

Advancing Salesian Education: An Evolutionary Analysis of St. John Bosco's Preventive System for Peacebuilding¹

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Abstract:

This lecture explores the author's evolving understanding and appreciation of St. John Bosco's Preventive System, an educational approach grounded in nonviolence and the holistic development of young people, particularly those from disadvantaged backgrounds. The system's roots trace back to a pivotal moment—Don Bosco's dream at the age of nine—which instilled in him a deep aversion to violence and a commitment to fostering gentleness and love. The discourse is organized around six key, interrelated themes: the dream, the method, the hermeneutic, the universality, the model, and the content. This framework guides the discussion toward four types of education: preventive, expressive, inclusive, and positive peace.

Good evening to one and all. It gives me great pleasure to be here in your midst to discuss a vital aspect of our Salesian Educational System.

Please bear with me if I sound pompous. Over the past 47 years, no other theme has captivated my attention more than understanding and transforming the discourse around the Preventive System for our times. I've been fortunate to learn and grow alongside many remarkable individuals who have challenged, inspired, and encouraged me. To them, I am grateful.

Over the next thirty minutes, I hope to guide you through the method, hermeneutics, universality, model, and content. Articles or books for each of these sections have been published and are in the public domain. I will reference them in red colour on the screen as we proceed.

1. The Dream

Some dreams never die. They take on a life of their own, becoming part of our consciousness, shaping our aspirations and transforming our lives. St. John Bosco had such a dream at the age of nine that inspired him to follow the preventive method of education.

According to the *Biographical Memoirs*, Johnny Bosco was loved by his companions and often acted as a *peacemaker* when conflicts arose.² So it was not surprising that on the night of his famous dream, he found himself surrounded by a group of scruffy kids who were fighting and using abusive language. He lunged into their midst, striking out with his fists to make peace when, suddenly, a majestic figure appeared and stopped him, saying, "Not by blows, but by gentleness and loving kindness." These words left a lasting impression on Johnny, and the dream became the central force

¹ "Advancing Salesian Education" suggests exploring new ways to implement, interpret, and expand the application of Salesian educational methods in contemporary settings, with an emphasis on fostering peace, nonviolence, and holistic development. The term "Salesian" comes from St. Francis de Sales (1567-1622), who inspired St. John Bosco.

NB: All the author's publications referenced in this article, are available for download at <https://unisal.academia.edu/PeterGonsalves>

² G. B. Lemoyne, SDB, *Biographical Memoirs of Saint John Bosco*, Vol 1 (New Rochelle, Salesiana Publishers, 1965), 38.

shaping his values, needs, and passions. It guided his actions and decisions, ultimately leading him to become the internationally renowned Father and Friend of Youth.

This dream also marked the start of my personal journey of reflection on the differences between the Repressive Method and the Preventive System during my time at two Salesian boarding schools. The first was in Bombay. I witnessed a teacher mercilessly beat a struggling adolescent for neglecting his homework. I observed how another boy, who had sneaked into the refectory through a window, was humiliated and punished by being forced to enter the same way for a whole week.

In contrast, my experience at the second school in Lonavla was defined by a warm, welcoming atmosphere, where the teachers' positive energy and genuine concern provided us with numerous opportunities to nurture our talents. This supportive environment inspired me to join the Salesians. By the end of my Novitiate in 1977, we had composed three hymns in honour of our saint: "We Thank You, O Lord, for Don Bosco", "To Work Among the Poor and Young" and "Long Live, Don Bosco!" Eleven years later, we produced a two-hour musical titled *Man with a Dream*.³

2. The Method

Don Bosco chose the Preventive System because he did not want punishments to be a part of his educational method. To him, they did more harm than good; sometimes even to the point of instigating young people to seek vengeance. His prison visits taught him that preventing crime or anticipating harm was easier than curing the damage already done. He believed in respecting youngsters, even when administering nonviolent punishments. He tells us: "When you have to correct someone in particular, never do so in the presence of others. When you give advice or counsel, always try to send the person away satisfied and still friendly toward you."⁴

