## “Don Bosco, a master of interactivity!”

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**Interactivity is a key word in digital and virtual communication**!  A relatively new word! A strong word! A word that has changed our relationships! From a child playing games to an elderly person listening to music online, we all interact! For example, face to face meetings, phone calls, text messages in social media.

**But what is interactivity all about?**

**The  Oxford Reference Dictionary** **defines interactivity as**“**any communication between two or more individuals** that is dynamically shaped by the participants of the exchange. When taken as a property of the communication process, interactivity is characterized as being active, intentional, and occurring only in conditions where the roles of sender and receiver are fully interchangeable”.

**Evidently that interactivity requires feedback from viewers/listeners** so that the process of communication is shaped by participation and involvement from all parties involved. For example,  an interaction that happens in a group of people who are in  conversation during a video conference, who share images, sounds, texts, and therefore, interact among themselves.

**A second important question we need to raise: what builds interactivity?**

**Above all, it is done from the person in relation with another person or group through devices, gadgets.** When we are participating, for example, in a live-conference, what is involved in terms of human relationships? Above all emotions, gestures, attitudes, actions that express our way of seeing and feeling reality.

**Interactivity puts my person, my self, in relationship with others.**  In a certain way, my emotional and social intelligence is manifested in my relationships with others. In an online meeting, when I am in favour of an opinion, when I agree or disagree, when I express concern, approve or disapprove of something, when I laugh, I am expressing  what I feel, what I think, my intentions and ideas.  In the process of listening to the other, of understanding the other's point of view, of expressing empathy, of searching together for solutions to a certain problem, I am building interactivity.   Like in a game, interactivity requires rules of participation, listening,  dialogue, feedback.

**At this point, I would just like to touch briefly on a question involving interactivity with the mobile phone, computer or other media**.  We are not going to enter into this issue, but we have to say that we  humans interact with devices, with apps, with emoji, symbols, sounds, images. The Human-Technology Interaction (HTI) group for instance, studies how we interact with technology in order to better understand and improve how humans interact with different kind of media.

**Whether we use technology and internet services and social media to promote team relations**, or promote marketing or customer service, to start a group at a social networking, we are using technology that will affect people cognitively,  emotionally and neurologically.

**It is all about interactivity!**

**Understanding the relationship between ourselves and technology enables us to communicate better and more extensively with people** in the online environment and helps us to interact with them with a view to education, research, evangelisation, business, entertainment.

Let’s go back to the initial concept of interaction: it has to do with our human ability to connect with others. Interaction happens, for example, with two people playing ping pong or playing music together, or performing in a play.

**Interactions require feed back among people!**

What is the medium in the case of music?  The  musical instruments, the song, the sound… Who interacts? The musicians, the singer, the singer with the audience, and so on.  Participation between the singers and the audience is  interaction.   **Therefore, interaction is a personal and social way of  relating to people in a certain environment.**

**Here, I would like to show how Don Bosco interacted with young people and created very good tools and use of the media of his time**(band music, theatre [teatrino], games, liturgy) to promote interaction!

**First of all, Don Bosco interacted with his youth from his deep cognitive and emotionally warm way of relating to them.**His interaction started from his ability to understand, be interested in them, to motive, embrace and love young people.  Speaking in terms of psychological studies today (terms such as the affective school of psychology, multiple intelligence, emotional and social intelligence and neuroscience) we can say that Don Bosco had a strong emotional, social and artistic intelligence.

**Don Bosco had a special sense of awareness,**for instance; an ability to recognise emotions and feelings, and to show empathy with people’s talents and abilities, their areas of weakness, what they needed to improve on, their levels of flexibility, sense of responsibility. And he could appreciate their ability and need to collaborate in a team, show engagement and fidelity.

**From this ability as a person, educator and priest,**Don Bosco learned how to identify and figure out who was who, what they could do and  how much he could require from them to grow, to create, to  engage in the process of education, and how they could  pass on the Salesian values he imbued them with.

**In his time, Don Bosco created a strong and effective system characterised by a warm and friendly presence as an educator**, the involvement of the young in scholastic, educational, artistic and religious activities, with freedom for young people to express their inner motivation in all these activities and then give the best of themselves by engaging in activities together with others.  In this way he promoted creative interactivity in the form of networks of affective and social relationships.

**The centre of this affective, social and spiritual reference is the figure of Don Bosco,**who became a reference for all on how to interact in order to educate from his rich and profound experience of loving interactivity.

**Some studies of Don Bosco (Stella, 1969) expresses in a clear and simple way how Don Bosco loved:** “Don Bosco's heart never stopped loving, until the end. Don Bosco's pedagogy is identified with all his action and all his action with his personality; Don Bosco's inner being is ultimately focused on his heart. It is the heart as he understands it, 'not only as an organ of love, but as a central part of our being', on the level of nature and grace: the heart wants, the heart desires, understands and unites, it listens to what is said to it, it is inflamed with love, it reflects, moves.”

**A good number of studies on Don Bosco's spirituality and educational system show that he had an enormous capacity to establish human relationships**(Stella, 1969; Braido, 2004; Afonso, 2002), captivate people, to have an educational influence on young people, provide motivation, form leaders, create a network of relationships, use arts to educate… to promote interactivity!

**Don Bosco developed a unique school of education in which interactivity plays a very important role.** Intuitively he understood what the human being is and how to offer individuals the best for their growth and development as good human beings, open to self, to others and to God.

**Because he profoundly understood human reality and knew how to propose a way of spiritual growth to every young person,** Don Bosco is an educator who used music, theatre, and the liturgy itself as a way of interacting with his young people, involving them creatively as interactive authors.

**The young people of yesterday and today are inherently interactive.** The digital, virtual and artificial intelligent world today requires more and more interactivity. With Don Bosco, let us walk with the times and with young people!