

Preventive Method of Education and Its Reverse Effects

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Abstract

*An educational experiment which is commonly known as Preventive System is a method of education that was promulgated by John Bosco who is commonly known as Don Bosco. In *Memoirs of the Oratory of Saint Francis de Sales from 1815 to 1855*, the autobiography of this great educator, he explains the basics of this method of education. He lived and experimented with this method all his life. Gradually it grew, understood and became more specific in settings and institutions managed by his collaborators and their disciples across the globe. Its buoyancy is a matter of in-depth study for adaptation and continuity. This paper study the impact of the Preventive system on the educator.*

Keywords – Don Bosco, Education, Expressive System, Preventive System, Punishments

1. Introduction

Preventive system is a method of education that was promulgated as an educational experiment by John Bosco who is commonly known as Don Bosco. In *Memoirs of the Oratory of Saint Francis de Sales from 1815 to 1855* (Bosco J. , 2009), the autobiography of this great educator, he explains the basics of this method of education. He lived and experimented with this method all his life. Gradually it grew, understood and became more specific in settings and institutions managed by his collaborators and their disciples across the globe. Its buoyancy is a matter of in-depth study for adaptation and continuity. This paper study the impact of the Preventive system on the educator. In the first part of the paper, the researchers study the history and origin of the Preventive method of education. This has a short biography of John Bosco who adapted this system of education for the youngsters of his time. The next part speaks of the innovation of John Bosco in blending two systems of education that was existing during his time and how he made this into a more acceptable system in its present form. The third part look into the five salient features of this method of education. The reverse effect of this system is studied in the fourth part which is followed by the general conclusion.

2. History of the Origin of Preventive Method of Education

2.1, A Short Biography of John Bosco

Born on 16 August 1815 at Becchi, in Piedmont, Italy of Francis Bosco and his second wife Margaret Occhiena, John was the third of the four children. With the loss of his father at the age of two, he had a tough time as he grew up, with his stepbrother. His mother was very supportive of his attempt to study. He made use of every opportunity that he had and created the tough and acrimonious life experiences into a positive upbeat for his life. Part time jobs with a baker, tailor, cobbler, musician and other experts made him a connoisseur of many professions (Desramaut). He used these acquaintances with various professions to impart skills to the young people at risk. He decided to become a catholic priest and joined the seminary at Turin, Italy. He was ordained a priest on 5th June 1841. During his life as a priest of the diocese of Turin he took care of the orphans and the poor boys of the streets of Turin who came to the town to look for work in the factories that had come up during the industrial revolution. He taught them various trades and got jobs for them. His mother and some of his friends joined him in his noble task. To continue his work, he began a Society named 'Society of St. Francis de Sales, along with his pupils. They called themselves *Salesians*. They imbibed his spirit by living with him and learned from their life experience with him. At one time he had more than eight hundred students in his home for the boys which he called, "Oratory". Later along with a young lady, Mary Mazarello, he extended his work to the poor girls of Turin. The girls who followed his educational philosophy called themselves, *Daughters of Mary Help of Christians*. After more than thirty years of his successful work among the boys he defined his method of education as 'Preventive System of Education'. He wrote about this in his autobiography. He died on 31 January 1878.

Today his work extends to more than a hundred and thirty countries of the world with more than fifteen thousand 'Salesians' and seventeen thousand 'Daughters of Mary Help of Christians' working for the all-round development of the young boys and girls. Besides the founding of *Salesian Society* and *Daughters of Mary Help of Christians*, he set up a world-wide family of *Co-operators*, *Past pupils* and *Lay volunteers*. He spent his whole life involving others, businessmen, government officials, even Pope for the benefit of poor and abandoned youth. (Gonsalves)

2.2, John Bosco's Approach: A Melange of Preventive and Expressive Systems of Education

Don Bosco, who learned over the years, through his various life experiences, the difficulties of the young boys of his time was fascinated by the Preventive method of education¹. He called his educational experience with youth of his time the 'Preventive System'. Thus, he borrowed the title from the more humanistic educational institutions of his time. The notion of prevention as a method opposed to absolutist, authoritarian and repressive regimes was already common in the period of eighteenth century illuminism. He chose, thereby, a modern approach of education through loving persuasion, than the medieval method of Repression².