For the smooth running of the Oratory, he appointed peer leaders as "*pacificatori*", boys who were holy and courageous enough to be peace keepers in the event of a fight. (Dominic Savio is a shining example.) This unique initiative distinguished his type of preventive system from all other institutions.⁵ Moreover, the emphasis on nonviolence was inspired, not only by his mysterious dream but also by imitating the gentleness of his patron, Francis de Sales. He became a priest known for his understanding, friendly, and kind demeanour, always ready to welcome young people, especially those who were lonely and disadvantaged. In his presence, they felt safe, secure, and loved rather than afraid.

You are invited to read "Don Bosco's place in the History of Nonviolent Education"⁶ (2013).

3. The Hermeneutics

³ The musical was first staged in 1990, by Don Bosco High School, Matunga, Mumbai.

⁴ E. Ceria, SDB, *Biographical Memoirs*, Vol. 11 (New Rochelle, Salesiana Publishers, 1985), 7.

⁵ Cf. "180. Regulations of the Oratory of St Francis de Sales for Non-residents", in *Salesian Sources*, Vol. 1 (Rome, LAS, 2010), 593. The section dedicated to the role of 'peacemakers' in his Oratory was an essential requirement for maintaining peer-to-peer discipline among unruly externs. Historian Pietro Braido who is considered the expert in researching Don Bosco's educational method, seems to have inadvertently played down this detail which is crucial for our study.

⁶ P. Gonsalves, "'Not with Blows!' A Study of Don Bosco's Place in the History of Nonviolent Education", in *Orientamenti Pedagogici*, Vol. 60/4 (354), 2013, 777-791.

In his *Treatise on the Preventive System*, Don Bosco presents the Preventive System as distinct from and, in fact, opposed to the repressive method. He explicitly notes that it “excludes all violent punishment, and tries to do without even the slightest chastisement.”⁷ This implies that Don Bosco saw prevention as fundamentally different from repression, focusing on proactive care, encouragement, and the avoidance of punitive measures. However, later in the text, he emphasizes the importance of activities like gymnastics, music, recitals, theatricals, and hikes, calling them “very effective methods for getting discipline; they encourage good living and good health.”⁸ This raises an important question about the breadth of the term “preventive” in his work.

Pietro Braido, the leading expert on the subject explains: “Don Bosco never considered the preventive system to be a purely preparatory moment, a protective step [...] He never intended to restrict it only to its disciplinary aspect or to a way of exercising authority [...] *the positive educational elements both in quality and quantity are far superior to disciplinary and protective measures.*”⁹ According to Pietro Stella, “We must not overlook the limitations of [the *Treatise on*] ‘The Preventive System’, which become increasingly evident when we compare its pages with the *wealth of experiences and pedagogical formulas* offered by Don Bosco’s own writings or other documentation dealing with his life.”¹⁰ Arthur Lenti agrees: “[the term ‘preventive’] expresses Don Bosco’s preference in educational practice; but it *does not express the richness and complexity* of the method.”¹¹ All three Salesian historians have clearly expressed the idea that Don Bosco’s educational method far exceeds preventive approaches. Can these ‘very effective methods’, these ‘positive educational elements’ continue to be considered “preventive”, or do they warrant a more specific categorization today? Can they be given a unique name?

What’s in a name, one might ask. Naming accomplishes more than assigning a label—it grants identity and situates the thing named within the larger scheme of our understanding. Once named, it becomes part of our conversation, our culture, our world. The act of naming unlocks new avenues of valuable knowledge, revealing insights that were previously hidden, simply because the thing had no name. For instance, when we refer to ‘fruit’ in general, we remain unaware of the specific identity, characteristics, and benefits of any one fruit until we know its particular name—apple, mango, or banana. The differentiation allows for greater understanding and engagement. In philosophy, this is called the ‘principle of individuation’. A name invites us into a deeper discourse, initiating exploration and recognition of the nuances of the named. Ludwig Wittgenstein encapsulated this well when he said: “The limits of my language mean the limits of my world.”¹² Naming, then, is an essential act of expanding those limits, making the unknown known, and fostering the ability to discuss, understand, and relate to the world in more meaningful ways.

