

MEANING AND MISSION:

Exploring a Contemporary Approach to Spiritual Formation for Catholic School Educators

submitted by

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STATEMENT OF AUTHORSHIP AND SOURCES

This thesis contains no material published elsewhere or extracted in whole or in part from a thesis by which I have qualified for or been awarded another degree or diploma.

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All research procedures reported in the thesis received the approval of the relevant Ethics Committee (Appendix A).

Signed: **Date:**

Jill Gowdie

Dedication

This thesis is dedicated to the great host of women and men who sense the world of the Divine imagination and keep the rumour of angels alive. They are teachers, companions, leaders and soul friends who age after age reflect the heart of God.

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ABSTRACT

This thesis documents Australian research into contemporary spiritual formation for Catholic school educators within a systemic context. It contributes to international research that identifies concern for an appropriate approach to formation for Catholic educators. This concern has been intensified by the rapidly declining number of religious and clergy, the rising expectation on 'lay' educators to model authentic Catholic leadership, growing understanding of the adult developmental journey, and shifts in perception and practice around spiritual formation.

In addressing this problem, the research has explored the development and trialling of an adult spiritual formation initiative entitled Catching Fire Project (CFP). The study has interrogated both individual experience and community influence in a curriculum of formation strategies. The intention is to increase the understanding of how staff, individually and collectively, experience a contemporary approach to formation within a school setting, and what strategic elements make it more likely for spiritual formation to gain traction in the wider community context.

This study is potentially significant for the following six reasons:

1. It addresses an immediate un-researched need in the provision of appropriate formation for Catholic educators.
2. It is a pioneering initiative of lay people addressing the needs of other lay people in the provision of spiritual formation.
3. It applies and extends contemporary learning theory to the development of an approach to spiritual formation in a Catholic education setting.
4. It explores how adults journey in their spirituality and make meaning in their lives. Little research has been conducted in this area.
5. It has system significance because it explores the effects of an initiative designed to address spiritual formation in a strategic system-wide context.
6. It offers a robust new model for Catholic school educators and leaders that may assist practitioners to design appropriate spiritual formation programs.

The following two questions focus the conduct of the study:

1. How do participants perceive the Catching Fire Program (CFP)?
2. How does the CFP influence the school community?

Since the study explores perceptions of staff as they engage in a systemic initiative, it invited an interpretivist research design. This interpretative research has engaged the epistemological framework of constructionism and the theoretical perspective of symbolic interactionism because such lenses support a focus on participant experience and meaning making. The research methodology adopted was an evaluative case study which ensured the unique process and nature of individual meaning making was recognised as richly as possible. The case school is located in the western suburbs of the Brisbane metropolitan area. Key data gathering strategies included interviews, questionnaires and documentary analysis.

The research conclusions identify three dimensions in the context of the Catholic school setting: personal, ecclesial and systemic. The CFP approach illustrates the importance of addressing all three of these dimensions so that spiritual formation is personally meaningful, ecclesially faithful and strategically sustainable. In so doing, it makes an original and significant contribution to knowledge, policy and practice in this area. Finally, the research conclusions have political dimensions in two key aspects: they indicate spiritual formation to be a pivotal rather than an optional factor in growing Catholic leadership; and they fundamentally challenge an informational or doctrinally centred design to formation as an authentic or sustainable contemporary approach.

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Glossary of Terms

For the purpose of this research, the following definitions are provided to lend consistency and clarity in the usage of these terms.

AARE: *Australian Association for Research in Education*

ASVEF: *Australian Schools Values Education Framework*

ACBC: *Australian Catholic Bishops Conference*

ACEL: *Australian Council of Educational Leadership*

ACS: *Australian Community Survey*

ACSP: *Association of Catholic School Principals*

ACU: *Australian Catholic University*

AIS: *Association of Independent Schools*

APAPDC: *Australian Principals Associations Professional Development Council (also identified as Principals Australia)*

APRE: Assistant Principal Religious Education, a formal position on the school leadership team in Brisbane Archdiocesan Schools

Archdiocese: *Designation by the Catholic Church to describe a particular geographical region comprised of several pastoral areas, and under the leadership of an Archbishop*

BCE: *Brisbane Catholic Education (Archdiocesan vicariate for education)*

CCE: *Congregation for Catholic Education*

CCL: *Code of Canon Law*

CCLS: *Christian Church Life Survey*

CEC: *Catholic Education Council: Archdiocese of Brisbane*

CEVC: *Catholic Education Commission Victoria*

CFP: *Catching Fire Project for staff spiritual formation for the mission of Catholic Education in the Archdiocese of Brisbane. Catching Fire is named after one of the early translations of Luke 24:32 – ‘Were not our hearts gradually catching fire within us!’*

Christian Spiritual Formation: *Purposeful development (or ‘forming’) of an individual’s beliefs, attitudes and behaviours in the light of the Christian meta-narrative*

CRA: *Catholic Religious Australia, previously ACLRI (Australian Conference of Leaders of Religious Institutes)*

CRA: *Christian Research Association*

Lay person: *An individual who is a member of the Catholic Church, but is not a priest or religious Sister or Brother*

Lectio Divina: *A traditional Catholic practice of scriptural reading, meditation and prayer. It is sometimes referred to as the practice of 'holy reading'*

Missiology: *The theology of mission, a relatively new area of scholarship*

Mission: *"What God does, through the Church and in the world. In other words, it is not that God's Church has a mission but rather that God's mission has a church" (Bevans, 2009). This is the understanding adopted in this research study*

NCEC: *National Catholic Education Commission (peak Australian body)*

NCLS: *National Church Life Survey*

Professional Learning Community: *A collaborative organisational arrangement built on principles of life-wide and lifelong learning that is seen as a powerful staff development approach and a potent strategy for school change and culture*

QCEC: *Queensland Catholic Education Commission (State body)*

RE: *Religious Education*

Religion: *A particular framework which includes a system of beliefs, a code of morals, authority structure and a form of worship*

Religious Sisters and Brothers: *Women and men under vows, usually of poverty, chastity and obedience, who belong to an order of congregation*

Spirituality: *'A way of being in the world in the light of the Mystery at the core of the universe' (Harris 1996, p. 75). This is the definition adopted for this research study*

Transformation: *The meaning of 'transform' is the same as 'transfigure'. Both translate from the same Greek word. Both mean changing a being from within – as distinct from externally*

Vatican II (Second Vatican Council): *The second general or ecumenical council of the Bishops of the Catholic Church held in Rome 1961 - 1965*

Vocation: *"A calling or way of life that flows from our soul". (Durka, 2002, p. 10). In the context of Catholic education, this is a calling that is both personal and professional contributing to God's presence and action in the world.*

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1 THE RESEARCH PROBLEM IDENTIFIED

1.1 Introduction

This thesis documents Australian research into contemporary spiritual formation for Catholic school educators. It contributes and is a response to international research that identifies concern for an appropriate approach to formation for Catholic educators. The inherent challenge in this concern appears multi-dimensional for diocesan education systems.

This introductory chapter offers a preamble for the dissertation. The research problem is identified and its context is acknowledged. The significance of the research is explained and the research design described. Finally, a chapter by chapter outline of the thesis is provided presenting the overall shape and sequence of the research journey.

1.2 Research Context

The research occurs in the Archdiocese of Brisbane, Australia. Catholic schools have existed in Australia since the 1820s with the earliest Catholic schools conducted by lay people. By the late 1880s, however, the bishops of Australia responded to government initiatives to withdraw government funding from denominational schools (Griffiths & McLaughlin, 1999) by establishing an alternative education structure for Catholic children. The resulting development of Catholic schooling in this country has been characterised by the contribution of religious orders, recruited initially from England and Ireland in the 1800s.

Following this pattern, the first Catholic school in Brisbane opened in 1845 and was staffed by a lay couple. The Mercy Sisters and Christian Brothers established the first purpose-built Catholic schools soon after. The Josephite Sisters, Good Samaritan Sisters and Marist Brothers followed, establishing and staffing a growing number of schools, and stretching north and west throughout Queensland (Griffiths & McLaughlin, 1999).

By the late 1940s and early 1950s, a *de facto* Catholic education 'system' became clearly defined. The system had two characteristics. Firstly, there were Catholic schools owned by the diocese that were labelled as systemic schools. In addition, there was a parallel strand comprised of schools owned and maintained by the

religious orders, known initially as Religious Order Schools and currently identified as Religious Institute Schools. With the increased complexity in government financial policy and schools administration, Diocesan Education Offices expanded considerably in the late 1970s and 1980s, demanding more professionalism in the administration and support of Catholic schools.

During this same period, the rapid decline in the numbers of members of religious orders serving in schools resulted in the majority of staff in contemporary Catholic schools being lay people. This changing demography of Catholic teachers generated challenges. Members of religious orders received their education or formation as part of their membership of the order. Such a process was absent with the lay staff now engaged to teach in Catholic schools. In addition, staff and parents in Catholic schools reflect a broader culture characterised by a general secularity and a particular disconnection with institutional churches. Thus, the contemporary Australian Catholic school, as well as the system, has altered considerably both in demography and structure. This changing landscape in system and school offers the broad context for the proposed research.

1.3 Identification of the Research Problem

Although the system and school landscapes have changed dramatically, Catholic education remains a central activity in the mission of the Church. There remains a strong expectation about staff formation for this mission, articulated in Church documents and Catholic education policy. However, a gap has developed between the missional expectations for Catholic educators and the efficacy of formation provided because the reality of staff composition and the context of staff formation have changed so dramatically. This conclusion is supported in the following sources:

1. documented ecclesial expectations
2. Catholic education policy expectations
3. personal and cultural realities of the current staff demographic.

1.3.1 Documented Ecclesial Perspectives

In the wider Church in an ecclesial context, evangelisation had become a 'catch cry' central to Pope John Paul II's pontificate and is enthusiastically promoted by the current Pope. Evangelisation is defined as "bringing the love and message of Jesus to people through witness and word" (*Qld Bishops Project on Catholic Schools for the 21st Century*, 2001). This is central to the Catholic Church's mission. The

Catholic school is an agent of the Catholic Church (CCE, 1988, n. 11) and as such shares in the Church's mission. This understanding is embedded in key documents from the Vatican's Congregation for Catholic Education (CCE) over the last 40 years: *The Catholic School* (1977); *Lay Catholics in Schools: Witnesses to Faith* (1982); *The Religious Dimension of Education in a Catholic School* (1988); *The Catholic School on the Threshold of the Third Millennium* (1997); *Educating Together in the Catholic School* (2007).

Pope John Paul II reinforced this understanding of the place of Catholic education in the broader mission of the Church (*Ecclesia in Oceania*, 2001). He affirmed that the Catholic school had an ecclesial identity through its role as "part of the evangelising mission of the Church" (CCE, 1997, n. 19). He also reaffirmed the influence of teaching staff on the identity and authenticity of Catholic schools. In the Brisbane Archdiocese, the task of evangelisation, and, in particular, an understanding of what this call is and how it is recognised in contemporary Australia, has been the focus of attention since 1996 (Catholic Archdiocese of Brisbane, 1996; 2000; 2004).

1.3.2 Catholic Education Policy

Australian Catholic schools are represented at both state and federal levels in relationships with governments. The Queensland Catholic Education Commission (QCEC) negotiates and advocates on behalf of the Brisbane Archdiocese and the other four Queensland dioceses in the state political arena and also in various national government initiatives. The National Catholic Education Commission (NCEC) represents the interests of Catholic schools throughout Australia at federal level.

In Queensland, Catholic education policy across the five dioceses has reflected a priority for appropriate education for teachers and leaders. Successive policy development has sought to strengthen the expectation and provision of the religious dimension for both employing authorities and employees (QCEC, 2000; 2010).

Central to the provision of an appropriate education for Catholic educators is the concept of 'formation'. Formation in the context of spiritual development implies deep learning that involves attitudes, values and commitment to particular life directions, as well as knowledge and skills (BCE, 2006). Spiritual formation of staff in Catholic schools has been consistently acknowledged by ecclesial authorities as vital to the effective mission of Catholic schools (CCE, 1982, n. 60).

Recent developments in policy identify a shift from support for the religious knowledge dimension in general to attention to spiritual formation in particular (QCEC, 2010). The QCEC policy statement *Formation for Staff in Catholic Schools in Queensland* (QCEC, 2010) highlights a specific expectation of school authorities to ensure *all* staff participate in “spiritual formation experiences” (QCEC, 2010, 3). This policy presents formation as part of “a broad strategy which contributes towards the requirements for professional development of all staff in Catholic schools” (QCEC, 2010, 3.1.3). However, the nature of ‘spiritual formation experiences’ and the shape of ‘a broad strategy’ for Catholic authorities remain largely undefined.

The refinement of policy is also responsive to shifts in the Australian educational scene. At a time when the Catholic parish has a declining influence on Catholic culture, values-based leadership and initiatives increasingly contribute to the fabric of general Australian educational culture (APAPDC *Leaders Lead Project*, 2003; ACEL *Leadership Capability Framework*, 2009). In this environment, Catholic schools are challenged to differentiate themselves from the more explicit values-based framework all Australian schools currently promote. Consequently, Catholic schools have emerged with an ecclesial role that carries more missional responsibility than ever before.

1.3.3 Personal and Cultural Context of the Current Staff Demographic

While the ecclesial and educational documentation have given increasing attention to mission and formation, the cultural and social reality of the current Catholic school staff demographic poses significant challenges.

The Australian Catholic Church has witnessed a general decline in Church attendance and affiliation. This has been exacerbated by a decline in clergy numbers and therefore presence and leadership among Catholic faith communities, as well as a decline in perceived authority and integrity due to clergy abuse revelations. Not surprisingly, there has been a corresponding decline in adherence to particular Church teachings (Dixon, 2006; McLaughlin, 2002; 2005). The parish culture is weaker and, in many places, the parish struggles to make a meaningful connection with the local school community (McLaughlin, 2000a; 2002). In contrast to the past, many staff, parents and students in Catholic schools share the values of a contemporary secular Australian culture.

Catholic education communities have witnessed the decline in the numbers of applicants to religious orders resulting in a rapid disappearance of religious Sisters and Brothers from Catholic schools and an accompanying increase in lay people staffing and leading Catholic schools. In addition, diocesan administrators have continued to build new schools and to integrate former order-owned schools into diocesan systems. This changing dynamic in the conduct of Catholic schools has generated new challenges for diocesan administrators. The laity in Catholic schools now has the responsibility to nurture the Catholic educational culture. For this to occur, an appropriate formation for Catholic lay educators is a pressing pre-requisite (Dixon, 2006; Hughes, 2009; Rymarz, 2002). The particular style of formation which accompanied the religious lifestyle of earlier times and informed the culture of Catholic schools is inappropriate to the formation needs of lay people today. It is a time of continuing transition (Dixon, 2005; Hansen, 2000).

These changes have generated the need for Catholic schools to offer staff members an appropriate type of professional development. By 1990, the Director of the Sydney Catholic Education Office had signalled the need for the spiritual and theological formation of educators (Canavan, 1990). Reflecting similar needs in all Australian dioceses, these concerns, identified twenty years ago, have contemporary currency.

1.3.4 The Research Problem Identified

Consequently, the research problem underpinning this thesis is concerned with the appropriate formation of staff in Catholic schools in order for the Catholic Church to authentically fulfil its education mission. The focus of the research is a systemic staff formation initiative for Catholic educators identified as the *Catching Fire Project* (CFP).

1.4 The Design of the Research

The literature review (Chapter Three) generated two research questions which governed the conduct of the research design. They are:

1. How do participants perceive their experience in the *Catching Fire Project* (CFP)?
2. How does the *Catching Fire Project* (CFP) influence the school community?

Given the interpretive nature of the study and the research questions, the following research design offered an appropriate framework.

Figure 1.1: Summary of the Epistemological Paradigm and Theoretical Framework, Methodology and Methods.

Epistemology	Constructionism
Theoretical perspective	Interpretivism Symbolic interactionism
Methodology	Illuminative case study
Methods or data gathering strategies	Open-ended questionnaires Semi-structured interviews Focus group Journaling Observation Documentary analysis

1.4.1 Epistemology

The research process is based upon a constructionist epistemology. A constructionist epistemology honours the assumption that knowledge and meaning, as constructed by the participants, form the basis for making judgments and decisions (Crotty, 1998). Such an underpinning epistemology reflects the socially interactive and self-reflective process of constructing meaning inherent in the formation program and process. It is therefore appropriate to this research as it explores purposeful meaning in complex interactions.

1.4.2 Theoretical Perspective

In exploring how Catholic school staff members construct their understanding of the world, this study invites an interpretivist design. The theoretical perspective of interpretivism aims to generate an in-depth understanding of the process of individual and collective meaning-making. The particular focus of the study occurs through interaction between the participants, and between participants and their context. The dynamics of what connects with individuals and communities, and what is happening in the process are at the heart of this research. Given the diversity of staff, and the network of interaction between the participants and their wider community, an interpretivist design offers an appropriate research paradigm.

1.4.3 Symbolic Interactionism

Symbolic interactionism is the primary lens within the interpretivist research paradigm informing this study. Central to the theoretical framework of symbolic interactionism is the concept of 'self' (O'Donoghue, 2007) and an attentiveness to the inner, experiential world of the individual's life context and social construction of reality (Chenitz & Swanson, 1986). Symbolic interactionism is grounded in the process of basic social interactions, reflecting "the perceptions, attitudes and values of a community" (Crotty, 1998, p. 8). The research aims to explore the understanding of individuals and communities as they experience the formation program. Multiple perspectives, varied experiential sources and a person-centred approach offer the possibility of addressing research 'blank spots' and 'blind spots'.

1.4.4 Case Study

Case study methodology is adopted for this research as it "investigates a contemporary phenomenon within real life context" (Yin, 1994, p. 13). The specific school community provided a unique bounded setting for the study. The methodology is characterised by the researcher as the 'primary instrument' of data collection and analysis, an inductive investigative strategy and the product being richly descriptive (Merriam & Assoc., 2002, p. 179).

1.4.5 Participants

The case school community is within the Archdiocese of Brisbane – the fastest growing diocese in Australia. It is an outer Brisbane co-educational primary school experiencing steady growth in student and staff populations. Currently, 600 children from Prep to Year 7 are enrolled, and there are 54 staff members.

Participant selection was purposeful and designed to provide information-rich insights into the phenomena being explored.

- Seven staff (comprising a cross-section of leadership, teaching and support staff) took part directly in the formation program.
- These seven staff and an additional five staff comprised the focus group.
- All school staff (54) were invited to respond in two open-ended questionnaires.
- The 65 participants in the additional 9 pilot schools provided further data in the formation program.

1.5.6 Data Gathering Strategies

The strategies for data collection and analysis were guided by the research design, and support the purpose and unique character of the research project. These are:

1. Open-ended questionnaires at beginning and end of research period (n = 54 participants x 2);
2. Semi-structured and informal interviews (n = 7 participants);
3. Focus group interviews (n = 10 participants);
4. Observation/feedback of participants during program (n = 72 participants);
5. Informal conversation with the broader staff community;
6. Document collection;
7. Journaling by the researcher and participants (8 participants).

1.5 Significance of the Research

The pathways provided for spiritual formation for staff in the Catholic school context have challenges from multiple directions. Existing research identifies key factors that contribute to the complexity of contemporary formation: cultural individualism (Grace, 1996), altered school community constructs (Mulligan, 1994), and changing demographics and belief systems in the Catholic schools' staffing pool (McLaughlin, 2002; Tinsey, 1998). While research has contributed to the amplification of this complexity and the deconstruction of past formation models, this study offers a novel contribution to the development of a response for staff spiritual formation. It is potentially significant for the following six reasons:

1. This study addresses an immediate unresearched need in the provision of appropriate formation for Catholic educators.
2. The study is important because it is a pioneering initiative of lay people addressing the needs of other lay people in the provision of spiritual formation.
3. It applies and extends contemporary learning theory to the development of an approach to spiritual formation in a Catholic education setting.
4. This study is important because it explores how adults journey in their spirituality and make meaning in their lives. Little research has been conducted in this area.

5. It has system significance because it explores the influences of an initiative designed to address spiritual formation for Catholic mission in a strategic system-wide context.
6. The study offers a new model for spiritual formation that may assist practitioners to design appropriate spiritual formation programs.

1.6 Structure of the Thesis

The thesis consists of ten chapters.

This introductory chapter places the study within the context of the problem it seeks to illuminate, giving an overall concept of the research study. The research problem is identified, and the research approach outlined. The methodology and significance of the research is also briefly described.

Chapter Two defines the research problem and purpose. In particular, this chapter elucidates the specific contextual influences which have bearing on the Catholic school educators in this study.

Chapter Three analyses and synthesises the literature pertinent to the purpose of the research. Three key themes are identified in the literature review: Adult Spirituality, Adult Education, and Mission and Ethos. These themes generate the research questions and provide a lens for discussion of the research findings about participant experience and community influence.

Chapter Four provides an overview of the *Catching Fire Program* (CFP). It outlines the conceptual underpinning, framework model and matrix, as well as the strategic parameters of the initiative, including the formation program structure and components. Finally, it outlines the stages for the curriculum development and situates this within the research design.

Chapter Five critiques a number of models of spiritual formation and experiential learning and generates a formation model that may be appropriate to the contemporary context of the individual. This model maintains the key elements of formation identified in the literature. The resulting narrative framework acknowledges the movement from personal experience to transformational change and from individual experience to systemic change.

Chapter Six presents and justifies the research design of the study. The research has a constructionist epistemological framework and an interpretivist theoretical perspective which honours participants' experiences and meaning-making. Given the bounded setting, and the evaluative purpose of the research, an illuminative case study methodology is adopted. The methods employed for data collection are case study.

Chapter Seven narrates the story of the participants and wider staff of the case school. The findings are presented within the general scaffold of the theoretical 'story' framework generated in Chapter Five. The chapter includes a summary of findings from the additional nine school communities in the pilot program. The detailed outline of these findings is presented in Appendix N.

Chapter Eight discusses the findings presented in the previous chapter in the light of the review of the literature presented in Chapter Three and the theoretical framework offered in Chapter Five.

Chapter Nine concludes the thesis by reviewing the research journey, summarising the findings of the study, generating conclusions concerning new knowledge and providing recommendations for future research.

2 DEFINING THE RESEARCH PROBLEM

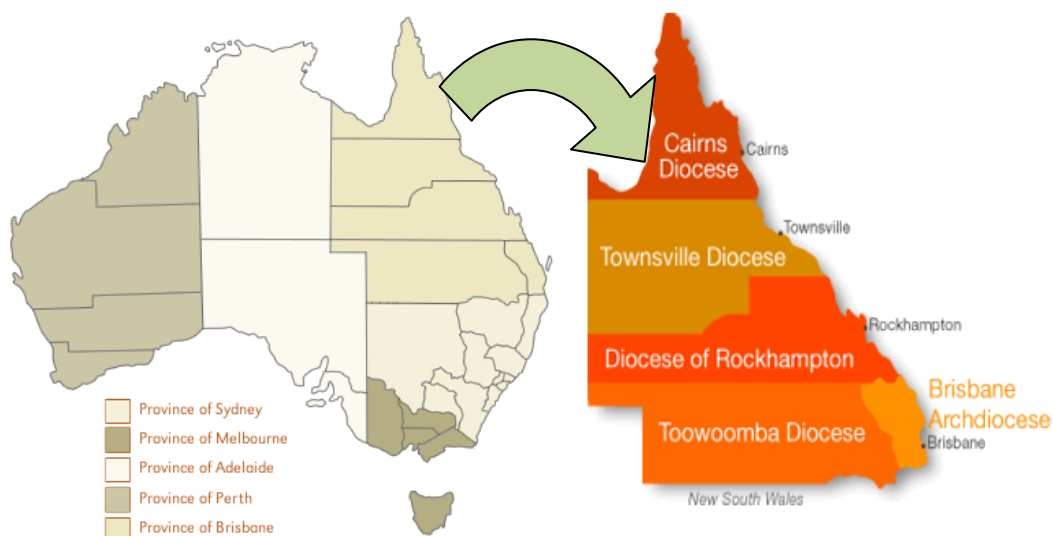
This chapter defines the research problem in light of the contextual environment influencing the world of the case school. The study is situated within an Australian Catholic educational context with distinct features in structure and governance. Within this setting, the role of the educator in a Catholic school carries specific ecclesial expectations which have been consistently reinforced. At the same time, research on the profile of contemporary Catholic school educators suggests there are challenges in meeting those expectations (Grace, 2000; Mulligan, 1994; 2005). The concern created by this disjunction is reflected in policy and research at each level of Australian Catholic educational governance. An understanding of the contextual literature is appropriate in defining the identified research problem.

2.1 The Australian Catholic Education Context

The Catholic Church in Australia is divided into seven geographical Archdioceses which embrace 21 smaller dioceses. Each Archdiocese and its smaller dioceses are grouped into provinces, approximately corresponding to state boundaries (Figure 2.1). Thus, the province of Brisbane includes the five Queensland dioceses (Figure 2.2).

Figure 2.1: Map of Australia showing all Dioceses and Provinces (BCE 2010)

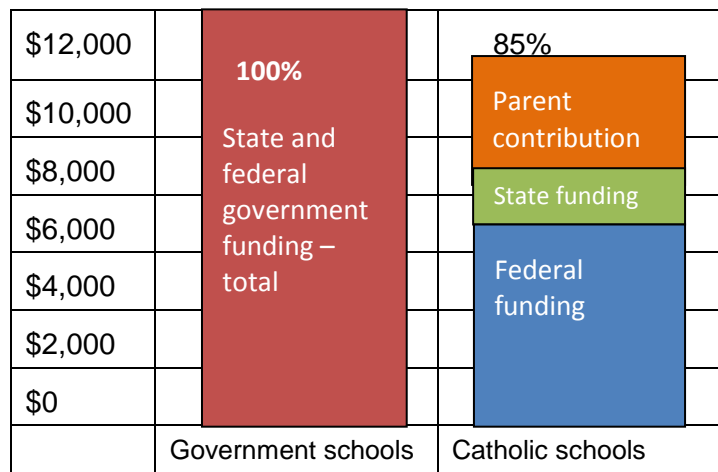
Figure 2.2: Map of Queensland (Province of Brisbane) showing the Brisbane Archdiocese and other Qld Dioceses (BCE 2010)



The five Queensland dioceses oversee 288 Catholic schools. The Brisbane Archdiocese, which functions as the senior and metropolitan diocese, oversees about half of those schools (NCEC National Catholic Schools Database). There are 133 Catholic schools in the Brisbane Archdiocese (102 primary schools; 22 secondary schools; 9 prep to Yr 12 schools) with 20 Religious Order owned schools (BCE 2009 Census).

Until the 1960s, Australian Catholic schools existed with minimal government support. When elected to federal government in 1972, the Australian Labor Party increased funding to education, including Catholic schools. This much needed focus on education came at a time as the numbers of lay staff in Catholic schools escalated and the centralisation of diocesan education authorities grew rapidly. Presently, both government and Catholic schools receive government funding from federal and state sources, albeit with different funding ratios. Currently, 74% of funding for Catholic schools is from the combined Commonwealth and state government funding, leaving a funding shortfall of 26% to be covered by diocesan authorities and parents' school fees. Consequently, Catholic schools operate at about 85% of the government schools resourcing level, even when parent contributions are taken into account (Table 2.1).

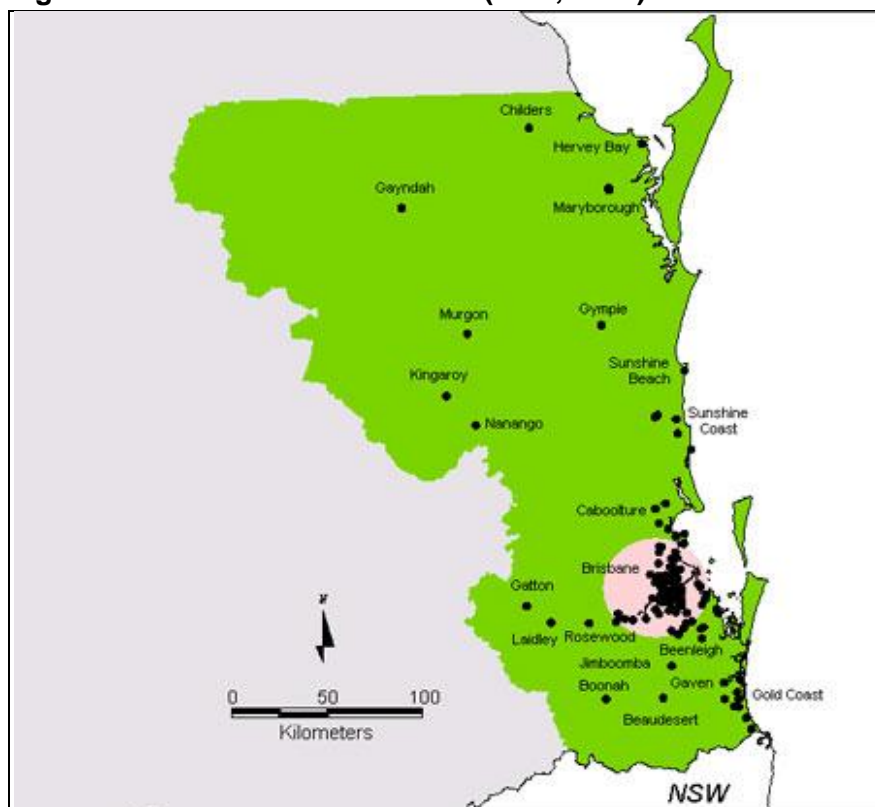
Table 2.1 Average Resourcing Levels Per Student: All Schools (NCEC, 2010)



Catholic education currently enrolls 20% of the school-age population and 66% of the non-government sector (Smith, 2007). It has evolved an administrative complexity in governance and budgetary oversight. Moreover, Catholic education is currently Australia's largest non-government employer, with Brisbane Catholic Education (BCE) being Queensland's second largest non-government employer (BCE, 2010).

The geographical context for this research is Brisbane. The Catholic Archdiocese of Brisbane covers a geographical area that includes much of South-East Queensland, spanning metropolitan Brisbane, the Gold and Sunshine Coasts, west through Ipswich and the Lockyer and Brisbane Valleys and through the South Burnett district, and north to Childers. This is the area experiencing the most rapid population growth in Australia, with a current population of 3.07 million (Queensland Government, 2010). Internal BCE data projections indicate that from 2001 to 2026 the population of the Archdiocese is expected to grow by 48–75%. All areas of the Archdiocese (Figure 2.3) are likely to experience major population growth during this time, most by more than 50% (BCE, 2008).

Figure 2.3: Brisbane Archdiocese (BCE, 2010)



Of the current population in the Brisbane Archdiocese, 600,000 (20%) identify as Catholic. Approximately 62,000 students attend the systemic archdiocesan Catholic schools, with Religious Institute schools providing education for an additional 19,000 students. 68% of students at Catholic schools are baptised Catholics, with 57% of parents and 82% of staff identifying as Catholic (BCE, 2010).

The pilot schools involved in the CFP are the sites for this study. They are situated within this rapidly growing area of South-East Queensland. The case school is located in the western suburbs of the Brisbane metropolitan area. The other nine

schools in the pilot program are scattered across the Archdiocese and are comprised of primary and secondary, urban and country, small and large schools.

The case school and its parish also reflect, in composition and structure, the general trends for Brisbane Catholic schools which include:

- a lay administration;
- a lay staff;
- the enrolment of children of other faiths;
- an increased percentage of non-Catholic, or non-practising Catholic, teachers and pupils;
- an ageing population of practising Catholics;
- an identifiable secular influence in the community culture and lifestyle;
- a priest who is not from the local Archdiocesan area.

(Belmonte, Cranston & Limerick 2006; McLaughlin, 2000b)

While these trends have had a prolonged influence on Catholic education, the last trend is a new phenomenon. As priestly numbers sharply decline in Australia, Australian Bishops are negotiating with Bishops in third-world countries to supply priests to minister in Australian parishes. This initiative reflects a noticeable shift in the global composition of the Catholic Church:

At the beginning of the 20th century, 70% of Catholics were in Europe and North America. At its end, that percentage is found in the Southern regions of the world, namely in Africa, South America, Asia, Oceania... listed among the ten largest Catholic countries are no longer Poland and Spain, but Nigeria, Uganda and the Republic of the Congo. (Kelly, 2009)

The case school is an example of the implications of the global trend at the micro-level. A Nigerian priest has replaced the Australian priest who recently relocated. This Brisbane ecclesial response to the global shifts has raised challenges for the local community as cultural complexity compounds an environment already characterised by extensive change.

2.2 The Role of the Educator in the Catholic School

Within this setting, the Catholic school educator encounters a range of expectations for their role, professionally and personally. The role of educator in a Catholic school carries specific aspirations. Teaching as a vocation is described as a deep, honoured and personal calling: "Teaching is a vocation. It is as sacred as

priesthood, as innate as desire, as inseparable as the genius which compels the artist” (Pearl S Buck cited in Gleeson, 2003, p. 80).

Within the Catholic school context however, the construction of teaching as a vocation or calling includes an additional lens that situates vocation in the mission of the Church. This is identified in current ecclesial documents, which echo the strong emphasis on the responsibility of the Catholic school educator established at the Second Vatican Council (1961–65):

Teachers must remember that it depends chiefly on them whether the Catholic school achieves its purpose (*Gravissimum Educationis*, 1965, n. 8).

and:

Teachers must bear testimony by their lives and by their teaching to the one Teacher, who is Christ (*Gravissimum Educationis*, 1965, n. 8).

and further:

if modern women and men listen to teachers at all, they listen to them because they are witnesses (*Evangelii Nuntiandi*, 1975, n. 41).

Vatican policy has since continued to recognise the rich relational nature of teaching:

The teacher under discussion here is not simply a professional person who systematically transmits a body of knowledge in the context of a school; ‘teacher’ is to be understood as ‘educator’ – one who helps to form human persons. The task of a teacher goes well beyond the transmission of knowledge. (CCE, 1982, n. 16)

Further to this, the role of the teacher has individual and communal dimensions:

A significant responsibility for creating the unique climate of a Christian school rests with the staff as both individual and in community, for the teacher does not write on inanimate material but on the very spirit of human beings. (CCE, 1982, n. 19)

With the developing ecclesial focus on the role of the Catholic school educator, distinct themes are identified that recur throughout ecclesial documents since Vatican II (Shimabukuro, 1998). These contribute to a ‘model’ of the *ideal* Catholic school educator as one who is committed to:

- community building;
- lifelong spiritual growth;
- lifelong professional development;
- students’ spiritual formation; and
- students’ human development.

This ideal model of the Catholic educator, formulated in the language of vocation and mission, reflects a role that incorporates ecclesial responsibility and high expectation:

The Catholic educator must be a source of spiritual inspiration... The Lay Catholic educator is a person who exercises a specific mission within the Church by living in faith, a secular vocation in the communitarian structure of the school: with the best possible professional qualifications, with an apostolic intention inspired by faith, for the integral formation of the human person, in a communication of culture, in an exercise of that pedagogy which will give emphasis to direct and personal contact with students, giving spiritual inspiration to the educational community of which he or she is a member, as well as to all the different persons related to the educational community. (CCE, 1982, n. 24)

Concomitantly, the need for 'formation' in this vocational responsibility of teaching and leading in a Catholic school has been acknowledged: "Formation, therefore, must be a part of and complement the professional formation of the Catholic school teacher" (CCE, 1982, n. 65). Such formation has the two-fold aim of:

...personal sanctification and apostolic mission, two inseparable elements in a Christian vocation. It requires a human and well-rounded formation, as well as a formation in spirituality and doctrine. (CCE, 1982, n. 65)

It is thus apparent that the distinctiveness of the role of the Catholic educator and the need for support in this role has been a priority identified in the post-Vatican II ecclesial literature. The potential influence of Catholic educators is recognised and the expectations placed on them have become prominent. However, while the reality of a predominantly lay teaching staff has been noted demographically, and acknowledged by ecclesial and governance authorities, research regarding the experience of what it means to be a teacher in an Australian Catholic school is meagre. It is here, in the experience of the role, that the complex external world of Catholic school education intersects with the internal and deeply personal world of Catholic school educators.

2.3 The Profile of Catholic School Educators

Research about staff in Catholic schools has provided insight into the complexity of the area by drawing attention to both the striking changes in the religious/lay staffing of Catholic schools and the perspectives of the various categories of Catholic teachers. The changing reality experienced by religious attracted early interest as their presence in schools diminished (Burley, 1997, 2001). Table 2.2 illustrates the

statistical decline in the presence of religious in Brisbane Archdiocesan Catholic schools over the last 40 years.

Table 2.2: Engagement of Religious in Catholic Archdiocesan Schools (1968–2010)

Year	Primary			Secondary		
	No. of Religious in Schools	Total Teaching Staff	Percentage %	No. of Religious in Schools	Total Teaching Staff	Percentage %
1968	373	643	58%	363	574	63.2%
1980	220	1212	18.1%	195	1022	19.1%
1990	79	1497	5.3%	85	1634	5.2%
1997	35	1494	1.7%	28	1735	1.6%
2010	27	3375	0.8%	4	1670	0.2%

The staff demographic has thus changed over the last 50 years from predominantly vowed religious with a culturally homogeneous profile to a predominantly lay staff with a culturally heterogeneous profile. Given this, the research exploring the values and experience of lay teachers is particularly relevant for this study (D'Arbon, Duignan & Duncan, 2002; Downey, 2006; Fisher, 2001; McLaughlin, 1997; 2002; 2005). Between the responsibility of vocation and the provision of formation lies the current reality of a staff demographic where evidence identifies increasing distance from the ecclesial Church: "The vast majority of them [Catholic educators] have reservations about the contemporary Catholic Church and, like the general Catholic population, are not practising" (McLaughlin, 2002, p. 12).

There are two areas which highlight particular characteristics in the profile of contemporary Catholic school educators:

- the generational meaning-making of staff
- the system-world and life-world of staff.

Each of these will be considered in turn.

2.3.1 Generational Meaning-Making

Generation X includes young teachers and educational leaders, and Generation Y incorporates those in teacher education preparation or those beginning teaching. Baby boomers carry the major leadership responsibilities in Catholic Education and many of these are former religious brothers and sisters or those who have had extensive early Church enculturation. This situation in the Brisbane Archdiocese reflects the general situation in other Australian dioceses as well as those in Europe, America, Canada and England (Grace & O'Keefe, 2007).

One of the fundamental shifts within the global Church has been the willingness of the Catholic laity baby boomers to challenge and/or reject elements of Church teaching whilst at the same time continuing to remain active members of the Church (Dixon, 2005; Mulligan, 1994). In contrast, Gen X teachers are less likely to offer such loyalty. They are a generation who trust their own experience, distrust received 'truth', know the plurality of experience and accept the validity in the individual's perspective (BRC, 2003). For them, there is a longing for a personal discovery of trustworthy certainties (Mason, Singleton & Webber, 2007). They are a generation of seekers, and while institutions may not have their loyalty, they value authentic behaviour and conduct.

If they agree with the Church on an issue, it is because the Church position makes sense to them and they actively decide to agree. If a Church teaching does not make sense to them, they will refuse to agree, no matter how often or how clearly or how authoritatively the Church has spoken on it. (McLaughlin, 2002, p. 12)

The Australian Catholic University is "the largest single supplier of teachers for Catholic schools" (McLaughlin, 1997, p. 3). Research undertaken with ACU undergraduate students confirms the identified slippage of Gen X and Y from any sense of ecclesial loyalty. The research reported:

- One third of the student teachers believed in transubstantiation during Mass.
- 34% indicated that they attended Mass on a weekly basis. 50% indicated monthly attendance.
- On the matters of the Church's teaching on divorce and contraception, 2% accepted the teaching. 89% indicated that the decision was a personal matter for the couple involved.
- 14% accepted the Church's teaching on abortion, whilst 10% accepted the Church's teaching on premarital sex.
- Slightly less than half, 47%, agreed that Catholic schools should aim to bring students to a sound knowledge of the Catholic faith. (McLaughlin, 1997)

More extensive Australian research has substantiated these findings (Hughes, 2007). In addition, the figures from this broader sample group and longer study indicate a strong drift away from Christianity among Gen Y; before they reach the age of 25, “about 18% of those who used to belong to a Christian Church are already ex-members” (Mason, Singleton & Webber, 2007, pp. 301–2). The implications of these findings for Catholic education staff suggest that teacher cohorts coming into the Catholic education system have little sense of connection to a parish culture and even less sense of allegiance to Church teaching.

Two subsequent Brisbane Catholic Education studies amplify these findings in the immediate context of the present research. The 2008 primary graduate process review (BCE, 2009) was revealing in the attitudes of new graduates towards both Church connection and the teaching of religion. Thirty graduates, representing a range of candidates (successful, unsuccessful, and those who declined offers of employment) responded to the survey. The results indicated that while elements of their employment such as a *Positive Professional Referee Report* rated highly in importance to them (3rd out of 16 possible priorities), other aspects relating directly to faith and Church did not. For example, a *Positive Church Representative/Religious/Clergy Referee Report* was rated 15th out of the 16 priorities (BCE, 2009, p. 3). The *Understanding of Parish/School Connection* was also regarded as having little importance (rated 12th), while both *The Practice of Faith* and the *Eligibility for Accreditation to Teach Religion in a Catholic School* scored as being of only moderate importance (both rated 10th). The results thus indicated the graduates lacked familiarity with Church connection and held low levels of awareness of the link between religious context and their professional lives.

In contrast, a large-scale BCE research project that surveyed all staff (*Who's Coming to School Today?* ACER, 2010) concluded there was a strong positive response among staff to expectations of the school and their perceptions of success for their school. Staff also expressed strong endorsement of the importance of religious faith and practice in the life of the schools. These views varied little across sub-groups of the staff based on a variety of demographic and related factors.

These research findings identify two noteworthy issues. First, positive traction around values and religious purpose still exists across Brisbane Catholic Education school staff. However, the graduate teachers entering Catholic schools appear to have little appreciation concerning Church connection or the religious dimension of

their role, a poor connection to a parish culture and even less allegiance to Church teaching.

The reasons for the diminishing decline in Church affiliation are endemic and deep-seated, suggesting issues of fundamental meaning-making. Researchers have identified this as the source of crisis in the institutional Church. This crisis:

is far more profound than simply falling attendance at Mass, increased practice of artificial birth control, an aging clergy and a decreasing number of vocations, and the unfortunate longevity of some anachronistic customs of clerical control that simply refuse to die. These are but symptoms of the more fundamental nature of the crisis. There is today a different way of understanding reality. (Mulligan, 1994, p. 99)

This conclusion invites further explanation. While each major era or stage in the human lifespan is marked by its own way of meaning-making, the recalibration demanded in building community with a 'different way of understanding reality' is compounded by a cultural insularity in contemporary society. The fragmented and individualistic culture that currently prevails obstructs the development of almost any broader community or organisational commitment (Senge, Scharmer, Jaworsk & Flowers, 2005). Yet capturing the commitment of older staff and engagement of younger teachers appears to require an operative community dynamic.

In trying to identify what is needed to nurture young adults to develop "a mature commitment in a tentative world" (Daloz-Parks, 2000, p. 171), American research has identified critical factors in the first three decades of life that dispose young adults to living a life of commitment to a larger whole (Daloz, 1999, 2000). The elements that seem to operate favourably towards such a commitment, and in a variety of combinations, include: "community adults who model commitment; service opportunities; mentors and critical experiences in college or graduate school" (Daloz-Parks, 2000, p. 6). In addition, the research identified 'habits of mind' nurtured in a healthy community dynamic that characterise this development. They are:

- Dialogue;
- interpersonal perspective taking;
- critical systemic thought; and
- holistic thought (Daloz, Keen, Keen & Daloz-Parks, 2000, p. 173).

Within this dynamic, older mentors and the wider community have a unique role. The findings demonstrated that for the 17–30 year olds (those preparing for teaching

or in their early teaching years), strategic mentorship is influential. Moreover, young adults are influenced not only by individual mentors but also by mentoring environments, with older adults having a powerful responsibility in this. Furthermore, the findings confirmed that the broader culture as a whole plays a mentoring influence in the formation of each new generation of young adults, shaping the future of the culture itself (Daloz-Parks, 2000). This has important micro implications in the community structure of the Catholic school and its young staff for cultural renewal and meaning-making. In such a scenario, the pressure on school leaders for spiritual and faith leadership is a real and immediate challenge in creating authentic communities of witness.

Reflecting on the challenge of creating an authentic shared reality for the mission of Catholic education, practitioners in the field of teacher formation advocate for a new language that speaks to the hearts and souls of people today, “a re-inflaming of the romantic imagination” (Rolheiser, 2006, p. 21). In this endeavour, these practitioners appear to draw on the language of the mystic rather than ecclesial tradition. Indeed, the search for characteristics of a new vocabulary to engage people was one of the outcomes of an international series of symposia between 2002 and 2004 that investigated the nature of mission in contemporary secular culture (Oblate Communications, 2004).

2.3.2 The System-World and Life-World Interface

The second area which highlights particular characteristics in the profile of contemporary Catholic school educators concerns life-world. The terms *life-world* and *systems-world* were coined by Habermas (1987) to describe “two mutually exclusive yet ideally interdependent domains” (Sergiovanni, 2001, p. 5). Research in Australia, Canada and the United States identifies the changing patterns and pressures in the life-world of teachers and principals in particular. Findings indicate the complexity and responsibility of contemporary family life, in addition to identified work intensification issues, heightening stress, fatigue, and professional and personal upheaval (Branson, 2004; Carlin, d’Arbon, Dorman, Duignan, & Neidhart, 2003; Downey, 2006; Hargreaves, 1994; McMahon, 2003). A brief overview of the key factors is appropriate to this discussion.

The rise of economic rationalism on a global scale has influenced educational systems worldwide in a sweeping process of restructure and reforms (Hughes, 2000; O’Donoghue & Dimmock, 1998). In Australia, this is reflected in a thrust for

greater accountability to and influence from the community; the justification and national monitoring of curriculum, individual public rating of schools; and institutionalised scrutiny of teacher performance. The impact of market driven values on the policy of schools is an attendant concern for Catholic schools striving to maintain a values base that is countercultural to elitist and materially aspirational drivers (Grace, 1996; 2002; McLaughlin, 2002).

Adding to these wider changes exacting pressure on the 'system-world' of the Catholic educator are the 'life-world' issues and personal pressures of postmodern society. The juggling of family, community and work commitments in an individualist, materialist culture contributes to a level of busyness that has become endemic. Constant 'over busyness' is linked to burn out, with sleep deprivation becoming a common lifestyle concern (Downey, 2006; McMahon 2003).

Thus, in the midst of technological, gender, cultural and economic revolutions (Mackay, 2008), the current generations of Catholic school educators face the difficulty of increasing pressures in their life-world and the juggling of conflicting ideology in their system-world. There are "few other occupations where lifestyle and work are so closely linked and where lifestyle options can so strongly affect career possibilities" (Tinsey, 1998, p. 36). As these worlds collide, there is increasing difficulty in attracting staff to engage in Catholic school leadership (Belmonte, Cranston & Limerick, 2006; Flintham, 2007).

As this complex dynamic continues, it has become more and more apparent that much of the Church's outreach into the community is through Catholic schools (McLaughlin, 2000b). For the majority of Australian Catholics – parents and students – the Catholic school is the only experience of Catholicism they choose to have (McLaughlin, 2000c; Quillinan, 1997). Indeed, research conducted for the Queensland dioceses indicated that one third of the families associated with Catholic schools were involved with a parish or diocesan Church community; for the remaining two thirds, the Catholic school was "the face and place of the Church" (QCEC, 2001, p. 3).

In consequence, the pressure of responsibility on the Catholic school educator has increased. Catholic school staff have become the face of the Church, asked to be its best advocates, integrating professional, spiritual and communal qualities and commitment in their ministry. Increasingly, Principals are expected to engage in more Church leadership initiatives (Coughlan, 2010). This expectation is heavily

reinforced by ecclesial authorities. Compounding this pressured situation is the perception that ecclesial authorities, while requesting a high level of commitment and authentic witness from teachers, view the mission of the laity as “an apostolate of the second string” (Lakeland, 2003, p. 98). Overlaying this system-world is a life-world for contemporary Catholic school educators which carries its own increasing pressure. In this complex dynamic, traditional approaches in the delivery of spiritual formation for the mission of Catholic education appear inappropriate.

2.4 Situating the Study in a Policy Context

Increasing attention on both the role of the Catholic school educator and appropriate formation for that role is reflected directly in policy and research at each level of governance for Catholic education in Australia. Policy direction concerning formation for Catholic school educators which influences the research context for this study derives from four key sources:

1. the Australian Bishops;
2. the National Catholic Education Commission (NCEC);
3. the Queensland Catholic Education Commission (QCEC); and
4. the Brisbane Catholic Education Office (BCEO).

These sources offer an important perspective in understanding the context of the study. Each is addressed in turn, with reference to relevant policy and research.

2.4.1 The Australian Bishops

From the earliest days of the Church’s establishment, the Bishops of Australia have argued for the central role of the teacher in Catholic education:

Catholics do not believe that the education of a child is like a thing of mechanism that can be put together bit by bit. Now a morsel of instruction on religion which is taught, the teacher and his [*sic*] faith, the rule and practices of the school day, all combine to produce the result which we Catholics consider to be education. (1862 Provincial Council – the Bishops of Hobart, Melbourne, Brisbane and Sydney, cited in O’Farrell, 1992, p. 149)

The Bishops continue to advocate enthusiastically for the mission of Catholic education and the role of the educator and leader in the Catholic school through key documents and research. The three most recent examples emanate from:

1. The Bishops of Queensland (QCEC: The Queensland Bishops Project – *Catholic Schools for the 21st Century*, 2001)
2. The Bishops of New South Wales and the ACT (*Catholic Schools at the Crossroads*, 2007)

3. The Australian Catholic Bishops Conference (*Bishop G. Holohan: Re-visioning Catholic Schools in an Education Revolution*, 2009).

2.4.1.1 The Bishops of Queensland – *Catholic Schools for the 21st Century*, 2001

This research was a Queensland wide project commissioned by the Queensland Bishops through the QCEC. The outcome of the research was the development of five defining features of a Catholic school. The Queensland Catholic School will:

1. have a strong Catholic identity and give witness to Christian values;
2. be open and accessible to those who seek its value;
3. have a holistic curriculum;
4. be a community of care and right relations;
5. be staffed by qualified, competent people who give witness to gospel values (QCEC, 2001, p. 7).

Each Queensland diocese subsequently undertook to develop its own profile in response to the research. The Brisbane Archbishop requested a review of the Queensland document in the light of the Brisbane Archdiocesan context. This review highlighted 'spirituality' as a distinct and key feature of the document. In addition, feature 1 has been elaborated (also at the request of the Archbishop) to strengthen the foundational place of Jesus Christ in Catholic schools. The resulting Archdiocesan statement, embedded in subsequent document states that the Catholic school of the future in the Archdiocese of Brisbane will:

1. promote the dynamic vision of God's love manifest in the life and mission of Jesus Christ;
2. recognise and nurture the spirituality of each person;
3. be a place of quality learning and teaching;
4. continue to act in partnership with families;
5. provide an authentic experience of Catholic Christian community;
6. be open to those who support its values;
7. be experienced as a community of care. (BCE, 2006, p. 15)

2.4.1.2 The Bishops of NSW and ACT – *Catholic Schools at the Crossroads*, 2007

Global shifts in ecclesial demographics and their influence on the Australian context (Grace & O'Keefe, 2007) have already been noted. Furthermore, the main trends in the changing demographics of Australian Catholic schools have been

acknowledged. The importance of such changes over the last 35 years has not escaped the attention of those ultimately responsible for Australian Catholic education, namely, the Catholic Bishops. The conclusion of the Bishops of New South Wales and the Australian Capital Territory is that Catholic schools are at a crossroads (Bishops of NSW & the ACT, 2007). Causal factors are acknowledged in their pastoral letter whereby “changes in enrolment patterns and in our educational and cultural context have radically affected the composition and roles of the Catholic school in recent years” (Bishops of NSW & the ACT, 2007, p. 2).

The Bishops also noted the rising proportion of nominally Catholic and non-Catholic enrolments and hence the necessity for leaders in Catholic education to ensure the preservation of a Catholic identity of the school. In addressing this concern, the Bishops offer some prescription with regard to staffing in Catholic schools: “People whose lives give witness to Christian values and who are committed to engage in the Church’s mission of evangelisation will staff Catholic schools” (Bishops of NSW & the ACT 2007, p. 3).

The documents of both the Bishops of Queensland and New South Wales emphasise the importance of appointing committed Catholics with an understanding of witness and mission to positions of principal and senior administrators. Thus, a key element in the ecclesial response to the impact of changing cultural and ecclesial contexts has been to emphasise more strongly the expectations that teachers and leaders cultivate Gospel-based beliefs, values and witness.

2.4.1.3 The Australian Catholic Bishops Conference – *Re-visioning Catholic Schools in an Education Revolution, 2009*

The most recent research, commissioned by the Australian Catholic Bishops Conference, is Bishop Holohan’s *Re-visioning Catholic Schools in an Education Revolution* (Holohan, 2009). It has contributed to the Brisbane systemic context at the diocesan level, ecclesially and educationally and is discussed in further detail in Chapter 3. Holohan aimed to delineate and clarify an understanding of the key terms and issues raised in the policy literature promulgated by the NCEC. The terms given concentrated attention were ‘mission’, ‘evangelisation’, the ‘purpose of Catholic education’, and the appropriate stages of ‘catechesis’, ‘faith formation’ and ‘religious education’ in the context of the Catholic school. Holohan characterises the Catholic school as “a community of both formation and education” (2009, p. 4). As a

pedagogy, he chooses the metaphor of ‘apprenticeship’ for formation and explicates how this unfolds in the Catholic school environment.

Importantly for the development of work in this field, Holohan draws attention to the difference between in-service and formation. His document has become a source document for Australian Catholic Education Offices. Its approach and language is ecclesial. The Australian Bishops’ encourage the use of the definitions and explanations presented in this document as the promoted and shared understanding.

2.4.2 National Catholic Education Commission (NCEC) – Policy and Research

Policy and research at the national Catholic education level of governance have progressively positioned a positive anthropology of humanity and a connection to a loving God as central to both student formation and teacher formation. This has been an important element of the NCEC’s policy and documentation as it has responded to challenges in Catholic education first identified twenty years ago.

At the national level, the NCEC’s 1991 statement on National Curriculum firmly placed the vision of the human person in the Christian tradition and faith development in the Catholic tradition as the foundational principles for Catholic education. A subsequent policy document in 1998 addressed explicitly the distinctive challenges and goals for Catholic education in the contemporary setting. The introduction to the policy, *Australian Catholic Schools: Why We Have Them? What They Aim To Achieve? What Catholic schools do?* (1998), addressed the broad context directly:

At present, Catholic schools are especially challenged by a range of issues emanating from Australia’s changing place in the world and its struggle for self-identity, as well as the theological and ecclesial transformations of the post-Vatican II Church.

Given this, the document contends that the pre-eminent purpose for Catholic schools is to “challenge students to discover God and to make value of their lives” (Introduction, NCEC, 1998).

Further to this, the NCEC policy *Top Ten Challenges in Catholic Education* (1996) recognised the confusion in Catholic school communities concerning understanding of mission and purpose; identified the reality that the Catholic school for many students and their parents “is their only experience of community, let alone church”

(NCEC, 1996, p. 2); acknowledged that the “integration of faith and culture has implications for teacher selection and development” (NCEC, 1996, p. 3); recognised the critical role of leadership into the future; and called for a coordinated policy and national vision for Catholic education within the mission of the Australian Church. The NCEC policy also highlighted a specific need “to provide better quality programs for the professional development of religious educators, and for the faith development of all teachers” (NCEC, 1996, p. 5). In particular it states:

The co-ordinated development of adult education around a coherent and systematic curriculum, its resourcing and the training of its teachers and leaders are large issues confronting us immediately. (NCEC, 1996, p. 5)

Almost ten years later, in a major report following a national forum for Directors and Heads of Religious Education in Catholic School Systems (NCEC, 2005), a number of key issues were named as challenging matters demanding response. These included ‘parish–school relationships and expectations’, ‘parent expectations and engagement’, and ‘Catholic school identity and mission’. However, echoing the urgency of the 1996 *Top Ten Challenges*, the leading issue for all stakeholders was ‘teacher spirituality and formation’: “The readiness of teachers to take up the challenge of being leaders in the religious domain and the need to design and support high quality formation programs” (NCEC, 2005, p. 11).

2.4.3 Queensland Catholic Education Commission (QCEC) – Policy and Research

QCEC policy over the last twenty years has prioritised the religious dimension of the role of educators. The ‘religious dimension’, though not defined, has until recently been assumed to refer to qualifications and accreditation in religious education. For example, teachers in Catholic schools are expected to undertake accreditation opportunities as a professional requirement:

to develop a deeper understanding of the nature of the Church’s mission in the world, the identity and educational mission of the Catholic school within the mission of the Church, and their contribution as teachers to that mission. (QCEC, 2005, p. 1)

Moreover, senior leaders in Catholic schools must have “demonstrated commitment to ongoing religious formation and participate in the life of the Catholic community and in its mission in the world” (QCEC, 2000, 2. p. 1).

Underpinning this, and reflective of the ecclesial documents already discussed, the statement from the Queensland Bishops *Catholic Schools for the 21st Century*

(QCEC, 2001) highlighted as a defining feature for Catholic schools in Queensland that they be “staffed by qualified, competent people who give witness to Gospel values” (2001, p. 3). This signalled the need for a different kind of staff preparation for mission, additional to qualifications and professional in-service.

Thus, in seeking to strengthen the missional dimension of Catholic school staff, QCEC policy in the last ten years has increasingly identified the importance of formation for both employing authorities and employees. The most recent QCEC policy statement, *Formation for Staff in Catholic Schools in Queensland* (2010), makes explicit the responsibility of the employer:

All Catholic school authorities will ensure that all staff members participate in formation experiences to assist them to grow in understanding of their ministry as part of the mission of the Catholic Church. (QCEC, 2010, 1, p. 1)

This policy also reflects a strengthening of expectations for employees to engage in formation experiences. While an assumption of formation in the Catholic ethos has been embedded in role descriptions for all teaching staff for some time (BCE, 2001, 2004; QCEC, 2005), the 2010 QCEC policy signals an increased intentional focus on formation rather than RE qualifications and accreditation activities. Policy for senior leadership positions reflects a similar change. The 2000 QCEC policy statement for senior leaders identified the religious dimension of Catholic leadership as a central principle and introduced some essential criteria. This policy has been enhanced with more prescriptive religious qualifications and formation expectations required for senior leadership (QCEC, 2010).

In the last fifteen years, the QCEC has commissioned two research projects relevant to this study. The first of these is *What Strategies and Models Best Support the Faith Development of Teachers?* (1995), which identified the following as formative experiences for teachers: the influence on their lives of significant other people who modelled relationship with God; the foundational importance of experience over acquiring knowledge; the lifelong and individual nature of the spiritual journey; the role of significant times of pain in being catalysts for seeking spirituality; and the positive experience and influence of being part of a faith community (QCEC, 1995).

Suggested macro-actions from the project group directing the research were:

- the introduction of Sabbath time through policy and personal initiative
- quality improvement through the Self-Renewing Catholic Schools process
- the introduction of a spiritual mentor role in schools.

While this research has been confirmed by other studies concerning the place of community, spiritual experience and modelling/mentoring (Bracken, 2008; Daloz-Parks, 2000), the macro-actions did not directly generate policy or practice innovations. Rather, the research offered useful information for those planning spiritual and faith formation initiatives in schools.

The second research project commissioned by the QCEC, *Spiritual and Faith Formation for Leadership* (2005), explored the landscape of theory, practice and opportunities in spiritual formation for leadership across the Queensland dioceses. The research identified serious challenges for leadership succession in Catholic education. This 2005 report was one of six research projects initially commissioned in 2003 to address key issues for leadership succession in Queensland Catholic schools. The report included an overview of formation opportunities for those in leadership positions; a detailed report on current policy and practice in spiritual and faith formation for leadership in diocesan and Religious Institute schools in Queensland; a preliminary review of the literature in the area; an outline of key learnings; and design principles and strategies for further development.

The report offered a contribution to the overall project in four key ways:

1. It situated formation appropriately within the wider parameters of the work of the larger QCEC succession project.
2. It was informed by the broader contemporary local and global dialogues about the importance and centrality of spiritual and faith formation in Catholic school leadership.
3. It resonated authentically with the practice wisdom of those in our diocesan and Religious Institute schools already working within this area.
4. It provided some theoretical and practical scaffolding for Queensland diocesan and Religious Institute schools in formation planning in this area.

BCE responded to this research report by commissioning the development of a framework for spiritual formation. Coinciding with major recommendations in a comprehensive review of services (BCE Renewal Process, 2005) BCE subsequently established a unit for evangelisation and spiritual formation, appointing a role holder to implement the framework in the development of strategy and policy for this area.

2.4.4 Brisbane Catholic Education Office (BCEO) – Policy and Research

Policy at the Brisbane Archdiocesan Catholic education level reflects the evolving priority for formation at the Queensland Commission level in the general employment of all staff and specific employment of leadership staff.

The revised *BCE Employment of Staff Policy* (2009) gives explicit expression to both the employer's expectations of staff and commitment to all staff. We will:

- ensure that employees have an understanding of the *Statement of Principles for Employment in Catholic Education* and adhere to them
- ensure that staff, as appropriate to their roles, are provided with clarity of expectations regarding their commitment for the Catholic ethos of the school and the mission of the Catholic Church
- provide opportunities for induction and ongoing formation of staff in their personal faith journey and in the teachings and practices of the Catholic Church.

(BCE Employment of Staff Policy, April 2009)

The professional learning guidelines *Guidelines for Professional Development and Planning Days* (440.4, updated November 2007) display an ambiguity concerning appropriate placing of spiritual formation in professional learning. The guidelines' directive for leaders is broad, with personal, professional, spiritual and religious development as components contributing to the curriculum. Unfortunately, there are difficulties in implementing these guidelines, since adopted terms lack adequate definition. This has added to the ambiguity and confusion for school leadership in implementing their staff development program as well as their personal sabbatical plans. Unfortunately, such lack of clarity has generated an *ad hoc* approach to the area of spiritual formation.

The classroom teaching of Religious Education (RE) has in fact had priority over formation in the time allocation for staff development. Accreditation to teach in a Catholic school in the Brisbane Archdiocese requires that all teachers participate in 20 hours of spirituality/faith/religious development every four years. In addition, teachers of RE must undertake an additional twenty hours. Common practice has seen this translate into the equivalent of one staff day per year with a focus on spirituality/religious education. This usually takes the form of a presenter organised by the Principal or APRE (Assistant Principal – Religious Education) to in-service staff. This in-service day often focuses on resource development and professional development in RE curriculum, responding to a strong system focus on the classroom teaching of religious education. With an RE curriculum intentionally predicated on an approach that does not presume faith, one of the unplanned repercussions has been that attention to the spiritual formation of BCE staff has been idiosyncratic and variable.

Because of the ill-defined dynamic between employee and employer concerning formation, individual teachers respond to opportunities for their own spiritual formation as a matter of autonomous choice (Whelan, 1994). The diversity of needs among teachers and leaders in schools, and their different life stories and experiences have contributed to ambivalence for action in this area. Some teachers are familiar with the beliefs and language of Catholicism and may express their beliefs in a worshipping community (Prest, 1997). Others are less familiar with the religious language of Catholicism yet support the values espoused within the Catholic community (McLaughlin, 2005). The extent of the challenge to address diverse needs among teachers does not diminish the pastoral responsibility to provide spiritual formation opportunities for teachers.

Indeed, BCE senior leadership has been aware of this dilemma since it was identified by staff in the 2005 review of services by Brisbane Catholic Education noted in Section 2.4.3 (BCE Renewal Process, 2005). Commissioned by the Brisbane Archdiocesan Catholic Education Council and conducted by the Flagship for Creative and Authentic Leadership, ACU National, the review report was the result of a comprehensive consultation with all staff (at that time numbering about 8,000). A key finding was the low level of satisfaction in terms of the quality, quantity and priority of what was offered to staff in the area of spiritual formation. This low satisfaction rating was consistent across BCE office staff, school staff and school leadership, and constituted one of the areas that showed a large incongruence between perceived importance by staff and satisfaction of service delivered. In addition, a clear concern emerged around the understanding of Catholic identity, ethos and evangelising mission. As one respondent in that survey explained:

I suppose we just automatically took it for granted that lay people would just step in with the same level of faith: we didn't realise or spend much time in trying to form them. (BCE Renewal Process, 2005, p. 30)

The report recommended an explicit focus on the area of spiritual formation and Catholic identity, and the establishment of an Evangelisation and Spiritual Formation Unit attached to the Executive Director's Office.

Finally, the most current research conducted for Brisbane Catholic Education is the *Who's Coming to School?* Survey (ACER, 2010). The findings have identified the following as areas of concern.

- All stakeholders find Catholic schools very appealing. They strongly subscribe to the values of the Catholic faith even though they are not involved regularly in its rituals.
- Between 60 and 80 per cent of students and parents, and approximately 40 per cent of staff, do not/rarely attend Church outside of school .
- There is little difference between Catholic and non-Catholic respondents on most of the scales measured. However, there is a difference between Catholic and non-Catholic respondents on the 'Personal values: faith' scale. Most non-Catholic respondents scored lower on this scale. This was true for parents and Year 6, 9 and 12 students.
- In agreement with the 2006 Association of Independent Schools (AIS) survey, religious education was a second-order issue for parents after more pragmatic concerns involving the personal, intellectual and vocational development of their children.
- The culture of BCE communities is strongly founded on Catholic beliefs and principles.

In addition, the following findings are relevant to the research problem.

- Staff expressed strong endorsement for the importance of religious faith and practice in the life of the schools, with little variance in sub-groups.
- While parents and students want more emphasis on vocational outcomes, particularly in terms of academic success, few staff thought that the best thing their school did was to generate good academic results.
- When stakeholders are asked the dominant thing that BCE schools do best, they choose a 'caring community' over academic qualities. However, this co-exists with a finding that the majority of stakeholders 'agreed'/'strongly agreed' that their school provides good academic results.

Thus, while this research affirms that BCE culture is strongly grounded in Catholic beliefs and principles, and that the cultural traction among parents, students and staff also appears strong across BCE, this support is not accompanied by a parish or Church connection among parents and their children. Thus, this ACER research identifies a significant challenge around ecclesial identity focus and maintenance into the future.

The challenge is exacerbated by two other realities: the pressure of a dominant educational paradigm focusing exclusively on academic outcomes (Grace, 2002) and the challenge of non-Catholic, ecumenical and multi-faith engagement in Catholic schools (Ryan & Malone, 2003). With the total number of students attending Catholic schools having increased continuously over the past 20 years, and the Brisbane diocese experiencing more population growth than any other in Australia (NCEC, 2006), the challenges of maintaining identity in an increasingly diverse and pressured school community population are apparent.

2.5 Systemic Contextual Markers

The aspirations around authentic Catholic community, identity, mission and witness are explicit in the language and goals of key strategic archdiocesan Catholic education documents. A review of these documents highlights the challenges raised in this chapter in terms of how those aspirations are to be met through staff formation in the current context. The language and goals of key documents invite fundamental formation questions for the systemic context. As such, they reflect the disquiet at the core of the research problem – what shape and manner of support ought the system provide so that staff can effectively and authentically fulfil the mission and purpose expected of them?

These fundamental formation questions arising from the aspirational language of the key BCE documents can be framed into four dimensions in the provision of spiritual formation:

1. personal spiritual formation;
2. communal spiritual formation;
3. missional formation; and
4. strategic approach to delivery of formation.

1. Questions arising about personal spiritual formation

- How does BCE support people to “give witness to the gospel”? (*BCE Learning Framework, 2002*)
- How does BCE “nurture the spirituality of each person”? (*Defining Features of Catholic Schools, 2001*)
- How does BCE “enhance the faith development of staff”? (*Strategic Renewal Framework, 2005*)

2. Questions arising about communal spiritual formation

- How does BCE develop “a capacity to witness and build community”? (*Celebration and Challenge, 2005*)
- How does BCE provide “an authentic experience of Catholic Christian community”? (*Defining Features of Catholic Schools, 2001*)
- How can BCE “integrate faith life and culture”? (*BCE Learning Framework, 2002*)

3. Questions arising about missional formation

- How does BCE understand “the evangelising mission of education”? (*Strategic Renewal Framework, 2005*)
- How does BCE “promote a dynamic vision of God’s love”? (*Defining Features of Catholic Schools, 2001*)

- How does BCE understand its role in Catholic education as “transformative”? (*BCE Vision Statement, 2004*)
- How does BCE promote teaching in Catholic schools as “a vocation”? (*QCEC Spiritual and Faith Formation Project, 2005*)

4. Questions arising about strategic approach

- How does BCE “coordinate the support of appropriate personal, professional and spiritual needs of staff”? (*Strategic Renewal Framework, 2005*)
- What is the function of spiritual formation “within the roles and domains of school personnel”? (*Spiritual and Faith Formation QCEC Project, 2005*)

These questions reflect the challenges inherent in the desire and concern of Brisbane Catholic Education to meet the needs of staff and Church. They are also system reminders or markers that scope the parameters of staff and system outcomes relevant to this study.

2.6 The Research Problem Defined

Given the multi-faceted contextual difficulties identified, the research problem concerns the dissonance between the recognised need for spiritual formation of Catholic school staff and the appropriate provision of that formation.

2.7 The Purpose of the Research

The scholarly conversation around this dissonance highlights a need to critically understand appropriate formation strategies for contemporary Catholic educators. Thus, the purpose of this study is to explore the experience and influence of a contemporary spiritual formation initiative (the *Catching Fire Project* or CFP) in order to further illuminate understanding about appropriate formation for educators in a Catholic educational systemic context.

2.8 The Major Research Question

The research question focusing the conduct of the research is:

How are Catholic school educators influenced by the *Catching Fire Project* (CFP)?

2.9 Summary

The contextual literature situates the research problem in its local milieu. The understanding of the role and profile of the Catholic school educator in this milieu amplifies the research problem. The pertinent national, provincial and local policy development and research data gives context and particularity to the study, illuminating the challenges and parameters of the research focus. The following chapter locates this contextual literature within a review of the scholarly literature.

3 REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

3.1 Introduction

The research problem identified in Chapter 1 concerns a dissonance between the articulated evangelising mission of Catholic education and the provision of appropriate staff spiritual formation for this mission. Chapter 2 further clarified the research problem by defining its context for this specific study. In particular, the contextual literature defined the challenges around formation for Catholic educators as they influence the particular milieu in which this study is located – the Catholic school system in the Archdiocese of Brisbane, Australia. The purpose of this chapter is to generate a selected critical synthesis of the scholarly literature underpinning the research problem for this thesis.

As Catholic schools seek to be more ‘mission authentic’, the role of staff is attracting increasing attention. Yet few empirical studies have been undertaken to explore the experience of staff formation for mission and the influence of that experience on the wider school community. The purpose of this research is to explore the experience of a systemic initiative designed for a contemporary Catholic education context. The literature that informs such a study has a wide reach, embracing several disciplines including theology, psychology, spirituality, educational theory, leadership theory, missiology and ecclesiology. The literature review draws on those specific areas within these disciplines that directly illuminate the context and purpose of this present research.

The body of literature on each of the three themes identified in this chapter is extensive. The purpose of the review is not a critical analysis of the literature, but rather a synthesis of the relevant areas of scholarship within each theme to offer the reader sufficient background to understand the relationship of this literature to the topic of the study. As such, it serves to illuminate both the problem and purpose of the research, providing a more informed understanding of the factors that influence staff spiritual formation within a Catholic school setting. The outcome of the literature review is the generation of appropriate research questions through which to focus the conduct of this study.

3.1.1 Conceptualisation of the Literature – A Framework

This literature review interrogates the research concerning formation for Catholic educators in terms of three key intersecting areas of relevance. The assumption guiding this review of literature is that contemporary spiritual formation in the context of Catholic education is shaped not only by scholarly thought and experience concerning the nature of the adult spiritual journey, but also by current educative approaches and praxis in adult learning and change education, as well as the theological understanding of mission and vocation. This is reflected in the conceptual framework (Figure 3.1). Thus, even as the nature of this research embraces multiple disciplines, it synthesises in a focused way the relevant scholarly discourse in these fields.

The themes that are generated, and the main areas addressed within those themes, are exploratory in nature, and while they are presented as three discrete areas of focus, in reality they intersect and interlink in a complex way. The review is respectful of this. Thus, the themes have a dynamic orientation rather than a static content orientation and the research questions generated reflect this dynamic.

The three thematic areas are developed into a conceptual framework which guides the exploration at the centre of this study.

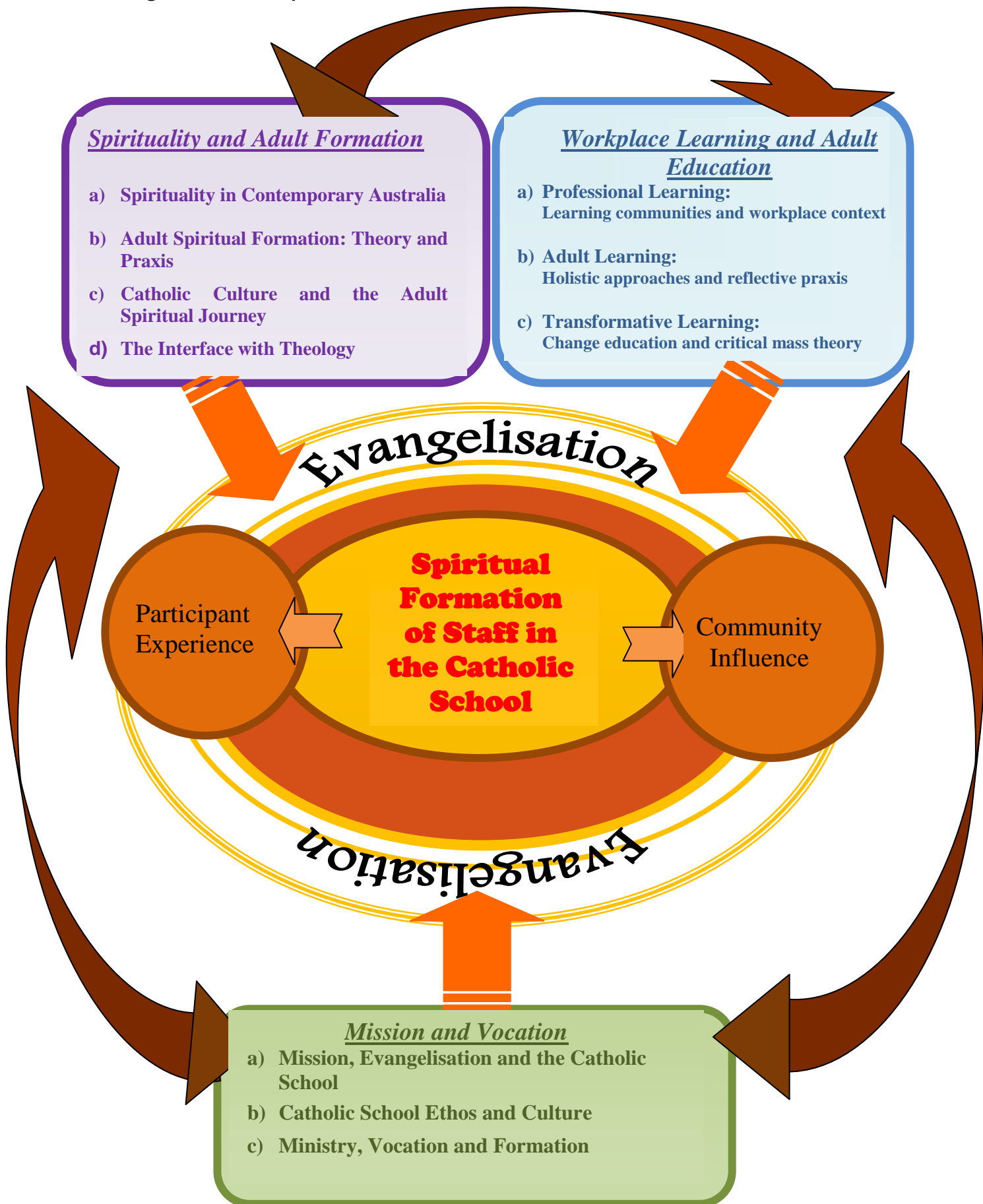
Theme 1: **Spirituality and Adult Formation**

Theme 2: **Workplace Learning and Adult Education**

Theme 3: **Mission and Vocation**

Within the conceptual framework, the three overarching themes are identified, as well as the specific areas for attention within each theme. The exploration of these areas is critical in understanding the key interlocking issues at play for the spiritual formation of staff today. The relationship that identifies formation as core to evangelisation is also reflected in the framework. In understanding more of how this is so, and what makes it meaningful, the research questions generated centre on participants' experience and community influence. This relationship is also indicated in the framework.

Figure 3.1: Conceptual Framework of the Literature Review



The literature review begins with an exploration of adult spirituality, how this has been understood and what cultural factors are at play in the Australian context. The research in developmental theory and the process of spiritual formation and practice in Australia and internationally are critiqued. The historical development and understanding in Catholic faith formation and practice is analysed and, finally, the interface between Christian spirituality and theology is examined.

Because the context of formation in this study is within an educational environment, theory and current methodologies in educational approaches for adult learning are relevant. The relationship of formation to learning is considered, as key elements of educational practice are explored in the literature. Lastly, the dynamic of change facilitation and critical mass theory in the development of whole systemic initiatives is explored.

The third area of attention, interacting with the previous two, concerns the literature focussing on mission and vocation in Catholic schooling. This literature critiques the challenges concerning the changing context of Catholic schools and the resultant tensions in ecclesial expectations, school leadership, identity and purpose. The key interconnecting areas of evangelisation, Catholic school leadership, vocation and formation for mission are critiqued.

These three thematic foci engage with the complex reality underpinning the research problem about the dissonance between recognised need and appropriate provision of spiritual formation for Catholic school staff. The visual dynamic of the conceptual framework signifies the challenging interplay of variables underpinning the research problem (Figure 3.1).

3.1.2 Sequence of the Literature Review

For the sake of clarity, a linear outline of the chapter is illustrated in Table 3.1. It includes the sections for discussion under each of the main themes identified in the review.

Table 3.1: Sequence of the Literature Review

<p>3.1 Introduction</p> <p>3.1.1 Conceptualisation of the Literature – A Framework</p> <p>3.1.2 Sequence of the Literature Review</p> <p>3.2 Spirituality and Adult Formation</p> <p>3.2.1 Spirituality in Contemporary Australia</p> <p>3.2.2 Adult Spiritual Formation: Theory and Praxis</p> <p>3.2.3 Catholic Culture and the Adult Spiritual Journey</p> <p>3.2.4 The Interface with Theology</p> <p>3.3 Workplace Learning and Adult Education</p> <p>3.3.1 Professional Learning Communities and Workplace Context</p> <p>3.3.2 Adult Learning: Holistic Approaches and Reflective Praxis</p> <p>3.3.3 Transformative Learning: Change Education and Critical Mass Theory</p> <p>3.3.4 Implications for Spiritual Formation in the School Community Context</p> <p>3.4 Mission and Vocation</p> <p>3.4.1 Mission, Evangelisation and the Catholic School</p> <p>3.4.2 Catholic School Ethos and Culture</p> <p>3.4.3 Ministry, Vocation and Formation</p> <p>3.4.4 Implications for Formation for Mission</p> <p>3.5 Generation and Justification of the Research Questions</p>

3.2 Spirituality and Adult Formation

In this study, the primary concern is with the field of spirituality as distinct from religion. 'Spirituality' and 'religion' are each complex, multi-dimensional constructs that interact each with the other. Nevertheless, the literature generally concurs that the term 'religion' implies a sense of belonging to an organised faith tradition and the term 'spirituality' denotes a more personal connection with something greater than oneself, including the sacred (King & Boyatzis, 2004). This latter area of exploration is the starting point for the literature review.

In the contemporary education context, a primacy is given to ‘spiritual knowing’ as opposed to ‘religious education’ (Tacey, 2003) applying to learners of all ages. “When the spirit is activated and recognised, the student tends to develop or discover a natural interest in religion because religion offers the spirit a complex language, a sense of tradition and a cultural memory” (Tacey, 2003, p. 77). Thus, it is the development of the initial and continuing personal spiritual connection that is the central focus of this research, even though it is nested in and draws toward the religious faith tradition. Moreover, the Australian context in which this study is situated offers a distinctive cultural lens to particularly appreciate the concept of spirituality.

There are four areas of focus in the first theme of the literature review:

1. Spirituality in Contemporary Australia;
2. Adult Formation Theory and Praxis;
3. Catholic Culture and the Adult Spiritual Journey; and
4. The Interface with Theology.

Each is addressed in turn.

3.2.1 Spirituality in Contemporary Australia

The characteristics of Catholic Christian spirituality in Australia are coloured by its unique history in the establishment of religious institutions. That history has unfolded within a distinctive culture, strongly characterised by an independent and laconic spirit that has an uneasy existence in authoritarian constructs (Mackay, 2008). The interplay between spirituality in the Christian context and the Australian cultural milieu in a post-modern setting provides the starting point for critiquing the scholarly literature.

3.2.1.1 Spirituality and the Christian Context

Contemporary Catholic Christian spirituality is influenced by a growth of interest in the broader culture as well as developments in understanding within the tradition. No longer contained within institutional religion (Tacey, 2009), spirituality is identified in current culture as “an unusual outpouring of deep human longing” (Fenwick, 2001, p. 10) alternatively identified as a “wild explosion of spirituality” (Taylor, 1996, p. 10). The contemporary, post-modern society perceives spirituality as a personal quest, and understands this quest to be heavily influenced by the circumstances and historical context in which people find themselves (Doherty, 1981). A Catholic

understanding of spirituality is rooted in the Christian tradition of discipleship. It is about self-transcendence, but it is also concerned with an orientation towards others. Most especially, the 'deep human longing' is "the radical desire of the human spirit for meaning, truth, value and love--a radical desire that is, at bottom, always a desire for God" (Conn, 1998, p. 72-73).

Until recent times, the word 'spirituality' was in fact, an almost exclusively Catholic term referring to the experiential and ascetical aspects of Christian life or discipleship, especially as these were represented in various movements and Catholic religious orders (Rossiter, 2005). These have developed such that today, the way in which spirituality is expressed within Eastern Orthodoxy appears very different from how it is expressed within Roman Catholicism. Further, the sacramental emphases of all Catholic traditions contrast with the evangelical traditions of Protestantism (Drazenovitch, 2004). In recapturing the essence of a Christ-centred spirituality and a renewed vision of Christian life signalled by the Second Vatican Council (1961-1965), Post Vatican II scholars (Dreyer & Burrows, 2005; Rohr, 2010; Schneiders, 2003; Wolski Conn, 1999) have turned to earlier Judeo-Christian foundations.

Both Hebrew and Christian Scriptures have a concrete meaning for the word 'spirit': in both the Hebrew *ruach* and the Greek *pneuma*, the basic meaning is 'wind/breath' describing the breath of life permeating and animating all of life (Merkel, 1998). The Christian theological origin of the word is Pauline. *Pneumatikos* (spiritual) was a new word created and applied to any person or reality seen to be filled with the Spirit. The original meaning thus had a distinctly inclusive sense that referred to the *whole* person being influenced by the Spirit or breath of God (*ruach*).

The early development of Christianity was influenced by the dualism inherent in Greek philosophical thought which emphasised a split between the body and the soul. By the twelfth century, the holistic understanding around spirituality had been recast into a dualist mind-set between the things of the Spirit and the things of the flesh. The body subsequently became identified with the lesser things of the material or temporal world and the mind identified with 'higher order' things of the spiritual or eternal world (Treston, 1997). Further, this dualism became genderised in theology. Women were associated with the lesser worlds of the body and men with the higher worlds of the mind (Schussler Fiorenza, 1984). Already established in the normative male culture of the patristic literature, a dualist world view became entrenched by the Middle Ages and its influence has survived into the present time (Treston, 1997).

In the latter part of the twentieth century, the move in religious orders to use the language of *charism* rather than *spirituality* to describe their distinguishing characteristics paralleled the development in the secular world to appropriate the word 'spirituality' to describe the depth dimensions of human experience. At the same time, the emergence of reference to 'lay ministry' as a result of Vatican II (addressed further in section 3.4) attracted theological and spiritual debate on the varieties of Christian experience in the world. Dialogue concerning a 'lay spirituality' emerged. This initiated a focus on "appropriate 'psychological' expression in cultivation of habits of prayer, examination of conscience, and a humble respect for mystical gifts should they occur" (Kelly, 2004). Spiritual direction as a support to lay people also began to gain acceptance. Having originally grown out of the tradition of companioning particularly common in the early Celtic Christian tradition, spiritual direction had developed as a distinctive feature in religious orders in the Middle Ages. Since 1980, the psycho-spiritual perspectives pioneered by Wicks, Parsons and Capps, (Wicks, Parsons & Capps 1993, 2003; Wicks, 2006) have developed as an influential element in the contemporary understanding and approach to spiritual direction, lay ministry, and Christian formation.

As the understanding of the spiritual journey within a contemporary Catholic Christian milieu has been broadened and deepened by ecclesial and psychological scholarship, so too has it been challenged in its cultural context. Indeed, spirituality has become associated with a broad mix of religious traditions as well as non-religious practice. As this has occurred, the dynamic nature of spirituality has drawn attention from researchers (King & Boyatzis, 2004). All forms of spirituality seem to have a common thread, "the quest of the human spirit for something that is above us, that is bigger, deeper, 'more than' the ordinary surface reality of life" (Guinan, 1998, p. 1). Contemporary research has identified key characteristics about spirituality in all its contexts that are also central to evolving understandings of Christian spirituality:

- spirituality is holistic (Zohar & Marshall, 2000);
- it is an intrinsic human capacity (Benson, Roehlkepartain & Rude 2003; Hill, 2004; Tacey, 2003);
- it is transcendent (Zinnbauer, Pargament & Scott, 1999);
- it is connective (Rossiter, 2004; Berk, 2001; Castelli, 2000); and
- it is about meaning making (Tisdell & Tolliver, 2001).

In harnessing these global characteristics to a specifically Christian focus, the following definition of spirituality is appropriate for this study:

Spirituality is our way of being in the world
in the light of the Mystery
at the core of the universe. (Harris, 1996, p. 75)

In this definition, the dynamic mystery is God; this mystery pervades all of creation; and the 'way of being in the world', along with the individual's response to it, is uniquely influenced by the Catholic Christian tradition, the wider culture and the individual's embodied and personal reality. Thus spiritual formation is defined as the growth and development of the whole person by an intentional focus on one's:

- spiritual and interior life;
- interactions with others in ordinary life; and
- spiritual practices (May, 1992, p. 6).

3.2.1.2 The Australian Cultural Milieu

In this dynamic, the influence of the wider culture within the Australian context takes specific expression. Australia displays the range of characteristics of the post-modern world it is part of, as well as some distinctive characteristics which have grown out of its own history and story. Key features relevant to this study are fragmentation, individuated meaning making and a determined egalitarianism. Fragmentation has been identified as a bi-product of the primacy of compartmentalisation and standardisation in the human world since the industrial revolution. The literature suggests this fragmentation permeates everything.

The first kind of fragmentation involves the separation of economic life from the environment. A second kind of fragmentation is social fragmentation. Another kind of fragmentation is within ourselves. We find ourselves disconnected from our bodies and our hearts (Senge, Scharmer, Jaworski & Flowers, 2005, p. 190).

A further kind of fragmentation in post-modern culture is a lack of a shared sense of meaning or mythology (Flowers, 1988). Belief in meta-narratives is questioned and there is a strong individualism in the way people construct their own meaning (Drane, 2000). The strongly defended egalitarian theme in Australian culture, where one person's position and meaning making has no more importance than another's, provides a robust scaffolding for post-modern individualism.

Given this context, while statistically Australia is categorized as a “predominantly Christian country” (Smith, 2006, p.8), it is not surprising that social researchers (Holmes, 2005; Mackay, 2000) claim the lived reality reflects a more complex dynamic. This derives from a social history indicating Australians as a whole have never been overtly religious, and that organised religion has not been an integral part of Australian political and cultural society other than at certain key moments (Mackay, 2000). Thus, even though most Australians express a belief in God, there is a continual and marked decline in weekly Church attendance (*National Church Life Surveys*, 2001, 2006; ACBC, 2007). At the same time, the interest in spirituality continues to thrive. Research concludes that spirituality as expressive of individual meaning making enjoys acceptance and a degree of popularity among Australians as it does elsewhere (Mitroff & Denton, 1999; Holmes, 2005). In Australia, Tacey (2000) suggests that people are no longer embarrassed to speak of things of the spirit; the divide between the social and the spiritual world is closing. As this has happened, the shift has been away from traditional religious frames of reference toward an individualistic, personal emphasis on spiritual experience and making sense of the here and now (Hughes, 2007). Accompanying this shift has been the emergence of a ‘collector’s mentality’ criticised as an underlying malfunction: “Australia is ‘acting out’ a neurosis; an increasing number of people have rejected the religious life of their own traditions and found solace in new age therapies” (Tacey, 2000, p. 236).

Within the category of those Australians identifying as Catholic or Christian, specific research into their spiritual beliefs and practices has been neglected. It was not until 1978 that Australia theological literature (specifically the *Australasian Catholic Record*) began to consider elements of a distinctive Australian spirituality. Acknowledging the dearth of research about Catholic laity, Massam (1996) nevertheless identifies two distinct approaches to spirituality and argues that their interaction encapsulates a central dynamic of faith in twentieth century Australia. These two strands, devotion and activism, were dynamically in opposition while simultaneously coherent, and characterised lay Catholic spirituality in the forty years before the second Vatican council (1961-65):

Australian Catholics were drawn on the one hand by a passive and highly emotive piety centred on personal holiness for the next world, and on the other by an active apostolic spirit which called for an analytical understanding of this world in order that it might be transformed. (Massam, 1996, p. 4)

Research in cultural history has brought spirituality to the attention of Australian cultural historians. Understanding that “spirituality is cut from the cloth of culture, and the context in which beliefs are held shapes their expression” (Massam, 1996, p. 15), these researchers have begun to “acknowledge the spiritual dimensions of Australian life, adding depth to the understanding of the lives of ordinary people” (Massam, 1996, p. 2). Historians have characterised Australia as a God-forsaken land (Clark, 1995), where there is little sense of meaning and where “the real narcotic today is that driven consumerism” (Kelly, 2009). However, a perspective attracting growing interest holds that this is itself a search for meaning in the midst of an uneasy identity. Such a search is a spiritual one. “Recognising the potential sacredness of the modern experience of emptiness, is perhaps the first step toward the genuine religious revival of our civilisation” (Tacey, 2006, p. 2). As such, this supposed search raises a need to examine non-traditional sources to describe and respond to it (Massam, 1996; Tacey, 2000).

There is a tension between those who are responding by exploring new boundaries in non-traditional ways (Morwood, 2007, Tacey, 2006) and those arguing for attention towards a more ecclesial spirituality (Kelly, 2004). The concern of the latter is about the separation occurring between spirituality and ecclesial existence, and the possible shortcomings involved in the adoption of a ‘generic’ spirituality. Indeed, there is a request for ‘a new phase’ in the conversation between an ecclesial Christian faith and the broadening realm of spirituality, contending that “the institutional component is necessary if Christian witness is to have a presence, a voice and a witness in the groaning, conflictual reality of world history” (Kelly, 2004). In explaining how this dialogue might be conducted, Kelly (2004) believes the recovery of “the full panoply of modes of understanding” is needed in communicating the rich reality of the Christian beliefs and ecclesial understandings within the Australian culture.

The argument that this dialogue is unachievable contends that there is no possibility for a bridge with the present ecclesial direction and a new language and paradigm ought to be embraced (Tacey, 2003; Morwood, 2007). The Church continues to rapidly lose credibility and relevance exacerbated by the world-wide abuse scandals and the rise in Roman centralism (Treston, 2007; Tacey, 2003). Amid this, the sense of spirituality to be found within the Church community has diminished:

Within the Catholic community in Australia there has been a deep, dark hole for a long time now, which amounts to a lack of genuine spirituality. By

'spiritual' I...mean...something that can live at the very centre of the human dilemma. Religion can become the possession of an elitist group, whose power reinforces the power of all the other institutional forces in society. Its language then becomes spiritually hollow, incapable of criticising or challenging any of those forces. (Fr. Ted Kennedy, ABC, 2004)

Rather than condemning the secularity of Australian culture and the absence of a particular expression of traditional spirituality, this body of literature suggests that an authentic response to the present context is finding the sacred in the reality of the now, however that presents itself.

I am convinced that this is the way forward for religion: a movement from creed and proposition to receptivity and listening. It is a move away from moralism to mysticism, away from religious instruction to the encouragement of spirituality (Tacey, 2006).

Staff in Catholic schools, as members of an ecclesial community and the broader Australian culture, experience the tensions outlined above in both their personal and professional lives.

3.2.1.3 Generational Shifts in World View

Currently, senior leadership in Catholic schools and diocesan organisations is the responsibility of those belonging to the Baby Boomers (including a large number of ex-religious). In contrast, teachers and administration are predominantly from Gen X and Gen Y. It is they who are Catholic education's future leaders. It is appropriate to research this population's perspectives concerning spirituality. An understanding of their perspective and needs informs the broader issues.

Gen X, Gen Y and the Baby Boomer generation are each characterised by distinctly different experiences with Church, religion and culture (Beare, 2003). Many of the Baby Boomer generation are increasingly disaffected from the Church, but carry a corporate Catholic memory from direct experience in Catholic parish culture during their formative years. Gen X are the first post-conciliar generation with little knowledge and connection to the cohesive pre-Vatican II Catholic culture with its strong experiential indicators (fasting; benediction; devotional practices) (Rymarz, 2004). Gen Y are the first 'post-church generation' (Rolheiser, 2008) – *children of children* who have not had a childhood imbued with Catholic parish cultural experience. Church attendance research indicates that most current parents and students do not have a connective experience with parish and its culture. Any experience of Church they have is school related, and they bring with them to this

community their own perspective and experience of the world (McLaughlin, 2002; Rymarz, 2004).

Table 3.2 illustrates key features from the literature of the generational demographic that constitute the staff, parents and students in present school communities.

Table 3.2: Generational Demographics

1927–1945	Silent Generation	Generous, conformist, parents affected by the Depression, disciplined, like consistency, still providing the backbone of support in parish life
1946–1961	Baby Boomers	Peacetime generation, the first divorce generation, loyal, economically comfortable, expectant of a full and healthy life, carrying the current leadership of the church with ex-religious providing a significant role in this.
1962–1977	Generation X	Predominantly single, rapid rise in divorce rates, rapid rise in women in paid workforce, post-feminist generation where inclusion and equality need to be authentic, acute drop in Church attendance and involvement, rise in use and accessibility of illegal drugs, deferral in marriage and raising children, greater reluctance to leave the family home, decline in home ownership
1978–1995	Generation Y (also known as Gen Net; Gen Next; Millennials or Echo Boomers)	Children of rising divorce rate, raised within a technological revolution, mostly unchurched generation but tolerant of a multitude of faith pathways, education oriented, continuing deferral of marriage and children, grew up with a revolution in media, communications and digital technology – eg Internet, Foxtel. Global citizens
1996–present	Generation Z	‘Digital natives’, used to instant action and satisfaction, mainly the children of Gen X parents with smaller families and older mums, communicate mainly through online communities and social media like MySpace, Twitter and Facebook.

Source: McKay, (1997).

The cultural influences for each generation whether student, parent, staff or grandparent, are markedly different. While it is possible to burrow further in the profile of each generation (Rymarz for example identifies three different cultures within Gen X Catholics), the literature (Hughes, 2007; 2010; McQuillan, 2002; 2004;

Rymarz, 2002; Tacey, 2003) suggests there are generalisations pertaining to both Gen Y and Gen X relevant to this research. These include:

- They are suspicious of authority, institutions and ideology, reactive to orthodoxy and absolutism and prefer to build their own conceptions of reality.
- They identify luminal experiences but do not connect them to 'Catholicity'.
- They have engaged with the world in ways that often give stronger meaning to them than their engagement with Church.
- Voluntary commitments tend to be short-term with visible and local outcomes.

In addition, Gen X and Y adopt a more informal and non-traditional approach to any and all community involvement (Donovan, 2000; Greenberg & Berkold, 2004). Faith is expressed in highly personal and informal ways, and social networks are integrated and diverse. At the same time, relationships, however they are formed, shaped and maintained, remain central to Gen X, Y and Z. Parallel to their fierce independence is a strong respect for parents as role models (BRC, 2003).

The research concludes that loyalty, community, commitment and spiritual seeking are not extinct in the post-modern Australian generations. Rather, they are expressed in manifestly different ways from their predecessors. Spirituality remains predicated on a distinct culture and special context influenced by the individual's value system (Johnson & Castelli, 2000). The goal of organised religion is to facilitate connectedness with the sacred (King & Boyatzis, 2004). The primary challenge therefore, lies in the ability of institutional Christianity to connect with the context of the contemporary individual.

3.2.1.4 The Influence of Indigenous Spirituality

Indigenous art and spirituality have found a place in popular Australian culture, and the syncretism that marks the faith expression of indigenous Australians, who have embraced Catholic Christianity is an important part of the current Australian Catholic spiritual landscape. The difficulties in this relationship are real and complex. The collector's mentality already identified in the broader culture is apparent in the mainstream appropriation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander art and spirituality. In challenging this consumerist mentality, Tacey contends that "we have not only stolen Aboriginal land, destroyed the tribal culture, raped the women and the

environment, but we now ask for their spirituality as well” (Tacey, 1995, p. 132). A different consciousness is called for:

We cannot merely tack on Aboriginal spirituality to our own faulty or overly-rational consciousness, but must change our consciousness from within The direction we need to take is downward, into our own depths, to see what could be happening there, rather than to remain the same and move sideways by appropriating another culture’s dreaming. (Tacey, 1995, p. 134)

At the same time, there is an argument for an integrous fit between indigenous spirituality and the mystic dimension of an emerging contemporary Australian Christian spirituality (Hendriks & Hall, 2009). Aboriginal spirituality is described as “a relationship between the Great Spirits and the heart that allows the mind to live in peace and harmony with the human” (Hendriks & Heffernan, 1993, p. 31). For the non-indigenous person to engage with this spirituality requires the leaving of a western frame of reference, or at least an inclination to see the everyday with a different lens (Tacey, 1995).

