REIMAGINING THE CATHOLIC SCHOOL: AN EXPLORATION OF PRINCIPALS' RESPONSES TO CHANGING CONTEXTS OF THE CONTEMPORARY CATHOLIC SCHOOL

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STATEMENT OF 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. No other person's work has been used without due acknowledgement in the main text of the thesis. This thesis has not been submitted for the award of any degree or diploma in any other tertiary institution. All research procedures reported in the thesis received the approval of the relevant Ethics/Safety Committees.

I acknowledge the assistance, generosity and support of the school leaders who participated in this project and who responded to requests for continuing involvement throughout.

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Graeme Mellor.

ABSTRACT

The focus of this research project was the changing perception amongst practising Catholic school principals of the nature and purpose of the contemporary Catholic school. This examination was set within the changing social, ecclesial and educational contexts within which the Catholic school has operated in the decades following the Second Vatican Council (1962–1965). The research which was conducted amongst principals in the Archdiocese of Brisbane, Australia, was focused by two research questions. These were:

- How do principals currently perceive the purpose of Catholic schools?

- How do they perceive Catholic schools changing?

The review of the literature examined elements of the changing environment of the contemporary Catholic school. It also surveyed the ways in which that literature described the effects of changing social, ecclesial and educational contexts upon the sense of purpose amongst principals of Catholic schools. The demise of "inherited meanings" and the reconstruction or reimagining of a new meaning structure provided the conceptual template for the study.

Since the study explores the perceptions of leaders concerning their schools in times of extensive and foundational contextual change, it involved an interpretive research design. An epistemological stance of constructionism was adopted because it acknowledges the impact which engagement with the research exerts upon participants' construction of meaning. An interpretivist theoretical perspective served to structure the research in a manner that was congruent with the philosophical foundations of the research questions. The employment of the research orientation of symbolic interactionism was appropriate because it holds that meaning and

interpretation of phenomena are to be understood by listening to the voices and perspectives of the participants within a given context. A case study approach was utilised in the execution of the research design which allowed for flexible, systematic and continuing data collection, analysis and participant feedback.

Data were collected through the use of personal, open-ended questionnaire, semi-structured interviews, critical review interviews, focus groups and independent review and were analysed using constant comparative method.

The research led to the conclusion that in the contemporary Catholic school, a high priority is given to the offering of a holistic educational experience to students. This, in turn, is predicated upon an anthropology which adopts a more unitive rather than dualistic view of the human person.   This represents a significant conceptual movement within the period under study.

A greater emphasis is also placed upon the evangelising role the Catholic school, which, in turn, acknowledges the increasingly secular environment within which it operates. At the same time, there is a strong, expressed belief amongst its leaders that the contemporary Catholic school offers an experience of a redemptive community in which its members can find acceptance, inclusion and a sense of the spiritual dimension of life which transcends the status of affiliation with the institutional Church.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

7.   Appendices

GLOSSARY OF TERMS

A.P.R.E.:   Assistant Principal, Religious Education.

(Arch) Bishop: The leader of an (arch) diocese ordained to the fullness of the priestly office. He is believed to be a successor of the apostles.

Congregation:
1. A department of the Vatican bureaucracy e.g. Congregation for Catholic Education.
2. A community of clergy or religious founded for a particular ministry and taking solemn vows, which usually include obedience to the communal rule, poverty and celibacy.

Curia: The Vatican bureaucracy charged with the responsibility of administering and overseeing the functioning of the Catholic Church in its doctrinal and administrative aspects.

(Arch) Diocese: A geographical area under the control of an (arch) bishop.

Laity: Members of the Catholic Church not ordained to the clerical state.

Order: A community of men or women founded for a particular ministry and taking simple vows which usually include obedience to the communal rule, poverty and celibacy.

Religious: Men or women under vows who belong to an order or congregation.

Soteriology: The branch of theology concerned with the matter of salvation.

Teleology: A focus in theology and philosophy on the final end of human existence.

Vatican II (Second Vatican Council): The second general or ecumenical council of the bishops of the Catholic Church held in Rome, 1962-65.

LIST OF TABLES

LIST OF FIGURES

CHAPTER ONE

THE RESEARCH DEFINED

1.1   INTRODUCTION TO THE RESEARCH

The contemporary Catholic school functions within a network of interrelated contexts. These include ecclesial, social and educational environments, each of which exerts an influence upon the Catholic school. Further, each of these contexts is currently undergoing significant change, a phenomenon which in turn, brings to bear forces for foundational transformation for the Catholic school. Indeed, the years since the Second Vatican Council (1962-65) "for many Catholics … have been traumatic" (Collins, 1986, p.6) in terms of the maintenance of meaningful structures and the perceived need for reconstruction (Arbuckle, 1988, p.78). Beyond this ecclesially generated impetus for transformation for the Catholic school sits the impetus for change resulting from contemporaneous and profound historical and cultural forces (Lennon, 1995; Ludwig, 1996) in the last four decades of the twentieth century. In addition to the ecclesiological and cultural shifts affecting the Catholic school are the transitions in the educational theatre. So far-reaching are the transformations in the world of contemporary education that "education (no longer) need(s) fine tuning, or more of the same; rather the fundamental assumptions about schools have to be revised" (Beare & Slaughter, 1993, p.1).

The concatenation of ecclesial, social and educational developments in recent decades, then, has resulted in foundational questioning of the goals, purposes

1

and even the future of the Catholic school (Arthur, 1995). This questioning has taken place in the context of a breakdown of what might be termed the inherited meanings (Beare & Slaughter, 1993) for the Catholic school and for the Church itself which is its sponsor. Those inherited meanings, once constitutive of a clearly understood mandate for Catholic schools were founded upon established ecclesial, social and educational assumptions (O'Donoghue, 1997). With the paradigmatic movements which resulted in the demise of those inherited meanings came the possibility of a new and qualitatively different form for the Catholic school (McDonald, 1993). In exploring change and the Catholic school, the metaphor of journey is helpful.

The perspective of a journey of re-imagining allows for a "radical reinventiveness" (Arbuckle, 1993) directed towards the goals, purposes and meaning structure of the contemporary Catholic school as it both functions within its present contexts and sets direction for the future. Figure 1.1 diagrammatically represents this process described above.
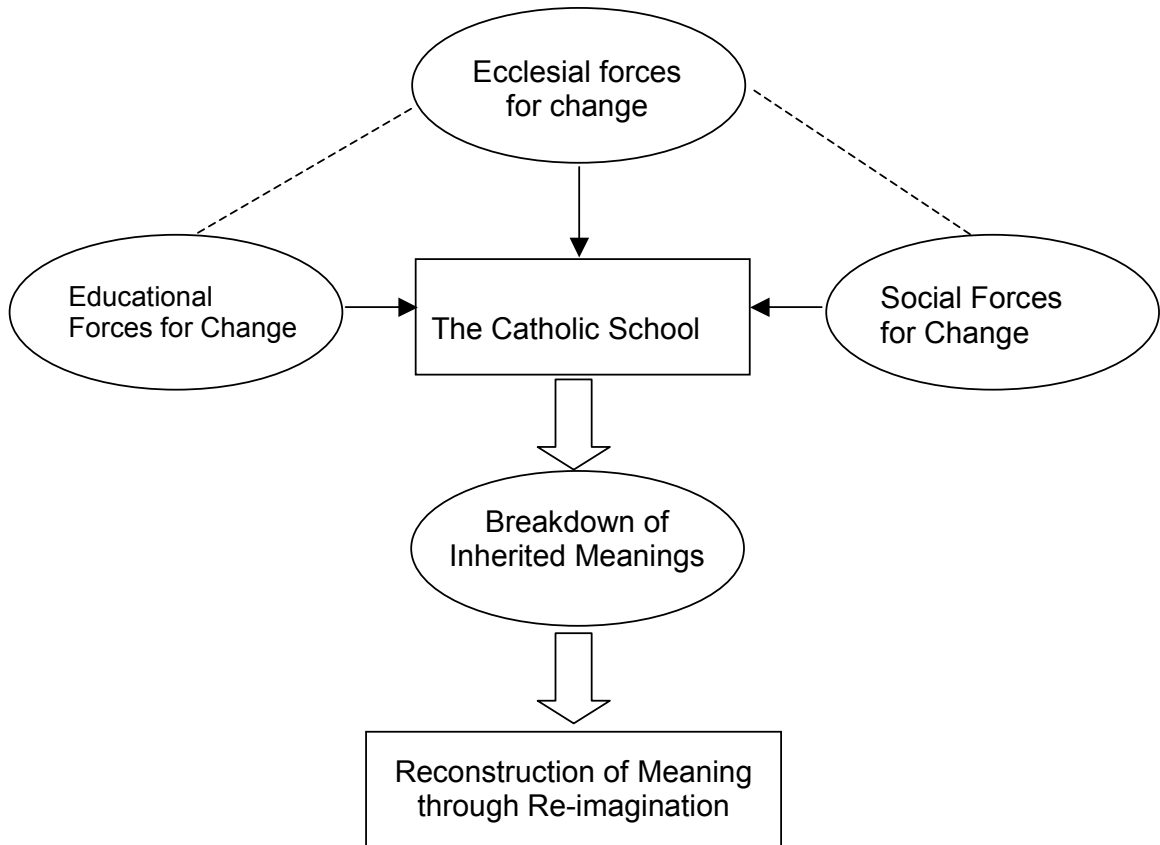
Figure 1.1

The Background to the Research Project

This study focuses on the role of principals because they are pivotal, not only to the transformation of a school's cultural life (Fullan, 1990) but also because of their role in the "administration of meaning" (Starratt, 1996; 2004, p.25). The focal implications of this understanding for a study of the reconstruction of meaning for Catholic schools are clear.

1.2 THE RESEARCH CONTEXT

This study is situated within systemic schools of the Archdiocese of Brisbane, Queensland (see Figure 1.2). At the time of the research, there were one hundred and twenty nine (129) systemic schools in the Archdiocese with a total student enrolment of 45,985 pupils (Brisbane Catholic Education, 1999) an increase of 2% over 1998 (Hutton, 1999). The Archdiocese of Brisbane holds 62% of all Catholic school enrolments across the five (5) Catholic dioceses of the State of Queensland.

GEOGRAPHICAL MAP OF DIOCESES
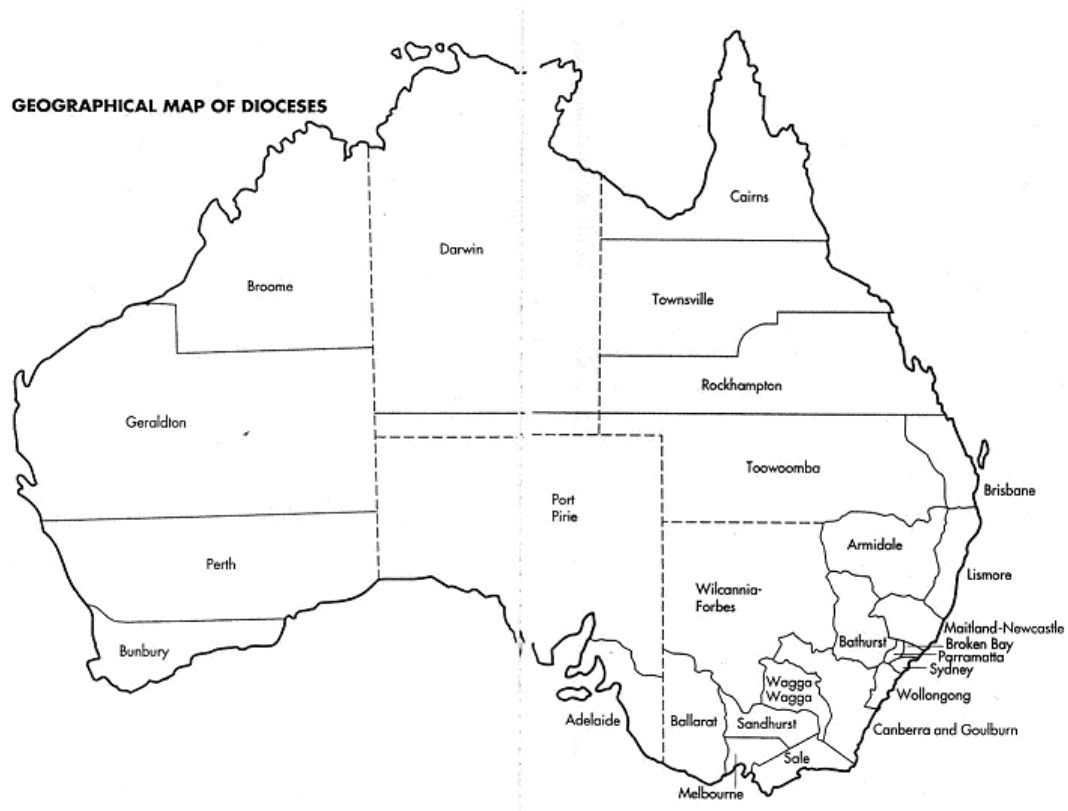
Figure 1.2

The Geographical Context of the Archdiocese of Brisbane

(Source: *The Official Directory of the Catholic Church in Australia*, 2000)

4

In 1991, the primary systemic schools of the Archdiocese of Brisbane employed 1,573 full time lay teachers and 11 full time religious staff whilst the systemic secondary schools included 932 full time lay staff and six (6) full time religious staff. The overall staff ratio of full time teachers, religious to lay was 1:143 (Brisbane Catholic Education, 1997) in the primary schools and 1:155.3 in the secondary schools (Brisbane Catholic Education, 1997).

Brisbane Catholic Education (B.C.E.) is an agency of the Catholic Church of the Archdiocese of Brisbane and acts as the employing authority on behalf of the Trustees of the Archdiocese (Archdiocesan Catholic Education Council, 2001). It is accountable to ecclesiastical authorities in the Archdiocese and declares its commitment to "an educational ministry that embraces and promotes life long learning; respects the richness of the past; seeks to meet the major challenges of the present (and) creates the potential for a better future" (Catholic Education Council, 1993, p.1).

Approximately 80% of funding for Catholic schools comes from Commonwealth (Federal) and State Government grants. Complementary income for schools is generated by fees, levies and self funding.

The *Queensland Catholic Education Commission* (Q.C.E.C.) represents Brisbane Catholic Education and the four (4) other Queensland dioceses in negotiations with the State and Federal Governments. The National Catholic Education Commission (N.C.E.C.) represents the interests of all Australian Catholic schools at the federal level (Brisbane Catholic Education, 1997).

Because of accountability models for state and national funds disbursement, Brisbane Catholic Education is bound by the parameters of the respective bodies in educational policy. "Consequently, this creates tension and increasing challenge for the system to keep abreast with current trends and to meet political accountability measures. This must be done in a manner that concurs with the mission and vision of Catholic schooling" (Hanifin, 1999, p.2). These competing claims set the general context for this research project which sets out to study the manner in which Catholic school principals negotiate the process of the reconstruction of meaning for the contemporary Catholic school within ecclesial, (and therefore, theological) social and educational theatres of change and accountability.

1.3   IDENTIFICATION OF THE RESEARCH PROBLEM

The Catholic Church has acknowledged the complexity of the context within which the contemporary Catholic school functions and the challenges it poses:

> On the threshold of the third millennium education faces new challenges which are the result of a new socio-political and cultural context. First and foremost, we have a crisis of values which … assumes the form … of subjectivism, moral relativism and nihilism. The extreme pluralism pervading contemporary society leads to behaviour patterns which are at times so opposed to one another as to undermine any idea of community identity. Rapid structural changes, profound technical innovations and the globalization of the economy affect human life more and more throughout the world … To this we must add, in countries of long-standing evangelization, a growing marginalization of the Christian faith … (Congregation for Catholic Education, 1998, No. 1)

This observation presupposes and describes the phenomenon of the breakdown of the inherited meanings which informed the life of the Catholic school in the period prior to the last four decades of the twentieth century.

6

These inherited meanings concerned both the observable and implicit life of the Catholic school and related to diverse factors such as the valued prevalence of religious males and females in the school (Arbuckle, 1996); the assumptions, to whatever degree justified, made about the moral superiority of the Catholic school (Kelty, 2000) over its secular counterpart; its teleological preoccupation (McLaughlin, 2000a); its undiluted faith in the single Catechism as the manual embodying all necessary religious truth (Campion, 1982); the undisputed place of clerical leadership in its operation (Kelty, 2000) and the subservient role of an obeisant laity (Rohr & Martos, 1992).

In the decades in question (i.e. 1960's to the present), social, educational as well as ecclesial shifts together saw the demise of that consequential meaning structure which grew out of factors such as those outlined above. In the researcher's own professional teaching and administration experience, commencing in 1970, he has experienced the effects of that breakdown of inherited meanings which had, in turn, informed his own experience as a student in Catholic schools (1955-1966). In two periods as principal of a Catholic school (1979-1981 and 1996-2000) the researcher has been immersed in the process of negotiation of meaning for the Catholic school whilst experiencing the attendant vicissitudes of this transition.

Through professional and peer contact with principals in three (3) different dioceses in Australia, the researcher was able to nominate the negotiation of renewed or re-imagined meanings for the Catholic school as a significant challenge for school leaders worthy of serious study.

The problem underpinning this research is the nature and extent of contextual change for the Catholic school in recent decades. The particular focus of the study is the ways in which school principals have negotiated the reconstruction of perceived purposes of the school in those changing contexts.

1.4   PURPOSE OF THE RESEARCH

The focus of this study is the changing nature of the contemporary Catholic school and, within that, the ways in which practising Catholic school principals are re-shaping or re-imagining the goals, purposes and meaning structure of the schools they lead in the current context of changing ecclesial, social and educational environments. Therefore, the study explored, through a range of strategies outlined below, the experience and reflection upon that experience of practising Catholic school principals from both primary and secondary schools.

The project sets out to address two (2) key research questions which focus the conduct of the research:

- How do principals currently perceive the purpose of Catholic schools?
- How do they perceive Catholic schools changing?

The research questions are posed within the framework of the demise of inherited meanings for the Catholic school and the reconstruction of new meanings for the contemporary Catholic school through the responsive and creative use of the power of imagination.

The issues underpinning the research questions are particularly pertinent given the changing social, educational and ecclesial contexts within which the

Catholic school currently functions. It is because of these contexts that new forms of the Catholic school may need to be constructed in the future.

These research questions are especially important because the central concerns of this study have to do with the role that practising principals are playing in the reconstruction of meaning, and hence of both vision and form, for the contemporary Catholic school. Principals' understandings and perceptions are therefore critical to this research.

Given the adoption of an interpretive approach to the research, its objectives may be summarised under three main purposes. These were to:

- explore principals' perceptions of the future of their Catholic schools especially in relation to existing and/or future parish structures;

- clarify perceptions as to strengths and challenges in Catholic schools and how these affect future directions;

- add to an understanding of the process of the reconstruction of meaning for the Catholic school against the background of the deconstruction of their inherited meanings in recent decades.

This project will illuminate the processes, conscious or unconscious, deliberate or spontaneous, which principals of Catholic schools employ to lead their schools in the sometimes volatile but ceaselessly evolving ecclesial, social and educational contexts in which they are placed and the ways in which those processes shape a new meaning structure for their schools. The study does not assume a clear, stepped procedure for meaning construction in which deliberation and reflection always precedes action and unerringly results in new understandings and new meanings. Rather, it assumes a dialectic of imaginative action and reflection out of which new meanings emerge. It

affirms the belief that "we do not think ourselves into a new way of living, but we must live ourselves into a new way of thinking" (Rohr & Martos, 1992, p.82). The research orientation of symbolic interactionism employed within this project is in accord with this premise. In this way, the reimagining of the Catholic school "is a way of doing theology built on … *praxis* - practical activity informed by the message of the gospel" (Rohr & Maritos, 1992, p.93).

The research, therefore sets out to illuminate the professional world of practising principals and to understand better their professional environment so as to assist them to manage more creatively and constructively the process of reimagining in which they find themselves.

1.5 EVOLUTION OF THE RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The two research questions evolved from two sources. Firstly, they emerged from the researcher's own experience of administration of Catholic schools at systems level and at local level (as a teacher and principal) over thirty years. In that time, the researcher had experienced the changing contexts of Catholic schooling undergoing ecclesial, social and educational change and had noted the ways in which he himself had managed the effects of those changing contexts upon the Catholic school. He had also observed his colleagues involved in the same process of the negotiation of the changed meaning structure which accompanied these evolving contexts.

Secondly, at the outset of this research project, the series of informal, semi-structured interviews which the researcher conducted with a range of relevant personnel, helped to define the final research questions as specified above.

The questions focus the study upon current understandings held by Catholic school principals of the goals and purposes of their schools and upon the perceptions of those principals of future goals and purposes. The questions rise to both the choice of research strategies and the focus of application of those data gathering strategies.

1.6   DESIGN OF THE RESEARCH

The research is predicated upon a constructionist epistemology (Crotty, 1998). Thus, it holds as foundational the belief that humans construct meaning and knowledge as they engage with the world which they are attempting to interpret (Peters, 2000). Hence, constructionist research seeks to understand those meanings or constructions of reality held by the participants, in this case, the principals who took part in the study.

"The theoretical perspective of the research project is interpretivism, a perspective which places importance upon both the interaction between actors within a social context and also between those actors and their context" (Burgess, 1985, p.4). Of central importance to this study which focuses upon the reconstruction of meaning by Catholic school administrators, is this network of interactions which shape meaning. In other words, interpretive research is "interested in understanding the meaning people have constructed" (Merriam, 1998, p.6).

Symbolic interactionism is the chosen research orientation. Symbolic interactionism assumes "that meanings arise through social interaction" (Jacob, 1988, p19) and that linguistic and other instrumental symbols "carry"

11

those meanings (Crotty, 1998). Within this framework, a case study methodology is adopted because it utilises interpretive research methods to gain a rich descriptive account of meanings and experiences of people in their social setting (Harney, 1997) and offers a means of organising social data for the purpose of analysing social reality (Best & Kaher, 1989). Case study allows the researcher to undertake the "collection and presentation of detailed, relatively unstructured information from a range of sources from a particular … group" (Hammersley, cited in Hitchcock & Hughes, 1995, p.318).

Within the study, data are collected principally through personal journaling, participant questionnaires, in-depth semi-structured interviews, critical review interviews, focus groups and independent review as described in Chapter Three.

1.7 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE RESEARCH

The research is significant because it reviews the process of the reconstruction of meaning by Catholic school administrators in changed and changing ecclesial, social and educational contexts. It seeks to gain insight into the new meanings which principals have formed in those contexts, the ways in which they have applied those meanings and the ways in which they view the future of their schools in the light of a new meaning structure.

The research will add to the corpus of professional knowledge in the area, and it is hoped that it will assist a wider audience to reflect upon the emerging meaning pattern for contemporary Catholic schools. The study is undertaken at a time when, nearly four decades since the conclusion of the Second

Vatican Council, it is possible to place into perspective, the developments in Catholic schooling that were precipitated by that convocation and by the co-incidental forces, social and educational, that have accompanied it.

Further, the researcher will be afforded an insight into his own professional world through an analysis of a process of meaning reconstruction in which he has been engaged in one way or another for over thirty years.

1.8   LIMITATIONS OF THE RESEARCH

The research is concerned with gaining a deep understanding of the meanings which Catholic school principals have developed through their practice of school leadership. The research is limited by the number of participants whom it was possible to engage in the study but this limitation was addressed by the utilisation of a range of validatory research instruments e.g. questionnaires, interviews, focus groups and "outsider" critique.

The researcher's own professional relationship with the participants as colleague is acknowledged. Every effort was made to ensure that whilst that relationship assisted in some ways, for example in the professional rapport of the interviews undertaken with participants and with the focus group interaction, it did not detract from the objectivity of the study. Participants were all engaged freely and of their own consent.

The research provides a "snapshot" of the available data taken over a defined period of time. It does not provide a longitudinal study of the development of professional meaning that may be possible over a protracted period through

the in-depth study of a smaller number of participants over time. The research sought rather, to obtain as clear a picture as possible of the participants' perspectives within a relatively short time span. The research instruments employed, consistent with their epistemological and theoretical underpinnings, allowed for rich, thick description of those perspectives and provide something of a summative view at the current time.

1.9 OUTLINE OF THE THESIS

A brief outline of the structure of this thesis, "The Reconstruction of Meaning by Catholic School Administrators", is given here. Apart from this introductory chapter which introduces and contextualises the research, this thesis has five other chapters.

Chapter Two, Review of the Literature, synthesises relevant writings concerning both the historical context of the contemporary Catholic school, and also canvasses the changing ecclesial, social and educational context in which it functions. The review also discusses a body of literature concerning the nature and process of meaning reconstruction.

Chapter Three, Design of the Research, explicates the theoretical and epistemological foundations of the research undertaken. Details regarding the methods and approaches used for data collection and analysis are also given.

Chapter Four, Presentation and Analysis of Findings, presents the data gathered from the range of research tools and provides a discussion of the findings of the research.

Chapter Five, Discussion of the Findings, explores the implications of the research findings for the contemporary Catholic school.

Chapter Six, Review and Conclusions, provides a statement of review of the research project and re-address the research questions.   Conclusions and implications for the profession are presented.   Suggested areas for further research are nominated.

This thesis now proceeds to the Review of Literature.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1   INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this chapter is to review a range of pertinent literature from the extensive corpus of work on the subject of the evolving nature of the contemporary Catholic school. Empirical data from relevant studies will be included where appropriate to complement the body of reflective commentary. Such a review will shed light upon the two key research questions. It will further assist in the process of analysing and discussing the research data within this study.

2.2   INTRODUCING THE IDEA OF REIMAGINING THE CATHOLIC SCHOOL

The focus of this study is an exploration of the changing role of the contemporary Catholic school and the work of school principals in negotiating that changing role. It will be seen that currently the Catholic school is in a critical phase of its evolution for several reasons. Central to these is the fact that the Catholic school is situated within the context of the Catholic Church which is itself undergoing foundational structural and ideological change (McLaughlin, 2000a). This relationship itself between the Catholic school and the Church will be examined. In addition to the ecclesial, other contextual factors influencing change in the Catholic school will be surveyed. These include both social and educational forces which have an impact upon the character and purpose of the Catholic school.