I believe the term *expressive* is most fitting because it is the natural opposite of *repressive* and perfectly complements what is lacking in *preventive*. Phonetically, it mirrors the contrast, and more importantly, it shifts the focus from merely averting risks to actively fostering positive growth. The *expressive* approach encourages educational institutions to prioritize developing future-oriented competencies in young people, rather than focusing solely on preventing the dangers that surround

⁷ “151. The Preventive System in the Education of the Young”, *Salesian Sources*, Vol.1 (Bangalore, Kristu Jyoti Publications, 2017), 490.

⁸ “151. The Preventive System...”, *Salesian Sources*, Vol.1, 492.

⁹ P. Braido, *Prevention, Not Repression, Don Bosco's Educational System* (Bangalore: Kristu Jyoti Publications, 1999), 7 (italics mine).

¹⁰ P. Stella, *Don Bosco: Religious Outlook and Spirituality* (New Rochelle, Salesiana Publishers, 1996), 476.

¹¹ A. Lenti, *Don Bosco History and Spirit*, Vol 3 (Roma, LAS, 2007), 156.

¹² L. Wittgenstein, *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*, trans. D. F. Pears & B. F. McGuinness (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1961), 5.6

them. Poetically put: *the best way to weaken the weaknesses of young people is by investing in strengthening their strengths*. This expressive philosophy moves beyond protection, creating spaces where young people can freely express their potential, creativity, and individuality – thus, empowering them to thrive in both character, capability and competence.

In the year 2009, the choice for the term ‘expressive system’ was thoroughly explained and elaborated in an article called “Don Bosco's ‘Expressive’ System: An alternative perspective for a communication age”¹³ (2009). By referring to the positive aspects of the Preventive System as ‘expressive’ education, we can now explore new research possibilities grounded in contemporary sciences. This can lead to fresh perspectives that are well-adapted to the signs of our times.

You are invited to read the paper: “Possible areas for scientific research based on an education to expression in Don Bosco’s Way”¹⁴ (2010). It suggests a list of titles for academic theses across various scientific disciplines. As an example of further research, we have the web-book “Salesian Expressive Education”¹⁵ (2012) which is a collection of five applications of the expressive system and an example of deepening the expressive discourse: “Johnny Bosco's Communication Competence: A Theory-Guided Study of Don Bosco's Autobiographical Anecdotes, 1825-1835”¹⁶ (2015).

4. Universality

The manual *Don Bosco's Way: A South Asian Perspective*¹⁷ (2011), also called the DBWAY, is arguably the first attempt at elaborating his Preventive System with the aim of reaching educators who hail from non-Catholic, multi-religious contexts. Notwithstanding the fact that Catholics in the South Asian Region are a miniscule minority,¹⁸ the educational institutions run by the Catholic Church are some of the most sought after for the quality of their environments, ethos and opportunities. In these institutions, the percentage of students and teachers of other faiths far exceeds that of the Catholic community. The question therefore is: How can they imbibe and benefit from the essential values of Don Bosco’s pedagogy that have been founded on the principles of the Catholic Christian identity?

The key changes attempted to make Don Bosco's educational method socially inclusive are as follows:

- The title DBWAY is neutral, intentionally avoiding contested terms like ‘preventive’, ‘system’ and overt Christian or Catholic terminology. It is concise and easily understood by those familiar with

¹³ P. Gonsalves, "Don Bosco's 'Expressive' Education: An Alternative Perspective for a Communication Age" in *Salesianum*, Vol. 71, no.4 (Roma, LAS, 2009), 651-694.

