

Jean-baptiste de La Salle's contributions for the formation of the modern school

Ângelo Ezequiel Leubet*
Evaldo Luis Pauly**
Valdir Leonardo da Silva***

Abstract: The pedagogical contribution of Jean-Baptiste de la Salle to teachers' formation and the comprehensiveness of primary education in the Western World are analyzed especially in the wake of few academic studies on the Christian Brothers' pedagogical tradition in Brazil. Current paper is foregrounded on a critical reading of La Salle's writings and contemporary comments on his pedagogical proposal and demonstrates the manner the French educator faced his countries' educational issues between the 17th and 18th centuries and, consequently, his contribution towards the constitution of the modern school. The paper forwards suggestions for future research work which will surely overcome the 'eloquent silence' currently observed.

Keywords: J-B. de la Salle, comprehensive education, teachers' formation, simultaneous teaching, schooling.

* Licenciado em História e Mestrando em Educação pelo Centro Universitário La Salle – UNILASALLE de Canoas/RS. Diretor da Casa de Formação La Salle Niterói. E-mail: angeloleubet@outlook.com

** Doutor em Educação pela Universidade Federal do Rio Grande do Sul. Coordenador do Programa de Pós-Graduação em Educação e professor do curso de Pedagogia, ambos do Centro Universitário La Salle – UNILASALLE de Canoas/RS. E-mail: evaldo@unilasalle.edu.br.

*** Licenciado em Filosofia e Mestrando em Educação pelo Centro Universitário La Salle – UNILASALLE de Canoas/RS. Diretor do Centro de Assistência Social La Salle, Canoas/RS. E-mail: valdir.leonardo@lasalle.org.br.

Contribuições de João Batista de La Salle para a constituição da escola moderna

Ângelo Ezequiel Leubet
Evaldo Luis Pauly
Valdir Leonardo da Silva

Resumo: Este artigo analisa a contribuição pedagógica de São João Batista de La Salle para a formação profissional do magistério e a universalização da escola primária na modernidade ocidental, apontando para a pouca frequência de estudos acadêmicos sobre a tradição pedagógica lassalista no Brasil. A partir da leitura crítica dos escritos de La Salle e dos comentaristas contemporâneos de sua proposta pedagógica, o artigo procura demonstrar como esse educador respondeu aos desafios educacionais da França, entre o final do século XVII e o começo do XVIII, contribuindo para a constituição da escola moderna. Com base nesse referencial, o artigo conclui formulando uma pauta para futuras pesquisas que potencialmente julgamos capazes de superar o alegado ‘silêncio eloquente’.

Palavras-chave: La Salle, J. Batista, educação universal, formação de professores, ensino simultâneo, escolarização.

Contribuciones de Juan Bautista de La Salle para la constitución de la escuela moderna

Ângelo Ezequiel Leubet
Evaldo Luis Pauly
Valdir Leonardo da Silva

Resumen: Este artículo analiza la contribución pedagógica de San Juan Bautista de La Salle en la formación profesional del magisterio y la universalización de la escuela primaria en la modernidad occidental, apuntando para la poca frecuencia de estudios académicos sobre la tradición pedagógica lasallista en Brasil. A partir de la lectura crítica de los escritos de La Salle y de los comentaristas contemporáneos de su propuesta pedagógica, el artículo quiere demostrar cómo ese educador respondió a los desafíos educacionales de Francia, entre el final del siglo XVII y el principio del XVIII, contribuyendo a la construcción de la escuela moderna. Basado en esta referencia, el artículo concluye formulando una pauta para futuras investigaciones que potencialmente creemos capaces de superar el llamado "silencio elocuente".

Palabras clave: J. Bautista La Salle, educación universal, formación de profesores, Enseñanza simultánea, escolarización.

Introduction

Jean-Baptiste de La Salle¹ and a group of teachers started a pedagogical undertaking in schooling in mid-17th century France, which became a religious order, still extant today. The *Fratres Scholarum Christianarum* (FSC) was approved by the Catholic Church in 1725 and in 2012 comprised 4,485 Christian Brothers within the Institute of the Brothers of the Christian Schools. The Christian Brothers are not priests but educators who are consecrated to the religious life. The Institute complies with the educational laws of each country and at present administers 1,049 teaching institutions (of which 82 are Higher Education Institutes) with 938,690 students and 84,503 educators worldwide (Statistics..., 2012). There are 200 Christian Brothers, 3,000 educators and 60,000 students within the Lasallian education system in Brazil, ranging from Children's Education to HE with doctoral degrees (A Rede La Salle, 2015).

Current paper analyzes two pedagogical contributions of the Lasallian Institute, namely, professional formation for teaching and the comprehensiveness of the primary school in the modern Western world. Current investigation deals with what Tagliavini and Piantkoski identified as “[...] eloquent silence”² (2013, p. 17) on the La Salle institution with regard to teachers' formation and to research in education in Brazil. The paper is divided into three parts: (1) contextualization of the educational

1 Jean-Baptiste de la Salle was born in Reims, France, on the 30th April 1651. His father was a judge at the Higher Court of Reims and his mother belonged to the local nobility. He received a doctoral degree in Theology at the Sorbonne in 1680 but dedicated all his life to the education of artisans and poor people that roamed the cities of Reims and Paris in the 17th century. He committed himself to the education and formation of teachers. Together they founded the Institute of the Brothers of the Christian Schools, also known as Lasallian Brothers. He died on the 7th April 1719 in Rouen, France, and was canonized on the 15th May 1900. In 1950 Pius XII declared Saint Jean-Baptiste de la Salle the Patron Saint of Teachers and Teacher Trainees. The liturgical feast is on the 7th April (Hengemüle, 2012).

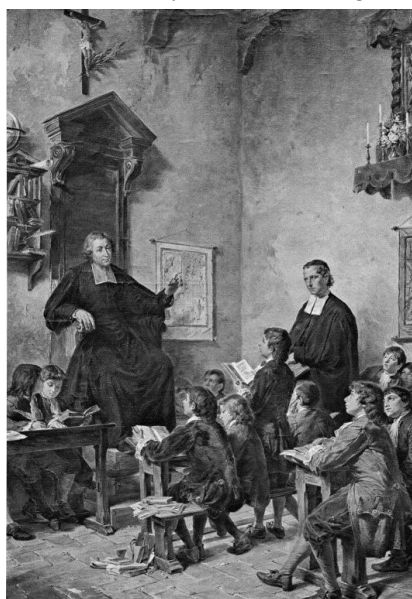
2 Through the Post-graduate Program in Education at UFSCar, Tagliavini&Piantkoski (2013) underscore that there is a gap on La Salle “not only with regard to bibliography but also in dissertations and theses in Postgraduate Programs in Education in Brazil” (2013, p. 24). They state that there exists “an eloquent silence on the Catholic educator who modeled the modern school” (2013, p. 16). After listing the educator's contributions to the modern western school, the authors remark: “Is it an eloquent silence or mere unjustified lack of knowledge?” (2013, p. 38)

work of Jean-Baptiste de la Salle in 17th and 18th century France; (2) underscoring two Lasallian contributions for the constitution of the modern school; (3) indication of future research work which may overcome the silence alleged by Tagliavini & Piantkoski that surrounds the Lasallian pedagogical tradition in Brazil.

