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“What Must Be Done?”: Vincentian Teacher Preparation in the 21st Century

CHRISTOPHER WORTHMAN, PH.D.
As a teacher educator at a Vincentian university, I began wondering a few years ago what Vincentianism could contribute to pre-K through 12th-grade teacher preparation. I wondered, in part, because public debate about education seldom considers inherently complex and complicated societal problems such as poverty, oppression, and inequality, problems that have mobilized Vincentians for nearly 400 years. Like Rev. Craig B. Mousin, I asked: “What can be culled from Vincent and those who followed that provide particular substance for this mission without reducing it to generalities lacking power and vision?”1 In this article, I take up this question with a focus on how to define Vincentianism teacher preparation, and what it can contribute to preparing pre-K-through 12th-grade teachers in the twenty-first century. I draw on Vincentian history to identify principles for preparing teachers of all faiths who will work in all types of schools with religiously, culturally, socially, and economically diverse populations. As noted by Betty Ann McNeil, D.C., the Vincentian charism is secular in nature. It moves the religious outside the cloister to serve others, to be a part of the world, as a way of responding to the needs of others.2 As such, it speaks to the needs of the world and thus must not only be responsive but also accessible to all. The principles defined in this article are designed to facilitate this movement.

Education Today: The Effect of Accountability and Standardization

Present-day debates about education focus almost exclusively on questions about student learning and teacher quality. These are, no doubt, important, legitimate questions. For the past twenty-five years, however, the questions have been answered most strenuously with calls for more accountability and stricter standards of performance, and they have been directed most visibly at schools that serve nonmainstream and socio-economically disadvantaged students. For these students, this has meant increasingly standardized curriculum and assessment. It has also meant increased focus on skills development, notably skills believed relevant for employment, such as communication and technology. For teachers, this has meant increased accountability for student learning. Standardization and accountability have led to a range of responses among school districts that serve these students, including adopting standardized, fabricated curricula, eliminating coursework thought unrelated to skills development, such as art and physical education, and instituting stringent disciplinary policies to control student behavior.

Although emphasis on standardized testing has begun to wane, with the U.S. Department of Education calling for less testing,3 state funding and school status are still often tied to test scores, as are increasingly more teacher evaluation processes. Tests scores


are used to determine the *value added* to students’ education by a teacher.\(^4\) That is, scores are compared to expected student gains across an academic year to determine teaching efficacy. Other learning effects, as well as mitigating factors beyond teacher control such as poverty and students’ previous experience, are inconsequential and subsumed by an emphasis on personal responsibility. The importance of student-teacher relationships and factors not easily quantifiable such as students’ psychological and emotional well-being, moral development, and broader thinking skills related to concept development and creative and critical thinking are minimized.

Similarly, standardized assessments propagate standardized curriculum. In its most outrageous form, this curriculum consists of pre-fabricated materials distilled down to an overt and repetitious focus on those skills tested. More assiduous varieties go as far as dictating teacher pacing and instructional sequencing, including scripting teacher instruction. Again, what these types of materials — materials described as teacher-proof — ignore is the integral role of human relationships to learning.\(^5\)

My experience working with teachers and students over the past twenty years suggests that standardization and accountability, even as they often arise from good intentions, diminish teacher-student relationships. They minimize the complexity and richness of student lives to a set of categories related to skills and performances that can be aggregated and disseminated to stakeholders.

I realize, however, that many people can probably name schools that have *not* been affected by increased accountability and standardization. Schools that serve predominantly middle- or upper-class students, regardless of location, tend to be quite different, with starkly higher student learning outcomes in comparison with schools that serve low-socio-economic and nonmainstream students. Comparatively, schools with predominantly middle- and upper-class students outperform schools from nations worldwide, while those that serve poor students are some of the lowest performing schools in the industrialized world.\(^6\) Clearly, standardization and accountability are issues of social justice by bent of how they manifest themselves unevenly across school districts depending on the students served.

Thus, our struggle in the United States, and where our standardized test scores take a huge hit when compared with those of other nations, is our futility in meeting the educational needs of poor children. Standardization and accountability have not alleviated the struggles of teachers and students in low-socio-economic schools, and in many ways


have exacerbated those struggles. Educational disparity is greater today than it was twenty-five years ago.\textsuperscript{7} One could say, in fact, that we do not have an education problem; what we have is a poverty problem that adversely affects educational opportunity. Standardization and accountability, and their manifestation in teacher preparation as Teacher Preparation Assessments (TPAs)\textsuperscript{8} or as long lists of state standards and indicators, have failed to account for the role human relationships play in making any endeavor relevant, meaningful, and achievable for people. Within this educational context, then, Vincentian teacher preparation is most needed, especially as a model which strives to define itself as distinct from other teacher preparation programs.

**Vincentian Education: Some Examples**

Anthony J. Dosen, C.M., wrote that it is hard to define what makes an education Vincentian.\textsuperscript{9} However, beginning with Vincent de Paul and Louise de Marillac, Vincentian education initiatives and practices have been omnipresent throughout Vincentian history. One reason, however, why it might be difficult to identify these practices as Vincentian is that much of what can be associated with and traced historically as part of Vincentian education is regarded as educational best practices today. For example, these practices include an emphasis among many educators, and most teacher preparation programs, on teaching for social justice. The challenge is to frame these practices in ways that are uniquely Vincentian and identify how the framing defines and enhances practice. Before doing this, however, let us consider several examples of Vincentian education initiatives across

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the centuries which might be used to establish historical reference points for introducing Vincentian principles.

