti anche grandi, ma sapeva che non erano attuabili se non per gradi in base alle effettive disponibilità di mezzi e di persone."

instead attracted by a project, a future, and an idea.⁸⁹ In the case of Don Bosco, his colleagues included Giovanni Battista Borel, Sebastiano Pacchiotti, Antonio Bosco, Sebastiano Trivero, Giovanni Battista Vola, Roberto Murialdo, Pietro Ponte and Giovanni Marengo. The existing collaboration implied the sharing of core values, a certain comradeship and frankness; there was also room for disagreement regarding methods and management.⁹⁰ Historians have detected the *collaboration – personal identity* binomial. Stella writes:

Even before 1848 Don Bosco had fought for the autonomy of his own Oratory. When meetings were held to unify the management of the Turin oratories, he had turned down amalgamation with the other oratories. He supported collaboration between various oratories and the priests connected with them, it seems, and he may even have offered his own services in that cause. But he refused to submit to any sort of formal subordination to others, whose ideas he did not fully share.⁹¹

After 1848 Don Bosco maintained that same balance. He clung to his independence slowly, arriving at a point of advantage compared to other oratories. While his preeminence was reinforced by the decree of 1852, he did not belittle other models as, for example, the oratory of Don Cocchi and Don Ponte. Stella annotates: “Some priests and laymen began as helpers of Fathers Cocchi and Ponte, went on to help Don Bosco between 1848 and 1856 (perhaps noticing his neediness), and then returned to Father Cocchi’s circle without giving up their friendship and collaboration with Don Bosco.”⁹²

In the development of the Oratory emerged a third dynamic: *expansion of the works – growth of self-donation*. Stella sums it up describing Don Bosco’s state of mind during the foundation of the Adjoined House (boarding facility):

If you choose to go out and make personal contact with poverty and misery, and if you do not succumb to compromises in trying to do something about it, you will be drawn irresistibly to give you all: your time, your possessions, your whole life.⁹³

89. See Stella, Don Bosco. Life and Work, 104-107.

90. See Braido, Don Bosco prete dei giovani, 1:197-199 and 1:240-243.

91. Stella, Don Bosco. Life and Work, 110.

92. Stella, Don Bosco. Life and Work, 112.

93. Stella, Don Bosco. Life and Work, 113.

It was precisely in the situation of material poverty and in the midst of the everyday life of an educator that his total self-donation became a reality.

At the Valdocco oratory the boarders, who later came to be called the interns, led a simple and rather rustic life as one big family. There was no pretentiousness because all were convinced that they could not ask more of Don Bosco or others.⁹⁴

Although Don Bosco's transformation was hardly noticeable at an empirical level, yet there were some indicators of something extraordinary happening because of his profound spirituality of total self-donation. Pietro Stella quotes a paragraph from the records of 1861 which describes the atmosphere that reigned in Valdocco around the image his young helpers had of him: "Don Bosco's outstanding brilliant gifts, his extraordinary experiences which we admire to this day, his unique guidance of young people along virtue's arduous paths, and his grand plans for the future are indications to us of some supernatural intervention; they portend a glorious career for him and for the Oratory."⁹⁵

The fourth and final dynamic is the deepening of his *managerial boldness – trust in Divine Providence*. The extraordinary phenomena surrounding Don Bosco and his trust in God, that made him undertake plans beyond his possibilities, were not detached from a careful scrutiny of the situation.⁹⁶ Certainly he was not the first person that joined the spiritual and the managerial dimension of life in the service for the young. Pietro Braido sees different patterns and traditions describing Don Bosco's approach:

In all of his affairs Don Bosco made every effort to follow the steps not only of his ligurian moral tradition mentors, but as well as of persons, such as the theologian Guala and Don Cafasso, prudent and honest in the financial management of resources, originating mostly from donations. From the very beginning his benefactors knew that their contributions were being deposited into hones

94. Stella, Don Bosco. Life and Work, 116.

95. AS 110 Ruffino 1, as quoted in Stella, Don Bosco. Life and Work, 118.

96. See Stella, Don Bosco nella storia economica, 71-100.

and skillful hands that would administer them for the benefit of his charitable institutions.⁹⁷

The power of the vision which was unfolding and becoming a reality has to be seen as the driving force of the expansion of Don Bosco's work. Braido gives us this description of the years that followed 1848:

Don Bosco is a countryman coming from the rural world. He could have been unnoticed and his accomplishments could be confined to a neighborhood, or at most at the urban level of events. Instead the methods and the style of the oratorian initiative, born at the right moment between the old and the new regime, the resourcefulness of the developer, the favorable conditions, all of these guaranteed him a quick establishment and an astonishing resonance.⁹⁸

Collegialization, Foundations and Missions (1863-1888)

From the 1860's onward, we see in Don Bosco another trait which well explains the indisputable development of his works and his leadership: generativity and the corresponsibility. The best evidence of these characteristics is the courage, identification, and entrepreneurship shown by the first generation of Salesians that shared the vision-mission of Don Bosco. The fundamental dynamic in this period springs from the binomial: *shared vision – search for stability*.