¹⁴ Cf. P. Gonsalves, “Possible Areas for Scientific Research Based on 'An Education To Expression in Don Bosco's Way'”, in *Academia.edu*, <https://shorturl.at/CXrJ9>

¹⁵ P. Gonsalves, Ed., “Salesian Expressive Education”, in *Divyadaan, Journal of Philosophy & Education*, 2012, Vol. 22 & 23.

¹⁶ P. Gonsalves, “Johnny Bosco's Communication Competence, A Theory-guided Study of Don Bosco's Autobiographical Anecdotes: 1825-1835” in *Salesianum* vol. 77, 2015, 127-163.

¹⁷ Cf. P. Gonsalves, “Don Bosco's Way - A South Asian Perspective” (Mumbai, Tej-prasarini, 2011). This manual was originally designed as a self-study course to offer educators, parents, social workers and youth leaders of different religious traditions the opportunity to be enriched by Don Bosco’s educational method. The pilot project began in 2008 as a response to a request from the management of the Don Bosco Centre for Higher Learning, Kurla, Mumbai.

¹⁸ The percentage of Catholics are: 6.1% in Sri Lanka, 1.5% in India, 0.2% in Bangladesh and 0.03% in Nepal. Cf. “Religions in South Asia” in *The World Factbook*, <https://www.cia.gov/the-world-factbook/south-asia/>

Don Bosco's story. If expanded, the title could be: *Don Bosco's Way of Educating for a Happy Life in this World and the Next*.¹⁹

- Society generally views the word 'preventive' as having negative connotations. In English, 'prevent' clearly means 'to stop someone from doing something' or 'to stop something from happening'²⁰ It is used in various contexts, such as 'preventive action', 'preventive maintenance', or 'preventive healthcare'. The COVID-19 pandemic is a prime example of preventive care taken to an extreme level. Labelling something as positive as 'education' with a negative term is simply ineffective marketing.

- Don Bosco's slogan, "honest citizens and good Christians," which is relevant for Christians, can be adapted to "honest citizens and true believers" for individuals of other faiths. This change promotes harmony with the virtuous principles of each religion, grounded in the universal Golden Rule: "Treat others as you would like them to treat you."²¹ Therefore, the practice of nonviolence and respect for all people, together with reason and loving kindness are acceptable interpretations of the DBWAY.

- The DBWAY also explains the differences between the three forms of education: 'Repression, Prevention and Expression'. Teachers of our schools who were accustomed to the univocal term, 'preventive system', have expressed their appreciation for the inclusion and elaboration that has put all three systems of education in perspective, thereby indicating the merits and demerits of each method, and subsequently the choice for the binomial, 'preventive-expressive' which complements and completes Don Bosco's educational method.

- To broaden the appeal of Don Bosco's method beyond Catholic circles, in 1994 we created a cartoon book for busy parents and teachers titled *Growing with the Young*²². It was sold alongside a valuable booklet on the Preventive System called *Love What the Young Love*²³ by Rev. Fr. Joaquim D'Souza. Given the multicultural and multireligious context of South Asia, it was crucial to examine how the Preventive System has been applied over the years. To this end, the article "Keeping Don Bosco's Educational Method Alive in India: 1906-2016"²⁴ was written in 2016. At the request of Fr. Filiberto Gonzalez, the then General Councillor for Social Communication, an article titled "Growing to be Salesians of Don Bosco through the Smartphone Years"²⁵ (2020) was written. The article discussed the rapid advancements in communication technology and explored the dilemma of whether smartphones should be permitted during the novitiate, a year traditionally spent cut off from the world to discern God's call.

5. The Model:

¹⁹ 'To be happy in this world and the next' is a recurring theme of Don Bosco's "The Companion of Youth in the Practice of Religious Duties," in *Salesian Sources*, Vol. 1, 695.

