



# Vocational Training Center (VTC)

Salesian Youth  
Ministry Sector

# Vocational Training Center (VTC)

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Ministry Sector

## ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

<b>MO</b>	<i>Memoirs of the Oratory of St. Francis de Sales from 1815 to 1855</i> by John Bosco. Introductory essay and historical notes edited by Aldo Girauda (Rome, LAS 2011).
<b>FR</b>	<i>The Salesian Youth Ministry. Frame of Reference</i> (Rome, 2014).
<b>YMF</b>	<i>Salesian Youth Ministry and Family. Sector for Youth Ministry</i> (Rome, 2021).
<b>YML</b>	<i>A Youth Ministry That Educates to Love. Sector for Youth Ministry</i> (Rome, 2023).
<b>EPC</b>	Educative-Pastoral Community.
<b>Const./Reg.</b>	Constitutions and Regulations of the Society of St. Francis de Sales (1984).
<b>VTC</b>	Vocational Training Center.
<b>SEPP</b>	Salesian Educative-Pastoral Project.

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# Presentation

Since its beginnings, the Salesian Society has been known and appreciated for its Vocational Training Centers, through which young people are offered **quality human formation and preparation for work**, enabling them to face their future with confidence and responsibility.

Don Bosco's intense biographical experience as a boy reminds us how, by skill and necessity, he learned numerous trades while playing as a professional acrobat; he became a general of games and recreations; a founder of schools and workshops; a guardian of the rights of young workers under mutual aid associations and with apprenticeship contracts in collaboration with local businesses; he surrounded himself with staff filled with an all-encompassing dedication among *the students who most reciprocated the good received by embracing the same charismatic identity*.

These young and very first Salesians whom we can authentically call *co-founders of Don Bosco* learn at the school of their master, they are doubly his pupils. First, as boys to be educated, as wolves turning into lambs, and second, as aspiring educators, as lambs turning into shepherds (cf. *Don Bosco's Dream of 9 years*).

Still today, one of the main motivations behind Salesian Vocational Training is the realization that within our centers practices and projects are put in place that are distinguished by their level of innovation, by the attention with which they are calibrated to the needs and desires of learners and families, by the involvement and family spirit they manage to trigger between the team of educators and the group of learners, by the educational success of the learners and social equity for all.

Certainly, these pages should be used as opportunities **to rethink one's formative action and revise one's paths in VTCs in a way that is more congruent with the Salesian educational-pastoral proposal**. Teacher training is perhaps the most demanding phase, made up of contacts, moments of confrontation, and dialogue, but it is also the most significant investment for a real increase in the quality of the Salesian and formative offerings of one's center.

**Fr. Miguel Angel García Morcuende, sdb**

*General Councilor for Youth Ministry*

ROME, 31ST JULY 2024

# THE ORIGINALITY OF THE SALESIAN VOCATIONAL TRAINING CENTER

CHAPTER

I

*"It was at that time that I discovered from experience that if youngsters who came out of the place of punishment can only find a benevolent hand, which takes care of them, assists them on holidays, studies to place them to work with some honest employer, and going sometimes to visit them along the week, these young men gave themselves to an honorable life, forgot the past, became good Christians and honest citizens" (MO, 129).*

## 1 1 DON BOSCO'S DESIRE TO ENSURE DIGNITY AND A FUTURE FOR YOUNG PEOPLE

❖ The Vocational Training Center and Salesian school were born in Valdocco to respond to the concrete needs of young people and to include them in a global project of education and evangelization, especially the most needy.

From the very beginning of his activity Don Bosco was interested in the development of young people both from the point of view of studies and from the point of view of work. He decided to create educational spaces open to the poorest sectors of the population. More concretely, **Don Bosco's first Oratory began as an initiative for young workers.** They were called "artisans" and had regulations and an educational itinerary designed specifically for them.

*In the first draft of the Constitutions (1858) of the future Society of St. Francis of Sales, Don Bosco defines the beneficiaries of the work of the Salesians, who "must be provided with shelter, food and clothing and, at the same time, must be instructed in the truths of the faith; in addition, they will be initiated into an art or a trade as is currently done in the House attached to the Oratory of St. Francis de Sales in the city" (G. BOSCO, COSTITUZIONI DELLA SOCIETÀ DI S. FRANCESCO DI SALES [1858] -1875, ROMA, LAS, 1982, P. 75, ART. III AND IV).*

As early as 1853, Don Bosco had set up a modest shoemaking workshop for young apprentices in a small room of the first socio-educational institute founded in Valdocco, Turin. From then on, the "artisans' section" occupied an increasingly important place in the *House attached* to the Oratory of St. Francis de Sales and in other Salesian houses, alongside the boys attending humanistic studies. With a clear preventive concern - to avoid the serious moral dangers of workshops in the city - and with an explicit practical

purpose, he opened six workshops in this annexed house: the one already mentioned for shoemakers (1853), and later: for tailors (1853), bookbinders (1854), carpenters (1856), typographers (1861) and locksmiths (1862).

❖ As can be seen, **the world of work in Don Bosco's mind underwent a continuous and progressive evolution** and ended with the opening of in-house workshops with the fundamental purpose of educating young people and, consequently, making them live in an environment that would allow them to grow in their professional and human and Christian fulfillment. The establishment of the workshops and vocational schools at Valdocco represented for Don Bosco a continuous development toward an ever-open improvement of this Salesian educational environment within the Salesian 'home'.

When Valdocco was looking for ways to improve the condition of the artisans, **Don Bosco was naturally thinking of many aspects:** religious and moral along with those related to education; cleanliness and hygiene; commitment to work; the need to make the workshops more productive; and the organization of school life (festive celebrations, games, gymnastics, hiking to the countryside, vocal and instrumental music, evenings, and theatrical performances, which were to "entertain and instruct").

Don Bosco *felt the need to have them "in-house"* precisely to achieve the purpose of his formative intervention. And insiders not only as boarders (he began in 1847), but also as students and artisans. Don Bosco preferred to create his large workshops, the production cycle of which provided a useful apprenticeship for young apprentices at the popular and school level.

Animated by a desire to ensure dignity and a future for young people, Don Bosco gave life to the workshops of arts and crafts and, at the same time, *helped his young people in their search for work and procured contracts for them to prevent their exploitation.* One of these is dated Feb. 8, 1852, and is the "contract" between master Giuseppe Bertolino and young Giuseppe Odasso, "with the intervention of Rev. Fr. John Bosco, and with the assistance and authorization of the father of this boy."

This service and preparation would be enriched with the vocation and presence of the Salesian Coadjutor. Don Bosco gradually began to include Salesian Coadjutors to realize the envisioned educational environment. In 1860, it can be said that this new figure of a full-fledged Salesian member

of the Society, intimately associated with the great mission of youth, officially took shape.