The Formation of the Clergy

During his lifetime, Vincent introduced a number of educational initiatives that taken together reveal essential characteristics of Vincentian education. Emerging from his experience with Madame de Gondi at Folleville in 1617 and in response to her question, “What must be done?”, Vincent began to focus his work on the spiritual needs of the rural poor by evangelizing in rural areas.10 This first mission service evolved to include the formation of clergy. As Stanislaus Wypych, C.M., noted, Vincent became “convinced that the renewal of religious life in the Church had to begin with the reform of the clergy.”11

These early reform efforts took a decidedly educational turn in 1628 when, in response to the Bishop of Beauvais concerns about the preparation of priests, Vincent began to organize what we would call today professional development opportunities. He instituted retreats for ordinands to develop their “ecclesial spirit” to serve the rural poor.12 Subsequently, he started Tuesday Conferences and retreats for practicing priests to hone skills and to reflect on mission.13 Never satisfied with the status quo, Vincentians continued to refine professional development efforts. Distinct among these efforts was the seminary of renewal, or an additional year of seminary that was completed six or seven years after ordination as a way of honing skills and reinvigorating the priesthood.14

Similarly, at the same time Vincent was directing professional development for priests, Vincentian Seminary education spread across France and throughout Europe. In the nineteenth century, seminary education began in the United States. As a response to societal needs, Vincentian-led seminaries emphasized spirituality and preparation for the priesthood, an intricate combination of self-development and service that is a Vincentian trademark to this day.15

Education in the Service of the Poor

In the 1630s, Louise de Marillac and the Daughters of Charity began “little schools” for poor, rural girls in France.16 Like most of Vincent and Louise’s initiatives, these schools

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13 Ibid.
15 Mezzadri & Francesca Onnis, Ibid., Vol. 2.
grew from their experiences among the poor and from the immediate needs they identified. In the case of the little schools, Marguerite Naseau’s tenacious efforts to teach reading to and serve the needs of the poor were the seeds for what Jean Delemeau called “the considerable role that the Daughters of Charity played in overcoming illiteracy among the female population of France.”

From their understanding of this young woman’s experience and her efforts to educate others, Vincent and Louise systematically sought to address the needs of poor French girls, first in rural areas and then in cities. For them, Marguerite personified the capacity of the poor not only to transform their own lives, but also collectively to transform the conditions in which they lived through concerted, practical initiatives.

The Society of Saint Vincent de Paul, under the leadership of Frédéric Ozanam, would later build its mantra upon collective action that drew on all segments of society in the service of the destitute and working poor. The Society became one of the first and probably most effective social activist organizations in France and later in the world. Education, in the form of preparing Society members for activism and encouraging literacy and skills development among those with whom they worked, was a part of the Society’s earliest endeavors.

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Meeting Diverse Educational Needs

As the Society of Saint Vincent de Paul demonstrates, Vincentian educational endeavors became woven with other Vincentian activities over time. The formation and growth of Vincentian activities in the United States continued this integration, and, as experienced in the early 1800s, provided challenges related to working among religiously and culturally diverse people. Educational endeavors in this environment required ongoing flexibility and responsiveness. As Stafford Poole, C.M., noted, Vincentians had to adapt to a “frontier situation,” which meant that in their responsiveness to community concerns, they had to broaden their educational reach and integrate a quintessential American ethos with their Vincentian mission.

Educational reach in the United States included lay education at all levels, consisting of primary and secondary education, and ultimately university education. Thus, flexibility extended not only to preparing priests but also to responding to local needs, particularly those of the poor and underserved. With the growth of lay schools, and later with university education, Vincentian personalism was manifested in an emphasis on what education could do for the student and his or her community. These students were increasingly not Catholic and often without access to other educational opportunities because of gender, ethnicity, religion, and socio-economic status.

Flexibility and responsiveness were also reflected in the work of Elizabeth Ann Seton. Alice O’Neill, S.C., notes that Seton is popularly considered the patron saint of American Catholic education. She established the Sisters of Charity in the United States in 1809 and subsequently opened Saint Joseph’s Academy in Maryland the next year. The school served the children of poor and wealthy families alike by establishing standards of excellence for both students and teachers. Its philosophy was fashioned after Louise de Marillac’s little school, with a focus on meeting students’ spiritual and practical education needs. The teachers’ role was synonymous to Vincent’s vision of the priest’s role as a mentor and guide who recognized the uniqueness of each of his charges. Seton also believed in team teaching and in enlisting students to teach and mentor one another and serve as teacher aides, examples, again, of how Vincentian practices ultimately came to be supported through educational research as effective pedagogical practices.

Seton was ahead of her time in a number of other ways, too. She emphasized inclusivity by accepting all children at Saint Joseph’s. She noted that “abilities are not alike in all


22 Stafford Poole, C.M., “‘A Brave New World’: The Vincentians in Pioneer America,” Vincentian Heritage 14:1 (1993), 150. Available at: http://via.library.depaul.edu/vhj/vol14/iss1/8


25 Ibid.
and thus teachers had to be patient with and attentive to students, reflecting a level of care and love reminiscent of the love and care Vincent and Louise spoke of for the poor and oppressed. Teachers had to know how to identify and meet diverse student needs. To prepare teachers, Seton started a normal school in 1818. Judith Metz, S.C., wrote that Seton “established standards of excellence, insisted the sisters had time to study, and arranged that the more experienced teachers mentor the new ones.”

