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Introducing the Journal

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EDITORS' COMMENTS

INTRODUCING THE JOURNAL

Several years ago, two journals in the U.S. were devoted to research pertinent to Catholic education. One was published at Catholic University and the other at the University of Notre Dame. Both of these journals ceased publication by the mid-1970's. Since that time, Catholic educational leaders have lamented this void. After a period of prolonged discussion about the need to stimulate increased dialogue among scholars and practitioners, four Catholic universities—Fordham University, Saint Louis University, University of San Francisco and the University of Dayton—resolved to publish a journal devoted to scholarship about Catholic education, both at the preK-12 and higher education levels. Achieving this end required financial assistance. Fortunately, the Lilly Endowment awarded us a generous grant to support many production costs during the first two years of publication.

Representatives from the founding universities articulated the primary objective of the journal as providing intellectual leadership to and an inquiry-based understanding of Catholic schools during a period of critical transformation. The term critical is used advisedly as the size of the educational complex, its clientele, the composition of the professional community, and the available economic resources, just to mention a few salient characteristics, are changing dramatically. To respond effectively to these changes, there is a need to cultivate a generalized understanding of policy and practice as well as the social dimension of Catholic schools.

Evolving cultural characteristics as well as a deeper transformation in the Catholic Church itself have served as catalysts for the dramatic changes within Catholic schools. In the pre-Vatican II Church, the mission of Catholic schools was to develop faith in the young within the context of a homogeneous Catholic subculture. Vatican II challenged the faithful to a new conception of Church which requires a greater involvement in a diverse and pluralistic society. The profound sociological, spiritual, and theological transformation of the Church creates a call for re-visioning the mission of the schools. We hope that the journal can play an important role in promoting a substantive philosophical and theological dialogue about the mission and practice of Catholic education as well as schooling.

Even though Catholic education is in a period of critical transformation, it has been remarkably effective in many ways. As several educational leaders have emphasized, Catholic schools have made an invaluable contribution to the common good. Anthony Bryk, for example, upon extensive analysis of the research, concluded that Catholic schools manage simultaneously to:

- achieve relatively high levels of student learning;
 - effect a more equitable distribution of learning among students of different races and classes than does the public sector; and
 - sustain high levels of teacher commitment and student engagement.
- (McLaughlin, O'Keefe, & O'Keefe, Eds., *The Contemporary Catholic School*, 1996, p. 25)

By disseminating such scholarly reflection and research on Catholic schools, this publication can help reinforce a much needed collaboration and attitude of partnership with public educational institutions and researchers conducting inquiry about them.

The editorial policy of this journal is to seek the highest quality research and scholarly monographs pertaining to both Catholic preK-12 and higher education that have implications for policy and practice. To this end, the editors will combine blind refereeing of manuscripts with invited papers from eminent scholars and practitioners. The Journal will offer periodic theme issues with guest editors. These issues will focus on the latest research and scholarly reflection around critical issues, such as character education, school funding policy, and the Catholic identity of schools.

Our editorial objective is to foster a community of reflective dialogue. To this end, we will make every effort to avoid taking an editorial position on controversial issues. Frequently, opposing viewpoints will appear in the same issue either as separate essays or as responses/commentaries. We invite readers, both researchers and practitioners, to submit brief articles in response to essays appearing in the journal. We will publish a selected number of these articles in an "ongoing conversation" section of the journal.

As a complement to featured essays, sections will be dedicated to book reviews and analyses of current research. Sr. Mary Peter Traviss, O.P., director of the Institute for Educational Leadership, University of San Francisco, will serve as book review editor, and Joseph O'Keefe, S.J., Boston College, will edit a review of research section for the journal. We believe that critical analyses and information about pertinent educational literature and research are vital dimensions of the dialogical climate we hope to foster.

The journal will understandably include much research and scholarship selected from contributors in the United States; editorial policy also encourages a broad range of international contributions. An understanding of Catholic education in a variety of cultural contexts will most assuredly help our efforts to be mutually supportive. The advisory board already includes

international representatives, and we hope to quickly develop a network of individuals to assist in extending the international scope of the journal.

While the journal is under the direct sponsorship of four institutions, we consider it to be a shared venture of the Catholic educational community. The success of the venture depends on the submission of quality manuscripts and editorial suggestions as well as support for subscriptions. If you are aware of individuals conducting research or scholarly writing pertinent to Catholic education, encourage them to submit their work to the Journal. Likewise, please provide subscription information to your institutional administrators, librarians, and colleagues. After the grant money is expended, the high cost of producing the journal will be borne solely through subscriptions and institutional support.

Many individuals have contributed immensely in nurturing the journal from a "good idea" to this inaugural issue. While taking the risk of oversight, we acknowledge the invaluable contributors to the incubation phase of the journal: Rev. James L. Heft, S.M., University of Dayton; Sr. Mary Peter Traviss, O.P., University of San Francisco; Rev. Michael Garanzini, S.J., Saint Louis University; and Bruno V. Manno, Hudson Institute. Gerald Cattaro has more recently participated in the development of the journal as the representative of his supporting institution, Fordham University.

Likewise, we are indebted to the Lilly Endowment for providing funds to help support production costs for the first two years of publication. Sister Jean Knoerle and Fred Hofheinz, both with the Endowment, gave encouragement to the project at its inception and during the proposal stage. The Peter Li Education Group, especially Carl Fischer and Mary Noschang, have been exceptionally helpful in offering competent counsel for all aspects of the journal's production and distribution. Julie Biddle worked tirelessly as associate editor in the prepublication phase to coordinate the editorial tasks so essential to the development of an academic journal. The editors are also most appreciative of the competent and thorough editorial assistance of Stella Barber.

Our advisory board has already provided extensive, worthwhile suggestions for the journal's development. We will depend on continued support from these individuals and many others in the Catholic educational community for the success of this shared venture.

William F. Losito
Joseph F. Rogus
Editors

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