

THE PRESENT SCENE

The Institute establishes, renews and diversifies its works according to what the kingdom of God requires. (R 11)

PRELUDE

1.50 *In order to respond to this plan (of salvation) and also to situations of distress similar to those that the Founder knew, the Institute desires to be present to the world today as part of the Church's work in spreading the gospel.* R 11

The educational policies of Lasallian Institutions are centered on the young, adapted to the times in which they live, and designed to prepare them to take their place in society. These institutions are characterized by the determination to make the means of salvation available to young people through a quality education and by an explicit proclamation of Jesus Christ. R 13

1.51 The present reality

The Lasallian educational mission embraces 63,116 religious, priests and lay persons in partnership, teaching and administering in 914 establishments in more than 80 countries, reaching 785,127 pupils, according to the statistics published by the Institute in December, 1995. The Brothers, who are currently involved in full-time positions in schools and other educational works throughout the world, are around 7%. The accompanying tables shows this world-wide distribution of Lasallian educational works and those who are currently working in them.

LASALLIAN SCHOOLS AND STUDENTS, BY CONTINENT *Reported as of 31 December 1995*

	AFRICA	AMERICAS	ASIA	AUSTRALIA/OCEANIA	EUROPE	TOTAL
Schools	74	325	83	21	409	912
Students	53,075	337,982	112,675	12,278	268,120	784,100

1.52a STAFF IN LASALLIAN SCHOOLS, BY CONTINENT

Reported as of 31 December 1995

	AFRICA	AMERICAS	ASIA	AUSTRALIA/OCEANIA	EUROPE	TOTAL
Brothers fsc	292	1,649	213	91	1,614	3,859
Brothers not fsc	19	52	58	0	28	157
Sisters	52	204	36	15	101	408
Priests	40	307	42	9	178	576
Lay Women	853	12,055	3,772	518	11,168	28,366
Lay Men	1,649	12,633	2,902	554	11,966	29,704
Total	2,905	26,900	7,023	1,187	25,055	63,070

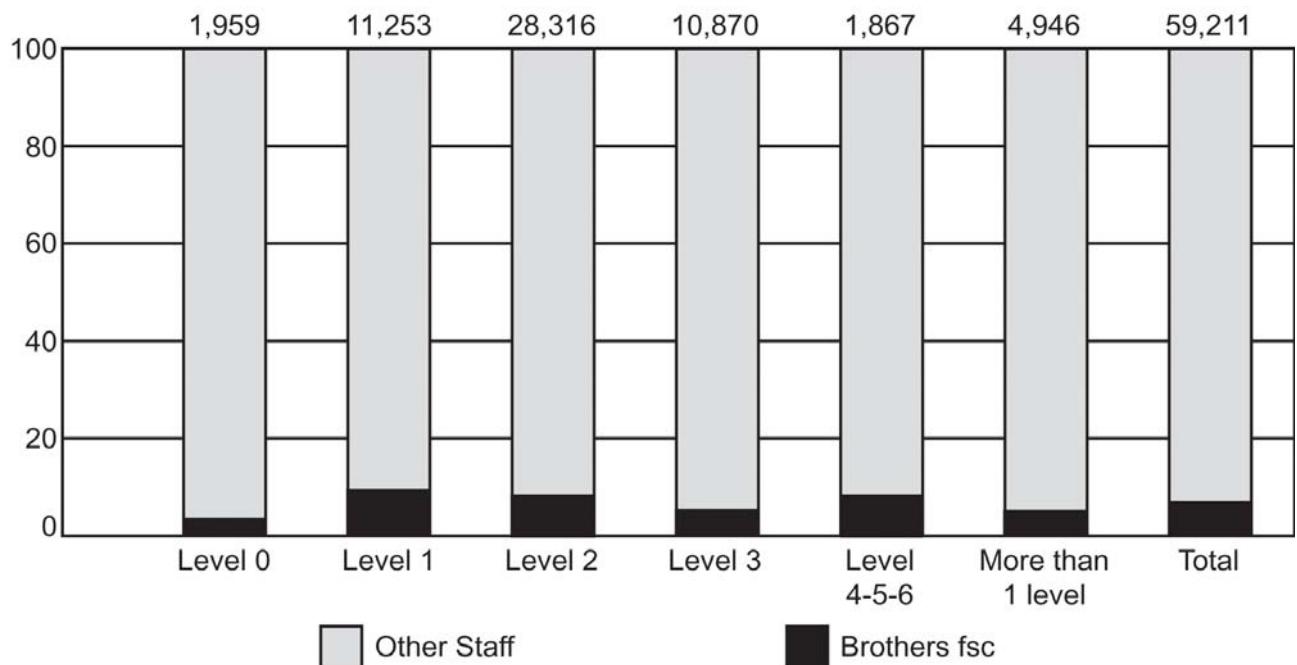
* It is important to note that these tables do not indicate the Brothers who work in other than Lasallian institutions nor the Brothers who are effectively retired. The total number of Brothers at this same date was **7,225**.