Jean-Baptiste de La Salle: contexts and times: Pre-revolution france

The life of Jean-Baptiste de la Salle and the establishment of the Institute of the Brother of Christian Schools coincide with the administration of Louis XIV (1654-1715), the 'Sun King' who endeavored to turn France into a military, political and cultural power. Greatness and misery are the context in which Lasallian pedagogy developed. If one the one hand, wars, hunger, diseases, religious conflicts, political and military alliances were rife, on the other hand, the scientific and cultural revolution coupled to the spiritual and pastoral renewal of the Catholic Church, proposed by the Council of Trent (1545-1563) were at full boom. The cultural and global phenomenon of the Renaissance influenced European societies, including education and pedagogy. "Monseigneur de la Salle will take great decisions within this highly convulsed and revolted society, full of human and spiritual challenges" (Morales, 1990, p. 23).

Figure 1. The saintly founder during teaching.



Source: Rousset (1979, p. 145).

From the political point of view, “[...] seventeenth century France was the most cultured and influential country among the European countries” (Lima, 2013, p. 194). From the demographic point of view, it was the most populous country in Europe, with more than twenty million people of whom 80% lived in the countryside even though a constant demographic increase was occurring in the towns and cities. Life expectancy was low and children’s death rate was very high. According to Morales (1990, p. 26), “[...] 25 out of 1,000 children born alive failed to complete one year of age”. Another historian remarks that children’s mortality rates in the French rural areas “[...] catastrophically ranged between 650 and 900 per 1,000 children born alive” (Heywood, 2004, p. 90). “When children survived such high mortality levels, they were counted as adults” (Ariès, 1981, p. 100), since “[...] within medieval society [...], childhood was non-existent” (Ariès, 1981, p. 99). According to Ariès, the concept of childhood established itself from the 17th century onwards through political, cultural and educational activities developed “[...] among moralists and educators of the 17th century” underscoring that “[...] the childhood idea [...] inspired the whole education stance of the 20th century in the city and in the rural areas, among the bourgeoisie and the Junior classes” (1981, p. 104).

Undeveloped medicine, lack of food and bad conservation of food, poor hygiene conditions, epidemics, great richness of the few, and court strives were among the causes for people’s misery and hunger. Historians insist that Louis XIV involved France in many wars, especially that against the League of Augsburg which caused the great 1694 famine (Oliveira, 2013, p. 232-233). Moreover, harsh winters, floods, taxes and earthquakes increased the people’s already terrible conditions and the situation of the people, especially that of poor children, affected de la Salle’s susceptibility till he finally decided to devote himself exclusively to people’s education (La Salle, 2012a).

La Salle and the first Christian Brothers started their schools in 1679 since during this period the Junior Schools were greatly uncared for. Two structured educational levels existed in France, namely, the university and secondary levels constituted by colleges. University level reached its peak in the 12th and 13th centuries and was formed by an international network which followed statutes and regulations agreed among the Universities and approved by Rome. The Universities taught the classical disciplines: Arts, Theology, Law and Medicine. The elementary educational level comprised

the Junior Schools which were founded in the Middle Ages without any acknowledgement by the Universities and Colleges. Junior Schools changed in the 16th century especially through interest in popular education by Catholics and Protestants. According to Lauraire (2011, p. 21), schools were highly unequal due to scanty resources and lack of qualified teachers. Some schools which attended to poor children were free. They were maintained by parishes, town halls or city governments, or even by some rich benefactors who footed the bills. Others received fees and focused on families that could pay the fees to teachers. Teaching programs for boys' schools concentrated on "[...] reading, writing, sums, catechism, even though some included Music and Latin [...]" (Morales, 1990, p. 31).

Only few people were available for teaching and those who really dedicated themselves to education were not professionally qualified. Moreover, teachers had other tasks and failed to persevere in their profession due to the low status teachers were held.

In this context, La Salle and the Christian Brothers perceived

[...] the urgent need of teachers' formation already recommended by Comenius in the 17th century. The first teaching establishment for teachers' formation was prepared by Jean-Baptiste de la Salle in Reims in 1684, and was called the Teachers' Seminary (Saviani, 2009, p. 143).

It was the first Teachers' Training College acknowledged by historians of Education. According to Nunes, "[...] the Teachers' Seminary was actually the first school of its type formally founded in Europe in 1684" (1981, p. 144). "La Salle's greatest achievement was the establishment of training colleges for the Christian Brothers and for eventual lay teachers to train teachers for town schools and those in the rural areas" (1981, p. 142). The first religious congregations to attend boys' primary education started in the 17th century, including the Christian Brothers whose collective organization went beyond the medieval model of elementary schools, extant since the 14th century, and which still survived in the 17th century. In the Junior schools,

[...] as a rule, the teacher rented a room, *schola*, for a price according to rules established in university towns. These schools were on the same street in Paris, Rue du Four: *vicus straminis*. The schools were independent units and the

students sat on the floor covered with straw (Ariès, 1982, p. 108, author's emphasis).

Although there were structured levels of education, the most serious issue was access to schooling since only a small number of children had the possibility of going to school. In 1719, the year of de la Salle's death, there were Christian Brothers' schools "[...] in 27 French towns, whereas in 1790, there were 920 Christian Brothers, 123 schools and 520 classrooms with 35,713 students" (Nunes, 1981, p. 145).

However, most children stayed away from the schools either due to lack of vacancies, or the need to help their family through work, or lack of schooling stimuli and organization. Lauraire (2011, p. 28) pinpoints several problems in Junior Schools in the 17th century, namely: "[...] apparent disorder, individual method, corporal punishments, different age groups, lack of classroom organization, individual rather than collective pedagogical relationship, lack of clearly established norms on children's behavior [...]" In response to specific situations within the French social and educational context, the Lasallian brothers concentrated their teaching within the urban milieu, preferentially directing their attention to poor children and to the offspring of artisans, without charging any fees.

As early as 1717, the Order's rules established education as the aim of the Institute of the Brothers of Christian Schools conceived as a "Society in which schools are meant to be free of charge". The Christian Brothers were the teachers and "[...] were refrained from becoming priests or have ecclesiastic positions". The Institute's aims were to offer "Christian education to boys, the offspring of artisans and poor people, so that they would be taught to live a morally correct life" (La Salle, 2012a, p. 18).