The Sisters of Charity, guided by their Rules, continued Seton’s work and their leadership of Catholic education spread across the United States.

Translating Vincentian Education into Principles of Vincentian Teacher Preparation

John E. Rybolt, C.M., in his survey of Vincentian education, identified it as person-oriented and focused on understanding the needs of students and the world as it is. He identified four principles of Vincentian education that, combined with our understanding of Vincentian Family history, can serve as starting points for thinking about teacher preparation: (1) emphasis on evangelization; (2) attention to the poor and neglected; (3) charitable action; (4) and empowerment of others. Citing Daughter of Charity Louise Sullivan’s work, Rybolt concluded that these principles’ core values are that they are holistic, integrated, creative, flexible, excellent, person-oriented, collaborative, and focused. In the three multi-faceted examples of Vincentian education I provided above, these foci and values are evident in the expansive yet focused nature of each example, and in how their design, administration, and goal never wavered from serving the poor and their communities.

29 Sullivan, “Core Values.”
Rybolt’s four principles, however, stand, in part, in contrast to present-day educational practice, especially his emphasis on evangelization and charitable action. These two principles reveal a level of religiosity absent from educational practice that is not parochial, and also from teacher preparation programs designed to prepare teachers for all types of settings. The other two principles — attention to the poor and neglected and the empowerment of others — reflect an understanding of the world as it is and of what needs to be done. These two are elemental to missions of social justice, which appears to be a cornerstone of nearly all teacher preparation programs, although what is meant by attention and empowerment is often unclear and always debatable.

Thus, from the three historical examples of Vincentian education I provide above and based on the work of Rybolt and Sullivan, we can discern an underlying commitment to the poor as an essential element of Vincentian education. This commitment has always been guided by a sense of immediacy or by the realization that something needed to be done. Related to this is the belief, first honed by Vincent, that what is done must be affective and effective — it has to enrich the spiritual and physical existence of participants. That is, it has to empower, and beyond that, I suggest, provide individuals with emancipatory opportunities, or opportunities to take control of their lives physically, intellectually, economically, emotionally, and spiritually.

When considering principles such as immediacy, and affective and effective action, then, there should be an underlying religiosity that guides and defines all actions. This religiosity can be traced back to Vincent de Paul and Louise de Marillac, found in the persons of Ozanam and Seton, and tied to the Catholic evangelical and charitable work that are part of Rybolt’s four principles. Together, Vincentian evangelical and charitable works reflect spirituality often referred to as Lucan. It is a spirituality premised on the idea that it is not enough to focus only on one’s own spiritual development, we must also act. The historical Vincentian education initiatives I cited reflect actions born of unshakeable spiritual commitment to others. In these examples, faith is revealed through word and deed.

These three principles of Vincentian teacher preparation, affective and effective action, a sense of immediacy, and a Lucan spirituality as word and deed, are rooted in Vincentian history and align with Rybolt’s and Sullivan’s definitions of Vincentian education. In the following sections, I will first define these principles, and then explore how they can be mobilized in a Vincentian teacher preparation program.

**Principles of Vincentian Education**

**Lucan Spirituality**

I begin with Lucan spirituality because who we assert to be, and how those assertions affect our actions, define who we are as people and as teachers. Lucan spirituality is revealed in the symmetry between one’s relationship with God and one’s relationship to
the world and with others, or in what Edward R. Udovic, C.M., refers to as the reciprocity of orthodoxy and orthopraxis.\textsuperscript{31} It is contingent on the inseparability of belief from practice. In addition, it is epitomized in the Gospel According to Luke, notably in verses like 4:18\textsuperscript{32} and 6:36,\textsuperscript{33} where Jesus calls on us to show mercy and bring the good news to the poor, imprisoned, and oppressed.

For Vincentian teacher preparation, the translation of Lucan spirituality into a working principle can be tendentious. Vincent and Louise lived in an overwhelmingly Catholic France, with Catholicism as the common denominator defining interactions with others. Today, to hold solely to a Catholic interpretation of religiosity, or even a Christian one, without recognizing the potentiality of other interpretations fails to account for diverse cultural, social, and religious experiences and values. If one’s religiosity fails to be inclusive of others’ experiences and perspectives, the spirituality that emanates from it will stymy one’s ability to serve others fully or to nurture orthopraxis.

However, interpreted too generally, Lucan spirituality loses the theological foundation that makes it Christian and provides meaning to and direction in serving the poor. It becomes disconnected from belief or orthodoxy, and thus it becomes no different than other ways of making sense of the world that are social-justice-centered. It loses that essential element of a clearly articulated developmental process and way of interacting with others that is fundamental to how Vincentians, religious and lay alike, are called to engage and serve the poor.

\textit{A Sense of Immediacy}

Vincentian educational initiatives, like all Vincentian initiatives, were born of immediacy. The initiatives arose in response to specific, identifiable needs. Success was measured by how well those needs were alleviated. Often Vincent and Louise identified the needs in consultation with others, which served as catalysts for action. Such was the case with Vincent’s commitment to priestly education. Beginning with Vincent’s response to de Gondi and the Bishop of Beauvais, Vincentian education has been and is driven by the immediacy of acting now to serve the poor and oppressed.