The first prototype of expansion out of Turin was the brief experiment with the minor seminary in Giaveno, that was discontinued after a short time. The year 1863 marked the Salesian Congregation's move into the boarding school education with the opening of the minor seminary in Mirabello.⁹⁹ The structure of the secondary boarding school (*collegio*), which found itself between the tendencies of the Restoration and the laws of the Liberal

97. Braido, *Don Bosco prete dei giovani*, 1:218. "Nella conduzione degli affari don Bosco cercava di seguire maestri non solo di morale liguoriana, ma anche di oculata e corretta amministrazione dei beni e del danaro, in gran parte dato in beneficenza, quali erano il teol. Guala e don Cafasso. I suoi benefattori sapevano fin dagli inizi che il loro denaro era affidato a mani che lo avrebbero trafficato in opere di bene con onestà e perizia."

98. Braido, *Don Bosco prete dei giovani*, 1:233. "Don Bosco è un provinciale proveniente dal mondo rurale. Poteva passare inosservato e anche la sua opera si sarebbe potuta ridurre a un evento di quartiere o al più cittadino. Invece, le modalità e lo stile dell'iniziativa oratoriana, arrivata nel giusto momento tra antico e nuovo regime, l'intraprendenza del promotore, le condizioni favorevoli le assicuravano un rapido impianto e una sorprendente risonanza."

99. See Stella, *Don Bosco. Life and Work*, 124-131; Braido, *Don Bosco prete dei giovani*, 1:363-469; and Stella, *Don Bosco nella storia economica*, 123-153.

state, responded to many needs of Don Bosco's institutions at that historical moment.¹⁰⁰

His boarding high schools ensured a population of students less transient and more organizable than the population of the oratories. His schools took their place among the educational institutions specializing in private high-school education just as those institutions were being demanded by the milieu. This ensured greater growth, a larger range of action, and more solid support. There were less creative demands on these schools than on the Festive Oratories; but they served as so many seedbeds from which to draw new recruits into the family of his educators.¹⁰¹

Stella uses the term “collegialization” (*collegializzazione*), meaning the predominance of secondary boarding schools, to describe the new paradigm created in the 1860's. Because of the rising number of boarding schools, the college type of structured education became the standard norm for Salesian education, marginalizing the oratory style of catechesis and free time education. During this process, nomenclature also changed: from “house” it passed to “boarding school”. During this period Don Bosco “often thought primarily or even exclusively of collegial communities and the Salesians as educators in ‘collegi’.”¹⁰²

The predominance of the *managerial pole* of the dynamic which we are taking into consideration, stood out clearly as that which assured the stability of the growing institutions. The same can be said of the personnel: “The experience showed that volunteers did not guarantee stability, continuity, standards of action.”¹⁰³ Securing stability for both the educational institutions and the staff was bound historically with the commitment to boarding schools combined with the approval process of the Salesian Society. The other *pole of leadership* of Don Bosco's action is linked to his ability to share the inspirational vision which is in the process of development. This vision of Christian education of the young, so much at the heart of Don Bosco, started to grow and to spread throughout Piedmont and later to other countries. From the 1860's onward, it was precisely the synergy between Don

100. See Stella, *Don Bosco. Life and Work*, 124-127 which describes the Piedmontese context of the 1800's, where educators with some authority, such as Lorenzo Martini, supported the boarding school education. See Lorenzo Martini, *Emilio*, 12 vols. (Torino: Tip. Marietti, 1821-1823).

101. Stella, *Don Bosco. Life and Work*, 127.

102. Stella, *Don Bosco. Life and Work*, 128.

103. Braidò, *Don Bosco prete dei giovani*, 1:364. “L'esperienza stava a dimostrare che il personale volontario non garantiva stabilità, continuità, omogeneità di azione.”

Bosco's leadership (dynamics of growth and sharing his vision) and prudent management (creating sustainable conditions of growth) that accompanied the rise of his new religious family.¹⁰⁴

The shift towards boarding schools as related to the founding of the Salesian Society could be seen unfortunately as a turn towards a rigorous institutionalized type of stability. Some historical clarifications are necessary to overcome a simplified idea of the stabilization process. The "college" was an institution which guaranteed not only constancy but also freedom in education as compared to the expectations and stereotypes typical of the parish.¹⁰⁵ The Congregation in an analogous way provided some ministerial autonomy in its activity not enjoyed by the Diocesan clergy. Pietro Stella identifies 1864 as the year in which Don Bosco realized, that for the success and expansion of the Congregation, he would need the guarantee of self-government and freedom from Diocesan control.¹⁰⁶

During those years there were several growth limiting factors which demanded a different managerial approach. There was a need for defining the roles of the educators, teachers, and the administrators, motivated by three reasons. Firstly, the government inspections in Valdocco at the onset of the 1860's demanded more organization. The second reason was a need for certain managerial standardization in the years of expansion because not every Salesian house could be governed directly by Don Bosco himself. And thirdly the need to better define the procedures for admitting youngsters and personnel because of the growing administrative complexity as the number of persons involved grew.¹⁰⁷

Later during the 1880's, in the Salesian schools could be noticed a thrust towards a balance between the multiplying of regulations and the original identity of the Valdocco Oratory, which was characterized by openness,

104. See the concept of reinforcing and balancing feedback and their role in management as described by Peter M. Senge, *The Fifth Discipline. The Art and Practice of the Learning Organization* (New York: Doubleday, 2006), 79-91.

