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**LASALLIAN PEDAGOGY: TRANSFORMATIONAL EDUCATIONAL
PRACTICES AMIDST COVID 19 PANDEMIC.**

A. Brickston¹, Dr. A. Baskar²

**¹PhD Research Scholar, Regn.No: P5672, Department of History,
Madurai Kamaraj University, Madurai, Tamilnadu. India.**

**²Assistant Professor, Department of History,
V.H.N.S.N College (Autonomous), Virudhunagar, Tamilnadu, India.**

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Abstract:

This pandemic plight has locked the whole world inside four walls and caused futuristic, adventurous inventions that haven't spared the field of education also. This scientific paper denotes how educators of the Lasallian world are facing challenges to bring education back to the children through their innovations. The primary focus on this study is to help the lasallian educators to know the transformational educational practices during Covid 19 pandemic. This epidemic has challenged Lasallian Educators too, who have been transforming the lives of their pupils for the past three hundred years through their well-known Lasallian Pedagogy in seventy nine countries around the world .

Introduction :

The world is facing a kind of situation in which Aristotle's thought that "Man is by nature a social animal; an individual who is unsocial is naturally either a beast or a God" is being questioned today. Today, 1.5 billion children are away from existing school systems, stuck in front of the digital screens, lacking direct guidance of their mentors. Faith formation and behavioural formation becomes undoubtedly challenged. Online Education is considered a necessary evil but the other parts of the world perceive it as an opportunity for new evolution in the Educational system¹. Every Lasallian educator is challenged to consider the following question: "Can Lasallian Pedagogy be active in this crucial situation?" This paper will bring out challenges and findings of how

Lasallian educators are actuating the core of Lasallian Pedagogy into technological format during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Lasallian pedagogy was unique in the particular combination of teaching strategies. Lasallian pedagogy is practical, meets students where they are, sets the academic bar high, provides scaffolding to help students rise to the level of excellence, incorporates zeal, all while it teaches minds, touches hearts, and transforms the lives of the children². This pedagogy is in practice in 79 countries all around the world by the Institute of the Brothers of the Christian Schools, founded by St. John Baptist De La Salle in 1680. This work highlights the understanding of this pressing situation, challenges and findings through the Questionnaire, which had been circulated to Lasallian educators around the world with the help of Google Forms.

Lasallian pedagogy:

Lasallian Pedagogy has been marked by strategic, deliberate pedagogy that is responsive to the socio-political context³. St. La Salle's pedagogy is the composite of the works of earlier and contemporary educational innovators. Lasallian schools have traditionally implemented and actualized the pedagogy that carried the burden of teaching the poor, a burden that continues today throughout Lasallian educational institutions. Brother William Mann quotes Brother Leon's writings about Pedagogy, "It is, first of all, a sacred interaction between pupil and teacher. Lasallian teaching and education is, above all, a gift, a passion, a mission, a calling, a vocation. It is something both mystical and magical, something best understood as a 'sacred interaction between pupil and teacher,' something that is inspired and that inspires, an energy once tapped into that can be channeled and focused, a fire that burns within, one that needs to be fanned to flame and then tended, and that in the best of situations. It is also an innovative response to real human need"⁴. A key characteristic of Lasallian pedagogy, highlighted by Brother Léon in the third volume of his study of the Conduct, was that the success of the schools depended on the quality of the teachers; and this required their initial and ongoing formation.

Who are these Initiators of Lasallian Pedagogy:

Lasallian education began as something eminently practical and far removed from the realm of higher education. The Brothers of the Christian Schools, the creation and life's work of John Baptist De La Salle, began rather modestly as a group of laymen dedicated to educating the poor boys of France⁴. Brother Luke claims in his work "The Work is Yours" that De La Salle's contribution was more administrative than curricular. He created "a stable community of religiously motivated laymen to construct a network of schools throughout France that would make practicable and permanent the best elements from the pioneers who had gone before him"⁶. Lasallian Pedagogy is the result of thirty-five years of collaboration between the educational guidance of De La Salle and the classroom experience of these teachers, who were called 'Brothers'. La Salle sought to train his Brothers to fill the educational gap without disturbing the parents' rightful position as the primary educators. Now there are 3,418 De La Salle Brothers in 79 countries implementing this Lasallian Pedagogy in Lasallian schools and beyond. A commitment to helping poor students today is very much in keeping with De La Salle's hope for the future of his Brothers, and remains a guiding principle for Lasallian education⁷.

