

Nurturing Spirituality and Vocation: A Catholic Approach to New Teacher Induction

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The Catholic school system in Ontario, Canada, is fully funded by the government. Recently, Ontario's Ministry of Education mandated an induction year, the New Teacher Induction Program (NTIP), for all new teachers. This legislation provides an opportunity for Catholic school boards to take the lead and shape creative and effective programs for new teacher induction. The mission of the Catholic school and the vocation of a Catholic teacher give meaning and direction to the new teacher's professional educational practice. This article first explores some of the pastoral theological concerns that those charged with developing a Catholic approach to NTIP need to consider and integrate into the programs they develop and lead. It then proposes a model for new teacher induction that builds on the insights from pastoral theology and adult learning theory.

The largest government-funded system of Catholic education in North America is in the Canadian province of Ontario. That system educates more than 600,000 students and is administered and governed regionally by elected Catholic Boards of Education. In a large, publicly funded system, the demographics in Catholic schools often reflect a cross section not only of the Catholic population, but also of the larger community, many of whom are eager to attend Catholic schools. Within this system, Catholic schools fulfill a double mandate: to educate in the faith and to educate inspired by faith (Congregation for Catholic Education [CCE], 1988). Yet, because they are state funded, Catholic schools are immediately subject to the regulations, policies, and new programs emerging from the provincial government and its Ministry (Department) of Education.

Recently, the Ontario government revised the accreditation process for new teachers. Instead of writing a qualifying examination at the completion of their professional education, a transition year has been implemented to support and to train new teachers in the passage from being education students to professional teachers. Called the New Teacher Induction Program (NTIP), it

offers a combination of professional support and mentoring to ensure a successful entrance into the teaching profession. The NTIP, like other state policies, is obligatory for Catholic schools and in 2006 all Ontario school boards were given the responsibility of implementing the program.

This induction program can be a privileged opportunity, a time and a process for Catholic educators to initiate new teachers into the ministry of Catholic education in a manner that is appropriate, effective, and reflective of the beliefs and educational commitments of the Catholic Church. The NTIP offers the Catholic education community in Ontario a genuine “moment of promise” (Ontario Conference of Catholic Bishops, 1989, 1993). The rationale for and model of the new teacher induction program offered in this article, although reflective of a response to a government policy developed in Ontario, may be useful for other Catholic schools and supportive of Catholic education in a far larger area.

The Need for a Catholic Approach

According to the Ontario Ministry of Education’s (2006) *New Teacher Induction Program: Induction Elements Manual*, the induction program builds on the foundation of knowledge and experience gained in university programs leading to a teacher’s first certification by providing another full year of professional support. The Ministry proposes a process of induction that is rooted in the experience of the new teacher, builds on that experience, and lays the foundation for an ongoing reflective practice that epitomizes the best of the teaching profession. The pragmatic goal of this initiative is, according to Cherubini and Smith (2006), “to improve teacher induction practices in order to improve student learning” (p. 20).

If the induction program is aimed at improved student learning, then the Church’s vision of integral learning—moral, spiritual, and religious (CCE, 1977, 1988, 1997)—requires men and women who have learned what they are to teach. However, many new teachers experience what boards have known for a long time: that many faculties of education provide little or no foundation for professional growth as Catholic educators. Aspiring Catholic teachers have had little exposure to any form of faith formation since their own high school years. Universities and faculties of education in Ontario are public. Few offer courses in Catholic theology; most approach religion from the social sciences perspective characteristic of religious studies.

The initiation of new teachers into the ministry and community of Catholic education is not a simple task. An induction year represents a privileged opportunity. However, that opportunity can be squandered unless those

responsible for the program cultivate an attitude and approach that is realistic and achievable. Such a task calls for an effective model, painstakingly developed and carefully assessed, to insure that Catholic schools and school boards use this situation as a “talent” left to them by the Lord (Mt. 25). With a focus on the development of spirituality and a sense of vocation in the new teacher, a Catholic approach calls for an integral and unique process, which cannot be achieved simply through add-ons to a government-driven plan.

Who Are the New Teachers?

