

Nowakowski, Matthew. Annotation of "The Evolution of an Organization: A Case Study of a San Miguel School." by John Pyle, Ed.D. diss., Saint Mary's University of Minnesota, 2002. *AXIS: Journal of Lasallian Higher Education* 4, no. 2 (Institute for Lasallian Studies at Saint Mary's University of Minnesota: 2013).

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ANNOTATION

Pyle, John. "The Evolution of an Organization: A Case Study of a San Miguel School." Ed.D. dissertation, Saint Mary's University of Minnesota. 2002, 124 pp.

This qualitative research sought to describe the initial organizational stages of a San Miguel School in Minneapolis, Minnesota. The dissertation is guided by three topical questions: a) Why was this school formed? b) What were the challenges in this process? and c) What were the high points in this process? (1, 5, 90). The author designed a case study approach to collect data from twelve stakeholders involved with the launch of the school, via questionnaire, interviews, and document review (39-41). The data gathered from the triangulation of this three-channeled approach was intended to present an in-depth understanding of the actions, thoughts and feelings of the participants who created this San Miguel School (3, 91).

The dissertation is arranged in five chapters. Beyond identifying and justifying the research, in the first chapter Pyle provides a succinct overview of the study and a useful subsection that defines operational terms of particular relevance to organizational theory, religion and the population involved in this research. In the second chapter, the author presents a thorough review of literature to develop foundational themes in organizational theory and cycles. The evolution from classic systems organizational theory as described by Spencer, to the sociological perspectives of Durkheim and Weber are presented (11-14). Next, the author describes the growth of organizational theory to include the seminal process functions and scientific management theories of Taylor and Fayol (14-16). Pyle then addresses "organic" life cycle theory as it relates to organizational theory. The life cycle or stage theories of Freeman, Cameron and Whetten, Quinn and Cameron, and Lippit and Schmidt are presented (17-25). In this section, the author is clearly showing the historical context for his credible methodological justification of examining the initial stages of the incubation, launch, and growth of the San Miguel School.

The review of literature also explores the historical description of the De La Salle Christian Brothers and their connection to the San Miguel Schools movement. In his review, the author makes a connection between the Lasallian institute's foundational charism to provide access to education for the poor and marginalized of society and the focus of the San Miguel movement to offer an alternative education to those students who may not or did not succeed in standard formal schooling (27-33). The researcher concludes the literature review (34-36) with a description and discussion of the concept of volunteerism. It is the author's assertion that for the successful operation of a San Miguel School, volunteerism serves as an essential resource within the school.

The third chapter of the dissertation describes the methodology utilized in the study. Of particular interest is the researcher's attention to assure both internal and external validity and reliability of this qualitative study (41-47). Finally, the researcher discusses the process for collecting, coding, and categorizing data to address the three fundamental research questions (48-49).

Chapter 4 presents the data analysis and results of the study. Based on the questionnaire, two sets of interviews, and a document review of key institutional communications and procedures, the researcher identified 11 key themes that described the initial development and start of this San Miguel School. The results of Pyle's research indicate: a) Emotionally, members experienced both fear and excitement during the development stage (64, 78); b) the actions of founding participants were influenced by external factors, such as previous experience with San Miguel schools (65, 78); c) the ability to acquire and maintain resources significantly impacted the development of the school (71, 73, 78); d) the process of opening the school was a developmental process of active learning by the participants (74-75, 78); e.) the association and work of the Christian Brothers was essential in the formation of the school (76-78); f) in agreement with the literature, the participants described the development of this organization through a biological/organic systems metaphor (80, 86); g) the organization developed in an organic and non-linear fashion (82, 86); h) deciding the ultimate location for the school was a critical choice for the team, and this decision consumed considerable time and energy in the development stage (71, 82, 86); i) the participants did not have a sense of organizational risk in this entrepreneurial endeavor, however, the team felt concern over the personal risk being realized by the volunteers (83, 86); j) the development team indicated that a key responsibility of future board members was to assist the organization in fundraising (84, 87); and k) the participants felt faith was an essential component in sustaining the effort to create and start the school (pp. 84-87).

In the final chapter, the researcher presents conclusions and recommendations for future research. In reflecting on the results obtained in the study, Pyle identifies the importance of the "primary mover(s)"—an individual or individuals who have the main responsibility for the creation of the organization (94). The research also indicated as the organization grew organically and elliptically, choices concerning resources, financing, operations, had to be made and reconsidered as the members of the original team worked through emerging challenges (95-96, 98-99). The author posited that without the assistance of the Christian Brothers and the Lasallian network, the school may not have launched (99). The author addresses the original three research questions by suggesting: a) the school was formed because of key task force participants' passion and previous experience with San Miguel schools, which led them to commit to advance the mission of the De La Salle Christian Brothers through this opportunity; b) the challenges unique to this start up were the difficulty in finding a suitable location and low initial enrollment of students; and c) the high point for participants was in the process of creating the organization (103-105).

In closing, the author suggests future research related to this topic could include: a) a longitudinal study of the life cycle of the subject organization (107-108); b) a comparative study between this and another San Miguel School (108); c) a study of factors that influence the actions and decision-making of "prime movers" (108); d) a study of the perceptions and experiences of the volunteers involved with the San Miguel Schools movement (108); and e) a study that examines and reports the student experience at San Miguel schools (109).