

THE 'SOCIALIDARISATION' OF YOUNG PEOPLE AND EXTRACURRICULAR ACTIVITIES IN THE LASALLIAN SCHOOLS OF THE BASQUE COUNTRY

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This article constitutes a summary of a doctoral thesis in Sociology and Economic Sciences, defended at the FASSE (Faculty of Social and Economic Sciences) of the Catholic University of Paris (the 'Catho') on December 11th 2009. Furthermore, with some modifications, I have defended it at the public University of Caen (Basse-Normandie), Faculty of Education Sciences, on April 19th 2011.

Although it is not easy to synthesize the contents of an ensemble of four books (more than 700 pages), I will try to present the nucleus of our research, which is based on an experience of commitment of more than 20 years with young people in extracurricular activities, by preference theatre. I have been a language teacher (especially Spanish and English) for more than 30 years and have exercised my educational activities in some Lasallian establishments of the Basque country (Llodio, Zumarraga, Eibar and Sestao).

During the year 2003-2004 I had the opportunity to carry out some in-depth studies in the field of pastoral ministry, at the ISPC (Higher Institute of Pastoral Catechetic) of the Catholic University of Paris. In the course of that sabbatical year, I contacted Canadian, Fr. Paul-André Turcotte, Professor of Sociology at FASSE and, at that time, in charge of foreign students. I told him of my plans and he encouraged me to write the thesis. That is the reason for using the French language in my research. (My thanks to Br. Gérard Drynkebier, of the La Salle Community at the Rue de Sèvres, Paris, who improved my writing in a meticulous and very enriching way).

I have shown the path of my research in order to frame the exposition of my work which follows. This thesis, as I have put forward above, tries to study the significance, the profound meaning of extracurricular activities with young people in the secondary schools of our establishments and the relation, if there is one, of these activities with the later social active implication of the young. The deepening of this meaning constitutes the central question of the thesis.

I have divided my study into 4 parts. As an introductory section, the first part has been devoted to deepening the context, the framing of the question. Two fields constituted the object of my research. On the one hand, the social, political, economic and religious situation of our society in

the Basque country over the past 40 years, which leads me to note the reality of strong change which our society is in the process of experiencing.

On the other hand, in the context of profound change, of dialectic between the global, the opening to a globalised society, and the local, the preservation of the thousand year old traditions of the Basque Country (this dialectic has a big effect on us). I have analyzed the function, the study of our Lasallian school, inserted into this society. (On this point I am thankful for the support of Br. Pedro Gil). I have been able to feel that the La Salle school finds itself at this time searching for its identity, for its place in this society in profound mutation. (Involvement in the extracurricular school activities which I am studying and proposing, constitutes a concrete means of emphasizing, I would suggest, a bridge of union between the Lasallians school and this multicultural, plurireligious and pluriethnic society).

Following the study of the framing of the question, the deepening of the question constitutes the aim of the second part of the thesis, the theoretical research. This part is composed of four chapters, taken in their turn from the traits of extracurricular school activities, the object of my study. They are: being carried out preferably with young people between 14 and 18, volunteers, who require no special skills, in groups, in a play atmosphere and under school structure although outside the formal official timetable.

I began this part by studying the striking role of leisure for young people and also for the adult citizen in this society of the beginning of the third millennium. Among the reasons which explain this importance, I cite three: the 'youngism' or the 'adulthood', the 'presentism' and the devaluing of work in our overall western society. I relied by preference on two authors: Joffre Dumazedier and Manuel Cuenca, professor at the University of Deusto (Bilbao) and who has devoted many years to the study of leisure. In following these authors among others, I have noticed that this creative autonomous space of leisure activities is, at least in western society, one of the signs of identity of the citizen of our times and a place of social participation and involvement.

Then, I delved into the relation between leisure and values, especially solidarity, a key term in my work. I studied the etymology and diachronic of the term with preferential attention to the sociological sense and to the deepening of the exposition of some sociologists such as Emile Durkheim and his distinction between 'mechanical solidarity' and 'organic solidarity'. No, with authors such as Marciano Vidal, I have considered that today this conception of solidarity is insufficient, in the line of a 'closed solidarity'. Consequently, three other traits should, in my opinion, be added nowadays: the relation of affection and sympathy, solidarity open to everyone (the universal sense) and a solidarity which takes very much into account the poor and deprived.