The conceptual framework (Figure 2.1) offers a synoptic view of the literature review. This framework situates the contemporary Catholic school within a context of concurrent fields of change. The review firstly posits the Catholic school **within the Church** and some attention will be directed towards a study of the ways in which **changing ecclesiology holds critical implications for the Catholic school.** As an instrument of the Church, the Catholic school is being re-shaped by developing self-perceptions of the Church, especially as it reviews its **evangelising and ecumenical perspectives.** Other key factors in the development of an emerging ecclesiology, such as the **evolution of the role of the laity** in the Church and the renewed understanding of the **nature of ministry** will be integral considerations in the literature review because of the importance of these two developments in the emergence of the contemporary Catholic school. These developments are not without their internal tensions as various groups within the Church view the changing landscape with reactions ranging from apprehension or fear of their scope and swiftness to frustration at their very narrowness and slowness.

Because this study focuses on the three contexts of the contemporary Catholic school, the impact of social and educational change was also significant within the ambit of the review of literature. The review thus contributes to an understanding of the nature and extent of the forces for change which are influencing the formation of meaning in the Catholic school today by practising principals.

17

The **changing social context** of the contemporary Catholic school will also be canvassed. As the Church has initiated a new engagement with the cultures in which it proclaims the gospel, so too have those cultures experienced sweeping and foundational changes in recent decades and continue to do so. The contemporary social context in which the Catholic school functions has a significant impact upon the ways in which it operates and upon the ways in which its goals may be reimagined. These changes are experienced most immediately in the relationship of the school with the students and their families who form the meeting point of the school with the culture in which it ministers.

Developments in the **educational context** of the Catholic school will be reviewed. Whilst these are mediated through the Church's vision of the goals and purposes of education, they nonetheless have the potential to shape the ways in which principals understand in 'practice' those same goals and purposes. Factors such as the consumerist approach to education and the growing impact of market forces on the educational enterprise will be examined.

Ecclesiological, social and educational factors and the profound changes which they embody, allow for a study of the **breakdown of inherited meaning,** that network of understandings and foundational assumptions which had sustained and given shape to the Catholic school for several generations. This breakdown allows the Catholic school to enter the experience of fundamental renewal or **reconstruction of meaning**. The paradigm used to study this phenomenon will be the **transformation cycle**

18

(Beare & Slaughter, 1993) which describes a process in which, following the breakdown of inherited meaning, new meanings may be constructed through the dialectic of experience, with new meanings finding validation, refinement, rejection or adoption in the emergent life of the renewing organization.

This literature review will explore the critical role of the **power of imagination in that process of meaning reconstruction.** The research will examine the importance of the principal's capacity to envisage or imagine new meanings and ways of enacting those meanings within that process.

The literature review will also examine the importance of the **defining concept of the Kingdom of God** in directing and refining the imaginative capacity of the Catholic school principal in the journey of meaning reconstruction. The evangelical imperatives implicit in the core notion of the Kingdom or Reign of God form a platform from which the creative work of reimagining the purposes of the contemporary Catholic school may be undertaken.

Thus, this thesis is focussed on the ways in which practising Catholic school principals are reshaping or re-imagining their work of leading a contemporary Catholic school. The research addresses two key research questions:

- How do practising principals currently perceive the purpose of Catholic schools?
- How do they perceive Catholic schools changing?

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  │  Social Factors  │═══════▶│ C    S  │        │  Ecclesial Factors   │
  └──────────────────┘        │ A    C  │        │   • Evangelization   │
                              │ T    H  │◀═══════│   • Ecumenism        │
  ┌──────────────────┐        │ H    O  │        │   • Renewal of       │
  │  Educational     │═══════▶│ O    O  │        │     Ministry         │
  │  Factors         │        │ L    L  │        │   • Role of Laity    │
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Breakdown of Inherited Meaning

Power Of Imagination → **Reconstruction of Meaning** ← **Entry to Transformation Cycle**

Defining Concept: Kingdom of God

Development and Implementation of New Meanings for Catholic Schools
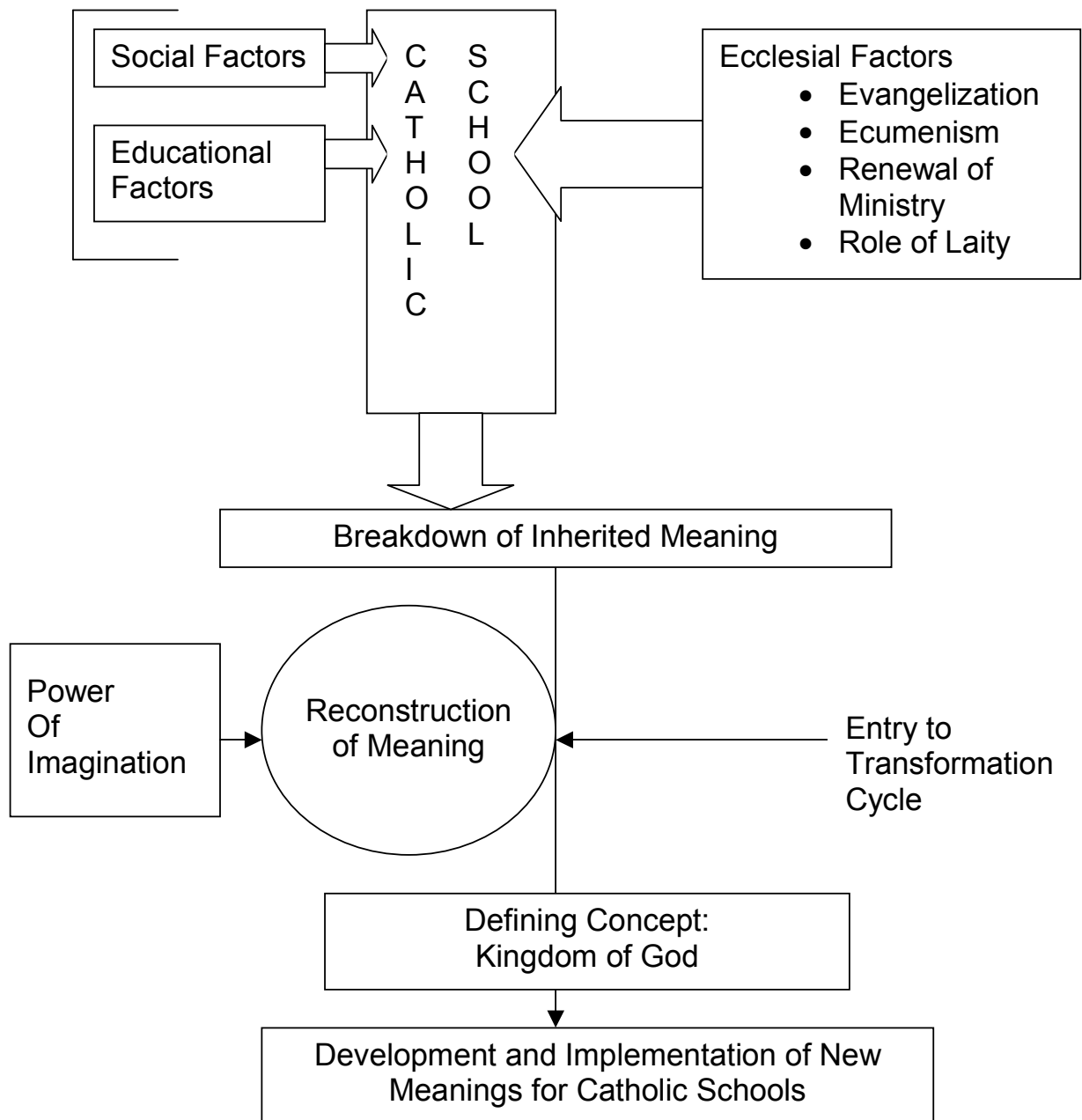
Figure 2.1
Conceptual Framework of the Literature Review

Because a study of the changing nature of the contemporary Catholic school involves an account, not only of ecclesial but also of educational and societal factors effecting change, this literature review embraces a broad compass of perspectives. The review has been structured as outlined below in Table 2.1.

Table 2.1

Outline of the Literature Review

2.1   INTRODUCTION
2.2   INTRODUCING THE IDEA OF REIMAGINING THE CATHOLIC SCHOOL
2.3   INHERITED MEANING FOR THE CATHOLIC SCHOOL
2.4   THE CHANGING ECCLESIAL CONTEXT OF THE CATHOLIC SCHOOL
2.5   THE CHANGING SOCIAL CONTEXT OF THE CATHOLIC SCHOOL
2.6   THE CHANGING EDUCATIONAL CONTEXT OF THE CATHOLIC SCHOOL
2.7   THE PROCESS OF REIMAGINING
2.8   THE PROCESS OF REIMAGINING IN A MODEL OF CHANGE MANAGEMENT
2.9   THE CONCEPT OF THE KINGDOM OF GOD IN THE TRANSFORMATION CYCLE
2.10 SUMMARY

This structure facilitates a review and synthesis of literature with a view to the development and refinement of an hypothesis concerning the changing nature of the contemporary Catholic school.

Pivotal to this hypothesis is an exploration of the consensus of vision which gave rise to an implicit charter of purpose for the Catholic school which remained largely unchanged for decades. This charter of purpose is what shaped and formed the inherited meanings of the Catholic school up until the middle of twentieth century. At this time, ecclesiological, sociological and

educational shifts gave birth to a revision of the Catholic school's sense of purpose, a revision which continues at the present time.

This literature review now embarks upon an examination of that historical movement from inherited meaning to meaning reconstruction.

2.3 INHERITED MEANING FOR THE CATHOLIC SCHOOL

2.3.1 The Historical Background to the Inherited Meanings for the Catholic School:

Within the scope of this study is an historical span which has seen critical change in the social, educational and ecclesial contexts of the Catholic school (McLaughlin, 1998) and the consequent raising of quintessential questions about its future purpose and direction (Chittister, 2003; Gilchrist, 1986; National Catholic Education Commission, 2000; Prendergast, 2003;). Throughout the decades prior to the Second Vatican Council (1962-1965), demonstrably a watershed in the history of the Church and consequently of the Catholic school (Bausch, 1981; Ludwig, 1996), certain underlying assumptions developed about the nature and purpose of the Catholic school (O'Donoghue 1997). These assumptions gave meaning and direction to the undertaking of Catholic education and to the task of principalship. Enshrined for generations in the practice of the Catholic school, these assumptions formed what might be termed "inherited meanings" (Beare & Slaughter, 1993, p.135). In turn, these inherited meanings rested upon foundational understandings of the Church and its relationship to the world in which it existed (Groome, 1998). These foundational, historical understandings warrant brief exploration.

In the centuries prior to Vatican II, socio-political developments had taken place which were to contribute greatly to the shaping of the Church's view of itself and its relationship to the world. For reasons of historical context, it is helpful to review the events which had a significant impact upon the Church

from the time of the French Revolution, "the Enlightenment's political carrier" (McBrien, 1994, p642). This review therefore begins at that point.

"At the end of the nineteenth century, the French Revolution helped to destroy the stable socio-political order which had sustained the Church for centuries" (Arbuckle, 1993, p.22). Napoleon, furthermore, in the aftermath of the Revolution, "set out to place the Church under the control of the State" (Arbuckle, 1993, p.22) and to spread this model across the Europe he had conquered, in the process sweeping away "the whole feudal system and the classes of society on which medieval Christianity rested" (Bausch, 1981, p.415).

> The revolutionary ideas of liberty, equality and the overthrow of monarchy were viewed as the antitheses of Christianity by the papal government. When the clerics returned to power in 1815 they were determined that these revolutionary ideas were to have no place in the Papal States, nor in the wider Church. This was to be a disastrous policy (Collins, 1997, p.35).

As the new century unfolded, further but contingent challenges presented themselves to the Church in Europe:

> The Church had to confront an entirely different and anxiety-evoking situation at all levels of human endeavour: the vigorous power of an anti-clerical state system, the growing impact of the Industrial Revolution on society, the Enlightenment values of naturalism, rationalism, liberalism, democracy and the growing fascination of the world for the new empirical sciences and historical research methods (Arbuckle, 1993, p.33).

The very concept of liberty itself was perceived as inimical to a Church which had suffered such loss and was threatened with more. "It (liberty) is intimately associated with the idea of progress. Both ideas … imply that the frontiers are

open to human curiosity and initiative at every point in every direction" (Suttor, 1965, p.244).

Again, it is important to recall that the Church's suspicion and disregard for such liberal and revolutionary ideas stemmed largely from the fact that "its initial contact (with them had been) with the excesses of the French Revolution" (Bausch, 1981, p.414). The revisionist attempts to restore the pre-Revolutionary alliance of throne and altar failed in the revolutions of 1830 and 1848 as the Popes of the time, Gregory XVI and Pius IX respectively, struggled in vain to withstand these forces, even in the papal states (McCool, 1977).

The ecclesiastical resistance firmed but "the more the Church's leadership struggled to resist the revolutionary insights and values emerging from the Western world, the more the Church withdrew from what was taking place in history and in people's lives" (Arbuckle, 1993, p23). The resultant ecclesiology of withdrawal was to affect profoundly the development of theology (and later the concomitant understanding of the Catholic school) in the decades that followed as the "Church…adopted an inward-looking, hostile-to-the-world, sacred-fortress mentality" (McLaughlin, 2000a, p.31). This attitude was exacerbated by the occupation of the Papal States in 1859 under Victor Emmanuel (Bausch, 1981), an action which Pius IX saw as a "a new assault on the Church" (Collins, 1997, p.44) and a consequence of modern errors (Coppa, 1990, p.139). This political loss *inter alia* led Pius IX to issue the *Syllabus of Errors* and its accompanying encyclical, *Quanta Cura* in

25

1864, both symptomatic of the Church's growing "alienation…from the modern world" (Collins, 1997, p.44).

The centralist, Romanist movement which had its origins in the 1801 *Concordat* (Bausch, 1981) had gathered momentum. It found not only doctrinal expression at Vatican I (1869-1870) where the *ultramontane* ideal was realised in the definition of papal primacy and papal infallibility (Collins, 1997) but also a foundational philosophical structure in neo-scholasticism, which "provided the Church with a very coherent intellectual framework" (Arbuckle, 1993, p.23). With a few notable exceptions in the latter half of the nineteenth century including Lamennais and Lacordaire in France and Rosmini in Italy and Newman in England, the prevailing theological system was neo-Thomism (Kelty, 2000) or neo-scholasticism. This "perennial philosophy", the unitary system that became mandatory for all in the Catholic Church" (Donohue, 1973, p.1), was declared so by Leo XIII in his encyclical, *Aeterni Patris* (1879) (Kelty, 2000).

The disadvantage of this philosophical framework was that "it was so self-contained that its supporters saw no need to listen to, and even learn from, other philosophies" (Arbuckle, 1993, p.23):

> The Church as a culture became increasingly closed or inward-looking, defensive and protective of its members, compelled to live in a world considered to be under the direction of evil or subversive forces. Detailed rules and laws were invented just to keep Catholics safe from contact with these agencies, such as Protestants, who were thought to endanger the purity of their faith. The assumptions that had existed for centuries – namely that people had to be changed by religion, not religion changed by them and their cultures – thus became further reinforced throughout the nineteenth century and right up to Vatican II
> (Arbuckle, 1993, p.23).

26

This defensive stance cannot be fully understood without reference to the modernist crisis "which had come to its zenith in 1907 when Pius X issued his encyclical, *Pascendi Dominici Gregis"* (Kelty, 2000, p.13). Modernism was not, in reality, a single movement but a complex of interrelated movements. However, the term was applied to all who refused to adopt a strictly conservative standpoint on theological matters (McBrien, 1994). However, Pius X, "suspicious, narrow minded and totally aligned in philosophy with his conservative curia" (Baush, 1981, p.470) was convinced that an international conspiracy sought to destroy the Church (Collins, 1997). The result was the issuing of the decrees *Lamentabili* (Holy Office, 1907), *Pascendi* (1907) and *Sanctorum Antistitum* (the Oath Against Modernism for all clergy). These measures further forced the Church to adopt a more isolationist position against its social environment which it perceived as increasingly hostile.

The eurocentric Church entered the twentieth century with a complex of systemic premises which set it apart from the contemporary world; which viewed human existence in dualistic terms, separating temporal from eternal concerns (McLaughlin, 2000b) and confirming a vast gulf between the "sacred" and the "profane" worlds. It also caused the Church to view with grave suspicion any new intellectual or cultural movement which, in turn, reinforced the view that the Catholic Church and it alone was the repository of all truth[1]. The institutional Church emphasised curial power and papo-centrism and eschewed dialogue for decree as the means to correct perceived

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[1] Vatican I produced only two documents, *Dei Filius* and *Pastor Aeternus,* the former on the Catholic faith, the latter on the Church, enshrining a definition of papal infallibility (Collins, 1997). *Dei Filius* includes the statement:

The situation of those, who by the heavenly gift of faith have embraced the Catholic truth, is by no means the same as that of those who, led by human opinions, follow a false religion.

27

deviation from orthodoxy, an orthodoxy which relied virtually exclusively on a neo scholastic philosophical worldview. These premises gave rise to what may be called the "inherited meanings" which shaped the Church, and hence the Catholic school (Kelty, 2000) up to Vatican II. Their demise became the catalyst for the revolutionary change which surrounded this Council (McBrien, 1994).

The Effect Upon Catholic Schools in Australia

The translation of those pre-conciliar ecclesial meanings to the Catholic school is made clear in the encyclical entitled *On the Christian Education of Youth (Divini Ilius Magistri)* issued in 1929 by Pius XI, "at a time when Catholic education had a strong and taken-for-granted identity, expressed in a distinctive educational philosophy or even theology" (Kelty, 2000, p.9).

That philosophy held firmly to a belief in "the impossibility of perfect and adequate education outside the context of a Catholic Christianity" (Groppo, 1991, p.65) and enshrined "a philosophy of education that was able to find support in the (neo) scholastic philosophy almost universally present in the Catholic Church of the twenties and thirties" (Kelty, 2000, p.21). The document is predicated upon a teleological anthropology (McLaughlin, 2000a):

> … since education consists essentially in preparing man (sic) for what he must be and for what he must do here below, in order to attain the sublime goal for which he was created, it is clear that there can be no true education which is not truly directed to man's last end… (*Divini Illius Magistri, par 26*)

28

Furthermore, in terms of the goals of the Catholic school:

> Bluntly, this means that Catholic education's essential goal is to provide an environment conductive to the "salvation of souls" and that all judgements about the Catholic school ought to be consistent with this "supernatural" goal. The distinctiveness of Catholic schools consequently needs then to be critiqued against this pre-eminent "supernatural" purpose (par 244) (McLaughlin, 2000a, p.2).

Such an other-worldliness of goal and vision had an established educational pedigree. At the opening of the first Christian Brothers' school in Sydney in 1887 at Balmain, Br O'Hagan had declared: "Our main object shall ever be to teach our pupils to value above all things their eternal salvation, and to secure this by faithfully and steadfastly adhering to the faith of their fathers." (O'Hagan in Campion, 1982, p.68)

The faithfulness and steadfastness of which Br O'Hagan had spoken were ensured by a didactic approach in Catholic schools which viewed Catholic doctrine "as received truth to be handed down unchanged from generation to generation" (O'Donoghue, 1997, p.40). The single catechism mandated by the Bishops' Plenary Council of 1885 for all Australian Catholic schools, "fitted well a religion of law, in which obedience, deference, and the recognition of authority were prime virtues" (Campion, 1982, p.70). There are some today who would see its universal successor, the Catechism of the Catholic Church "as a summary and reference point for all our questions about faith and morals" (Hart, 2003, p.2)

29

Inherited Anthropology

The other-worldly preoccupations of Catholic schooling were firmly rooted in the teleological anthropology of the Church at large (McLaughlin, 2000, O'Murchu, 1997b). *Divini*, whilst acknowledging the importance of human, earthly existence, in a posture not entirely divorced from a hint of Jansenism (McBrien, 1994), never took its gaze from the ultimate goal of the elevation of the human towards the divine:

> Christian education takes the whole of human life, physical and spiritual, intellectual and moral, individual, domestic and social not with a view to minimising it in any way, but in accord to elevate, regulate and perfect it, in accordance with the example and, teaching of Christ … thus (the individual) ennobles what is merely natural in life and secures it for new strength in the material and temporal order. (*Divini*, paras 300, 302)

It is helpful, in this connection, to allude to Niebuhr's (1951) fivefold typology in which he addresses the issue of the relationship between Christianity and civilisation. Of the five given types, *Divini* clearly articulates Niebuhr's scholastic type of *Christ above culture*:

> That is to say, Christ is both the fulfillment of culture and the means which relates humanity to the supernatural order … what was unforeseen was that this type or model was to break down within Catholicism. (Kelty, 2000, p.25)

The final sentence is germane to what follows in this literature review as socio-ecclesial developments throughout the twentieth century witnessed the breakdown of the network of philosophical and anthropological tenets with which the Church had entered it. In this breakdown were the seeds of the development of new foundational beliefs about the holistic nature of human beings and the purpose of human existence.

30

In Australia, at least, the single mindedness of *Divini* was tinged with a more immediate preoccupation. "The schools were intended, first, to preserve the religious culture of the Catholic people and, then, to be the means of their rising from the poverty in which so many of them had found themselves" (Dwyer, 1986, p.2; Turner, 1992). The Catholic population, largely Irish, "were socially marginalised and economically underprivileged. Education was perceived as the only practical vehicle available to Catholics to redress their injustice" (Ryan & McLaughlin, 1999, p.3). Whatever the mixture of motivation, the determination to build a separate Australian Catholic school sector was strong and drew heavily on the fortress model of a Church withdrawn from a hostile world yet determined to overcome it in a victory of righteousness. The Irish bishops who promoted the cause were led in the crusade by the second Archbishop of Sydney, Roger Bede Vaughan. Upon his arrival in Sydney in 1873, he was greeted by the clergy with an indication of their determination fuelled by their preoccupation with the anti-Catholic discrimination which they perceived all around them: "We (the clergy) hope to be better able to protect the education of the rising generation from the blighting influence of anti-Catholic secularism" (Clerical address of welcome, 1873, in O'Farrell, 1977, p.177).

The Education Bill of 1870 which ensured the cessation of funding to non-state educational endeavours in the colony drew a similarity defiant response from one observer:

> I presume that the minority require religious education as well as the majority, and you offer them a form of education, paid for out of the rates, which they cannot use; and you will tell me that it is political justice or religious equality? (Harcourt circa 1870 quoted in McTiernan, 1936, p.207).

31

The position of the bishops of New South Wales in the latter half of the nineteenth century anticipated the philosophical stance of *Divini Illius Magistri.* In 1879, fighting for the existence of a separate Catholic school system they declared:

> True, the State does not, and cannot claim a commission to educate. It is the bounden duty of the State to protect, not to usurp the moral duties of its members. All Christian Fathers and Mothers are required by the natural and divine laws to give their children a Christian education. The State has no power or commission to usurp the parental rights, and to compel parents to violate their conscience by sending their children to schools where an alien religion or no religion at all is taught. To do so would be to indulge in the most cruel form of religious persecution ...
>
> We find, on all sides, that where philanthropists have attempted to educate the inner life of man (sic) by philosophy, legislation or intellectual culture, the effect has always been the same. Every civilization which has not had Christianity for its basis has been dwarfed stunted or deformed; and every effort, from that of the most remote paganism to that of the most modern infidelity, to deal with the conscience, the will and the heart of man in their inner sanctuaries, has resulted in the degradation of man, and in the collapse of the philosophy which corrupted him. The reason may have been exercised, and the intellect may have been informed; but apart from Christianity, the moral nature, on which man's worth so much depends, has never been educated, nor his powers, passions and motives elevated or refined. (Bishops of New South Wales, 1879, quoted in Clark, 1955, vol II, p.723).

The Birth of the Separate Australian Catholic School

Such a view was the philosophical antecedent of the physical reality of the separate Catholic school system which became a key element in "the local parish plant" (Kelty, 2000, p.13) and in the pastoral work of the local Church. The separatist Catholic worldview shaped that system of schooling so that the form and content of Catholic schooling (as of the Catholic world in general) which predominated until the 1960s may be described as having "transmitted to the young…Catholic tribalism" (Fallon, 1996a, p.4). That is, the specific form and content of Catholic schooling up to that time immersed students in a

32

certain world view which presumed and sought to perpetuate certain values, beliefs and assumptions. Such an expectation was not a uniquely Australian phenomenon. In the United Kingdom it has been asserted that "the Catholic body clearly desired an education to take place within the perspective of the Catholic faith, so that believing children of believing parents could be taught by believing teachers in Catholic schools" (Arthur 1995, p.37). The proffered basis of this stance is an echo of the statements cited above concerning the intrinsic link between the Church and its schools: "Catholics viewed religion, in particular the Catholic faith, and education, as inseparable" (Arthur 1995, p.38). In hostile environments, both socially and religiously, Catholic schools were established to preserve the religious integrity of a Catholic community under siege (Arthur, 1995; O'Keefe, 1996,). Preserved through times of dire need because of a fixed belief in the intrinsic value of education integrated with and founded upon a Catholic worldview, Church schools not only survived, but offered their students "a means of upward mobility for an emerging Catholic meritocracy " (O'Keefe, 1996, p.189).

"This particular type of school, which was so close to the centre of Catholic life for nearly a century … was staffed almost exclusively by members of religious congregations" (Dwyer, 1986, p.2) and operated under close clerical, and ultimately episcopal control (Campion, 1982; Kelty, 2000,). Crucial to the success of the enterprise was the "huge 'army' of priests and the men and women of the various religious orders" (Kelty, 2000, p.13). Even if there is evidence to suggest that the original preoccupation of at least some religious orders had been chiefly with social works and in the main, addressed to adults (O'Sullivan, 1979) the work of schooling soon dominated. The post Vatican II

"evaporation of the presence of religious brothers and sisters in Catholic schools" (McLaughlin, 2000a, p.1) which had been one of the hallmarks of the Australian school, was one of the chief and most visible indicators of the foundational changes which have altered the conception of the nature, goals and purposes of Catholic schooling in the contemporary Church and which have broken down the inherited meanings which sustained the Catholic school prior to the Second Vatican Council.

Inherited Meanings for a Catholic School

As established above, these **inherited meanings** *inter alia* related to a clear sense of the quintessential separateness of the Catholic school from other forms of education by virtue of its moral superiority grounded in its Catholicity. A central element of that Catholicity was a belief in the Church's "earthly battle waged against the forces of evil at work in this world … '(by) the Church militant' " (Kelty, 2000, p.12).

They were also founded upon a (neo-Thomistic) anthropology which fostered a focus on "the final end" (eternal salvation) of human life which, in turn, allowed for an eschewing of an engagement with the world from which the Church had essentially withdrawn (Hales, 1965; McLaughlin, 2000a). Yet, it has been seen, the Catholic school, somewhat paradoxically, nurtured generations of students who were equipped educationally to involve themselves very successfully in human endeavour (Dwyer, 1986) and who were formed in a spirit of service to the world, especially to others in poorer, mission countries (O'Donoghue, 1997).