... Indigenous Australian peoples’ experience of nature is more cosmic, more communal, more natural. It is not the ecstatic, unrepeatable experience of a chosen individual, but the ordinary, every-day, abiding experience of the sacred and interconnected unity of all beings with the earth, cosmos and ultimate reality. (Hendriks & Hall, 2009)

It is an understanding that both challenges an individualistic consumerist culture and strikes chords of familiarity and attraction. The question of how a contemporary Christian spirituality embraces this spiritual richness, without appropriating it in a tokenistic or disjointed way, presents a challenge into the future.

3.2.1.5 Implications for the Contemporary Context

While there is declining support for institutional religion in Australia, there is an openness to spirituality. This appears to be characterised by particular cultural traits. These include an indigenous perspective that assumes an interconnectedness with creation; a postmodern perspective that demands personal meaningfulness; and a cultural perspective that demands its own vernacular and symbolic expression. The Catholic Church is challenged to dialogue with these aspects of Australian culture in developing an authentic approach to Christian spiritual formation in the contemporary world.

3.2.2 Adult Spiritual Formation: Theory and Praxis

A range of associated disciplines have contributed to an understanding of the adult spiritual journey, and offer valuable insights for consideration in contemporary Catholic spiritual formation. These combine traditional developmental theory with psycho-spiritual theory and learnings from approaches in adult faith education, as well as perspectives and praxis in the relatively new discipline of health and wellbeing. The remainder of this section addresses firstly the nature of spiritual formation and then each associated discipline in turn as it intersects with the formation context.

3.2.2.1 The Formation Context of Spirituality

Spiritual formation in a developmental sense has remained a rather general term referring to “all attempts, means, instructions, and disciplines intended towards deepening of faith and furtherance of spiritual growth, including educational endeavours as well as the more intimate and in-depth process of spiritual direction” (May, 1982, p. 6). The word ‘formation’ refers to a set of experiences designed to prepare a person or group for a particular purpose. Formation, in preference to a word like ‘training’, is used in the context of spiritual development. In the Catholic tradition, the concept of spiritual formation has carried a sense of separate reality from general human development, a product of the dualist understanding of the human condition discussed earlier (section 3.2.1.1).

Contemporary understandings of Christian spiritual formation remain grounded in the tradition of discipleship, while encompassing the post-modern concern for the person. Spiritual formation and human formation are considered inseparable without one being reduced to the other (Wolski Conn, 1999). Such formation implies deep learning, not additional learning, that involves personal attitudes, values, commitment to particular life directions as well as knowledge and skills (BCE, 2006). The resultant spiritual growth constitutes a lifelong journey and occurs within a ‘formation field’ (Whelan, 1994) which includes the forming influence of memory, other people and the immediate and wider environment (Bracken, 2004). In the Christian tradition, it is also “an inner journey travelled in a partnership between God’s spirit and our spirits working in kinship” (Groome, 2002, p. 325).

While spiritual formation may occur independently from a religious faith tradition, the faith tradition provides a powerful conduit for meaning making through its language, stories, beliefs and rituals. The term ‘faith’ has a variety of meanings in the literature.

However, the concept of faith within a Catholic context originates singularly and directly in the Hebrew scriptures. A useful mapping of the term through documents from the early centuries into the modern era portrays Christian faith as developmental and expressed in discipleship (mission), as well as growth in understanding.

Because circumstances vary and situations change, discipleship of Jesus requires more than following a set of explicit instructions. It involves willingness to learn from one's own contemporary experience, and to grow into progressively deeper understanding of the meaning and demands of the gospel. (Hellwig, 1993, p. 38)

The journey of 'deeper understanding' of the gospel has also been described as "our moving into deeper and more comprehensive love" (Wolski Conn in Thompson, 1995, p. 652), and has its origins in the early Church. The Biblical words for hospitality (in both the Hebrew and Christian scriptures) mean "love of/for the stranger," and the creation of a welcoming space where guests and hosts encounter each other is central to the gospel (Nouwen, 1976). Spiritual maturity was seen in early Christianity as love of God and love of neighbour. In every era, Christian tradition has interpreted spiritual growth as a gradual process of seeking integration and communion (*koinonia*), detachment and self-emptying (*kenosis*), service for others (*diakonia*) and self-transcendence (*metanoia*) as this deeper love, reflecting and engaging Godself, takes hold over one's being (Wolski Conn, 1994). This context inscribes a transformational personal spiritual journey that grows attentiveness to the spirit of God in relational and connective ways, seeking

an existence before God and amid the created world. It is a praying and living in Jesus Christ. It is the human spirit being grasped, sustained, and transformed by the Holy Spirit. It is the search of believers for a communion that arrives as a gift. (Wainwright, 1987, p. 452)

Spiritual formation may not lead to transformation. However, spiritual formation provides the environment or catalyst in which transformation may take place. Many spiritual writers describe spiritual formation as the 'planting of seeds' (Tang, 2006). The dynamic process of spiritual transformation is often sparked by moments of conflict, (which can take many forms) and which happen across the life cycle. The Christian meta-narrative provides a way of framing the experience. Thus, spiritual formation is a lifelong process informed by one's individual life and formation field and profoundly influenced by "the collected wisdom gathered through history relating to God, Jesus Christ, the Holy Spirit and Church" (Bracken, 2004, p. 24).

3.2.2.2 Spiritual Formation and Developmental Theory

As a developmental process considered with other human development processes, spiritual formation is a recent phenomenon (Erikson, 1994; English, Fenwick & Parsons, 2005). The emergence of the 'spiritual' has been generally viewed in the field as an adjective that describes one's personal religious or faith orientation and as a descriptor that "in large measure reflects a commitment to the ideal of post-conventional claiming of authority for one's own religious and ethical orientation and practices" (Fowler, 2000, p. 6).

The developmental psychological models, (Fowler, 1981, 2000; Kohlberg, 1984) are relevant to understanding spiritual formation because they offer frameworks to explain how individuals construct meaning through experiential maturation. Building on the work of Piaget (1955) in cognitive development and Kohlberg (1984) in moral reasoning, Fowler's 'stages of faith' has provided a developmental understanding equating faith with the growth of individual meaning systems: "Faith is the process of meaning making that is universal and relational" (Fowler, 2000, p. 15). In relating this understanding to the journey of formation, Bracken offers a simple and helpful definition of faith formation as "personal growth within a religious tradition" (Bracken, 1997, p. 4), while not being bound or defined completely by that tradition. In other words, while a person's faith can be nourished within a religious tradition, it also transcends it and is open to change through new insights and experiences (Smith, 1996).

The identification of faith with meaning making also reflects the influence of Neibuhr's theology of radical monotheism (Niebuhr, 1993). There is an underlying "system of transformations by which the self is constituted as it responds to questions of ultimate meaning" (Fowler, 2000, p. 29). This nuanced model of stage theory in faith development proposes the narrative structure of life history. The stages may be viewed as a frame for weaving the tapestry of meaning for one's life – a flexible spiral of interaction between person and society.

Fowler's model has invited criticism. While other impediments to credibility, such as gender bias, have been corrected by research in the last two decades, the linear and cognitive nature of Fowler's stage theory continues to be its most contested assumption (Coles, 1990; Hay & Nye, 1998), with alternative approaches exploring the spiral process whose stages intermesh and overlap (Wilber, 2006; Huitt &

Robbins, 2003). An example of this integrative approach is Kessler's 'pathways' theory (2000).

Developmental theory continues to inform the process of spiritual formation as contemporary models offer a more complex understanding of the developmental journey than their predecessors. These are discussed further in Chapter 4.

3.2.2.3 Spiritual Formation and Adult Faith Education

Identifying a blurred distinction between education and formation, Australian research has highlighted differences between respondents' understandings of 'adult faith education' described primarily as formal coursework involving lectures, assignments and accreditation, in contrast with a concept synonymous with 'faith formation' (Keely, 2002). Thus, while adult faith formation ideally is formative, it often takes an informational focus.

Research on the dialectic between formation and transformation focuses on the gaps in research about adult faith formation in the intricate journey from information to formation to transformation (Daloz & Parks, 1986; Miller, 2005). Prominent developmental researchers have identified sources and stages of faith change (Fowler, 1991), as well as elements involved in the dynamic of transformation such as imagination, community and higher education (Daloz & Parks, 1986). However, the complex interplay of these factors has not been addressed.

Where this has been attempted (Miller, 2000), the contexts of community and personal experiences are identified as the key factors, and use of a shared praxis approach in any kind of religious education is advocated as a way of ensuring "an intentional space for engaging and supporting the ongoing and inseparable interplay between formation and transformation" (Groome, 2002, p 279). Religious transformation is understood as a change in the forms or structures of one's religious being (Miller, 2005) or a change or complex series of changes that enable movement from one state of being to another (Lawrence, 1998). In this process, six influential factors have been identified in Australian research:

1. The importance of warm, trustful relationships in the very early part of life;
2. The catalysing impact of later life experiences as major triggers;
3. The practice of habits of reflectivity, meditation or prayerfulness;
4. The confirming influence of being placed in a religious leadership role;
5. The sustenance of contact and support with a faith community; and

6. The absence of the above factors adversely impacts faith development
(Hetherington & Leavey, 1988, p. 124).

While useful in informing adult faith education, these influences provide insightful reference points of engagement in the contemporary adult formation journey.

3.2.2.4 Spiritual Formation and Psychotherapy

In the twentieth century, secularism became the dominant motif of psychology. The twenty-first century has seen a resurgence in connection between psychology and spirituality, with two trends identified:

First, psychotherapy professions are engaged in an impressive effort to humanize their work more broadly by paying unprecedented attention to spirituality and in some cases to religion. Second, efforts to de-pathologise the mental health field have continued to grow and prosper. (Beck, 2003, p. 24)

In particular, psychotherapy and spiritual direction have developed rich conceptual correlations. Both approaches share many common concerns in working with individuals: growth, change, development, mind, consciousness, insight and self-experience (Beck, 2003).

In addressing the scholarship on transformational processes and spiritual formation, research with its source in psychotherapy suggests adopting the use of “additive and subtractive principles of change” (Leffel, 2007, p. 281) in approaches to personality change and transformation. These are derived from the kataphatic (where God is found in the external signs and created interpretations in the world) and apophatic (where God is found in the mystery of the process of an internal emptying of self) traditions in spiritual formation. In other words, a useful connection is identified between strategies used for personal change and the innate approaches to spiritual formation in the Christian tradition.

The kataphatic and apophatic traditions tend to emphasize different principles of personality change, the kataphatic with the additive principle and related decisionist methods, and the apophatic with the subtractive principle and transformist methods. (Leffel, 2007, p. 282)

The current and popular focus on cognitive behaviour strategies associated with the kataphatic approach overlooks the possibility of deep change offered by the alternative apophatic approach, with its attendant strategies of self-reflection and examination, and the development of character virtues or affective capacities. While both have their place, there is an argument for a stronger focus on the latter, which:

taken to its logical conclusion, shifts the paradigm from the presently dominant cognitive rationalist moral psychology to a 'cognitive intuitionist' *moral motive* approach that is more centrally focused on implicit more than explicit meaning-system constructs of personality. (Leffel, 2007, p. 282)

In this way, the insights and habits of the apophatic way being explored by contemporary approaches to psycho-therapy offer a deeper and possibly more sustainable change in life perspective and spiritual awakening that is congruent with the essence of spiritual formation.

3.2.2.5 Spiritual Formation and Health and Wellbeing Theory

One of the key developments in understanding the adult spiritual journey has been the recognition of human life formation as part of spiritual formation. The generation of values, attitudes and behaviours can no longer be seen as a separate area of development in the human being. Rather, these things emerge out of and are an expression of a person's deepest reality. The nurturing and growth of this deepest reality is the work of spiritual formation.

Notable research findings in spirituality are emerging from the disciplines related to health and medical research. In this area, spiritual wellbeing defined as "a fundamental dimension of people's overall health and well-being" (Fisher, 2001 p. 100), has been conceptualised as the development of harmonious relationships with self, others, God and the world (National Interfaith Coalition on Aging (NICA), 1975, in Ellison, 1983). A number of concurrent studies confirmed that a core component of internal development is 'spirituality' (Kelly, 1995; Pargament & Park, 1995). Furthermore, the spiritual dimension is identified as a contributor to core leadership capacity and, in particular, to transformative change (Moxley, 2000; Thomson, 2004). This dimension is now attracting attention in educational leadership and is addressed in the final section of this chapter (3.4).

As a result of further research, the NICA statement was expanded to contend that the 'fundamental' dimension of spiritual wellbeing permeated and integrated all other dimensions of health (i.e. the physical, mental, emotional, social and vocational) (Fisher, 1999). Four corresponding domains of spiritual wellbeing were created to integrate into the original NICA definition – Personal, Communal, Environmental and Transcendental – with the proposal that:

Spiritual health is a dynamic state of being, shown by the extent to which people live in harmony with:

- themselves (i.e. stated meaning, purpose and values in life);

- others (as expressed in the quality and depth of relationships, relating to morality, culture and religion);
 - the environment (beyond care and nurture for the physical and biological, to a sense of awe and wonder; for some, the notion of unity with the environment); and
 - some-thing/some-One beyond the human level (i.e. ultimate concern; cosmic force; transcendent reality; or God—through faith).
- (Fisher, 2001)

Staff in Catholic schools expressed a consistently high level of concern for their students' wellbeing in each of these four domains, reflecting support for the holistic goal of education in Catholic schools in contemporaneous research findings (Fisher, 2001). The recent research conducted in Brisbane Catholic Education school communities, *Who's Coming to School* (ACER, 2010), and discussed in detail in Section 3.4.2.2.4.2, confirms similar findings for the Brisbane Archdiocese. (Of note are the contrasting findings from Christian independent schools involved in the Fisher (2001) study indicating considerably lower scoring in the first three domains, reflecting a more compartmentalised approach). The holistic approach in health and wellbeing research aligns with the definition of spirituality adopted in this study, recognising both personal and communal dimensions of response to the experience of the transcendent.

3.2.2.6 Implications for Formation Design and Praxis

Within traditional stage theories of personal development (Fowler, 1991; Kohlberg, 1981), a reflective analysis is invited supporting a more nuanced stage trajectory in individual growth. The relational contexts profiled in the development of spiritual wellbeing (self, others, nature, God/Creator) (Fisher, 2001; Hamilton & Jackson, 1998) amplifies the spiritual formation literature and adult education research which gives emphasis to the dynamic between self-awareness, interconnectedness and a relationship with a being beyond self (Hay and Nye, 1998; Harris, 1991). Finally, in the field of psychotherapy, the understanding of individual drivers and their link to specific pathways in the spiritual journey (Huitt & Robbins, 2003; Leffel, 2007) offer insights into a contemporary approach in the engagement of individuals.

3.2.3 Catholic Culture and the Adult Spiritual Journey

A critical element in understanding contemporary Catholic spirituality is the influence of traditional Catholic culture. Many authors have written on spirituality, outlining principles of prayer, discernment, asceticism, direction, silence, solitude, reading, meditation, journal writing, contemplation, and service to guide a person's growth in

the spiritual life (Keating, 1987; McPherson, 2002; Morneau, 1996; Van Kaam & Muto, 1978). In Australia, as in other Western countries, spirituality has traditionally been linked to a Christian understanding of worship and practice (Rossiter, 2005). For 'lay' people, Church attendance and parish ministry involvement has been viewed as the key pathway for spiritual formation, while engagement in a specific lifestyle based on the monastic or religious life tradition of the institution has been viewed as appropriate for those in religious orders or the priesthood (Dixon, 2005). Both these assumed pathways are energetically criticised. There is notable research identifying reasons for this, as well as the threads of that distinctive culture which continue (NCLS, 2008; Hughes, 2009).

3.2.3.1 Participation and Practice - A Changing Culture

Weekly Mass attendance and parish participation have traditionally been viewed as a central built-in formative construct for 'lay' people (Wilkinson, 2011; Dixon, 2005). However, since the 1970s Catholics have been drifting away from active parish involvement and Church attendance. Research findings (Dixon, 2005; ACBC, 2007; NCLS, 2006, 2009) confirm anecdotal reports suggesting that in recent years this drift has been noticeable, even among people who were once regular Mass attenders and active parishioners for much of their adult life. This phenomenon has serious implications for how Catholic culture is transferred between generations and how community is modelled, as the current Church-going Catholic population diminishes without a new generation replacing it.

While the Catholic sector continues to exert a major influence in a range of ministries (health, education, social services), the actual Church-going demographic has changed in terms of age, background, country of origin, and personal attitudes and practices. The 2006 Australian Census indicated that Catholics remain the largest religious group (25.8%) However, 22.7% Australian Catholics are born overseas, with 17.6% of these born in non-English-speaking countries. In addition, Mass attendance continues to drop (15.3% in 2001; 14% in 2006; 12% in 2009) and the trend in the profile for Mass attendees indicates they are on average older, better educated, more likely to be female, married and born overseas than Catholics in general (NCLS, 2006).

Further research into the findings regarding the causes and profile of 'disappearing Catholics' (ACBC, 2007) identified a marked decline in the attendance rate of Catholics in Australia who are 50 years of age or younger. Of this cohort, the lowest numbers of Mass goers are in the 20–34 age groups. The research also identified

the major reasons for not attending Mass were expressed as both disagreement and disillusionment with the Church along with the prioritising Sunday as a 'family day.' A lack of meaning in liturgical experiences for this demographic was also identified as a factor. Yet the most commonly expressed reason for not going to Church was the belief among those surveyed that attendance at Mass did not define a 'committed' Catholic.

More than half (54%) of all the infrequent or non-attenders among Catholic parents nominated as one of their reasons for non or less frequent attendance the statement 'I no longer feel that being a committed Catholic requires attending Mass every week or as frequently as I used to attend' (ACBC, 2007, p. 5).

While these findings consolidate an analysis of earlier research (Bellamy, Black, Castle, Hughes & Kaldor, 2002), the most recent available research (Hughes, 2009) identifies an additional trend of Catholics beginning to cease identifying themselves as Catholics by the age of 25 (Dixon, 2005).

Two particular studies concerning women and the Church and Gen Y and the Church offer nuanced insights to these broader trends.

1. The Research Project on the Participation of Women in the Catholic Church in Australia (Macdonald, Carpenter, Cornish, Costigan, Dixon, Malone, Manning & Wagner, 1999) identified three specific areas of dissatisfaction among women. These are:
 - a) a perceived lack of support by the Church for single women;
 - b) the Church's perceived discrimination against and active exclusion of those who were divorced and remarried without an annulment;
 - c) disagreement with the Church's teachings about sexuality, contraception, divorce, marriage and abortion.

2. The *Spirit of Generation Y* project (Mason, Webber, Singleton & Hughes, 2006), echoing earlier US studies (Camille & Schom, 2004; Hoge, Dinges, Johnson & Gonzales, 2001), reported specific reasons for not attending Church as being:
 - a) disillusioned by the Churches' attitudes to moral issues;
 - b) disillusioned by the restricted role of women in the Church;
 - c) a feeling that the Church was unrealistic and out of step with society.

Even as Church going declines, there is some support for the concept that personal faith continues in society. This is described as believing without belonging. However, both the *Participation of Women* (1999) and the *Spirit of Gen Y* (2006) research

confirm that there is little evidence to support this proposition in the longer term (Voas & Crockett, 2005). With participants indicating a sense of responsibility and capability about their own spiritual life, 'believing without belonging' is considered more likely to be an expression of 'residual religiosity.'

While "it was important for virtually all participants that they nurture the spiritual dimension of their lives" (ACBC, 2007, p. 49), participants reported a strong desire for self-direction:

Participants insisted that they wanted to take responsibility for the quality of their own spiritual lives, leading to an eclectic approach to spirituality and a readiness to leave aside beliefs and practices that were not seen as helpful, life-giving or leading to personal fulfilment. (ACBC, 2007)

Thus, while there remains a call from within the Catholic Church to support its current structure and practices, enormous shifts are in progress influenced by both cultural and ecclesial issues. The traditional patterns of formation associated with participation in that structure can no longer be assumed. Neither attendance at Church nor active participation in a parish community is considered fundamental to spiritual growth or Catholic identity (ACBC, 2007; ACS, 1998; CCLS, 1996; NCLS, 2006). The predominant view in the research is that the present trends will continue (ACBC, 2007; Dixon, 2005).

3.2.3.2 Core Components of Catholic Practice: Prayer, Reflection, Outreach

In exploring Catholic practice in spirituality, the range of activities in the tradition can be examined in three categories: prayer, reflection and outreach. Given the research findings outlined above with regard to the changing landscape in participation and practice, an understanding of the essential aspects of each of these three areas of practice as they have developed into present times is valuable for this current study.

3.2.3.2.1 Prayer

Prayer remains a pivotal practice in all programs of spiritual formation. *The Catechism of the Catholic Church* (John Paul II, 1997) lists three expressions of prayer: vocal prayer, meditation and contemplative prayer, having in common "the recollection of the heart" (Part 4, Chapter 3, n. 2721). The Church invites all its followers to participate in regular prayer: daily prayers, the Liturgy of the Hours, Sunday Eucharist, feasts of the liturgical year (CCC, 1997, n. 2720).

However, within the broad catechism definition, the Catholic Christian tradition has a diversity of prayer practices heavily influenced by religious orders through the ages and by liturgical scholars and practitioners in Christian spirituality. This range of prayer experience and practice includes different types of meditative and contemplative prayer, including the examen of conscience and prayer of gazing; liturgical prayer; *lectio divina* and other styles of praying with Scripture; body prayer such as labyrinth walking and reflective prayer that includes song and movement working with spiritual texts. As interest in the spiritual life continues to develop a wider appeal, the broad assemblage of prayer practice appears to have been recovered and reinvigorated both inside and outside of the institutional context of the Church (Oliver 2004; Sheldrake, 2007; Thompson, 2005).

In particular, the range of contemplative and meditative prayer forms appear to appeal to those searching for ways to navigate their own suffering or need for healing, whether emotional or physical (Rohr, 2008). Prayer and the experience of suffering (identified as the 'dark night of the soul' by St John of the Cross, Underhill, 2002, p. 477) are commonly seen by Christian spiritual teachers as catalysts for the transformative spiritual journey. The capacity to be in the present moment is the locus of contemplative prayer and the mystical tradition within the Catholic Church. The work of Chittester (2000); Keating (2009); Merton (1961); O'Donoghue (1997); Rohr (2009) and Silf (2007) has brought the mystical tradition into the contemporary practice of spiritual life.

3.2.3.2.2 Self-Reflection

Woven throughout the daily and seasonal cycles of Catholic life is a practical emphasis on self-reflection. This practice is given special focus during particular liturgical seasons of the Church year (Lent and Advent), and in particular traditional activities (e.g. the parish mission) and groups (e.g. Cursillo), encouraged personally and communally in the parish pastoral context. It is part of the Catholic culture. There are two important aspects of this broad practice which are relevant to this present research: 'theological reflection', and 'life narrative reflection'. While these have long been a part of Catholic practice, they appear to be meeting contemporary needs in new ways.

3.2.3.2.2.1 The praxis of theological reflection

Developing the praxis of theological reflection is a core element of the Catholic tradition and spiritual discipline. The scholarship of Kinast (1996, 1999, 2000),

Killeen and DeBeer (1994), Wicks (2003; 2006; 2009), and Whitehead & Whitehead (1997) contributes to a body of work that constitutes the seminal thinking and development in the discipline of theological reflection.

Practitioners in this area offer a reflective method that creates a balanced conversation between the individual's experience and the Christian tradition. Pioneering work (Whitehead & Whitehead, 1997) offered a model that created a dialogue between three sources of information: the faith tradition; personal and communal experience; and contemporary culture (Kinast, 1999, 2000). Working within the same basic model, contemporary scholars have turned their focus very specifically to how the tradition translates as a relevant touchstone for reflective praxis in today's world. They ask: *Is Christianity a viable wisdom tradition as the 21st century dawns?* (Killeen & DeBeer, 1994, p. 2). They propose a method that integrates life experience and the wide heritage of the Christian tradition in a transformative dialectic that has a contemporary energy.

Authentic lives reflecting integral patterns grounded in religious wisdom and values, result from seeking God's presence, not apart from the world, but in the midst of it... in this conversation, we can find ourselves called to act in new, courageous and compassionate ways. We are called to transformation. (Killeen & DeBeer 1994, p. 3)

In this way, orthodoxy (or right thinking), and orthopathy (right feeling), lead to orthopraxis (right acting). Lived experience is as important as the classic Christian texts, and the outcome of theological reflection is to be reflected in practical action, not theoretical ideas (Kinast, 2000). This approach also aligns with the direction of contemporary thought with regard to the work and witness of Christians: "Emerging Christianity is going to have to emphasize orthopraxy (walking the talk) much more than mere orthodoxy (talking the walk)" (Rohr, 2010).

Importantly, Kinast identifies three characteristics in the process of theological reflection that make it relevant and meaningful for spiritual seekers today: "it must be *portable* so Christians can carry it into their daily lives; it must be *performable* so that they can translate their reflections into actions; and it must be *communal* so they can face today's challenges with each other" (Kinast, 2000, p. 7).

In the development of ways to engage in theological reflection, the issue of language – of how one imagines God and how one dialogues with God – is an important one. Reflecting on what he refers to as the deep *communal* nature of theological reflection, Bevans (2005) stresses the dialogical nature of the process, a

mode that mirrors the communal nature of the God who is at the centre of Christian faith. Australian poet, Les Murray's concept of 'wholespeak' offers a prototype for the kind of imaginative language needed to make spiritual dialogue more accessible (Kelly, 2004). 'Wholespeak' invites an appropriate language of the imagination that "brings together poetry and religion to express the ultimate and comprehensive realities of our lives" (Kelly, 2004). It is "the language of real conversation, of genuine prayer, of poetry and indeed all the arts" (Kelly, 2004).

The engagement with culture, language, experience and tradition now absorbs the attention of scholars and practitioners in the theory and practice of spiritual formation. Future formation models/initiatives will also need to engage with these developments.

3.2.3.2.2 The Praxis of Life Narrative Reflection

A fundamental component of spiritual development is the depth with which people make sense of their life experiences (Palmer, 2004). While the encouragement of self-reflection on life choices and daily living has been part of the Catholic culture and a routine homiletic focus for pastors, scholarly development in this area has both recovered and enriched its basic principles (Schneiders, 2006).

The use of life narrative reflection is an important element in the work of practical theology (Bons-Storm, 2002; Osmer, 2008). The basic questions of practical theology concern the development of a community of faith built on an engagement and understanding of the lives of its members. 'Life and faith history' refers to the narrative a person tells about her/his own life and the developments of what s/he experiences as 'faith'. The narrative is never a 'true' report of what happened; it is not a documentary of facts, but rather:

a painting, a work of art, giving meaning to 'reality' from the narrator's point of view. Not only the *knowing* about God is important for a faithful life, but also the experience, just fleetingly perhaps, just sometimes, that God really has something to do with and in one's everyday life (Klein, 1993, p. 59).

While not always explicit, this process is a constant conversation for someone immersed in the Christian tradition – a conversation between tradition and life moment, which reveals a certain hermeneutic:

a manner of understanding the Christian tradition in the context of the life of a concrete person, relating to a community of Christian faith in one way or another, with a certain degree of commitment (Bons-Storm, 2002, p. 27).

The product of a well-developed practice of life narrative reflection is the process of prayerful discernment. From the Latin *discernere* meaning 'to sift apart', discernment as a spiritual practice refers to the process of prayerfully seeking to notice with clarity, a contemplative disposition that takes "a long, loving look at the real" (Burghardt, 1989 p. 14). Decisions are made by sifting choices and scenarios in prayer, identifying what is spirit-led and life-giving in one's story, and what is not. Within the Christian tradition, the process of discernment is often carried out with the guidance of a mentor companion or spiritual director. This practice has been part of the tradition since the early ascetic communities through the Middle Ages into the present. The traditional Christian model for spiritual mentoring includes developing awareness of God's presence, wholeness and healing (Merton's "theosis" 1960, p. 23), and communion ("friendship with Christ grows deeper through human spiritual friendship." Guenther in Shinohara, 2002, p. 105). The goal is transformation.

While the practice of theological reflection and the development of a narrative mode of thinking about one's life are distinct and separate practices, the literature demonstrates their complementarity. It appears that the two operate in an iterative way to grow the individual's capacity for deep reflection and integration within community.

3.2.3.2.2.3 Outreach

The third category of activity in Catholic practice involves outreach. Catholics retain in their theology and church culture a strong emphasis on social justice, the common good, and community (Laser & Jones, 2010). This includes service learning and participation in social justice activities. While traditionally these have been associated with Catholic organisations directly connected to the Church (St Vincent de Paul, Caritas and Catholic Missions) they now include initiatives through religious congregations, Catholic education offices, Archdiocesan services and broader independent Catholic community networks. The opportunities afforded across these providers include immersion experiences, political activism, local voluntary work on the streets and environmental protection issues, as well as fundraising and donations. Australian research concludes that this area of social action and outreach has a strong resonance among the students, parents and staff of Catholic schools locally and nationally, and is growing broader connections and growth points within the wider culture (ACER, 2010; ACBC 2007).

In the post-Vatican II shifts in the Church, this development was anticipated with the hope it would have a positive impact on strengthening community through:

a growing centrality of justice as a constitutive dimension of the gospel, having a great influence on eroding a purely privatised and individualistic spirituality; and the ecological movement (Harris & Moran, 1998, p. 6).

Contemporary scholars affirm this shift as fundamental to the authenticity of gospel witness and by implication the relevance of the Church in today's world (Rohr, 2010; Treston, 2000). The dialectic of contemplation and action, an important part of spiritual work and Catholic culture, has thus been revived as an essential element of formation and ministry.

3.2.3.3 Implications for Contemporary Lay Formation

The traditional patterns of participation and practice which have constituted the key elements of formation for lay Catholics have been fractured for a variety of reasons outlined. Even so, essential threads of a distinctive Catholic culture appear to survive and thrive, albeit in a different way than packaged in traditional ecclesial structures of participation and practice. The challenge is how to harness these vital 'threads' in new formation pathways.

3.2.4 The Interface with Theology

The development of Christian spirituality as a discipline in its own right, and its dynamic interplay with systematic theology have made for a fertile and remarkable body of literature. It is an area still growing and is characterised by boundary breaking scholarship engaged in the work of translating the fundamental Christian realities in new cultural paradigms. While self-transcendence is a central aspect of spiritual development implying internal growth, traditional theology has articulated spirituality as either a non-developmental and fixed aspect of the human experience or a mystical approach to religion and worship practice (Driedger, 1999; Hill, 2004). Understanding the role of theological scholarship in the independent discipline of spirituality offers insights for possible future directions in spiritual formation.

3.2.4.1 Christian Spirituality as a Theological Discipline

The discipline of theology initially subsumed under itself in a seamless way all other aspects of scholarly focus concerning Christian studies, including Biblical studies and Christian spirituality. As the focus on dogmatics developed in theology, a multiplication of associated disciplines emerged. Thus, spirituality which has

previously been a minor area of focus in theology is now a focus of scholarship and praxis in its own right, with a strong body of work behind it.

The development of Christian spirituality as a discrete discipline has been strongly influenced since Vatican II by the Council's inclusive call to holiness (*Lumen Gentium*, n. 40–41) and its invitation to engagement with the world which invited dialogue with other approaches and traditions (*Nostra Aetate*, n. 2). The acceptance in definition of inclusion and continuity “between the ordinary (ascetical) and extraordinary (mystical) elements of spirituality” (Ryan, 1997, p. 13) and the recovery of the early Christian understanding of living ‘in the spirit’ has also seen sustained consideration in a more holistic understanding of spirituality. This has been accompanied by attention to experiential and contextual aspects, as spirituality is promoted “as a way of being integrated into the everyday” (Downey, 1991, p. 271). This experiential context has been highlighted by Schneiders (2006) articulating the primacy of spirituality “as the study of lived experience, preceding theology which is a second level reflection on experience” (Schneiders, 2006, p. 4).

In charting the terrain of Christian spirituality, seven useful focal points are offered (Downey, 1991). Christian spirituality is concerned with the work of the Holy Spirit in individuals: “(1) within a culture; (2) in relation to a tradition; (3) in light of contemporary events, hopes, suffering and promises; (4) in remembrance of Jesus Christ; (5) in efforts to combine elements of action and contemplation; (6) with respect to charism and community; (7) as expressed and authenticated in praxis” (Downey, 1991, p. 277).

In exploring the ways these elements have integrated since Vatican II, four general patterns in approach are identified (Schneiders, 2006). In the first approach, spirituality is equated with an individual's personal prayer life. In the second approach, it is equated not just with prayer but with intense faith-filled engagement in daily activities. A third and still broader view argues that spirituality incorporates the whole of personal experience, including bodily and emotional dimensions discounted in earlier Church development. The fourth stresses the relationship between Christian commitment and social and political life, particularly justice, feminist and ecological issues.

The early, and still relevant understanding of the journey in Christian spirituality was predicated on theological approaches known as the apophatic and the kataphatic ways of knowing. The kataphatic way of knowing (or the *via positiva*) seeks to

understand God by learning what God is, with a focus on a cognitive understanding of God. This approach does not necessarily require the learner to negotiate the inner journey of self. Apophatic theology (also known as the *via negativa*) stands in contrast to the kataphatic way in that it seeks unity with God as the unknowable, through discernment and focusing on the individual experience of the Divine, often found outside institutional structures. The apophatic way is most often linked with the mystic tradition (Beck, 2003; Leffel, 2007).

This contemporary work in the discipline of spirituality has synchronicity with research in psycho-therapy, against the backdrop of a renewed interest in mysticism in the general culture. As noted in section 3.2.2.4, psychotherapists have identified the apophatic tradition as an appropriate conduit for sustaining transformational change in individuals (Leffel, 2007). Observers of contemporary shifts in religious affiliation identify the apophatic tradition as one which needs to be recovered and respected for different reasons:

The emphasis has been external: 'religion' is performed by good works, helping others in the world, rescuing those in need, shared rituals often practiced by rote, and community service. This is all very good, but it is only one side of religion. The other side is esoteric, and has largely been suppressed by mainstream tradition and forced to the margins. This exiled esoteric tradition, namely, the mystical tradition of finding the God within, is now the 'stone rejected by the builders', which is to become the cornerstone of the future church. (Tacey, 2006)

Thus the focus on lived experience has become the defining characteristic of scholarship in Christian spirituality, influencing contemporary scholarship in theology in a continuing and iterative way.

3.2.4.2 Theological Perspectives for Contemporary Spiritual Formation

The nexus of the spiritual journey is the realisation of a personal experience of God which influences how life is lived. In the Catholic Christian tradition, this is nurtured and shaped by culture and tradition, and, within the tradition, particularly by theological perspectives. Thus, the conceptualisation of God is fundamental to the construction of meaning in the journey of spiritual formation. The pre-Vatican II 'fall-redemption' theology which informed so much of the shape of spiritual formation has been challenged by rich theological development since the sixties. Current theological thinking, as it engages with the exponential arcs in thinking in the sciences and the arts, is opening up new articulations of God and God's action in the world.

In the transition from the modern to post-modern world, theologians identify a shift in theological models for understanding ultimate reality or God. This shift is from a monolithic view or model to a post-modern multilithic view or model of ultimate reality (Craig, 2010). The implications for systematic theology suggest the need for recalibration of the language inherent in the modelling of God, from that of a closed system and machine metaphor to that of an open system and more organic metaphor (Hartwell, 1996). The implications for spiritual formation suggest a similar shift from a confessional approach to an experiential and mystical approach. This mystico-prophetic perspective finds resonance in the inductive theological method of Bevens (2002), Fischer (1994), Gutierrez (1971), Lonergan (1972), O'Murchu (2004) Rahner (1963), Schillebeeckx (1990), Solle (1981) and Schussler-Fiorenza (1984). The perspectives of these theologians are now examined for the unique insights they offer in the literature relevant to spiritual formation in a contemporary context.

3.2.4.2.1 Incarnation and a Mystic Perspective

In a prophetic anticipation of the current direction in thinking around spiritual experience, Rahner, some forty years ago, contended that “the Christian of the future will be a mystic or (he/she) will not exist at all” (Rahner, 1973, *Theol. Invent.* XX, 149). By mysticism, Rahner explains, he does not mean some esoteric phenomenon, but “a genuine experience of God emerging from the very heart of our existence” (Rahner, 1990 p. 115). Ultimately for Rahner, the source of spiritual conviction comes not from theology but from the personal experience of God (Vorgrimler, 1986). This reflection, made late in Rahner’s life, echoes through the centuries to a similar insight attributed to Thomas Aquinas after his own mystical experience late in life “All that I have written seems to me like so much straw compared to what I have seen and what has been revealed to me” (Bacik, 2002 p. 15).

An analysis of Rahner’s own theological journey as a systematic theologian suggests a trajectory that encompassed a comprehensive paradigm that always had its primary model in the ‘heart’ (Masson, 1984). Out of this paradigm, Rahner offered projections about the shape of Christian spirituality into the future. Six indicators are identified in Rahner’s work, which are important for the current discussion:

Christian spirituality in the future will have to:

- engage the whole person: head, heart, hands, and feet;
- provide a grammar that avoids false dichotomies which divide the divine and human;
- focus on the original central revelation;

- be humble and open;
- live with diversity - and value that diversity while also patiently seeking the unity of truth and love in the pluriformity of its expressions; and
- be sacramental and dialogical.

(Masson, 1984, p. 353)

Christian faith therefore calls for a spirituality that integrates orthodoxy and orthopraxis, personal spirituality and social responsibility, intellectual and affective dimensions. Rahner (1973) insists on the Incarnation as ‘the grammar’ which communicates that the human is found in the divine and the divine in the human. From this original centre, the mystery of God and the self-revelation of God in the diversity of cultures, philosophies, and theologies in the world-church is held easily. Despite accusations of promoting a non-kerygmatic spirituality, Rahner rather suggests a different understanding for the Church’s purpose: it is not to provide another route to solidarity with God besides the life of love, but “to reveal that the dynamism of the world is indeed rooted in love, and to reveal that the goal and culmination of that dynamism is union with God through the Spirit of Christ” (Rahner, as cited in Masson, 1984, p. 354)

3.2.4.2.2 Conversion and a Unitive Perspective

If Rahner provides a meta-view of the lived out nature of Christian spirituality and the implications for the Church, then Lonergan (1971) offers a micro- examination of the process of transformative experience for the individual. Like Rahner, Lonergan’s understanding of the conversion experience central to the spiritual journey is redolent of a deep experiential reality. He describes it as ‘falling in love’ and ‘becoming a being in love’ where God is all there is (Hide, 2004). Lonergan’s theology of conversion as part of the process of transformation which is at the heart of spiritual formation has three stages (intellectual, moral and religious conversion) that create a dialectic (Lonergan, 1971). Each individual step requires a moment of conversion which Lonergan presents as:

a complex process of transformation involving various judgments, decisions and actions that move us from an established horizon, usually formed through the desires and addictions of the false self, into a new horizon of knowing, valuing and acting, informed by our true self that has its ground in the being of God (Hide, 2004).

Intellectual conversion challenges and clarifies the bounds of our knowing ‘to enable divine wisdom to be the only source of our knowing’ (Hide, 2004). *Moral conversion* shifts the criteria for decision making ‘from the satisfaction of the self as the basis of choice, to the discovery and pursuit of truth and value’ (Hide, 2004). *Religious*

conversion integrates all else and centres one's own centre in God. Lonergan understands this unity with and in God that occurs in religious conversion as 'love'.

Then one's being becomes being in love... It is the first principle. From it flows one's desires and fears, one's joys and sorrows, one's discernment of values, one's decisions and deeds... *cor ad cor loquitur*: love speaks to love and its speech is powerful... faith is born of this love (Lonergan, 1971, pp. 105, 113, 115).

3.2.4.2.3 Normative Experience and a Social Justice Perspective

It is now recognised that the experiential starting point in the development of theological thought has historically been male, mainstream and European (O'Murchu, 2007; Radford Reuther, 1993). It has been a dominant perspective and regarded as normative until relatively recent times. Accordingly, much of the theological literature of the tradition reflects the inherent bias of this perspective. However, new frontiers in theological scholarship (Boff, 1993; Gutierrez, 1971; Koyama, 1979; O'Murchu, 1997; Schussler Fiorenza, 1983; Soelle, 2001) have progressively explicated what it means theologically if the experiential starting point is female or Asian or poor or creation centred. In particular, this scholarship has generated a range of hermeneutical paradigms that offer more connections to the gospel than had previously been available.

All these approaches have their foundation in a justice perspective drawing on the tradition itself in confirmation of their validity. Both scripture (Genesis, Micah and the gospels of Matthew and Luke in particular) and key Church documents (especially *Rerum Novarum*, 1891; *Mater et Magistra*, 1961; *Gaudium et Spes*, 1965) underpin the preferential option for the poor and vulnerable, the stewardship of creation, human rights and human dignity. These four justice dimensions are embedded in the new hermeneutics. The exploration of new boundaries has also provoked consideration of an understanding of being God-centred outside the context of the institutional Church. Soelle for example embraced mysticism as the appropriate response 'in a world reeling from consumerism, economic inequities, ecological trauma and global chaos' (Soelle, 2001, p. 210).

Not one to be as concerned about organised religion as about living out God in the world, Soelle's brand of radical Christianity finds connections between mystical experience and political activism, between suffering and resisting the status quo. (Oliver, 2006)

The limitations of God language and image became an issue for Soelle as it did for Rahner and Schussler Fiorenza. The language of traditional systematic theology,

where God is understood objectively, has become particularly inadequate. Authentic knowledge is intuitive, personal and ineffable, finding its expression in paradox and poetry (Ryan, 2006). Thus, the experience of God, and the social response to that experience, needs a new language both to describe it and to engage with others.

3.2.4.2.4 Quantum Theology and a Missiological Perspective

The new boundaries in theology include a re-visioning of the Christian understanding of ecology, binding it closely to the principle of experiential knowing central in the discussion thus far. Liberation theologian Leonardo Boff (1993) integrates ecological theology into the social context, insisting that such an understanding of the nature of God requires an understanding of the world's social systems and the use and misuse of power for exploitation of nature and the world's poor. Boff offers an agenda for spirituality that goes beyond any individual-centred or 'feel good', spirituality. Rather, Boff advocates for a new alliance between humankind and other beings, a new respectfulness for creation and the working-out of an ethic and mysticism of brother/sisterhood with the entire cosmic community (Boff, 1993).

Other theologians have directly explored the links between the modern developments in particle physics and spirituality. Irish scholar, O'Murchu's work (2007) has moved beyond previous dialogues between science and religion. He explores the divine co-creativity emanating from the scientific discoveries of quantum theory through the use of metaphor, particularly the Dance, the Story, Darkness and Light (O'Murchu, 1997). Principles of quantum theology describe God and the divine in terms of 'creative energy', which is perceived to include, but also supersede, everything traditional theology attributes to God. A new paradigm is offered:

The God of Trinitarian theology is a God of mutual and equal relations. When such a God creates a universe it is not surprising that it turns out to be a radically relational and interdependent one (Edwards, 1999, p. 28)

The new scholarship in cosmology interrelates with the current work of leading trinitarian theologians and missiologists (the latter is outlined in further detail in Section 3.4). Trinitarian theology adopts a new and expanded perspective underpinned by the premise that biology and theology both point towards a view of reality in which relationships have a primary place: "When life unfolds through the process of evolution, it emerges in patterns of interconnectedness and

interdependence that ‘fit’ with the way God is” (Edwards, 1999, p. 28) Citing both the early theological work of Aquinas (1245-59) and the more contemporary theological work of Johnson (2002) and Boff (1993), missiologist Stephen Bevans concludes:

God in God’s deepest identity is a relationship, a communion. This life in communion spills out into creation, healing and sanctifying, calling all of creation ... into that communion, and once in that communion, sending that creation forth to gather still more of it into communion (Bevans, 2009, p. 2).

Finally, the gradual re-emergence of biblical theologians and liturgical scholars (Byrne, 2001; Kelly, 2009; Schneiders, 2003; Treston, 2007) using the imagination as a language to explore the Scriptures within a broader setting, has encouraged the regeneration of symbolism in the tradition.

Attention to the language of the Hebrew scriptures as well as that of the New Testament assures that incorporating the imagination more fully into spirituality is not a matter of a current craze or passing fad. It is rather the recovery of a long-standing spiritual tradition, the renewing of a lost spiritual resource. (Fischer, 1989, p. 105)

In this process, “traditional symbols are transformed” (Fischer, 1989, p. 104), allowing for new ways of connecting with familiar symbols and rituals. This work reinforces that of Rahner, Soelle, Schussler Fiorenza, Gutierrez and Boff advocating a new language to engage a deeper and more expansive perspective in Christian spiritual formation.

3.2.4.3 Implications for Developments in Spiritual Formation

Spiritual formation theory and praxis is undergoing considerable change. This is exemplified by the rapidly declining number of religious and clergy; the rising expectation on ‘lay’ educators to model authentic Catholic leadership; the growing understanding of the adult developmental journey and the shifts in both understanding and practice around spiritual formation. The coalescence of these changes has overwhelmed traditional assumptions about appropriate spiritual formation. The literature indicates that the uniqueness of the individual journey is now heavily influenced by cultural context and key relationships. Existing research and experience has induced those in other faith traditions and secular environments to explore new ways of formation that address both new contexts (post-modern culture) and renewed purpose (personal transformation).

Insights from the theological literature offer a helpful perspective on key considerations for design and content in contemporary spiritual formation. The integration of a mystic perspective into everyday experience; an understanding of

conversion that is centred on transformation rather than redemption; and an awareness for relational engagement with and in the world appear to be central elements for consideration. The implications for language, symbol and ritual that has resonance with contemporary meaning making while remaining faithful to the essential revelation of the Christian tradition is an immediate challenge.

3.3 Workplace Learning and Adult Education

This research is located within an educational environment. Therefore, a synthesis of the literature concerning adult educative processes is highly relevant. The three areas for attention in this second theme of the literature review critique research in workplace learning and adult education:

1. Professional Learning Communities and Workplace Context;
2. Adult Learning: Holistic Approaches and Reflective Praxis; and
3. Transformative Learning: Change Education and Critical Mass Theory.

Each is addressed in turn.

3.3.1 Professional Learning Communities and Workplace Context

As the understanding of adult professional development has grown, significant change has occurred in how staff development is conceptualised and provided. This shift recognises the primary importance of the social nature of learning, the key influences in effective professional learning and the shared workplace as the setting for sustainable and ongoing adult learning and staff development.

3.3.1.1 From Professional Development to Learning Communities

Professional development, seen as complex and career long, is “the sum of all activities both formal and informal carried out by the individual or system to promote staff growth and renewal” (Connors, 1991, p. 54). Many policy definitions of professional development across the educational field focus teachers’ knowledge and skills acquisition, and refer to measurable outcomes of teaching and learning. However, a ‘skills and acquisitions’ approach belies a deficit model in professional development that is about filling the gaps (Bellanca, 1996). The understanding that is becoming prevalent in the literature acknowledges the nurturing or renewal of what is already present, and the many ways and places learning and growth occur (Garvin, 1993; Hough, 2004; Senge, 2000).

This has been accompanied at the micro-level with a clarity about the difference between, and therefore role of, in-service and professional development. In this important distinction, “in-service is characterised by short bursts focusing on aspects of curriculum, while professional development refers to long-term sustained learning” (O’Brien, with reference to Bellanca’s research, 2004, p. 10). Further, the shift in the literature to using the term ‘professional learning’ rather than ‘professional development’ reflects the growth in conceptualisation of the adult as both a lifelong and life-wide learner. In the discussion following, the term professional learning is used.

As the concept of lifelong learning has developed, so too has the contextual nature of adult lifelong, life-wide learning (Day, 1999; Carter, 2009). Research concerning ‘learning communities’ whose norms emphasise lifelong learning and the communal nature of learning (first given recognition by Dewey in 1938) has gained increasing momentum in current educational, social, economic and religious contexts (DuFour, Eaker & DuFour, 2005; DuFour & Eaker, 1998; Fullan, 2010; Senge, 1990; 2008; Sergiovanni, 1994b; Turkington, 2004). While the individualist culture remains strong, there is a contemporary movement away from the “age of the individual to the era of community”:

Learning communities are a manifestation of this movement and aim to strike a balance between individuality and social connectedness... [as we begin to] see the essential role that relationship, participation, reciprocity, membership, and collaboration must play in any theory of human development that aspires to guide us... (Feldman, 2000, p. xiii).

As an organisational arrangement, the professional learning community is seen as a powerful staff development approach and a potent strategy for school change and improvement. A learning community is one that learns continuously and transforms itself (Marsick & Watkins, 1990). School leadership seeking to operate in this way must share “an understanding that constant learning is central to the current and future success of the school, and will assume that parents, students and the wider community are partners with teachers in a learning community based around the school organisation” (Hough, 2004, p. 26). The fundamental principle of operation is an assumption that the whole community shares a common purpose and vision in order for the partnership to be realised.

Learning communities are made up of people who share a common purpose. They collaborate to draw on individual strengths, respect a variety of perspectives, and actively promote learning opportunities. The outcomes are

the creation of a vibrant, synergistic environment, enhanced potential for all members, and the possibility that new knowledge will be created.

(Kilpatrick, Barrett & Jones, 2003, p. 11)

3.3.1.2 Key Elements in Fostering Professional Learning Communities

A review of the literature identifies five attributes of successful professional learning communities:

1. Supportive and shared leadership – the style is collegial and facilitative, fostering staff input into decision making;
2. Collective creativity – developing new ways through one another's insights and skills;
3. Shared values and vision – that are consistently articulated and referenced;
4. Supportive conditions – both physical and human to support initiatives; and
5. Shared personal practice – peer mentoring and sharing (Hord, 1997).

Two drivers are critical to the establishment of these attributes:

- a. A leadership that drives the re-culturing of a common vision; and
- b. A community that is characterised by a culture of trust.

The school change and educational leadership literature stresses the pivotal role and influence of the administrator (i.e. principal and school leadership team) in determining whether authentic change occurs in the school (Fullan, 2002; Gall & Borg, 1999; Gronn, 2002). Further, there is consistent argument for a particular model of leadership that nurtures and grows a learning community in the school or educational setting.

While both the transformational and transactional models of leadership (Evers & Laskomski, 1996) have been critiqued for their shortcomings in providing a framework for change in the contemporary context (Gurr, 2001; McLaughlin, 1997), they offer useful insights. Transformative leadership understands the role of good communication in inspiring trust and articulating vision (Rshaid, 2009). At the same time, there is recognition of the goal orientation of transactional leadership, and its capacity to be an intercepting catalyst in the learning process.

The capacity to drive vision in the creation of professional learning communities also involves the work of 're-culturing' (Fullan, 2001; 2010). Sharing vision is not just about agreeing with a good idea; it is a particular mental image of what is important

to an individual and to the organisation (Hord, 1997). In such a community, the relationships between individuals are described as caring. Such caring is supported by open communication and made possible by trust, resulting in a dynamic where the individual staff member is responsible for his/her actions, and the common good is valued equally with personal ambition (Fawcett, 1996). It is the growing and embedding of this understanding within the whole community that constitutes the work of re-culturing.

The development of a culture of trust has to recognise and incorporate the life world of the teacher (Gilligan, Spencer, Weinberg & Bertch, 2003). As the understanding of the dynamics of professional learning communities has deepened, the important role of other dimensions of the teacher (and leader) outside of classroom skilling has gained increasing recognition.

Teachers teach in the way that they do not just because of the skills that they have or have not learned. The ways they teach are also grounded in their background, their biographies, in the kinds of teachers they have become. Their careers – their hopes and dreams, their opportunities and aspirations, or the frustration of these things – are also important for teachers' commitment enthusiasm and morale (Hargreaves, 1994, p. ix).

Attention to this wider context is reflected in the perspectives of leading educationalists about the purpose of education itself. "Education is a profoundly moral work which calls on the full humanity of teachers and students" (Starratt, 2004, p. 2). The implication for leadership is the need to respect and harness that 'full humanity' in a collective, collaborative way: "An enabling presence starts with this premise; I can't do it alone; you can't do it alone; only we can do it" (Starratt, 2004, p. 99).

This aspect of 'collaborative enabling' in leadership, also highlighted by Fullan (2010), is underscored by the work of Heifetz (1995, Heifetz & Laurie, 2001) on 'adaptive leadership,' identified as the real need in leadership in a time of unprecedented change.

Adaptive work is required when our deeply held beliefs are challenged, when the values that made us successful become less relevant, and when legitimate yet competing perspectives emerge... solutions to adaptive challenges reside not in the executive suite but in the collective intelligence of employees at all levels (Heifetz & Laurie, 2001, p. 6).

Thus, the literature demonstrates that transforming a school organisation into a learning community is orchestrated with the intentional support of leadership that understands the power of collective wisdom, while using this to shape the culture

and ownership of it, and does so through the active nurturing of the entire staff's development as a community. The management skills of the school leader are a perennial requirement, and the inspirational skills of the school leader are critical in articulating shared vision. However, it is the capacity to develop a pervasive culture which captures a resonance in thinking and belonging between the individual and the community that is emerging as the pre-eminent task of leadership for learning communities. The development of a culture of trust which is built on the principles of collaborative enabling and adaptive leadership is fundamental to this general task.

3.3.1.3 The Workplace Context

The context for professional learning is the workplace. With the recognition that most learning, formal and informal, occurs in the workplace setting, the term 'workplace learning' has been established to mean:

the way in which individuals or groups acquire, interpret, re-organise, change or assimilate a related cluster of information, skills and feelings. It is also primary to the way in which people construct meaning in their personal and shared organisational lives (Marsick, 1987, p. 4).

Three main dimensions can be identified in workplace learning: instrumental learning, dialogic learning and self-reflective learning (Marsick & Watkins, 1990). These take on a particular shape in the Catholic educational setting.

- Instrumental learning is that which gives focus to isolating skill development and improving individual productivity.
- Dialogic learning relates to how the individual learns about the organisation and gives focus to team relationships, coaching, mentoring and understanding the mission of the organisation.
- Self-reflective learning gives focus to extending the individual's own understanding of themselves, their beliefs and values in orientation and in their workplace (O'Brien, 2004, p. 15).

The school workplace context is influenced by the staff individually and collectively, and it is in this setting that the work of re-culturing and en-culturing is undertaken. Instrumental learning, dialogical learning and reflective learning are part of the daily activities of the school workplace setting. However, while important, the evidence of these kinds of learning does not on their own guarantee an authentic professional learning community.

3.3.1.4 Professional Learning Models in the Workplace

The literature identifies numerous models for the application of professional learning in the educational workplace. These models reflect three kinds of approach to professional learning: outside-in models; inside-in models and inside-outside models (Hoban as cited in King, Hill & Retallick, 1997). Outside-in models draw upon the knowledge of others (expert outsiders) for teachers to use. The most common example of the outside-in approach is the ‘training staff’ model. Inside-in models draw on the expertise and drive of the teachers themselves, recognising the previous knowledge and experience of staff in the learning community. Examples of this model include staff working in pairs or small groups for the development of school based curriculum plans, classroom practice evaluation and development, or curriculum modification. The inside-outside models make use of the knowledge and experience that teachers have as well as the knowledge and experience of the broader educational community. This model attempts to integrate theory and practice in order to maximise application in the workplace context. Indeed, the research indicates the dimensions of workplace learning identified by Marsick and Watkins (1993) operate in different ways in each of the models. Nor is it surprising, given the indicators of best practice in professional learning communities already identified in this discussion, that the inside-outside models are the most instructive in nurturing staff professional learning.

A detailed analysis of these models, and associated approaches in the literature, identifies four areas that strongly influence effective professional learning:

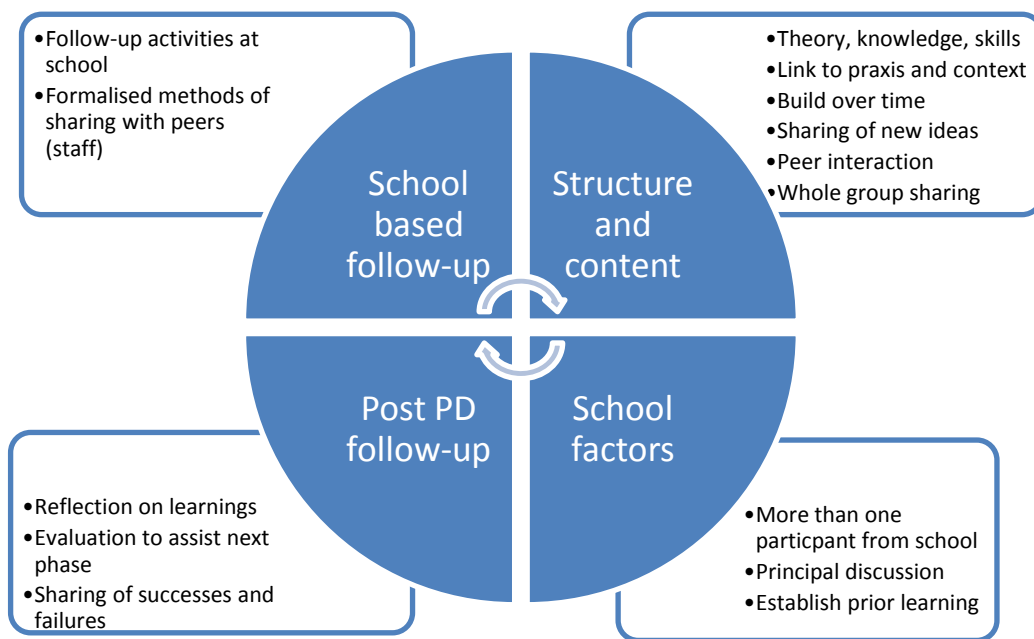
1. School factors;
2. Structure and content of program;
3. Post professional development (learning) follow-up;
4. School based follow-up (O’Brien, 2004, p. 129).

A contemporary model (Figure 3.2) which integrates the characteristics of effective professional learning and the attributes arising from the model analysis, offers a way of highlighting key factors in professional learning that may be relevant to the strategic embedding of spiritual formation into the school community culture. In the research supporting the development of this model, peer sharing, reflective time and follow-up emerged as key elements regarding good process in professional learning in the workplace. There was further evidence that:

where more than one teacher went to a professional learning program, and where this could be shared back in the school workplace context, there was greater effective implementation and follow-up. (O'Brien, 2004, p. 153)

While these elements are found to be highly valuable, other research highlights the difficulties of building in any kind of reflective sharing time in the school routine (Carotta, 2003; Downey, 2006; Simone, 2004). The research on work intensification confirms the challenge in integrating reflective praxis into the school routine (Jarvis, 2004; McMahon, 2003; Simone, 2004).

Figure 3.2: Professional Learning Model (O'Brien, 2004, p. 130)



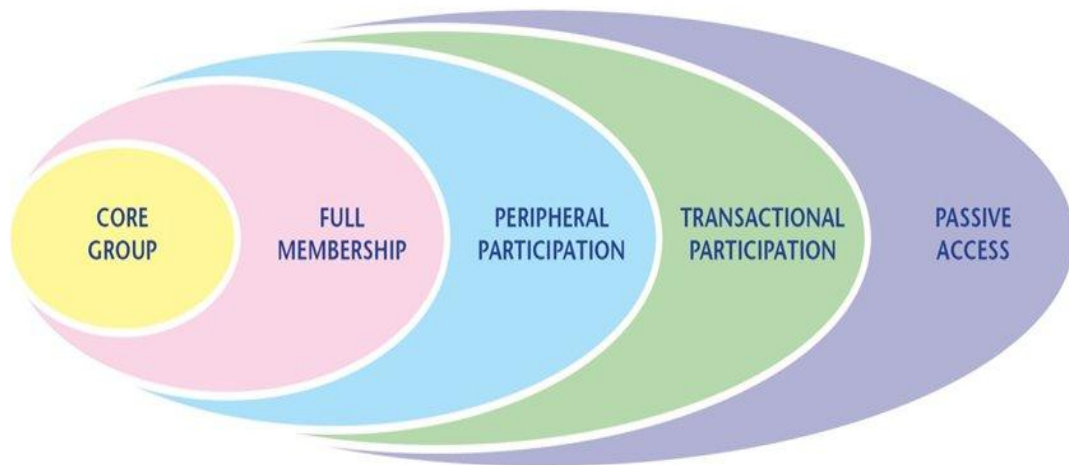
Paradoxically, research conducted on spirituality in the workplace is providing both insight and empirical data on the positive, even critical, role of personal reflectivity and sharing for sustainability and meaning making. These are also key elements in two of the three key dimensions (dialogic learning and self-reflective learning) identified above in workplace learning.

3.3.1.5 Communities of Practice

Within the workplace, an important form of experiential learning is in the emergence of communities of practice. Less structured than organised workplace learning, a community of practice does not need to have a formal social structure nor charter, manager, or executive officer. Shared expertise and passion for practice connect members (Carlson, 2003). Within the culture of a learning community, where enabling leadership and trust is present, the development of communities of practice

reflect a dynamic and energising response within the whole community to improve educational outcomes. Figure 3.3 illustrates the varying levels of participation that can be identified in a community of practice.

Figure 3.3: Levels of Participation in a Community of Practice



Source: Wegner, (2000) in Carlson, (2003), p. 30

Each of these levels of participation represent different groups and can be described in terms of distinctive functionality:

The core group is a small, energizing group called masters who establish ideals, enhance practice standards, and are highly respected by the community. Full membership describes members possessing the explicit and tacit knowledge needed to practice within the community. They are often called upon to function in the role of mentors to those new to the practice. Peripheral membership belongs to newcomers, the apprentices, with casual practice in the community's body of knowledge. Transactional participation describes outsiders who occasionally interact with the community or provide a needed service. Passive access includes people who value artefacts produced by the community such as websites, publications, standards, recordings, or art objects. (Carlson, 2003, p 18)

Identifiable as an organic way of working in the school context, this dynamic remains relatively fluid, responsive to changing needs and foci within a school context from term to term and year to year. When this dynamic works well, its strength comes from the grounding of recognised expertise within and outside the school community itself, which creates a sustaining capacity for ongoing collaborative learning. It gives energy to workplace learning and reflects key characteristics in an inside-outside model of effective professional learning (prior learning, team participation, reflection praxis sharing and celebrating) that must be harnessed in the sustaining of professional learning communities.

3.3.1.6 Spirituality in the Workplace

Research in workplace learning is giving increased attention to the spiritual dimension of the workplace in developing commitment to vision, organisational trust and personal and corporate productivity (English, Fenwick & Parsons, 2005). Many professions and corporations are identifying spirituality as an important part of professional development (Guillory, 1997). This is scaffolded by a growing body of evidence in understanding the influence of a spiritual dimension in the workplace and its connection to leadership (Fairholm, 2000; Vaill, 1998). Groen (2001) identified a surprising consistency in key tenets of a spirituality-infused organisation:

- People have a sense of vocation and passion about their work;
- The workplace culture encourages creativity and risk taking through training and career development;
- The workplace balances both work and home by having supports and programs in place which foster outside commitments;
- Base line wages and benefits are in place, which demonstrate the organisation's willingness to invest in its workforce;
- There is a sense of community both within and beyond the workplace, which is reflected in its operational and decision-making practices;
- The articulated values of the organisation are infused into its day-to-day practice (Groen, 2001, p. 20).

it is thus apparent that the spiritual dimensions of the workplace apply to all of its aspects. Also apparent is an alignment between the characteristics required for the development of a culture of trust in a learning community and the characteristics noted above which feature in a spiritually infused organisation. In addition to this, there is specific research on how teachers might best strategise to recognise, incorporate and develop the spiritual dimension of their practice (English, Fenwick & Parsons, 2005).

Addressing the fundamental and deeper dimensions of workplace culture appears to require both organisational and personal spiritual leadership. More particularly, the strength of spiritual formation in the leadership role is found to be pivotal in addressing the spiritual dimensions of the workplace: "In order for it [the workplace] to become 'spiritually infused', the leadership ... must also be 'spiritually infused'" (Groen, 2001, p. 21).

3.3.1.7 Implications for Professional Learning and the Workplace Context

This focus on spiritual leadership in the workplace comes at a time when people are looking for meaning in their work, and highly value recognition, appreciation and a sense of ownership (Corban, 2002). Teachers have higher morale and are more personally invested in their work when it has meaning and significance in contributing to a higher purpose or goal. Influential leaders do this by prioritising professional and personal support of staff (Gunter, 2001), and providing challenges for teachers that involve leadership and the chance to contribute to the school's higher purposes and goals (Stenlund, 1995). The professional learning community where a culture of trust is fostered provides the setting for personal and professional success. Within this culture, communities of practice flourish, exhibiting the best features of professional learning that maximise both the skills within and expertise outside the school community.

3.3.2 Adult Learning: Holistic Approaches and Reflective Praxis

Having reviewed the research concerning professional learning communities and the shared workplace as the setting for sustainable staff development, it is appropriate to critique the research concerning adult learning. In a lifelong and life-wide adult learning paradigm, learning is assumed as an inclusive engagement that happens in a variety of ways (Kalantzis & Cope, 2008). Within this understanding, the principles of holistic education have gained currency, with experiential learning taking its place as a central component. Of particular relevance is the role of reflective praxis in adult learning, in both personal and communal forms, along with the function of mentoring within the learning community.

3.3.2.1 Holistic Education

Holistic education has developed a strong following over the last 50 years in educative methodology and curriculum. The word holistic comes from the Greek word *holon* and refers to “an understanding of the universe as made up of integrated wholes that cannot simply be reduced to the sum of its parts” (Miller, 2007, p. 6). Researchers and educators attracted to this theory are vitally interested in an integrated approach to learning, in systems where they see the trend has been and continues toward silo learning (Bateson & Bateson, 1987). Such educators are attuned to the understanding of the variety of ways of knowing and engaging, made popular by Gardner’s seminal work on intelligences (Gardner, 1993).

Seven kinds of intelligence would allow seven ways to teach, rather than one. And powerful constraints that exist in the mind can be mobilized to introduce a particular concept (or whole system of thinking)... Paradoxically, constraints can be suggestive and ultimately freeing. (Gardner, 1993, p. xxiii)

The roots of holistic education are found in the expression of “a core wisdom underlying various spiritual traditions and teachings” (Miller, 2007, p 16). There are five essential elements in developing this way of knowing:

1. An interconnected mysterious unity in the universe (Huxley’s ‘divine reality’ 1970);
2. A connectivity between this mysterious unity and the individual’s intimate self/soul;
3. Knowledge of the mysterious unity can be developed through various contemplative practices;
4. Values are derived from seeing/realising the interconnectedness of reality;
5. This realisation leads to social action to counter injustice and suffering (Miller, 2007, pp. 17–18).

Holistic education thus seeks to underpin learning with a sense of balance, inclusion and connectedness. Catholic educators have been encouraged to see the connections between holistic learning and the field of spirituality (Healy, 2005; Treston, 2001). Examination of the five elements defined in holistic education indicates the intersection of three dimensions when situated within a Christian approach to spiritual formation:

1. An engagement with the world – others and all creation;
2. An inner engagement with deep self – internal God space; and
3. An imperative to make a difference (social action) based on 1 and 2.

Moreover, specific practices encouraged in the holistic approach correlate with similar key practices in the Christian tradition. These include varieties of meditation and contemplative practice. Finally, there is a general alignment identified in this educational approach with current approaches in understanding spiritual growth and theology identified and discussed in section 3.2 of this chapter.

3.3.2.1.1 Engaging the Aesthetic

An understanding of the aesthetic and the psycho-spiritual dimensions of learning provide more specific scholarship in the areas of holistic learning. This has been an important contribution in the development of religious education. It has been at the

forefront of praxis in the Catholic educational setting of lifelong learning and teaching seen as a holistic journey demanding new pathways.

If we remain wedded to the way education is currently provided we cannot imagine other ways... we need some imagination, some fantasy, some new ways of thinking – some magic in fact. (Beare, 2001)

While there had been proponents for an aesthetic dimension in early educational research (Dewey, 1934; Kant, 1760; Rosenblatt, 1938; Sparshott, 1963), the aesthetic as a way of knowing gained sustained attention in the 1970s, building further on the well-developed 'ways of knowing' theory which identified three pathways: cognitive, interpretive and self-reflective (Habermas, 1972; 1974). The aesthetic dimension of religious education, introduced and promoted by Harris in the 1980s and 90s, brought a focus on the imaginary and an embodied approach to learning in religious education that was, at the time, revolutionary. Harris's work (1989; 1996) in the aesthetic imagination remains groundbreaking. Both she and Moran (1983; 2000) expanded the understanding of the purpose and process in religious education, with their scholarship regarded as a touchstone for best practice teaching and learning in religious education (Dorney, 1997; Crotty, 2003). Their contribution has been about re-shaping an understanding of religious learning that draws on multiple ways of knowing (much like Gardner's intelligences), is outward in its dialogue with the world, at the same time drawing directly on the content, symbol and insights of the Catholic Christian tradition. "The artistic isn't an add-on. It's an essential component. I have become more celebratory, (and) more upfront about the impact of imagery, ritual and the non-verbal elements of our learning" (Harris, 1998 p. 6).

Harris engaged Moran's work on forms of educational curriculum with the four themes of Church ministry: *koinonia*, *leitourgia*, *diakonia* and *kerygma* (Harris, 1998, p. 19). In pursuing an understanding of these in relation to community, literate knowledge, work and wisdom, recognisable links are made to the symbolic and metaphorical language of the tradition in understanding and naming God as 'Trinity', 'Logos', 'Creator' and 'Sophia'.

The aesthetic dimensions of learning in religious education have been developed by Groome in his work on the sacramental imagination as part of a shared praxis approach and 'wisdom way of knowing' (Groome, 1998) that engages both tradition and experience. Engaging the aesthetic remains a valuable component of an holistic approach to learning in the Catholic educational context.

3.3.2.1.2 Experiential Learning

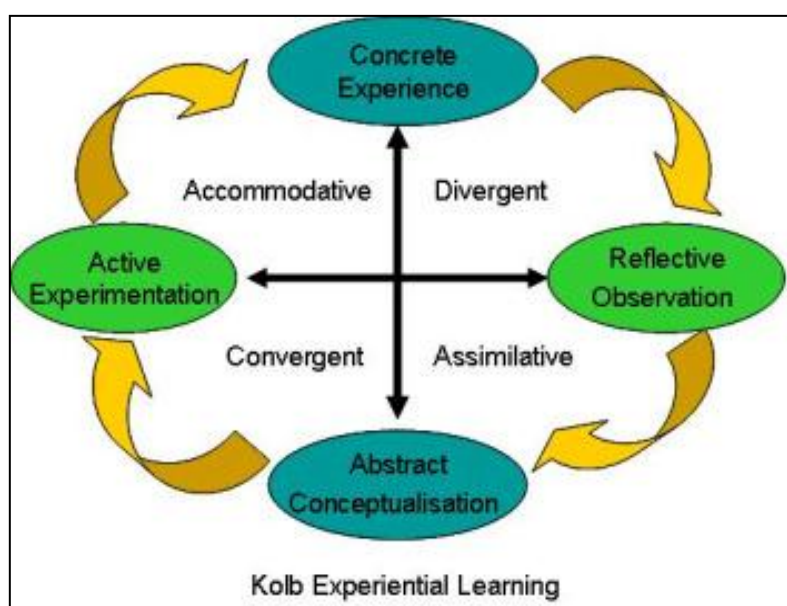
Also critical to holistic education is the integration of experiential learning in pedagogical practice. The term 'experiential learning' is used in different ways in the literature, and has become an important area of research in its own right. A helpful categorisation of experiential learning differentiates the area into four 'villages' of interest:

1. assessing and accrediting learning from life and work experience;
2. bringing change in the structures... of post-school education;
3. providing a basis for group consciousness raising;
4. having concern for personal growth/self-awareness (Weil & McGill, 1989, p. 3).

Areas 3 and 4 are of particular relevance for this discussion, and have contributed in the development of experiential models of learning over the last thirty years. A foundational model for experiential learning provided by David Kolb (1976, 1981, 1984) has been central to the scholarly conversation around the theory and practice of adult learning, informal education and lifelong learning.

Kolb's model has four elements, predicated on the argument that "effective learning entails the possession of four different abilities" (Kolb & Fry, 1975, pp. 35–6). These abilities generate four distinct learning styles: the Converger, the Diverger, the Assimilator and the Accommodator (Kolb, 1976). The model is represented in Figure 3.4.

Figure 3.4: Kolb's Circular Model of Adult Learning



The four elements are represented in an 'experiential learning circle' that involves:

1. concrete experience, followed by
2. observation and reflection, followed by
3. forming abstract concepts, followed by
4. testing in new situations.

While its strength is in understanding the role of experiential learning, the weaknesses in this model lie in a lack of recognition of the importance of reflective praxis in adult learning, and a lack of recognition of the differing contexts of learning and the role of community in individual learning. Even as the model expounds a view that knowledge is a result of "grasping experience and transforming it" (Kolb, 1984, p. 41), the focus is on knowledge rather than praxis (Jarvis, 2004).

Recognising both the insight and the limitation of Kolb's model, further research (Gardner, 1993; Jarvis, 2004) draws more intentionally on the work of Friere and Dewey to validate the experiential aspects wherein the role of the learner's psychological history is part of the interpretive processing of any experience (Jarvis, 2004). Experiential learning, particularly as it both connects with and stretches the lifeworld of the learner is now privileged in adult learning approaches, even as it continues to contrast with the classic philosophies of learning which use didactic methods to teach facts and principles (Billig, 2004; Mezirow, 2000).

3.3.2.1.3 Service Learning

Service learning is an area of experiential learning that has particular interest for researchers in Catholic education, as it finds a place in the curriculum of schools and universities. It is defined as:

a form of experiential learning that connects meaningful community service with academic instruction while emphasizing student learning through reflective thinking and analysis (Bailey, Carpenter & Harrington, 2002, p. 433).

Service learning, as a child of experiential education, draws on Dewey's theory of experiential learning (1933), and the further research of other field practitioners (Kolb, 1984; Jarvis, 2004). Education is authentic when through repeated and thoughtful reflection on an experience, a student is informed to take action that enhances development. Consequently, subject matter taught in a classroom context would not produce knowledge without examination of its meaning through experience and reflection. Finally, continuity as a criterion for experiential education is seen as vital for real learning (Dewey, 1925).

In the context of Catholic education, the 1980s saw the emergence of education for justice re-surfacing a long tradition embedded in Catholicism (Harris, 1998). The trend toward the inclusion of outreach and service programs in religious education curricula was viewed by educationalists as a positive sign where students would experience and reflect on real life (Hecht, 2003) and learn that they could make a difference in the world (Harris, 1998; Meyers, 1999). In the last decade, service learning has been linked with the increasing interest in 'values' programs (for Catholic high schools, pre-service and continuing staff), the underpinning view being that service learning also "affords a unique and valuable opportunity for student (participant) value exploration and development" (Chapdelaine, Ruiz, Warchal & Wells, 2005, p. 7). Consequently, an important focus of the research into service learning has been exploring measurable differences in values development in participants, with a number of findings confirming the efficacy and potential values growth for participants (Kenary, 2009; Price, 2008).

Nevertheless, the appropriateness of service learning as a catalyst in promoting deep levels of experiential learning is not conclusive. While the research has supported the positive influence of service learning in initiating experiential learning (Kenary, 2009; Largent, 2009), Fowler's (2009) research concerning nursing students generates conclusions contrary to previous studies, in that service learning failed to influence the nurturing of professional values among the participants. However, this discrepancy may be attributed to a lack of or inadequacy in structures that purposely nurtured reflection with participants. These include the use of mentorship, structured supportive frameworks and prolonged period of time in engagement in service learning (Price, 2008, p.v).

3.3.2.2 Reflective Praxis

The role of reflective practice in the context of growing and sustaining teacher excellence is well documented (Schon, 1983; Carter & Francis, 2001). In the sphere of Catholic education, research in both teaching and leading confirms its central place (Branson, 2004; Bracken, 2004). Reflective practice has both an outward and an inward dimension: situating the reflective practitioner in both a global context and an inner self context. Exploring the outward dimension, the scholarship highlights the importance of the reflective practitioner having an awareness of their contemporary global context (Manternach, 2002). Other research, exploring how internal reflective praxis develops, confirms the role of inner reflection in teachers' initial and ongoing professional development (Hanifin, 2000).

In the exploration of reflective practice in the spiritual domain, numerous studies confirm that reflecting in a systematic and personal way about teaching in a Catholic school both nurtures and sustains the teaching vocation itself (Downey, 2006; Jackson, 2006; Neal, 2000; Rolph, 1991; Simone, 2004). More than this, research indicates that reflective practice in the spiritual dimension, in and of itself, can have an observed and measurable influence on the wider community culture (Kauanui & Bradley, 2003). Further research into preferred teaching practices demonstrates that teachers who are highly spiritual are more likely to use student centred pedagogy than their less spiritually centred colleagues with accompanying stronger outcomes for students personally and educatively (Lindholm & Astin, 2008). Thus, the findings in this area have implications both for enhancing pedagogical practice as well as staff formation.

3.3.2.3 Mentoring

Within the research on lifelong learning and the role of the learning community context, the experience of mentoring is beneficial in the promotion of experiential learning (Bennet, 2001). The reflective exercise of naming and discussing helpful mentor relationships appears itself instructional in learning and growth. Effective relationships are understood as transformational in the lives of participants. Consequently, the literature identifies the need for quality reflection processes in mentoring relationships (Green, 2006).

Responding to these trends in the literature, organisations have committed to formally structured mentoring relationships for staff (Manternach, 2002). However, it has been confirmed that people “perceive more benefit from an unstructured mentoring alliance” (Blackwell & McLean, 1996, p. 26). The inclusion of informal methods of learning in any evaluation of mentoring approaches also finds support (Law, 1987). Continuing research on informal mentoring has led to recommendations that organisations should “... identify, recognise, acknowledge and legitimise [mentoring] where it exists, and thereby create a climate for its existence, rather than constrain it by formal structures within the organisation” (Lyons & Scroggins, 1990, p. 284). Such an approach has potential to build a culture of empathic respect, rather than legislated mentor structures, as a community-changing strategy (Tausch, 1978).

The importance of a significant person or experience in the spiritual formation of leaders is a common finding in the research on companionship and mentoring,

regardless of the context. Inspiring human connections with others is identified as a key formation element (Moore, 1999; Newby & Hyde, 1992). Further research indicates that intentional and systematic ways are needed for teachers to reflect upon their practice (Manternach, 2002). Such reflection needs to take account of the pivotal role of teachers and all that they bring, influenced by their lives, their histories and experience as well as their skills and expertise (Senge, 1990; Starratt, 2004). Research in this area explores the inner terrain or world of the teacher and leader (Palmer, 2000; 2004). The reflective praxis thus developed gives focus both to the self as mentor and the community as mentor, and is aimed at sustained development centred on the personal growth of the teacher and their spiritual dimension, within a community of colleagues.

3.3.2.4 Implications for Adult Learning in a Catholic Educational Context

The literature indicates that holistic education is focussed on a contemporary dialogical pedagogy that supports a learner centred rather than instruction centred approach, an inquiry culture rather than a testing culture, and which is also welcoming of digital modes of learning that are grounded and integrated into the learning process (Miller, 2007). Research using a comprehensive philosophical underpinning has demonstrated how holistic educational approaches are well placed to navigate the post-modern terrain in a constructive and positive way (Forbes, 2003). It is no coincidence that holistic education is gaining more and more traction at a time when many cultures are becoming identified as increasingly disconnected - the “fragmentation which permeates everything” (Senge, Scharmer, Jaworski & Flowers, 2005, p. 190) identified in section 3.2.1.2.

Education has done much to sever the relationship between head and heart. As a result, in industrialised societies we live in our heads, denying our deeper knowing and intuitions (Miller, 2007, p. 4).

Holistic educative approaches, privileging the aesthetic, experiential and service dimensions of the learning process, seek to redress the balance. The research concludes that important features for maximum efficacy include a well-structured framework, a form of mentor accompaniment and a sustained process, within which direct experience and full engagement can occur (Price, 2008). This pedagogical approach presents a conceptual alignment with the literature on spiritual formation design and praxis.

3.3.3 Transformative Learning: Change Education and Critical Mass Theory

Transformative learning theory and research is of interest to educationalists because it offers them authentic strategies to examine meaningful engagement that is learner centred. Spiritual formation in the context of education is informed by scholarship in transformative learning that leads to deep change in a community setting.

3.3.3.1 Transformative Learning

Because the goal of spiritual formation is transformation, and the context for this study is an educational one, the adult educational literature in this area is instructive. Transformational or transformative learning is about change, “dramatic, fundamental change in the way we see ourselves and the world in which we live” (Merriam, 2007, p. 123). Accordingly, there are three concepts in transformative learning that contribute to the change process:

- Experience;
- Critical Reflection;
- Development of New Understandings (Merriam & Caffarella, 1999).

Transformative learning theory is built in large part on the work of Mezirow (1990). The theory suggests this kind of change occurs in one of four ways: “by elaborating existing frames of reference, by learning new frames of reference, by transforming points of view, or by transforming habits of mind” (Mezirow, 2000, p. 19). Other practitioners have applied transformative learning theory to the area of adult professional learning (Cranton, 2005; Hansman, Kimble, Hildreth & Bourbon, 2008) highlighting life context and personal developmental dimensions of the adult learner. There are five principles of androgogy – the term introduced to specifically refer to “the art and science of helping adults learn” (Knowles, 1980, p. 43):

1. Self-Concept: As a person matures, he or she moves from dependency to self-direction.
2. Experience: Adults possess personal histories which define their identities and are a source for their experiential learning.
3. Readiness: The learning readiness of adults is closely related to socially relevant learning.

4. Orientation: As an adult learns new knowledge, he or she wants to apply it immediately.
5. Motivation: As a person matures, he or she receives their motivation to learn from internal factors (Knowles, 1980).

As the scholarly conversation has progressed, perspectives in developmental and organisational theory have further contributed to this analysis bringing a contextual and multiple learning dimension to the original highly cognitive method in transformational learning theory (Daloz, 1999; Dirkx & Prenger, 1997; Illeris, 2003; 2004). In particular, Daloz has brought a contextual framing to the research, emphasising a developmental, intuitive, holistic and contextually based approach to adult transformative learning. Illeris's (2004) work supports the multiple dimensions of learning occurring within an integrated relational dynamic. But it has been the work of Dirkx and Prenger (1997) that has grounded the contextual framing, and for the first time, advocated in the process approach "the inclusion of the spiritual dimension, along with the intellectual, emotional and moral dimensions of being" (Dirkx & Prenger, 1997, p. 1250).

Thus, when the learner experiences transformative learning, they experience, within the context of their own lives, and through an integrated and holistic process that draws on the intellectual, emotional, moral and spiritual dimensions of being in the world, a deep shift in how they understand and interpret the world, re-setting their inner mapping. This process influences behaviour. Importantly for the focus of this study, a critical review of the empirical research in transformative learning (Taylor, 2007) has identified contextual conditions such as establishment of relationships, engagement in dialogue, self-disclosure, careful listening and the accessing of alternative understandings to be essential conditions for the transformative learning experience.

3.3.3.2 Change Facilitation

All professional learning involves change education (Fullan, 2002). A focus on change facilitation that precipitates transformational learning has captured the interest of organisational scholars around the world. In the general literature, three types of change are identified – the implementation of new materials and resources; changing behaviour and practices; and changing professional beliefs and understandings (Johnson, 1998). A fourth type is proposed to underpin other types of change in the Catholic education context of the teacher and leader: "a sense of spiritual growth and transformation through experiences that are generative of new

learning” (Healy, 2005, p. 29). The following principles are identified as influential in the process of change facilitation:

- Understanding change is a process, not an event, and therefore requires time, energy and resourcing;
- Change is accomplished by individuals first and then by institutions;
- Change is a highly personal experience;
- Change entails growth in both feelings about and skills in using new programs/ways;
- Interventions can be designed to support the individual’s implementation of innovation. As this is done, consideration is given to the systemic nature of the organisation;
- The change facilitator needs to adapt to the differing needs of individuals and to their changing needs over time (Hord, 1992)

The role of the educational leader as a change facilitator building a learning community is well documented in the work of Fullan (2007; 2008; 2010). Linked with leadership development (Fullan & Fink, 2003; Senge, Scharmer, Jaworsk & Flowers, 2005; Starratt, 2005) change facilitation has highlighted the internal growth and inner learning journey of the individual leader where vision and reflective practice are given priority. In exploring how leaders might usefully conceptualise their leadership, Fullan (2010) generates five ‘conceptions’: moral purpose, relationship building, knowledge generation, understanding the change process and coherence building. It is the development of these belief systems, rather than management techniques alone, that creates influential leadership.

Leaders who are effective operate from powerful conceptions, not from a set of techniques. The key, then, is to build up leaders’ conceptions of what it means to be a leader... These conceptions can be fostered, but they must be fostered through a socialization process that develops leaders as reflective practitioners. (Fullan, 2010, p. 12)

Within this framework, ongoing or lifelong learning for both principal and staff is prioritised and shared (Hallinger & Heck, 1997). Research in leadership sustainability supports the instructive role of lifelong learning in leaders for meaningful long-term change (Shimabakuro, 1998; Hargreaves, 2007).

These insights and change facilitation principles have been applied to whole system reform (Fullan, 2010). The term ‘collective capacity’ in a group or organisation “implies a level of trust and collaboration essential to whole system reform” (Fullan,

2010, p. 5). Where this exists, there is the opportunity to maximise high impact strategies in the everyday context. In such a paradigm, connection, coherence and collective capacity-building characterise the entire system from classroom to school to cluster to organisation (Fullan, 2010). A collaborative competition develops (lateral capacity building) as schools and clusters learn from each other in a robust and positive process where leadership “is central in promoting collective capacity and ownership” (Fullan, 2010, p. 13).

Research continues to explore higher order qualities of leadership that contribute to transformative change. This literature highlights the nature of reflective praxis for deep learning. It is here that the concept of ‘presence’ as a conduit for ‘deep learning’ has gained attention (Senge, Scharmer & Flowers, 2005). While ‘presence’ is not a new concept, it has gained currency over the last ten years as a significant component in leadership literature (Starratt, 2004, 2005) and parallels the broad and growing interest in the spirituality of leadership. While not widely used with explicit reference to the Catholic leadership context, the connections have been explored in the context of authentic leadership (Bezzina, Burford & Duignan, 2007; Duignan, 2002; 2007; Horner, 2008).

The literature thus indicates that change facilitation requires commitment to a shared vision and individual meaning making that demands a radically new way of approaching learning – one that guides the individual mind through the process of many minds working together (Hammonds, 2002). Within this, the focus on the deeply human dimension of change (Sergiovanni, 2000) has overtaken the structural dimension as the key to facilitating the ongoing complexity of change in community. There is recognition that expertise and wisdom, and the commitment that comes with them, lies within the community, though not exclusively. In the endeavours of whole system reform or change, as with micro-change at individual school level, the literature indicates the critical role of leadership. It appears that a relevant mode of leadership for Catholic school communities is one that accompanies staff, builds a culture of trust, applies personal reflective praxis, nurtures other leaders and is clear about the primary purpose of leadership in the midst of change.

3.3.3.3 Critical Mass Theory

In understanding and identifying the process and space in which transformative change occurs in a group or community, researchers have engaged with critical

mass theory. The term 'critical mass' was originally borrowed from nuclear physics where it refers to "the quantity needed to start a chain reaction, a qualitative shift or turning point" (Dahlerup, 2005, pp. 275–6). Critical mass models found their genesis in game theory (Schelling, 1978) becoming popular as the generalised term for a wide variety of phenomena (Granovetter, 1978). Following this, critical mass models became a major stream of the theoretical sociology literature on crowd behavior and collective action.

The earliest research (Kanter, 1977, cited in Dahlerup, 2005) suggested that critical mass could be quantified as a percentage point. This research was applied to exploring how minorities could begin to influence the dominant culture of an organisation and suggested that "when the numbers reached about 35 percent, the shift would occur" (Kanter, 1977, p. 239 in Dahlerup, 2005). Social science researchers have since applied the critical mass concept to explain the diffusion of innovations and ideas (Rogers, 1995), although with a more cautious approach to quantifying the shift.

In the area of Christian studies, critical mass models have been used to analyse church growth and community membership (Land, Deane & Blau, 1991). In particular, research exploring the phenomenon of Christian conversion of communities has used the principles of critical mass to argue that social networks, along with other variables, provide adequate insights to explain the influence of a small group.

Most new religious movements fail because they quickly become closed or semi-closed networks... they fail to keep forming and sustaining attachments to outsiders and thereby lose the capacity to grow. (Stark, 1996, p. 20)

This more sophisticated application of the threshold or critical mass model illuminates how, at a particular point, a shift can occur in movements of a spiritual nature, as well as political or social (though it can be argued these elements interlink in any group) which creates a qualitative change in the wider group or community. In this dynamic, the critical mass is most likely to lead to maximum movement, when a small core of the most interested people begin contributing to draw in the other, less interested members of the population (Oliver & Marwell, 1988). Both resourcing support and community environment influence the depth and efficacy of the movement (Oliver, Marwell & Teixeira, 1985).

More recent work on critical mass theory and threshold or tipping point modelling suggests five different 'species' or kinds of group models (Oliver & Marwell, 2002).

In this grouping, the 'species' most relevant to the context of this study is the influence model. Key factors in developing critical mass in this context are:

- (1) the reach of the strategy - the total number of people recruited;
- (2) the selectivity of the strategy - the degree to which it focuses recruitment efforts on those with the greatest interest and resource levels;
- (3) inter-dependence - how recruits take into account the effect of their actions on those of others; and
- (4) the production function - the relationship between the total amount recruits contribute to the strategy to the amount of the collective good obtained

(Prahl, Marwell & Oliver, 1991).

3.3.3.4 Implications for Spiritual Formation in the School Community Context

From this research applying critical mass theory to a variety of specific contexts, there are two specific points of relevance for this study.

1. Firstly, the theory of a critical mass depends upon the identification of underlying differences in the values, attitudes and behaviour of the group concerned. (Norris & Lovenduski, 2001). The contextual literature pertinent to the profile of staff and the school community in this case study suggests there exists no inherent difference between the staff of a Catholic school and the general population. Given this, the research needs to identify a discernible change in development of attitudes and behaviour in staff.
2. Secondly, while the precise point at which qualitative change might occur can be debated, critical mass theory verifies that it involves numbers of people (Oliver & Marwell, 2002). One person is unlikely to effect a qualitative shift in the whole community. Thus, critical mass theory suggests an effective strategy should involve the targeting and resourcing of a small group of staff in each school community.

3.4 Mission and Vocation

This research is located within an ecclesial environment. Within the changing landscape of Catholic schooling, the spiritual formation of staff is closely connected to and influenced by the shifts in the ecclesial, theological and cultural landscape. The synthesis of the scholarly discussion in this third theme highlights the currents of thinking and research as they relate to the mission of the Catholic school and the formation of the Catholic school educator.

Three inter-related areas emerge as relevant to this discussion:

1. Mission, Evangelisation and the Catholic School;
2. Catholic School Ethos and Culture; and
3. Ministry, Vocation and Formation.

These are discussed in turn.

3.4.1 Mission, Evangelisation and the Catholic School

Prior to the Second Vatican Council (1961–65), apart from the papal encyclical on Christian Education in 1929 (*Divinillius Magistri*), the articulation of the purpose and identity of the Catholic school attracted little attention. There was little need. Until the sixties, there was an ecclesial and cultural correlation in which the Catholic school was seen and experienced as an extension of the home and the parish.

It was a milieu that supported the religious faith and practices of the Catholic family that also belonged to and actively participated in, a local parish under the leadership of the clergy and the authority of the local bishop. The school was the cultural agent of the Church, entrusted with the task of handing on the Catholic faith, its beliefs, traditions and practices to the next generation. Such an environment provided a strong sense of identity and purpose for members of the Church and school.

(Belmonte, Cranston & Limerick, 2006, p 2)

This correlation has weakened and has consequent ramifications for shared understandings in the work of Catholic educators. In particular, and for a variety of reasons, the term evangelisation as the focus for mission has not had an easy reception among Catholic school teachers and leaders, and this is reflected in the findings generated in a range of Australian studies over the last decade (Graham, 2006; McLaughlin, 2000; 2002; Tinsey, 1998).

The individual Catholic school is a community bound together ecclesially and communally with the local Church community and the worldwide Catholic community. A shared and monitored vision and mission is espoused which ought to afford the local and global organisation a strong sense of its purpose and identity (Turkington, 2004) with considerable potential for influence. However, from this same place of powerful potential has risen a powerful concern – precisely because the sense of a shared understanding among the stakeholders around key elements of the role of the Catholic school appears increasingly fractured.

3.4.1.1 Understanding Mission

Prior to Vatican II, that which constituted the nature of mission was clear and simple and shared by Protestant and Catholic alike. But this understanding of mission has collapsed amid the reality of political, geographical, cultural and ecclesial shifts. The twin purposes of ‘saving souls’ and ‘church extension’ (Bosch, 1991) are now being supplanted by a new and energetic theology of mission that responds to the question about purpose quite differently. This has consequences for how contemporary spiritual formation for mission is constructed and delivered. Table 3.3 summarises the change in understanding.

Table 3.3: Summary of Shift in Understanding of Mission (Phan, 2002)

	Prior to Vatican II, Mission is:		Post Vatican II, Mission is:
1	the church’s work for the salvation of souls	1	for the reign of God
2	carried out for the benefit of the pagans abroad,	2	to the world
3	mainly by priests, religious brothers, nuns, and specially-commissioned lay folk, mostly from Europe and America	3	by the whole community of believers, in God and the Spirit
4	with the financial and spiritual support of the laity back home, and	4	with cross-collaboration by all Catholics and Christians
5	by planting the church in these “mission fields”	5	in dialogue

In examining the post-Vatican II directions in mission, four useful insights emerge in the literature: The Church helps realise God’s mission, which is not confined to the institutional or historical tradition; it requires a new and different language for understanding and dialogue; it invites an inclusive approach to other denominations and faiths in a common search and calling; and it demands a genuine and collaborative appreciation of the role of the non-ordained members of the Church. Each of these points is now briefly explained.

The heart and energy of Mission has its source in God, not the Church. Mission is what God does, through the church and in the world. In other words, it is not that God’s Church has a mission but rather that God’s mission has a church (Bevans, 2009)

Imagine what our church would be like if Christians really understood this and took this seriously. What it means is, first, that the church is not about

the church. It is about what Jesus called the Reign of God. We are most church not when we are building up the church, but when we are outside of it: being good parents, being loving spouses, being diligent and honest in our workplace, treating our patients with care if we are health workers, going the extra mile with our students if we are teachers, living lives responsible to the environment, being responsible citizens, sharing our resources with the needy, standing up for social justice, consciously using inclusive language, treating immigrants fairly, trying to understand people of other faiths, etc., etc. What we realize too is that people in the church don't have a monopoly on working for the Reign of God. (Bevans, 2009, p. 11)

The implications for such a redefinition of mission are that the signs and indicators of effective missioning are not necessarily or even probably found in traditional measures such as church attendance or priestly vocations.

This understanding of mission which has its origins in the theology reflected in the Vatican II documents is moving toward a dialogue around church where new language plays a central role. It is best described as a *prophetic* dialogue (Bevans, 2006; Kirk, 2000; Lakeland, 2003) and is accompanied by the development of a missiological imagination (Bevans, 2005). A missiological imagination stretches thinking, reflection and perspective on mission that generates an understanding about how what those within the Catholic Church do, contributes to what God does, and is, in the world. In so doing, there is a more intentional drawing on the Vatican II language that sees church as a sign of grace, as sacrament, as sign and instrument of God's grace in the world. (*Lumen Gentium*, 1964, n. 1, 5; *Dei Verbum* 1965, n. 7, *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, 1963, n. 6; *Gaudium et Spes*, 1965, n. 3, *Apostolicam Actuositatem*, 1965, n. 2; *Nostra Aetate*, 1965 n. 2). It is a direction supported by the work of scholars from related disciplines interested in the re-shaping and re-contextualising of how God, Church and Jesus function in an authentic meaning making within the diversity of the current culture (Johnson, 1994; LaCugna, 1993; Phan, 2000; Schreiter, 1996). It also signals a shift from making traditional ecclesial language the conduit for the dialogue, and instead allowing that to underpin a new language that finds traction within the culture.

In the contemporary context for Catholic schools, church and culture interact in a variety of different modes and an ecumenical orientation is encouraged. A paradigm that sees "mission in many modes" (Bosch, 1991, p. 511), where signs of grace are recognised in other religions and in the general culture, offers a new way of thinking into the future.

Mission still is ... about crossing boundaries. Like Jesus, whose ministry crossed the boundaries that religion, culture and class had set up, the early community crossed boundaries that even Jesus could not have imagined

when it admitted Gentiles and respected their customs. Indeed, I believe that it was in this willingness to move beyond itself under the guidance of the Holy Spirit which allowed the early community to become aware of itself as something clearly distinct from its Jewish roots, as a discrete *ekklesia* or church (Bevans, 2005)

In exploring ecclesial history to recover and develop a robust understanding of mission, the literature identifies ambiguities and a misappropriation of ecclesial 'traditions'. For example, the origins of the separation of 'clergy' and laity' are not found in the scriptures, but rather in a later organisational development that has grown into 'a tradition' (Lakeland, 2003). A critique of Council documents (*Decree on the Apostolate of the Laity; Ad Gentes; Divinitus, Gaudium et Spes*) exposes the ambiguities in the attempt to define the lay vocation and the church-world relationship (Lakeland, 2002). A danger is identified, inherent in the documents, of the lay vocation being developed as "the apostolate of the second string" (2002, p. 95), and based on a deficit understanding of what the laity *cannot* do in ministry. The implications of this in terms of the development of a formation for mission are discussed further in a later section of this chapter (section 3.4.4).

The tension emerging in the theological literature around mission can be explained by two contrasting models of church. The 'citadel' approach (Grace, 1997), where the church is protected and extended in the process of evangelisation, has its energy invested in maintenance and measurement, and quite specific outcomes. The 'web' approach (Grace, 1997), where the church sees itself as part of, rather than owning or being the origin of God's mission, has its energy invested in recognizing and contributing to the wider reign of God in the world, with outcomes far more difficult to measure. The movement from a citadel approach to a web approach represents a paradigm shift in conceptual understanding:

If the motive for mission is the creation and maintenance of the church, mission will be essentially concerned with baptism and church-extension. But if the focus is the kingdom or realm of God, then without compromising the significance of neither the gift of baptism nor the importance of visible communities of baptized people, there is less likelihood of restricting mission to church-extension (Gittins, 1993, p 38).