²⁰ Cf. "to prevent", Oxford Dictionary. Etymologically, the word 'preventive', comes from Latin *praevenire*, 1630, which means "serving to prevent or hinder; guarding against or warding off." From 1670 it was used as medical care. Cf. <https://www.etymonline.com/search?q=prevent>

²¹ H. Gensler, *My Ethics and the Golden Rule* (New York: Routledge Press, 2013), 76 ff.

²² P. Gonsalves, *Growing with the Young, Don Bosco's Art of Educating Explained in Cartoon for the Busy Parent, Educator and Youth Leader of all faiths* (Mumbai, Tej-prasarini, 1994).

²³ J. D'Souza, *Love What the Young Love* (Mumbai, Tej-prasarini, 1994).

²⁴ P. Gonsalves, "Keeping Don Bosco's Educational Method Alive in India: 1906-2016" in *Salesianum*, Vol. 78, No 4 (2016), 675-704.

²⁵ P. Gonsalves, "Growing to be Salesians of Don Bosco through the Smartphone Years" in *Salesianum*, Vol. 82/2 (2020), 356-381.

After broadening the concept of the Preventive System to include the expressive dimension and the inclusion of collaborators from various faiths, we decided to delve deeper into the life of Don Bosco in order to evaluate how he actually lived the principle of ‘not by blows’, or nonviolence or peace. Thus, the six-year research, titled, *Don Bosco’s Peace Culture: A Theory-based Study of his Response to Conflicts*²⁶ (2022), was born. The aim was to measure Don Bosco’s “peace quotient”²⁷ using the historical data of historians based on primary and secondary sources and the sociological framework of Galtung’s concept of peace elaborated as peacekeeping, peacemaking, and peacebuilding. Without this crucial study, we would not do justice to the command ‘not by blows’ of Don Bosco’s dream.

The concept of peace is generally limited to the ‘absence of war/conflict’ and ‘interior silence’ or ‘meditation.’ Johan Galtung (1930-2024), widely regarded as the father of Peace Studies, a field he pioneered in the late 1950s, used ‘blows’ or violence as his point of departure. He identified three types of violence: direct violence, structural violence, and cultural violence. Correspondingly, he defined three forms of peace: peacekeeping, peacemaking, and peacebuilding. Examples of these are, respectively: separating people in the midst of a fistfight; bringing conflicting parties to the table for compromise or mutual forgiveness; and teaching peace education or promoting human rights.

In the hope that you read the book we will merely mention the scope and type of research for each part. The book is divided into three parts, each having varied research methodologies.

The first part (88 pages) is based on Galtung’s assertion: “The test of the validity of a culture of peace lies in how it affects behaviour in conflict.”²⁸ We embark on a *historical research* to observe how Don Bosco *behaved in times of conflicts*, which we have broadened to consider even challenges and crises. A total of twenty major episodes of conflict spread over five important phases in his life were collected. (1) from a child to an adolescent, (2) from a seminarian to a priest, (3) from a champion for the rights of the young to a compassionate educator, (4) from an enthusiastic defender of the faith to an intrepid mediator between Church and State, and, (5) from unexpectedly becoming the target of rigorous episcopal demands to being an obedient subject of papal authority until his death.

Table 1. Twenty Episodes of Challenges, Crises and Conflicts as perceived by the Author				
CHAPTER ONE	CHAPTER TWO	CHAPTER THREE	CHAPTER FOUR	CHAPTER FIVE
1. THE DREAM 2. MOTHER 3. SCHOOL 4. SEMINARY	5. ORATORY 6. MIGRANTS 7. PRISONERS 8. ILLITERACY	9. PEACEKEEPING 10. CHOLERA 11. DISCIPLINE 12. JUSTICE	13. NETWORKING 14. WALDENSIANS 15. ENEMY 16. RATAZZI	17. MEDIATOR 18. GASTALDI I 19. GASTALDI II 20. NEW POPE

The second part (89-140 pages) consists of *qualitative research* in order to gauge the level of Don Bosco’s ‘peace quotient’ by using three sets of content analyses called X, Y, Z.

