

Mendoza, Miguel. Annotation of “Niveles de Participación en la Realidad Asociativa Lasallista en América Latina y España (Levels of Participation in the Reality of Lasallian Association in Latin America and Spain)” by Lorenzo González Kipper. D.Ed. dissertation, Universidad de Montemorelos, N.L. México, 2004. *AXIS: Journal of Lasallian Higher Education* 6, no. 3 (Institute for Lasallian Studies at Saint Mary’s University of Minnesota: 2015).

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ANNOTATION

González Kipper, Lorenzo. “Niveles de Participación en la Realidad Asociativa Lasallista en América Latina y España (Levels of Participation in the Reality of Lasallian Association in Latin America and Spain).” D.Ed. dissertation, Universidad de Montemorelos, N.L. México, 2004.

Lorenzo González Kipper’s dissertation is aimed at discriminating among the levels of belonging within Lasallian association (2). With this purpose, this dissertation assesses the validity and reliability of five variables as discriminatory factors of Lasallian association in Latin America and Spain. These five factors are: a sense of belonging, solidarity, enthusiastic adherence, internalization of the spirituality, and level of community engagement with the mission (6). González utilized these discriminatory factors to classify the levels of association in three categories: solidarity with other Lasallians in mission from the perspective of the poor, commitment to the poor from a Lasallian standpoint, and responsible participation in the Lasallian educational mission (28).

This study is relevant because association has been a characteristic principle of the Lasallian Institute since its foundation (10, 18) and because, currently, it might offer some responses of creative fidelity to the significant challenges that the Lasallian mission faces because of the drastic decline of vowed religious personnel to serve the Lasallian works (13, 20). Thus, a measure of these five characteristics of Lasallian association may allow participants in the Lasallian mission to identify the different levels of association and enable Lasallian leaders to make appropriate decisions to strengthen the levels of association and to improve performance regarding mission (229).

The population of this study comprises an undetermined number of individuals who belong to the 328 non-tertiary educational Lasallian works in Latin America and Spain. These Lasallian works include 294 formal educational institutions and 34 initiatives of non-formal education (142). From this total of educational works, 49 programs and institutions were stratified (randomly selected) in order to represent formal and non-formal organizations, works from Latin America (both Spanish and Portuguese speaking countries) and from Spain. Among the 49 programs and institutions that were randomly selected, 45 responded to the instrument and participated in the study. The total number of individuals who responded to the instrument was 939 participants (170); they included women lay partners, men lay partners, Brothers, and some non-specified participants. From the total number of participants, the greater majority (96.9%) work in formal education.

The aforementioned five discriminatory factors were used to develop an instrument to measure the level of involvement in Lasallian association. This instrument was developed by consulting with a panel of experts (152-153) and, then, applying it to the 80 Lasallians from Latin America and Spain (153). This process helped refine the instrument into its two versions: Spanish and

Portuguese. The final version of the questionnaire includes five items for each one of the five variables, a total of twenty-five items. All items of the questionnaire use a Likert scale from one to five (160). The total scores of the instrument run from 25 (the minimum degree of association) to 125 (the maximum degree of association). Based on these scores, participants were able to classify themselves into one of three levels: associated with people for mission at the highest level (associate); associated for mission at the medium level (co-participants); and associated with the institution at the lowest level (collaborators) (215).

Results of the study show that the five variables (solidarity, spirituality, adherence, commitment, and finally sense of belonging) do have an impact on defining the level of association, and in that respective order (212). The study also shows that 584 (62%) of the participants belong to the highest level of association, 287 (31%) to the medium level, and 68 (7%) to the lowest level (206, 226). 78% of the participant Brothers, followed by 60% of the participant women were the largest groups assessed as associates (226).

Among the conclusions, two striking points are highlighted by González's study. First of all, not all of the Brothers consider themselves as associates, according to the scores of the instrument (251). Secondly, women are the largest Lasallian associated group in the context where the study was conducted, which means that the role that women are playing in Lasallian mission is changing (226). Finally, some recommendations to improve the present study are presented (254). The two key recommendations are: using other measurement techniques that the literature presents in order to develop the instrument and refining the choice of words of the instrument in order to make it clearer for participants from all contexts.