Within the context of the Christian religion, a correct life boils down to living according to God's will, manifested in the Church's teaching. The concern of Lasallian schools at that time, precisely similar to that of modern education, refers to "[...] the preparation of students for day-to-day life and for the exercise of some kind of profession. Although the school did not forward social ladder, it prepared people for the tasks they were engaged in" (Tagliavini & Piantkoski, 2013, p. 35). Eventual social ascension, the result of the professionalization obtained in school, went *paripassu* with social mobility, heavily restricted in the mid-17th century by

[...] family name and reputation. Intellectual and technical competence and moral value were not taken into account; they were not despised but were included in the approval that consecrated a man as 'famous' or 'good' [...] success could be achieved only due to the favors of great people and to friendship among equals (Ariès, 1981, p. 175, author's emphasis).

According to Ariès, La Salle wrote *The rule of christian decorum and civility* and used it as a handbook for the teaching of reading and writing. According to Ariès, civility handbooks were addressed to “[...] a rude and uncivilized population. The discipline of good manners were at that time required more than in current society in which people have to face all types of public authority and police control” (1981, p. 173). *The rule of christian decorum and civility* is La Salle's best known book; It seems that the rules comply with childhood's socialization role inscribed within the Republican school whereas it was conceived for a type of socialization within an aristocratic society, liable to contradictions. According to Revel, the employment of the handbook in the school “[...] should provide ever growing problems [...]” since “[...] its success would disrupt radically the civility stance [...]” of the aristocracy which led some “[...] by the end of the 17th century to distance themselves from a code which revealed itself to be greatly accessible and would disrupt the privileges of the elite” (2013, p. 203).

La Salle within contemporary academic context

Michel Foucault's doctrine is basic to contemporary Brazilian pedagogy (Aquino, 2013). Foucault associates La Salle with his discipline. His thesis on the Lasallian contribution with regard to children's docile bodies is extensively known and accepted (Foucault, 2013). Within the above theoretical perspective, it should be understood that La Salle and the first Christian Brothers uniformed, ordered, chronometered school activities to control the movements of children's body within the school which, according to Foucault, is undertaken by a “[...] detailed observation [...]” triggering “[...] a whole set of techniques, a whole set of processes and knowledge, descriptions, prescriptions and data. The human being of modern humanism was born from such details” (2013, p. 136). La Salle has contributed towards the birth of the modern human being through the primary school as a specific social and cultural space that

organizes “[...] a new economy of teaching time” (Foucault, 2013, p. 142).

Although Chapter 15 of the *Conduct of the christian schools* regulates school practices of repression towards indiscipline (La Salle, 2012b, p. 155-190), physical punishments are restricted (for example, caning), to exceptional cases and should be applied with “[...] parsimony and calmness” (La Salle, 2012b, p. 162). The teacher should preferentially “[...] strive to act with expertize and creativity to maintain order in the class without recurring to punishments” (La Salle, 2012b, p. 163).

Figure 2. School exit in the 18th century, according to Augustin de St. Aubin.



Source: Rousset (1979, p. 144).

According to Gauthier and Tardif (2010) insist that the Lasallian Brothers invented modern pedagogy since the Christian Brothers led by Jean-Baptiste de la Salle, between the end of the 17th and the beginning of the 18th century in France organized a network of primary school in which they established themselves as professional teachers exclusively dedicated to literacy and to the initial education of children and young people.

According to Gauthier and Tardiff, Lasallian institutional and professional construction may be followed through the successive

revisions of the Conduct of the christian schools (La Salle, 2012b) which is a collective work in which the teachers consolidated their pedagogy by systematic, permanent and inconclusive reflections on the teaching role and practice. They actually started the production of modern pedagogical science, characterized by the dialectic relationship between action-reflection-action, developed in and for the classroom. According to the Canadian handbook, the first Lasallian Brothers would have invented the pedagogical principle that characterizes pedagogy as a modern science: knowing how to teach is a knowledge which is different from the contents to be taught. When the distinction was made, the Lasallian Brothers became concerned with subject matter (the literacy curriculum in French) and didactics through which the subject matter could be more adequately understood by children.

It seems that assessment of La Salle's pedagogy depends on the manner the Education scientist currently evaluates modern political-pedagogical project which endeavors to make the school available to all and to make teachers provide "[...] the integral development of students, preparing them for the exercise of citizenship and qualification for work" (Brasil, 1996, art. 2º).

Within the political and pedagogical perspective of modern education, there are two contributions by La Salle and the first Christian Brothers that foreground the constitution of the modern school and the characteristics of the educational model. In fact, they broaden critique on the task of this Catholic pedagogue within the Brazilian intellectual milieu.

Two lasallian contributions for the modern school

When La Salle and the Christian Brothers started their primary schools, they encountered an uncared of, fragile and disordered institution but a favorable school movement. There was a series of factors that converged towards the consolidation of a project for primary education, or rather, the people's growing desire for culture, the dissemination of print, the Renaissance, and the new modern but still fledging science. It was within such a context that La Salle took important decisions that transformed his schools into different institutions.

According to Morales (1990), progress comprised the decision to train lay teachers instead of priests, teach 'profane' subject matters, besides the catechism, transform the school into an pleasant and well-

planned space for the students, deploy a teaching method. La Salle also endeavored to prolong the permanence of children in the school, consolidated the method of simultaneous teaching, decided on the same teacher for each class throughout the year, trained whole teams of teachers and focused on the school's physical aspects.

La Salle and the first Christian Brothers reacted positively to the educational challenges of contemporary children and introduced educational practices which contributed towards the constitution of the modern school. Details were registered in Lasallian books especially the Conduct of the christian schools on the pedagogical premises and teaching methods developed by the Brothers. Simultaneous teaching and teachers' formation were La Salle's innovations

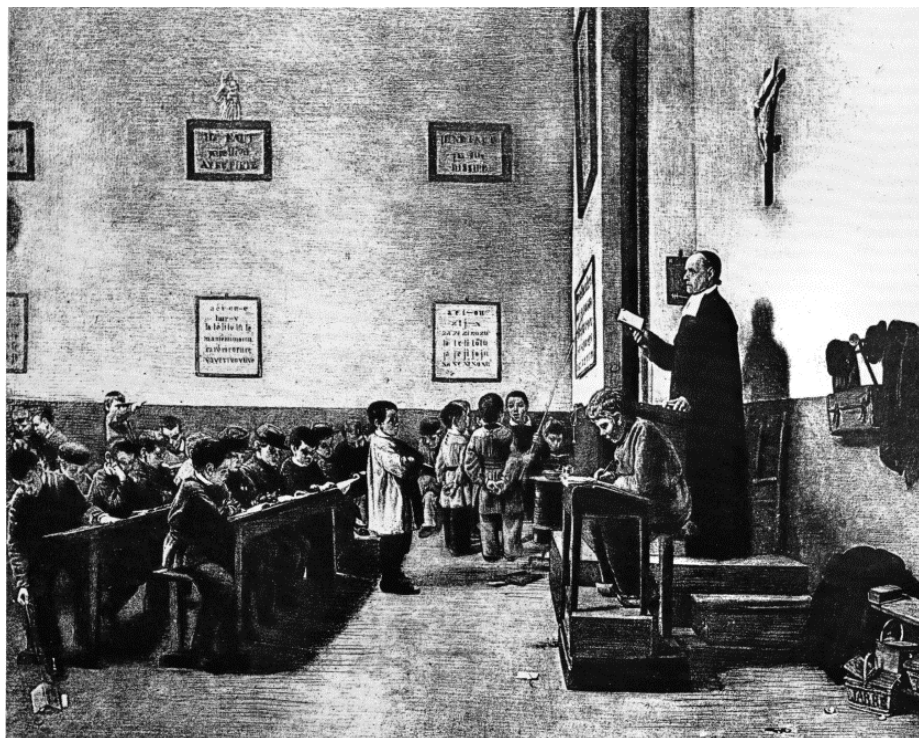
Education for all: the systematization of the simultaneous teaching method