3.4.1.2 Understanding Evangelisation

The term evangelisation is translated from the Greek (*evangelion*) and Latin (*evangelium*) as 'good news' or 'gospel'. The current church teaching on evangelisation as the fundamental mission of the Church has developed under the enthusiastic patronage of both Popes Paul VI and John Paul II. While Paul VI re-

centred evangelisation as the baptismal responsibility of all Christians (*Evangelii Nuntiandi*, 1975), the concept of 'a new evangelisation' gained currency under John Paul II. Recognising the need for new ways, new strategies and new commitment, he promoted the Holy Spirit as the "principal agent of the new evangelisation" (*Tertio Millennio Adveniente* 1994, n. 45). In 2005, the publication of Pope Benedict's XVI'S first encyclical (*Deus Caritas Est*) provided a further lens for the present ecclesial understanding of evangelisation drawing on key terms from the Church's earliest times: *leitourgia* (worship), *marturia* (witness), *kerygma* (proclamation) and *diakonia* (service). Two other functions to be included in this framework are *didache* (teaching) and *koinonia* (community).

However, while there is a tendency to prescribe evangelising activities when using the term, evangelisation has always had a broader understanding:

In the church's work of evangelization there are undoubtedly certain elements and aspects which are deserving of special attention. Some of these are indeed of such importance that they may at times be regarded as constituting in themselves the whole of evangelization...But no such defective and incomplete definition can be accepted for that complex, rich and dynamic reality which is called evangelization without the risk of weakening or even distorting its real meaning (*Evangelii Nuntiandi*, 1975, n. 17–18).

Even as these efforts to anchor terminology continue, their application to the current local and global context remains complex. New understandings shape and are shaped by the historical-cultural context, or movements of culture, and the corresponding theological thought of particular figures, times and places (Knights, 2005). This means that while evangelisation is understood as "the church's proper grace and vocation – its deepest identity" (*Evangelii Nuntiandi*, 1975), and the school has a role in this, there is need to embrace the reality of what it means "to evangelise human culture and cultures not in a purely decorative way, but in a vital way, in depth and right to its roots" (*Evangelii Nuntiandi* 1975, n. 20).

The understanding in the literature has moved beyond the idea of evangelisation as conversion to 'the faith' or developing 'the faithful' to preserve and strengthen the Church:

Evangelization is not a call to restore Christendom, a kind of solid, well-integrated, cultural complex, directed and dominated by the Church. It is not an activity set in motion because the Church is endangered, a nervous activity to save the remnants of a time now irrevocably past. It is not a winning back of those people who have become a prey to sin in such a way that the organised Church no longer reaches them (Donovan, 1997, cited in Tinsey, 2002, p. 190).

Further, the shift from a citadel model of church to the web model outlined above (Section 3.4.1.1) extends the understanding of evangelisation to:

identify and celebrate the humanising and ennobling elements within it (the world) and to offer the gospel's alternatives to those definitions of reality that oppress and enslave the human spirit (Dwyer, 1993, cited in Tinsey 2002 p 56).

However, the ecclesial perspective appears to have diverged from this post Vatican II understanding of a synthesis of faith culture and life reflecting an approach that "must not only be organic, but also critical and evaluative, historical and dynamic" (CCE, 1982, n. 20) and where "in the process of evangelisation, culture makes the gospel understandable, and dialogue possible" (Donovan, 1990, cited in Tinsey, 2002, p. 115). In reality, the "evangelisation of culture" (*Evangelii Nuntiandi*, 1975) has moved away from a more iterative dialogue with culture (inculturation) towards a critique of contemporary trends (Church as counter-culture). Consequently, Benedict XVI, appears to give emphasis to the Church itself as giver and 'the culture' as recipient:

Emphasis is on fidelity and the discipline of those who communicate the Gospel and the content of the Gospel communicated, and little weight (is) given to those by whom this communication is to be received" (Knights, 2005, p. 13, 14).

3.4.1.3 Evangelisation in the Australian Context

In Australia, and in the Brisbane Archdiocese, evangelisation has become a more mainstream term in Catholic culture over the last fifteen years. Here, the implications of a broader and deeper understanding of "the complex, rich and dynamic reality" (*Evangelii Nuntiandi*, n. 17, 18) of evangelisation has been explored in preference to a narrower interpretation usually associated with (and often confused with) the direct witness modes of 'evangelism'. The publication of the *General Directory of Catechesis* (1997) and the accompanying adaptation for Australian Catholic schools provided by the Australian Bishops (Holohan, 2009) has supported this broader perspective. The post-synodal apostolic exhortation, *Ecclesia in Oceania* (2001), reiterated Pope John Paul II's call for a 'new evangelisation' and cited the strengthening of the identity of Catholic schools as a critical way in which to action this. The Catholic school as an agent of evangelisation has thus become a focus point of renewed discussion in the Australian context.

The work of Australian researchers accentuates the need for new ways of connection with stakeholders as the data continues to indicate that:

the dissonance between the official rhetoric about Catholic schools and the world views of students and parents (and some staff) is a very serious issue confronting the movement to authentic Catholic schools (Treston, 1997, p. 15).

Those who are searching for bridges to be made between the ecclesial call to mission and the lived reality of Catholic schools have found useful connecting points in the current missiological literature (D’Orsa, 2008; Tinsey, 2002). This has generated four emerging principles:

1. The always contextualized nature of evangelization;
2. The centrality of dialogue in all contexts;
3. Respect for the range of forms of authentic response (which may or may not include joining a worshipping community); and
4. The deep engagement of in-culturation (Tinsey, 2002).

Embracing the new missiology as a most authentic and appropriate platform for the complex context of Catholic schools today, the ramifications are profound:

Church membership defined in terms of regular association with a worshipping community, is a desired but not indispensable response to evangelisation and can be envisioned in more than one way. As Panikkar (1981, p 82) argues: ‘If it be true that ‘outside the Church there is no salvation’, this ‘Church’ should not be identified with a concrete organisation, or even with adherence to Christianity (Tinsey, 1998).

3.4.1.4 Evangelising Mission and Brisbane Archdiocesan Schools

In ecclesial terms, the purpose of the Catholic school remains intrinsically linked to the mission of the Church. Education is a dynamic and transformative process (CCE, 1988). The work of teachers in a Catholic school is linked with the evangelising mission of the church and is concerned with the formation (and transformation) of human persons (CCE, 1982, n. 16). This fundamental evangelising mission of the Church is expressed as transformational on a personal, communal, local and global level, “bringing the good news into all strata of humanity from within and making it new” (Paul VI, 1975).

The Brisbane archdiocesan context of this study reflects the tension discussed above (3.4.1.1; 3.4.1.2) emanating from conflicting understandings of church,

mission and evangelisation and its outcomes. However, there is at this archdiocesan level a clear orientation in understanding evangelisation as a focus on transformation and cultural engagement. This direction is predicated on the assumption that God is already active in the world, and the church is part of the world (*Let Your Light Shine*, 2004). Evangelisation is understood as being conducted through word and action and is made visible in personal, communal and organisational ways. It involves deep listening as well as dialogue at a communal level with other traditions and faiths, respecting the Spirit's movements throughout humankind. (*Let Your Light Shine*, 2004). Thus while the tensions are being lived out, the aim of realizing the missiological vision embedded in the Vatican II documents remains challenging for all stakeholders.

... evangelization is to be achieved, not from without as though by adding some decoration or applying a coat of colour, but in depth, going to the very centre and roots of life. The gospel must impregnate the culture and the whole way of life of man (sic), taking these words in the widest and fullest sense which they are given in the constitution *Gaudium et Spes*.

(*Evangelii Nuntiandi*, 1975, n. 20)

Nevertheless, for Catholic schools in the Brisbane Archdiocese, the focus remains on an evangelising purpose that integrates faith and life and provides education for transformation. The implications extend beyond catechesis and religious education to encompass the identity, ethos and culture of the school, including its whole curriculum, structures and processes.

3.4.2 Catholic School Ethos and Culture

Culture is the lived beliefs and values of an organisation as expressed in policies, practices, ritual and ceremony (Treston, 1992). Ethos refers to the deeply embedded matrix of values, ideology and philosophy (Beare, Caldwell & Millikan, 1993) that drives the dominant spirit or character of a place (Williams, 1997). Thus, the culture of the Catholic school is the lived expression of its ethos. It expresses

core beliefs, values, traditions, symbols and patterns of behaviour which provide meaning to the school community and which help to shape the lives of students, teachers and parents. In short, culture is 'the way we do things around here' (Deal & Kennedy, 1982, p. 4).

Research into the culture of Catholic schools indicates the ethos of a Catholic school is a complex mix of tradition and context, where the core values of Catholic education "are distinctive insofar as they are explicit and predetermined by the religious tradition of the Catholic Church" (O'Donnell, 2001, p. 25). Thus the iterative

relationship between school ethos and culture determines the authentic continuity of mission and purpose.

As the ecclesial and theological shifts (Section 3.4.1) have continued, the role of culture in the Catholic school has become identified as critical. Church documents reflect a concern to re-establish the ecclesial identity of the school in the face of the “complexity of the modern world” (CCE, 1998, n. 11). However, the disengagement among parents in recognising the elements of Catholic ethos is quite apparent. While the Vatican has been concerned about the increasing secularisation in schools, and encouraging a stronger evangelising thrust, the challenge is not just for stronger promotion of core business: evangelisation, ethos, spiritual formation and Catholic education (Crotty, 2002; Holohan, 2009; McLaughlin, 2000). The challenge appears rather for a re-articulation that connects with all stakeholders, including parents, students and staff. The language of ecclesial authorities and scholars might resonate with educational authorities, but this understanding of Catholic education and Catholic ethos does not appear to be in the mindset of parents and students (ACER, 2010; McLaughlin, 2000).

In this interplay, while affirming the engagement with culture, the ecclesial perspective has been nuanced. At the same time, researchers point to the challenge of a disappearing ethos where Catholic schools risk becoming “too expensive for the children of the poor, not posh enough for the children of the rich, but just right for those who want a cheap private education” (Fisher, 2006, p. 7).

3.4.2.1 Distinctive Elements in Catholic School Culture

The foundational feature of the Catholic school is " to create for the school community an atmosphere enlivened by the gospel spirit of freedom and charity” (CCE, 1982, n. 38). It is argued that there is a distinctiveness in Catholic education that is found in the distinctiveness of Catholicism itself, and which is accessible and faithful (Groome, 1996). The five key characteristics identified by Groome to describe this distinctiveness have been widely used among the Queensland dioceses as reference points for Catholic school culture:

1. a positive anthropology;
2. a sacramentality of life;
3. a communal emphasis;
4. a commitment to tradition as a source of story and vision; and

5. an appreciation of rationality and learning (Groome, 1996).

As examined in 3.4.1, Vatican II heralded a radical extension of outlook and outreach. This renewal found expression in the activities of Catholic schools, shaping school culture. Three specific areas can be identified in the literature:

- a strong social justice orientation;
- a holistic Catholic curriculum; and
- a renewed understanding of evangelisation.

Each of these is addressed in turn.

3.4.2.1.1 A Strong Social Justice Orientation

Social justice as an expression of Catholicity experienced a re-emergence after Vatican II. The pre-Vatican II emphasis on classical study and development of human reason and morals was enriched by the post-Vatican II emphasis on social justice in the teachings of Jesus.

First and foremost, the Church offers its educational service to the poor or those who are deprived of family help and affection or those who are far from the faith. Since education is an important means of improving the social and economic condition of individuals and of peoples if the Catholic school was to turn attention exclusively or predominantly to those from wealthier social classes it could be contributing towards maintaining their privileged position and could thereby continue to favour a society which is unjust (Bryk, Lee & Holland, 1993, p. 44-45).

The implications are challenging at both the school and system level. In interpreting this in context, post Vatican II Catholic education proclaimed to be “at the service of the economic poor, the family poor and the faith poor (the latter including lapsed Catholics) and those of other faiths and no faith” (Grace & O’Keefe, 2007, p. 5). The premise that this is part of the core purpose of Catholic schooling is strongly challenged in the current culture by both the changing demographics of Catholic schools, and the increasing focus on performativity identified across many Catholic schools (Grace, 2000; Mulligan 2005).

3.4.2.1.2 A Holistic Catholic Curriculum

The social justice perspective gained momentum with the re-iteration in Vatican II documents of the value and centrality of the person in education, and of the underpinning of the whole curriculum with gospel values. Curriculum was to

originate from the mission and not the mission from the curriculum. Thus the Catholic school:

is not simply a place where lessons are taught; rather it has an operative educational philosophy illuminated by the Gospel message, a philosophy which is attentive to the needs of its students in their search for meaning and life (CCE, 1988, n. 22).

It follows that Catholic education authorities therefore must seek to ensure

the provision of an authentic educational environment, where the value of the human person is affirmed, where knowledge is integrated for the sake of ultimate truths and where the relationship of the human person with God is modelled, as well as taught (McLaughlin, 2000b, p 91).

The recent focus on the identification of a 'Catholic curriculum' (d'Orsa, 2008) attempts to recapture the spirit and substance of this purpose in response to the view that Catholic school curriculums are becoming more aligned to a performance and production culture (Grace, 2010). The QCEC Queensland Catholic Schools Curriculum paper (Treston, 2008) grounds the renewed focus for a holistic approach in Queensland Catholic schools by articulating the foundational themes in a Catholic theology and philosophy of curriculum. These are examined under four headings: anthropology; epistemology; Cosmology and Catholic Christian story and tradition (Treston, 2008, p. 6).

Within the broader curriculum, religious education as a discrete part of the whole curriculum has a defined role. The *Religious Dimension of Education in a Catholic School* (CCE, 1988) promulgated six goals for the Catholic school. Again, the pre-eminence of gospel values within course content, the explicit naming of gospel values as the inspiration of the school, and the "precise description of the pedagogical, educational and cultural aims of the school" (CCE, 1988, n. 100) reflected the new thrust in a total education.

Thus, the contemporary Catholic school is called to provide a curriculum shaped and informed by Gospel values and appropriate to the needs of its students, providing quality learning and teaching that is relevant, challenging, Christ-centred and values based (McLaughlin, 2002).

3.4.2.1.3 A Renewed Understanding of Evangelisation

In applying the broadening of ecclesial and theological understanding around evangelisation, already discussed, to the Catholic school context, the evangelising purpose of catholic education implies a broad brief. Today's Catholic schools may

be a setting where primary proclamation is the pre-dominant need (Holohan, 2009). However, the means and mode of 'sharing the gospel' is more varied, more complex and more integrated into the life and rhythms of the school community and its operation than is often understood or affirmed.

Evangelisation involves an outreach to students in the formal curriculum and the general culture of the school. It also involves outreach through the processes, values, structures and curriculum of the school and in corporate witness, in communion with all those who stand in the Catholic Christian tradition (Tinsey, 1998). This implies an outward looking, inclusive and more seamless approach to the place of evangelisation in the Catholic school. It signals a process that is better described as intrinsic in all that occurs, rather than a discrete action that happens.

3.4.2.2 Modelling and Measuring School Culture

The three major trends outlined above have emerged as specific drivers in shaping Catholic school culture into the present time. Efforts to develop frameworks and instruments to measure the efficacy of Catholic school culture attempt to take account of these factors.

The literature offers a number of ways that the culture of any school can be explored and understood. These include models and typologies common to all school environments. As such, they provide a lens to examine Catholic school culture.

3.4.2.2.1 Development of Typologies in School Culture

One of the first models developed to explore school culture consists of four types each accompanied by an image to represent its structured relationships:

1. the club culture (spider's web – with principal in the centre);
2. the role culture (pyramid – with principal at the top);
3. the task culture (grid - outlining connections via role); and
4. the person culture (cluster – illustrating person centred relationships)

(Handy & Aitken, 1986).

In contrast to the focus on principal and staff relationships, a similar style of typology is offered with descriptors of four different cultures focussing on school atmosphere:

1. Formal culture – the school is perceived as a traditional school espousing traditional values;

2. Welfarist culture – work pressure is low and social cohesion displaces academic goals;
3. Hothouse culture – the focus is on personal enjoyment, involvement and success in the school community;
4. Survivalist culture - teachers strive to maintain control at the expense of academic expectations and social relations are poor (Hargreaves, 1994).

The development of these typologies in studying school culture in general, amplifies themes in the literature concerning the building of learning communities discussed in 3.3.1. Within the context of mission in a contemporary Catholic school community, the language of 're-culturing' acquires a particular resonance. The nature of the school environment and the influencing relationship of leadership are key elements.

3.4.2.2.2 Symbol and Ritual in the Catholic School Environment

In the process of en-culturing and re-culturing in the Catholic school context, the place of symbol and ritual is influential. Cook (2001) proposed seven building blocks to promote the Catholic culture of the Catholic school: integration of core religious beliefs and values using the school's mission statement; honouring of heroes and heroines who exemplify Gospel values; creation of a symbol reflecting Gospel values; rediscovering of the school's religious and historical heritage; and socialising staff to Gospel values and mission. These building blocks give focus to the symbolic, ritual and relational life of the school, underlining the importance of this dimension in developing culture.

An important part of school culture involves the customs and traditions that have evolved in the school (Schein, 1997). Catholicism is characterised by a strong liturgical and symbolic tradition (Greeley, 2004). Symbols, rituals and ceremonies reflect the ethos and core values of the school and the tradition. The symbolic and ritual dimension is realised in a variety of ways in the Catholic school. For example, the metaphors, descriptors and language a school uses in its mission statement, parent newsletters, staff meetings and strategic goal setting reflect the culture that operates and permeates the school. Ritual and symbol present in prayer and liturgy convey a deeper meaning about a school's core beliefs and values (Deal & Petersen, 2003). Participation of staff in communal prayer and liturgy provides for engagement at a deeper level in the domain of the spiritual (van Eyk, 2002). The presence of religious symbols in the school environment can also provide moments

of reflective space and encourage students and staff alike in the development of a sacramental consciousness (Groome, 1996; 2002).

3.4.2.2.3 Leadership in the Catholic School Environment

Catholic leadership is generally understood to be “an influencing relationship, a collaborative process that supports a community of believers pursuing a transformational cause” (Spry & Duignan, 2004). The leadership literature is explicit about the role of the Catholic school leader in promoting Catholic faith, *spirituality and culture* throughout the school community (Flynn, 1993; Cook, 2007; Duignan, 2006; Moxley, 2000; Starratt, 1993). This aspect of the Catholic school leader’s role is variously called faith leadership, missional leadership, religious leadership, spiritual leadership, or Catholic leadership. It particularly describes the capacity to translate mission into the lived reality of the community. The faith leader recognises the influence of the Catholic mission on the school (Buetow, 1988) and is able to build a community of faith around a vision of the Church that is shared by all members of the community (Gorman, 1989).

The synthesis of the literature on Workplace Learning and Adult Education (Section 3.3) has highlighted the critical role of leadership in the broader contemporary educational setting. As leadership theory has moved from scientific management theory to influence and contingency theory, dialogue concerning school leadership has moved from viewing the principal as manager to instructional leader to transformational leader. In the general leadership literature, the pressures and challenges of this shift in itself are well documented. However, for Catholic school leaders, the challenges faced are compounded by the distinctly different missional role of the Catholic school leader:

The difference to other leaders however is in the overt expression of the primary motivation that shapes these values and attributes: the explicit commitment to a theocentric and Christocentric view of life...a commitment to the reign of God in making meaning and in building the common good. Faith therefore provides ‘the reason why’ in that making of meaning, and it is ‘this faith element frame that makes the difference’ in ensuring ‘the congruence of values and practice’ across the whole school community (Flintham, 2007, p 7)

The literature describes a constant struggle in Catholic school leaders to maintain a focus for the school community on values that underpin their role in the mission of Catholic schools. Pressures emanate from increasing disengagement from the Church (McLaughlin, 2002; Tacey, 1998); a parental “culture of performativity”

(Grace, 2002, p. 141) and academic expectations (Flynn, 1993; Flynn & Mok, 2002) the impact of increasing numbers of non-Catholics in schools (Ryan & Malone, 2003); an ever-expanding list of compliance and accountability, duties and expectations (Carlin, d'Arbon, Dorman, Duignan, & Neidhart, 2003; Duignan, 2004; Scott, 2003) and the general secular culture of Australian society (Flynn & Mok, 2002; McLaughlin, 2000c; 2002; Treston, 2001). Thus, even where Catholic school leaders are clear and energetic about the mission of the school, there is real concern whether this is strong enough to balance the day to day demands of the school as an efficient educational organisation in competition in the "market place" (Dreyer & Burrows, 2005). It remains a question open to debate (Grace, 1995). Many principals protesting the national 'My School' website initiative in Australia, have done so out of this very concern about market competition engulfing the essential vision of Catholic schools.

At the same time that these challenges have increased, the clarity of connection and support between school and parish has decreased. The lack of a functioning relationship between priests and principals has been cited as a source of anxiety and confusion in several studies (Coughlan, 2010; D'Arbon, Duignan & Duncan 2001). In addition, Tinsey's (1998) research found that almost half of Australian priests in his study considered that the Catholic school agenda had little to do with partnership with the local parish. At the same time school staff in the study perceived that communication between the parish and the school was poor, and that the parish priest was responsible "in making parish life more relevant to young people" (Tinsey, 1998, p 39-40).

The awareness of increasing disconnection between parish and school, along with the escalating impact of a declining and aging Catholic clerical profile is deeply felt. A consequent shift has been identified in the role of principal as a Catholic leader. There is sufficient research to argue that with a combination of dwindling clerical numbers and availability, and the continuing sexual abuse controversies, "the unofficial pragmatic pastoral leadership of the Australian Catholic Church has slid from clergy to Catholic principals and teachers" (McLaughlin, 2002, p. 15).

It is the principal, the Assistant Principal (Religious Education) and other approachable teachers who have been given the unofficial leadership of the local Catholic communities (McLaughlin, 2002, p 11).

In the last fifteen years, teacher leadership has also emerged as a focal point in the school leadership literature (Zinn, 1997). Underpinning teacher leadership is the

concept of 'parallelism'; a claim that "the leadership activity of principals and teacher leaders occurs simultaneously and is of equal value" (Andrews & Crowther, 2002, p. 155). There are three essential characteristics of parallel leadership: "a sense of shared purpose; mutualism (trust and respect); and an allowance for individual expression" (Crowther, Kaagan, Furguson & Hann, 2002, p. 38). The application of these principles within the Catholic school context provides fertile ground for the development of a community culture that is peer driven and richly formative.

Teacher leaders therefore build culture by aligning their leadership with the Christian vision and Catholic tradition; they are sustained in their leadership by the trust and respect of the principal; they are encouraged to express their individuality in creative and active ways. In strengthening Catholic culture, teacher leaders create opportunities for the spiritual formation of teachers (Bracken, 2004, p. 62).

The power of parallel leadership is confirmed in other research with findings that

the practice of partnering, conversing, arranging and developing shared vision' in two different schools were 'powerful re-culturing mechanisms' and 'conversations about learning, shared beliefs mission and vision, enabling leadership that reflects parallel learning relationships ...are critical for sustainable reform.' (Martoo, 2006, p. iii)

It is not surprising then that there is a strong call for visionary, spiritual and authentic leadership in Catholic schools (Duignan, 2004). As a result, school leaders are being challenged to be the "architects" and creators of culture rather than its guardians and defenders (Cook, 2001).

3.4.2.2.4 Application of Typologies in the Australian Context

Australian research authorised by diocesan authorities grounds the work in typologies and identified trends within the literature in the reality of Australian experience. Three studies are of particular interest to this discussion.

3.4.2.2.4.1 Enhancing Catholic Schools Identity Project

The Enhancing Catholic Schools Identity Project, jointly sponsored by the Catholic Education Commission Victoria (CECV) and the Leuven University in Belgium, is ongoing, while preliminary results are published. Seeking to both deepen and broaden the capacity to name and gauge the dimensions of Catholic school culture and identity, it is being conducted in two stages: measuring school identity and enhancing school identity (CECV, 2010).

The first stage has involved the profiling of the current context and a large scale empirical investigation involving schools in Belgium and schools from across four dioceses in Victoria. In this process, three scales have been developed: the Post-Critical Belief scale, which describes religious coping styles; the Melbourne Scale, which describes the theological stance of the school; and the Victoria Scale, which describes the pedagogical stance of the school. While the research project is not yet complete and findings are not yet published, preliminary results show a strong register in 'second naivete' in the Post-Critical Belief scale, which profiles the role of symbolic mediation and on-going interpretation in assisting people to enter into a relationship with the transcendent reality. The application of the Melbourne scale indicates a strong support within school communities for re-contextualisation as a hermeneutic approach in sustaining Catholic vision and culture. Finally, the application of the Victoria scale indicates a shift toward a 'dialogue' school culture.

In particular, the Victoria scale outlines four school types, and in the mode of other typologies (Handy & Aitken, 1986) offers accompanying metaphors as descriptors:

1. The monologue school (air raid shelter – traditional school led by Catholics for Catholics);
2. The dialogue school (the oasis - a Catholic school in the midst of cultural and religious plurality);
3. The colourful school (the action centre - A secularised and plural school environment where people relate to each other in a social, engaged way and in solidarity with each other and society); and
4. The colourless school (the meeting place) - A secularised and plural school environment where the relation between individuals remains free of engagement or obligations (CECV, 2010).

While the collapse of religious affiliation and observance has been more marked in Belgium than Australia, the contextual challenges of the post-modern secular culture are well documented in Australia. The options in response to this situation are clarified in this CECV-Leuven research (CECV, 2010), and the indicators are that the stakeholders are desiring to embrace a new dialogical paradigm that sees the heart of the tradition re-imagined for a new time. It remains to be seen how this will be embraced by Church and system authorities.

3.4.2.2.4.2 Who's Coming to School Project

The *Who's Coming to School?* research (ACER, 2010) was commissioned by the Catholic Education Council in the Archdiocese of Brisbane. A comprehensive survey of all stakeholders, it has concluded strong support and satisfaction among parents for Catholic schooling. In addition, the summary report of the research included the finding that “the culture of BCE communities is strongly founded on Catholic beliefs and principles” (ACER, 2010). However, the report confirms other research that identifies an apparent disconnect between those features that parents find most attractive about Catholic schools and a comprehension of the ethos and purpose of Catholic education. For example, parents cited “welcoming and inclusive nature of the school”; “quality of teachers”; “support for each student’s self-development” (Summary Report, ACER, 2010) as strong incentives for choosing Catholic schooling. At the same time, while not rating lowest on the scale, the “opportunity to learn about the Catholic faith” and about “Jesus and Christianity” rated relatively poorly (ACER, 2010). The findings display little evidence of an understanding by parents that the features they identify as highly attractive and highly valued are directly related to the ethos, purpose and ecclesial identity of Catholic schooling.

The proposition offered in ecclesial documents of the last thirty years suggesting a religious and moral apathy among staff in Catholic schools is not supported by this study. Nevertheless, the research did identify a ‘greening’ in the staff demographic across BCE. In the five years from 2004–2008, the number of teachers over 50 reduced by 12% and the number of teachers between 20 and 30 increased by 12%. This shift signals a marked loss of both experience and ‘embodied culture’ as older staff leave. It is a trend compounded by the decrease in religious observance among stakeholders which itself confirms other studies noted in 3.2.3.1. Currently, however, the cultural traction and allegiance to Catholic school communities remains firm, with stakeholders strongly engaged with the Christian values of their schools and a spiritual and religious dimension within themselves. The study concluded that while it is unclear exactly what drives this ‘brand loyalty’, it was “more likely to be the impact of the quiet practice of Christian values and beliefs in the everyday setting than formal expressions of religious belief and experience” (ACER, 2010, p. 98).

3.4.2.2.4.3 Primary Graduate Review

Concurrent research in Brisbane archdiocesan graduate perceptions of ethos amplifies similar issues of disconnection found in the 2010 study. The 2009

Brisbane Catholic Education *Report on the 2008 Primary Graduate Process Review* (BCE) indicated that graduates rated school and church connection of low importance, but rated as their number 1 priority a “Commitment to the Catholic School Ethos” (2009, p. 2). Amplifying the disconnect apparent in the *Who’s Coming to School* survey, there was little evidence among graduates of an understanding of ethos connected with church, mission or the gospel vision of Jesus.

A further concern emanates from the review conclusions. A key finding of the survey results included:

The importance of the Catholic ethos is and should continue to be an underlying principle of employment within the system (BCE, 2009 p. 16).

The fact that this is identified as a finding is cause for reflection. It implies that the inclusion of ethos is considered a debatable principle contingent on participant views rather than a foundational component of employment and ongoing formation.

3.4.2.3 Ethos, Culture and Brisbane Archdiocesan Schools

The challenge in nurturing an ethos and culture that is faithful to the tradition and resonant with stakeholders in the current context has provoked diverse responses. However, even as they grapple with different expectations from its key stakeholders, Catholic schools continue to rise in popularity and patronage. The Brisbane research (ACER, 2010; BCE, 2009) indicates that while formal and meaningful connections to Church and parish continue to diminish, the cultural traction at this point remains strong in the schools of this Archdiocese.

3.4.3 Ministry, Vocation and Formation

As the challenge in sustaining an authentic culture in Catholic schools has intensified, there is a growing dependency on Catholic school staff to enliven the ethos, culture and mission. This in turn makes spiritual formation of staff central to the effective mission of Catholic education. As outlined in Chapter 2, the expectation of both system provision and employee engagement in formation for Catholic educators is embedded in Queensland Catholic Education policy documents and reflective of diocesan policy across Australia. In turn, systemic policy provisions for staff formation reflect an ecclesial reality first signalled as the Second Vatican Council (1961–65) finished:

In the twenty-first century, it clearly will be the task of lay women and men to substantially determine whether or not a school realises its aim and accomplishes its objectives’ (Paul VI, 1965, n. 8).

It has been no coincidence then that there has been a concomitant focus on both the laity and the mission of the Catholic school in many Church documents since Vatican II. The opening up of the church to the modern world coincided with large numbers leaving religious orders, a major decline in new recruits and a consequent need to employ ever-greater numbers of lay teachers (Grace, 2002). Many of the Australian Catholic schools of the sixties had been founded and were fully staffed by religious orders. In Australia, the presence of members of religious Sisters, Brothers and Priests as teachers and administrators in schools, is less than 1% (O'Donohue & Potts, 2004 p. 469). For students in Catholic schools in Australia, as in many other English-speaking countries, "their teachers are now lay teachers, the principals in their schools are lay women and men, and lay people predominate on their school boards" (O'Donoghue, 2004, p. 11). Consequent to this, there has developed a growing and explicit expectation that the laity assume a more active role in the life of the Church and this has been realised in Catholic education more than in any other area (McLaughlin, 2005).

In examining the literature concerning the formation of Catholic educators, there are three areas of focus: teacher formation, leader formation and whole of staff formation. Each is considered in turn.

3.4.3.1 Teacher Formation

The Second Vatican Council gave particular emphasis to the role of the teacher in a Catholic school. The *Declaration on Christian Education* (1965) defined the ecclesial understanding of this role, viewed as a vocation, "requiring special qualities of mind and heart, careful preparation, and readiness to accept new ideas and to adapt to the old (1965, n. 8). *Apostolicam Actuositatem* acknowledged that the spirituality of the laity is shaped by the conditions of one's life (1965, n. 4). Documents since then have continued to reinforce connection between the personal and the professional:

The concrete living out of a vocation as rich and profound as that of the lay Catholic in a school requires an appropriate formation, both on the professional plane and on the religious plane. Most especially, it requires the educator to have a mature spiritual personality, expressed in a profound Christian life. "This calling" says the Second Vatican Council, speaking about educators, requires "extremely careful preparation." (CCE, 1982, n. 60).

Further, formation occurs through interpersonal relationships within an educational community that has a theological as well as a sociological foundation (CCE, 1998, n. 18). Adult spiritual formation in the Catholic educational context then is central to the

professional life of the workplace. It is personal and it is professional, tapping into the adult learner's own experience and living that out professionally as part of a Catholic education community. This in turn ultimately determines the effectiveness and credibility of Catholic schools with respect to their mission (Durka, 2002).

3.4.3.1.1 Teaching as a Ministry

The origins of the term ministry derive from the Greek word *diakonia* or table service (Treston, 2000). This was the word chosen by the early church to express the New Testament understanding of both ministry and leadership (Adair, 2001). In the last fifteen years, there has been a trend to express the vocational role of the lay teacher in terms of 'ministry' (Mulligan 1994). The understanding behind this is that "the teacher is called to serve in a special way (through the Catholic school and Catholic education) in furthering the mission of the church" (Mulligan, 1994, p. 120). The ministry of teaching in a Catholic school is thus recognised as a participation in the evangelising mission of the Church. To teach in Catholic schools therefore is to give witness to the community's understanding of its heritage, its culture and its tradition, its teaching and belief (CCE, 1982, n. 23, 24).

While the use of the term ministry has gained increasing currency since Vatican II, and it is now common usage to speak of 'lay ministry' and 'ordained ministry', scripture scholars and theologians point to the fact that the terms 'lay' and 'clerical' are historically determined categories, with no basis in the Hebrew or Christian scriptures (Coloe, 2010; Lennan, 1995). Stott's scholarship details how in the earliest communities the word *apostolos* (messenger) was used for all the disciples indiscriminately: "In this sense we are all messengers of Christ, and we are the message" (Stott, 2002, p. 18) Indeed, Vatican II championed the recovery of a 'total ecclesiology' (Congar cited in Beal, 2009) where the separation of a theology of clergy and laity would be discarded and the original sense of the early community of disciples recovered.

While contemporary scholarship has developed a constructive ecclesiology moving the conversation beyond Congar, Vatican II and the two recent Popes (Lakeland, 2008; Beal, 2009), the re-emergence and encouragement of a dualist approach to ministry has been apparent in general perceptions. The sense persists that lay ministry is a second string ministry (Lakeland, 2003) considered as a lesser status than priests, brothers and nuns, even among a generation who are more theologically literate than ever (O'Donoghue & Potts, 2004). This is identified in a

new sensitivity to the ecclesial rhetoric about ministry in the Catholic school that proclaims it as distinctive and varied (lay, priestly, religious, professional) with a sense of “mutual and complementary presence” that ensures “the character of the Catholic school” (CCE, 1982, n. 44) and yet at the same time appears to lament this reality (CCE, 1982, n. 45). This exacerbates a strong current of disillusionment with clergy already identified among lay Catholics, amid a rising distrust of the institution (Mulligan, 1994).

In response, the literature gives expression to a growing interest for either a re-alignment or a re-development of lay ministry with a recognition of the centrality of the school community. Recovering post Vatican II theological thinking of Congar (1965) and Boff (1986), Mulligan revives the term ‘*laos*’ used by Boff to describe a de-clericalised community, interpreting Pope Paul VI’s inclusive call to mission as one where gifts and talents are richly distributed by all members of the community:

The new ecclesial reality is that the Catholic school for many is the primary place where young people will encounter Jesus and his teaching, and it is Catholic educators, the laity, who are the evangelisers (Mulligan, 1994, p 76).

While there have been notable formal ecclesial initiatives to reframe lay ministry within the existing reference points (e.g. *Co-workers in the Vineyard of the Lord*, USCCB, 2005), a growing number of researchers and writers call for a completely new ecclesial conceptual structure that takes account of the new ecclesial reality. In other words, the contemporary situation is such that:

given the enhanced role of the People of God in the post-Vatican II Church and the decline of the clergy in numbers and credibility, Catholic education should be reconfigured as a ministry of the laity and new models of leadership are necessary (O’Keefe, 1996, p. 178).

3.4.3.1.2 Teaching as a Vocation

Derived from the Latin word *vocare* (to call), the word ‘vocation’ has religious origins used in the Christian tradition to refer to the decision to enter a monastic order. The reformation expanded this understanding to apply to all people, each having a vocation that could be enacted in everyday life. Ecclesial documents affirm the integrative nature of the spiritual life in the everyday for lay people:

In discovering and living their proper vocation and missionThere cannot be two parallel lives in their existence: on the one hand, the so-called ‘spiritual life’, with its values and demands; and on the other, the so-called secular life; that is, life in a family, at work, in social relationships, in the responsibilities of public life and in culture (*Christifideles Laici*, 1989, n. 59).

Translated into a teacher's life, this requires an underlying spirituality within a humanising and holistic vision, educating not only for character (Lickona, 1991) but also for life (Groome, 2002). In such a setting, every teacher has a vocation to be a "humanising educator, to teach with a spiritual vision" (Groome, 1998, p. 37). This calling (*vocatus*) is heard within one's being and comes from beyond one's self. "My vocation (to use the poet's term) is the spiritual life, the quest for God, which relies on the eye of the heart" (Palmer, 1993, p. xxiv).

In exploring vocation in the context of a spirituality for teachers today, Durka (2002) outlines five characteristics of a teacher's calling:

- presumes a sense of adventure to engage the world;
- is more than selfless devotion;
- is more than a personal matter;
- is active and compelling; and
- is unique in every individual as the inner work of the person leads to the outer journey of the teacher.

This embodied understanding of vocation means that vocation is unique and individual to each person.

Such a sense of vocation is not a set of glasses or lenses that we can take off and put on at will. ... Such a way of looking at life is a result of our character that has been formed over time. It flows from our soul (Durka, 2002, p. 10).

The emphasis on the outward expression of the inner journey resonates in other research (Buechner, 1973; Palmer, 2007; Daloz-Parks, 2000). For both Daloz-Parks (2000) and Palmer (1998), vocation involves commitment to others as well as personal fulfilment. This is described as a process of "personal and social transformation, venturing and abiding" where engagement with others is grounded by turning "deep into self" (Daloz-Parks, 2000, p. 11). This deepening into self influences growth from the inside out, since "The spiritual journey of the teacher is the peeling away of loose outer layers of teaching beliefs and diving deeper into the centre of what calls us into the classroom" (Michalec cited in Simone, 2004, p. 5). The disciplines of mythology and psychology offer the learning that one's deepest identity will be found in "finding and following your bliss" (Campbell, cited in Flowers, 1988, p. 120). Further, the journey in vocation is a spiritual one because "it is all about your life but still not about a life that is all yours" (Carotta & Carotta, 2005, p. 14). This meeting place of the work one is called to and which is responsive to the

world, is framed in spiritual terms: “The place God calls you to is the place where your deep gladness and the world's deep hunger meet” (Buechner, 1973, p. 95).

In examining the adult Christian vocation, Fowler (2000), who similarly defines vocation as “a purpose for one’s life that is part of the purposes of God”, brings a psycho-spiritual perspective to the subject of vocation, and critiques this within the changes and tensions apparent in the post Vatican II Catholic church:

.... with Vatican II we beheld the spectacle – truly remarkable – of an international communion of faith solemnly and publicly going through the anguish of fundamentally altering its self-definition and its structures of authority. From a church defined by the hierarchy and its solemn control of scripture and tradition we saw a move towards a church defined as ‘the people of God.’ The normative images of Christian adulthood fostered by the church became more pluralistic (Fowler, 2000, p 5).

This vision spoke to a generation of highly educated, faithful laity, in whom extensive research has confirmed “a growing disillusionment with the official church” (Mulligan, 1994, p. 59). Fowler’s view is that the efforts of popes since Vatican II to re-institute an hierarchical authority has been superseded by a community that has simply grown up:

While he (the Pope) has had some success in re-establishing centralised authority and maintaining a male dominated church, this has not been accomplished without the alienation of millions of thoughtful and faithful Catholics around the world whose faith had developed to the individuating - reflective stage or beyond (Fowler, 2000 p. 5).

This compounds the challenge for those charged with providing appropriate spiritual formation for staff today: the hierarchical Church’s position is viewed as an additional layer of requirements and expectations for a generation with a mistrust of institutional values and authority and an emphasis on a personal spirituality rather than an imposed religion (Treston, 2000).

Recognising the current alienation of Australian people from the church, Australian theologians are concerned to recapture the relationship between the deepest reality of mission in the Church and the deepest reality of everyday lives:

And yet this “other thing”, this Church-thing, is just what is essential to Catholic identity. Indeed to be Church is essential to the Catholic vocation—to be called to mediate the mystery of salvation, in word, sacrament, personal witness, to the world of suffering. It is sent as a promise of healing into those dark zones of guilt, despair and absurdity, and to offer the bread of life to the deepest hungers of the heart—even if a vocabulary for our deepest needs and longings now scarcely exists (Kelly, 2009, p. 7).

3.4.3.1.3 Developments in Teacher Formation

The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* recognises that spiritualities arise in the context of an individual's work, life and circumstances (CCC, 1994, n. 2684). Thus, the teacher's work and person is the starting point to attend to the formation of a teacher's spirituality.

While this reality has been noted demographically, and given focus in ecclesial and theological domains, little research has been done regarding the experience of what it means to be a teacher in an Australian Catholic school. Burley (1997; 2001) has opened up the complexity of the area by drawing attention to the various categories of Catholic teachers, and within this, the changing reality and experience of religious has been examined in research. However, while this is valuable, it is the research of McLaughlin (2000b, 2005), Fisher (2001), D'Arbon and Duignan (2002) and Downey (2006) that has opened up the exploration of lay teachers' values and experience. This research itself has highlighted the need for more extensive study in the field.

Probing the key elements of what might be essential in formation for educators today, the literature gives expression to a common concern (Croke, 2007; Holohan, 2009; NCEC, 2005) as to the formation of teachers "with appropriate knowledge, values and commitment" (Croke, 2007, p. 823). In explicating an understanding of evangelisation Holohan (2009) defines the place of initiatory catechesis in the school as "an apprenticeship in how to enter into the beliefs, celebrations, life and prayer of the faith community so as to experience Christ. It enables the 'apprentice in the faith' to enter into each experience" (Holohan, 2009, p 23).

Initiatory catechesis is needed by those who say 'I can be a good Christian without going to church'; 'I feel closer to God on the beach than at mass in church'; 'A good Christian is someone who just loves their neighbour. Nothing else is necessary.' I gave up Christian faith because its teachings are too hard'. 'I am a spiritual person, but do not feel a need to belong to a church' – and so on (Holohan, 2009, p 22).

Apparent concern for the relationship between the individual's experience and the life of the Church is also evident in the most recent Vatican document, *Educating Together in Catholic Schools* (2007). It includes a call for formation that is holistic and of the heart rather than solely knowledge based:

Catholic educators need a 'formation of the heart': they need to be led to that encounter with God in Christ which awakens this love and opens their spirits to others, so that their educational commitment becomes a consequence deriving from their faith, a faith which becomes active through love (CCE, 2007, n. 25)

A critique of this document notes the inclusion of ‘the heart’ along with ‘the head’ as critical to formation, with witness, *communio* and experiential learning complementing professional learning:

What is enlightening in *Educating together* is that in its understanding of the concept of formation, appropriate academic rigour (n. 26) and pedagogical competency (22-23) must be complemented with “formation of the heart” (n. 25) (McLaughlin, 2008, p. 14).

The concept of the vocation of teaching as essentially a spiritual calling nurtured in the reflective self-awareness of the teacher is highlighted in the methodology of Parker Palmer (1997; 2000; 2004; 2007), now attracting international interest in educational circles. Central to Palmer’s work in teacher formation, and predicated on the belief that “good teaching comes from the identity and integrity of the teacher” (Palmer, 2000, p. 11), is the development of trust in the individual’s own story and inner wisdom. In contrast to the predominant focus on technique and skills in the educational literature, Palmer illuminates the personal dimension of the individual teacher and its central place in the teaching–learning dynamic.

The question we most commonly ask is the ‘what’ question – what subjects shall we teach? When the conversation goes a bit deeper, we ask the ‘how’ question – what methods and techniques are required to teach well? Occasionally, when it goes deeper still, we ask the ‘why’ question – for what purposes and to what ends do we teach? But seldom, if ever, do we ask the ‘who’ question – who is the self that teaches? How does the quality of my selfhood form – or deform – the way I relate to my students, my subject, my colleagues, my world? How can educational institutions sustain and deepen the selfhood from which good teaching comes? (Palmer, 2007, p. 4).

Formation involves an encouragement of ‘creative conversation’ around these things. Palmer suggests centring this reflection on four themes: “*critical moments* in teaching and learning; the *human condition* of teachers and learners; *metaphors and images* of what we are doing when we teach; and *autobiographical reflection* on our great teachers, and ourselves” (Palmer, 1993b, p. 10).

In his approach to formation, Palmer draws a strong demarcation of the ‘inner’ and ‘outer’ worlds of the individual. This individualised and bounded understanding of selfhood has been soundly critiqued by those who recognise how it can unintentionally feed into the post-modern focus on the self (Burkitt, 1990; Sampson, 1993; Smith, 2005). Yet, his process of narrative reflection is different from the self-focus associated with the plethora of social networking tools (e.g. Facebook, MySpace). As such it intersects well with the narrative and reflective practices within

the Catholic spiritual tradition, providing a valuable way to understand the story of one's life and the shaping of that narrative.

3.4.3.2 Leader Formation

The Church has given voice at various levels in an eloquent way about what it sees as foundational in the source and nature of Catholic leaders. It is evident in papal reflections:

What the world needs now are heralds of the Gospel, who are experts in humanity, who know the depth of the human heart, who can share the joys and hopes, the agonies and distress of people, but who are, at the same time, contemplatives who have fallen in love with God. (John Paul II, 1984)

It is also evident at the more local level in the voice of the Australian bishops:

If Catholic schools are to succeed in the mission... it will be essential that: all those appointed as Principals, Assistant Principals and Religious Education Co-ordinators are faithful Catholics who are ready to embrace the mission of the Catholic school today and to lead and inspire their staff and parents accordingly (Bishops of NSW & ACT, *Catholic Schools at a Crossroads*, 2007, n. 16).

Yet, as aspirational as the conversation is around the spiritual heart of Catholic leadership, Grace (2000) identifies the inherent conundrum for lay Catholics moving into leadership today with traditional religious formation models inappropriate for them and very little provided in its place to prepare them for such lofty aims from both the hierarchical church and the community of scholars:

In a society increasingly marked by secularism, consumerism and market forces, the need for strong spiritual leadership in Catholic schools is very clear. But it is a daunting challenge. The Vatican document of 1982, *Lay Catholics in Schools: Witnesses to Faith*, presented some high aspirations when it said that 'the Catholic educator must be a source of spiritual inspiration'. Being a personal faith witness is one thing but being a source of spiritual inspiration is quite another. Many professional and highly competent teachers may feel less confident of leading in this area and articulating persuasively the fundamental spiritual purposes (Grace, 2000 p. 16).

In an ecclesial sense, religious leadership begins with a profound sense of Mission and an understanding that the Mission originates in God. This reflects the development in the understanding of evangelisation already discussed (Section 3.4.1). The responsibility around school leadership and mission is also emphasised in diocesan and inter-diocesan systemic policy documents (Chapter 2). These spiritual and religious responsibilities are not to be thought of as an overlay but rather as integral to the exercise of leadership within a faith community (McLaughlin, 2000b; Sullivan, 2001).

Developing this further, it is the integral spiritual sensibility which comes first; that principals in Catholic schools are *called*; that they are in fact spiritual persons who become Catholic school principals and not the other way round (Cappel, 1989). These attributes brought to leadership “are influenced and grown through the individual’s personal lived faith experience” (Drahmann & Stenger, 1989, p. 191).

The Catholic school principal of today must be a person who recognises the sacredness of their call, how their task is to develop community and challenge for excellence, and are people who respect their role as being a servant of Christ in the mission of educating children. It is a vocation described by Cardinal Thomas Williams (2000) as the most widespread and effective ministry in the church today (Lacey, 2003, p. 2).

It is clear that this process is highly individualistic, and thus the way spiritual and religious leadership is interpreted in an individual Catholic school has much to do with the vision and attributes developed in the principal (Barth, 2004; Lingard, Hayes, Mills & Christie, 2003; McGilp, 2000). While the resulting variance has been well researched in terms of whole school identity (Treston, 1997) other research does reveal conceptual commonality across principals in terms of their translation of mission. In British research conducted in 1995, a concurrence of three interrelated features in the predominant view of Catholic leaders regarding the special mission of Catholic schools was identified: “Gospel values, the teachings of Christ and the nurture of community” (Grace, 1997, p.162). This finding concurs with similar research in Australia but remains at odds with the more prescriptive and static pre-Vatican II understanding of the mission of the Catholic school as “institutionalising Catholic traditions and doctrinal emphasis” (Heft, 1990 cited in Joseph, 2002, p. 3). The existence of these dual approaches in the church remains an ongoing cause of tension in the formation of Catholic school leaders.

3.4.3.2.1 Understanding the Spiritual Dimension of Leadership

Until the fifties and sixties, the Catholic school was seen as a genuine teaching agent in the mission of the Church (CCE, 1988, n. 11, 33, 34; Reck, 1991). The local parish fulfilled the role of ongoing support and solidarity for schools (CCE, 1988, n. 44), and parish priests supported the local Catholic school by their words, presence and actions (CCL, Canons 805, 806). However, with ecclesial, cultural and theological changes, Catholic school leadership now constitutes more than “handing on the doctrine” or “passing on the torch to the next generation” (Prendergast & Monahan, 2003, p. 13). Within a contemporary educational setting, Catholic leadership involves the desire and capacity to develop a sense and experience of

the Transcendent in the lives of staff and students, and an awareness of the presence of a “beneficent watchfulness” in their lives (Hicks, 2004, p. 2).

While this is identified in the literature as spiritual leadership, it is only since 2000 that there has emerged the need to consider deeply and specifically what spiritual leadership is as a discrete function and how institutions might educate for spiritual leadership. Consideration of the day to day school context, and the often nebulous language used to define what one does as a spiritual leader begs the question:

But what do the less specific descriptions actually mean? ‘Leads the school community in prayer’ is specific but ‘integrates Christian social principles into the curriculum and life of the school’?? When the bell goes at 8 a.m. how do you observe spiritual leadership? (O’Hara, 2000, p. 3)

In this milieu it can be helpful, as Thompson (2005) has done, to identify what spiritual leadership in a Catholic school context is not: “It is not holier than thou; head in the clouds, mysterious, unaccountable, ethereal, pious, jargon thick syrup” (2005, p. 4).

The literature indicates that principals, while not always able to articulate the essence of spiritual leadership, nonetheless have confidence and commitment in this area of leadership. There is evidence in American research to demonstrate a common understanding of what it means to be a Catholic school principal and spiritual leader (Ciriello, 1994; O’Hara, 2000; Schuttloffel, 2007). Findings in Flintham’s Australian and English research (2007) identified a similar cogency: “When asked to describe the foundations of their faith, the spiritual bases on which their school leadership stands, two words summed up the responses from principals – ‘inclusion’ and ‘invitation’” (2007, p. 6). Wallace’s research (1998) also identified a high level of self-belief among principals about their spiritual leadership role. This finding has been confirmed in other research (Compagnone, 1999; Moore, 1999; O’Hara, 2000) showing that principals tend not only to have a strong self-perception regarding their spiritual role in schools, they also express strong commitment to spiritual mission in taking up leadership positions.

The literature indicates a more uneven understanding around spiritual leadership among the broader staff population, though its importance is recognised. Participants in O’Hara’s research (2000) consistently referred to the significance of the principal being a spiritual role model visible through participating in and leading prayer and liturgical services and acting toward others in ways consistent with the teaching of Jesus. However, in another prominent American study to determine how

effectively teachers could identify more closely with the Church's mission (Cioppi, 2000), it was found that none of the school staffs were able to agree on or articulate the mission of evangelisation and the role of teachers in this. Despite this, where individual leaders role-modelled 'evangelising leadership', teachers were more likely to emulate the same behaviours (Cioppi, 2000).

3.4.3.2.2 Missional Leadership

Missional leadership lies at the juncture between contemporary missiology and contemporary leadership theory. In contexting the missional function of Catholic school leadership, the transformational imperative in Catholic education means that the nexus between personal meaning making and mission shaping is explicit and transparent in the Catholic school leader. The literature offers a variety of ways to describe dimensions of this area of leadership (Cardona, 2000; Duignan, 2004; Hjalmarson & Helland, 2011; McLaughlin, 2002; Vaill, 1998; Wheatley, 2002; Woods, 2002). In addition to the literature in missiology and spirituality, the general development in this area has been heavily influenced by the leadership literature on *servant leadership*, *transformational leadership* and *values-led leadership*.

Servant leadership (Greenleaf, 1977) has a natural alignment with leadership in a Catholic context with its strong gospel connotations. The blending of this with the dominant model of leadership since 1990, transformational leadership, has provided the theoretical bedrock for the development of missional/spiritual leadership. Sergiovanni's (1987) seminal research on leadership demonstrated that while educational leadership ensures competence, it is the dimensions of symbolic leadership (giving vision, communicating deep purpose, and leading beyond management issues) and cultural leadership (articulating vision, supported by systems, symbols and rituals) that are necessary for excellence in leadership. This was confirmed in research exploring the spiritual role of the Catholic school principal: the closest links between general and educational leadership theory and the spiritual leadership role of the Catholic school principal lie in the cultural and symbolic, transformational and servant leadership theories (O'Hara, 2000).

Transformational qualities associated with the domain of spirituality have been linked to effective capacities identified for organisational change in general, using the construct of transformational leadership theory (Bass, 1985; Frost & Egri, 1994; Moxley, 2000).

The transformational leader creates a compelling narrative about the mission of her/his organisation... embodies the narrative in her/his own life; and is able through persuasion and personal example, to change the thoughts feelings and behaviours of those whom she/he seeks to lead (Gardner, 2006, p. 100).

More recently, the term 'post transformational leadership' has emerged. It is a values-led leadership construct that emphasises vision, integrity, context, reflection and continuing personal professional development (Day & Harris, 2000; Branson, 2004). Aligned with the work on authentic leadership (Duignan & Bhindi, 1997), values-led leadership research gives direct focus to spiritual leadership capacity. Accordingly, an essential characteristic of authenticity in leadership for principals is their own spirituality, a sense of deep meaning from an awareness of a transcendent presence and a sense of unity and relatedness with one another (Duignan, 2004). Modelling authenticity is argued as the most important role a principal has in building school culture and community, and this is supported by the research (Section 3.4.3.2.1). The disciplines of self-reflective practice are critical in developing authentic self (Duignan, 2002). These include reflective practice in both personal disciplines (meditation, silence, prayer journaling) as well as interpersonal disciplines (sharing of life stories, deep listening) (Moxley, 2000).

These principles and capacities grown through attention to the heart and soul of one's own narrative in leadership and modelled authentically in community, are at the growing edge of current explorations in leader development.

3.4.3.2.3 Preparation for Catholic Leadership

An identifiable trend in the literature associates the spirituality of the leader as vital in the maintenance of direction and the sustaining of purpose in the life and culture of the school (Kelleher, 2000). Such studies have identified the need for the implementation of personal faith formation to strengthen their role as spiritual leaders (Crotty, 2005). Despite strategies and tools alluded to in the Catholic leadership literature (e.g. reflective practice), a lack of relevant, integrated and systematic formation for the challenges of leadership is a common finding across Australian, American, Canadian and English research (Bezzina, 2008; Flintham, 2007; Grace, 2002; Moore, 1999; Mulligan, 2005; Wallace, 1998) This is apparent both from the voices of principals themselves as well as those in diocesan positions overseeing the development of principals.

The attributes and competencies required in the Catholic school leader generally span two areas:

the spiritual attributes that a person brings to the job through a personal faith experience, and the pastoral competencies to create a prayer environment, develop a sense of community service, witness to the faith, and integrate the Gospel message into the curriculum (Drahmann & Stenger, 1989).

The gap in formation crosses both the knowledge and experiential domains, and is identified by principals as an issue prior to appointment and through continuing principalship (Graham, 2006). The perceived lack of theological understanding to underpin their leadership is also cited in a number of studies. Australian research (Belmonte, Cranston & Limerick, 2006) on principals' experience and perceptions found there was "a significant dearth of adequate support for them especially in the religious matters of their responsibilities" (Belmonte, Cranston & Limerick, 2006, p 11). Participants identified this "failure to assist their on-going religious growth" (Belmonte, Cranston & Limerick, 2006, p 11) as a major challenge and anxiety for them. In particular, principals voiced that they had need for continuing personal growth in faith and vision, and were frustrated in the lack of provision for this (Belmonte, Cranston & Limerick, 2006). These findings are consistent with other Australian research (Duignan, 2004; Duignan, Burford, d'Arbon, Ikin, & Walsh, 2003; Flintham, 2007).

In exploring strategies of support, a 2007 study involving principals from 12 dioceses in Australia and England identified self-sustaining strategies that included support from peer networks and parish, renewal through retreat programs and sabbatical opportunities, and the development of reflective space and capacity. The most valued of the support structures were spiritual development opportunities, usually accessed individually with little provision by the system or employing authority. Significantly, the opportunity for 'time-out' reflective space in the presence of like-minded colleagues, "giving an away-experience of spiritual discussion at an adult level" (Flintham, 2007, p. 14), was perceived as more important than the content of preparatory or on-going study.

There was a *cri de coeur* for the provision of such 'events with a spiritual heart' with 'the opportunity to talk about the role of principalship in the context of the distinctive nature of Catholic schools' (P5). In this, the opportunity for structured retreats and sabbaticals, was highly valued, particularly in creating space 'to set the problems of school in the perspective of eternity' (Flintham, 2007, p. 7).

Importantly, principals have cited their own lived faith experience (as childhood Catholics), their personal and professional experiences in Catholic schools and their mentors, many of whom were vowed religious, as foundational to their capacity as spiritual leaders. They also believe they are “more intentional about this aspect of their leadership than vowed religious may have been in the past” (Flintham, 2007, p. 192). This view was echoed in Belmonte, Cranston and Limerick’s (2006) findings. Consequently, while principals perceive their leadership preparation lacking, they also believe that today’s Catholic schools are “as successful as schools in the 1950’s in establishing and maintaining Catholic identity even though those 1950’s schools were predominantly staffed by vowed religious” (Wallace, 1998, cited in Joseph, 2002, p. 7).

Flintham’s summative findings reflect much of the research regarding the specific need for spiritual formation for leadership:

Their (participant principals) vision is of an alternative paradigm which places the development of leadership capabilities above competencies (Duignan 2007), ‘being’ above ‘doing’, relationships above results, and Christ at the centre of all things, rooted and grounded in faith in Him (Flintham, 2007, p. 13).

3.4.3.3 Whole of Staff Formation

Research on effective staff development programs, though not extensive, has made a significant and insightful contribution to the understanding of adult learning in the context of the Catholic school. Key findings include the following:

- (1) Staff development programs need to be designed according to the backgrounds, experiences and needs of the participants.
- (2) Teachers as adult learners are autonomous in nature and will have a tendency to resist staff development programs that are mandated rather than those that give them the freedom of choice.
- (3) Teachers who are engaged in staff development activities need to have the support and guidance from local school principals and/or coaches.
- (4) Staff development programs designed for Catholic school teachers need to focus more on the contemporary concerns that the laity have in relation to their individual daily lived experiences and levels of faith development.
- (5) Catholic school lay teachers have a strong sense of mission and dedication to the ideals of *Catholic education* and see themselves as very important in carrying out the mission of the Catholic Church (DiPaola, 1990).

Additional research into models for staff formation offers a useful five step framework for ongoing staff development which attempts to make spiritual formation part of the core staff development agenda rather than an addendum:

1. View all interactions with staff as having staff development implications (it's an attitude);
2. Make a clear distinction between informal and formal staff development;
3. Build a strong informal staff development program;
4. Set the stage for a strong formal program; and
5. Consider specific program priorities in both professional development and spiritual formation (Rogus and Wildenhaus, 2000, p 159).

The importance identified in prioritising a place for spiritual formation in staff development that is integrated and at the same time quite distinct from other professional learning, is echoed in the findings of Rshaid (2009) in research on the formation initiatives for staff and leaders:

The key to the success of any personal growth initiative is to understand that it must be approached differently from other types of training or professional development. For example, the effectiveness of such activities is almost impossible to measure quantitatively (which is flagrantly countercultural in this accountability era) (Rshaid, 2009, p. 74).

The research also found that attention to dimensions of growth associated with spiritual formation was also critical in developing effective learning communities:

Most schools have the goal of becoming professional learning communities. Staff meetings centered solely on pedagogy and technique, however, do not enable teachers to form the emotional bonds that can truly cement such communities (Rshaid, 2009, p 75).

In interpreting these results, the findings emphasise a holistic imperative in the approach. Importantly, one of the unexpected results of the formation initiatives in Rshaid's research was the identification of potential leaders.

... the alternate environment of the retreats gave us a different starting point for discovering leaders. It opened our eyes to the fact that the academic and intellectual traits that are conventionally regarded as the preeminent indicators of leadership potential sometimes emerge only after the person has been given the chance to exhibit those traits in a different environment (Rshaid, 2009, p. 76).

Thus, research into staff development programs and ongoing formation confirm the broader literature stressing context and holistic learning as the philosophical learning construct for spiritual formation. Research findings supporting spiritual formation for teachers have confirmed key themes already canvassed: recognising and supporting teaching as ministry; remaining attentive to the life questions in the teaching vocation; enacting leadership through witness and example; and the nurturing of rich authentic community relationships (Derbyshire, 2005).

3.4.3.4 Formation in Pre-service, Service and Succession Planning

The literature also points to a view shared by practitioners and researchers that formation needs to extend to teacher pre-service preparation in the future.

To date, our focus has been mostly on accreditation and professional development. As employers, we need to be much clearer in what we ask of our Catholic universities, and of our Catholic tertiary institutes that work in other universities (Holohan, 2009, p 37).

This implies a responsibility for education employing authorities and teacher training institutions:

Catholic Education Offices have a responsibility to ensure that all school staff, but especially young teachers, yet to mature in their faith journey, have access to appropriate professional education aimed at nurturing faith “in an educational, personal and pastoral environment designed for its promotion” (McLaughlin, 2000a, p. 73).

For continuing teachers, accreditation has been the strategy adopted by most Australian dioceses to ensure that teachers in Catholic schools undertake regular in-service of a religious nature. This involves a minimum number of hours of professional and spiritual development per year. The contextual literature (Chapter 2) has demonstrated concern across most Queensland dioceses about the efficacy of the current accreditation practice. A number of dioceses are currently developing a more intentional approach to what is offered systemically for accreditation in the area of spiritual formation. The most recent diocesan research has been in Wollongong diocese where planning is being developed on a needs based survey of staff (Marden, 2009).

This survey highlighted different self-perceived needs between male and female staff and between age demographics (Marden, 2009). 19–25 year old female staff reported as highly interested in immersion and inter-personal activities while their male counterparts reported preference for course work in theology and e-learning opportunities. Across both male and female cohorts as the age demographic

increases, the perceived need for reflective retreat time increased and a desire for wide and diverse opportunities for encounter in their formation is expressed. Negotiating grief and loss figures prominently in the 26–65+ female cohort and in the 36–65+ male cohort. These survey findings have directly shaped the program of offerings planned for staff in the Wollongong diocese. Their significance is in confirming the diverse needs of staff reflected in their life-world, and the need to acknowledge this diversity of starting points in any programming of spiritual formation during continuing service.

Research in leadership succession planning identifies a particular set of issues with implications for spiritual formation. Australian research (*ACU Leadership Succession Project*, D'Arbon, Duignan & Duncan 2001; *ACSP Leadership Succession Survey*, Lacey, 2003) has confirmed other studies in Canada, England and America about an apparent “global crisis” in relation to the lack of teachers exploring opportunities for principal-ship (Lacey, 2003, p. 2). The 2003 *Australian Journal of Education* symposium on the problem of principal shortages gave international focus to available research evidence (D'Arbon, Duignan & Duncan, 2002; Carlin, d'Arbon, Dorman, Duignan, & Neidhart, 2003; Scott, 2003). The wide and disparate expectations among principals has been identified as an important contributing factor, along with burgeoning expectations and intrusion into family life (Barty, Blackmore, Sachs & Thomson, 2005)

The particular challenge of religious leadership has also been identified as a disincentive for Catholic school leadership aspirations (Crotty, 2005). This is illuminated in Flintham's research (2007) which indicated current principals drew heavily on relationships with members of religious congregations for their formation. As these ‘cradle Catholic’ principals diminish and religious congregations contract, a new generation of teachers and leaders who have had little meaningful connection with parish and no affiliation at all with living out the norms of religious orders, are unlikely to benefit from the “matrix of sources for spiritual capital” (Grace, 2003, p. 237). Flintham notes this as a major conclusion in his research. It is a significant concern that can also be insinuated from the research of Wallace (1998), Crotty (2006) and Belmonte (2006).

There is a major conflict in a system of schooling that exists to nurture the faith of young people, yet it fails to realise and address the fact that the traditional spiritual capital of Catholic school leadership is likely to decline. The renewal of spiritual capital therefore becomes a critical question for the continuance of the distinctive purpose of Catholic schools in the future. (Belmonte, Cranston & Limerick 2006, p 9)

In addressing this concern, the literature indicates three areas of strategic focus: broader opportunities for spiritual (and theological) development; early identification and spiritual mentoring of aspiring leaders; and the development of new Catholic school leadership constructs. Noting the need for growing the 'soul' of leadership (Bolman & Deal, 2001), researchers and practitioners are calling for broader strategies than formalised accredited programs in the selection, screening and training of future Catholic school principals (Killeen, 1997). Crotty (2006), drawing on her Australian research, calls for more diverse opportunities for religious and theological development, and "expanded processes and strategies that constitute accreditation for all teachers to teach in the Catholic school" (Crotty, 2006, p. 793). This finding is relevant in the current research in that it reflects a long-term, organisationally contexted recommendation responsive to both vision and reality.

The active identification and spiritual mentoring of potential leaders is also an avenue attracting interest as the research mounts around the importance of the inner capacities of the principal for the Catholic ethos and culture of the school and the embedding of spiritual formation in staff (Bracken, 2004; Flintham, 2007). Belmonte, Cranston and Limerick's (2006) findings in particular indicate successful leadership in Catholic schools being highly influenced by the cultural and spiritual capital that a principal brings to a school signifying a fundamental importance of appointing principals who are not only professionally competent but spiritually as well (Belmonte et al, 2006). Thus the strategy of early mentoring is seen as a way of building in this spiritual capital, and the issue has been raised at significant Catholic leadership gatherings around the country (Holohan, 2009; Ranson, 2006).

If school leadership is going to assume wider religious leadership then persons need to be identified who, alongside possessing administrative capacity, are also grounded in faith, possessing spiritual maturity, a vocational sensibility and the awareness of ecclesial responsibility. Such persons obviously don't come ready packaged! Such persons, identified by potential, require sustained formation and requisite education. Both focussed theological and spiritual formation are required (Ranson, 2006, p. 421).

This is supported by the specific recommendations offered for further research:

Potential principals should be spotted young, grown, nurtured and affirmed by the school and diocese. National preparation programs should be 'translated' into the language and context of faith. The increasingly shallow pool of candidates secure in the background of faith and its expression should be addressed by 'remedial opportunities' for spiritual formation and development prior to taking up principalship. Selection processes should focus more upon 'being' rather than 'doing': 'the heart as well as the hoops of headship (Flintham, 2007, p. 3).

Finally, the scholarly conversation has raised the need to explore different future scenarios for Catholic leadership. These include shifting to a new paradigm of leadership (Ranson, 2006; Spry & Duignan, 2004) integrating formation into professional learning at all stages (Belmonte, Cranston & Limerick 2006; Branson, 2004) and giving the development of spiritual leadership high priority in the identifying of future leaders and their preparation (Ranson, 2006). While the shape of new leadership constructs is not defined, the need for new paradigms of leadership development is part of the broad conversation during a period of recognised change:

Within this current 'liminality' new styles of leadership for the Church in Australia will emerge, and these new styles will have direct implication for the way in which leadership of our schools is imagined...School leadership will, more and more, need to be seen as religious leadership. This will demand persons who are deeply conscious not only of their own vocation for leadership but also highly aware of the vocation of the Catholic school community, and yet, at the same time, of the relative and participative place of the school community in the wider evangelical mission (Ranson, quoted in NCEC, 2005, p. 9).

Integrating formation into professional learning programs at all levels is a strategy that invites a range of possibilities explored in the literature. 'Regular strategic planning' in spiritual development and the provision of more structured, targeted, protected and even mandated opportunities for principal spiritual formation and growth (Flintham, 2007) is one area of focus. Another is the integration of the three aspects of the spiritual role identified in the research (being, knowing and doing) into any planned framework for spiritual leadership (O'Hara, 2000). This has strong advocacy. Building on research by Sarros (2002), Duignan advances that "formation programs for leaders in catholic schools need to focus on the heart and soul of leadership as well as on its cognitive and intellectual aspects" (Duignan, 2002, p.176). The outcome is the development of authentic witness (Duignan, 2002). This kind of formation is highly valued by school leaders:

Of more importance to us as Principals of Catholic schools is the spiritual, moral and ethical framework that underpins the use of these types of skills... What we really value is transparent not in the good times but in the bad. That is when we act from a heart informed by an integrated faith/spirituality (Spry, 2004, p. 21).

It is apparent that there is a rising interest for new understandings of leadership to be imagined – and pursued – that give a much stronger focus to the spiritual heart of leadership. Moreover, this is recognised as fundamental to the sustainability of authentic Catholic schools into the future:

If Catholic schools are to continue to be distinguished by their strong faith communities and not become private schools characterized as schools of academic excellence and a religious memory, attention must be given to faith leadership and how it is being developed in school leadership

(Wallace, 2000, cited in Earl, 2005, p. 513)

3.4.3.5 Implications for Formation for Mission

Within the changing landscape of Catholic schooling, the spiritual formation of staff is intimately connected to and influenced by the shifts in the ecclesial, theological and cultural landscape influencing understanding around mission, ethos and vocation. In an era of unprecedented social, economic and ecclesial change, the greatest challenge is how to imagine and undertake the preserving and enhancing of the school's Catholic mission and culture for future generations. The literature indicates this will need an intentional and conscious approach to staff formation for mission. While a range of strategies and directives have emerged, little has been done to test the efficacy of any. In the midst of this uncertainty, perhaps the essential challenge is to design formation that is rooted in tradition, future oriented, and responsive to the present - able to make sense of the "mixed signals emanating from our social and ecclesial context" (Mulligan, 1994, p. 106).

3.5 Generation and Justification of the Research Questions

The review of the literature in this chapter has encompassed three significant areas of scholarship relevant to the research. The body of literature on each of the three themes is extensive, crossing several disciplines including theology, psychology, spirituality, educational theory, leadership theory, missiology and ecclesiology. In presenting a selected critical synthesis, the purpose has been to give the reader sufficient background to understand the relationship of this literature to the research problem. As such, it provides a more informed understanding of the factors that influence staff spiritual formation within a Catholic school setting, and generates the research questions.

The nexus of theory from the multiple disciplines contributing to the scholarship in spiritual formation constitutes a rich holistic source when considered together. In scanning the literature in the theme of adult spirituality with a particular focus on the areas of contemporary Australian spirituality and formation theory and practice, it is clear that the spiritual journey is always contexted, relational and experiential. Australian culture, and in particular the characteristics of that culture in the demographic profile of the school communities in this study, presents a unique

challenge for engagement. The post-modern search that demands individual meaningfulness is undergirded in Australian culture by a fierce independence and value for authenticity (Mackay, 2000). Australian spirituality, influenced by the country's unique history, landscape and indigenous identity, demands a spiritual vocabulary that speaks to its context and experience (Tacey, 2003). Such a lexicon is not found in religious institutions, and while the adults in Catholic school communities appreciate the spirit of the Catholic tradition they encounter in the school, they do not connect readily with the reality of the tradition they encounter in the Church. This is a fundamental challenge for contemporary spiritual formation.

In the formation context of spirituality, best practice in associated disciplines as well as contemporary theological perspectives, are contributing to the challenges of engaging new contexts (post-modern culture) with renewed purpose (personal transformation). The personal experiential foundation is paramount across all disciplines, with current theological thought framing the transformative dimension of formation in new ways. Through every lens – cultural, religious, cross-disciplinary and theological – the need for recovery and development of a new language of symbol and metaphor around God and Christian spirituality is re-iterated. These diverse disciplines, in the particular ways identified in the synthesis of the literature, influence contemporary approaches to formation design and praxis adding a depth and vigour previously untapped in the processes of accompanying the individual spiritual journey.

The literature review explicates a changed and diverse background to the personal and faith context of contemporary staff and in the ecclesial and contemporary spiritual context of their Catholic school setting. Further, it is apparent that the uniqueness of the individual journey is heavily influenced by elements of both the post-modern Australian and post-conciliar Catholic cultural contexts. The absence of a shared meta-narrative in contemporary culture means that general assumptions about shared meaning are improbable and that the process of individual meaning-making in this setting is complex and varied.

Therefore it is vital that an exploration of a contemporary spiritual formation initiative, as the CFP is, must seek to understand the experience of participants from their perspective. Consequently, the first research question is:

How do participants perceive their experience in the Catching Fire Project (CFP)?

The research is set in a systemic Catholic school environment. The review of the literature explicates the complex inter-connective and unique aspects of this environment where the personal, the professional and the cultural dimensions of community converge. In addition, the contextual literature and scholarly research has shown that the rising challenge in the area of formation is the provision of an effective system wide strategy. Thus, greater understanding of what elements help or hinder strategic influence of a spiritual formation initiative in a Catholic educational setting demands exploration.

The synthesis of literature concerning the theme of adult education identifies the strategic factors in growing and implementing spiritual formation in a systemic educational context. In particular, these include the professional and community dynamics of adult learning and staff development; the importance of the connection to the workplace; the aesthetic, experiential and service learning dimensions of holistic adult learning approaches as well as the integration of characteristics of change education in adult learning and how this interplays with critical mass theory to effect transformative and sustainable change. The role of leadership in providing witness, purpose and generating a culture of trust within the group of learners or staff has emerged a central factor for consideration. Moreover, the life-wide, life-long context of all adult learners presents opportunity and challenge for the development of appropriate formation experiences. Finally, developments in reflective practice and the dynamics of group culture also point to a strong interface with key aspects of spiritual formation in the religious context.

This research is also located within an ecclesial environment. The synthesis of the scholarly discussion in this third theme of the literature review has identified the currents of thinking and research as they relate to the identity of the Catholic school and the vocation of the Catholic school educator. While the literature interrogates the fractures and challenges in the ecclesial sphere, it also indicates a strong and positive alignment between leadership, vocation and the role of the Catholic school as a place of transformative vision. The developing language and imagining that underpins a contemporary missional vision of Catholic schools is a rich resource for staff spiritual formation. However, the fragmenting of the ecclesial and cultural fabric challenges traditional assumptions about purpose and identity for those involved in the ministries of the Church, with understanding around the core lexis of mission and evangelisation having wide variance across key stake-holders.

The literature also identifies a need for spiritual formation for mission to be both integrated into the everyday school context and separated for specific attention. The exploration of strategies and pathways for the development and formation support of Catholic leaders has had even less attention in the literature than staff formation, but the urgency of leadership formation is apparent. The close links evident between the general leadership literature, the educational leadership literature and the spiritual leadership role of the Catholic school principal, lie in the cultural and symbolic, transformational, and servant leadership theories. Advocacy for the connective and integrative approach of the holistic education scholars is embraced by those exploring appropriate formation in contemporary settings: a meaning making around formation for mission that echoes a head heart and hands approach:

Faith formation must be more than just an intellectual exercise, of the head. It must be of the heart and hands as well: prayer, contemplation, activity leading to justice and a love for the poor. (Mulligan, 2005, p. 240)

The importance of context, leadership and integration intersect across the three themes of the literature review. Their convergence in addressing the challenge of spiritual formation for Catholic school educators constitutes fertile ground for exploration. The harnessing of best practice in holistic education, staff development and learning communities has the potential to maximise strategic influence in the school context. An appreciation of emerging thinking in understanding mission, purpose and vocation has the potential to re-imagine ways of integrating formation into the professional and personal context of staff. An understanding of the role of leadership in creating environments of learning, Catholic ethos and community has the potential to develop an intentionality around formation that animates the self who leads as well as the community who is led. Thus, the second research question is:

How does the Catching Fire Project (CFP) influence the school community?

The generation of these two research questions is one of the many outcomes of the literature review and serve to focus the conduct of this study. The issues identified in the synthesis of the literature intersect and interlink in a complex way, and the research questions generated reflect this open reality. The dynamics of what connects with individuals and communities, and what is happening in the process, are at the heart of this research.

4 OVERVIEW OF THE CATCHING FIRE PROJECT

4.1 Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to explain and justify the origin, conceptual underpinnings, staff programs, resources and the strategic parameters of the *Catching Fire Project* (CFP) at the centre of this study. The CFP has been an initiative of Brisbane Catholic Education in response to the perceived need for a systematic approach to staff formation. To this end, an external consultant was commissioned to design a framework in 2005. I was the external consultant approached for this task. At the same time, the BCE Renewal Process was being undertaken, delivering recommendations at the end of 2005. The implementation of these saw the development of a role entitled Project Officer for Evangelisation and Spiritual Formation. Responsibilities of the role holder included the implementation of the newly created spiritual formation framework and the development of strategies evolving from the framework. I was subsequently appointed to this role. The following year saw wide consultation around the framework, and the development of three staff formation programs with accompanying resources. The Catching Fire Staff Formation for Mission framework was launched in conjunction with the Leadership Framework and the Strategic Renewal Framework. The formation programs and strategies were piloted in the following year. This research explores the experience of participants during that pilot year of the project.

Thus, as events have unfolded, I have been involved in the development of both the CFP framework and the creation and implementation of the formation programs which are the focus of this research. With this professional involvement, I bring to this study a belief that spiritual formation is a catalytic dimension in the growth of contemporary Catholic education leaders as schools and education systems continue to reinterpret their contemporary identity and mission. I also know how difficult it is to obtain substantive data in the area of formative spiritual experience, and how critical this is in developing a collaborative way forward in the provision of an authentic approach in spiritual formation for leaders and educators. Thus, while I have a positive disposition about the role of spiritual formation itself, there is much to be explored in terms of best practice and contemporary application. Within this, I am particularly interested in understanding how people authentically connect with and translate the transformational vision at the heart of the Gospel message. To this end, I am as keen to generate insights on what is not effective and why, as I am to

confirm what is effective and why. Trustworthy findings offer valuable insights for further development in this work, and it is this longer-term vision that is the fundamental driver for this researcher.

Consequently, in the role of researcher for this study, the concern for professional distance has been paramount in undertaking this research. Therefore, in addition to measures safeguarding the validity and reliability of the data gathering process outlined in Chapter 6.8 and 6.9, and the self-managing tools utilised by the researcher outlined in 6.10, the following measures were taken to ensure, as far as possible, an appropriate professional distance throughout the research period:

- The production of resources and the creation of the programs were developed in collaboration with a variety of other contributors and with a diverse group of colleagues functioning as critical friends.
- Programs were always co-facilitated, and these were with external facilitators taking the leading role.
- Pilot school participants were not aware of the role of the researcher in either the design of the formation framework or of the programs and resources. These were always named as BCE initiatives and presented collaboratively.
- Resources, strategies and the oversight of relationship with the pilot school principals and staff was undertaken with colleagues and specific external consultants.
- A separate Catching Fire email address was created for the direction of general feedback from schools about resources.
- The researcher employed a professional supervisor for the duration of the research.

4.2 CFP's Research Foundations

To develop the CFP and its formation strategies and resources, the following process was adopted:

1. Problem identification;
2. Needs assessment of learners/target audience;
3. Communication of goals, objectives and purpose;
4. Educational strategies including content and method;
5. Implementation; and
6. Evaluation and feedback (Sheehan & Kirkland, 2007).

The *Catching Fire* Framework was generated from the processes engaged in Steps 1, 2 and 3 above. The initial concepts for the framework were informed by key elements of the contextual literature outlined in Chapter 2, namely research for the

QCEC on *Spiritual Formation for Leadership across the Queensland Dioceses* (2005) as well as an earlier QCEC research project: *Strategies and Models that best support the Faith Development of Teachers* (1995). In addition, contributions from the following sources also informed the framework's development:

- NSW Catholic Education Directors (2005);
- Parramatta and Hobart Dioceses 'Courage to Teach/Lead' initiative (2005);
- The 'Leaders Lead' project for Lutheran schools (2005);
- Emerging formation initiatives by Catholic Health Australia (2011);
- The formation approaches of Loyola Institute (2005), the Marist Formation Team (2006) and Edmund Rice Education Australia (Qld) (2006).

The development of the CFP incorporated a critique of international and Australian spiritual formation approaches and practices. In addition, detailed interviews were conducted with key education office personnel in each Queensland diocese. These engagements generated key learnings (Appendix M) with suggested design principles and practical strategies for the development of any systemic approach to formation. The *Catching Fire* Framework was developed on these foundations.

Following the development of the framework, Steps 4 and 5 led to the creation of the *Catching Fire* staff formation programs and other resource initiatives, and later their implementation within Brisbane Catholic Education schools.

Finally, as implementation proceeded, evaluation (Step 6) commenced. In this study the evaluation process used Parlett and Hamilton's (1972; 1987) illuminative model of program/curriculum evaluation.

4.3 Conceptual Underpinnings of the CFP

The CFP conceptualises spiritual formation as a transformative journey in the context of the mission of Catholic education. That journey is understood as personal and professional, individual and communal. The participant is seen as a lifelong, life-wide learner, who has a unique story and context, experience and way of knowing. The formation curriculum is based on an approach to learning that understands spiritual formation as holistic, enlivened by engagement with multiple learning strategies and most effective when priority is given to the experiential dimension. In this way, the CFP, is designed to be person and process-centred.

Finally, the CFP is congruent with the religious and evangelising priorities of the BCE Strategic Renewal Framework, which is the overarching strategic organiser for Brisbane Catholic Education. This aspiration is appropriately expressed in the CFP's primary goal of "enlivening all staff through spiritual formation as lifelong adult learners who nurture education for transformation" (BCE, 2006, p. 4).

4.4 CFP Framework Matrix

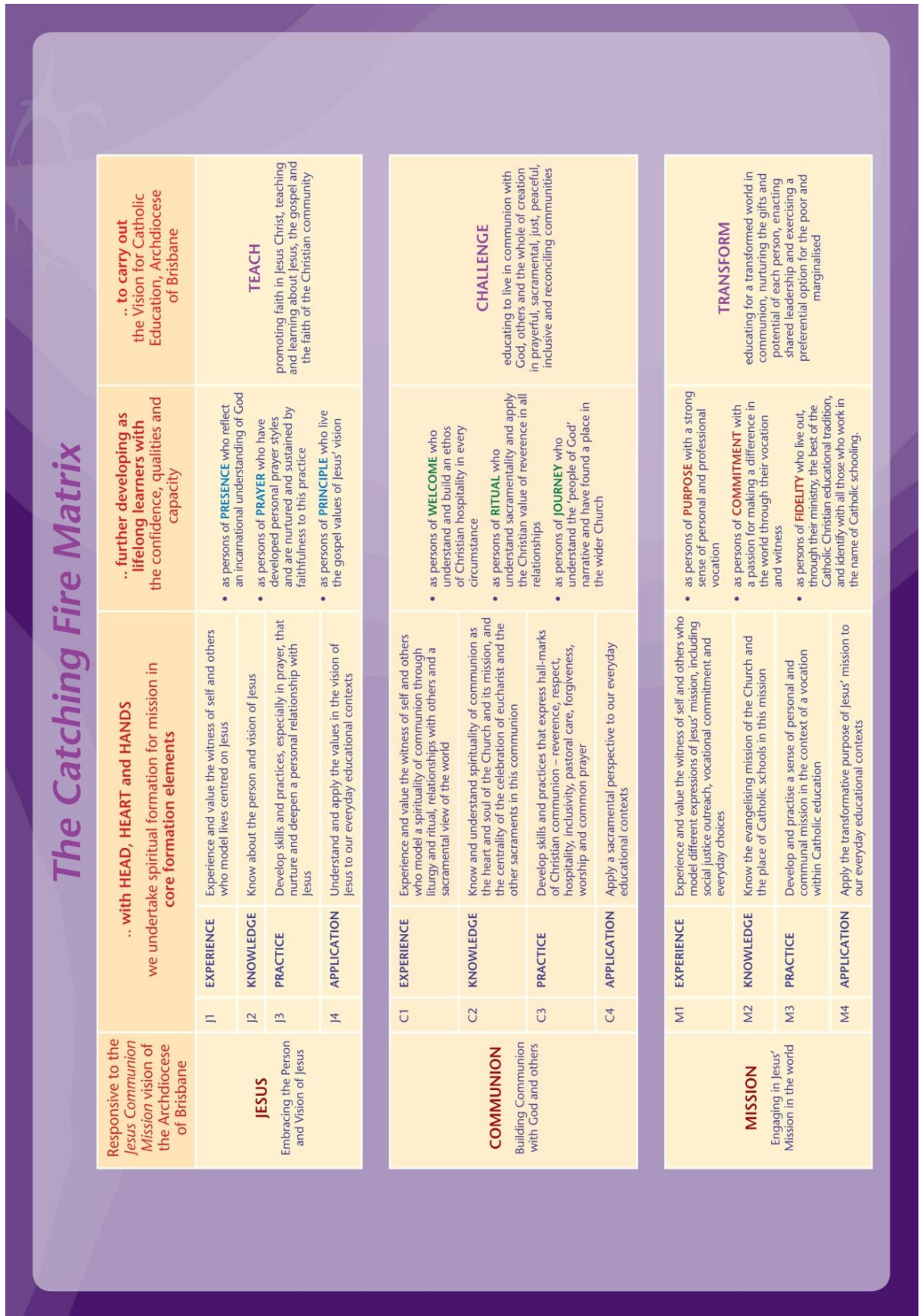
This BCE goal underpins the CFP Framework as indicated in the CFP Matrix (Figure 4.1). Explicated in the framework document, *Catching Fire: Staff with Spirit, Spiritual Formation Framework for the Mission of Catholic Education, Archdiocese of Brisbane* (BCE, 2006), the matrix explains the framework in a linear way that elaborates on core formation components. The framework responds to key visioning statements of the Brisbane Archdiocese, including the Archdiocesan *Jesus Communion Mission* vision (2003) and Brisbane Catholic Education's *Teaching Challenging Transforming* vision (2004). In the light of these foundational statements, the framework identifies core formation elements and spiritual capacities to be developed within experientially grounded and holistic formation experiences, as represented by the expression '*head, heart and hands*'.

The rationale for the CFP explicates three dimensions of the Archdiocesan vision:

1. a lived relationship with Jesus and his vision (the **Jesus** dimension);
2. the participation with the whole company of travellers who embrace the Jesus mystery across time and space (the **Communion** dimension); and
3. response to the reality that authentic spiritual formation in the Christian tradition moves us out of ourselves through action that makes a difference in the world (the **Mission** dimension).

Figure 4.1 presents the CFP Matrix.

Figure 4.1: The CFP Framework Matrix



4.5 CFP Framework Core Formation Elements and Capacities

The framework matrix (Figure 4.1) illustrates that attached to each of the 'Jesus', 'Communion' and 'Mission' formation dimensions are four core formation steps, namely:

1. Experience – referring to engagement and reflective praxis with personal experience/story or stories of others who model particular ways of being;
2. Knowledge – referring to information about and conceptual understanding of key spiritual formation content;
3. Practice – referring to skills, practices and disciplines in everyday life that will deepen spiritual growth in an ongoing way;
4. Application – referring to application of key spiritual formation learnings to everyday contexts.

Although knowledge is a vital component of spiritual formation, this framework is predicated on the belief that adult spiritual formation has a foundational experiential base that promotes reflective learning and the application of knowledge, skills and practices.

Also attached to each formation dimension are three associated capacities that the CFP seeks to develop in participants. These capacities are outcomes of their spiritual formation experience and recognisable hallmarks of Catholic Christian educators. Thus, across the three theological dimensions in the framework, there are twelve core formation elements and nine capacities.

These core formation elements and capacities guide content and process in each CFP staff program and all resources. However, in both program and resource implementation, they are designed to be experienced in different ways appropriate to the context and target group. This is explained in Section 4.6 (the staff formation programs). Furthermore, while nominating core formation elements and spiritual capacities, the CFP Framework offers a comprehensive understanding of spiritual formation and a flexible guide for spiritual formation planning and goal-setting for renewal, within which individual staff and schools may shape programs of formation according to specific needs and context.

Based on these three formation dimensions, a two-fold aim is specifically planned for in all experiences and resources generated from this framework:

1. the nurturing of the 'inner fire' – the deep personal connection to God in each person;
2. personal growth in community through the nurturing of particular capacities identified as hallmarks of Christian community in the spirit of Jesus. These capacities are identified in the framework.

4.6 CFP Staff Formation Programs

The *Catching Fire Project* staff formation programs explore the framework's three theological dimensions in a developmental and sequential way through distinct programs, each targeting different groupings of staff. The programs are as follows.

The ***Keepers of the Flame Program*** (KFP) is designed for experienced classroom teachers and begins with a 2½ day residential retreat program to develop reflective capacity for their personal and professional spiritual journeys. After initial attention to the stories of their own pathways into teaching, the program seeks to assist participants in making a personal connection with each other's stories and to the presence of God in their individual and collective contexts. The wider ecclesial connection is introduced to this dynamic, with the Jesus meta-narrative providing the connecting links.

The KFP has the following characteristics:

- designed for teachers with at least 8 years' experience in the classroom;
- uses Parker Palmer's approach (1993; 2000; 2007), 'the teacher within';
- focuses on the personal and professional journey into teaching;
- includes experiential and practical sessions on 'sustaining the fire' through prayer and reflection;
- develops a reflective capacity in company with other teachers, using narrative and the rich resources from the Christian tradition.

The second staff formation program in the CFP is the ***Guiding Lights Program*** (GLP), which is designed for members of school leadership teams. Commencing with a 2½ day residential retreat experience, the GLP focuses on deepening participants' spiritual foundation for Catholic school leadership, understanding and developing an integrated leadership style, engaging with the school and Church contexts, and developing an understanding of mission that integrates the missions of the school, the Church and Jesus. The process includes an encounter with homeless people 'on the streets', as well as the use of psycho-spiritual tools to

explore a personal understanding of the role of spirituality in Catholic leadership. The subsequent 'leader companioning' component offers a model of mentoring and continuing support that is characterised by flexibility in response to participant need.

The GLP has the following characteristics:

- designed for leaders (principals, deputy principals, APAs, APREs);
- uses Enneagram (a model of human personality) tools to open up the link between spirituality and personal leadership style, linking this to authentic gospel-centred leadership;
- includes an 'on the streets' experience that takes participants out onto the city streets with the homeless in a number of different contexts;
- includes a 'leader companioning' element as a sustainable form of mentoring, self-care and ongoing individual support and development;
- focuses on the soul of Catholic leadership rather than content coverage or management skills.

The third staff formation program in the CFP is the ***SpiritFire Program*** (SFP), which is designed for those who have an interest in and potential to animate the spiritual life of the school community. Three people from each school in *SpiritFire* are drawn from the staff, one from the school leadership team, usually the APRE, and two other staff members. The aims of the program are two-fold: to nurture the spiritual formation of participants and to develop skills for use in their own school staff communities. While participants strengthen their own spiritual life, they have particular carriage in implementing the systemic resources provided to schools, especially *Staff PrayerFire*.

The main activities within the SFP are the participants' 'reading' of their own lives through an understanding of scripture and psycho-spirituality, as well as their learning of simple skills to facilitate small group prayer initiatives and reflection times with other staff. Over the course of four formation contact days through the year, participants learn how to engage with the meaning of scriptural passages, understand and lead personal and group reflection on the scriptures, facilitate a process of theological reflection, develop and lead ritual, and explore a range of approaches to prayer that are part of the Catholic tradition.

The SFP has the following characteristics:

- designed for those staff identified as already having interest in and potential to be 'PrayerFire' animators amongst school staff – one person from the leadership team (usually APRE) and any two other staff members (including school officers and professional and support staff);
- has a two-fold focus: personal formation and skilling for future prayer facilitation/leadership in school community;
- uses scriptural exegesis, prayer practices, group spiritual discernment and psycho-spirituality tools to allow participants to explore and reflect on their own spiritual journey in a Christo-centric context as well as learn new tools to lead and facilitate;
- includes planning tasks and practice between gathering days;
- gives explicit emphasis to vocation and Catholic educational ministry.

4.7 Other CFP resources

In addition to the three staff formation programs outlined above, which are directed to selected participants, there are CFP resources produced for all staff in BCE Catholic schools. These resources aim to assist schools with a broad range of spiritual formation activities from individual and staff prayer to spiritual formation planning and goal setting for entire staffs. These resources include:

- the *Light a Prayer Candle* website;
- the *Staff PrayerFire* resource;
- the Spiritual Formation Network;
- the planning and goal setting resource;
- the PowerPoint Introduction to the Spiritual Formation Framework;
- the guide for facilitation;
- the DIY (Do It Yourself) resources, prayer cards; and
- web resources e.g. staff pilgrimage.

This extensive set of resources, along with the staff programs, supports the strategic approach to spiritual formation being piloted for staff by BCE, the parameters of which are summarised in Section 4.8.

4.8 Strategic Parameters

The BCE Strategic Renewal Framework is the overarching strategic organiser for Brisbane Catholic Education. Priority 1 in BCE's Strategic Renewal Framework is: "the religious and evangelising mission of Catholic schools" (BCE, 2006). The Evangelisation and Spiritual Formation Unit (ESF) was established in 2006 as part of the Executive Director's specific portfolio of responsibilities, signalling an elevation of spiritual formation of BCE school staff to the highest strategic priority level. As such, the work of the ESF, and the CFP in particular is the central system-wide staff strategy in supporting Priority 1 of the Strategic Renewal Framework.

Strategically, the aims of the CFP are two-fold: first, it supports and nurtures the culture of spiritual formation in all schools each year through the provision of centrally prepared formation processes and resources for local implementation by school staffs (as outlined in Section 4.7); second, it provides a set of coordinated staff formation programs (as outlined in Section 4.6) for selected staff in a cohort of schools. The experience of some of these staff members individually and as members of school communities is the focus of this research.

At systemic and school levels, the CFP is premised on the belief that spiritual formation is a shared responsibility, whereby the individual staff member, the school and Brisbane Catholic Education each contribute to its provision. However, primary responsibility for spiritual formation lies with the individual staff member. School communities and staff members are expected to negotiate annual spiritual formation goals in response to their individual needs.

Those schools that accept the invitation to engage with the CFP undertake to discern and invite staff to be involved in the formation programs. The strategic purpose in engaging a number of staff from the same school in the three formation programs is to build a core of shared experiences, shared understanding and shared praxis in order to influence the wider culture in the school. Targeting a cross-section of staff that includes leadership, classroom teachers and support staff has the strategic intention of capitalising on the influence of leadership as well as generating broader staff ownership.

As pragmatic incentives to participation, accreditation and funding are offered for participants. The seven staff from each school directly involved in the programs accrue 30 hours towards accreditation to teach (or specifically to teach RE) in a

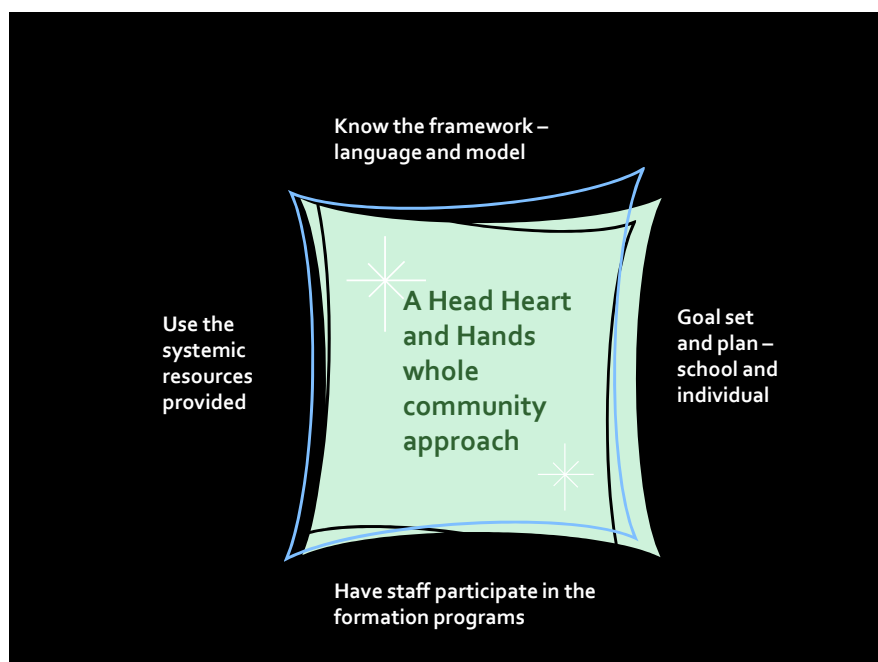
Catholic school. In addition, the costs for teacher release are shared between the school and Brisbane Catholic Education.

As well as sponsoring seven staff to the staff programs, the participating schools are expected to engage in three ways:

1. **The *Catching Fire* Framework:** Familiarising all staff with the approach and language of the *Catching Fire* Framework and using the resources made available as the basic framework for spiritual formation planning.
2. **Planning and Goal Setting:** Ensuring that spiritual formation planning and goal setting occur for individual staff members and the whole staff, linked to school and systemic annual goal setting and strategic renewal planning.
3. **General Systemic Initiatives and Resources:** Using the range of systemic resources provided to all schools as previously detailed.

Figure 4.2 illustrates the commitments of participating schools.

Figure 4.2: Strategic Parameters for Commitment of Each School to the CFP



The way in which schools engage with each of these strategic parameters remains a choice for each school, allowing flexibility to shape and integrate formation to meet the needs and context of the staff and school community. Staff members are encouraged to think outside of set programs, to critically analyse through the 'lens' of the framework what is already happening in their school, and to include appropriate strategies that integrate easily into staff life. Contact is maintained with each school community involved in CFP staff programs, thereby supporting work

with the whole staff and the leadership team in annual goal setting and renewal. Throughout, intentional connections are made with concurrent BCE developments in the broader priorities areas of school renewal, leadership, succession planning and induction.

Having outlined in this chapter the spiritual formation project (the CFP) at the centre of this study, the next chapter generates a theoretical framework that underpins individual participant experience.

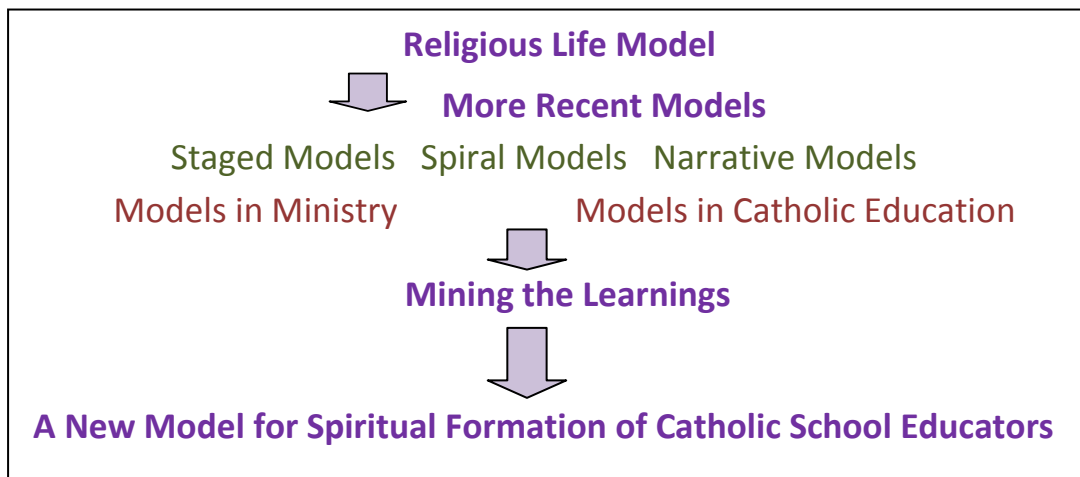
5 A THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK UNDERPINNING INDIVIDUAL EXPERIENCE

5.1 Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to generate a framework that explains the theoretical construction for the journey of the individual, underpinning participant experience in the CFP. Accordingly, this chapter examines formation approaches leading to a new model of spiritual formation appropriate for Catholic educators. The resultant model of formation is a convergence of theological insights, conceptual understanding and best practice across the areas of spiritual formation and adult education. As such it will provide, along with the literature review, the twin lens for the discussion of findings in Chapter 8.

