



**SALESIAN SPIRIT**  
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# PREVENTIVE SYSTEM: EDUCATOR'S QUALITIES

**T**his article tries to enquire into the essential qualities of the educator according to the preventive system of education of Don Bosco.

## EDUCATOR'S AIM

The educator must have clear goals and objectives if all his efforts, programmes and methodologies have a unified direction. The preventive system aims at the Christian education of the pupils. It is directed towards their spiritual well-being and also moral and intellectual education. Don Bosco says, "Teachers should bear in mind that teaching is but another means of doing good. . . . From time to time, they should stress Christian truths, our duties towards God, the Sacraments, and devotion to the Blessed Virgin. In short, their teaching should be Christian, a frank and warm exhortation to their pupils to be good Christians."

'Good Christians and honest citizens' being the goal, the educator should desist from expecting quick results from the pupils: the good seeds sown by this educational method during their early years produce lasting fruits after they leave school.

Don Bosco affirms that stubborn youngsters who drove him crazy later became good Christians due to the preventive system. One such boy returned to Don Bosco to make his confession after thirty years!

## EDUCATOR'S QUALITIES

The Christian, moral and intellectual education of the pupils is the goal. The educator, then, should be a personification of this. He should also be a good Christian and a model Christian so his pupils can imitate him. He should realize that his pupils' morality improves in proportion to the brilliance of the educator! Fr. Paul Orioli, who spent a few days at the Oratory in 1882, wrote back to his friend about what he saw in the Oratory: unassuming professors doing ordinary chores! In his report of the Salesian Oratories, Dr. Julius Benelli wrote that the teachers in those oratories were of sound moral training and, hence, were excellent models for the pupils to follow!

The preventive system is founded on love. And love is patient. The educator should be very loving and manifest this love in being patient. An educator should have a good reserve of patience, even heroic patience! Of course, patience demands sacrifice. It might be much easier to settle a problem with a slap, but that approach does nothing good in the long run. It does not excite the heart of the pupils to virtue. Whereas patience does! Don Bosco explains the patience of the educator, comparing it with a gardener's patience in cultivating a seedling. He toils hard, prepares the ground, weeds it out, manures it, and sows the seed. Then, he protects it from the pecking of birds or trampling by people! He patiently waits for the seedling to sprout. Then he adds support to it, binds it up together, etc. The hope that it will bear fruit makes him do all that.



In the same way, the educator should have patience in educating his pupils, putting up with their light-mindedness, forgiving them for their mistakes due to their forgetfulness, assisting them always, etc.

The educator should be loving and kind in his dealings with the pupils. His words must be kind in admonishing and correcting the pupils. Don Bosco says, "Work always but with the gentleness of St. Francis de Sales and the patience of Job." He should win the pupils' goodwill by dealing kindly with them. The educator should learn to love what the boys love so that they will love what the educator wants from them.

The educator should know that he is taking the place of the parents of the pupils, and hence, he should be fatherly. Don Bosco tells the educator, "If you are to be true fathers to your pupils, you too must have a father's heart."

The educator should be totally dedicated to the task of education, being prompted by the will to do good to the pupils in everything he does.

### EDUCATOR'S METHODOLOGY

The educator should discover the pupil's positive qualities and encourage him to develop them. When this is done, the boys cooperate all the more.

The educator should give boys the freedom to run, jump, play, participate in dramatics, music, etc.

The educator should love and respect all pupils. Attention should be directed not only to the sound, clever and talented but also to those who are not suitable or clever, even those who are downright bad. It is only fitting that the educator should take special care of the backward pupils.

While the educator should be loving and caring, he should avoid being too close or particularly friendly with any, being drawn by their looks or qualities. Don Bosco says, "Never write overly affectionate letters to them. Never hold them by the hand. Never embrace or kiss them. Never be alone with

them in secluded spots. Never look too fondly on them."

A teacher seen only at the teacher's desk is only a teacher, but if he joins the boys at recreation and games, he becomes a brother to them. So, the educator should always be in the midst of boys more as friends than superiors, especially at recreation. This constant presence among boys exerts a positive influence for good on the pupils.

The educator should supervise the pupils always. He should notice whether the books they read are good books.

The educator should study boys' characters carefully and advise them accordingly. He should be more understanding with boys who are over-sensitive and easily hurt. Even the bad boys have a soft spot, which the educator should strive to locate and take advantage of to help the boy.

The educator should be quick to forgive wholeheartedly whenever a pupil shows he is sorry. He should not keep mentioning past offences or threatening to punish them, saying, 'You will pay for it!'

The educator should keep the pupils' minds occupied with wholesome thoughts through pep talks, literary recitals, choral music and the like.

### A BOY BECOMES AN EDUCATOR

Bernard Vacchina, an Oratory student, donned the cassock in 1876 after schooling. Don Bosco sent him to assist 170 pupils. Halfway through the year, he was asked to teach the first-year high school students in the lower division. Don Bosco guided him as to how to carry out his duties and how to act towards his pupils; how to be an example to them; how to clarify his own ideas, not talking too much himself but getting his students to speak; how to give special care to slower pupils; how to love to make himself respected and obeyed; Vacchina did his best. But there were also moments of discouragement and weariness as he taught and supervised many boys.

The following year, he was appointed to take charge of the upper division of the first-year high school students! At the very start, he was faced with insubordination! He lost his cool, grabbed the boy and put him out! And the boy raised his hand to slap him! Vacchina would not admit him if he did not apologize! Don Bosco intervened and spoke to the boy as well as Vacchina. And the boy was readmitted. From then on, he was very obedient.

Vacchina was put in charge of the second-year high school the following year. He had 130 pupils. It was a problem class, and Vacchina needed help figuring out where to turn because their level of learning was so widely uneven. He was patient, but he was tested beyond his strength! Don Bosco told him, "Patience is what we all need. Do what you can, and God will do the rest. If you work for Him, He will not abandon you."

Learning in this way, Vacchina became an excellent educator.