*This is the matrix of today's VTCs that are concerned with promoting the human, Christian and professional formation of young people. This proposal responds to the predispositions, abilities and perspectives of many of them who, upon completion of basic education, aspire to enter the world of work. Vocational training turns out to be and still involves, an effective tool for integral human maturation and the prevention of youth distress, as well as for promoting Christian animation in social reality and development in the business world.*

❖ Don Bosco's initiative is based without difficulty on the personal experiences he himself described in his *Memoirs of the Oratory*. In order to understand the educational value of work as recognized by Don Bosco, from the very beginning of his educational work, it is necessary to keep in mind the sense of duty, of industriousness that Margaret Occhiena in particular transmitted to him.

**Don Bosco himself had been a small worker**, a student-worker, and had known from an early age the toil of working under a master. As a boy he participated in farm work on the family land; as a student in Chieri, he was an apprentice tailor in Roberto Gioanni's house; and a "coffee and liquor maker" in Gioanni Pianta's bar and boarding house. On summer vacations during his seminary years, he helped in the fields and did carpentry work. After his ordination to the priesthood and the beginning of his pastoral work - from 1841 to 1843 - he came into contact with young bricklayers, painters, and pavers who frequented his Oratory, which opened on the outskirts of Turin, in the neighborhoods of Valdocco and Borgo Dora.

❖ In short, as a place of gathering, recreation, evangelization, catechesis and social promotion, **the Oratory turns out to be an adequate response to the "educational emergency" of his time**. Don Bosco was unique in his pursuit of education and evangelization of the poor and less privileged of his time, as society of the time tended to work with and for the privileged and middle class because of the prestige and advantages associated with them.

The protection of young apprentices and their vocational training was a goal pursued tenaciously by Don Bosco at a time in history when industrial

development was taking off. Don Bosco knew how to grasp the risks they faced in a society moving *from a predominantly agricultural economy to a market economy*. It was important to him to provide these disadvantaged youth with useful skills. Moreover, he went beyond this need by providing what they needed most: the development of their personalities and the formation of their values. With this holistic proposal, VTC is designed to equip marginalized youth with skills, attitudes and faith that will help build a better society.

1 2

## THE SALESIAN SCHOOL AND VOCATIONAL TRAINING CENTER

The Salesian School and Salesian VTC **are two systematic training structures with their own characteristics**. There is no true Salesian school that does not aim to prepare young people for work, nor is there a true Salesian VTC that does not take into account the systematic elaboration of culture.

VTC, like school, is part of the integral proposal for the education and evangelization of young people, and both have distinctive aspects. It is important to define the scope and boundaries of each of the two mission areas.

*In general, the VTC educates with work and to work in a more direct and short-term way, with the learning of professionalism, a positive integration in society and with different models and programs than the school. In some countries, the VTC has generally increased its relevance by considering pacts or agreements in different countries and agreements on employment, productivity, industrial relations, etc., with different local governments, agencies and non-governmental organizations (NGOs).*

In the specific Salesian area, VTCs differ from schools in that they ensure:

- It has a SEPP that focuses on the most *socially, economically and culturally disadvantaged (at-risk) youth* according to the Salesian pedagogical system.

- ▶ The Salesian VTC promotes inclusive access to *education for the world of work with equal opportunities*, a sense of responsibility through training internships designed with companies in their respective areas and ensures preparation, upgrading and development of skills for work with continuous and quality processes.
- ▶ Through the VTC, we create *spaces for interaction with the productive, labor and economic sectors*, develop placement processes and promote equal inclusion in the world of formal work, strengthening in young people the responsibility that the complexity of the world of work requires.
- ▶ *The development of social and spiritual skills* is promoted through the integral design of SEPP with a humanistic and evangelical view of work. In addition to promoting job skills, 21st-century skills are also developed.
- ▶ *Learning by “doing”* is promoted, allowing learners to experiment with their skills, to link operative-ness to knowledge.
- ▶ Educative Pastoral Communities are formed through processes of pedagogical reflection and knowledge management that *involve both educators and youth in educational processes* in line with technical and scientific progress.
- ▶ Due to their ability to fit into their environment and culture, VTCs are *well integrated into the historical and normative context defined by the laws of each country* and promote research that supports social justice, productivity, respect, sustainability and inclusion.
- ▶ In some countries, the VTC has become an excellent place for the education of young people, including *non-Catholic and non-Christian youth*. In these contexts, the provision of vocational education has been the reason for the acceptance of the Salesian presence. The VTC has evolved into an open institution that welcomes poor youth and helps them learn skills and grow in the values common to Christian and non-Christian denominations. As a way forward, some VTCs prudently collaborate with the leaders of other religions to teach the faith to their students belonging to those religions.

1 3

## PRE-PROFESSIONAL TRAINING CENTERS AND BOARDING SCHOOLS

❖ There are also **Pre-Vocational Training Centers** with a particular formulation and diversified proposals: career guidance, education and training, upgrading, retraining, socio-occupational insertion and reintegration, and promotion of social entrepreneurship. They contribute to the personal success of each individual and cater to a wide range of target groups: young people in compulsory education; youth and adults seeking employment; young people in situations of hardship or school dropout; and migrants or apprentices. *These pathways provide a highly individualized proposal* to facilitate re-entry into the formal school system or to be initiated into the world of work. This pre-vocational training includes a series of interventions designed to sensitize individuals to the work environment and prepare them to manage better the stages of entering new employment.

❖ Some provinces offer **the service of a boarding school for young people** attending VTCs. Boarding schools are equipped with a residential facility that allows the students to stay during the entire day, including the night period. Most importantly, the boarding school can create an environment where young people feel supported.

It is a conducive environment for study in an atmosphere of peaceful living together. Young people are constantly accompanied by a *team of educators*. Great importance is assumed in boarding schools by the figure of the educator: assisting and advising the students during the hours of study and recreation; sitting with them in the cafeteria and accompanying them throughout the day. In some cases, the educator also takes care of the human and cultural formation that provides support for daily study. The daily schedule is well planned to ensure school attendance, study, recreation, healthy sports and spiritual activities.

*Due to the “24/7” nature of the bond, there is a sense of family, community and friendship that comes from living together, caring for and supporting each other, and spending leisure time together. The boarding schools offer facilities for music or sports so that students have a wide range of activities, programs and challenges to choose from each day.*



Indeed, the Salesian boarding school is an environment to live in a community where learning, personal growth and exploration are a top priority, where spiritual formation is savored, where programs and activities are varied, where making friends is paramount, and where success is celebrated.

Boarding schools are also *an important form of protection for children at risk of emergencies*, such as civil wars. In many places, Salesians run hostels to provide shelter and education for street children and those displaced by ongoing conflicts. The boarding school atmosphere is critical to a child's physical and mental health and development. Boarding schools provide good nutrition, hygiene and sanitation; a balanced daily routine with personal hygiene; education; sports and recreation; and study habits. Children are introduced to new ways of life, new routines and responsibilities, new technologies, as well as new teachers and classmates from outside their community.