Because Catholic schools were staffed almost entirely by members of religious orders until the 1960s, the predominant model of teacher formation in Catholic education has been the 'religious life' model. As current expectations for the provision of formation intensify for systemic authorities, the limitations of the religious life formation model for the contemporary context of Catholic school staff is at the core of the research problem. Indeed, the growth in the social and psycho-spiritual understanding of the adult learner and the nature of transformative change not only highlight shortcomings in the religious life model but also provide insights for a robust new model of spiritual formation for Catholic school educators that better reflects and interprets the spiritual journey of participants. Figure 5.1 identifies the various sections of this chapter, featuring a review of various models of spiritual formation, commencing with the religious life model and culminating in the explication of the new model.

Figure 5.1: Process of Review of Formation Models



5.2 The Religious Life Model

The review of spiritual formation models commences with the religious life model. The religious life model “is the Catholic historical realisation of the monastic archetype” (Schneiders, 2000, p. 9). While monasticism is a religious phenomenon identifiable across various religious traditions, cultures and throughout history, the Catholic religious life model is distinctive in three ways:

1. A Christ-centric focus – with a focus on the person of Jesus who is not merely an historical person whose memory gives a model to live by, but who is living and interactively present in the life of the believer.
2. A conception of salvation – based on a conviction that the one who believes in Jesus has eternal life in the here and now, and that whatever follows human death is not substantially different from the life of grace.
3. An ecclesial setting – where religious life is a ‘form of Catholicism’, not an alternative to it, and where mission and ministry in the world (even for contemplative orders) flows out of a commitment to the reign of God in the world.

(Schneiders, 2000, pp. 13–17)

The traditional formation framework, which provided the foundation for the religious who once staffed Australian Catholic schools, was a staged and sustainable immersion model. For most religious orders, the journey to perpetual profession took some years and progressed through identifiable phases: juvenate; postulancy; novitiate; profession of annual vows, scholasticate and profession of lifelong vows (Finke, 1997). There was a clear sense of journey, of living and learning toward a shared reality.

Formation in the religious life model is predicated on a three-step movement in spiritual development: the purgative way (moving away from sin); the illuminative way (progression of virtue); and the unitive way (where one reconciles with God) (Groeschel, 1984). This traditional understanding has a generally static or fixed view of the formative dimension. Lonergan’s theory of knowledge and process of religious conversion (Lonergan, 1972) challenged this to a more dynamic and transformative understanding of formation. Hide (2004) adds a fourth movement, the affirmative way, as an initial step to the traditional three-step movement. A matrix framework allows for the application of Lonergan’s conversion dimensions to the four-step process, situating the whole process within the journey towards Oneing – a term coined by the mystic Julian of Norwich to describe the growth toward and in union with God (Hide, 2004). Table 5.1 illustrates this application.

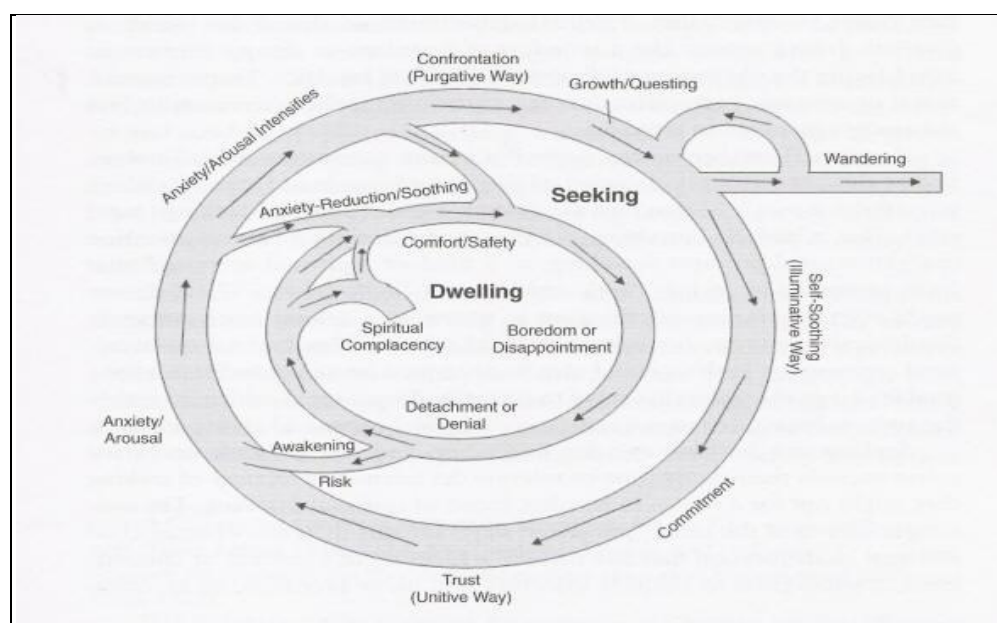
Table 5.1: Conversion: The transformative process of Oneing (union with God)
(adapted from Hide, 2004)

	Affirmative Way <i>Original Oneing</i>	Purgative Way <i>Oneing Through the Cross</i>	Illuminative Way <i>Becoming One in Love</i>	Unitive Way <i>Being in Love</i>
Intellectual Conversion	Our minds were created to reflect the wisdom of Christ in God.	Letting go of the limits of our intellectual certitude involves being prepared to embrace the cross.	Our search for knowledge opens us to new and deeper insights about the nature of wisdom and truth (mind of Christ).	Truth is more and more deeply intuitively grasped by the mind.
Affective Conversion	All things flow from God and return to God. Feelings can direct us to God.	We begin to earnestly seek to face our deepest fears that set up resistance to God.	Our physical and spiritual senses become more sensitised.	Our feelings are grounded in God enabling us to find consolation in the midst of suffering.
Moral Conversion	Our journey to God is to enable Christ to act in and through us.	There is a painful turning away from old tapes that give false messages about loving.	We begin to experience oneness with all humanity. We go out to meet Christ in others.	In the way of Christ we take personal responsibility for our life and mission .
Socio-political Conversion	The whole of the human person, body and soul, is sacred. Everyday life is sacred.	The violence in our own hearts makes us desperate to find peace and to work for peace.	There is a maturing ability to act from a place of inner freedom and to work for peace.	We can live in the midst of things but not in things.
Bodily Conversion	Human beings are spiritually embodied.	Addictions begin to cause real discomfort and motivate us to address them.	The wisdom of bodily knowing develops.	We live out of a holistic body–spirit unity.
Religious Conversion	God invites us to love with all our heart, all our mind and all our strength.	There is a deep unsettling desire to taste and see the goodness of God.	We have a maturing awareness that we must see all things through the eyes of God.	We know true joy and live in the eternal now.

In exploring the transformative process in a spiritual formation context, Wuthrow (1998) identifies an ongoing journey of ‘seeking’ and ‘dwelling’. Building on the research of Loder (1998) and Wuthrow (1998), Shults and Sandage (2006) developed a model (Figure 5.2) that expresses the relationship between ‘seeking’ time and ‘dwelling’ time. Based on the original three-phase movement in spiritual

development (purgative; illuminative; unitive), the model illustrates the progress between the inner and outer paths of dwelling and seeking. Dwelling includes “connection to a spiritual community and tradition that legitimises certain rituals and spiritual practices and provides a sense of continuity to spiritual experience” (Shults & Sandage, 2006, p. 32). For spiritual growth to continue, the individual is propelled at intervals to enter the path of seeking. While the model does not profile the variety of catalysing events or moments that cause the shift, it indicates the moment of transformative resolution propelling the individual into a renewed place of dwelling.

Figure 5.2: Balancing Spiritual Dwelling and Seeking
(Shults & Sandage, 2006, p. 33)



5.2.1 The Religious Life Model in Practice

In practice, the traditional religious life model translated into a distinctive lifestyle that had a marked influence on Catholic school identity and culture. The elements of this formative lifestyle might be summarised as: a commitment to the calling; a commitment to the community; and a commitment to service (O’Donoghue & Potts, 2004). The commitment to a deep sense of calling, symbolised by dress, by title and by a direct daily vocational living, gave a clear sense of unity about purpose and mission. The commitment to living in community with its daily rhythms around communal prayer, and its expectation on the individual to serve, developed a commitment to community identity above individual identity. The commitment to service demanded that time and energy be given to long hours in the school covering a multitude of tasks outside teaching, as well as service to the wider

community needs of parish and parish families (O'Donoghue & Potts, 2004, pp. 469–72).

The context of community living in religious life provided sustainable modelling which extended into the school environment. One learned how to be a religious, and how to teach, partly through observing how others did it, and by the companionship of influential individual religious and the religious community. The daily formation framework included compulsory morning prayers, communal Mass, communal rosary and night prayers. In a seamless extension into the classroom and the school community “many other spiritual exercises filled the day” (Burley, 2001, p. 33). Students absorbed a religious culture communicated through aural, visual and olfactory aspects entwined in their Catholic schooling experiences (O'Donoghue & Burley, 2008).

At the same time, the shortcomings of this model had a detrimental impact on the individual religious, as well as the school environment. The program of ‘spiritual formation’ for religious Sisters, Brothers and Priests included elements of renouncing self, family and any relational ties. Related quandaries also presented themselves for the individual religious:

It was not long before I began to feel the contradictions inherent in the life of a nun—we were to live a life of love, of God first and above all else, and then of love for all those we worked with. Love to me implied warmth, spontaneity and generosity, but these qualities were often suppressed. For our training involved ‘death to self’—a disciplined self-control of all such feelings. For me, love and death to self, presented a dichotomy that could never be reconciled (Graham as cited in O'Donoghue & Burley, 2008, p. 187).

This often resulted in a variety of discipline practices being adopted by teaching religious within the school environment, which were not in accordance with any official pedagogical position of the religious orders to which the members belonged (O'Donoghue & Burley, 2008).

While elements of a shared community vision and integrated praxis in everyday routine are a rich and valuable source in formation, the focus in the religious life model on the purgative way of transformation devalued individual experience. Rather than confirming a positive anthropology, the development of a deficit view of the human condition presents a major inadequacy for contemporary times.

5.3 Staged Developmental Models

A second group of approaches adapted for formation emanate from the staged developmental models. Models by Fowler (1981) and Kohlberg (1987), and the multiple pathway models offered by experiential practitioners Jarvis (2004) and Huitt and Robbins (2003) give priority to individual experience and development in the adult learner. In contemporary culture, this emphasis has become prominent in the educative contexts.

5.3.1 The Sequentially Staged Model

The most influential stage thinker in the faith development field is James Fowler (1981; 2000). Fowler defined faith development as a sequence of stages by which persons shape their relatedness to a transcendent centre (Fowler, 1981).

Fowler's theoretical research identified seven stages of spiritual development across a person's lifespan. Following a linear set of stages, he claims most people attain Stage 3, shaping some kind of personal definition of faith. Fowler also believes few people ever attain Stage 7 – the development of a consciousness of complex issues such as social justice, and the giving up of an egocentric focus that creates 'a universalising faith'. Importantly, Stage 5 suggests a second naïveté where an increased appreciation for the power of myth and symbol emerges. It is a movement that is indicative of "a return to the inner-child that values direct experience, while learning to affirm others' beliefs" (Huitt & Robbins, 2003, p. 11).

There are four fundamental assumptions in Fowler's work:

1. Human beings are hardwired for communion with the Divine, with connection to something greater than self.
2. Faith evolves through a complex development of sequential stages.
3. An individual's freedom of choice to deepen that communion, or move away from it, operates within the strong influences of secularity (Wilber, 2000).
4. This formative development happens within and is shaped by community, and its symbolic and ritual life (English, Fenwick & Parsons, 2005).

For the purposes of this study, Table 5.2 outlines the four Fowler stages which are most relevant to the participant demographic in this current research.

Table 5.2: Fowler’s stages of faith (stages 4–7)

Stage	Typical Age	Defining Qualities	Influences	Major Antecedents to Transition
4. Synthetic–Conventional	15–21, plus some adults	Formation of personal identity and shaping of personal definition of faith	External sources such as school, work, friends, media and personal reflection	Internal conflict between personal beliefs and social expectations
5. Individuative–Reflective	Young adult	Unique, individualistic worldview	Independent critical thinking; beginning to balance self, others and higher power	Desire to integrate worldviews of self and others
6. Conjunctive	Mid-life and beyond	Value direct experience while affirming others’ beliefs	Increasing appreciation of symbols and myths; meaningful learning experiences	Desire to reconcile the untransformed world and the personally-developed transformed vision and loyalties
7. Universalising Faith	Few ever reach	Disciplined activist seeking to impact and transform the social order	Consciousness of complex universal issues; loss of egocentric focus	

While Fowler’s work remains foundational, the framework is critiqued as being too cognitive and linear. The juxtaposition of Jung’s studies on mid-life against Fowler’s stage theory has provided a thoughtful lens for researchers to expand Fowler’s work. Drawing on Jung’s theory (1981) that the first half of life is influenced more by biology and the second half of life more by culture, researchers support an approach that gives emphasis to awareness and emotion. The ‘cultural’ aims of mid-life “come to fruition by the maturation of the spirit” (McFadden & Gerl, 1990, p. 35). This proposition confirms Erikson’s contention (1950) that “generativity is the central issue in midlife” as cited in Huitt and Robbins (2003, p. 12).

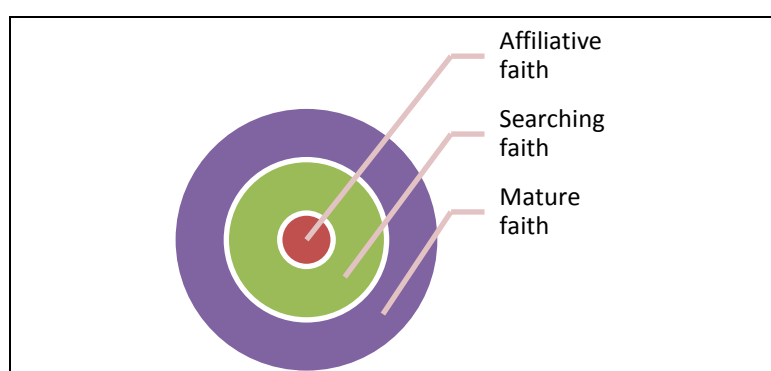
5.3.2 The Experientially Staged Model

Working with staged modelling, experiential learning scholars have contributed what they understand to be the working principle of individual differentiation. Jarvis (1987, 2004), building on Kolb’s work in experiential learning (1984), offers a model which allows different routes and non-linear pathways in the adult learning journey. While acknowledging the reality of different learning pathways, this model foregrounds reflection and experiential praxis in progression through stages and in the creation

of transformative change in the adult learner. However, insufficient reference to, and integration of, adult developmental markers remains a key limitation in this model.

A different kind of experiential approach that incorporates both staged models and spiral models is Westerhoff's 'Rings of Faith' model (1976). Identifying 'rings' or stages, Westerhoff proposes that faith life grows and builds on these concentric rings of experience. The revised stages (Westerhoff, 1980) are identified as affiliative faith, searching faith and mature faith (Figure 5.3). This model recognises lifelong growth, where the core of mature faith rests in a childlike faith.

Figure 5.3: The Rings of Faith Model (Westerhoff, 1980)



Experientially, and paradoxically, the stages of maturing spiritual growth reflect a developing interiority to a point where the individual is subsumed in God. The contribution of the mystics in the Catholic tradition to the experiential dimension of formation is well documented.

The first theologies of the soul were also the first attempts at depth psychology. Mystical awareness of the person's inner world or soul is distinct from ordinary awareness. For St. Teresa it was an inner castle; for Catherine of Siena the soul was an interior home; for Meister Eckhart it was a little castle; for St. John of the Cross the soul was the dark and hidden part of his house (Beck, 2003, p. 30).

This process of deepening interiority is elaborated in three steps in the 14th century work of Christian Mysticism 'The Cloud of Unknowing' (Walker, 1998):

1. A way of life where the believer is caught up more with things outside of self than those within. It is a life in the world filled with good deeds and works of mercy, but not yet deepened with interior things.
2. The second stage is characterised by a movement towards interiority. Within self, interior meditation on the things of the spirit is the key.

3. The believer is above and beneath self and under God – this happens through grace. Here the believer is united with God in spirit and one with God in love and desire in the Cloud of Unknowing. (Walker, 1998)

The same paradoxical process of interiority and detachment has been re-presented as a four stage journey of spiritual growth moving from the 'chaotic/anti-social' stage into the 'formal/institutional' stage through a 'scepticism/questioning' stage and finally into the 'mystic/communal' stage (Peck, 1993, p. 238).

In all expressions of experiential staged learning, there is an acknowledgement of the uniqueness of the individual journey. This remains an important contribution to contemporary understanding of the formative process.

5.4 Spiral Models

The application of spiral dynamics in spirituality has been associated with Ken Wilber as part of the development of 'integral spirituality' (Wilber, 2006), which is a response to the challenge of re-conceptualising spirituality in the modern and post-modern context. Within a broader framework that assumes multiple pathways of development, Wilber identifies four factors that facilitate a personal transformative process that spirals into deeper awareness and being. Different in each individual depending on background, capability and life experience, the four factors are fulfilment, dissonance, insight and opening (Wilber, 2000). Fulfilment means that the individual has reached the completion of a particular stage or 'wave'. Some experience of dissonance then opens the individual to transformation. This experience is one of pain and disorientation in letting go and embracing the new. Eventually, out of the dissonance comes insight to a new reality. Finally, if all three factors fall into place, there is an opening up to the next wave of consciousness, a deeper and richer reality than previously experienced or imagined (Wilber, 2000). For each individual, the profiling of dissonance as a catalyst for transformation resonates with what the mystics call the 'dark night of the soul' as a necessary breakthrough phase in spiritual growth.

From this meta-world of theology to the real-world setting of education, the conceptual perspective of the spiral model has application in curriculum planning development. In her work, Harris proposes educationalists adopt curriculum planning "from a religious and artistic angle of vision, in contrast to one that is technical and mechanical" (Harris, 1989, p. 169).

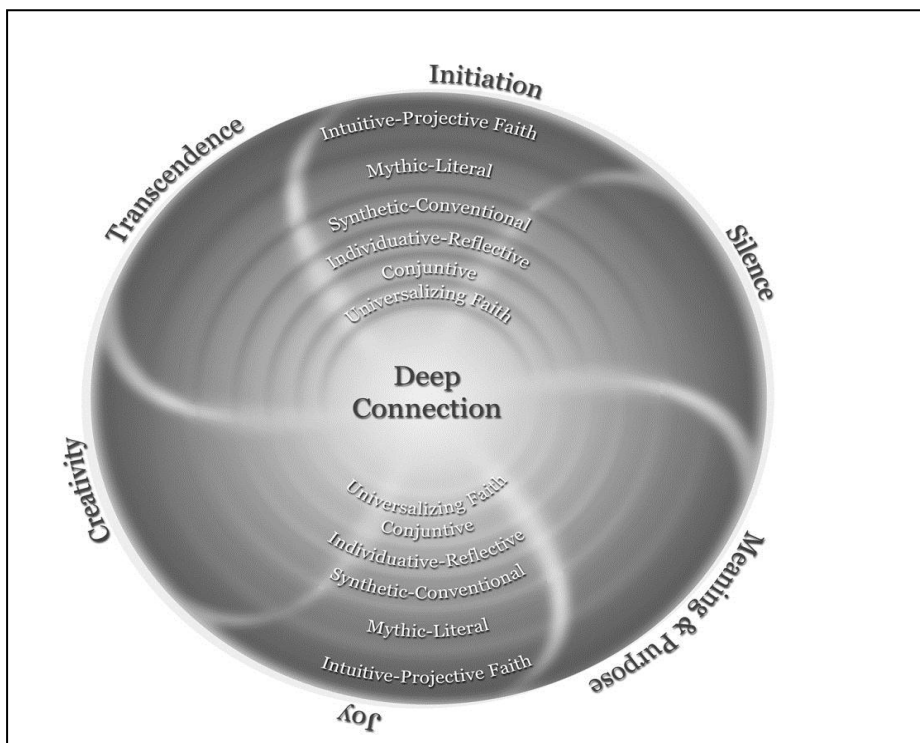
Curriculum planners should think of themselves as artists, as the potter who works with clay, so that we can “fashion a people.” We re-order and re-create experience to give it meaning. What we do will be intuitive rather than technical... more like a dance than something linear. (Harris, 1989, p. 170)

In this way, Harris pioneers a new paradigm for modelling that directly reflects a way of understanding adult development that is cyclical rather than linear. This perspective is particularly appropriate for a formation program because of the experientially responsive nature of the work and the acknowledgement of the complex and iterative nature of individual human spiritual growth.

5.4.1 A Spiral ‘Pathways of Learning’ Model

One of the educationally engaging approaches developed through this perspective is the spiral model created by Kessler (2000). This model highlights an understanding of learning that identifies diverse pathways. Figure 5.4 illustrates the

Figure 5.4: Kessler’s Spiral Model of Spiritual Development (2000)
(Huitt & Robbins, 2003, p. 11)



Identifying seven different innate drivers for individuals derived from the developmental research of Fowler (1981), Kohlberg (1984), Maslow (1983), Gardner (2000), Erikson (1950) and Campbell (1972), Kessler (2000) affirms distinct practices needed to nurture these different pathways in the spiritual journey. The

premise in this model is that the starting point for individuals is different yet falls into seven general pathways. Kessler calls these “pathways to the soul” (Kessler, 2000, p. 160). For each pathway, the experiences and activities provided, progress the individual yearning deeper and deeper into their connective soul space. Table 5.3 elaborates the descriptors for each pathway, cross-matching Kessler’s identified pathways with other theories from Fowler, Gardner, Erikson, Maslow, Sternberg, Csikszentmihalyi and Campbell.

Table 5.3: Pathways to the soul (Kessler, 2000)

Pathway	Description	Found in Other Theories
Yearning for deep connection	Describes a quality of relationship that is profoundly caring, resonant with meaning and involves feelings of belonging	Fowler (1981) Erikson (1950) – Need for belonging (to something larger than oneself); Gardner (2000) Inter-personal intelligence (connection/others)
Longing for silence and solitude	As a respite from the tyranny of busyness and noise, silence may be a realm of reflection, of calm and rest, prayer or contemplation.	Gardner (2000) – Intrapersonal intelligence
Search for meaning and purpose	Exploration of big questions, such as “Why am I here?” “Does my life have a purpose?” “What is life for?” “What is my destiny?” and “Is there a God?”	Gardner (2000) – Existential intelligence Fowler (1981) Unique, individualistic worldview
Hunger for joy and delight	Can be satisfied through experiences of great simplicity, such as play, celebration or gratitude	Csikszentmihalyi (1998) – Flow in consciousness
Creative drive	Is part of all the gateways; the awe and mystery of creating, whether developing a new idea, a work of art, a new discovery or a new lens on life	Sternberg (1988) – Creative intelligence
Urge of transcendence	The desire to go beyond perceived personal limits; not only the mystical realm, but experiences of the extraordinary in the arts, athletics, academics or human relations	Maslow (1983) – Transcendence Fowler (1981) - loss of egocentric focus
Need for initiation	Deals with rites of passage	Campbell (1972); Schlegel and Barry (1980) – Initiation

While Kessler’s work is focussed on school students, the model is applicable to adults. The key to implementing this model is to provide appropriate scaffolding and opportunity to address each of the pathways in a manner that is meaningful to the developmental level of the individual. A strength in Kessler’s spiral model is the cross-match analysis and integration of developmental theories with her individual

pathway recognition. This contribution underlines the holistic approach to formation strongly supported in the literature. Her understanding of the critical role of environment and context also has endorsement in the literature.

The limitation of this framework is the reliance on the initial environmental engagement and the ability of the teacher/facilitator to propel individuals into the quest about their “most intimate questions and longings” (Kessler, 2000, p. 18) and to continue the companionship. This is because the capacity to “invite soul into the classroom” (Kessler, 2000, p. 16) ultimately depends on “the identity and integrity of the teacher” (Palmer, 2007, p. 2) and attention to their own spiritual development.

5.5 Narrative Models

Another model for adult formative learning to emerge in contemporary times is the narrative model. The construction of narrative as a mode of thought has been methodically explored in the literature, informed by the groundwork scholarship of Ricour (1984) and Bruner (1986; 2004). Two pre-eminent characteristics of narrative thinking are relevant to the discussion:

1. Narrative thought contrasts with logical inductive thought, allowing for a different way of world-making; and
2. Narrative reflection gives entry to a different reality that orders experience outside of chronological time and other temporal forms (Bruner, 2004).

In this dynamic, connection to an articulation of experience is crucial, and the outcome of that connection gives shape to one’s spirituality.

The drive for self-understanding in the post-modern context has seen a stronger use of narrative across a number of disciplines. By telling and retelling their life stories, adult learners describe times of continuity and change in their lives, and give an account of their self-formation. The process of (re)reading one’s narrative offers new and alternative learning (Johnson, 2002) where “both the narrative itself and reflections upon the narrative appear to facilitate understanding and to generate new knowledge” (Chambers, 2003, pp. 404–5). The use of narrative is thus a way in which teachers “find voices to tell their own stories” (Beattie, 2001, p. 59) and gain new understandings of their lives and the communities within which they live.

Reflection is an integral part of narrative inquiry and is linked to the gaining of new understandings (Day & Harris, 2000). Transformative learning occurs when

reflection on disjunctive experience leads to interpretations which change the learners' meaning perspectives and their social practice (Moxley, 2000). These changes are incorporated into a new version of the life narrative. In this dynamic, imagination partners with critical reflection in the individual to re-frame life in a new and evolved way. The narrative facilitation of this transformative or hermeneutic conversation is the pivotal element in adult formative learning.

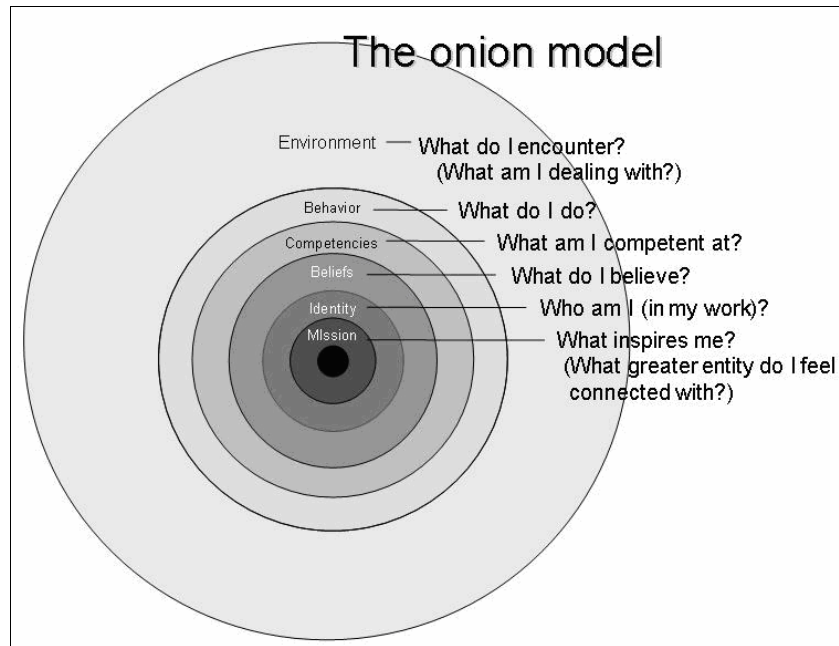
One of the contemporary narrative models pertinent to the discussion is Korthagen's 'onion' model, which explores the possibilities of multifaceted reflection (Korthagen, 2004). The general thrust for more reflectivity in educators is not accompanied in the literature by much practical guidance in developing a self-reflective practice. Cognisant of this, Korthagen's approach presents an "umbrella model of levels of change that could serve as a framework for reflection and development" (2004, p. 77). It is also responsive to the post-modern emphasis in narrative work around the beliefs people hold about themselves.

Thus, this is a model that interprets the relationship between a person's inner self and his or her behaviour in the outer world, linking core beliefs about self to professional identity (Korthagen & Vasalos, 2005). The six layers of this model are:

- (1) the environment
- (2) one's behaviour in relation to this environment
- (3) the competencies determining one's behaviour
- (4) the beliefs guiding one's functioning in the outside world
- (5) sense of identity
- (6) mission.

The sixth level is also referred to as the level of *spirituality*. Reflection at this level is concerned with what inspires, with what gives meaning and significance to work or life (Faller-Mitchell, 2010). 'Mission' is "what is deep inside us that moves us to do what we do" (Korthagen, 2004, p. 85) and is about what gives meaning to one's existence. Korthagen directly links this core level to the teacher's professional development. Figure 5.5 illustrates Korthagen's onion model and the relevant questions for each layer.

Figure 5.5: Korthagen's Onion Model (2004, p. 80)



In Korthagen's model, transformative learning occurs in the learner through ongoing interpretation of events in their inner and outer experience, during which learners compose their lives and their life stories. An important aspect of this model is the principle that the levels influence each other, with the inner and outer levels determining, at different times, how the individual operates. When there is alignment between the levels, one experiences what Csikszentmihalyi (1998) calls *flow*, that is, a state of optimal functioning in which one feels that one's expression in the real world reflects 'the real me'. In other words, there is a sense of identity and integrity.

To summarise, the alignment of teachers' inner spiritual core with their professional context and mission is an important principle of formation in the Catholic tradition and in the adult learning literature. Korthagen's model suggests the animation of that core carries the capacity for transformative change in behaviour and outlook. The limitation of Korthagen's model is the inadequate recognition of the role of community (others) in the individual's learning journey.

5.6 Formation Models in Ministry

The United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB, 2005) offers an approach to formation based on the recognition of a lay ecclesial ministry. The formation framework already in place for deacons and priests (based on *Pastores*

Dabo Vobis, 1992) is applied to lay ecclesial ministers. The foundational background statement affirms a holistic approach to formation:

Effective formation methods address the whole person: emotions, imagination, will, heart, and mind. It is the whole person who ministers, so the whole person is the proper subject of formation. (USCCB, 2005, p. 33)

This approach also recognises the importance of the cultural context of participants, insisting that formation should “take the greatest account of local human culture, which contributes to formation itself” (*Christifideles Laici*, 1989, n. 63). The USCCB approach postulates four inter-related areas of formation: human, spiritual, intellectual, and pastoral, considered critically important in formation for any pastoral ministry (USCCB, 2005).

However, the basic framework raises significant questions. Researchers in the psycho-spiritual field (Huitt & Robbins, 2003; Leffel, 2007; Theissen, 2005) understand spiritual formation to necessarily include human, intellectual and active/pastoral dimensions within the formation journey, and that to place spiritual formation separate from these other areas is unhelpful for both the process and integrity of spiritual formation. In her schema for spiritual formation for leaders, Thiessen (2005) re-shapes the human, intellectual and pastoral elements named in the USCCB framework as *connection* (to self, community and creation), *compassion* (growing from knowledge and experience) and *contribution* (service). In this way, the human context is the starting point for engagement.

Formation work in youth ministry and leadership ministry offers further insights relevant to the current discussion. A prominent approach in contemporary youth ministry (Zanzig, 2004) offers a four-step model described as a formation of discipleship: inspiration (through the witness of others); imitation (conscious daily practice); integration (into personal identity); and identification (in a way that sees the transformation of self). It is a process that is sequential and ongoing, with potential application to ongoing spiritual formation. Another approach, based on rabbinic education, offers a pedagogy of spiritual formation (Rosov, 2001). In this model, four key components are identified for facilitating spiritual formation: reflective deliberation; teaching text for meaning; discipling; and creating community. Further research that builds on specific strategies for nurturing spiritual leadership has subsequently distinguished four conceptual dimensions as the focus for formation programs: worship; warmth; word; and work (Cheung, 2002).

There are a number of other models used in contemporary Christian ministry preparation which rely more on non-institutionally based formation methodologies such as mentoring, retreating, and small group spiritual formation within the context of a local church or other Christian community (Harrison, 2007; Lount & Hargie, 1998; Robinson, 2007). These models signpost the integration of personal and group development research with customised elements of formation. An implication of this philosophy of ministry preparation is a focus on action orientation rather than a didactic (lecture-centred) orientation (Miedema, 1995; Dowson & McInerney, 2005). The discussion, discovery and problem-solving orientation reflects a shared wisdom approach to spiritual formation.

In practice, most ministry formation models are more commonly used outside the Catholic Church context than inside. However, they have much to offer in a time of rapidly changing contexts for both lay and ecclesial ministry formation. In particular, the profound influence of the experience of community immersion and service orientation on participants' spiritual growth is instructive. While this 'doing' dimension has not had a strong link to approaches of spiritual formation within the Catholic contexts of spiritual formation, its recovery in a contemporary model invites exploration.

5.7 Current Models and Approaches for the Catholic Education Context

Within the Catholic education context, approaches to formation contrast in both process and content. The formation for evangelisation model developed by James Mulligan (2004), the spirituality/virtues seminars model developed by Patricia Earl (2003) and the reflective retreat model developed by Parker Palmer (1997) exemplify three distinct approaches for consideration.

5.7.1 Teacher Formation for Evangelisation Small Group Model

The small group model of formation created and explored in the research of Canadian, James Mulligan, provides an insightful perspective on contemporary evangelisation. Teacher formation, in his view, is understood as a preparation for the ministry of Catholic education, with its goal being evangelisation. However, Mulligan maintains that formation for contemporary times must be invitational, not coercive. It needs to be designed to touch the spirit of the Catholic educator, not propagandise, and it must tend to the life experience of the educator (Mulligan,

1994). Mulligan's approach is dialogical, given context in the life and work of educators, with a community process-oriented development of knowledge.

Supported by selected readings, the themed content of the series of small group discussions that form the process in this model, focus on both cultural and ecclesial contexts for the Catholic school teacher. While these contexts for Catholic schooling are significantly different from the Australian environment, the underlying principles in approach are relevant and applicable. The strength in Mulligan's approach is four-fold: it allows for quality reflection and engagement; the structure of discussion allows the challenge of the present personal and ecclesial reality for the Catholic school educator to be addressed; the extended time period of the program (eight months) allows for a genuine formative experience; and the choice of participants addresses the issue of the mentoring need identified for beginning teachers. In addition, Mulligan demonstrates a sharp understanding of the needs of Catholic school educators and a respectfulness for the challenge and interpretive wisdom of the experienced teacher and leader in Catholic schools. This is reflected in the shape of the program and in Mulligan's personal learnings from his research journey:

Our experience together as a group of pilgrim believers concerned about Catholic education confirms for me again the fundamental intuition that ministry in the Church today is most effective when it is done in the context of a caring, critiquing, enabling community. (Mulligan, 1994, p. 14)

5.7.2 Spirituality/Virtues Seminars Formation Model

The contrasting approach in American research by Earl (2003), which uses values as a conduit in formation for Catholic school educators, is informative. Constructed as a four-week seminar series on basic elements of spirituality, and a two-day seminar on virtues for the classroom, Earl's approach combines formation background for teachers with strategies for the classroom. The spirituality seminars provide "a background for spirituality based on the Bible, Catholic Church documents, and the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*" (Earl, 2007, p. 40). The virtues seminar provides a basic theological background and understanding of virtue and how to develop it in the classroom with students. The aim of the seminars, targeted to both pre-service and practising teachers, is "helping teachers to help students love God and love neighbor and use talents" (Earl, 2003, p. 13). The findings indicate that the seminars provided theological knowledge related to virtue or character education.

Participants identified, as a sign of God's love, such things as modelling virtue and prayer, integration of religion and concepts of moral development, and nurturing and caring for students. The seminars provided teachers with not only information, but also personal formation to guide students to love God and neighbor, to develop and use their gifts and talents, and to become caring and responsible individuals. (Earl, 2003, p. 14)

The strength of Earl's approach is in the twin targeting of personal formation and professional pedagogy, with her study indicating the seminars "had influence on four areas: the individual, teaching pedagogy, character education, and understanding the mission of Catholic education" (Earl, 2007, p. 43). This is underpinned by literacy theory and theological background. It is an approach that coincides with a resurgence of interest in values education as an entry point to formation in Catholic belief and teaching in England and Scotland (e.g. *Values for Life*, Scotland CEC, 2007). In Australia, values education is being given greater emphasis. In referring to the potential of values education in all Australian schools, Lovat & Clement (2008, p. 3) comment, "We live in a time when our understanding of the role of the teacher and the power of values education is coalescing." Seeking to capitalise on this development, a number of dioceses are exploring values as the lever between the national educational agenda and Catholic philosophy (e.g. *Values that Matter*, Parramatta CEO, 2008; *Our Values, Our Mission*, Broken Bay CEO, 2008).

The concern in adopting this approach is two-fold. The focus on values or virtues runs the risk of losing the richness of the Catholic tradition in the search for an acceptable compromise that connects with a contemporary audience. Secondly, the seminar approach is based more on an in-service or informational model than a formation model, with limited time provided for deepening a personal journey, either theologically or spiritually. As such, the structure and process can accommodate large numbers of participants, but there is doubt about the sustainable influence of this model.

5.7.3 Courage to Teach Reflective Retreat Formation Model

A retreat-centred model provides a third approach, developed by American educationalist Parker Palmer in conjunction with the Fetzer Institute (1994). Initially created as a renewal experience for public school teachers, it draws on Quaker practices and principles as well as scholarship in education and psychology. The approach is based on the premise that "good teaching cannot be reduced to technique; good teaching comes from the identity and integrity of the teacher" (Palmer, 2007, p. 10).

Focusing on the inner life of the participant, this program is structured as a series of eight retreats over two years, with six key elements in the formation approach: “Evocative questions; Silence; Paradox; Birthright Gifts; “Third things” and “Clearness Committees” (Intrator, 2002, p. 282). In large-group, small-group and solitary settings, each three-day retreat experience explores concepts of vocation, and “the teacher’s heart” (Palmer, 2007, p. 4) through the use of personal stories, reflections on classroom practice, insights from storytellers, poets and a variety of religious and wisdom traditions. This overall process is carefully bounded in the creation of established principles for “the formation space” (Palmer, 2007, p. 76), which develops a dynamic of deep sharing and trust among participants.

Palmer’s most influential work has been around the role of community and reflective praxis. Palmer is a strong proponent of the ‘wisdom within’ both the individual and the community, and the individual’s own ability to find and nurture that wisdom. Independent evaluations of Palmer’s *Courage to Teach* retreat program (CTT) empirically validate the approach of exploring teacher spirituality in the context of their lives and everyday work (Intrator & Scribner, 2000; McMahon, 2003; Simone, 2004). The strength of the approach lies in the carefully constructed retreat process, the personal focus and the creative use of a variety of resources. While this approach has been readily adopted in a number of Australian dioceses, its greatest limitation is a lack of an appropriate cultural and theological context for the Catholic school educator.

5.8 Mining the Learnings for a New Model

The strengths of each model of spiritual formation so far presented offer valuable insights into the development of a theoretical framework to underpin participant experience in this study. The religious life model of formation, while no longer an appropriate, sustainable framework in its traditional form, offers foundational design elements that have the potential to be contemporised for a new context. Similarly, elements of approach and structure from the other models make useful contributions to the creation of a new model for this study.

In addition to the strengths in each model already outlined, there are five general aspects of these models that are instructional in the development of a new model, and which invite some further explication. A short discussion of each proceeds here, prior to presenting and explaining the new model.

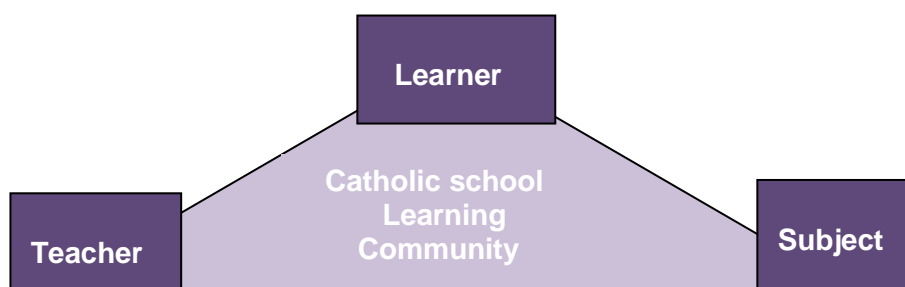
5.8.1 Calling (Vocation)

The grounding of spiritual formation processes in the context of vocation has a rich tradition for Catholic educators. In a contemporary approach, there is a connecting of one's personal story and heart to one's professional story. Vocation comes to be known in a new way "not as a goal to be achieved but as a gift to be received" (Palmer, 1983, p. 10). The voice of vocation is not 'out there' but within us calling us to be the person we were born to be, to fulfil the original selfhood given at birth by God (Palmer, 1983). Therefore, the authentic call to teach "comes from the voice of the *teacher within* [author's italics], the voice that calls me to honour the nature of my true self" (Palmer, 2007, p. 29).

For Catholic educators, a personal, holistic approach to vocation is organically situated within the school community, and in the context of the pedagogy of the reflective practitioner and a seamless Catholic curriculum:

The essence and beauty of Catholic education since the paradigmatic shift brought about by Vatican II is to promote the growth of the individual and the development of the *whole* person. This call to formation of the whole person in students... insists upon the continuous formation of the teacher and subject matter that is organised relevantly to the holistic development of the student. (Shimabukuro, 2001, p. 113)

Figure 5.6: The Learning Community Dynamic (Shimabukuro, 2001, p. 114)



Such a paradigm implies an interior synthesis within the teacher, which permeates the Catholic school culture through the student–teacher dynamic and the staff dynamic (Shimabukuro, 1998). For this to be effective, the continuous spiritual process becomes visible through interaction with others, and there is an apparent nurturing of skill in behavioural areas, such as self-esteem, authentic caring, humility and communication. Aligning with Groome's belief that the educator's mission is "to inform, form, and transform with the meaning and ethic of Christian faith" (Groome, 1996, p. 118), this paradigm is an alternative call for an 'inspirational pedagogy'

(Grace, 2002) that encourages critical thought and dialogue to develop a personally meaningful spirituality through a knowledge and experience of the Reign of God. This is at the heart of the mission of the Catholic school, and it is the heart of the vocation of the Catholic school educator (Mulligan, 2004).

5.8.2 Community

All of the models, to differing degrees, recognise the role of community. In fact, the community context is described as amongst three spiritual practices of central importance to formation in the educational context: “the study of sacred texts, the practice of prayer and contemplation, and the gathered life of the community itself” (Palmer, 1993, p. 17). The hallmark of Palmer’s ‘community of truth’ is in its claim that “reality is a web of communal relationships, and we can know reality only by being in community with it” (Palmer, 2007, p. 95). Peck’s (1993) four developmental stages of spiritual growth seek to bridge both individual and community journeys in faith. An emphasis on the relational and communal aspect of spirituality demands a focus on ‘living relationships’ which requires personal commitment and investment of time and energy (Whelan, 1998). This also requires the nurturing of mutuality (Zappone, 1991). The practice of mutuality requires the acquisition of certain formative habits – things that are done often and eventually with some kind of ease – to sustain a lifestyle of mutual relationships. Seven habits of mutuality are identified for regular practice:

1. Self-love;
2. Taking ourselves and one another seriously;
3. Being present to others and ourselves;
4. Seeing the sacred in ourselves and others;
5. Acknowledging and respecting differences;
6. Facing conflict; and
7. Participating in supportive communities (Zappone, 1991, p. 84).

Australian research confirms that a lack of connectivity between the reflective practice involved in spiritual formation processes and the day-to-day school environment dissipates the impact of the formation experience (Bracken, 2004). Further, where the approach to formation remains focused on the individual, the influence appears to remain restricted to the individual (Downey, 2006). Mulligan (2004) situates the formation process at the centre of his study within the wider staff and school milieu, understanding acutely the dynamic that characterises contemporary Catholic school communities and the growing of leaders:

The leader, the single authority figure, no longer has the same impact as the collaborative, consistent and conscientious witnessing of the group or community. In education, the commitment and the dedication of the school community will make a deeper, more relevant statement to the public than the single leader no matter how great her charisma or his public relation skills. Real authority is diffused throughout the Catholic school community. The contemporary challenge for authority in the Catholic school then is to release the potential of the core community, the Catholic educators in the school. It is to facilitate the liberation of others who will be leaders in their different spheres of influence (Mulligan, 2004, p. 114).

This collaborative development of leaders within community finds resonance elsewhere. Across the literature, there is a growing sense of the need for co-leadership to drive mission in Catholic education: "...this is best done when the partners in Catholic education, personally and collectively, live out their own vision of Catholic education in its wholeness" (Grace & O'Keefe, 2007, p. 127).

5.8.3 Service

Service as a result of spiritual formation is a particular feature associated with the Catholic Christian tradition. It is a dimension closely linked to mission and ethos in the Catholic educational context (Harris & Moran, 1998; Meyers, 1999). Experiential practice includes elements of social action with emphasis on a harmony of both contemplation and action in formation. "With discipleship or apprenticeship, Christian life is a continual learning from, and empowerment by, the person of Jesus of Nazareth" (Hellwig, 1998, p. 7). Hellwig proposes the following four core characteristics for this apprenticeship:

- to learn to be thoughtful and discerning;
- to learn to be countercultural and community building;
- to learn to be open to uncertainty and attuned to an unending process of learning; and
- to learn to be practical in the public and private sphere, and ecumenical in seeking allies and inspiration wherever they may be found (Hellwig, 1998, p. 8).

Thus, personal and social transformation are developmentally and conceptually linked in Christian formation.

In the Catholic school context, Church documents since Vatican II (consolidated by the social encyclicals of the last 150 years) have stressed the creation of an environment where the school would be "the leaven for the community, and teach the message of hope, build community and serve all mankind so that above all, schools should be instruments of social justice" (Bryk, Lee & Holland, 1993, p. 53).

Thus, the challenge for Catholic educators is profoundly social, for “We cannot be called truly ‘Catholic’ unless we hear and heed the Church’s call to serve those in need and work for justice and peace” (USCCB, *Communities of Salt and Light*, 1993).

The challenge to service, particularly through social justice, remains a non-negotiable principle for Catholic Christians. In this Catholic framework of making a better world through witness and action, there is alignment with the concept of the contemporary learning organisation (discussed in Chapter 3.3) which involves transformational change or *metanoia* in the leaders and people of the community “so that they can become who they are meant to be” (Senge, 1990, p. 13). Given the confluence of these elements in the Catholic school context, it seems that “the idea of a mission-ed and empower-ed people is most applicable to the Catholic education reality” (Mulligan, 1994, p. 76).

5.8.4 Individual Entry Points

The contemporary models of formation acknowledge the diversity of individual context, and seek to affirm and accommodate this reality. Although the direction for everyone in Christian spiritual formation is towards God, each person is unique, and therefore “our response to God’s call will be as unique as each person, each child of God, who has ever lived” (Guinan, 1998, p. 4). The diversity inherent in adult learners underlines the need for a holistic approach. While Harris’ framework (1989) for spirituality recognises cognitive dimensions, spirituality in fact “takes us beyond cognition” (Ochs, 1983, p. 9) and allows for the creation of spaces where the future possibilities can take shape in people’s imagination. Harris (1991) confirms this in her holistic view of the developmental qualities for growing an authentic spirituality: it must be appropriate, communal, expressed in service and justice, and be intelligent requiring an openness to learn and be challenged.

This approach brings together the processes of reason, memory and imagination to provide a lens of understanding that seeks “the deep heart’s core” (Groome, 1998, p. 14), whatever one’s pathway. In this way, a sacramental perspective is nurtured, “an incarnational and holistic faith, a faith that engages the whole person, body and soul, mind and senses” (Groome, 1998, p. 135). This ‘sacramental consciousness’ is called “a depth characteristic in Catholicism, that looks at the world and then through it to see the transcendent in the ordinary, the Creator in the created”

(Groome, 1998, p. 129). This transformative impact of the praxis approach as used by Groome has been insightfully described:

Contemporary life stories interact with inherited stories; and the hearing of inherited stories uncovers the depth of present experience of the gracious mystery we call our God. Most of all it is about the story of Jesus and the many ways the ancient tradition of our faith has found of telling it (Doherty, 2008, p. 8).

Specific models offer a more sophisticated understanding of individual human pathways. Predicated on a diversity of human ability, development and growth, Wilber's (2000) complex developmental theory, referred to in the discussion on spiral models, brings together thinking across theology, philosophy, human development and metaphysics. According to Wilber, multiple lines of development or intelligences exist (e.g. cognitive, aesthetic, musical etc.) and individuals have varied patterns of development in each of these lines. Within each broad stage, there are sub-levels, and it is spiral dynamics that fully explicates this movement between stages and highlights the reality that individuals are on their own unique developmental journeys.

5.8.5 Reflective Praxis

All models discussed include a focus on the dimension of reflective praxis. Both Palmer (2000) and Kinast (2000) are leading figures in this area. While Palmer's focus is on developing trust in the individual's ability to read their own lives and plumb the wisdom of their own lived experience to develop their spirituality, Kinast's contribution (1996) is the development of a contemporary method of theological reflection that engages the traditional three-fold movement (lived experience, Christian tradition, practical implications for Christian living) (Kinast, 1996).

Bringing together both vocational and spiritual aspects, Brookfield (1983; 1995) offers four lenses through which a reflective practice might occur for educators in the Catholic school context. They are:

1. reflecting on one's personal teaching history;
2. engaging in dialogical communication with the community of learners;
3. reading literature supporting the ministry of teaching; and
4. engaging in collegial conversation and critique (Brookfield, 1995).

Across all models, specific experiential practices that nurture a reflective perspective are encouraged including prayer, meditation, reading of sacred texts, singing songs, embracing silence and engaging in rituals. These practices enhance the central formation focus identified in the theoretical literature: knowledge of the relationship between a person and the Creator, and the development of a relational consciousness (Stonehouse, 1998; Kessler, 2000).

5.9 A New Model for Spiritual Formation of Catholic School Educators

The strengths of each model of formation outlined in this chapter, and the learnings around key aspects shared by all models, inform key design elements in a proposed new model. This model is offered as a narrative theoretical framework for this study. Its base reflects the scholarship which spans the three major areas of the literature relevant to this research. Story as a metaphor becomes the unifying motif, reflective of the holistic and narrative dimensions of the spiritual journey referred to by key writers in the field, in the Catholic Christian tradition and in the contemporary world (O'Murchu, 1997; Palmer, 1999; Rohr, 2008). While it is a staged model, it adopts the dynamic of the spiral models (Korthagen, 2004; Wilber, 2006) in an organic process of development. This methodology acknowledges the starting point of the individual (my story), connecting to the communal story (our story) and into the God narrative (The Story). In doing so, it accommodates the iterative nature of the spiritual journey as the self-engagement phase is constantly re-visited and re-calibrated. Finally, the model signals an approach that is holistic in intention, operative at each phase, and cognisant of individual difference and the unique personal journey for each person (Groome, 1996; Harris, 1989; Kessler, 2000). Figure 5.6 presents the model in graphical form.

Figure 5.7: New Narrative Model for Spiritual Formation of Catholic Educators



There are 10 key features in the model.

1. The model allows for, but does not prescribe developmental steps or set pathways. There is flexibility in the process that accommodates points of catalyst and points of rest (Shults & Sandage, 2006).
2. It is a person-centred model. This means the focus remains on the process or personal experience, rather than content or outcomes.

3. The model begins with the participants' engagement with their own stories (my story). This recognises that participants come to the process with their own story, community and personal spirituality. This self-engagement phase allows participants in the spiritual journey to 'know their own story'.
4. The mutual engagement phase (our story) recognises the importance of community in how learning and growth takes place (Rosov, 2001). This is apparent across the educational literature (Senge, 1990), as well as being a primary tenet of Christian spirituality (Schneiders, 2000).
5. The transformative engagement phase reflects the experience of the unitive or Oneing (Hide, 2004), universalising (Fowler, 1981), deep connection (Kessler, 2000) or opening (Wilber, 2006) phase for the individual. It is in this phase that 'the pieces fall together' in an experience of conversion (Lonergan, 1972) or mystery (Rahner, 1973). Both theologians recognise the heart of this moment as an experience of profound love. It is a connection to the God meta-narrative (The Story) that signifies a self-identified inner change or shift, reflected then in behaviour and outlook. This nurtures a new way of being and seeing; a new language and because of this, a living theology (transformation, integration, recreation). It is in this phase when the individual realises a sense of being 'the fifth gospel' (Schillebeekx, 1990).
6. The narrative phases operate in an iterative manner. Thus, the narrative builds in a developmental way from self-engagement (my story) (Westerhoff, 1980) through mutual engagement (our story) to transformative engagement (The Story), always revisiting and re-framing self-engagement in a constant dynamic of individual growth.
7. In each phase, the core elements of the formation process operate in a 'head heart and hands' holistic engagement (Groome, 2002; USCCB, 2005), allowing for diverse ways of encounter and learning in adults (Huitt & Robbins 2003; Kessler, 2000). This approach draws on traditional elements of spiritual formation (Hide, 2004). At the same time, it reflects the literature on holistic learning and the primacy of experiential learning in formation, acknowledging different points of entry and different ways of learning. Giving value to experience as well as knowledge in the formation process, and the discipline of practice in everyday life, the steps of practice/application take the inner journey out into the world: a core element in traditional Christian formation (O'Donoghue & Potts, 2004; Schneiders, 2000):

Formation must be more than just an intellectual exercise of the head. It must be of the heart and hands as well: prayer, contemplation, activity leading to justice and a love for the poor. (Mulligan, 2005, p. 240)

8. The formation process is dynamic and ongoing as the 'lifelong learner' grows in engagement with the 'lifelong Creator'. This is indicated by the wraparound process of 'learning to be and see with new eyes', understand 'a new language' and to articulate it and live a new theology as relationship with God creates new understanding (Doherty, 2008; Hide, 2004; Lonergan, 1972). Thus, change, subtle or dramatic, occurs as the transformative insight impacts upon self-engagement and mutual engagement.
9. The vocational connection to Catholic education is woven through the phases from the beginning – it is part of participants' own stories (Shimabukuro, 2001). Participants situate their work and calling in the wider story of school community and Church, and in the wider mission of God (Brookfield, 1995; Earl, 2007).
10. This new narrative model integrates reflective praxis as an inbuilt dimension, involving self-companionship as well as peer companionship and leader companionship (Kinast, 1996; Mulligan, 2005; Zanzig, 2004). The model would therefore appropriately adopt a group retreat context (Palmer, 1999) where the process dynamics of individual, small group and whole group can be applied.

This chapter has explained a proposed narrative model of spiritual formation for this study. It has outlined key formation models from the traditional religious life model through to contemporary approaches to spiritual formation. The proposed model contemporises core elements of the religious life model along with learnings from best practice in other current approaches. The synergies across the areas of spirituality, education and mission evident in the literature come together in this proposed new model, providing both practical alignment with the tradition and a new framing of the formation journey that has accordance with the context of Catholic school staff today.

The following chapter now outlines the research design adopted to explore individual participant experience and community influence of the CFP.

6 DESIGN OF THE RESEARCH

6.1 Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to explain and justify the research design adopted for this study. The research design is “the logic that links the data to be collected to the initial questions of the study” (Yin, 2003, p. 19) and, as such, is congruent with the research purpose (Patton, 2002). Given the purpose of the study is an exploration of participant and school community experience of a spiritual formation initiative for Catholic school educators, an interpretive framework is adopted. The two research questions that focus the conduct of the study are:

How do participants perceive the *Catching Fire Project* (CFP)?

How does the *Catching Fire Project* (CFP) influence the school community?

6.2 The Theoretical Framework for the Research Design

A theoretical framework offers a philosophical foundation which justifies and directs the structure of the research design. Because the focus of the research is on participant and community experience, the study is highly contextualised and individual, with a corollary need to create a research design that allows the experienced reality speak. This implies that the research design incorporates components that ensure these perspectives are listened to and appropriately interpreted. The theoretical constructs underpinning the research design are concerned with the nature of human spirituality and its growth, the nature of contemporary adult learning, and how the two interact in the context of the Catholic spiritual tradition and the Catholic educational setting. Thus, an epistemological approach of constructionism using the lens of symbolic interactionism is adopted because it enables the researcher to maximise understanding of participant insights and influence in the community.

The study seeks to explore significant features within a bounded system (Merriam, 1998), namely the experience of individuals engaging in a specifically targeted program of formation strategies in the real-world setting of a school. Case study is therefore the adopted research methodology. A range of methods was employed to gather rich, in-depth data from research participants. These methods included participant journaling, semi-structured interviews and a focus group. Parlett and Hamilton’s illuminative model of curriculum evaluation (cited in Ellis, 2003)

orchestrated this evaluative case study, maximising the potential for an holistic evaluation of the study context.

This understanding of the theoretical framework invites amplification. Table 6.1 provides a summary of the interpretivist paradigm adopted for this study. Figure 6.1 offers a diagrammatic mapping of the research design, demonstrating the relationship between the design elements. Each element is considered in turn.

Table 6.1: Research Framework – An Interpretivist Design

Epistemology	Constructionism
Theoretical perspective	Symbolic interactionism
Research methodology	Evaluative case study
Participants	Purposive selection
Data collection strategies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Staff questionnaires Consultation feedback Informal conversation Participant journaling Researcher journaling and observation Focus group Field notes

6.3 Research Paradigm: Interpretivism

The research paradigm (or theoretical framework) is the “philosophical stance that lies behind the methodology in questions” (Crotty, 1998, p. 66). The nature of this study is inductive and exploratory, and therefore invites an interpretive approach that affords the researcher an opportunity to negotiate meaning which people have constructed from events and experiences associated with CFP (Crotty, 1998; Kirk & Miller, 1986).

Figure 6.1: Diagrammatic Mapping of the Interpretivist Research Design



6.3.1 Epistemology: Constructionism

Research concerns the generation of knowledge, or wisdom, on the basis of systematic, creative and critical enquiry (Bassey, 1999). All knowledge claims or research outcomes are influenced by many assumptions that underlie the research methodology. These include theories about knowledge, social construction, the belief and value system of the researcher, and the purpose of the research itself. Thus, the researcher is guided not only in choice of method, but foremost in ontologically and epistemologically fundamental ways (Guba & Lincoln, 1994).

Epistemology concerns the nature of knowledge through the study of “how knowledge is generated and accepted as valid” (O’Donoghue, 2007, p. 9). The epistemology that aligns with the research purpose in this study is constructionism. The underlying assumptions of constructionism concern the individual interpretive nature of meaning construction for human beings; the recognition of historical, social and cultural perspectives on the process of that meaning-making; and the essentially social and interactive nature of the research process (Crotty, 1998).

Interpretivist researchers seek to make sense of personal stories and the ways in which they intersect. Constructionism is an epistemology based on the understanding that meaning is constructed by groups of people in their own time and place through interaction with their environment (Schwandt, 1994). It takes into account that individual constructions of meaning are filtered through, and shaped by, social realities such as common language, meanings, symbolism and interaction. This research seeks an understanding of participants’ individual and personal spiritual growth, as well as the complex web of meaning-making that is generated in community relationship. A constructionist epistemology recognises both the subjective and transactional nature of this environment where “meaning is not discovered but constructed” (Crotty, 1998, p. 9) as individuals make sense of their world (Creswell, 2003). The relationship between researcher and participants is also understood as an important dynamic in the research process.

The spiritual journey from a Christian perspective is deeply personal and profoundly communal. While the individual’s experience is unique, meaning-making happens in connection with others, and new shared understandings influence the contexts of life and work. Constructionism, therefore, is congruent with a multi-faceted approach to understanding human experience where the individual’s meaning-making in the spiritual journey is influenced internally by personal values and beliefs, and externally by professional values and practice dynamics within the Catholic educational mission. Thus, the focus and context of the research – the spiritual formation of individuals in the context of community – is underpinned by an epistemological perspective that offers the research process the potential to generate new and more sophisticated understandings (Guba & Lincoln, 1994), with the possibility of making space for a radical spirit of openness in the process (Merriam, 2002).

6.3.2 Theoretical Perspective: Symbolic Interactionism

A theoretical perspective is the philosophical reference in which the epistemology is embedded and indicates how knowledge generation is understood in a more nuanced manner. The theoretical perspective acknowledges the assumptions about knowledge and knowing that the research design employs (Crotty, 1998).

Symbolic interactionism is adopted as the primary lens within the interpretivist research paradigm that informs this study. Symbolic interactionism addresses language, communication, interrelationships and community. It is an approach where the researcher puts themselves in “the place of the other” (Crotty, 1998, p. 69). Thus the symbolic interactionism lens is appropriate in exploring the understandings existing in culture as a “meaningful matrix” (Crotty, 1998, p. 71) that influences the way meaning is created from the experience of living in a particular place, time and situation.

If the aim of interpretivism is to explore the values, attitudes and beliefs which influence people to act in a particular manner (Punch, 1998), then the lens of symbolic interactionism offers an exploration of how people define and act on those beliefs emerging from their meaning making (Blumer, 1969; Horn, 1998; O’Donoghue, 2007). In particular, symbolic interactionism offers an appropriate theoretical framework that aims to generate the kind of rich data sought in this study and in which the concept of ‘perspective’ is central (Wood, 1992). This is because symbolic interactionism examines the symbolic and the interactive together as they are experienced and organised in the worlds of everyday lives (Blumer, 1969).

Symbolic interactionism as a perspective has developed from the research of Cooley (1956), Dewey (1933) and Mead (1934). Blumer popularised this perspective and the term itself is attributed to him (Blumer, 1969). Contemporary theorists (Charon, 2001; Stryker, 2000) have developed symbolic interactionism as an effective theoretical lens for research in the educational context. The understanding that spiritual formation develops ‘in company’ – in human community – is foundational to the research. The framework offered to the researcher in using the lens of symbolic interactionism provides a critical capacity to explore how the professional and relational dynamic of the educational community influences the individual’s spiritual journey. As such, this framework offers a useful alignment with the nature and focus of the current study, given its context within the school

community, the focus on Catholic Christian spiritual formation and the understanding of the communal dimension of spiritual growth in the Christian context.

There are three principles underpinning symbolic interactionism as a theoretical perspective that serve to illuminate this alignment. The first principle is about the centrality of meaning. Human beings act towards things on the basis of the meanings they have attached to them (Blumer, 1969). The symbolic interactionist is interested in the meanings that have been attached to situations, to phenomena and to themselves. There are common meanings given to things and to experiences, which people appropriate into their own meaning-making. Central to this process is the notion of empathic role-taking between human beings, whereby individuals participate 'in the mind of another' in order to acquire knowledge about the experience, understand it and 'try it on' (Blumer, 1969). This is especially apposite in the religious culture of Catholic spirituality because there is a shared culture assumed within schools about the tradition, expression and experience of spiritual values.

The second principle concerns subjectivity. Meaning is generated from, and arises out of, the social interaction that one has with others. This happens on each encounter through an individual's unique interpretive process. The focus in this research is on the individual participant's experience of social realities (in this instance, spiritual formation experiences) contextualised within socially negotiated meanings and a wider cultural and historical context (Berger & Luckman, 1967; Blumer, 1969; Stryker, 1980). This being established, the study also acknowledges that each person's way of making sense of their world is as valid and worthy of respect as any other (Crotty, 1998; Holloway, 1999).

The third principle addresses the social construction of reality. Meanings are not generated in isolation; they are constructed and reconstructed in social interaction with others, and this is a dynamic process. In the Christian tradition, spiritual formation is seen in this way: as a dynamic process that has a relational aspect fundamental to the formation taking place; one does not go the journey alone (Hay & Nye, 1998a; Whelan, 1994). The symbolic interactionist knows that because of this dynamic process, reality is not fixed; people define their contingent situations in a variety of different ways, all of which are 'real' to them (Denzin, 1989; Lofland & Lofland, 1984; Mead, 1934). The individual participants in this study interact on the basis of meanings they assign to their worlds, and the research explores how these are formed, maintained and changed individually and in a community dynamic.

Positioning the research in this way acknowledges the fluid dynamic in the nature of meaning-making both individually and collectively. Central to this is the concept of “self” (O’Donoghue, 2007) and an attentiveness to the inner, experiential world of the individual’s life context (Chenitz & Swanson, 1986). This is the focus of the study and is at the heart of the theoretical framework of symbolic interactionism. Multiple perspectives, varied experiential sources and a person-centred approach also offer the possibility of addressing both ‘blank spots’ and ‘blind spots’ in this area of educational research (Gough, 2002). This study aspires to generate considerable information concerning a small number of people in order to offer insights concerning personal growth and development in spiritual formation. Symbolic interactionism offers an interpretivist lens, “whereby we enter into the perceptions, attitudes and values of a community, becoming persons in the process” (Crotty, 1998, p. 8). Moreover symbolic interactionism encourages the gathering of rich, thick data as it works “to yield variable knowledge of human group life and human conduct” (Blumer, 1969, p. 21).

This research explores the meaning-making embedded in the participants’ responses to their formation experiences. The central research questions, as well as the broader contextual and theological understanding of spirituality in the Catholic tradition, are consistent with a theoretical perspective that respects the dynamic reality being explored. The implication of the symbolic interactionist lens is that the individual’s perspective is central and the meanings they attach to events and things must be understood from their perspective (Crotty, 1998). Thus, the interpretive research design and data gathering strategies provide a coherent approach for understanding how each person engages and makes sense of their spiritual journey, and develops shared understandings in a common context.

6.4 Research Methodology

Methodology is concerned with the congruence between paradigm-related questions and methods (Crotty, 1998). A research methodology is “a model, which entails theoretical principles as well as a framework that provides guidelines about how research is done in the context of a particular paradigm” (Sarantakos, 2005, p. 30). In other words, it offers a theoretical justification for the choice and orchestration of the selected research ‘methods’ or data gathering strategies. A number of methodological approaches are located within the interpretivist tradition of research paradigms. The methodological approach adopted for this study enables the

researcher to gather in-depth data about the interactions between the various aspects that shape perceptions of the spiritual journey for Catholic educators and the consequent influences on personal and professional roles, as well as identify patterns that emerge from the data analysis.

6.4.1 Case Study

This research design adopted a case study approach. Interpretive case studies share with other forms of interpretive research the search for meaning and understanding; the researcher as the primary instrument of data collection and analysis; an inductive investigative strategy; and the product being richly descriptive (Merriam & Assoc., 2002). Case study is defined by its specific features. The following five characteristics of a case study approach offer a justification for its adoption in this research design.

6.4.1.1 Case study – an holistic approach

Sometimes called a ‘systemic’ or ‘integrated’ approach, case study seeks to understand parts by understanding how they interrelate as a whole (Sturman, 1997). The focus of this research highlights particular human experience (Yin, 1994). Human experience is multi-faceted, interrelated and, in the case of this research, closely connected to the context of participants. The variables which impact and influence the individual staff member’s spiritual formation are interconnected with their personal story, their professional vocation and their broader staff community. This kind of situation, where it is impossible to separate the phenomenon’s variables from its context, is suited to case study design.

6.4.1.2 Case study – a bounded context

One of the defining characteristics of the case study approach is its bounded context (Merriam, 1998; Merriam & Assoc., 2002; Stake, 2005) where there is a particular phenomenon being studied that occurs within clear and intrinsic boundaries. In this study, the phenomenon being studied is the process of spiritual formation; the context is bounded in both the population of the study (the school staff being a naturally occurring finite group) and the framing of the formation program (the formation strategies themselves are offered within the established boundaries of a system framework).

6.4.1.3 Case study – a descriptive analysis

A compelling reason for choosing a case study approach is the generation of rich and thick description of the phenomenon. The interpretive nature of the reporting allows for a comprehensive exploration of variables and their interaction. Furthermore, case study design, because of its extensive description and analysis of phenomena, aims to gain a deeper understanding of phenomena and of the meaning which those involved in the study give to their experiences (Merriam, 1998). Since this study focuses on understanding personal spiritual growth and what nurtures it in the individual stories of participants, the generation of descriptive data is important.

6.4.1.4 Case study – an heuristic approach

Grounded in reality, case study design allows the reader to make naturalistic generalisations from the research (Gomm, Hammersley & Foster, 2000). “Previously unknown relationships and variables can be expected to emerge from case studies, leading to a re-thinking of the phenomenon being studied” (Stake in Merriam, 1998, p. 30). Thus, there is potential for the reader of this research to identify their own experience with that featured in the study, and for that understanding to be illuminated and for new meanings to emerge (Merriam & Assoc., 2002; Stake, 2005).

6.4.1.5 Case study – a process focus

Case study design has an innate focus on process. The researcher explores the processes of formation development to context characteristics that shed light on the further development of relevant and effective formation strategies. To concentrate on the uniqueness and complexity found in a single case (Stake, 1995) invites a depth of understanding that can investigate not only what happens, but also the process of how and why it happens, and the variety of individual perceptions around the unfolding experience. This is useful information in a field as rich and complex as human spirituality. In this process, case study offers an insightful focus on the human condition (Merriam, 1998).

6.4.1.6 Case Study Limitations

Case study also has limitations. Four pertinent criticisms about case study identified in the literature are the volume of data, the integrity of perspectives, the generalisation of findings and researcher bias.

The first criticism concerns the volume of data. While a strength in the case study method is the rich and thick data yielded, the multiplicity of interwoven detail in the gathering of the data can be overwhelming (Merriam, 1998). A second criticism of case study is the difficulty of keeping the integrity of participants' perspectives (Gall & Borg, 1999). Case study is also criticised on the grounds that the findings cannot be generalised, as opposed to findings within positivist research design (Gall & Borg, 1999; Yin, 1994). The final criticism is that case study design is open to bias, particularly from the researcher (Flyvbjerg, 2004).

In response to the first criticism, the volume of data is contained by maintaining a focus on the research questions for this study, within the parameters set by the purposively selected group, capturing multiple perspectives in the bounded context (Punch, 1998). Second, in order to maintain the integrity and holistic unity of the case, the emic perspectives of the participants have been recorded verbatim (Merriam, 1998; Punch, 1998). This rich and thick description of educators' experiences allows for deeper understandings of spiritual formation from their perspective. The paradox of case study methodology is that "by studying the uniqueness of the particular, we come to understand the universal" (Simons, 1996, p. 231). Accordingly, the researcher has demonstrated the characteristics of the known case, in its particularities, in order to maximise the learnings that others may take from this research. Finally, it is acknowledged in the literature that all research has researcher bias (Cherryholmes, 1993). Accordingly, the researcher has identified and communicated openly her background context and perspectives.

In summary, the case study approach offers this research the opportunity to develop a detailed description and understanding of a particular phenomenon (the implementation of a strategic approach for contemporary Catholic spiritual formation) in its natural setting (a Catholic school). As an orchestrating justification for this research, case study provides not only the means by which a comprehensive exploration of the variables and their connectivity can be undertaken, but also the emergence of new insights into the unfolding experience of adult spiritual formation.

6.4.2 Illuminative Evaluation

This case study is an evaluative case study, and, as such, involves "description, explanation and judgement" (Merriam, 1998, p. 39). Evaluative case study has proven especially useful in the educational field in three ways: for studying educational innovations, evaluating programs and informing policy (Merriam, 1998).

This research explores how a particular program in contemporary spiritual formation for Catholic school staff is experienced individually and communally, and aspires to outcomes in all three ways noted above. It seeks to develop new insights in the educational innovation that is the formation program, to gain an indication of the efficacy of the approach and to uncover issues that may intelligently inform future policy direction in this area.

Parlett and Hamilton's (1972; 1987) illuminative model of program or curriculum evaluation has been adopted in this research for four reasons:

1. This model is less restrictive than traditional evaluation because it is more concerned with description and interpretation than measurement and prediction (Tawney, 1976).
2. It provides the best way to understand the organic process of data analysis, addressing the integrated whole and iterative nature of this research focus.
3. It allows for the inherent flexibility of all adult learning processes.
4. It accommodates the role of the researcher's observations in the process and places of data within a wider perspective (Ramsey & Clark, 1990).

A wider perspective is justified within the interpretive orientation of symbolic interactionism where individual meaning, subjectivity and the social construction of reality undergird the research process. It is also justified by the case study approach in this research design, which is concerned with understanding the integrated whole rather than discrete segments. Moreover, consistent with the case study approach, the illuminative model of curriculum evaluation considers the wider context, "gathering data from many different sources and in different ways in order to illuminate the situation" (Brady & Kennedy, 2003, p. 240).

There are three stages in the illuminative evaluation process: observation, inquiry and explanation (Parlett & Hamilton, 1972; 1987). While they overlap and interrelate, each stage is distinct:

1. Observation. This first stage involves the tracking and observation of ongoing events – the formation experiences of the participants.
2. Inquiry. This refers to the more sustained and intensive inquiry – the data gathering from interviews and focus group feedback as well as journaling.

3. Explanation. This final stage involves identifying underlying patterns and principles, critiquing alternative interpretations of the data and placing specific data within the wider frame of gathered data.

The 'instructional system' – in this case, the *Catching Fire Project* (CFP) – and the 'learning milieu' – in this case, the network of contextual variables that comprise the staff community of one Catholic primary school – are both central to an understanding of illuminative evaluation.

A helpful overview of criteria for evaluation is provided by Kemmis (1982) and is summarised to highlight the organic and integrated role of evaluation in the research project. These criteria include the understanding that:

- evaluation should illuminate the reasoning that guides program development and facilitate critical examination of the historical and contextual factors that influence it;
- evaluation should illuminate the commonality and conflict among the values and interests of community participants; and
- evaluation should refine the critical debate about the nature and worth of a curriculum (Kemmis, 1982, pp. 221–40.)

The initial development of the curriculum of experiential learning at the focus of this research was predicated on an 'interaction' or 'dynamic' model (Cohen, 1974; Taba, 1962). Instead of the elements comprising a fixed sequence, they are regarded as interactive and progressively modifiable (Brady & Kennedy, 2003). The program of experiential learning continues to evolve in this way as the curriculum develops. Thus, the curriculum development process reflects an approach congruent with the flexibility required for adult learning. This is particularly pertinent for the area of adult spiritual formation, with its innate non-linear dynamic.

This model of curriculum development is therefore consistent with the illuminative model used for evaluation. Rather than focusing on measuring tested outcomes, the illuminative model offers understanding of what connects with individuals and what is happening in the process. This evaluative approach is labelled as 'new-wave' (Stenhouse, 1975) and the concern of 'new-wave evaluators' is in answering the questions: "How good is it?" and "What is happening?" (Brady & Kennedy, 2003, p. 239). As these questions are addressed throughout the study, both the development and evaluation of the curriculum continues in a simultaneous and iterative fashion.

The following sections address in detail the three stages in illuminative evaluation: Observation, Inquiry and Explanation.

6.5 Stage 1: Observation – Participants and the *Catching Fire Project Strategy*

The first stage includes two main aspects. The first is an introduction to the school community participants. The second is the tracking of the overall CFP strategy within the school-based plan for the whole staff community.

6.5.1 Participants

This case study is bounded within one school community within the Archdiocese of Brisbane. The research involves the study of perceptions and behaviour of a range of staff participants. The school, referred to in this study as St Raphael's, is a Catholic co-educational primary school, serving 600 children from Prep to Year 7 and has a staff of 54. It is an outer Brisbane suburban school experiencing steady growth in student and staff populations. St Raphael's volunteered for this study as part of the pilot cohort.

The self-selection of this Archdiocesan Catholic school created a bounded group. The self-selection was not driven by the Principal, and so the level of commitment by the leadership to both the pilot program participation and the case provided initial concern. At the same time, the researcher recognised that these concerns around commitment and participation which were identified in the early stages would contribute to the authenticity of the research. The naturally occurring variety of role, background and perspective existing in any staff group ensures the demographic reality being studied is accurately portrayed.

While the Leadership Team provided management and support for both general staff direction and the volunteer participants in the target programs, this was done in a negotiated and collaborative way. The use of circles in Figure 6.2, rather than a pyramid or segment model, illustrates the invitational and collaborative dynamic. The diagram also illustrates that leadership staff and the formation program participant staff remained strongly connected with, and part of, the wider staff community. Figure 6.2 illustrates the layered involvement of St Raphael's staff in this study.

Figure 6.2: St Raphael’s Staff Involvement in this Study



The 54 staff members of the case school include leadership personnel, teaching staff, support personnel and secretarial staff. The primary source for data collection was the seven staff participants involved directly in the staff formation programs, as well as four other staff members from the leadership group and wider staff community who were involved in the focus group. Feedback was collected from other staff as initiatives driven by CFP program participants began to register in the wider staff community. In addition, all staff participated in a general questionnaire at the beginning and the end of the research period. Finally, the data from St Raphael’s staff were examined in cross-case analysis with feedback from staff in the other pilot schools. The purpose was to critique emerging themes and identify disconfirming data in participant experience. Table 6.2 indicates the layered nature of data gathering for these different groups.

Table 6.2: All Research Participants

Categories of participants	Number of participants	Questionnaires	Interviews	Observation, journaling and written feedback
All case school staff	54	2	Intermittent	0
Case school CFP program participants	7	2	3 rounds	Continuous throughout research period
Focus group	11	2	6 meetings	1
Other pilot schools staff cohort	9 additional schools: 72 CFP program participants	0	0	Continuous throughout research period

6.5.1.1 Coding for Participants

As indicated in Table 6.2, the whole case school staff community constitutes the case for this research. In order to identify the data sources, the following codings were applied to the data:

Names: Each staff member was provided with a pseudonym that denoted their gender.

Feedback: Each staff member was accompanied by a coded notation denoting role and nature of participation.

Anonymity and security: The code and all participant data were stored safely in accordance with BCE guidelines, and participant data access was restricted to people authorised by the researcher.

The inclusion of all staff in this case is central to the purpose of the study, since the research is interested not only in the experience of the seven volunteer participants in the formation programs, but also in the influence of the CFP on the wider staff community. Some of the broader staff feedback potentially provides “contradictory or overlapping perceptions and nuanced understandings” (Rubin & Rubin, 2005, p. 67). This approach reflects the complexity of the reality under study, enhancing the credibility of the findings, enabling the researcher to “discover, understand and gain insight into those from which most can be learned” (Merriam, 1998, p. 61).

6.5.2 The Development of the *Catching Fire* Strategy in the School Plan

The overall engagement with the *Catching Fire* strategy at St Raphael's was influenced by intentional goal setting and planning. The *Catching Fire* staff formation programs were explained in Chapter 4. Importantly, the staff formation programs were supported by and located in the broader school-based CFP strategy. This meant there was a planned collective formation pathway, with resource use linked to goal setting and with the staff formation programs providing focused, direct and experiential formation for a core staff group.

The development of an annual plan for staff formation was assisted by the researcher and another member of the senior staff from Brisbane Catholic Education. The purpose of the plan was to:

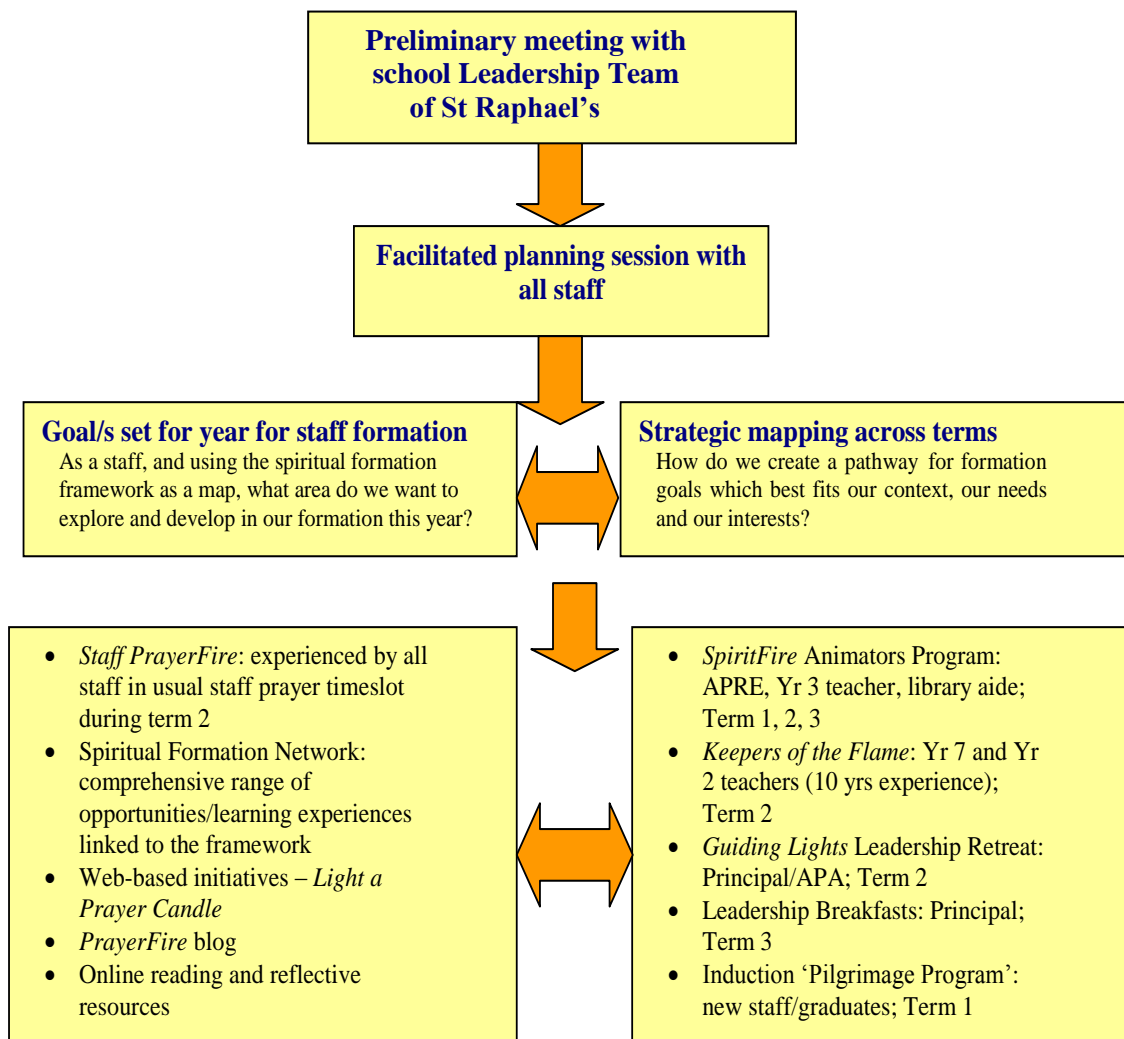
- develop spiritual formation goals for the year and map out a collaborative pathway to pursue the negotiated priorities over the year
- connect this goal setting with strategic renewal planning and contextualise it within the longer term story of the staff community of the school.

The following three points summarise the resulting process of planned participation for staff at St Raphael's.

1. Led by the school Leadership Team, collaborative planning was undertaken to set goals and negotiate a collective pathway of formation specific to the school across the year, making informed choices from the 'curriculum' and resources on offer. Key opportunities were put on the calendar for all staff.
2. Seven staff members volunteered for the spiritual formation programs.
3. All staff had the opportunity to experience and respond to system-wide initiatives including *Light a Prayer Candle* and *Staff PrayerFire*.

The overall strategy aimed for staff involved directly in the CFP to support, and be supported by, a broader school-based plan for the whole staff community. Figure 6.3 illustrates the process and pathway options for staff formation, goal setting and strategic mapping at St Raphael's.

Figure 6.3: St Raphael's Process and Pathway Options



6.6 Stage Two: Inquiry – Data Collection

The second stage of the illuminative evaluation model entails sustained and intensive inquiry through data gathering strategies. The strategies for both data collection and analysis are guided by the research design, and support the purpose and unique character of the research project. Data can provide a source of well grounded, rich description and explanation of processes occurring in local contexts, such as the focus of this research (Miles & Huberman, 1984).

Within a case study approach, a wide range of data sources are available (Gillham, 2000; Yin, 2003). In this particular study, data collection strategies consistent with an interpretivist framework were employed.

- observation
- interview (semi-structured and informal)
- focus group
- open-ended questionnaire
- journaling/written reflection feedback
- informal conversation
- document collection

This multi-method approach to data collection enhances the credibility of the evaluation (Ramsay & Clark, 1990) and reduces the possibility of bias resulting from choosing only one method to gather information.

6.6.1 Observation

For the holistic researcher, participant observation invites submersion in the natural setting (Patton, 2002). Thus, during this study the researcher observed participants throughout the program and developed meaningful relationships with them over an extended period of time. Detailed participant observations were undertaken during the periods of most intensive data gathering, that is, during particular staff participation in the targeted initiatives. Field notes were kept during these observation periods.

There are significant issues in regard to potential bias in participant observation to which all researchers are alerted. These are expanded by Yin (1989) into problems of compromise through advocacy, compromise through over-identification and compromise through imbalanced time allocation between interaction and

observation. Increased self-awareness and a mindfulness of the role and impact of the researcher are key to minimising these issues (Davis, 1986).

These are, of course, the same characteristics that make observation a valuable data gathering strategy. When the researcher “walks into the setting with eyes and ears open” (Gillham, 2000, p. 28) and, at the same time, has a sense of respect for the participants and the setting (Basse, 1999), then it becomes possible to enter the informal reality and deeper currents of staff life and communal dynamic. Moreover, the degree of rapport developed over time in this way allows the observer to gain access to confidential information and situations that would be unavailable to other researchers (Merriam, 1998). Examples of participant observation are detailed in Appendix F.

6.6.2 Interviews

The second data gathering strategy used in this study was the interview. Interviews are a vital source of case study data (Merriam, 1998) because they provide the researcher with important insights into the phenomena being studied from the perspective of the participants. Just as importantly, interviewing affirms the importance of the individual without denigrating the possibility of community and collaboration (Tawney, 1976).

All staff volunteering in the targeted programs were interviewed twice. All interviews were audio-taped and lasted 60 to 70 minutes. Through the use of interviews, each individual’s understanding and experience of spiritual formation was probed, and their journey was illuminated and explored as they experienced the target programs. St Raphael’s Leadership Team offered another perspective to the broader experience. The research design and philosophy situates the participants as co-learners in this study. The nature of the research subject required a high level of trust and rapport to be developed between the researcher and participants.

There are many ways to interview, and the modes chosen by any researcher need to be considered in the light of the research purpose, research context, resources and cost (Gillham, 2005). In this study, two types of interview strategies were employed: the semi-structured interview and the informal interview. The employment of both is designed to elicit from participants their “sacred, secret and cover stories” (Clandinin & Connelly, 1998, p. 161).

The semi-structured interviews were guided by the research questions. Prompts are used to allow every interview to be “unique and personal” (Gillham, 2000, p. 69) while covering identical questions. The main advantage of the informal interview is its use in spontaneous situations, which may yield rich detail about the interviewee’s perception (Patton, 2002). By utilising informal, open-ended interviews with the participants, the researcher “is able to follow up on previous conversations and comments, clarify observations or ‘go with the flow’ and allow participants to lead the conversation into new areas” (Patton, 2002, p. 282). The example below demonstrates a participant’s own construction of her growth in community, as the researcher re-visited a theme previously raised by this participant.

EXAMPLE: Interview with CFP participant exploring topic previously raised

Q. You talked last time about prayer and the staff. Have you noticed any changes in how you see prayer or how you experience it?

M: I think prayer is about community. These experiences are... well, they are building another community you know, in a different sense than what we are as just a teaching community. It takes us into a deeper relationship and then when you’re in that deeper relationship you’re about to share on a different level...

Q: What is that like?

M: It’s like entering a cave that gets bigger and bigger when more people feel it’s a safe place to come.

In some contexts during the research period (e.g. during retreat experiences), the researcher utilised narrative interviewing techniques to allow the individual participant’s meaning-making to be articulated as fully and authentically as possible. This more unstructured rendering of perspective is critical in “constructing the story of the experience” (Gillham, 2005, p. 48) as the use of the narrative accesses “the primary form by which human experience is made meaningful” (Polkinghorne, 1988, p. 1). The example below illustrates one participant’s response to this process.

EXAMPLE: Participant response on retreat

D: Throughout my whole life, I’d felt that pull [to be more involved in justice work], but never followed it. I see it knocking at my door intermittently now as I look back, but my ‘house’ was always so full I had no room for it. I don’t think I can keep going now without addressing this. I feel I’m running on empty, going through the motions of living the gospel but not really in it. It is who I am.

Multiple interviews were designed and re-shaped in collaboration with the participants as the data collection developed. This reflects the interpretivist paradigm adopted, which understands reality as socially constructed by participants within their settings, and complex and changing. As the researcher interacted with

the participants, she was conscious of the way new understandings emerged for both participants and researcher, which in turn uncovered new questions to be recognised and asked. The interviewing approach accommodated this dynamic, allowing for uncovering rich data. Thus, the strategies employed to interview participants proved flexible enough to invite a more imaginative and creative response from the participants (Charon, 2001). Examples of interview scripts are given in Appendix G.

6.6.3 Focus Group

The focus group strategy provides a non-directive form of data collection that leads to an exploration of participants' feelings or opinions in a free-flowing, open-ended discussion (Fontana & Frey, 1994; Gall & Borg, 1999). The aim is to allow another context for expression of feelings, insights and discussion of shared formative experience. Because the participants in this study knew each other, working closely on staff, this allowed a different dynamic than the one-on-one interview and provided a structured opportunity for staff to check with each other the commonality of their responses and experiences.

The focus group comprised the seven staff members participating directly in the formation programs, one other member of the Leadership Team, three other staff members, in addition to the researcher and a skilled spiritual formator. The group met every three to four weeks over the research period with the purpose of sharing participant experience and reflecting on the whole staff experience as it unfolded. These discussions were audio-taped and were of 60 to 90 minutes duration. It was during the focus group discussions that staff reflected on their own growth and the effect of their experience on the rest of the staff. Those in the focus group who were not involved directly in the formation programs offered reflections back to the program participants about their perceptions of changes in staff as individuals and in the broader staff community. The example following, illustrates this contribution.

EXAMPLE: Focus group member who was not a program participant making an observation on the influence of participants on the wider staff community

Q: Can you talk a little more about that? What do you think has made the difference you've observed?

L: I think firstly it is from within them, the passion that they had felt with what they've done is being imparted to us. You can have a piece of paper; you can light the candles; you can do all that; we've done all that. Now, I'm not saying it's never happened before; it's at this moment that I'm feeling they're so thankful. So their confidence, because they can have the passion but their inability I think that's the difference. That they have lived it and they are owning really that they're letting us have some of it.

Because the focus group dynamic removes the power imbalance that most often occurs in the interviewer/interviewee setting, the dialogue can result in the emergence of especially powerful insights. Participants are in a setting where they are at ease in self-disclosure, and there is a readiness to engage more completely with a perspective among known colleagues, engaging the dynamic of 'collective remembering' (Kitzinger, 1994). Below is an example of the process.

EXAMPLE: Focus group discussing a new insight emerging in their dialogue

M: Just came into my head is that we watch the children or the classes present but that we as a staff don't present prayer to the school... I thought that's what D was going to suggest just then... that's why I picked up on it actually because I thought that she was going to go that way too and I think that would be a good idea.

A: And it would model all sorts of things!... We might do it in the classroom, but for kids to see here's a group of adults who are... you know for a lot of kids they don't see that at home, they don't see prayer.

S: Now that staff know what it feels like to be with each other like that, I also think it will be well supported by staff. And great for parents to see as well. Because they don't know what it looks like for adults either! And they can't give what they don't have.

M: Which was the same situation for all of us!

Thus, the focus group data adds a richness and depth to the other modes of data collection. Attentiveness on the part of the researcher to the group culture supports open sharing and individual expression. Appendix H contains example scripts.

6.6.4 Open-ended Questionnaire

The questionnaire is widely used as a data gathering strategy. In many cases, questionnaires are employed as the sole data gathering strategy (Sarantakos, 1998). At the same time, "questionnaires are difficult to do well and easy to do badly" (Gillham, 2005, p. 3).

Given the number of staff at St Raphael's and the variety of understandings and experience of spiritual formation among staff, it was considered appropriate that a questionnaire be administered to all staff members at the beginning of the research period. The same open-ended questionnaire (Appendix I) was also administered at the end of the research period, with a view to gauging shifts in perceptions that may have occurred during the period of the study.

EXAMPLE: Questionnaire responses at beginning and end of research period

Q: Please outline briefly what spiritual formation means for you.

A: Beginning of research period (S 21):

The forming of significant values to enable me to be a more fully knowledgeable and willing participant in my religion and to convey a sense of being Catholic to my students

A: End of research period (S 21):

It means to be formed and shaped in the Spirit and of the Spirit (to breathe in – the breath of life and God). It sometimes requires ‘burning discomfort’ like gold in the furnace. It is my lifelong journey.

On both occasions when the questionnaire was administered, the context was within the agenda of a full staff meeting with appropriate permissions and preparation. This guaranteed consistency and conformity along with a high response rate. Other advantages in using an open-ended questionnaire for this research included the guarantee of anonymity of responses and minimisation of bias, and the ease and cost efficiency of delivery and collection (Neuman, 2000).

The limitations of this strategy were addressed with careful preparation and briefing, so that while the researcher was not present for the administration of the questionnaire, the circumstances for completion were satisfactory and useful data was obtained. One of the challenges in not being present to clarify questions or respond to queries which may emerge is the risk of the questionnaire not being completed (Sarantakos, 1998). However, all questionnaires were completed. Even where participants may be unclear about requirements in some questions, their responses can still offer valuable insights for the research. The open-ended approach, as an introduction to the research focus for staff, allowed for a broad spectrum of perspectives to be reflected.

6.6.5 Journaling/Written Reflection Feedback

The researcher maintained a journal for the duration of this research. This journal provided a personal reflection of the progress of the study, insights with regard to strategies and participant response, and notes on interviews and other data collection. This then formed part of the audit trail (Merriam & Assoc., 2002). In addition, participants in targeted strategies had a journal for the term of their particular program. Time for journaling and some guided reflection notes were built

into the program processes. Outside of this structured time, participants were encouraged to journal as much as they could and wished.

Written reflection feedback was part of each segment of the program for participants in both the case school and the other nine pilot schools (Appendix J). Time for reflection and written feedback was integrated into the programs, giving the researcher immediate feedback throughout the stages of the CFP. The example below illustrates reflection feedback during the program sessions.

EXAMPLE: Participant reflection feedback following *SpiritFire* Day 4

- I feel I've come to a new spirit of acceptance of the journey of others in my own school community, to being open to meet them where they are, without conflict or criticism. Hopefully, to together meet the challenge to move forward as People of Faith.
- I would like to think that I could become an agent for releasing the inner spirit/spirituality of others who have not had the opportunity of attending those four days... perhaps through staff prayer, Lenten journey, community/social gatherings, attending to one person each day.
- How to make it real? How to make it authentic? On each of the days I gained a significant insight during the reflection time that presented a huge challenge. I'm still working on that! Probably believing that we can change the culture and also having time to maintain the passion.

Both journaling and written reflection feedback offered useful strategies in tracking the personal journey of each participant as they engaged with the spiritual formation strategies. They also provided an important marker in the triangulation of data during the analysis phase.

6.6.6 Informal Conversation

The informal conversation data gathering strategy seeks to acknowledge the rich data that can be gathered in snatched moments of conversation that are so characteristic of life in a busy school environment. Such interchanges were recorded in the researcher's field notes and journal.

The number of informal discussions depended on the availability and time of participants, and the availability of the researcher to take advantage of spontaneous opportunities for such conversation. The unique contribution of informal conversation is that it empowers the participant to influence the choice of topic under discussion in a direct and open way, accommodating personal needs and situations (Patton, 2002). Such interactions can give expression to lateral directions and tangential perspectives in individual understanding of the school's experience.

Used in conjunction with participant observation and focus group feedback, informal conversation nuances individual experience, distilling emerging insights and direction, and validating previous data.

6.6.7 Documentary Analysis

Written documents in this context include: material from “organisational, clinical or program records; memoranda and correspondence; official publications and reports” (Patton, 2002, p. 10). There is a broad range of documents that are pertinent to the research. As many as possible were sourced by the researcher.

In addition to key systemic publications, documents produced by the school itself in relation to the nature and purpose of the school, its goal setting and planning, and its professional planning for staff were collected for analysis. These documents group into three key categories for analysis: “public records, personal documents and physical material” (Merriam, 1998, p. 113). Most documents used were public records including policy documents, public newsletters and communications, strategic planning documents and meeting minutes (Appendix K). Some personal documents such as reflective notes and emails from the Leadership Team were also sourced. Finally, physical material such as banners, prayer rituals and spaces, artwork and plaques were also included in the data analysis.

The purpose of choosing these documents was two-fold: to understand how the school currently articulated its spiritual dimension and to identify any change in this articulation over the course of the research period. For example, one document collection comprised the weekly school newsletters, in order to study the Principal’s and APRE’s messages. The example below illustrates the public expression of the Principal’s personal experience.

EXAMPLE: Front page, School newsletter, July 18, 2007. Principal’s message

During the first week of my leave, I was fortunate enough to participate in a retreat with a dozen or so of my colleagues from other schools around the Archdiocese involved in the staff spirituality project this year... It provided the chance to reflect and be challenged about aspects of our lives as principals and spouses and parents. One of the more challenging activities we undertook was a ‘street retreat’ one evening... Our collective experiences across those three venues that night provided enough stimulation to keep us talking and thinking for the next couple of days and then some. At a personal level, it reinforced for me the importance that the service of others should play in our own spirituality. Further, service is critical if we are to have any deep appreciation of the place of the Church in our lives.

The example of the Principal's message from this collection illustrates not only the personal perception of his experience in the formation program, but also how he perceived its relevance to the school's identity. The positive response from parents to the Principal's sharing was strong enough for the Principal to address more of his experiences over the next three newsletters. Following is part of his final instalment.

EXAMPLE: Front page, School newsletter, Aug 1, 2007 Principal's message

Hidden among the trees at various places along the river, we found shelters housing more people than I knew to be living rough in Brisbane. When we spoke, their stories of how they came to be living on the streets were as varied as the number we met – mental illness, relationship failure, and addiction were common... these months later, I am still left in awe of the dignity of so many of those we met and their desires which differ not at all from those which any of us have in our everyday lives.