Future envisioned in Digital Era:

This pandemic experience revolutionises the learning experience of children around the world. According to OCED information, 95% of students from most of Europe are learning through computers, 34% in Indonesia, and every 15-year-old student in America has their own computer for learning⁸. But this situation helps the privileged side of the world to cope with this learning, but not children who don't have access to devices. Seebach believes that Online Education might be seen as reflective of an academic condescension and that is also a kind of thread to slow-

ing the practice of Lasallian practices, that always center on the transformation of children by intervening into their life by being an example. In this time of chaos, the Lasallian educational system is challenged to respond to the changing landscape of education. Lasallian Education is a value which we can not afford to lose. It figures out how to provide children an experience of relational, spiritual, and human formation through online education.

Dr. Josh Packard from Springtide, Research Institute, USA comes out with a strong recommendation during this viral time. As we are physically isolated and socially distanced from the real society, we pay more attention in shifting the working premises and require the people to work for what they are paid. But we need to help them to know how much they cared. Primarily every student should be helped to know that they are listened to, followed, looked after well in this time of pandemic. Every Lasallian educator believes in the transformative power of education, and they are challenged to translate that core of the Lasallian pedagogy into online modes where Lasallian students feel that they are well cared for and didn't miss the Lasallian way of life even in the time of pandemic.

The focus of this paper identifies the better understanding of the present crisis and how Lasallian Educators around the world have come up with innovative modes to revamp learning systems to keep the student connected to their creative way of learning amidst COVID-19. A well reflected questionnaire has been circulated to a few Lasallian educators around the world (America, Australia, Canada, Ethiopia, Hong Kong, India, Ireland, Japan, Mexico, New Zealand, Peru, Philippine) through Google Forms to identify whether Lasallian Pedagogy is still transformative amid challenges of COVID-19. Those questions challenged the Lasallians to think and reflect seriously about what practices in online teaching work for a Lasallian classroom? Which aspects of a Lasallian face-to-face classroom can make the shift to an online format? How will Lasallian educators translate Lasallian formation in faith and life into an online pedagogical framework⁹.

Meeting the students at digital Tech: a rapid response:

As always, Lasallian pedagogy is rooted in relationships. Many of the Lasallian schools around the world have made efforts to continue a sense of community during the pandemic. Educators around the world are challenged to build a robust infrastructure for Tech-enabled teaching and learning ensuring that their students and teachers are fully equipped for digital transformation¹⁰. It has been very important to have a mode to contact the students in whatever way they can, specially tools like Zoom, Google Hangout, Schoology, Cervo Escolar, Canvas, EdPuzzle, Flipgrid, Google Meet, Support Hub, SUC and Microsoft Teams. Most importantly teachers remind their students that they care for them even when they have no devices to access online study. The relational approach of Lasallian Education has been successfully practiced in full swing through regular scheduled virtual classes and children's spiritual formation has been looked after by including spiritual matters using email signatures, Podcasts, and virtual bulletin Boards¹¹.

De La Salle High School in Minneapolis, USA have made every possible way to offer food and mobile hotspots to students without the internet to be connected to their best experience of learning, that creates the real human connection in the time of isolation. De La Salle School, Oak hill- Australia, created an online learning platform where students and parents can access the learning tasks for each lesson. Video conferences were also held with students to maintain the connection with them. Engaging students in on-line morning assembly by De La Salle in Canada raised the world's eyebrow. De La Salle Mangere, New Zealand, has sent laptops to students who don't have one to make sure no student misses out on Lasallian education during this pandemic situation. Translating the Lasallian traditional practices into technological format is still successful for the educators who continue to care for the children who are entrusted to their care.

A Lasallian Methodology: walking side by side:

Lasallian Educators of Instituto Regiomontano Chepevera, Mexico recommend that every Lasallian Educator be very creative and create learning experiences that lead the students to learn with responsibility. Many Educators find the best online strategies to meet the students in smaller groups or individually to continue the relational aspect of Lasallian pedagogy. It provides consistency in meeting students where they are, and it is about being flexible and caring. It also promotes individual attention, creating a sense of community, empowering students to be the owners of their personalized learning. Lasallian methodology insists its educators be leaders, motivator and inspirer to provide students better learning experience by walking with them. Mr. Robert Lundy, President of De La Salle School, Canada, says that every member of the Lasallian youth team is invited to create on-line events for the kids to participate in trivia, that helps them to live the Founder's message of service to others. Br. Shef Mekonen, Principal of La Salle School, Ethiopia notes that every educator who activates the Lasallian pedagogy is an active agent who faces the present situation creatively to reach the unreached, especially to the poor. Br. Aikee Esmeli FSC, Teacher in St. Lasalle School, Japan specifies that the Lasallian methodology suggests the educators to work with their colleagues to bring out their newfound ways of teaching, that helps children experience joyful learning.