Vincent and Louise always responded quickly even as the activities and programs initiated might have taken years to be formally structured and institutionalized. Similarly, Vincentian education initiatives focused on issues and concerns that directly and indirectly affected the poor and oppressed, and on how best to address those issues and concerns in a timely manner. They strived to provide for the immediate spiritual and practical needs of the poor, thus establishing the precedent that education is essential to transforming the lives of the poor.

\textsuperscript{31} Edward R. Udovic, C.M, Personal communication, 6 April 2017.

\textsuperscript{32} “The Spirit of the Lord is on me because he has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to set the oppressed free.…”

\textsuperscript{33} “Be merciful, just as your Father is merciful.”
Affective and Effective Action

As the third principle of Vincentian education, affective and effective action brings together the sense of immediacy and Lucan spirituality. It defines action as service-oriented, as focused on the whole individual and society *writ large*, and as heart-felt, compassionate, and well thought out and implemented. Vincent said it is important “not only to do good, but to do it well.”34 That is, what is done not only needs to be worth doing and beneficial in the long-term to those in need, but it also needs to arise from and align with the most deeply held convictions of the actor.

Together, these three principles are contingent on one another for definition and relevancy. They continually reinvigorate one another. As principles of teacher preparation, they suggest specific approaches to teaching and learning that, although reflected in many of today’s most effective teaching practices, are distinctive in how future teachers can be prepared to think about themselves as teachers, and how they are prepared to interact with students. Knowing this, let us now consider each principle in greater detail and identify teacher preparation activities designed to make ready Vincentian teachers.

Fostering a Vincentian Spirituality in Pre-Service Teachers

In translating Lucan spirituality into specific curricular understandings that can be called Vincentian teacher education, I am translating a Christian perspective grounded in the Biblical record into a secular or nondenominational perspective designed to prepare teachers to forefront Vincentian service to the poor. However, I believe that spirituality, whether called Lucan or some other name (e.g., worldview, life source, philosophy, etcetera), is an appropriate term for the inner- or self-development of a teacher who practices Vincentian education. Spirituality, defined broadly, connotes a relationship with something or someone (for Christians, that is God) that arises from a contemplation of one’s inner being or existential origin. Highly personal in nature, it is, however, universal and available to anyone to the extent it reflects a human yearning and capacity for meaning-making. It receives resonance from more than one’s physical presence in the world. Resonance emanates from within a person and reflects one’s understanding of what it means to be a human in the world and to interact with others.

Thus, I use the term spirituality to suggest that Vincentian teacher preparation should prepare teachers committed to specific understandings about self and one’s place in the world and about the nature of human relations that are integral to existence. These understandings, while called Vincentian in this article, need not and should not exclude other cultural, social, or religious traditions that espouse similar understandings and go by different names. Indeed, these similar understandings, and the histories that inform them, are also substance for shaping Vincentian educational practices and facilitating self-reflection on the dynamic and living nature of Vincentianism.

In writing about Vincentian education, Donald Harrington, C.M., said that Vincent’s “approach to life and to mission was not based upon any elaborate theoretical or pre-determined system, but rather his writings and his teachings proclaim a dynamic view of spirituality and of reality.” He continued: “Vincent’s system was experiencing God in life and responding to the needs, the culture, and the challenges around him.” Thus, Harrington identified two assumptions that guide Vincentian education: (1) a living spirituality grounded in the day-to-day world, and (2) a love of the poor. These assumptions suggest a way-of-being contingent on the reciprocity of spirituality and reality, or on how they inform each other.

The way-of-being that Vincent espoused begins with the self, or with one’s own spiritual development. It moves outward into the world to interact with others based on who one is. It is a way-of-being founded on the relationship of one’s interior life (orthodoxy) and one’s actions (orthopraxis). Udovic suggests that spirituality is manifested in the

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36 Ibid., 131.
reciprocity of orthodoxy and orthopraxis. Vincent’s life exemplified this way-of-being for, as Harrington noted, his “interior life gave meaning to action, and action inextricably nourished the interior life.” For a teacher, this way-of-being forefronts the need to reflect on one’s actions from a personally developed way-of-being a teacher that is, ultimately, rooted in one’s understanding of what it means to be human and to be in relationship to others.

Implicated in this way-of-being is how a teacher reconciles who he/she is with what he/she believes and does. That is, how does a teacher draw on their inner, most intimate understandings and aspirations as a human to define their pedagogy and interactions with students? And vice versa, how does he/she reflect on and evaluate their practices and interactions so that they grow as a teaching being? These questions should not be understood as philosophical or theoretical questions but as substantive ones about day-to-day ways-of-being and interacting. Generalities and abstractions — educational theories, policy positions, and teaching strategies — can never fully define the relationship between who one is as a teacher and how they act and interact with others, notably with students. Only the exegesis of experience and ongoing self-reflection and discernment of the world and the place of the classroom in that world — that is, only attentiveness to oneself and the world — can define this relationship.

Scott Kelley, Ph.D., identified open reflection as a characteristic of this attentiveness. He wrote, “the habit of prayer and critical reflection discloses to us our own deeply held biases which might inhibit further understanding.” The internal process of reflection, which informed by different traditions can be called prayer, meditation, self-awareness, etcetera, is attuned not only to the self but also to the larger world and to others. Loretto Gettemeier, D.C., characterized the process as “unrestricted readiness,” or a willingness to consider all possibilities as a way of nourishing one’s inner being and preparing to act. Metz similarly referred to it as openness to the “now.” She identified the need for one to slow down and reflect in order to live in the world attentively, asking that we consider “how a quietly graced focus on the present moment” can help us in our interrelationships.