¹ The Preventive Method of Education: Preventive method of education was developed in the early nineteenth century in Italy and France. It was a method used to deal with the juvenile delinquents in correction homes. In this method, it is the duty of the educator to protect the young from all moral evils than to punish after being affected by them. This method developed a system in which the educator makes effort to keep the students away from wrong doings so as not to punish them for breaking the law. It is based on love and care that one receives from one's loving parents.

² The Repressive Method of Education: It is an ancient method based on suppression of a learner by putting in a lot of restraint on his activities by the educator. It is a method of subjugation used by the teacher over its pupil. Here the teacher's approach towards his/her pupil is highly authoritarian. Fear of the teacher and punishment plays an important role in this method of education. There is very little place for love in this system.

Don Bosco promoted the preventive method of education as he was completely against the repressive method used during his time to control the young delinquents. The experiences that he gathered as a fatherless child from the age of two, his mother's loving corrections and his experiences in dealing with the young for a long time made him convince the need to follow the path of prevention rather than repression. He wrote in January 1884 a letter to the directors of his institutions of that time that the young people "benefit rather than suffer when they are objects of disciplinary action" He insisted on "kindly persuasion" than "coercive measures"³.

Don Bosco favoured the Preventive method of education. For he envisioned in it the only hope to stop juvenile delinquency and child exploitation which was universally accepted during his time. "[The] Preventive system is more centered on the child, on the limitations of his or her age, and therefore calls for a constant and loving assistance by the educator or teacher, who like a father or like a mother is there present, gives advice, guidance and lends support. The end results are family-oriented educational patterns." (Braido, 2013)

Don Bosco visualised a method of Preventive system which can be applied through the *Expressive method of education*⁴. He had an enthusiastic and energetic personality. He was endowed with a blend of qualities of head and heart. He was an extrovert. These expressive characteristics of his life and his talents became part of his educative methodology. The amalgamation of these two systems helped him to protect the young from the evil influences of the society at that time and to motivate them positively to bring out the best in them. For Don Bosco, preventing young people from physical or moral erroneous actions were essentially linked to training them for self-expression through creative activity.

It is worth noting that Don Bosco's use of Expressive techniques along with Preventive method anticipates by a hundred years the ideas of the twentieth century humanistic psychology and education. By expressing themselves personally and in groups, Don Bosco knew that the young people mature in body, mind and spirit. They become emotionally balanced and thus enabling them to take up leadership, develop their talents and become honest citizens capable of contributing positively to the betterment of the society. This blend of the Preventive and Expressive methods done so harmoniously distinguishes Don Bosco's educational approach from other Preventive approaches of his time.

3. Salient Features of Don Bosco's Preventive System

3.1, No Corporal Punishments

³ Don Bosco, Letter from Rome, First published in *Atti del Capitolo Superiore della Pia Società Salesiana*, Anno 1, n. 1 (24 June 1920) 40-48.

⁴ The Expressive Method of Education: This method of education has its roots in the thoughts of the educational philosopher Jean Jacques Rousseau. It provides a wide variety of opportunities for maturation. In this method, experiential learning, talent-nurturing, skill-development, training for livelihoods – all these possibilities are made available in order to create the positive reinforcement needed for a healthy self- esteem and citizenship.

Don Bosco was opposed to the idea of corporal punishments. He believed that a student learns very little when he/she is afraid of the educator. Trying to Please the one they fear becomes the motivation of all that they do. What the educator teaches becomes secondary and how one acts in front of the teacher to avoid punishments become the primary concern of the student. The pupil by often wearing the mask of uprightness and honesty before the educator basically become fraudulent. For Don Bosco punishments or its trepidation makes the young dependent on others for everything. "Fear is what prevents the flowering of the mind, the flowering of goodness" (Krishnamurti, 2009) . The young adolescent loses confidence in oneself by being afraid of making mistakes. This slowly create inferiority complex in them as they lack self-confidence, they come to believe that they are incapable of success.