# THE EDUCATIVE-PASTORAL COMMUNITY OF THE SALESIAN VOCATIONAL TRAINING CENTER

CHAPTER



*“Among the principal works of charity exercised by our Pious Society is that of sheltering, as far as possible, those youngsters who are so abandoned that all care for them proves useless, of instructing them in the truths of the Catholic faith, and of initiating them into some art or trade. Therefore, in those houses where the number of artisans is considerable, one of the members may be appointed to take special care of them under the name of professional counselor.” (“Address to be given to the working class in Salesian houses,” from the Deliberations of the Fourth General Chapter of the Pious Salesian Society 1886 - it was the last one held under Don Bosco’s presidency).*

2 1

## THE IMPORTANCE OF THE SALESIAN VTC EDUCATIVE-PASTORAL COMMUNITY

In the decades between the end of the 20th century and the beginning of the 21st century, there has been a move from an institutional educational model to a community educational model, from a model in which education has been delegated to certain consecrated persons (religious, professors) to a model of active participation of all those involved in the educational process.

**The Educative-Pastoral Community (EPC) is the new subject of educational responsibility and the educational environment.** The convergence of intentions and convictions on the part of all members makes the work of SEPP (with different ways of membership or connection) easier and more effective in Salesian VTCs.

*The goal of the mission carried out by a VTC is this committed community for the youth of today. This community is made up of several people who share **visions about Salesian education, establish relationships with the corporate structure, propose educational processes and organize themselves around a project.***

2 2

## THE SUBJECTS OF THE SALESIAN VTC EPC

We can confirm that the future of our societies depends on our Vocational Education and Training. The nature and scope of vocational education and training, especially initial vocational education and training, is broad and heterogeneous and involves different groups (adults in continuing education, workers, the unemployed, people in different situations, etc.) In particular, *Salesians seek to contribute as a priority to the inclusion of young people between the ages of 15 and 24 into the labor market and society.*

The education and training system today must have all the necessary tools, resources and quality to effectively qualify, retrain and update the young population.

❖ **Learners are the primary protagonists of the educational journey.** They are not just beneficiaries of the educational process, but *active agents of their own formation and development.* They actively and creatively participate in the development and realization of the formative goals in their various stages and are not merely notified; they grow in relational skills through their training and education.

*In response to the need expressed by young people for serious cultural and professional preparation, the VTC takes care of accompanying them to the **meaning of life and work**, taking into account their differentiated needs, aptitudes and aspirations. The Salesian VTC establishes paths, activities and initiatives that essentially address this concern.*

❖ According to Don Bosco’s expression, **the teaching staff** creates with young people a “family,” a youth community where the interests and experiences of young people are placed at the foundation of the entire educational arc. *The teachings of one’s own Master are crystallized in the memory of each student.* Therefore, in the Salesian VTC, one sees and glimpses an encounter with a witness of authentic life and dedication to teaching. In fact, the Salesian method can only work through unconditional dedication like that of Don Bosco, who said, “Near or far I always think of you. Only one is my desire: that of seeing you happy in time and in eternity” (*Letter from Rome to the Salesian community of the Turin-Valdocco Oratory, Rome, May 10, 1884*).

For this, educators will be effective in training students if their qualifications and Salesian formation are adequate. This requires that VTCs develop and implement a professional development program to improve the professional, managerial, technical, pedagogical, Salesian and pastoral skills of their educators.

In Don Bosco's time, the selection of educators has always been fundamental, aiming for a high level of professionalism and educational relationships. In addition to the selection of workshop leaders, their training, apprenticeship, and the coordinated and formative collaboration between the various superiors of the vocational schools and the trainers are crucial.

Educators not only teach but "assist," work, study and pray together with the students. They are willing to be with young people, able to take on their problems and listen to their concerns.

*Don Bosco described them: "The teacher seen only in the desk is a teacher and no more, but if he goes to recreation with the young, he becomes like a brother" (LETTER FROM ROME TO THE SALESIAN COMMUNITY OF TURIN – VALDOCCO, ROME, MAY 10, 1884).*

The teaching staff is composed of **Salesians and lay people** fully inserted in the educative pastoral commitment according to the Salesian project and their professional expertise:

- ▶ The *choice of lay people* is an expression of a careful and thoughtful decision that demands balance, seriousness and a coherent tenor of life: lay people who assume their educational commitment joyfully, and are open to the pedagogical interests proper to the Salesian VTC. They have professional competence and readiness for systematic updating and actively participate in planning and evaluation processes. Their educational professionalism values interpersonal relationships and is characterized by a fundamental ethical dimension, understood as a personal witness, which helps students acquire values. Lay teachers bring their experience of lay life, expressed culturally and professionally in their life choices, knowledge and activities, including extra-curricular activities. It is recommended that the criteria for hiring educators and their induction program be written in a handbook or manual for permanent reference and guidance.

- ▶ For their part, the **religious teachers** testify to their experience as consecrated persons who inspire new ways of engaging culture and education according to a Christian vision of life, humanity and history. They can become a motivating stimulus to guide, inspire and motivate the collaborators to be truly Salesian educators.

❖ The **auxiliary and administrative staff** contribute to the educational action through the care they exercise for the VTC, the relational style and the good logistical and organizational functioning.

The administrative staff performs the administrative, accounting, management, instrumental, and operational functions related to the activities of the VTC, in a collaborative relationship with the Director and the teaching staff. The role of the administrative staff is also indispensable as a support to the teaching action and the enhancement of their skills; it is decisive for the efficiency and effectiveness of the service and the achievement of educational goals.

The quality of the relationship with the public and with the staff is of fundamental importance since it contributes to determining the educational climate of the VTC and to fostering the communicative process between the different components that move in or around the educational center.

❖ Each VTC seeks and promotes, in the balance of their respective competencies and safeguarding the respect of the educational relationship in the Centre and the **collaboration with the family**. Pupils and teachers need their presence: which becomes impetus, support, and sharing of educational goals, difficulties and goals.

The family remains a point of reference for students and therefore it is not possible to ignore it; if the family is present in a positive way, collaboration is easier. With the family, mutual recognition becomes necessary; the development of mutual respect is essential.

Some Salesian VTCs offer formation to parents of students, who are the first educators of their children and collaborate with educators in the holistic process of education and evangelization. Through the formation programs, parents become responsible members of the EPC. It is good to acknowledge the presence and assistance of some parents who are members of the Salesian Family as their collaboration with educators can be particularly exemplary.

Finally, Don Bosco's Preventive System is inspired by the family and practiced in family relationships. It is part of our VTCs to serve as a model of relationship and growth in dialogue with adolescents and young people:

*“Parents’ Associations, Family Groups, School-Family Collaboration Programs and other initiatives can be structured according to a wide range of proposals with different emphases: charitable and service-oriented, formative, spiritual and educative-pastoral. However, each action, with its specificities, is called to be a sign and stimulus for young people and to introduce into the formative proposal a more fraternal style of personal relationships that reveals the family dimension of the EPC and the Church”*  
(YMF, CHAPTER 3, 3.2).