I then put in relation the concepts of 'leisure' and 'solidarity' which with Manuel Cuenca and other authors, possesses three characteristics: the necessary presence of the other, the awareness of intervention to better society and of altruism. In synthesis, 'solidarity leisure' is characterized by satisfaction –it must first of all be 'leisure'- and help (This concept is key in planning extracurricular activities).

I continued my reflection by putting two other concepts in relation with each other: the 'solidarity' which I have just studied and the 'socialization' of the young. I studied the process of socialization by following the contribution of George H. Mead and of symbolic Interactionism. According to Mead, role taking, putting oneself in the place of the other, constitutes the great mechanism of the formation of the 'self'. One of the most important reasons for my choice of this trend is the calling into question of the present complex western society as a system, which leads me to not put the stress, by preference, on the system but on the individual, on the 'actor' and his role in the construction of this present day society.

Then I reflected on the concept of 'solidarity' already presented and that of 'socialization', since, in my opinion, the latter enriches the process of socialization. In fact, there are three aspects of the definition of 'solidarity' which I do not consider sufficiently emphasized in that of 'socialization'. I remind you of these three aspects: 'the fact of setting out from the richness of the diversity of persons', 'awareness of the cohesion and interdependence of the human species', which implies a sense of universality, and 'action in compassion, above all with the poor'. As a result, I have considered it adequate to consider a new term, the result of the union of the two which we have presented: the concept of 'socialidarisation' or 'socialidarity'.

The next chapter of my study constituted a kind of abstract of this part, devoted to theoretical research. First of all, I suggested three aspects, taken from the study of the preceding chapters, to be delved into in the present Lasallian school in its aim of accompanying young people in their process of social involvement. Here they are: the deepening of 'paraformal' education (that is, education carried out under the school structure, while outside the formal official timetable), the deepening of education in values, solidarity by preference, and the deepening of the active involvement of a varied number of social actors, in order to end up with the concept of 'educational town'.

A point should be made here before continuing: the value of extracurricular activities in the framework of 'paraformal' education has been increased, in the course of my research, by a case of *serendipity*, of a happy chance, with regard to the term 'school'. Paradoxically for us, in its Greek etymology, the meaning is that of the moment of 'recreation' even of 'amusement' and then of 'leisure devoted to study'.

Having made this observation, I will now present empirical research, the groundwork, the aim of the third part of my thesis. This is the longest part of the work and, to develop it, I worked with a group of sociologists. Our study is divided into three parts: the method of research, the way this research went and the presentation of the results of the latter.

I chose the qualitative method, which seemed in coherence with the sociological current which was the basis of my study: Symbolic Interactionism. I approached the nine Lasallian establishments of the Basque Country and I carried out three types of interviews with the persons involved in the extracurricular activities which take place in these schools (free time, *Tandanacui* – groups of sensitization with the Third World -, theatre, scouts, mountain groups and others).

First of all, with pupils who participate in extracurricular activities, two ages groups are singled out: 14-16 and 16-18, with a further condition in all cases: a minimum involvement of three

years in these activities (8 interviews; total: 36 young people interviewed). Furthermore, I met with two groups of young people (one from the 14-16 age group and another from the 16-18 age group, 20 persons in all) who had never been involved in these activities, in order to better contrast the results. Secondly with leaders/monitors with three years of involvement also. At the end a third group was made up of the 'stories of life', 11 interviews with persons aged about 30, with a more or less long period of involvement in these activities. 81

The exposition of the results of my research constitutes the General Conclusion, the fourth part of the work: The significance of the question. Extracurricular activities, a place towards a triple process of going beyond. I noted that the activities which were the object of my analysis, take place in a Lasallian school in the context of change and in a search for its social function. A dominant line, the most important of the whole study, sticks out: the strong sense of belonging, of the group. This is a basic aspect of these activities which, in this sense, constitute "oasis of 'socialisation'", places where solidarity and values are lived in a practical manner, and places also in the process towards 'leisure solidarity'.

In the end, and this is my proposition, humble but convinced. At the Lasallian school of today: these extracurricular activities are considered as a place, as a concrete model towards a new relation between the Lasallian school and the young. As a result, deepening the sense of association, of belonging, which these activities encourage, can lead our school to a triple process of going beyond: relational (between the adults and the young), space-temporal (going beyond formal official time) and institutional (opening *ad intra* to the Lasallian network, and *ad extra*, to other educational and social bodies).

All this demands audacity, creativity and imagination, since what is at stake is the role of the Lasallian school in the complex and multicultural society of today, its creative adaptation, as was carried out more than 300 years ago by St. John Baptist De La Salle.