105. See *Deliberazioni del terzo e quarto capitolo generale della Pia Società Salesiana. Tenuti in Valsalice nel settembre 1883-86* (S. Benigno Canavese: tip. Salesiana, 1887), 5; Eugenio Ceria, *Annali della Società Salesiana* (Torino: SEI, 1941), 1:247-260. See also Stella, *Don Bosco. Life and Work*, 127-129.

106. See Stella, *Don Bosco. Life and Work*, 127-171.

107. See Stella, *Don Bosco. Life and Work*, 159-171.

spontaneity, and the absence of formality.¹⁰⁸ We will deal with this later when commenting on the Preventive System.

Don Bosco wanted the Salesian Congregation to have an institutional form that balanced the relationship both to the Church and to the State. He created an association of consecrated citizens who lived in community professing public vows recognized by the Church.¹⁰⁹ The Salesians were bound “in conscience” to the Superior, “who together with his subjects are bound to the Head of the Church, and as a consequence, to God Himself.”¹¹⁰ Meanwhile, in the eyes of the State, the Congregation appeared as “an association of free citizens, who gather and live in a community for the purpose of charitable works [...]. Any such society of free citizens has a right to exist as long as its purpose and activity are not contrary to the laws and the institutions of the State.”¹¹¹

During the drawn out struggle that led up to the approval of the Congregation, Don Bosco is seen blending the divine with the human, the ideal with the practical,¹¹² as Stella summarizes at the end of the chapter dealing with the foundation of the Salesian Society:

Notice that it is not easy to pinpoint Don Bosco’s outlook between reality on the one hand and the dreams he takes to be prophetic on the other. One gets the impression that his actions are based on the conviction that he has a mandate from heaven, a goal to be reached, something to accomplish, even though his dreams do not make evident what exactly that thing is going to be. Don Bosco indicates that the course of events gave the congregation a configuration that was not exactly what he had wanted or thought it should be. This does not mean he did not like the way it turned out, or that he was unsatisfied. Don Bosco’s

108. See Stella, Don Bosco, 66-70.

109. See the study of Don Bosco’s mindset as a man of the Church and as a founder in Karl Bopp, *Kirchenbild und pastorale praxis bei Don Bosco. Eine pastoralgeschichtliche Studie zum Problem des Theorie-Praxis-Bezugs innerhalb der Praktischen Theologie* (München: Don Bosco Verlag, 1992), 199-218.

110. *Regole o Costituzioni della Società di S. Francesco di Sales secondo il decreto di approvazione del 3 aprile 1874*, in Giovanni Bosco, *Opere edite*, (Roma: LAS, 1977), 29:217.

111. “Storia dell’Oratorio de S. Francesco di Sales,” in *Bolettino Salesiano* 7 (1883), no. 97. “un’associazione di liberi cittadini, i quali si uniscono e vivono insieme a uno scopo di beneficenza [...]. Qualsiasi associazione di liberi cittadini è permessa, purché lo scopo e gli atti suoi non siano contrari alle leggi e alle istituzioni dello Stato.”

112. See “L’evoluzione dei testi delle Costituzioni” in Francesco Motto, ed., *Costituzioni della Società di S. Francesco di Sales 1858-1875* (Roma: LAS, 1982), 6-20.

attitude seems to be that of a person explaining how things happened, not that of a person indulging in recriminations and clinging fondly to a fanciful ideal in preference to reality. [...] Here again his temperament is revealed: practical and aggressive rather than passive; extrovert rather than introvert. His ideas were modified and defined more precisely by the course of actual events. He always paid close attention to the latter, not to accept them in a passive way but to adapt to them in a constructive and creative way. [...] This is not pragmatism because the whole project is governed by a well established goal and a series of religious and moral principles. It is the ability to seek and find the right moment, a radical optimism based on the conviction that the course of events will always provide suitable ground in which to plant one's own seeds. It is a feeling of confidence that those seeds, however affected by 'sorry weather', will somehow find a way to survive disasters and bear fruit.¹¹³

His realism stood out in his awareness of a mission given him from on high, in his trust that the good seeds would, in the long run, produce dividends, all of which point to the harmonic *leadership – management* synergy that is part of Don Bosco's personality.