b. BROTHERS AND OTHER STAFF IN LASALLIAN SCHOOLS, BY LEVEL

Reported as of 31 December 1995

1.52c DISTRIBUTION OF STAFF IN LASALLIAN SCHOOLS, BY LEVEL

Reported as of 31 December 1995



1.53 Variety and breadth of the Lasallian Mission today

Lasallian schools and institutions try to be open to all who wish to attend them. Pupils from all cultural backgrounds and faiths work with a similarly mixed body of teachers and advisers in a caring community.

Education in secondary schools is the focus for 49.9% of Lasallian works. The large number of teachers and administrators in tertiary level education, almost equal to those engaged in primary education, is a recent development. The 3.3% of Lasallians who work in pre-school and the 11.8% who work in special education services- as court-referred, handicapped, children at risk and other activities reflect the growing awareness of the crucial nature of early childhood development, and an expanding of the traditional Lasallian commitment to the deprived, disadvantaged and vulnerable in response to their special needs. It also reflects the greater involvement of women (now close to 44% of the total) in the Lasallian mission. The majority of pupils in the schools in Asia (with the exception of the Philippines) would be from the Moslem, Buddhist, Hindu, Confucianist, or Shintoist traditions. Many of the educators would also come from one or other of these traditions.

In all these levels of education, the traditional attitudes and values of the Institute as found in the Lasallian Heritage, are the basis of what is done. Lay colleagues are bringing their distinctive contributions to their increasing presence in posts of responsibility in this overall transition from what was the *Brothers' school* to the *Lasallian school*. The *Rule of 1987* indicates the necessary openness to change and development as new needs arise.

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"The Christian School, which has always to be given new vitality, is the preferred field for the activity of the Brothers. The Institute also explores other possibilities for teaching and education more adapted to the needs of time and place." (R 3)

1.54 Level 2, secondary education

If the original Lasallian mission began with primary schools and expanded only gradually via the boarding schools into secondary education (cf. 1.5 I; 1.52), today around half of Lasallian educators work in secondary schools. Frequently, the original primary school sometimes became the secondary school and, in a certain number of cases, the technical or trade school became the college or university.

Secondary education is the last stage of formal schooling for the great majority. In the "developing economies," therefore, schools for young people up to the age of fifteen years are the obvious centers for a training in skills that enhance individual opportunity and community wealth. It is frequently found that these schools are fully engaged in promoting the social and economic growth of the people of the area through adult literacy classes and training in appropriate trades. In this regard, it is especially important to emphasize the role which can be played by technical schools in a better preparation of young people for a trade, by collaborating with public authorities, local businesses, trade unions and other educational and social agencies.