²⁶ A “quotient” is understood as “the magnitude of a specified characteristic or quality”, in our case: “peace”.
<https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/quotient#>

²⁷ P. Gonsalves, *Don Bosco’s Peace Culture, A Theory-based Study of His Response to Conflicts* (Rome, LAS or Bangalore, Kristu Jyoti Publications, 2022), 119-125.

²⁸ J. Galtung, “Cultural peace: some characteristics”, in *From a Culture of Violence to a Culture of Peace* (UNESCO, 1996), 77.

X involves the author's task of measuring the 20 episodes of Don Bosco's behaviour in conflict along the lines of Galtung's three types of peace, that is, peacekeeping, peacemaking, peacebuilding. Don Bosco scores well with 43 out of 60, or 71%.

Table 2. X. Application of Galtung's Peace-Triad to the Twenty Episodes as perceived by the Author

CHARACTERISTICS		EPISODES																					
		1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	+	
a	Peacekeeping	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	20	
b	Peacemaking	*		*		*	*			*	*	*			*			*			*	9	
c	Peacebuilding					*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*			*	14	
+	+	2	1	2	1	2	3	2	2	3	3	3	2	2	3	2	2	3	1	1	3	43	

Y & Z involve a sample of 18 participants, consisting of nine Salesians and nine non-Salesians. Their task was to read 20 episodes while considering two lists: Y, a *deductive* list of 11 peace values derived from research by the Galtung school, which identifies peace values from 100 peace models; and Z, an *inductive* list of 11 Salesian values based on the author's 45 years of experience as a Salesian of Don Bosco. These exercises were conducted to ensure the objectivity of the qualitative research. The chart below illustrates the frequency with which participants selected peace values (Y) and Salesian values (Z).

Table 3 Y+Z: Top 12 Perceived Peace Characteristics of Don Bosco where Y refers to Peace values and Z to Salesian value

RANK	TOTAL VOTES	TOP 12 PEACE CHARACTERISTICS	POLL PV. SV.
1	210	Faith	Z
2	206	Determination & Persistence	Y
3	194	Proactiveness	Z
4	177	Purpose driven life	Y
5	169	Enduring relentless Courage	Y
6	164	Patience	Z
7	157	Respect for others	Z
8	155	Empathy & Compassion	Y
9	150	Nonviolence & Gentleness	Y
10	149	Risks criticism, danger (resilience)	Y
11	148	Flexibility & Adjustability	Z
12	148	Visionary	Y

The third part (141-388) of the book delves into *anecdotal* and *expert elicitation research* concerning Don Bosco's culture of peace during periods of routine. Five key dimensions are identified—the 'personal,' 'social,' 'political,' 'communicational,' and 'transcendental'—and expanded into twelve chapters, each essential to building a culture of peace. The framework outlined in Table 3 serves as a guide for the reader's journey through the book.

TABLE 3. DON BOSCO'S PEACE CULTURAL FRAMEWORK		
DIMENSIONS	CHAPTERS	SEGMENTS
A) PERSONAL		
	10. Gentleness	a. b. c. d. e.... etc.
	11. Truth	a. b. c. d. e.... etc.
	12. Detachment	a. b. c. d. e.... etc.
B) SOCIAL		
	13. People-centred	a. b. c. d. e.... etc.
	14. The Social Question	a. b. c. d. e.... etc.
C) POLITICAL		
	15. Citizenship	a. b. c. d. e.... etc.
	16. The Archbishop	a. b. c. d. e.... etc.
D) COMMUNICATIONAL		
	17. Education	a. b. c. d. e.... etc.
	18. Letter writing	a. b. c. d. e.... etc.
	19. Mass media	a. b. c. d. e.... etc.
E) TRANSCENDENTAL		
	20. Conscience	a. b. c. d. e.... etc.
	21. Faith	a. b. c. d. e.... etc.