The Conduct of the christian schools was written by Jean-Baptiste de La Salle in 1702 with consultation with the most experienced brothers in teaching. It was constantly revised and edited by the Brothers and by La Salle, but was printed posthumously in 1720. The Conduct of the christian schools aimed at systemizing educational practice in all schools of the Christian Brothers and conducting the training of young teachers. The book is divided into three sections: (1) school activities; (2) the establishment of a method, with detailed and precise procedures in the art of teaching; (3) the task of the School Inspector, the functions of the administrator of new teachers, the attitudes of teachers and what students had to do. In fact, the book is pedagogically relevant since it presents a specific teaching and education style that characterized the Christian Schools and inspired several pedagogues and founders of teaching institutes. Although the Conduct of the christian schools deeply affected the development of the school and pedagogical ideas, it was resented by Manacorda (2006, p. 228-235) with enthusiasm as a great disclosure.

The Lasallian system allowed the teaching (with quality) of a reasonable number of children at the same time and established a type of didactics that overcame the limitations of aristocratic education which was based on a preceptor and private home teaching with a focus

on the single student. The simultaneous method and teachers' training made viable the democratic proposal of education for all children.

Figure 3. An 1873 print by F. Bouvin: A classroom modeled on the Conduct of the Christian schools.



Source: Rousset (1979, p. 146).

Due to social phenomena mentioned above, the number of school-going children started to grow, with serious problems in discipline and class organization. Since most elementary schools were focused on the individual teaching system, they were not accustomed to simultaneous teaching. Control became somewhat difficult and the number of punishments and disciplinary measures increased, which naturally estranged the student from the school. New methods and procedures had to be employed. When La Salle organized his schools, he perceived the advantages of the simultaneous teaching method with one teacher dealing with a great number of students in the same classroom.

[...] Simultaneous teaching implies that the teacher supervises the students in a glance, to better control them. Placing himself before the students, frequently on a dais, the teacher could give his lesson to all the students, the exercise of a single task to all, whilst he could control the group's performance at a glance (Gauthier & Tardif, 2010, p. 135).

The simultaneous teaching method required the elaboration of several methods and procedures which aimed at attending the whole school milieu and facilitate, at the same time, common school tasks and individual performance. Obviously the organization of time, space, subject matters and classroom order had to be taken care of.

It must be underscored that, although teaching was chiefly simultaneous, several activities were done either individually or in groups, such as catechism, praying and parish work. The book was central for such a teaching method. In fact, each student had a copy of the book used by the teacher so that the lessons could be followed. "Each and every student will have the book and follow the same lesson" (La Salle, 2012b, p. 37).

Lasallian schools averaged three to four classrooms and children were grouped according to their level, such as age, ability and instruction. A strict progression program in subject matters was put into practice, organized from the easiest to the most difficult. There was a monthly evaluation of the students to pass to the next level if satisfactorily attaining the lesson's objectives. The Christian Brothers were very particular in not promoting students prior to their proper time.

There will be nine different kinds of lessons in the Christian Schools. First, the alphabet chart. Second, the syllable chart. Third, the book of syllabication. Fourth, the second book for learning to spell and read by syllables. Fifth, the same second book, in which those who know how to spell perfectly will begin to read. Sixth, the third book which will be used to teach how to read with pauses. Seventh, the Psalter. Eighth, Civility. Ninth, letters written by hand. All students of all these lessons, with the exception of those who are reading the alphabet and the syllables, will be grouped at three levels: the first composed of the beginners, the second of the intermediate, and the third of the advanced and those who are perfect in the work of the lesson (La Salle, 2012b, p. 36).

Classroom space organization and time management were two challenges that had to be coped with by the Brothers. According to the Conduct of the christian schools (2012b), the ideal measurements of each classroom were between 25 and 35 square meters for small children and between 35 and 45 m² for older ones. Since the classroom normally harbored about 60 students, space was restricted and hindered their movements. No recreation space was allotted.

Several rules and long continuous periods were required due to the classroom's reduced space and the great number of students. Space limitation for each student was mandatory: "Each particular student shall have a specific, assigned place. None shall leave or change this place except at the direction or with the permission of the Inspector of Schools" (La Salle, 2012b, p. 259).

Another basic aspect was the good use of time, or rather, avoiding loitering and thus jeopardizing the good environment for studying, without receiving important knowledge on the personal and social life. In this case, La Salle requires special attention to teachers. "End the chat in a short span of time with people who come to the school door so that children will not lose time" (La Salle, 2012b, p. 76). Order in the classroom was another requirement within the new teaching method. Improvisation and prohibited things must be eliminated.

Order avoided in the students and in the teachers the hesitations produced by insecurity and aggressiveness. It makes easy the calm and serene functioning of the group. When one knows what, when and how to do things, efficaciousness and satisfaction are greater (Lauraire, 2010, p. 166).

According to La Salle, the establishment of order is the result of teacher's vigilance on the student, surroundings and on oneself. The participation of students in different ways was also important:

1. reciters of prayers;
2. Helper in Holy Mass;
3. Alms giver;
4. Holy water bearer;
5. The rosary carrier;
6. The bell ringer;
7. Monitors and supervisors;
8. The first benches;
9. The visitors of absent students;
10. Distributors and collectors of papers;
11. Distributors and collectors of books;
12. sweepers;
13. doorkeeper;
14. Keeper of the school key (La Salle, 2012b, p. 214).

Punishments were very relevant and La Salle was oriented on the doctrine of Confession, presuming the penitent's deep contrition and applied with the students' free consent. This boiled down to the student's acknowledgement of his error and the motive of why he is being punished. He should therefore be convinced on the convenience of being punished. The ten conditions for the application of physical punishment are:

[...] voluntary, accepted by the student, with the student's consent, making him understand the gravity of his error, the duty to remediate and the great wickedness that he brings to himself and the bad example he gives to his colleagues (La Salle, 2012b, p. 165).

