REVIEW OF RESEARCH

CATHOLIC SCHOOL RESEARCH

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One of the goals of this journal, along with presenting information about important research articles, is to stimulate the formation of a research network for Catholic schools. In a previous issue, Tom Hunt and I wrote about a conference on private school research at the University of Dayton. In subsequent issues you will learn about the revised work of the Chief Administrators of Catholic Education (CACE) Research Center, including requests for proposals. This issue offers an overview of the recent Catholic School Research Summit.

From March 17 to March 19, 2000, the Institute for Catholic Educational Leadership at the University of San Francisco convened a select group of educators from around the nation to reflect on the state of Catholic school research. Joining USF faculty members Mary Peter Traviss, OP; Ed McDermott, SJ; and Gini Shimabukuro were Vincent Duminuco, SJ (Fordham University); Mike Guerra (NCEA); Peter Holland (Belmont, MA, Public Schools); Tom Hunt (University of Dayton); Remigia Kushner, CSJ (Manhattan College); Lourdes Sheehan, RSM (USCC); Robert Starratt (Boston College); and Joseph O'Keefe, SJ (Boston College). Doctoral students joined us at the end of each day.

We began by reviewing what we have learned in the past 40 years. In the course of our time together, a framework for discussion emerged. We looked at various types of research under four headings: descriptive, explanatory, analytic, and theoretical. Five broad headings organized our discussion of topics of research: authenticity, access, leadership and personnel, curriculum, and instruction. We also took into account the agents of research: the United States Department of Education; NCEA; scholars at universities and think tanks; doctoral students; and practitioners. Many of the names will surely be familiar. All concurred that Anthony Bryk, Valerie Lee, and Peter Holland

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made the most significant contribution of the past decade when they published *Catholic Schools and the Common Good* (1993). We also recognized the importance of John Convey's summary of research on Catholic schools in his 1992 publication *Catholic Schools Make a Difference: Twenty-five Years of Research.* Among the other social scientists were James Coleman, George Elford, Joseph Fichter, Andrew Greeley, Joseph Harris, Neil McCluskey, Paul Peterson and his colleagues, and the team of the American Legacy at the Crossroads project. The American Legacy project has given birth to new books about Catholic schools, both published in 2000: *American Legacy at the Crossroads* and *The Catholic Character of Catholic Schools.* We looked at important studies sponsored by the United States Catholic Conference/National Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCC/NCCB), most especially Ciriello's work on the principalship. Of course, we made frequent mention of important studies on a wide range of issues that were conducted by staff members at the National Catholic Educational Association, which offer insight into elementary and secondary schools, central administration, boards, and religious education. The social sciences are not alone in providing a research methodology for Catholic-school research. We recognized the importance of historical perspectives in the work of Harold Buetow, Timothy Walch, and Thomas Hunt, among others. Theological perspectives are also essential to building and maintaining mission. The documents of Vatican Council II have had an enormous impact, as have subsequent documents promulgated by the Congregation for Catholic Education at the Vatican. Many noted the importance of the Congregation for the Clergy's *General Directory for Catechesis.* The USCC and NCCB provided significant theological grounding, most especially in the seminal document *To Teach as Jesus Did.* Theologians have made significant contributions, especially Avery Dulles and Thomas Groome. Given the scope of the Catholic Church, the international viewpoint is very important; the work of Marcellin Flynn and *The Contemporary Catholic School: Context, Identity and Diversity* were recognized as important contributions.

After reviewing the past, we assessed the present state of Catholic schools, and the research agenda flowing therefrom. We discussed a number of issues under the aegis of authenticity. Underlying all of the areas of inquiry is the desire to understand through research the extent to which the lived reality of the school matches its espoused mission. All agreed that we need to explore further the notion of social capital, which figures so prominently in the work of James Coleman. We must know how Church documents are integrated into school culture, especially in terms of the spiritual and theological sophistication of Catholic school personnel. We must articulate models of the Church that are implicit in schools, especially in those that serve large numbers of non-Catholic students. Moreover, we must understand better how schools function as sites of primary evangelization for nominally Catholic

children from non-practicing homes. There is a need to investigate the ways Catholic institutions collaborate with each other, especially the relationship between Catholic schools and Catholic universities. In light of state performance and assessment standards, which can at times conflict with religious mission, we wondered what drives the Catholic school's curriculum. Moreover, how do new insights into epistemology and constructivist models of teaching affect ethos? Finally, how will technological advancement change educational institutions? How "virtual" will the Catholic school become in the future? What impact will technology have on the building and sustaining of community?