6. The Content

If the central theme of the dream is “not by blows”, should we limit it solely to an education free from violence, or should we also explore what it means to live non-violently, gently and lovingly? Why not embrace content and curricula that empower us to nurture peaceful individuals? This would mean evolving from raising youngsters in a nonviolent environment to one that transforms educators and students into beacons of peace, persons who teach and live by the principles of peace,²⁹ subsequently, radiating peace to their family, friends, a whole community, an entire nation.

- Don Bosco affirms: “I am convinced that the happiness of a nation depends on the sound education of youngsters.”³⁰

²⁹ Galtung refers to this as Positive Peace, or peacebuilding, in contrast to Negative Peace, which focuses on peacekeeping (preventing conflict) and peacemaking (resolving conflict). Building on Don Bosco's Preventive System, which emphasizes forestalling repression, we take a proactive step toward peacebuilding, incorporating peace education alongside other positive initiatives. Both Negative and Positive Peace are crucial for fostering a harmonious and lasting coexistence.

³⁰ “Letter to Doc. Peverotti di Cassine (Alessandria), 6 Sept. 1876, E, Vol. 3, 93” in Braido, *Prevention, Not Repression*, 164.

- The “universally respected”³¹ Mahatma Gandhi concurs. When asked by Maria Montessori about the best way to stop wars, he said: “If we are to reach real peace in this world and if we are to carry on a real war against war, we shall have to begin with children.”³²
- Our Constitution, Art. 73 states: “[W]e participate with a spirit of enterprise in the mission of the Church and in her struggle for justice and peace, especially by educating those in need.”³³
- Cardinal Ángel Fernández Artime³⁴ gets to the point when he says: “Our world is becoming increasingly violent and we, educators and evangelisers of the young, *must be an alternative* to what so distressed young John in his dream and which hurts us so much today.”³⁵

Inspired by this challenge and informed by a study of contextual needs, a syllabus or curriculum on Peace Education can be developed for teaching young people. Regarding India, a rationale for peace education is already available in the article “Peace Education for India: An Idea Whose Time Has Come *Back*”³⁶ (2019). Fortunately, a practical resource outlining the suggested curriculum for children and adolescents aged 5 to 17 is also available in PDF format in the manual *Exercises in Peace Education* (2003/2019). The archdiocese and Salesian province of Mumbai have already begun teacher-training courses in their schools followed by implementation.³⁷ However, there is still much work to be done to truly “Give Peace a Chance.”³⁸ It is time for us to take up the responsibility of promoting peace education wherever we are, especially in places prone to violence.

Conclusion

When speaking to members of the Third General Chapter in 1883 Don Bosco said: “We must make an effort to discern and adapt ourselves to our times,”³⁹ We hope our elaborate study will gradually advance Don Bosco’s method of education in response to our many challenges today.

We have indicated the way forward. The dream that began with ‘not by blows’ challenges us to proceed towards behaving gently and lovingly with the young, especially the poorer.

³¹ The International Day of Non-Violence is observed on 2 October, the birthday of Mahatma Gandhi, leader of the Indian independence movement and pioneer of the philosophy and strategy of non-violence. Cf. <https://www.un.org/en/observances/non-violence-day>

³² This excerpt is taken from Gandhi’s speech which was delivered at the Montessori Training College, London, on October 28, 1931, and published in *Young India*, 19-11-1931.

³³ *Constitutions of the Society of St Francis de Sales*, Art. 73.

³⁴ It is to the credit of Cardinal Ángel Fernández Artime that the *Strenna* 2024 has emphasized, perhaps for the first time, the connection of ‘not by blows’ to the broader concept of ‘nonviolence’, which is much more than corporal punishment as he explains in the various types of violence. Cf. *Acts of the General Council*, no. 442, p 25. It is also worth noting that the concept ‘nonviolence’ of *ahimsa* dates back to Mahavira (6th century BC), the founder of Jainism. It was popularised by Mahatma Gandhi who was heavily influenced by Jainism in his youth.

