

Gossen, Timothy. Annotation of “The Perceived Influence of Lasallian Mission Formation Programs on Participants from the District of San Francisco New Orleans.” *AXIS: Journal of Lasallian Higher Education* 11, no. 2 (Saint Mary’s University of Minnesota: 2020).

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ANNOTATION

Cannon, Gary J. “The Perceived Influence of Lasallian Mission Formation Programs on Participants from the District of San Francisco New Orleans.” EdD dissertation, University of San Francisco, 2016. 225 pp.

The author states that the mission of Catholic education is “faith formation and integral human development of individuals” (1). The introduction of the dissertation addresses the realization of this mission asserting that a school’s mission is “dependent primarily upon its faculty and staff” and that many of those working in these schools are not vowed religious. The Institute of the Brothers of the Christian Schools has developed programs to address this reality, by means of “personal formative preparation through local, onsite programs as well as District, and Regional programs” (2). It was stated that “limited empirical data exists on the perceptions of Lasallian Catholic educators regarding the influence of the Lasallian Mission Formation Programs provided by the [De La Salle] Christian Brothers. This study seeks to address that limitation” (2).

The need for the study was that “contemporary Catholic secondary schools in the United States face a number of changes,” specifically as it relates to Lasallian schools (3). The author noted these challenges (changes) as: school leadership, the changing composition of school personnel, a decreased number of De La Salle Christian Brothers in teaching roles, and the dedication of the De La Salle Christian Brothers to building the future and forming the new next generation of Lasallian educators. For the purpose of this study, the author “limited the Lasallian Mission Formation Programs examined to those that lasted four or more days” and consisted of both Regional and District led programs which propose to “inform faculty and staff about the mission of Lasallian education and about the philosophy, pedagogy, and spirituality that underpin that mission” (5).

This dissertation “investigated the perceptions of Lasallian Catholic school faculty and staff of the San Francisco New Orleans District (SFNO District) regarding their Lasallian Mission Formation Program experiences between 2005 and 2015” (6). The study (a) identified the programs in which faculty and staff participated, (b) measured the degree participants would recommend the program to other colleagues, (c) explored the extent to which the programs influenced the participants’ ability to address the Five Core Principles of Lasallian Education, and (d) examined whether a significant correlation existed between each of the participants’ self-reported demographics (6). It was noted that the statement of “Lasallian core principles is not a centralized, ratified definition of the constitutive elements of the Lasallian mission by the Institute of the Brothers of the Christian Schools”; but they are one specific iteration of such an “informal agreement,” and so the principles were used as the operationalized definition of the mission of Lasallian education (7). Research questions were noted (11), definition of terms listed (13), and a comprehensive literature review was created including but not limited to the topics of Catholic education, Lasallian Catholic education, the Lasallian educational mission, faculty and

staff in Lasallian Catholic schools, Lasallian formation programs, and research on Lasallian mission formation programs (20).

The author used a quantitative study that consisted of a researcher-designed survey that was sent to participants of one or more of nine Lasallian formation programs (80). Participants were faculty or staff members from 16 of the 17 Lasallian Catholic secondary schools located in the SFNO District (82). A total of 166 faculty and staff were identified as meeting the above criteria. The researcher-constructed survey was an online instrument and consisted of 37 questions and took approximately ten minutes to complete (83). Validity and reliability of the questionnaire were addressed (87).

Permission to administer the survey was obtained from the Director of the Office of Education for the SFNO District, the General Councilor of the Lasallian Region of North America (RELAN), and the administration of the one university involved in the study (90). A three-week window for survey completion was found, school emails were used to communicate with the participants, and the researcher sent three reminders during that time frame (91). Once the surveys were completed, SYSTAT statistical software was used to analyze the data (91). Limitations of the study (94) and the background of the researcher were addressed (96).

The four research questions addressed within the study were: (a) the programs participated in, (b) whether the participants would recommend the programs to others, (c) how influential the programs were in helping participants to understanding the Lasallian Core Principles, and (d) whether or not there was a significant relationship between participants' demographics and the extent to which each Lasallian Mission Formation Program had influenced the participants' ability to address the Core Principles (100). A total of 73% (N=121) of the participants successfully returned the survey; of these, 92% were lay men and women, 61% were male, 26% have served in a Lasallian ministry for 13-18 years, 67% had attended Catholic secondary school themselves, and 77% had a graduate degree (104).

The summary of findings for question one – “the programs participated in” – found all participants had participated in at least one Lasallian Mission Formation Program. Of those reporting, 45% participated in at least one District or Regional program, 26% participated in two, and 30% participated in three or more programs. Of all the programs, the Lasallian Leadership Institute (45%) and the Campus Ministry and Student Activities Annual Gathering (28%) were the most frequently attended (107).

The summary of findings for question two – “would participants recommend the programs to others” – found “all the participants perceived the nine Lasallian Mission Formation Programs to be recommendable to a colleague.” The percentage of the net promoter scores (NPS) was found to be in the strong range of satisfaction relative to the Reichheld's scale (109). The Vandhu Paaruu program obtained a 100% NPS, and the programs Discerning Leaders (81%) and the Buttimer Institute of Lasallian Studies (78%) also reported high NPS scores. The lowest NPS was 38%, which according to Reichheld's scale still suggests positive engagement and recommendation (110).

The summary of findings for question three – “how influential were the programs in helping participants to understand the Lasallian Core Principles” – found most of the programs were perceived by the participants as “very influential” on their ability to address the Five Core Principles of Lasallian Education (112). Four programs (Buttimer Institute of Lasallian Studies, Brother John Johnston Institute, Discerning Leaders Program, and Vandhu Paaru) were noted as very influential on addressing all five principles. The Lasallian Social Justice Institute and the Lasallian Leadership Institute were found to be influential in addressing most of the principles; and three programs (Lasallian Association for Secondary School Chief Administrators, District Chief Administrators Association, and the Campus Ministry and Student Activities Annual Gathering) were found to be only “somewhat influential” on their ability to address all the core principles (113).

The summary of findings for question four – “was there a significant relationship between participants’ demographics and the extent to which each Lasallian Mission Formation Program had influenced the participants ability to address the principles” – found no statistically significant correlations between this and the extent to which the nine Lasallian Mission Formation Programs had influenced participants’ ability to address the Five Core Principles of Lasallian Education and demographics (117).

The researcher recommended a number of items for future research (144), as well as recommendations for future practice (145). The findings suggest that the “Catholic Church’s call for faculty and staff to be prepared and formed both spiritually and professionally is being addressed by the SFNO District” and is confirmed by the influence of the Lasallian Regional and District Mission Formation Programs upon the study’s participants (148). Respondents perceived the programs in which they participated to be “very influential” on their ability to understand the Five Core Principles of Lasallian Education. Participants would recommend the program in which they participated to a colleague, and the findings suggest that additional Lasallian Mission Formation Programs in the SFNO District are needed in the future.