La Salle mitigated the practice of body punishments, which were greatly common and particularly vicious at his time. He established norms to avoid their application since he was convinced that physical punishments hindered school progress. A reading of the rules on 'corrections' (La Salle, 2012b) with regard to details for their applications impaired the Brother's use of the cane or the rod.

All signs indicating correction should be reduced to five. Teachers must show for which the student is being punished.

The five issues or motives for which punishment is meted out in school are: 1. Not studying; 2. Not writing; 3. Not attending school; 4. Not paying attention during catechism; 5. Not praying (La Salle, 2012b, p. 139).

The establishment of the simultaneous teaching method required constant analysis and evaluation of their schooling practices to solve the teaching problems. In fact, they decided in establishing new solutions which helped in the configuration of the modern school, some of which remain extant in current schools.

Teachers' formation: the importance of teachers' formation

Lack of teachers' formation at the time of Jean-Baptiste de La Salle was one of the motives for engaging in education and remained a commitment throughout all his life. La Salle was convinced that only teachers' formation guaranteed quality education for the children of poor people and of artisans

The great aim was educating to live better, which comprised catechism (truths of faith), basic knowledge on conviviality (good manners) and learning a profession (reading, writing, calculating, drawing etc.). Such an educational project was guaranteed by teachers' qualifications, an important strategy for the school's success. In fact, la Salle made all sorts of efforts to prepare quality teachers. In La Salle's time several categories of Christian teachers existed. Priests and friars, who actually maintained schools in their parishes, had great social importance. Teachers of Handwriting, a guild with royal privileges featuring monopoly of their office, were also highly acknowledged. As a rule, other teachers, especially those from the junior and elementary schools had scanty knowledge and were not well paid. They were highly inconsistent and never persevered in their profession.

Since teaching was a subsidiary profession and many had another profession to live by, it was exercised in the junior schools by "[...] sacristans, invalid soldiers, cobblers, people with a sedentary profession or limited to certain months of the year" (Justo, 2003, p. 298). The teaching profession was exercised by "[...] former judges, stallholders, vendors, salesmen, inn keepers, unemployed people, stone workers, blacksmiths, violin players, magicians, house keepers and others" (Flach & Machiels, [199-], p. 24).

In fact, teachers were not valorized and had no social prestige, due to a deep bias for the job, as Maillefer reports when he narrates how a bishop discouraged his nephew not to be a Lasallian Brother dedicated to teaching:

He told him not to accept such a despicable job; that he would never permit that a young man of his condition would lower himself to be a teacher; that if he really had a vocation for the priesthood, he should make a better choice (Maillefer, 1991, p. 135).

On the other hand, there were many irregular schools, clandestine and not-authorized ones, which were run at the teacher's home or workshop, without the least conditions in hygiene, ventilation or illumination. In this case, the teacher practiced his main job and then dedicated himself to teaching. Frequently school milieu was not much different from that in which an authorized ecclesiastical teacher taught.

Teaching was not a socially important job. Low wages proves it: In 1698, or instance, a royal order authorized that communities should be taxed to guarantee 150 and 100 pounds to male and female teachers respectively of small schools, compared to the earnings of a qualified worker, such as a carpenter or stone dresser, which reached 200 pounds a year. Low wages coupled to months in which the teacher did not teach (and, therefore, he was not paid) stimulated teachers to seek other jobs so that they could earn a decent living (Hengemüle, 2000, p. 50).

La Salle knew well teachers' qualitative and quantitative deficiencies. Since there was a dire lack of prepared and competent teachers in the method of correct reading and writing, he was particularly concerned with teachers' formation. Lack of information is even more relevant if Manacorda's suspicion is correct when he evaluated the Conduct of the christian schools.

It seems highly important to underscore two things. First, the total division, or better, the didactic, organizational and cultural division between reading and writing. Reading was essentially concerned with religious teaching, doctrine, Holy Scripture; writing, with its teachers and places, was concerned with an essentially material technique, requiring special care and focusing on a profession. The coexistence of two different instructions is extant in two techniques: religious and moral acculturation and a pre-learning of mercantile artisan professions. This is the great novelty of the Christian Schools (and obviously not the only one!) (2006, p. 232).

Hengemüle (2000) underscores that people who accepted the teaching profession were controlled by the Church. They had to comply with norms and statutes for the exercise of their activities. Authorization was renewed yearly and teachers' approval was rather linked to personal and religious conduct than to intellectual preparation and pedagogical abilities. Teachers' functions were undertaken parallel or complementary to several other parish tasks. Mongrediendescribes the situation in which the teacher teaches and does other parish work.

Prior to everything and above all, the school teacher is the helper of the parish priest, normally accumulating the job of teacher, singer and sacristan, probably

a court officer, surgeon, tanner, winemaker, watch maker, grave digger and farmer. He used to copy registries of baptism, marriages and deaths in the parish and, at the same time, the minutes of the community's meetings (Mongredien, 1948, p. 166 apud Poutet & Pungier, 2001, p. 151).

Needless to say, pedagogical activities were secondary and no priority to teaching was given. The teacher was involved in all the activity of the parish described by Poutet and Pungier (2001, p. 152) when they reported the teacher's multiple functions when he was employed by the community.

[...] twenty inhabitants confessed that it was necessary to hire a teacher to sing in church, assist the parish priest in divine service and in the administration of the Holy Sacrament, to instruct young people, to ring the Angelus bell at sunset, in the morning and at midday and during wild weather throughout the year, bring water to have it blessed on Sundays, sweep the church on Saturdays and lead prayers at all evenings from All Saints Day to Easter (Poutet & Pungier, 2001, p. 152).

Information on the situation of teachers is very relevant to understand La Salle's decisions with regard to teachers' formation. The establishment of schools was not initially in his plans but his engagement in education started from two circumstances ³that shattered his project of being a good parish priest. His meeting with the teacher Adrian Nyel in Rouen and the suggestion of lady Maillefer are the circumstances acknowledged by La Salle as those that motivated his involvement in education. Teacher Nyel had been sent by Lady Maillefer, La Salle's cousin. Since she was very rich, she made a donation for the opening and establishment of a school for poor boys in Reims. La Salle helped Adrian in the undertaking. Nyel started to open many schools without the proper concern for teachers' formation. La Salle perceived that Nyel was more concerned in establishing schools and was often absent to take charge.

3 Described in the document titled *Memoirs of the beginnings*, written by La Salle himself to explain to the Christian Brothers the initial years of the Institute. "These two circumstances, the meeting with Nyel and the suggestion that this lady gave me, triggered thoughts on a school for boys. I had never before thought on this matter" (La Salle, 2012a, p. 7).