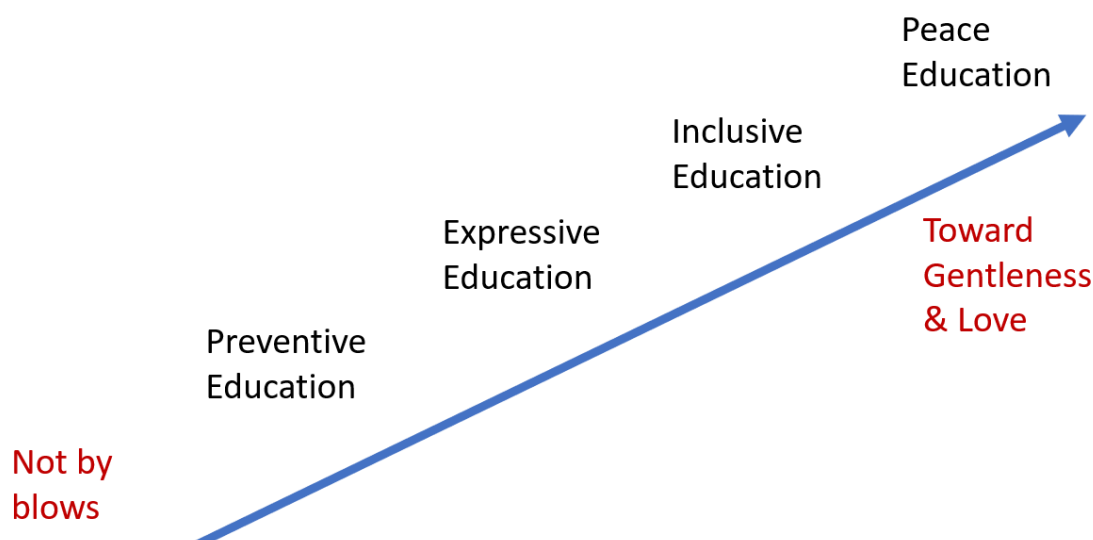
³⁵ Ángel Fernández Artime, “‘The dream that makes you dream’ A heart that transforms ‘wolves’ into ‘lambs’”, *Strenna* 2024, in *Acts of the General Council*, no 442, 24-25 (emphasis mine).

³⁶ P. Gonsalves, “Peace Education for India: An idea whose time has come *back*”, in Pudumai Doss & Sahayadas, *Prophets with Wings* (New Delhi: AIDBES, 2018), 161-183.

³⁷ Cf. Peter Gonsalves & Revathy Sundararajan, “Peace Education Induction Courses for Teachers of Salesian Schools in the Province of Mumbai, 2023,” *Divyadaan*, Vol. 35/2 (2024). Earlier, Catholic schools in the Archdiocese of Mumbai offered peace education courses for teachers from July to August, 2019.

³⁸ John Lennon, *Give Peace a Chance*, https://youtu.be/C3_0GqPvr4U?si=9feHOgPFgWw1HE6Q

³⁹ *Archivio Salesiano Centrale*, 4, Capitolo Generale III, September 7, 1883.



However, some Salesians might question whether we are diverging too far from Don Bosco's Preventive System. Are we exceeding our mission, or are we staying true to our core purpose? Notably, Braido sees the adaptation of the System as a necessary and legitimate process of enrichment.

[T]he preventive system, no matter how it was carried out and how it was understood within Christian tradition, is not the ultimate system of education possible; nor is Don Bosco's preventive system the ultimate possible version of the preventive system itself. The preventive system is not a rich heritage standing apart. It has had remote origins and the first of these origins is the Gospel. *The future development of the system, if we are faithful to its principles and its history, will be no less rich in promise and perspective.*⁴⁰

We hope that our journey from Preventive Education, through Expressive and Inclusive Education, to Peace Education proves promising, fulfilling, and fruitful.

Salesian Family, are we ready to embrace the challenge?

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⁴⁰ Braido, *Prevention, Not Repression*, 10 (emphasis mine).