New teachers in Catholic schools come to this career shaped by the contours of the post-modern, millennial, mass-mediated culture of today. They bring with them a mixed and uncertain understanding of the Catholic faith. They have grown up in an atmosphere of suspicion toward authority, uncertainty about institutions, and “multicultural richness and religious homelessness” (Schweitzer, 2004, p. 23). Some are deeply committed and actively practicing Catholics. Others are more casual in their identification with the Church (Beaudoin, 1998; Clark, 2003). Most have chosen to work in Catholic education and come to teaching with memories of their own Catholic schooling, high ideals, and concrete images of the good they hope to accomplish (O’Keefe, 2000). The Catholic educational community should care not only about the potential of new teachers to contribute to Catholic education, but also their ability to find satisfaction in their work, discern its vocational significance, and enjoy the support of a strong Catholic educational community (Cook & Engel, 2006).

Experienced primarily as personal aspirations and assumptions, many of the beliefs and convictions new teachers hold about what it means to be a teacher and about Catholic education have not been critically examined (O’Keefe, 2000). The stress and activity of first-year teaching often leaves them with barely enough time to survive and little time to develop a reflective practice. The immediate and at times competing demands of the workplace, driven by standards of practice, legislation, administrators, boards, and professional associations, often play a greater role in shaping professional identity, behavior, and attitudes (Campbell, 2003). In this situation, Catholic spirituality, Catholic faith knowledge, and Catholic vocational consciousness would appear to be peripheral to what is happening in the life of a new teacher.

The process of induction is a dynamic interplay of student-centered (the new teacher) and situated learning (within the Catholic education community). Authentic development of spirituality, faith knowledge, and vocation

in the professional consciousness and practice of a beginning Catholic teacher implies growth. It recognizes that professional development, especially in a religious context, is a transformational process that builds on, while at the same time challenges, pre-established belief patterns and assumptions (Cranton, 1996; Fowler, 2000; Lonergan, 1992; Mezirow, 1991; O'Sullivan, 1999; Parks, 1993).

Many new teachers are young adults, at a time in life that is critical for their faith development. They are, as Parks (1986) points out, at a life stage characterized by both openness and caution, experimentation and dependence, and movement away from conventional beliefs to a critical, reflective engagement with serious issues of meaning and value. Their doubts and questions, their unspoken disagreement or unfamiliarity with Church teachings or morality ought not be ignored as they learn to participate in the mission of Catholic education. Mere socialization into the Catholic culture of a school does not do justice to the searching, questioning characteristics of this age group. Nurturing the spirituality and fostering a sense of vocation in new teachers requires us to find ways to join them on their faith journey. Thus, it is important to create a program that is strengths based and not built on the perceived deficits of the new teachers, focusing for example on their lack of knowledge of Catholic teachings (Gilchrist, 1989). A realistic new teacher induction should build on their values and beliefs and readiness to succeed in their chosen profession. Thus, an achievable approach to teacher induction should necessarily pay attention to the new teacher's experiences, while situated within a faith perspective and the theological traditions of the Church.

To achieve this, Catholic schools and/or boards should engage new teachers in a shared learning process that includes those who mentor and support them, as well as their peers. This may be a delicate process, involving painful paradigm shifts and exposing conflicts between personal religious and moral values, the assumptions in the culture of the schools, and teachings of the Church. There are two risks to anticipate here. First, because of the certification aspects of NTIP and probationary status of most new teachers, there is a subtle risk of fostering an extrinsic approach to Catholicity, demonstrated in external compliance and conformity with whatever is presented as Catholic teaching or practice. Second, it would be naïve to think of mentoring/induction as all about the new teachers and to be unaware of the learning needs of the mentors and of the mentoring school community. If not addressed, these risks can undermine the effectiveness of true learning, faith development, and vocational growth. These young teachers need a chance to practice and integrate new knowledge in a safe environment (Merriam & Simpson, 1995).

An understanding of the eclectic contour of value systems in the so-called post-modern culture (Beaudoin, 1998; MacIntyre, 1984; Parks, 1990; Stout, 1988) and an appreciation of the importance of critical thinking in authentic, adult learning (Brookfield, 1991) underscore the folly of a one-directional process of informing new teachers of what they need to know and how they have to teach Catholic beliefs and morals. Telling, as they say, is not teaching. Instead, a process that draws on new teachers' lives, experiences, hopes, and questions is appropriate to help them integrate—*affectively, cognitively, and spiritually*—their personal values and the mission of Catholic education.