❖ Other professionals play an important role within our VTCs in the Salesian world (experts in personalised guidance and mentoring) or even outside the EPC (in-company mentors, experienced alumni and other stakeholders). For this reason, the role of the **company** is indispensable. The area of school-company relationships is also crucial for the success, particularly of *internships or periods* of on-the-job training at a company or institution: often the success of the internship depends on the right match between the student and the company mentor.

Consequently, we ensure the involvement of all those social and business forces that are particularly interested in the Vocational Training of workers, especially young workers. We need socially committed companies that are able to take a formative and transformative role in the lives of young people, especially those most in need.

Vocational Training in a work setting needs to be supported by the different forms of articulation of the training process (Regulations, framework agreements) between the VTC and the company, with both environments aiming to achieve more comprehensive learning. This approach requires *a close relationship between the different teaching-learning agents and environments*, with structure, management and systematization playing a key role in both VTC and training companies. We refer not only to companies but also to other workplaces such as public agencies (municipal, regional or national agencies) or nonprofit organizations.

# THE EDUCATIONAL-PASTORAL PROPOSAL OF THE SALESIAN VOCATIONAL TRAINING CENTER

CHAPTER



*“The aim that the Pious Salesian Society proposes in receiving and educating young artisans is to raise them in such a way that on leaving our houses, having completed its apprenticeship, they may have learned their trade so that they may honorably earn the bread of life; they may be well-instructed in religion and have the scientific knowledge appropriate to their state. It follows that threefold must be the address to be given to their religious-moral, intellectual and professional education.” (“Address to be given to the working part in Salesian houses,” from the Deliberations of the Fourth General Chapter of the Pious Salesian Society 1886 - it was the last one held under Don Bosco’s presidency).*

The Salesian educator has the task and the art of thinking about the content of his teaching from the point of view of the integral development of young people. The goal is to provide students with numerous opportunities to enhance *their professional and personal development, a comprehensive development of each of their faculties and dimensions, as well as the values derived from them.*

*On the one hand, job skills, that is, those essential for work; on the other hand, the attitudinal skills of “knowing how to be” and “knowing how to act”. The latter include affective-motivational and social-relational skills: maturity, emotional security, self-esteem and sense of self-efficacy, empathy, assertive communication, teamwork and leadership, conflict management and resolution, good interpersonal relationships, and personal ethics, among others.*

At this point, it is appropriate to briefly recall some essential features of the educative-pastoral practice that make Salesian VTC *an excellent means of holistic formation*: a valuable element in the development of the upright citizen, and a context for effective evangelization of the good Christian.

3

1

## INSPIRATION FROM GOSPEL VALUES AND THE FAITH PROPOSAL

❖ With extraordinary educational genius Don Bosco succeeds in finding new responses for the youth reality of his time, analyzing its complexity and interpreting its needs. Moreover, he knows all human aspects: *from work to family, moral and religious life.*

It should be noted that students in our centers generally have different ideas and perceptions of life and hold a variety of worldviews. However, our educational proposal is first and foremost an ecosystem whose fundamental value lies precisely in the search for the well-being of the person with a view to holistic maturation. The central concern of the VTC is the **wholeness of the person**, whether man or woman **and their equal dignity and complementary ability** to build the society. Because the mere offering of vocational subjects, however great it may be, is unable to produce good Christians and upright citizens.

The VTC intends *to create a network of interventions based on the SEPP and the situation of the young people it welcomes.* In this context, three educational-pastoral proposals for the VTC environment are listed below: the centrality of spirituality and work ethic; the accompaniment of students; and the revitalization of the humanistic dimension.

❖ It seems important to us to recover in our Vocational Training Centers **the centrality of spirituality and the work ethic.** Simple spirituality is part of everyday life, and it also ennobles the person. It is a spirituality that is a source for overcoming challenges and an ethical life, for the search and recovery of human, scientific, moral and spiritual values.

It becomes necessary to recover a “spirituality of work,” understood not solely as a one more task to be carried out, but as a privileged form of communication, self-expression, self-realization, interpersonal and social relationships that are always new, and the contribution of the human being to the improvement of the world in which he or she lives and works.

The technical-scientific culture is insufficient from the point of view of the growth of the person: it even runs the risk, if made absolute, of excluding the possibility of access to the more human dimension. The need for serious technical training cannot be separated from a broader ethical training. Indeed, there is no doubt that human work has an ethical value, which is completely and directly linked to the fact that the person who carries it out is a person, a conscious and free subject, i.e. a subject who decides for him/herself.

Good ethical behaviour will enable the learner to set priorities and choose the best values in the service of which to put techniques and skills.

As we have seen, Don Bosco felt the extraordinary edifying power of the human personality in all the senses and moments of work as an educational

tool. In this sense, the pedagogy of work is an important element of a holistic Salesian education for life in today's world:

*“Provinces will foster a commitment to the education of young workers. They will participate in the pastoral activity of the particular Churches by offering special initiatives and services. They will strive to be well-informed about the world of work and the conditions under which young people work. They will ensure that Vocational Training Centers pay attention to pastoral, pedagogical and technical aspects and that appropriate programs are developed to educate young people in an authentic spirituality of work.” (REG. 2)*

❖ A fundamental starting point is **the accompaniment of young people**: getting to know their human and religious richness, observing the context of their environment, assessing how much positivity they have within them, and listening carefully to their expectations. The laboratory, the classroom, the courtyard and all the other spaces of the Center are a place of encounter, beyond the different roles. Essential is this “pedagogy of daily situations” that hides enormous educational possibilities: they are “free” opportunities for listening and proposing; it is a ministry of familiarity.

This connectivity of daily interactions generates relationships characterized by *mutual acceptance*, *unconditional* respect, collaboration and a sense of responsibility, and is thus evangelical. The ability to build relationships that are not only functional but active is one of the key elements of the quality of Christian-inspired Vocational Training institutions.

❖ The scope of **gender identity laws** passed by some governments and their many important implications for the education sector cannot be minimised. On the one hand, many of these legal provisions contain rules that educational institutions must follow in the event that a student raises a particular situation related to his or her gender identity. On the other hand, they contain more or less prescriptive guidelines for the education of students on these issues.

This second aspect, in particular, is of great importance for training in our Vocational Training Centers and touches on very important issues related to the concept of the person to be taught, which come into contact -

and sometimes clash head-on - with the anthropological assumptions of a Christian view of the person.

It is therefore important, and not only because of these laws, that Salesian VTCs have a *programme of affective-sexual education* that is adapted to the different ages of the students. Students must be supported in their maturation process, in full accordance with Christian anthropology and with respect for their personal rights and freedoms.

Furthermore, it is essential to convey *a message of support and full respect for each person in our centres*, aware of their individuality. Personal matters require careful and prudent handling, always for the benefit of the young person, especially in the light of our principles and values. Every young person needs time and an environment of trust in which to grow. It is therefore important to create a friendly and welcoming environment for all students.