The *Constitutions of the Society of St. Francis de Sales*¹¹⁴ and the *Regulations for the Houses of the Society of St. Francis de Sales*¹¹⁵ were important guidelines. They were "a firm, secure, and, I may add, infallible basis"¹¹⁶ for Salesian ministry and became a point of reference for many of Don Bosco's ideas. The way in which he composed and published these documents is significant. In the first place, Don Bosco described the leadership dimension, his vision, the reasons for the existence, aspirations, and identity of the Congregation, and its members.¹¹⁷ Then followed the managerial aspect: the description of roles within the community, the behaviors needed and the regulations to be observed. These were understood as norms essential to their identity that had not to be changed. We can see this dual composition in *The Regulations for the Houses of the Society of St. Francis de Sales*. It was divided into four

113. Stella, Don Bosco. Life and Work, 173-174.

114. See "Regole o Costituzioni della Società di S. Francesco di Sales secondo il decreto di approvazione del 3 aprile 1874", in Bosco, Opere edite, 29:199-288.

115. See "Regolamento per le case della Società di S. Francesco di Sales", in Bosco, Opere edite, 29:97-196.

116. "Costituzioni della Società di S. Francesco di Sales", in Bosco, Opere edite, 29:201. "basi stabili, sicure, e, possiamo dire infallibili."

117. See "Il Sistema Preventivo nella educazione della gioventù" which precedes the "Regolamenti" and "Ai soci Salesiani" which precedes the "Costituzioni" in the 1877 edition. See Bosco, Opere edite, 29:97-113 and 201-241.

sections: *The Preventive System in the Education of the Young*, which is his synthetic essay on pedagogy; the *General Notions* describing the young and their attitudes; the *Particular Regulations* which define the roles of the staff; and lastly, the *Regulations for Houses of the Congregation* which deals with the various areas and activities in the life of the Salesian House.¹¹⁸ In the language of management researchers, we might say with Scharmer that after twenty years of prototyping it was time to the implementation phase.¹¹⁹

In the founding of the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians (FMA), there were several differences from what had been the experience with the Salesian Congregation. These differences reveal Don Bosco's managerial acumen in adapting his vision to a different situation. The roots of the FMA were found in a pre-existing group of "virtually consecrated women in the world."¹²⁰ Don Bosco preferred to not be personally involved (he acted through the priests Domenico Pestarino, Giuseppe Cagliero, Giacomo Costamagna and Giovanni Battista Lemoyne);¹²¹ the juridical recognition of the Institute by the local Bishops, and a certain "merge" with the Salesian Congregation was to be preferred for practical reasons considering the probability of a decennial independent recognition process through the Sacred Congregation of Bishops and of Consecrated Life.¹²²

In the founding of the FMA (Don Bosco and Mary Mazzarello) and in that of the Salesian Cooperators, besides the classical equation of *vision – context*, we can also find the interdependent dynamic of autonomy and centralization given the synergy of the educative-pastoral action. According to Stella Don Bosco, in tune with the thinking of Catholic Italy in the 1870's, while accepting the autonomy of the Institute and the Association,

the idea of unity dominated his thinking: "vis unita fortior". In it was reflected another solid idea from his own religious heritage: that of a single family in the image and likeness of the human family whose Father is God, and the ecclesial family whose father is the pope. [...] This centralism was certainly one of the reasons for the vitality of the Union of Cooperators, which was solidly bound to

118. See "Regolamento per le case della Società de S. Francesco di Sales", in Bosco, *Opere edite*, 29:97-196.

119. Claus O. Scharmer, *Theory U. Leading From the Future as it Emerges. The Social Technology of Presencing*, (Cambridge, MA: Society for Organizational Learning, 2007), 191-229.

120. Braidò, *Don Bosco prete dei giovani*, 2:56. "virtuali consacrate nel mondo".

121. See Stella, *Don Bosco. Life and Work*, 221-223.

122. See Stella, *Don Bosco. Life and Work*, 223-231.

the Salesians and dependent on the same center. It was also one of the reasons behind the respectable growth of the Salesian Cooperators.¹²³

There was an accord between the juridical-administrative elements of unity and the bonds resulting from friendship, from trust and from a shared vision that had eventually become a reality. Braido states:

Don Bosco certainly did not believe that regulations and conferences of themselves could create community and communion. There were prescribed meetings for the Association of the Cooperators. But Salesian brotherhood was created especially through personal relationships, kindness, gratitude, faith-sharing, prayer, working together.¹²⁴

Not only were there strong bonds of affection with the benefactors, but were also offered spiritual direction.¹²⁵

The missionary expeditions to Latin America, beginning with 1875, is a good example to see the interdependency between the missionary effort, as Don Bosco visualized it, and the practical running of the mission entrusted to the first generation of missionaries. His vision of a Salesian missionary approach generated a complex of strategies binding missionary posts, education and Salesian lifestyle:

Schools, boarding schools, shelters, orphanages must be opened along the borders. The opening such structures, will attract the young; while you are educating the young begin catechizing their parents. There are two ways of doing this: by natural instinct, the parents will listen to whoever treats their children with kindness or better, once the children have been instructed, they will share the Good News with their families, who will accept the word of God proclaimed by their young ones.¹²⁶

