

Edwards Robeson, Valerie. Annotation of "A Content Analysis of Lasallian Documents and their Ontological Application to the Contemporary Pedagogy of Technology." by Edward Esquibel Tywoniak, Ed.D. diss., University of San Francisco, 2001. *AXIS: Journal of Lasallian Higher Education* 3, no. 3 (Institute for Lasallian Studies at Saint Mary's University of Minnesota: 2012).

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ANNOTATION

Tywoniak, Edward Esquibel. "A Content Analysis of Lasallian Documents and their Ontological Application to the Contemporary Pedagogy of Technology." Ed.D. dissertation, University of San Francisco, 2001, 220 pp.

The title of this doctoral dissertation accurately represents the focus of Edward Tywoniak's careful application of qualitative methodology (130-131) to discover the strands of meaning that unite seemingly disparate chapters in the evolution of Lasallian instructional pedagogy. The work addresses three questions (27) common in dialogue among teachers, administrative staff and governing boards of Lasallian educational ministries:

1. In what ways and with what frequency did John Baptist de La Salle reference technique as a basis for his pedagogy?
2. To what extent do post-Vatican II Lasallian documents address the need to remain contemporary in the postmodern world of 21st century education?
3. What aspects of Lasallian pedagogy do scholars envision as essential to the virtual classroom of the 21st century?

To address these questions, Tywoniak applies a well-documented thematic content analysis strategy, beginning with the writings of Saint John Baptist de La Salle as epitomized in *The Conduct of the Christian Schools* (1706/1996) and *Meditations for the Time of Retreat* (1718/1994) (134). For the second question, he relies upon three documents that emerged during the last half of 20th century as touchstones for comprehending intersections of the Lasallian mission, institutional structures, and pedagogical innovation: *The Brothers of the Christian Schools in the World Today: A Declaration* (1967/1997), *Reaching Out, Touching Hearts: Context for Action / Action Plan* (1999), and *The Documents of the 43rd General Chapter* (2000) (136). The third question is addressed through interviews with three widely recognized Lasallian scholars: Luke Salm, FSC, S.T.D., William Mann, FSC, D.Min., and George Van Grieken, FSC, Ph.D. (140). These interviews also serve as reviews to authenticate his interpretation of findings pertaining to the first two questions.

Tywoniak situates his exploration clearly within the context of the Institute's enduring effort to attend at all times to the whole of its heritage (2) - its mission to provide a human and Christian education to the young, and especially to the poor - and to educational innovation, a constitutive element of that mission (5). Readers unfamiliar with the Lasallian charism will appreciate the concise overview of De La Salle's life and time, essentially a case study of the human, philosophical and scientific context of the emergence of what we now know as Lasallian pedagogy (33-62).

A useful introduction to the theory of technological determinism (20-24) is the basis for discussion of the proposition that humans and technologies evolve concurrently. Tywoniak reviews technology use in contemporary education (83) and the inherent threats to privacy (88), health (91) and the exacerbation of social inequality (94). He extends work linking activity

theory and constructivism (114) to De La Salle's pedagogy (117). The literature review offers a compelling case that in Lasallian education today, teachers must be competent inhabitants of contemporary electronically mediated culture in order to empower students to similar autonomous competence (82).

The study provides a commendable example of transparent qualitative design. Following a description of the mechanisms by which he validates the unique and authentic value of his sources, Tywoniak describes with care his adaptation of Meister's (1990) work in thematic analysis of early Lasallian documents to produce the seven analytic constructs (Community of Teachers, Person of the Teacher, Students, Religious Dimension, Methods, Special Ventures, and The Need to Remain Contemporary) (146) used with the five subject texts. Equally clear is Tywoniak's derivation of "Six Key Pragmatic Indices for the Utilization of Technology" (1) mission and purpose, (2) technical resources, (3) fiscal resources, (4) human resources, (5) curriculum, and (6) future vision (140). The indices provide the framework for both the interview protocol and thematic analysis of the narrative interview transcripts. The credibility and confirmability criteria commonly used to validate this type of research are met in the thorough description of how the analytic method was employed and in the detailed findings for each of the texts.

From his analysis of the 18th century documents, Tywoniak confirms De La Salle's symbiotic emphases on pedagogical techniques as inspired by, and disposing teachers and learners toward, an abiding Gospel-rooted spirituality, a spirituality of bringing forth or bringing to awareness the sacred nature of each participant in the learning interaction (200). Analysis of the more recent documents confirms the Institute's continuing concern with spirituality, and also a significant shift from work to articulate pedagogy (sometimes understood as technique), toward work to articulate the dimensions of 21st century reality within and to which the Institute's increasingly diverse educational enterprises and practices must adapt. Regarding the final research question, Tywoniak identifies as essential and distinctively Lasallian two characteristics that must extend to technology-facilitated learning experiences. First, the spiritual or mystical catalyst of the person of the teacher is an irreplaceable instrument in whose presence the learner may find a manifestation of God's will for us *to know*, to become whole, together. Second, Lasallian educational systems can and must actively, systematically discover how technologies can serve the implementation and stewardship of institutional mission.

These conclusions discourage adoption of technology for its own sake, and refer Lasallian scholars to the heritage practice of shared inquiry. Through these means, Tywoniak would have us discover those circumstances in which technology serves to generate or sustain deep and unifying learning experiences, while avoiding uses that divert resources from making a human and Christian education uniquely accessible to the poor and educationally marginalized (214). Areas for future research thus include the means by which institutions demonstrably link mission, curriculum development and learning outcomes to the teaching of technology, and to teaching with technology (215), and case studies of educational technology decision-making using the "Six Key Pragmatic Indices for the Utilization of Technology". Practice implications include leveraging technology to unite inter-institutional communities of teachers to explore and disseminate best practices (215-16), and to explore how and to what effect these practices "assist the poor in crossing the digital divide" (216).