Open reflection leads to greater understanding of who we are, and reveals our own poverty and limitedness, and thus our dependence on others. As already noted, Vincent, Louise, Elizabeth, and Frédéric listened to others and, in many cases their most successful endeavors were derived from what others’ said and did. But they did not act without first

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37 Udovic, Personal communication, 6 April 2017.
42 Ibid., 244.
spending time contemplating what they saw and heard and allowing it to sift through the spiritual cloth in which they had wrapped themselves. They relied on their inner being — those understandings about themselves, their place in the world, their relationship with God — to make sense of what they saw and heard, and to define their actions.

The significance of listening often implicit in the Vincentian mission and in scholarship on Vincentianism reminds me of Mikhael Bakhtin’s concept of *aesthetic contemplation* or *active empathy*, which is a particular way-of-being with others.\(^{43}\) Bakhtin, a twentieth-century Russian literary scholar and philosopher, wrote that the “first step in aesthetic activity is my projecting myself in him [the other] and experiencing his life from within him. I must experience — come to see and to know — what he experiences; I must put myself in his place and coincide with him, as it were.”\(^{44}\) However, this contemplative act, according to Bakhtin, is never fully empathetic because of the perspective from which I contemplate the other.

Because the other already occupies a particular place and time, that is, because he or she has their own unique perspective, and because my empathizing is grounded in my own place and time or perspective, I never really “stand in another’s place.” I never can fully know another’s experience because the other has a “surplus of self” that can never be fully revealed to me. However, the act of consciously trying to understand, of trying to “stand in another’s place and time,” facilitates my ability to empathize aesthetically or imaginatively. What makes my empathizing aesthetic is my own “surplus of vision,” or my unique perspective from which to respond to the other. Thus, the other and I are always more than what either of us can conceptualize about each other. Because of our unique


\(^{44}\) Bakhtin, *Art and Answerability*, 25.
perspectives, we offer each other new understanding about the world and ourselves.

Bakhtin’s aesthetic contemplation is one way of engaging others’ perspectives as substantive and potentially revelatory. This type of engagement has affinity with Vincent’s beliefs about human dignity and human responsibility. Human dignity is based on God’s presence in us, which eliminates barriers between people when we understand others to reflect God’s presence in the world, a presence so expansive that no one person could ever fully understand it. Our responsibility, in light of the dignity that is imbued in all of us and the poverty of each of our perspectives, is to engage the dignity of each human and respond to his or her needs from our own place and time. Kelley identified this as Vincent’s *mission-centered horizon*. Aesthetic contemplation makes explicit that personal transformation is intricately woven to our recognizing the other as unique, unconsummataable, and essential to our own development as humans.

Aesthetic contemplation, thus, suggests that our engagement with God is manifested in our engagement with others. How we interact with others has much to say about our spirituality and how it is we understand God’s presence in our lives. As Mousin wrote, “of critical importance is how Vincent understood his faith in relation to the individuals he assisted.” For Vincent, Christ was sent to bring good news to the poor. He understood this as the “other present within the poor.” This forfronts the other and his place in the world as not only essential to our understanding or experience of the world, but also as essential to our relationship with God or to our spiritual development. This larger essentiality is the place from which one aesthetically contemplates the lives of others.

Sullivan used the term *servant leader* to describe teachers who recognize and honor the dignity of students as human beings and learn from them how to be effective. Becoming a teacher who is a servant leader begins with exegeting one’s reasons for wanting to teach, and for what that means. In teacher preparation, this often happens through assignments such as an education autobiography, which is usually part of introductory coursework. In Vincentian teacher preparation, however, the assignment should be a program-long activity of reflection that integrates pre-service teachers’ educational experiences, teacher preparation experiences, and course content. It should culminate for pre-service teachers in a clear, specific statement of teacher interiority or spirituality — of their internalized teacher identity — and of principles of human relations that can guide practice.

Similarly, from a Vincentian perspective, teaching philosophies that only espouse educational jargon and trends in theory and practice serve little purpose in the preparation of Vincentian educators. A pre-service teacher’s philosophy of teaching should reflect her

46 Mousin, “Most Important Question,” 38.
48 Louise Sullivan, D.C., “‘God Wants First the Heart and then the Work:’ Louise de Marillac and Leadership in the Vincentian Tradition,” *Vincentian Heritage* 19:1 (1998), 161-76. Available at: [http://via.library.depaul.edu/vjh/vol19/iss1/11](http://via.library.depaul.edu/vjh/vol19/iss1/11)
or his deepest convictions and should draw on experience across their life to give evidence of that identity. Thus, an educational autobiography and teaching philosophy, as integral teacher preparation assignments, should evolve over an entire program of study.

Maybe of greatest importance, however, in developing and articulating spirituality are the opportunities pre-service teachers have to engage others, particularly students but also parents, practicing teachers, and other pre-service teachers, in extended and meaningful interaction. These interactions should go beyond engaging diverse perspectives, important in its own right, to engaging others in their daily lives and understanding whom they are as human beings, including their experiences, aspirations, strengths, and challenges. Opportunities to have these types of engagements come through field experiences and community-based service learning in schools and community-based sites, as well as through collaborative projects inside and outside of the classroom.