Don Bosco's method, was an ingenious one. It was one that took advantage of the indirect missionary effects of education which was the

123. See Stella, *Don Bosco. Life and Work*, 255.

124. Braido, *Don Bosco prete dei giovani*, 2:192. "Don Bosco non pensava, certo, che la comunità e la comunione si potessero creare soltanto con i regolamenti e con i discorsi. Per l'Associazione dei Cooperatori erano, certamente, aggregati gli appuntamenti prescritti. Ma la fraternità salesiana si formava soprattutto con i rapporti personali, fatti di attenzione, di riconoscenza, di compartecipazione di fede, di preghiere, di opere."

125. Braido, *Don Bosco prete dei giovani*, 2:35-43 and 2:192-195.

126. Jesús Borrego, "La Patagonia e le terre australi del continente Americano [pel] sac. Giovanni Bosco," in *Ricerche Storiche Salesiane* 7, no. 13 (1988): 413-414. "Esso consiste nell'aprire collegii, case d'educazione, ricoveri, orfanotrofi sui confini di questi paesi e attirare così i giovani; e coll'educazione de' figli farsi strada a parlare di religione

standard salesian mission (“children have been instructed they will share the Good News”) in a Salesian way (“treat them with kindness”), and also with direct evangelization of the adult population (“begin catechizing their parents”).¹²⁷

Characteristics of the leadership dynamic are seen in the various ways Don Bosco operated from a distance guiding the missionary effort. He was not a planner who from far away develops plans for what must be done; rather he fuels the dream by creating in Italy a climate that makes missionary work an “epic saga” in progress.¹²⁸ At the same time, he knew how to instill in his followers the gift of leadership creating an “environment of orderly, yet not constraining, interdependence.”¹²⁹ The first generation of Salesians sent to the Americas was known for their strong leadership in laying the foundations for Salesian work in a new context.¹³⁰ The content of Don Bosco’s famous three letters sent to the Salesians in America¹³¹ makes clear that his concern was the family spirit and the method of education, based on the Valdocco experience, and not the exact execution of his earlier plans.

After reflecting on the various phases of the evolution of Don Bosco’s educative-pastoral activity, we can distinguish three stages which also define the *forma mentis* of Don Bosco: the first phase was the *call to be an educator* as expressed in a dream but not yet as a clear project as we would understand it today. Then followed the phase of experiments *creating a prototype* of his educative-pastoral action. Finally, there was the *regulation of best practices*

coi genitori. La qual cosa potrà riuscire in due modi: o che i genitori pel naturale istinto che porta a esser benevolo a chi tratta con bontà i proprii figli, o più ancora, che poco per volta crescendo su i figli ben istruiti, vadano poi essi stessi a portare la buona novella a quei della propria tribù, i quali volentieri accetteranno la parola di Dio bandita da tali predicatori.”

127. See Marcos G. Vanzini, “El Sistema Preventivo en los internados de Viedma y Rawson (Patagonia Argentina)”, in Jesús G. González, Grazia Loparco, Francesco Motto, and Stanislaw Zimniak (eds), *L’educazione salesiana dal 1880 al 1922. Istanze e attuazioni in diversi contesti. Atti del 4° Convegno Internazionale di Storia dell’Opera salesiana Ciudad de México, 12-18 febbraio 2006*, 2 vols (Roma: LAS, 2007), 2:79-80.

128. See Stella, Don Bosco. *Life and Work*, 200-203.

129. Braidò, Don Bosco prete dei giovani, 2:148 “clima di regolata e libera intraprendenza”. See also Motto, *Start afresh from Don Bosco*, 94-95.

130. See Braidò, Don Bosco prete dei giovani, 2:147-161.

131. Giovanni Bosco, *Tre lettere a salesiani in America*, a cura di Francesco Motto, in Braidò, ed., *Don Bosco educatore*, 439-450.

that attempted to describe the decennial experience and the more efficient procedures.¹³² This regulation can be applied to the development of the festive oratory (1841-52), the Annexed Home and the boarding schools (1853-1877).

The Preventive System and the dual concept of *leadership - management*

In the following paragraphs, we will examine in a concise manner the dynamics at work in Don Bosco's educative experience intrinsic to the binomial *leadership - management*. Pietro Braidò defines Don Bosco's Preventive System as "an adequate expression of everything he said and did as an educator,"¹³³ in which the concept of prevention transcends the managerial idea of prevention intended as a mere disciplinary or organizational style.¹³⁴ His Preventive System "is not exhausted by simply protecting or watching over."¹³⁵ Preventive management becomes meaningful when joined with a pro-positive style of education which encourages the young person to become an upright citizen and a good Christian.