The document analysis thus provided some objective sources of data in a non-intrusive way (Merriam, 1998). Themes and concepts could then be pursued in interviews and focussed discussion, and most importantly helped the researcher to sharpen the understanding of the dissonance at the heart of the research problem. While some of these documents articulate the ecclesial understanding of staff spiritual formation and the evangelising mission of the Church, other documents, like the school newsletter, illuminate how individuals appropriate their understanding and give voice and witness in the everyday reality of the school context.

While the researcher remained mindful that the analysis of these data sources has limitations regarding "selectivity, incompleteness and quality variability" (Patton, 2002, p. 245), the sources found a very useful place in the process of validation and triangulation when included with other data sources.

6.6.8 Period of Data Collection

The bulk of the data was gathered during Terms 2 and 3 (amounting to 6 months). This data covered a range of experiences included individual staff participation in the three staff formation programs (*Guiding Lights*, *SpiritFire*, *Keepers of the Flame*). This was supported by and positioned within the broader staff involvement in wider school resourcing and planning:

- Strategic planning and goal setting in conjunction with the school Strategic Renewal plan: this occurred at the beginning of the year
- *Staff PrayerFire*: A staff prayer pack used during the 10 weeks of Term 2
- *Light a Prayer Candle*: Interactive website for all staff to use
- DIY resourcing for prayer, ritual and reflection

- Formators Network: Offering access to a network of spiritual formators for whole staff development and/or individual opportunities.

The data collection therefore reflects participation of staff in the formation programs as well as the broader strategies for the whole school community. Figure 6.4 and 6.5 provide an outline of what, with whom and how each of the data gathering strategies was used.

Figure 6.4: Data Collection – Staff in CFP

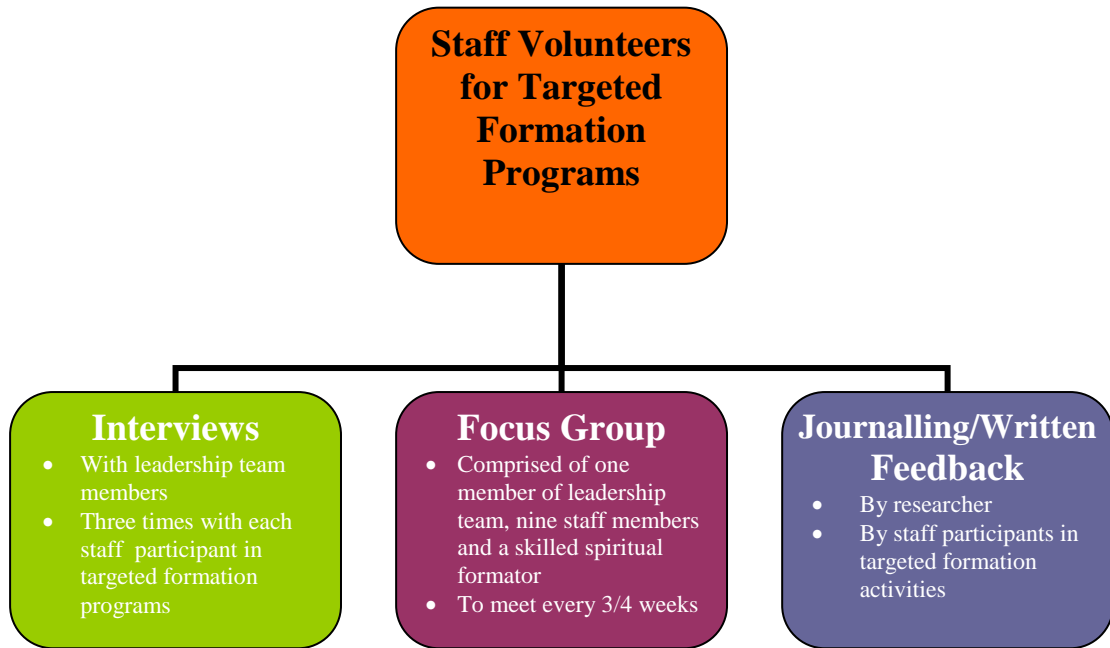
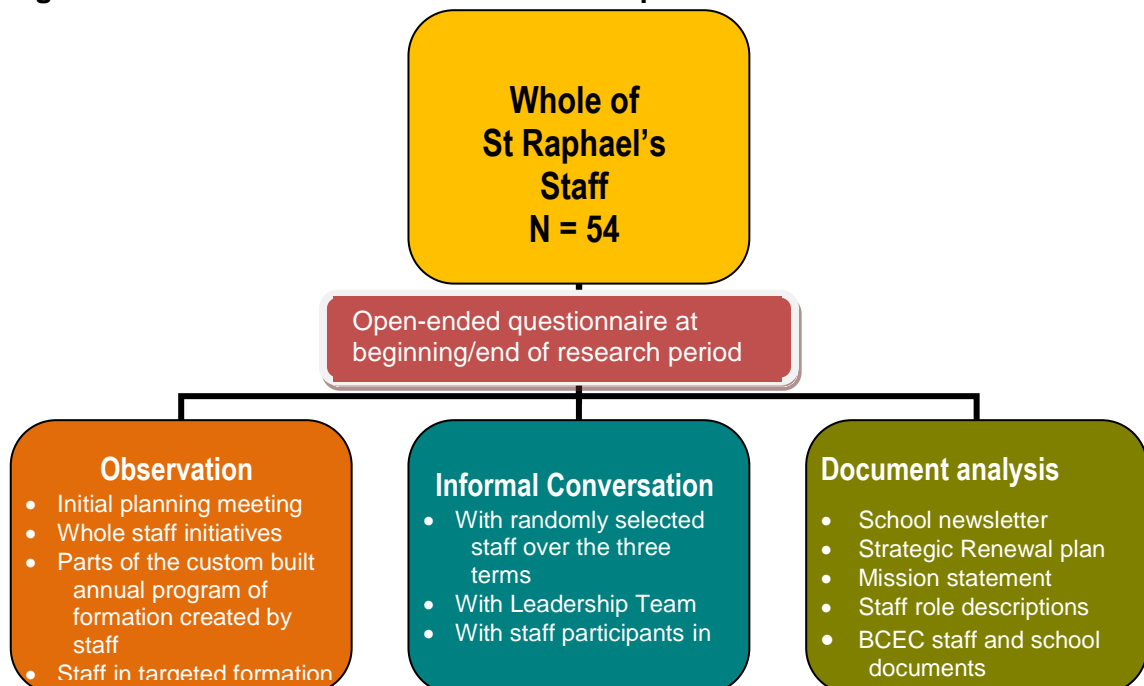


Figure 6.5: Data Collection – All Staff at St Raphael's



6.7 Stage Three: Explanation – Data Analysis

The third stage in the illuminative evaluation model gives focus to the process of data analysis, identifying underlying patterns and principles, and critically assessing the gathered data. Because data analysis is the process of making meaning out of the gathered data (what has been seen, heard and read), it is a complex, iterative process (Dey, 1993; Glesne, 1999). The research design in this study guided the data collection procedures and data analysis throughout the research period.

6.7.1 Strategy for Data Analysis

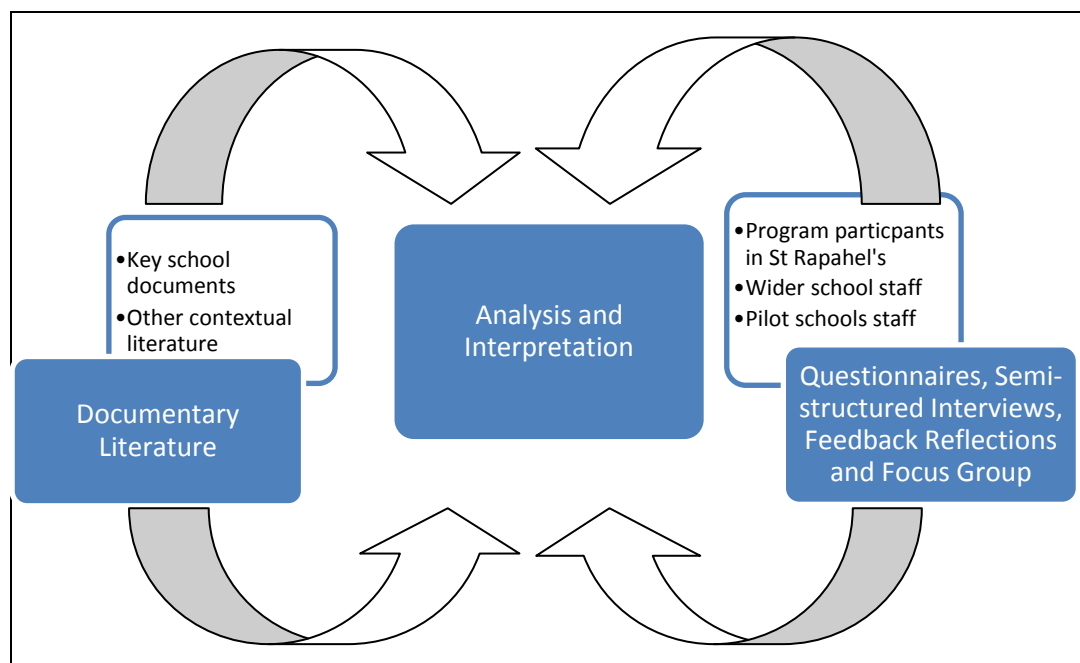
Interpretative research generates considerable amounts of information regardless of specific methods used. The data analysis process can be considered problematic precisely because the theoretical and epistemological lens adopted for the research allows for employment of an eclectic diversity of strategies to gather rich, thick data (Bassegy, 1999). Because of this, it is a particular task of the interpretive researcher to choose data analysis techniques that make connections which are ultimately meaningful to themselves and the reader (Glesne, 1999). Therefore, a clear strategy is essential to guide the process of case study data analysis (Yin, 2003).

Within the range of tools on offer, data analysis in this study drew together techniques from both case study and grounded theory traditions to best serve the evaluative case study methodology. A consequence is that data analysis occurred simultaneously and iteratively with data collection and report writing (Creswell, 2002; Denzin & Lincoln, 1998; Miles & Huberman, 1984). Figure 6.6 (overleaf) illustrates the model of the ongoing process of collection and analysis.

The data analysis itself follows a three-phase process: data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing and verification (Miles & Huberman, 1994). In the first stage, data is collated, summarised, coded and sorted. In the second stage, data is organised and assembled, and then conceptualised visually. In the third stage, the process involves interpreting and giving meaning to the gathered data, showing themes, patterns and shared perceptions. Within this process, the researcher has applied the constant comparative model of analysis (Glaser & Strauss, cited in Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 339) to reduce the large amount of data to a number of emergent themes. In the process of coding analysis, a three-part method for coding (O'Donoghue, 2007) provides a process that re-combines and synthesises the data

in a way that illuminates the research purpose and research questions, while allowing emergent understandings and dimensions to evolve.

Figure 6.6: Hermeneutic of Simultaneous and Iterative Data Collection and Analysis (based on Gallagher, 1992, p. 106)



Because interpretive data analysis is always more complicated in reality, involving the subjective perspectives of the researcher, and, in this study, is also developed out of an evaluative model “that is both adaptable and eclectic” (Tawney, 1976, p. 92), this researcher found it helpful to overlay these basic steps with the following six-stage working guide in the real-time process of analysis (Wellington, 2000).

- Stage 1: Immersion. This stage involves ‘immersing oneself’ in the data and getting an overall sense or feel for what is being said/communicated (Rubin & Rubin, 2005).
- Stage 2: Reflection. This stage involves standing back from the data in order for the researcher to digest and process the whole.
- Stage 3: Taking apart/analysing the data. This stage comprises data analysis in its strictest sense. It includes the selection or filtering of units, the categorising or coding of units, and the subsuming or further categorisation of subsequent units.

- Stage 4: Recombining/synthesising data. This phase gives more focus to refining particular patterns and themes in the data. Continuous refinement results in carving up the data in order to re-shape it.
- Stage 5: Relating and locating the data. This stage draws on the strength of the study's comprehensive literature review, as the data is located and related to others' research. This is an important reflective phase of data analysis.
- Stage 6: Presenting the data. This is the final stage where the data is presented as fairly, accurately, clearly and coherently as possible, allowing the voices to speak, and drawing out the key themes. The evidence-based interpretations that evolve are then the foundation for published reporting (Rubin & Rubin, 2005).

Figure 6.7 illustrates part of the summary presentation of the interpretive data analysis process.

Figure 6.7: Presentation Snapshot from Data Analysis Process



6.7.2 Coding

The use of coding assists the process of data analysis by imposing order on the raw data (O'Donoghue & Punch, 2003). Coding is the “fundamental analytic process used by the researcher” (Corbin & Strauss, 1990, p. 12). In coding the data, the researcher takes an active part in the process; she cannot be neutral. It is the researcher who makes the decisions to include or exclude, and who will “intervene, manipulate, act on, conceptualise, and use specific techniques” (Walker & Myrick, 2006, p. 550). This research is keen to generate the connective clues for a contemporary spiritual formation curriculum appropriate to the Catholic educational context. It aims to discover and document what it is like to participate in the project and to “discern and discuss the innovations most significant features, recurring concomitants and critical processes” (Tawney, 1976, p. 89). The analytic process for coding outlined below serves this purpose well.

A three-type process offered by O'Donoghue (2007) and based on the work of Corbin and Strauss (1990) was adopted for the nature of this evaluative case study. The coding was guided by the research questions, led to new questions, and allowed the researcher to understand themes and emerging concepts. Each stage of coding – open, axial and selective – is designed to achieve a different purpose, each building on the others. In essence, the coding process can be summarised as follows: in open coding the data is still fractured; in axial coding the method relates and integrates data; and in selective coding the process is to select and integrate data (Walker & Myrick, 2006). The process was applied as follows.

6.7.2.1 Open Coding

This is the first step in the process of data analysis. Data are interpreted and ordered into concepts to be continually compared and contrasted. It can be a line-by-line or word-by-word process. Through the constant comparison, events and feedback are analysed for similarities or differences and conceptual labels are attached. Given the wealth of information that emerges, code notes are used to help describe and explain concepts as they are identified. These concepts are grouped into categories and subcategories. In turn, these become the basis for sampling in the next round of observations. “Open coding stimulates generative and comparative questions to guide the researcher upon return to the field” (Corbin & Strauss, 1990, p. 12). This new level of questioning, combined with constant comparative analysis, assists the researcher in the removal of subjectivity and bias.

In this data analysis, about 120 nodes were created initially by open coding. The example below illustrates the process of initial coding of raw data.

EXAMPLE: Process of Initial Coding

Participant D	Raw Data	Initial Coding
<p>Journaling excerpt</p> <p>Reflection on structure</p>	<p><i>“So, had it been Bible and all that sort of stuff, I think that might have been a bit off-putting for me to start with. But you know, finding out who you are, it’s that whole thing of knowing who you are before you can love anybody else or, you know, have your faith.”</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Negative assumptions about faith exploration • Positive personal focus • Self-discovery

6.7.2.2 Axial Coding

The purpose of axial coding “is to put the fractured data back together in new ways” (Walker & Myrick, 2006, p. 553). During this stage of the study, the researcher attempts to make sense of the data by establishing relationships between categories and their subcategories. This is done through the ‘coding paradigm’ of “conditions, contexts, strategies (action/interaction), and consequences, where subcategories are related to a category” (Corbin & Strauss, 1990, p. 13). Any relationship proposed at this stage of the analysis must be constantly verified with incoming data. The example below illustrates how the process of merging the open coded data nodes through the identification of similar concepts resulted in the development of a reduced group of main nodes. This process reduced the 120 nodes in the open coding stage to 33 main nodes.

EXAMPLE: Development from Open Coding to Axial Coding

Open coding	Axial coding
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Negative assumptions about faith • Positive personal focus • Self-discovery • Scripture as Bible bashing • Scripture as in-service information • Feeling self-affirmed 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Personal focus • The place of Scripture • Recognising personal gift and inner wisdom • Claiming a personal spirituality

6.7.2.3 Selective Coding

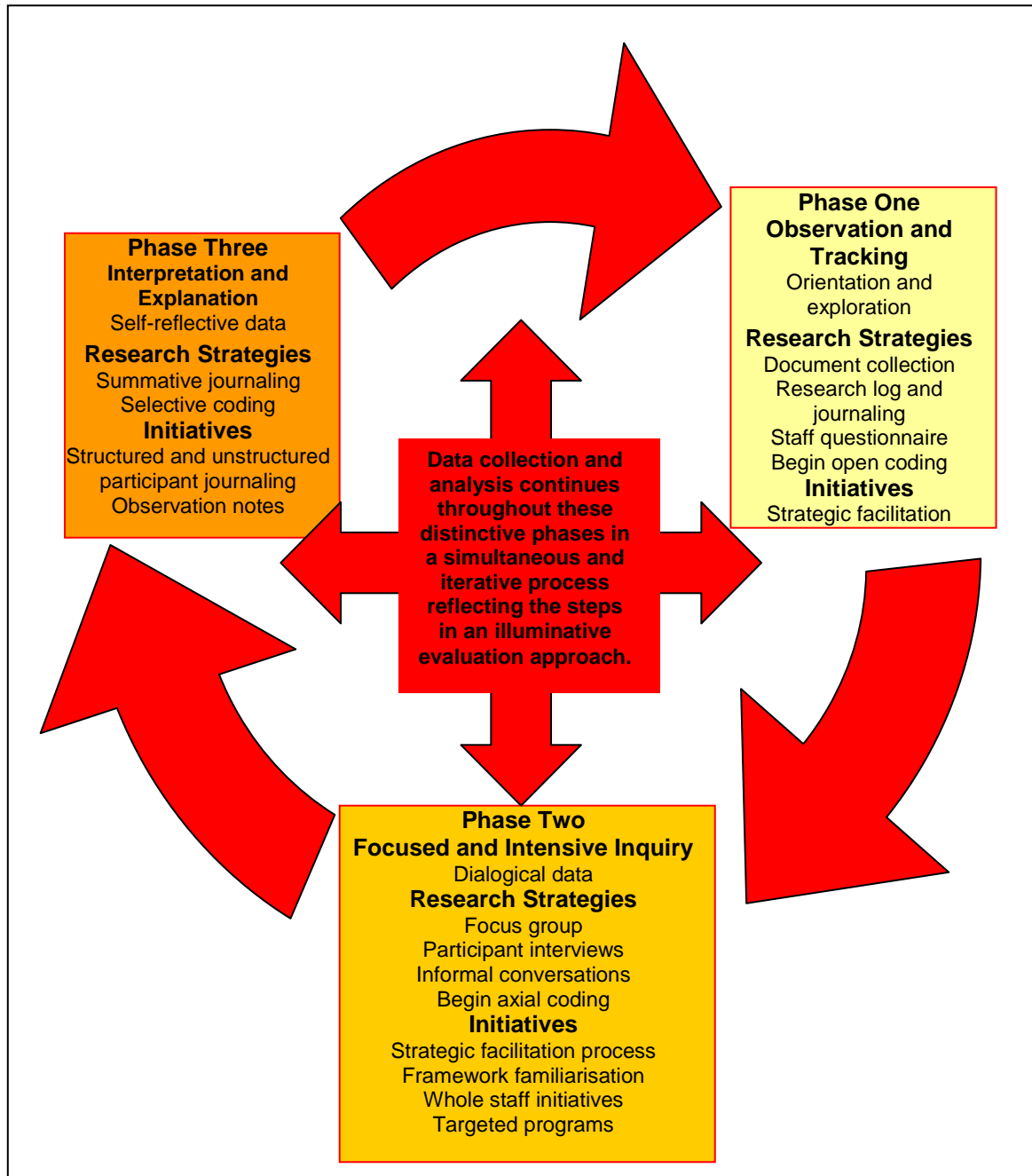
At this stage the integration of data or the unification of all categories around a central core or theme occurs (Corbin & Strauss, 1990). The researcher may allow the central theme or category to emerge from the data, or alternatively, use selective coding which is “the process of selecting the core category, systematically relating it to other categories, and validating those relationships” (O'Donoghue, 2007, p. 138). It is here that inadequately developed categories are identified and re-developed or subsumed (Corbin & Strauss, 1990). The following example illustrates the process of integrating and refining categories in order to build key themes.

EXAMPLE: Development from Axial Coding to Selective Coding

Axial Coding	Selective Coding
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Personal focus• The place of Scripture• Recognising personal gift/inner wisdom• Claiming a personal spirituality• Self-identity through each other	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Participatory culture• Holistic perspectives• Connecting with tradition

Figure 6.8 presents the research phases which are consistent with the illuminative evaluation approach taken in this research design. The data collection strategies and steps in data analysis are included in the diagram, as well as the specific initiatives at the school level, indicating how these were distributed across the research phases.

Figure 6.8: Distribution of Data Collection Strategies across the Research Phases Correlating to the Illuminative Evaluation Approach



6.8 Rigour

In interpretive research, rigour offers an opportunity to demonstrate the trustworthiness of the study by verifying its credibility, dependability, confirmability and transferability (Gall & Borg, 1999; Guba, 1989; Richards, 2005). In this research, the triangulation created by the data collection strategies supported the development of an holistic understanding of the research focus. In ascertaining the

trustworthiness of the data gathered in this study, the following criteria, based on the work of Lincoln and Guba (1985; 2003), were applied.

6.8.1 Credibility

Credibility refers to the truthfulness of the data and is characterised by a number of indicators. The benchmarks for credibility were maximised in this study in a number of ways. Firstly, there was an extended period of data gathering, allowing for more and changing data to be uncovered. Secondly, there was prolonged engagement with participants during this time. The multiple data gathering methods employed, which created the source triangulation noted above, allowed the voices of participants to be paramount in the process. Here, disconfirming data can prove to be as helpful as confirmatory triangulation (Gillham, 2000). Finally, the involvement of participants in critiquing emerging data through the process of member checking (Merriam, 1998) and shared reflection enhanced credibility. Both participants and readers of this research ought to be able to recognise the lived experience being described in the research as similar to their own (Roberts & Taylor, 2002).

6.8.2 Transferability

One of the earliest and lingering criticisms of case study methodology, and of illuminative evaluation in particular (Ramsay & Clark, 1990), relates to the extent that it can be used to generalise to other settings. For example, some researchers assert that transferability in its strictest sense is not compatible with interpretive inquiry due to the nature of the research design itself (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Others, however, advocate for 'naturalistic generalisation' (Stake, 1980; Gomm, Hammersley & Foster, 2000), where similarities, likely transferability and co-variations, are naturally deduced by the reader. Further, the literature suggests that illuminative evaluation, by its nature, will have high validity (Morgan, 1991) and that as the researcher using illuminative evaluation focuses on 'what is going on' and charts the multiple realities, then a different researcher should arrive at essentially the same conclusions (replicability), resulting in high reliability (Ramsay & Clark, 1990). This perspective aligns with the design and aspiration of this study.

The major technique for establishing the degree of transferability is thick description (Guba, 1989), thus ensuring there is sufficient data triangulation to amplify and clarify the emergent picture of the case in focus. This is precisely the course pursued by the researcher in this study. The assembled data includes detailed

interview transcripts and observation notes. The variety and depth of data collection provided sufficient rich, thick data that readers can ascertain how closely their experience identifies with the case, and what implications can therefore be drawn and applied in their own contexts.

6.8.3 Dependability

Dependability refers to the stability of data over time and differing conditions. The development of an audit trail provides an accessible trackability of data and the development of findings. This allows the researcher to take the reader through the work from the beginning to the end so that the process by which patterns are revealed and conclusions are drawn is made apparent (O'Donoghue, 2007). In this way, the audience can judge the dependability or trustworthiness of the outcomes (Maykut & Morehouse, 1994). Dependability in this study was enhanced by the length of time of the research period and by the consistency in the contact, gathering and evaluation of data inherent in having one researcher involved.

6.8.4 Confirmability

Confirmability refers to the grounding of the data and findings in events, rather than being developed out of the researcher's constructions. A comprehensive audit trail is a key strategy to ensure this aspect of trustworthiness. This means that all data can be tracked to their sources, and that the logic used to assemble the interpretations into a coherent whole is both explicit and implicit in the narrative of the case study (Guba, 1989). All data from the case school participants and the broader cohort of pilot school participants were maintained in a database, providing a comprehensive data trail of all feedback from all participants from the beginning of the CFP. Transcripts of all interviews and notes on emerging themes during the research period are also apparent in this data trail.

6.8.5 Trustworthy Reporting

There are four common ways the interpretive researcher can do *injustice* to the research process at the reporting stage (Richards, 2005). The first is by presenting the 'patchwork quilt' style of reporting, comprising a collection of long quotes connected by generalisations and partial summaries. This kind of reporting betrays poor data reduction and a lack of focus. The second is the "flooded description style of reporting" (Richards, 2005, p. 139) that includes rich and colourful descriptions and narratives, but again lacks clear data analysis and an economy of text. The third

style of reporting that reflects poorly on the research design is the 'leap of faith' account (Richards, 2005). Here, the reporting makes 'a leap' from evidence-based discussion to ideological assertions, reflecting more the bias and passion of the researcher than the findings of the data. Finally, a fourth poor reporting style is where the reflexivity of the researcher takes too central a place in the telling of the story, becoming the 'hero' of the telling. In these ways, the research process can be derailed in the reporting stage, despite an established research design and an abundance of data. Richards (2005), providing an important reminder of this, highlights the need for the research process to be as thorough and transparent as possible. The more this is so, the more trustworthy the findings will be. Every effort was made in this research, from the identification of the research problem to the reporting of the research findings, for a thorough and transparent process.

6.9 Ethical Considerations

Ethical considerations include privacy, confidentiality, protection from harm, informed consent, ownership of data and care in reporting (Bassey, 1999). Ethical considerations here include general ethical issues in research and specific ones that relate to the site or participants involved (Marshall & Rossman, 1999). Three principles of procedure identified by Howe and Eisenhart (1990) were adopted during the course of this educational research. These principles are:

1. understanding one's own values through alertness to, and coherence with, background assumptions
2. the effective integration of appropriate data collection and analysis techniques
3. congruity between research objectives, questions and design.

The three principles undergird the explanation and justification of the research design. The structure of the research design was aligned with the theoretical framework and epistemology underpinning the research. The data gathering methods and analysis were developed out of this framework in an iterative process throughout the project. This alignment of the theoretical and process dimensions of the research was carefully structured and respected, ensuring the ethical considerations, right through to and including reporting, were adopted consistently.

This study followed a series of protocols that govern and drive the design and data gathering. These are in accordance with the policies of the Australian Catholic

University Research Projects Ethics Committee and the Brisbane Catholic Education (BCE) guidelines for research. Informed consent in writing was received from the university authorities, the system authorities, the school authorities and participants within the case school itself (see Appendices A, B, C). After an initial visit to the school, thanking the staff for their participation and outlining the nature and purpose of the research, a follow-up letter was sent to all staff advising that ethical clearance had been obtained from the ACU Research Projects Ethics Committee; a consent form and demographic questionnaire were also included. The purpose of the questionnaire was to provide the researcher with data describing the diversity of background of participants and their role within the school community.

In addition, all data from the study were treated in a way which protects the confidentiality and anonymity of the participants, specifically through the use of coding. Each staff member in the case school was provided with a pseudonym that denotes their gender. Each staff member was accompanied by a coded notation denoting their role and nature of participation. The codes and all data were stored safely in accordance with BCE guidelines, and data access was restricted to people authorised by the researcher.

A final, fundamental ethical consideration, and a critical one for the integrity of this project, is the researcher's role and relationship with the participants. Interpretive investigators recognise this and attempt to be unobtrusive without being secretive; to be supportive without being collusive; and to be non-doctrinaire without appearing unsympathetic. Care was thus taken in this research process to maximise the benefit of the researcher's position and to minimise any risk of compromising the data collection and analysis during the research. Importantly, participants expressed a high degree of trust in the research project and confidence with how the data would be treated due to the approach and reputation for professionalism and integrity of the researcher herself.

6.10 Role of the Researcher

No researcher commences with a blank mind and no analysis of data is neutral (Charmaz, 2005). Researchers "filter data through a personal lens that is situated in a specific socio-political and historical moment, so one cannot escape 'the personal interpretation brought to qualitative data analysis'" (Creswell, 2003, p. 182). Thus it is imperative to acknowledge who the researchers are and what biases and subjectivity they might bring to the study (Gillham, 2005). In this case, the

researcher was the primary instrument for data collection and analysis, and her personal and professional experience, interests and knowledge guided the progress of the study (Crotty, 1998; Merriam, 1998; Punch, 1998).

During the research process, the researcher adopts many roles (Glesne & Peshkin, 1992; Marshall & Rossman, 1999), dependent not only on the researcher's experience, but also on the context of the research, and the participants' personality and background. While a range of roles has been identified in the literature – for example, exploiter, reformer, advocate and friend (Glesne, 2006; Lapadat, Mothus & Fisher, 2005) – the main role adopted by the researcher in this study was that of 'researcher' (Patton, 1990).

It is universally understood by interpretive researchers that they must “systematically reflect on who they are in the inquiry and be sensitive to their personal biography and how it shapes the study” (Creswell, 2003, p. 182). The changing dynamic of such reflection was keenly felt by the researcher during this study. Most particularly, because of the change in her professional position during the course of the research, the researcher was acutely aware of the impact of her role in the strategic leadership in this area within Brisbane Catholic Education. Her empathic skills, her own professionalism and intentional self-reflective tools, including the use of an external person as a 'peer de-briefer' or 'critical friend' during the research addressed the need to keep her role as researcher well monitored (Creswell, 2003; Lincoln & Guba, 2003).

By naming her reality, the researcher acknowledged her context as transparently as possible. By identifying the self-managing tools to be employed during all stages of the research process, personal and professional boundaries were established and these ensured the rigour of the research findings. The genuine surprise felt by the researcher in viewing the data and elements of the evolving themes in the research findings bears some testament to the efficacy of her established boundaries.

6.11 Overview of the Research Design

The preceding discussion justifies the strategies and methods employed in the research. These reflect, in spirit and practice, the interpretive paradigm this research draws on and the social interactionist perspective which informs the research design, data collection and analysis. Evaluative case study methodology, supported by an illuminative evaluation model, complements the research design in an integrated way. Throughout, two specific research questions focused the design:

1. How do participants perceive the *Catching Fire Project* (CFP)?
2. How does the *Catching Fire Project* (CFP) influence the school community?

In sum, the value of adopting an interpretivist design, and of the symbolic interactionist perspective within it, is the capacity it allows to explore people's perspectives, the actions people take in the light of their perspectives, and the patterns which develop through the interaction of perspectives and actions over a particular period of time (O'Donoghue, 2007). The researcher was the primary data gathering instrument, using a variety of data gathering strategies that drew on traditional case study techniques as well as grounded theory tools. This led to the creation of rich, thick data guided by a clear strategy for the data analysis process, in preparation for presentation and reporting. Ideally, the output of this research will be regarded as useful, intelligible and revealing by those involved in the study itself. Further, by addressing key educational issues in the Catholic context, it can be seen as "a recognisable reality by others outside the innovation" (Brady & Kennedy, 2003, p. 100). The researcher then has not only short-term goals, but also the long-term goal of illuminating a developing and urgently required new field of study. The following chapters present and explore the research findings with these goals in mind. Table 6.3 outlines the relationship between the phases of the illuminative evaluation design, the timeline of data collection, and the source and modes of data collection in response to the research questions.

Table 6.3: Overview of the Research Design and its Relationship to the Two Research Questions

Research Question	Research Phases (2007–2009)	Data Collection (2007)	Data Analysis	Sources of Data	Timeframe
How does the CFP influence the school community?	Phase 1, 2 and 3	Document analysis Informal conversation Focus group feedback Establishing staff relationships Open-ended Questionnaire	Overview of questionnaire data and initial focus group feedback Contemporaneous data analysis begins and continues Data referenced and chunked	Literature review Church documents School and system documents School ritual life – artifacts, events, daily rhythm. All St Raphael’s staff	June 2006 to June 2008 Jan–Feb 2007 Jan–Mar 2007
	Phase 1 and 2	Interviews Focus group feedback Informal discussion	Overview of interview data Data transcripts referenced and chunked Early data analysis and clarification of emergent themes with participants	All staff participants in programs Leadership Team Staff representatives Staff members from wider staff community	Jan–Sept 2007 Staff <i>PrayerFire</i> Program Term 2 <i>Light a Prayer Candle</i> website Jan–Dec 2007 St Raphael’s formation network choices
How do participants perceive the CFP?	Phase 1, 2 and 3	Participant observation Series of interviews Informal discussion Focus group feedback Journaling – mapping Written program feedback Open-ended Questionnaire	Validation of responses with participants Validation of original transcripts Axial coding of data Close examination of alternative interpretations and disconfirming data Final validating steps with participants Data synthesis	Each CFP participant begins formation process with mapping exercise designed to articulate beliefs and positions before commencing programs This map is revisited at the end of the research period. Targeted staff initiatives are spread across the year, with a focus on Term 2 and 3 Other initiatives are available to all staff in their own time	Principals’ <i>Guiding Lights</i> Leadership Retreat May 30–June 1 2007; Follow up day Sept 4 <i>Keepers of the Flame</i> retreat for experienced staff – May 16–18; Follow up day Sept 11 <i>SpiritFire</i> program for staff formation seeding, March 19–20; May 28; Aug 27

7 PRESENTATION OF FINDINGS – CASE SCHOOL COMMUNITY

7.1 Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to document the findings of the research exploring participant and school community experience of a spiritual formation initiative as experienced within the case school, St Raphael's. These findings are a synthesis of the data gathered from participant interviews at different points during the program, whole staff questionnaires at the beginning and end of the research period, and focus group discussions during the period of program involvement. School and parish documents, further informal conversations with staff as well as participant journaling provided additional data sources. Summary findings from the other schools involved in the pilot year are included at the end of the chapter and presented in detail in Appendix N.

7.2 Framework for Presentation of Data

Within the narrative framework, story as a metaphor is the unifying motif. Stories are full and rich, giving testimony to what was witnessed and creating a voice in the process (Frank, 1995). Each participant's experience becomes a unique 'story' and simultaneously contributes to the 'shared story'. At the same time, the individual and community story can be traced to express the key themes in the journey of development. This reflects both the phasal development informed directly by Parlett and Hamilton's (1972; 1987) model, and the formative development illuminated by the scholarship and practice wisdom in spiritual formation (Dreyer, 2005; Rohr, 2010; Schneiders, 2003; Wolski Conn, 1999).

The story framework not only provides a framework for this chapter, but also aims to amplify the depth and power of the narrative at the heart of the research. In educational research, the use of narrative is both central and influential, for "at the heart of meaningful educational reform and change, lie the narratives" (Beattie, 2001, p. 66). Equally important in this research is careful attendance to the unfolding process, rather than anticipated outcomes, since "predicting the outcome is less important than understanding the journey" (McCormack, 2002, p. 338).

Table 7.1 summarises the framework for the presentation of findings.

Table 7.1: Chapter Structure

7	PRESENTATION OF FINDINGS
7.1	Introduction
7.2	Framework for Presentation of Data
7.3	Participant Context
7.3.1	One School, Three Programs, Seven Stories
7.4	'My Story' – The Self-Engagement Phase
7.5.1	Seekers after Something
7.5.2	Response to the Program Structure
7.5.3	Recognising Personal Gift and Inner Wisdom
7.5.4	Re-framing Grief and Failure
7.5.5	Claiming a Personal Spirituality
7.5	'Our Story' – The Mutual Engagement Phase
7.6.1	I Am Not Alone
7.6.2	Growing in Community
7.6.3	Experience with Institutional Church
7.6	'The Story' – The Transformational Phase
7.7.1	Giving to Community
7.7.2	Reconnecting to the Jesus Meta-narrative
7.7.3	Reconnecting to Church
7.7.4	Living Sustainable Practice
7.7.5	Connecting Meaning and Purpose
7.7.6	Embracing the Mystic Dimension
7.7.7	Images of Transformation
7.7	Decisions
7.8	Community Learnings and Directions
7.9	Generation of Themes for Discussion
7.10	Findings from the General Pilot School Cohort
7.11	Conclusion

In reflecting on three types of narrative identified in the literature – restitution, chaos and quest – this research attunes closely with the third of these, the 'quest narrative'. Quest narratives "accept what is happening, and seek to use such happenings positively on a journey of growth and change" (McCormack, 2002, p. 337). This research is permeated by the participants' stories, their understanding of what is happening for them through their formation experiences, and their searching for the best response to the experiences they have had. Moreover, the quest

narrative moves each participant in an organic and iterative way through the three phases of the story metaphor developed as the framework for presenting the findings, thereby reflecting one of the underlying principles of engagement in CFP (Chapter 4) and in the theoretical framework (see Figure 5.7) underpinning participant experience in this study.

7.3 Participant Context

The formation program experiences of the seven St Raphael's participants were as members of a larger group of twenty to thirty participants from nine other pilot school communities in each program. At no time did they experience a formation program activity together as their own discrete school group. However, apart from the Principal, neither were they usually lone participants from their school in the larger group.

7.3.1 One School, Three Programs, Seven Stories

There were seven case school participants involved in the three staff formation programs in the CFP. To understand the journeys of these participants, it is appropriate to recall the program structure and context, which was detailed in Chapter 4. There are three staff formation programs in the CFP. All three programs share assumptions concerning a process focus and person-centred approach. All programs share common principles or touchstones for participant engagement which are identified as 'boundary markers'. Table 7.2 delineates their participant status. The names of the participants in this report are pseudonyms.

Table 7.2: Program Participants

<i>Guiding Lights</i>	<i>SpiritFire</i>	<i>Keepers of the Flame</i>
Joseph (Principal)	Mary (APRE)	Susannah (Classroom teacher)
	Tamar (Learning support)	Sarah (Classroom teacher)
	Elizabeth (Pre-school)	Rebeccah (Classroom teacher)

In this presentation of findings, the participants' voices are heard as the most direct way to connect with their own unique experience. The analysis of each participant's

interviews generated fourteen themes which became the structure to present the findings. These themes are further reclassified under the headings of 'My Story', 'Our Story' and 'The Story'. Capturing the experiences of the seven participants from the case school revealed both the struggle of the journey for each person as well as moments of transformative encounter. As far as possible, these findings present each participant's 'voice' as they articulated their experiences of participation in the CFP. This is their story.

7.4 'My Story' – The Self-Engagement Phase

The starting point for the process of each program in the CFP is the participants' naming of and reflection on their own story and life journey. This process began in their self-selection for the CFP formation programs.

7.4.1 Seekers after Something

Although the participants were open about what the experience of the formation program might hold for them, there was considerable variation in their motivation for participation.

Susannah is a pre-school teacher who was in private business, managing two childcare centres in Australia and overseas, before moving into teaching. Raised as a Catholic, she has been married for 24 years and has two children. Susannah sees herself as task oriented and well organised. She identifies as a community builder, who is faithful to others in her relationships and is also direct when addressing concerns or critiques.

Susannah felt that she was interested enough to reply to the invitation to be part of one of the programs, since she had started reading around areas she identified as spirituality and wisdom. She was reading *The Secret* (Byrne, 2006) and had read *The Power* (Byrne, 2007).

I am interested in mediums and the whole afterlife thing. With different things that happen in your life, you start to see things differently – I think it's called maturity, wisdom. And so when this came up, I thought 'Yeah, I'm happy; I'd like to see where this takes me.'

When it came to preparing to attend the first retreat experience, Susannah felt less comfortable.

There was a bit of anxiety about it. I've never been to a retreat in my life. And driving to the retreat, I thought, 'I have no idea what I'm doing!' But I just

figured it's through Cath Ed; it's a retreat; it's 2 days away; yes, absolutely let me have it.

Sarah is a classroom teacher who had a career in retail and nursing before becoming a teacher at the age of 35. She has been teaching for five years and feels uncomfortable with her lack of long-term teaching experience. She is organised and competent, and describes herself as a 'helper' and a 'fixer'.

Sarah was raised as a Catholic and attended Mass regularly in her early family life. When her husband left her and she became divorced, she found herself with four children to support on her own. Her sense of alienation from the Church was deep and hurtful. Eventually, through her teaching studies at ACU, she found a perspective that offered acceptance and affirmation in terms of her self-perception and her place in the Church.

Sarah had given no deeply considered thought to volunteering as a participant in the CFP programs.

I really went in very raw. I didn't have any preconceived ideas either. But I suppose one of the reasons I put my hand up was because I feel a bit stagnant, that I haven't moved and grown, and as much as I want to – and I think I give in the classroom all the right things that I should do – that doesn't necessarily mean that I'm getting and growing in what I needed. So I had a bit of a feeling that maybe I should do this.

Rebecca is an experienced and committed classroom teacher who has taught in many diocesan schools. Like Sarah, Rebecca was raised in a close-knit Catholic family. She attended a Catholic teachers' college in Canberra and has been involved in Church life while raising her three children. She has juggled several location moves around the country and short-term teaching positions. Eventually, Rebecca settled in Brisbane. Unfortunately, she left her local church over an altercation with the priest (she was sacramental coordinator at the time). Although she went to Mass in other parishes, she eventually decided to cease Sunday Mass attendance, because she was unable to find a comfortable 'home' and already had weekend time taken up with children's sport as they grew older.

Rebecca had attended a week-long 'futures' in-service program for teachers previously offered by Catholic Education, which was her only comparable experience. Having felt that she'd greatly benefited from that program, Rebecca was enthusiastic to embark on a similar experience. However, she was hesitant to volunteer, if it denied another's opportunity to attend such an experience.

I was very, very excited just initially when I saw it on our Daily [school intranet]. I thought if this is just as good, I'd really like to be part of that again.

In terms of Rebecca's expectations about this formation program, her initial concern was about her current faith background and her ambivalence to religious practice.

You wonder if you're worthy to be there. Do you have to be pious and meaningful? But that's probably just my old Catholic upbringing coming to the foreground!

Her reservations evaporated once she accepted the invitation to the program. "I'm just going to go there with an open mind and take what it can give me. So I didn't have high expectations." Rebecca decided she would be open to whatever the program would offer for her.

I really came as a piece of clay, so to speak, and I was waiting to be, you know – how can I be moulded, how can I be shaped into something and now, what can this offer me?

Mary is the APRE of St Raphael's. As such, Mary is on the Leadership Team. Raised a 'cradle Catholic' in the 1950s, with the mix of devotional practice and a strong parish culture, Mary had an association with both the Salesian Sisters and the Presentation Sisters as well as the experience of six years in religious life as a Josephite Sister. She feels that the formation developed through her connection with the Josephites, the Salesians and the Presentation Sisters has been influential in the development of her adult faith and for her capacity in her professional vocation. She has extensive experience as an APRE and has previously worked as a consultant to schools on the religious education (RE) team. Mary has a strong commitment to formation and community as well as religious education.

Mary's interest in being a participant in the CFP programs was keen. "I was really excited about it because I'm quite passionate about spiritual formation, basically." Mary also saw involvement in the CFP as a way to generate ideas and interest among staff to support the area of spirituality in the curriculum and the school environment in general.

I thought it would offer an opportunity to be able to look at it [spiritual formation] more formally and in a more sort of structured way to get some assistance, along the lines of what you say to staff and ideas of how to get them more involved.

Tamar is an experienced teacher and has been a support teacher for 24 years. Raised as a Catholic, her first experience outside a Catholic community was her

attendance at a government teachers' college. Her career, however, has been in Catholic schools. Tamar indicated that the Catholic school community has had an important influence on her, both professionally and personally. Tamar has endured personal tragedy, having lost her mother to cancer when she was seven, and in her adult life, being left to raise two daughters on her own, when the youngest child was only six months old. Nevertheless, Tamar feels her life has been blessed and she has an abiding sense of the presence of God.

Tamar has not been involved with the religious life of the school and did not feel she was an obvious choice to be invited into the CFP programs.

I'm a support teacher; I've been involved in special ed [education] for a million years and that's my area of expertise. So I guess there was a fair bit of fear and trepidation there.

She was also concerned about her rapport with participants from other schools.

Part of me thought, "Oh no, I'm probably going to be involved with a group of people either classroom teachers or APREs who will be a lot more familiar with anything we do than I will be."

At the same time, Tamar had a sense of being open to the opportunities that might be generated by the program.

I thought, "Well this is obviously the direction I'm meant to be going in, so let's just go with it." I was at a point where I wanted something to happen and I wasn't sure what that something was.

Elizabeth is an experienced teacher, who has been an APRE in the past and has returned to infant teaching. Born in a tight-knit Catholic family, her early family memories are of a strong social justice base in her parents and of her father's encouragement of long and passionate discussions around the weekly homily on the way home from Mass. Three of her four brothers entered the seminary for a time, one becoming a priest. She has been married for thirty-seven years and has three children. She is actively involved in her local parish.

Elizabeth was not concerned about what the CFP might entail and saw her involvement in the programs as an opportunity to learn and reflect. "I guess I was looking forward to sitting quietly for a couple of days and perhaps participating." Elizabeth was in the middle of a very stressful family time and looked forward to what she expected might be a restful break for her.

It just came at a truly dreadful part of my life and yes, my husband had just been hit by a car and it was my first day away from minding him and he wasn't really self-sufficient, so my mind was full of that. Just having the opportunity to just think and relax and get myself back into that work frame of mind without the tension of class as well.

Finally, **Joseph**, the principal, is an experienced principal who is respected by his peers. Joseph has a robust and unusual connection with the Good Samaritan Sisters through their guardianship of his mother who was orphaned at the age of twelve. He trained with the Christian Brothers for five years. Although he withdrew from membership of the Brothers at the end of teacher training, he maintains that this period was a major influence on his faith life and personal development.

Joseph was not the instigator in the self-selection of St Raphael's for this research. However, he supported the decision, which meant he would himself be a direct participant in the *Guiding Lights* leadership program. He anticipated that the program would be a personal enrichment for him.

I was excited, I suppose, on two levels: a personal level but also from the whole school perspective. I felt it was right for the whole school and I think that I also needed the experience as well.

7.4.2 Response to the Program Structure

Each of the programs in the CFP is designed with a flexible structure. While each program exposes participants to unique experiences, they share a common approach, a common 'vocabulary' and common 'principles of engagement' which set the parameters for the formative process. Within this structure, the process offered flexibility to respond to the group dynamic.

7.4.2.1 Boundary Markers

'Boundary markers' identify the common principles or touchstones for participant engagement. The term has common usage in the work of Palmer (2000; 2007) and delineates key ground rules for adult group interaction. In the CFP, there are five boundary markers:

1. Soft eyes

'Soft eyes' refers to the practice of listening to each other's stories with compassion and understanding, finding aspects of self in another's experience and noting the uniqueness of each other's experience. When hearing difficult or jarring experiences, 'soft eyes' reminds the face muscles

as well as the mind to respond with attentiveness rather than harsh judgement or criticism.

2. No fixing

There is often a tendency when listening to another's story to offer 'helpful advice' or suggest ways of 'fixing'. This is a common characteristic of those in the helping professions. This boundary marker is a reminder that 'fixing' is not the work of these programs.

3. Double confidentiality

Double confidentiality refers to the respectfulness to be shown to each other. What is shared in the group as a whole remains with that group. Further, what is shared between participants during sessions and encounters is not raised again with the sharing person and not shared with anyone else in the group without the person's permission.

4. Presume and extend welcome

Participants are encouraged to both extend a sense of welcome to other participants and also to remind themselves that they are an important and welcome member of the group.

5. All of yourself

'All of yourself' is a reminder to participants to intentionally set aside the usual distractions of phones and other tasks, and to come to the work of formation with 100% of self. Speaking of oneself personally builds this sense and capability of being fully present.

The setting out of these markers at the outset of the process had a dramatic impact on all participants. Susannah commented, "I've talked to a lot of people between now and then about what we did and people have been so interested in the boundary markers. It's actually a great way to live."

Rebecca too was taken by the program touchstones.

I have taken the 'soft eyes' into my classroom. I just thought those were fantastic boundaries, because they were fresh, made you feel safe. And to feel safe is very important if you are to share your story – not that we knew we were going to do that at that point.

For Sarah, the boundary markers created a place of trust and affirmation.

We joked about a lot of things and soft eyes and what happens on retreat, stays on retreat, but I do think that people really felt that. And so that gave you the confidence to want to talk, and you knew it was going to be treated with respect. There was 'no fixing', and while it wasn't all touchy feely, people most often could tell you that it's ok to feel that way because you're doing all the right things and you know you're a good person and you know you thought about this so you are obviously concerned and maybe you are doing the right thing and you are wise.

7.4.2.2 Personal Focus

For Joseph and Mary, the initial personal focus surprised them. They were prepared for a content or module-based program.

Mary: I suppose I expected information about the framework and a bit more assistance with what you say to staff and what the process could be and how you could do this and what things might work, and what you don't say and what you don't do and what strategies you could use. We did get that, but not as the main game. And I probably wasn't expecting it to be so well structured or so well put together.

Joseph had an expectation of a more theoretical approach.

It was completely different from what I expected. I didn't expect to take the Enneagram route to begin with; I thought it might be more about opening up some contemporary thinking around theology... Christology, whereas it wasn't that at all at first.

While this expectation was there initially, Joseph was not disappointed with his program experience.

No, no. Because in the end it's what I think I really needed. Just to think about how I operate and who I am in leadership and listening to the stories of other people in similar roles and realising that we are on much the same sort of a journey. It was done within a well facilitated spiritual base.

The level of engagement and personal impact of this personal approach was identified by all participants. Elizabeth came to the first days at a time of family difficulty. Her husband was recovering from an automobile accident. It was the first time they had been separated since the accident.

I just thought, "I'm never going to get my head around this or be able to concentrate and I'll have half my mind constantly on something else." And at the end of the first day, I just felt so peaceful and relaxed. It was just a complete turnaround for me. [...] I didn't think that anything would draw me out of that to the extent that it did.

When Rebeccah, in the *Keepers* program, first examined the program outline she was concerned that the structure would be facile and not engaging for her.

I was really a bit worried, to be honest, once I saw the outline. I thought it might be a bit narrow for me. But, what a big surprise. You know, ... didn't overload it; it opened up. It was clever. I thought the structure was excellent.

Rebecca was also surprised by the intensity of participation and interaction.

The other thing about the structure of it, when we broke for those breaks, we were reluctant to break up actually. When it's 'Oh, oh,' morning teas or lunch, "Oh my God I've just run into this deep meaningful discussion." They often got continued through morning teas and lunches. And even at breakfast, they got continued. It was not quite 24/7 but it went a long time. And because of the structure, it kept coming back to a lot of that stuff in a different way. I must admit I couldn't believe how much I enjoyed it.

Sarah adds, "It was like 'How did that happen?' It was very moving to have such an intense conversation with strangers." Susannah summed up her feelings of deep intimacy.

It was like everybody just came with their hearts in their hands and said, "Here I am." You would normally have to know someone for a long, long time to get to know those things about them.

Susannah also found that the structure was a welcome approach.

I was pleased that the religious content wasn't pushed forcefully. I thought that the format of not bringing Jesus into it till the second night of the initial retreat was really appropriate. So, had it been Bible and all that sort of stuff, I think that might have been a bit off-putting for me to start with. But you know, finding out who you are, it's that whole thing of knowing who you are before you can love anybody else or you know, have your faith.

For Sarah, the personal focus had its challenges.

I think when you go to the RE days even though sometimes they're based on spirituality, you still tend to think "How does that affect work, how do I ... and how can I ...?", and you are still putting your face on in some way. But this had a completely different focus so it really made me very introspective and I suppose I didn't expect to be quite that much, but I obviously was ready. I obviously needed it.

The *Guiding Lights* program included an 'on the streets' experience for participants on the initial retreat. Many of the participants, who were all school principals, appeared fearful at the prospect. The researcher did not anticipate the trepidation expressed by the principals, given that many of them will have had the experience of students or staff involved in outreach work. Joseph articulated what he saw in others' reactions in his own reflections.

To me it appeared to be something so very foreign to what a number of them had ever done, which surprised me for people in their role. You get into people's homes, you see some unusual stuff, some disturbing stuff, you hear

stories, you walk with people on those sorts of journeys on a regular basis and I was just really surprised. I didn't have any of that anxiety.

For those same participants, and for Joseph in particular, the streets experience became a catalyst for deep reflection on witness and calling. A principal from a different pilot school explained his experience to parents through his newsletter.

I drive over the Grey Street Bridge through West End to meetings at Cath Ed many times through the year. I will never drive over the Grey Street Bridge the same way again. We are called to stand with the poor, to transform this world, and those who need our witness, our welcome are all around us. We cannot lose sight of the gospel call in our communities and outside of our communities.

7.4.2.3 Creating Environment

Among the participants, there developed an awareness of the environment created for the retreat experiences. They reflected on this at different points on their journey.

Rebeccah: That had such a big impact on me I can't explain. It was great to be totally taken out of your normal space. And it was such a supportive atmosphere – something you really wanted to model and bring back.

Participants repeatedly expressed a sense of being able to step back into this space each time they gathered over the year. "As soon as I walked in and saw everyone, I felt the sense of peace and trust come. It was incredible. I just walked right back into that sacred space" (Sarah). An understanding of the nature of 'Kairos' time began to be articulated. "It was like you were in this different world where there was no time" (Susannah).

Scheduled time and an environment conducive for reflective and silent space are intentional components of the CFP. The experience of these, without an expectation of producing or presenting anything, was a challenging experience for many, as Sarah explained.

The real challenge was time on your own and thinking. Stopping – that was a challenge to actually stop, breathe and think. 'Cause you're usually running and thinking, doing 17 things all at once. Regardless of whether I'm here or whether I'm at home as a mother, you're doing that all the time, so actually a challenge to me was to stop. To think, calm down and then to contribute.

For Susannah, the experience of focused reflection time for herself and about herself was a totally new experience. "I've never in my life had time to think about myself for that long and that deeply. I remember the second day feeling absolutely exhausted by lunchtime!"

Rebecca's experience was similar.

The time to sit and think is – I know a lot of people said this when we were together – it's something you never do; it's challenging; you just go through life, in this crazy place, and you never have time to sit down and reflect about what's good, what's not so good, what you can do to make it better, what changes you can make, what changes you should make, to make your life more meaningful for yourself or your students and your family, 'cause it's not just you; it's that ripple effect.

7.4.2.4 The Place of Prayer

The experience of different ways of praying was central to each of the programs. For Joseph and Mary, this was a welcome and familiar oasis.

Joseph: I suppose I enjoyed the prayer, the coming together on a regular basis, the fact that it was planned by someone else. Once again it's nice to just experience as a silent friend. I enjoyed this real experience and I kept looking forward to that. I was really looking forward to that!

For Mary, it was a return to her heart.

Prayer is just that presence; it's being in a relationship with God, you know the Other in that sense. It's not the Our Father or the Hail Mary; to me it's the whole relationship. It's where my heart is.

For the three classroom teachers, it was new to experience prayer rather than learn *about* prayer for use with students. For Susannah, it opened up a whole new dimension to her life, and she began to find in prayer a sustaining confidence and peace she had not experienced before. "I found a way to pray that was really great for me, and I just find an inner peace now whenever I pray like that."

Tamar found something sustaining in the use of Scripture in prayer. "I have learnt much about exploring Scripture and prayer. My spiritual life has become part of my daily life and this is exciting."

In reflecting on the wider staff group, Mary also recognised the value of the range of ways of praying to which staff were introduced.

I think there's a variety of prayer too that you do fit into, you know you don't have to just have one experience. I think the variety of experience has been good for people.

7.4.2.5 The Place of Scripture

The use of Scripture was common to all programs. However, the *SpiritFire* program gave particular focus to a contemporary reading of Scripture in conjunction with

using psycho-spirituality skills. This had an overwhelming response from all participants, seeming to ignite a hunger to explore Scripture more in this way. Tamar's response was typical.

The big one for me would be response to Scripture. I've used the journal we were given on those four days to sit down with a piece of Scripture and go through the four levels – you can really identify with it and it helps Scripture make sense for me here and now. I just learned so much.

Elizabeth recognised a need for this among Catholic staff in general.

I guess having worked with staff in varying capacities in schools there's a constant request for staff to have a deeper understanding of Scripture – really up-to-date knowledge. You'd think in a Catholic school that these opportunities would come up, but they don't always. The opportunity to be with a group who is interested in doing that and facilitated in a way that we haven't had was wonderful. It was personal and relevant. We've started a small group at school and we love it – just talking about what we see in it; how it hits us.

7.4.3 Recognising Personal Gift and Inner Wisdom

As the CFP unfolded, the invitation and challenge to engage with one's own story and professional journey developed. The insights seemed to have great personal and collective impact.

Rebecca: I worked out that my story in becoming a teacher was different – I often have thought about it, but never deep and meaningful, and you know I didn't get this urge since I was eight years old to line my dollies up and do it [teach] on the blackboard. I didn't have that urge that others had, and I had always thought, "Oh God, maybe I'm not a very good teacher if I never had that urge." But it was very powerful for me to actually realise that my directive came from my father whom I would call my 'Rock of Gibraltar'. He had great insight into me as a person, and when I was 17 or 18, he saw for me a future – he saw for me what I couldn't see.

Rebecca was stunned by this dawning realisation that she had never understood before.

I was gobsmacked actually – it hit me like a ton of bricks. It's taken me all this time to realise where it [the decision to be a teacher] really came from. And I found that quite profound. I cried because I am so happy with that decision so long ago.

For Susannah, the reflection on her journey to becoming a teacher was also a cause for tears, though for different reasons.

It's like you're looking at a child or you're looking at someone grow – your own child. And you're thinking, "Wow, this is what's happened to me; these are the steps; these are the people." Writing that letter to myself was

probably the first time I had ever told myself what I thought about me. This has helped me learn to listen to myself and believe in myself. The folder and journal we kept has been a lifeline to that moment.

For Sarah, this sense of discovering and uncovering the wisdom within herself and her own journey was hard work but liberating.

Over those days, I found I had to face a lot of things I'd sort of buried. I'm a bit of an ostrich. But I'm also a bit of a fixer – until it gets overwhelming – then I have to bury for a while til I can come out and think, "Ok, I can cope now." But yes, it did help; it made me feel even more comfortable about my own wisdom, and making my decisions.

Sarah also expressed a recognition of significant life choices that she had not been aware of before.

I'm at a bit of a crossroad in my personal life, so reflecting on my family and teaching I think has made me realise that, instead of just keeping on doing.

This feeling of coming to a time of important choices was also Tamar's experience.

It has really been an answer to what I was looking for, and when I say that, I haven't quite worked out what that is, but I know that I'm sort of going down a path that I want to be going down. I guess there are lots of things that have come out of this for me, and you know I could go on and on. I have developed an openness that I previously didn't possess – to share my thoughts, beliefs and feelings.

Looking back at her own life journey, Tamar was able to say, "I am proud of the person I've become."

This affirmation of the personal gift in one's own life journey was shared by others, including Susannah.

I could tell myself the kind of person I see in myself and how proud I am of that person. It took two days to get [to] the point to be able to write so freely and have this knowledge about myself that I haven't tapped into.

For both Mary and Joseph, there was a sense, albeit in different ways, of rediscovering and recovering a lost heart.

Mary: I think it's something that deep down I've known I've needed to do for a long time, explore all this, and what I think this whole process has done for me is it's been the catalyst, really, to remind me to say, "Yeah, this is who I am and it's ok and I do need to look at this."

For Joseph, the formation journey has called him back to attend to deep issues he had ignored for a long time. He named these as 'soul issues'.

It's helped me to look deeply at and right what's not in balance. What am I pretty happy with at the moment? What are some of the issues that I need to address in my personal life, in my professional life, in my family life, in my spiritual life? And I think what it's given me is a bit of a framework to actually look at that, so I just haven't been brave enough to do it, you know.

7.4.4 Re-framing Grief and Failure

The program process allowed space to reflect on the experience of failure. The impact of this appears to have been the development of a capacity in the participants to re-frame those experiences within a bigger picture.

Sarah shared her hurt and confusion with the Church as her marriage broke down.

When my marriage failed, I was told that you never let anyone know that because you won't get a job. This was said to us in fourth year at ACU when we were getting ready for our interviews. And I felt that it was also a sense that I was too old you know, and had too many strikes against me. It was a bit late to be telling me that 3½ years into the degree! When I've got four children at home who are relying on this to feed them. I think I also had that awful Catholic guilt that you're raised with, that terrible stuff that I hope we aren't passing on to our kids today, that we grew up on. You know, that guilt of 'I failed'. 'My marriage is the one thing I should have been able to do, and [I] failed at.' I was also told by a priest that I could never take communion again. And so I believed that to be true until I started thinking, "Hang on, I didn't do this. Why do I have to be the one who gets penalised?" I started thinking and thinking, "I don't think God believes that."

Joseph realised he had carried a sense of not living up to his own desire to do what he felt most drawn to, and this feeling had become a heavy weight he carried.

The number of times that I've felt on the verge of ringing St Vincent de Paul in this parish and in other parishes saying, "I want to join, I want to be active." Then you look at the date – "Oh, it's P & F night" or "It's Parish Council night". So you miss, you miss the opportunities to get involved and I think, do I want to go along and just be half-hearted about it? And I don't really want to. I suppose at the time I've looked at it, I've had a young family and the fact that schools suck so much out of you in terms of serving others, just how can you manage at all?

Susannah's guilt involved her expectations of herself and others in different areas of her life, including Church involvement. As with the other participants, she began to re-frame this and look to what she wanted to do to change it.

My guilt at not attending Church regularly has shifted as I feel that I am linking myself to God on a more regular basis now. I try to be a little more Christian and humane in my day-to-day life, in particular towards my colleagues by listening to what people say and letting them know that I have heard them.

For other participants, the program process seemed to provide an affirmation of the re-framing they had already come to in the challenges of their life journey. Mary's response expressed this succinctly: "I just feel so blessed to realise again that I am ok; I have made the right choices and what is dearest to me in my own spiritual journey is good and ok, however imperfect I am."

7.4.5 Claiming a Personal Spirituality

The discovery that spirituality was something they already had and that the nurturing of their spirituality was their birthright were new concepts for some participants.

Rebecca: I never thought I was a spiritual person; in fact, I just thought that was for other people – nuns and priests. I thought you had to be something else to be that.

For Susannah, it was a rediscovery of her deepest self. "What we have been involved in opened the door to a part of my life that I had put to the side." This began an ongoing transformative journey for her.

While all participants identified development in their spiritual life, from the blossoming of new realisation to the deepening of an awareness already there, the sense of God within their spiritual journey showed the variance in pathways.

Mary expressed a spirituality more directly, articulating an intuitive relationship with God: "I know also that there's God, you know, whoever or whatever God is, that I'm walking this journey with something somehow bigger than myself."

The holistic nature of the 'head, heart and hands' approach in the CFP, an unexpected process for Joseph, stirred in him a recognition and challenge to pursue his 'missing piece' – the pathway he had not taken.

And that is the whole notion, I've felt there's been something lacking from my own spirituality, and that is in the area of service. It's dogged me for about 20 years or so. It has! And I've never really reconciled it in that I think my spirituality is intellectually based. Relationship is pretty important to me, is very important to me – it's something that I'm prepared to say if the relationships ain't right, you might as well shut up shop. But then it's that next level, so it's the head, the heart and the hands. You know it's the hands, it's the hands thing for me.

Tamar felt herself to be growing into a new and comfortable sense of being that has integrated a faith-filled base.

I feel incredibly comfortable with the small group who continue to meet on Thursday – I feel comfortable as I listen; comfortable to speak; and I feel

comfortable with the silence. I consider that I have been very blessed during my life. I am proud of the person I have become, and I know that God has been with me and will continue to be with me each step along the way.

7.4.5.1 Establishing Personal Spiritual Practice

Experiential practice in a praying in a variety of ways, in listening and being listened to, and in developing an orientation for mutual hospitality are key components of the programs. The encouragement to establish personal spiritual practice as an ongoing part of the program was overtly connected to the shape of the participants' individual spiritual awareness. Experiencing and then practising simple prayers and rituals had a profound effect on a number of the participants.

Susannah: I've been trying those daily prayers in the morning, first thing in the morning, and the breathing, and looking at certain little chants and repeating them in my head. I've been singing the mantra we did in my head quite a bit. They were beautiful words to sing. And my morning prayer now is just thank you, thank you, thank you!

Rebecca realised a sense of prayerfulness already part of her, and she intensified this aspect of her self awareness over the program.

You know I never heard anyone before say, "When you wake up in the morning, you pray." And I thought, "That's interesting, you pray..." and then I thought to myself, "I never realised that, but I actually do too." But I don't pray in proper form, I don't say, "Dear God thank you." I just wake up and say, "What a magnificent day, isn't it beautiful outside? Thank you!" I realise I prayed, I actually pray all the time and never realised it.

The *lectio divina* approach was the prayer style that spoke to Elizabeth, and she has continued the practice.

It brings up what's happening in your life at the time. For me, I look at the words that I've underlined and I think, "Goodness, you know that's exactly what I'm involved with particularly at the moment," and then to look at that and say, "Well what is this saying to me? And where can I go from here?" Just going through that thought process and resolving, I find it helps me resolve things. It's been fantastic.

Practising being present to others in conversation, ensuring all feel welcome in a group and providing food and drink to share for guests were elements modelled in the programs that participants took back to their family and school community. Sarah related a story reflecting this practice on attending a Catholic Education in-service.

Well, they were just lucky the Holy Trinity [the three *Keepers* staff from St Raphael's] were there! They [the presenters] introduced themselves, but didn't invite us to do that. So the three of us just took a lead and that allowed others to do the same. It changed things!

7.5 'Our Story' – The Mutual Engagement Phase

One of the key characteristics of the Christian faith is the central place of community in spiritual growth and the journey of faith. This understanding is reflected in the CFP through both process and content. The experience of this was evident both during the program contact time and back in the school community.

7.5.1 I Am Not Alone

The realisation that their individual journeys were different but something shared deeply at the same time struck the participants at different times and in different ways. Having set the boundary markers, the program process, which included the use of diads, triads, group discernment and spiritual direction as well as plenary sessions, gave participants opportunities to develop and experience the companionship of each other. Different participants expressed a realisation that they were 'not alone', and this realisation was key to better understanding their experience of the formation journey. Further to this, Mary expressed an awareness that this had developed into a professional support she now experienced – an unexpected outcome that she alluded to many times.

Not only do I appreciate the opportunity for further personal spiritual growth resourced and supported by the great work of the researcher and BCE, but also the aspect of my role to support and resource the spiritual growth of staff members has been greatly assisted this year. This has liberated me somewhat. As an APRE and person, I also have had the joy of witnessing the spiritual nourishment of some staff members, in particular through the retreats... as well as having the comfort in knowing that I am not alone in the spiritual journey or on my professional journey of fostering spirituality in others.

7.5.1.1 Through the Eyes of Each Other

The sharing and unfolding of story, in a safe and invitational way, is a strong design element in all the programs. This sharing dynamic was a unique experience for many participants.

Susannah spoke several times about the rich experience of sharing with one another on her initial retreat.

When we shared in triads, we went right through to morning tea and just kept talking. The person who was reluctant to talk – and that was always ok – ended up divulging quite a lot of information while they would say at the end, "I didn't really plan on telling you all of this."

Susannah went on to say, “I think it broke down a lot of my barriers. And I think it broke a lot of embarrassing moments then. And a lot of layers maybe came off, you know.”

Mary was able to name some of what she observed.

I thought that idea that ‘we learn who we are through the eyes of each other’ was excellent. You know, it draws on our Christian heritage in a contemporary way, and I hadn’t thought of it like that. I loved that, and because we were using ‘soft eyes’, we really did hear and were heard.

Susannah described the growing appreciation of having ‘companions’ on the journey.

I have to say, when I got there, the whole convent thing was a bit freaky – the long corridors and all of that, but I was really pleased to be going there with two people from work. I think now that to know people that have experienced what I think was so unique was... important. You don’t want to walk out of that and have no connection again.

The sense of growth by connecting and sharing within a wider group was a feeling identified by all participants. Susannah described her impression.

I guess we shared lots of things during those times – we might not even remember what we said – but it had connection with somebody else. Together, we affirmed our own beliefs in teaching and who we are.

Back in the school staff environment, the modelling of this, particularly of sharing story during staff prayer time, seemed to have a marked effect on both the participants and the staff in general. All of the participants experienced a sense of unspoken unity that they had neither planned nor expected. Tamar reflected on it this way:

I think it was because somehow we were talking the same or a similar sort of language and because even though we weren’t all in the same program, you knew that they had the same or similar experience.

And so, they found themselves supporting each other in their own sense of community within the broader staff community.

Susannah: You didn’t even have to say anything when we saw each other or passed each other – just a look, and you felt supported, safe, back in that space of who I am. It made me happier and braver.

A staff member not involved directly in the program commented in relation to staff prayer, “I like the fact that people put something of themselves into it, that they’re

prepared to share something of themselves. It makes such a difference.” In reflection on this, Sarah commented:

I think that’s probably the biggest thing I’ve noticed that people really appreciate... but it’s more than appreciate... is the fact that you really give something of yourself rather than give them something to do. You can see them listening and almost opening to you on the spot.

Susannah added:

But it’s not hitting people over the head with Jesus or Bible bashing or mush. It is just about being true. And about where you are with it all. I don’t think we have ever talked like that before... The eyes don’t lie!

7.5.1.2 Sensing a Sacred Humanity

The participants’ own experience through retreat and program days allowed them to reflect in a different way on all their relationships, both personal and professional.

Reflecting on the variety of staff from across the schools involved directly in the CFP programs, participants from St Raphael’s remarked on a shift from the social to the sacred.

Sarah: What people shared, or the level of sharing and the intensity of sharing, some of it was really personal stuff, and very deep and meaningful to them and I think it was received with respect. It did really become a sacred space whenever we gathered.

Rebecca shared her insight about the community dynamic.

Even though we all had come from a different place, and we’re all at a different place, we had a story to share that was just amazing and the other thing was that I know we weren’t meant to be doing any fixing there, but we found answers ourselves through the respect of each other.

Sarah described the intensity of her experience.

There was stuff coming out there that I’m going ‘Oh, my God!’ I’ve never had a conversation like that so quickly with people in my life before. And I’ve never seen these people before in my life. It was really, really spiritual I would say.

Reflecting on their broader relationships, the participants varied from expressing a new found gratitude they felt in their spiritual growth to having a sense of gratitude directly grounded in a faith context. For Susannah, her sense of gratitude expressed a growing acceptance of herself and others, without judgement. “There is a thankfulness [for] all the different people in my life.”

For Tamar, this gratitude was in the context of her faith.

There have been some really tough times – growing up without my Mum and raising my two beautiful daughters alone – but even during these tough times God has surrounded me with wonderful people. Some of these people have challenged my beliefs, but each person has allowed God to enter my life and each experience has had its purpose.

And in commenting on the staff community, Susannah offered the following reflection:

It's a bit like a sacred web – gradually bringing people in, knowing others have done the retreat. But it's making us more cohesive as a staff and as community.

7.5.2 Growing in Community

In addition to appreciating the influence of others in their own story and journey in the programs, participants also referred to experiences of ongoing growth beyond the programs. These experiences happened through interactions with the broader staff back at school and with the other people in their lives.

7.5.2.1 Self-Understanding within Community Context

Growing in community had a two-fold effect on many. Rebeccah summed up the view shared by other participants.

Sharing time with people who were so honest in sharing of themselves was wonderful. I discovered that my spiritual journey is very different from others but that is ok. And I found being more spiritual in myself has helped me as a 'whole person'. I often relate to music even more now and look to music to help children be aware of the God around us. Relationships with fellow staff members have also developed.

For some, the growth in self-understanding was strongly grounded in personal change, as Sarah's experience demonstrates.

Because I'm a yes person, "Yeah I'll do it, yeah I'll do it, give it to me, yeah, yeah I'll do that, yeah I'll do that," and I'm six foot in and I'm still saying, "Yeah, give it to me, it's ok, I can cope, I can do it." I can do it until I'm drowning and I go, "Oh, I can't do it anymore. No, I'm so sorry I need to get out of this hole." [...] So I started to say 'no', and I'm very proud of myself. I'm starting to say no at school and I'm starting to realise that I can only help some people some of the way and they have to make decisions to help themselves, and I can't be worried about them, so I've actually done that this week. I even said no to my mother this week, which has been like, well, I can't tell you how long, because then I'll have to erase the tape. You know, a long, long time. I just thought it's enough now, time, it's time. I think those two things for me, it's a miracle.

7.5.2.2 Deepening Shared Knowledge

The opportunity to deepen their knowledge was built into the three individual programs in different ways: through individual leader companioning in the *Guiding Lights* program; through extra follow-up resources on the *Catching Fire* website in the *SpiritFire* program; through a whole group companioning in the *Keepers of the Flame* program; and through the opportunities to access a facilitator to further deepen the experience of the whole staff.

Elizabeth showed a great enthusiasm for what she had learnt and wanted to pass on. “I had a deepening of my understanding of the Spirit and of how I might help others deepen their knowledge and understanding.”

Scripture, and Elizabeth’s deepening knowledge of it, became her burning focus.

To know that for four days across the year, and in between, there would be a focus on spirit and spiritual formation, I think that was a really big thing for me. The other thing that I got out of what I’ve done subsequently was the reminder or re-introduction to looking at Scripture and underlining words. It is something that really works for me and I’ve got back into that and it has been just enormously helpful in the last little while; so that for me has been just a fantastic thing.

Lydia, a staff member not directly involved in the CFP programs, commented further:

People definitely acknowledge a need for spiritual development. They’re searching. I think deepening knowledge of Scripture and prayer is essential for the whole staff. Staff need good modelling and this program gives the confidence and capacity to do that.

7.5.2.3 Exploring Experiential Practice

The personal experience of differing prayer styles, both in the programs and in the broader staff community, had a marked influence. The integration of prayer into everyday personal routine seems to have taken hold in most of the participants.

Someone said on the first retreat experience, ‘Do you know how we’ve become afraid of quiet?’ and I know I have. I fill my head, fill my environment with sound all the time so even this morning again, I didn’t put the music on I thought, ‘No, I’ll just leave it off.’ And that’s what I do – to have the quiet to make the space [for prayer]. (Joseph)

Tamar found the unexpected emails a support to keep her on track. ” liked getting your emails – planting seeds of spirituality – made me see things in a different light.”

Mary has begun to revive a practice she likes: "I've started keeping a journal!" She is also keen to practise how she has learned to use Scripture in the *SpiritFire* program.

I've got to get back to spending time with Scripture because here I'm meeting Jesus, here in this Scripture. And I've tried to be more conscious of prayer, not so much prayer in words, but I think just prayer as being in the presence of God, and just being who I am completely human, as someone that God has made, as God's creation.

Susannah used the material from her formation sessions in *Keepers* to help her stay mindful of integrating time for her spiritual life to breathe.

I have to say I've gone to my journal and you know the letter wasn't enough a couple of months ago. I thought, 'I want to go to my journal' and I have it sitting by my bed along with the folder and all those articles that you'd given us. And I thought, 'Oh, I'll start reading the articles' and I read my journal again and you know, I love that. It brought me back to that first session, and it's got all those little breathing prayers in there to do in the car. I'm listening and I'm ready.

For Elizabeth, the discipline of the practice of making time for prayer, even when she was unmotivated, was a challenge that she continued to engage.

I love to read, and so when I go to bed at night I'll read for hours, but I almost, you know, I think, 'Oh I haven't got time to do that prayer thing,' and yet I'll lie there and read for two hours. So it was very much that, 'No, I can't get into that novel or whatever it is I'm reading until I've done this.' So the discipline that gets me into that, that's my challenge. I'm working at that, sometimes it works, sometimes it doesn't.

One of the agreed initiatives was to set up a prayer space for the staff. Having a free standing cross at its centre was something Elizabeth hoped for.

The other thing from our formation days that I thought was just fabulous, in a visual sense, as well as in that feeling in a very tactile sort of sense, was the cross at the centre of the Prayer space. I absolutely adored that cross, and the concept of the welcome... I loved it.

Rebecca commented on the effect of the space:

We talked about setting up a prayer space, which we don't have. Well, we did it and it looks fantastic! There is that feeling of it being prayerful, you know ritualised time and, whereas we might have had prayer before, there didn't seem to be a connection.

Sarah also identified a change in participation by staff in general. "You could ask the staff here to do things and half of them will sit and not move, whereas, you ask them now and they just get up and do it."

In the broader school community, experiential practice was extended into the classroom and to the parent community. This occurred in innovative ways.

Tamar shared what she saw happening for Elizabeth in her prep class. “I’m sure Elizabeth will mention this, but the *lectio divina* and what’s growing out of that I just think is amazing.” Elizabeth has brought her newfound skills with *lectio divina*, learned in the *SpiritFire* program, to her prep class, using art rather than words for their self-expression and conversation with God. She had the children listen to the Scripture passage, reflect and draw their responses. She shared the results:

This is Luke and his picture shows Jesus within us [Jesus is in the child figure’s tummy]. Jesus is inside us, which is a wonderful learning for them. And this is another one, with children playing peacefully together and helping look after the things that God made for us. And in this one, God is the star travelling down to save the peaceful people and this is love, God’s love and the fish is representing what God asked us to look after. So they’re just lovely, and so spot on.

Elizabeth is planning to do a little more of this with parents. She also shared with others the idea of the staff modelling prayer with parents on assembly.

What came into my head is that we watch the children or the classes present but that we as a staff don’t present prayer to the school. I thought that’s what Priscilla [the APA] was going to suggest and that’s why I picked up on it actually. I think that sometimes that would be a good thing.

7.5.2.4 Using Systemic Resources

While participants were bringing back to their school community the skills and experience they had in the programs, the provision and use of system-wide resources and initiatives further supported the journey at St Raphael’s. At first, the resources were a source of puzzlement and even surprise, but the variety and different modes in which these systemic resources came was greatly appreciated, and the program participants expressed the feeling of being personally supported with further skills and knowledge for whatever they might choose to build on in St Raphael’s broader staff community.

Emails were sent out at specific times during the year with a prayer or appropriate ritual or blessing for staff in the programs.

I just loved the staff prayer ritual for the opening of the school year that you sent out [to all schools]. The litany of saints for all our schools made us feel part of that wider story – that we are in it together. The other great thing was what you sent personally via email in little bits and pieces. I don’t know whether it was just to the APREs, but you wrote a wonderful Easter reflection

which many schools printed in their newsletters, so along with the spirituality framework... it was sort of planting seeds of spirituality and looking at gospels and seasons and you know offering us blessing, and that meant a lot to me.

In addition to similar emailed resources, there was a *Staff PrayerFire* resource sent to all schools for Term 2. It included staff prayer ritual outlines and all the resources and directions needed to use them, including candles, a staff prayer intentions book, prayer cards for each prayer style and encouragement to set up a staff prayer space. As well as this, web resources provided a further sixteen prayer ritual opportunities linking Jesus' charisms to religious orders and prayer styles, and an online blog. The *SpiritFire* participants were asked to take carriage of the use of this particular staff prayer resource in their schools.

Different people on staff responded to different elements of the resource package.

I loved the blogs where staff from across the system shared how they understood different charisms and gospel values in their own lives and teaching. (Elizabeth)

The structure of how each staff prayer was put together and then delivered was terrific. Each one captured a different message; each one involved people in different ways and on different levels. Each one allowed people to take from it just what that particular individual was prepared or ready to take away with them. (Lydia, a staff member not directly involved in the programs)

I was talking with one of the other staff at assembly yesterday, and she said, 'I really enjoyed Lydia and all our prayer times.' I asked Lydia where she got the ideas from and Lydia said, 'I actually got it from the kit you know.' So that prayer kit has been brilliantly used. (Tamar)

When Joseph spoke at staff prayer time about his growing up experiences, it had great impact. It gave others the courage to talk about prayer and spirituality and their own questions and journey. (Elizabeth)

Another of the system-wide resources created was the *Light a Prayer Candle* website. This was also widely accessed by staff. Mary shared her response:

The candle site – I was just absolutely blown away with it. I had read in the draft framework that there were initiatives that were going to be implemented to help people and I might have seen prayer candle and thought, 'Mmmm, I wonder what that's all about.' And then it was actually this electronic prayer candle site. So, because I was so excited by it... I used the site myself and then I used it for staff prayer a couple of weeks down the track. It was also sort of a teaching prayer about the tradition of prayer intentions in a way they [the staff] understood.

A further resource that was developed was a Local Formator's Network. This is made up of people from the local archdiocese and beyond, skilled in the area of

spirituality. They offer fixed sessions, twilight gatherings and whole days on topics connected to the framework, and they also provide a customised offering in negotiation with the school's needs. St Raphael's made use of this network for its Professional Development days, engaging the skills of Br Barnabas (an expert resource person working in conjunction with the creator of the programs) in further whole staff formation. Finally, St Raphael's goal-setting involved a focus on the quality and quantity of staff prayer experience.

At St Raphael's, the adoption and use of the systemic resources in conjunction with the skills learned by participants on the formation programs was tempered initially by organisational issues, resulting in a slow initial engagement compared to other schools in the pilot phase. However, once the resources were used, staff engagement became stronger and more inclusive of the whole staff cohort.

7.5.2.5 Sharing Witness

The awareness of sharing witness to the spiritual and faith journey emerged more strongly as the programs progressed. By mid-year, Rebeccah found herself spontaneously supporting Susannah in her leading of prayer rituals.

And so I thought you know I need to share and get into it. And I did. I got everyone up and involved. You show a bit more – I don't know what they think about that really but you know, I don't really care. I realised there's more to me than Sister Act [the skit Rebeccah does each year for a staff concert] and it's about time I showed that.

The connection between authentic selfhood and witness was seen by several participants. For Elizabeth, "Witness is about knowledge, belief and truth." Similarly, Tamar felt witness was about "living what you believe".

The challenge of perception and reality around witness was felt keenly by Joseph, the principal.

It's easy to be *seen* as a witness to what you're doing in the role that I've got. It's really easy, it's really easy. However, the part that I'm struggling with is, am I really doing the hard yards?

As another in leadership, Mary also named the challenge of "walking the talk".

You do witness just by being who you are and the way you are with others in a relationship I think. It is more about walking with, than ahead of. Sometimes I think we/I need to articulate that call a bit more strongly.

In terms of the capacity for the staff as a whole to 'share witness', Tamar reflected on the challenge of this for St Raphael's:

I think there is a feel of community. I think because the staff is so big, sometimes there may be groups within that community but not necessarily fractured groups. I think people recognise the need, and want to be involved in supporting staff members – I don't have any doubt about that with anybody on the staff. But I think all of a sudden when you start talking about spirituality, people sort of become fearful, yeah, they just, you know this is not something traditionally that we're used to, we're not used to sharing that with ourselves and I mean I've been exactly the same to a certain extent. So the challenge with a staff this size is to get others to join the adventure. I have found myself going from a participant to taking more of a leadership role in this area than I previously would have. I have found myself in a situation of sharing things I never would have previously, and I have been comfortable in doing that.

7.5.3 Experience with Institutional Church

While all participants expressed growth in their own spirituality, some felt a corresponding affirmation concerning their connection to Church, while others expressed their drift and disconnection with their experience of the institutional Church. Those who felt an unbroken connection to Church still expressed experiences of discomfort and alienation at times with aspects of the Church.

All participants come from a Catholic family background, though the degree of cultural engagement ranged greatly. Some participants were 'cradle Catholics' with a background of immersion in Catholic parish life, exemplified by participation in sodalities, devotional prayer practices, regular mass attendance. Others had a milder experience of Catholic culture, with perhaps a family member (parent/grandparent) being Catholic, and having a general commitment to a Catholic education.

Sarah's story reflects both the experiences of belonging and of disconnection as she recounts her journey with the Church as her life has unfolded.

My Dad is not Catholic. He comes from a family steeped in tradition and is the most Christian person I know. We grew up with the no talking at the table... My Mum is a Catholic and so are my brothers and myself. But Mum was very 'Catholic'; she went to Catholic boarding schools as they lived in the country. She was the head girl who went to afternoon tea with the Archbishop to give him his money. We all went to Catholic primary and secondary schools. We were forced to go to Mass every Sunday no matter what, and I think the reason I turned away from 'religion' when it was up to me was because I had to go to every cricket, soccer and football match of my brothers, so by the time Sunday came I just wanted to stay home. Also

some of the priests in those days were a bit 'fire and brimstone'. Once I got to Mass it was ok and I enjoyed it. But I guess, like most kids, I wanted to choose for myself and I was just a bit defiant. I started nursing at – of course – the Mater. During this time of nursing I still went to Mass as it gave me strength to get back to work and help others.

Then at about 21 years old, I dove into the shallow end of a swimming pool and broke my neck. I ended up in a rota bed for 6 months in total plaster. I have to admit I got angry with God; I couldn't understand how all my life I had given to others and been a good daughter and sister and friend and then He did this to me. I found my journey very difficult, and I think this was about the time my Mum started to question her beliefs. So I guess from that time on, I lost my 'faith'. It surfaced again at the important times of my life: marriage (had a full nuptial mass as this was really important to me – not as important to my husband); children (all baptised, did the sacramental programs and attended Catholic schools).

So at the peak times in my life I have turned back to the Church for help, guidance and strength. It has been my faith that has brought me through some of the darkest patches, but it has been the Church which has also delivered some blows along the way too, like being divorced and that in-built guilt and belief that even though I didn't want or seek the ending I can't practice as a Catholic – until I woke up to myself and thought, 'I don't care what anyone thinks; if I want to go to Mass, I can and will'. My thanks to St Mary's at West End for the opportunity to get back into the Church without parishioners pointing a finger at you, thinking they know all.

When I went to uni and was doing my theology subjects, I started to look and see the Catholic faith in a new light, which again rekindled my journey and my thirst to understand and know more through adult eyes [...] Now *Keepers* has helped me grow spiritually in a way I needed but didn't imagine.

Also during the program, Sarah identified that the strained relationship with Church remained for her.

I still feel that, that length between my spirituality and the Church is probably you know, it's there. I don't have good experiences with parish priests. And I think that's where the problem is; I don't think our parish priests, a lot of them, are open enough and giving enough and on that wavelength. So that puts a bit of a spoke in things.

Joseph's commitment to the Church is deeply grounded, and yet he also expressed longstanding unresolved issues around gospel preaching and gospel witness.

When I was at Helidon (the Christian Brothers Novitiate), I think it goes back to this, I don't know why, we used to have a big clean up the day before Easter and I used to drive the tractor. So I had the privilege of going to the dump, which is through the main town, across the railway and up 17 miles of rock road. And right beside the dump there was this bloke living on a little farm in accommodation that he had built by himself. And he just looked rough, rough, and we got talking to him as we were dumping the rubbish. He was out there with his goats; they were his companions. Living in this dried up little area beside the dump, he used to go and scavenge through the

dump and being Easter time you're also on retreat. I can remember going to the Brother in charge that night and saying, because we'd had a bit party after the Easter vigil and there was food, you wouldn't believe the amount of food that was left over and I just, I had to do something. I wanted to share some of our food with this bloke and the novice master actually was pretty suspicious with 'What's going on here?' and he said, 'Ok, alright, but just this once'. Anyway, I took it up to the old guy – I just drove up and just wished him a happy Easter, and that's the last time I saw him I think. But I was intrigued by the novice master's suspicion, 'Only this once. We're not into this.' And I couldn't... I've never been able to resolve that.

Despite a strong Italian Catholic upbringing, Susannah has believed it increasingly difficult to personally connect with God and Church as she has grown older. She maintained some family customs deeply ingrained in her, such as having a crucifix on the bedroom walls, but she did not find a personal connection to her public faith. The Foundations course she did helped her understanding of a more adult approach to faith and Church, but she had not made a personal connection with this.

I have been brought up a Catholic and have followed this belief. I completed the Foundations course through Catholic Education a few years ago and felt enlightened by the ecumenical content and the self-criticism that it had on the Catholic religion. I learnt a lot about myself and my religion while undertaking the course. I then fell into the *Keepers of the Flame* group and have felt much satisfaction and direction from this process. It has been life-changing – maybe I was ready for it.

Susannah in fact expressed during the program a resolution of her angst in relationship to Church going: "My guilt of not attending Church as regularly has shifted as I feel I am linking myself to God on a more regular basis now."

For Mary, the journey with Church has been close and strong. She joined the Josephite sisters for six years and there is a sense of reclaiming this heritage more strongly through having been involved in *Catching Fire*. Her relationship with the Church has been one of critical friend, but always loyal.

Although I left the religious to live a more independent life, I would like to think that my spirituality is still a Josephite one and that I continue to have a 'Josephite heart'. Rooted in my family of origin, the Salesians, and guided by the teachings and principles of Vatican II, frameworks such as *Catching Fire* and other spiritual writers, directors and counsellors since, my personal spirituality hopefully continues to grow and evolve. I continue to be comfortable with religion and in religious circles, and have a deep interest in community, justice, spirituality and philosophy. I have taught in Catholic schools now for over 30 years, and for 20 years have been a member of the parish of St Raphael's.

My way of being, operating and relating to others is based on a strong belief in equality, justice, respect and compassion and the discernment of the spirit

of the law, rather than the blind following of the letter of the law. I endeavour also to view and be part of creating a Church (and school) that is a caring, consultative, creative, prayerful, playful, sacramental and liturgical community that gathers with Christ and [has] Scripture at its centre rather than a dogmatic, patriarchal, patronising, hierarchical institution concerned with rubrics and politics.

By the end of the program, both Susannah and Sarah had moved further to integrate their understanding of Church with their own faith journey and spiritual growth. They share this in the final phase of the findings.

7.5.3.1 Commitment of Catholic Education

Many participants across the programs at different times expressed surprise and very positive responses to the fact that Brisbane Catholic Education was investing in staff in this way. It seemed to be a view worthy of note for this study.

Mary reflects the views of many in saying:

I think one of the wonderful things was – and I’m not quite sure whether I’m surprised – was that Cath Ed put their money where their mouth is, and said that this is really important, you know, spirituality is important, we need to do this, ... and we’re going to really put our money into getting this up and going. And I thought that was wonderful and so do a lot of other APREs.

Joseph too, as principal, had the view that “Catholic education has much more to do with the importance of the lived reality, not just the politics and the structures”, and enthusiastically endorsed the program for principals and for school communities because of its attention “to nurturing the lived reality”.

These thoughts were echoed by staff participants at St Raphael’s as well as by many staff across other pilot schools, indicating both the importance and surprise of system support for the programs.

7.6 ‘The Story’ – The Transformational Phase

The goal of spiritual formation in the Catholic Christian tradition is transformation, marked by internal shifts in world view and an external moving out of self to others. The signs of this may be identified in both the inner and outer world of those on the journey to varying degrees and in a range of ways.

7.6.1 Giving to Community

The formative process of the CFP sought to take all participants on a journey to open up their own stories, and deepen their understanding and engagement of the spiritual pathways in the Christian tradition. One of the indicators of change is the engagement of participants back out 'in the world.'

7.6.1.1 Desire to Reach Out

The participants returned each time to their school environment wanting to reach out to others through the structures already established in the school. Mary, the APRE, observed, "I think firstly it is from within them, the passion that they had felt with what they've done is being imparted to us."

Tamar expressed the desire from the participants' perspective.

I mean, we've had staff prayer at any place I've ever been to, but it's always been like one person leads it, the other people listen and that's pretty well how it goes. Whereas I felt we got to the stage – although there was never any pressure, it was always only if you want to – but I think it sort of got to the stage where you did want to, you know, you felt you had something that everybody else could share. So, to me that's when you really start to feel comfortable with the whole spirituality, your own spirituality.

Elizabeth agreed, "We [me and other staff participants] were really fired up with ideas and enthusiasm to make a difference at school and made some concrete plans."

Tamar, Rebeccah, Susannah and Sarah all expressed a passionate desire to "make a difference" through using their own gifts and growth to help staff and students reach their full potential.

My role really lets me sort of empower teachers and I love that, that part of it. People have got so much to offer but just don't recognise it; so I suppose that's really the crux of the whole thing, you know, helping people recognise what they've got to give and how sacred that is. (Tamar)

Mary too wants to "have the joy of knowing you have made a difference. I think I most want to give my creativity and my imagination."

Joseph, who is most passionate "to give of himself to see authentic relationships alive in the community", can see some directions he feels that he and the community need to move in to make this happen.

The place we give prayer in our communal life as staff and school and so on – we need to reconsider that. And I suppose going back to what we said before, it's that place of service in what we do – how what we do as a staff member fits in with the way I live out my life personally. And that's the big question that I'm grappling with.

The particular story of Susannah as she re-entered the school community after the initial retreat experience gives concrete expression to the transformative shift in participants' growth in confidence and capacity, and reflects the reverberations back to the staff room and classroom.

You see I had never done a prayer before. I've been here 5 years and we had a principal who wanted prayer done every week. And I remember I had to do one in my first year and it was like, 'Just get me through this, I have no idea.' I did liturgies with my class, but this is different.

When I got back to school after that first retreat in *Keepers*, my co-teacher said we were doing this prayer ritual the next day and it's all prepared blah, blah, blah. And I said, 'Ok, that's fine.' But I thought to myself, 'Well, if I'm not ready to do one now, I'll never do it!' She's also been an APRE and taught here for 25 years and I would normally always just have let her run it, you know. So I looked at it and said to her, 'I thought, you know, that I would really like to include a blessing mantra.' And she said, 'Do you think it will fit in? Are you sure you can do it?' And I thought, 'Well let me have a look at it,' and I did have a look at it, and I thought, 'Yeah, it fits.' Then we looked at the gospel and she said, 'Do you think you'll be alright with the gospel?', and I'm going, 'Yeah, I think I can manage it.' And then she said, 'Maybe you'd like to adjust it so it's not so long.' I had a look and thought, 'No, you know, I think the way it's written is really quite nice and I'd like to just read it as it is.' And I said, 'Then what I'll do is I'll link it up and flow into the community mantra.' So then when we were practising, I was saying it to her and she said, 'Oh look it's lovely, it fits in beautifully, but, maybe not sing it, maybe just say it.' And I said, 'Oh...'

So the next day, we're ready to go, and Rebeccah was in the room with us, 'cause it was only a P-3 gathering, but admin and everyone were there. So I said to Rebeccah, 'Look, Elizabeth thought best if I don't sing it, if I just say it.' And Rebeccah said, 'No! Sing it.' So, when I did the gospel reading I was really calm and thinking about what I was reading more so than reading to the staff. And when I led the other bit, I really, you know the words were really powerful the way they were written, and I thought, 'No, I'll leave it the way it is' and then I got up and I sang. I sang it in a way that I felt was really soothing and in a meditating kind of a way. And so everyone joined in – Rebeccah helped get everyone up, even the boys – and they did it really happily, and, and it just brought, I could feel this calmness had come across the group which is what I felt when we did it. So it was lovely; I felt really pleased and I got lots of people come up to me afterwards and say, 'We loved the mantra! We think we could do that with our kids you know in the classroom.' And there was just this lovely feeling in the room. There were about 15 of us and I felt really at peace doing that and I thought, 'Gee I can't believe I have done that. It flowed, it was meaningful and it involved everyone. I can do this and I want to do this.'

Later, I was recalling this to my teacher-aide and they don't come to these things. And she said, 'Can you do it and show me?' and so, we did it together just one morning before school. And she just said, 'Oh that gave me goose bumps!'

While her everyday work colleague had reservations about Susannah's capacity to lead the prayer, Susannah drew from a new confidence and knowledge. It was Rebecca, her fellow participant in *Keepers*, who spontaneously gave her support. This represented a significant shift in the order of ownership and participation in staff prayer, one that was noticed and welcomed by the APRE (Mary).

I sort of feel now that there's some support. I mean in many ways, particularly these days, I think APREs feel like aliens. You know, a strange person on another planet particularly if you see there's a religious dimension or a spiritual orientation as well. I think you've got many, many APREs that are more comfortable with the academic side, you know the curriculum side of religious education, and so whether they've not had the experience or [are] not so comfortable with the spiritual side of things... But, in many ways you wonder whether you're talking in a different language, whether it's leading prayer or speaking about spirituality or about Jesus, or theology or a liturgical season, or Mass or... And you wonder whether you're just talking to the wind. However, since we've been involved in this wonderful framework and teachers have had the opportunity to experience, to find spirituality themselves and I feel as though we're all on the same side; I feel as though there's more company, and there are more of us journeying together. And it does make my job not so sort of onerous. I'm not so pushing against the tide, now that there are people that are going in the same direction. There are others now, and they are taking up leadership in lots of ways and that's wonderful!

7.6.1.2 Vocational Response-ability

The programs in the CFP each had a focus on the participants' vocational context. Their response to their vocational journey and commitment was serious and considered, whether it was in confirming and energising their choices as with Rebecca and Mary, or in challenging the authenticity of their pathway as with Joseph, or in beginning to consider leadership as with Tamar and Sarah.

Mary experienced a renewal of vocational commitment that she described in strong ecclesial terms:

I realise more fully that I am called, even compelled, through baptism fundamentally to teach, challenge and transform in more overt ways at times. [...] I believe that is my responsibility vocationally, that I've been called to do that, but also in my professional role here at school, and it's something that I really believe in – that sort of faith life. So, I love to see teachers also that are the same, because it's not just about head stuff, it's about what they are doing in classrooms at prayer to really engage and tap into the spiritual, the

God within. And if they don't have it themselves, they can't do it with the children.

Tamar was also thinking about vocational responsibility outside the classroom.

I don't teach any longer; I don't teach religion to students. I'm involved in special ed. So I guess my whole way of thinking of it is very much at a staff level. I think one of the big things with relation to actually being a teacher in a Catholic school, when I think professionally rather than personally, was when someone that day, maybe it was ..., said that it's our whole spirituality that sets a teacher who teaches in a Catholic school apart from any other educational institution. And I thought, 'Yeah, that's it, that's the crux of the whole thing. That's why we should be giving time to it rather than letting all these other things sort of take over.

I guess the question is, 'How do we make it real in a Catholic school community?' I don't believe we interact as a spiritual community and yet I think that that's really what should be happening. So, I guess my question is, like I can see how things are being put in place now to try and support that and they look great – my question at the outset is how to do it? So it will be interesting at the other end to see whether we've gone part way along the track with that.

Mary agreed with Tamar's understanding of the key question for them as a Catholic educational community.

You said I think what makes us different here from the state school down the road, and we really, we are bound to, we are responsible for nurturing the spirituality of this place. I mean this is what it's about. It's about Jesus. The challenges today are how do you do that now. I have always believed that in being who I was I could model just being the person I am I suppose. That doesn't mean I am the model for what spirituality is, but I realise that I need to overtly sort of go and do things as well, you know to bring that about.

Rebecca and Elizabeth expressed a delight in their renewed energy for the classroom possibilities. Rebecca, in reflecting on the impact of her involvement in the CFP on her teaching, remarked: "Showing children how to pray with confidence and watching children embrace God in their lives has been wonderful."

Other participants also felt drawn to leadership through their experience.