An Online Campus: Being connected at distance:

It is hard for learning to occur without an environment that is conducive to learning. It is essential for instructors to provide well-designed instruction in order for students to learn effectively¹². Lasallian schools around the world set clear instructions and expectations to the students at the beginning of the online learning period. These standards have been vital to the success of online classes and that supports the teacher as well as keeping the students away from unnecessary distractions. Educators figure out the best time that works for everyone and make every way possible to avail themselves for the students to reach the teachers. Some creative Lasallians from Canada create a few videos to help them feel that they are cared for and kept engaged with life giving and joyful learning. During the online class, teachers ensure the content of the day and explanations are delivered clearly to the kids because it is harder to see students' confusion and for them to ask questions. So, it is important that teachers divide the students into smaller groups to talk about ideas and to design work that can be more self guided and self motivated. Maintaining similar procedures like starting the class with prayer, calling on students, setting high expectations for every class and assignments, greeting them all as they enter into virtual class keep the students alive and interactive. Lasallian educators around latino countries keep engaging students with lessons very creatively through making videos and preparing online assessments that both challenge the students and enrich their knowledge of the material. Brother Martin FSC, a math teacher at St. James's School, Sooranam, India, found himself as an initiator of lasallian Pedagogy to help the students educationally and emotionally in this period of crisis. Since his students are not able to access the Blended learning from their home, he came up with his own blog in YouTube called Trends in TamilNadu to keep his students engaged constructively with his motivational speeches and Classes on English grammar. He also felt happy to bring Lasallian traditional practices into digital environment by beginning and ending his classes on screen with the lasallian prayer "Live God In Our Hearts... For Ever".

Regulating the Directives for student's Mental Health:

Lasallian Educators around the world are aware of UNESCO's Director-General Audrey Azoulay report, saying that schools have been suspended nationwide in 188 countries, Over 90% of enrolled learners worldwide are now out of education and that causes disruptions and damages to mental health of the children. Social isolation caused loss of part time jobs, prolonged stay at home, disrupted exchange studies and ceremonies, postponing of completions, no interaction with peers.

Psychiatrist Chi-Hung Au, University of Hong Kong warns that there will be considerable 869rganizedties adjusting back to normal life when school resumes and they can become frustrated and short-tempered when their daily routines are disrupted. He also pointed out that creative ways, such as online speech and social skills training, are needed to make up for the loss. He advised parents to create a schedule for their children to reduce anxiety induced by uncertainty¹³. Considering the situations and suggestions, Lasallians have started to implement the following pragmatic plans to regulate their normal moods and reframe anxiety and stresses; constant contact with the students on specific schedule, counselors are entitled to be responsive for every student, students are reminded to stay physically active and socially connected, online seminars for parents on handling kids in a non-abusive way, small group therapy sessions are conducted, spiritual sessions and activities that have been 869rganized, promoting the use of video platforms so students are engaged and also running weekly pastoral activities to help them understand that they are cared for in this time of uncertainty.

Students response to the reality of covid 19:

Most of our children are undergoing a kind of traumatic experience that keeps them physically chained and mentally bubbling with self learning. These uncertain viral days caused children to see themselves and change their perspectives in good and bad ways. Students are scared, lonely, uncomfortable, uncertain, frustrated and exhausted staying in front of the digital screen throughout the day. They are sad to be missing out on real experiences with peers. Some children are impressive and appreciative to have a sense of normalcy to understand that they are still getting an education; it is good to be able to see teachers and classmates at least online; making the best of things. Vassiliou, a student at Georgetown Prep, America, says that having 3 to 4 hours of work a day is a heavier workload than he did in the regular school year. Though he enjoys no correction and punishment in school, he misses playing sports in school with peer groups. He also added that being on a computer for six hours straight can have a negative impact¹⁴ and time away from the screen is important. A student from Lasalle, Ayacucho, Peru shares that distractions are difficult to remove during homeschooling and many students of his locality find difficulties in accessing technology in the time of uncertain economic difficulties. Br. Tom Walsh FSC, Student Coordinator in Waterford school, Ireland reports that students are frustrated with less physical exercises, lack of digital accessory for learning in bigger families, worry about their final exams and placements in Universities. Some of them are full of uncertainty and their hope of a bright future dimmed by worries and fear.

