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# TRAINING OF EDUCATORS



**Piarist Identity  
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## Piarist Identity Notebooks SUMMARY 09

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Author: General Secretariat  
of Ministry  
Edition: September 2020  
Piarist Identity Notebooks  
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# TRAINING OF EDUCATORS

Proceso formativo permanente e integral por el cual se cultiva la identidad del educador escolapio (personal docente, no docente, agentes de pastoral y otros colaboradores), de tal manera que sea referencia para la tarea educadora y evangelizadora que define la Misión escolapia, abierto siempre a la innovación y a la mejora continua.

## THE FORMATION OF EDUCATORS IN CALASANCTIAN PEDAGOGY

In the 16<sup>th</sup> century, at the time Calasanz started the Pious Schools, teachers did not enjoy a good reputation. They were considered as “*vagabonds and unstable persons who have little care for the children’s learning, but they themselves are sometimes such that they would need to go to the school of the holy fear of God and of good morals, and for all this, although without reason, teaching children was a vile and despicable exercise*”<sup>1</sup>. In general, they did not have a good social recognition and sufficient income to live, so their training was deficient, both in the contents to be taught and in the methodology.

Calasanz conceived education as a true mission and the educator as an apostle who, with the light of piety and letters, dispels the darkness of ignorance, saves men from intellectual and moral slavery, and makes them happy.

Just as the apostle has received a call from God to proclaim the Gospel, the teacher must have “*a great spirit and a particular vocation (...) because they will encounter other difficulties that derive from a life mortified by the obligatory treatment of children, laborious because of the continuous effort and despicable in the eyes of the flesh, which considers the education of poor children* (Tonti, 24).

No teacher can educate; that is, transmit life if he has not first received it from above. From this perspective, he conceives the teacher as a person with a solid spiritual life, because the way of life educates more than words.

Furthermore, he defines the teacher as an “effective cooperator of the truth” (CCn<sup>o</sup>3), an instrument of the Truth, who is Christ, the true teacher who shows the best way to lead a full and happy life.

To carry out this educational mission, teachers with a good formation are needed, especially in the spiritual dimension. In the Constitutions, Calasanz clearly describes the meaning and the formative structure of the Piarist: *Since the purpose of our Congregation through the exercise of the Pious Schools is the formation of children in piety and human letters so that they can reach eternal life, we believe it necessary to achieve this end, not only to offer an example of spiritual life, but also to acquire doctrine and the way*

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<sup>1</sup> SHANTA, G. (1984) San José de Calasanz. Obra pedagógica. Madrid BAC pág 41.

to teach it (CC 203). The text indicates which are the three pillars of the Piarist formation: spiritual identity (being), cultural contents (knowing) and methodologies (knowing how to do).

Christian education requires that the educator *be a man of spirit, that he has a great spirit to help not only the youngsters in the schools but also the laity, by example and doctrine, to embrace the true path to paradise* (EP 4321).

To have a good spiritual structure is the condition for the teacher to reach the necessary wisdom to educate: *The way to become wise and prudent in the interior school is to become like a fool in the eyes of men, allowing oneself to be guided like a donkey* (EP 2300).

The teacher must be of integrity, sensitive to spiritual things and with a sincere desire to do the will of God. This spiritual life is nourished by a deep spirit of silence and prayer, listening to the Word of God and the frequent and sincere practice of the sacraments.

Formation in the spiritual dimension, the foundation of everything else, consisted of the exercise of piety, prayer, spiritual reading and meditation, as well as the development of virtues useful for the educational apostolate: love of neighbor, patience, humility, poverty, joy and other natural and supernatural virtues.

Once the spiritual base was assured during the novitiate, the teachers received the cultural contents together with the way to teach them to the children, alternating school-work with study. In this way, they were making a synthesis between theory and teaching practice. In their training, teachers were expected to learn humanities, good calligraphy, arithmetic and reading of classical authors in Latin.

To this end, he did not hesitate to seek out the best specialists of his time: the calligrapher Ventura Serafellini, Andres Bayano, a specialist in classical languages; Gaspar Scioppio, a Latinist of German origin; the philosopher Tommaso Campanella, the mathematician and physicist Galileo Galilei, and the scientist Alfonso Borelli.

With the rapid expansion of the Pious Schools, it was ensured that each Province had its own center of studies and that all the houses had some students accompanied by an experienced teacher. The house of San Pantaleo in Rome was always a place of reference for formation since it was under the direct guidance of Calasanz.

The founder wanted pedagogical studies to be systematic. The whole formative process of the teachers was a novelty, especially for the Primary School. In fact, it can be said with good reason that Calasanz was the initiator of the first systematic teacher training studies, although others after him perfected them well.

The General Chapter of 1718 approved a plan “Ratio studiorum pro religiosis nostris”, based on that established by Father Pirroni, which meant the consolidation of a good formation, the results of which were seen in the splendor of the Pious Schools during the 18th century.

In the last decades of the 19th century and the first decades of the 20th century, a great effort was again made to improve the studies of the new Piarist teachers. This was concretized in the creation and maintenance of the so-called “Central Houses” of study, which were placed under the immediate jurisdiction of the Superiors General, and which were endowed with good teachers and good conditions for study.