1.55 Level 3, adult higher education

The industrialization of Europe and the immigrant settlement in the United States of America in the nineteenth century produced urban populations for whom the traditional primary education was initially indispensable and subsequently insufficient. The children of the working class and of the poor came to need and to seek secondary education. Both for reasons of expense and from fear of the secularism and even anti-clericalism of the existing universities, aspirations beyond secondary education would have been frustrated without the provision of Church-affiliated higher education at modest cost. In the changed circumstances in many parts of the world today, Lasallian higher education institutions are now challenged with the deterioration of the urban centers out of which many of them grew.

"Many of the World's great cities have significant areas which are in steady or steep decline. Accordingly, urban poverty constitutes one of the great strategic problems facing Lasallian universities, especially in that dimension of their mission which emphasizes justice, communal responsibility, moral reflection on social conditions and a commitment to providing access to a high quality human and Christian education for people of all economic categories, especially the

needy."(Br. James Gaffney to the meeting of Heads of Lasallian Universities, Encuentro 4, Rome, July 1995)

Statistics made available by the Secretary General show that, in 1995, one in eight of all pupils at Lasallian establishments was in tertiary level education and of our present Brothers and colleagues, one in five is involved in tertiary level teaching, administration and support. This is a staff deployment similar to that engaged in primary teaching. The Lasallian tertiary institutes number 76 in 19 countries.

The Lasallian response to the call for higher education has been to develop, with a certain pragmatism, a diversified service in universities, technical colleges and teacher training establishments inspired as much by perceived needs as by pre-existing models. Each institution tries to be present to the local society, responsive to its culture and adaptable to its particular needs. Research projects tend to support local industrial initiatives and to promote community awareness. At the same time, academic excellence and, in favorable circumstances, fundamental and theoretical research are pursued.

"The educational policies of Lasallian Institutions are centered on the young, adapted to the times in which they live, and designed to prepare them to take their place in society. When the Brothers work in the area of adult education, they put the same emphasis on the importance of person, adapting their methods accordingly." (R 13)

1.56 A special Lasallian tradition: the training of teachers and catechists

The Institute tradition in teacher training and the preparation of catechists has been maintained since the time of the Founder, both in specific Teachers' Colleges and in integral programs in the professional training of student Brothers. The 1987 *Rule* notes:

"Ever since the time of their foundation, the Brothers have contributed to the promotion of the Christian laity, especially among those educators who want their professional work to be a form of gospel ministry.

The Brothers co-operate in forming Christian teachers. They help them to build their professional competence and also to become increasingly involved in the work of the Church and in the field of education." (R 17)

A characteristic of recent developments in this professional training is the care to maintain a close relationship between the local realities and the approaches to the teacher training.

1.57 Literacy and community support programs

There is a demanding and growing call for involvement in the lives of young people who are in specially difficult circumstances, especially where increasing urbanization threatens the cohesion of community cultures and often, paradoxically, limits opportunities for formal education.

The very poor are isolated and exposed to exploitation. The influence of the media can cause a distortion of values. Extreme poverty can deprive some of basic human dignity, leading even to their being excluded from the society of the better-off. The unequal distribution of wealth and the limited access to resources tend to foster frustration and undermine the sense of self worth. This was recognized by the Capitulants of the 40th General Chapter in their *orientations concerning the poor and justice*, when they invited the brothers:

“ . . . to work directly in the educational service of economically poor young persons (children of laborers, of under-employed persons, of migrants), of the victims of social injustice, of the handicapped, of delinquents.” (G 403, Oct 1976. page 79)

Young offenders, or children referred by the courts as being especially at risk, are cared for in an honored tradition dating back to the expansion of the school at Saint Yon in De La Salle's lifetime. It is not surprising, therefore, to note that everywhere, Lasallians are increasingly involved in various forms of education for parents, in family support services and in projects with street children, homeless children, young offenders, Boys' Villages and Boys' Towns, and also in many other forms of advocacy for the young. Many newer projects, with their holistic approach to education which addresses at once the intellectual and moral development of young people and the support of the communities in which they are growing up, cannot be fitted easily into the traditional groupings adopted in this review. A less formal *“pedagogy of the poor”* enables educators to go to where the young are and to be a presence of Christ to them there. Wherever the mission is especially adapted to meet the needs of the very poor, those who work in it are increasingly involved with a broad spectrum of authorities, religions, cultures and resources in a community approach to the education of the disadvantaged. The partnership of women, which has greatly enriched the Lasallian mission overall, has notably enhanced our understanding of the needs of families and extended the support services that can be offered to them.

