

Nowakowski, Matthew J. "A Comparison of Attitudes of Avowed Religious and Lay Teachers and Parents toward Avowed Religious and Lay Principals in the Christian Brothers High Schools of the Saint Louis District." *AXIS: Journal of Lasallian Higher Education* 10, no. 2 (Institute for Lasallian Studies at Saint Mary's University of Minnesota: 2020).

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ANNOTATION

Convey FSC, Kevin. "A Comparison of Attitudes of Avowed Religious and Lay Teachers and Parents toward Avowed Religious and Lay Principals in the Christian Brothers High Schools of the Saint Louis District." EdD dissertation, University of San Francisco, 1987. 159 pp.

This research investigated the perceptions of parents, teachers, and principals concerning the growing influx of lay principals in De La Salle Christian Brothers High Schools of the Saint Louis District. The percentage of lay staff in USA Catholic schools rose from 41.3 % in 1968-1969, to 77.4 % in 1985-1986 (1). The purpose of this study was to compare the degree of consensus of perception of the role and effectiveness of principals in these schools as seen by significant role definers of the Catholic secondary school (4). The study was designed as a constructive replication of Joseph Laria's 1974 PhD dissertation at Fordham University entitled "Role Expectations for Catholic Secondary School Lay Principals" (4, 33).

The overarching inquiry of this dissertation concerned how the shift to more laity in principal positions at De La Salle Christian Brothers schools was manifested in framework, mission, formation, and operation of the schools. The study included participants from nine schools in the Saint Louis District of the Brothers of the Christian Brothers with a sample consisting of 9 principals, 310 teachers, and 1,399 parents, $n=1,718$ (44). The study was time-bound cross-sectional descriptive study (40). The dependent variable was perceptual response as measured by the *Opinionnaire of Role Expectations for the Catholic Secondary School Principals* (40). The independent variable was the status of the respondent; that is, avowed Religious principal, avowed Religious teacher, lay principal, lay teacher, or parent (40). Pairwise comparisons among the five groups were made on five different role dimensions: (a) providing for a formal religious education program, (b) administering and supervising the school's instructional program, (c) hiring staff and improving staff morale, (d) relating with parents and the community, (e) exerting leadership (8-11).

The review of literature describes the interesting evolution and dynamic status of the role of the laity in the Church. Consideration is given to how Catholic schools have engaged and supported laypersons in the attainment of education, economic status, and theological growth (17-24). The research makes the salient point suggesting the attainment of a Catholic education has lead graduates to significant economic mobility (17). The author then describes the increased status in role and participation of the laity in Catholic charism and mission. In fact, what had begun as a desire for auxiliary participation or Catholic Action in 1920 was vital to the existence of Catholic education in 1980 (22-23).

The next section of the review of literature describes the status and role of the Religious in the Church, with keen attention given to the role of the De La Salle Christian Brothers (26-29). The

author explores the “Personal Crisis” (reduction in the number of Brothers) experienced after the Second Vatican Council (27). The author cites the total number of Religious Brothers in 1973 had declined by 19% since 1960 and 32.5% since their peak membership in 1967 (28). Within the context of this decreasing population of Brothers, the literature review then considers the relational dynamic between avowed Religious and laity working in schools (29-30). The review of literature concludes with a discussion of studies concerned with the role of perception, role theory, and Getzel’s Social System Theory (30-38).

The *Opinionnaire* was completed by the 1,718 participants and then analyzed. Homogeneity of variance was considered justified for the parent and teacher groups, but not for the principals (47). Thus, both parametric and non-parametric data analysis was utilized. A “t-test” was used to compare the responses between teachers and parents, with the criteria for statistical significance being $p=0.01$, while a Mann-Whitney U test was used to analyze responses from principals with a criteria for statistical significance of $p=0.05$ (48).

No significant difference was found in the comparisons between Religious and lay principals, all principals and all teachers, and principals and parents. All respondents ranked providing for a formal religious education as the most important role dimension of a principal at these schools. Significant differences between the five groups of role definers were found when considering the role dimensions of hiring staff and improving staff morale, relating with parents and the community, and exerting leadership (105-125). The author suggests that it can be implied from these results that lay principals seem to be adjusting to the role of Catholic school leader (121).

Based on the results, the research makes several recommendations for practice and continuing research concerning the growth of lay leadership in Catholic schools. Detailed suggestions are given concerning the recruitment, training, development, and skill development of lay principals (109). The author suggests specific programs and opportunities should be developed for the communication and discussion of each school’s mission and curriculum to parents, teachers, and principals (113, 119). Due to the continuing growth of laity in school administration, the researcher advises fiscal planning should be undertaken at the diocesan level and within Religious Orders to cover the cost of training the laity for academic leadership positions (121). Finally, as a formative assessment, the researcher suggests the survey instrument utilized in this study could be used to gather the perspectives of candidates concerning key job dimensions during the selection of a new principal at a Catholic school (125).