A further clear inherited meaning related to a belief that the Catholic Church alone held the keys to eternal salvation and that "none of those who are outside the Church…can have a part in eternal life, but will go into eternal fire, unless they are gathered into that Church before the end of life" (Pope Eugene at the end of the Council of Florence, 1442 cited in Morwood, 1997, p.43). Accompanying this certainty was a belief in the unchanging, univocal teachings of the Catholic faith, founded upon a papal succession which could speak infallibly on matters of faith and morals (McBrien, 1994), teachings which could faithfully and fully be transmitted via a single Catechism (Campion, 1982).

Inherited meanings also related to a perception of the work of Catholic education as the virtually exclusive province of vowed men and women in religious orders (O'Donoghue, 1997) people whose very formation and lifestyle promoted a sense, both in themselves and to the laity, of their separateness from the world in which they taught (Arbuckle, 1996). This, in turn, resulted in a submission to (not unrelated to a financial dependence upon) clerical authority at the local level (Arbuckle, 1996; Kelty, 2000) and to episcopal authority at the diocesan level (Purcell, 1977) however problematic that relationship might have been at the congregational level (Campion, 1982).

In summary, for the decades prior to the Second Vatican Council (1962-1965), the Catholic school in Australia, situated within a strongly Irish cultural heritage, assumed a set of cultural characteristics which were more or less uniform and which constituted its inherited meaning structure. This meaning

structure guided the role of principals. The Catholic school typically adopted

an insular posture, preserving its students from the negative influences of the

external world (Looney, 2003), teaching its students a circumscribed syllabus

of religious knowledge framed in a mandated Catechism and supported by the

study of apologetics. It was staffed, almost exclusively by male and female

religious identified by their religious dress or habit. The school day was

marked by the discipline of prayer and the seasons marked by liturgical

observance. Older students were protected in their Catholic faith through

membership of the Young Christian Students (Y.C.S.) movement or at

university via the Newman Society. The whole educational enterprise was

steered by a clear goal – the salvation of eternal souls. At the same time, the

fostering of an educated, socially mobile Catholic generation was an ever

present objective even if an understated or even unstated one (Ryan &

McLaughlin, 1999).

Current Tensions

To some, these characteristics are constitutive of a halcyon time "of happy

memory, when unity was prime … and when everyone agreed upon a clear

philosophy and direction for Catholic schools" (Ryan & McLaughlin, 1999, p.7;

Duignan & Bhindi, 1998). There are those who would seek to restore such

conditions (Arbuckle, 1993; Collins, 1986) while others would argue that in

fact, "there never was a 'golden age' in Australian Catholic schools" (Ryan,

1993, p.7) to begin with. Such contrasting views are indicative of some of the

tensions in the post Vatican II Church (Croke, 2002) which affect the sense of

purpose of the contemporary Catholic school and which will be explored

below. These tensions are captured in the following observations concerning

the conflict of paradigms of direction and control of Catholic schooling which

36

are part of the focus of this study. The tension between the past and the future, between the remembered and the reimagined, is at the core of the epic transformation from Irish roots to contemporary and future forms for Catholic schooling that can emerge only in time:

> We are heirs to a Catholicism that defines itself as much by what it is not than by what it is in favour of… We have an educational system with its roots in defiance. We have a brand of Catholicism imbued with a call expressed in the hymn "Faith of our Fathers", to be "true to thee to death" in "spite of dungeon, fire and sword." Put the two together and you have a construct of Catholic education that's perpetually on its guard, watchful and mindful of its borders and its territory. This seems a caricature of the kind of Catholic education that is presented as something from which to recover rather than as something to celebrate. It seems to be of times past and not of times present. But echoes of this remain, and we would ignore them at our peril. If reimagining is to be more than the creation of utopias we must listen carefully to what sometimes we might rather not hear. Issues of power and control and ownership remain, and will not go away no matter how hard we reimagine. (Looney, 2003, p.237)

Further, these tensions are heightened when confronted with the reality of changed patterns of affiliation amongst students and their families with the institutional Church. This reality which will form a critical part of the research within this study. Present tensions caused by a lack of familial affiliation with the Church are brought into clear relief when placed over against the task of reimagining the Catholic school:

> …how can we refocus a Catholic school ethos that has been traditionally aligned to Church traditions among students who are largely unchurched? I believe that part of the answer lies in the understanding that times past were not some "golden age" where the Catholic school ethos was accepted and reproduced by generations of practising Catholics. Rather, it has always been a struggle, and what these schools are faced with today are some of the same issues, namely a call to an acceptance that Catholic schools try to engage the spiritual as part of their educational goals and ideals. (Van Eyk, 2003, p.34)

37

A Global Problem

In overview, returning to the global perspective, as the middle years of the twentieth century arrived, the Church lamented the poor state of the world which, it rued, had largely shunned its message. Perhaps it saw a "golden age" of unity, compliance and peace passing from view:

> At the start of the Second World War, Pius XII reflected in his first encyclical on the darkness over the world as Nazism, Fascism and Communism began to unleash their destructive powers. These evil political philosophies endangered world peace because the world itself had apostatised from the Church. Doom and gloom was everywhere, except in the Church – understood, of course, primarily as the hierarchical Church, Pope and bishops. It was argued that God was now condemning and punishing the world for its failure to listen to the Vicars of Christ over the past century or more.
> (Arbuckle, 1993, pp.23-24)

The foundational shift which will be surveyed below and which was to accompany the Second Vatican Council in the next decades, arguably had more to do with the consequences of the failure of the Vicars of Christ to listen to the world than with the world's failure to listen to them. The fundamental movement which took place at the time of the Second Vatican Council and which involved the Church, both through its own initiative of renewal and openness (Pell, 2003) and through co-incidental epochal social transformations, constituted a paradigmatic shift for the Church (Ludwig, 1996) and therefore for the Catholic school. The inherited meaning structure explored above broke down in the face of seemingly irresistible forces, necessitating the cycle of meaning reconstruction which is the focus of this study. It is valuable now to survey the pivotal period of the time of the Second Vatican Council within its social context to understand better the transformations which it wrought for the Church and for the Catholic school.

2.3.2 A paradigmatic shift and its aftermath:

Having surveyed the approximate historical context of the Second Vatican Council, it is valuable now to survey the proximate social and ecclesiological climate surrounding the Council in order to explore its profound and foundational effects upon the Church and consequently upon Catholic schools.

Just over ten years after the close of the Council, one observer, noting the already evident impact of its proceedings remarked:

> There are some events in Church history so decisive that they set the agenda for an entire historical era. For Catholic ecclesiology the Second Vatican Council seems to have been such an event. More than a decade after the Council the Catholic ecclesiologist has no choice except to frame his (sic) questions in the light of what the Council initiated.   (Dulles, 1977, p.1)

"What the Council initiated" was arguably a profound and far reaching overturning of theological assumptions which had sustained ecclesiology for centuries:

> According to the expressed desires of Pope John XXIII, Vatican II was a Council of renewal and reform … This invitation to change, following upon many centuries of relative stability, unleashed a sudden surge of questioning, turmoil and internal criticism. This criticism, in turn, gave rise to a measure of self-doubt and to a certain crisis of identity. (Dulles, 1977, p.12)

The theological shifts accompanying Vatican II were "fundamental … mythological (and) long overdue … produc(ing) profound value changes within the Church" (Arbuckle, 1988, p.77). As will be surveyed below, this "mythological" transformation allowed the Church's self-perception to be radically altered.

39

Ancient symbols re-emerged (Arbuckle, 1988) as defensive, hostile-to-the-world positions (Treston, 1997) were challenged by other ecclesial perceptions. The fortress, for some, gave way to the "tent of the people of God, pitched in the desert and shaken by all the storms of history, the Church laboriously seeking its way into the future, groping and suffering many internal afflictions, striving over and over again to make sure of its faith" (Rahner, 1979, p.152), yet seeking to listen to the cry of the poor and the afflicted around it and beyond it (*Gaudium et Spes, para.1*).

A Changing Church within a Changing World

Yet not all change was ecclesially driven. Social and cultural movements in the world at large profoundly affected a Church opening itself to dialogue with them (Wilson, 1983). At the very time Pope John XXIII called the Council together, the Western world was undergoing foundational social transformation. As one observer remarked: "Those of us who lived through the 1960s sensed that the changes taking place within and without us were profound and permanent, yet we had little idea of what legacy this would leave our children." (Ludwig, 1996, p.18)

Moreover, in the decades since the Council, social transformation has proceeded apace:

> In the decades since the 1960s, aspects of Western culture as diverse as the forms of popular music, telecommunications, and attitudes to women and the environment have altered significantly. While little in this process of redefinition has been the product of deliberate policy or overarching direction, its effects have been nonetheless profound … In the last generation, perhaps more than at any other time in history, it has become clear that the Church is not simply the product of what could be called theological factors … but it is also affected by its place in history. (Lennan, 1995, p.9)

40

That place in history in the latter half of the twentieth century has been marked by the Church's encounter with a world shaped by a post-modern perspective, a perspective characterised, at least in part, by pragmatism, deconstruction, scepticism, relativism and nihilism (Norris, 1992; Tarnas, 1991). Just as the Church faced the task of *aggiornamento* and sought to "consider attentively the world of today" as Pope John XXIII exhorted the Council Fathers to do in his opening address in St Peter's Basilica in 1962, that world itself was undergoing epochal change. The concatenation of factors, movements and aspirations, both ecclesiological and global at the time of the Second Vatican Council, saw the Church facing multiple and daunting challenges that would fundamentally transform its nature:

> Though all mainline Churches have been deeply influenced by post-modernism, the Roman Catholic Church has been especially affected. Vatican II challenged Catholics to leave the securities of their ghetto culture and go out into the world to listen and to evangelise, but few were prepared for this task, and certainly not for the turmoil of the Expressive Revolution. Catholics were expected to adjust to the demands of the modern era – something they had in many ways been protected from for centuries – and to the turmoil of the emerging postmodernist age *at the same time*. The effects of the combined impact of the Council, the Expressive Revolution, modern and postmodern cultures were traumatic for many Catholics: their meaning system, if it had been the coherent and well-integrated world-view of the ghetto-Church, collapsed with remarkable suddenness.
>
> (Arbuckle, 1996, p.54)

So profound were the effects on the Church that it may be claimed that the only parallel movement in two millennia of Christian history was the definitional transformation from a persecuted, small community faith to the status of official religion of the Roman Empire under Constantine in the fourth century (Rahner, 1979) with all its attendant transitions (McLaughlin, 2000). Others situate the present paradigmatic shift (Arbuckle, 1993; Ludwig, 1996;

Murphy, 1997; O'Malley, 1983;) within a broader scope. One observer likens

it to not one but four other such dramatic movements:

- The Church emerging from its Jewish matrix to face the realities of life in the gentile and Roman world;

- The transition under Constantine to official imperial religion;

- The "Gregorian revolution" of the 11th century whereby Gregory VII (1073-85) introduce the hierarchical, centralised model of Church governance still operative today;

- The Counter Reformation of the 16th century when the Church adopted an "absolutist" model of theology and liturgy in response to the challenge of Protestantism. (Collins, 1986, pp.11-12)

Yet, the manifold, contemporary effects of Vatican II, profound as they are,

are the current manifestation of the effects of centuries of revolutionary

cultural movements in the Western world. It may be that these "large epochal

movements in Western culture … these accumulating, piled-up revolutions

(that) hit all at once in our contemporary institutional Catholic experience"

(Lee, 1995, p.28) have contributed significantly to the paradigmatic shift

experienced since Vatican II. These cultural transitions include:

- The *scientific revolution* "which brought about a new method for acquiring knowledge and new knowledge content about the world";

- The shift from *feudalism to modern governance models* that are participative;

- The rise of *historical consciousness* and a *sense of historical responsibility* which "recognises the historical conditioning of all experience, all understandings of experience, and all articulations of our understandings of experience". The Modernist controversy at the end of last century is an example of "sustained resistance toward historicised interpretation". (Lee, 1995, pp.28-29)

In summary, just as Pope John XXIII called for an ecclesial renewal which

involved, at its core, an opening to the world, and just as the Council Fathers

42

announced in their opening message on October 20th, 1962, that they "look(ed) forward to a spiritual renewal from which will also flow a happy impulse on behalf of human values such as scientific discoveries, technological advances, and a wider diffusion of knowledge" and just as they turned their attention to "whatever concerns the dignity of man", the world they faced was radically being transformed. The world itself was in the throes of a paradigmatic shift resulting from profound historical and cultural forces (Lennan, 1995). This understanding is vital to what follows, as any attempt to canvass the process of the reconstruction of meaning for the Catholic school must take into account not only ecclesiological considerations but also the concomitant social context (McBrien, 1994) in which the school functions. In turn, the consideration of social context necessitates the review of the changing educational world in which the Catholic school operates. Hence, this study reflects a concern for the ecclesial, social and educational theatres of change which all have significant impact upon the journey of the reconstruction of meaning for the Catholic school.

Tensions in a Period of Change

Given that "for many Catholics (the years since Vatican II) have been traumatic… (and that) they have passed through the searing process of evaluating, sometimes abandoning and then re-discovering their meaning structure" (Collins, 1986, p.6), it is to be expected that the journey of the reconstruction of meaning would not be without its internal tensions (McLaughlin, 2000b; Schreiter, 1997). Some would celebrate the change and what they perceived as the growth and blossoming of the Church in its "aggiornamento". Others would take the opposing view and lament forty years

43

from the commencement of the Council the lack of rationality and vision in the

dynamism of renewal and hold that:

> Discussions about the nature and practice of Christian life since Vatican II have exhausted most of us with their haphazard not to say arbitrary and at times unhealthy approach to change – more often than not merely for the sake of change. Change, like dissent, has become a good in itself, desirable and unstoppable – or so we are led to believe.
> (Stenhouse, 2003, p.5)

These tensions have been part of the story of Catholic schooling since

Vatican II:

> The identity of Catholic education in the wake of Vatican II … has been a centre of controversy between competing conservative and radical interpretations. (Arthur, 1995, p.51)

This controversy has found focus in issues such as enrolment policies where

questions about the criteria for the acceptance of enrolments based upon the

religious practice of parents are symptomatic of broader issues of ecumenism,

evangelisation and mission and their attendant tensions (McLaughlin, 2000b;

Tinsey, 1998).   These tensions result from the conflict between those who

would return to the seeming security of the Catholic world defined as it was

prior to Vatican II (Arbuckle, 1996; Collins, 1986) and those who wish to see

the journey of renewal undertaken with varying degrees of urgency (Gellner,

1992; Ludwig, 1996):

> People who … had based their faith on what was considered quite wrongly ever-enduring symbols of God's presence, gradually began to feel lost and confused because the familiar cultural supports had suddenly disappeared. Often they needed time to grieve the loss of what had given warmth and meaning to their lives … but unfortunately the space to mourn was rarely given them by those ever anxious to implement the changes based on the purified mythology. (Arbuckle, 1988, pp.78-79)

The tensions inherent in this conflict of worldviews remain (Thornhill, 2003)

and affect the work of principals in the contemporary Catholic school. The

deep-seated bifurcation that had its roots in Pope John's work towards the democratisation of Church structure left unfinished at his death is one clear example. His successor "inherited a democratic spirit encased in an autocratic political body. The tension has not been resolved to this day" (Bausch, 1981, p.537). Nor have the fundamental tensions created by the Church's sudden encounter with "the realities of the culture of modernity (in) a world in the cultural turmoil of postmodernism (an encounter for which) it was ill-equipped, and remains so today…" (Arbuckle, 1996, p.67). The conflict of perspective and aspiration within the Church and Catholic schooling informs what follows in this study of the reconstruction of meaning for the Catholic school.

All of these considerations lead to the understanding that the contemporary Catholic school is situated within a Church which has undergone a foundational transformation or paradigm shift, "leaving its medieval European forms behind even if unevenly and hesitantly" and moving the tradition into a global and contemporary context" (Ludwig, 1996, p.35) and in the process, "crossing…a threshold which leaves behind the Constantinian establishment" (Thornhill, 2003, p.5). A paradigm may be understood as "the entire constellation of beliefs (and) values … shared by members of a given community" (Kuhn, 1970, p.175). The paradigm shift for the Church finds its ecclesiological epicentre in the Second Vatican Council yet is the result of a concatenation of cultural and social tremours associated with the demise of the modern and the rise of postmodern philosophy with all its attendant turmoil.

The Breakdown of Inherited Meaning

An inescapable element in such a paradigmatic movement is the phenomenon of deconstruction or breakdown of meaning (Spretnak, 1991). In fact:

> One could interpret the whole sweep of self-criticism leading to the Second Vatican Council and its reforms, not to mention the avalanche of internal critique among Catholics that the council ushered in, as an exercise in deconstruction. The practical fallout of the Council … for many believers has, in fact, been deconstructive: the loss of a pattern of meanings and values that held life together and gave it purpose and direction. (Ludwig, 1996, p.5)

That breakdown or deconstruction of meaning has been precipitated, as seen above, not only by internal ecclesial factors but by external forces as well:

> In a changing social, economic and familial landscape, most of all the support networks for meaning and identify that functioned for past generations no longer have the same plausibility and force. For many young people, the beliefs about life's meaning drawn from religious convictions and from the Church do not seem to have the same cogency they apparently had in the part. (Rossiter, 2001, pp.24-25)

The inherited meanings for the Church, its "silent language" (Arbuckle, 1996, p.66) with its pervasive symbolic and mythical influences, which had been reinforced by centuries of history, were dismantled in a very short period of time. Assumptions, practices and structures which had been held for several centuries to be immutable, were suddenly and resoundingly interrogated for meaning by those who were asked to accept them. The Catholic school community has experienced this "major crisis of meaning" (Rohr, 1993, p.1), with inherited meaning structures, predicated upon pre-Vatican II premises, being broken down. New meanings presented themselves for scrutiny by the community involved in Catholic education and by principals responsible for leading its schools. The breakdown of the old and the discovery of new meanings became a critical challenge for principals. The scrutiny of those

46

new meanings is the substance of what follows in this review of literature. The obverse of deconstruction is reconstruction. It is the goal of this study to examine the process of the reconstruction of meaning taking place in Catholic schools under the leadership of practising principals. This reconstruction does not ignore the past or ignore history. It aims to search out the truth of tradition and establish an authentic meaning structure for those who minister today and for those to follow. The journey is toward the establishment of new "inheritance meanings" which give a sense of continuity to those who minister in Catholic schooling and for those to whom ministry is extended:

> There is an enormous spiritual vacuum … people are dying for lack of vision, for lack of transcendent meaning to name their soul and their struggles … It is time for reconstruction. We need to know what we *do* believe, why we are proud of our only past, what is good about even the broken things, and how we can begin a new language of responsibility. (Rohr, 1993, p.2)

This survey of literature continues by examining the sources of meaning for Catholic schools and their principals which are arising from the ecclesial, social and educational arenas. The first of these to be studied will be the ecclesial context.

2.4 THE CHANGING ECCLESIAL CONTEXT OF THE CATHOLIC SCHOOL

Catholic schools in the decades leading up to the 1960s functioned out of a set of inherited meanings which, in turn, had been founded upon established ecclesial, social and educational assumptions and principles (O'Donoghue, 1997). In surveying the breakdown of those inherited meanings, it is beneficial to begin by studying the changing ecclesial context of the Catholic school from the 1960s onwards. The separate yet interrelated theatres of change, namely the social and educational, will then be surveyed.

Given that within Catholic education, there is currently the possibility of moving into a qualitatively new existence (McDonald, 1993; Monahan, 2003;) this review sets out to examine the process by which this renewal might take place and the characteristics of the leadership currently being exercised to effect the transition from the present to such a reimagined status (O'Rourke, 1998). It is necessary, therefore, to explore not only the factors which indicate the need to reappraise the basic goals and purposes of Catholic schooling in Australia, but also the nature of the process of redirection or reimagining which might result from such a study.

Initially, however, it is beneficial to examine the foundational relationship between the Catholic school and the Church which is its sponsor. The terms of this relationship determine the extent to which developments both within and without the Church, have an impact upon the Catholic school and play a role in determining the school's goals and purposes.

2.4.1 Changing Ecclesial Self Perception:

At the Second Vatican Council (1962-1965) the Catholic Church proclaimed the inextricable link between itself and the world in which it exists and at whose service it places itself. Such an outlook is in stark contrast to its earlier isolationist posture outlined above. The Council could assert in a statement "above all others addressed to the world" (Murphy, 2003, p.219) that:

> the joy and hope, the grief and anguish of the men (sic) of our time, especially of those who are poor or afflicted in any way, are the joy and hope, the grief and anguish of the followers of Christ as well. Nothing that is genuinely human fails to find an echo in their hearts (*Gaudium et Spes*, 1965, par 1.)

In so doing, the Church situates itself (or declares its aspiration to situate itself) within the sphere of contemporary society, as a "listener…at the heart of the world" (O'Murchu, 1997a, p.115) making the concerns of its members and the issues of its time, the Church's concerns and issues. Hence, the "… church is, first and foremost, a community gathered around the exploration and articulation of a deep spiritual yearning" (O'Murchu, 1997a, p.89). The joining of ecclesial and social concerns is also an expression of the internal, ecclesiological shifts within the Church since the Second Vatican Council (1962-1965). These ecclesiological shifts however, have not seen seamless change. "The fundamental theological orientation…derived from Augustine did not lead (everyone) to have optimistic expectations for the Church's new openness to the world of human culture" (Thornhill, 2003, p.7). The tensions between the Augustinian and Greco/Thomistic positions were (and are still) pronounced. The conflict between kerygma and dialogue, proclamation and discussion are at the heart of the tension (Allen, 2000).

The emergence of new models of Church (Dulles, 1974) or the revitalisation of ancient ones nevertheless has broadened the scope of ecclesial self-perception and has offered new approaches to understanding the relationship of the Church to the world (O'Sullivan, 1997). Both of these outcomes are important. New self-perceptions allow for an openness to an examination of alternative organisational and structural possibilities along with models of leadership and ministry based upon renewed philosophical and theological tenets. Further, the Church's reformed understanding of its *modus vivendi* allows it to revise (to re-imagine) (Arbuckle, 1996) its mode of relating to the society or societies in which it exists. The declaration of affiliation with the world at the opening of *Gaudium et Spes* is a statement of the Church's aspiration to shape a renewed relationship with society (Bernier, 1992). This renewed relationship, it will be seen, posits the Church within the world and the sphere of the world's concerns. It does not isolate the Church from issues or matters which might not immediately be designated as "religious". It also somewhat removes the spurious distinction between the "sacred" and the "profane" or "secular" (Ryan, 2003). The Church has identified itself with the broader concerns of the larger human family and in that way has declared all genuine social concerns to be "religious", and all of life, "sacred".

This identification has implications for the Catholic school. As a Church instrumentality, it is affected by new models of Church. The Catholic school is intrinsically challenged by the Church's renewed terms of engagement with society to confront questions of fundamental purpose and mission. This research project is an attempt to study some of those questions highlighted by contemporary ecclesiology as well as by other major social and educational movements.

2.4.2 The Consequential Relationship of the Catholic School to Society:

Catholic schools under the leadership of their principals are called to enact those same revised terms of engagement with society. This new relationship represents a shift in perspective for Church schools and exposes them to "encounter situations of rapid social, cultural and ideological change" (Grace, 1995, p.160; McLaughlin, 1998). For this reason, the societal and educational developments surveyed below do have a significant impact upon the life of the Catholic school. As it interacts with both the social *milieu* and the educational world within which it functions, the Catholic school is influenced by both of these fields as well as by the ecclesial context within which it exists. Hence, this study examines the effects on the school and its leaders of its reshaped ecclesial, social and educational contexts. It will also study the reimagination of its goals and purposes which may result from such effects. Such possibilities of reimagination result from the relationship of openness of the Church, and hence of its schools, to the wider world, a relationship galvanised largely by the Second Vatican Council.

In contrast to the conditions surrounding the Church's relationship to society which prevailed prior to 1960 (Lynch, 2003), the social and cultural climate of the 1960s witnessed a "dramatic loss of corporate identity, of cohesion, authority and discipline as they had been known. All the symptoms of de-tribalisation of people were visible" (Fallon 1996a, p.4). With that de-tribalisation, the sense of insularity from the wider world declined. With a new relationship being forged with the wider world, new challenges faced Catholic school principals in terms of a "whole range of moral, ethical, and professional

dilemmas of a kind not encountered by their predecessors" (Grace, 1995, p.163).

Challenges Facing the Catholic School

The challenges facing the Catholic school community come both from within and from without. Challenges from within are both proactive, generated by the Church's evangelising initiative, consonant with emerging models of Church (O'Keefe, 1996; O'Rourke, 1998) and also reactive, with many within the Church asking, amongst other things, whether Catholic schools should continue to exist (Crudden, 1972) given the vastly different conditions under which they now operate and the radically altered forms in which they function (Hypher, 1996). External challenges are issued by the world of education itself and the rapidity with which it is changing (Beare & Slaughter, 1993) both in form and in substance. Global technologies affect educational methodology and content and the post-compulsory years of schooling are being shaped by the world of the workplace. Governments' economic determinism is not without impact on the expectations placed on the perceived productivity of schools and schooling (Jones, Foreword, as cited in Beare & Slaughter, 1993).

