



08-A-42

## THE MANAGEMENT OF SCHOOLS: EMULATIONS AND REWARDS

The preceding two leaflets had to do with classroom relationships. In a certain way, rewards and corrections pertain to the same topic. In order to better understand what is said in *The Management of Schools*, it seems to me that it would be useful to say something about the situation of the family and the children with regard to the school, near the end of the seventeenth century and the beginning of the eighteenth.

### ELEMENTS OF THIS SITUATION:

#### **Regarding attendance of classes**

Instability, frequent absences from class, dropping out of school before the course was over were rather common. If school attendance was theoretically obligatory, in practice it was hardly observed. After centuries of more or less whimsical and irregular individualized instruction, the student body was not very well prepared to adjust to requirements and school behaviour required by simultaneous teaching. We know that one of the main concerns of John Baptist De La Salle and his first Brothers was how to keep the pupils in their places and how to make them more stable and regular.

Here are a couple of ways given them to arrive at this:

— Strong armed methods, based upon strict discipline or upon corrections were expected to act as deterrents. But we know that this type of «dissuasion» had uneven effects: many pupils quit the schools or left the teachers who made use of it!

— The softer way, which, it seems to me, was the choice which the Management of School favoured. What are the best ways of attracting the children, of making them interested in school, of getting them down to work, in spite of having to impose certain constraints on them to assure their continued progress? In this regard, you could not rely very much upon the parents for any help because they themselves had never experienced such a situation and they were not always convinced that staying many years in school had any value to it.

#### **Interest in school work**

The Management gives ample witness to the useful nature of the Lasallian school. This school should achieve good results so that the children, and especially their parents, would be convinced that attending classes regularly was not a waste of time.

The obvious success, preparing the children for occupations after they are finished with school, are the guarantees that the schools are useful. If certain pupils need further help and encouragement, then there should be no hesitation in providing such.

These orientations certainly explain to a great extent the success achieved by the first Lasallian schools. This success was attested by public opinion, by the proficiency of the students in these schools and by their stability. Here we present some of the concrete means proposed by the Management of Schools to achieve these results.

### THE MEANS PROPOSED:

#### **In the first place, the help given to the children individually:**

«The teacher will help the pupils to apply themselves completely to catechism, which for them is not naturally easy and which is ordinarily of short duration, and they will achieve this by the following means:

1° They will take care not to scold or confuse them, either by words or in any other way, when they are unable to answer properly the question they have been asked.

2° They will encourage them and will even help them to say what they have difficulty in recalling.

3° They will offer rewards, which they will give from time to time to those who have been the best behaved and the most attentive—sometimes even to the slowest pupils who have made the greatest efforts to learn well. They will use various other similar means, which in their prudence and charity they will be able to find, to encourage the pupils to learn Catechism more willingly, and to retain it more easily». (page 133-134).

**They will make use of a «pedagogy of success»:** Nowadays, the study of motivation and conduct acknowledges the importance of success, and of encouragement to facilitate the progress of the pupils. The organization of lessons and the methods used in the first Lasallian schools led to a normal assurance of success. Here are two significant passages:

«They shall be careful not to present any pupil to the Inspector for promotion who is not qualified. Pupils are easily discouraged when they have been admitted by the teacher but have not been promoted by the Inspector». (p. 67).

Regarding those who have not been promoted, we have another passage on the way of encouraging them:

«They will persuade them by means of some reward, by assigning them to some office, such, for instance, as Head of the class, and making them understand that it is better to be the first, or among the first, in a lower grade than the last in a more advanced one». (p. 68).

### **Frequent Evaluation:**

Today, along with incentives and motivation, frequent evaluation and its positive results are equally stressed.

According to the Management, the procedures in the Lasallian schools call for constant and immediate evaluation. However, it gives special solemnity to the monthly changing of the order or the lesson. This is not only a frame of reference of the pupil's progress but also a strong motivation and a positive re-enforcement of the learners.

### **Direct Emulation:**

This depends not upon a search for equality but one of distinction. To create more dynamism in the class one must rely on mutual help, «the appeal to big brother» as certain psychiatrists say, to the model, to the «locomotives» who help along the less advanced, to help them become a part of the group:

«The teachers will come to an agreement with the Inspector upon those who might be promoted, but whom it would not be opportune to promote at that time: either because they are too young or because it is necessary to leave some in each grade or in each section who know how to read well enough to stimulate the others and serve as models for them; to train them to express themselves well, to pronounce the letters, syllables, and words distinctly, and to make the correct pauses».

«The teachers will take care, some time before the day the promotions are to be made, to inform those pupils whom the Brother Director or the Inspector has agreed not to promote—either for their own good, because they are too young or for the good of the class and the grade, so that there may be some who can support the others. They will do this in such a way that these pupils will be content to remain in the grade or in the section where they are». (p. 68).

### **REWARDS, PROPERLY SPEAKING:**

These occupy a very restricted place in the Management of Schools: only two pages, as if to indicate that recourse to such external and artificial means of emulation or motivation should be closely limited.

Elsewhere these recompenses aim more at the child's general conduct in school rather than towards his work properly speaking, his comportment being directed, in the language of that day, by «duties».

«From time to time, the teachers will give rewards to those of their pupils who are the most exact in fulfilling their duties, in order to incite them to do so with pleasure and to stimulate the others by the hope of the reward. (p. 160).

«There are three kinds of rewards which will be given in the schools: First, rewards for piety. Second, rewards for ability, Third, rewards for assiduity». (p. 138).

Further on, it specifies that the rewards for piety ought always to be the biggest and most beautiful of the prizes. Next comes assiduity, and finally, capacity. The objects given as rewards are equally classified into three categories: books, pictures or sacred texts. The books mentioned are always «book of piety» and sometimes constitute a way of making up for certain financial inequalities by giving them to the most needy.

«Hymn books and prayer books, Diocesan Catechisms, and other books that are used in the Christian Schools, may be given only to poor children. These will not be given to those who are able to buy them».

«Rewards for ability will be given only once every month. There will be but one for each grade. Every month, a reward may also be given to the pupil of the entire class who has excelled in everything, that is to say, to the one who has shown the most piety and decorum in church, and, during prayers, the greatest ability and assiduity». (p. 161).

### **IN CONCLUSION:**

The last citation reminds us of an essential aspect of the educational aim of John Baptist De La Salle and can serve to conclude this brief study: whatever is proposed to the pupils never stops at the mere human level but tries to come into close contact with the child of God and to help him to become, more and more each day, a «true disciple of Jesus Christ».

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