3.2, Loving Kindness

A good relationship between the teacher and the pupil is the basis of the Preventive method of Education. The confidence of the pupil grows when there is mutual love and respect. When the students love the teacher, their performance becomes better. It is difficult for them to forget the lessons of life, which they have learned from a person they respect and love. The time spent with a loving educator becomes a lifelong experience for the young. A teacher becomes a model, that the young love to imitate. Don Bosco used to say; "Love what the young love, that they may love what you love." (Braido, 2013) "Familiarity breeds affection and affection breeds confidence". (Stella, 1985)"It is not enough to love the young, but they must know that they are loved". (Bosco J. B., 1988)

An educator is able to draw out the best in every educand through love. Learning becomes a joyful event for the student if there is rapport exists between the educator and educand. When taught with love, the learner is never anxious of making any mistakes, in the presence of the teacher. The student enjoys taking risks and this builds up his self-confidence and success rate.

For Don Bosco the qualities of head and heart is a must for the educator in order to be an excellent teacher. In order to understand them an educator must listen to them. They should not be judgmental. The young need attention. Availability of the educator when the young needs them most is what makes the young come closer to their teacher. It's not a virtual presence but he/she must be physically present with them. Presence and availability of the educator in places like, playgrounds, theatre, during recreations, trips, tours, parties, excursions and all possible extracurricular activities where learning takes place makes him/her precious to the students.

3.3, Reason

Reason is an inevitable element in Preventive system as envisaged by Don Bosco. The inevitability of reason is underlined in the fact that it shields a bond based on love to become mere schmaltziness. It restrains alterations of anything into extremes or exaggerations. The educator's encounter with the pupils has to be in a disposition of mutual respect which is conducive for learning. Common sense should be the most important deciding factor in creating rules. There should not be too many rules. This will make the life of the young easy and enjoyable. The instructions and guidelines must be kept simple and clear to the mind of the young. It must be explained orally and must be placed, ordinarily in writing if possible, in places that are visible. Once the youth are convinced of

the benefits of certain laws and rulings, they would not hesitate to follow it even if it is highly demanding from them. The youth are at times impulsive, impetuous and spontaneous that they turn to forget the rules. The reason demands that the teacher remind the young timely of the rules to be followed without annoying them.

The teacher must make sure that the pupils understand the significance of each rule and that all are not of same value. Consequently, significant ones are to be followed to the letter and a few concessions must be allowed to the not so important ones. When formulating certain laws, the teacher should get the views of the students and make the students to formulate some. This will create an interest in the young to follow the rules without fail. Timely evaluation of the rules along with the students, if possible, will help the educator to perceive the efficacy of those rules. The educator does not hesitate to remove those rules that have lost its significance due to the change of time and situation.

3.4, Religion

Religion and belief in God played a major role in the education of the young in the Preventive system. For Don Bosco, silence during prayer, study and in certain places was uncompromisable. He demanded silence although he encouraged noise and laughter among the young in a joyful environment. He believed strongly that faith will help a person during crisis and struggles. He wrote prayer books for his students and taught them and prayed along with them. For him God was a loving father with whom every human being needs to enter into loving personal relationship. He gave a lot of importance to life after death. So, heaven, extra-terrestrial beings and places often became part of his classes and talks.

He was a realist. He taught the students to live a sincere life keeping in mind their sepulchre and trained them to live gazing always at heaven. This helped them to avoid getting into troubles, look for astute alternatives while making decisions and live with a sense of hope. Don Bosco believed that the best way to serve God is to do one's duty to the best of one's ability. Each student was expected to do his/her duty most happily. For him, helping the disadvantaged and the neglected was a means to serve God. Thus, religion also made the young service minded.