“Some Lasallian kids have accepted this unavoidable situation and are able to cooperate with the requirements of the government, and they are positive about the e-learning and homeschooling because it is not new to them. Children learn to vitalize their given time for better learning”, said by Br. Jude Waltharis FSC, Maths Teacher, LaSalle College, Hong Kong. It has given students of the Lasallian world the opportunity to develop a high level of resilience. They have been reminded to continually set goals for themselves to reach, regardless of the circumstances. Through Lasallian educators’ accompaniment to each student in a different way, being closer, implementing new strategies according to their needs, has helped the children to understand that Education has changed, it is time to make use of technology to its fullest potential to catch up the demands of the present world.

Blended learning: an analysis on the impact:

It's obvious that educational contemporary culture has got a predominant position in teaching and learning in the field of education. What has been important for imparting education has no meaning in this situation. This pandemic challenged everyone to place technology to play a central role in nearly all aspects of the field of education. This situation has empowered Lasallian Educators and students to face this paradigm shift in implicating the core of Lasallian Pedagogy into con-

temporary trends in the field of education. As an educational community, teachers and students are doing everything they can to adapt and make the most out of this unpredictable experience. Lasallian pedagogy has been challenged to improvise their educational system that helps the students to learn by themselves. Innovation is a must, in order to be able to achieve quality education nowadays. Though collaborative learning in an online environment strengthens the learning environment and becomes the future of the education, that too has its own shades where education becomes incomplete. Ongoing formation for the teachers about online teaching and equipping every student with devices have become a palpable issue to be addressed. Machines can never replace an educator, life on the school campus can never be given in online campus education, that matters in Lasallian pedagogy where educator walks side by side with every child who is entrusted to their care. Lasallian educators are coping with the need of the hour and come up with a more hybrid model where students will do some of the education in person and another part online/distance learning.

Mr. Murray Fisher, Lasallian educator from Lasalle College, Oakhill, Australia says that he is unsure of how this will impact teaching and learning moving forward. He understood from the feedback of the students he teaches, many are bored with prolonged online learning and craving the return to in-class learning. New delivery modes of education enrich our pedagogy and open new opportunities. It's going to be tough on teachers because teaching then becomes non-stop. Right now, Teachers teach 24/7 because students keep asking questions even throughout the night. That hinderance to Lasallian teachers to actuate the quintessence of their Founder's pedagogy, which is being available to students inside and outside of the classroom. Though Lasalle school in Canada is handling the on-line learning fairly well; however, they worry about the kids who don't have all the devices and free internet for joyful learning, that is the struggle every Lasallian educators face in this epidemic plight.

Conclusion:

The COVID-19 pandemic has resulted in educational institutions across the world inventing new transformative tools to educate students. This epidemic situation has paved the way for educating children in an interconnected world, and has redefined the role of educators, unlocking technology to deliver education¹⁵ to navigate effectively the content in a digital environment. Lasallian pedagogy is not just imparting the content of the subject but transforming the lives of the children by teaching their minds and touching their hearts. This mystical miracle in education can be done only by Lasallian educators even in time of trials. Lasallian professors are trained to translate the traditional Lasallian practices into a technological format. Lasallian pedagogy has been propagating human values since 1680, and it still vibrates the whole world with its uniqueness in the field of education. Elizabeth Seebach, the author of "Envisioning a Lasallian Online Pedagogy" says that the educator is doing something with each student, not to each student. The educator is dedicated and committed to the transformation of the learner. The goal is for each student to see oneself, the world, and the future in a new way. The goal of this Lasallian pedagogy is not just information transmission, but transformation¹⁶. And they have been successful in implementing its pedagogy in a digital environment. Lasallian educator's digital environment is full of well designed schedules with predestined goals and intelligible guidance, educators are trained in online teaching and for handling student's emotions. Even in face-to-face online teaching, they fully present on screen; they create conducive and joyful learning for children creatively with the help of newly available internet modes. Thus Lasallian pedagogy is still active and adaptive to the present change and continues building community to facilitate teaching, learning, and transforming.

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