“Although organizations do socialize their members, such socialization is probably secondary or tertiary (i.e., subsidiary) to earlier (primary) socialization...experienced by an individual from the time of birth” (Baba, 1989, p. 7). This insight both limits what can be expected from a new teacher induction program, while at the same time indicates a fruitful starting point—the story of what brought these teachers to Catholic schools. Such an approach also fits with a Catholic perspective that understands that ministry and vocation go beyond behaviors and aim at the development of a faithful person, the realization of a call that began with and is integral to the sacrament of Baptism (CCE, 1988; John Paul II, 1989). Development of a vocational consciousness and sense of mission are part of a longer journey of faith. Therefore, credible induction will connect with and build on the values and beliefs that new teachers grew up with and that shape their stance and approach to Catholic belief and practice (O’Keefe, 2000). To be effective, mentoring and professional development will have to bring these personal faith systems into the broader social and religious context of the Church (Fowler, 2000).

Of course, we may not overlook the fact that the Catholic community in Ontario is multicultural. It is blessed with a plurality of authentic approaches to Catholicism, reflecting not only the cultural frameworks of different ethnic communities, but also their historical struggles to remain faithful in often-difficult diaspora situations (Rahner, 1981). To honor and engage this pluralism, while meeting the needs of a coherent Catholic witness in our schools, requires a methodology that moves new teachers beyond a self- or group-referential way of seeing the Church and justifying choices, without losing the individual’s connection to the sources of faith that supply the mood and motivation (Geertz, 1973) for being a Catholic teacher.

Those who oversee the mentoring of new teachers also need to be self-reflective. As in any institutional setting, in a Catholic school the task of building a strong communal and organizational identity often reflects the priorities and vision of those in charge (Manring, 2003). While administrators and principals are rightly motivated to create a climate of commitment and openness

to the Church's educational mission, they need to guard against promoting their own understanding of and commitment to Christianity "without sensitivity to [the] multicultural complexities" (Baba, 1989, p. 9) present in the faith and professional identity of those they wish to mentor.

The multicultural reality of the Church in Ontario suggests that faith consciousness in Catholic schools is multifaceted, shaped by the often implicit diversity of religious and cultural practices, systems of meaning, and values. Some of these go back to the Irish Catholic foundation of Catholic education in Ontario; others are the result of newer waves of immigration. Shaping the professional identity and practice of new teachers in a way that fosters faith development, spiritual growth, and vocational awareness requires credible and do-able models that challenge new teachers and their mentors to develop a more conscious self-awareness and reflect on their prior and present faith experience, creating a faith-commons that fosters open dialogue and mutual learning.

The Catholic School and the Ecology of New Teacher Induction

In principle, the "focus on community in Catholic education provides opportunities for support networks and shared reflection" (O'Keefe, 2000, p. 538), which are essential for a successful transition to the teaching profession. Faith community, however, should not be considered a given simply because a school is designated Catholic. Indeed, research on teacher recruitment and retention underscores the importance of the religious environment and the need to do more to nurture the school faith community (Cook, 2001; Squillini, 2001).

The Catholic Church in North America is characterized not only by diversity, but also by a tension or struggle to agree on what it means to practice the Catholic faith (Tanner, 1997). Plurality in beliefs and differences in approach to Catholicism is not a phenomenon unique to new teachers, but characteristic of teachers and groups of teachers already teaching in Catholic schools. What Eck (2001) says of inter-religious dialogue, that it is a dynamic process of engaging with one another in and through our deepest beliefs as well as differences, applies as well to discourse within the Catholic faith community (Paul VI, 1964).

Insofar as this Catholic educational community is the culture into and through which new teachers are initiated, the introduction of mentoring/induction must raise intense interest in that culture not only on the part of researchers, but of school leaders, as well. Any endeavor to develop a sense of vocation, mission, and understanding of Catholicism in new teachers implies a commitment to renew and revitalize the larger community, and in particular

the school receiving the new teacher. The imperative to achieve this ideal is often described, at least in Ontario, with the word “Catholicity.” Sometimes, this imperative is communicated as a set of values that make Catholic schools unique, capture their essential characteristics, or provide a framework to help educators move effectively toward their goal and purpose.

It is easy to see how concern for shaping the school as a Christian community and mentoring new teachers in the spirit of this ideal could easily be construed as depending exclusively on the administration or requiring a plan aimed at instilling Catholic educational values. Since schools and school systems tend to be organized hierarchically and function in accord with authoritarian structures (Davies & Guppy, 2006), change is often understood as a top-down process. This is typical of educational reforms mandated and measured by provincial, state, or federal departments of education; overseen by local school boards; and implemented in schools under the direction of principals and department heads. This approach, however, is one-directional. It assumes that the school or Catholic teaching shapes the new teacher and pays too little attention to how the presence of the new teacher impacts the shape of the school. The ecology of new teacher induction is a dynamic reality in which the existing school community is called to change and grow.