My personal challenge I think is the calling to really put myself into a little bit of a leadership role with this. I probably have been more of a participant previously, thinking that, you know, it's everybody else, it's the Marys of the world who have the ability and the knowledge and the skill to impart whatever needs to be imparted to the rest of the staff in relation to spirituality. Whereas after doing the program [*SpiritFire*], I don't know whether it's the people that I met with or what was presented; it was probably a combination of both and the fact that I was then sort of thrown into a leadership role when Br Barnabas (a practitioner in spiritual formation) came out – I found myself in a situation of sharing things that I would have said

previously [but] I never would have done. And feeling kind of comfortable doing it. So yeah, a lot has come out of it really. (Tamar)

It's brought me away more confident. Normally I would have taken a back seat and said, 'Whatever you think.' But I think it's made me step up and take more of a leading role. I don't think I'll be as afraid to do things with the [staff] group because I feel like I have been given some tools. (Susannah)

I also thought I needed to take a more assertive role in keeping it going at school. I think I've been a bit inclined to, a bit like Mary says, 'Just sit back and let someone else do it.' And I do think, 'Oh, isn't that lovely; she does such a good job,' I just sit back and enjoy it. And I think I'm very comfortable doing that within my classroom. I'm very comfortable in some respects doing that in my personal life. Not so comfortable doing it on a staff level. And so I think, 'Now this is something I'm really going to have to change; this is going to be a challenge for me.' Because this is something I need to pick up on and show because I feel I've been offered this gift and you know I thought, 'I think it's about time I stood up a bit to be counted.' (Rebeccah)

Joseph remains passionate about the communal aspect of creating Catholic community.

It's that experience of community that you get. You know you've got a significant group of others who are there for the good times and the bad times who are also on a journey, that we're there trying to work out what they're being called to do. You can share interaction around that journey, with them.

After Joseph returned from long-service leave, he had decided that he would act on his desire to integrate outreach and service learning into the school.

Coming back, it was a hard, hard week and I suppose just walking around the place you know people were asking about the trip and that sort of thing and I suppose the good news is that I'd already decided that I wanted to just capture a bit of the retreat side in the newsletter each week. So I'd come back with that plan and that's the only thing that kept me going – I just wanted to share a little bit about particularly the street retreat and so I've done that over three weeks in the newsletter.

What's been great is the response from such a broad range of people who've never really engaged in conversation with me. The parents who've said, 'Oh, that's interesting!' and staff members who've said, 'I didn't know that we had homeless like that in Brisbane.' A number of people in various ways have said, 'We'd love to have that opportunity as well.' So, it built very quickly to organising an experience for people. So yesterday we had Vinnie's in, the local contact we have with Vinnie's is one of our granddads, and I wanted to make the contact through them just to link parish, school, all that sort of thing.

I must say I'm really grateful that people have told me that it would be of interest to them, because as you know it touched me. I suppose a lot of people you know who have older children who've experienced something like it themselves but often the parents haven't, so here is a way.

Sarah echoed Joseph's thoughts.

I heard Joseph speak about it at the board meeting. I was sitting there and I was thinking, you just don't realise how lucky you are and how cocooned you are and I was really moved the night he was talking about what the girls do at night at Rosie's, and I was thinking it must be the most wonderful experience for them to really see how lucky they are and to recognise that. The boys too do the training camp at (a Religious Institute School) and they give respite to the disabled children for a week and the boys absolutely love it. What they get out of those experiences is just, you can't get it out of a text book; it's wonderful.

7.6.1.3 Growing Capacity

Growing capacity in understanding and living out the connection between spiritual formation, personal growth and the vocation of the Catholic educator became clearer for those involved in the CFP as time passed.

For some, the connection was expressed in simple terms. As Rebeccah said, "If I can learn to make people feel good, which has a ripple effect and that makes other people feel good, I just see that as a great gift."

The combination of passion with growing capacity was a key element in the effectiveness of what happened within the broader school community according to Mary, the APRE.

You can have a piece of paper; you can light the candles; you can do all that; we've done all that. Now I'm not saying it's never happened before, but they [the staff participants] now have not only the passion, but the ability. And they have a confidence and a belief in prayer and in God. I think that's the difference. That they have lived it and they are only really letting us have some of what they now have.

Now what we take out of that as a staff is hard to measure, and sometimes it might be stronger for others than some. But you get the feeling it's happening – that knowing – because it is the quietness, no-one talks or chats down the back... this is the feeling on staff that I get now.

Lydia (a staff member not directly involved in the CFP programs) shared her reflections on the program participants:

Over the course of the time I noticed some interesting and inspiring things about the people who had been part of the whole *Catching Fire* experience. There was an obvious special bond – a real connectedness – between all of them. I truly felt it was much deeper than just that they had done the program together. I felt they shared the fire of the spirit with each other and within themselves. When I saw them around the school involved in different situations or different roles, or I listened in on their reflective times with ..., I can only express that what I saw or felt the following way – they all seemed

to have an inner contentment – a glow that came from deep within – the Spirit! This is the key to Catholic leadership!

7.6.1.4 Influence on Wider Staff Community

Participants noticed a difference in the broader staff community. All participants saw this as a major development, describing their staff as large and busy with a somewhat insular dynamic. This was exemplified in specific experiences as Mary described:

The effect on staff has been amazing. I was there when Susannah led the prayer. Just towards the end of it, she said now we're going to try this prayer style you know. And then Rebeccah, who was just a participant in the prayer sort of said, 'Oh yes,' she said, 'This is a really good one and it's something that we can use with the children as well,' and she said 'Susannah, I'll help you!' Everyone got involved.

It was also demonstrated in more general experiences as Tamar explained:

I sort of think of the staff as being, in a spiritual way, fairly private people, so we don't share a lot as a staff in that respect. When we decided to do a whole staff formation day on the pupil free day, it had the potential of either being very positive or passionately antagonistic, but looking at the responses it seems to have really touched a lot of people. And so that would sort of suggest that where we go from here has the potential to touch a lot of people. And I think that's rather a really big positive with the whole thing.

The approach to formation in the CFP programs gave Mary clarity as to how to approach formation for staff in general.

As a result of our work this year, I am now more aware than ever that there is not a 'one size fits all' approach to spirituality or how this is personally expressed. Staff and communal prayer, for example, need to be inclusive of, and sensitive to, various personal pathways, both genders and many personalities. As APRE in particular, I need to work on this.

The depth of response by those staff directly involved in the programs was something noted by the principal.

The responses when people came back to school, you know and shared quite openly to others. They said it was 'life changing', you know that it's been a time where they've been given an opportunity to really consider where they are at and where they're going in their spiritual lives and in their broader lives. It's opened people up to new possibilities. That is by far, I think, the most important thing that's happened for our community. And I think also, now that we've had this body of people who've experienced that, others say, 'Oh, this looks interesting, maybe there's something in it for me.' The people who've gone, they haven't necessarily been the power brokers, but just by the way they responded and told their story, portions of the story they've told, you know, the impact on others has been quite strong.

Rebecca also feels there has been a shift in general acceptance about the whole initiative, and she believes this is a big step.

I think people are accepting of it now, whereas way back earlier this year that was a really uncomfortable beginning. We didn't prepare well. I think prayer is about community; these experiences are building another community in a different sense than just being a teaching community. It takes us into a deeper relationship and then, when you're in that deeper relationship, you're about to be together on a different level.

Priscilla, who was not involved directly in the programs but was a member of the Leadership Team, also identified a change in staff dynamic and in herself.

I think that, yeah, probably in that sense I changed my approach with them a little bit and what I would discuss with them in the future, you know, what I would be prepared to share with that person. Because I felt that they had given to me, I could give back to them and they would understand what I was saying. So I think in that sense it really has changed the way we deal with each other. It's certainly changed it for me.

This sense of a shift in receptivity, acceptance and participation of the staff in general occurred despite considerable upheaval in the Leadership Team – the APRE had long-service as well as sick leave during the course of this research; the principal had long-service leave as well, and the APA was asked to assume an acting principal position in another school where that principal was on extended sick leave. While this had its own natural disruption, it also provided a useful reality check for the researcher, as this kind of disruption is typical in the reality of school communities.

7.6.2 Reconnecting to the Jesus Meta-narrative

The personal connection to Jesus was strongly articulated among those who were in the *SpiritFire* program and those in leadership. Views were deeply held.

For Elizabeth (in *SpiritFire*), the relationship with Jesus is about “love, compassion and prayer”. She has a clear sense of what ought be at the heart of the Catholic educator. “The joy is learning: getting to know Jesus more and to be comfortable speaking with stronger conviction about what we should be about as a Catholic faith community.”

Tamar (also in *SpiritFire*) sees Jesus very much with her in a personal way. “Jesus is on the adventure with me.” Rebecca and Susannah (both from the *Keepers* program) have also developed an understanding of presence and relationship in

Jesus. “Presence is about developing awareness.” (Susannah) “Presence is about the gift of relationality with others and with Jesus.” (Rebeccah)

Joseph (in *Guiding Lights*) already had a well developed understanding of the Jesus vision and how it ought be grounded in everyday school community life.

Knowing Jesus is all about ‘relationship’, I say that here in your presence. Years ago as an admin team at (another school), we came up with what we felt captured what we needed to be on about. I believe it is about the development of relationships which reveal Christ’s presence, and the signs of his Kingdom should permeate all aspects of life at school. So, if it doesn’t have a Christ-centred dimension to it, there’s something wrong. It means that you have to be soft, and you need to be tough at times, but you know your motivation if in your action you are trying to reveal Jesus’ presence here and now in this decision making. It’s making Jesus present here through whatever we are doing. So we believe that the development of relationships that reveal Christ’s presence and are a sign of his Kingdom should permeate all aspects of life. It’s education for life and living in partnership with families and community for the glory of God. That’s what we’re on about.

Mary’s reflections (Mary is APRE and in *SpiritFire*) on the Jesus story are also grounded in relationship, which she sees in a trinitarian and embodied sense.

When I think of Jesus, there’s the Jesus of faith, the Jesus of history and I see Jesus as a person who walked on this earth at some particular time. But Jesus I think is kind of the Word of God, or the manifestation of God’s love for us I suppose, you know, everything that Jesus did or Jesus was about or still is about, is the revelation of God. What does that mean for me? I don’t know; I tend not to have a relationship with just Jesus, as such, but it’s more of a theological understanding – trinitarian. God is the creator I suppose. God is a supreme Other and also I think that God is also the centre of who I am as well. So God is part of me and I am part of God. God to me is a unity, an entity, a communion, something that just brings together and binds.

7.6.3 Reconnecting to Church

Mary, as APRE, expressed a desire and feeling of responsibility to connect with parish life in a more relational way.

I think religious education is very important and I love the way we have learning about religion, and I think that’s really important. But I think parish life is important, or Church life is important to me, not so much the institution, but the real nourishment that the people would get by [connecting] personally and spiritually in faith, with each other as a community. And that’s something that I would love to see happen. I don’t know whether the time is long gone that we can bring that back with the students or the families... It sort of has an evangelising feel without being Bible bashing, but I see that that’s a responsibility of mine.

Joseph articulated a desire to be more involved in the parish community through its outreach and service initiatives.

Tamar and Elizabeth continue a stable connection to Church and to parish. Their faith life is stretched and CFP has simply, as Tamar put it, “enriched or filled in what was missing” in parish connection.

For Sarah, a movement has been clear.

Since then [the difficult time after her marriage broke down], I have started to feel good about my place in the Church. *Keepers* has helped me to re-establish a connection with God, the Church and myself. I felt I was in a bit of a no-man's land. I lacked direction, connection and commitment. *Keepers* has given me back my drive and my connectedness.

Susannah also identified a sense of reconnection with Church in general as a result of *Keepers*, though for her this has not translated into a re-invigorated parish involvement.

Rebecca has not reconnected with her parish community and, while committed to Catholic community, does not feel compelled to be part of a parish community. “Sport with the kids began to take over as they hit the teenage years, and I feel the need for rest at some stage on the weekends. It’s just too busy.”

7.6.4 Living Sustainable Practice

Living sustainable practice was the challenge for all participants. They were supported by irregular emails from the researcher at key points throughout the year and by systemic resources supplied to all school communities. But the adoption of these resources for the sustaining of personal practice was the choice and challenge for them.

While Elizabeth, Susannah, Tamar and Rebecca expressed the continuity of sustainable practice in their personal and professional lives connected with prayer, for Sarah the sustainable practice was around her personal boundaries in relationship, and for Joseph it was about staying with the questions and challenge about the alignment of his work and deepest spirit.

Susannah’s indicated that other people’s sustainability goals were helpful to her.

I actually liked some of the goals that other people had set, which were those daily prayers in the morning, first thing in the morning. So I’ve been trying those and that breathing and looking at certain little chants and repeating

them... So I guess it's been, I kind of shifted it a bit because I thought, 'Actually that's probably more targeted to what I should have been than what I was thinking of doing.' So I kind of diverted from that and took on other people's goals. And I've kept it up. I've also kept my journaling going.

Rebecca felt she had integrated a new way of being into her everyday presence in the classroom.

I think my spirituality in the classroom is because I feel better and I feel calmer and I feel more peaceful and I feel more together and not as stressed. I think that's reflected in the classroom anyway and just the day-to-day running of it. And in the spirituality that we build into it every day and every lesson and [in] everything that we do. It is that treating each other with respect, that being warmly spoken and welcoming. All of that, I think, is more strengthened and I so like that it is part of our tradition – not from somewhere else. And how do I keep that feeling going? By looking at those children with fresh eyes every day. I want to sustain that.

One of the concrete outcomes of participation in the programs was the establishment and continuing development of the staff Prayerspace. Mary explained:

We've set up a Prayerspace now in the staff room – it's the only point where all staff gather, and it's worked well. This initiative has come out of the people on *Catching Fire*. We change the colours and symbols, and it has been a great visual encouragement then for staff prayer. We have our P&F meetings here now as well. And we are continuing modelling that to the parents as well on assembly.

Lydia remarked about all of the participants who were involved in the programs, "They are good at being in the moment – being present. They don't need to say much."

However, the ongoing challenge back in the community to sustain the deep learning of individual participants was named along with a sense of the need for personal responsibility for it.

We need to be taking that time personally, as well as, as a group, a staff group. I mean, when you've got a staff of this size trying to work out logistically how it will work, as well as recognising that we're all in different places and how you get that to work. So, there are lots of challenges. But, you know, they're all worthwhile. (Tamar)

Mary echoed Tamar's insights about the need for time.

Spirituality is not just about words or lovely ideas; it really has to be integrated, I think, into my own life personally. And then into the lives of the individuals within the staff and the staff as a whole, and I think for that you need time. You need to be able to reflect.

At the same time, Tamar also expressed her view that there was a readiness for participants to be able to meet the challenges.

This spirituality framework has the potential to be infectious. When the *SpiritFire* people join with the *Keepers* and the *Guiding Lights* people, a group of people develop who share a yearning, an enthusiasm about their spiritual journey and they in turn want to share this with others. They may have had different experiences, but they are keen to share the journey.

All of the participants were involved in generating strategies for sustainability at a staff level.

Joseph looked ahead to next year's goal-setting and planning.

I think that's the next phase; that we need to almost organise ourselves. You know sort of, we've got the mentors, the companions that sort of thing; I think that's what we need: to organise. And I think funding is just one of those things that we need to be looking at pretty carefully, as with planning.

The three goals subsequently developed and negotiated with staff for future direction were:

1. the engagement of a spiritual guide/facilitator to assist formation;
2. living our spirituality through compassion and service; and
3. continuing to pray as a staff.

Joseph also appreciated the in-built flexibility in the *Guiding Lights* program for principals to choose the areas most helpful for their individual growth rather than a uniform ongoing process, and he saw some creative possibilities for this.

I like the idea of buying into something, like the reading circle. Even through the principals' association, through its money, it has some funds set aside for small group activities. And we thought there's another way of accessing someone to come and work with a group who've got particular interests. runs that on behalf of the association. It's just a matter of saying, 'Look, I'm interested in this area, it might be a one-off activity; it might be something over a number of weeks; we want someone to act as facilitator for our group.

Others agreed that the challenge for the future was to strategise for further engagement across staff.

I think, for the future, our challenge is to set the scene and to draw people's memories back to maybe a few things they indicated they would like to focus on as a result of that PD [Professional Development] day or some other time, and follow through in that way with those things. (Elizabeth)

In the wider community scale of the school staff, the approach and experience of the CFP underlined for Mary the challenge of effective spiritual formation.

I suppose the challenge was, as ... the framework has suggested, that there are different spiritual pathways, different ways that people come from and I thought, 'How do I recognise that?' I had done a staff meeting and shared some of those things very early last year – how there's a justice pathway and how there's an ecclesial one and there's, you know, all of these things. And I thought, 'How do I find either a common pathway or tap into everyone's pathway so that I can start with where they are in their spiritual formation, I suppose, to make this as a whole school, a more spiritually rich and informed kind of a school?

Even with this challenge, Mary was confident that the staff in general had changed.

There's definitely a commitment to head, heart and hands – not just head [learning about]. With many sparks among the staff now, I am confident that the fire of the spirit will be caught more generally as a staff.

7.6.5 Connecting Meaning and Purpose

The challenge that unsettled and called Joseph from the first days of the program remained with him to the end, tipping him into a time of discernment that would take another year to resolve. This struck at the very heart of his meaning making.

I can't pretend... I'm not content. I can go through the motions as a Catholic school administrator and say, 'Well, I'm doing all that I need to do,' but I know deep down there's an emptiness in my spiritual life; it's that one area. That's the one that just seems to be gnawing away at me. Yeah, and that's what it's been like for 20 years. I can remember, I think I was still at (another school) and thinking maybe I should join the St Vincent de Paul Society, you know.

While Joseph was agitated to recognise his discontent, Rebeccah was stirred too, but into making the connections between herself, her spirituality and her life purpose.

It's been life changing, worth its weight in gold. It has centred me as a mother, teacher and friend. It has helped me find a good balance in my life, not just to serve others but to serve myself, and see what really matters and what my life is really about.

For Susannah, Rebeccah and Sarah, there was a sense of 'things fitting together', of a peace about how things are and an expressed hopefulness in the future.

Mary expressed a recovery of her meaning making, while Tamar had a strong sense of being led in a direction that she felt comfortable to trust.

7.6.6 Embracing the Mystic Dimension

The touching of mystical experience – being genuinely grounded in the present – is the heart of the spiritual journey. One of the traditional metaphors in spiritual formation to indicate a transformative journeying in this way is the idea of ‘having our eyes opened’. Another descriptor is the reclaiming of true self or story. The experience of these transformative moments was woven through the participants’ sharing over the year, and spoke in a cumulative way of the connection to the larger story of meaning making.

7.6.6.1 Seeing with New Eyes

To varying degrees, participants re-entered their families and school community ‘seeing with new eyes’.

Rebecca feels very blessed in the place she is at, at the moment – she has never felt more content, and this has filtered through to her teaching. She has learned to see the blessings in her life.

I’ve never been here before. So that was the surprise when I got back. I looked at things with fresh eyes. Not gobsmacking fresh eyes, but I just thought, ‘Let’s do things slightly differently.’

For Susannah, the experience of prayer opened up a whole new dimension to her life. Her comments indicate a movement into the contemplative prayer of the mystic.

Spiritually I find myself praying everywhere [now]. Previously I would pray a more traditional thank you prayer. Now I sing songs and use mantras on a regular basis. Sometimes my prayers last 20 seconds, but it doesn’t matter. I seem to be aware of quiet times when I’m walking, exercising, riding my bike along the river and I happen to notice some special view or scenery. It is at this time that I say a little prayer of thanks. When these moments are captured and I tune into what I’m doing, I feel a deep sense of change and fulfilment.

Mary was able to make new and real connections with the framework concepts: “The head, heart and hands aspects of spiritual engagement have been opened up for me and new connections have been made with the *Jesus Communion Mission* vision of the Archdiocese.” She also saw herself and others in a more gentle way.

I suppose I came away ... thinking that if all of me in my humanness can give glory to God and just sort of be, then that can happen for everybody else too. So I suppose I’ve been seeing that in everybody, that it’s ok to be human, to be not perfect, and then trying to get them to see that connection as well.

For Tamar, her already regular prayer life has taken on a communal dimension. “Until recently prayer has been my interaction with God. Now it’s probably, I feel more a need to be involved in the community.”

Perhaps, it is appropriate that the last word here is from Lydia, a staff member from the broader staff who looked at what has happened with St Raphael’s involvement in the CFP: “It’s a privilege and a gift and I feel this deeply.”

7.6.6.2 Reclaiming Story

Joseph’s struggle with the call he feels to outreach work became a reclaiming of his story and his spirituality.

Spirituality is that fire, the fire within us, ‘that burns within us’ and that’s the phrase that just sort of keeps coming back to me this year. Even after the experience the other night, I still think I’m being called to do something more than what I currently do in terms of serving. And I don’t think long term that I can rely on doing that through the school end. Because that’s going to finish sooner or later and it’s a bit like the kid in primary school: if their only experience of parish is through the parish primary school and they end up at another school where there is no link to parish, will they ever experience it again? I think that’s the way I’m feeling it, I’m living out my service part of spirituality through the school, where it’s not part of my broader life.

Joseph has entered a deep discerning time because of this.

Elizabeth rediscovered “a fire within”. Her biggest learning was: “The coming to the realisation that I do have a very strong belief and that I would like to follow that and extend that as much as I can.”

Rebecca’s insight was to discover she has a strong spiritual life and it is her birthright. She had thought: “Spirituality was only for nuns and priests”, but now thinks, “It’s for everyone”. Her biggest learning was about who she is as a person.

Susannah realised her spirituality, “as being connected with one’s inner soul where God is found”. Her biggest learning was “about being positive about what’s happening with you; to see and stay with the big picture about what we are called to and what life is about”.

Sarah’s transforming learning was about “facing things” and seeing prayer as “being in relationship with others as well as God”.

For Mary, the biggest learning was:

... knowing that my spiritual journey and spiritual heart is a big part of me and a fundamental and important part of me, and I am comfortable with that at last, and in fact feel blessed and amazed by it. It's ok that this is who I am. My spirituality comes from within and keeps me earthed while connecting to God. Presence is being with each other through God – it is communion.

And for Tamar, her spiritual journey is “a new adventure” – one with changing understandings.

I had always thought of God as very much the father figure, but since *SpiritFire* this is changing – there's a sense of presence and love – of being with – it's so wonderful! This is such a great program – I will always value this.

7.6.7 Images of Transformation

At the end of the year, participants were asked to reflect on the year and suggest a metaphor or image that might best describe their journey. Below are their reflections, all indicating degrees of transformative awareness.

This experience has been a very special one for me – one which has been personally life-changing. If nothing else happened, this year in itself has been pure gold! Watching myself and many others grow and change into something/someone more beautiful through the realisation of their gifts and personhood – fullness of life. The larva to the butterfly is the image for me that speaks of this program. (Tamar)

Mary reclaimed and celebrated the hallmark of her spirituality.

As I look at the play-dough model of a teapot, I recall forming this as [a] symbol of the kind of spirituality that I aspire to, have rediscovered and am growing into – a spirituality of support, welcome and hospitality. With the pouring out or sharing of my spirit with others, I aspired and still aspire to do so with 'soft eyes', openness, humility. My melted, squished, deformed candle from the retreat also reminds me of this, 'That I too am human (melted, squished, deformed, limited) – and that's ok.

What Sarah most needed was a way to articulate her relationship with God that offered her a new start, helping her to transform her centre and act from a platform of knowing herself to be deeply loved and affirmed. She feels she found this through the program.

Keepers has given me the gift to see I am doing a great job; I am a great teacher; I am a great person; I do have a lot to contribute to society; I can be a good listener; I don't have to 'fix' everything.

Her symbol reflects the shift in her inner life.

My symbol is a setting sun. It is filled with all the colours in the world. As it sets it takes all the things that happened that day and promises a new

beginning, [a] new start every day. It gives you time to reflect and gather your thoughts for a new day. A setting sun is so peaceful and all your stress goes with it as it sets. Just as *Keepers* gave us the opportunity to look deep into ourselves and make changes as we needed and felt strong enough. It gave us the opportunity to look at ourselves and our relationship with God to make a new start or build on what we had to make us stronger and better equipped to go back and help others by sharing our wisdom we have gained through *Keepers*.

Susannah expressed on a new and deep sense of self-awareness.

I suppose I fell into the *Keepers of the Flame* group and have felt much satisfaction and direction from this process. Personally, this program has helped me regain some control over my life. And so, in a short period of time, I have achieved my best weight loss and physical endurance that I have ever experienced. After a while, people began to notice changes in me, and I was overwhelmed with compliments. It was as though my inner strength and peace was transparent and widely approved. Due to *Keepers* I have formed a close bond with my other two colleagues who have grown from this experience. We try to approach our life and work in a very positive and productive manner. My symbol is probably more like a flame because we always say that we need to keep the flame burning when referring to the inner peace that we found in this wonderful adventure.

Elizabeth understood the experiences she had within a community framework.

I have always believed in Urie Bronfenbrenner's idea of the necessity of under-girding people in a society and feel that this is what *SpiritFire* does in a spiritual sense. It supports, extends and challenges individuals to develop their spirituality regardless of where they are on the continuum. I felt enormously supported by the program and connected to the ideas presented within it. I particularly appreciated the bond forged with the other people from my school who attended *SpiritFire* with me. The experience seemed to knit us together. It gave us a common language and purpose, and a means of pursuing our individual spiritual development while supporting the others with theirs. I think this is the thing I miss most about not being part of the school community now – the opportunity to pursue my spirituality with these women and the flow-over support that reached into many aspects of my life and theirs.

Elizabeth decided to retire at the end of the research year. Her symbol was knitting wool.

For Joseph, the CFP was a catalyst for calling him back to his deepest centre.

The *Catching Fire* Project, for me, has been akin to re-reading an old favourite, discovering that the book is not quite as I remember it; then realising it is not the book which has changed, rather that I am reading it with new eyes – the eyes of someone who has lived another 30 or so years; that on this reading I am seeing the story through a very different lens.

7.7 Decisions

Participant reflections on their journey over the research period indicate significant and decisive movement in their lives, professionally and personally. All participants expressed a belief that their involvement in the CFP formation programs was the catalyst for change. The summative decisions for each participant at the end of the research period are outlined below.

Susannah and Sarah decided to explore career opportunities in formal leadership positions in Catholic education, most likely in roles as APREs. These aspirations were certainly not part of their plan at the beginning of the year. They also took steps to become co-facilitators in the program. Tamar made a personal decision to formalise her long-term relationship in marriage (not within the Church) and move with her new husband to England for two years.

Rebecca made significant decisions that confirmed her classroom teaching vocation, expressing a strong new sense of calling and joy in this.

Mary confirmed her perceived need for a more balanced work and home life, articulating a desire to centre that around what she spoke of as her “own spiritual heart and religious base”. She identified and claimed a need to nourish this.

Joseph found a long-held but stifled desire to give more witness to outreach both professionally and personally, and made a personal commitment to this and the school community, realising what he perceived to be a damaging disconnect between his ‘work focus’ and his ‘soul focus’.

Elizabeth came to a discernment that it was time to retire and did so at the end of the research year. She was the one most surprised at this decision.

Thus, out of the seven participants, at year’s end, two left the school community. One retired, while the other one left to commit to a relationship; two began to seek leadership roles in Catholic education; two expressed a re-commitment and sharpening of their current educational vocation and one has made changes to align his leadership witness with what he understands to be his spiritual heart.

7.8 Community Learnings and Directions

The seven direct participants in the CFP programs felt there had been an identifiable change for participants and the broader school community.

We have seen such significant impact on the staff involved in the programs directly and on our staff in general (Focus group participants).

They also articulated some key learnings they had gathered about spiritual formation for their community.

We see there are three key learnings for us as a whole staff community:

- The need for support (ongoing) and guidance/structure. It's great that there are seven people here and everyone takes a role in supporting. It's not left to one person;
- The necessity to take time for nurturing self and spirituality through reflection (head), feeling (heart) and action (hands/service); and
- The importance of prayer in the growth and development of staff/community relationship.

Though the wider staff and the parent and parish community were kept informed, the leadership and direct participants believe that had they taken the time to prepare the staff better at the beginning, the influence on the broader staff community would have been even stronger: "What would we do differently? Allow time and adequate pacing to involve the whole staff in the ownership of St Raphael's spirituality. We need to engage the whole staff in the journey".

While the program participants expressed the need for greater communication and involvement of the broader staff to help them engage, the responses from the whole staff community indicated a clear movement in understanding the nature and the place of spiritual formation in the context of the individual Catholic educator and in the whole community. At the beginning of the year, feedback via questionnaires for all staff surveyed a variety of understandings of spiritual formation ranging from "of no real purpose in my life", to expressions of personal growth, "It means developing a sense of self, and being comfortable with who I am and where I'm going," to understandings couched in religious language, "developing and strengthening relationship to God and commitment to living the faith". Questionnaire results at year's end indicated collective responses that reflected a stronger alignment of the relationship between self, God and engagement with the world. Responses also reflected an understanding that spiritual formation is ongoing:

- Becoming a spiritual person, who is one with God, and learning about your personal strengths and weaknesses and acting on these to become a more "spiritual" being;

- Developing an awareness of your connection with yourself, others, your environment and God;
- Taking time to reflect on the inner self, get in touch with the essentials of life. Becoming closer to God so you can be more for self and others; and
- To gradually be formed and shaped in the Spirit, sometimes requiring “burning” discomfort – like gold tested in fire.

Responses at the end of the year also indicated the influence the CFP appeared to have on perceived opportunities for formation for staff in general over the year, with staff prayer, school retreats and the formation programs themselves named as key elements by many. Opportunities in the area of spiritual formation for all staff members before this year ranged from “none since high school” and “little in the last ten years”, to “in-services every so often”, to “Catholic upbringing”, “formal study (Foundations and ACU)”, “parish involvement” and “personal reading”. Responses also indicated the limited experience that staff had of focussed ongoing formation. In addition to the significant number who cited ‘none or very little’, many named a variety of educational in-service days and professional development programs as their main formation experiences. Church involvement was the other key source named for formation.

Responses to what had been their best and worst experiences of spiritual formation also displayed a stronger focus and sharper articulation by the year’s end. Many expressed the opportunities over the current year as having been the best for them.

- There’ve been some wonderful experiences over the past 12 months, each one becoming deeper and more meaningful;
- Spirituality days at school and prayer during staff meetings this year;
- Not too much before *Keepers of the Flame* – I feel [with that] I was given the best experience and opportunity of a lifetime; and
- Staff prayer, personal prayer and reflection.

A couple of staff expressed particularly memorable experiences and connection with St Mary’s community of South Brisbane: “Attending St Mary’s and listening to some really powerful homilies. Also seeing a healer who is helping me to see things in a different way.” The staff member who expressed fervent support for St Mary’s community was also the only staff member who included multi-faith experience as part of her spiritually formative experiences:

Catholic Church and school environment – immersion and involvement in all offered; St Mary’s Church has also been inspirational to my journey; meditations, discussions and multi-faith involvements have broadened my faith experience through friends and family.

Of equal interest for this study were the comments about what constitutes a poor experience of spiritual formation. Staff responses from the end of year questionnaire were articulated with clarity:

- When there’s too much lecturing and no space for activity or reflection;
- Where large groups are together... as it is less personal and difficult to hear/concentrate; and
- When there is a compulsion to respond at a personal level, especially when this makes for an uncomfortable experience and too personal amongst a group of strangers.

The questionnaire data also indicated a substantial shift in position by some staff with regard to the place of spiritual formation as it connects to professional and personal vocation. The surveyed feedback at the beginning of the year indicated strong negative views from some staff about the relevance of spiritual formation to teaching in a Catholic school, to each person’s ministry in Catholic education, and to becoming an authentic witness to the life and vision of Jesus. By year’s end, this stance appeared to have softened with responses (moving from ‘E – strongly disagree’ to ‘C – open to possibilities’) indicating a less strident position on those questions.

Opinions from the whole staff cohort about the impediments to staff involvement in spiritual formation were expressed around four key areas: time; readiness; perception and recognition. The following summarises these in their words:

Time

- We all get caught up in the “busy-ness” of life – the rapid change of curriculum/reporting changes become the major focus of surviving as a teacher. Many do not realise that spiritual formation allows for better focus and clarity of purpose, and are therefore reluctant to give it time.
- During designated professional days, I usually feel that I would prefer to either prepare for [the] upcoming term through curriculum planning etc. OR engage in professional development directly related to teaching, e.g. maths strategies. Maybe a day in the middle of term would allow me to appreciate spiritual activities and re-invigorate me.

- Mainly the timing (in my experience) is poor. Days where curriculum pressure is strong. I become frustrated that we do spiritual formation when other pressures are mounting.
- 'Lack of time is probably the biggest reason, along with family commitments.

Readiness

- A lot of people would be worried that it would be too heavy in theology, scripture ... and they would feel threatened. Most would be scared! Basically, you are asking people to share, to leave their comfort zone and, in some cases, to confront their demons. Some are ready, some are not quite ready and some will never be ready.
- Not everyone is ready – seeds need to be planted.
- Seven years ago I would have considered myself not worthy or committed enough to engage in a course like *Keepers of the Flame*.
- Each school needs to look at a range of options to provide staff with the opportunity to develop a stronger sense of spirituality.

Perception

- People do not feel it is relevant to teaching.
- Other staff see it as imposing on their busy schedules and may think they do enough already by going to Church etc. It's another thing to do in an already busy schedule of life.
- Some see it as an invasion of their privacy because to them, their spiritual journey is only for them.
- People don't feel holy enough or think it's being offered only to the chosen few.
- We have a work self and a home self. Don't want to show emotions when you want to be seen as professional.
- People need to feel invited and welcomed. They shouldn't be forced to reveal what they don't want to just because others are. They may not have had a good experience in the past.

Recognition

- More information on expectations [in relation to spiritual formation] is needed.
- Proper support is needed at school and this is not always available.
- Spiritual formation activities let you focus on why you teach in a Catholic school. The values being taught/nurtured in a Catholic school are an essential part of our identity.
- Accreditation is an important issue, if this [spiritual formation] is considered an important part of our role development.

The CFP program participants are cognisant of both the range of views across the full staff cohort and the positive movement in relation to spiritual formation evident in the wider staff. They are keen to build on this positive direction. For now, they have established steps to build on the robust base they feel they now have. "We want to make sure we continue to take these transformative steps into the future growth of our faith community."

7.9 Generation of Themes for Discussion

The findings of the experiences of staff participants in the St Raphael's school community reflect the journey of the participants as they engaged through different phases of the spiritual formation programs in the CFP. Participants experienced significant change, personally and professionally, through the spiritual formation processes and support structures and resources of the CFP. There is considerable evidence to indicate this rippled into the broader school community. The synthesis of findings identifies the following five key elements that have been generated from the fourteen themes.

1. **The role of community** in the sustainable growth of spiritual formation – from 'self-companioning' to development of an influential group
2. **The holistic nature of formation** offered for a contemporary target group – a head, heart and hands approach; recognising different pathways in the spiritual journey
3. **The importance of invitation** – meeting people in their own context; being host and guest in their story
4. **The contemporising of key elements of traditional Catholic formation**, especially in the use of symbols, ritual, prayer and Scripture
5. **The contexting of formation within a vocational role** – the effect of distinct programs for leaders, teachers and 'animators' in the CFP.

Table 7.3 presents the fourteen themes around which the presentation of findings was structured and the five key issues emerging from the findings that invite discussion.

Table 7.3: Issues Arising from the Presentation of Findings – St Raphael’s

Themes emerging from the Findings	Issues inviting Discussion
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Seekers after Something • Response to the Program Structure • Recognising Personal Gift/Inner Wisdom • Re-framing Grief and Failure • Claiming a Personal Spirituality • I Am Not Alone • Growing in Community • Experience with Institutional Church • Giving to Community • Reconnecting to the Jesus Meta-narrative • Reconnecting to Church • Living Sustainable Practice • Connecting Meaning and Purpose • Embracing the Mystic Dimension 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The role of community 2. The holistic nature of formation 3. The importance of invitation 4. The contemporing of key elements of traditional Catholic formation 5. The contexting of formation within vocational role

7.10 Findings from the General Pilot Schools Cohort

The findings generated from the experience of the staff in the additional nine pilot schools nine pilot schools amplify the findings of participants in the case school, St Raphael’s. The findings are presented in detail in Appendix N. In addition, and looking ahead to the future based on their experience, the pilot school participants were asked to share what their ‘powerful advice’ would be (Appendix L). Their responses identified the role of ongoing communication, the acceptance of the range of starting points for staff, the process orientation and the availability of resourcing to connect back into the school community. Of further interest, some general outcomes across the ten pilot schools are identified:

- Four of the pilot principals involved are now Area Supervisors (there are eight Area Supervisors in all);
- Seven of the schools report staff taking and maintaining leadership in spiritual formation;
- Seven of the schools report significant change in staff numbers attending and participating actively in prayer and ritual experiences;
- Three of the schools have reported that they have used the skills and resources to engage their parent communities in intentional ways; and
- Teachers across all schools reported an identifiable change in their classroom dynamic and student response and participation.

Importantly, the data from the whole pilot school cohort generated four additional issues for inclusion in discussion. These are:

1. The role of those in the programs ‘walking the talk’ in the school context;

2. The role of the school leadership for sustainability in the school context;
3. The role of strategic planning for formation in the school context;
4. The importance of the theological underpinning of the programs.

7.11 Conclusion

Accordingly, the following ten themes are identified and invite discussion.

- Participatory culture
- Professional relevance
- Holistic framing
- Time factors
- Connecting with the tradition
- Companioning
- Modelling in community
- Strategic alignment
- School leadership
- Theological underpinnings

Table 7.4 summarises the synthesis of data from the presentation of findings to generated themes for discussion.

Table 7.4 Generation of Themes for Discussion from Synthesis of Findings

<p>Participatory culture</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Seekers after Something!</i> • <i>Boundary Markers</i> • <i>Desire to reach out</i> • <i>Personal Focus</i> 	<p>Holistic framing</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Recognising Personal Gift and Inner Wisdom</i> • <i>Claiming a Personal Spirituality</i> • <i>Re-framing Grief and Failure</i>
<p>Professional relevance</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Self-understanding within Community Context</i> • <i>Deepening Shared Knowledge</i> • <i>Exploring Experiential Practice</i> • <i>Vocational Response-ability</i> 	<p>Theological underpinnings</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Images of transformation</i> • <i>Re-claiming Story</i> • <i>Seeing with new eyes</i> • <i>Reconnecting to Meta narrative</i> • <i>Embracing mystic dimension</i> • <i>Connecting meaning and purpose</i>
<p>Strategic alignment</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Commitment of Cath Education</i> • <i>Using Systemic Resources</i> 	<p>School leadership</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Impact on Wider Community</i> • <i>Growing Capacity</i>
<p>Companioning</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Through the Eyes of Each Other</i> • <i>Giving to Community</i> 	<p>Time factors</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Creating Environment</i> • <i>Living Sustainable Practice</i>
<p>Connecting with the tradition</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Establishing Personal Spiritual Practice</i> • <i>The Place of Prayer</i> • <i>The Place of Scripture</i> • <i>Experience with Institutional Church</i> • <i>Reconnecting to Church</i> 	<p>Modelling in community</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Sensing a Sacred Humanity</i> • <i>Growing in Community</i> • <i>Sharing Witness</i>

8 DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

8.1 Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to discuss the findings presented. This discussion involves a critical reflection on those findings in the light of the relevant literature and the narrative theoretical framework developed to underpin an understanding of participant experience in this research.

The findings highlighted that participants constructed their meaning making through three distinct phases, with consistent themes emerging from the data analysis in each phase. This has formed the structure of the presentation of findings in the previous two chapters. During the final stage of data analysis, a further synthesis generated a number of critical elements emerging as themes that invite discussion. These issues constitute the focus of this chapter.

The first five foci for discussion are:

- *Participatory Culture;*
- *Professional Relevance;*
- *Holistic Framing;*
- *Time Factors; and*
- *Connecting with Tradition.*

They concern the direct experience of the CFP by participants, and therefore also reflect most directly on the story model.

The second five foci for discussion are:

- *Companioning;*
- *Modelling in Community;*
- *Strategic alignment;*
- *School leadership; and*
- *Theological underpinnings.*

These concern the implementation of the CFP in the wider community, and thus include the organisational elements relevant to the context of this study. Figure 8.1 illustrates the development of themes from the Presentation of Findings through to the final synthesis using the Story framework and identifying the issues that are the focus of discussion in this chapter. The relationship of these critical elements to the research questions is included in the diagram.

Figure 8.1: Final Synthesis of Data: From Presentation of Findings to Issues Inviting Discussion



8.2 From Presentation of Findings to Issues inviting Discussion

The process of data analysis allowed the important central focus in the presentation of the findings to be the experience and voices of the participants themselves. The 'story' framework gave a scaffold for this 'telling' as the process moved from a personal narrative phase to a communal narrative and finally into engagement with the meta-narrative and new meaning making. The themes emerging in the 'telling' clustered naturally with each 'Story' phase, as indicated in Figure 8.1.

In the final synthesis of data, the further analysis of these clustered themes generated the ten critical issues that are the focus of this chapter. While these are issues of summative focus, they remain connected to the Story framework. This is also signified in Figure 8.1, and made more explicit in Figure 8.2.

The issues for discussion are also clustered under the research questions, reflecting the two core concerns of the research around participants' experience and community influence. While they are grouped distinctly in Figure 8.1, they are interlinked.

Moreover, these ten issues which have been generated are more than generalisations from the final analysis of the data, and more than themes to be discussed in relation to the research questions. In fact, it appears they constitute pivotal elements or triggers that either channel participants more deeply into the formation journey, (as they move from self engagement to mutual engagement to transformative engagement) and/or trigger a stronger influence in the community experience.

Figure 8.2 thus illustrates the summative themes for discussion and the relationship with the theoretical 'story' framework and the review of the literature: the two lenses through which this discussion is conducted. The diagram indicates that the tipping points have emerged from participant and case school experience of the CFP understood within the Story framework, and thus illuminating the research questions derived from the review of the literature.

A discussion of findings using each of these themes or pivotal elements follows.

Figure 8.2 Summative Themes for Discussion



8.3 Discussion of Summative Themes

Each of the ten summative themes generated from the research findings is discussed in light of the theoretical framework developed in this research, and reflection on the pertinent literature. As a means of providing clarity for the reader, the following structure for the chapter, Table 8.1 is offered.

Table 8.1: Chapter Structure

8.1	Introduction
8.2.	From Presentation of Findings to Issues inviting Discussion
8.3	Discussion of Summative Themes from the Research Findings
8.4	Discussion of Themes in relation to Participant Experience
	8.4.1 Participatory Culture
	8.4.2 Professional Relevance
	8.4.3 Holistic Framing
	8.4.4 Time Factors
	8.4.5 Connecting with Tradition
8.5	Discussion of Themes in relation to Community Influence
	8.5.1 Companionship
	8.5.2 Modelling in Community
	8.5.3 Strategic Alignment
	8.5.4 School Leadership
	8.5.5 Theological Underpinnings
8.6	Conclusion

8.4 Discussion of Pivotal Elements in relation to Participant Experience

For each section of this chapter, discussion of the themes or pivotal elements has been prefaced by a statement that provides the reader with a succinct indication of the focus of the content and the construct that emerged through the findings.

8.4.1 Participatory Culture

Spiritual formation is fostered through a sustained invitational approach that develops a culture of participation.

The findings indicate that while participants entered the program from a range of personal points of perspective and experience, the invitational approach established explicitly at the outset and sustained at every step in the program was a key factor in continuing participation and commitment.

The general understanding that spiritual formation must be invitational is well documented in the literature (Bevans, 2006; Crotty, 2005; Mulligan, 1994; Treston, 2001; Wright, 2002). The most recent Australian research in the Catholic educational context, commissioned by the Victorian Catholic Principals Association of Secondary Schools, reconfirms this position as a key finding (Hughes, 2009). This is now also confirmed in this thesis.

However, while the findings in this study support the established body of research that highlights an important focus on initial invitation, the findings here indicate something more. The invitational approach is a pivotal element at every stage of the process of formation, paradoxically developing a communal culture of participation that has acted as a driver for individuals to continue and to commit in a sustained way. Further, this intentionality of 'invitation', recognised and embraced by participants, was transferred back into their school community and became a sustaining part of the wider community dynamic of welcome and engagement.

In so doing, the respect for the individual journey modelled at each stage of their 'story' opened participant engagement without dislocating the structure and direction of the formation program itself. The strong and sustained participation and commitment to the process modelled in the wider community also appears to be strengthened is a result of this approach.

The variety of research in adult learning theory and practice underlines the influence of situational factors on the type of 'instruction' an adult learner seeks (Brockett & Hiemstra, 1991). Thus, an adult learner may relinquish control over the learning situation to the 'session leader', and still remain a responsible and self-directed learner because the decision to do so for a particular kind of learning has remained theirs to make. The research findings support this understanding of the self directed adult learner, with the '*Seekers after Something*' (Chapter 7.5.1) choosing to be led

by and into the formation program experience precisely because it was a context they were interested in, but had little prior understanding. The invitation was open and the decision to enter into learning was theirs to make.

Each participant had volunteered to participate in the spiritual formation programs via an open invitation to staff from the school principal, or had agreed to come after being ‘tapped on the shoulder’ by the principal and APRE. Even so, the levels of commitment and ambivalence were quite varied by the time participants arrived at the first gathering. This diverse range of outlook was reflected and amplified in the broader cohort of the ten pilot schools, and this reflects the profile and perspectives identified in the literature (McLaughlin, 2002; Mason, 2007, ACBC, 2007).

While most pilot schools had acquainted their staff with the *Catching Fire* framework and briefly explained the parameters of the project and the nature of the three staff formation programs, none of the participants was sure of what was before them, personally or professionally. This was shared openly:

I said ‘yes’ – seemed like a good idea at the time! Now I’ve got so much on, I hope this doesn’t mean more work or reporting or producing stuff. (KFCSFB)

I hope I don’t have to know any answers. (SFPGFB)

At the same time, many were open to what the experience might bring: “It was an opportunity to have time for me: that was enough” (KFPGFB). Finally, some schools, and some individuals within those schools, had come in trust because of prior experience of the facilitators:

I had no idea really what I signed up for, but I do know X and what X does and I trust what-ever it is ... would be meaningful and worthwhile (SFPGFB).

These comments reflect the generally limited nature of prior experience of staff in the area of spiritual formation and this presents a problem for school leadership seeking to develop an agenda with staff. The problem is complex.

The difficulty is that while specific research recommendations emphasise that “a dialogue between school leadership and staff about interests and preferences” is important (Hughes, 2009, p. 40), there is a lack of shared understanding about spiritual formation to bring to such a conversation. Thus, while a collaborative approach in creating the agenda for spiritual formation reflects the operating principle of the primacy of learner experience and interests in adult education (Grabinger & Dunlap, 1995), the contextual literature (BCE, 2005; QCEC, 2005) highlights, learner experience in this area is limited; the provision of system led

formation has been inconsistent; and the resultant shared recollection and understanding of what might constitute appropriate formation has become nebulous. This has been further apparent in the literature on contemporary school staff and leadership cohorts (Bracken, 2004; Downey, 2006; Hughes, 2009).

Thus, it may be that the starting point conversation between school leadership and staff also requires a simultaneous dialogue between system leadership and school leadership, so that school leadership are able to facilitate their staff conversation with a sense of shared clarity and confidence. When the system can formulate and communicate its purpose, it is likely that school principals can better lead an agenda for spiritual formation that is appropriate for their context. Without this system level dialogue, individual schools can develop an ad hoc approach to formation predicated on diverse personal interests, and with a limited cohesive strategy. The prior research conducted in Queensland dioceses indicated this to have been both a reality and a continuing concern for those in the Queensland diocesan offices overseeing professional development and formation (QCEC, 1995; QCEC, 2005).

The current research confirms the influence of the simultaneous system dialogue. The establishment of that dialogue did provide the basis for development of a shared understanding of what constitutes spiritual formation for Catholic educators and the place of formation in the strategic development of future school leadership and educators. In particular, the current research findings indicate that the production of the systemic framework document, which itself included a substantial staff consultation period, provided an established shared starting point.

We already have the language of the archdiocesan vision and the catholic vision – we know that. And the framework, with its head heart and hands structure, puts the pieces together so we're building on what we're already doing separately, together (Primary Principal, VM).

While that conversation falters in places, there appears to be both enough systemic direction and enough individual school self direction for formation to have a common understanding and for the initial invitation to staff to be in language and context familiar enough for a purposeful dialogue.

Findings with regard to a sustained sense of invitation are less well documented in the literature. While trialling a somewhat different model of teacher formation, Mulligan (1994) was alerted to the reticence of beginning teachers as his program progressed. To address this, one of the 'experienced' participant teachers was given the strategic role of supporter of the beginning teachers in the group. The findings in

this current study point to this aspect in the ongoing process of formation being pivotal rather than incidental.

In particular, three aspects are identified which contributed to sustained participant commitment. These are each addressed in turn:

- clarity of boundaries;
- individual acceptance; and
- sense of welcome.

8.4.1.1 Clarity of Boundaries

The first aspect concerned the creation of a shared understanding of the ‘ground rules’ for each program. Five so-called ‘boundary markers’ (section 7.5.2.1) were set in place in all programs. These were introduced and re-visited at the beginning of each gathering over the year. The boundaries, based on the work of Parker Palmer, framed in a distinctive way that which adult educators would recognise as standard group dynamic rules. They made a significantly greater impression on participants than anticipated.

The initial gathering of participants for each program was characterised by a sense of trepidation and some lack of ease. However, as soon as the ‘boundary markers’ were made clear and held within a sense of open invitation at all steps along the process, the anxiety disappeared. The perceived sense of open invitation and deep hospitality within it was remarked on repeatedly by participants as a significant support to them in entering further into the experience at each point of the process of ‘self engagement’, ‘mutual engagement’ and ‘transformative engagement’:

They were such great boundaries – not the usual rules yet they were that at the same time. Just more challenging and freeing at the same time. I felt safe (KFCSFB).

Thus, as well as providing some simple and direct rules of engagement, the effect of these ‘boundary markers’ was to invite participants to move into a ‘performance free’ space. Participants were expecting to receive materials they could ‘package up and take away’ and what they had to ‘produce’. They began to realise the CFP was not an outcomes based project, nor an in-service model. In fact, it took some time for a number of participants to understand the approach since their common experience had been in-service and workshop style professional learning. It was an understanding that came for some only in hindsight rather than in preparation.

The lack of familiarity with a sustained and integrated experience of formation echoes the findings of both researchers and practitioners in the field. While research indicates that it is the encouragement to do the inner work of negotiating the personal and structural landscapes of self and school that embeds change (Simone, 2004), the reality is that teachers faced with any kind of professional development are likely to implement only what they absolutely have to and “once their classroom door swings shut they tend to return to their own ways” (Simone, 2004, p. 3). Thinking and reflecting in deep personal and systematic ways about the teacher’s spiritual perspective as an educator in a Catholic school is not part of the fabric of school culture (Cole and Knowles 2000; Maynes 2002). The clarity of articulated boundaries from the outset helped participants move into the kind of space that promotes this deep reflection.

8.4.1.2 Acceptance of Each Person

The second aspect contributing to sustained participant commitment concerned the perception of a genuine acceptance of the individual’s experience on the spiritual journey. In the opening sessions of the programs, there was a sense that many had come with a hope for ‘something,’ and carried at the same time a ‘fear’ that their program might be a ‘something’ that would be alienating.

I’m looking for something – something that will really nurture my spirituality, and I love teaching in a Catholic school. So I was drawn to it. But I was also worried it would be about doctrine and dogma – I wasn’t sure what it would be (SFPGFB).

Many participants expressed a view that they were not ‘holy enough’ to participate in these programs, perhaps reflecting the persistent influence of a ‘second string’ mentality that Lakeland (2003) has identified. The experience itself changed that perception:

I really thought I’m probably not holy enough to be doing this – it’s for people like nuns. I shouldn’t be here. But then, it was so OK to be me, I forgot about that til I reflected on it later (KFCSFB).

Other research (Bracken, 2004) has confirmed that individuals are at different points in their spiritual journey and open in their seeking. This sense of searching is reflected in research concerning staff attitudes in the Brisbane Archdiocese indicating a movement “away from ritual and church attendance yet openness to belief and a sense of God when seen from a psychological and personal level” (ACER, 2010). Thus, with 40% of BCE staff not attending Mass regularly, and at the

same time, 90% of staff strongly supporting the Catholic values and ethos of schools, the research findings confirm that the starting point for engagement in staff spiritual formation is their individual sense of the sacred and of 'something other', however that may be expressed.

Feeling it was OK to really come as I am meant I could let go of my fear and defensiveness and see what happened. It was incredible – I didn't expect that to happen (GLPGFB).

In fact, there was a discernible expression of relief in the beginning sessions as participants realised the CFP was not going to be a test or a measure of how 'Catholic' or 'religious' they or their school were. For some participants in particular this was the pivotal factor:

I didn't expect the spotlight to be on me just as I am; I thought I would be told straight up how I should be, It was very powerful to actually think about what was sacred about me as I am in who I am. Not in what I do or haven't done. Just that one thing opened me up (KFPGFB).

While the perception and experience of the Church can be characterised as one of coercion and compliance (Knights, 2005), Catholic theology and the Church documents themselves consider such a position as the antithesis of the Gospel imperative: "The church strictly forbids that anyone be forced to accept the faith, or be induced or enticed by unworthy devices" (*Ad Gentes*, 1965, n. 13). More than simply being non-coercive, the approach taken in the CFP actively reflects a positive anthropology (Groome, 2002), and a recognition of different pathways into the spiritual journey (Kessler, 2000). The acceptance of individual reality and meaning-making as the starting point for each program in the CFP, and as a continuing principle for their individual journey, paradoxically acted as a catalyst for deeper engagement in the spiritual formation process.

Once participants felt a genuine acceptance of who they are and what they felt, there developed a freedom to explore what could be. From this initiation developed the understanding and acceptance of each participant's own story. They learned to read the narrative of their own lives (Klein, 1993). Within that, they learned to read the presence of God and the deep places of their souls in ways they had not imagined before. The process that occurred is reflected quite transparently in the researcher's own observation notes during the program period.

The evidence is there in front of us now – really quite striking ..to see people feel accepted as they are. Not to demand faith; but to help people discover faith in themselves, a sense of sacredness about themselves; a sense of

newness and closeness of God to them. So that's just so exciting to think that we've reclaimed this important step so effectively, starting where people are at, without an attitude to them of deficit! (Researcher's journal notes, May 2007)

8.4.1.3 Sense of Welcome

Hospitality and welcome were named as important features of the CFP experience for participants. 'Welcome' was explored in the CFP as both a boundary marker in establishing the group dynamic in the programs and as a key framework capacity for Christian community in the school. As participants began to recognise that this was an intentional and carefully planned part of the CFP, they better appreciated it.

The experience of the participants indicated a lived reality to the understanding of 'deep hospitality' common to church documents, theological thinking and field practitioners. From an ecclesial perspective, it is named as foundational to the atmosphere of the school community: "Before all else, lay people should find in a Catholic school an atmosphere of sincere respect and cordiality" (CCD, 1982, Part IV, n. 77). From a theological perspective, it is identified as central to spiritual formation: Hospitality is not part of the gospel; hospitality IS the gospel. It is not to change people but "to offer them space where change can take place" (Nouwen, 1976, p. 201). Finally, from a practitioner's perspective, "Hospitality means receiving each other, our struggles, our newborn ideas, with openness and care ...the classroom where truth is central will be a place where every stranger and every strange utterance is met with welcome" (Palmer, 1993, p. 74).

Those experiences of exchange, sharing and mutual recognition are reflected in the term *commensality*, coming from Latin (*com-* together, and *mensa* a table) and which incorporates the concepts of guest (linked to the notion of receiving), and hospitality (linked to the host notion of sharing a table). Thus participants understood 'welcome' experientially as well as exploring it conceptually through the tradition in the gospels and Acts and in the fabric of Christian community. The influence of this simple concept had resonance beyond the programs themselves.

I knew in a way that as Catholics we always put on a good spread and we try to welcome people. And I suppose I also get used to a bit of a thin spread when we're focussed on in-service or work and think it's probably not really important. The important thing is to get the work done. I realise now that in a Christian community that is part of getting the work done. To ignore the sense of welcome for each person at a meeting or a school or a class is defeating the purpose before you've started. I am so attuned to the difference it makes now— not just a nice extra (SFPGFB).

Participants became so accustomed to the elements of 'welcome' that they were highly attuned to its absence in other kinds of contexts – in-service, meetings, workshops and staff gatherings they attended. They identified the difference welcome made to the group dynamic and owned this as their Christian tradition. A number of them shared how they were now impelled to step forward and make sure this happened at events and meetings they attended, because they "couldn't stand that it was not happening" (KFCSFB).

They introduced themselves but they didn't invite people to introduce each other. So we stepped up and introduced ourselves. Others then followed and it made everyone much more comfortable for the time we'd be together. It's such a simple but such an important thing. It means that you remember when you're presenting it's not all about you – in fact it should be all about everyone else! (KFCSFB)

The other aspect of this element that participants remarked on was about how 'welcome' is established in the group. The Christian ethos gives 'welcome' a reverent attentiveness that is qualitatively different from what is otherwise recognised as 'good manners.'

Every time I came back to one of our gatherings, I just felt as if people wanted me to be there and were truly glad to see me. Not because they went over the top in greeting – it was just a warm feeling of knowing I belonged to that group and it made a difference that I was there. We spent ages talking one day about what it was that made it that way. We think the facilitators did it – modelled it and we kind of picked it up and were like that with each other (KFPGB).

School staff are immersed in an increasingly performativity and outcomes based culture, reflected in the literature in educational pedagogy and professional learning (Duignan, 2004; Grace, 2002; Flynn & Mok, 2002). Paradoxically, it appears the person centred and journey oriented nature of the formation process in the CFP programs highlighted the power of the element of 'welcome' in the group dynamic to the extent that it became for participants and their schools a pivotal focus in learning and their community culture.

8.4.2 Professional Relevance

Spiritual formation is most effective when it is contexted in the everyday personal and professional vocational reality of the participant.

One of the key messages in the professional learning literature is that adult professional development is most effective when connected to the work or professional context of the learner (Carlson, 2003; Sparks, 2003; Hough, 2004;

Kilpatrick, Barrett & Jones, 2003; Kwakman, 2003). The fundamental principles of a professional learning community apply to the context of spiritual formation: an inclusive group of people, motivated by a shared learning vision, who support and work with each other, finding ways to review and reflect on their values, processes, structures and practices (Preedy, Glatter, & Wise, 2003). Thus, the participants in the CFP function as a professional learning community (Marsick, 1987), and a community of practice (Carlson, 2003) on two levels: in each separate program group and in the staff community of St Raphael's. Within this community setting, the vocational contexting allowed for three conceptual messages to grow: Spiritual formation is hinged on life and system worlds; it is explicitly linked to mission and ministry in the Catholic context; and it involves all staff, through their role and membership of the community.

Previous surveys and anecdotal evidence in other Australian dioceses have indicated that where retreats and formation programs are offered generally to catholic education school staffs, principals and teachers are reluctant to participate (Bracken, 2004). Time poverty and the lack of a sense of perceived relevance are the two key reasons given for non-attendance (Crotty, 2003). Assuming the veracity of the research findings in offering generic or non-targeted professional learning to be as applicable for spiritual formation as it is to adult professional learning in general, the CFP structured three programs, each of them targeted distinctly to the vocational and role context of the school staff community.

Participants appreciated the links to their role and vocational context. The CFP allowed participants to explore their own identity and story in relation to this. It also made the shifts from the 'my story' stage to the 'our story' stage and the meta-narrative full of sense and immediacy: "I am more comfortable in speaking with stronger conviction about what we should be about as a Catholic faith community and what I am about as a teacher" (SFPGFB).

Principals also demonstrated a shift in confidence about their role and their own spiritual heart:

What I say now feels more authentic and confident as I speak in enrolment interviews and in staff meetings. I have also discovered/rediscovered what keeps me afloat spiritually and what about the Jesus 'story' gives me fire in the belly! (GLPGFB)

The connection of each program to the vocational context shared in community allowed for collegial experience to be heard and also reflected a deep level of trust

that had developed, an element of the CFP modelled on Palmer's work (Palmer, 2000; 2007). Participants found this process profoundly moving at times:

To hear other principals talk about their struggle in leadership and where they find the day to day heart to deal with things was incredibly affirming of my own struggles. And to hear the moments of grace described that way was inspiring. I have just learned so much from this outstanding group of principals. We are so lucky to have these leaders. (GLPGFB)

The transference of experiences and skills from the program back into the classroom context was a strong feature of development, especially for those in the *Keepers* and *SpiritFire* programs. Confirming the findings of O'Brien (2004) and Carlson (2003) on professional learning and communities of practice, this appeared to be characterised in two ways:

1. A recognisable change in the quality and confidence of aspects of their teaching role
2. A broadening and increase in the kinds of experiences offered in the classroom and staffroom.

In a number of instances, the excitement of a different sense in the classroom clouded the cause of the change. One young teacher's experience illustrates this well:

I went back and prayer was so much better. I couldn't believe how different the kids were! They were really into it – the prayerspace was wonderful; their prayer meaningful – I was just blown away. And all because I'd just made a few changes to how we did things and the style of prayer we used. (SFGFB)

As she reflected with others on exactly what those changes were and how differently she now felt about 'doing prayer,' she realised that the children were responding fundamentally to the change in *her* more so than the modification in how they were 'doing prayer.' This was a revelation to this young teacher:

It's me isn't it?! I believe what I'm doing now, not going through the motions and they know that. Oh my God!!!!!!..... (SFGFB – young teacher)

While skills and resources were part of the learning, this reflection of the young teacher captures the perception of small shifts and transformations shared by many participants. There was a growing recognition that the change in them effected the change in the classroom, in the students, in their staffroom.

The researcher's diary also noted this transference from the self to the classroom. The following excerpt from the Researcher's notes after observing the sharing by

one of the participants of her development and positive experience of *lectio divina* for a prep class, illustrate this:

So because it's become part of her own experience, she's been empowered to model it and teach in a very confident way. I'm a little surprised in a sense that she would not have done that prior to this formation program – she's a very experienced teacher in RE. And on the other hand it seems to echo the story again and again that in fact until people engage or connect personally where they are in their lives, and it makes deep sense to them, until that first step happens, the system can put out all sorts of resources in this area that remain tasks to do – or not do. Once the personal experiential connection is made however, then all those kinds of things that are out there suddenly become meaningful and useable. I actually think it's a shift from engagement in 'doing' to engagement in 'being'. (Researcher's notes, August, 2007)

These findings confirm the correlation between spiritual formation and transformative learning theory and practice (Dirkx & Prenger, 1997; Mezirow, 1990). Senge's concept of 'deep learning' (2005) as the key to transformational change and Fullan's work on educators as change facilitators in their professional learning communities (2003) are most applicable in these findings. The deep learning in participants is operating as the catalyst for change facilitation in their school communities.

While most participants shared changes in specific ways they were praying and teaching or understanding Jesus, God and the Catholic story, they also articulated a connection to a stronger sense of their own vocation sourced at their 'centre'. This confirms an understanding of vocation and ministry that begins with "the voice within calling me to be the person I was born to be, to fulfil the original selfhood given me at birth by God" (Palmer, 2007, p. 29). The authentic call to teach comes then from "the voice of the *teacher within*, the voice that calls me to honour the nature of my true self" (Palmer, 2007, p. 29). Unconsciously demonstrating elements of a teacher's spirituality (Durka, 2002) and the self transformative process identified by Daloz-Parks (2000), participants articulated an intention to take the shift in 'being' they experienced back to their class and community:

I just want to do things differently now. The classroom is set up differently. I use the boundary markers for our class community. I stay in the inner place I have found on Keepers and I won't let this go. I bring it to my interactions with the kids and the parents. I know I have always been a good teacher, but I also know now that I'm in a strong inner space and this is what the kids most need. I think I'm actually doing Jesus here now. I probably was before but I really feel that now (KFCSFB).

Thus, the findings confirm an approach to spiritual formation that is situated within a vocational context that is both personal and professional. The formation process embraces reflective vocational praxis with personal journey and this became catalytic for those involved in Catholic educational communities where professional and personal witness are expected to converge. Further to this, the capacity to use the formative learning from the programs in the classroom and community context helped to embed changes in the everyday working structures and daily routines of the participants.

8.4.3 Holistic Framing

Spiritual formation is powerfully facilitated by the experiential dimension of a holistic approach.

Just as the story scaffold provided the design structure, the holistic framing of what became known as a ‘head heart and hands’ approach underpinned the strategies and programs within the CFP. The holistic approach to the formation process was identified by participants in both the case school and across the pilot schools as an important factor in their openness to the programs and positive response at each stage. Many staff expressed surprise in learning that a holistic approach to spirituality has deep roots in the Catholic tradition. These participants anticipated that the formation process would be information based and doctrinal. Whilst their own teaching practices used a variety of skills, they retained a ‘jug-mug’ preconception of content and process in this area of adult learning, with an assumption that the individual’s experience and story would be of little focus or relevance. However, the theoretical framework, structure and process of the CFP draws on the holistic theological and spiritual sources of the Catholic tradition. These sources thus adopt a “positive anthropology of humanity” and “epistemology of being” (Groome, 1998, p.285), rejecting dualist understandings developed at particular times in the tradition (Schussler Fiorenza, 1984).

The ‘head heart hands’ process underpinned each phase of the ‘my story’, ‘our story’, ‘the story’ formation journey, and the findings confirm that this holistic approach (and the experiential dimension in particular) was pivotal in deepening the formative development of participants. The experiential dimension of each of the programs was strong, seeking to reflect best practice from the educative research in experiential and service learning (Jarvis, 2004; Kenary, 2009; Price, 2008) as well as reflective praxis and narrative method in spiritual formation (Johnson, 2002;

Kinast, 2000; Rahner cited in Masson, 1984; Rosov, 2001). Such was the traction of this approach that the words *Head Heart and Hands* became a catch phrase across the pilot schools and the broader school communities. The catch phrase also reflected four steps identified in the literature and through practitioners (Brookfield, 1998; Groome, 2002; Mulligan, 2004) as being fundamental to the formation process – knowledge (Head), experience (Heart), practice and application (Hands).

Several aspects in the findings indicate how important the experiential dimension was in sustaining development. These included facets of reflective praxis (theological reflection), narrative method and experiential and service learning. Participants expressed an appreciation that the process reflected an understanding that there were different ways individuals engaged in their spiritual journey (Kessler, 2000; Wilber, 2006), although some thought this was simply a clever innovation:

I thought it was great that you understood those of us who don't get too excited by sitting and listening or reading a pile of books or sheets. It was good to respect different ways of learning just as we do with the different intelligences with children. That was clever (KFPGFB).

Other participants, who had prior experiences of formation work, appreciated what they perceived as 'solid process and content.' In particular, the use of psycho-spirituality (Leffel, 2007) and narrative reflection (Bons-Storm, 2002; Klein, 1993) in the interpretation of scripture provided participants with a sense of personal engagement and challenge most had not experienced:

Sometimes, what is called holistic formation can be too fluffy – in trying to be something for all, there is nothing to grab on to. But SpiritFire has such gutsy stuff – very challenging but very caring of us too (APRE,PGFB).

The response of participants to the experience of theological reflection based on the approach of Kinast (2000) confirms the primacy of the integration of orthodoxy and orthopathy in developing authentic orthopraxis (Rohr, 2010). Thus, the *Head Heart and Hands* process also reflects the Catholic Christian awareness that formation involves understandings and experiences which promote a personal transformation involving a passion for serving the community. This last step, a service element, is intentionally connected to the social justice imperative of the Catholic tradition (Rolheiser, 1998), and is identified in ecclesial documents pertaining to the Catholic school educator:

The vocation of every Catholic educator includes the work of ongoing social development: to form men and women who will be ready to take their place in society, preparing them in such a way that they will make the kind of social commitment which will enable them to work for the improvement of social

structures, making these structures more conformed to the principles of the Gospel.....All of this demands that Catholic educators develop in themselves a keen social awareness and a profound sense of civic and political responsibility (CCE, 1982, n. 19).

It is apparent that the inclusion of the justice/service dimension in the CFP deepened identification with the gospel challenge. The being 'for the other' and for the 'common good' demonstrates the uniqueness of the CFP formation approach in contrast to many contemporary spirituality opportunities that maintain a focus on personal and individual satisfaction and wellbeing. The latter approach is more amenable to the prevailing cultural discourses operating in the reality of Catholic school communities (Grace & O'Keefe, 2007; Mulligan, 2005). While the literature confirms that the demands of the social justice imperative so fundamental to authentic Catholic leadership can prove too challenging for the current Catholic school context (Crotty, 2005; Flintham, 2007), the CFP approach appears to have been helpful in strengthening participants' internal resolve to adopt a social justice lens. For many principals on the *Guiding Lights* program for example, the 'on the streets' experiential component, while personally challenging, functioned as a potent catalyst for the deepening of their reflective praxis in a variety of aspects of their role including enrolments and school mission and culture:

The street experience was difficult for me, on a personal level. But I see it as an absolute must for a leadership program. The impact on all of us was huge – I know that a couple of the principals met with past parents who have ended up on the streets. And I know others are going to organise for their staff and parent groups to be invited to experience something like we have here (GLP5).

This constituted a renewal of heart advocated in Church documents:

But education demands a renewal of heart It will also inculcate a truly and entirely human way of life in justice, love and simplicity. It will likewise awaken a critical sense, which will lead us to reflect on the society in which we live and on its values; it will make men (sic) ready to renounce these values when they cease to promote justice in all men (sic) (*Justicia in Mundo*, 1971, n. 51).

Whether the intention and renewal of heart can be sustained is debateable.

The recovery and exploration of a holistic approach is congruent with the contemporary context of staff where a postmodern setting demands a primacy of experiential encounter for the individual in their meaning making (Hughes, 2010; Tacey, 2003). At the same time, participants were attentive for what they perceived to be a quality educative approach in the *Head Heart and Hands* elements of each program, aligning with their own understanding of best practice. This balance appeared to be critical for a positive inclination at their initial entry point into the

formation programs and in their sustained application at school. It provided a framework they could work with and felt confident to model and support because in the words of one participant, “*Head Heart and Hands* speaks to everyone in a real and relevant way that makes sense for each of us separately and all of us together” (Principal, GLPGFB).

Finally, the research findings confirmed the efficacy of the approach generated from adult learning theory (Feldman, 2000; Heifitz & Laurie, 2001; O’Brien, 2004; Oliver & Marwell, 2002; Starratt, 2004) and theology (Bevans, 2009; Fischer, 1989; Hide, 2004; Kelly, 2009; Lonergan, 1971; Rahner, 1973; Schneiders, 2003) for spiritual formation. As participants experienced this staged model with its spiral narrative dynamic, three insights are identified from the findings:

- Recognising there are many ‘gateways’ into the spiritual journey had the effect of affirming participants in their own journey and sustaining their engagement.
- Being able to enter the journey through a particular personal ‘gateway’ encouraged the individual to negotiate all steps of the formation process in each phase.
- Affirming the spiritual journey honours the whole person, and their integration and re-creation allowed a way for both the apophatic and kataphatic pathways of the tradition to be absorbed into the approach.

The goal of spiritual formation in the Christian tradition is transformation (Hide, 2004). The findings suggest that the holistic program structure, design and process was an effective conduit for sustained transformative experience, making it more likely for participants to embrace each phase while strengthening their personal spirituality.

8.4.4 Time Factors

Spiritual formation requires inclusion of quantitative time away from the school environment facilitating a unique qualitative experience. The resultant ‘kairos’ time experience is pivotal to spiritual growth and sustainability.

One of the main concerns expressed by all stakeholders about the provision of any professional learning injected into the school scheduling is the issue of ‘time’. There are two aspects of this issue relevant to this study and the findings. These concern quantity and quality of time. The findings reflect that both quantity and quality of time

were pivotal for the efficacy of the CFP for individuals and in the sustainable impact within the school community.

8.4.4.1 Identifying Issues around Quantity of Time

The social history literature gives focus to the concept of a post-modern 'time-poor' culture (McMahon, 2003; Senge, Scharmer, Jaworski & Flowers, 2005), and schools operate within and reflect the pressures of this culture. All schools are constantly busy places, with new curriculum initiatives, compliance audits and support programs. Staff generally carry responsibility for at least one other area of school life or curriculum in addition to their teaching role. Furthermore, the majority of staff have outside commitments including family. This cultural reality, identified in Chapter 2.3.2 in terms of the competing demands of the 'system world' and 'life world', is characterised by the attendant issues of professionalization, work intensification and over-busyness (Branson, 2004). Yet even in anecdotal evidence across schools generally, the pressure of any perceived extra time commitment has been a constant one, and it was a predicted and predictable challenge for commitment to the CFP.

Catholic principals and staff have expressed concern in other studies about the number of responsibilities and tasks expected within the school program, and a view that spiritual formation is one more (optional) inordinate expectation (Bracken, 1997; Marden, 2009). In the pilot schools of this current research too, it was a viewpoint clearly voiced by staff in one school:

... the overnights were seen as a burden, particularly staff with Family commitments. It is appreciated that Catching Fire provided a time to withdraw from school and family and to focus on one-self. However this was in some instances very difficult and far too demanding. Staff members give 100% of themselves constantly and the expectation that they place family second to 'another school commitment' was seen by some as too great (APRE, PGFB).

Some of the concerns about overbusyness are connected to self-identity questions separate from the system world and life world issues (Hargreaves, 1994). In particular, the educator's self-expectations are identified as a major contributing factor on busyness and intensification, regardless of how much time they are given for preparation and planning (Hargreaves, 1994). Subsequent research confirms that the nature and substance of that time is indeed critical to the outcomes (Intrator & Scribnor, 2000; Simone 2004). Through a different lens on busyness, Thomson (2004), researching the experience of principal leadership, gives voice to the loss of

personal and even professional identity for principals, in the pressures of a task oriented culture:

The change goes to the core of who the principal actually is, their identity, that is their self narrative. It is hard to maintain a view of oneself as a teacher if one spends most of the time engaged in managerial tasks (Thomson, 2004, p. 8).

Indeed, the provision of reflective non-classroom time given to educators is pivotal in changing the sense of intensification (Hargreaves 1994). There are dangers to the professional core calling of the teacher in *not* scheduling in reflective time.

The constant busyness and overbusyness of teachers' lives can divert them from the initial vocational engagement, or 'epiphany of recruitment' (Mahan 2002, p. 20).

While the participants in the programs, and their principals in particular, had some concern about the time commitment – or what they feared might emerge as an extra responsibility and time commitment back in their school, they were all prepared to commit to the process. To some degree, there was a trust in the developer of the project built on previous experience, and this will have had influence. For others, it was a case of being prepared to support a new system initiative responding to an area in deficit identified by staff in the 2005 BCE Renewal Process (BCE, 2005).

During the the CFP, participants developed a different perspective about the need to commit time to formation. The generation of this perspective confirms other research identifying the same need (English, Fenwick & Parsons, 2005; Flintham, 2007). At the close of the year, it was the participants themselves who conveyed three clear messages for the future development of the CFP:

1. The programs needed to continue to include the overnight away time
2. The programs needed to continue past the year into two or three years
3. Schools need to give more time with all staff at beginning of CFP

In reflecting about the importance of the residential component of the program, one of the participants shared her shift in thinking:

When I first came on that first afternoon, part of me thought, Why am I doing this?! I can't afford to be away from the classroom or the family like this. But I am so convinced that it is absolutely a must that it is this extended time away - and overnight. And two nights is do-able. I think once people actually do it, they will just know this wouldn't work anyway if you tried to do in afternoons after school – then it really would be a case of fitting in something that can't be fitted in to the days. It would be completely lost. You need to take the time (KFPGF).

An important factor in the shift in thinking that emerged about the amount of time to be given in preparation and in commitment was influenced by the perceived quality of time experienced. This will now be addressed.

8.4.4.2 Identifying Issues around Quality of Time

The ancient Greeks had two words for time, *Chronos* and *Kairos*. *Chronos* refers to chronological or sequential time, and is measured by the clock or calendar. It is quantitative, rhythmic, and predictable. It best describes too the pace and measure of the school day and school year for educators.

The other word for time from the ancient Greeks is *Kairos*. There is no equivalent word in English. This is a qualitative understanding of time - an “in between time” or liminal time that is almost stepping outside chronological time to make a space for something unique and significant to happen that would not be able to happen in the normal pattern of *chronos* time (Nouwen, 1975).

The CFP nurtured the development of this *kairos* time during the programs themselves and in application in the normal daily and weekly routine of the participants. Knowing that *kairos* time does not happen easily in a day or a twilight or half day session, the CFP structured in retreat time as a catalyst space to maximise the prospective shift into *kairos* time for the participants. Some things helped this further. Participants in the Leadership program for example, had no program outline and no time break-ups given out. Participants left a symbol of their work life at the door on arrival, and brought a personal symbol of their life into the prayerspace of the first gathering. There was no expectation to share about this. The action at this point was enough and was reflected upon later:

I found leaving the symbol of work at the door was very powerful – surprisingly so. I guess we all came with our heads still very much in the business and responsibility of school, I expected I'd have to say something about this. But to just be invited to leave it at the door was hard and was freeing at the same time. We all talked about that later (GLPGFB).

For the teachers in the *Keepers of the Flame* program, most of whom were women with families, the taking of the time away in itself launched them into a different space, so atypical was this for them. For some, it had been a long time since they had taken time for themselves:

I don't even remember when I have ever been on my own like this, where I am just focusing on me. I found it very hard to begin with just because of that. I'm not used to really thinking about me (KFCSFB).

Others expressed that they had not experienced this kind of time since they were at school themselves:

I had a journal right up until I was married. But once I married, and I had to share the room - and the bed - and the time, that me-time went. This is the first time of done journaling since and I realise how much I miss it and how good it is for me (KFCSFB).

The same sense of leaving responsibility behind expressed by principals was later identified as being powerful for teachers and their responsibilities in a different way:

I couldn't do any more at home or school to plan for the time I was away. Once I stopped fighting this, and let myself be 'present' as we were asked, things changed. We quickly gave up thinking about what we would be doing now or what our classes would be doing now. We were there! Some parts of the day just flew incredibly – we couldn't believe that we had no idea of the time; and other moments seemed so forever in the lasting feeling (KFPGFB).

The intentional fostering of kairos time for participants created a fertile space for the reframing of self-understanding and theological reflection or 'making faith sense' (Killeen & DeBeer 1994). The honest self-reflection generated a more authentic and adult connection with participants' personal narrative, while the kairos experience enabled participants to enter into a more mature and 'present' relationship with God. Many of the participants' summative reflections alluded to the different kind of space they accessed, as being pivotal in *retaining* a sense of their deepest self and their connection to God:

I know I need to keep going back to this place inside me to be with my God and know the me I am and want to be. When that's the place I come out of, I am better at home, at work and with my students and staff (KFCSFB).

This latter description of the experiential connection with God is what philosopher Ken Wilber (2006) refers to as expressive of the esoteric religious tradition. This connection with God is "the ultimate reality that traditional science can't touch" (interview by Steve Paulson, 2008). It is what the mystics describe as "the identity of the interior soul with the ultimate ground of being" (Paulson, 2008; O'Murchu, 2004; 2007).

The findings indicate that the strong aspiration of authenticity evident among the participants has found through the CFP approach, a source reality that is sustaining. The kairos experience that is facilitated during each phase of the program structure allowed participants to deepen and embed the initial experience. The skilling they were given further embedded their capacity to return to that space and to live out of that space in the everyday. An emerging personal authentic relationship with Jesus

and with the Divine source not only sustained individuals, but directly influenced community relationships, growing a culture perceived to align with the gospel values that underpin Catholic community. In addition, the impediments for some individuals in relation to the ecclesial Church, appear to have been reframed in a way that saw a diminishing of the negative encounters they had experienced. Thus, participants learned to hold the truth of their personal relationship with God, developed in community over the duration of the CFP, in creative tension with the reality of the variable ecclesial experience of church for them.

The formation processes used also meant that the kairos time allowed the 'shadows of life' experience to surface for participants (Keating, 2009; Merton, 1961; Palmer, 2000; Underhill, 2002). This was carefully contexted and monitored. The great teachers, mystics and writers have always emphasised how critical the facing of the shadow is to spiritual growth (Rohr, 2008). The "dark and hidden part" (Beck, 2003, p. 30) chronicled by John of the Cross (Chapter 5.3.2) may open and flourish in ways no other path can offer. This is a critical way of knowing.

I did not want to look at this part of my life, and have avoided it diligently. And did so successfully during this retreat. But it kept bobbing up and finally I did (look at it). I'm grateful there was no pressure or expectation to do so, otherwise my antenna for manipulation would have sent me to an angry place! I felt I had adult ways to look at this now. I was in a group I could trust – not that I shared with others – I just knew this was a safe place and they helped make it that way. And I had X and Y (facilitators) who just made a way for me. I found wisdom I didn't really think I ever had. What I was scared of was not really that big in the end once I stared it down. It really was a mouse with a megaphone in my heart. I'm incredibly grateful for this. It's changed me – I feel like I'm growing into an adult who is whole and loved and loving. God is real and close and in me. I can't tell you what that means (SFPGFB).

Time, space, developed trust and tools for reflection were all important elements in participant negotiation of the difficult parts of their lives. It appeared that the invitational principle which operated throughout the CFP programs was never more important than in reflecting on the difficult moments of life. Rather, if and when these moments did emerge for participants, they perceived that the reflective skilling they were building already helped them shift perspective, and the attentiveness of facilitators created a safe passage for deeper and honest reflection.

This work of engaging with 'the shadow' or the 'via negativa', is a critical part of the journey of spiritual formation, and the findings indicate the outcomes are powerful for participants if there is appropriate scaffolding and skilled direction. While we

cannot say from this research what would have happened if these intentional supporting competencies in the facilitation process were not present, a significant amount of anecdotal evidence, observation and experiences in the wider field gives an indication of the damage done in allowing people to explore this area without competent facilitation. What this research *does* confirm is the transformative power of 'kairos time,' especially when intentional scaffolding and skilled direction are constant in the process.

8.4.5 Connecting with Tradition

In the current cultural context for spiritual formation, the contemporising of key elements of traditional Catholic formation provides a genuine conduit for connection.

The term 'traditioning' refers to an intentional approach that seeks to faithfully hold the essence of traditional ways in new and imaginative ways for a contemporary audience. There is an assumed understanding among practitioners that the traditional monastic and religious life models of Catholic formation are inappropriate for the contemporary lifestyle and demographic of those now in various ministries of the Church (Burley, 2001). In addition to this, one of the key indicators from the literature concerning the current dissonance between members of Catholic school communities and 'church', is the lack of connection and attendant meaning making of traditional symbols, concepts, rituals and other expressions of Catholic culture (McLaughlin, 2000, 2005). In response, there has been an appeal for a re-inflaming of the imagination (Kelly, 2004; Rolheiser, 2006). Aware of this, the CFP was intentional in formation and resource design about recovering some of these key elements of tradition in a way that was faithful to the tradition, and at the same time experiential and connective for a new time.

Traditioning therefore refers to the contemporising of key elements of traditional catholic formation in concept, symbol, ritual, prayer and scripture. This means the recovering of older principles and practices in the tradition and bringing them into the present as well as re-imagining new ways of doing past practice. There are three reasons identified by the researcher for pursuing this in the development of the CFP, and which appear to confirm theory and practice. These are discussed.

8.4.5.1 A Response to the Contemporary Reality

As the contextual and scholarly literature indicates, the homogenous culture of 'being Catholic' is no longer the reality (Dixon, 2006; Hughes, 2003; McLaughlin,

2000c; 2006). The current adult population is a generation whose parents largely stopped attendance at Mass and participation to any committed degree in parish life. So, while the parents of the current generation have a memory of the culture of Catholicism from direct childhood experience, the current generation itself does not, apart from exposure through Catholic schooling (Rolheiser, 2008; Rymarz, 2004). In consequence, the experiential thread that holds ritual and meaning is stretched thin. With it, the assumed understanding and connection to traditional elements is contracted and fragile, and the engagement has become informational rather than formational.

8.4.5.2 An Appreciation of the Power of Aesthetic Ways of Knowing

The second reason for pursuing this process of ‘traditioning’ as part of the CFP, is the role of experiential praxis in the individual and communal journey of spiritual formation. In exploring aesthetic ways of knowing, the senses provide a powerful means of engaging in ritual. A different way of knowing is accessed through hearing, feeling, touching, sensing and seeing. More than this, this aesthetic dimension is engaged (Dewey, 1934; Harris, 1991) when a particular experience becomes transformational. At a time when the cultural rituals of Catholic life are anecdotally described by Gen X-ers and Gen Y-ers in the literature as variously mind-numbingly boring and/or irrelevant (Rymarz, 2002), the rise in appreciation of aesthetic ways of knowing remind us of how critical this dimension is to human growth. Greene (1999) quotes Dewey in explaining how the opposite of ‘aesthetic’ is ‘anaesthetic’: for her, the aesthetic is about “awakening people into fullness of life” (Greene, 1999 p 13). Thus, the promise and the challenge is that in connecting and re-connecting with some of the Catholic tradition’s key symbols and rituals, it would be necessary to recover the original aesthetic experiential influence and meaning of them.

8.4.5.3 A Recognition of the Richness of the Tradition

Finally, because the traditional monastic models of formation identified so closely with religious teaching orders and ‘religious life’ in general, (both in decline), presented a daily reality and routine so markedly different from ‘lay’ teachers life, the assumption has naturally developed that the model itself is irrelevant in today’s landscape and has nothing to offer. However, the CFP has taken the position that there are significant learnings and principles in formation to be recovered in examining the traditional models. As outlined in Chapter 5.2, the religious life model of development through postulancy, novitiate, juniorate and final profession

highlights that formation is developmental and takes time (Finke, 1997). Further, within this overall staged growth model, the traditional approach was characterised by three things: an explicit commitment to calling; to the community; and to service (O'Dohoghue & Potts, 2004). Thus, spiritual formation in this context involved an experiential immersion approach, with distinct stages, and undertaken in community. These aspects were integrated in the CFP structure and processes, albeit in new ways, and have been enthusiastically embraced.

8.4.6 CFP Resources – Three Snapshots

Three specific examples follow here to illustrate how this 'traditioning' approach acted as a pivotal factor in the experience of participants.

8.4.6.1 Staff PrayerFire (see accompanying Resource DVD for content)

A major systemic resource that each pilot school committed to use as part of its commitment to the CFP (and which was available for use in all schools) was *Staff PrayerFire*. This resource provided eight different prayer experiences for Catholic school staff drawing on the variety of prayer styles found in the Catholic tradition.

The purpose was three-fold:

- To develop a culture of expectation within staffs for communal prayer and personal prayer;
- to provide a formative experience with a variety of prayer styles to help staff find and practice a prayer style that can sustain them personally;
- and to support leadership in the commitment to and engagement in the facilitation of staff prayer.

These prayer experiences came with simple directions for the prayer leader to set up and to lead, as well as general directions to secure time, a physical place and visible engagement for the school leadership team. A basic staff prayer kit for staff as a whole including candles, a prayer intentions book and other materials needed for each prayer was provided. These three levels of engagement – with school leadership, with individual prayer leaders and with general practical support – was an intentional crafting of the initiative in response to the challenge of integrating staff prayer as an important and valued part of community life for all staff.

Prior to the development of this initiative, the anecdotal feedback from across school communities was that a number of schools did not have staff prayer at all; many who did, struggled to make time; and many who successfully made the time, struggled with a sense of purpose and format. In those schools where the APRE had managed to integrate a roster for staff prayer, the APRE was so grateful for staff leading prayer at all, that whatever staff did in terms of prayer was undisputed:

We do have a roster, but because people are good enough to do their roster, I don't feel I can ask them to do prayer in a particular way or to tell them that what they're doing isn't right.' I'd never get them back again and then I'd be doing staff prayer all the time which is almost the case now (Systemic APRE).

Thus, the presenting situation appeared to be that staff prayer had in fact become part of the 'too hard basket' across schools. The challenges of time and the lack of clarity of purpose, discussed earlier (8.4.2; 8.4.4) had resulted in staff prayer having a limited connection in the life of staff and relationship to Catholic ethos.

When the proposal for Staff Prayerfire was raised in consultation with schools, the response to the concept showed an acute awareness of the need:

I'd love to see Staff prayer with a more solid theological basis – so love the prayerpak idea. Could we please eliminate the rhymed verse with no reference to a spiritual being e.g. Helen Steiner Rice verse?? Can this be mandated????? (Systemic APA)

With the subsequent roll out of Staff PrayerFire, the three pronged strategy proved effective, the feedback overwhelmingly positive in terms of buy-in and receptivity.

I would just like to congratulate BCE on a wonderful prayer pack for staff prayer. I have had a look through the resources and it looks wonderful - can't wait to do it next term! It sits really well with where our staff are at and in terms of Josephite traditions etc as well, as we are in the process of looking at a 'St Joseph's Way' for our Pastoral Care Policy, so it is a good starting point, we may adapt and use it with parents in our strategic renewal planning nights as well (Systemic Primary APRE).

Everyone who has seen the prayer resources is very impressed – (Principal's name) particularly! Actually he wants to run the prayer sessions weekly with the campus minister (Secondary APRE)!

As previously indicated, those schools who were in the CFP pilot were required to commit to using Staff Prayerfire as part of their CFP engagement. The added dimension of being part of a more comprehensive strategy with the formation seeding teams (SpiritFire) having particular carriage of Staff PrayerFire was influential.

Did my thing at the staff meeting and introduced the whole Catching Fire thing. Put the pilot program in the same terms as the cervical cancer vaccine. You know, how you trial it on a few, so that in the long run, many will benefit. Showed the outline of the program in terms of the activities that a few will participate in, but also explained the opportunities for ALL to be involved in e.g. Chris Gleeson, Parish Women's Retreat Day, Spirituality Day and of course, the staff prayer that you have given us...to name a few things...well, usually get about 15 to staff prayer, well about 30 turned up on Thursday morning. Thanks so much (Primary APRE)!

For those in the SpiritFire program, Staff PrayerFire provided a scaffold for them to venture into new territory using new skills.

The PrayerFire resource has been a wonderful support– the whole framework has been gold for me in giving me a solid base and during these four days I have been given some tools to use to help others understand/utilise the framework. I think staff have had a real experience of prayer for them and for some it's the first time they've had that. Like everything in Catching Fire, it meets people where they are (SFPGFB).

While the positive impact within the CFP pilot schools was hoped for and welcome, it was the widespread impact of this one initiative on so many school communities outside of the CFP pilot that was of unanticipated note. While this reflects the efficacy of the resource initiative itself in the adaptation of professional learning theory to spiritual formation (O'Brien, 2004; Bellanca, 2004; Senge, 2000), it also indicates the need and receptivity for clarity and creative direction in this area. The following feedback responses reflect the depth and resonance of the *Staff PrayerFire* initiative across diverse school communities.

I actually had too many volunteers and had to put them into weekly teams!!!! We have extended our staff prayer time to 30 minutes and changed the day so that more people (part time staff) can be involved. I think we will finally have the school officers joining us for prayer and that has been a goal I haven't been able to achieve up to now (Systemic APRE, Primary country school).

The capacity for this initiative to ignite the interest of diverse staff members across both primary and high schools was notable.

When I introduced the kit to the staff and showed them the overview of the themes and charisms for each week they were 'wowed' by it and thought it was a great idea. I believe this is also a wonderful way to educate the staff on the different charisms and prayer styles. All in all it has been welcomed wholeheartedly from us all (APRE, Systemic Secondary School).

The prayer initiative generated a sense of inclusion with an understanding reflected in the literature (Chapter 3.3.1; 3.3.2), that prayer life (like any other kind of learning) needs to fit the learner rather than the learner needing to fit the learning. This

changed the spirit in which staff prayer was held. The following comments underline similar experience already expressed in the case school findings.

We've modeled the first one and I've given out the prayers to the eight people who will be leading prayer and I'm amazed by their response. These are the same people who refused to fill in prayer rosters (APRE, Primary city school)!

Staff prayer has been great for us. It has been a revelation for our staff that the Catholic church actually had these different kinds of prayer in the vault! A bit more than the Our Father, Hail Mary and a bit of Christian meditation, which is about the limit of what I think most staff think Catholic prayer is to be completely honest! And they love it. And they're doing the Quickfire prayer themselves through the week (Principal, Primary outer metro school)!

8.4.6.2 Light a PrayerCandle website (see accompanying Resource DVD for content)

Another of the systemic initiatives launched available for all schools and a 'must use' commitment for CFP pilot schools was the *Light a PrayerCandle* website. The purpose of this interactive web initiative was to offer an innovative, contemporary experience through an online community based prayer option. The target group was all staff communities. This strategy was seen as a vehicle to potentially reach all individual staff on their own terms, in their own time, and for their own need. At the same time, it would be a low key system wide community builder.

In itself, the process had the capacity to:

- inform about a traditional ritual of the church
- model prayerfulness and invite individuals into the practice
- build a visual sense of community of communities within BCE
- provide a pathway of involvement and support at times of grief and trauma in particular, and of encouragement and gratitude at other times

The site includes a brief introduction with an invitation to light a candle, and the long history of this ritual in the Christian tradition and in other faiths. A series of six steps takes the participant through a short but prayerful process in 'lighting their candle'. These include 1. Pausing for intention; 2. Choosing a short prayer/mantra; 3. Name or purpose for which candle is lit (or school origin); 4. Message or intention; 5. Quiet time with candle-flame; and 6. Final prayer for all intentions. The site was launched on All Saints Day, making the link to the communion of saints – part of the unseen reality that is a key element of the Catholic imagination (Wright, 2002).

The response to this initiative was also positive and like *Staff PrayerFire* touched a receptive chord in staff:

The candle sight is just beautiful... and obviously touching people already...
(BCE Consultant).

Thank you for such a beautiful website that I am so glad that I found. I love to read the prayers from people (Parent).

Light A Candle has been invaluable to me in so many ways. Thank-you
(School secretary).

The website has become popular farther afield than the archdiocesan school communities with regular site visits from parishes within the Brisbane Archdiocese and from other Australian dioceses. While it contemporises a traditional ritual of prayer, embracing new modes of educational technology (O'Brien, 2004), it has gained approval for also being perceived to remain faithful to the heart of the tradition:

I too have heard great things about the prayer candle site. At a meeting in Sydney yesterday I told the Bishops what you are doing and they were most impressed. It is a great way of teaching people in this brave new world to pray (Brisbane Archbishop, John Bathersby).

In addition, the online mode was well embraced by Gen-Xers as well as the Baby Boomers:

Hello, I just wanted to congratulate ...on the lovely idea enabling people to light a candle on line for their special intentions. I wondered if it is possible to load the page as a screen saver or desktop background?

(Parish Secretary)

Hey, this is cool. Thought I'd let u know I'm using it (ICT staff member, BCE)!

8.4.6.3 Traditioning Elements within the CFP Programs

Two important dynamics that can be identified in the efficacy of the traditioning approach in the CFP are retrieval interpretation - pulling things out of the storehouse of tradition, and creative interpretation - going into new spaces, which, in turn, become tradition (Groome, 2002). The premise is that those who live now are "the fifth gospel" (Schillebeekx in Harvey, 2003, p. 2) and that Christian faith is not static and thus its potentiality can never be exhausted:

A deep Catholic conviction is that God's revelation did not end with the Apostolic era and is not limited to the Bible's pages. Rather, by the presence of God's Spirit, tradition continues to unfold throughout human experience (Groome, 2002, p. 152).

Within the CFP programs, the 'traditioning' approach was integrated in the overall structure through the principle of staged growth, and through specific expression in prayer and ritual, and in engagement with scripture and the Jesus narrative. As participants realised over time that the programs were designed in a staged approach, the realisation became a strong affirmation of the journey they'd come:

As we talked about the program nearing the end of the year, I couldn't believe how much I'd moved, how much I'd learned. I knew that what I was doing at the end of the year I would have been incapable of doing at the beginning and if you had told me what I'd be doing by the end of the year, I wouldn't have believed you (APRE, PGFB).

More than this, as participants saw in their developmental journey some parallel to the traditional religious life model, they expressed a sense of pleasure and pride at seeing a connection to the journey of those who they had considered were the real 'holy people.'

I don't know why it should, but it seemed to add something to see that we had been 'novices' but were no longer. Maybe it's our Catholic guilt, or feeling we were not holy enough to be doing this that made that mean something. I don't know, but it's good (SFPGFB).

The in-service mindset prevalent among educators has been discussed in 8.4.1.1 where it was noted that the use of Boundary Markers in each program served to establish a performance and outcomes free zone. Being so used to an in-service model of learning, there were a number of staff who took some time to understand the developmental approach of the CFP programs. The following instance gives example to the difficulty this created in the program process.

On one of the days of the SpiritFire program, the APRE of one particular school decided that it would be better for one of the SpiritFire participants to go on a school excursion and for another teacher who needed to complete her general accreditation hours to come to the SpiritFire day. When the facilitators were alerted to this just before the first session began, (by another staff member from that school who was concerned for how difficult it would be for the 'visiting' staff member to pick up the program) we explained to the APRE that this would not work. The principal was informed of the situation. We did not allow the staff member to stay. We explained this to the staff member herself who could not leave til morning tea when we organised transport back to the school. As I walked out with her, she said, *I'm so sorry, I see what you all mean, I didn't understand anything about what people were sharing in that session!*

(Researcher's Notes, September SpiritFire)

This incident also confirmed the critical role of leadership in formation, as in any initiative for cultural change (Fullan, 2002; 2005; 2010).

The recovery of traditional elements of spiritual practice included a physical sacred space in each of the programs with specific symbols in that space including a bible, a candle and a cross. Seeing how this space was set up and experiencing how to greet the space and each other in reverent welcome echoed a lasting impression in the findings:

Just seeing how to set the prayerspace up and knowing what has to go there and what might go there and how to be with each other helped me learn so much. Every time we came back, it was so comfortable and quiet and safe. I think that's what a prayer circle should be (KFPGF).

A new way of engagement with scripture involved the use of psycho-spiritual tools to help participants understand scripture personally and theologically. This approach did not truncate other scriptural approaches, but rather intensified and integrated reader response and historical critical techniques. The experience and the teaching of this approach are named again and again in the findings, as life changing, leading to a re-connection with the Jesus narrative in a way that is immediate, personal and challenging.

I have never understood scripture like this. I listen I guess at Mass, but it just flows over me like a nice fairytale while I really think about how I'll sort out a family issue or how I'll plan the next few weeks work, or what needs to be done with the shopping. I know that sounds bad but that's the truth. Now it's so real to me we have all said how personally challenged we are in our thoughts and our lives (SFPGF).