Catholic schools under the leadership of their principals strive to respond at least to some of these challenges and to those posed by the increasingly secular and pluralistic *milieu* in which they function. The result may be presented as a process of reimagination or radical reshaping (Arbuckle, 1988, 1993; Beare & Slaughter, 1993; Bolman & Deal, 1991; Ludwig, 1996) of the Catholic school out of which new models and new structures will evolve. The

dynamic and dialectic nature of this evolutionary process of reimagining may

be seen as essentially communitarian and dialogic:

> The future shape and profile of the local communities that the schools serve will be an influence in the manner in which Catholic schools engage with their community. The identity of the school will be community. The identity of the school will be shaped by the interaction with this external environment and the intentions of the Catholic community; the making of this identity will be the interactions and collaboration of the parties concerned. (Herron, 2003, p.250)

This evolution may be described as generative of the "third wave of…the

Australian Catholic School" (Degenhardt, 1996, p.26). Schools of this third

wave can be seen as having "boundaries (which are) porous and amorphous,

constantly changing (experiencing) interaction with the wider society (and)

immersion in the wider culture" (Degenhardt, 1996, pp.1-2).   Some of the

external factors, from which the Catholic school had been somewhat insulated

but which now bear significant impact upon it, may be summarised in Figure

2.2 below.
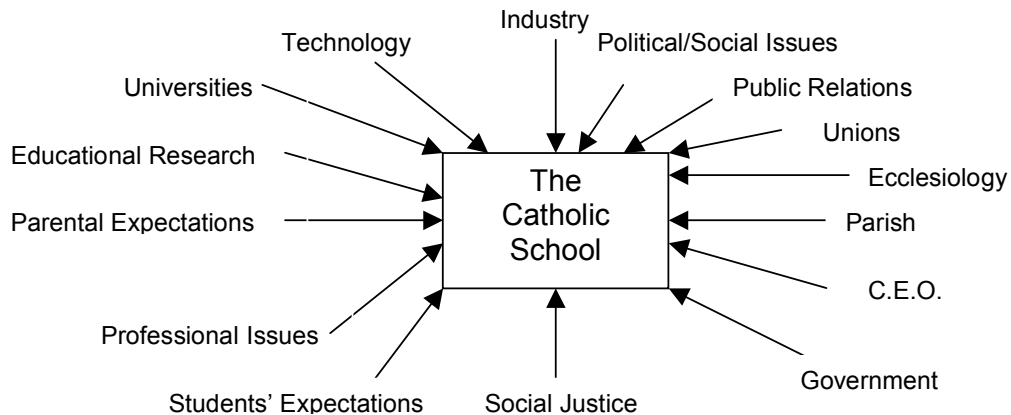
Figure 2.3

Contemporary Influences on the Catholic School
(Source : Adapted from Degenhardt, 1996, p1.)

Such a range of factors, some inter-related, give cause for principals of Catholic schools to examine the nature and direction of Catholic schooling for the future, and along with that, to examine the inherited meanings which have determined that nature and direction in the past. Given that contemporary Catholic schools exist within, and are sponsored by, a Church which claims to respond to "the joy and hope, the grief and anguish … of our time" (*Gradium et Spes*, 1968, para.1) some of the factors identified in Figure 2.3 are to be considered by Catholic school communities seeking to respond faithfully to the call of the contemporary Church. Others are to be assessed in seeking the balance between a legitimate responsiveness to market forces and the constant call to fidelity to the mission and ministry of the Catholic school. These issues will be addressed in section 2.4.3. They form part of the network of factors causing Catholic school communities to reexamine questions of purpose and direction which, in turn, open the possibility of the creative exercise of reimagining those same purposes and directions for the Catholic school in the light of a new meaning structure. There are numerous factors prompting that reappraisal of direction, purpose and nature. One of the critical internal elements in that network of factors is the evolving role of lay people in the mission of the Church. This crucial evolution will now be discussed.

2.4.3 The Evolving Role of the Laity:

Whilst many forces for change acting upon the Catholic school will be treated in some detail within this study, one salient element in this evolution which flows from and contributes to the potential for reimagining the Catholic school,

is a renewed awareness of the responsibilities of the laity (*Decree on the Apostolate of the Laity*, 1965, para.25). These responsibilities flow from the privileges of Baptism (Treston, 1994). Such an awareness of the role of the laity recognises a foundational shift from the hierarchical ecclesiology outlined by Pius X in 1906 that, "The Church is an unequal society…the one duty of the multitude is to allow themselves to be led, like a docile flock, to follow the Pastors."(*Vehementer Nos*, no. 8 cited in Morwood, 1992, p.41)

In tandem with the emerging role and involvement of lay people in the work and leadership of Catholic education (Dwyer, 1986) the re-emergence of an ecclesiology which embraces a legitimate role for all the baptised allows for the possibility that that work may be recognised and deemed as ministry (Lee, 1995). The term "ministry" and its implications will be explored below. The understanding and designation of the work of the laity as "ministry" signifies a vital shift in ecclesiology and, in turn, in the understanding of the mission of the contemporary Catholic school. This is especially so given that the Congregation for Catholic Education holds that it is the laity "who will substantially determine whether or not a school realises its aims and accomplishes its objectives" (*Lay Catholics in Schools*, 1982, para.1). Of significance here is the theological legitimation given for the re-emergence of the role and ministry of the laity. Indeed, it is considered vital that the Church "acknowledge and foster the ministries, the offices and roles of the lay faithful that find their foundation in the Sacraments of Baptism and Confirmation, indeed for a good many of them, in the Sacrament of Matrimony" (*Christifideles Laici*, 1988, para.23). Furthermore, denying that it is a form of

"ministry by default" in the light of diminishing involvement of professed religious and clerics in the field of education the Church upholds that:

> The most basic reason for this new role for Catholic laity, a role which the Church regards as positive and enriching is theological… the authentic image of the laity within the People of God has become increasing clear (*Lay Catholics in Schools*, 1982, para.2).

This question of the role of the laity will be pivotal to key issues canvassed below. The reality, which is not without its complexities and problems (Marti, 2002) lies well beyond statistical trends which are, nevertheless, indicative. What is more important is the recognition of the lay hermeneutic, the perspective that is brought by lay people to issues of ministry:

> It is not just a matter of arithmetic, that is, of greater numbers here or there or everywhere. It is a matter of *the power of a voice that interprets* who we are and what we are about. (Lee, 1995, p.10)

Given this, an examination of the developing role of the laity in Catholic schooling is germane to a comprehensive view of the ecclesial evolution affecting a contemporary understanding of the goals and purposes of the Catholic school. Indeed, it is crucial to any attempt to reimagine its future.

2.4.4   Lay Involvement in Catholic Schools:

An obvious change in the ecclesiastical context of the Catholic school has been the decrease in the numbers of religious involved in Catholic education (Neidhart, 1998). Table 2.2 illustrates the statistical decline in the engagement of religious in Catholic schools since 1968.

Table 2.2

Engagement of Religious in Catholic Schools (1968 - 1997)
in Systemic Catholic Schooling in the
Archdiocese of Brisbane

Years	Primary			Secondary		
	No. of Rel	Total Staff	Percentage %	No. of Rel	Total Staff	Percentage %
1968	373	643	58.0%	363	574	63.2%
1976	310	1046	29.6%	249	791	31.5%
1980	220	1212	18.1%	195	1022	19.1%
1985	126	1359	9.3%	100	1341	7.4%
1990	79	1497	5.3%	85	1634	5.2%
1995	32	1574	2.0%	45	1779	2.5%
1997	35	1494	1.7%	28	1735	1.6%

(Source: Brisbane Catholic Education, 1997)

This turn of events has posed important questions for Catholic school communities (Moylan, 1996). For parents, it has meant acceptance of an overtly altered kind of Catholic school from the one with which they were familiar up to the 1960s and 1970s (Untener, 1999). For administrators, it has posed questions concerning the nature of the new spiritual leadership to be exercised by laity, especially as the relatively assured formation and selection procedures which pertained to religious could not be replicated in Catholic schools staffed increasingly by lay people from diverse personal and professional backgrounds (Moylan, 1996). For the lay staff themselves, it has meant the challenge of gradually uncovering a sense of vocation to Catholic education based on a sound perception of the spirituality of the laity. This is especially the case given that the overwhelming focus within the Church had been up to, and to some lesser extent since, the Vatican Council, on the

spirituality of religious and clerical life. The substantive development of a spirituality of the lay state (*Decree on the Apostolate of Laity*, 1965, para.4) allows for a positive, apostolic view of the ministry of Catholic schooling and preempts a view of lay involvement by default (Untener, 1999). Such a view would neglect the scriptural and traditional foundations of the lay apostolate (Bernier, 1992). As was observed in the early years of the significant rise in enrolment demand in Catholic schools (1960s, 1970s):

> It would be tragic if lay teachers thought of themselves as stop-gaps who were called in when the school population began its rapid increase which became permanent… Lay teachers have their place in catechetics of their own right. (Drew, 1971)

An examination of the nature of the lay state is pivotal, therefore, to an understanding of the role of the laity in Catholic schooling.

2.4.5   The Ministry of the Laity :

Even given the distinctive advances it made in the development of an understanding of the dignity of the lay state, the Second Vatican Council did not give a definition of it. "The council alternates between a single or double-pole description of their (the laity) not being clergy, or neither clergy nor religious" (Bernier, 1992, p.287). With this reservation, however, several key developments should be acknowledged in the Church's appreciation of the role of the lay person within its mission. The *Decree on the Apostolate of the Laity* (1965) speaks of "the apostolate, through which the laity build up the Church, sanctify the world and get it to live in Christ" (para.16). Furthermore, this lay apostolate is "everywhere and always in place…..every lay person, whatever his *[sic]* condition is called to it, is obliged to it" (para.16). It is a "global apostolate" (O'Grady, 1991, p.108) for the execution of which, the

58

"Holy Spirit … gives the faithful special gifts" (*Apostolate of the Laity*, 1965, para.3) so that:

> from the reception of these charisms, even the most ordinary ones, there arises for each of the faithful the right and duty of exercising them in the Church and in the world for the good of men *[sic]* and the development of the Church. (*Apostolate of the Laity*, 1965, para.3).

Furthermore, and of special relevance to those who work in the apostolate of Catholic education, the Council mentions the special witness of those who conduct their apostolic work in common:

> The group apostolate is in happy harmony therefore with a fundamental need in the faithful, a need that is both human and Christian. At the same time it offers a sign of the communion and unity of the Church in Christ who said: 'Where two or three are gathered together in my name, I am there in the midst of them' (Mt. 18:20) (*Apostolate of the Laity*, 1965, para.7).

Further, the ministry that is the lay apostolate not only nurtures the spiritual growth of the individual(s) involved (*Apostolate of the Laity*, 1965, para.4) but works for the good of those to whom the ministry is directed, "bring(ing) all men *[sic]* throughout the whole world to hear and accept the divine message of salvation (*Apostolate of the Laity*, 1965, para.3). This evangelising role is emphasized elsewhere:

> The evangelization of the world involves an encounter with such a wide variety and complexity of different situations that very frequently, in concrete circumstances and for most people, only the laity can be effective witnesses of the Gospel. (*Lay Catholics in Schools*, 1982, para.9)

Further, the Church declares in *Lay Catholics in Schools* (1982) that "lay teachers must be profoundly convinced that they share in the sanctifying, and therefore educational mission of the Church" (para.24).

Consequently, the ministry of the lay apostolate is to be seen in its own right and not merely as "participation of the laity in the apostolate of the hierarchy" (Bernier, 1992, p.208). This is fundamentally understood as service (Bernier, 1992; Neuner, 1995) rooted in the *kenosis* or self-emptying of Christ (Phil 2:6-11) and that one of the fundamental acts of service is witness to the Gospel. "The love and service that builds the community is the most powerful message we can give a world starved for meaning" (Bernier, 1992, p.283) since it is thus (i.e. by witness) that the minister "announce(es) to the world by word and action the message of Christ and communicat(es) to it the grace of Christ" (*Apostolate of the Laity*, 1965, para.6). Hence the lay state may be described as a "specific wonderful vocation within the Church" (*Lay Catholics in Schools*, 1982, para.27) even if the implications of that vocation "are still being discovered" (Bernier, 1992, p.287).

The Priestly Role of the Laity

The Second Vatican Council understood the ministry and vocation of the laity in terms of the grace of Baptism which opened to all a share in the "priestly, prophetic and kingly office of Christ" (*Lumen Gentium*, 1964, para.30).

Thus:

> … the starting point for reflection (on ministry) is that the prime priestly reality in the Church after that of Christ, is the priesthood of the faithful that all receive in baptism. Church life and ministry develop from this common priesthood, rooted as it is in our common baptism. (Bernier, 1992, p.281)

This emphasis on the shared primordial priesthood of all the baptised may cause a re-evaluation of the specific grace of priestly ordination (Neuner, 1995; Richards, 1995;). Whilst this grace, it has been clearly stated, differs

"essentially and not only in degree" (*Lumen Gentium*, 1964 para.10) from the common priesthood, it still places the priestly ministry of the laity into a rich and sustaining context, since "every lay person, through the gifts given to him *[sic]* is at once the witness and the living instrument of the mission of the Church itself" (*Lumen Gentium*, 1964, para.33).

Historically, it was very early in the Church's story that "the rich variety of ministries began to melt away" yielding to an emerging hierarchical structure (Dues & Walkley, 1995, p.12) which led to a diminution of the significance of the lay state. The New Testament, however, "is remarkably reticent about calling any of its members priests" (Bernier, 1993, p.279) with the designation being applied only to Jesus. "The only usage of the concept for anyone other than Christ is found in two New Testament writings which call the entire Church 'priestly'" (Bernier, 1992, p.279). The threefold clerical structure of episkopos, presbyter and deacon (Coriden, 1997) is a secondary development (Dues & Walkley, 1995) but one which tended towards a decline in the value and significance of the lay state which has manifestly persisted until recent times with a concomitant erection of barriers between laity and clerics within the church:

> Thankfully, the decision of the Council to entrust all baptised, non-ordained Christians with important pastoral and liturgical roles was a major step in breaking down those barriers. Most of us know by now that the priesthood is not at all a step upward on the social ladder, but rather a particular commitment to descend, in humility and service to where the people are, so as to be "out amongst them". In so doing, the significance of the priesthood has not been lost. Rather, in that sense, the priesthood has been wholly restored, strengthened, and deepened with redirection to Christ's humble baptism among the many, as a sign of his identity as the wholesome High Priest. Universal and ministerial priesthood point *together* to our baptismal call to service on behalf of the Messianic peace on this earth.(Haring, 1996, pp.38-39)

61

Vatican II acknowledged that it may be that some laity would be called "to some ecclesiastical offices with a view to a spiritual end" (*Lumen Gentium*, 1964, para.33). The role of the pastoral assistant is one example that has been cited as having "loosened the traditional difference between priest and lay person in practice and for the church public" (Neuner, 1995, p.136). The role of Catholic school principals especially in their *pastoral and ritual* leadership is another example of this loosening of traditional differences for some Catholic school communities. This is given significance by the European experience of lay people increasingly assuming previously exclusively clerical ministries such as preaching, with pressure being brought to bear for them to perform further sacramental functions (Kerkhofs & Zulehner, 1995). Keeping in mind the need to avoid the growth of "lay elitism" (Pirola, 1995, p.72) as an incipient form of its clerical antecedent, the call to lay leadership is clear and repeated.

The role of women, especially lay women, also has been problematic. A brief discussion of this issue is beneficial in the light of the fact that lay women play a vital part in Catholic education today.

The Role of Women

Despite historiographical difficulties, it is clear from extant texts that women played a significant role in the functioning of the nascent Church. Phoebe, Prisca and Chloe for example, are given specific mention in a fashion which designates a recognised role for them in the local Church (Dues & Walkley, 1995; Gryson, 1976;). Conversely, it must be acknowledged that the internal evidence of the New Testament is somewhat contradictory on the status of

women in the early Church. Witness the contrast between the perception of the Pastoral Epistles (especially 2 Timothy) that women "personify the dangerously weak and naïve" on the one hand and the Johannine presentation of women as key and compelling witnesses to the faith on the other (Brown, 1984, p.44 and pp.94-95). Both Marcan and Lucan texts specify the presence and participation of women in the mission of Jesus (Grayson, 1976). So, whilst the future of the scope of the participation of women in designated ministry within the Church remains problematic (Kerkhofs & Zulehner, 1995), three salient points may be made.

Firstly, the foundations for an acknowledgement of shared leadership between men and women in the Church are laid in New Testament times, even if historiography makes extrapolation of the development and continuance of the role of women in leadership somewhat indefinite.

Secondly, in the history of Catholic education in Australia (as well as in the United Kingdom and the United States) women played a major and formative role both in the establishment of teaching orders and in the staffing of schools as religious.

Thirdly, women continue to play an important role in the leadership of Catholic schooling. Table 2.3 shows the engagement of women in Catholic school principalship in the Archdiocese of Brisbane in the period 1994-2000.

Table 2.3

**Trends in Engagement of Women in Principalship
in Systemic Catholic Primary Schools in the
Archdiocese of Brisbane
1994 – 2000**

	Female Lay Principals	Total Lay Principals	% Female
1994	20	89	22.4
1995	22	88	25.0
1996	24	90	26.6
1997	23	95	24.2
1998	Not available		
1999	27	95	28.4
2000	27	95	28.4

(Source: Brisbane Catholic Education, 2000)

2.4.6 Considerations Growing out of a Renewed Understanding of the Nature of Ministry:

Because Catholic schooling has become increasingly, and is now almost exclusively, an undertaking of the laity both male and female, any estimate of its intrinsic value is inextricably linked to an appreciation of the vocation of the lay state. Essential too, is a recognition of the work of Catholic schooling and of leadership within it as a call to ministry in a full and valid sense.

Given also that the Catholic school arguably represents the single significant point of contact with the larger Church for the families of many students (Cappo, 1996; Quillinan, 2002) the capacity of the Catholic school community and its administrators to lead families into deeper and broader ties with the wider Catholic community is important.   The delicacy of this issue is exacerbated by a noticeable decline of confidence amongst that wider Catholic community in the existing clerical leadership (O'Keefe, 1996). This is

further accentuated by "a growing lack of credibility in the institutional Church" (McLaughlin, 1997, p.19) and by the fact that "uncritical acceptance of the leadership of (the) Church appears to be unwarranted for many Catholics" (McLaughlin, 1997, p.19; Treston, 1997). Further complexity ensues from the attested indifference of adult Catholics to the institutional Church (Gallagher, 1996; West, 1994) or their estrangement (Day, 1996) or alienation from it (Robinson, 1996) or disillusionment with it (Omerod & Omerod, 1995). Further, the issue is accentuated by the findings of research that indicate that many involved in the leadership of Catholic schools, themselves hold personal and intellectual reservations about elements of the teaching and praxis of the contemporary institutional Church (McLaughlin, 1997).

Empirical research highlights some relevant considerations. The Australian Community Survey (1998) reported a statistically strong decline in confidence in the churches surveyed concerning the effect of clerical sexual abuse. The results are shown in Figure 2.3.

Percent Affirming Damage in Confidence
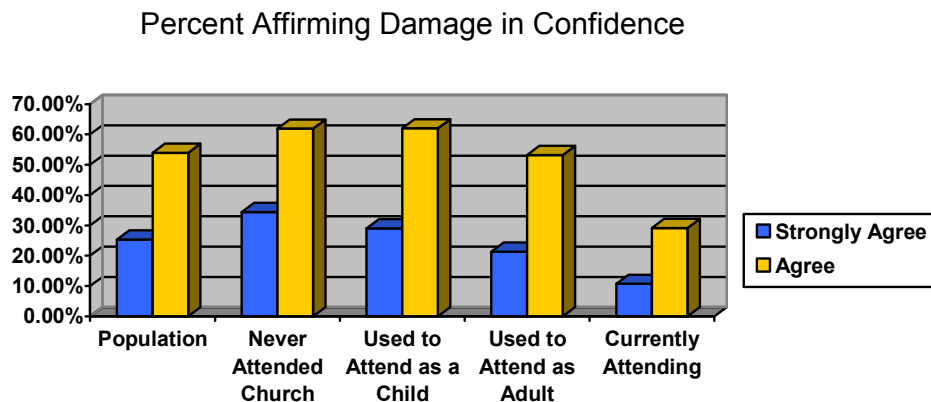
Figure 2.3

Effect of Clerical Sexual Abuse on Confidence in the Churches
(Australian Community Survey, 1998)

Whilst the results show lowest loss of confidence to exist amongst those currently attending church, the overall decline in confidence is pronounced.

The same data, analysed by age group and personal situation show high levels of decline in confidence in the churches across age groups, genders and marital status with highest levels of loss being recorded in the 60 plus age group, in the male population and amongst the separated and remarried respondents. These findings are shown in Figure 2.4.

Damage in Confidence (%)
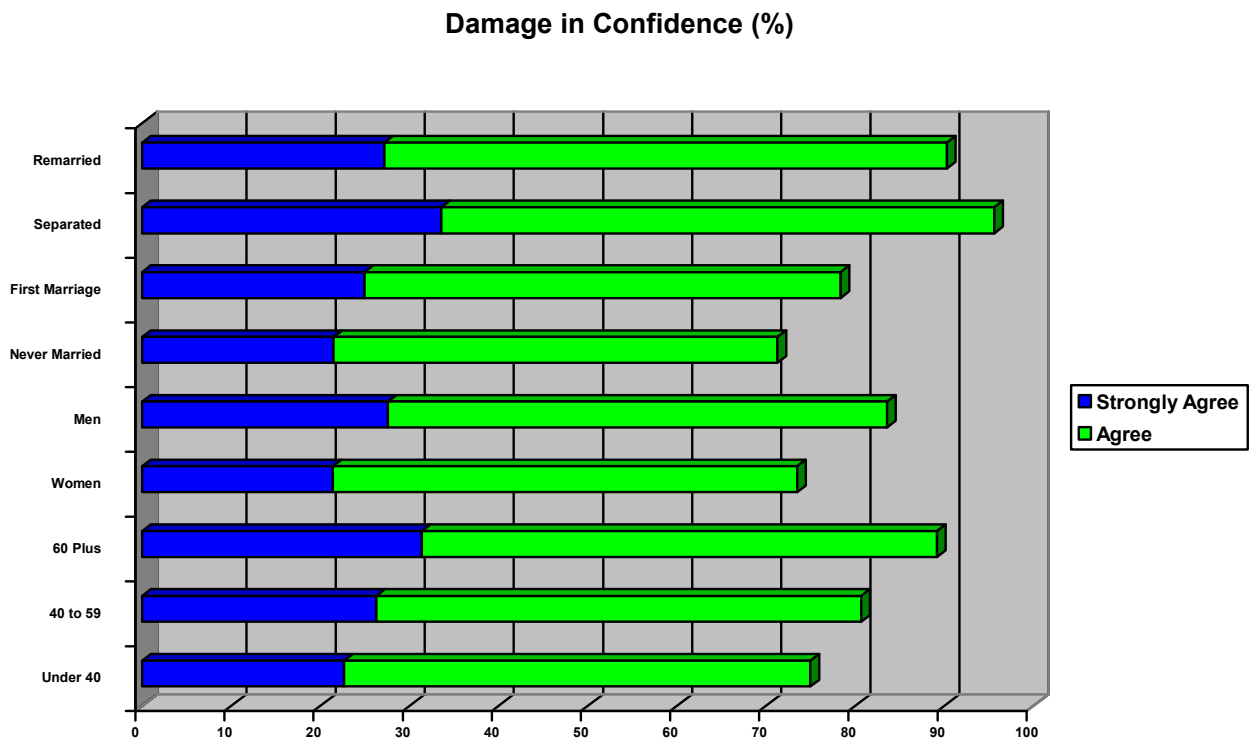
Figure 2.4

**Effects of Clerical Sexual Abuse on Confidence
in the Churches by Age Group, Gender and
Marital Status**
(Australian Community Survey, 1998)

66

The relevance of the foregoing to a renegotiation and re-imagining of the nature and function of the Catholic school concerns two main points. On the one hand, lay people, both men and women, are being called to the ministry of principalship in Catholic schools as lay people assume roles within the educational ministry previously usually fulfilled by religious. If this is not to be denigrated as "ministry by default", a clear appreciation of both the vocation of the lay state and the nature of ministry is crucial. On the other hand, issues of popular credibility in the wider, institutional Church and, to some extent, its clerical leadership, add an element of delicacy to the situation.

2.4.7 The Future in Diversity:

The evolving role of the laity within the Church is one manifestation of the evolving nature of the Church itself. As has been seen above, contemporary ecclesiology allows for, and indeed encourages, the development of diverse ecclesiological models, each with its own perspective on the nature of the Church. (*Lumen Gentium*, 1964). The reality resides in the totality and the complementarity of the several possible models (*Lumen Gentium*, 1964, para. 6). This is evidenced particularly by such models as the Church as "Pilgrim People", much favoured by the Council Fathers and by Pope Paul VI (*Lumen Gentium*, 1964, paras 48-51).

Implicit in this image is a sense of the imperfection of a people in movement towards an as yet unattained goal (Bernier, 1992). Implicit also is a sense of search, of an acknowledgement of incompleteness (*Lumen Gentium,* 1964, para.48) and of its corollary, the legitimacy of diversity (*Lumen Gentium*, 1964, para.7). Indeed, one of the manifest characteristics of contemporary Catholicism is its diversity (McLaughlin, O'Keefe & O'Keefe, 1996). It is this

67

diversity which affects directly any attempt to achieve clarity of purpose and direction for the Catholic school (Sullivan, 1996) bearing in mind its essentially organic relationship to the Church at large.

Furthermore the emergence of several perspectives in theology e.g. liberation theology (Boff, 1972), creation theology (Fox, 1983) and quantum theology (O'Murchu, 1997) in the wake of the decline of the dominant scholastic parameter, affects the ways in which the Catholic school might be conceived and its purposes defined (Bezzina, 1996). Moreover, the search for long term clarity of direction is seen by some as futile:

> Futuristically, one could argue that the rate of change is such that it is impossible to get a handle on what life "should" be like from projections at a given point of time. The Commission for the Future (1990) outlined a future for which concrete planning was an irrelevance. The implied advice was to focus on skills of invention and adaptation. The Commission states … the inappropriateness of planning for a future that was increasingly unpredictable … (Roff, 1996, pp.41-42).

Alternatively, it is not long term planning *per se* which should be discounted but rather that which does not allow for diversity and adaptability. Given that, "for as far ahead as we can see, there will be turbulence and deep-seated, structural change … (and that) we are, in other words, at a major historical divide" (Beare & Slaughter, 1993, p.6) the imperative is to plan within that evolving reality with the best of available data, the most intelligent of research and, most of all, with the deepest of faith and trust, towards a sustainable, if diverse and evolutionary future in Catholic education.

Such a future in Catholic education directly reflects the predicted future of the Church itself in the post-Vatican II era:

68

Vatican II presents Catholicity not as a monotonous repetition of identical elements but rather as reconciled diversity. It is a unity among individuals and groups who retain their distinctive characteristics, who enjoy different spiritual gifts, and who are by that very diversity better equipped to serve one another and thus advance the common good.(Dulles, 1987, p.24)

Historically, the very birth of popular and systemic Catholic education in Australia in the nineteenth century took place, not at a time of stability and certitude but rather at one of upheaval and of social and philosophical turbulence (Clark, 1980). If the Church stands at the threshold of the "third wave of the Australian Catholic school" it does so also at a time of the construction of "a new cultural paradigm" (Beare & Slaughter, 1993, p.11) with all its attendant uncertainty and instability. Given this context, it is to be hoped that the resultant structures and establishments do not evoke, at some future time, a similar lament to that which the developments in Catholic education in the middle of last century have called forth:

By an odd irony of fate, this Australian society, which was in such sore travail on this question of faith - with one faith dying and no agreement on the new - was called on at this time to decide what should be taught to the children. By 1870 it was clear that the Christian churches would not reach agreement on this question … Thus one of the most momentous decisions, and probably the most disastrous in the history of Australia, was reached … It meant the permanent division of the Australian education system into three types of schools - the Catholic, the Protestant and the State: it meant the pauperisation of the Catholic Schools, and left them as an aggrieved minority. (Clarke, 1980, p.662)

Hence, decisions about the future shape and direction of the Catholic school need to take intelligent and thoughtful account of the spectrum of obstacles and stimuli that compose not only its ecclesial but its social and educational context. Only in this way will a productive reimagining of the Catholic school be made possible.