Under the aegis of access we considered several issues. Foremost among them was the need to determine the socioeconomic status of students, especially in regard to the eliting phenomenon that has been posited by researchers and affirmed by practitioners. Are Catholic schools, especially at the secondary level, becoming inaccessible to students from lower socioeconomic backgrounds? We also wondered about ethnicity and race. Clearly, Catholic schools, seen in the aggregate, are more ethnically diverse than they were 40 years ago. But, how are people of color distributed across schools? Are Catholic schools in fact segregated? What policies and programs can alleviate such a situation? In light of the demographics of the Catholic Church in the United States, we placed the highest priority on research that addresses the recruitment and retention of Latinos in Catholic schools. We also wondered about the presence of other immigrants. To what extent do Catholic schools today continue the tradition of providing educational opportunities for newcomers? In light of research about learning theory and in response to the eliting phenomenon, we also saw the need for research about the inclusion of students with special needs. Finally, we must learn more about the range of ways that government supports students in Catholic schools, from federal entitlement programs like Title I to voucher experiments and other choice initiatives.

A number of issues emerged under the heading of leadership and personnel. Primary among them was concern about teacher recruitment and retention. Where are the shortages—by region, level, and sector (parish, private, diocesan)? What recruitment mechanisms are most effective? Which Catholic schools have had success retaining high-quality teachers? What mentoring and other support programs seem to work? We saw the need to investigate the changing roles of others who are involved in Catholic education. For example, what is the relationship between the hierarchy (bishops and pastors) and the Catholic school, with a particular focus on the structure and role of school boards? What is the impact of the continuing decline of religious communities? What remains of the founding charism when religious are all but absent, or have left altogether? What are the contours of the charism of the laity? What are the de jure and de facto links between the

Church and the school when the founding community is marginally involved? How has the superintendency changed in shifting diocesan structures that often include a secretary or vicar for education? How has the principalship changed with the emergence of school presidencies? On both levels, what has been the impact of leadership theory? What are the dynamics of transition of personnel from the public school to the Catholic school? What models of staff development work best? Finally, how can Catholic schools recruit and retain people of color for teaching and administration?

We concluded our summit by reflecting on those issues that are prominent now, but were not as prominent 10 years ago. In other words, what are the crucial issues that we might not have anticipated? First, we considered the realm of finances, from increasing costs for technology and employee benefits on the expense side, to the rapid and widespread growth of centralized diocesan fundraising (sometimes called "private vouchers") on the income side. Second, we would not have predicted the popularity of home schooling, especially among some Catholics. Third, technological advances have been stunning, especially the Internet. Fourth, we would not have predicted the existence of charter schools and their bearing on Catholic education. Fifth was the stress on accountability (especially through high-stakes testing) and competition in the broader education sector. Sixth was the growing disparity between wealthy and poor and its impact on Catholic social thought and action. Finally, we would not have predicted the sometimes bitter struggles related to ecclesial identity. This exercise helped us articulate a research agenda for the current day; all of the aforementioned issues provide ample territory for inquiry.

Cognizant of the difficulty of predicting the future, we nonetheless speculated about which questions might be prominent in 2010, for these should form the research agenda in the next few years. What will be the impact of the implementation norms of *Ex Corde Ecclesiae* on Catholic schools, both for the dynamics of Catholic institutional life and the commitment of the universities to dioceses and schools? How will globalization link Catholic education across political and cultural boundaries? How will the superintendency and principalship be affected by structural change at the school and diocesan level? How will church affiliation among elderly baby boomers and gen-Xers impact enrollment and philanthropy? If disaffection increases, what will happen to fundraising efforts? What technological changes will take place during the next decade and how can research assist practitioners with institutional planning? What impact will distance learning have on the preparation of teachers and administrators? To what extent will there be support from the clergy, an increasing number of whom never attended a Catholic school?

Several concrete action steps emerged at the summit's conclusion. First, the full proceedings would be published by USF. Second, a team of researchers would work with CACE members on the issue of teacher recruit-

ment and retention and present their findings at the October 2000 CACE meeting. Third, we will do more to ensure that doctoral students have avenues of partnership across institutions, to help them with their dissertations and to encourage them to continue working in the field. Fourth, we will foster international collaborations through publications such as the *International Journal of Religion and Education* and organizations such as the International Federation of Catholic Universities. Fifth, conscious of the high cost of good research, we committed ourselves to developing relationships with appropriate foundations and donors. Finally, we bemoaned the gulf that sometimes exists between practitioners and researchers and promised to redouble our commitment to mutual and sustained collaboration.

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