Finally, the use of Harris' definition of spirituality ("Spirituality is our way of being in the world in the light of the Mystery at the core of the universe" Harris, 1996, p. 75) opened participants up to a 'Catholic imagination' (Bevans, 2005; Groome, 2002). While this definition does not stipulate specific Catholic belief and doctrine, neither does it contradict it. Rather, it appeared to offer a large enough understanding to both hold the core of Christian belief and acknowledge the individual's unique experience and varied entry-points, confirming Kessler's (2000) approach to spiritual development.

I loved the definition we had. It wasn't churchy but it felt Catholic. I don't what that means but we talked a lot about it. We could relate to it and differently all the way along (KFPGF).

Other rituals, such as leaving a light on in the sacred prayerspace overnight, re-introduced participants to the tradition of the sanctuary light. These practices had the effect of recovering or discovering what some called a deep pride in their Catholic inheritance.

I had no idea how rich was the symbol and story of the Catholic tradition. It's like we seem to only have left the motions without the meaning. This is so different but I can see it's not too. It makes me feel we have as much as much depth and wisdom as the Buddhists who you always hear these days as being the most sacred or wise religious people. Why don't we know about this stuff?! (KFCSFB)

Traditioning therefore has emerged in the findings as a critical element in the personal connection of staff to practices that had become for them a veneer of adherence with little bearing on their lives and vocation. More than simply a useful addition to the process and experience within the programs and resources, the influence for individuals and for the community is notable.

8.5 Discussion of Pivotal Elements in Relation to Community Influence

The role of community in the sustainable, strategic growth of spiritual formation in Catholic school communities is vital. The findings indicate five fundamental factors which signalled a sustained influence of the CFP on the broader community. Where the influence on community was minimal, one or more of these factors appeared absent. These five pivotal elements, which acted as strategic triggers for embedding formation in community, were companioning, authentic modelling, strategic alignment, active school leadership and theological underpinning.

As with the previous section of this chapter, the discussion of the themes or pivotal elements in relation to community influence is prefaced by a statement that provides the reader with a succinct indication of the focus of the content and the construct that emerged through the findings.

8.5.1 The Role of Companioning

Spiritual Formation has greater sustainable influence in community when individual confidence and capacity is supported in partnership by a core group sharing the vision and praxis.

Companioning refers to a range of ways or modes of inter-personal mentoring or accompaniment. These included self companioning, peer companioning, leader companioning and facilitator modelling. The concept of 'companioning' embraces the first steps of the individual's self-companioning to the development and influence of a critical mass within the school community. The word 'companion' comes from two Latin words – cum meaning 'with' and panis meaning 'bread.' A companion is in

the fullest sense of the word, one who breaks bread – shares a meal – with another. “To share food with a person is to share life with them.” (Chittester, 2001, pp. 98, 99) This is the understanding of companionship embedded in both the structure and the processes of the CFP reflecting both a strong practice in the Christian tradition as well as best practice in professional learning (O’Brien, 2004). The data within the case school and confirmed in the data from all of the pilot schools, indicated that this was a pivotal element both for the individual and in the community.

8.5.1.1 Companionship Construct for Program Participants

In all pilot schools, at least two staff members participated in each program. The purpose for this was to ensure as much as possible that the individual staff member shared the general experience of their particular program with at least one other person from the same school community. In this way, it was hoped that the individual’s experience would be validated and more likely to be sustained back in the school community. This was confirmed in the general feedback from all pilot schools as well as the case school.

8.5.1.2 Companionship Construct for Facilitators

In a deliberate design, all programs were co-facilitated. This too was another way to model and embed the concept of companionship. It not only shared the responsibility for facilitation, it also modelled collaborative skills and a shared respectfulness of skills and processes. This modelling was a new experience for some participants:

The way X and Y worked together was so ...honouring ...is the word of each other, but not all serious and precious. I haven’t seen people REALLY work like this before (SFPGFB).

They just slipped into each other’s stream ... no competition or holding the floor – or any this bit that bit kind of stuff. It was fluid but you can see how much they like and respect each other (SFPGFB).

Skills of facilitation adopting both professional learning theory (O’Brien, 2004) and spiritual formation principles (Schneiders, 2000), modelled then practised in incremental ways as part of the CFP processes, were ways of working that participants could then re-produce and adapt back in their school communities.

8.5.1.3 Companionship in Program Processes

Companionship was also fundamental to the processes in each program in both implicit and explicit ways. This first step in learning how to ‘companion self’ involved

practising self reflective skills and an introduction to particular styles of personal prayer. These included journaling, walking prayer, meditation and lectio using a variety of focus pieces – music, art, poetry, psalms, scripture. Learning to be with themselves in this way was also a significant new experience and challenge for many participants.

I am **never** alone! ... I was not sure how to be alone anymore. I worked out that I don't think I've had thinking or reflecting time like that since I was a teenager. Definitely not since I've been married and had children. It was very hard to begin with (KFPGFB).

Building this kind of time into their everyday life was one of the sustainable tools to be learnt and applied. Thus, participants learned first to be their own companions – their own anam cara (soul friend) in their own story before moving to the wider community story and learning how to be an anam cara with and for others.

In this next step, participants then learned the skills to companion each other. These skills included the art of attentive listening supported by a theology of presence and an understanding of being both guest and host to each other (Nouwen, 1976, 1991). These were difficult skills to learn, and participants recognised this. Further, these particular skills seemed counter to those most used in the school and the classroom (making judgements; fixing problems; leading discussion and giving direction). These skills instead required silent listening and attentive presence to the other. They required reminding themselves not to reflect back their own experience or to fix another's situation. The power of being listened to and listening deeply to another became one of the most moving experiences for many staff.

I don't think I have ever in my life felt listened to in that way, without judging or without feeling I had to struggle to be heard or get air-play. It was the most amazing experience. I cried later because of the love in it to be somehow that cared about that someone would just listen. Jesus must have been like that. I can be Jesus to someone else like that (KFPGFB).

The *Guiding Lights* program also afforded principals the opportunity to companion each other, and this was highly valued, confirming Flinham's research (2007) where the opportunity for sharing between principals of both honesty about the demands, and inspiration about the calling, was a recommendation of the findings.

A particular aspect of companioning developed as a core component in the *Guiding Lights* program was the offering of 'Leader Companioning'. The literature review highlighted how important is the influence of significant people in the spiritual growth of leaders, with the capacity to inspire human connection with others a key element

noted in a variety of studies (Moore, 1999; Newby & Hyde, 1992). This study confirms those general findings, and offers further insight into the importance of selection and skill of the companions and the mentoring dynamic.

Through the process described in Chapter 4, school leaders were afforded the option to be individually companioned by a skilled person with a strong spiritual foundation themselves. The concept was embraced well, with some having a significant experience of being mentored in this way:

My sessions with the Leader Companion have been excellent. ... I have found this an oasis in the hard work of leadership. The flexibility of how we meet and my changing needs has been a great reason for success with this I think. It has been all about my needs and I haven't felt locked into another person to meet with. (Principal, GLPGFB)

It became apparent that the flexibility in the structure of companioning and the content focus of the companioning was critical to the success of the concept, confirming the literature around successful mentoring and coaching practice (Bennetts, 2001; Blackwell & McLean, 1996; Green, 2006; Law, 1987; Tausch, 1978). For those where this did not work as well, it was the calibre of the Leader Companion that seemed to be at issue: "They just seemed to be pushing their own barrow – it wasn't about me" (Principal, PGFB). This disconfirming data underlined how important it was to be discerning in the choice of those invited to be involved as Leader Companions.

As program participants moved back to their school community, they became a supportive group to each other in the everyday unfolding of school life, a group who:

understood a new language,' had a 'way of seeing, and maybe being, differently that we kind of saw in each other and it somehow made us stronger – more brave I think, not able to just do as we'd done before (KFCSFB).

Schools were encouraged to organise semi-regular meetings for all participants involved in the separate programs (up to seven) to share their experiences and to plan initiatives in their schools. Where this happened, the general influence and change in the school community appeared to be most sustained. However, even where no meetings or get-togethers among participants occurred, the influence of this 'critical mass' was still evident and identified by the participants and critical friends in the research: "There was an obvious special bond – a real connectedness – between all of them" (Lydia, CSFB). Others, particularly APREs, understood and appreciated the practical implications of this shift: "I feel very supported. It's great

that there's seven people here and everyone takes a role in supporting. It's not left to one person" (APRE, PGFB). The APRE of the case school, St Raphael's, had no doubt about the internal shift that had occurred: "...They now have not only the passion, but the ability. And they have a confidence and a belief in prayer and in God. I think that's the difference". The shift was manifest most obviously in a broadening active participation in prayer, liturgies and professional learning days on spirituality and faith, and a more collaborative sense of ownership in staff meetings around the issues of identity and ethos and formation planning. This dynamic confirms research in critical mass theory (Dahlerup, 2005; Oliver & Marwell, 2002; Norris & Lovenduski, 2001; Stark, 1996), giving example to its application for spiritual formation in the Catholic school setting.

8.5.1.4 Companioning, Adult Learning and Christian Community

The efficacy of the companioning component is of importance in the research for two reasons. These have to do with both the educative and the spiritual perspectives reflected in the literature and the theoretical model.

Firstly, the companioning strategy is supported by the educational literature around adult professional learning and professional learning communities particularly in the school context (Hord, 1997; O'Brien, 2004; Starratt, 2004). At a time when the literature indicates the cultural milieu is characterised by a sense of fragmentation and a lack of shared meaning (Senge, Scharmer, Jaworski & Flowers, 2005), the effect of 'companioning' apparent in this study is remarkable. A shared meaning making has been developed, and a communal sense of meaning has been built that has stretched the community beyond its current patterns. In educational terms, what has been generated in the case school is a professional learning community (Groen, 2001; Hord, 1997; O'Brien, 2004) operating at a high level of functionality, doing the work of re-culturing (Fullan, 2001) based on the emergence of a powerful culture of trust (Gilligan, Spencer, Weinberg & Bertch, 2003). The culture of trust is the product of the companioning experience and skilling of the small group of participants involved directly in the CFP programs, who constitute a critical mass (Oliver & Marwell, 1988) in animating their school community. The efficacy of this strategy would indicate that in terms of the four factors critical to the effectiveness of the 'influence' model of critical mass (Oliver & Marwell 2002), the reach, selectivity, interdependence and production functions (Prahl, Marwell & Oliver, 1991) have

been adequate enough to effect change. In a number of school communities, this has been described by participants as transformative change.

Secondly, as the understanding around adult professional learning continues to shift in focus away from a gathered information paradigm and into a lifelong learning paradigm, the application of the principles of adult learning as a life wide and lifelong process in community has a deep correlation with fundamental principles in Christian spiritual formation (Groome, 2002; Kinast, 2000; Miller, 2000; Whitehead & Whitehead, 1997). The concept of companioning is deeply embedded in the Christian tradition (Shinohara, 2002). The Christian tradition is a tradition of companions in discipleship (Woski Conn, 1999) and the twin pillars of divine presence and communal wisdom are fundamental to how the journey of spiritual formation is understood (Groome, 2002; Rolheiser, 1998; Rosov, 2001). For example, disciples were sent out in company, two by two; the early communities had a brother or sister mentor or confessor whose earliest understanding was as a companion in the spiritual journey; and pilgrimages were made to anchorites and wise sisters and brothers, seen again as learned companions among the great communion of saints (Wright, 2002). Further down the ages, two giants of Christian spirituality, Aquinas and Theresa of Avila advocated and modelled what educationalists might now call professional learning communities for individual and systemic growth – Thomas of Aquina in his advocacy that the whole Christian community become teachers and learners together, and Teresa of Avila in the creation of her active mentoring network in the re-shaping of the Carmelite order. In Australian adult faith education, adult learning is situated in a community context, having long moved from a 'jug and mug' model of learning to a 'shared wisdom well' model (Benet McKinney, 1987). Thus, this contemporary embedding of companioning across the variety of modes of formation, while reflecting solid pedagogy for adult learning and change principles, also recovers the deep theological and spiritual practice wisdom in the history of the Christian tradition.

The confluence of principles of contemporary practice in adult education and spiritual formation is predicated on the movement that occurs within the individual because of the community dynamic in which they are placed. While "reality is a web of communal relationships, and we can know reality only by being in community with it" (Palmer 2007, p. 95), at the same time, "anyone engaged in education must, in preserving their integrity, seek to make sense of their work in terms of the rest of their outlook on life" (Hull, 1997, p.18). Any internal shifts need to be authentic to be

sustained (Wilber, 2006). It is apparent that the companioning work in story with 'self' and the 'other' helped this process of meaning making. The findings also confirm the influence of self-reflective practice for teachers and leaders in the classroom and the staffroom. This finding contributes to significant research already undertaken in this area (Hanifin, 2000; Kauanui & Bradley, 2003; Simone, 2004).

Thus, the modes of self companioning and peer companioning embedded in the CFP structures and processes appear to have helped participants develop a strengthened personal commitment and vigour for their life and work. They also expressed a deeper and more satisfying understanding of and relationship to God and questions of ultimate meaning. This in turn had a wider influence on the community as they transmitted this new awareness among each other and with each other. It resulted in the nurturing of rich authentic community relationships (Derbyshire, 2005), and in fact, emerges as a key to sustainability in the community.

I think the sustainability issue that Sarah raised is important. Each other become the sign that points back to their own sacred experience so that sign is the sustainability – I think we need to build that in. There is a significant power in this support for each other, and is a key to implementing change back in the school community. (Researcher's Notes, June 2007)

8.5.2 Modelling in Community

The authentic modelling of individual learnings and experience in spiritual formation is a transparent and influential catalyst for change in the community.

Church documents repeatedly call attention to the importance placed on teachers in relating a transformative vision of life (CCE 1977; 1982; 1988; 1998). The most recent document from the Vatican expresses this in more metaphorical language:

Catholic educators need a "formation of the heart": they need to be led to that encounter with God in Christ which awakens their love and opens their spirits to others, so that the education commitment becomes a consequence deriving from their faith, a faith which becomes active through love" (CCE, 2008, n. 25)

The concept of a 'formation of the heart' is more the language of contemporary spiritual writers. Chittester echoes Palmer's attention to the heart of the teacher – "What you are, your students will be" (Chittester, 2003, p. 9), while Borg in explaining what is essential in following Jesus' vision, uses the language of transformative imagery:

The appeal is to the imagination, to that place within us in which resides our images of reality and our images of life itself; the invitation is to a different way of seeing, to different images for shaping our understanding of life. (Borg, 1994, p74)

While Kelly (2002) observed from his research that for some teachers at least, the ecclesial reality of the church has undergone “a form of sociological reduction which leaves it with only its most imperfect and limited institutional form” (2002, p. 312), and Bracken’s research findings that the formation offered in his diocese neither challenged nor changed this view (Bracken, 2004), the research findings in this present study indicate a different possibility. The formation content and processes of the CFP programs did indeed shift the perspective of individual teachers about church and about the relevance of the God meta-narrative. In consequence of this, a subtle change in perspective rippled into the staffroom and the classroom.

The enabling factor in the wider community influence was a shared confidence and capacity among program participants for modelling of the CFP processes and practice in everyday school and family life. So clearly did this emerge in the research findings that it constitutes a pivotal element in reflecting on the influence of staff formation in whole community growth and life. There are two aspects of this – firstly the intensely personal growth in the formation programs that led to a desire and capacity to be a change maker on staff; and secondly, the practical reality of having other CFP program colleagues model action and behaviour on staff.

These two aspects are discussed in turn.

8.5.2.1 Influence of Intense Personal Growth on Community Culture

The growth and change in the personal spiritual journey of participants involved in the CFP programs was relatively rapid and sustained. Those in *SpiritFire*, who were charged with the carriage of implementation in their schools, however small or ambitious they chose that to be, were asked to reflect on the journey at different points of the process. This was structured as a tool for personal reflection to help participants gauge their own perceptions. Their reflections were honest and open, indicating engagement and awareness of both their personal journey and their growing sense of purpose in the school community. In responding to the question about their most significant personal learning in the first four days of the program, participants shared the following:

'I learned' ...

- *What separates Catholic Education from other educational institutions!!*
- *That we understand the person of Jesus through our own understanding*
- *What we do can make a significant difference to the way staff view their role in our Catholic schools*
- *prayer can give you the 'centredness' we need to become fully human*
- *the need to recognise 'Resurrection' in others*
- *Jesus came to show us how to be fully human*
- *A clear process for reading scripture for understanding and reflecting*
- *A way to be silent that didn't involve checking breathing and repeating mantras*
- *I learnt that Jesus came to show us how to be fully human*
- *4 understandings of scripture and their application.*
- *How important prayer is to our spirituality*
- *Prayer works! Taking time, being silent, being still was so enlightening.*

The question of how sustained this engagement remained on returning to the school community formed the subsequent issue for reflection. The possibility of facilitating change back in their community was gently woven into the programs as a natural corollary to participants' personal growth. Given this, as participants finished their formation program, they were asked to quietly reflect on what God was asking of them at this point. Following are some of their responses.

- *To respond to the general acceptance in the staff/school culture of the need for growth and spiritual development. A core group of staff working in liaison with the principal, APRE, campus minister and willing and committed participants is a good model for successful growth. Staff won't accept activities being imposed upon them from above.*
- *I found Catching Fire to be an incredible journey into God. It gave me a chance to be still and to LISTEN to God. Sometimes I think I get so busy telling God stuff or asking God stuff I forget to have a conversation I thank BCE for valuing the sacred, the sacred in schools and the sacred in me.*
- *To become a leader (with others) in the spiritual journey of our staff.*
- *Always be aware each time I encounter someone, it is the 'face of God'.*
- *To go back to school and share with colleagues a different way if prayer – especially for staff prayer and assembly e.g. The respectful use of silence, listening, responding.*
- *To stop and make time for prayer and that I need to acknowledge God's presence. To let go of my fears.*
- *To reclaim my Sabbath time and space.*
- *To be a catalyst. Not necessarily to do, but to help put things in place for myself and for our staff that are conducive to taking up the challenge to pray effectively.*

- *To know myself, to make time for myself, in order to know and make time for others ... to renew my heart and mind and to experience resurrection in my life.*
- *To go back into my school community to ignite the flame of prayer, through provision of opportunities.*
- *To be honest with myself – to ask the question “Is what I am doing on my journey, relevant, purposeful, spiritual?” or just doing – keeping busy.*
- *To more fully return with my whole being to prayer, gospel values the Catholic Church.*
- *Walk with Jesus and to assist everyone – our community to become fully human – to be the best possible human being they can be.*
- *To assist in the removal of the roadblocks on the road of communication between God, my colleagues and I.*

There is clarity and enthusiasm in these reflections. With their individual permission, individual feedback was shared with the whole group. The realisation of the commonality of their reflections strengthened a firm resolve among them. Their resolve appeared to become an empowering corporate memory as they returned to their school environments and began to follow up their simple ‘school action plans.’ The key to this was their own modelling of personal behaviour/ perspective as they supported school initiatives, however basic or simple.

8.5.2.2 Practical Reality of Supportive Behaviour and Action of Colleagues

This second aspect of modelling in community - the support of other CFP program colleagues – was equally important in the success of that modelling work. Again, the voices of participants speak to this strongly in the research findings. In addition, those who were not directly part of the CFP programs, but on staff, and the researcher’s own notes amplify the participants’ reflections. An example of each of these follows.

(Susannah – St Raphael’s – SpirtFire Participant)

The way we could just step up for each other – take the risk knowing we really did have the support of each other and knowing we were on about something real, made the difference for me when I got back and began to think Who am I to be anything to these other people and who am I to get up and speak about anything at all! What have I got to give to the person next to me in the lunch room. But somehow I knew I did have something, and I was different and I couldn’t help it. And when I looked over and saw,well, all we had to do was look at each other and I felt an enormous sense of love and support.

(Lydia – on staff at St Raphael’s – not a CFP Program Participant)

(About the bond between participants) I truly felt it was much deeper than just that they had done the program together. I felt they shared the fire of the spirit with each other and within themselves. When I saw them around the school involved in different situations or different roles, I can only express that what I saw or felt the following way – they all seemed to have an inner contentment – a glow that came from deep within – the Spirit! This is the key to Catholic leadership!

(Researcher - after a focus group meeting)

I come away from these meetings with staff so energised .. humbled really at what has opened up for them and what kinds of things are flowing from their initial experience and then how they’ve interpreted that experience for their own lives and for their professional lives and community. The APA who is the onlooker in this has experience and critical wisdom to offer our reflections. It’s particularly valuable I think in this case because she has been an APRE and has an APA background with acting principal experience and she’s not been involved directly in the formation programs. Her observations are quite dispassionate. The fact that she is observing a greater engagement and a strong sense of presence in staff, particularly in staff prayer, leaves me in no doubt that is exactly what’s happening.

(Researcher’s Notes - on completing third round of focus group interviews)

The bridge between the personal journey of individuals and the communal journey of change is a difficult one to build, particularly in the context of large systems as is Brisbane Catholic Education. The literature shows that individual staff most often find themselves buried under the pace and weight of school routine and demands once back in school and best intentions are soon forgotten despite the strength of the experience (Groen, 2001; O’Brien, 2004). The personal everyday integration of the CFP practices and approach in school life is pivotal to modelling change, and the collegial support for this modelling is therefore very important. Using Carlson’s terminology (2003) in developing communities of practice, the modelling of the core group did in fact act as an energising group on staff, drawing in peripheral members, and creating an atmosphere of ongoing collaborative learning grounded in the staff themselves. This has been critical in bridging the personal and the communal, and paramount where successful strategic implementation has been identified.

Thus, the research findings confirm the theory of change facilitation as well as amplifying findings in previous research about vocation. Despite pressures of time and workload, the clearer teachers are about their purpose, reflected in daily actions, the more likely they are to become committed to it (Deal & Peterson, 2003). More importantly, as Palmer reiterates, teachers teach who they are (Palmer, 2007),

and the deeper the clarity they have about their own story and its connection to purpose and vocation and a broader story, the more powerful their influence in what they do and how they do it among staff, students and parents. When this is supported by a core group of peer support, as discussed in 9.5.1, applied behaviour and peer modelling, it has the potential to become a self-sustaining reality.

8.5.3 Strategic Alignment

Spiritual formation has greater traction in the life and processes of the school community when it is connected to the language, structures and processes of mission and vision, annual goal setting and strategic renewal.

One of the newly emerging understandings about spiritual formation within Catholic organisations is the need for it to be connected more strategically to the broader system structure and perceived as a core engagement. For those dioceses grappling with the place of spiritual formation in their organisational vision and structure, the issue of how formation is best placed within the service organisation of Catholic education has become a key challenge. A number of different options are being pursued in Australian dioceses (Hughes, 2009). In pursuing this, one of the observable developments in Australian diocesan education offices is the structuring of formation away from separate retreat teams and towards an integration with professional development in general. This development was identified in the 2005 report 'Spiritual and Faith Formation for Leadership in Catholic Education' commissioned by the QCEC, and discussed in Chapter 2.

Historically, as the need for formation for 'lay' staff became recognised as a need, the opportunities that may be regarded as 'spiritual' developed as part of the brief of diocesan religious and faith education teams. Those places who were more intentional developed retreat teams. There appears to be a shift in the thinking now, which sees a move away from formation services as addendums or adjuncts to other areas and towards integrating spiritual and faith formation into wider professional development and leadership programs. (QCEC, 2005, p.12)

Long regarded as a leader in this area, the Parramatta diocese, following the recommendation of a review of their RE and Formation services, closed down its retreat team and re-structured those services between coursework studies offered in conjunction with their RE team and formation work offered in conjunction with their PD team leadership programs. (There has since been a further major system restructure). Bracken's (2004) research based on the initial review indicates an effort in the Parramatta diocese to give formation a strong localised profile in schools, with

an underlying rationale that it is everyone's responsibility, and everyone plays a part. The risk in this approach is that formation becomes no-one's responsibility and is sidelined and buried under multiple and pressing responsibilities. As the formation provided becomes a localised negotiation with a general shared responsibility, there is the possibility of a reactive and piecemeal approach lacking a strong driver for overall responsibility. This emerging reality in the Queensland dioceses was reflected in the aforementioned 2005 report for the QCEC:

Another common phenomenon is that spiritual and faith formation becomes defined by whomever or whatever is on offer to deliver a formation experience, without reference to any broader understanding of what spiritual and faith formation entails. This gives rise to situations where 'spirituality' morphs into anything that somehow connects with people; where facilitators are often put in the difficult position of having no brief but to 'do something about spirituality'; where excellent programs are dropped – or not offered – because there are 'no takers'; and where very little is offered at all because formation is an adjunct to someone's area where there are always more immediately pressing issues to address. (QCEC, 2005, p. 7)

The Brisbane Catholic Education Office in receipt of the 2005 QCEC report and following its own 2005 system wide renewal process followed the recommendation there to set up a unit with a focus on evangelisation and spiritual formation and to place this unit in the Executive Director's Office. Two years later, Wollongong has also followed this lead. The difference between Brisbane's creation of a new Evangelisation and Spiritual Formation Team and the Retreat teams of the past and in other places, is that this team/unit is to have a strategic vision and purpose with all staff as its target audience. The placement of the team within the Executive Director's Office has been a sign that spiritual formation was being considered core strategic business for all staff across the organisation, and not an adjunct of any particular area. This perspective was embedded in the CFP pilot initiative: as outlined in Chapter 4, each pilot school was required to connect formation into their Strategic Renewal Plan and annual goal setting; engage with systemic resources including the framework language and concepts and develop an understanding of spiritual formation as core business particularly for those in leadership positions.

Structurally organised in this way, the findings confirm that the clarity offered about the core content of the program was accepted well by staff. Some of the key conceptual terminology was already embedded in system language with which they were familiar (Jesus Communion Mission; Teach Challenge Transform). Staff felt the process was respectful and person centred rather than system centred, and so there was no challenge during the programs about purpose and process. The

systemic resources provided a range of options, and within those, a range of levels of involvement, chosen and managed by the individual school. In many schools, the framework itself has become adopted and shaped to fit the school in unpredicted ways, whether they were a pilot school or not:

The framework is brilliant. We made it our own, it works just so well for our school. And we've woven our planning and goal setting; our whole curriculum fits with Head Heart and Hands! (General systemic school FB)

The speed and energy with which schools did this was a surprise for the researcher, but indicated that the strategic vision of providing a shared framework within which schools can custom build the framework application has been successful. While this adoption and integration of the CFP framework and resources occurred on a much broader scale than the pilot school cohort, the data around this development remains anecdotal.

At the same time, the research findings indicate that this mapping of spiritual formation constituted a shift in thinking that some staff, including leadership, found difficult to negotiate. It gradually became more acceptable in many schools as staff within the pilot programs began to 'walk the talk.'

And my responsibility, ... we are responsible for nurturing the spirituality of this place, I mean this is what it's about - and you can't do everything just on your own ... I thought this is a really good way to go - this is where I could start myself with staff or start with Tamar and Elizabeth and already we've had some ideas of what we could do to make this a more spiritual place or at least to support people in their spiritual formation in terms of just a couple of small things. (Mary, St Raphael's)

As staff together began to take responsibility and realised it was a developmental and communal journey and not an in-service piecemeal model, the goal setting took on a more specific and planned appearance. For example, in one pilot school, the general goal of '*Increasing the spiritual life of the community*' became more targeted towards actions/strategy and was reworded to reflect this - '*Develop and support staff involvement and leadership in ritual and prayer life of the school community.*' The strategies also became more specific and stepped. Systemic resources appeared to support this, as did consistent system-wide messages about the connection between formation, mission and vocation, planning and leadership.

I think one of the, one of the big things with relation to actually being a teacher in a Catholic school, our whole spirituality is what sets us apart from, you know sets a teacher who teaches in a Catholic school apart from any

other educational institution. And I thought “Yeah that’s it that’s the crux of the whole thing. That’s got to colour our lives. (Tamar, St Raphael’s)

While the findings confirmed the influence of teachers, the potential of school staff to be authentic leaders within their school community was often a self revelation for the teachers. It emerged as a positive outcome, amplifying the research of Bracken (2004) and Deal and Petersen (1999) in underlining the influence of teacher co-leadership in shaping and re-shaping culture.

We have done things and that’s made the difference together. And our last day went really well. And so that would sort of suggest that were we go from here has the potential to touch a lot of people. And I think that’s rather a really big positive with the whole thing.... I am surprised at how much the three of us have stepped up! (Tamar, St Raphael’s)

The practical ‘knitting in’ of spiritual formation to the key structures and processes of the organisation is a new frontier for contemporary catholic education systems. In general, very little research has been done about the ‘how’ of this shift. This research confirms that the particular approach in the CFP pilot is effective because of the strategic alignment in the following:

- a framework conceptually connected both to archdiocesan and Catholic education vision;
- practical connection with the organisation’s Strategic Renewal Framework and Leadership Framework;
- support through systemic resourcing (staff prayer resources; DIY formation resources; the Local Formators network....),
- an expectation of practical goal setting and annual planning,
- provision of targeted formation programs and
- key messaging from system leadership

While the new paradigm was challenging for some, the feedback indicated that for many others, the connectivity seemed a long time coming:

The connectedness to the Archdiocesan vision, and the Cath Ed vision as well as practical connection to strategic renewal is a breath of fresh air. Thank-you (Systemic APRE).

Thus, the organisational intention in the CFP has been to provide strategic leadership and grow local capacity. This is built on the premise that shared responsibility at the local school level will not grow without strategic system leadership, and that central systemic leadership on its own will not grow local

capacity. Both are needed. The findings in this research indicate that the influence of the CFP in the local community was strengthened and supported by connection to staff goal-setting, systemic resourcing and system messaging. The indications are that this alignment is a pivotal element in effecting a sustainable shift in strategic engagement around spiritual formation.

8.5.4 School Leadership

School leadership that reflects an authentic engagement itself in spiritual formation is critical for the effective embedding of staff formation, and the growing of an authentic Catholic ethos and culture in the school community.

The research findings confirm the critical role of school leadership in staff spiritual formation, ethos and culture. Researchers and writers scrutinised in the literature review (Chittester, 2003; Deal & Peterson, 1999; Starratt, 2004) have previously identified the role of leaders, both formal and informal, as crucial to the effective development and nurturing of culture within a school community. Within this task of nurturing culture, the capacity for the principal to build community relationships has become pre-eminent. This is because the school is for many parents, students and staff who now constitute a post-ecclesial community (Rolhesier, 2007) the only place that provides a sense of connectedness to Church. For reasons of both expectation and success in this, the Catholic school is seen as the 'new church' (McLaughlin, 2002; 2005). In this context, the role of the leader that is emerging is one who builds school community based on principles and values that govern judgements and direction within the cultural context of the school (Meyer & Macmillan, 2001). Because "principals bring themselves, including their deepest convictions, beliefs and values to their work" (Starratt, 2004, p.65), a capacity to understand their deepest identity and convictions and to grasp the power of their own shadow and light (Palmer, 2000) is a crucial element in building authentic community. The current study indicates the CFP spiritual formation program for leaders was helpful in strengthening participants' capacity for deepening both self-identity and community culture.

8.5.4.1 Leadership and Staff Culture

Consistent with the literature (Belmonte et al, 2006; Flintham, 2007; Fullan, 2010; Sergiovanni, 2005), the principals in this study expressed a confident understanding of the importance of community in their school culture and worked hard to develop a

sense of belonging and inclusion in their schools. An important difference between this generation and previous generations for those who seek to influence the spiritual life of the contemporary Catholic school community through their witness of the Christian faith is that each person will make up his or her own mind about its value. Relationships and friendships are the mainstay of life and demonstrating commitment in relationships may be very significant in communicating what the Christian faith is all about (Hughes, 2009). The principal must provide what Palmer calls “the permissions and excuses for teachers, parents and students to realise their full potential” (Palmer, 2007, p. 111).

Also consistent with the literature (McLaughlin, 2002; 2005; 2008; Kelly, 2007), these principals shared the strain of maintaining authentic ecclesial relationships parallel to their emergent role as pastoral leaders for the school families, displacing the priest and parish. The findings confirm that the open, direct and dialogical manner in which the *Guiding Lights* program explored and processed these issues as it moved from the ‘My Story’ to ‘Our Story’ phase proved to be effective and affirming.

Where else is the place to have this conversation without conflict? To be able to try to put your own experience into some kind of order and hear the others experience and to have our own Executive Director talk to us about his frustrations and joys and how he sees it all fitting together, and Fr Z giving us a longer history was all just great. Just a privileged experience of trust and good knowledge and good challenge, and what we need to face the reality we’re in. (Principal, GLPGFB)

The Australian research identifying the role of principals expressly in the area of spiritual formation within their school communities is small and relatively recent, as this area emerges as a focus in the field of leadership (Bracken, 2004; Coughlan, 2010; Belmonte, 2006). Specific studies relevant to the discussion indicate that the growing of spirituality in the leader is vital to the maintenance of direction and the sustaining of purpose in the life and culture of the school (Kelleher, 2000). These studies have also identified the need for personal faith formation to strengthen their role as spiritual leaders (Crotty, 2005). The findings of the current research confirm very clearly the critical role of school leadership in the effective embedding of staff spiritual formation and with it the growth of a spiritual culture within the school community. More specifically, we see the influence of the CFP weakest in those pilot schools where the leadership is correspondingly non-committal.

Of the ten pilot schools, one school in particular demonstrated the repercussions of a divided and uncertain leadership. This school had requested to be involved with the pilot project. The principal was new to principal-ship, although had been in the small school community for a lengthy period of time. Initial conversations with both the APRE and the principal indicated a limited understanding of the place and purpose of spiritual formation, and an ambivalent commitment to this dimension of professional development and community in their role as leaders. However, while the principal was open and keen to learn, the APRE worked out of an in-service paradigm from which she did not move. Lamenting the difficulties and load of a small school, the lack of commitment and energy within the school for the CFP also appeared to be reflective of an established culture within the school which the new principal for a variety of reasons seemed unable to influence and which the APRE seemed disinterested in changing.

Nevertheless, out of that staff, one classroom teacher experienced remarkable growth, personally and professionally through her involvement in the *Keepers* program. With no perceived encouragement or support from school leadership, she instigated a retreat experience for her class, drawing on one other teacher and parents for the adult supervisory support. This retreat experience was the first of its kind within the history of the school and was received with overwhelming positive feedback from parents and students. Reflection on the experience created an internal struggle for her around the nature and responsibility of Catholic school leadership:

I am really struggling to come to terms with this. I never ever saw myself as being one to 'keep the flame alive'. I always saw this as being in the leaders – that's why they got the job.. I'm just the teacher. But I just realise now that I'm the one who keeps it all alive in our school. I'm actually the one who makes prayer a good experience and who does the liturgies and who does the sacramental stuff. I see the holes now in the leadership and it's very distressing to me. (*Keepers*, PGFB)

The findings indicate that in those schools where one might characterise the principal's leadership as collaborative and directly enabling with staff, and with clear, committed key messaging to students and parents, the strategic engagement with the CFP had greater traction. While some studies indicate that principals see their responsibility in providing spiritual formation for staff summed up as to "put things in front of people" (Bracken, 2004, p 148) the same research indicates the hit and miss approach is becoming more and more fractured and dangerous as the veneer of Catholic culture becomes thinner. While staff members have a degree of

responsibility for their own formation, it is also true that leadership is called to be more personally committed, strategic and targeted in the planning and provision of formation. Further, although teacher leadership can exist without principal support, where teacher leadership flourishes, principals have actively supported and encouraged it (Crowthe, Kaagan, Furguson & Hann, 2002).

A strong commitment to strategic planning and culture building appears to correlate highly with an active and tangible personal commitment to the spiritual life and reflective praxis of the Christian leader. The findings indicate that where the principal had a well developed spiritual life which was visible and constant, it was more likely that the commitment to the CFP remained a high priority; participant staff in the CFP were more likely to succeed in school based initiatives; and staff in general were more likely to participate in broad school based initiatives outside the programs. Staff directly involved on the CFP formation programs felt empowered or challenged by the degree of support in their school leadership team. While the importance of school leadership in creating culture was not given explicit focus in any of the programs, participants very rapidly began to see and give voice to how important this was as they journeyed themselves. For many, it was an appreciation of the school leadership they had. For others, it was an unwelcome revelation to entertain the growing concern that their leadership did not have a strong spiritual formative base themselves.

8.5.4.2 Leadership and Self Engagement

Part of the strategy of the CFP was the targeting of principals themselves through the *Guiding Lights* Leadership program. The fact that staff saw their principals commit to a program had influence in itself.

When Joseph (the principal) told the story of his growing up, the story of going to the dump, you could just see people open up to him, and stay open I think. It was something having the courage to share of himself, and something about showing what really moves him, makes him tick I guess, it showed us something about what catholic leadership is supposed to be about, not in fancy words but in a real life. It just changed things I think. It certainly changed our staff prayer time. (Staff member, not in CFP – St Raphael's)

For the principals, the peer mentoring that occurred organically during the program was a gift for the younger and newer principals. For those with whom spiritual formation had not had a high priority in their journey to leadership, the struggle was quite apparent. The paradigm of principal-ship as management in overseeing the

religious/spiritual (and other) dimensions of school life was challenged by a paradigm that saw principal-ship as 'walking the talk' of the religious and spiritual heart of leadership through all the dimensions of leadership (O'Hara, 2000; Thompson, 2005; Wallace, 2000). This represented a profound shift because it is personal - it is about the person and the 'who' of their leadership.

In Christian churches where a more assertive approach to formation exists than is the accepted norm in mainstream Catholic culture (for example, the Uniting Church, the Christian Outreach churches and the Pentecostal Churches), the nurturing of personal spiritual charisms for leadership is the major focus of attention. The other capabilities of leadership are built around this core which forms the centre of integrated leadership programs. With a strong grasp of this concept, a number of Christian ministry centres in Australia (for example, Barnabas Ministries; the Potter's House Christian Churches Australia) have put extensive resources into integrated leadership programs that combine the formal study in the faith tradition and personal spiritual formation with the other elements of management and responsibility (Miedema, 1995; Dowson & McInerney, 2005). The research findings about the CFP confirm the value and strength in leaders being able to identify and explore their particular gifts. The use of the enneagram and the leader companioning model offered as part of the Guiding Lights program served to do this very well. Most of the principals in the pilot schools expressed their gratitude for this aspect of the program and their yearning to develop this more.

I have connected with a deep yearning for spiritual growth. I feel more whole - better equipped to be in the (leadership) position I'm in. The enneagram work withand my companion has helped enormously in this. I actually have something unique to offer (GL – new principal).

8.5.4.3 Spiritual Formation and Leadership Preparation

The concern about the nature, process and content of current pathways to Catholic leadership has been an ongoing one for Catholic educational authorities over the last decade. These same concerns were raised directly in the findings of the 2005 report for Queensland diocesan education offices and Religious Institutes commissioned by the QCEC (QCEC, 2005). That report highlighted a lack of alignment, clarity and direction in the place and provision of spiritual formation for aspiring leaders, apart from the requirement for 8 units of post graduate study. Beyond the option for studying spiritual leadership as a component of these eight units, there has been nothing more on offer in any organised way. The Senior

Professional Development Officer at Brisbane Catholic Education summed up what he saw as a gaping hole in this area:

There is in fact one glorious vacuum after the study is finished. Overall, it's an ad hoc and spasmodic approach. It's a fertile field ready for the planting (BCE, 3)

There are two issues arising out of this concern: one is in relation to the place of formation in existing and future leadership programs. The other is in relation to the nature of the required study pathways themselves.

9.5.4.3.1 The Place of Spiritual Formation in Leadership Programs

The contextual and scholarly literature indicates that the place of spiritual formation in leadership programs presents a challenge for as long as it remains fundamentally perceived as an optional extra outside of required preparation for aspiring leaders and for maintaining leaders (Earl, 2005; Ranson, 2006). The tracking of perception changes among the participant principals in this study confirm both the prevailing perception of spiritual formation as a soft option extra, and the centrality of spiritual formation to deep leadership growth.

The challenge to change perceptions about the place of spiritual formation in leadership development was behind the decision in Parramatta diocese to move in the direction of embedding formation in their professional development programs for leadership and away from the RE team or Retreat Team. Edmund Rice Education Australia in the Queensland province has also moved to make strong links between spiritual formation and professional development for leadership, with some of their spiritual formation programs becoming mandatory pathways for leadership positions. Aspiring school leaders certainly appear to be more open to spiritual and faith formation initiatives where they see these programs directly connected to their career path and/or their school context. A number of participants saw their involvement in the CFP as a useful addition to their resumes for this very purpose.

I assume that Cath Ed would value highly my involvement in Catching Fire, and this will help me if and when I go for leadership positions. (Classroom teacher, PGFB)

Researchers and writers in the field (Bezzina, Burford & Duignan, 2007; Duignan, 2002; O'Hara, 2000) now strongly contend that effective leadership requires something beyond experience and competence and is "much more a matter of who the leader is than how the leader applies leadership principles or adopts leadership style" (Starratt, 2004). However, the place and nature of spiritual formation for this

development is given scant attention. Yet, in the Catholic context, it is spiritual formation that is at the heart of the kind of leadership described above, and which grows that authentic, inner, values driven leadership so prevalent in professional leadership conversation.

If the connection between the human and the divine and between personal leadership development and spiritual formation is not made, then the Jesus story and the God meta narrative will indeed become no more than a religious memory (Wallace, 2000): “If the principal is not able to lead his or her community to a realisation and celebration of the divine in the human then he or she might as well create a secular non-religious school” (Lacey, 2003, p 3).

9.5.4.3.2 The Current Construction of Leadership Pathways

The concern that has emerged around the structure of leadership pathways in general is about a mentality of ‘paper-chasing’ and a culture of box-ticking among teachers and leaders. The Manager of Employee Services who at the time oversaw professional learning for Brisbane Catholic Education, saw the trend reflected in the language used:

My concern with all the programs that are around is that they do just remain programs and become a string of things people complete. We need to bury the language of ‘professional development’ and encourage a culture and language of ‘continuous professional learning.’ This is whole person learning. It’s not just about knowledge and skills. It’s about who and what you are... (BCE, 4)

The issue around the structure of leadership programs also goes to the heart of the effectiveness of the organisation in its mission. Organisational research indicates that it is a collective passion and mission at the core of an organisation that assures enduring success as opposed to one that is merely ‘good’ (Collins & Porras, 2004). The emergence of the core ideology that inspires its members in a flourishing organisation cannot be left to chance:

It is intentionally cultivated by making it the centrepiece of regular professional development activities and serves as the driving purpose and inspiration behind decision making, employee development, and resource allocation (Intrator & Kunzman, 2006, p. 39).

At present, Catholic education systems struggle to integrate the core ideology in a concrete way, and this is reflected in the corporatisation of approaches to leadership and employee management under the pressure of a culture of performativity and

measurable productivity. The consequence is the depletion of 'spiritual capital' (Grace, 2000). While it appears imperative that school leadership understands and is committed to the core place of spiritual formation within staff and in the community, this needs to be supported, encouraged and underpinned in the system leadership. The challenge therefore is to develop such a systemic culture. While the findings in this study emphasise the strategic difficulty in growing staff where the school leadership is not intentional, this too can be very hard work if not supported in vision and practice by system leaders.

Thus, the research findings indicate that the movement 'on the ground' or at grassroots level has been influential and sustained where school leaders have engaged in their own spiritual formation (Compagnone, 1999; Flintham, 2007; Moore, 1999; O'Hara, 2000) and been intentional about building culture and ethos in the community (Fullan, 2010; Groen, 2001; O'Donnell, 2001). The challenge is for this reality to be supported in a shared understanding and praxis in system level leadership.

8.5.5 Strong Theological Underpinning

Spiritual formation that is anchored in a comprehensive theological foundation and reflected in the formation process, content and key messages around mission and evangelisation, captures a strong alignment in communal meaning-making.

The research findings indicated participants perceived a solid and consistent theological underpinning in the three CFP spiritual formation programs. This supported the capacity for participants to make cohesive connections between their own life narrative, their vocational story within the Catholic education community and the God meta-narrative of the Catholic tradition.

As evident in the literature review, research in the field of the Catholic school educator's life and perspective has been an area needing attention. The change to a pre-dominantly lay led and staffed Catholic schooling system in Australia began to happen in the mid-sixties (Grace, 2002; O'Donoghue, 2004), and initial research into the impact of this development on 'religious' staff followed (Kyle, 1986; Trimmingham-Jack, 2003). However, research into the life perspectives of the 'lay' teachers in Australian Catholic schools has only gained serious momentum in the last decade (Burley, 2001; McLaughlin, 1997, 1998, 2005, 2008; O'Donoghue & Potts, 2004). The work of these researchers has been instrumental in identifying the fractures and

fault-lines in 'lay' teachers' reception of church doctrine and belief, and increasing understanding of the unique stressors for those who choose a vocation to teach or lead in a Catholic school (Branson, 2004; Carotta & Carotta, 2005; Downey, 2006; Jarvis, 2004; McMahon, 2003). This has been complemented by other research on the increasing recognition of the role of 'spirituality' in leadership and in 'work' in general (Bolman & Deal, 2001; Conger, 1994; Duignan, 1997, 2002, 2003; Holmes, 2005; Starratt, 2004). The result has been the identification and generation of interest in a bigger picture approach outside of the task and management focus for leadership in the eighties.

However, while the difficulties become clearer and the importance of the spiritual dimension becomes sharper, the precise shape of learning in the area of spiritual formation has remained an elusive area for thorough exploration. The challenge involves creating an approach to formation that addresses the fractures and gives a concrete, strategic and cohesive approach for growing a spiritual core perspective for all staff in Catholic school communities. Just as the research on the role of principals in the area of spiritual formation within their school communities is small and relatively recent, so too the Australian research on spiritual formation for Catholic educators in general is relatively slim (Bracken, 2004; Downey, 2006). The accumulated work giving focus to formation for 'lay staff' in response to the post-conciliar reality still gives little direction outside of general guidelines and suggested discussion strategies. One of the challenges appears to be how to effectively engage with the theological elements of the Catholic tradition in formation.

Anecdotal experience of various programs developed as 'spiritual formation' in Queensland and other Australian dioceses has indicated that where the focus remains heavily on the personal dimension, and ambivalent or 'light' on the theological dimension, the program risks remaining at the level of a 'holistic personal experience'. Where the focus leans heavily on theological input, and is light on the holistic and experiential elements, the program risks remaining a cerebral exercise. The CFP programs were designed with an awareness of the importance of both elements. Generally, the more difficult element to weave through without it becoming an informational and content laden experience is the theological component. The CFP sought to incorporate this component in three main ways:

- In the conceptual underpinning of the *Catching Fire* framework itself;
- In the developmental skills and practice of theological reflection within each separate program; and
- In the consistency of approach and articulation of key theological concepts.

8.5.5.1 Conceptual Underpinning of Catching Fire framework

The *Catching Fire* model and framework sought to provide a theological understanding of formation for mission set around the archdiocesan vision and the ministry of Catholic education. In becoming part of the CFP, all of the pilot schools committed to become familiar with the *Catching Fire* framework and its language as part of their whole staff professional learning, with further resources being provided to assist in this. Built on its theological underpinning, the framework outlines the steps in formation and the transformative purpose of formation in the Catholic tradition. It underlines shared values and shared responsibility in the Catholic educational context and articulates a connection between the personal spiritual dimension with Catholic leadership and the teacher's vocation. Finally, it identifies 'capacities' for spiritual growth that reflect enduring characteristics of Christian community. This has provided for all systemic schools a foundation for shared understanding and discussion at school and system level. It is the framework from which the programs and initiatives have been developed and thus is connected by a conceptual vision and the theological understanding that informs it.

This way of seeing the world and living in it constitutes a core belief system of reality that is shared and nurtured. In this sense alone, it poses a counter cultural challenge to a post-modern time. For, while our post modern culture tends to reject universal narratives, the reign of God is the transforming vision for those who choose to stand in the Catholic Christian tradition. And while the individual path to this reality is acknowledged and respected, the vision itself is a non-negotiable touchstone for all those choosing to be involved in the educational mission of the church. It is founded on a sacramental view of the world, nurtured in the cradle of community, strengthened by pathways of prayer, challenged in the world to do what must be done for justice sake, and reflected in the compassionate hospitality that is the hallmark of all followers of Jesus. (BCE, 2006, p. 7)

Consequently, for those participants in the CFP, there was a shared understanding articulated in the *Catching Fire* framework which provided a background for the whole staff in the school context, and knowing at the same time this was promoted as a system wide understanding. The feedback indicated strong support for this:

This is brilliant. The underpinning theology and appreciation of spirituality, spiritual formation and what might be involved in it is appreciated; the strong resolve and boldness of the plan; its grounded contemporariness; a real freshness in approach; its comprehensiveness and simply the framework itself. (Marist Spirituality Team)

I like the idea of being upfront about what we're on about. (Systemic Principal)

8.5.5.2 The Practice of Theological Reflection

Theological reflection provides the praxis with which to build meaning between personal experience and the tradition. Across the three programs in the CFP (*Keepers, SpiritFire* and *Guiding Lights*), the skill of theological reflection was a key practice. The model of theological reflection used, described as 'making faith sense,' drew on the work of Wicks (2009) and Kinast (1996). The appeal of Kinast's approach (outlined in Chapter 3.2.3) was a process that was *portable* so participants could carry it into their daily lives; *performable* so that they could translate their reflections into actions; and *communal* so they could address issues together. Drawing on lived experience as much as classic texts, and aimed at practical action rather than theoretical or abstract ideas, the simple three-fold movement in the process appeared to be appropriately adopted.

Once again, I'm amazed at what is actually in our tradition and I didn't know. I can do this (SFPGFB).

The process of discernment in theological reflection opened up a different way of approaching issues for participants. The temptation to take individual experience to the tradition in a way that reinforces prior interpretation and habitual thinking is backgrounded while a space for genuine conversation can occur. "In this process of theological reflection, we bring our experience to the tradition so that a surprising encounter can emerge" (Killen & De Beer, 1994, p. 64). It appeared to have been effective for many participants: I was a little unsure of what to expect and how this would go, but I found it very helpful – surprisingly helpful (SFPGFB).

Participants in the CFP engaged in the art of theological reflection after immersion in a stepped process of experience with prayer practices, scriptural engagement, deep listening, orthodoxy (right thinking), orthopraxis (right acting) and orthopathy (right feeling) (Rohr, 2010). The process of theological reflection was practiced individually and in small groups, so that by the time participants began the practice of theological reflection, it seemed to be an organic development in their experience.

When Y asked us did we think we would have been able to do this at the beginning of the year, we realised, no!, no way! And that was the moment I really understood how developmental formation was. I mean, I did know it was, we've been told that - but now I really get that it is. I can't believe how easily now we are able to just move into these practices. And how good it feels. (KFPGFB)

The process of deep engagement and responsive action embedded in the practice of theological reflection also mirrors the two-fold action described in the *Catching Fire* framework. The deepening of relationship with God (fire) creates a transformative space that takes one back out into the world with a new perspective.

Figure: 8.3 Catching Fire Framework Two-fold Action



This journey moving from 'My Story' through to the transformative phase of 'The Story' and being changed by that encounter is at the heart of the formation journey, and has been reflected in the perceptions of participants in the CFP programs. The findings indicate that participants made this journey, sometimes after years of being fixed in a particular way of seeing or feeling. None were more surprised than the individual themselves. One participant summed up part of her transformative experience in this way:

I have never been able to let that go – to see it differently. I'm almost stunned that I couldn't move now that I have, if that makes sense. I just feel liberated, and just why couldn't I do that before for myself. I've been to counselling; I've done the talking, but I have been carrying around a 'load of stones' and didn't even know it. (SFPGFB)

This approach to theological reflection encourages people to move "beyond knowing *about* Jesus" or "*about* scripture" or "*about* tradition" to a point where they become 'disciples' of the 'way' (Groome, 1996, p. 118). It is an approach that emphasises inner transformation over external behaviour (Kelly, 2009), rather than external practice over internal beliefs. It appears to facilitate an authentic engagement between a solid theological grounding to the participants lived experience.

8.5.5.3 Consistency in Approach and Articulation

The structure and delivery of the CFP programs and supporting resources aimed to maintain a consistency of language, messaging, and core components particularly around Scripture, Christology, Ecclesiology and Theology. The conceptual underpinning of the Catching Fire framework provided the foundation for this, and the three spiritual formation programs and resources created a consistent and firm body of understanding around those core components. Rather than being explicitly presented in a content format, the understanding is embedded in the formation experiences through process, language, choice of readings and articulation of purpose and direction.

In doing this, the focus and beginning point is firmly on the *experience* of incarnation; the *experience* of the living community; the *experience* of scripture made relevant in the present life; the *experience* of a sacramental reality. In this way, the intellectual meaning making of the tradition takes on a perspective that speaks to the experience.

I didn't understand sacrament to be so everywhere. I do see God among us, in our faces; in each other; in our stories. I only thought about the seven sacraments as we teach the kids. (SFPGFB)

Doing it this way gave me a real love of scripture. (SFPGFB)

The vocation of the Catholic educator is thus framed and understood as being animated by a spirituality that is:

- incarnational, accompanying the joys and hopes, the grief and anxieties of the people (*Gaudium et Spes*, 1965, n.1);
- paschal, affirming the promise of a bigger, deeper, everlasting reality of life even in the face of pain, diminishment and dying;
- ecclesial, nurturing the bonds of communion and community;
- gospel, deepening relationship with the one whose way sets our principles and actions;
- sacramental, developing a sacramental imagination that sees that all is sacred;
- and missional, being in the world to bring a transformative difference.

8.5.5.4 Living Theology

The importance of the experiential pathway into this understanding is highlighted eloquently by key figures in the Catholic tradition, both past and present, and their insights underline why the findings indicate this to have appeared to be so effective in the CFP. Speaking of his own transforming journey in ministry, Daniel O’Leary, priest and spiritual writer, writes:

After decades of clerical ministry, I began to realise that what people were yearning for, much more than information about the Church and its doctrines, was the actual redeeming reassurance of God in their daily lives. They wanted the experience of God more than knowledge about him. They longed for in the here and now, light in their darkness, hope in their despair, courage in their fear..the inner journey preceded the outer one (O’Leary, 2011, p. 41).

This personal narrative animates the prediction of Karl Rahner, made in the late sixties, that “The Christian of the future will be a mystic or will not exist at all” (Rahner, 1973, p. 149). A decade earlier than O’Leary, and three decades after Rahner, John Paul II expressed the same essential insight:

What the world needs now are heralds of the Gospel, who are experts in humanity, who know the depth of the human heart, who can share the joys and hopes, the agonies and distress of people, but who are, at the same time, contemplatives who have fallen in love with God. (John Paul II, 1984)

The great line of mystics in the Christian Catholic tradition have always advocated this transformative pathway, seeing the model and person of Jesus as the key. Teresa of Avila, in the fourteenth century, referred to Jesus as the doorway to the Godhead, and urged all those true seekers to follow this way: “We must look at his life – that is our best pattern” (Peers, 2002, p. 139). In doing so, language, symbol and the new imagining advocated by the foremost theologians and practitioners in the literature, is a key to linking the reality of Jesus to followers in a new time.

Jesus invited his followers to see in a radically new way. The appeal is to the imagination, to that place within us in which resides our images of reality and our images of life itself; the invitation is to a different way of seeing, to different images for shaping our understanding of life (Borg, 1994, p74).

It is the meeting of the reality of an extravagantly and unconditionally loving God (O’Leary, 2001), with the individual current reality of Catholic school staff, that the CFP seeks to facilitate.

The insitutional Church itself has been perceived to be complicit in blocking or damaging this kind of connectivity. The Australian theologian, Kelly, sums it well in his 2009 Aquinas lecture: “There is a general sense that the Church’s stance on

many issues is not a genuine search for understanding and answers rather “a mere flexing of institutional power” (Kelly, 2009). Other research (Bracken, 2004; Coughlan, 2010) has also highlighted that principals and employing authorities themselves struggle trying to separate “an authentic search for a liveable theology from the strictures of official Church policy.” In addition, there is concern that Catholic school leaders (principals) lack the sophisticated spiritual awareness and theological literacy to adequately fulfil the role of religious leadership (QCEC, 2005).

However, it seems that for the CFP participants, there has been a re-framing of their experience that allows them to accommodate the challenges and short-comings of the institutional Church enough to claim an active place in the wider Catholic community.

I feel differently about church and how I have been treated by some in the church now. It doesn't matter so much. What I have now can't be taken away. (KFCSFB)

Judging whether this can be sustained or not into the long-term future, is beyond the parameters of this study.

8.5.5.5 Situating a Values Approach

As discussed in the contextual literature, some Australian dioceses are embracing values education as an entry point to Catholic theological belief and ecclesial teaching. This development reflects increasing interest in this approach in England, Scotland and the U.S. (eg. Values for Life, Scotland, 2007; Virtues Seminars: U.S., Earl, 2008).

Such an approach is certainly supported in the literature (Branson, 2004; Earl, 2005) with the integration of formation into the broader palette of professional learning. However, the focus on values as a conduit for spiritual formation also carries a risk, and the risk is two-fold:

1. Firstly, the ‘values’ espoused can present as a generalised and reductionist mix of biblical and sociological concepts (e.g. terms from current Australian diocesan documents using the Values approach include: ‘search for wisdom and truth’; ‘community and common good’; ‘freedom from oppression’). These risk being largely indistinguishable from the general values focus promoted across Australian schools with the establishment of a *National Framework for Values Education in Australian Schools (2005)* (The values in

the National Framework includes 'care and compassion'; 'a fair go'; 'freedom'; 'integrity' and 'tolerance and inclusion').

2. Secondly, the deeper theological concepts underpinning the values risk being lost in an unbridgeable void between the more generic nature of the stated values and the more complex and rich theological and scriptural base. In recent research on the ethos of Edmund Rice schools, Tuite's findings (2007) name this very concern around clarity, direction and connection of values, ethos and formation.

Cognisant of the risk and the concerns, the choice was made in the CFP to embrace a more direct, though still integrated, theological underpinning within the program process and structure. The findings show this approach was viable, achievable and connective individually and communally.

Moreover, the story model reflects and is couched in a theological framework that provides a 'system of ideas' (Erikson, 1994) which leveraged terms and concepts already familiar to BCE school communities. To some degree, the use of this theological framework assumed enough participant acceptance of the reality of God, the person and vision of Jesus and the continuing presence of the Spirit. The ease with which participants and the broader community embraced the conceptual framing is supported by the findings of the BCE Research Project *Who's Coming to School Today?* (ACER, 2010) which showed there is still considerable traction around staff comprehension and support of Catholic culture and values. This shared alignment provided enough cultural grounding for the seeds of a genuine formation journey to take root. It is very probable that a more severely eroded culture would create a significantly greater challenge for this formative work.

8.6 Conclusion

The research findings confirm the efficacy of the design, structure and approach of the CFP for both the case participants and community of St Raphael's and for the wider pilot school communities. The various modes of data gathering used have developed a thick rich source of data that indicate over the research period a sharpening of focus and articulation of purpose and lived mission in individuals and in the school community. This movement still occurred in St Raphael's despite considerable disruptions throughout the year. The evaluative case methodology did indeed answer the questions such a qualitative study wants to know: 'How good is it?' and 'What is happening?' (Brady & Kennedy, 2003, p. 239). The constant and

iterative evaluation of the experience of the curriculum of formation revealed it was 'very good', and that what 'was happening' was indeed a developmental phasal journey that saw identifiable changes in engagement as the participant's personal narrative grew to embrace a God meta-narrative.

More than this however, the analysis of these findings illuminate ten critical elements whose presence cumulatively create a context where the experience of the participants and the influence on the school community reaches a 'critical mass' phase of genuine transformative impact. In explaining this, the three-phase 'story' model of formation has proved useful in underpinning the participants' experience. The disconfirming data served to emphasise the importance of these critical elements or tipping points in explicating the phases of the formation journey in a systemic setting. The resultant transformative phase for the individual is marked by a new way of seeing and being, with a new way of engaging with the tradition. The transformative phase for the school community is strongly characterised by the witness of the participants, self-described as 'authentic presence' in themselves and with each other.

A critique of the most recent text issued from the Vatican on Catholic education (*Educating together in Catholic Schools*, CCE, 2007), points out that the document "echoes substantial research that the proof of all formation programs is in "witness", Church-speak for "walking the talk" (McLaughlin, 2008). The findings in this research confirm this reality, giving strength to the perspectives with which Bevans (2005), Borg (1994) and Wright (2002) use to understand the Christian meta-narrative in a way that shifts the focus from dogma to relationship as the firmest pathway in recovering the 'layered universe' and 'conceptual world' of the Catholic tradition (Wright, 2002).

The findings in this research may be interpreted as confirmation that those who are involved in the work of spiritual formation in contemporary times are missionaries to a secularised people, doing the primary work of pre-evangelisation. However, this study generates a more nuanced understanding in such a missional dynamic. The findings indicate a depth and capacity for insight and connection in these participants and their community that is not captured in the established language of evangelisation and ecclesial referencing: the theological horizon in their journey is wider; the transformative rupture personally and communally is deeper; and the anchor points are more cohesive. Thus the formation work that is the focus of this

study may be more appropriately described as the work of missional re-imagining. Unbinding the layers that can obscure the heart and light of the core narrative for contemporary travellers nurtures a personal and professional witness that follows very faithfully in Jesus own footsteps who showed his brother and sister Jews a more loving and authentic way of living their own tradition.

9 CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

9.1 Introduction

This chapter reflects on the course of the study and its outcomes. The purpose of this chapter is to generate the conclusions for this research and demonstrate how the study has made original contributions to scholarship and to educational practice. The research journey is reviewed and a summary of the research findings is presented organised around the research questions. This is followed by the research conclusions and recommendations for further study.

9.2 Reviewing the Research Journey

The purpose of Catholic schools has its rationale in the evangelising mission of the Catholic church. This rationale is explained in the Vatican's Congregation for Catholic Education:

- 1977 *The Catholic School,*
- 1982 *Lay Catholics in Schools: Witnesses to Faith,*
- 1988 *The Religious Dimension of Education in a Catholic School,*
- 1988 *The Catholic School on the Threshold of the Third Millennium,*
- 2001 *Ecclesia in Oceania*

Since 1980, the Australian Catholic Church has experienced a decline in church practice. This has been exacerbated by a decline in clergy numbers and therefore presence and leadership among Catholic faith communities, as well as a decline in perceived authority and integrity due to the clergy abuse revelations and a decline in adherence to particular Church teachings (Dixon, 2006; McLaughlin, 2000c; 2002; 2006).

For Catholic Education, the decline in religious vocations has generated the gradual disappearance of religious in schools and the accompanying increase in lay people staffing and leading Catholic schools. The particular style of "monastic" formation which priests sisters and brothers experienced is inappropriate to the formation needs of contemporary laity (Dixon, 2005; Hansen, 2000).

With the decline of vowed religious, the majority of staff in Catholic schools are lay people, comprising the generations of Baby Boomers, Gen X and Gen Y. The research concludes that these stratifications hold differing values and beliefs,

personally and professionally (Rymarz, 2002; Dixon, 2006). Formation experiences that were appropriate are no longer relevant for contemporary staff.

These important changes have generated issues for staffing that are presenting with more urgency. The issue of spiritual formation for staff in Catholic schools is a perennial nation-wide challenge (Canavan, 1990). In Queensland, the QCEC policy Statement on Senior Leadership Positions of 2000 sought to strengthen the religious dimension of Catholic leadership by identifying it as an essential criterion for those aspiring to senior leadership positions in Queensland Catholic schools. The provision of formation is also embedded in role descriptions for teaching staff (BCE 2001, 2004; QCEC 2005). This is the research problem that this thesis addresses.

It has addressed this by the developing and trialling of an adult spiritual formation initiative entitled *Catching Fire Project* (CFP). The research has explored the experience of CFP on educators in a Catholic diocesan educational setting. The study has interrogated both individual experience and community influence in the curriculum of formation strategies.

The theoretical foundation for CFP emanated from a synthesis of three interrelated scholarly disciplines (Chapter 3):

- Spirituality and Adult Formation;
- Workplace Learning and Adult Education; and
- Mission and Vocation.

Their interlocking dynamic is illustrated in the conceptual framework (Chapter 3.1.1). The scholarship, insights and synergies across these areas not only explicated the issues around the research problem, but also generated the research questions and provided a lens for interpreting the findings.

Consequently, two specific research questions were generated from a synthesis of the literature review. These focused the conduct of this study:

1. How do participants perceive their experience in the *Catching Fire Project* (CFP)?
2. How does the *Catching Fire Project* (CFP) influence the school community?

9.3 Research Design

Since the study is exploring perceptions of staff as they engage in a systemic initiative it invited an interpretivist research design. This interpretative research has engaged the epistemological framework of constructionism and the theoretical perspective of symbolic interactionism because such lenses entertain a focus on participant experience and meaning making. It offered the researcher opportunities to share in the participants' professional and personal lives by observing, listening, questioning and interpreting the meaning teachers gave to their experiences.

The research methodology adopted was an evaluative case study, incorporating the illuminative model of evaluation (Parlett & Hamilton 1972) which ensured the unique process and nature of individual meaning making was recognised as richly as possible. In-depth interviews, an open questionnaire, documentary analysis and participant observation were the data gathering strategies adopted. The result of this methodological approach was a more integrated understanding of the whole than might otherwise have been possible.

The pilot schools involved in the CFP are the sites for this study. The case school is located in the western suburbs of the Brisbane metropolitan area. Nine additional schools in the pilot program are scattered across the Archdiocese and are comprised of primary and secondary, urban and country, small and large schools.

The overview and outline of the CFP initiative and its components provided an understanding of the structure of engagement for participants as well as the local setting.

Finally, the generation of a theoretical framework to underpin an understanding of participant experience in the spiritual formation project at the centre of this study offers a staged narrative model. Together with the literature review, they provide the twin lens for interpreting the findings.

9.4 Limitations of the Research

The research has been concerned with gaining a deep understanding of the meaning making as individuals and communities experienced the CFP. The schools involved are Catholic schools and, as such, have an explicit and implicit value system that is assumed. While the reality from other studies (Crotty, 2003; McLaughlin, 2000) suggests that across the general community, there is a high

degree of ambivalence and a questionable degree of lived acceptance of these values. However, the value system in this local community is clearly identified and supported by the Catholic educational community as a whole, and this is an important contextual factor for staff participants in the CFP. While the research is limited by the number of participants with whom it was possible to engage in the study, this limitation was addressed by the diversity of participants and the tools used in the research design itself.

The researcher is aware that her own professional and personal background has a bearing on both the choice of research area and the particular perspective she brought to it as it unfolded. The need to “systematically reflect on who he or she is in the inquiry and be sensitive to his or her personal biography and how it shapes the study” (Creswell, 2003, p.182) has been addressed. The researcher was aware of needing to engage her own professionalism and self-reflective tools, including the use of an external person in the role as a ‘peer de-briefer’ or ‘critical friend’ during the research. This kept in check her role as researcher (Creswell, 2003; Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

The researcher’s own professional relationship with the participants in general is also acknowledged. The researcher is conscious of the possible bias and influence this may have on the research findings (Gillham, 2005). The choice of multiple data collection techniques has minimised the researcher’s bias in the collection and analysis stages. Every effort has been made to ensure that while the rapport with participants maximised the capacity for gathering rich thick data, it did not detract from the validity of the data.

Finally, the research provides a snapshot of the available data from a specific group taken over a defined period of time. It does not provide a longitudinal study of the sustainability of changed meaning and behaviour, and no generalisability beyond the boundaries of this case is claimed. However, the research strategies employed, consistent with their epistemological and theoretical underpinnings, allowed for rich thick description of perspectives developed over an extended time period and generates a synthesised interpretation. The reader will derive their own meaning and transference from the research findings presented for the case.

9.5 Research Questions Addressed

The findings suggest that the spiritual development of Catholic educators can be understood in a 'Story' framework. The narrative model reflected in the findings included three identified phases:

- My Story: the self-engagement phase
- Our Story: the mutual engagement phase
- The Story: the transformative engagement phase

These phases operated in an iterative rather than a linear way, so that participants continued to re-visit their own story as they engaged in the meta-narrative. These phases mirrored the journey that the participants experienced over the twelve months of their participation in the CFP. Within each phase, several themes and sub-themes were identified such as 'Seekers after something,' 'Reclaiming story' and 'Establishing personal practice.' These themes and subthemes emanated from the ongoing analysis of the data. During the final stage of data analysis, a further synthesis generated the issues for discussion.

The research subsequently concluded that there were several key elements in the structure and process of the CFP that were pivotal in its effectiveness. The presence of these elements critically influenced the personal transformational experience of participants and the strategic community influence of the core group. The discussion of the findings, through the twin lenses of the literature review and the 'story' model of formation, revealed ten issues that have emerged as pivotal elements in maximising the impact of individual experience in the CFP and strategic influence within the community. The findings thus respond directly to the research questions identified at the beginning of the research.

The research problem identified at the beginning of the study and the consequent review of the contextual and scholarly literature led to the formulation of two research questions. The research questions are:

Research Question 1:

How do participants perceive their experience the *Catching Fire* Project (CFP)?

Research Question 2:

How does the *Catching Fire* Project (CFP) influence the school community?

The research questions are closely related, linking the perceived experience and change that occurred within the participants to the influencing change within the school community context.

9.5.1 Research Question 1

How do participants perceive their experience the *Catching Fire Project* (CFP)?

The first research question sought to understand how participants perceived their experience of the CFP in order to clarify whether the structures and processes had any influence on their personal spiritual growth and identity as a Catholic school educator. If so, the research sought to know which aspects of the CFP were key in facilitating effective change. The staff participants in the case school and the other pilot schools strongly reflected that personal experience is essential for significant and sustained change in meaning making and behaviour. Personal experience is formed in personal story, and all participants shared the impact of having focus on their own story as a fundamental and deeply connective touchstone. The structuring of the programs to participants' vocational setting allowed for the translation into the next phase – the mutual engagement phase - the story of the school, of Catholic education and of the broader church. The iterative nature of the journey through these two phases prepared participants for connection to the God meta-narrative. This constituted the transformative stage as participants experienced connective points between their own story and this meta-narrative. The consequence for the participants was a perception that their individual story was held in a deeper and wider way, giving it enhanced meaning.

Because the meaning making was re-framed over a period of time, and supported with strategies to embed the resultant changes in behaviour, the perceived changes were sustained. The strategies included the exposure to a range of prayer styles, writers and journaling along with ongoing contact and the use of systemic resources that reflected a head heart and hands engagement. The educative focus on holistic learning, and learner readiness, also reflected in the tradition of spiritual formation, was embedded in the processes. The educative focus on reflective practice in professional learning was used as a prior learning strategy to develop the practice of theological reflective praxis. Finally, attention to the world of language and symbol found an important place.

In this journey, the research identified five key elements in the structures and processes of the CFP that together created a transformative experience for individual participants. The following summarises each element and the powerful learning about it for spiritual formation in a contemporary context:

- **Participatory Culture:**
Formation is fostered through a sustained invitational approach that develops a culture of participation.
- **Professional Relevance:**
Formation is most effective and sustained when it is contexted in the everyday personal and professional vocational reality of the participant.
- **Holistic Design:**
Formation is powerfully facilitated by the experiential dimension of an holistic approach
- **Time Factors:**
Spiritual formation requires inclusion of chronological time away from the school environment facilitating a unique qualitative experience of time. This 'kairos' time experience is fundamental to growth and sustainability.
- **Connecting with Tradition:**
In the current context for spiritual formation, the contemporising of key elements of traditional Catholic formation provides a powerful conduit for connection.

So clearly did these elements form as pivotal factors in the findings, that it is the belief of the researcher that the absence of any one of them would have greatly compromised the effectiveness of the total formation initiative.

9.5.2 Research Question 2

How does the *Catching Fire* Project (CFP) influence the school community?

Formation is contextual. In the Catholic school context, the personal, the interpersonal and the communal come together in quite unique ways. This second research question sought to clarify whether the CFP had any influence on the broader school staff community, and if so, what aspects of the CFP were significant in its influence.

The educational mission of Catholic Christian schools gives witness to the gospel and the integration of faith, life and culture through both curriculum and people within the community. Spiritual formation of staff (leaders, teachers, support personnel

and central office personnel) is thus central to the core work and purpose of Catholic schools. This is well sourced in both ecclesial documents and systemic policy.

However, the contemporary context of the wider post-modern culture and ecclesial milieu present significant challenges for Australian Catholic school educators and employing authorities. In Australian culture in particular, there is a strongly defended egalitarian theme where one person's position and meaning-making has no more importance than another's 'story-choice'. This provides a robust scaffold for post-modern individualism. At the same time, the links to the cultural world of Catholicism through direct experience in a parish are much less strong than they were 50 years ago. For many Catholics now, (adults and children), "the face of Christ in the school is the only face of Christ they will encounter, at least the only encounter with Christ that makes any sense to them" (Treston, 1998, p. 70). This is an immense responsibility for a predominantly lay staff. In sum, cultural fragmentation is the societal motif against the background of an increasingly centrist Church leadership. These worlds collide in the reality of the Catholic school setting.

In addition to the pressures presented by the changing cultural and ecclesial contexts, the many competing priorities, shifting agendas and accountabilities in contemporary education can easily threaten the broader, long term planning needed to adequately address the spiritual formation of staff in Catholic schools. These include the challenge of succession planning; the need for intentional formation of a new generation of leaders, as well as the changing staff demographic working within Catholic education.

In this context, new ways are needed for authentic formation work to be delivered. The delivery, from a systemic point of view, is required to be strategic, cohesive and aligned with the educational setting in which staff communities exist. Many opportunities for spiritual and faith formation trialled over the last thirty years have tended to be seen as optional extras, luxuries in the day to day pressure of school demands. Re-framing formation as a core component of professional learning with a solid theological underpinning connected to the ethos and mission of Catholic education requires a shift in strategic vision and planning. In addition, previous research indicates that the singular experience of an individual is easily lost once back in the relentless pace that is school life. Sustainability in our contemporary context is a huge challenge. In the CFP initiative therefore, the principles identified in the literature around professional learning communities and communities of

practice were utilised to create a critical mass within the staff community who generated change within the culture. Finally, the role of leaders in attending to their own formation appears to be critical in the nurturing of staff formation and community culture and ethos. The experience of the CFP strongly authenticated this reality.

The research identified five key elements in the structures and processes of the CFP that together created a transformative influence within the school community. The following summarises each of these elements and the powerful learning about them for spiritual formation in a contemporary context:

- **Companioning**
Spiritual Formation has greater sustainable influence in community when individual confidence and capacity is supported in partnership by a core group sharing the vision and praxis
- **Modelling in Community**
The authentic modelling of individual learnings and experience in spiritual formation is a transparent and powerful catalyst for change in the community.
- **Strategic Alignment**
Spiritual formation has sustained influence when it is connected to the language, structures and processes of mission and vision, annual goal setting and strategic renewal.
- **School Leadership**
School leadership that reflects an authentic engagement itself in spiritual formation is critical for the effective embedding of staff formation, and the growing of a spiritual ethos and culture in the school community.
- **Theological Underpinnings**
Spiritual formation that is anchored in a clear theological foundation reflected in the formation process and content, and the key messages around mission and evangelisation, captures a strong alignment in communal meaning-making.

In the context of the need for a strategic approach for the work of spiritual formation in a Catholic educational setting, these elements proved pivotal. As with the first five elements, it is the belief of the researcher that the absence of any one of these would have compromised the influence of the CFP in the school community.

9.6 Conclusions of the Study

The following conclusions offer an explanation of the key findings about the experience and influence of the CFP.

9.6.1 Contributions to New Knowledge

There are a number of conclusions generated from this research that contribute new knowledge.

Personal Authenticity

This thesis concludes that personal meaningfulness has far more influence on the sustainability of spiritual formation experiences than other factors including system compliance. More than in any other era before it, the people of the post-modern era demand personal meaningfulness in experiences. Loyalty, community, commitment and spiritual seeking are not extinct in the post-modern Australian generations – they are rather expressed in distinctly different ways from their predecessors. More than ever, Gen X, Gen Y and Gen Z call for authentic witness – a person they can trust; a story they can believe in; experience that speaks to them.

Any contemporary approach to spiritual formation must address this personal requirement for authenticity. The post-modern experience dictates that if this primacy of personal authenticity is not respected, it is highly unlikely that there will be any openness to what follows. Conversely, if personal authenticity *is* respected, there is likely to be increased openness to what is on offer.

Spiritual Capital

The second conclusion that offers new knowledge concerns the generation of spiritual capital within a community. In particular, this study illustrates how the growth of personal spiritual beliefs and practices can influence the spiritual capacity of the broader community culture.

Yet, as Catholic education systems seek to become more mission effective, the concern for the development of spiritual capital has become intense. The participant experience of the CFP indicates that the formation program approach delivers all the elements of the ‘inspirational pedagogy’ (Grace, 2002) that is required for personal spiritual growth, practice and belief. The adoption of principles of professional learning communities and communities of practice to the nurturing of spiritual formation in the broader school culture created an iterative dynamic between the individual and the community. This delivered both individual and cultural change that was sustained over the prolonged period of research.

Peer Companionship

The third conclusion that generates new knowledge concerns the capability of staff to develop formation skills for both the routine context of school life and for facilitating quality spiritual formation experiences for others. This has both cultural and educative implications. The application of skills and attitudes learned in the CFP programs to the everyday routine of school life has shown potential to influence the wider community culture. In particular, it contributes to building a culture of trust. This in turn is a critical component in creating effective professional learning communities. In addition to this flow-on effect in the educative domain, the development of participants' personal spiritual growth and their facilitation skills developed both confidence and capacity in providing spiritual formation opportunities for their peers within and across schools. This has implications for long-term sustainability in the provision of formation with a new mode of delivery that moves away from a 'team of experts' model and towards a peer-companionship approach.

Missional Leadership

The fourth conclusion that offers a contribution to new knowledge concerns the intersection of a theological re-imagining of mission in the contemporary world with the function of religious leadership in Catholic schools. The concept of a missional imaginary (Bevans, 2009; Phan, 2006) provides a perspective on evangelisation that redirects it from a concern for maintenance towards a mindset for engagement. This shift signifies a tension between the ecclesial expression around mission and evangelisation and the theological scholarship in these areas. Theologically, the challenge is to embrace a missional approach that is about community, humanity and a transformative invitation to fullness of life. In the Christian framework of making a better world through witness and action, there is alignment with the concept of the contemporary learning organisation which involves transformational change or *metanoia* in the leaders and people of the community "so that they can become who they are meant to be" (Senge, 1990, p. 13). Given the confluence of these elements in the Catholic school context, it seems that "the idea of a missioned and empowered people is most applicable to the Catholic education reality" (Mulligan, 1994, p. 76).

Moreover, across the leadership literature, there is a growing sense of the need for co-leadership to drive mission in Catholic education: "...this is best done when the

partners in Catholic education, personally and collectively, live out their own vision of Catholic education in its wholeness” (Grace & O’Keefe, 2007, p. 127). Thus the emerging conceptualisation around mission has resonance with leadership constructs in Catholic schools that seek to model authentic community, transformative engagement and an inclusive vision.

9.6.2 Contributions to Theory

There are conclusions generated from this research that contribute to theory.

Integration of Living

The thesis concludes that personal and professional meaning-making are integrative experiences each nurturing the other. The integration of spiritual formation with lifelong learning theory offered an insight to participants concerning the holistic dynamics of living where the sacred and profane are arbitrary distinctions. Spiritual formation is focussed on the nurturing of authentic human living.

Application of Learning Theory

The second conclusion that contributes to theory concerns the appropriate application of learning theory to the processes of spiritual formation. The diversity inherent in adult learners underlines the need for a holistic approach that honours the variety of starting points in any group of learners and the primacy of experiential learning. The CFP programs were designed to be directly relevant to participants professionally as well as personally. The narrative model developed to underpin participant experience also allows for, but does not prescribe, developmental steps or set pathways. There is flexibility in the process that accommodates points of catalyst and points of rest. The CFP approach also recognises the importance of community in how learning and growth takes place and is sustained in practice, and leveraged this to effect personal and community change.

Application of Critical Mass Theory

This thesis concludes that critical mass theory can be appropriately adopted to understand the dynamic of change facilitation in a Catholic school setting. The experience of participants itself was the catalyst for them to understand the importance of strategic thinking about the place of spiritual formation. It became clear to them how critical this kind of formation was for leadership across Catholic schools, and in fostering the culture of school communities

9.6.3 Contributions to Practice

There are conclusions generated from this research that contribute to practice.

Reflective Praxis

This thesis concludes that reflective praxis in a range of forms is a key component of spiritual formation that has useful application in the variety of teaching and leading contexts of a Catholic school. The narrative model generated in this study integrates reflective praxis as an inbuilt dimension, involving self-companioning as well as peer companioning and leader companioning. Theological reflection, journaling and 'circle of trust' skills were found to offer useful and innovative applications in maintaining focus, reviewing processes, managing issues and relationships in the school setting. A consequence of this may be that these tools in reflective praxis may be more appropriate than the range of corporate tools available.

Targetted Design Structure and Strategies

The second conclusion that offers a contribution to practice is the need for a contemporary approach to spiritual formation to be targeted and context relevant. The shaping of programs in the CFP, tailor-made for the key professional or vocational roles of Catholic school staff, proved to be most effective. This meant that the practices learned in the formation programs were easily adopted into work life, and the programs themselves gained traction because of participants' perception of their day to day relevance.

9.6.4 Contributions to Policy

There are conclusions generated from this research that contribute to Policy.

Strategic Sustainability

This thesis concludes that strategic sustainability requires an intentional focus on leadership development and staff capacity that sees spiritual formation as a joint responsibility and collaboration between the individual, the school and the system. At the level of school community, the active witness of leadership and the nurturing of a core group or critical mass among staff are key strategic drivers in school community sustainability. An implication of the development of staff to co-facilitate spiritual formation experiences across the system is the need for appropriate recognition of this contribution.

School Identity

One of the outcomes of the CFP journey for participants was addressing childhood and/or child-like understandings with a new way of seeing that reframed institutional realities and experience. There is real need for Church and Catholic educational authorities to properly reflect on the decline of parish as the primary place where Christian community is formed and experienced, and affirm the identity of the school community as such a place.

A Culture of Expectation

Strategic thinking around how formation is appropriately embedded in both the professional learning continuum for Catholic school staff, and the community culture of the Catholic school context, is essential for sustainable traction. Developing a culture of expectation around formation in a systemic setting requires a re-framing that sees spiritual formation as an essential part of professional learning for all staff, in all roles, from induction to leadership extension, and part of the strategic thinking and planning at all levels. Thus, the alignment with leadership, strategic renewal and professional learning frameworks is crucial if spiritual formation is to develop systemic sustainability.

9.7 Originality of the Research

The research is original and significant in a number of key aspects.

This study has addressed a current need in the provision of appropriate formation for Catholic educators. Little research has been conducted in this area. The introduction to the dissertation acknowledged the multi-dimensional nature of the challenge in providing appropriate spiritual formation within contemporary diocesan Catholic education systems. The research conclusions indicate that these dimensions are personal, ecclesial and systemic. The CFP approach illustrates the importance of addressing all three of these dimensions so that spiritual formation is personally meaningful, ecclesially faithful and strategically sustainable. In so doing, it makes an original and significant contribution to knowledge and practice in this area.

The research has applied and extended learning theory to the development of a contemporary approach to spiritual formation in a Catholic education setting. Such an undertaking is both original and significant. The couching of spiritual formation in the language of lifelong learning and transformation had a natural alignment with key messages in the professional understanding of staff in this study. In this way, the personal and professional meaning-making happened in an iterative way, each fostering the other. The adoption of principles and best practice in professional learning also provided an authentic framework for workplace change and culture shaping. An important consequence of this approach for participants in this study was a shift in understanding spiritual formation as core business, rather than an optional extra.

The research is significant in that it is a pioneering initiative of lay people addressing the needs of other lay people in the provision of spiritual formation. In so doing, it explores how adults journey in their spirituality and make meaning in their lives, illuminating best practice in contemporary design and strategic approach. Further, it has system significance because it explores the effects of an initiative designed to address spiritual formation for Catholic mission in a strategic system-wide context.

Finally, the study has generated a new model for spiritual formation that assists practitioners to design appropriate spiritual formation initiatives in their own contexts. Amplifying the depth and power of narrative, the journey design resonates with both the core of Catholic tradition and with a post-modern, individualistic, experiential context. It is therefore important for two reasons – because it makes an original and significant contribution to the scholarly research and in the practical real world.

9.8 Recommendations

The following recommendations identify possible courses of action to bring clarity and closer agreement to understandings of mission and role. The strategic integration of spiritual formation within a system requires the development of a culture of expectation around spiritual formation as core business in leadership and teacher development. In the encouragement of such a culture the following recommendations are offered in the key areas of policy and practice.

9.8.1 Policy

It is recommended:

1. That the undertaking of formation programs are part of and attract significant recognition and accreditation for teacher and leadership pathways
2. That clear system policy be developed situating spiritual formation centrally in leadership preparation and development. The policy ought provide a shared understanding of the assumptions, principles, approach and parameters of spiritual formation for all stakeholders
3. That spiritual formation is promoted as a joint responsibility between the individual, the school and the system. Not all formation occurs within the school context for individuals, and it is not the responsibility of the system to provide all spiritual formation opportunities for staff. Individual schools also have appropriate responsibility for the carriage of other formation initiatives.
4. That spiritual formation be regarded as mandatory for leadership preparation and ongoing development, and appropriate guidelines for this be developed
5. That spiritual formation be explicitly integrated into induction and succession processes, strategic renewal and leadership frameworks
6. That spiritual formation be re-framed as an essential part of professional learning for all staff, in all roles.

9.8.2 Strategic Practice

It is recommended:

1. That guidelines be developed to ensure all spiritual formation initiatives be underpinned by contemporary theory, reflective and experiential learning, access to best practice, and relate to the individual's professional and personal world.
2. That spiritual formation be undertaken within a whole community approach as the most effective strategic way to address spiritual formation of staff and influence school culture in a sustainable way. The development of a critical mass within the school community is the key to this.
3. That a system wide capacity is developed through the active nurturing of 'graduates' of formation programs, who are able to co-facilitate spiritual formation initiatives in a variety of contexts within their school and across the community of schools.

4. That spiritual formation be extended into the parent community. The literature indicates that for Gen Y and Z, parents are a very strong influence. However, the 2010 Brisbane research (ACER, 2010) also confirmed that many parents are disconnected from the Christian meta-narrative. Appropriate spiritual formation initiatives may help address this.

9.9 Implications for Further Development and Research

The research findings signal challenges for further development in the CFP initiative, and also invite further study in specific areas.

The major challenge for a continued systemic roll-out of the CFP initiative is the task of sustainability at the individual and school community level. Key issues are:

- Staff movement between schools may hinder the maintenance of a critical mass among staff and stifle the embedding of communal change
- The continuing pace and magnitude of mandated educational and organisational issues may overpower leadership priorities and staff culture
- The maintenance of skills may be inhibited by a lack of opportunities to practice in other contexts and with other groups
- The natural complexity of a large organisation which is itself in the midst of major structural change may mean implementation strategies are protracted

The findings also invite further study in the following specific areas:

- A need to further understand personal and professional sustainability invites a longitudinal study of the participants involved in this research
- Given the findings indicate the efficacy of the formation approach for Catholic school educators, it would be a worthy focus for future research to explore its use with other related groups (e.g. parents, BCE Office staff)
- A need is identified that invites further exploration of the role of spiritual formation in leadership development for senior staff
- The links evident between spiritual formation and positive psychology around meaning-making as a mechanism for well-being invite further study

9.10 Summation

Spiritual formation is a “sleeping giant” for Catholic education. While it is still perceived by many in system leadership as the soft edge of professional

development, the reality is authentic spiritual formation is probably the most confronting and challenging journey leaders and educators can undertake. It calls for courage to own that formation is not just informational learning or compliant action – it is deeply personal and radically communal. The creation of a contemporary approach to spiritual formation that is both faithful to the evangelising mission of the Church and responsive to the personal worlds of individuals calls us to be creative and practical; to re-imagine traditional approaches and to recover core realities. The challenge here is not whether such a re-imagination is possible, but whether it finds its place in the current ecclesial, cultural and educational landscape.

The research indicates that the approach to spiritual formation in the CFP has been transformative, impacting every part of participants' lives, personal and professional. The strategic approach reflects in substance and process, both the core elements of the Catholic spiritual tradition and sound current theological and educational practice, and demonstrates a capacity to meet the contemporary context of the adult catholic educator. In so doing it holds in creative balance the tension between respectfulness for the individual spiritual journey and systemic needs and expectations. It thus bridges the meaning making of personal narrative and the mission shaping of the Christian meta-narrative in a way that maintains a deep integrity with both. Most of all, it proclaims the transformative reality we are called to in its deepest sense, drawing mission and meaning together in a divine fusion.

Then you will say the last word,
the only word
that abides and that one never forgets.
Then, when all is silent in death
and I have learned and suffered my last.
Then will begin the great silence, in which you alone resound,
You who are Word from eternity to eternity.
Then all human words will be dumb.
Being and knowing, knowing and experiencing,
will be all the same:
'I will know as I am known',
will understand what you have always said to me,
namely yourself.
No human word, no image and no concept
will ever stand between me and you;
you yourself will be
the one joyful word of love and life
that fills all the spheres of my soul.

(Karl Rahner March 1984)

APPENDICES

APPENDIX A: HUMAN RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE APPROVAL LETTER

Human Research Ethics Committee

Committee Approval Form

Principal Investigator/Supervisor: Dr Denis McLaughlin Brisbane Campus
Co-Investigators: Brisbane Campus
Student Researcher: Ms Jill Gowdie Brisbane Campus

Ethics approval has been granted for the following project:
Catching Fire: Exploring a Contemporary Approach to Spiritual Formation for
Catholic Educators
for the period: 23 April 2007 to 30 September 2007
Human Research Ethics Committee (HREC) Register Number: Q200607 10


The following standard conditions as stipulated in the *National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Research Involving Humans* (1999) apply:

- (i) that Principal Investigators / Supervisors provide, on the form supplied by the Human Research Ethics Committee, annual reports on matters such as:
 - security of records
 - compliance with approved consent procedures and documentation
 - compliance with special conditions, and
- (ii) that researchers report to the HREC immediately any matter that might affect the ethical acceptability of the protocol, such as:
 - proposed changes to the protocol
 - unforeseen circumstances or events
 - adverse effects on participants

The HREC will conduct an audit each year of all projects deemed to be of more than minimum risk. There will also be random audits of a sample of projects considered to be of minimum risk on all campuses each year.

Within one month of the conclusion of the project, researchers are required to complete a *Final Report Form* and submit it to the local Research Services Officer.

If the project continues for more than one year, researchers are required to complete an *Annual Progress Report Form* and submit it to the local Research Services Officer within one month of the anniversary date of the ethics approval.



Signed:

Date: 23 April 2007

APPENDIX B: RESEARCH REQUEST TO BCE

Mr David Hutton

Executive Director

Brisbane Catholic Education

243 Gladstone Rd

Dutton Park 4001.

24.04.07

Dear Mr Hutton

I write to seek approval to conduct research in one of the Catholic schools of the Brisbane Archdiocese. This research is to be conducted over the course of the next three terms and would involve the staff of Our Lady of the Rosary Catholic Primary School at Kenmore.

I have received approval from the ACU Ethics Committee, where I am undertaking doctoral studies. Confirmation of this is included in the accompanying documents.

Three folders accompany this letter. Each folder contains copies of all required documents as requested.

These include:

- Application to BCE to Conduct Research
- Application to ACU seeking Ethics Approval
- Outline of Research Design, Methodology and Objectives
- Open-ended Interview Schedule and Focus Group Process
- Open-ended Survey
- Letter to Principal seeking Approval to Conduct Research
- Information Letter for Staff
- Consent Form
- Confidential Declaration by Principal Researcher
- Agreement to provide Research Findings to BCE
- Agreement to adhere to BCE Personal Conduct Code

I look forward to your response in the near future.

Yours sincerely

Jill Gowdie

37 Gardner St

Nundah 4012

APPENDIX C: RESEARCH REQUEST TO CASE SCHOOL PRINCIPAL

Mr David Greig

Principal

Our Lady of the Rosary School

1 Kenmore Rd, Kenmore 4069

21 April 2007

Dear David

I write to you to request approval to conduct research with your staff at Our Lady of the Rosary Catholic Primary School Kenmore.

The research itself is concerned with the implementation of the strategic approach to spiritual formation being introduced and piloted this year by Brisbane Catholic Education.

The research period will span term 2 through to term 4 and while it will involve all staff to some degree, there will be particular focus on those involved in the range of targeted programmes and initiatives over the year. Those staff involved in the targeted programmes will be invited to participate in two interviews over the data gathering period (term 2- term 4), in addition to journaling and informal conversation during the targeted programme period. All staff will be invited to participate in an open-ended survey administered twice over the data gathering period. Finally, six staff members will be invited to be part of a focus group which

There will be no parent participation sought, nor student participation sought, in this research project. Participation by staff will remain invitational and they may withdraw that participation at any time.

I believe this is an exciting piece of research to be involved with, at an exciting time of exploration around the whole area of spiritual formation. It is my hope that you and your staff might share this view.

David, I look forward to your response.

Yours sincerely

Jill Gowdie

Principal Researcher

Doctoral Studies

School of Educational Leadership

ACU, Banyo Campus.

APPENDIX D: INFORMATION LETTER TO STAFF

INFORMATION LETTER FOR STAFF

TITLE OF PROJECT: *CATCHING FIRE*: EXPLORING A CONTEMPORARY APPROACH TO SPIRITUAL FORMATION FOR CATHOLIC EDUCATORS

PRINCIPAL SUPERVISOR: DR. DENIS MCLAUGHLIN

STUDENT RESEARCHER: JILL GOWDIE

DOCTORAL PROGRAMME: BANYO CAMPUS

Dear Participant,

You are invited to participate in a research project which explores a contemporary strategic approach to spiritual formation for Catholic educators within a school setting. The study aims to illuminate an understanding of the experience of Catholic school staff in the strategic implementation of a pilot programme of formation – *Catching Fire*. Specifically, it aims to provide information about how participants perceive the *Catching Fire* Programme (CFP), and how the *Catching Fire* Programme (CFP) influences the school community.

The research will be carried out over terms 2, 3 and 4 of 2007. It will include:

- An open-ended questionnaire for all staff. This will be undertaken during a regular staff meeting in term 2 and again in term 4.
- Informal conversation with randomly selected members from the wider staff group. This will occur within the day to day school context and the targeted programmes, at random, over the course of the 3 terms.
- Audio taped interviews with those participants involved in the targeted programme initiatives. These interviews will be 30 minutes duration, and will be undertaken at school during school time in terms 2 and again in term 4.
- Journaling by participants in the targeted programme initiatives. This will occur in allocated times of 1 to 5 minutes during those programmes, and participants will be invited to continue to journal between gatherings.
- Finally, a focus group will be formed mainly comprising staff involved in the targeted initiatives across the year. Meetings of this group will be of one hour's duration during school time and will be audiotaped.

As researcher, I will also be making my own observation notes during the course of the targeted programme initiatives in which a number of staff will be involved.

The expected benefit to participants is access for well supported spiritual formation, as well as offering a space which gives voice to participants needs, perceptions and experience in this area. More generally, this research will make a valuable contribution to critically understand appropriate formation strategies for contemporary Catholic educators. While there are a number of quality studies amplifying the dissonance between the ecclesial expectation and personal reality of Catholic educators, little has yet been done to explore an appropriate approach to

spiritual formation for contemporary Catholic educators that is connective, effective and relevant. This research is important in its contribution to that exploration. Appropriate feedback will be provided to all participants in this research study.

Cooperation in this study will not place you at any risk personally or professionally. All data collected will be treated with the strictest confidence, and confidentiality of individual participation and contribution will be maintained in data collection, analysis and any report or publication arising from this research. You are free to refuse consent to participate in this research without giving any reason for your refusal. You are able to withdraw consent and discontinue participation in the study at any time without having to justify that decision.

Any questions or concerns regarding this project should be directed to the Principal Supervisor, Dr Denis McLaughlin and the Student Researcher, Jill Gowdie.

Dr. D. McLaughlin

Jill Gowdie

On telephone number 0736237154

On telephone number 0438817682

School of Educational Leadership

OR

School of Educational Leadership

This study has been approved by the Human Research Ethics Committee at Australian Catholic University.

In the event that you have any complaint or concern about the way you have been treated during the study, or if you have any query that the Research Supervisor and Student Researcher have not been able to satisfy, you may write to the Chair of the Human Research Ethics Committee care of the nearest branch of the Research Services Unit. Any complaint or concern will be treated in confidence and fully investigated. The participant will be informed of the outcome.

Chair, HREC

C/O Research Services

Australian Catholic University

Brisbane Campus

PO Box 456

Virginia QLD 4014

Tel: 07 3623 7429

Fax: 07 3623 7328

If you agree to participate in this project, please sign both copies of the Consent Form, retain one copy for your records and return the other copy to the Supervisor or Student Researcher.

Principal Supervisor

Student Researcher

APPENDIX E: CONSENT FORM FOR STAFF

CONSENT FORM

TITLE OF PROJECT: *CATCHING FIRE*: EXPLORING A CONTEMPORARY APPROACH TO SPIRITUAL FORMATION FOR CATHOLIC EDUCATORS

PRINCIPAL SUPERVISOR: DR. DENIS MCLAUGHLIN

STUDENT RESEARCHER: JILL GOWDIE

I (the participant) have read (or, where appropriate, have had read to me) and understand the information provided in the Letter to Participants. Any questions I have asked have been answered to my satisfaction. I agree to participate in the data gathering activities where and when required over terms 2, 3 and 4 of 2007. I realise I can withdraw my consent at any time without any adverse consequence either personally or professionally. I agree that research data collected for the study may be published or may be provided to other researchers in a form that does not identify me in any way.

NAME OF PARTICIPANT:

.....

(block letters)

SIGNATURE: DATE:

SIGNATURE OF PRINCIPAL SUPERVISOR:

.....

DATE:

SIGNATURE OF STUDENT RESEARCHER:

.....

DATE:

APPENDIX F: PARTICIPANT OBSERVATION EXCERPTS

Journal notes

Just finished the session at Kenmore. I think I probably want to record that I come away from all of these meetings with staff just energised and even humbled really at what has opened up for them and what kind of things are rippling out from their initial experience and then how they've interpreted that experience for their own lives and for their professional lives. And what kinds of things are happening.. I suppose some of those things would be the impact of that street experience for Dave to be so sustaining and even after he's been on renewal leave most of which was taken up with a world tour. The fact that he would come back to this says something about the strength of the experience for him - and he's now acting on a hope that his own staff and parent community will take it up too.

I think the importance of the sustainability Deb raised tells us something. That she hasn't needed to read her letter....that having 'a dose of me' as she put it meant that she didn't require it, she didn't need it. I responded to her by saying 'you know, perhaps my being there simply reminds you of the treasure that's already in you, rather than it being me.' And I think that that's what it is in reality. I'm just the sign that points to her own deep and sacred experience and that sign is the sustainability and we need to build that in. I think the companioning of this group as it goes forward is a smart way to go.