69

2.4.8 The Idea of the Catholic School:

One of the basic obstacles to the reconstruction of meaning called for by the profound challenges, ecclesial, social and educational which either have been already referred to or which will be explored below, is that of the residual Platonic idea of the Catholic school (McLaughlin, 1997). The monochromatic image generated from such an abstract idea is of a supposedly halcyon age when Catholic schools were not only staffed entirely by religious (usually living in community, on or near the school site) but were populated by practising Catholic students from practising Catholic families who supported the school via working bees, fund raising activities and the like. Such an idyll is open to question, both in the United Kingdom (Arthur, 1995) and in Australia:

> There are those who hold such a (Platonic) concept of the Catholic school and who crudely judge existing schools against some abstract universal norm. To do so can burden our schools with unrealistic expectations since it takes no account of the people in them and the particular situation in which they work. (Gallagher, 1996, p.287)

Rather than the uni-dimensional picture which may be inspired by the abstract, the current praxis allows for a multi-faceted reality with several models of the Catholic school operative (Treston, 1997). This is not to argue that all undertakings under the global banner of Catholic schooling are of equal validity and even fidelity to the wishes, hopes and ideals of the contemporary Church, but it is to assert the fact that the Catholic school may, and does in reality, take shape apart from the more or less factual form of the living memory. One critical factor in determining authenticity of any form of "Catholic" schooling may be its "identification with the Catholic Church, its mission and character … since the Church is the context for all Catholic education" (Arthur, 1995, p.46). Such a criterion, however, must be seen

against the definitive call of the Catholic school to the advancement of the Kingdom of God. In this regard, the missions of the Catholic school and the Catholic Church are identical (O'Murchu, 1997a).

The Missionary Character of the Catholic School

One of the essential elements formative of any model of the Catholic school is the Church's missionary character (Hypher, 1996). Given that there is ample evidence to suggest that the Catholic school is the first, and perhaps, the only point of contact with the Church for many families of enrollees (McLaughlin, 1997), it is, therefore, significantly shaped and formed by its resultant evangelising imperative.   This missionary role stands in contrast to the thoroughly "Catholic" insular model of the school "in which children would be protected from the errors of other religions and from secular influences" (Hypher, 1996, p.221). Acknowledgement of, and fidelity to its missionary character signifies that the Catholic school in post Conciliar times is operating out of a new paradigm (McLaughlin, 1997) guided by consequential principles (Lane, 1991) which direct a new shape and form in Catholic schooling (Hypher, 1996).

This emerging shape and form is moulded by consideration of the Church's own re-definition since the Second Vatican Council; by its increasingly articulated concern for the education of the poor for whom it has a "preferential option" (O'Keefe, 1996, p.181); by its ecumenical dialogue; by its marked transformation in personnel and the loss of confidence in clerical and hierarchical leadership; by its espoused concentration on seeking the "common good" (Bryk, Lee & Holland 1993, p.320; Australian Catholic

Bishops' Conference, 1992); by its evangelical imperative and by shrinking resources. It is affected also by the social context in which it operates, one marked by signs of increasing secularism and pluralism yet retentive of a thirst for spiritual, transcendent values (O'Murchu, 1997a). It is moulded further by an educational environment which is being transformed by technology, by the demands of industry and commerce and by a culture which seeks to measure worth by "output" and equates value with "productivity". Such an environment places the concept of the "individual" over against the ideal of the common good in a world "suffocating under the environmental and social costs of the corporate capitalism, which requires for its sustenance that each of us give first priority to our individual desires" (Johnson cited in Heffern, 2003, p.15). These factors and others all have a significant part to play in the remoulding, redirecting and renewing of the idea of the Catholic school and, therefore, in its reimagining.

2.4.9   The Identity of the Catholic School and Ecumenism:

A further ecclesial development which affects the principal's contemporary understanding of the Catholic school and which has been instrumental in the breaking down of its inherited meaning structure has been the Church's reappraisal of its relationship to people of other denominational or faith traditions.

The openness of the Catholic Church and therefore, of its schools to the wider world is expressed in this ecumenical initiative. Like other manifestations of renewal and receptivity to dialogue, ecumenism carries both promise and warning. It holds out the hope both of *diakonia* and of *koinonia,* both of

service to the world which Catholic tradition holds as ultimately sacramental and therefore sacred (McBrien, 1994) and also of intimate communion with it (*koinonia*). Ecumenism necessarily carries, too, the cautionary experience of the need to maintain a sense of identity in the midst of encounter, the "faithfulness - openness tension" of the two *modi vivendi* of the Church (Barnes, 1996, p.237).

For the purposes of clarity, it is helpful to examine briefly the challenges confronting the Catholic school principal in the ecumenical initiative of the Church. These are evident in the envisaging of the Catholic school as one which:

> … offers itself to all, those who are not Christian included, with all its distinctive aims and means, acknowledging, preserving and promoting the spiritual and moral qualities, which characterise different civilizations. (*The Catholic School*, 1977, no. 85).

Such a perspective takes "the broadest view of the scope or extent of God's self-revelation … (allowing) for the possibility that God is at work in ways and forms which the Church may not know about" (Barnes, 1996, p.236). However, mindful of the faithfulness-openness tension inherent in such a perspective, when it is applied within the Catholic school in practical terms in enrolment policies, it creates issues of balance for the principal:

> If a Catholic school decides to admit pupils of other faiths, it will necessarily come under pressure to respect the religious sensitivities and obligations affecting pupils of other faiths and possibly at the same time come under pressure from Catholic parents anxious about a dilution of Catholic faith or of educational standards. (Hypher, 1996, p.218)

73

Exclusion, or a policy of non-admission of pupils of other faiths, creates tensions too, in the questioning of the ecumenical responsiveness of a Catholic school community in light of the Vatican Council's assertions that "many elements of sanctification and of truth are found outside its visible confines" (*Dogmatic Constitution on the Church*, 1964, para. 8). This is especially so given that the Council also declared that since "peoples comprise a single community, and have a single origin (the Church) rejects nothing which is true and holy in these religions" (*Declaration on the Relationship of the Church to non-Christian Religions*, 1965, para. 2). The educational implications of this spirit are made clear in the Vatican Council's *Declaration on Christian Education* (1965, para. 9): "The Church should offer its educational service first to the poor or those deprived of family help or affection or those who are far from the faith".

The theme is continued in more recent times by the Congregation for Catholic Education when it declares that the Catholic school "is not reserved to Catholics only, but is open to all those who appreciate and share its qualified educational project." (*The Catholic School on the Threshold of the Third Millennium,* 1997, para. 16).

Further, the Catholic school appears to be one of the principal instruments of ecumenical action which in a broader context, has lost its momentum:

> While documents such as *Ut unum sint* have given a new rationale for eccumenical activity, others such as *Dominus Jesus* hint at a retraction. Apart from official documents, on a popular level much of the ecumenical fervour of the late 1960's and early 1970's has waned. In the United States, the most sustained institutionalised ecumenical efforts are to be found in the schools. (O'Keefe, 2003, p.98)

74

2.4.10 The Identity of the Catholic School and Evangelisation:

Such observations lead to a related consideration of the role of the Catholic school in the work of evangelisation (Quillinan, 2002). The Congregation for Catholic Education recently acknowledged what it saw as the reality of the contemporary challenge facing the Catholic school. Its words point to the urgency of the evangelising mission of the school:

> The school is undoubtedly a sensitive meeting-point for the problems which besiege this restless end of the millennium. The Catholic school is thus confronted with children and young people who experience the difficulties of the present time, pupils who shun effort, are incapable of self-sacrifice and perseverance and who lack authentic models to guide them, often even in their own families. In an increasing number of instances they are not only indifferent and non-practising, but also totally lacking in religious or moral formation. To this we must add … a profound apathy where ethical and religious formation is concerned … (1998, para. 6).

Given the reality of the limitations in religious or spiritual terms of the environments from which children may come to a Catholic school:

> it is recognised that initial evangelisation has often not taken place before children participate in religious education or catechesis. Therefore, since the Catholic school is part of the evangelical mission of the Church, catechesis may have to concern itself with arousing faith (Arthur, 1995, p.67).

In this connection, empirical evidence would suggest that the religious practice of students in Catholic schools is not universally strong. A study of 6465 Catholic Year 12 students showed that over half of the participants rarely attend Mass at all while fewer than a quarter attend weekly. The data is set out below in Table 2.4.

Table 2.4

Religious Practice of Catholic Students (1998)

I Normally Attend Sunday Mass		%
1	Each Sunday at least	23
2	A few Sundays each month	14
3	Once a month	9
4	A few times a year	32
5	Rarely or Never	22

(Source: Catholic Schools 2000, C.E.C. N.S.W. p.90)

The same study, however, revealed that of the sample, 41% of students surveyed stated that religion had some real importance in their lives whilst over a quarter "judged that it was of no real significance as far as they were concerned" (Flynn & Mok, 2002, p.89)

A longitudinal perspective shows a pronounced decline in religious observance of Year 12 Catholic school students in the period, 1972-1998 with weekly Mass attendance dropping from 69% to 23% with a concomitant rise in non-attendance from 10% to 22% over the same period. Table 2.5 sets out the results of this longitudinal study.

Table 2.5

**Longitudal Study of Catholic Students Mass
Attendance Patterns
1972-1998**

I Normally Attend Mass	1972 (N=1,393) %	1982 (N=1,834) %	1990 (N=5,155) %	1998 (N=6,441) %
1 Each Sunday at least	69	55	38	23
2 A few Sundays each month	11	16	16	14
3 Once a month	5	5	7	9
4 A few times a year	5	14	23	32
5 Rarely or Never	10	9	16	22

(Source: Catholic School 2000, C.E.C. N.S.W., p.245)

However, in the light of the above considerations concerning the respect due to other faiths and traditions, a distinction must be drawn here between the evangelisation or pre-evangelisation of those who come to the Catholic school without a clear religious or spiritual framework (*The Catholic School on the Threshold of the Third Millennium, 1998, no. 6*) and the respecting, on the other hand, of the sometimes firm and well established religious background of those who come to the school from another Christian or non-Christian tradition. This is one area which clearly needs to be differentiated when official statements concerning the work of the Catholic school (for example those cited within this study) are read.

A second area with potential for confusion is the terminology used to define the work of catechesis, religious education and evangelization (Holohan, 1999). The differing states of preparedness of students to engage in catechesis, an undertaking defined as "being addressed to those who have expressed some commitment to the catholic faith already" (Arthur, 1995, p.67), means that often, evangelisation is a more appropriate term. Yet, the *General Catechetical Directory* of 1971 states that "catechesis is certainly not to be omitted for such children" (section 81). Aims and goals for Catholic schools in this area are not consistently clear due sometimes to a lack of precision in the terms used to describe what they set out to achieve when speaking of the religious formation of students. Because "no consensus exists on the correct usage of the key terminology in religious education… out of this ambiguity has grown misunderstanding and confusion about the aims of Catholic education" (Arthur, 1995, p.67).

77

Two Models of the Contemporary Catholic School

Such confusion is related to a fundamental lack of precision about the purpose of contemporary the Catholic school which is at the core of this study. Two broad categories may be established under which to gather aims and purposes for the school related to this current issue of evangelisation. One set of purposes may be grouped around the understanding of the Catholic school as being concerned with the passing on of the Catholic tradition, and as "assist(ing) the Catholic community in the process of handing on the knowledge and practice of the Faith to the next generation" (Murray, 1996, p.246). This may be called the "Traditio" model of Catholic school. Such a model would have been the dominant one, described earlier, in the relatively stable and ecclesiastically introspective period up to the landmark changes which took place in the 1960s (Chadwick, 1994). In this model, the goals of the Catholic school concerned the welfare and security of the Church itself and its efforts were directed to the perpetuation of a set of defined and recognised beliefs and practices. This may be broadly depicted in Figure 2.6:
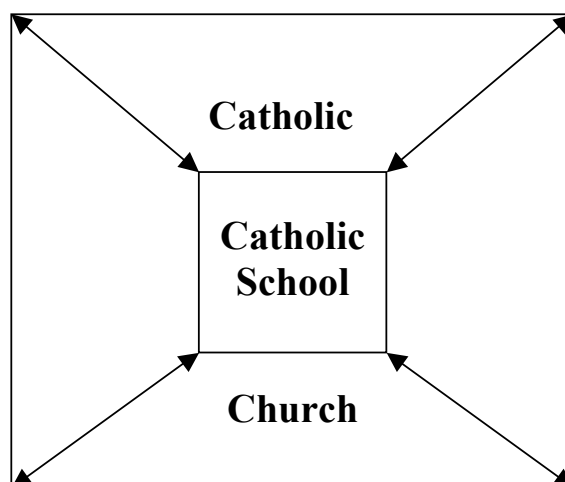
Figure 2.5

The "Traditio" Model of the Catholic School

78

In this model, the Church through its local community, parish or group of parishes, supported and sustained the Catholic school, morally and materially. This symbiotically beneficial model is predicated in turn upon a model of Church which (as described earlier) values security, stability and preservation of the Faith in a hostile or, at least, unreceptive world (Chadwick, 1994).

The obverse of this model presents the Catholic school as an extrospective enterprise concerned with the welfare of a broader group with whom it seeks to assay meaningful dialogue. Such a school finds its stimulus within a Church which looks to enter dialogue with its social environment (Schreiter, 1997). Such a model may be described as the "Missio" model of Catholic Church and school and may be depicted as in Figure 2.6:

Wider World

Catholic

Catholic School

Church

Wider World
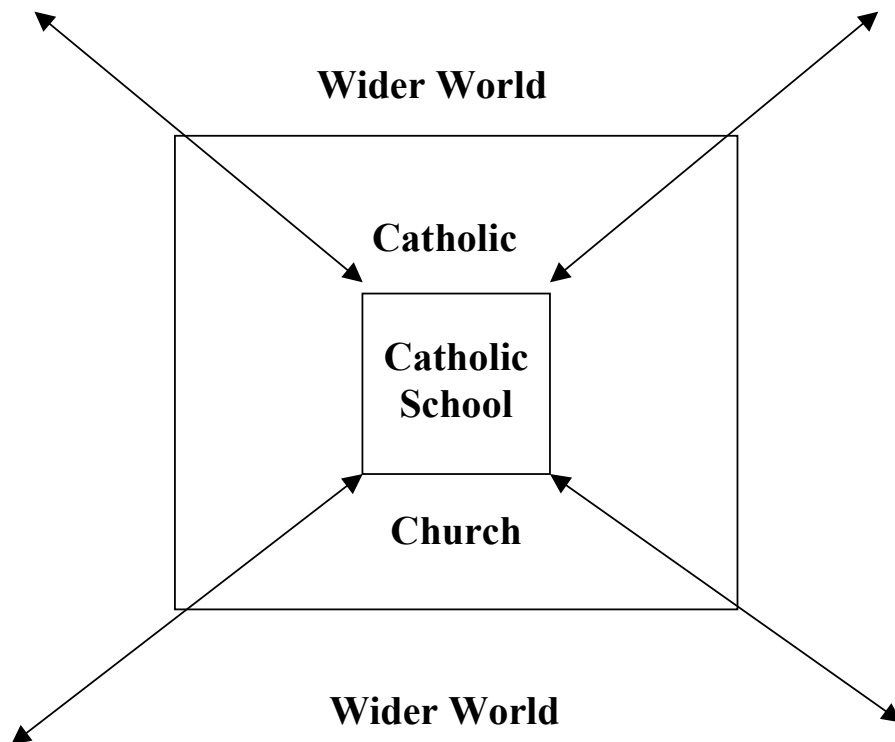
Figure 2.6

The "Missio" Model of the Catholic School

In this view, the Catholic school extends its ambit beyond the Catholic Church embracing a wider community (*Catechesi Tradendae* 1979, nos. 51-53) In so doing, the Catholic school does not neglect its own integrity but sees its outward-directed service as beneficial rather than inimical to that integrity (*The Catholic School*, 1977, no. 15).   In this way it honours "the twin values of building up the community of faith and having a mission in the world … (because) no Catholic community exists just for itself but to fulfil the Church's mission of love and justice in the world" (Murray, 1996, p.246).   Further, it takes seriously the fundamental commission (*Catechesi Tradendae*, 1979, no. 10) to all believers:

> Reading the Acts of the Apostles helps us to realise that at the beginning of the Church the mission *ad gentes*, while it had missionaries dedicated "for life" by a special vocation, was in fact considered the normal outcome of Christian living, to which every believer was committed through the witness of personal conduct and through explicit proclamation whenever possible. (*On the Permanent Validity of the Church's Missionary Mandate*, 1991, no. 27)

Such a view acknowledges, too, the need for the "new evangelization" (Quillinan, 2002, p.51) and accepts the reality that "today we face a religious situation which is extremely varied and changing" (*On the Permanent Validity of the Church's Missionary Mandate*, 1991, no. 32) and that "the Gospel (now is preached) in a vastly changed environment and that those to whom it is addressed have new questions" (Gallagher, 1996a, p298).   Hence:

> The task today, being mindful of and realistic about these influences, is to help people converse with one another and share the convictions and the questions they have about God, Jesus, the church, themselves, their religious worldview, and their bonding with the rest of creation (Morwood, 1997, p.5).

80

In this acknowledgement, too, including that of the "obstacles and difficulties of all kinds that it meets" (*Catechesi Tradendae,* 1979, no. 40), there is laid open the possibility of a fundamental evangelising movement not only at the level of goals and purposes for the Catholic school but at the practical level of consequent models and types. (*The Catholic School*, 1977, Chadwick, 1994). Hence: "… the emphasis shifts beyond the concept of providing "an education for the Catholic community" to incorporate the Post Vatican II understanding of mission as also providing "a Catholic education for the community". (Murray, 1996, p.250)

The possibility of reimagining a Catholic school community in terms of its essential role of evangelising is thereby presented. This survey of literature will proceed now to approach the ramifications of such an understanding for Catholic school principals because of their significant role in the implementation and realisation of the goals of the Catholic school.

2.4.11 Considerations Growing out of the Communal Nature of the Catholic School:

Questions concerning the evangelising and ecumenical nature of the Catholic school and its fundamental goals have been discussed. It is appropriate now to turn to consideration of the essentially communitarian nature of the Catholic school as it is through its existence as community that the Catholic school achieves its ecumenical and evangelizing purposes. In fact, the very authenticity of the Catholic school is inextricably linked to its communal nature (*The Religious Dimension of Education in the Catholic School, 1998, para. 31; The Catholic School on the Threshold of the Third Millenium, 1998, para. 18).* This is ultimately because the Church itself is essentially communitarian in

nature (McBrien, 1994,). In a clear acknowledgment of this reality and of the concomitant reality that the reimagining of the Catholic school will be, to a large extent, the responsibility of each school-in-community, it is claimed that:

> the realisation that the school climate or ethos is "constituted by the interaction and collaboration of its various components: students, parents, teachers, directors and non-teaching staff" (Third Millenium, no. 18) rather than imposed from above, marks out the twenty-first century Catholic school from its predecessor of say fifty years ago. (Herron, 2003, p.250)

However, what that communal nature might be and how it might be lived warrant some comment. Because a concept such as "community" is representationalist, there will "always (be) a gap between that which is present and that which is re-presented" (Kneipp, 1994, p.80) "…between the sign and the signified" (p.175). The capacity of imagination plays a key role in the conjunction between reality and representation, between sign and signified (Kneipp, 1994), a conjunctive which is typically complex and fragile (Starrat, 1993). Therefore, it is experientially the case that a plurality of meanings may be attached to the concept of "community" (Duignan & Bhindi, 1998). This multiplicity of meanings will be located between what may be called the "idealised view" and the "current reality" (Duignan & Bhindi, 1998, p.43). The idealised view of community:

> …is dependent on the "old paradigm" thinking which sees communities in terms of clear boundaries; fixed membership; calibrated relationships; ordered structures and processes; balanced and stable lives and relationships; shared unchanging values and perspectives; loyalty to the community's institutions; harmony in interactions and relationships; collective commitment to goals; orthodoxy in beliefs; rules that have been imposed from "higher up" or from "outside"; physical contiguity … (Duignan & Bhindi, 1998, p.43)

82

Such a picture reflects the *traditio* model of Church and defines its consequent understanding of community. In turn, it is also the philosophical antecedent of the inherited meanings which shaped Catholic schools in the decades prior to the Second Vatican Council.

Alternatively, an understanding of community may be:

> derived from an emerging paradigm … based, primarily, on a new philosophy of science and natural systems theory (which) would suggest quite a different view of the "reality" of community. Such a view sees communities in terms of fuzzy boundaries…; messy structures and processes; dynamic balance in life and relationships; multiple, changing perspectives and beliefs; divided or conflicting loyalties; individualism and self-interest as dominant values; independent thinking promoted; rules grown by the group, from inside; (with) physical association not (seen as) necessary for "meaningful community"… Duignan & Bhindi, 1998, p.43)

This emerging construction of community reflects many of the characteristics of the post-modern context of the *missio* model of Church and school outlined above within which principals of Catholic schools currently seek to clarify and implement re-imagined meanings for the schools they lead. At this time there appears to be no single articulated consensus about the meaning of "community" which will shape the Catholic School. This is a source of tension for principals. The essential, constitutive element of the Catholic school, namely its communitarian nature (O'Keefe, 2003), is a source of confusion, if not division:

> Some would have us go back to the premodern notion of community, in which individuality and autonomy were absorbed in a communal identity. But that would be to miss a historic opportunity. With our growing understanding of the interconnection of all national systems on the planet, our growing understanding of the interconnection of all living systems with cultural systems … we are poised to create ourselves as new kinds of individuals. We are closer now to knowing how to create an ecology of community that promotes the richest form of individual human life and to knowing how to create an ecology of individual striving that promotes the richest form of community life. (Starratt, 1996, p.92)

Again, what is critical is "the human capacity to imagine…(a capacity) which seeks the conjunctive between sign and signified" (Kneipp, 1994, p.175) which works toward the alignment of the reality of human community and the "new kinds of communities" which await creation. It is clear, furthermore, that "resolutions to (the) third millenium challenges (to community) confronting those with the responsibility of leading Catholic schools are unlikely to be found within a nineteenth century paradigm" (Leavey, 1993) especially when those third millenium challenges, are placed within the post modern context, facing the difficulties inherent in the fluidity, the unstructured nature and the manifold uncertainties of that context.

The significance of the task of clarifying what "community" means for the Catholic school is highlighted by empirical data. The longitudinal study by Flynn and Mok (2000) showed that the Catholic school teachers surveyed ranked the goal of providing "an atmosphere of Christian community where people are concerned for one another " as the highest perceived religious aspiration for the Catholic school (p.117) with 96% of teachers ranking it as "very important". After vocational and academic goals, of the students surveyed in the same study, 61.4% rated the provision of "an atmosphere of Christian community" as very important ahead of any explicitly religious goals (p.110).

Further, the longitudinal perspective of Flynn and Mok (1982, 1990, 1998) show a consistent pattern of lowest ranking of religious development goals amongst students behind social and personal aspirations with vocational and academic goals being seen as most important (p.193)

84

Another empirical study of student attitudes in Catholic schools (Fahy, 1992) showed a high degree of consistency between the expressed ideal of the importance of community with its actual importance with a 57% and 56% rating for each respectively amongst a sample of 3431 students (p.157).

Such perspectives highlight the need for primoridal points of reference for principals engaged in the reconstruction and reimagining of meaning for the community that is the Catholic school. Such a point of reference, for both school and Church, is the semiotic of the Kingdom of God.

Community and the Kingdom of God

Authentic ecclesiological foundations are inextricably linked to the mission of the realization of the Kingdom of God in the world, a realisation which has at its core, the nurturing of "communion" (John Paul II, 1987, para. 40). Authentic Catholicism and the authentic Catholic school then, are embedded in the evangelical and communitarian (McLaughlin, 1999), concept of the Kingdom of God (*Evangelisation in the Modern World*, 1975, no. 8). This concept which was "central to the mission of Jesus" (Australian Catholic Bishops Conference, 1992, p.7) revolves around the notion of transformation of the world and the reconstruction of its values and priorities according to the mind of God. It is about reimagining the world in the light of the foundational principles that Jesus proclaimed:

> The Kingdom that Jesus proclaimed is essentially about transformation: a new world order characterized by creative relationships of justice, love and peace…God in Jesus has irrevocably entered our history, turned its power structures upside down by declaring the powerless and marginalized blessed, and by dissolving

85

himself into human and earthly history particularly in his death and resurrection. The challenge for us is to accept full responsibility for the process of transformation, initiated in and through Jesus, and commit ourselves to its unfolding by building up a world order marked by right relationships of justice, love and peace. (O'Murchu, 1992, p.118)

Hence, in discussing the nature and purpose of the Catholic school, especially its essentially communitarian nature (Third Millenium, no. 18), an appreciation of the true nature of Catholicism and its commitment to the flowering of God's reign is of the essence (Brennan 1995; O'Murchu, 1992). The "foundational belief of Catholic education is that the act of education is in the end, a salvific event… that the kingdom is being lived inside each human person in the community" (Higgins, 2001, p.9). In other words, Catholic education holds to a belief in "the primacy and sacramentality of relationships in a Catholic school" (Prendegast, 2003, p.101).

