
ANNOTATION

Daniels, Michael. "Perceptions of the Catholic Secondary School Presidents and Principals of Six Dioceses in Northern California regarding Their Faith Leadership Practices and Preparations." EdD dissertation, University of San Francisco, San Francisco, California, 2013. 220pp.

Dr. Daniels conducted a study to explore "faith leadership" in "the context of Catholic high schools" and "regarding the preparation and practices of high school administrators as faith leaders" (2), specifically examining their preparedness, not only as administrators but also as faith leaders of their schools. Daniels's literature review (14-45) contends that most of the focus on administrators' roles in faith leadership have centered on primary education rather than secondary education. He notes that previous literature stresses that "many Catholic administrators consider themselves unprepared for their role as faith leaders of their schools" (3). In addition, Daniels includes a brief history of the evolving mission of Catholic schools and how that mission shapes the duties of the administrative leadership in Catholic schools.

The sample for this study was limited to Catholic secondary schools in six (arch)dioceses in Northern California: Monterey, Oakland, San Francisco, San Jose, Santa Rosa, and Stockton. The study used a conceptual framework of a "four-part model of faith leadership" encompassing: "faith development, Christian community building, moral and ethical formation, and the mission of Catholic education" (46). It also examined "the factors that Catholic secondary school leaders view as having influenced their faith leadership (46). The four research questions set out to be studied were: 1. How do Catholic secondary school presidents and principals from the selected (arch)diocese "exercise their leadership" relative to the four-part model of faith leadership (46)?; 2. What factors do these leaders identify as influencing their faith leadership in their schools relative to the four areas mentioned above (47)?; 3. What degree of influence do each of the four parts of the model of faith leadership have upon their faith leadership in their schools (47)? ; 4. What level of preparedness do they perceive themselves as having as faith leaders in their schools in the four areas (47)?

The research conducted was a quantitative and qualitative study designed to answer the above-listed points of analyses. To collect his data Daniels utilized a mixed methodology: survey research, follow-up telephone interviews, and an on-line survey (48). Daniels examined three types of Catholic schools. The first two types of Catholic schools include religious order sponsored schools and (arch)diocesan schools. His third category of "other" encompassed Catholic independent schools. In his study, Daniels found that the 21 principals and 20 presidents from secondary schools that he surveyed "perceived their experience as a Catholic school administrator to be an influential factor to all four areas of their faith leadership" (109). In addition, "analysis of the presidents and principals' perceptions as separate groups revealed that they both perceived their experience as Catholic school teachers to have been very influential to

their ability to foster the faith development and the moral and ethical formation of school members” (109). The school leaders’ participation in religious order sponsored activities was also “influential to their ability” to “foster the faith growth of school members” (118). Importantly, Daniels’s findings reveal two factors that did not greatly impact the faith leadership in Catholic schools: participation in parish programs for adults and participation in post-graduate full-time volunteer programs (118). Daniels reasserts that this study was necessary due to the concentration of studies on faith leadership in primary school education and the subsequent lack of literature on preparation of faith leadership in Catholic secondary schools.

Daniels found that presidents and principals who participated in the study practiced the four aforementioned areas of faith leadership “to a great extent in their respective schools” (124). Daniels’s overarching findings are contrary to previous studies in that his surveys and interviews revealed that Catholic secondary school leaders perceive themselves as prepared for faith leadership. Moving forward, Daniels’s study has concrete, critical implications for the hiring practices of administrators for Catholic secondary school leadership. Daniels’s recommendations for future hiring practices include urging those responsible for hiring to consider two factors that greatly impacted Catholic secondary school administrators’ ability to perform faith leadership. These factors are that Catholic school teaching experience prepared administrators for faith leadership (159) as did a strong Catholic family background (160).

Implications from this study are manifold. Daniels points out the demographics of his survey as containing 80% male respondents. “Given that over 50% of full-time faculty and staff in Catholic high schools across the United States are female, this disparity in gender diversity among chief administrator roles may need to be addressed by the religious orders and (arch) dioceses” that operate the Catholic secondary schools in the region of Daniels’s study (155). In addition, the majority of respondents self-identified as white, which contrast with the “30% minority students” enrolled in U.S. Catholic schools (155). Daniels also suggests enhancing leadership opportunities for “people of color” (155).

Moreover, an analysis of the data demonstrated that “six factors were somewhat influential on the Catholic school administrators’ ability to build Christian community within their schools” (113). These include: participation in Religious order sponsored activities, participation in formation activities, participation in Catholic educational leadership programs, mentorship with a faith leader, and Catholic family background. Daniels’s research also revealed that “Catholic educational leadership degree programs may not be as influential as they are perceived” (161). Therefore, he recommends that Catholic educational leadership degree programs “intentionally include the four areas of faith leadership”: faith development, Christian community building, moral and ethical formation, and the mission of Catholic education (167). Further recommendations for future practice include continuing to invest in “charism formation efforts” such as retreats and conferences for administrators and faculty and staff in order to “enhance faith leadership in schools (166). Also imperative is preparing for leadership succession. Daniels suggests that boards, religious communities, and (arch)dioceses that oversee hiring of principals and presidents support colleagues’ transitions from other “Catholic school communities in order to meet the anticipated leadership needs” in the future. Daniels concludes that “continuing to prioritize faith leadership . . . must remain a strategic and supported priority of secondary school administrators in order for Catholic high schools to continue to thrive” (170).