The role of the pre-service teacher in these interactions should be one of humble servant and guide, with the pre-service teacher aesthetically contemplating the perspectives of others as legitimate and profound understandings of the world, even as she might disagree with those understandings. As Metz suggested, the pre-service teacher must demonstrate “an openness to the richness and diversity of worldviews, cultures, people, and ideas — a searching for the larger picture, a willingness to communicate, to always be in a stance of readiness to embrace more.”\(^{49}\) The pre-service teacher must identify and confront their biases and aesthetically contemplate the world as it is for those with whom they work. As Metz went on to note, teaching is about being receptive even when it is difficult. Receptiveness as a disposition needs opportunities to develop over the entirety of one’s teacher preparation.

The reciprocal process of deep reflection on teacher interiority that is captured in an education autobiography and teaching philosophy, and of project-based service to

youth during field experience and community-based service learning opportunities, are program-long endeavors designed to prepare and sustain a teacher’s career. It is essential, however, that the process of developing teacher spirituality is exploratory and collaborative. Spirituality emanates from the pre-service teacher’s experiences and reflections, and not from without and not as a source of assessment. Thus, while Vincentian teacher educators strive to model Lucan spirituality and aspire to facilitate the development of that spirituality in their pre-service teachers, the goal is never to impose spirituality, as if that were even possible. Teacher educators should model the servant leader role and aesthetically contemplate who it is their students are becoming, knowing that ultimately another’s spirituality is intricately personal and, as Bakhtin suggested, not something that can be fully or truly understood by others.

Developing a Sense of Immediacy in Teachers

Vincent acted with immediacy after Madame di Gondi posed the question, “What must be done?” His spirituality guided him to take immediate action to support the mission. The question of what I, we, any one of us, individually and collectively, must do is an urgent inquiry, an interrogatory that begs for immediate and ongoing consideration. As a principle of Vincentian teacher preparation, immediacy is a way of acting, much as praxis is a way of acting in critical theory, a way defined by ongoing and collaborative reflection. Moreover, as with critical theory, to know what must be done one must understand the disparity between what is and what should be, and be able to define what is needed to eliminate that disparity.

Vincentian immediacy provides a way to discern needs amidst the contingency and ambiguity that is inherent in working with diverse groups of people. The process with which Vincent, Louise, Elizabeth, and Frédéric worked required acting deliberatively and collaboratively. They listened closely to others. They began by acting locally within contexts with which they were familiar, and by working with people with whom they knew and trusted. In this regard, they honored their own and others’ experiences as sources of knowledge and possibility. They evaluated early efforts and revised based on outcomes, and only then expanded efforts based on continued need. They never worked beyond their means nor promised what they could not deliver. And, it was only after one, two, or more years of effort and evaluation that they codified their activities and programs for replication.

Thus, Vincentian immediacy goes beyond a call to action, a readiness to respond and do good works, to include collaborative, creative, and critical thinking. It is praxis open to the world to the extent that it is contingent on experience and collaboration and not on specific theoretical models or worldviews. For example, Vincent learned at Châtillon

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that immediate action poorly planned could have negative consequences and ultimately undermine effort. The rapid response of the Châtillon women to the needs of a family left the family more food than they could eat. Most of it spoiled. This experience led to the formation of the Daughters of Charity in order to identify needs and services strategically, and to coordinate the day-to-day work that needed to be done.

Developing a sense of immediacy as a teacher disposition has often gone by different names in teacher preparation. Becoming a teacher researcher, advocating for one’s students, or grounding one’s pedagogy in critical theory implicitly requires a sense of immediacy. It requires working with students, parents, community members, and other educators to evaluate needs and identify courses of action both inside and outside the classroom. In this regard, education and the work of educating youth are part of larger community and societal needs, which reflect much of the educational work accomplished by Vincentians throughout history.

Integrated into a teacher preparation program, a sense of immediacy requires teacher educators to demonstrate the same thoughtful, collaborative planning that they would advocate for pre-service teachers. Effectively preparing teachers requires program-wide emphasis on deliberate and collaborative action as a way-of-being a teacher. Teacher educators need to provide pre-service teachers with opportunities for ongoing reflection and evaluation across a program of study. Three crucial elements of this process are: (1) dialogical engagement grounded in reading or making sense of the world; (2) understanding of diverse perspectives of teaching and learning; and (3) ability to define and evaluate action based on a reading of the world and understanding diverse perspectives.

Reading the World. Beginning early in their teacher preparation and continuing through student teaching — the culminating internship — pre-service teachers should have opportunities to read and discuss educational ethnographies and case studies. These readings and discussions should focus on the relationships of teachers and students, and

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of schools and communities, as a way of understanding teaching as inherently about relationship building and schools as sociocultural and historical institutions. Similarly, as defined in the section on Lucan Spirituality, pre-service teachers should have opportunities to do community-based service learning in community and school sites that serve students from families on the lower end of the socio-economic scale. Their work with students should be project-based and focused on addressing an interest or issue identified by the site. As they progress through their programs, and reflect on their readings and experiential learning, pre-service teachers should integrate opportunities for collaborative activities with families and communities in their curriculum development and instructional practice assignments.