In this perspective, the moral and ethical formation of young people, for instance, in a Catholic school is not an individuated exercise but rather an undertaking of, and effect of the experience of, community: "…the great challenge for schools is to reconnect moral teaching with the reality of the issues and the dilemmas that young people face in their day-to-day relationships." (Gaffney, 2003, p.82)

Similarly, ethical formation is essentially and necessarily undertaken in a communal context: "Ethics are taught in relationships, they are taught in communal contexts, they are taught in the context of living. Ethics cannot be taught as a subject that is clinically detached from life…" (Preston, 2001, p.17)

86

In this regard, one approach summarises the essential, distinguishing characteristics of Catholicism and therefore of Catholic education, as:

- its positive anthropology of the person;
- its sacramentality of life;
- its communal emphasis regarding human and Christian existence;
- its commitment to tradition as source of its Story and Vision;
- its appreciation of rationality and learning, epitomised in its commitment to education. (Groome, 1996, p.108)

Throughout these characteristics may be identified three "pervading commitments" of Catholicism. All three have particular relevance to Catholic education. These are:

- Catholicism's commitment to people's "personhood", to who they become and their ethic of life - an ontological concern;
- Catholicism's commitment to "basic justice" - a sociological concern and
- Catholicism's commitment to "catholicity" - a universal concern.
  (Groome, 1996, p.109)

Such articulations of foundational characteristics lead to a consideration of what may be called the "Catholic worldview", a way of viewing the world through "Catholic-spectacles" (Bell, 1996, p.23). It is such a particular view of the world, of its human dimension and of its immediate and ultimate ends (Higgins, 2001, p.9) that it provides the framework for any consideration of the specific mission of the Catholic school community (*The Catholic School on the Threshold of the Third Millennium*, 1998, no. 9) especially in the light of the ecumenical and evangelical imperatives under consideration. It is appropriate, therefore, is to study the place of the ecumenical and evangelising initiatives within the Catholic worldview and, hence, within the ambit of the mission of the Catholic school.

2.4.12 The Catholic Worldview and the Common Good:

As a point of entry to a discussion of the global Catholic worldview it is beneficial to take the specific issue of the matter of the common good. Such an approach is one particularly appropriate since the concept of the common good goes to the heart of the matter of community, a core value of Catholicity (Bernier, 1992). As a case in point, the Catholic education community in England in the 1980s and 1990s has faced fundamental questions of nature and purpose that have been "crystallised ... by the specific policy issue of grant-maintained status and by a general increased salience of market values in schooling … Such specific matters have given rise to fundamental dilemmas between notions of the common good and of autonomous advantage" (Grace, 1996, p.82).

In regard to the context of Australasia, it has been asserted in this philosophical dilemma that:

> prior to the 1960's there was a strong degree of national coherence
> based on a value system which had a strong communitarian focus and
> was underpinned by the Judeo-Christian ethic. Since then we have
> become a much more pluralistic solely with significant groups who do
> not accept this Judeo-Christian foundation…(some) are only interested
> in themselves, their immediate families and that is about it – hardly a
> recipe for a coherent society. (Lynch, 2003, p.26)

Study of a particular element within an organic system is revelatory of the nature of the whole. A review of the Catholic approach to the matter of the common good is a window to the understanding of the whole of the Catholic worldview. This is a particularly poignant point given that:

> The ideological changes of the 1980s, in particular the influence of New Right agencies in both America and Britain, have broken (the) historical settlement … based upon a recognition that both common good and individual interest have their legitimate claims in educational theory and practice ... by in effect denying the existence of constructs such as "society" or of "common good". (Grace, 1996, p.86)

That judgement becomes more pointed if the assessment is accurate that "our society has a surfeit of information but limps in teaching its citizens about the pursuit of the common good." (Treston, 2001, p.88)

That "historical settlement" mentioned above would see Catholic schooling distinguished by an "impassioned rationality shaped by a vision of the common good" (Bryk, Lee & Holland, 1993, p.320) and would assert that authentic growth of the individual and that of the community can occur in balance only within the context of the notion of the common social good (Codd, 1999; Australian Catholic Bishops' Conference, 1992).   This "inspirational ideology" (Bryk et al., 1993, p.320) furthermore "gives preference to the common good over individual choice" (McLaughlin, 1997, p.56) by "seek(ing) to develop each student as a person-in-community" (Bryk, 1996, p.33).

The development of the individual is not, however, to be seen as antithetical to the advancement of the common good. Pope John Paul II in asserting that "Catholic schools provide an incalculable service to the common good" goes on to link this service to the appropriate development of individuals:

> The Catholic school is a witness to the truth that genuine education seeks to do more than simply impart knowledge, or train people to perform an economically productive task. All education worthy of the name seeks to bring forth as it were, a full person. (*Address to the English Bishops*, 1992).

Such a perspective, then, does not reduce itself philosophically to the view that the common good is achieved through "the aggregate of the individual goods" (Pring, 1996, p.62) nor that "the selfish pursuit of one's own positional good by some will benefit everyone insofar as … schools will improve their performance for everyone" (Pring, p.62). The point of balance in the Catholic worldview is that "ultimately the individual good is bound up with the common good" (Preston, p.4) and is captured in the stated goals of one Catholic school which expresses the objective that a graduate of the institution would:

- Recognise the global nature of many social justice problems and (accept) the responsibility to address these problems for the benefit of the human community;

- Recognise the value of community service and develop a sense of social responsibility guided by compassion, confidence and accountability. (Loyola College, 2002)

This comprehensive view is counter-cultural or, at least, counter to a prevailing culture that educationally would "reduce … knowledge to a technical rationality, a 'know-how' for productivity" (Groome, 1996, p.121) or that generally would place the individual in competition with society (McClelland, 1996, p.159) as if the common good and the growth of the individual were mutually inimical.

Instead, the Catholic worldview proposes a kind of "personalist communitaranism" (Miller, 1986, p.289) founded on the scriptural concept of "covenant" (Hollenbach, 1996). In such a view, the key virtue is that of "solidarity" (Hollenbach, 1996, p.96) which Pope John Paul II (1987) defines as: "a firm and persevering determination to commit oneself to the common

90

good; that is to say to the good of all and of each individual". (*One Social Concerns*, no. 12)

This definition is in continuity with Thomas Aquinas's "understanding of the orientation of all virtues to the promotion of justice, and through the promotion of justice to the enhancement of the common good" (Hollenbach, 1996, p.97). Such an orientation pays due regard to foundational Christian communitarian principles including solidarity with those in need, distributive justice, a preferential option for the poor, power sharing and basic human rights (*The Catholic School on the Threshold of the Third Millenium*, 1998) which constitute the "building blocks of authentic community" (Cappo, 1996, p.16).

The challenge for the school lies in its contemporary context. The reimagining of the Catholic school is confronted with a society which, in many ways, rejects the concept of the common good in favour of individual benefit:

> Again and again, social commentaries see in demographic trends, confirmation of a rootless society. This ambiance of anomie, combined with highly sophisticated marketing, creates a consumer culture in which human worth is measured by professions… children face a lonely and highly competitive environment. Never has there been so great a need for schools that provide a sense of community and a compelling philosophy of life that one develops one's talents not primarily for self but for building up the common good. (O'Keefe, 2003, p.100)

Such considerations of the balance between individual and common good lead to an understanding of Catholic identity particularly as it relates to education, since the character of Catholic education is predicated upon a "distinctive view of human nature and, therefore, of the qualities and values, knowledge and understanding that are worth acquiring" (Pring, 1996, p.67) both for the individual and society.

91

2.4.13 A Consequent Understanding of Catholic Identity:

The character of Catholic education presumes and heightens the capacity of student and teacher to critique and question the dominant themes of culture in the light of Christian belief (Zipfel, 1996, p.212; National Catholic Education Commission, 2000). It also accepts that, in the process of self-definition, "the Second Vatican Council inaugurated profound developments in the understanding of what it means to be Catholic" (Hypher, 1996, p.226). Hence, contemporary Catholic identity is to be defined in the light of conciliar and post-conciliar positions:

> To be Catholic now means not only proclaiming the Gospel by the witness of being a living Catholic community and by catechesis for the baptised, but also proclaiming the Gospel by recognizing where the Holy Spirit is at work in people of other faiths and relating to them in a dialogue of life and of religious experience, of action and of theological exchange (Hypher, 1996, p.227).

Catholic identity, then, is to be found, not only within the "traditio" paradigm but also in the "discourse of mission" (Grace, 1996, p.74) intrinsic to the "missio" model of Church outlined in section 2.4.10. This section of the review of literature began by identifying the issue of the "Catholic worldview" as it apprehended the challenges to that world view implicit in the Church's ecumenical and evangelizing imperatives, or what might be termed its discourse of mission. A study of the literature reveals that contemporary Catholic identity is defined largely in terms of these evangelical and ecumenical imperatives. Catholic identity, then as it is expressed in Catholic schools, faces questions for instance concerning enrolment of students of other faith traditions, or of none, from the perspective of this "discourse of mission" (Chadwick, 1994; McClelland, 1996). In this it pays due regard to

the missionary (ecumenical and evangelising) vocation of the Church as well as to its fundamental fidelity to its own essential communitarian character (Arthur, 1995; Wedge, 2003). Further, the employment of staff is of concern to the Catholic identity of a school (N.C.E.C., 2000) especially given that "it is quite clear that the Church's expected role of the Catholic teacher goes beyond the ordinary professional role of most teachers" (Arthur, 1995, p.187). It is, therefore, of importance for any Catholic school to be clear in the matter of aims and goals if it is to pay due regard to the matter of Catholic identity in the midst of its contemporary philosophical challenges.

2.4.14 The Importance of Aims and Goals in Catholic Education:

A clear sense of Catholic identity is central to the task of describing aims and goals for Catholic education. "Clarity is particularly needed by Catholic schools … as a central element in the complex exercise of judgement and discernment which they must bring to bear upon their educational mission in the contemporary world" (McLaughlin, 1996, p.137). Given some of the characteristics of the contemporary world surveyed in this study "the purpose of the Catholic school may need to adopt wider terms of reference. A new rationale for Catholic schooling that is relevant to the contemporary church and society may be what is required" (McLaughlin, 1997, p.41).

It is undeniably required in the exercise of reimagining the Catholic school. Traditionally, expressed aims of Catholic schooling have held as an ultimate goal, the realization of final human destiny in eternal salvation. Indeed, it is held that "the Church has a continuing interest in teaching an explicit philosophy of education which reflects her long standing belief that true

education aims at the formation of the human person in the light of their final end." (Arthur, 1995, p.245).

Further, the *Catechism for General Use in Australia* (1937) in answering the question of the divine purpose in the creation of human beings affirmed that God created us "to know Him, love Him and serve Him here on earth and to be happy with Him for ever in heaven" (Q 13). This soteriological concern is central to the traditional Catholic definition of aims and goals in education. The incarnation of God in Jesus, therefore, "profoundly influences the Christian's understanding of education" (Flynn, 1993, p.17). The salvation achieved through that incarnation has long been formative of the primary aims of Catholic education: "The primary aim of education is a person's salvation and everything else is subordinated to this end, including the content of education … only Catholic education is capable of leading us to our eternal destiny." (Arthur, 1995, p.49)

The Centrality of Anthropology

The necessary philosophical companion to such central questions of human destiny is the issue of the very nature of humankind and the issue of how that anthropology shapes education (McLaughlin, 1997): "The question of what man *[sic]* is – or what we mean by human nature – is … ultimately the basis of every system of education … only when we know what man is can we say how he should be educated." (Beck, 1964, p.109).

At the heart of the Catholic school, then, lies a specific and particular anthropology. So, the Church "establishes her own schools because she considers them as a privileged means of promoting the formation of the whole

94

man (sic), since the school is a centre in which a specific concept of the world, man and of history is developed and conveyed." (*The Catholic School*, 1977, para. 8).

The content of that "specific concept" is of the essence. As seen above, anthropology essentially informs educational philosophy. In turn, that is necessarily related to the idea of the human being's "final end" or destiny. In a philosophical construct which equates human destiny with beatitude after death and judgement, educational formation would be directed solely to that end. Formation for this life in that view, is entirely pointed towards that heavenly goal. However, contemporary Church teaching on the other hand upholds the present life as of inestimable value and as a divine gift (*Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 1994, nos. 1700, 1701). In fact, the human person "finds perfection in seeking and loving what is true and good" (no. 1704). Hence, there is found in current Catholic doctrine, a unitive-holistic view that holds that this present existence has intrinsic value and purpose as it leads to, and works towards, the eternal destiny to which all are ultimately called (*Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 1994, no. 1721). That holistic anthropology views the human being as an integral being with a vocation to live the wholeness and integrity which is in at the core of human nature:

> Ultimately, we are enfleshed spirits or incarnate spirits and the work of being human is to integrate them properly. Body and spirit are not separate and conflicting things, one good and the other bad. Each person is a unity; a human is body and soul. The challenge is to live that unity and the challenge for… teachers is to find ways to live and teach this mystery for the benefit of the young. (Ryan, 2003, p.3)

This holistic view is increasingly influential in contemporary Catholic education.

95

The Kingdom of God

Further, the concept of the Kingdom (or Reign) of God, so central to the preaching and mission of Jesus (Lonsdale, 1992; O'Murchu, 1997a; Perrin & Duling, 1982) is pivotal to the principal's understanding of the goals of the Catholic school. That Kingdom, the *Basilea* (O'Murchu, 1997b) is, at the one time, both present and therefore, central to the work of education but also exists in prospect, is yet to come (Lk 17:20-21; Mk 1:15; Mt 4:17; Boucher, 1981; Edwards, 1987; McBrien, 1981; O'Murchu, 1997b). So it is concerned with the holistic sacredness of both the present and eternal realities. Hence, the work of the Catholic school in "put(ting) intelligence and care into the service of divine love, and into the remaking of this world, are elements in the building up of God's kingdom" (Lawler, Wuerl, & Lawler, 1976, p.536; cf. Australian Catholic Bishops' Conference, 1992). In fact, if the responsibility of "promoting the reign of God….(is an) absolute (basis) of a Catholic philosophy of life" (McLaughlin, 1997, p.25), it follows that it is a foundational element in the formation of aims and goals of the Catholic school. Those aims and goals concern on the one hand, the work of transforming the present worldly reality "by the invitation to radical conversion" (Australian Catholic Bishops' Conference, 1992, p.7) and on the other, the complementary and consequential task of shepherding people towards their final, eternal salvation. The balance of these complementary preoccupations in practice will be a focus of the research outlined below.

2.4.15 Summary:

This section of the review of literature has focused on the changing ecclesial context of the Catholic school within which the principal operates and discovers meaning. Within that context several factors have been canvassed.

96

The first and foundational factor to be considered was the changing self-perception of the Church especially as it is expressed in the models or perspectives through which it understands and communicates its own nature. The expansion of the range of ecclesiological models has had a direct effect upon the Catholic school as it takes its place within the changing Church.

Another key factor to be examined affecting the role of the principal was the evolving role of the laity. This is significant because of the marked shift from religious to lay leadership and staffing in Catholic schools. It is also important as the numbers of clerics available to take pastoral roles in parishes, within which most Catholic schools function, diminishes with the resultant emphasis on the pastoral role of the lay leaders of those schools. A further factor in this connection is a loss of confidence in clerical leadership because of a wider complex of issues breaking down former patterns of affiliation with the institutional Church.

These factors led to a study of the increasing emphasis for the contemporary Catholic school in its evangelizing and ecumenical character. This, in turn, raised the critical issue of the communal nature of the Catholic school as the context within which its evangelizing and ecumenical ministry may be exercised. In this way, consideration of the idea of the common good was appropriate within the survey of literature. All of these factors made some explication of the nature of contemporary Catholic identity appropriate.

This part of the survey of the literature followed upon a section which canvassed briefly the concept of the historical development of inherited

meanings for the Catholic school based upon a certain set of theological and anthropological premises and the phenomenon of the breakdown of those inherited meanings because of a range of factors. The changing ecclesial context was examined as one of those factors. This survey of literature now proceeds to examine the effects upon the contemporary Catholic school of another of those factors, its changing social context.

2.5 THE CHANGING SOCIAL CONTEXT OF THE CATHOLIC SCHOOL

Having surveyed major shifts in the ecclesial context of the contemporary Catholic school, it is beneficial to explore some aspects of its changing social environment which have seen the deconstruction of the inherited meanings of the Catholic school and have emphasised the need to reimagine its future direction and purposes in the reconstruction of its meaning.

If the protective insularity of Catholic schools has evaporated in recent times, then the social context to which they have subsequently been exposed has altered as well (McGrath, 1998; N.C.E.C., 2000). If it is argued that "not even schools placed within a faith tradition escape the cacophony of values generated by diverse voices and interests in our society" (Preston, 1996 p.3), those voices and interests draw attention to three main categories of issues in the Australian social context. These may be grouped as economic, social and cultural matters (Kelly, 1990). Each of these concerns poses questions for the operation of Catholic schools in an Australian society increasingly economically exposed to foreign monetary movement and patterns of investment (Schreiter, 1997); beset by the complexities facing a nation learning to manage its pluri-cultural composition (Schreiter, 1997) and culturally in need of intellectual liberation (Kelly, 1990; Shields, 1996).

The Challenge of Secularisation

Influencing these factors is the social phenomenon of secularisation (O'Murchu, 1997b). This is often conceived negatively in terms of the threat it poses to the religious-Christian worldview, (Catholic Education Office, Sydney, 1990; Rohr & Martos, 1992). However, secularisation offers both jeopardy

and promise (Longley, 2003) as it has been argued that its presence offers "a number of new openings for the place of religion in society today" (Schreiter, 1997, p.90), for "new paradigm(s) and new metaphor(s)" (O'Murchu, 1997a), for reimagining. The imperative upon the Church is this context is clear:

> The church needs to listen to the young because there have seen huge changes in society in the last 30 or 40 years. Many Christians are outrageously struggling with the new world while others have decided to stay comfortably in traditionalist bunkers talking either to themselves or to the shrinking numbers who listen passively. But the Church needs to realise that the modern age, while often terrifying, offers the Church an opportunity like no other. (O'Donnell, 2003, p.2)

Further it is argued that "one of the most precarious dilemmas of our time (that is) the vacuum created by the demise of formal religion" (allows for attending to the most) fundamental human aspiration, namely, *spirituality* (O'Murchu, 1997a, p.12). In localized terms, Australia from its inception may be viewed as "the first genuinely post-Christian society" (O'Farrell, 1977, p.17) and the context in which its story has been lived as essentially secular. This is especially so, given that our "founding fathers … came from a society where religion was in decline and disarray, eroded by scepticism and indifference (O'Farrell, p.17). However, given the reality that "post-Christian" does not signify "non-Christian", there is both hope and challenge for the re-imagined Catholic school in the following assertion related to the whole Church:

> It would seem to be the task of the Christian Church today to establish credible communities, places that engage the power of ritual and create group solidarity. In environments like these, practices can be cultivated and spiritualities evolved that could initiate people gradually and ever more deeply into the Christian mysteries. (Schreiter, 1997, p.92)

The challenge to establish "credible communities" is in harmony with the Church's mandate to the Catholic school to ensure that from the moment of a student's immersion into the school community, "he or she ought to have the impression of entering a new environment, one illumined by the light of faith and having its own unique characteristics" (*The Religious Dimension of Education in a Catholic School*, 1990, no. 25). One of those characteristics should be a communitarian spirit based on Christian values. In other words, "the Catholic school, far more than any other, must be a community whose aim is the transmission of values for living." (*The Catholic School*, 1977, no. 53)

Overall, there are indicators that our society is in a phase of transition with all the uncertainties, lack of direction and even hopelessness (Green, 1996) that accompany that state. If "we have been plunged into a period of unprecedented social, cultural, political, economic and technological change" (Mackay 1993, p.6) Australian society can expect to experience all three aspects of the transitional journey typically identified in psychological theory i.e. confrontation of past and present realities, emotional reaction and movement in new directions (Joyce, 1996; Mackay, 1993). The implications of this tripartite syndrome for the Catholic school will now be examined.

2.5.1 Contemporary Moral Context of Catholic Schools:

It may be the case that in a transitional social phase, presumed philosophical and sociological absolutes are in decline (Lennan, 1995). While some see stricter school discipline as the solution to the problem, (Courier Mail, May 20

1995) others take a broader view. In pointing to an emerging social disjunction, Judge McGuire (1996) observed:

> I sense a feeling of fear and hopelessness creeping into our community at the present time. This new fear-fullness is symptomatic of a moral vacuum…I am speaking of a dangerous widening of the cracks in the moral and social orders. The best time to reinforce the moral and social foundations of failing communities is not after they have collapsed, but when they are cracking (p.3).

If such describes the moral context in which the contemporary Catholic school principal operates then one of the main challenges facing "school leaders, teachers and parents (is) to engage in principled moral reasoning about different human dilemmas in which some degree of personal autonomy and situational adjustment is expected by the participants" (Grace, 1995, p.164). A Catholic Christian moral philosophy allows for that moral reasoning to take place in an environment which is consistent and is founded upon "a framework through which data can be interpreted" (Bell, 1996, p.23).   The integrity of that moral framework can be threatened even by philosophies which are not generally held to be overtly inimical to it e.g. liberalism. Part of the vigilance required of a Catholic school community is to assay the philosophical influences which impinge upon it to ensure that its moral foundation remains coherent and integral (Sullivan, 1996).

The Post-Modern Context

The post-modern world in which the Catholic school operates sets a global context for its moral relationship to the wider world. The post-modern mind, eschewing the melioristic naivete of modernism's belief in the inexorable ascent to betterment (Starratt, 1990) is prone to a cynical incredulity about the relevance of eternal verities (Donogue, 1999).   The post-modern world

102

challenges the Catholic school to establish its bona fides and to justify its existence. (Schreiter, 1997). "In a word, the world's 'symbol - making factory' (has) changed its address. It is not a church address any more" (Lee, 1995, p.29). The task for the contemporary Catholic school in this context is to establish its credibility and authenticity on the foundation of the evangelical principles or "gospel values" to which its leaders regularly refer and which the Church claims are dispensable to its existence.

2.5.2 The Relationship of Parents to the Catholic School:

Another changed element in the social context within which the contemporary Catholic school principal functions is the relationship of the school with the parents of its students. Whilst the primary role of parents in the formation of their children is incontrovertible (Kelly, 1990; McGuire, 1996) and, hence, their relationship with the school pivotal, the nature of that relationship has evolved in recent times (Hard & Kelly, 2000; Phillips, 2000). It may be asserted that "the ideology of parent power has produced some significant transformations within Catholic schooling culture" (Grace, 1995, p.170). Therefore, "in a culture which had been historically characterised by a deference to the teachings and advice of an ecclesiastical hierarchy on matters spiritual, moral and social, the 1980s and 1990s … produced a more assertive and differentiated Catholic community" (Grace, 1995, p.171).

Within the broader social context it may be observed that "the traditional dominant relationship between professional educators and the public is being reworked in favour of parents and community members" (Murphy, 1997, p.193). Parent bodies seek:

to establish through collaborative planning and programming a strong partnership that will speak and act into being, a process that fulfils educational equity. Simultaneously, the process will collapse the barriers and tensions that segregate a student's learning from whole-of-life education (Phillips, 2000, p.47).

In the ecclesial context within which the Catholic school operates, the vocal and participative parent bodies in Catholic schools place new pressures and stresses on principals for accountability and urge then towards a more generally collaborative model. It is arguably the case that "parents are increasingly well educated and articulate and attention should be given to their ability and eagerness to make a wider and more comprehensive contribution to many areas of school life" (Hard & Kelly, 2000, p.35). Moreover, this movement creates new forces on the hitherto dominant models of the Catholic school typified by a largely submissive and compliant parent body, formed in the hierarchical tradition, and forces it to look to new *modi operandi*.

Empirical research has shown that the parental choice of Catholic schooling is influenced by a changing pattern of educational preference for their children. The result of a survey published in 2003 showed that "within the group of parents (surveyed) who had elected for Catholic schooling, the more traditional criteria for Catholic school selection were rated comparatively low" (Sultmann, Thurgood & Rasmussen, 2003, p.17). In the category of "Absolutely Essential", faith development was included by fewer than half the parents (46%) and Religious Education by only 39% of respondents (Sultmann et al., p.17). The highest-ranking characteristics for Catholic schooling rated as "absolutely essential" are set out in Table 2.6 and are led by a priority for "quality teaching (and) education". Second in importance were "care of students" and "school discipline". It is clear that what might be

termed "religious" considerations, did not rank highly in the choice of schooling by parents.

Table 2.6

**Criteria Deemed as Absolutely Essential
in Catholic Schools by
Parents Choosing Schooling Sector**

Criteria			
Absolutely Essential	**State**	**Independent**	**Catholic**
Care of Students	100%	92%	90%
Quality of Teaching/Education	92%	94%	94%
School Discipline	88%	85%	90%
Consultation with Parents	100%	76%	68%
Moral Development	68%	80%	84%
Vision/Principles/Value	75%	73%	78%

(Sultmann, Thurgood & Rasmessen, 2003, p.17)

2.5.3 The Global and Technological Context of the Catholic School:

If developments have occurred in the parental relationship with schools, marked changes have taken place also in the global context within which the educational work of the Catholic school and the leadership of the principal are being exercised (Croke, 2003; Shields, 1996). Such a shift is acknowledged in the Strategic Plan (1997-2001) for the Queensland Department of Education (1996). The document speaks of teaching as a "global profession" and of teachers as those who "will need to help students to learn to live both as an Australian and as a member of global society" (p.16). What has been termed one of the "megatrends" in education is the move for "national and global considerations (to become) increasingly important, especially in respect of curriculum and an education system that is responsive to national needs

within a global economy" (Caldwell, 1992, p.1). In a perspective pertinent to the fundamental tenet of this study, the Curriculum Corporation (2002) has suggested that global awareness involves "reimagining" the world.

The issue of globalisation (Schreiter, 1997) is closely linked to that of technology. It is technological advance that allows immediate dialogue on a worldwide scale (Shields, 1996) and grants access to data which hitherto has been unavailable or difficult to attain (Mehlinger, 1996). Advances in technology and their effects dictate a new and ever shifting context for schools (Commonwealth Department of Education; Training and Youth Affairs, 1999). As an educational enterprise, the Catholic school is essentially affected by technological advance and challenged by it, not least because the technologically adroit student can now be in control of the learning world that in times past was in the hands of the teacher (Mehlinger, 1996). The quest for the Catholic school in this dramatically changing context is to manage the phenomenon of technological change (Kealey, 2002) and to guide the students' use of, and attitudes to, the technologically possible in the light of a realistic understanding of the school's own role in the intellectual, moral and spiritual formation of the young (Boston, 1997). This becomes an even sharper question in a world where the concept of "moral absolute" itself is under question (Preston, 1996) and where the teacher is asked to assume a morally formative role far beyond the scope of "classroom teacher." In the words of one observer:

> A teacher is far more than a navigator, a human compass or a learning facilitator. Students should leave school:
> * knowing what is valuable and what is not
> * being able to distinguish what is worthwhile and what is not
> * knowing truth from the illusion of truth
> In short, I believe in the moral authority of the teacher.
>
> (Boston, 1997, p.14)

These words are essential to an understanding of the role of the teacher in the contemporary Catholic school and of the responsibilities of its leadership.