“In these educational communities all, both young and old, are called upon, with due respect to their freedom of conscience, to integrate their faith with their culture and so become available for the service of society and of the Church.” (R 13a)

1.58 Non-formal schooling

The incidence of “drop-outs” from formal schooling is a reminder that many students do not succeed in school. Alternative structures, more easily adapted to the special circumstances of neglected young people, are increasingly a feature of Lasallian education. Such centers usually involve cooperative arrangements among Brothers and local governmental and religious leaders of various faiths and the support of a devoted personnel. This was already anticipated for the Brothers by the *Declaration* in 1967:

“New educational and apostolic needs are making themselves felt in many places; these will require new educational ideas, new teaching methods, new ways by which the Church can make her presence felt among the young . . . (Nevertheless) it is the mind of the General Chapter (39th) that the Institute not limit the

interpretation of its educational apostolate so as to refuse all apostolic activity unrelated to the school. Such a narrow point of view would not conform to the traditions of the Institute. It would run the risk of opposing the action of the Holy Spirit among us, and it would paralyze the very initiative that is capable of renewing the schools themselves.” (D 51, 2, 4)

1.59 Pastoral centers and youth support groups

Even though many schools are able to develop and maintain excellent programs of religious education with strong pastoral emphases, school-based catechesis sometimes suffers from the fact that the time set aside for religious education is sometimes inadequate and not always well chosen. Such lessons may do little to engender spirituality. For reasons which differ from case to case, it may be difficult to foster positive attitudes to religion in the classroom. Lasallian pastoral centers of various kinds, led by experienced youth leaders, can help young people by giving them the opportunity to share their faith among themselves in less formal surroundings than the school.

1.510 Responding to new realities

The endorsement by the Church of the *United Nations Convention on the Rights of Children* (1989) commits the Institute to implementing its proposals. While, historically, Lasallian principles have long preceded this formulation of the United Nations, the convention emphasizes significant elements in the contemporary understanding of individual autonomy during the years of dependency. It acknowledges, for example, that the right of a child to an identity extends to ethnicity and name, nationhood and culture, and to access to information and education (Art. 6-14). Children are to be listened to, especially where decisions affecting their access to resources are concerned (Art. 12). The convention is underpinned by a view of childhood which accepts young persons as partners in society and not simply objects of its care; as having a contribution to make. not merely a debt to pay.

1.511 The colloquia on phenomena affecting the educational mission

The Institute tries to respond through its educational mission to the particular needs of young people in different parts of the world. The 1993 General Chapter was particularly aware of the global problems which more and more influence the young at the approach of the third millennium. This was the perspective which led the Chapter to pass the following formal proposition so as to encourage continuous monitoring of the global issues which ultimately have their own influence on the lives of the young.

“The General Chapter asks the Brother Superior and his Council to name a group of experts in the field of education who will serve as observers of the broad educational concerns throughout the world to enable the center of the Institute to develop a public policy.” (C 435, Ch. 4. Proposition 2)

Implementation of this proposition has taken the form of a series of Colloquia on issues that illustrate the current impact of world trends on young people. The Lasallian Mission is challenged to recognize a new anthropology of childhood and to renew and adapt itself accordingly. The five principal issues under examination in the series are, in sequence:

- The Family today (1994);
- The phenomenon of Globalization and its effects on education (1995);
- World-wide Urbanization and its consequences (1996);
- Information technology and some of its implications for education (1997);
- Suitable approaches to proclaiming the Gospel today (1998).

The main issues arising from these Colloquia will be published to all involved in the Lasallian Mission as part of the preparation of the 43rd General Chapter in the year 2000.