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ANNOTATION

Everett, Dominic Edward. “John Baptist De la Salle’s *The Conduct of Schools: A Guide to Teacher Education*.” Ph.D. dissertation, Loyola University of Chicago. 1984, 397 pp.

Dominic Everett, FSC, Ph.D., completed his doctoral dissertation, “John Baptist DeLaSalle’s *The Conduct of Schools: A Guide to Teacher Education*”, in 1984 at Loyola University in Chicago. It provides a very thorough analysis of De La Salle’s seminal work on primary school pedagogy and teacher education, *The Conduct of the Christian Schools (The Conduct)*. Everett states, “The dissertation reconstructs *The Conduct of Schools* and analyzes the book as a teacher education manual in three parts: administration and supervision of teacher education, curriculum and classroom organization . . . , and practical methodology . . .” (1). Chapters One and Two of the dissertation put *The Conduct* in the context of seventeenth century France and how primary education developed there. Everett is careful to indicate that De La Salle did not create the education of primary school teachers “ex nihilo” and that he makes no attempt to apply De La Salle’s seventeenth century ideas to twentieth century pedagogy.

In Chapter One, Everett shows, “. . . that the development of primary teacher education in France took place in a rich tradition of schooling and education” (6). Everett describes the various types of teachers that existed at that time from the “Craftsman Teacher” to the “Brother Teacher”. He concludes in Chapter One that “. . . by the third quarter of the seventeenth century the concept of teacher education as a necessity for the successful operation of the primary schools in France had come to maturity” (57).

Chapter Two begins with biographical notes about De La Salle. Everett then divides the 40 years of De La Salle’s work in teacher education into three time periods when his institutions of teacher education were located in three different cities: Reims (1679 – 1688), Paris (1688 - 1707), and Rouen (1707 – 1719). Everett indicates that, “His [De La Salle] favorite residence was in the novitiate with the teacher candidates. The picture of Lasallian teacher education is that of a community gathered around De La Salle” (118 – 119). Everett also reviews De La Salle’s difficulties in establishing primary education for poor children and states, “De La Salle’s grand design . . . was not, unfortunately, well received by all in the educational establishment” (120).

Chapter Three covers four distinct topics. The first is a review of the origin, composition and history of *The Conduct*. The second covers the 12 virtues of a good teacher and the teacher education team (*formateur* of new teachers, inspector of schools, and director of novices). The third illustrates how another seminal De La Salle work, *Meditations for the Time of Retreat*, complements *The Conduct*. The fourth and concluding topic is a review of seven pedagogical principles that characterize De La Salle’s education of teachers: integration, specialization, association, vocation, mission, conversion (spirituality), and supervision of apprentices.

Chapter Four covers Part One (*School Practices and the Manner in Which They are to be Carried Out*) of *The Conduct* in which teachers learn what to teach and how to teach it – the major part that covers pedagogy. Everett takes De La Salle’s ten chapters and regroups them into

six sections: classroom management and curriculum organization; teaching reading in French rather than Latin; teaching writing, arithmetic and spelling; teaching catechism and the art of questioning; the psychological, social and moral atmosphere of the Lasallian classroom; and a summary of Part One of *The Conduct*. Everett's summary of De La Salle's pedagogy looks at eight principles of instruction: preparation, organization, apprenticeship, questioning, utility, socialization, vernacular, and religion. Everett concludes Chapter Four by referring to De La Salle's approach as a "peaceful revolution" in education since he, ". . . promotes a wider use of incremental learning and small group instruction, abandons Latin in the name of realism, makes school useful to the student, and establishes a new type of pupil-teacher relationship based on gentleness, unpretentious friendliness, and mutual respect" (252).

Chapter Five shows that De La Salle's intent was to build a school community for children of the poor based on sound pedagogical and psychological practice. Everett highlights the following elements, found in *The Conduct*, that create school community: vigilance, silence and signals, student records, restricted and moderate correction, rewards, calendar of holidays, student participation, understanding of children with academic or behavior problems, and individual psychology. Everett also shows that De La Salle believed that the teacher is responsible for establishing this sense of community in his classroom. Everett states, "The teacher is responsible for educating the whole child in the academic domain as much as in religion, in character formation as much as in the professional and social preparation for life" (315).

In the Conclusion Section of the dissertation, Everett lists 15 statements that summarize De La Salle's teacher education principles and the content of *The Conduct*. However, Everett makes several other key points that more succinctly summarize his analysis of *The Conduct* and De La Salle's work. First, "De La Salle was not a creator" (318). He studied all of the educational thinkers of his time and patterned his early teacher education efforts on them. Second, "De La Salle was an educational reformer" (319). His reforms of primary education through better teacher education was, ". . . his point of departure for improving the plight of the neglected children of workers and the poor" (319). Third, *The Conduct* was the result of 25 years of teacher collaboration. Everett indicates that there was, "No doubt *The Conduct* originated from the notes taken at frequent conferences held by De La Salle and the brother teachers" (321).

Finally, Everett emphasizes that not only did De La Salle make great pedagogical advances but he showed great concern for the individual and love and understanding for the children of the poor. This was evident by the attractive human community established at all of his schools. Everett identifies several other topics for further study: other educators in seventeenth century France not covered in the dissertation, the curriculum in De La Salle's upper primary boarding schools, other textbooks written and published by the Brothers of the Christian Schools, an evaluation of the teacher education programs as described in *The Conduct* as compared to today's programs and a study of the relationship of the teacher as an older brother to the student..

Everett's dissertation gives a very comprehensive analysis of *The Conduct* from the eyes of an experienced educator. For those who want to teach about De La Salle from historical or pedagogical viewpoints, Everett's work is a rich fountain of accurate information presented in a logical format. It is surely one of the most complete analyses of *The Conduct*, giving biographical information about De La Salle and historical context to his forty years of work in teacher education.