**Diverse Perspectives.** Teacher educators should introduce pre-service teachers to diverse perspectives of teaching and learning, including theories of human development, using primary sources and research studies grounded in different theories. Primary sources provide direct, albeit vicarious, access to others’ perspectives. Such material offers pre-service teachers with opportunities to interpret and evaluate perspectives on their own merit, and not as distilled, often simplified summaries of research and theory as are typically found in textbooks.

Pre-service teachers also should have an understanding of the evolution of formal education, and its varied roles throughout history. For secondary teachers, this understanding should include their disciplinary areas. As they define their teaching philosophies and form teacher identities, pre-service teachers should contextualize their perspectives within the diverse theories of teaching and learning and the history of formal education. They should do so as a way of thinking not only about what they do in their own classrooms, but also about the role of the school and community in educating youth.

**Defining and Evaluating Actions.** Pre-service teachers should develop clear statements of purpose for curriculum and instructional practices that are grounded in diverse theoretical and philosophical perspectives. In their curriculum and instructional practice assignments, they should strive to account for the practical concerns of teaching, such as space, time, access to resources, and policy mandates. That is, these assignments should explicitly reference educational theory and philosophy and they should be contextualized within real-world classroom concerns. They should also include reflections on, and evaluations of, curriculum and pedagogy, including opportunities for peer and instructor feedback.

In development of a sense of immediacy in pre-service teachers, the focus on reading the world, diverse perspectives, and defining and evaluating actions over the entirety of one’s teacher preparation is designed to provide ongoing engagement with schools and communities. The question, “What must be done?” should guide this work. Answers to the question arise and evolve from ongoing engagement in reading the world and encouraging diverse perspectives. The evolution of pre-service teachers’ answers is a source of reflection that ultimately will acculturate them into not only the contingency and ambiguity of teaching, but also into its richness and innately interpersonal significance.
Affective and Effective Teaching

Vincent, as Louise Sullivan noted, abhorred theory and ideas that did not lead to concrete action. He eschewed lectures and recitation — common teaching practices of his day — for a more Socratic method to facilitate interaction around parishioners’ essential questions. The “little method,” a seventeenth-century preaching technique, strived to engage parishioners by honoring their experiences and ways of using language. Similarly, Ozanam believed the only viable way to understand the complexity of poverty was inductively. He wrote:

The knowledge of social well-being and reform is to be learned, not from books, nor from the public platform, but in climbing the stairs to the poor’s man garret, sitting at his bedside, feeling the same cold that pierces him, sharing the secret of his lonely heart and troubled mind. When the conditions of the poor have been examined in school, at work, in hospital, in the city, in the country... it is then and then only, that we know the elements of that formidable problem, that we begin to grasp it and may hope to solve it.

For teachers, the “little method” and Ozanam’s emphasis on experiential learning have important pedagogical implications for what they suggest about engagement and instructional focus. Student experiences and questions are the foundation on which instruction should be built. These experiences and questions provide relevance and meaning to content, and should guide teachers as they define practice.

Practice premised and built on student experience and questions arises from answering two essential questions. First, what is worthwhile? A subset of this question is: What is worth knowing? What is worth doing? And why? These are questions teachers and students answer together. A teacher must ask what are my options and what do I choose to do in light of who my students are, what they have experienced, and what they are interested in. Answering these questions must be done within a cacophony of competing demands, mandates, and suppositions about education and what students need. Teacher preparation programs should provide pre-service teachers opportunities to design curriculum that prepares them to engage students around these questions, while ensuring content is taught and learning objectives are met.

The second, related question pre-service teachers should be prepared to answer is: Who benefits from their teaching and how? This may seem like an odd question to ask unless someone is familiar with the nature of schooling and current educational debate.

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52 Ibid.
54 Mgr. Louis Baunard, *Ozanam in His Correspondence* (Dublin: Catholic Truth Society of Ireland, 1925), 279. See also, Raymond L. Sickinger, Ph.D., “Frédéric Ozanam: Systemic Thinking, and Systemic Change,” *Vincentian Heritage* 32:1 (2014), 8. Available at: [http://via.library.depaul.edu/vjh/vol32/iss1/4](http://via.library.depaul.edu/vjh/vol32/iss1/4)
Education, as a mainstream institution, is defined by and reflects the values of mainstream society, and includes those ways of thinking, acting, interacting, and using language and texts that mainstream society values. Ways of being and using language that reflect non-mainstream societies and subjugated cultures — that often reflect the experiences of the poor and oppressed — are often minimized and even castigated by schools.

For example, as a mainstream institution, schools value a specific type of language use, usually referred to as Standard English or correct grammar. However, most nonmainstream students enter school having mastered a slightly different grammar. Their nonmainstream grammars are often viewed as inappropriate and incorrect, and understood as evidence of intellectual deficiency. Yet, their use of language is often more structured and rule-driven than mainstream grammar.

Schools typically teach mainstream grammar as a set of distinct skills that need to be mastered before other skills, notably those related to writing, speaking, and concept development, can be taught. The question, then, is who benefits from this type of instruction? Research shows that it is not nonmainstream students, even as researchers and teachers agree that it is important for all students to know how and when to use mainstream grammar. The question of what is worthwhile takes on added pedagogical significance when the issue of who benefits is foregrounded. If not all students are benefiting intellectually, emotionally, psychologically, socially, and spiritually from instruction then it is neither affective nor effective. It is not worthwhile.