Trudy always has a wise and considered view and I really value that. It's particularly valuable I think in this case because Trudy has an APRE and an APA background and yet she's not been involved directly in the formation programme. So she's come on board as an on-looker and she will probably have come on board with all kinds of questions about that. The things that she observes I would put great store by. So the fact that she is observing a greater engagement and a sense of presence of the staff in staff prayer fire, the fact that she has noticed that means that's exactly what's happening! She would not be one to exaggerate and she wouldn't be seeing something that's not there. She's got a great critical mind. In the kind of hurley-burley, day to day timetable they have, and in addition having such a spread out campus and quite a rabbit warren of staff rooms, the fact that they make the effort to gather - the act that it's happening is really truly marvellous.

Maggie's got so much potential, she's going to be one to watch and it's been beautiful to see her blossom into the role she's taken on and to just open up into this area. At the beginning of the year, this was not on her horizon, not on her agenda, not part of her background or experience so what a journey it's been for her. Again I just feel humbled to see that kind of growth in a person.

Kay - again that perspective from someone slightly on the outside so observing Kay wanting to do staff prayer fire and having the kit open to everyone, just wonderful to see! Because again, she hasn't been part of any of the formation experiences - she's someone outside on the staff like Trudy is so there's such a valuable perspective to have in terms of how it's going.

APPENDIX G: INDIVIDUAL PARTICIPANT INTERVIEW EXCERPTS – QUESTIONS AND RECORDED SCRIPT

1. INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

(Interviews will occur for the participants in the targeted programmes during those programmes. Second interviews will take place in November at the end of the data gathering period)

How did you feel about the prospect of being part of this research on spiritual formation?

What did you expect your first experience in the programme would be like? What did you think you would be asked to do?

What was it like?

What have been the positive surprises about the programme so far?

What have been the challenges so far?

Have you developed any practices so far that you have integrated into your everyday life?

How has the programme so far, impacted on your day to day activities work relationships personal life?

What questions about spirituality and your role as a Catholic educator/ school staff member have emerged for you so far?

Respond to these words:

Catholic education

Spirituality

Teaching

Prayer

Presence

Witness

Leadership

Jesus

God

What are you most passionate about giving in the role you have in your school community?

What are you most passionate about receiving in your school community?

What has been your biggest learning so far?

2. RECORDED SCRIPT

Interview 4

Jill: Thank you for being part of this interview process. As you know we will be having a two hour interview, one at the beginning of the program that we are running and you will be interviewed again at the end of the year

Jill: So, can I ask you first how did you feel about the prospect of being a part of this research in spiritual formation?

2: Well I actually thought it would be really good because I do believe in spiritual formation itself I think. It would offer an opportunity to be able to look at it more formally and in a more sort of structured way to kind of get some assistance, so that I can enable other people to understand a little bit more about it too and get into it as well. Not quite sure whether I answered your question, what was the question again? (Jill repeated question)

2: So obviously I was really excited about it because I'm quite passionate about spiritual formation basically, so be part of the research just yeah.... So I did.

Jill: What did you expect your first experience in the program would be like... you've done Spirit Fire... the initial days on that would have been your first experience?

2: Yes it was. Well, initially, as you know I am coming in at a school level or a system level I have been interested as an APRE in the whole spirituality framework anyway and so by the time I had come to Spirit Fire I had got exactly what I expected I believe so...

Jill: And what was that?

2: that was I think some time out to really look at our own spirituality first, I think or to look at what it is in general, but also to look at ourselves and what it means for us individually and I think unless we look at ourselves first, it's hard to know what it means in a general sense. And we also had some facilitation with all of that. And I probably wasn't expecting it to be so well structured or so well put together and to find someone like Br Bill who has worked with this sort of area with other staff? So that was really good along with yourself and Suzanne.

Jill: What did you think you might be asked to do? What sort of things did you think you might be asked to do or think we might include?

2: I suppose I thought as an APRE and a lot of our in-services and professional development have always been, you know, along these lines, ideas and way we could get our staff involved the whole school community into this spirituality framework. you know what you don't say and what you don't do and how you don't get into it. So, I believe we got that and I can see why we didn't get as much of that as I expected at first, on the other hand I thought it was really wonderful that we got what we got and that was our own exploring, our own spirituality.

APPENDIX H: FOCUS GROUP INTERVIEW EXCERPTS – QUESTIONS AND RECORDED SCRIPT

ST RAPHAEL'S

Focus Group Questions:

- Review of experience so far
 - Mousemats/Staff letter/Powerpoint
 - Keepers Retreat
 - SpiritFire Programme
 - Lighthouse Retreat
 - Staff PrayerFire

- What has been your own experience so far?
Highlights? Lowlights?

- What is your sense of the kind of impact any of this initiative has had on the wider staff so far? Share one reflection/story about what you have observed.

- What do you think would be the best emerging thing that could happen in this staff community in this area?

- What do you think is the greatest need to develop in your staff community in this area?

- What's the greatest challenge to the above?

Focus Group Interview Script Excerpt

2: I'm sorry, because I remember that and feeling, 'I don't do this, I don't do this.' That's why I remember doing it.

1: And there was just this lovely feeling in the room, I don't know 15 of us or something and I felt really at peace doing that and I thought 'Gee I don't know that I would have been comfortable to do this beforehand'.

Jill: You were very confident, I remember you telling me about it'.

1: I think you visited a couple of days after that.

Jill: And you were very clear about what you could do and what would work and what you wanted to do?

1: Yeah because I was doing it with another staff member and they were deterring me from something and I said, 'no hang on a second, no I'm going to do this' and they didn't want me to sing and then it was like, 'No – sing!' You know? I knew it would be ok and that I could do it properly.

2: That's right.

Jill: And Kay got up with you as well didn't she?

1: Yeah! because it needed partners to do the movement...and she just got up.

2: It's what she sang that's what tipped us.

1: Yeah, it was...Oh, it was the mantra.

2: It was honestly something..

1: And I got a lot of feedback after that and that was really nice and having done that, because I had to type it up, it stayed with me more. And like you know I talk about going down the hill and looking at the beautiful water, and I sing the mantra when I go down. So it came easily to me and maybe that was why it went so well when I did it with staff.

APPENDIX I: OPEN-ENDED QUESTIONNAIRE

CATHOLIC EDUCATION STAFF AND SPIRITUAL FORMATION

All Staff: Please read this introduction.

This open-ended survey aims to provide information on the experience and opinions of Catholic school staff about spiritual formation. This survey is part of a research project exploring a contemporary approach to spiritual formation for Catholic educators. The research has been approved by the Human Research Ethics Committee at Australian Catholic University.

Expected completion time: Between 15 and 20 minutes.

INFORMATION CONTAINED ON INDIVIDUAL SURVEY SHEETS REMAINS STRICTLY CONFIDENTIAL.

Participation in this survey is strictly voluntary.

Your name or your school's name is not to be indicated on this form.

Please seal your form in the envelope provided, and send to:

Associate Professor Denis McLaughlin

School of Educational Leadership

Australian Catholic University

Po Box 456 Virginia Qld 4014

SECTION A

1. Please outline briefly what spiritual formation means for you.

2. What experience/ opportunity have you had in this area in general?

3. What has been your best experience of spiritual formation offered through BCE? If none, please indicate.

4. What has been your worst experience of spiritual formation offered through BCE/ If none, please indicate.

SECTION B

Section B explores why staff members might want to engage in spiritual formation.

Below are statements made about spiritual formation and Catholic education.

To what extent do you believe the following statements influence Catholic school staff to engage in spiritual formation? Indicate your opinion by circling the appropriate letter.

Strongly agreeStrongly disagree

A B C D E

Spiritual formation opportunities are an appropriate way to A B C D E

maintain accreditation to teach in a Catholic school.

Spiritual formation helps you to grow personally. **A** **B** **C** **D** **E**

Spiritual formation helps you to grow professionally. **A** **B** **C** **D** **E**

Spiritual formation opportunities give you reflective time away from the school routine. **A** **B** **C** **D** **E**

Spiritual formation is critical to each person's ministry in Catholic education. **A** **B** **C** **D** **E**

Spiritual formation is as important for the school officer and secretary as it is for the classroom teacher and principal. **A** **B** **C** **D** **E**

Spiritual formation is about becoming an authentic witness to the life and vision of Jesus. **A** **B** **C** **D** **E**

Spiritual formation is about developing a deeper understanding and relationship with God. **A** **B** **C** **D** **E**

Spiritual formation is necessary for educators because the Church says it is. **A** **B** **C** **D** **E**

Spiritual formation is necessary because it is a condition of employment in a Catholic school. **A** **B** **C** **D** **E**

SECTION C

Section 2 explores why staff members might NOT want to engage in spiritual formation.

To what extent do you agree with the following statements?

Indicate your opinion by circling the appropriate letter.

Strongly agreeStrongly disagree

A B C D E

1 The spirituality of the teacher has little to do with the teaching process. **A** **B** **C** **D** **E**

2 Exploring spirituality is an optional extra. **A** **B** **C** **D** **E**

3 Spiritual formation is for staff who are not busy. **A** **B** **C** **D** **E**

- | | | | | | | |
|----|--|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|
| 4 | Those who seek opportunities for spiritual formation are not as committed to their work. | A | B | C | D | E |
| 5 | Spiritual formation is not part of professional learning. | A | B | C | D | E |
| 6 | I would be seen as a little weird if I actively participated in spiritual formation. | A | B | C | D | E |
| 7 | Those who participate in spiritual formation opportunities are more likely to be stressed, burnt out or needy. | A | B | C | D | E |
| 8 | Spiritual formation is an oldfashioned term reflecting out of date religion. | A | B | C | D | E |
| 9 | Spiritual formation is another form of coercion. | A | B | C | D | E |
| 10 | You have to be over religious to do spiritual formation. | A | B | C | D | E |

SECTION D

Section D invites you to offer your own opinions why Catholic school staff might or might not engage in spiritual formation activities. Please write them in the space provided below.

THANKYOU FOR YOUR PARTICIPATION

APPENDIX J: REFLECTION FEEDBACK

EXAMPLE 1: PERSONAL REFLECTION

A year that has been-a year of being called to satiate a personal and communal spiritual hunger.

This year I have had more opportunities than for some time to meet a need to tend the spirit - dimension of my being. Though never enough, opportunities for reflection, prayer and wondering have been a blessing. The head, heart and hands aspects of spiritual engagement been given direction for me and connections have been made with the Jesus Communion and Mission vision of the Archdiocese.

Prior to this year and with regard to Jesus and Communion I would say that what are named as the core formation elements of experience, knowledge, practice and application had been reasonably well integrated into my personal spiritual experience and certainly that which has needed to be applied to my role as APRE in a Catholic School, which has the very motto of 'to know (head), to love (heart) and to serve (hands)' While, there is room for much growth in general, after awhile I realised more fully that I am called (compelled?) through baptism fundamentally to teach, challenge and transform in a more overt way at times.

As a person and as an APRE, I am keenly aware that I am especially called to be engaged in the evangelising mission of the Church through social justice outreach and a commitment to reaching out within and beyond this community in sharing the Gospel values through active service. Not wishing to keep my spirituality within the spheres of head and heart only, I felt called to spread during my travels in Term 3, the message of peace of and for the OLR community in a small way, in the leaving of a 'peace star' and message in various places in need of peace and justice, or where conflict and abuse of human rites had occurred throughout the world.

Not only do I appreciate the opportunity for further personal spiritual growth resourced and supported by the great work of Jill and BCE, but also the aspect of my role to support and resource the spiritual growth of staff members has been greatly assisted this year. This has liberated me somewhat. As an APRE and person I also have had the joy of witnessing the spiritual nourishment of some staff members, in particular through the retreats and work of Jill as well as having the comfort in knowing that I am not alone in the spiritual journey or on my professional journey of fostering spirituality in others. With many sparks among the staff now, I am confident that the fire of the spirit will be caught more generally as a staff.

As a result of our work this year, I am now more aware than ever that there is not a 'one size fits all approach' to spirituality or how this is personally expressed. Staff and communal prayer for example, need to be inclusive of and sensitive to various personal pathways, both genders and many personalities. As APRE in particular, I need to work on this

EXAMPLE 2: CASE SCHOOL FEEDBACK

1. What was the significant insight for you from today's formation program?



- Everyone struggles at some point in their life
- How much negativity I carry around and how this effects my life
- How our thinking can cloud or make clear our pathway
- The belief system
- Fear is the opposite to faith
mostly fear has to do with negativity
- The role fear plays in our belief decisions and how unaware I am of whether I can go down a positive path or not
- Fear feeds Depression
(Peter had a wife?!!)
- "Stinkin' Thinkin'" – to become conscious of my negative beliefs/patterns and transform into a POSITIVE belief system
- A reminder of: May I never forget the infinite possibilities that are born of faith
- Redirect thought patterns when I am challenged / afraid / hurt
- Reinforcing: negative thoughts = negative actions
 positive thoughts = positive actions
- Being more positive and believe that Jesus and God as always there to stand up for you and walk with you
- ABC DEF It's great to look inwards and know that I can change
- To Go Inward To Look Deeper
- This afternoon's program made me stop and reflect on how my feelings and faith affect so many other lives.
- The choice we have to follow positive belief system rather than negative
- For spiritual development you must overcome fear and self-doubt
- Exploration of FEAR
- I adored your statement in number 5!
- With no Ego, I am glad I am here and on the right track for me, I have so much love to give and children are so eager and happy to be given it.

- That my presence, actions and behaviour for the children I teach is

2. In what way were you challenged / stretched because of your involvement in the staff day?

- The strength / will or an individual to overcome adversity
- To try to redirect it and change old patterns of behaviour
- Look at areas of my life in which I struggle – name them
- Moving from my child to adult self
- I felt that some of my biggest faith / understanding / questions have started to be met
- The need to look at my beliefs
- Finding my strengths
Acknowledging my childish side
- To become conscious
Aware of myself
- In being reminded that God is always on my side and I can do that to others
- I was challenged / stretched to use positive affirmations
- Having to think about myself – how I act what I believe – truly
What negative thoughts and ways do I have that can be changed for a better way
- Reflection on my own self image, beliefs and knowing that I can help others
- I thoroughly enjoyed the 5 minutes to sit with it. It was good to question what kind of Role Model I am being for the kids in my care
- To Believe in Myself
To Be Still
To Cast away negative beliefs
- I have been close to tears realising just how influential our attitudes are
- To try to develop a more positive belief system
- I had to state my positive and negative beliefs. I had not voiced all my negative beliefs before today
- To listen
- I wanted to find out more about breaking the negative thoughts in our minds we 'inherited' from our parents. Book I borrowed – for professional/ personal reasons "Toxic Parents' – to help me with personal hurdles, and listening to parents in our class who were not as 'perfect' as I 'think' they

should have, I know I can't fix them!

- To question how I viewed things in my life my perceptions of others, and filters we all have, to be tolerant
- Stretched – to always be willing to start again and forgive
Challenged to not let the busyness of life stop me from grounding my actions to be (Christlike)

3. What is God asking of you as a member of the OLA staff?

- To continue my faith journey
To help foster and guide my students faith journey
- To help the students see value in themselves / to find a positive direction and to feel comfortable in strengthening their own relationships with the 'higher force'
- To use my OLA and other life experiences of God to change me and therefore be more Christ like to others
- Model how to be a complete human
- To keep the kids and staff at the forefront of all we do. Our kids are great – look for the good
- To be Jesus to others
- To see myself as a 'teacher' to others to open your arms and hearts. (I need to focus on these positives, rather than the negative of – I haven't taught in 9 years)
- To be positive in the life of students and staff
- Why are kids trusting me with negative behaviour – to be attentive to that
- To listen, walk, perceive with compassion, an OPEN heart, positive belief
- To be the best person I can be
- He is asking me to prominently model and share his wisdom and teaching
- To be the best I can for the students – to care for them, help them learn and grow
Staff – kind, helping, positive, hard working
- Be the best I can, he will help in all ways
- Possibly to be a good role model. To remind them that's it's not 'lame' to be on a spiritual journey
- To be more prayerful
To LISTEN to EVERYONE'S story

- The power of negative / positive thought
- Ways I can help my students by modelling Jesus behaviour
- To model God to the children and others (that's a big ask) and develop positive beliefs in themselves
- To Grow
- Support / forgive / listen / be bright and happy!!
- To be more like him in my everyday life, to love to give, to walk in others shoes, to feel compassion and show myself honestly so others can feel safe with me
- To hang in there and see that I can contribute in small ways for fellow teachers and my students

4. What would you like to learn more about?

- Positive thinking strategies
- How to achieve the above mentioned things most effectively – i.e. mediation? retreats?
- Scripture interpretation
- Interpreting scripture
- How to listen to and value others
- More about unpacking the scriptures
- EVERYTHING
- How to let go
- Changing thinking patterns for real stuff that causes depression
- I would like to learn / practice the art of positive thinking so it empowers my every move / thought / behaviour
- Deeper understanding of scripture
- It would be good to go even deeper with this. To keep reflecting as an individual and to go over strategies to help the people in our community
- Spirituality – how to be conscious of it's effect on our lives and our living
- The power of Negative / Positive thought
- Ways I can help my students by modelling Jesus behaviour
- How to handle self-doubts and how to overcome over 50 years of negative beliefs about myself

- Constantly changing → negative → positive → supporting others
- How to cope with feeling frustrated at things that happen in your day?
And things that people do
- How to stay in tune with what Christ is asking of me

5. Any other comments?



- This was better than the whole staff day
- Thanks
- Thank you so much
You have come at just the right time
- Thank you for a positive enriching session
- Thank you
- Br Bill was easy to listen to and interesting to listen to
- Thank you once again. You are a pleasure to listen to
- Thank you – your visit coincided with a very difficult day. I feel able to walk away today and start clearing the 'Stinkin Thinkin'
God Bless!!
- I really enjoyed the scripture reading
- It was very thought provoking and to me, very, very close to the bone
- Well presented
Easy to follow
- Your statement: 'It's not because you've got it all together, it's because you can grow into it.'
Very timely
- Loved today,
Thank you so much
- Loved the time to reflect be still and be renewed!
Thank you

EXAMPLE 3: BROAD CONSULTATION FEEDBACK
Catching Fire
Spiritual Formation Framework Consultation Feedback
Key Themes

Strong Support for:

- **Holistic Approach**
 - experiential dimension of it
 - head, heart, hands
 - integrated
 - person-centred
 - the all staff approach
 - bringing us back to what we're about
 - real desire to move in this direction

- **Key Implementation Strategies**
 - they connect to framework
 - there's a focus on Jesus/prayer next year
 - respect for what's happening in schools already and support for planning there
 - breadth of strategies are inclusive of diverse strata of staff
 - variety/creativity

- **Realistic Base**
 - life-long, life-wide learning
 - accepting where we are with staff, church, culture and working from there
 - not trying to dump more on schools, but help them do what they do

- **Strategic Connectedness**
 - linked with Archdiocesan vision and with Catholic Education vision
 - not a one off 'bits and pieces' approach
 - linked to Strategic Renewal and other documents/markers
 - linked through every directorate and role
 - linked to professional learning
 - developmental and staged
 - renewal: Religion/evangelisation no 1 priority
 - process of goal setting with staff

- **Vision**
 - education for transformation – articulating the big picture of what we're about
 - systematic approach; philosophy behind it; model and matrix; 3 lenses
 - comprehensive but respectful approach
 - capacity for schools to plan / approach / development that suits their context
 - ecumenical application
 - system wide, but individual
 - community/system wide focus, with singular usability

Feedback Exemplars

Love the name, the graphic and capacities - there's so much familiarity for staff to feel confident with and enough to make us curious to find out more. Well done!

(Teacher)

What came to me as I was reading the preamble was my reaction to the statement 'The vision... is founded on a sacramental view of the world, nurtured in the cradle of community, strengthened by pathways of prayer, challenged in the world to do what must be done for justice' sake, and reflected in the compassionate hospitality that is the hallmark of all followers of Jesus.' I thought to myself - what a fantastic criteria for APREs specifically and schools generally to work towards - for me it summed up the many strands of our mission that sometimes seem overawing into a statement that seemed within reach. I am not suggesting that we might ever reach the completion stage - I understand that spiritual formation and our mission within the Church will be forever ongoing - but to see it expressed in such terms really appealed to me, and to my sense of 'where I sit' within the context of our school, and indeed the wider community.

(Gen X APRE)

Love the lot! Congratulations on a very comprehensive and sound framework. Very useful for professional development planning at all levels. Excellent to see where it is placed in structure of organisation – not subset of any particular team.

(BCEC – AEO)

This is brilliant. The underpinning theology and appreciation of spirituality, spiritual formation and what might be involved in tis appreciation; the strong resolve and boldness of the plan; its grounded contemporariness; a real freshness in approach; its comprehensiveness and simply the framework itself.

(Marist S.Team)

Yes, this is needed. I have been struggling with a staff member who is not Catholic but has recently completed Grad Dip RE – now I know what's missing!

(APRE)

I think the experiential approach to the formation is excellent - knowledge, experience, practice and application. Love the model and matrix – accessible, deep and rich. It shows a commitment to the depth of the process - it's not to tick the process off.

(Teacher)

This seems to be a really positive and practical way of walking the talk – otherwise people just don't engage with it and it becomes another document that gathers dust on a shelf somewhere.

(APA)

I appreciate the approach to principal's formation –the lifelong learning approach, not the 1 day retreat approach!

(Principal)

Strategies are excellent – prayer candle web site; staff prayer pak; leadership retreat with leader companions; formator network; spiritfire ... wide reach; aimed at particular group and have particular purpose - well thought through; I think staff will respond well to this.

(Principal)

The connectedness to Archdiocesan vision, and Cath ed vision as well as practical connection to strategic renewal is a breath of fresh air. Thankyou.

(APRE)

It is great that BCE have seen this as a priority and acting upon it.

(Secretary)

I like the honesty of being up-front about what we're on about.

(Principal)

Concerns

- **Accreditation**
- **Compliance**
- **Overload of staff**
- **Money/funding**
- **Sustainability – within system/ with schools**
- **Bigness of it – needed, but huge task**
- **Fringe dwelling staff**
- **Clergy – difficulties in their involvement**
- **Timeframe / stages / expectations**
- **Eucharist – stronger naming of this**
- **Process of goal setting with staff**

How do we cater for the diversity of stories on our staff and promote the necessity of spiritual formation to be a part of our future development when staff feel overloaded with expectations of curriculum?

(Principal)

Funding!! Who pays in the end – school or system. For small schools if funding is not forthcoming, it will get lost in the process, which is a shame.

(Principal)

So many frameworks, so many demands, so much curriculum, assessment, reporting, appraisals, renewals, requirements, demands, time. How can this be introduced to school communities as a 'life-giving' opportunity and not just another accountability measure added to the list?

(Principal)

Firstly it is a terrific presentation that creates a feeling of security about how we will plan and move forward with our spiritual formation in Catholic schools and at BCEC in the future. After reflecting on your presentation and reading the draft documents. I feel I need to comment on the importance of ensuring there is a direct link made between the Strategic Renewal Framework, the new Leadership Framework and the Catching Fire framework. If this is not seen as central in a real way to leadership and renewal, then it will be the same issue of miscommunication that has been identified in the past. (David has referred to this as us all working in silos)

(BCEC AEO)

How do I cater for the different stages at which staff find themselves/ disengaged staff and convince them that this is not just an option but a responsibility? Not just another thing to do, but something for them?

(Principal)

How do we bring people along to the transformational stage in a very transactional world?

(Sec APRE)

The normal questions from staff – do I have to; is there release time; will it be funded? Plea from principal - Please let's do it!

(Principal)

We need system provided formation for new staff – and this has to be the core of it.

(Principal)

Concern about this being linked to principal's leadership role. Sometimes outcomes in this area are difficult to measure.

(Priest)

Hopes

- **That this will hit the road at employment, enrolment, pre-service or inclusion stages**
- **That it is sustained**
- **To see this develop with parent and parish communities**
- **That more use is made of regional focus eg convocation in spirituality**
- **That there be a focus on staff prayers / liturgies**
- **To see increased connectedness**
- **across Brisbane Catholic Education**
- **within Brisbane Catholic Education Centre**
- **That there is unpacking of the document with staff**
- **That accreditation is managed broadened / recognised**
- **To see people walking the talk – real depth experience with staff → committed to day to day of what they do**

'I would love to see a developing shared vision with staff, about different pathways, and what holds us together – this approach just might do it!'

(Principal)

I would hope that this becomes articulated as a non-negotiable for all staff as part of their accreditation to teach in a Catholic school.

(Principal)

I'd like to see opportunities to pray – not just talk about it; prepare it and read about it. Rather experiences of praying and prayer and praying communities.

(APRE)

There are implications for pre-service here – would love to see that pursued. Once a staff member hits the deck running, I think a lot goes out the door for a while. If we start some of this at pre-service, then we are talking, working and challenging those with some focus to the task.

(Part-time teacher)

I see that Cath Ed is trying to engage staff in the mission of the church in ways that nurture our individual understandings about what it really means to be LIVING and to question, develop and be excited about our faith journey. I'm looking forward to it all and hope our staff is part of it.

(New graduate)

What will this look like in 5 years time – we need this to be sustained – with money, resources, leadership from top.

(Principal)

After staff, the framework could apply to parents, families, parish etc. This is a huge need. Would like to see parish community involvement/connection/link made explicit in applying the framework (ecclesial dimension of community).

(Priest)

I'd love to see staff prayer with a more solid theological basis – so love the prayer pak idea. Could we please eliminate the rhymed verse with no reference to a spiritual being eg Helen Steiner Rice verse?? Can this be mandated????

(APA)

I'd like to see us identify as a part of a wide community of believers – prayer candle site is great start. We don't connect enough.

(Secretary)

Being system directed and not just schools directed gives more credence to the development of community.

(New APRE)

APPENDIX K: DOCUMENT EXTRACT: MISSION STATEMENT



Mission Statement

Our Lady of the Rosary School strives for excellence within a Catholic environment, which fosters each child's spiritual, intellectual, social, moral, emotional and physical development.

To achieve our mission:

Ongoing development in faith occurs in a community that witnesses its belief in prayer, worship and daily living.

Love of learning is nurtured in a secure and happy environment where children are challenged individually. In partnership with dedicated staff and families, the children experience an education emphasising current best practice, relevance, quality and development.

Respect for the individual, and development of self esteem are encouraged through relationships that value collaboration, commitment, dedication and co-operation.

Responsibilities:

Parents

- Provide a positive role model
- Provide a Christian home
- Support staff and children
- Participate fully in the life of the school

Staff

- Provide a positive role model
- Provide relevant education in a positive learning environment
- Maintain ongoing professional development and educational knowledge
- Participate fully in the life of the school community

Students

- Respect others
- Develop ownership for learning and behaviour
- Participate fully in the life of the school community

APPENDIX L: REFLECTION and POWERFUL ADVICE FEEDBACK SAMPLE

My Individual Story...

- How great it was to break open the scripture
- Learning to make sure I had time for myself each day
- Start each day in a positive way
- Learning to journey – “The fifth gospel”!
- Improved my ability to value the wisdom of others.

Community...

- The Catching Fire framework was able to blend in with our current spirituality so well. It supported what we were already doing and added so much more
- The staff loved the collectable prayer card/bookmarks

What would we do differently?

- We would change the time we did the prayer. Instead of adding it to the start of a staff meeting, making it a special time away from the meeting.

What are 3 major learnings?

- There is a real thirst and desire for this kind of thing
- How valuable and important it is to stop. To take time to be still
- ‘Soft Eyes’

How do we intend to go forward?

- Possibility of whole school quiet time – no iPods, no computers, no phones etc. Time for all staff and students to be still and journal
- Creating ‘time out’ for staff to spread the experience we’ve had through this.

What is our powerful advice?

- The ongoing promotion and delivery of this program is critical to the fundamental success of Catholic education and what it strives to achieve.
- Keep doing what you’re doing!

APPENDIX M: DESIGN PRINCIPLES - QCEC SPIRITUAL FORMATION FOR LEADERSHIP PROJECT 2005

The learnings suggest some key design principles and these are included along with possible practical strategies.

1. The Defining Issue

The first presenting challenge is one of definition. Spiritual and faith formation is an area where it has been unhelpful to assume a shared understanding of the subject matter. Spiritual and faith formation simply mean different things to different people, who give them different emphases and have different personal takes on what they might constitute.

This is not surprising given the plethora of material that now finds a place under the umbrella of 'spirituality' and the plurality of views within the contemporary church regarding the essential elements of faith and how these are expressed.

And the difficulty in a shared understanding of precisely what we mean when we speak of spiritual formation or faith formation for leadership poses challenges about where it fits, who owns it, and to what purpose it serves.

At the ground level, this seems to be reflected in both the kinds of requests made by Catholic school leaders, and the kinds of resources that are made available.

For example, anecdotal evidence suggests the kinds of requests from school leaders vary widely. Some specifically ask for an experience that will give them time out to focus on their personal spiritual journey, though not knowing quite what this might look like. Others request some kind of input in response to the demands of being 'the face of the church in the school.' This comes at a time where we are seeing school pastoral leadership shift from the parish priest to the Principal/Deputy/APRE in schools, (see Melbourne CEO study) and school leaders express a feeling of being on shaky ground in answering questions about faith and church. This requires 'big picture' understandings as well as some depthed knowledge across the areas of scripture, church history, sacramental, moral or contemporary theology, spirituality and liturgy. In situations where these areas have not been picked up in previous studies, nor in leadership study qualifications, there is very unlikely to be the will or the time (unless specifically directed to do so) to undertake another course of extended study to fill those gaps. And there is very little alternative resourcing available to address this need, apart from travelling guest lectures that occur from time to time.

In terms of delivery, presently, in many cases, experiences are offered or are taken up, and the simple fact of these, define the formation. This gives rise to situations where 'spirituality' morphs into anything that somehow connects with people; where facilitators are often put in the difficult position of having no brief but to 'do something about spirituality'; where excellent programmes are dropped – or not offered – because there are 'no takers'; and where very little is offered at all because formation is an adjunct to someone's area where there are always more immediately pressing issues to address.

This process needs to be reversed; the nature and elements of formation need to be defined first, situated within a framework of delivery and then prospective experiences to be offered can be measured against that framework for inclusion.

For this project, I identified two distinct but intertwined strands critical to this area of leadership: 'spiritual formation' and 'faith formation'. By 'spiritual', I have meant to name the inner spiritual journey of development that all Christian leaders are called to, and by 'faith' I mean to name more directly the religious and faith community development of leaders in the Catholic Church.

However they are named, (spiritual and faith; the personal and the communal; the informal and the formal ...) these two strands reflect different essential aspects of the journey of formation, but they both must evolve around common elements.

Naming these elements of an authentic Catholic formation for leadership must also be part of the conversation of definition. A number of writers in the field (eg Rolheiser, Chhittestester, Wright) isolate key elements that constitute non-negotiable platforms for the formation of a genuinely Catholic spirituality. These need to be discussed and contexted for Queensland Catholic educational leadership.

Strategies

A conversation needs to be had among stakeholders about what Catholic spiritual and faith formation is; what it looks like in the development of catholic educational leaders; and how this would translate into a formation programme. This process need not be exhaustive: the issue is not about finding out what it is, but agreeing on how it is to be defined in the context of formation for Catholic educational leadership. A short discussion paper may be the only catalyst required to sharpen the lens on a discussion which ought have a short timeline. A clear and shared understanding among providers and leaders can then be articulated in a general way as well as in its specific elements, defining precisely why it must be central to leadership formation.

Some further research on the expressed needs and understandings of those in school leadership positions may be helpful here, as would be further articulation of their own vision in this area by diocesan leaders.

Design Principles

Any formation programme/s or framework must clearly and simply address in its rationale the essential elements of Catholic spiritual and faith formation, and its place in the development of authentic Catholic educational leaders.

Subsequently, any programme or opportunity offered ought be clearly seen to address some aspect, and fit within the parameters of the agreed understanding of spiritual and faith formation.

All those working in the area of delivery of spiritual and faith formation opportunities ought be given clear briefings which situate their task within the defined parameters of Catholic leadership formation and its framework.

2. The Importance of Ownership and Resourcing

In her address to the Leadership in Education Conference in 2003 Adrienne Jericho, Director of Lutheran Schools Australia, in reflecting on the Millennial Principals Project, commented, "Formation won't just happen!" While she was commenting on leadership formation in general, this is true in particular for spiritual and faith formation, and yet a prevalent assumption seems to have developed that this area somehow forms a 'given' background for leadership capability. (eg see comments on p27, in report on A Framework for Leadership in Queensland Catholic Schools, March 2004)

The research for this project on Spiritual and Faith Formation for Leadership shows that formation initiatives within and outside of Catholic education contexts have been most effective where they are clearly owned and driven.

In Catholic Diocesan and Religious Institute experience around Australia, the strongest developments have occurred where spiritual and faith formation is clearly owned as a central part of Catholic Education services or Religious Institute mission.

Ownership means that the work of formation is named and actively supported and promoted. A lack of ownership most usually results in the development of a vacuum. Phillip Fitzgerald (Director of RE and Curriculum, Toowoomba Catholic Education), and John McArdle (Senior Professional Development Officer, Brisbane Catholic Education) describe the situation in Toowoomba and Brisbane dioceses respectively, using this very term. (See Part D for detailed report)

The naming of spiritual and faith formation as a central part of leadership development must come from educational authorities at every level: Commission, Diocesan, Religious Institute and School.

The key to active support is resourcing and a key resource is personnel.

Strong, focussed and innovative initiatives have occurred where personnel have been employed to animate an area, or have taken up specific responsibility for it. Progress has been less evident where this focus is part of a very broad portfolio of responsibilities.

In some cases, intensive action has occurred where a person (persons) already in a significant leadership position has an 'uncommon passion' for this area and has driven new initiatives.

Without ownership, the will and commitment for resourcing this area tends not to be present. This is a source of real frustration for those in significant positions who see the need, but feel unable to provide resources nor even promote spiritual and faith development as a significant focus for formation.

Strategies

An honest review of resourcing and personnel be undertaken, with a view to making a commitment to resource adequate funding.

Design Principles

Any programme for spiritual and faith formation for leadership must be owned by the relevant educational authority, and resourced appropriately.

3. Resource Collaboration

Few dioceses and religious institutes are able to fully resource this area, given their size or competing priorities. For this reason alone, it seems very sensible to collaborate resources where possible.

Some collaboration between personnel, of course, already occurs and the meeting of diocesan representatives four times a year is a helpful low-key development already in place.

However, collaborative resourcing refers to more than a sharing of initiatives and ideas. It requires, after a careful review of what is available in each diocese, networking and organisation to intelligently and systematically pool resources and programmes. Rather than each diocese 'reinventing the wheel' or alternatively continuing to offer 'shot in the dark' initiatives within the constraints of time and money, such creative collaboration allows the best to be shared and a commonly held framework of spiritual and faith opportunities to become part of catholic leadership culture in Queensland.

There are some obvious programmes and areas where collaborative planning can make maximal use of programmes already beginning to be used.

There are two important considerations in the effectiveness of such a collaborative approach.

The first is the profile of personnel employed in this area – the key resource. This is not an area, particularly at this stage of its development in Catholic educational structures, where responsibility can be bestowed at random! It needs to be driven and it needs to be driven by individuals who themselves have a strong belief in and commitment to spiritual and faith formation as central to Catholic educational leadership.

The best initiatives in this area from around Australia occur where those employed or working in this area have this strong commitment, even passion, for it.

In addition, the kind of collaboration that is being suggested here requires an excellent networking ability and a proven collaborative approach. It requires a proactive style that will build a strong network among those people working in this area in Queensland and further a-field.

Without these two important qualities - a strong personal and professional commitment to the area of spiritual and faith formation, and a proven ability to network and collaborate – a productive and creative sharing of resources and programmes, will be much less likely to be realised.

Strategies

In the collaborative use of resources, particular attention needs to be paid to personnel, with a view to engaging professional expertise committed to, and capable of, effecting longer-term outcomes.

Design Principles

The most important resource for any programme of spiritual and faith formation is personnel. Programmes need to be driven, and the greatest benefit for all stakeholders will occur if any future personnel employed in this area among the dioceses and religious institute schools have a strong commitment and interest in this area, and well developed collaborative and networking skills.

4. A Structured Framework with Targeted Programmes

While a consciousness of the need to provide spiritual and faith formation for all staff has been long evident in dioceses and religious institutes, the actual availability and shaping of formation opportunities has not been addressed, in the main, with any great degree of thoroughness or structured approach.

This is of course related to resources, priorities in planning, workloads and an ambivalence about what kind of formation is appropriate/desired/most important.

Spiritual and formation initiatives appear to be most effective when they are a part of a framework with a well-structured approach to the place, the elements and the connectivity of each particular initiative. Without such a framework, programmes, however well run, have trouble finding a purpose and eventually an audience. General retreats for example have a very low take up rate by principals.

The kind of framework for spiritual and faith formation which seems to be emerging has the following characteristics:

- Programmes and initiatives within the framework are specifically targeted.
There are few if any offerings in such a framework that are for a general audience. Formation opportunities are specifically targeted to those in leadership, and at different levels of leadership – eg for Principals; Deputy Principals; APREs; Leadership Teams; Middle Management Personnel.
- Programmes and initiatives are multi dimensional
The programmes cover a range of aspects of spiritual and faith formation – formal and informal; personal and experiential – so that mentoring or companioning sits within the same framework as does coursework on spiritual leadership and social justice imperatives.
- Programmes and initiatives are structured in a developmental way.
There is a clear pathway of progression, appropriate to position, experience and background.
- Programmes and initiatives are connected to professional development requirements.
Within the framework, particular programmes are mandatory for career advancement and professional development.
- Connections are evident between the programmes and initiatives on offer and their relevance to the leadership role.
Programmes are not seen as optional extras, but as central to the work of those with the role of spiritual or faith leader in schools, particularly Principals.

Strategies

Time and resources need to be put into organising and targeting existing programmes into a structured framework, and developing or accessing appropriate programmes/resources to fill the identified gaps.

Design Principles

Spiritual and Faith formation programmes are most effective when structured into a developmental framework where they are specifically targeted, in a multidimensional way that is connective to both career and professional development expectations and the workplace context.

5. An Integrated Approach

Historically, opportunities that may be regarded as 'spiritual' have been part of the brief of religious education teams or religious and faith education teams. There appears to be a shift in the thinking, which sees a move to integrate spiritual and faith formation into professional development calendars and leadership programmes.

Parramatta's move in this direction - connecting spiritual formation to professional development and to professional development for leadership in particular - comes after extensive research in the literature and in their diocesan schools. ERED in its formation programme is also moving to make strong links between spiritual formation and professional development for leadership, with some of these programmes becoming mandatory pathways for leadership positions. In programmes outside of the catholic school context too, the learnings are there for an approach that sees the nurturing of spiritual growth and faith formation as a central component in integrated programmes for the growing of leaders.

In addition, prospective school leaders appear to be more open to spiritual and faith formation initiatives where they see these programmes directly connected to their career path or their school context. Re-framing such programmes as part of professional development appears to effect a shift in perception and involvement.

It is worth noting that in Christian churches where a more assertive approach to formation exists than is the accepted norm in mainstream Catholic culture, the nurturing of personal spiritual charisms for leadership is 'the main game'. The other capabilities of leadership are built around this core, which forms the centre of integrated leadership programmes. With a strong grasp of this concept, a number of ministry centres in Australia – eg the Baptists – have put extensive resources into integrated leadership programmes that combine the formal study in the faith tradition and personal spiritual formation with the other elements of management and responsibility.

The general research in educational leadership shows that mentoring is vital for growing leaders. In this area of the development of faith leadership, I suspect it is pivotal, and needs to be integrated into all mentoring or supervisory support set in place for those in leadership positions.

Strategies

A review of the individual programmes and initiatives offered within each diocese or religious institute, focusing on where they fit into overall professional development frameworks is an important step. Using this lens, gaps can be identified, and programmes can be realigned to position spiritual and faith formation initiatives within a general professional development framework for leadership.

Mentoring for faith or missional leadership be further explored as an integrated part of professional supervision for those in leadership positions.

Design Principles

For maximum effectiveness, spiritual and faith formation initiatives and programmes are best situated within a professional development framework for leadership.

6. Flexibility: A Central Design Characteristic

While the most effective approaches to spiritual and faith formation are within a structured framework, this does not equate with a 'tick the boxes' mentality for professional development. Rather such a framework provides for formation pathways that may well include mandatory programmes, but which also allow for an individually driven programme of continuous professional learning.

Executive Director of the American Association of School Administrators quoted in *Principal Matters* (52) 5-8, makes a succinct comment about leadership succession planning in general that applies equally well to spiritual and faith formation for leadership in particular: *'We have got to get away from the field of dreams models of recruitment; you know, if we build it they will come.'*

Senior leadership personnel are time poor. Spiritual and faith formation, from a busy school leader's point of view, is an easy area to put on the back burner. This is not to say the need is not there, or not recognised. Programmes for spiritual and faith formation must be respectful of this reality, and look for creative ways to accommodate the demands of leadership positions within the parameters of a solid and relevant formation programme. This is not at all impossible, but it does require creative thinking and a shift for some in the way they view formation programming.

Some shift in the thinking has already occurred at the level of specific course structure. For example, ELIM is offered in two separate week-long blocks, and Lismore's Spiritual Leadership Programme for Principals is also split into two week-long blocks, and its timing (mid-contract) shows careful targeting. In other places, well respected programmes have been dropped entirely and new programme packaging explored because the feedback was that leadership personnel were simply not prepared to take a three week block of time away from their schools.

Alternative strategies might include the initiation of individual learning programmes; changing the structure and style of conferences – a gathering time already structured in; developing article reading networks supported by facilitated direction; a series of breakfast gatherings for input/sharing/learning pods; adopting a transdisciplinary approach to future formal studies in this area at diocesan or religious institute level.

Strategies

Invest in developing creative options for both formal and informal pathways of formation, examples of which are listed above.

Design Principles

Flexibility is a hallmark of an effective programme of spiritual and faith formation. This will be reflected by a learner centred approach using principles of adult learning which respect the context of the learner, their individual needs and gifts. Within a structured framework, this means that formation pathways are negotiated to be

relevant to the ongoing needs of the individual while building on professional formation requirements for faith leadership.

7. The Need for a Developmental Framework

The work of spiritual and faith formation is the journey of every person employed in Catholic schools. Spiritually strong leaders come from those places where staff have been nurtured in this area and where individuals have been afforded opportunities and encouraged in this growth.

Effective spiritual and faith formation occurs where:

- formation for leadership is part of a framework of general staff development in this area, and is accepted as such; and
- in such a way that respects the individual's 'place' on the journey.

A professional literacy that sees teaching as vocation and ministry – a call to discipleship and leadership - needs to be fostered. Within this understanding, spiritual and faith formation for beginning teachers is as important as spiritual and faith formation for those in middle management and senior leadership positions.

Secondly, programmes must recognise and allow for the individual journey of development in spiritual and faith formation. This requires discernment and mentoring at a personal level and the provision of this in some way at a systemic or organisational level. This becomes most critical for those in senior leadership positions.

Currently in the Queensland scene, Townsville diocese, under the leadership of Ernie Christie and Joan Neal, and the Christian Brothers Schools, under the leadership of ERED Director Bill Sultmann and the Education Officers –Formation (Mary Murphy and Ian Robertson) are at the forefront in developing programmes of formation for leadership. Both organisations have moved to establish a developmental framework for spiritual and faith formation, where programmes are in place to consistently nurture staff. For leaders, a variety of initiatives aim to be respectful of different individual needs and foci.

The religious institute schools in general have moved earlier than their diocesan counterparts in addressing the area of spiritual and faith formation of school staff, primarily in order to address the issue of retaining and nurturing the founding charism as schools became increasingly lay led.

Strategies

Speaking of teaching and leading in terms of formation, vocation and ministry ought be encouraged in professional development conversations.

Design Principles

Programmes and initiatives in spiritual and faith formation need to sit within a developmental framework which caters to all levels and connection points within school communities and allows for the personal experiential dimension of formation to be nurtured in a professional and relational way.

APPENDIX N: PRESENTATION OF FINDINGS – PILOT SCHOOL COMMUNITIES

Introduction

The purpose of this document is to present the findings from the research conducted in the additional nine school communities that participated in the CFP pilot year.

Altogether, ten school communities participated in the pilot year. St Raphael's was one of these. However, data were also systematically collected from the other nine pilot schools. The purpose for conducting research in these schools was to allow the gathered data from the broader pilot schools cohort to amplify or contrast the findings of the case school experience. The nine school communities additional to the case school hold seventy-two individual journeys, and the presentation of their experience is the focus here.

Framework for Presentation of Data

Data from all pilot schools were collected in the same year as the case school. There are two important things to note:

- These data from the additional pilot schools do not include personal interviews, questionnaires or focus group process. Rather, they are sourced from feedback sheets, reflection documents, personal observation and individual and group discussion. This provided a rich and considerable source across the year. In addition a facilitated reflection process in pilot school groupings at the year's end yielded further thick data.
- The reflective data collected throughout each staff program were focussed directly on the participant's experience. This gave rise to the rich self-reflective data reflected in the findings of this chapter.

The findings are presented using the same 'story' framework as adopted in chapter 7, in order that the reader has a consistent and cohesive perspective of the findings of the case school paralleling the findings of the other schools participating in the CFP pilot. Accordingly, the format of this document structure is consistent with the framework for presentation used in chapter 7 and is outlined in the following table.

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Pilot Schools Participation Context

The nine additional schools in the pilot cohort joined the CFP for a range of reasons. Some self selected; some were invited; some were encouraged to join by their area supervisors (system managers of school clusters). Furthermore, the final cohort of

schools were characterised by a range in size, location, demographic and primary/secondary status.

All pilot school leadership teams and schools were similarly prepared and committed to engagement within the four proposed commitments for the project outlined in Chapter 5:

1. *CFP – Staff Formation Programs*: School leadership commit and invite specific staff to be involved in the three programs.
2. *The Catching Fire Framework*: School leadership undertakes to engage staff with the language and concepts of the basic framework for spiritual formation
3. *Planning and Goal Setting*: School leadership undertakes to plan and goal set for spiritual formation – and connect to annual goal setting and strategic renewal
4. *General Systemic Initiatives and Resources*: Schools undertake to use these.

Nine Additional Schools: Three Programs: Seventy-two Stories

As with the case school, within each of the additional nine pilot schools, up to seven staff participated directly in the staff formation programs. These included the principal (*Guiding Lights*), the APRE (*SpiritFire*), three classroom teachers (*Keepers*) and any two other staff identified as interested and open to direct participation in the programs. These remaining two staff members included those in roles such as secretaries, school officers, finance staff, tuckshop staff as well as classroom teachers) joined the APRE in the *SpiritFire* program.

Thus, in addition to the staff in the case school, another sixty-five staff were involved directly in the staff formation programs across the pilot schools, and at the end of the year, those nine pilot schools also reflected on and shared their journey as a whole school community. This constituted seventy-two stories in all, generated from a broad cross-section of staff and schools.

‘My Story’ – The Self-engagement Stage

Across the pilot schools, the level of initial commitment and motivation by the principal of each school varied as did the level of initial commitment by staff directly involved across the programs in the CFP.

Some of the classroom teachers came with a sense of trepidation. These participants shared that they were 'asked' or 'told' that they would be taking part in this program, rather than invited. In every group, the anxiety was expressed that they might have been selected by the school leadership, because they were not "good enough" or perhaps "burnt out" or "not coping". This fear of having some kind of deficit was voiced on the first evening.

I worried that they (the school leadership) must think there's something wrong with me to send me on this program. It never crossed my mind that it might be because I was valued! (SFP26)

When you said these programs were for great teachers, I thought you said 'grey' teachers – that made me feel even worse! (KFP16)

It was the case in two instances that the principal had chosen staff in the hope that they would be 'fixed' by the CFP programs or would at least give other staff a break by having them away from the school for a couple of days. However, this attitude was the exception, and participants expressed a sense of relief in having opportunity to give voice to their anxiety and in being assured that these programs were not concerned with therapy, or the provision of remedial 'time out' or part of any compliance process.

It is most likely that you have been invited, offered or chosen for these programs because you are highly valued and considered as a key asset to your community. Think rather on this - you are here because you are a great teacher; a great person; a wise and gifted companion. (Facilitator)

Seekers after Something!

As with the case school, participants from the pilot schools came from a range of starting points as they began the programs. Some came with an already well developed spiritual life and articulated a desire to explore this in real depth.

I have a strong relationship with God and a good prayer life I think. I would like to develop my understanding of theology and scripture and my own belief in myself as a believer. (GLP5)

I'd like to deepen my sense of prayer and ability to pray. I see this as an opportunity to find practical and prayerful ways of enhancing my spiritual journey. (SFP13)

I hope to explore my relationship with Jesus who walks with me. (SFP22)

Many expressed an uncomplicated openness to what might be on offer, while others reflected an understanding of spiritual formation as more than a cerebral activity.

Even though I miss my class, I think it will be a nice relaxing time out from school. That has to be enjoyable, and I'm open to what happens. (KFP6)

I think it recognises the need to take time out. I know I'm in my head a lot. (SFP11)

Participants' articulation of their own spirituality was expressed in a range of ways:

I am a spiritual person and I can put myself in others presence. (SFP8)

My spirituality is connected to social justice, and how it relates to being a human – as Jesus came to show us that. I want to be able to articulate this better! (KFP4)

I'm a people person, so I'm looking forward to meeting and connecting with others. (SFP12)

I love nature and hope we have some time for walks. (KFP14)

A desire for authenticity was expressed repeatedly among participants.

I am a truth seeker and I believe I have a good radar for authenticity. (KFP18)

For some, the aspiration for authenticity was expressed in terms of mistrust and negative expectations.

Whenever a 'religious' rather than a spiritual slant was referred to I become quite defensive. (KFP7)

I don't know why I said I'd come to this. I don't do PD, a waste of time. I teach. (KFP26)

I came ready- and not that willing – thinking it would be workshops and seminars and note-taking and have to complete or present something for marking. (SFP17)

Response to the Program Structure

As explained in Chapter 5, each of the staff formation programs within the CFP has a unique design, with a focus on the respective target group and their professional role. At the same time, all programs share a common approach, a common 'vocabulary' and common 'principles of engagement' setting the parameters for the formative process. The inbuilt flexibility in each program provided capacity for responsiveness to each particular group's dynamic. These broad elements of the program structure were received enthusiastically across all groups, while particular activities offered challenges to different individuals.

Feedback offered on the broad program structure included the following observations:

It was great being able to interact with like minded people in a meaningful way as a result of the structure provided – particularly as the structure stimulated such positive outcomes in terms of the trust and support that enabled people to show and share their strengths and weaknesses without intimidation. (SFP12)

The planning was extremely good. The evening session on Thursday night hit a spot with me – very powerful. (KFP8)

I loved how the structure of the retreat was couched in the times of solitude and the style of sharing. It was non-threatening for all religions and viewpoints. (KFP28)

(I liked) the reflective time; input and direction; social aspect/must have a wine (not whine); acceptance and openness of leaders; it had every important aspect. The symbols added to the journey. (SFP19)

Where participants encountered challenge, the process and structure appeared to allow them to continue to participate on their own terms.

I found it challenging to speak my feelings out loud, so it was helped by the fact you didn't have to, you could choose to, when you were ready. (KFP10)

I have always found sitting still challenging. Made easier because it wasn't all that. (SFP11)

There was in fact considerable affirmation of the elements and structure which characterised all programs. The following comment typifies the general feedback:

An outstanding program, led by example, by people of faith and deep spirituality. This was an amazing experience. Thank you for making the leadership path a little clearer and a little brighter. You have created a safe place for us to explore challenging things – great! (GLP7)

This feedback was confirmed by those who also expressed challenge with individual aspects of the program or process, perceiving them at the end of the program as having been important parts of the process.

While initially challenging in the lead-up, I think it makes a huge difference that it is a 'live in' program; I would say this is essential. And the self reflection whilst challenging is essential to bring to a conclusion the purpose of these days. (KFP23)

Boundary Markers

The boundary markers were received positively by staff across the pilot schools, reflecting similar findings in the case school.

The boundaries set at the beginning were great, they encouraged us to be present to one another - after that it flowed. (SFP12)

Some participants experienced the practice of the boundary markers as a helpful challenge:

Listening with soft eyes – those boundaries, they were so challenging. Because I'm used to fixing things ... but remembering to use 'soft eyes' helped me not to be so critical of myself; and learn to just be myself at times. (KFP26)

Many staff took these 'boundary markers' back to classrooms and staff rooms and sought to make them part of the school culture:

The ground rules were fantastic. They set up a climate of trust and I use them now in my classroom and we have put them up in the staff room as well. Everybody responds! (SFP23)

Personal Focus

For a number of participants, the personal focus was a new experience and held its challenges. It was received with surprise by some as they struggled with the focus on themselves rather than content and activity.

I found it enormously challenging focusing on myself – I just don't do that. There was a feeling of genuine care, listening, support, trust, solidarity. But to be very honest with myself in the alone moments and to be honest with others was hard. (SFP21)

And from another participant:

It was difficult to examine my life and have solitude to think; I have never thought about myself in this way and I see it now as important to help develop your spirituality. I find it hard to write but that challenge is important; to restrict my need to fill empty space and silence with noise and activity. (KFP12)

For some, this experience had a moving personal impact:

We were all given a time where nothing else really mattered but us, and whether or not I become a better person for it, for two days I was a better person. (KFP25)

For those school leaders in the *Guiding Lights* program, the personal focus proved an uncommon opportunity.

As a leader, it was a rare opportunity for 'letting go,' delving more into who I am and how that connects with others, and having time to explore deeply and question and reaffirm my inner thoughts and feelings in my spiritual nourishment. (GLP8)

Creating Environment

Participants across all programs articulated an awareness of the elements of the environment that contributed to a positive experience of the program for them. These elements included: the prayerspace and prayer experiences, the location, the sense of hospitality and the invitational nature of all activities.

For me, what is so strong is the welcoming atmosphere, the freedom to share or no, the freedom to rest, the lack of pressure. (GLP4)

What made the difference for me? Here, there is time to be at peace, to prayer, to reflect, to be challenged in an out-breaking environment, to hope. Presented beautifully...The prayer rituals; learning how to acknowledge my journey and the journey of others. (SFP14)

Participants also shared the sense of being able to step back into the space each time they gathered over the year:

Each Spirit Fire day has been like coming home. (SFP12)

The Place of Prayer

Giving time to experience different ways of praying was central to all programs. This was enthusiastically embraced by participants.

I am just feeling safe, comforted, uplifted and restored by each of the days. Day 2, when we separated into groups and went into a room to share the silence. Wonderful! I would never have guessed how powerful this would be – or easy! It had a lasting impact. (SFP7)

The introduction to a variety of prayerstyles in the Christian tradition was of particular interest to those with a kinaesthetic learning style:

I am a doer and sitting quietly reflecting was hard but I realise it is important to do. And not so hard when I now know that walking prayer and moving prayer are legit! (KFP29)

Brilliant Prayer/Sacred spaces! Inspirational multiple ways to engage but especially I liked the day doing the mouldings and the sharing of this in the prayer space. It was good to have something to do with my hands – prayer has usually been about sitting still – I get self-conscious about that. (SFP12)

Other participants particularly liked the experience of the prayer method of *lectio divina*. A number of participants had taught their students about it, but had not had experienced it themselves in a way that was personally connective.

I'd love to do more Lectio divina practice on other scripture. This is the best praying experience I've ever had. Not sure why that is. (SFP20)

Finally, the desire to keep prayer a part of the participants' everyday life as they went back to their communities was expressed strongly.

I realise that daily prayer is not an option – it's my bread and butter, my 'raison d'être.' (SFP13)

I want to keep this prayer-time in my life every day. I am more centred, more at peace, more whole in the time I have been practicing this. The challenge is to not let it go. (GLP7)

Can we have just more! More of all of it! (KFP22)

The Place of Scripture

While the use of scripture is a core element of all programs, it has particular emphasis in the *SpiritFire* program. The rationale for the special focus in this group is related to their role back in their schools. As the 'drivers' of any staff formation initiatives, it was hoped that their personal confidence and capacity would be enhanced by an understanding of scripture, and how to use it in different contexts. The response from participants illustrates a positive perception of this strategy in the program.

The four levels of reading scripture really gets into my head and heart. (SFP9)

The interpretation of scripture and understanding scripture relating to today's life is wonderful. (SFP12)

This is the first time I've experienced a clear process for reading scripture for understanding and reflecting that is not fundamentalist and makes sense to who we are. (SFP22)

The big learning is that scripture is so powerful and has such great potential for personal transformation. I am loved. (SFP14)

Many expressed the desire to take this new appreciation of scripture back to their classrooms and staff rooms. The program offered ways to do this.

Please don't leave us alone next year – help us to be able to work with our staff; we need (and want) more scriptural unpacking; more staff prayer resources. (SFP15)

As the year progressed, participants successfully facilitated sessions with their staff using this method of reading scripture. This is discussed in a later section of this chapter (8.6.2.5).

Recognising Personal Gift and Inner Wisdom

Over the course of each program in the CFP, participants expressed a gradual understanding that of the importance of their own life experience and learnings for their spiritual growth.

The answers one seeks are not necessarily out there or about someone else having them, but about looking and listening to the Spirit within. (KFP13)

There's a deep inner acknowledgment of self insight to re-discover myself and to move beyond the stage of mere navel gazing to a depth. (GLP4)

In the *Keepers of the Flame* program, the experience and practice of listening and of being listened to made a strong impression, with a number of participants expressing that this was the first time that they had ever really felt listened to. The following comment is typical of others' reflections:

Being listened to – really listened to I don't think I have ever had that experience ever! It was so powerful. I will be trying to be present to others now in this gentle way in my family and in my staff and students because I know now how important it is to just listen. (KFP20)

Re-framing Grief and Failure

The combination of input and hearing others stories and experiences as the programs unfolded appeared to give participants insights into framing and reframing their own experience, particularly around the life experiences of grief and failure.

The genuine warmth care compassion that seemed to be part of this helped me to open up and to learn a different way of seeing my own experience. (KFP17)

While there are no sessions in any of the programs that focus specifically on grief or failure, the process of reflection used with all groups raised issues for individuals that traversed the multi- faceted nature of the life journey. For many, tears came as they revisited long forgotten experiences. For others, the tears were a surprise and a puzzle and many questioned their source.

Burdens – Nets/Jars/Rocks/whatever...“Why am I still carrying this stuff around – after all this time?” – I am awakened by this question. And I'm sad I could not see this before. But seeing now, I'm going to finally let it go! (SFP8)

For others, there was affirmation about how they were carrying their perceived failures and the learnings that had come out of them.

I have responded as an adult to life's challenges I'm doing OK! And that's so comforting to see as I face the future. (SFP14)

Claiming a Personal Spirituality

Realising that they already had a spirituality was a new concept for many participants. The assumption many expressed was that spirituality was for holy

people and these same participants were emphatic that they did not fall into that category.

I thought this was for holy people – you know really religious and serious people! Not me! (KFP11)

As the program unfolded, the understanding of personal spirituality developed to the point that participants were able to identify and articulate their own spirituality and story.

(After 2 days)I felt PRESENT, I felt safe, and I grew in my own spirituality. I understand my beliefs, and I'm learning to push fear out in the open. (SFP7)

I think I've grown a commitment to my life direction. I want to live more simply – when decision making/responding – take the Jesus centred approach. My Spirit is drawn to this – it's who I really am. (SFP19)

Many went on to name the challenge of their journey in terms of relationship with God and/or Jesus:

My challenge now is to rediscover/identify self/Christ; God. (GLP9)

Establishing Personal Spiritual Practice

Experiential practice in different types of prayer within the Catholic prayer tradition, attentive listening, and practising the habits of mutual hospitality were intentional components woven through the programs to support the development of personal spiritual practice. All participants were encouraged to develop one practice they could sustain in between the group gathering times. Participant responses reflected a variety of ways of engagement, deciding what would work for them. Some participants framed their practice within a larger understanding and gave themselves a specific goal:

I'm here to become fully human. And to do that, I'm going to take time for self and make use of prayer, modelling this with staff, students and self. (GLP5)

I've used the simple prayers every day. When I walk, I walk in prayer. Nobody else would pick this necessarily, but I am different inside. (KFP10)

I'm going to buy the bible commentary and I want to pursue my own spiritual practice. I walk already – I'm going to do that intentionally now and make it my meditative time – I now know how to do that. (KFP23)

I'm going to start the day with the thankyou prayer – I've already started doing that and it makes such a difference. I'm also going to practice the listening – just walking with others. There's someone on staff who I'm really going to try to do that with. We're always trying to fix her stuff and it never seems to get anywhere. Maybe being present to her will help her make her

own changes. That will help us all. And if it doesn't, I will keep my boundaries – I won't 'play with her child...!' (KFP7)

Participants also noted both the need and the challenge of continuing to integrate any of these practices into their personal lives:

While I know so clearly how much better I am when I take my 6 minutes each day, it's so easy to let it go! I try to do it at night before I go to sleep. But how quickly I just go to sleep! (SFP8)

'Our Story' – The Mutual Engagement Phase

One of the underpinning principles of the CFP reflective of the Catholic tradition of spiritual formation is the sense of journeying in community. This understanding of the place of others for the individual was woven into the CFP in both process and content. The positive experience of this was evident across the pilot schools, both during the program contact time itself and in the school communities.

I am Not Alone

An understanding that the individual journey is no less unique for being shared in a deep sense by others emerged as a new learning to some participants, a comfort to others and of value to all.

The togetherness and openness was amazing. I was so surprised to find how much my experience is shared and similar to others – and these are strangers! (KFP14)

I found it so comforting in sharing with others after initial feelings, and enjoyed developing closer relationships with members of my own staff. (SFP18)

I think we all realised the importance of companions, and the shared capacity to go forth together. Talking in the range of ways – pairs, triads, plenaries, group direction showed this. (GLP7)

Through the Eyes of Each Other

Experiencing the reflections of one another in a way that was perceived as invitational and authentic was reported as a rich and deepening encounter for participants across the programs.

It was a big thing having time away from the business of life for me and also spending time with others particularly I am now and have worked with. This has given me an opportunity to get to know these people on a deeper and more intimate level which has been very special. Finally, meeting new people and being given an opportunity to hear their amazing and inspirational stories. (KFP12)

Participants named the faith dimension in others' sharing as being particularly powerful for them.

I gained so much from the personal depth of faith of all those present and the beautiful insights gained from this experience. The companionship – the opportunity to bond with staff members and express thoughts and feeling openly - the friendliness; the comradeship; the wonderful leaders, the care shown – compassion, caring (ness). (SFP25)

Participants also transferred this sharing dynamic to their staff contexts, modelling the processes they learnt and integrating them into staff prayer.

It's made us share more openly and in a more genuine way at school – people don't think now that they have to use someone else's prayer or story – they use their own – and I think we've done that – we've shown others how to do that and that it's ok. (SFP16)

Sensing a Sacred Humanity

Reflecting on both personal and professional experience appeared to help participants see others differently. An attitude of respect for each other and a sense of humour emerged as an important part of this.

The blessing of each other was really powerful for me. I wanted to honour people 'cos I knew their story – and I felt honoured too somehow, without it being over the top. That's what I think was so amazing – it wasn't too much, it was just real. (KFP20)

There were many beautiful wise giving and sharing opportunities; Meeting new people with new stories; Together we were crying with laughing. Crying because of remembering happy stories; Belly-laughing; Lovely stories at breakfast, lunch, dinner, they just kept coming. (KFP4)

Seeing the light hearted side of a reflective life just made it more special. (SFP5)

Growing in Community

The sense of appreciation of others appeared to be accompanied in the participants by a growing sense of their self-understanding. This continued back in the school context between the face to face program contact times.

Self understanding within Community Context

Participants were able to articulate both the value in having others to journey with and their own growth because of this.

Sharing with everyone was awesome - sharing other's stories, meeting professionally on another level than the one teachers usually meet on – i.e.

classroom problems/concerns, and sharing where one talked for 5-7 minutes uninterrupted. (KFP15)

Learning from other people's life stories helped me grow in mine. I understand now the thing about companions on the journey. We do only grow with each other, even though our own stories are ours alone. (KFP17)

Many participants affirmed the nature of the composition of their groups between primary and high school backgrounds. There was a view that this enriched rather than hindered discussions.

I think it was good that we were all 'experienced' teachers with varied backgrounds and year levels. (KFP6)

The high school/primary mix was wonderful; Different areas, schools and locations. That cross mix of ages, personality types and year levels taught was so great. (SFP6)

Finally, participants also expressed an appreciation that sharing was not imposed within the group, allowing the learning and participation to continue.

I also appreciated not having to share my thoughts with the whole group. Not everyone's innate nature is to be comfortable sharing. I am quiet by nature and would not have benefited by being forced to say something. But I did appreciate and learn from what others were able to share. So I thank them for that. (KFP12)

Deepening Shared Knowledge

The opportunity to deepen the knowledge they acquired in the CFP was built into the three individual programs in different ways: through leader companioning in the *Guiding Lights* program; through extra follow-up resources on the *Catching Fire* website in the *SpiritFire* program, through a whole group companioning in *Keepers of the Flame* program and through the opportunities to access a facilitator to further deepen the experience of the whole staff.

We started and continued with the sharing of ideas, areas of concern; sharing of food "bread/wine"; sharing with colleagues from other schools. It was like a deepening circle. Then, we had the follow-up resources to help keep us going. That was brilliant. (KFP24)

What I liked about this program is that it wasn't a 'dip-in' program. There was solid stuff, but you didn't have to go to it with a theology degree either. It related to life, but helped me deepen my spirit and faith understanding. I'm a better teacher. (SFP13)

The Leader companioning model was an element of the *Guiding Lights* program that had a mixed response from participants. For some, both the opportunity and the experience was positive:

My sessions with the Leader Companion have been excellent. We did start with one thing, and that has changed as the time has gone on. I have found this an oasis in the hard work of leadership. (GLP7)

The flexibility of how we meet and my changing needs has been a great reason for success with this I think. It has been all about my needs and I haven't felt locked into another person to meet with. It really has been supportive and helped me to grow in a very supported way. (GLP4)

For others, the initiative was not as successful, and the reasons were articulated by participants, identifying the importance of companion selection:

I have been disappointed with the Leader Companion. They have not kept in good contact, and I felt they wanted to push their own barrow; they didn't really show much relational interest in me, just pushing their stuff on me and my staff. (GLP8)

Exploring Experiential Practice

There was a wide range of options that participants were encouraged to practise and integrate into the school context between face to face gatherings. These included journaling, prayer styles, attentive listening, rituals of community hospitality, boundary markers and sacred space. Participants embraced different aspects.

A few of us have set up a sacred space now at school and we have done it in our classrooms with much more care too than just getting the kids to put out the box of goodies that make up the prayerspace things. And we come to prayer in a different way now – not just going through the motions. It's had an effect on everyone – staff, kids, parents. (KFP17)

... and I used some of our skills from last week with prayer this afternoon for the staff meeting. We used the Gospel reading from Sunday and used the underlining and writing of words to add to the prayer space. Very new ground for our staff ... got some really nice feedback. (SFP21)

I haven't journalled for years. Can't even remember when I last did it. And I thought I wasn't the journaling type. But now I find it sorts my inside life, and I have practised the response writing from the heart. It works for me. And I've modified that for the kids. (KFP5)

Using Systemic Resources

The provision and use of system wide resources and initiatives during the pilot year as part of the overall strategic approach appeared to encourage and strengthen the efforts of participants to sustain their personal practice as well as school context initiatives.

I love the 'Light a Candle' website and use it frequently. The Staff Prayer Fire was excellent – it encouraged staff to take on prayer and more staff came to

pray – there needs to be more of this! Going Deeper allowed those who had time to reflect and discuss further. (SFP24)

The range of web resources was also considered helpful:

I have found the website resources and’s emails a real treasure. It keeps that link open and makes me feel connected and really supported to have a go! The Staff PrayerFire resources were so good – so easy to use and follow because we already have the SpiritFire experience, that it made us feel we really could do something that would make a difference and we wouldn’t look silly. So many other staff have responded now and even volunteer to be part of things. (SFP23)

The web resources included DIY (Do It Yourself) resources which provided flexibility in application and local context.

We are using the pilgrimage resource as an induction activity to begin next year. We have used parts of it to welcome new staff and help them realise that their story is important to us and part of our story now. It was well received by the whole staff, who said they also learned things about the school and the Archdiocese they’d never known. Don’t know whether to be excited or worried about that! (GLP5)

It was also noted by participants that the effort did not create extra work for busy people.

Because of the program and the resources our prayer life and staff life has changed dramatically. And it’s not people doing and committing to a whole lot of more stuff – it’s just doing what we’re already trying to do better and differently. (SFP11)

The *Staff PrayerFire* resources in particular were accepted and used with positive impression across all schools. The following email from one of the APREs echoes the feedback from others.

We celebrated our eighth Prayer Fire staff prayer this morning and I just had to email to tell you how wonderful it has been. The staff of came on board with great enthusiasm and commitment and we have loved the ride. Each week’s prayer was organised and presented by two staff members (a different couple each week) who had volunteered to do this at the beginning of term. They were inspired by the goodies you had sent and by the fact that the scaffolding was already in place. Each week so many attended prayer that we had to change our venue to a much larger room. At least 25 staff members have been present every Tuesday at 8am, ready to begin. A few more drift in a little after 8. A Truly Miraculous Phenomena in itself!!!! We even put a sign up in the office saying “Staff Prayer 8am-8:30” so that visitors came to know that they would have to wait while the office staff were at prayer. A very very sincere thanks for taking us to new places in new ways. Know that we really have appreciated all your thought, planning and hard work. They are bearing fruit in schools all over the Archdiocese. (SFP14)

Sharing Witness

The experience of sharing witness or 'walking the talk' became a feature across all schools as the participants returned to their school communities and began to live what they had experienced, and to practise what they had learnt. Many expressed that it took courage for them to do this, but they were determined to continue, and were surprised by the positive response. They shared this with each other when they gathered together again each time across the year. The following example illustrates the general perception of what happened for them:

It was as if people are just waiting for someone to speak up – to be genuine – to be PRESENT! That's all I did, it was no big fanfare, But somehow I think now that people felt that I was different and this changed them. (KFP17)

The sharing of witness happened in different ways: one participant (a classroom teacher) returned to her school and decided to offer her year 5 class a retreat using all the skills she had learned from her program retreat. It was a great success for her – and the first time the school had done anything of that nature. Others chose to practise simply being with and listening more intentionally to other staff. Using the skills learned in psycho-spirituality generated boundaries around their own interactions:

I don't play with anyone else's child! And that's changed my whole perspective now. I can be Jesus on someone else's road! (SFP7)

Many participants used practical skills they had learned to modify the school environment:

We have created a prayerspace in our staff space now. It is a quiet space for people to sit – it is also a reminder as we walk past the room each day. The response has been terrific! (KFP23)

We have put the boundary marker signs on our staff and classroom walls, and have made a simple affirmation flame painted on one staffroom wall. We have invited staff to write a note to someone whenever they like to affirm them in some way about what they're doing or how they are. The wall is covered in stickits. It's a simple thing, but has captured everyone's imagination. I think we have forgotten who we are about! (SFP6)

SpiritFire participants had the responsibility of actively supporting Staff PrayerFire and other initiatives among staff in their schools. The following comments give expression to their experience in this:

We did share a special bond going back into our schools – even with the ones who were on the other programs. And when the time came to contribute or speak up and just be there, we supported each other – we

knew where we were coming from and because we had experienced it, and we had support, we had the courage to do things differently than we had before. It was probably a bit of a shock for some staff because they had some power in keeping things the way they were. We just let them be. But people just responded anyway. We now have over half the staff attending staff prayer – it actually means something to them. (KFP8)

We have so many coming to staff prayer now we can't fit everyone in – the priest has given us extra pews – he says he's never going to need them! You know the impact has been transformational on individual staff on the programs and on the whole staff community. (secondary college) (GLP9)

Across the programs, there were staff who returned to their communities full of enthusiasm and resolve, but found the school leadership lacking enthusiasm. For some, this impeded initiatives. For others, like the classroom teacher who organised a retreat experience for her students, it helped them recognise their own capacity and became empowering.

I realised that I have probably been showing others how to do this stuff in my own way for years. I just never recognised that I was doing that – I just thought it was always the APRE because she was the person to do that. I saw myself as supporting, Now I realise, I was the one leading really. That's been a scary realisation, but also freeing for me personally. (KFP29)

To my A.P.R.E. – we need opportunities in our school to affirm each other. We talk about social activities for morale but a retreat is much more powerful. Know yourself – learn about yourself – learn to appreciate others. (KFP19)

Some participants expressed frustration or anger at the deficiencies they perceived in leadership:

I like that it's grassroots, and affirms us all. But at the same time, it shows who gets it in the leadership team and who doesn't. And once you see that, it can make you angry. Because if they don't have this kind of leadership in them, then why are they there – and being paid for it! (KFP22)

Experience with Institutional Church

The tension between a sense of personal growth and belonging and of disconnection with the institutional church growth was a cause of genuine struggle for a number of participants. For some this was not bridged across the year:

I know I have grown enormously through this program and I have a much deeper appreciation of the church I was born in to. But I still look at the local parish priest and see a very self-centred and even cruel human being. I can't bow to this and say it's ok. It's not. (KFP27)

For many others though, a genuine experience of healing and sense of 'coming home' to a core Catholic story was expressed:

I just wanted to say how much I gained from that program both physically and spiritually. It was just such an exhilarating experience and as I still struggle with my own place within Catholicism, I feel these sessions are renewing my awareness of God in my life. and your input are very personal and honest and for that I thank you both. You have a very rare gift to make each person within a room, feel touched by your presence. I agonised over what I said within the confidence of our inner circle on the last day as I did not want to bring in personalities but it did eventuate and it is one of the reasons that I have felt a bit lost within the Catholic Faith. But as I read in your quotes I need to be aware that God is always at home, it's just that I have gone out for a temporary walk. Our sessions have made me feel the essence of Catholicism and I am finding my way back to what I know I need in my life. (KFP20)

Commitment of Catholic Education

Participants across the programs expressed gratitude and surprise that Brisbane Catholic Education was investing in its staff in this way. The following comments illustrate the range and energy of views concerning systemic support for the CFP formation initiative.

A system that allows its members to have this time to grow people and not outcomes /timetables is one worth working for! (SFP12)

I've so enjoyed this fantastic opportunity to develop. This is what staff development should be about. How else can we become a Catholic school? (KFP8)

We are blessed to work in an organisation that not only recognizes the importance of faith and spirituality but also provides opportunities for this to assist us with our faith development. (SFP9)

Conversation occurred spontaneously throughout the year about access and encouragement for this kind of program for all staff. In each CFP cohort, there were those who demonstrated initiative to formally structure formation into professional development.

...the idea that BCE would acknowledge the power of such a commitment by allowing staff to redirect /access 1 or 2 days per year to depth their spiritual formation (one of today's participants came up with this excellent idea) (SFP30)

The principals group (*Guiding Lights Program*) was particularly strong in their advocacy for this kind of formation for all principals.

Every principal ought be doing this - and yes, I mean in a mandatory way! (GLP10)

'The Story' – The Transformational Phase

The goal of spiritual formation in the Catholic Christian tradition is transformation, marked by internal shifts in world view and an external moving out of self to others (Wolski Conn, 1999; Tang, 2006). As with the participants in the case school, participants across the pilot schools identified changes in both their inner and outer worlds to varying degrees and in a range of ways.

Giving to Community

One of the strong indicators of the shifts taking place in the participants was reflected in their enthusiasm to interact differently with others and to take their learnings back into their personal and professional lives.

Desire to Reach Out

The clear and prevalent sentiment in the feedback from all participants across the pilot schools was a desire to reach out to others through the structures already established in the school.

I want to keep the 'fire spirit' alive and continuing in everybody's everyday activities. This will mean including some small ways of challenging staff to become more engaged in their own spirituality. (SFP7)

I want to be authentic. Walk the talk – everyday be the face of Jesus. (KFP27)

I'm taking what I have learnt throughout the four days back to the reality of classroom and school life. It will be about making the time! And giving Staff PrayerFire priority. (SFP28)

For the principals involved in the *Guiding Lights* program, the streets' experience had a life changing personal impact. Many of them chose to share this experience with their staff and parent community and some chose to pursue street work in their local outreach contexts.

The street experience was difficult for me, on a personal level. But I see it as an absolute must for a leadership program. The impact on all of us was huge – I know that a couple of the principals met with past parents who have ended up on the streets. And I know others are going to organise for their staff and parent groups to be invited to experience something like we have here. (GLP5)

Other participants took their learnings to their family and parish and community:

I wanted to be able to talk to my own family – my partner and my kids – at the level I did on retreat. So I used (the) ORID process with my son – hiding my notes behind a load of ironing I carried with me to his room. I listened – I

didn't fix. I let him talk. This is the first time he has opened up to me in three years. (SFP14)

I decided that we ought do some theological reflection at our parish liturgy meetings. There was real resistance to doing anything –'we don't have time for that sort of thing.' But I persisted, even though I was scared really. And now, 4 months later, it's just what we do! And everyone gets a lot out of it. (GLP8)

Many participants were aware of the support they felt from others, who had participated in the CFP programs as they returned to their schools.

Knowing I wasn't on my own when I led staff prayer or assembly or parent nights was a great feeling. It wasn't as if anyone said anything or there was a secret handshake or anything – it was just that you knew you had support no matter what happened, and that gave a lot of courage when we had those moments where you thought- time to step up. (KFP11)

Vocational Response-ability

All of the programs in the CFP are relevant to the participants' Catholic educational context. Professionally and personally, changes occurred as participants gave serious consideration to their life work. Their reflections ranged from a confirmation of their current direction to consideration of new directions.

Four of the ten principals who were in the pilot group are now Area Supervisors – a position with influence on the wider principal group and organisation. Another principal took a similar supervisory position in another diocese. One other of the principals resigned from principalship. Another participant went from a BCEC position back to principalship. These decisions were intentional on the part of participants and all named the *Guiding Lights* program as having been catalytic in their decision making. (GLP 1, 4, 6, 7, 9, 3, 5)

Among the other sixty staff involved directly in the CFP programs are stories of deep personal reflection and resolution. One participant shared on arrival that she was in fact on twelve months leave with a view to leaving teaching permanently. Her mind was made up. Her principal had encouraged her participate in this program to help her transition:

Instead of focusing on my next steps into what I thought was going to be my next career, I found myself being called back to teaching! I remembered why I became a teacher and I realised that this was in fact my calling. Nobody was more gobsmacked than me. Here I was thinking that I had the great kindness of being given time to prepare myself for leaving, when in fact, I ended up preparing myself for staying! Maybe my principal knew me better

than I knew myself – and maybe she knew what this program would do too. (KFP28)

Several participants expressed an interest in exploring leadership roles, and have since begun to undertake further study in order to apply for leadership positions or have enrolled in the BCE Succession Program to find out more about leadership in Catholic schools.

I didn't think at the beginning of this year that I was interested in leadership. But now, I think I would like to be involved in that level. I guess I've discovered that I might have something to offer as a leader. I have the fire! (SFP14)

I decided to go along to the succession program to find out some more – and when I went, I found about half my SpiritFire group was also there! (SFP7)

Other participants felt confirmed in their vocation as a classroom teacher, expressing a deeper sense of purpose and commitment. As one participant put it:

I never aspired to be anything more than a classroom teacher. But now, I feel really affirmed in that decision and know I truly love and believe in what I do. I don't see my calling as 'just a teacher.' I can't see anything more important in the long run. (5)

Growing Capacity

Growing capacity in understanding and living out the connection between spiritual formation, personal growth and the vocation of the Catholic educator became clearer for all those involved in the CFP.

The fact that I am being more accepting of others and learning to walk with them on their journey I know is making my classroom a different place and how I am with parents. (KFP6)

Principals also expressed their leadership in terms of self growth and being spirit-centred.

I can see I am maturing and shifting out of some of the negative areas. I am affirmed in my leadership style and know God's presence guides me. (GLP2)

For many participants, the growth in capacity was about intentionality.

I realise how much we have become a 'tick the boxes' culture. I see leadership being about reminding people of how to walk the talk rather than how to tick the box. (GLP4)

Impact on Wider Staff Community

Participants across the pilot schools identified to varying degrees a positive influence of the CFP on the broader staff community. Many participants named this as an important development for their staff and school community.

The journey of the four days with our three staff members was great. Seeing people grow through their fears and taking risks e.g. leading Staff PrayerFire in term two and Going Deeper was special. We have had an increase in the number of staff who attend Thursday morning prayer, and the twilight session I organized with Kevin Treston on spirituality writings went really well. One person exclaimed 'I didn't know spirituality was for me. I thought it was just for religious.' (GLP4)

In some schools, members of the leadership team (who were not directly involved in the CFP programs) made contact with the researcher to share their experience of what was happening back at school:

I just wanted to contact you to let you know what a difference this program is making in our staff and our school. One of the year 12's was talking to me yesterday and said, 'Something's different in the teachers – I don't know exactly what it is but it feels good. The school's changed' (AP Pilot Secondary College)

Brilliant! Wow! Exclaimed ... and ..., well he used more than one word ...in fact I just left him talking out loud to himself 20 minutes after asking him about the Retreat! He was glowing. Thank you so much for enriching their lives...and our staff! (AP Pilot Primary School)

Participants believed the CFP assisted them to address realistically current educational challenges:

There is already a general acceptance in the staff/school culture of the need for growth and spiritual development. A core group of staff working in liaison with the principal, APRE, campus minister and willing and committed participants is a good model for successful growth. Staff won't accept activities being imposed upon them from above. (KFP25)

Participants also encountered considerable challenge in taking their own experience back to their school staff:

I am still trying to figure out how I can make a real different at school. I accept that not everyone on staff will have the same passion as I have. Need to reflect more deeply with my colleagues on this one. But I would say I will use my knowledge on SpiritFire to make our school a more Spiritual place. (SFP16)

(I want to take back) a new spirit of acceptance of the journey of others' in my own school community, to being open to meet them where they are, without conflict or *criticism. Hopefully, together, meet the challenge to move forward as People of Faith.* (KFP8) (Participant's italics)

Almost all participants in the three CFP programs expressed the desire for the rest of their staff to have the opportunity for direct experience of the programs. The following comment was made repeatedly in feedback reflection sheets:

I would love all staff members to have and share the same experience.

Reconnecting to the Jesus Meta-narrative

In a clear reflection of the findings from the case school data, the personal connection to Jesus was most strongly articulated among those who were in the *SpiritFire* program, and those in leadership. Those participants involved in *SpiritFire* gave expression to this using language around a relationship with God and witness to Jesus as key descriptors.

I am getting to understand the connectedness with God, and where/how am I going with discipleship journey. (SFP9)

I have an awareness of the presence of Jesus in each person and an acknowledgement of God's call to me to be fully human (This is the glory of God) God is working alongside us all the time and I don't have to be everything now, there is time to grow. (SFP12)

Principals spoke of the importance of the presence of God to them and their understanding of this being about relationship and their deepest centre.

I ask how am I able to be "used" for God to work through me to reach others. I trust in God's presence in my life and I do feel called to reflect this to others. (GLP10)

I have a relationship with God as one who knows me and loves me unconditionally. As I try to live by the gospel of Jesus, I try to be present everyday in our school. Christ has no body on Earth but ours. (GLP2)

My leadership, no matter what the style, is about my inmost core, and if this is aligned well with the heart of God, then people will see that. 'My job is to make it transparent'. (GLP5)

Those participants in the *Keepers* program explained how this relationship appears to others and what they felt they needed to develop further.

I have a great optimism in my faith – it is hopeful and I know this. This is the important thing to model to others. I need to nurture the space within, to show compassion, get out of my head and into my heart, and keep growing. As a male, some parts of this are a cultural challenge, but all the more important to acknowledge. (KFP6)

For some participants, this connection remained a continuing challenge and part of a bigger issue. The following comment reflects this struggle:

Challenging (but not unhelpful) was the deep questioning of myself and my faith which I have been avoiding for a long time. (KFP13)

Reconnecting to Church

While many participants described an active and stable connection to parish, particularly those in leadership positions, others expressed a disconnection and felt challenged.

I really hope to move from Head to heart and hands. I've done so much in the head – theology etc. Fear I thrown the baby out with the bathwater and am trying to reclaim. So I hope to have some good spiritual experiences myself and I am hoping even that the experience of the WYD Cross and WYD itself helps me with this. (KFP7)

I am challenged to more fully return with my whole being to prayer, gospel values and the Catholic Church. I understand transformation and resurrection in a new way now. I need more understanding of the teaching of the Catholic Church in light of contemporary society. (SFP6)

While the interest in re-connecting to church appeared widespread, awareness of the perceived difficulty of sustaining a connection was also quite apparent among participants.

I know I can be spiritual without necessarily being a true R/C. And this is so tempting. But I am drawn now that I see scripture in a different way and resurrection in a fuller way than I ever did. We need to look at ways to deflect the negativity – promote positive side of our faith. (KFP27)

I will need to keep the “fire” burning when the winds of change blow from different directions! (GLP8)

The ongoing difficulty in connection with church was identified as clerical and ecclesial:

This is great, and my leadership and my understanding of church is greatly deepened but my reality at school is a difficult parish priest and having to be the face of a church that has little credibility in the wider community. How do I do that? (GLP4)

Living Sustainable Practice

While having expressed a strong desire to continue to integrate the practices they had learned, participants across all programs and pilot schools identified sustainability as a key challenge, personally and professionally.

The hardest part will be keeping the mission alive amidst the ‘busyness’. (SFP7)

Strategies which were identified as having been helpful for this included the emails sent out intermittently; the re-visiting of their notes and their journals; the meeting with each other back at school and sharing their different experiences; their joint goal setting for the school community and the passion they carried back with them from their own varied but strong experiences.

This is what I took with me: the inspirational sayings – transferred to an inspirational thought for the week in the classroom; Journal writing – how healthy reflective writing is; Food for the soul – so needed to reflect after a difficult 12 months. (SFP12)

I remembered the need to take time to be silent, to internalise what I know in my head so that I trust it to lead me. (KFP4)

We have gotten together back at school, worked out our goals for the year and these have aligned well with our strategic renewal planning. (GLP3)

Some participants also remembered strategies they had initiated in the past and had buried in the busy-ness of school work. They decided to re-introduce these as something they knew and had worked. One participant offered an example:

What is core business! I designed a Prayer ritual for PC next year (I did this when I started 6.5 years ago, and I'm re-introducing it next year.) Also, a separate prayer group for staff is something I want to run with again. (SFP4)

Connecting Meaning and Purpose

A common reflection among participants in all programs concerned their personal sense of meaning and purpose:

What is it that God wants for me – why am I here? I still find this question complex and challenging. (KFP17)

I want to be honest with myself – to ask the question “Is what I am doing on my journey, relevant, purposeful, spiritual?” or just doing – keeping busy? (GLP3)

A number of participants expressed a new sense of purpose and energy for their community.

I would like to think that I could become an agent for releasing the inner spirit/spirituality of others who have not had the opportunity of attending those four days... perhaps through staff prayer, Lenten journey, community/social gatherings, attending to one person each day. (SFP14)

Questions of personal authenticity surfaced for most participants.

How to continue to develop my own sense of spirituality... I want to continue to question, to grow, to be authentic and spiritual. (KFP28)

I want to be fully human – the best I can be and be present to others and the Other! (SFP19)

How to make it real. How to make it authentic. On each of the days I gained a significant insight during the reflection time that presented a huge challenge. I'm still working on that! Probably believing that we can change the culture and also having time to maintain the passion. (SFP22)

Many were able to express a direct link between their professional and personal vocation:

My question is how I could improve that relationship with God and improve my teaching ability by being in tune with myself and God. 'You teach' who you are', made a big impact on me! (KFP6)

Questions about Catholic school identity were also identified as part of meaning and purpose:

What separates Catholic Education from other educational institutions?!!

How can I assist others to be fully committed to the vocation of being a staff member in a Catholic school. I realise what we do **can** make a significant difference to the way staff view their role in our Catholic schools. (KFP9)

Embracing the Mystic Dimension

The touching of mystical experience – being genuinely grounded in the present – is the heart of the spiritual journey. The metaphors of 'having our eyes opened.' and 're-claiming true self or story' were used to describe this in the programs. Experience of such moments was evident in all groups in the CFP pilot programs.

Seeing with New Eyes

Participants across the pilot schools re-entered their families and school community 'seeing with new eyes.' For many, this was identified as having 'high impact'.

Having time to confront things that I was avoiding has been life-changing for me. I have a new way of seeing these things! (SFP12)

It has been a most wonderful experience and I am so grateful to have had this opportunity to explore my spirituality and walk on a new path. (KFP7)

Formation is about: Becoming friends with Jesus; Transformation and Going out into the community. Resurrection happens in life not at the end of life. Finding the present moment – being in the NOW. These are the things I've learned that stick and have changed how I see life. (SFP15)

For others, there was a beginning of wanting a different way of being and behaving:

I hope to re-evaluate the lens through which I view life and its experiences. (KFP23)

I'm starting to find within myself what I need to still the restlessness. I wish to drop certain emotional habits and burdens (e.g. Over politeness, timidity, self sacrificing – Worrying what others think etc). (SFP30)

Some participants chose to connect this with the language of the spiritual formation framework:

I aim to be a person of presence – to be understanding; Principle – action; Prayer – nurturing. That makes sense to me. (GLP7)

And finally, fire as the central transformative metaphor, caught the imagination of many participants as they described how they felt:

I caught the flame, I'm on fire! (KFP26)

Re-claiming Story

For most participants, the re-claiming of their 'story,' of who they are, involved both the letting go of things and the re-covering of other things.

Letting go of all the things that keep me busy, but not necessarily focused - I found that I don't need to be perfect. (GLP8)

Our lives can be so busy that there is no 'room'/time for God. A result of this can be that we will not fully "grow", therefore, not being able to be the teacher/role model that we could be. I know the importance for me of being integrated rather than disintegrated To not be restless for an answer 'out there' – to focus within. (KFP10)

Participants were strong and clear in voicing what they felt they needed to recover and retain for their spiritual equilibrium:

I need – and will keep – a deep and significant engagement with God through prayer. (GLP6)

I need to reclaim my Sabbath time and space. (SFP25)

I don't want to let go of my inner peace and quiet. (KFP30)

Every Sunday, I need to be spending time in contemplation by walking (my ritual); Reading interesting books and continuing to learn; Engaging with some of the writings of the mystics and other writers of our tradition. (KFP4)

Others reflected their needs in more theological language:

To know myself, to make time for myself, in order to know and make time for others ... to renew my heart and mind and to experience resurrection in my life. This is what it is in the meaning of walking with God. (SFP21)

I want to keep exploring a deeper understanding of the mysteries; that my vocation is to be fully human and fear is the opposite of faith. (GLP4)

A number of participants expressed their concern and strong desire for continuing formation, and offering some specific concerns:

I'm worried next year I won't have days like this. I'd like to continue being given ideas and resources for prayer opportunities. (KFP23)

Let's have more experiences of engaging people in prayer and reflection. Especially men. We have a few men 'by the way' that would love to be called back in our community. (SFP19)

Finally, many participants found themselves in a better place than they had realised when they began. This was received as a welcome self affirmation.

I realise now that perhaps I am further along in my spiritual journey than I give myself credit for (Despite this ... the journey does not have a finish line) (KFP13)

Images of Transformation

At the end of the year, all pilot school participants were gathered in their school community groupings and led through a facilitated reflection on the year. In this process, they were also invited to choose a symbol or metaphor that might best describe their journey. Below are their reflections of what happened over the year for them – indicating degrees of transformative awareness both in the participants and in their communities.

Pilot School 1:

We have two symbols for what has happened in our school: the Pregnant woman and the crown. Great things have come to birth and this blossoming is the crowning glory of our school. Our story is awesome because at, we were ready to embrace a spirituality program. So when this was offered we decided to "Carpe Diem" (Seize the Day!). The program offered a rich spiritual experience for selected staff but it also set the tone for the year. The first staff day provided the vehicle to introduce staff to the 'Catching Fire' Framework. outlined the framework by using the PowerPoint presentation and then a number of staff were approached to attend the various days. Meanwhile back at school the whole staff were invited to participate in the Parish Lenten Program (after school in the staffroom). We also have had the opportunity to participate in formation opportunities (we organised) with guest facilitators.

Pilot School 2:

Our symbol is a set of Binoculars. We see with more focus and new eyes. In our school, the whole concept was received enthusiastically by the Admin Team, and then shared with all staff members. Prayer/Spirituality was a focus for R.E. program and teachers were able to share insights in this area. Students and their families were encouraged to visit the 'Light a Prayer Candle' website – teachers used it in class and it was the focus of a staff prayer.'s experience at the 'street retreat' was very powerful and moving. He was able to share his experience with the school community and it impacted deeply.

Pilot School 3:

Our symbol is our own Catching Fire – Staff with Spirit booklet, and a Motor bike – we're on the road! After the initial meeting, we identified the need to look at how this may support and identify the need within our staff to build community and relationships. We began by sharing the framework with the staff, as well as investigating the resources. All staff shared in the weekly prayers and staff had an option to participate in the Going Deeper Sessions which involved, prayer, reflection and discussion. To further cement staff relationships, Br Barnabas has led us on a journey of personal spiritual formation over three twilight sessions.

Pilot School 4:

Our symbol is the wine glass. It represents our developing relationship as a staff. 2007 was a new beginning for our school due to the appointment of a new administration team and at least half of the staff were new as well. It was a time to make changes and to reform and renew relationships within staff and school community. CFP helped us do this and become a more religiously aware staff. SpiritFire gave us the opportunity to spend quality time with other staff members. This has allowed us to develop as a more passionate and compassionate staff able to listen to each other and work in a proactive manner. We feel free to express our ideas/views but not in a hurtful way – the wine in the wine glass makes this easier on occasions.

Pilot School 5:

We have three symbols for our journey: Praying hands; Open seed pod; Bandaïd

Once our school had taken up the challenge to be involved, our Principal approached staff members to become involved in the various programs. All staff that were invited were keen to join in and some were even surprised to have been invited.

We found the Prayer Fire kick-started our spiritual journey awareness and this spring boarded our school into other directions. The Prayer Fire introduction was not necessarily received warmly by all members of staff to begin with but as the term progressed their resistance weakened and their participation was a pleasure to see. Some staff over the year, have expressed a delight in acknowledging their own spirituality and their journey. This is leading us to look towards recording 'our school' journey.

Pilot School 6:

Our symbol is the Paisley shirt!

Our campus minister, ... had already introduced us to the "Light a Prayer Candle" website, which became more accessible through desktop icons on all computers. As a college we were involved in Staff formation at Coral Cove to continue work on our Vision and Mission re-development.

The impact of these programs have been seen and felt throughout the college. While we did have a tradition of staff prayer, the program has enabled a more meaningful staff gathering to be celebrated. All staff - those who have been in the college for a long time; those who are new; and those who found prayer challenging - have found prayer more interesting, structured, meaningful and worthwhile. It has also extended to the student body, through our assembly prayers.

Pilot School 7:

Our symbol is us!

Our school's assignment was to improve prayer at all levels, and support spiritual sustainability. This was developing prior to contact with 'Jack and Jill'. Through circumstances we came together and were brought on board, probably later than other participants. Also in place, and to give us licence to be more openly spiritual towards each other we put in place group norms which acknowledged the worth and dignity of each individual. These were/are listed on each meeting agenda. This opened people to greater personal growth and spirituality.

In accessing Prayer Fire resources were different styles of prayer. Particularly important was the time at the beginning of staff meetings (20-25 minutes). This has seen a much richer, more diverse and inclusive prayer life for the school. All staff take responsibility for a weekly prayer session for staff and students; and the confidence of staff to lead prayer is evident. Techniques such as 'soft eyes' have remained and permission has been given to put faith at the centre of our school has been re-established. There have been unexpected surprises from previous nay-sayers taking up the challenge of real and purposeful prayer. Our social action project has been able to be interwoven with spirituality.

Pilot School 8:

Our Symbol is a set of Glasses – Power of lenses

In each of our ways, in each of our understandings and experiences, we were overwhelmed by the impact of such a comprehensive yet diverse program whereby the spirituality of our colleague and work teams came to life in unexpected ways.

There were significant outcomes: Our whole school community became more aware of the plight of the 'homeless' and they out reached to the needy; It brought to light a whole range of social issues; There was a strengthening of people's personal life especially meeting challenges; there was continuing self discovery – viewing through different lenses; and there developed a sense of inclusivity – a welcome for all no matter where they are in their journey.

For the community, we experienced the power of networking with others; the opportunity to become involved; and the extent of 'community' compassion.

Pilot School 9:

We have three Symbols: Earthen vessel; Tea bag; Wrapped present

Our SpiritFire journey began by adding on to the strong foundations of prayer we had already implemented at our school. With significant staff changes each year, due to the creation of a new school, we have had to constantly revisit our spirituality. The Catching Fire Framework has given us another way of developing spirituality within our school. It is complementary to our current spirituality and supportive of the prayerful experience we already have at our school. The six of us who have attended the different days have benefited not only personally but also professionally. Through our acquired knowledge and through the prayer fire

resources our entire staff have also had the benefit of being touched and transformed (we now have a school of 'soft-eyed', spirit filled staff who know how to simply Be Still!).

Community Learnings and Directions

Part of the summative reflection process involved the pilot school groupings identifying three key learnings for their respective communities as a result of participating in the CFP. Following is a summary of the general learnings articulated in their own words:

- The emergence of a positive awareness of individual and group spirituality;
- The need for support (ongoing) and guidance/structure;
- The necessity to take time for nurturing self and spirituality through reflection (head), feeling (heart) and action (hands/service);
- The importance of prayer in the growth and development of staff/community relationship;
- To be proactive using everyone's gift/talents to engage the community as widely as possible;
- Spiritual growth of staff - We have seen such significant impact on the staff involved in the programs directly and on our staff in general;
- Appreciation of where each individual is placed on their faith journey;
- We all have our own story, but we have a shared story;
- Scripture can be unpacked in many layers;
- Working together as a staff we are able to achieve change; You can't do it on your own;
- We have become a more religiously aware staff;
- Opportunities empower people to enter the spiritual journey;
- Surprising things happen when people enter the journey and keep them going;
- Staff prayer will be enhanced by the quality and structure of the prayer;
- A language to use when talking spirituality;
- Change is possible. Don't assume that people are not interested or are not yearning for spiritual growth;
- With modelling, we really produced significant change (confidence, wisdom, practice). Not just changing habits. It is actually transformative;
- The power of a simple idea; and
- Healing and direction come in a variety of ways.

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