La Salle was content with this new success [the establishment of a new school] and did not intend to go beyond that; he merely proceeded according to circumstances. Nyel, who was in charge of teaching, was a pious person but he neither had enough foresight nor was he sufficiently assiduous. His zeal diminished as the number of schools multiplied, without any concern for improving them. The continuous changes he had to do to reach his aims prevented him from focusing on the problems that he had at the start of the task. His long and frequent absences caused the disorganization of the schools. Some teachers started to miss lessons and this had a great repercussion on the children since they did not receive the necessary instructions (Maillefer, 1991, p. 56-57).

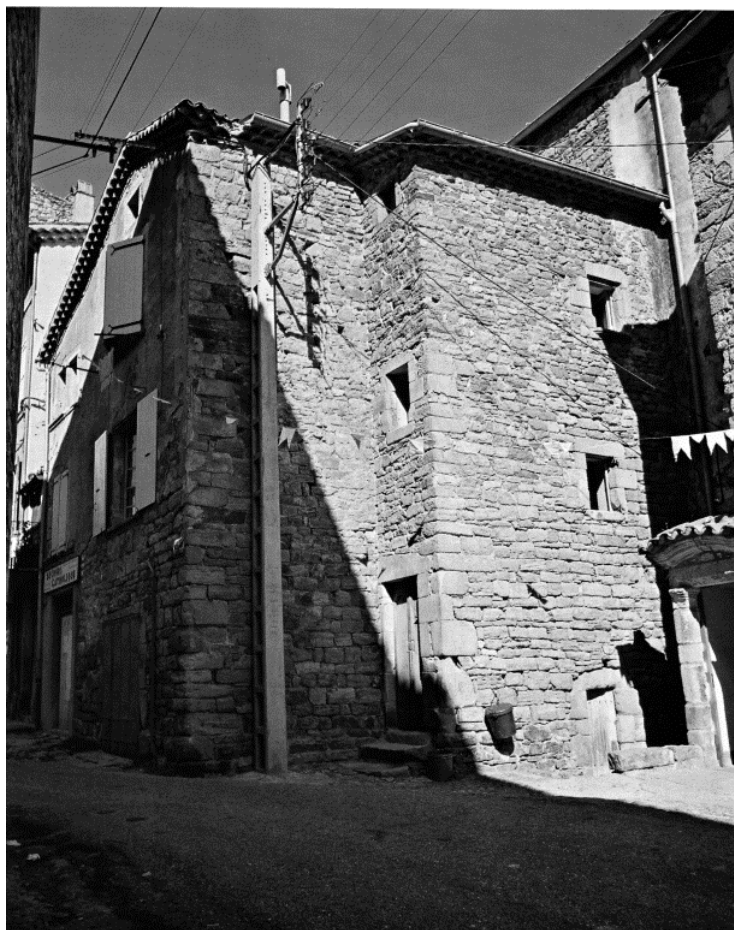
Gradually La Salle started to commit himself to the schools and to teachers' formation: 'one commitment was leading [him] to another'⁴. But he did not think in exclusively dedicating himself to the education of children and young people. His office as canon of Reims's cathedral, his family relationship with the Court and his doctorate in Theology indicated a carrier in ecclesiastical teaching and not to be a founder of a network of primary schools maintained by a community of teachers.

La Salle was taking care of the teachers without having either desired or planned the task. He rented a house for them close to his home; he then housed them in his own house, first during the day and then at night too. Due to the criticism of his relatives who did not receive well all those humble persons, La Salle took leave of his parents' home and rented a house for himself and his teachers. He was convinced that his mission was to found schools and prepare teachers; he renounced the office of canon to dedicate himself entirely to their formation and the direction of the schools (Hengemüle, 2007, p. 10).

4 La Salle's frase in the *Memoirs of the beginnings*: "It seems that this was the motive by which God, who governs all with wisdom and gentleness, and who does not force things on humans, wanted me to take care of the schools. He did so imperceptibly and during a long period of time, so that one commitment was leading me to another, without perceiving it from the start" (La Salle, 2012b, p. 7).

All these steps reveal that La Salle believed and was firmly convinced that without well-qualified teachers, he would neither reach the students nor would he have pedagogical success. Among other characteristics, the Lasallian proposal is greatly centered on teachers' formation. "It is the main focus of La Salle's concerns, one of his greatest points, his most important idea foregrounding all his educational activities" (Hengemüle, 2000, p. 139).

Figure 4. Les Vans, (Ardèche, France), a school run by the Christian Brothers, established in 1711.



Source: Rousset (1979, p. 123).

La Salle's constant concern with teachers' formation places him in a prominent place in the history of Education. Needless to say, he was not the first to be concerned on teachers' formation. His merit lies in the fact that he transformed simple persons without any instruction into competent pedagogues and convinced religious people who started their professional training in the Teachers' Training Colleges and undertook continuous training year by year during the annual holidays.

La Salle guarantees the success of schools and the education of the sons of poor people and artisans due to the formation of a community of teachers totally committed to teaching, to the school and to children. In their religious view, they were charged by God to do so. This is the reason why La Salle wanted trained teachers exclusively dedicated to teaching without any ecclesiastical office as priests or assistant parish priests.

According to Muñoz (2013), only a person totally dedicated to a mission and sustained by a community organized around it might warrant a stable educational service as the extremely poverty and the social marginality of the poor children of France required in the 17th century.

Community life around a mission is a central factor in the Lasallian pedagogy. The teachers nourished their faith and analyzed their practices within the community. Together they provided solutions to attend to the needs of Education of their epoch. Indeed, several works of La Salle are the fruit of such reflections and sharing with the other teachers-brothers.

Total commitment is understood from the point of view that the teacher has a vocation and was sent by God for the teaching task. Hengemüle (2000, p. 142) underscores that, from the point of view of several authors linked to the History of Education, the teacher, formed by La Salle "[...] was pervaded by the high concept of his mission and considered himself as a man called, or rather, a solidary professional, totally and constantly dedicated to his mission".

Within the transition period from the 17th to the 18th century, La Salle raised the requirements for teachers' training and capacitation. Chapter 25 of the Conduct of the christian schools deals with the theme. The Lasallian teacher is trained to give attention to his own activities and has the "[...] capacity to speak, express himself with clarity, order and at the level of the children taught by him" (La Salle, 2012b, p. 302).

The Conduct of the christian schools is presented as a collectively-constructed pedagogical resource, experimented and updated throughout the years to standardize school practices that would warrant Lasallian

schools “[...] a good and uniform procedure of the Brothers and excellent results by the children instructed” (La Salle, 2012b, p. 20). It is highly probably that systematizing of teachers' qualifications and the methodological standardization of teaching raised the social and political acknowledgements of teachers in the basic schools in children's education. Lasallian Brothers have given their contribution so that, by the end of the 18th century, the teaching profession was given due recognition professionally and culturally. Up to the end of the 17th century, exclusive teaching in children's schools was not considered an adequate profession for a cultured and instructed person. Cole (1952, p. 369 apud Hengemüle, 2000, p. 144) insists that the “[...] idea of an intelligent person, specifically dedicated to the teaching of children and to such an elementary task, was something new in the educational milieu”.