Joined to this pro-positive leadership is the concept of assistance which is not the same as oppressive surveillance,¹³⁶ instead, as we have read in the letter from Rome (May 10, 1884), it has a dual synergic operational way. It is bound to the "soul of recreation" creating a familiarity and life-sharing that leads to trust, and it is contemporary linked to the "exact observance of the rules of the house" which integrates the supervision dimension.¹³⁷ In this way, discipline and management are balanced and facilitated with an assistance of a proximity leadership style that empowers the student. The Salesian style

132. See Pietro Braidò, "Pedagogia perseverante tra sfide e scommesse", in *Orientamenti Pedagogici* 38 (1991): 906-911.

133. Braidò, *Prevention, not repression*, 1.

134. See Braidò, *Prevention, not repression*, 2-3.

135. Hubert Henz, "Lehrbuch der systematischen Pädagogik", as quoted in Braidò, *Prevention, not repression*, 3.

136. See the Jansenistic conception of the petit écoles de Port-Royal intended as a small "monitored universe" in Braidò, *Prevention, not repression*, 54-59.

137. See Giovanni Bosco, "Lettera ai giovani dell'Oratorio di Torino - Valdocco del 10 Maggio 1884", in Braidò *Don Bosco educatore*, 382-386.

of assistance and supervision is not far away from the concept of servant leadership as theorized by Robert Greenleaf.¹³⁸

There is another important kind of balance to keep in mind. It is the dynamic which exists among the three pillars of salesian education: reason – religion – loving kindness. Braido writes: “Reason, Religion, and Loving kindness are not simply juxtaposed; they are interrelated; rather, they co-penetrate one another. This occurs not only at the level of objectives and content but also at the level of means and methods.”¹³⁹

This attraction existing among them appears in kindness as the preferred method, and in reason and religion as the preferred content.¹⁴⁰ Reason and religion go hand in hand with the goals of Salesian education, namely forming “the upright citizen”, through the humanities, while forming “the good Christian” through the religious education program. Both of these components include a content to be assimilated and competencies to be acquired which are beyond the scope of kindness, which is after all “love that is shown,”¹⁴¹ affective and effective. The Salesian education theorist Reinhold Weinschenk describes this dynamic very well in his book *Grundlagen der Pädagogik Don Boscos*. He understands reason and religion as the fundamental objectives behind Don Bosco’s educative project, while kindness is the basis of his educative style.¹⁴²

The second dynamic at work among these three elements of the Preventive System indicates that the managerial aspect of education, which includes the contents and strategies of the various programs and activities that help achieve the goals of the educational project, is acquired in a particular form of leadership that includes loving kindness, trust, and friendship. This type of leadership, seen as confidence and kindness, gives greater depth to the

138. See Robert K. Greenleaf, *Servant Leadership. A Journey into the Nature of Legitimate Power and Greatness*. 25th Anniversary Edition (New York: Paulist press, 2002).

139. Braido, *Prevention, not repression*, 276.

140. See Braido, *Prevention, not repression*, 276-277.

141. See Stella, *Don Bosco. Life and Work*, 474-475 and 485-486.

142. See, Reinhold Weinschenk, *Grundlagen der Pädagogik Don Boscos* (München: Don Bosco Verlag, 1987), 40-44 and 116-129.

educative process. According to Stella, loving kindness is the art of “winning the heart” and expresses

the most profound understanding and symbiosis between educator and student (or former student). Winning or stealing the ‘heart’, or creating the most intense interpersonal relationship between educator and student is, the premise of a successful educational program; that is to say, the sharing of both, the goals and the chosen means.¹⁴³

There is a third dynamic at work among the three elements of reason, religion, and loving kindness: the primacy of religion. “The search for salvation is presented to the young as the lesson needed to learn the highest profession of being a Christian, for it is the one which gives meaning and fulfillment to all other professions.”¹⁴⁴ For Don Bosco the phrase “good Christian” does not denote a mediocre Christian (effectiveness); for him, it directs all of his ministry as an educator towards holiness (excellence).¹⁴⁵ Dominic Savio is his most significant example. With Braido we can say that the ideal of holiness becomes the most important objective of the entire educative project.¹⁴⁶ Don Bosco’s sermon on holiness, found in the biography of Dominic Savio, was directed to everyone as the goal of educative-pastoral ministry. In that biography we read that the “will of God is that we all become saints; it is God’s will that we become saints; it is quite easy to do so; there is a great reward in heaven for one who becomes a saint.”¹⁴⁷ The biography of Dominic Savio, intended as a model for the boys of the Oratory, was in part idealized. But it was also “an autobiography of Don Bosco himself, the mirror image of

143. Stella, *Don Bosco*, 60. “la massima simbiosi e la massima intesa interiore e operativa tra chi sta svolgendo il ruolo di educatore e chi è (o è stato) un allievo. Il “guadagnare” o “rubare” reciprocamente il “cuore”; il creare, in altre parole, la massima compenetrazione interpersonale tra educatore e allievo è in sostanza il presupposto per realizzare l’impresa educativa nel suo complesso; vale a dire la condivisione sia dei fini sia dei mezzi prescelti.”