Finally, in this context, it is necessary for the Province to establish a set of criteria (see YML, chapter 7), guidelines and protocols that determine how to act in situations related to gender identity experienced by the students. All these tools must be known by all the staff of the centre (religious, teachers, various collaborators, volunteers, etc.) since they are all educators. In this sense, it is necessary to promote measures to detect, prevent and protect against discrimination or harassment and to avoid the transmission of discriminatory content. This action necessarily entails education on the fundamental principle of respect for the human dignity inherent in every person.

❖ The current context makes it desirable that Vocational Training should be rooted in **an education that does not separate the technical from the humanistic**. One cannot address the question of culture and work in a Catholic-inspired Vocational Training Center without bringing to light the agenda of values (centered on a shared vision of the person, the world and God) with a *holistic anthropological vision inspired by Christian humanism*.

*It is absolutely necessary to avoid the risk of neglecting or even excluding the link with the fundamental values that underlie scientific and technological “knowledge.” Education in values, ideals and research are some of the educational aspects that form the backbone of an integral educational action.*

In the different subject areas, teachers introduce students to a living or vital encounter with the cultural and professional heritage in dialogue with Christian humanism. In this sense, *special attention is paid to the careful selection of textbooks and other teaching materials*. However, where necessary, the production of reference books is also encouraged to ensure that the content is based on authentic values and is consistent with the Social Doctrine of the Church.

The training reality as it has developed and as it is maintained and implemented by the VTCs, despite the difficulties, enables the Church to have a presence in the world of work. Those who work in the VTCs are aware that giving a qualification to a young person, to a person who needs work, is already today an opportunity *for a first step towards salvation*.

## 3 2 EFFICIENT AND QUALIFIED EDUCATION

❖ Among the many ways through which evangelization can be realized, we Salesians **favor those in which the educational concern is most respected**, where its well-defined processes are guaranteed. In a very general sense, education is a “planned” intervention (with specific goals, defined roles, and appropriate experiences) and teamwork (EPC). With this in mind, Salesian VTCs offer a quality educational-cultural proposal in which:

- ▶ the teaching/learning dynamics are grafted onto a *solid educational foundation* to manage the right transition to a green and digital economy, in times of demographic and economic cycles changes;
- ▶ it is to identify, plan and implement Vocational Training that is *accredited and aimed at educational success*, countering school and training dropouts;
- ▶ continuous attention is cultivated so that *young people are able to think critically* about their experience, their lives and the natural, social and cultural, local and global context in which they are found;
- ▶ an orderly *pedagogical-methodological approach* is offered, fostering in young people the discovery of their project of life;

- ▶ the continuous updating of the *professional qualification and Salesian identity* of all members of the EPC is guaranteed with systematic processes of ongoing formation;
- ▶ an adequate pedagogy and planning of the educational action is fostered by taking care of the close relationship of *educational, didactic, and pastoral objectives*;
- ▶ *a network and common experiences connecting all VTC educators and students throughout the Salesian world are ensured*.

❖ The cutting edge is the **educational-vocational dimension of orientation**, that is, capable of accompanying each young person to know himself, his aptitudes and inclinations, and the world of work and professions, enabling him to choose the project for his future and the best way to achieve it.

Guidance understood in this way is not limited to the provision of an occasional service that intervenes in decision-making moments with tests submitted by technicians and psychologists, but takes the form of an educational journey that accompanies the young person; indeed, a collective enterprise, which requires teachers to recognize the interests and desires of their students but also to concretely support and realistically encourage their path, so that the choices they are considering are transformed into effective possibilities.

❖ It is imperative to ensure **formation in professionalism**, in which the young person is involved in an overall educational process in which, alongside work-related skills, he learns the rights and duties of active citizenship; in which he/she experiences social behaviors marked by cooperation, individual responsibility and solidarity; in which he increases his own cultural knowledge; in which he matures his identity in order to integrate into the social and civil fabric.

*The main purpose of VTC is not the schooling of students, but their integration into the world of work. This is a short-term job prospect; in many cases, it is the last opportunity to enter the world of work. It is, therefore, an education “for” the work of young people and an education “through” work, a fundamental element of the Salesian educational-pastoral proposal: work is not only considered an existential necessity, but also a value through*

*which one builds, realizes, and expresses one's creative capacity and more generally one's personality.*

It is necessary to ensure *employability* that guarantees students the possibility of finding a job and the involvement they have achieved with the business fabric. For this, it is necessary to establish new learning methods and develop and expand training offerings, particularly in the growing labor sectors.

For this reason, vocational training centers must also offer special attention to *young workers or the unemployed*, fostering their reception and protagonism, adopting a methodology that facilitates their integration into the environment, and offering initiatives that respond to the needs they feel most.

Employment training initiatives, aid for self-employment, work grants and similar initiatives have sprung up in various places.

### 3 3 SALESIAN PEDAGOGY

Salesian VTC achieves its goals with **Don Bosco's method and style of education**:

*"This system - writes Don Bosco in the first paragraphs of the 1877 Booklet on 'The Preventive System in the Education of Youth' - is all based on reason, religion and loving kindness. Because of this it excludes every violent punishment and tries to do without even mild punishments."*

Its educational system (Preventive System) is based above all on three pillars, closely interrelated, deeply integrated with each other, both in the aims and contents, as well as in the means and methods: Religion (the anthropological openness to the existence of the transcendent and the search for God), Reason (the rationality that guides minds and consciences with the clarity of ideas and truths, never through suggestion or moral or psychological violence) and Loving-kindness (the affective relational style), which are manifested in cheerfulness, work, spirit of sacrifice and loving one another as in a family.

The experience of the following aspects offers the typical trait of our educational centers:

- ▶ Animating, orienting and coordinating in an *Oratorian* way, making the institution a family where young people have "their home" (cf. *Const.* 40), a welcome in a place where one feels good and where one perceives the meaning of what one does;
- ▶ Emphasizing the *personalization of educational relationships*, based on trust, dialogue and the presence-assistance of the educators among the youth in some significant spaces (the courtyard, the workshop, the good morning or good afternoon talk, social gatherings, cultural visits, Salesian festivals or events);
- ▶ Taking care of balance, moderation, rationality of regulations, prescriptions, interpersonal relations, constantly motivated and integrated by the requirements and encouragement of the educator who is actively present;
- ▶ Taking on the *integrality of young people's lives*, making the educators participate in youth interests, and promoting leisure activities such as theater, sports, music, and art in an educational environment of familiarity;
- ▶ Preparing them to *responsibly take an active role* in family life and civil society.

Lastly, learning is also strongly influenced by the state of *emotional well-being*: the affectivity/intelligence relationship acts in continuous interaction whenever this connection is dominated by fear (of not being worthwhile, of not being loved, of not making it, of not being understood, of being deceived...) there is an unproductive blocking of rational abilities, of the ability to decide, to take initiatives. It is important that the young person has, from the very beginning, the feeling that he or she will not be alone in moments of confusion and uncertainty but can count on the support of Salesian formators (see YML, Chapter 6).