La Salle not merely elevated such a concept but dignified the teaching profession which was so terrible lambasted. Several references may be found in La Salle's works in which he addresses educators with religious titles that heighten the social condition and the dignity of these professionals, conceding them with the following titles:

- Ambassadors and ministers of Jesus Christ: You are the ambassadors and ministers of Jesus Christ in the task you are practicing. You should, therefore, perform it as representatives of Jesus Christ (La Salle, 2012, p. 441).
- Parents' Surrogates: Divine Providence and its vigilance have conceded that parents are substituted by highly instructed and zealous men that would teach children the knowledge of God and his mysteries, with every care and possible applications (La Salle, 2012, p. 436).
- Architects of the Church: As good architects and according to the grace of Jesus Christ that God gave you, these people are placing the foundations stones of religion and Christian piety in the hearts of children [...](La Salle, 2012c, p. 436).
- Good Shepherds: In today's Gospel, Jesus Christ compares those with the direction of souls to the Good Shepherd greatly concerned for his sheep. One of the Good Shepherd's qualities is that he comes to know all his sheep, one by one. It should be the attention of those who dedicate themselves to the

education of others, or rather, to know them and discern the way to deal with them (La Salle, 2012d, p. 88).

- Guardian Angels: That is why [children] need visible angels so that, with instructions and good examples, they appreciate and practice [the premises proposed by the Gospel] [...]. It's the function you should perform with your disciples. Following what the Guardian Angels do for you (La Salle, 2012c, p. 447).

- Spiritual parents: God has given you an honor which is similar to that of Saint Joachim, since he placed you in the job you are at. He desired you to be the spiritual fathers of the children you instruct. As the saint was chosen to be the father of the Blessed Virgin, God has also given you the duty to generate children for Jesus Christ; or even to generate Jesus in their hearts (La Salle, 2012e, p. 334-335).

La Salle has enhanced a novel model in teachers' formation in 18th century France. Muñoz (2013) attributes such originality to La Salle's capacity not to be impressed by the poor conditions of lay teachers, to seek educational answers against the poverty of poor people and to believe in the mysterious presence of God in human history which, according to La Salle's faith, has a salvation plan expressed within the need to educate correctly children and young people, better, every person because of the infinite and universal love of God for Mankind.

Final considerations

The political and pedagogical project of modern education enhances students' autonomy. Detailed planning of the Lasallian community offers the teaching of writing posterior to reading for their emancipation for a profession: "[...] they will write, alone and without any help, letters, that will help them in the future" (La Salle, 2012b, p. 70).

The Christian Brothers' teaching practice anticipates the typical dilemma of obligatory education ministered by the democratic state: "What is necessary so that firmness would not degenerate into harshness and softness into weakness and looseness?" (La Salle, 2012b, p. 156). Or rather: how may one transform "[...] the subjective public right" in education that would be used by the children's pleasure in learning?

Rousseau (1712-1778) is still the model of the bourgeois educator although he reduces the right to education to an individual relationship or, at best, a family relationship between the preceptor and his only pupil. The model of individual teaching, proper of the aristocratic family, seems to have been more appreciated by the History of Education than the communitarian and collective contribution by La Salle (1651-1719), who also proposed to form individuals as from highly specific and specialized collective and communitarian spaces: the elementary school and Teachers' Formation Colleges.

Education integrated by the college of teachers, united by school or by association of schools, establishes standards for comprehensive education, standardized by the simultaneous method for massive learning. In fact, it gathers together children and young people, the children of aristocrats and the children of poor people and of artisans within a specialized social space, distinct from the parish and the family, a new place: a school which desires that its students learn to live better.

Why does an eloquent silence still hover over La Salle? We will indicate some research themes which we think will contribute towards the superseding of silence on one of the founders of modern education. During his time and manners, La Salle defended the pedagogical theory and instituted a network of fee-less schools, both attractive and efficient, for the comprehensive educational access of children and young people through the teaching experience of the Brother of the Christian Schools.

A likely theme is the influence of the sociology of French Education on Brazilian pedagogical thought which understandably has difficulties to admit that Lasallian teachers were decisive on the universalization of schooling of French children. They also caused the construction of a teaching methodology and the dissemination of a school network that was capable of universalizing the education of poor children, especially, by the systemization of simultaneous education, or rather, mass education necessary for the future republican education in France.

In 1780, due to historical and political contingencies, the religious orders with educational activities were expelled from France except the Lasallian Brothers who received official acknowledgements in 1808 by Napoleon.

In 1900, France could boast of 10,600 Christian Brothers, with 1,500 schools and they were acknowledged throughout the country. In 1907 all the schools

were banned by the government under the principle of laicization. Approximately 3,500 Christian Brother were secularized and had to quit their communities, albeit linked to the schools. Out of the remaining 7,000, many had to leave France, and by 1905 some seven thousand Catholic schools for boys and girls were closed. The anticlerical decrees greatly affected the Institute of Brothers of Christian Schools since any type of teaching maintained by Catholic Religious Congregations was thenceforth banned and all authorized Congregations with exclusive teaching rights would be suppressed within ten years (Tagliavini & Piantkoski, 2013, p. 36).

It is obvious that Durkheim, who was producing a sociology of education, could not give La Salle his true worth. At the beginning of the 20th century, the French sociologist was committed to the educational reforms of Jules Ferry and by other French administrations. The order of the day was a laicized and free education opposed to the confessional schools. The political thought at that time restricted public education to the state school and discarded completely the individual's freedom of conscience, a highly prized concept in the democratic state which was institutionalized in 1948. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights describes the right to Education in Article 26 including the priority that parents have to choose the type of education, whether laicized or confessional or ideological, ministered to their children.

It seems that the sociological tradition in Republican France ignores La Salle. When Georges Snyders (1974) describes 17th and 18th century France, he does not even mention La Salle's pedagogy even though he dedicates many pages to Rousseau.

The Spanish Civil War should be another important research theme. The Catholic Church canonized 13 Lasallian Brothers venerated because of their martyrdom for the cause of Education. Some were executed by militants linked to political factions that comprised the Popular Front in the Spanish Civil War. It is understandable that this historical event would produce embarrassment among those who defend a leftist education based on the emancipation of the human person.

Another theme may be detected in the recent history of the teachers' trade union movement. There was a trade unionist, political and scientific effort of teachers to transform the social imaginary, ideologically constructed, on teachers' work as a type of priesthood, an apostolic

mission, a transcendent dedication based on an activity featuring personal gifts and total devotion of teachers within their great love of children. This vision supposed that Education could be reduced to a love for children and love had neither price nor salary. Teachers' trade unions had to struggle to destroy the false vocational or sacerdotal image ensued and to build a professional image of the teaching class as a capacity constructed scientifically and not based merely on affection.