Effective and affective teaching begins with teachers knowing how to listen closely to students and to those involved in students’ lives, such as parents and community members. Teacher preparation programs should prepare pre-teachers to help students explore their experiences and perspectives, as well as content, as a way of establishing the place and role of content in the lives of students. Teachers should explore with students what should be done, or what is worthwhile and beneficial. Moreover, in identifying the types of experiences they might want students to have, teachers should interpret imaginatively what is possible. They need to ask what type of experiences will be effective and affective and fully engage students’ lives.

The extent to which teacher preparation can ready pre-service teachers to foster this type of engagement is limited. Generally, opportunities to work with pre-K through Grade 12 students and their communities to the degree necessary to plan affective and effective action are restricted. There are, however, specific curriculum development and instructional delivery assignments that can support pre-service teachers. These assignments can serve as models for curricular and pedagogical planning. One possibility, as noted in the previous section, is to practice developing curriculum drawing on what pre-service teachers learn

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56 Ibid.
through field experiences and community-based service learning opportunities. Using published ethnographies and case studies as examples, pre-service teachers should write their own ethnographic descriptions and case studies based on field experience and community service. These sites can serve as contexts for the curriculum they develop, and be used to demonstrate curriculum relevancy.

Another option is to use published classroom ethnographies and student case studies as contexts for curriculum development. Similarly, one more possibility would be for teacher educators to provide simulated classroom situations and student profiles for pre-service teachers to use to develop curriculum and plan instructional practice. In all cases, pre-service teachers use these descriptions as contexts for curriculum design and instructional practice. In using these materials as contexts, they should also define what makes their practice effective and affective and for whom, or why it is worthwhile and who benefits and how.

Ozanam’s admonition to go to the people and experience their lives reflects engagement designed to create relevant efforts to serve the poor. The options described above are designed to emulate his specific call for engagement. They transform curriculum development from a discreet cognitive process of identifying what to teach and how best to teach — an often technocratic concern about content understanding and delivery — to a richly experiential and inherently ambiguous engagement with others’ lives as a means of re-imagining content and revealing its relevance.

Conclusion

At the heart of the three principles of Vincentian teacher preparation is a focus on human relationships. In teaching, the relationships of concern are most often those between teachers and students, but can also be relationships among teachers, between teachers and parents, teachers and staff, teachers and community, as well as those among students. For Vincentian teachers, underlying all educational practice and theory is a continuous need to explicate actions for what they mean for the relationships we are developing with others. Thus, the three principles presented in this article serve as a framework for teacher preparation, and thinking about what it means to be a teacher. They foreground human relationships as primary and essential to teaching and learning.

Adhering to these principles requires providing pre-service teachers with three distinct but related foci. First, the principles emphasize the importance of opportunities for pre-service teachers to define who they are as teachers. These opportunities should not begin with theory or practices but with pre-service teachers’ experience, as well as their questions of worth and value, and what they want for themselves and for others. Second, in Vincentian teacher preparation there is always a focus on the other. How do we engage the other as a human being and not only as a student or parent or other teacher? In this regard, the emphasis is not only on social justice but also on socially just and loving interaction grounded in Lucan spirituality. Third, Vincentian teacher preparation focuses
on creating practices or ways of being in the classroom that honor and facilitate the types of relationships we think are important for others and us. What is a student ready for? What do they require to develop fully not only academically but also socially, morally, spiritually, psychologically, and emotionally? Practice is ultimately defined by immediate needs.

The types of human relationships that emanate from Vincentian teacher preparation, however, are not unique to Vincentianism. These relationships, although informed by Vincentianism and defined as Vincentian here, are inherently personal considerations of one’s place in the world. The best a teacher educator following this example can hope to do is model what it means to be a Vincentian teacher, and to create a Vincentian learning environment that provides pre-service teachers with the types of experiences described in this article. However, because they are not unique, human relationships formed with Vincentian values are open to diverse experiences and perspectives. They are shaped by a living spirituality that is receptive to the times and open to innovation, while steadfast in those principles that are engrained repeatedly in Vincentian practices of the past 400 years.
Vincent de Paul with clergy members at a Tuesday Conference.
Oil on canvas. Originally in seminary of Toul, now in Crézilles.

Courtesy St. Vincent de Paul Image Archive Online
http://stvincentimages.cdm.depaul.edu/
Marguerite Naseau learns to read while tending to her flock in Suresnes, France.

*Courtesy St. Vincent de Paul Image Archive Online*

http://stvincentimages.cdm.depaul.edu/
A statue commemorating Seton on the grounds of The National Shrine of Saint Elizabeth Ann Seton, Emmitsburg, Maryland.

*Public Domain*
Spanish engraving, circa 1844. The caption reads:

“Youth instructed by the Daughters of Charity in the duties of religion and society.”

Courtesy St. Vincent de Paul Image Archive Online
http://stvincentimages.cdm.depaul.edu/
Etching. The text reads:

“Care for children. Saint Vincent confides the education of youth to the Daughters of Charity, and blesses their first efforts.”

Courtesy St. Vincent de Paul Image Archive Online
http://stvincentimages.cdm.depaul.edu/

Courtesy St. Vincent de Paul Image Archive Online
http://stvincentimages.cdm.depaul.edu/
Portrait of Frédéric Ozanam.

The frontispiece to the 1862 publication of his Complete Works.

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