144. Braido, *Prevention, not repression*, 223.

145. For a managerial point of view about effectiveness (being good) and excellency (being great), see Jim Collins, *Good to Great. Why Some Companies Make the Leap and Others don’t* (New York: Harper Business, 2001).

146. See Braido, *Prevention, not repression*, 225.

147. Giovanni Bosco, *Vita del giovanetto Savio Domenico allievo dell’oratorio di San Francesco di Sales* (Torino: Tipografia e Libreria Salesiana, 1880), 140-141. “è volontà di Dio che ci facciamo santi; è assai facile di riuscirvi; è un gran premio preparato in cielo a chi si fa santo.”

the spirituality he lived and taught. The spiritual journey of the pupil is at the same time the story of Don Bosco, priest, and educator, in his role as guide in the 'story of a soul' [...]. The two paths are intertwined."¹⁴⁸

The educative-pastoral ministry transcends the mere fulfillment of one's duties, or in the management language, the realization of the activities and strategies in pursuit of the goals of the project.¹⁴⁹ The dynamics of the theological virtues are introduced, or in the language of leadership, the habits which incorporate the creative tension pointed towards a dream-vision. The Exercise of a Happy Death, which reflected the view of life as seen through the lens of eternity and was typical of the spirituality of the times, does not end in a spirituality that agonizes over one's salvation; instead, it finds balance in a spirituality of love which fills the soul with inner joy.¹⁵⁰ Braidó says: "From his first writings, with wisdom and normality, in a moral system consisting of obligations he introduced the bright sunshine of the theological virtues."¹⁵¹ Stella describes "religion" as the unitive power which has not to be referred

solely to obligatory religious practices or the educational value of frequenting the sacraments. He goes beyond a fragmentary view of sacramental piety and the task of education, not stopping at merely methodological issues. For him religion does not have merely external and instrumental functions. He sees the sacraments as instruments of grace enabling us to attain holiness and eternal salvation.¹⁵²

There is a fourth dynamic: put into practice the vision of the *Give me souls, take away the rest* among both educators and pupils, even though their roles are different. The difference between positions is of minor importance because

educators and students would work together, each party in its own proper way to carry out God's saving plan. [...] In short, the sole nucleus of Don Bosco's

148. Braidó, *Don Bosco prete dei giovani*, 1:324. "autobiografia di don Bosco, specchio della sua spiritualità, praticata e insegnata. L'avventura spirituale dell'allievo è insieme vicenda di don Bosco prete educatore, nel ruolo di guida nella "storia di un'anima" [...]. I due itinerari sono intrecciati."

149. See Braidó, *Don Bosco prete dei giovani*, 1:185-195.

150. See Bosco, *Vite di giovani*, ed. Aldo Giraudó, 27-28.

151. Braidó, *Don Bosco prete dei giovani*, 1:187. See also Guido Gatti, "Dall'osservanza della legge alla crescita delle virtù. Lettura etica della 'Vita'" in Aldo Giraudó, ed., Domenico Savio raccontato da don Bosco. *Riflessioni sulla Vita. Atti del Simposio*, Università Pontificia Salesiana, Roma 8 maggio 2004 (Roma: LAS, 2005), 177-183.

152. Stella, *Don Bosco. Life and Work*, 483.

pedagogy and spirituality was a soteriology that had become personal conviction. It balanced a wide variety of elements that had their proper place: e.g., outings, music, theater, and the full liberty for the boys to “run, jump, and shout as much as they pleased.”¹⁵³

This is the dynamic behind the one and only project leading to salvation which transforms the lives of educators and students in fulfilling their call to holiness.¹⁵⁴

Upon these four dynamics lie other equilibriums that are part of the Preventive System. Here we will list some of them without pretending to be exhaustive:

- a balance between the pedagogy of duties (discipline), and the pedagogy of cheerfulness (spontaneity);¹⁵⁵
- a complementarity of the goals in the education of the good Christian and the honest citizen;¹⁵⁶
- a continuity, development, and integration among the several “versions” of the Preventive System as applied in the various institutions (oratory, boarding school, day school, vocational training, university, a parish, social works, et cetera);¹⁵⁷
- a feasibility of Don Bosco’s educative-pastoral project which finds a balance between regulations and formulation of projects on the one hand, and the assimilation of the vision in the form of a narrative pedagogy on the other;¹⁵⁸

153. Stella, Don Bosco. *Life and Work*, 484.

154. See Pietro Braidò, “Memorie del futuro,” in *Ricerche Storiche Salesiane* 11, no. 20 (1992): 97-127.

155. See Braidò, *Prevention, not repression*, 307-319 and Pietro Braidò, “Il Sistema Preventivo di don Bosco alle origini (1841-1862). Il cammino del ‘preventivo’ nella realtà e nei documenti,” in *Ricerche Storiche Salesiane* 14, no. 27 (1995): 283-287.