## FORMATION OF THE EDUCATORS IN THE PIARIST REALITY TODAY

Calasanz said that “*the credit of the schools lies in having good teachers*” (EP 49) and this cannot be done without a careful selection and a good integral formation.

The Pious Schools have always shown great concern for the formation of educators; both religious and lay. The initial formation of Piarists religious is regulated by a complete document approved by the XLVI General Chapter of 2015<sup>2</sup>.

After the Second Vatican Council, the Pious Schools began to become aware of the protagonism of the laity in the Piarist mission. The Special General Chapter, celebrated in 1967–69, approved a “Decree on the relationship of our Order with the laity” that focuses especially on the educators of the schools. At that time, the fundamental concern was their permanent formation, spiritual development, and preparation of future collaborators of the schools, attending to the formation of good Catholic professors and teachers. The Chapter determined that they should be placed on an equal footing with the Piarist religious in the school field.

In the following years, the concern has been maintained to advance in the Piarist formation of educators to incorporate them to the Piarist charism with the conviction that they can live the richness of the spirit-

uality that characterizes them and the charism of the Institute, encouraging them to live them in the educational ministry according to the lay identity and in suitable and accessible ways to young people”. This concern has manifested itself not only in the publication of documents but also in the experience of successful concrete formation initiatives.

After the publication of the Directory for the Laity, it became necessary to propose some “guide-lines for formation” in the various modalities. The document is a proposal that helps the Districts to carry out their own formation plan. It covers the fundamental dimensions in every formation process in the Pious Schools: human, pedagogical, Christian and Piarist. It contemplates the aspects recommended by the Directory for the Laity: information, personal relationships, accompaniment, growth, and human maturity and in the Faith, initial and ongoing formation, areas of responsibilities, knowledge of Calasanz and harmony with the Order.

In the Pious Schools as a whole there is a clear conviction that it is necessary to train educators in the key of a Piarist identity. If educators can relate with the founding idea of Calasanz and with the current project, the quality of the educational service offered will improve.

The 2015 General Chapter valued the importance of promoting formative projects for educators in the key of Calasanzian identity.

<sup>2</sup> Training Directory. FEDE. Approved “ad experimentum” by the 47th General Chapter of the Pious Schools.

## PROPOSALS TO BE INCLUDED IN THE EDUCATIONAL PROJECT

Every Piarist educational project must include the formation of personnel to grow in identity with the charism and to give quality to the educational process. For this, we propose some actions:

1. To make a good selection of educators in which it will be sought that:
  - a. They come from the Piarist educational and pastoral processes.
  - b. Have the competencies to teach.
  - c. Have a great spiritual sensitivity and practice of the faith.
  - d. Have had volunteer experiences.
2. To train educators in the pedagogical options of the Pious Schools by simultaneously combining theory and practice in schools.
3. To offer educators training experiences that transmit identity.
4. To seek out the best specialists to train teachers, as they stimulate them and open new cultural horizons.
5. To propose experiences that nourish the vocational dimension of educators so that they grow in their apostolic commitment.
6. Offer personal and spiritual accompaniment to educators.
7. Design a training incentive plan for educators.
8. Promote pedagogical colloquiums that deal with the real problems that arise daily in the school.
9. Organize as a demarcation the training of educators with defined plans and good organizational structures.
10. Promote shared mission teams.
11. To develop in each presence the Piarist Christian community with concrete proposals, especially the development of the fraternity of the Pious Schools.

## EDUCATORS IN THE FACE OF TRAINING

One cannot exercise an apostolate in the Church without going through the process of being a disciple in listening to the Master Jesus. Calasanz always remembered that the commitment to teach entails the commitment to learn. We point out some qualities of a Calasanctian educator who is in an attitude of listening and permanent learning.

1. He is a person who likes to learn and enjoys learning. He shows it in the care with which he prepares and teaches his classes, in the readings he does and in how motivated he is to learn.
2. He knows how to allocate and use his time effectively, so he always sets aside time for personal reading and for workshops and refresher courses.
3. He is a persevering person, who tries to stay motivated, thanks to the passion he feels for what he does. He can overcome any inconvenience to achieve his goals.
4. He knows that the success of an educational project depends on the identity and sense of belonging to the Pious Schools. This implies deepening in the Calasanctian pedagogy and knowing the mission of the Pious Schools.
5. He has a personal project of ongoing formation that includes the human, Christian, pedagogical and Calasanctian dimensions.
6. He shares with his peers what he has learned from his readings and teaching practice.
7. He has the habit of delving into the contents of the subject he teaches and how to implement the most appropriate methodology for students to learn better.
8. He is attentive to the reality of the students and adapts the contents to their needs.
9. He takes care of his interior life with the means that the Church places at the disposal of the faithful.
10. Actively collaborates in the training of other educators..



## REFLECTION AND DIALOGUE IN GROUPS

- *Share what Calasanz's intuitions are regarding the formation of educators.*
- *What is the school's training proposal for educators, and how do you evaluate it?*
- *Talk about a personal experience that influenced your decision to become a teacher.*
- *How was the Calasanzian formation I received at school?*
- *What are my main training concerns now?*
- *What are my greatest formative weaknesses as a teacher?*
- *What are the books that have most influenced me in my work as an educator?*
- *How do you rate the quality of the school's communication with families?*
- *How to improve educator training in your school?*