Toward a Model for a Catholic New Teacher Induction Program

Any model needs to reflect the concrete political reality in the Province of Ontario, Canada and the framework for new teacher induction prescribed by the government. While most researchers hold that the induction extends 3 years (Williby, 2004), the first teaching year is critical. The Ontario Ministry of Education (2006) has prescribed a year-long entry into the teaching profession that combines mentoring, professional development, and performance appraisal. Developing and supporting professional competence in the new teacher is at the center of this process. For Catholic teachers, developing professional competence is not something that is separate from spirituality, faith knowledge, vocation, and being a religious educator/catechist. From a Catholic educational perspective, spirituality, vocation, and knowledge of the faith are neither add-ons to nor implicit in the process proposed by the Ministry of Education. Consequently, in any model for Catholic schools, this religious dimension will be integral and constitutive.

A Catholic model understands teaching as participation in a ministry of the Church and mentoring/induction as welcoming new teachers into a faith community. Thus, it will be a relational model, rather than authoritarian. It will be communal and communicative, rather than supervisory. It will be

characterized by mutuality, with learning going on not only in the new teacher but also in the mentoring, welcoming community. It will not be a relationship of power and control, but one of freedom and dignity, a community of truth (Palmer, 1998) in which knowledge, skills, and values are both learned and taught by the protégé and the mentor, by the novice and the experienced (Knox, 1994; Parks, 2000).

Finally, it is essential to the success of any model that those who will guide and enact it are adequately prepared. Competence does not come automatically. The schools that receive and mentor new teachers, the boards that provide professional development and religious and spiritual resources, and the principals who must monitor new teacher performance need to prepare well for this responsibility. Bringing new teachers into the mission of Catholic education requires of those who will lead the way on this venture that they enter into a shared learning experience, as well. Reflective of the communal nature of the Church and of the Catholic school, induction/mentoring is a shared responsibility.

A Workable Model

The Ontario Ministry of Education (2006) has identified five essential components for NTIP:

- Orientation for all new teachers by the school and school board
- On-the-job training/professional development in classroom management, parent communication skills, and instructional strategies that address the learning and cultural needs of a diverse student population
- Mentoring for new teachers by experienced teachers
- Two performance appraisals
- New accountability and reporting measures

The working model proposed here will focus on the first three components: orientation, professional development, and mentoring. Performance appraisal, accountability, and reporting measures will be discussed only briefly, as they raise questions and require a methodology that would take us beyond the scope of this article.

Nevertheless, a good induction program brings those responsible for performance appraisal together to insure a shared understanding of the appreciative and affirmative aspects of a Catholic approach to new teacher induction. Principals and superintendents responsible for overseeing an induction program are engaged in a social practice, not simply an administrative one. Their

personal views, while significant, need to be enriched and, where needed, corrected by a communal process of discernment of what it means to be a Catholic teacher in the context of the challenges and goals that the Catholic schools and school boards, which they lead, are facing. Finally, for a good model to be workable and effective, administrators will have to recognize and alleviate the overwhelming workloads of new teachers who “are frequently assigned the most difficult students, are asked to teach multiple subjects, are forced to teach classes for which they are not certified, and are expected to oversee extracurricular activities” (Williby, 2004, p. 186).

Orientation

In this component new teachers are familiarized with the mission and vision of the school board. Within this context they are also oriented to the particular character and culture of the school where they will work, including the policies and procedures in practice. In view of the profile of the new teacher, this is a time to allow new teachers to explore the meaning of the mission and vision of the school/school board and to express questions, doubts, hopes, and goals. The orientation is of critical importance because it models the spirit of respect and reciprocity that is necessary for effective learning and change in young adults (Parks, 1993, 2000). Young teachers bring gifts to Catholic education. Orientation should communicate a message that the process of becoming a Catholic teacher is more than showing young teachers the ropes, but involves joining a learning community, where Catholic belief and practice is integral to the teaching endeavor.

On-the-Job Professional Development

While the professional development identified by the Ministry is essential to successful transition from faculties of education to the work world of teaching, it is insufficient in meeting the needs of new teachers in Catholic school boards. New teachers are idealistic, committed, critical thinkers who are conscious of their own potential and the contribution they can make to teaching. They are also appropriately aware of their own needs and open to help from an external source (Parks, 1993). New teachers’ professional development has an active (self-directed) and supportive (mentors’ sharing) dynamic (Cranton, 1996).

