

Formation for staff members in Catholic schools in Queensland



Position Statement (March 2016)

Introduction

Catholic Schools. ... are places where people learn how to live their lives, achieve cultural growth, receive vocational training and engage in the pursuit of the common good; they provide occasion and opportunity to understand the present time and imagine the future of society ... At the root of Catholic education is our Christian spiritual heritage, which is part of a constant dialogue with the cultural heritage and the conquests of science; Catholic schools ... are educational communities where learning thrives on the integration between research, thinking and life experience.¹

Pope Francis says that Catholic schools have a responsibility for the evangelization of culture.² This evangelizing mission is to involve a theology, not simply a pastoral theology, but a theology in dialogue with other sciences and human experiences.

The document “Defining Features of Catholic Schools for the 21st Century” identifies the following desirable features of a Catholic school:

1. a strong Catholic identity
2. openness and accessibility to those who seek its values
3. An holistic curriculum
4. staff who are qualified, competent and give witness to Christian values
5. A caring community based on right relationships³.

The report noted, in consequence, that in order to maintain the strong Catholic identity Catholic schools will have staff with appropriate professional qualifications and provide ongoing staff formation^[4].

Furthermore Catholic schools must be run by individuals and teams who are inspired by the Gospel and have been formed in Christian pedagogy.⁴

In the position statement it is recognised that there is an ongoing challenge of ensuring that all members of staff are provided with opportunities for professional development which includes both professional and religious formation.

The Congregation for Catholic Education reinforces this in several documents and asks that all staff receive adequate preparation to serve in coherence with the Catholic faith⁵, and increase their awareness of the person and teachings of Jesus Christ⁶.

Definition

A guide to develop a framework for staff formation in Catholic schools in Queensland, 2012, identifies nine characteristics of a quality formation framework that offers experiences of Christian community and personal spiritual formation at school and authority level. This is understood to be a joint responsibility of the individual staff member, the school and the schooling authority⁷.

The aim of Christian formation is to increase awareness of the person and teachings of Jesus Christ⁸ who wants

¹ Educating Today and Tomorrow: A Renewing Passion (Instrumentum laboris), 2014, p5

² Apostolic Exhortation, *Evangelii Gaudium*, 132-134

³ Queensland Catholic Education Commission (2001). Catholic Schools for the 21st Century: A Report to the Queensland Bishops p. 7.

^[4] Ibid, p. 9.

⁴ Educating Today and Tomorrow: A Renewing Passion (Instrumentum laboris), 2014, p10

⁵ Congregation for Catholic Education, *Educating Together in Catholic Schools: A Shared Mission between Consecrated Persons and the Lay Faithful* (2007), nn. 34-37.

⁶ Ibid. n 27

⁷ *Educating Together in Catholic Schools* n. 15

⁸ Ibid n26, 27

everyone to be fully human, fully alive and open to the power of the Holy Spirit.

Rationale

The Second Vatican Council identified that Catholic schools depend upon teachers for the accomplishment of their goals and programs⁹. This is done in collaboration with parents¹⁰, respecting their responsibility as first and natural educators¹¹.

More recently the Congregation for Catholic Education has reinforced the notion that formation of teachers and administrators is of crucial importance in forming the Catholic identity of schools and in a school's ability to live in fidelity to its educational mission¹².

The Commission acknowledges that staff members employed in Catholic schools are at many different stages in their personal spiritual journey but that they can benefit from formation for mission¹³.

Position statement

Catholic schooling authorities in Queensland will support and promote the provision of quality formation experiences to assist all staff members to grow in understanding of their ministry as part of the mission of the Catholic Church.

Implications

Catholic schooling authorities in Queensland consider:

1. a variety of opportunities for formation experiences for all staff employed in Catholic schools
2. the needs of individuals and their roles in Catholic Education when planning formation experiences
3. incorporating formation of staff into a broad strategy which contributes towards the requirements for professional development of all staff in Catholic schools
4. the importance of an invitational approach to a variety of options, but with an expectation that all will participate.

References

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- Code of Canon Law, 1983
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- Second Vatican Council, 1966. Declaration on Christian Education.

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⁹ Declaration on Christian Education, 8

¹⁰ Code of Canon Law, can. 796 § 1

¹¹ Congregation for Catholic Education, *The Religious Dimension of Education in a Catholic School*, n. 32; cf. also Code of Canon Law, can. 799

¹² *Educating to Intercultural Dialogue in Catholic Schools Living in Harmony for a Civilization of Love*, Vatican City, 2013, nn 76 and 63.

¹³ *Lay Catholics in Schools: Witnesses to the Faith* n. 15