156. See Braidò, *Prevention, not repression*, 213-232.

157. See Braidò, *Prevention, not repression*, 335-359 and Braidò, “Il Sistema Preventivo di don Bosco alle origini,” 255-320.

158. See the three biographies of Savio, Besucco and Magone written by Don Bosco. See also the preface in *Bosco, Memoirs of the Oratory*, 3.

- a managerial and leadership balance:
 - among the roles of Director, Prefect, Catechist, Counselors and Assistants;¹⁵⁹
 - between the effective educative-pastoral salesian identity and the openness in the creation of a network of collaborators;¹⁶⁰
 - between spontaneity and discipline in the running of the house¹⁶¹ which is the expression of “formal” and “informal” direction;¹⁶²
 - between an intervention affecting the entire student body and the personal accompaniment which finds in youth groups an intermediate level of realization;¹⁶³

In the pursuit of his desire to save the whole person Don Bosco does not choose a systematic theoretical path; instead, he offers practical steps with simple words, which demonstrate the brilliant managerial-educative vision of an inspiring leader. “Don Bosco, unlike Therese of Lisieux, does not write of “the little way” to holiness. But he does suggest easy ways for boys that some might consider too trivial. These trivial means were undoubtedly not a royal road, but they were a path that led “to a marvelous level of perfection.”¹⁶⁴

Conclusion: the synergy between leadership and management as seen in Don Bosco

After having analyzed the person and the accomplishments of Don Bosco, although not in great depth, we can verify the presence and the synergetic connectedness between leadership and management in his life and mindset.

159. See Braidó, *Prevention, not repression*, 295-301. See also Braidó, *Don Bosco prete dei giovani*, 1:306-308.

160. Braidó, *Don Bosco prete dei giovani*, 1:208-212 and 222-225; Stella, *Don Bosco nella storia economica*, 397-398 and Casella, *L'esperienza educativa preventiva di don Bosco*, 123-137.

161. See Braidó, *Prevention, not repression*, 292-295.

162. See Francesco Motto, “I ‘Ricordi confidenziali ai direttori’ di don Bosco,” in *Ricerche Storiche Salesiane* 3, no. 4 (1984): 150-160; Braidó, *Prevention, not repression*, 295-299 and Carlo Colli, “La direzione spirituale nella prassi e nel pensiero di don Bosco: ‘memoria’ e ‘profezia’,” in Mario Cogliandro, ed., *La direzione spirituale nella familia salesiana* (Roma: Editrice SDB, 1983), 53-77.

163. See Braidó, *Don Bosco prete dei giovani*, 1:214-214 and 318-320. See also Braidó, *Prevention, not repression*, 302-306.

164. See Stella, *Don Bosco. Life and Work*, 206.

The following dual concepts are a synthesis of the relationship existing between leadership and management as he exercised them:

1. *trust in Providence – manual labor* expresses Don Bosco's mindset formed in his early years immersed in the rural Piedmontese setting. His leadership is God-centered, and he is simultaneously called to entrust himself to Providence and to work effectively as his gifts and knowledge allow;

2. *powerful dream – prudent management* becomes the efficient translation of the previous binomial. His vocation as priest and educator give direction to all later choices and creates the horizon of meaning where his skills as a prudent entrepreneur find their realization;

3. *expansion of the work – development of self-giving* explains the inner harmony that exists between the man and his activity. His total dedication to his vocation is not limited to the spiritual dimension; it penetrates all of his activity, educative-pastoral and managerial-organizational;

4. *personal identity – team collaboration* represents the bonding which Don Bosco created and which led to a significant movement of persons involved in his mission. His ability to be a leader with a mighty dream capable to appreciating and combining the gifts and differences of everyone is a typical Salesian trait;

5. *answer to need – preventive action* describes the synergy between education that both respond to the actual needs of the young and at the same time offers a way to transcend the conditions that cause a part of their needs or their poverty. They are empowered, given education, knowledge and the tools that prepare them for a better life;

6. *structured education – narrative education*. Here the reference is made to a style of leadership that excites and spurs on involvement and knows how to share the dream. It is complemented by necessary regulations, different roles and tasks. As for spiritual growth, management is equated with the forming of resolutions, while leadership is exercised through the biographies of exemplary students;

7. *reason and religion – loving kindness in a family environment* express the managerial aspect of education. This environment includes contents, strategies, programs and activities; all of which are directed towards the attainment of the goals (good Christian and honest citizen); all of these done with love and a style of leadership that is characterized by trust, friendship, and familiarity;

8. *enacted regulations - informal osmotic education* shows the executive translation of the previous balance. Study, work, and prayer are "tasks" in a

program, but they are realized in an environment that is forward-looking and informal, expressed in recreation, trust and friendship;

9. *stability management – expansion of vision.* Here we refer to how Don Bosco balanced the development of his works in Piedmont, in Italy and in the missions with the opening of boarding schools which were financially sound and would nurture new vocations. In this way, there is a balance between productivity and resource investments.