A Catholic approach to in-service/professional development should be collaborative, engaging new teachers and conveying deep respect for their competence, while offering them a compelling sense of direction. In-service

and professional development that is informed by a vision of the school, as a faith community, will help new teachers:

- Understand and become skillful in teaching the religion courses/sacramental preparation they are assigned.
- Appreciate both the possibilities and limits of the school-family-parish triad and become more effective in working with parents and the parish.
- Develop an understanding of students—in their cultural and learning diversities—from a Christian perspective and of their teaching role as an expression of “solidarity” with them in the social and educational mission of the Church. (*Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 1994, §§1928-1948)

The tasks facing the new teacher and the requirements of on-the-job professional development can frequently be overwhelming. Initial goodwill can easily be overtaken by a survivor mentality (Glassford & Salinitri, 2007). In order not to lose its vital connection to the spiritual and faith development of the new teacher, a Catholic induction program will find ways to help the new teacher explore what Palmer (1998) calls the “inner landscape of a teacher’s life.” This can be facilitated in a nonintrusive and supportive way through retreats, days of recollection, and journaling.

Retreats and days of recollection. Retreats and days of recollection are indispensable experiences for developing and nurturing a strong and viable commitment in new teachers. Retreats allow the concepts of spirituality, vocation, and mission to become internalized, lived realities. They facilitate the movement of professional identity toward a celebration of one’s own identity as a Catholic teacher.

Retreats provide a unique opportunity for new teachers to tell their stories and reflect on how their beliefs and values have led them to choose Catholic teaching as their profession. Under the skillful leadership of a retreat facilitator, these narratives manifest the ways in which God is calling the novice teachers through the events of their lives and the yearning of their hearts (O’Keefe, 2000).

Of course, vocation is not something that can be managed by a program or instilled by workshops. The school experience could be for some new teachers a discernment of a vocation that leads them away from teaching or from Catholic education. Others may never have considered their life or profession in terms of a calling from God. The reflective and quiet of a retreat offers a place to fuse the individual’s desire to teach with a consciousness of the Church’s desire to be involved in the lives of the young. Retreats can be

seen as gatherings and occasions for spiritual and intellectual journeying, not only reinforcing the stance of committed Catholics, but also affirming young teachers in their search for meaning and value in their lives. Here, too, the foundations for a lifelong habit of reflective practice are laid (Brookfield, 1995; Palmer, 1998) and formed by theological reflection (Kinast, 1999).

Journaling. Keeping a journal is a bridge between the individual's spiritual experience, as during retreats, and the possibilities inherent in a freeing mentoring relationship. Professional and vocational development of the Catholic teacher, although it will certainly involve new knowledge, is equally an initiation into a reflective and discerning process. Journaling contributes to the new teacher's professional growth and faith development through theological reflection and reflective practice.

Mentoring

Fostering spirituality and a sense of vocation requires attention to the day-to-day practice of the new teacher. It is here that the novice teacher makes judgments about teaching that are based in his or her experience, shaped by thoughts and feelings and by the social environment and administrative structures that prevail. Mentoring is a concept and practice that goes back to Greek mythology, where an older and wiser character named Mentor acted as a trusted guide and counsellor to the hero Odysseus. In this sense, mentoring is usually understood as "having a mentor" or "being mentored" by a more experienced teacher. However, mentoring occurs in a broader context and includes, in addition to an individual mentor, the school environment and the company of peers.

The mentoring environment. Since young adults are typically context driven (Parks, 2000), they are vulnerable to whatever images of Catholic teaching and Christian education are available to them in their working environment. The school itself exercises a quasi-mentoring function. When accepted at face value, new teachers will adopt the attitudes, values, interpretations, and meanings that underpin the conventional ethos of everyday practice, adapting to their new environment uncritically. The uniqueness of their gifts and of their vocation risks getting lost, unless effective mentoring helps new teachers through their transition year. There may be some merit in looking for mentors outside the school in which the new teacher works, in order to help the one mentored find both an objective and supportive perspective from which to reflect on what is happening.