Conflicts and misunderstanding do happen among the young and forgiveness is most difficult for a young person. Young people are very passionate about their beliefs. Religion can play a pivotal role among the young to forgive and co-exist peacefully without yielding to revenge and grudges. It creates an ambiance conducive for education.

3.5, Presence and Intimacy of the Educator with the Educand

Don Bosco's success in the practice of this system lies in the fact that he made this feasible and effective for the most uneducated, underprivileged as well as the elite youth of his time. He adapted the practice of this system according to the needs of his time. For him, a youngster has to express himself joyfully in the place where he is. His past is not a matter of concern and his future is built on the present. During the time of learning, the absence of the educator is considered as a grave fault on his/her part. His/her presence is a must, when the student learns, and is an important aspect in the educational methodology of Don Bosco. The teacher has to be fully present and the educand must be in the purview of the educator. This is a great responsibility, and it is highly demanding on

the educator. Students should not be seen as a liability or a burden. For the educator the presence is a privilege and an opportunity for the holistic growth of the educand and self.

A teacher must be diligent enough to take the first step in welcoming and making the student feel at home in his/her presence. They must be cordial and homely, and their approach must be informal. The educators themselves and their presence must inspire the students and encourage them to perform better. An educator has to be very tactful and creative when dealing with young people. Thus, they can inculcate in the young a thirst for knowledge and honest life.

The loving presence of the educator plays a major role in the education of the young. The personal touch and care of the educator especially to the most deserving ones increases their self-confidence. The educator must know the name of every student and is called by it, is the first sign of being known, loved, appreciated and accepted. It requires a professional approach deeply rooted in high moral principles. When dealing with youngsters who are feeble, deprived or marginalized, this loving presence take a demanding toll on the educator. An unprejudiced and impartial dealing of the educator make the young love what the educator loves.

4. The Reverse Effects of the Preventive System

The expectations and demand this system places on the educators are very high. The challenging work atmosphere, fear of future legal complications, individual fears, anxieties, lack of training and experience run the risk of an educator distancing oneself from the young people. So, this system expects the educator to be strictly present in places where the youngsters assemble. Even in their non-teaching hours, if required, a teacher is expected to be with the students, in classrooms or in their recreational activities during breaks. A teacher has to desert the luxury of one's cubicle and find happiness in the midst of the students as friendly guides and animators. This will enable the teacher to know the students better. A mature dealing of the teacher when giving corrections without hurting the sentiments of the students and being discrete in maintaining secrecy about their life and behaviour will earn one respect of the students.

An educator must learn to enjoy the company of the young though he/she is far above their age. The educator is expected to love what the young people love but this should not make one stoop so low as to lose one's self-dignity. A teacher should love to be with the young but should not exactly be like them. So, the emotional health of the educator is an important factor in this. An informal presence of the educator especially during recreations should not be a hindrance to his duty to be observant. The ability to be vigilant always, to think and foresee a situation, the ability to observe very tactfully and Common Sense are some of the important qualities an educator who practices this system must have. These will help him to be watchful of the weak, lonely, unpredictable and most mischievous of the students.

Thus, the educators who practices this system improves themselves and become lifelong learners. Their presence, always among the young, help them to rejuvenate themselves and return to youthful vigour and enthusiasm every day. This help them also to be morally upright and build up their character. It also helps them to be free from the

clutches of sluggishness and fall prey to various habits which may keep students away and destroy the life of the teacher.

5. Conclusion

Preventive method of education, if practiced as envisaged by Don Bosco, is one of the best methods of educational philosophy and practice which help both the students and the teacher. Today it is practiced in many parts of the world in institutions managed by the followers of Don Bosco who call themselves *Salesians of Don Bosco*. Though it places a lot of demands on the educator, it makes the life of the young adolescent and the educator soother. Its reverse effect on the educators who practice it, is the best reward that the educators receive.

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