Of special relevance for the Catholic school principal within the issue of globalisation is the paschal paradigm of death-resurrection that is at the core of the Christian reimagining of the contemporary Catholic school. This will be explored further below. The disjunction that can be intrinsic to the globalisation process (Schreiter, 1997) evinces the need to find "a new paradigm and a new metaphor" (O'Murchu, 1997a, p.54) the *sine qua non* to which is the death of existing, or more familiar, paradigms and of attachments to them. For those individuals and institutions experiencing the displacement of the globalised society, reimagining the paschal possibilities becomes a task of the highest priority:

> In the asymmetries eddying out of the globalisation process, with its maldistributions of power and profit, with its uprootedness, double visions, and multiple belongings, with its tentative hybridities - does not the paschal mystery take on new meaning, illuminating these realities in a special way? (Schreiter, 1997, p.93).

The challenge implicit for principals of Catholic schools in the phenomenon of globalisation and acute technological change is to find new or reimagined ways of offering an educational experience which will meet the needs of the contemporary community in a way which is faithful to its gospel mandate.

107

2.5.4 Summary:

This review of current literature has explored some elements of the changing social context of the Catholic school. The post-modern parameter necessitates a reimagination of the basic philosophical tenets of the school as does the global perspective out of which it is asked to work. The accompanying moral context also poses its challenges as does the changing landscape of parental involvement in the process of education.

This review will now move to canvass the matter of the changing educational context of the contemporary Catholic school as that affects the need for, and the process of, its reimagining. It is this changing educational context in which principals negotiate a reimagined sense of direction and purpose in the schools they lead.

2.6   THE CHANGING EDUCATIONAL CONTEXT OF THE CATHOLIC SCHOOL

Just as evolving ecclesial and social contexts have had a profound effect upon the inherited meaning structure of the Catholic school, so have the developing educational circumstances surrounding it. Part of these circumstances has been the pattern of growth and deceleration in enrolments in Catholic schools.

A Sense of Purpose in a Period of Expansion for Catholic Schooling

Born in adversity and nourished by a spirit of defiance and determination, Catholic education in Australia became an established pastoral work of the Church against many odds. Granted government funding, after the long and sometimes acrimonious State Aid debate in the 1960s, Catholic schools entered a period of strong, pronounced and unprecedented growth. That decade of vigorous growth warrants close study because the experience of a period of accelerated expansion can bring into sharp focus key issues of direction, purpose and goals from which much can be learned concerning the contemporary Catholic school. Figure 2.7 indicates patterns of heightened expansion in the period (1972-1982) for Catholic schools in Australia.
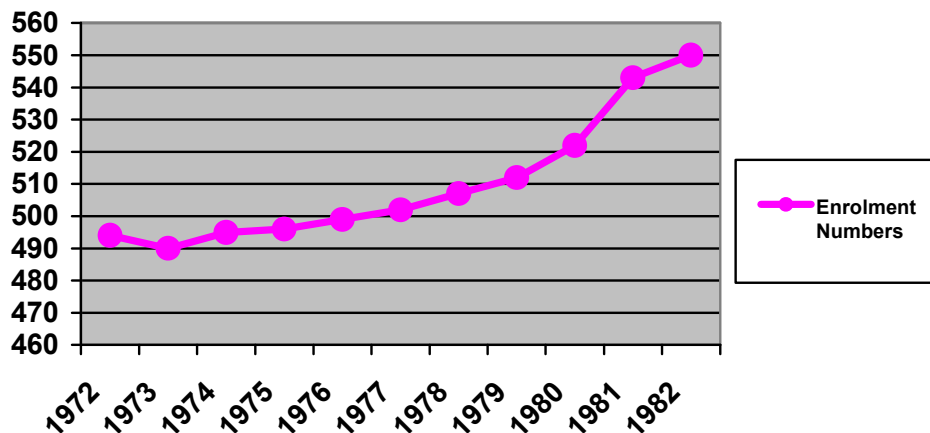
Figure 2.8

Enrolment in Catholic Schools in Australia
1972 – 1982 (thousands)
(Source: Flynn, 1985 p.78)

109

This period of accelerated expansion and consolidation had witnessed a high level of activity in building and growth with all the attendant dangers of a loss of attention to quality that a preoccupation with quantity can bring. In such periods of high activity there is the risk that a concentration on goals, or redefining or refining aims and expectations of outcomes will be diminished. In the shadow of the favourable judgement of the High Court of 10 February, 1982 (that federal funding of independent schools was not unconstitutional), one educator remarked:

> We still have concern for the quantity of educational provision, but I believe that there should now be greater concern for the quality of our educational services … the question of (our) distinctiveness has become educationally more acute. (Simmons, 1982, p.1)

Two years earlier, in the midst of this period of unprecedented (and unreplicated) growth a similar warning concerning aims and goals of Catholic schools had been sounded:

> Their (Catholic schools') impressive success (in the seventies) could be part of their problem in the eighties … The chief danger lies in goal displacement whereby means are enshrined as ends and instrumental objectives become terminal objectives. (Simmons, 1980, p.2)

It had been at the height of Catholic school enrolment in the U.S.A. too, some fifteen years previously, that similar questions of purpose and goals had been raised (Bryk, 1996).

The poignancy of such directional issues, raised as they were in an expansionary period, is heightened in time of slowing or contraction of growth, not only for Catholic schools, but for the Church which sponsors them (Arthur, 1995; McLaughlin, 1997). If some felt an urgency to address

110

directional and philosophical issues in a time of plenty, the quest for

sustainability in leaner days has led to renewed calls for attention to matters of

goals and purposes for Catholic schools:

> The critical question for Catholic school leaders in new circumstances is: can a balance be found between Catholic values and market values, or will market forces begin to compromise the integrity of the special mission of Catholic schooling? Can Gospel values survive in the face of a more direct relationship with the market place? (Grace, 1996, p.84)

One perspective alerts Catholic schools to the dangers of marketisation:

> The market model of individuals all pursuing their own respective interests leads not to an improvement of the general good but only to an improvement of the positional good of some vis-à-vis other competitors and also to a deterioration of the overall situation. (Pring, 1996, .p.65)

Given the questions and concerns, it is opportune to examine the significance

of market forces in the development of Catholic schools.

2.6.1 Market Forces and Catholic Schools' Special Mission:

A key social factor in the shaping and reimagining of the contemporary

Catholic school by principals and in the challenging of its inherited meanings

has been the emergence of its exposure to the power of market forces

(Grace, 2003; Vining, 1998). One observer has remarked that one of the

main factors that has implications for how principals engage in reimagining

Catholic education is "what is generally referred to as the marketisation of

education" (Looney, 2003, p.239). In this regard, there arise complementary

considerations of both ecclesial and social forces and their impact upon the

Catholic school (Sullivan, 2000). Additionally, reflection upon the effect of

market forces provides a point of entry to a study of the importance of

educational changes in the shaping of contemporary Church schools (Murphy, 1997).

Given that Catholic schools had been assured, especially in the immediate post-war decades in Australia, of an increasing stream of enrolments, they generally entered a period of security and marked expansion in both primary and secondary arenas as seen above. However, in more recent times, this expansion has steadied. Figure 2.9 shows the total enrolment growth patterns in the Archdiocese of Brisbane for the decade 1990-1999.
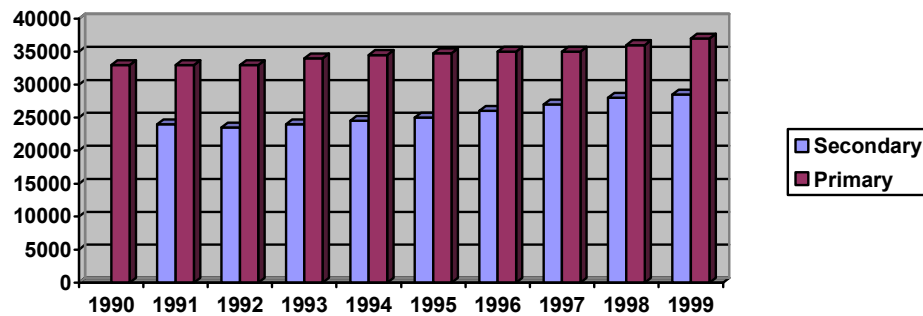
Figure 2.8

**Total Catholic School Enrolment
Primary and Secondary Catholic Schools
Brisbane Archdiocese
1990-1999**

(Source: Brisbane Catholic Education,1999)

One factor which has had an impact on the enrolment pattern in Catholic schools is their exposure to an "open market" in education (Herron, 2003, p.256). Catholic schools, for a variety of reasons, compete with other educational providers for enrolments. The situation in England and Wales, is relevant to Australia:

112

> With local management of schools, open enrolments, a more differentiated Catholic community and a lower Catholic birth rate, such schools have to operate in a competitive market in education. In other words, the space, identity, and voice of contemporary Catholic schooling is now more directly challenged by market values than ever before in its history. (Grace, 1995, p.175).

Whilst Catholic schools generally do not follow in Australia a policy of "open enrolment", nor do they function under the types of administrative conditions which pertain for example, in New Zealand, nevertheless the context in which they do operate increasingly requires them to merit enrolment of students (Donnelly, 1998), to establish their educational credentials vis-a-vis other schools or systems. This element of competition brings to bear certain stresses and pressures in the discernment and maintenance of a philosophy which allows Catholic schools to be both educationally attractive and hence, economically "viable" in a less expansionary era, and yet remain responsive to the Church's declared mission of relevance to, and dialogue with, contemporary society in fidelity to the Gospel.

This essential fidelity can be assured by the application of the principles and mandates of authentic theological reflection to the processes and structures of Catholic schools. In this way, for instance, issues such as staffing, policy making processes, curriculum, location of schools, enrolment policies and costs "would be subjected to critical examination in the light of a preferential option for the poor" (Bezzina, 1996, p.2). In this connection it has been observed that:

> … of undoubted importance is the difficulty, in an increasingly materialistic and economically driven world, of sustaining a commitment to the needs of disadvantaged people. There are many who believe that the challenge for Catholic leadership in nurturing human compassion, tolerance and understanding is at least as great as it ever has been. (Crowther, 1998, p.6)

113

Such scrutiny becomes essential to the integrity of the Catholic school when, "the traditional concepts of public and private schooling are wearing down in Australia" (Pascoe as cited in Clancy, 1996, p.2). If this is the case, the examination of the nature of Catholic schooling in the light of the touchstones of authenticity, that is, in the light of the Gospels, becomes a matter of even greater importance. The issue of market forces is another example of the factors which impinge upon the process of the reimagining of the Catholic school in very practical ways.

2.6.2 Market Forces and the Consumerist Approach to Education

Such questions introduce the issue of the consumerist approach to education (Noyce, 1996) which, in the view of some, should be encountered by the Catholic school with a hermeneutic of suspicion (Bernstein, 1996; Grace, 2002; Pring, 1996). This caution is heightened by warnings that the consumerist worldview is "another single vision ravaging the planet…that of the world as global market, in which we are all reduced to consumers, eating and being eaten" (Radcliffe, 1996, p.468). In this connection, the key questions for principals concern the authority of those:

> outside the Christian account of what it means to be human, to define the quality of life worth living; … (further) the (Catholic) school would reject (any) treatment of education as a commodity to be purchased"
> (Pring, 1996, p.69).

Especially pertinent here is the perceived danger that:

> …as teachers become embedded in these concepts and practices (of the functionality and utilitarianism of education)… some may take on the identity of the so-called new professionalism, serving the ideology and structures of the globalised capital as managers of "learning outcomes". (Ballard, 2002, p.29)

114

The link between these general philosophical shifts in the approach to education and the resultant movements in praxis and pedagogy are clear. One observer remarked:

> Accompanying this secularism, commodification and marketisation of knowledge in contemporary settings, there are comparable transformations in pedagogic discourse and communication. Pedagogy is not simply a means for the transmission of knowledge, it is also a powerful regulator of consciousness and a formative influence upon personal identity. Pedagogy in the secularized, market curriculum has itself become dominated by output measures of specific competences and skill acquisition, by performance models of comparative achievement levels and by efficiency and effectiveness criteria relating to the 'delivery' of … required objectives …(Grace, 2002, p.46)

Such considerations are to be included below amongst issues germane to a definition of goals and purposes of contemporary Catholic schools. Further, it is important to note the irony that, to some extent, the encouragement or at least, allowance within the Church itself, of a certain degree of diversity or freedom of opinion has added to the danger of education becoming a consumer item. If it is the case that, whilst in former times Catholic education and parental participation in it were presumed but that in these times, "the Catholic Church no longer, it appears, exacts a high price for deviation" (Arthur, 1995, p.45) it is also the case that "the reality and importance of diversity is of crucial importance for the contemporary Catholic school" (McLaughlin, O'Keefe & O'Keefe, 1996, p.15). Diversity implies the availability and freedom afforded by choice. Choice, in turn, signifies criteria for selection. Of the essence, is the ground on which that selection is made. It is here that market forces come into play for the Catholic school and for parents who make selection from the educational services available (Murphy, 1997). The response of the Catholic school and of the principals who lead them to this reality is crucial to its authenticity in any process of reimagining.

The Impact of Freedom of Choice in Education

Both in the provision of free choice, implicit in the principles of responsible participation in the Church and also in the multiplicity of options available to parents for the education of their children, lie both the threat and the challenge to the authenticity of the distinctively Catholic school. The essential task for the principal is the holding in balance of the call to serve the educational needs of a society with whom the Church is in dialogue and at the same time, the need to maintain a distinctive and authentic identity (Arthur, 1995; Hypher, 1996;). In the world of education, this becomes an even more delicate task if it is the case that "educational philosophy, psychology, management, curriculum theory and policy studies have all developed in the mainstream of educational research to the neglect of the Catholic dimension in education" (Arthur, 1995, p.247).

One observer offers the following reflection on the need for the Catholic school to maintain focus on perennial verities in its service of contemporary society:

> While schools cannot do everything and we need to be realistic in assessing the extent of their influence…if we believe that our schools should be instruments of change…then it is without question that we have a serious obligation to ensure that the future citizens that we are helping to form are challenged to question seriously the values that form the basis for much of the decision making that occurs in our world. More importantly, at least as a beginning, each an every member of our school communities needs to feel that every effort is being made to ensure that the school environment is always one within which they can experience the lived reality of Gospel Values. Any other situation reduces the concept of schools being agents for change for the better to an academic exercise. (Connors, 2003, p.1)

116

The Impact of Social Liberalism

The difficulty of finding and maintaining that balance of openness and identity is accentuated by the ascendancy within society of liberal principles. These are not overtly inimical to the Catholic tradition but need to be embraced with caution. The reverencing of rationality, the holding of all points of view as of equal value, the sovereignty of the individual are all liberal principles which have influenced the post-modern social construct. Yet "by in effect denying the existence of constructs such as 'society' or of 'common good' … the apparent triumph of liberal individualism as a decisive political, economic and cultural doctrine and its implementation in terms of educational policy and practice" (Grace, 1996, p.87) pose a danger to the identity of the Catholic school by "watering down its message, dissipating its energies, confusing the members of its community and preventing the attainment of its main goals" (Sullivan, 1996, p39).

The jeopardy is twofold. Firstly, in the guise of worthy and humanitarian foundations, liberal premises, if adopted unfiltered or unquestioned by the Catholic school, may lead to such a plethora of principles that a loss of focus on the essential Christian virtues may result, thus diminishing the Catholic identity of the school. Secondly, if liberalism is espoused because of a perceived "marketability" advantage to the school, distinctive identity is already lost in the search for survival. In this case, the double irony would be that in significant sectors of the parental "market" the:

> moral resources (of the Catholic school are) potent market assets in the competitive appeal for parental choice of schools in a wider constituency. In other words, demonstrable moral leadership would ensure the success of Catholic schooling in the new conditions of the educational market place (Grace, 1996, pp.84, 85).

117

Australian research identifies the value parents place on moral and values-related factors in choosing Catholic schooling for their children (Flynn, 1993; Sultmann, et al., 2003). These perspectives accentuate the challenges principals face as they strive to reimagine Catholic schooling in a complex environment.

Such observations would lend a sense of urgency and priority to the project of reimagining the Catholic school in the light of the fact that the forces referred to above challenge inherited meaning structures and posit fundamental questions of purpose and direction for principals, as does the phenomenon of the merging of the worlds of formal schooling and the workplace in a rapidly changing educational environment.

2.6.3 Market Forces and the Coalescence of the Worlds of School and the Workplace:

The worlds of school and employment in many ways are no longer discrete entities. This growing relationship may be most clearly seen in the post-compulsory schooling years and in the increasing emphasis being placed on transition programmes from school to work. The claim that "schools … will need to enter into … alliances with industry to build bridges that shape the content of the curriculum in the interests of students" (Mathias, 1992, p.4) indicates that the notional and practical separation of education and employment is currently being challenged to the extent that the two fields are seen to be in symbiotic relationship (Mathias, 1992; Ryan, 1993). At government level, the same connection between school and work is being espoused with priority being given to "making a direct connection between … young people and employers while they are at school" (Kemp, 1997, p.1).

118

This utilitarian focus is another factor which signals the need for Catholic school principals to approach the engagement with the world of work with vigilance. Clarity of goals and purposes is of the essence lest, in the satisfaction of the demands of industry and commerce, the call of the Gospel is ignored or its voice muted. This further issue emphasises the difficulties inherent in the principal's task of reimagining Catholic schooling in a changed context.

Key questions which arise in this regard are:

> Will Catholic education in Australia simply serve the needs of the global village for skilled and competent graduates or offer something else entirely?
>
> Will the educational competencies model and economic rationalist theory dominate completely?
>
> Will our schools and universities turn out graduates who will be high achievers … or
>
> Will at least some of our graduates be people with an understanding of the commitment to a radically Christian life? (Joyce, 1996, p.1).

The National Catholic Education Commission (2000) proffers a response to these issues by affirming that:

> "what is distinctive about Catholic schools (is their) critiquing our culture and challenging community values as an integral part of their Gospel mission (and their) encouraging students to develop an international perspective on their own country and how their country can identify and respond justly to its international obligations" (p.3).

The Commission (2000) further reiterates the Catholic school's "priority (for) educating the spiritually and financially poor and being their advocates" (p.3), thus stressing the need for the Catholic school to hold to foundational gospel

119

tenets in the face of the challenges issued by the significant movements in its educational context.

2.6.4 Consequent Pressures upon the Contemporary Catholic School:

Several factors and forces then are operative upon the Catholic school both because of its immersion in the societal educational endeavour and, also, because of its special mission in the service of the Kingdom of Go. This poses unique challenges to its sense of identity, purpose and direction. The insulation of the Catholic school from the forces and pressures of the socio-educational world which was a part of its "otherness" and its stance of separation from the world has been broken down in recent decades. This has been attributable both to the Catholic Church's post-Vatican Council dialogue with the world and to the realities of the world of education in which it engages. These are the very pressures of changing contexts for the Catholic school, which are the concern of this study. The breadth of issues are summarized here:

> In more recent times, (the) strong classification and insulation (of Catholic education) has weakened as a result of a complex of factors including ideological, social, educational and political change. The weakening of classification and insulation has arisen partly as the outcome of Vatican II reforms and the call to a greater openness to the external world; partly as a result of educational change, which has celebrated relating the world of school more closely to "real life", "the world of work", "youth culture" etc.; partly as a result of the decline in the number of priests and religious, and partly as a result of the imperatives of strong state reforms in education which have required compliance from the Catholic system. There can be no doubt that Catholic education institutions are now more weakly classified and insulated from external agencies than in earlier historical periods.
> (Grace, 2002, p.47)

Pressures from Outside the Educational World

These forces challenge many of the inherited meanings of the Catholic school. There are those forces for educational change or direction setting

120

which emanate from outside the education system. There is the identifiable societal pressure, especially in times of economic stress, "to see education merely in terms of marketable skills" (Kelly, 1990, p.23) and to restrict the national definition of "the clever country" merely to signify a set of fiscally advantageous skills to the neglect of other facets of human development.

Closely related to these pressures on Catholic school principals is the emphasis to conform the process of education, especially in secondary schools, to the pre-determined needs of industry (Ryan, 1993). As part of the broad education system, Catholic schools can benefit from participation in the contingent debate. The relationship of education and industry is to be acknowledged. Indeed "it is the responsibility of educationists to play a pro-active role in helping to determine the nature of skill formation that the nation will be needing" (Noyce, 1996, p.18). Engagement in the debate, however, dictates that Catholic schools look to the nature of their goals and purposes in order to remain an effective and authentic contemporary force in education as they seek to reimagine their very nature.

Pressures from Within the Educational World

From within the world of education also come voices that call for reexamination and reimagination of goals and purposes. The concept of "schools of the future" is gaining currency (Tickell, 1993, p.2) and others suggest that Catholic schools of the future might find their existence within the public rather than the private sector (Furtado, 1993).

Within the broad educational context there are calls for a radical reshaping of schools:

> The problems in education, we now realise, have no lasting or satisfactory solutions while schools operate out of the framework which has determined their *raison d'etre* for the past two hundred years. Education does not need fine-tuning, or more of the same; rather the fundamental assumptions about schools have to be revised (Beare & Slaughter, 1993, p.1).

Some of those "fundamental assumptions" concern the central pedagogical issue of the kinds of learning processes and outcomes formative of school practice. The longevity of information is no longer presumed: "The quest should not be to tie (the students) down with right answers, because today's right answers are likely to be off target tomorrow (Boomer in Parents and Teachers, 1998, p.9)*.

Just so, the kinds of skills being required of students in this new paradigm call upon "a kind of mental and categorical flexibility" (Boomer, 1998, p.10)*. Put more simply, this means they will need advanced skills in both problem posing and solving, research, team work, design, planning and communication (Boomer, 1998).

Challenges come, therefore, to existing ways of perceiving and organizing the basic elements of the practice of education. Timetabling, the architecture and structure of school buildings, the organization of the classroom itself, the content of curriculum and models of pedagogy are all subject to question and challenge (Ashenden, 1994; Chapman, 1992). Even the honoured and highly refined practice of the specification of vision statements is not immune from examination and dispute (Roff, 1996). In the spirit of the post-modern world, no icon is exempt from closer scrutiny.

At a radical level, even the fundamental coinage of education, namely knowledge itself and our collective ways of knowing are being revised "to present schemas for thinking which include but go beyond the limits of the framework of scientific materialism" (Beare & Slaughter, 1993, p.62) and which affect our collective ways of viewing reality: "Living systems are by their very nature neither subjects alone nor objects isolated, but both subjects and objects in a mutually communicating (and defining) universe of meaning" (O'Murchu, 1997a, p.33).

This revision of learning and of the nature of knowledge implies an even deeper question of the very nature of the post-modern learner and underlines the necessity of a holistic and integrated apprehension of the human person. The changing educational context of the Catholic school is demanding an anthropological reimagining as well.

2.6.5 Summary:

It may be seen that the world of education is undergoing challenges to both method and content, to both structure and assumption. The Catholic school principal as participant in the social educational undertaking is affected by, and seeks proactively to relate to, these developments and the others referred to above.

They call for sincere exploration. They also indicate, by their range and complexity, that Catholic education, both as part of the broader world of education and as Church institution, will need to reexamine goals and purposes. The results of that re-examination will lead to the conclusion that Catholic education, with many of its inherited meanings challenged or broken

123

down, has the possibility to stand on the verge of a new phase of existence, an existence reimagined in terms even of a new holistic anthropology.

If this is so, the way to that new phase of existence is through the process of reimagining in the reconstruction of meaning. This concept will now be examined.

2.7   THE PROCESS OF REIMAGINING

The Possible's slow fuse is lit
By the imagination.
                (Emily Dickinson, "The Gleam of an Heroic Act")

Reimagining the Church

The seminal ecclesiological work of Dulles in the decade following the
Second Vatican Council reawakened the Church to foundational avenues of
self-reflection and re-imagination based on the scriptures and tradition
(O'Sullivan, 1997).   In constructing several models of the Church, Dulles
(1974) highlighted the importance of the capacity to create new images in the
development of the Church's self-awareness.   He therefore described "the
contemporary crisis of faith (as) in a large part, a crisis of images" (p.19).
Dulles points to the power of the conscious self image to direct consequent
action and to form and instil consequent attitudes.   In the Church's
reawakening to ancient *modi vivendi* (e.g. church as sacrament, church as
servant), the long-term dominant institutional model (Arthur, 1995) is able to
be complemented.   Even relatively soon after the conclusion of the Council it
was observed that:

> the existing philosophic definition (of the church) with which most of us
> at one time were comfortable is simply inadequate.   It no longer
> expresses either the Church's understanding of itself as reflected in
> Vatican Council II or reflects the reality of the contemporary Church as
> we experience it (Pfeifer, 1997, p.12).

The challenge is thus issued for the Church to seek renewed self images
which reflect not only the reality of its existence but the desired states of being
to which it continuously aspires (Morwood, 1997).   It is the power of
imagination which allows for the formation of clear perceptions of these

125

desired states of being. The reflections of one commentator on the renewal of

Catholic schooling are helpful here:

> Where to begin was the question. Where do we set foot on the ladder? The answer that came to us as we began to ponder these things, and which we believe to have been providential, was that we should begin in the realm of imagination…We found ourselves saying that imagination is the locus of the spiritual, of transformation of conversion, of renewal. It is where the spirit of God fires us up, where the divine gives birth to new dreams. It is where we access the Kingdom. We told ourselves that we needed imagination to hear the voice that insists that we forever begin; we needed imagination in order to hope. (Prendegast, 2003, p.13)

In this context then, some discussion of the religious imagination is valuable.

2.7.1 The Religious Imagination:

The religious imagination may be described as that faculty, coupled with the

intellect, which allows for the development of new images or models which

articulate experience or which "reflect the reality … as we experience it"

(Greely, 1981, p.3). Thus:

> While the raw, elementary power of religion comes first through the imagination, it is the nature of human beings to reflect on their experience. Intellect examines experience, automatically and necessarily … Religious experience in creatures who are intellect as well as imagination inevitably leads to reflection, theology, philosophy and creed. This is precisely because humans must examine their experiences and the images which resonate these experiences. (Greely, 1981, p.3).

It is the same imaginative facility which is involved in the search for, and the

development of, what may be termed the "root metaphor" out of which

theology and social (ecclesial) analysis should grow. Thus:

> … behind both theology and social analysis there is something deeper. This is the root metaphor on which both draw … Our religious and social questions need to become radical - that is, to go to the root of our civilization. To go to the root means to go to the foundational metaphor out of which our civilization has been constructed.
> (Holland, 1983, p.170)

126

This present study involves an examination of the "root metaphor(s)" which give definition to the ecclesio-social construct within which the Catholic school exists and defines itself. Such an examination is, by definition, open to new understandings and images which capture those understandings (Morwood, 1997). In that way, new models of Church evolve. Thus, other self-concepts and contingent ways of acting become possible both for the Church and consequently for the Catholic school.