### 3 4 SOCIAL FUNCTION AND ATTENTION TO THOSE MOST IN NEED

*"Let the Salesian school be for the poorest people: this should be reflected in its setting, culture, curriculum and choice of students. Organize services to the people of the area, such as cultural and*



*professional training, literacy and remedial programs, scholarship funds and other initiatives.” (REG. 14).*

School programs are open to collaboration with businesses with other partners or agencies. Educators accompany the **integration of young people into reality**, in collaboration with related educational/training institutions and agencies. The full integration of young people into their environment and their assumption of responsibility represent a goal of the process of holistic education in the Salesian VTC. Our VTCs aim to contribute to the building of a more just and humane society. To accomplish this:

- ▶ they seek to establish themselves in the *most popular areas* and give preference to the inclusion and equal opportunities of the *young people most in need*;
- ▶ they denounce *any discriminatory conditions or realities of exclusion*;
- ▶ they give preference to the criterion of *accompanying everyone* over that of selecting the best;
- ▶ they promote a systematic *social formation* of their members;
- ▶ they give priority to the *fair inclusion and smooth integration of young people into the world of work, seeing them improve their quality of life and receive educational support for professional advancement* while maintaining systematic contact with the business world;
- ▶ they become centers of animation and cultural and educational services for the betterment of the environment, privileging those curricula, specializations and carefully designed programs that meet *the needs of young people in the locality*;
- ▶ they demonstrate *closeness and solidarity*, with the availability of the people and premises, the provision of promotional services open to all, and collaboration with other educational and social institutions;
- ▶ they promote a significant presence in the world of *alumni* so that they can be actively and *purposefully* included in the cultural,

educational and professional dialogue taking place in the area and the local Church.

As we have stated, the purpose of our educational intervention is not only to prepare young people for work but also to make them fit to carry out their vocation with dignity and thus **to collaborate in the transformation of society**. This objective requires us to set certain priorities in the educational programs of Vocational Training Centers, such as the centrality of the human person over the economy, preferential attention to the weakest and most vulnerable in the pursuit of the good of the community, safeguarding the dimension of “solidarity citizenship” over the overwhelming power of profit, professionalism lived out in terms of personal and professional skills, and the promotion of equitable models of development that prevent the widening gap of inequalities in the system.

3 5

### A WELCOMING ENVIRONMENT IN MULTICULTURAL AND MULTIRELIGIOUS CONTEXTS

As Salesian VTCs have been established in different contexts to provide education and training for all young people, this extends to non-Catholic and non-Christian contexts; still others in multicultural and multiethnic societies. But even in some non-Christian countries, young people choose the Salesian VTC because it is a good environment that certainly teaches values and discipline in addition to its educational and vocational standards. **Salesian VTC is becoming a beacon of diversity and inclusion.**

By welcoming students of different cultures and faiths, the Salesian VTC familiarizes them with different perspectives which is an essential step in the development of their morality. *Such a welcoming environment allows multicultural and Christian humanism-based interactions* that can lead to a broader worldview, the development of certain attitudes such as respect, compassion, responsibility, personal integrity and friendship (which are genuinely evangelical values), an appreciation of the beauty of life and even a deeper understanding of one’s own faith. It is possible to respect and promote the faith of non-Catholic students without “watering down” the Catholic faith for all those who are interested.

*Salesian educators in these contexts must be prepared to deal not only with the students but also with the cultural and religious challenge that the students we face, both as citizens and as believers. Even some non-Catholic educators can be integrated into the teaching staff, thanks to their educational and vocational expertise and their desire to fulfil the mission.*

Therefore, the formation of lay educators on the Preventive System and Salesian Youth Spirituality must be carefully programmed and implemented.

When Salesian VTCs welcome non-Christian students and respond to their needs, they plant seeds of faith through their identity and values of Christian humanism that permeate students' experiences. Proselytism has no place in the educational environment because it is proof of counter-witness. Educators who treat non-Christian students with respect and care have a wonderful opportunity to model their Christian faith through life witness and the explicit and timely proclamation of the Word (initial proclamation). For young people, whether they admit it or not, possess this hunger for something deeper within them and realize that they are seeking God or that God is patiently seeking them.

# THE ORGANIC PASTORAL ANIMATION OF THE SALESIAN VOCATIONAL TRAINING CENTER

CHAPTER

IV

*“In each professional house an exhibition of the work done by our students should be made annually on the occasion of the distribution of prizes, and every three years a general exhibition should be made in which all our artisan houses take part.” (“Address to be given to the workers’ part in Salesian Houses,” from the Deliberations of the Fourth General Chapter of the Pious Salesian Society 1886 - it was the last one held under Don Bosco’s presidency).*

## 4 1 MAIN INTERVENTIONS OF THE PROPOSAL

❖ In the Salesian tradition, people, time, space, relationships, teaching, study, work, and all other activities interact in a climate of serenity, joy, and commitment: **this is the educational environment.**

In addition to attention to the duties of study, research and work, it is educationally important to obtain respect and care for the tools, equipment and premises (welcoming, healthy and clean places and spaces) in which school and professional life take place, as an expression of belonging.

It is necessary to qualify educational relationships on the basis of the adequacy of needs, the appreciation of daily life and educational accompaniment. *The courtyard is an inevitable and central factor for this.* It is not just a place for activities and initiatives but is set up as a time for building personal relationships starting with animation, games, and sports.

*The Salesian courtyard is an educational space rich in meaning in which diverse interactions take place. The Salesian “educational presence” in the courtyard is **an authentic educational action** that creates welcoming and listening conditions that allow young people to develop independently and exercise their freedom. Experiencing complete togetherness outside school is very different from being together in a classroom or workshop. After these experiences, the young people feel better about themselves, each other and their teachers.*

Each Salesian VTC is called upon to safeguard the times and spaces set aside for students to meet spontaneously. The EPC makes sure that young people are assisted in this space in the spirit of Don Bosco.

Indeed, the discovery and revelation of one’s own self can only take place in a *context in which one feels welcome and accepted as one is.* If this premise is lacking, the young person with low self-esteem will continue to present himself according to stereotypes and external conditions which exclude the possibility of developing spontaneously and authentically as well as defining personal goals that correspond to his own life project.

Salesian Vocational Training is, therefore, a highly “personalized” formation, where each and every person has the space to realize his or her own life by developing an autonomous personality and critical and independent thinking.

Each VTC encourages the building of a safe and welcoming community that readily addresses problems of bullying and cyberbullying, demotivation, isolation, depression, or any other mental health problem.

*In today’s complex environment, the educational environment must provide guidance on the proper use and management of technology and social media to **build healthy virtual connections** while continuing to foster real-life interpersonal relationships.*

❖ Salesian education places young people at the center of its educational and evangelizing activity. The pedagogical style, which flows from the desired environment, is relational and therefore requires **the active and animating presence** of the educator. Don Bosco’s words, “It is not enough to love the young, it is necessary for them to know that they are loved,” have a strong impact on the educational apostolate. Salesian educators adopt “loving kindness” as a fundamental style in dealing with young people, especially those who are “unlovable.” As a result, young people value the friendships formed during their formation in a Salesian VTC.

