

ANNOTATION

Hengemüle, Edgard, FSC. *Lasallian Education: Which Kind of Education Is It?* Winona, MN: Institute for Lasallian Studies of Saint Mary’s University, 2016. 214 pp.

Edgard Hengemüle, FSC, offers an outstanding analysis of Lasallian education at its origins as well as its reception by contemporary historians of education. His work is a useful *ressourcement* of foundational Lasallian texts, such as the *Conduct* and the *Rules of Christian Decorum*, as well as De La Salle’s catechetical works and the mediations he wrote for his Brothers. From the specific practices outlined in these texts, Hengemüle derives nine principles that characterized Lasallian education at its origins. Each principle is explored in depth in a separate chapter. Bringing those principles to the modern day, he concludes each chapter with a section entitled “Assessment by Historians of Education.” While Hengemüle himself serves in the Latin American context, his analysis of the original principles underlying Lasallian educational practice translates equally to other geopolitical contexts. This book opens the potential for further scholarship that places these nine principles in contact with contemporary movements in education, particularly constructivism (e.g., Jean Piaget and Lev Vygotsky), holistic education (e.g., John Dewey, Maria Montessori, and Rudolf Steiner), and pedagogies concerned with the inner life of the teacher and student (e.g., Parker Palmer and Robert Kegan). Hengemüle’s nine principles of Lasallian education can also serve as a framework for envisioning the future of Lasallian education.

In Chapter 1, Hengemüle addresses the principle of *universal education*. In a characteristic refusal to romanticize Lasallian origins, he notes that De La Salle’s motivation had nothing to do with the factors that inspire universal education today (such as a concern for human rights). Rather, De La Salle considered education an essential condition for the acquisition of the eternal truths necessary for salvation (18-19). The author identifies seven means that De La Salle employed to make education accessible, some frequently associated with Lasallian education (e.g., gratuity and simultaneous instruction), others less so (persuasion, attractive schools and teachers, effective and appropriate instruction, and marketing based on attraction through quality) (20-35). As Hengemüle explores these seven means, he draws a picture of adaptive, responsive structures of education that serve current students’ needs and contribute to stability for the future of the schools.

Chapter 2 addresses the principle of *popular education*. Again, Hengemüle stresses that De La Salle’s perspectives were different from modern-day Lasallians, particularly his acceptance of the French system of social hierarchy (45-46) and that he did not espouse popular education in the modern sense of the word (as a political means of leveling social hierarchy) (49). Nonetheless, De La Salle was able to see that the poor were not being saved – physically, socially, morally, or spiritually – due to the realities of the circumstances; and he developed an approach to make education available to all who sought it, regardless of their economic situation (50-54). Through practical measures that made the schools accessible to the masses (e.g., teaching in the vernacular), De La Salle ensured that his schools served the social function of

transforming society even as they achieved the religious purpose of catechizing for salvation (58). Hengemüle takes up the related principle of *fraternal education* in Chapter 8. Here, he notes that the social function of the schools depended on the relationship of equality established amongst the teachers as a community of Brothers (219-226). Likewise, there was to be an equality in the Brothers' relationships with students, giving no preference to one over another (226-240). Similarly, practical measures were taken to mitigate the effects of the social inequality amongst students (240-252). By cultivating these three levels of relationship, the schools became "a laboratory of social life and Christian brotherhood" (218).

Chapter 3 explores the principle of *integral and integrative education*, with particular attention to the education of the whole person – physical, intellectual, social, moral, aesthetic, professional, and spiritual (66-76). De La Salle was unusual for his time in that he valued both secular and religious instruction, rather than seeing the former merely as an inducement to the latter (76-80). The integrative dimension of the schools was apparent in the purposeful linking of the secular and the religious to develop "eyes of faith" that placed all human activity within the Christian life of faith (82-90).

Chapter 4 explores the principle of *Christian education*. In the early days of the Lasallian schools, Catholic Christian formation meant catechizing for knowledge of the faith (religious instruction) and training in practices of faith (developing a Christian spirit, morality, and piety) (101-126). For De La Salle, "the primary means for the Christian formation of the students was the Christian teacher" (123). Thus, he encouraged the spiritual development of his teachers as well as of his students (123-126). The Brothers' spirituality allowed them to be models of holiness for their students (125-126). Hengemüle takes up the principle of the *centrality of the student* in Chapter 5: "In the Lasallian school, the point of departure, the center, and the destination was the good of the student" (133). Knowing the student was essential for guiding him (134-148). The common denominator of the many practices associated with "handling" the student is adaptation to the needs and possibilities of the student himself. Hengemüle emphasizes that the systematization for which the Lasallian schools became famous was balanced by personalized, customized attention for each student (149-152).

Chapter 6 addresses the principle of *connecting education to life*. Hengemüle describes De La Salle as "a realist" and "a practical genius," desiring to serve the specific needs of "the everyday student" (158-161). The Lasallian schools prepared their students for the life that awaited them – Christian, civic, and professional (163-172). This education demanded a practical methodology based on modeling and imitation, the building of habits, and assessment of skills acquired (172-175). That practical methodology contributed to *effective and efficient education*, the seventh of Hengemüle's principles. Growing out of De La Salle's personal drive for effective efficiency (179-182), educational effectiveness demanded that students be attracted and retained and that they progress well as a result of being at school; in this way, the schools would not only be opened, they would stay open (182-185). Pedagogically, De La Salle implemented preventative, corrective, and proactive measures – many detailed in the *Conduct* – which together fostered an effective and efficient learning environment (185-210). He likewise established administrative measures, such as focusing on a closely defined purpose and establishing systems of supervision (210-211). Hengemüle points to the opposition the Brothers suffered from other educators as

evidence of the success of these pedagogical and administrative measures to ensure effectiveness and efficiency (212).

The final educational principle identified by Hengemüle is *openness* – to society, to the Church, and to family (Chapter 9). De La Salle's openness to society was reflected, for example, in the alignment of class holidays with civic events (258-259). Despite De La Salle's conflicts with members of the ecclesiastical hierarchy, evidence of his openness to the Church is seen in his association of the schools with the Church's mission and his identification of his teachers as ministers of the Church, as well as in the participation of students and teachers in the liturgical life of the local parish (259-264). The Lasallian school's openness to the family was manifested primarily in its contacts with the parents, both at matriculation and throughout the student's time at the school (264-276). The Brothers worked to manage the competition that sometimes arose between school attendance and family needs, particularly with students who helped support the family (272-276), as well as to discern and meet the parents' expectations (269-272).