Experienced mentors. Although much has been written in educational and management literature on mentoring, “relatively little attention has been given to the requisite qualities and characteristics of effective mentors” (Wilson & Johnson, 2001, p. 121). Typically, mentors exercise a double function: a professional function, like that of a coach who facilitates the protégé’s smooth and successful transition into the teaching profession, and a psychosocial function, which attends to the protégé’s sense of professional competence, identity formation, and well-being. To this, a third function must be added: that of spiritual guide, who can share his or her own experience of vocation, vision of the teaching ministry, and the mission of Catholic education, not necessarily in words, but as a role model and fellow traveller.

Experienced Catholic teachers who have already shown that they understand Catholic education as a lived reality, who have developed a competence that is recognized by their peers and demonstrated in a consistent, habitual, and genuine sense of mission, vocation, and professionalism sustained over a period of time, are in the best position to provide altruistic support. They are concerned for the success of the young teacher, but conscious of the needs of the Catholic community. Mentoring is not about cloning oneself, but of strengthening and affirming the one mentored, even allowing him or her to go places where the mentor has not yet ventured. Good mentors will understand the stages of faith growth and professional development of the young adults they mentor. They will be sensitive to how young adults learn, able to read in beginning teachers the signs of readiness for new learning and greater challenges (Parks, 2000).

The role of mentoring is one that requires reflective practice. Mentors will benefit from sharing in a community of mentors. Mentoring is a part of the ministry of Catholic teaching, which is a shared practice within the Church. It is essential to structure into the NTIP opportunities for the mentors to meet with one another at set times, in prayer and reflection, in order to monitor and improve their own practice and to ensure that their work is moving toward its stated goal.

Peer mentoring. Conscious of the importance of community, Catholic schools and school boards should not overlook the significant role that peers play in counseling, guiding, showing the ropes to new teachers, and modeling Catholic teaching. New teachers share and make sense of their experience informally and often unreflectively in conversations ranging from simply letting off steam to problem solving around particular issues. The strength of this kind of sharing is that it is a spontaneous and informal coming together based on shared interests and concerns, enthusiasms and frustrations, and a

desire to learn and to help learn. Its weakness is in its potential to drift into uncreative and deadening repetitions of war stories and gossip. Of particular importance is the opportunity for new teachers to reaffirm their desire to bring innovation and contribute value to the school community by coming together to validate their own experience and rekindle their passion.

Leaders in the school community and new teachers' mentors, aware of this dimension of mentoring, should facilitate the development of effective networks. For this, they will need to learn how networks form and under what conditions networking exercises a supportive, transforming influence on the emergence of the vocational identity and authentic spirituality of new teachers. This also lays the groundwork for career-long professional development through communities of practice (Wheatley & Frieze, 2006). Opportunities should be encouraged and provided for new teachers to meet—often with the facilitation of an experienced mentor—to talk and walk one another through the process of moving from idealism to reality, from seeing things as they are to taking responsibility for things as they could be.

Further Research Is Needed

The commitment to a Catholic approach to the NTIP is an ambitious and complex project. Integrity and credibility depend on our being able to measure in some way the benefit and effectiveness of what is undertaken and to demonstrate the unique place of Catholic education within a larger publicly funded system. Standard practice suggests that an appreciative, qualitative approach is most reliable in meeting the requirements of reasonableness and confidence that are foundational to accountability and transparency (Merriam, 2001).

There is need for more evidence-based evaluation of induction programs. This is necessary in order to support forward movement and generate reliable knowledge of where a new teacher induction program is cooperating with God's grace and reflective of the experience of Catholic communities of faith. Initiation into Catholic teaching requires the integration of spirituality, religious knowledge, and vocational discernment with professional training and development. To evaluate such a process is a daunting task, because it leads into a "labyrinth of religious transformation" (Johnson-Miller, 2005, p. 1). Reflective of the differences in perspectives within the Catholic educational community, evaluation will not exclude the insights that emerge from mentors, principals, and new teacher support groups, and of all who have been engaged by skilled facilitators in the process of theological reflection and the discernment of spirits.

Recognizing the essential role of mentors in the process of new teacher induction, further research should also look into areas such as the identification and selection of mentors, their preparation and support, and articulating and developing guidelines and processes that will help mentors and those in charge of transition programs to create local knowledge.

Conclusion

The idea of a Catholic approach to new teacher induction is a logical continuation of the commitment of Catholic school trustees to building up our schools as believing communities. A commitment to new teacher induction need not be seen nor constructed as a compliance with ministry directives, but as an opportunity to reflect on and renew our religious commitment to ensuring that our schools are firmly integrated in the community of faith, which is the Catholic Church.

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