Salesian VTC upholds the maxim that “education takes place always and everywhere,” in any place and at any time. This is why **“Salesian assistance”** is a hallmark of Don Bosco’s pedagogy. It is an animating presence that goes beyond the boundaries of physical space and “office hours.”

Traditionally it takes place on the playground, in the classroom, in workshops, in the theater, etc. In the digital age, Salesian assistance and accompaniment take place beyond the boundaries of physical space, that

is, the “presence” and influence accompanying the Salesian educator can take place in social networks.

*Young people who study in the Salesian VTC are often attracted to the familiar environment they encounter. In the animation of EPCs, it is important that educators are increasingly willing to have **personal encounters with students**. Taking into account the different stages of student development, the educators in each sector should provide quality spaces and times for personal encounters with the students for a discussion about the progress made by each one and the proposals to be indicated.*

All educators should be available for *personal dialogue*, but some of them should devote special attention to this service to young people. A mentoring program can be established in which educators involve qualified members of the Salesian Family to accompany the students. And while psychological guidance is an important service to be rendered to students, Salesians can make themselves available for personal accompaniment.

❖ **The organized contents of various disciplines** are offered as knowledge to be acquired, truths to be discovered, techniques to be mastered, answers to deep questions, and values to be assimilated. Contributing to this is the clarity of knowledge, the pedagogical approach, and above all the fundamental cultural ideas that are transmitted.

In this formative sense, *multi-year courses achieve better results than one-year courses*. In this sense, vocational training shouldn't be “reduced,” aimed solely at facilitating a quick entry into the labor market without acquiring a differentiated repertoire of skills (not only vocational and scientific knowledge but also ethical, social and cultural perspectives).

This means, on the one hand, emphasizing the human experience that underlies the various disciplines, helping young people to grasp, appreciate and assimilate the values inherent in the facts presented and explored; and, on the other hand, keeping an open interest in *universal culture*, in contact with the expressions of different peoples and with the patrimony of values shared by humanity.

In the Salesian VTC, educators activate *formative programs that are rich* in the contributions of Christian and Salesian humanism and relate to

the central nodes of the maturation of young people: *the formation of conscience, education to love, socio-political education, education in the care for creation and, in particular, religious formation*. In the current context of VTCs, the well-designed curriculum needs to be complemented by practical and project-based learning opportunities that help students solve problems in real-life situations.

*The exhibition of final projects at the end of the training year is a very common practice. Organizing such events significantly increases the motivation of students and also becomes beneficial from the point of view of learning i.e. educational success. The teachers go to great lengths, even if it means a lot of extra work. They do so willingly because they often receive positive feedback.*

❖ For Don Bosco, Salesian education is a matter of the heart; it goes beyond a “rigid” teaching method. An effective teaching method seeks the good of each person and the means to bring out the best in them. For this reason, we choose **the personalization of proposals and mutually enriching collaboration** as our teaching-educational method. Sometimes young people who opt for vocational training come with different motivations (the practicality of the course, a weak desire to study, repeated failures in training, the possibility of working soon) and the trainers make them the architects of their own destiny by discovering abilities, especially manual skills, that others had failed to bring out.

These active didactics, based on the use of inductive method, develop in students the capacity for discovery, taking into account their level and pace of learning, and mature habits of creativity and autonomous cultural growth; an interdisciplinary approach in which different areas of the disciplines offer complementary contributions; and the evaluation of students' development processes, their learning and research skills through regular constructive feedback and not just by looking at the final results.

Educational methods and tools (*discipline, regulations, organisation of the educational community, interventions by the educator*) must be inspired by common sense, simplicity, functionality and attention to diversity.

*In this regard, the issue of adherence to rules must be discussed: Rules are the boundary line that demarcates appropriate behavior from inappropriate behavior, but more importantly, send*

*a message of clarity and restraint. The acquisition of rules goes hand in hand with the acquisition of self-confidence and a student's recognition of his or her own worth. Unfortunately, the process of appropriation is neither obvious nor simple; the authoritative qualities of the educators and their flexibility in allowing young people to experience some transgressions become crucial.*

❖ Holistic education requires the completion of the academic-vocational program **with other freely chosen complementary programs and activities that support them**. The Salesian VTC gives ample space to leisure and recreational activities (art, recreation, sports, culture), tending to become a full-time school as well.

The Salesian VTC makes room for *different groups* (study-research, cultural, recreational, artistic, community service, volunteer, Christian growth, vocational guidance or Christian commitment), and promotes and accompanies them, recognizing in them a privileged mediation of education and evangelization. Some VTCs offer workshops on practical life skills, such as financial literacy, media education, and health/wellness programs. Some VTCs provide opportunities for informal gatherings, lounges, music rooms, etc. Specific times for participation in such activities should be included in annual planning.

One of the pillars holding up the identity of Salesian VTCs is **the clear and organic articulation of explicitly evangelizing interventions**. The educational-pastoral proposal is translated into experiences and activities that are dear to the Salesian tradition:

- ▶ the peculiar and synthetic moment of the dynamics of reflection and self-education is the "Good Morning," *short daily encounters* arranged for the entire community or groups, inspired by the "Good Night" talk practiced by Don Bosco in his life experience with boys at Valdocco. The "Good Morning" is a time of prayer and wise reading of life with a view to a progressive assumption of a Christian judgment of events;
- ▶ *formative and spiritual experiences* are offered to both staff and students *throughout* the school year. Carried out preferably during the strong times of the liturgical year, they are favorable times for

growth in faith and evaluation of one's life in light of the Christian message;

- ▶ faithful to when Don Bosco lived with the boys at Valdocco, each VTC proposes explicit moments of *prayer and celebration*. Students belonging to other Christian denominations or other religions may also participate in the said activities as opportunities for cultural integration and knowledge of the religious tradition of the nation in which they live. The Eucharist and celebrations of liturgical seasons or local devotions are an integral part of the educational-pastoral proposal. Special attention should be paid to times for the celebration of the Sacrament of Reconciliation according to an appropriate schedule, provided for in the planning of annual formative activities;
- ▶ times of *gathering and celebration* should be provided as occasions for the expression of recognition and education on shared responsibility and belonging. Families and the various components of the EPC should be actively involved in the organization and implementation of some of these initiatives. Special emphasis should be given to the celebration of Salesian feasts, moments of growth in family spirit and gratitude.

*Encounters between students from different VTCs at the provincial, national, regional or world levels can be a source of enrichment to broaden their perspectives and worldviews. These encounters can take the form of exchange programs or other gatherings involving technical exhibitions, cultural presentations, sports competitions, team building, formation in Salesian youth spirituality, and religious experiences. If the objectives for this type of program are set, the activities organized and the experiences reflected upon, this encounter will prove to be an effective celebration of Salesian education.*

Even when students have graduated from our VTCs, continuous accompaniment during the period of their immediate departure from the institutions would lead them to gradually live their lives after Salesian education.

