

Mann, William. Annotation of "The Experience of Association for Mission for Mission in Lasallian Secondary Schools and Higher Education Institutions by Lay Teachers Who Have Completed the Lasallian Leadership Institute," by John Kane, FSC, Ed.D. diss., Saint Joseph's University, Philadelphia, 2011. *AXIS: Journal of Lasallian Higher Education* 2, no. 2 (2011).

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ANNOTATION

Kane, John. "The Experience of Association for Mission in Lasallian Secondary Schools and Higher Education Institutions by Lay Teachers Who Have Completed the Lasallian Leadership Institute." Doctoral dissertation, Saint Joseph's University, Philadelphia, 2011.

This dissertation is described by the author as a research project employing a phenomenological, qualitative research design (iii, 53-54). It centers on 4 Lasallian lay teachers who are graduates of the Lasallian Leadership Institute (LLI) and is "intended to understand their experience of association for mission in their current Lasallian ministry" (7). According to the author, the goal of such a research approach was "to obtain comprehensive descriptions of the experience [in this case, the LLI], which would then serve the "basis for a reflective structural analysis that portrays the essence of the experience" of the participants (56, 57).

Of the 103 respondents to a sixteen-question questionnaire, 26.9% identified as secondary school teachers, 14.4% identified as college teachers, 48.1% identified as administration, and 11% identified as other. The sole purpose of the questionnaire "was to choose participants to be interviewed." Chosen were 2 from secondary schools and 2 from colleges in part because each "expressed different experiences" (58, 64, 190). The author noted two prior studies evaluating the effectiveness of LLI: (a) Ketelle and Swain in 2002 of LLI Cohort 2 only and (b) Tidd in 2001 of "a small sample size of participants ... suggesting future studies needed" (51).

Kane ties the importance of lay teachers and association for mission of Brothers and laity strongly to "a significant decrease in [the Institute's membership] in the last fifty or so years" (iii, 4). "Brothers alone could no longer guarantee the mission" (8). However, he also ties this evolution to the impact of Vatican Council II's "understanding of the role of the laity in the Church" (5) and to the Institute's recognition that lay people needed formation experiences "if they were to truly share in the mission" (6).

According to Kane, the LLI was developed (a) to provide a Lasallian foundation for association for mission for lay colleagues, inclusive of Brothers, and (b) to provide characteristics of what it means to be associated with the Institute for mission (iii). It was begun in 1997 as a response to "growing awareness of the need for formation programs for lay colleagues if they were to be associated for the mission." It is a three-year program meeting three times per year using the cohort model. It is now in the 5th cohort of three cohorts across the USA (West, East, and Midwest) (7). The three major themes of LLI are: (a) creative fidelity to the Lasallian founding story; (b) spiritual leadership in Lasallian ministries; and (c) Lasallian leadership in the educational community. He notes that these themes were tied to the 5 goals of Lasallian ministries established in 2005 by the USA/Toronto Regional Education Board (49).

The findings of this research project are: (a) LLI was a good experience and its graduates clearly believe they are associated for mission; (b) the LLI experience, while having some similarities and convergences, appeared to have been unique to each individual; and (c) there rests a need to identify and address the needs of LLI graduates (iii-iv). Appendix D captures “selected responses from open-ended questions on the survey; and it provides interesting reading. For example: (a) “I believe association for mission is extremely important if the Lasallian mission is to continue into the future”; (b) “my feelings of inclusion are a result of individual effort more than organizational efforts”; and (c) “I very much appreciated and enjoyed my LLI experience. It helped me understand the Lasallian story and my part in it” (191-194).

The second chapter, the “review of literature,” focuses on 3 significant aspects of association for mission: (a) the historical development of association for mission; (b) the concept of association, including the relationship of association to mission; and (c) the LLI in relationship to association for mission (14-52). Seven “constant elements of the Lasallian experience” identified by the 41st General Chapter of 1986 are tied by Kane to its call for laity “to be welcomed and also to receive formation” (21). Noting clear distinctions between the identities of the Brothers and lay associates, “common elements of shared mission or association ... begin to emerge in the literature”: (a) communion or community (41); (b) mission (42); (c) “a spiritual and faith dimension to association for mission” (43); and (d) commitment (43).

Some characteristics of formation for Lasallian mission were suggested by the General Council in 1997 (47). In addition, some distinctly Lasallian characteristics were identified by the 43rd General Chapter of 2000 of “partners who have a long record of collaboration in the Lasallian mission and who feel a call to deepen the charism, spirituality, and Lasallian communion in which they wish to participate” (44). The General Council in 2010 restated these characteristics as “a rephrasing, for purposes of amplification and clarification” (44-45).

Chapters 4, 5, 6, and 7 of the dissertation describe and analyze the experience of the 4 principal interviewees. Chapter 8 presents the generalizations and conclusions of the study. A few similarities emerged: (a) LLI was a good experience; (b) the interviewees had a different view of students and changed their approach to their work as a result of LLI; (c) a strong connection with John Baptist de La Salle and the Lasallian heritage was noted; (d) the importance of the spiritual dimension in the lives of interviewees emerged; (e) a sense of connection with the larger Lasallian world network developed; and (f) a strong commitment to association and to the mission going forward evolved or was strengthened (143). Two differences emerged among the interviewees around the (a) experience of community and (b) the experience of mission. While there was a sense of a growing Lasallian community, some concern was noted about community being limited to those who had participated in a Lasallian formation experience and about a need for more effort to be dedicated to building this community and supporting participants after the LLI experience is over (166-171). While each interviewee expressed a clear understanding of mission at their school, a couple nonetheless had concern about mission at their schools. One felt that the chief administrator did not support or promote mission and mission formation. Another was concerned that mission was struggling at their school, especially as it moves into the future with fewer Brothers (172-174).

Kane's conclusion to this study of the current experience of association for mission is that each of the 4 participants "clearly demonstrated that they are associated for mission with the Institute" (165) and that the LLI influenced how participants approached their work, especially how they viewed their students (165-166). Furthermore, many areas for possible study of the graduates of the 5 LLI cohorts suggest themselves, according to the author, and would provide valuable data as the concept of association for mission continues to develop (176). Kane suggests (a) a study of non-teacher participants of LLI, (b) a study of the experience of lay partners who are leading Lasallian schools, and (c) a study of Lasallians from child welfare agencies.