Perhaps the teachers' trade union movement lacked knowledge or interest on the contribution of La Salle, a doctor in Theology, who objectively made the opposite: he transformed his vocational mission as a priest into the professional vocation of a pedagogue.

References

- Aquino, J. G. (2013). A difusão do pensamento de Michel Foucault na educação brasileira: um itinerário bibliográfico. *Revista Brasileira de Educação*, 18(53), 301-324.
- Ariès, P. (1981). *História social da criança e da família* (2a ed.). Rio de Janeiro, RJ: LTC.
- Brasil. Presidência da República. Lei nº 9.394, de 20 de dezembro de 1996. Estabelece as diretrizes e bases da educação nacional. *Diário Oficial da União*, Brasília, DF, 23 dez. 1996.
- Flach, A. A., & Machiels, H. J. ([199-]). *La Salle, um pioneiro na educação: "hoje, La Salle somos nós"*. Brasil: La Salle.
- Foucault, M. (2013). *Vigiar e punir: nascimento da prisão* (41a ed.). Petrópolis, RJ: Vozes.
- Gauthier, C., & Tardif, M. (Orgs.). (2010). *A pedagogia: teorias e práticas da antiguidade aos nossos dias atuais*. Petrópolis, RJ: Vozes.
- Hengemüle, E. (2000). *La Salle: uma leitura de leituras: opadroeiro dos professores na história da educação*. Rio de Janeiro, RJ: Centro Universitário La Salle.

- Hengemüle, E.(2007). *Educação lassaliana: que educação?*Canoas, RS: Salles, 2007.
- Hengemüle, E. (2012). Introdução geral. In J. B. La Salle. *Obras completas de São João Batista de La Salle* (Vol. I-A, p. VII-LXXVI). Canoas, RS: Unilasalle.
- Heywood, C. (2004). *Uma história da infância: da idade média à época contemporânea no ocidente*. Porto Alegre, RS: Artmed.
- Justo, H. (2003). *La Salle, patrono do magistério* (5a ed.).Canoas, RS: Salles.
- La Salle, J. B. (2012b). Guia das escolas cristãs. In J. B. La Salle. *Obras completas de São João Batista de La Salle* (Vol. 3, p. 7-317).Canoas, RS: Unilasalle.
- La Salle, J. B.(2012c). Meditações para o tempo de retiro. In J. B. La Salle.*Obras completas de São João Batista de La Salle* (Vol. 2-B, p. 433-483). Canoas, RS: Unilasalle.
- La Salle, J. B.(2012d). Meditações para todos os domingos do ano. In J. B. La Salle. *Obras completas de São João Batista de La Salle* (Vol. 2-B, p. 17-182). Canoas, RS: Unilasalle.
- La Salle, J. B.(2012e). Meditações sobre as principais festas do ano. In J. B. La Salle.*Obras completas de São João Batista de La Salle* (Vol. 2-B, p. 183-411). Canoas, RS: Unilasalle.
- La Salle, J. B. (2012a). Memória dos começos. In J. B. La Salle.*Obras completas de São João Batista de La Salle* (Vol. 1-A).Canoas, RS: Unilasalle.
- La Salle, J. B. (2012f). Regras comuns dos irmãos das escolas cristãs. In J. B. La Salle. *Obras completas de São João Batista de La Salle* (Vol. 2-A, p. 18-86). Canoas, RS: Unilasalle.
- Lauraire, L. (2006). La guía de las escuelas: enfoque pedagógico. *Cahierslasalliens*, (62). Accessed in: <http://www.lasalle.org/wp->

content/uploads/pdf/estudios_lasalianos/cahiers_lasalliens/62cahier_es.pdf

Lauraire, L. (2011). La guía de las escuelas: aproximación comparativa. *Cahierslasalliens*, (63). Accessed in: http://www.lasalle.org/wp-content/uploads/pdf/estudios_lasalianos/cahiers_lasalliens/63cahier_es.pdf

Lima, L. F. (2013). A Paris Regencial (1715-1723): o renascimento de uma cidade. *Revista Latino-Americana de História*, 2(7), 194.

Maillefer, F. (1991). *Vida de São João Batista de La Salle*. Canoas, RS: La Salle.

Manacorda, M. A. (2006). *História da educação: da antiguidade aos nossos dias* (12a ed.). São Paulo, SP: Cortez.

Morales, A. A. (1990). Espíritu y vida: el ministerio educativo lasallista. Bogotá, COL: Monserrate, 1990.

Muñoz, D. (2013). El maestro, un hombre comprometido por entero. *Estudios Lasalianos*, (17), 92-111.

Nunes, R. A. C. (1981). *História da educação no século XVII*. São Paulo, SP: EPU.

Oliveira, M. I. B. M. (2013). As guerras de conquista em prol da glória de Luís XIV. *Opsis*, 13(1), 222-238.

Poutet, Y., & Pungier, J. (2001). *La Salle e os desafios de seu tempo*. Canoas, RS: La Salle, 2001.

A Rede La Salle. (2015). Accessed in: <http://www.lasalle.edu.br/sobre-a-instituicao/a-rede-la-salle>

Revel, J. (2013). Os usos da civilidade. In R. Chartier (Org.). *História da vida privada: da Renascença ao Século das Luzes* (Vol. 3, p. 169-210). São Paulo, SP: Companhia das Letras.

Rousset, E. (1979). *J. B. de la Salle: iconographie: documents historiques, manuscrits autographes, pièces d'archives, itinéraire géographique*. Bolougne, FR: Limet.

Saviani, D.(2009). Formação de professores: aspectos históricos e teóricos do problema no contexto brasileiro. *Revista Brasileira de Educação*, 14(40), 143-155.

Snyders, G. (1974). Los siglos XVII e XVIII: la pedagogia en Francia en los siglos XVII e XVIII. In G. Snyders, A. Léon, & J. Vial (1974). *História de la pedagogía II* (p. 13-82). Barcelona, ES: Oikos-Tau.

Statistics: the educational mission: the school. (2012). Accessed in: <http://www.lasalle.org/quienes-somos/estadisticas/>

Tagliavini, J.V., & Piantkoski, M. A. (2013). João Batista de La Salle (1651-1719): um silêncio eloquente do educador católico que modelou a escola moderna. *Revista HISTEDBR On-line*, (53), 16-40.

Received: 2014/07/28

Accepted: 2015/02/21

Este é um artigo de acesso aberto, distribuído sob os termos da licença Creative Commons Attribution, que permite uso, distribuição e reprodução írestritos, em qualquer meio, desde que o trabalho original seja devidamente citado.

This is an open-access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution License, which permits unrestricted use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium, provided the original work is properly cited.