It is part of the Salesian tradition to maintain contact with *Salesian Past Pupils*, the young people who have attended our VTCs. It is necessary to

find the best ways to involve them as individuals and as a group. In some countries, in fact, Salesian VTCs have begun to follow up with their alumni in the 24-36 months after graduation to ensure good job opportunities for them and to keep them close to the Salesian environment.

❖ Our educational vocation invites us to think carefully about the impact that a systematic experience of failure can have and to ask ourselves, as educators, the following question: *“How can I help this student to have a successful experience? What can educational success mean for him?”*

The success or failure of Salesian education also depends on the willingness, readiness and ability of Salesian educators to facilitate, accompany and implement programs and activities. Hence, the urgency and importance of continuing formation.

Indeed, **the formation and updating of teachers** are great opportunities for every educational institution and those who work in it. The current context demands that our Salesian VTCs provide ongoing teacher training that accompanies teachers throughout their professional lives.

Within Vocational Training Centers it is sometimes necessary to plan for *retraining* with a view to learning new skills and/or retraining with a view to planning a new set of qualifications.

Opportunities for *exchange programs* (both nationally and internationally): a wide range of activities are supported, including job shadowing and professional development courses for staff, traineeships and long-term placements, invited experts, and other activities. All these professional development programs form the Salesian educators to be animators and facilitators of learning rather than mere instructors.

There is a need for training and updating of our teachers - not only with regard to teaching methods and their disciplines - that will qualify their professionalism in the Salesian school, according to a *formation project that combines faith, science and life*. Therefore, the formation of teachers should ensure a pedagogically effective professionalism; a qualified Salesian educational style; a Christianly lived spirituality; a humanly rich and welcoming personality. Greater attention to the educational pastoral care of the specific dynamics of the school is desired in their formation.

*Local or provincial initiatives that respond to a provincial plan for teacher formation be regularly scheduled, with **special care given to the formation of newly hired teachers**. Those entering Salesian Professional Education for the first time are offered content and methodological support specific to this area, according to the SEPP.*

These courses, days of reflection and formation, in which Salesian VTC teachers are required to participate, will involve them in a journey that includes knowledge of Don Bosco and the Preventive System. There will also be an exchange of the practical aspects inherent in methodology and teaching in the Salesian tradition.

❖ All the indicated elements and interventions that make up the VTC *must be integrated into the broader and overall SEPP*, according to the legislative provisions issued by the Governments. **The SEPP pastoral planning** expresses, shapes and defines the identity of the institution, making explicit the Gospel values that inspire it, and translating them into precise and operational terms. The SEPP is the criterion for all choices and interventions (curriculum, choice of teachers and textbooks, lesson plans, evaluation criteria and procedures). It distinguishes the pastoral intentionality that animates the entire EPC, which is decisive in all elements and articulations of VTC. It is the conscience that guides the EPC in achieving its goals, evaluating its efforts and seeking further improvements.

As educational institutions, our Salesian centers fit into a historical context and are defined by national laws that determine the system of organization and teaching, routinely recognizing and approving our goals and objectives for the VTC, our principles and values that characterize them.

*The SEPP is our “identity card.” It presents the charisma that inspires our educational offerings (the original motivation must continue to enlighten our work today); the concept of holistic education; the EPC as our model of educative community; the values of reference; the educational method and the preferred options in any given circumstance.*

The identity of our Salesian VTC as established in the local SEPP will, therefore, constitute a common educational program for all students and all classes. The SEPP, which explicitly lays out evangelizing interventions in

pastoral planning, is fully consistent with the culture of the educational curriculum (educational and didactic choices in general); it is also consistent with the broader extracurricular and organizational offerings, together with the managerial proposals (formation programs, activities, educational initiatives, organization and management of structures, personnel and resources of the school). *Pastoral activity is not isolated but permeates the entire educational work.*

❖ All the various components of the EPC, therefore, endeavor to realize the main contents of Salesian pedagogy in today's world. This is all the more true for those who, by virtue of their role, function and capacity, **are called to the service of leadership of the institutes-centers.** The areas in which this educational leadership could best be realized concern:

- the management of human resources (selecting people, developing their capabilities, planning personal and organizational goals, organizing roles, tasks and functions);
- the guidance of people (valuing, encouraging, increasing their motivational level, orienting, supporting);
- the formation of people (at the professional, human, Salesian and Christian levels).

But there is also a second level that aims to ensure that things work well inside the organization. The selection of personnel, the economic management of the Center, the management of human resources according to a specific organizational chart, the acquisition of economic and financial resources, the distribution of these resources on the minimal operation of the Center and pedagogical and didactic innovation, the maintenance of the administrative, managerial, regulatory, technological and didactic back office, the dissemination of the image of the Center in the territory, the contact with other VTCs, parents, social services among others, are some of the main leadership actions at this level of the organization.

**The management of economic resources, property and equipment** must be carried out per the guidelines of the province and with due administrative transparency. The Vocational Training Centers document the amounts following the applicable regulations and keep records of training activities.

## 4 2

## THE STRUCTURES OF PARTICIPATION AND ACCOUNTABILITY

### Local Animation

The structures of participation and shared responsibility are designed to create ideal conditions for ever-greater communion, sharing and collaboration between the different components of the EPC. The aim is to implement conscientiously the Educative and Pastoral Project and to see growth in collaboration between teachers, students and parents. These structures vary according to countries and different school legislations. This is why every Province should define the *concrete and appropriate organization procedures, internal functioning and responsibilities in its VTCs*, keeping in mind the following elements:

- first, the **EPC Council for the VTC** (or another appropriate term), in accordance with the provisions of each Province, is the body that animates and orients all Salesian activities through reflection, dialogue, planning and review of all educational-pastoral action (QR, Chapter VIII, n.2.1/d);
- secondly, the **teaching body** is responsible for the planning of educational guidelines in terms of proposal, discussion, decision and evaluation in accordance with the SEPP. Every VTC also ensures that the teaching body has certain structures: commissions (or teams or working groups) and departments (or different disciplines) with a view to the planning, programming and implementation of educational initiatives;
- finally, **the Pastoral Team**, headed by the pastoral coordinator, provides leadership for evangelizing activities, by taking care of its deep integration into the teaching and educational process. The criteria for the composition of this team are defined locally. Some students are also members of the team (QR, Chapter VIII, no. 6.3/b).

### Provincial/National/Regional Animation

The organizational structures provided for Salesian VTCs exist at the provincial, national and international (or regional) levels. They can be

**civilly recognized legal entities.** With clear policies and processes, this network of cooperation at different levels represents an active presence in the vocational training system, interacting with the production sector, public (governmental or civil society) and private institutions for research and development in vocational training, other social partners (companies and nongovernmental organizations) and trade unions, as well as with other national and international bodies interested in educational processes and labor policies. These structures serve to orient existing and potential partners in the educational and evangelizing mission of the Salesian VTCs, which goes in harmony with the building and transformation of society.