It is at this point that new conceptions or images give birth to new forms (Campbell, 1988) in what might be called "the moment of form-giving (which) is where our creative imagination gives shape to … the subject … New forms come into being because we take the risk of becoming artists, becoming creators, becoming teachers" (Harris, 1987, p.35). Alternatively, the process of re-imagining may be seen as "the conception moments in the birthing of new movements" (Brennan, 1995, p.3). Whilst it may be argued whether the act of reimagining is properly situated at the initiation (conception) or the actualisation (birthing) of new forms, it is arguable that the creative capacity of imagination is critical at several key points in the cycle of death and rebirth that is radical renewal. It will be seen below, in the context of a study of the phenomenon of change, that the capacity to reimagine is crucial to the generation of viable and authentically new forms of Catholic schooling. It has been argued that the power to reimagine is essential even to the identification of factors deleterious to renewal (Schreiter, 1997) as well as those which are positively essential to it. Imagination is crucial to the identification of possible barriers to change as well as to the construction of ways to proceed around those challenges.

127

2.7.2 The Dialectic of Imagination:

For present purposes, the imaginative process is described as:

> the forming of mental concepts of what is not actually present to the senses, the mental consideration of actions or events not yet in existence, and the conception of the absent as if it were present. In short, imagination is the creation of possible realities (Smith, 1990, p.45).

This "creation of possible realities" is not a singular and undivergent grasping of a single truth. The imaginative path to knowledge is well described by John Henry Cardinal Newman. In 1852, in *The Idea of a University* Newman wrote:

> We know, not by a direct and simple vision, not at a glance, but, as it were, by piecemeal and accumulation, by a mental process, by going round an object, by the comparison, the combination, the mutual correction, the continual adaptation, of many partial notions, by the employment, concentration, and joint action of many faculties and exercise of mind (Discourse VII, I).

Such is the circuitous and painstaking path of the imaginative reconstruction of meaning. Moreover, the power of the human imagination is particularly pertinent to this study which seeks to relate the emerging or evolving Church to the renewal of Catholic schooling because it may be argued that:

> … the task of "re-imaging" Catholic identity in the modern world requires a paradigm of education that takes seriously the particularity and distinctiveness of the Catholic tradition as a critical resource …"Catholicity" constitutes a unique religious horizon and manner of imaging reality that offers norms and principles which shape the processes through which the tradition itself is transmitted and transformed. This approach to Catholic education assumes a dialectical relationship between education and identity (Veverka, 1993, p.241).

The dialectic involves, on one hand, the "reconstruction of Catholic identity in the modern world" (Veverka, 1993, p.242) a mission to which the Church has been manifestly called and, on the other, "educational strategies … shaped by the particular identity we seek to nurture and sustain" (Veverka, 1993, p.242).

128

This latter grounding is in keeping with the assertion that the undertaking of theology (which, of necessity, lies at the heart of the reimagination of the Church and therefore of the Catholic school) is not entered upon "in general, but always and only under the impact of a given religious tradition" (McBrien, 1976, p.173).

The act of re-imagining, therefore, is undertaken in acknowledgement not only of the need for a sense of identity or continuity which provides the ground of authenticity (Sawicki, 1987); it also acknowledges the need for the capacity to see or envisage essentially or radically new or "refounded" (Arbuckle, 1993) forms, models or modes in which that authenticity may or should be enacted. Whilst identity precludes *anomie*, the visionary faculty enables radical renewal and, at the same time, allows for the creation of authentic yet diverse institutional forms in a state of "reconciled diversity" (Dulles, 1985, p.24).

2.7.3 Analogical and Dialectical Languages of Imagination:

For the creation of diverse institutional forms, the two forms of the imaginative capacity, namely the analogical and the dialectical, need to be exercised. The analogical imagination "relies on the language of 'analogy' or 'similarities-in-difference" (Veverka, 1993, p.251) and proceeds "by explicating the analogous relationships among various realities (self, others, world, God) by clarifying the relationship of each to the primary analogue" (Tracy, 1981, p.408). In the exercise of reimagining the Catholic school, this analogical capacity is clearly valuable. It encourages an inclusive view of human life.

In the broader Catholic perspective that all of life is essentially sacramental, that there is no thing, experience or moment which does not have the potential to draw the human being into the divine Mystery, the analogical imagination embraces the totality of life experience as the melieu of revelation. It also allows for the human experience of life in all its diversity to contribute to the reimagination of life, of our ways of being and of our consequent goals and purposes. It is a crucial ability in the undertaking of the reimagination of the Catholic school.

The Dialectical Imagination

The dialectical imagination on the other hand, encourages the critique of life experience to discern points and patterns of authenticity. (Diocese of Parramatta, 1996, p.8). Thus, whilst:

> the analogical or sacramental imagination assumes a stance (that) the scope of Catholic education is as broad as the scope of life itself and cannot be arbitrarily limited to experiences and insights of a particular culture, philosophical system, gender, race, or class, in appropriating the dialectical imagination, Catholic education has assumed greater responsibility for analysis and criticism of the cultural lenses which shape our understanding of Christian faith and practice. The mutually enriching and correcting perspectives of analogical and dialectical languages (point) to the hubris of a naïve intellectual positivism on the one hand and the despair of a corrosive scepticism on the other. (Veverka, 1993, p.253).

Such issues lie at the core of the work of the Catholic school and its reimagining because they embody a certain epistemological perspective. The reductionist definition that would equate intellectual or rational development with the acquisition of technical or instrumental forms of knowledge denies both the depth and scope of the search for human understanding offered to the Catholic school by the utilisation of the analogical and dialectical power of

130

imagination. This power is wedded to an epistemology, which perceives knowledge as: "a world of meaning, order of nature, physical process, pattern of events, organization of feelings … (a) labyrinth of reality through which and towards the understanding of which any particular discourse is a directing and guiding thread" (Walsh, as cited in Harris, 1987, p.31).

When the work of the Catholic school is open to reimagination, the totality of the world of learning and growth is also opened. The possibility of reimagining learning and the learner in holistic terms presents itself.

2.7.4 Summary:

The renewal and consequent ecclesial redirection that resulted from the Second Vatican Council (Lennan, 1995; Ludwig, 1996) in combination with the coincidental yet fundamental social and educational developments from the 1960s to the present (Dimmock & O'Donoghue, 1997) led to the breakdown of inherited meanings for the Catholic school (Arthur, 1995). These combined forces have also precipitated a radical reassessment or reconception (Bloom, 1998, p.xvii) of its foundational goals and purposes. Thus there is entered, a cycle of radical renewal. It is the hypothesis of this research project in addressing the two key research questions that the creative power of imagination (Kneipp, 1994) is crucial to the evolutionary reconstruction of meaning by principals (Brennan, 1995). More broadly, it is crucial for Catholic schooling and to its future direction and sense of purpose.

In the examination of this cycle of reconstruction of meaning through the power of imagination or what is called herein the "reimagination" of the Catholic school, it is appropriate to have examined the three salient groups of

factors which have led to the breakdown of inherited meaning for those schools. Thus, ecclesial, social and educational forces, which have had a decisive impact on the Catholic school in the last three decades, have been treated in some detail.

Using as a template, the Transformation Cycle of Beare and Slaughter (1993) this study will proceed to explore a process by which, through the application of the power of (re)imagination at crucial points, Catholic school principals may undertake a cycle of radical renewal of meaning and purpose. It will be seen that this is an appropriate and beneficial response to the opportunities afforded by the breakdown of inherited meanings for which the ecclesial, social and educational forces nominated above have been the catalyst. Some of these inherited meanings related to assumptions about the indissolubility of the relationship of the Catholic school to the Catholic Church (*Code of Canon Law*, 1983, Nos. 803, 806) especially as articulated through the structure of the local parish.

Other inherited meanings emanated for example, from assumptions concerning the place of undisputed clerical leadership over both parish and school (Campion, 1982) whilst yet others grew out of seemingly well founded assumptions about the regularity of religious practice in the families of children attending the Catholic school and hence about the religious context out of which students came.

Another set of inherited meanings which has manifestly already broken down as a result of developments in the staffing and administration of Catholic

schools since the Second Vatican Council is that related to the previously almost exclusive role of male and female religious within the schools (O'Farrell, 1977). These developments have taken place along with the concomitant emergence of an appreciation of the role and mission of the laity within the Church. What was seen as the province of teaching orders of religious is now almost universally that of lay men and women. The inherited meanings which were established on the basis of the presence of religious sisters and brothers in Catholic schools have been replaced by a set of newer meanings based on the premise of the valid and necessary role of the laity in the mission of the Church. This evolution of meaning typified by these changes and others in several of the Catholic school's inherited meanings will be the core interest of this study.

This review now moves to the placement of the template of the Transformation Cycle over this phenomenon of change in order to understand better the process of reimagining of purpose and nature of the contemporary Catholic school.

2.8 THE PROCESS OF REIMAGINING IN A MODEL OF CHANGE MANAGEMENT

The network of issues outlined above as well as other related pressures and influences upon principals leads from a consideration of the concept of reimagination to its application in the praxis of the changing Catholic school.

Reimagining, as it is applied here, is defined as the exercise of the creative capacity to envisage and design a radically new future for the life of an organization or for the individuals within it. When brought to bear in a process or cycle of institutional change, reimagining allows for such fundamental renewal that the institution may be transformed in profoundly new directions. It involves "scanning the imaginal horizons … catching glimpses of 'what can be' through the eyes of human aspiration" (D'Orsa & D'Orsa, 1997, p.72).

In this study, the reimaginative capacity has been embedded within a particular model of change management. This allows the energy of the creative power of the imagination to be harnessed within a particular structural setting and to be utilized at critical or key points in the change cycle (O'Sullivan, 1997). Marrying the creative power to reimagine with the conceptual discipline of the cycle of change management, affords the imaginative capacity a field on which to play out its creative dance. Furthermore, it injects the change process with the energy to generate radically new states of being rather than simply strengthening the determination to renew the status quo or to restore a former, halcyon way of life (Arbuckle, 1993; Brennan, 1995).

134

The concept is particularly applicable in situations where existing structures are confronted by the kinds of challenges and stresses that have been outlined above and which indicate the inadequacies or inappropriateness of current practices and institutions. Reimagining, therefore, "connotes … primarily a radical inventiveness directed at the causes of … pastoral problems" (Arbuckle, 1993, p.22). This is particularly challenging at a time when it has been proposed that "the human capacity for reflection, intuition and the development of the imagination is at an all-time low" (O'Murchu, 1997a, p.120).

Such radical redirection would appear appropriate if, within Catholic education there currently exists the possibility of moving into "a qualitatively new existence" (McDonald, 1993, p.18) and if further, "the future of the world and of its children depend on how well we can accommodate new ways of seeing in schools" (Beare & Slaughter, 1993, p.77). However, reimagining does not imply the rejection of history nor does it require the repudiation of an institution's tradition. Rather, the vital movement in the process of reimagining is to examine critically the status quo in the light of an appreciation of the circumstances and influences that brought it about. "Each new paradigm subsumes what preceded it … Schooling for the twenty first century will build on what we already know to be valid about learning" (Beare & Slaughter, 1993, p.73). It is an appreciation of the power of the tradition that allows the future to be transformed (Collins, 1997; Ludwig, 1996). The critique of dialectical imagination becomes especially crucial to the process. (Vererka, 1993)

135

Reimagining and the Implicate – Explicate Order

Further, reimagining may be seen to draw heavily on the theory of the implicate-explicate order (Bohm 1980; Bohm and Peat, 1988). According to this theory, "our primary reality is the unbroken wholeness, or implicate order … the source of all meaning" (O'Murchu, 1997a, p.57). (There is a parallel here with the Jungian concept of the collective unconscious.) By contrast "the explicate, unfolded order, which is visible and discernable, is the product of the former. The primary reality, therefore, is not the external, visible, sensory world, but the invisible enfolded realm of potential and possibility" (O'Murchu, 1997a, p.57).

The task of reimagining and its challenge, is to reach beyond the structure which exists at a given moment and to touch the "source of all meaning, the implicate order", upon which all visible structure depends for its validity and authenticity. Reimagining, as it is understood in this study, is the act of revisiting the well of essential meaning from which new forms may be drawn. Reimagining allows perennial, core values to be recast in faithful forms for the present and future:

> When we touch into archetypal meaning, we are dealing not merely with the past, but encountering an enduring will-to-meaning that draws on the past to impact upon the present and project us into an open-ended future (O'Murchu, 1997a, p.118).

The well of essential meaning from which new forms are drawn is the Kingdom of God, the concept inseparable from the mission of Jesus Christ. It is appropriate, however, at this point before exploring the concept of the Kingdom of God, to examine first, the place of the imaginative capacity within the cycle of change.

2.8.1 Reimagining Within a Process of Change:

As reimagining involves change, the process can evoke a level of fear and hence, resistance (Fullan, 1990). The inbuilt fear of the unknown inherent in any change is exacerbated by "the enticing certainties of the status quo." (Arbuckle, 1993, p.26). A process of change, especially one as radical and resounding as that which is involved in reimagining meaning structures, also typically incorporates a sense of loss and attendant grief for the participants (Bolman & Deal, 1991). Such a sense of grieving is accentuated by the experience of chaos that characterises fundamental change processes and the loss or deterioration of the familiar. Figure 2.9 outlines the typical stages in an experience of radical change and highlights the element of chaos that classically is integral to such a process, as the status quo and its attendant familiar comfort are relinquished (Arbuckle, 1993).

STAGE 1
Cultural concensus/
integration

STAGE 6
New cultural
concensus/
integration

STAGE 3
Political reactions

- Legal/structural
  changes
- Attitudes remain
  unchanged

STAGE 2
Initial unease /
stress

- Symbols/myths
  severely shaken
- Mixture of euphoria
  and unease as
  identity issues arise

STAGE 5
Self-help

STAGE 4
Chaos

- Culture/individual
  identity disintegration
- Grieving
- Loss of hope
- Anger/denial
- Individualism
- Faction
  feuding/labeling
- Orthodoxy witch
  hunting
- Fear of the unknown
  intensities

- 'Prophets' as
  leaders of
  revitalized or new
  movements/cults/
  sects/fads
- Types, e.g.,
  a) Escapist:
     fundamentalist/
     millenarian/
     nativistic or
     nostalgic;
     reactionist;
     anti-intellectual
  b) Conversionist:
     developmental/
     non-violent

Figure 2.9

Cultural Breakdown and Transformation

(Source: Arbuckle, 1993, p.94)

If Catholic schooling is to be reimagined within a cycle of change, the
significance of the intrinsic phases of chaos, turmoil and sense of loss in the
process cannot be underestimated (Brennan, 1995) nor their impact on the
individuals and sub-groups involved, undervalued:

> In the midst of chaos, people, as individuals and/or groups or cultures,
> grieve the loss of the familiar; they unsuccessfully stumble painfully
> and blindly to find reference points for a new identity or the restoration
> of the old. We popularly call the resulting personal and group upheaval
> "culture shock", yet the very naming of the "disease" can mock the

enormity of the human tragedy involved. Paradoxically, chaos (if rightly used) can be the catalyst for enormous personal and group growth. Chaos provides us with liminal space in which old familiar securities have gone and we can ask ourselves questions about the meaning of life and the authentic sources of human identity (Arbuckle, 1993, p.45).

Reimagining, because it involves a movement beyond the known to the unknown, is a journey undertaken in faith. It is, therefore, a journey that is necessarily made in uncertainty. Precise outcomes of the process cannot be predetermined for two key reasons. Firstly, because the journey typically is made through the experience of chaos and confusion, a multiplicity of variables can influence the direction that it takes. Chaos lends a sense of unpredictability to the experience. Secondly, since reimagining is, at its essence, a human endeavour rather than a mechanistic-structural process, the end point of the journey is not foreseeable. Rather, the pilgrimage toward truth and new understanding is undertaken not in certitude but with "a much more tentative fumbling, humble approach, trying to feel one's way through many partial notions" (Radcliffe, 1996, p.470).

The human element in the process of fundamental change, especially where the required fundamental change is related to core attitudes and assumptions (as it is in reimagining) necessitates a flexibility and pliability in the expectation of outcomes. However, the abandonment of the familiar is not entirely without promise of continuity. Here the memory, the retained heart of meaning, is the germ of the new, reimagined form which arises to take the place of the old. Yet this new form carries the unmistakable imprint of that essential retained meaning which gives both spirit and life to all authentic forms which spring from it. So, abandonment does not give rise to a vacuum: "It is a fullness

139

rather than emptiness, a subtle energy field, consisting of formative blueprints, which retain a memory of all past experiences and will govern patterns of future influence (O'Murchu, 1997a, p.70).

Further, since the journey is one "into the paschal mystery" (Arbuckle, 1993, p.148) it exacts a price in that it necessitates a relinquishing of established structures and comforting familiarities in order to make way for new forms and modes. In some cases, attachment to the established order can be such that its abandonment, with the accompanying emergence of a seemingly chaotic, uncertain state can be both institutionally and individually akin to a kind of death (O'Murchu, 1997a) giving rise to the observation that: "We are losing and will lose a lot. But in all this loss and dying, perhaps we are being led to a more genuine, real encounter with God. And maybe God is refashioning the church the way God wants it. (Anon. as cited in Brennan, 1995, p.6).

In the Christian scriptures, this para-mortal experience is expressed in terms of a self-emptying or *kenosis*:

> Though he was by nature divine,
> He did not cling to his equality with God
> But emptied himself
> And took on the nature of a servant …
> (Philippians 2:6,7)

The process of relinquishing old, existing forms can involve this level of abandonment to chaos or uncertainty (O'Murchu, 1997a). As alluded to above, one reaction to the foundational demands of the call to reimagination, may be termed "restorationism" (O'Sullivan, 1997, p.12). Restorationism may be seen as:

one of the culturally predictable, but theologically unacceptable, options in reaction to the chaos precipitated to a significant extent by the theological/cultural revolution of Vatican II. By *chaos* (is meant) the generally sudden cultural breakdown in which a people's network of meaning systems (symbols, myths and rituals) disintegrates. As a result of the insecurities and uncertainties evoked by the chaos, people feel numb, confused, angry and lost … Restorationists … fear the disorder or malaise of chaos because they cannot cope with the unpredictability and messiness that are the inevitable accompaniment to the anxiety-evoking new and bold pastoral endeavours. Order that is seen as synonymous with retreat from the world of change, they assert, must be immediately re-established and all must conform to it. Anyone daring to question this thrust only intensifies the Church's anxiety, so they must be marginalized as rapidly and as firmly as is possible! (Arbuckle, 1995, p.4)

One understanding that is shared by those who would restore and those who would reimagine, however, is that radical change involves the death of the familiar. The crucial issue is the nature of the response to that fact. The corollary of death in the Christian paradigm is resurrection. It is the faith of the reimagining leader that the letting go of the familiar, yet unproductive, whilst it may lead to chaos and death, will make way for the rebirth to a new existence of a radically transformed enterprise, giving new life to both the institution concerned and to the individuals who comprise it. In this way, reimagining is an entry into that death-to-new-life cycle which is the paschal mystery: "There could be no "newness" without a painful termination of the old. Such is the mysterious interplay of life and death, chance and necessity, rest and activity, emptiness and fullness (O'Murchu, 1997b, p.133).

This interplay of imagination and change can be posited and better understood within the paradigm of the transformation cycle.

141

2.8.2 Reimagining in the Transformation Cycle

The context into which the concept of reimagining may helpfully be embedded is the "transformation cycle" (Beare & Slaughter, 1993, p.136) which has been adopted in this study as a proposed conceptual model available to the Catholic school community and to the Church at large by which to approach and begin to understand the process of radical change urged by the factors outlined above. This model is chosen over alternative proposals for change negotiation such as the renewal or reconstruction models (Ludwig, 1996) or the redefinition model (Lennan, 1995) as neither is judged to allow for the possibility of radical newness resulting from the posing of foundational questions of purpose called for by social, ecclesial and educational contextual developments which the Catholic school has experienced. Reimagining within the change model used here bears strong resemblance to the refounding process (Arbuckle, 1993) in that it takes as its starting point, the breakdown of held meaning or the chaotic phase in the organisational renewal cycle (Arbuckle, 1993; Beare & Slaughter, 1993). The change or transformation cycle is included below as Figure 2.10
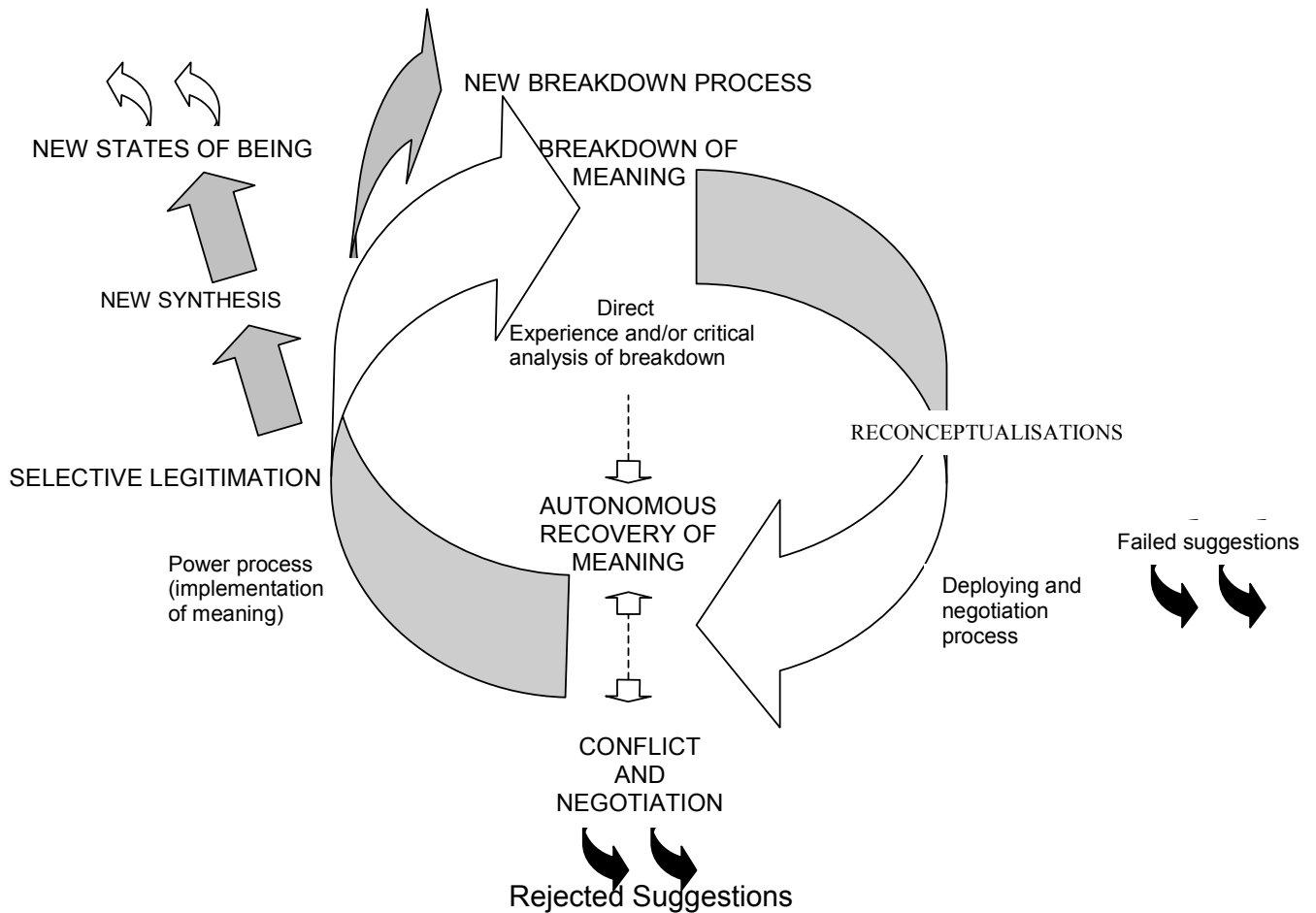
Figure 2.10

The Transformation Cycle

(Beare & Slaughter, 1993, p.136)

The Adapted Transformation Cycle

The Transformation Cycle has been adapted for the specific purposes of this study to form the theoretical platform upon which the creative activity of reimagining Catholic school may be initially examined. Significant modifications have been made to the original. Firstly, the cycle of transformation has been altered so that it begins with the receiving of

"inherited negotiated meanings" which are, in the course of events, subject to disintegration, thus giving rise to the cycle of transformation.

Secondly, the phase of "negotiation" arising out of conflict has been altered to that of "re-negotiation". Two major reasons for both of these adjustments can be advanced. Firstly, Catholic schooling in this country has already been through a period of negotiation or development of meaning in its establishing phase (say, the latter part of the nineteenth century) which gave it a set of inherited meanings which obtained until the last three decades and which have been subject to the destabilizing forces outlined above.

Secondly, "renegotiation" connotes the cyclic nature of radical renewal both in retrospect (given the present imperative to examine radically, inherited systemic meanings) and also in prospect, given that it cannot be assumed that a contemporary renegotiation will define a set of henceforth immutable characteristics and meanings. It signifies the need for "continual reformation" (Arbuckle, 1993, p.21) and so the formation of "new inheritance meanings" has been included in the adapted diagram as the cycle leads to "new states of being". These, presumably, will need themselves to be renegotiated at some time in the future under the influence of the creative potential of the human imagination as it responds to ever changing circumstances. In acknowledgement of the existentialist philosophical antecedents or, at least, connections, of such an understanding, the argument of Jean Paul Sartre or Albert Camus would hold that "we are always finishing ourselves" (Lee, 1995, p.45). Negotiation or renegotiation, furthermore, is understood to signify a phenomenon which is both dynamic rather than static and which is

fundamentally collaborative. As such, it does not necessarily lead to immediate resolution and is carefully structured to involve the various parties interested in the school's future e.g. parents, church authorities, staff and students as well as school leaders.

Figure 2.11 sets out the adapted transformation cycle which is crucial to the exercise of the imaginative intelligence.

NEW INHERITANCE OF
MEANINGS

NEW STATES OF BEING

Inherited
Negotiated
Meanings

BREAKDOWN OF
MEANING

RECONCEPTUALISATION PHASE
(Reframing)

SELECTIVE LEGITIMATION

Failed suggestions

CONFLICT
TO
RENEGOTIATION

Rejected Suggestions
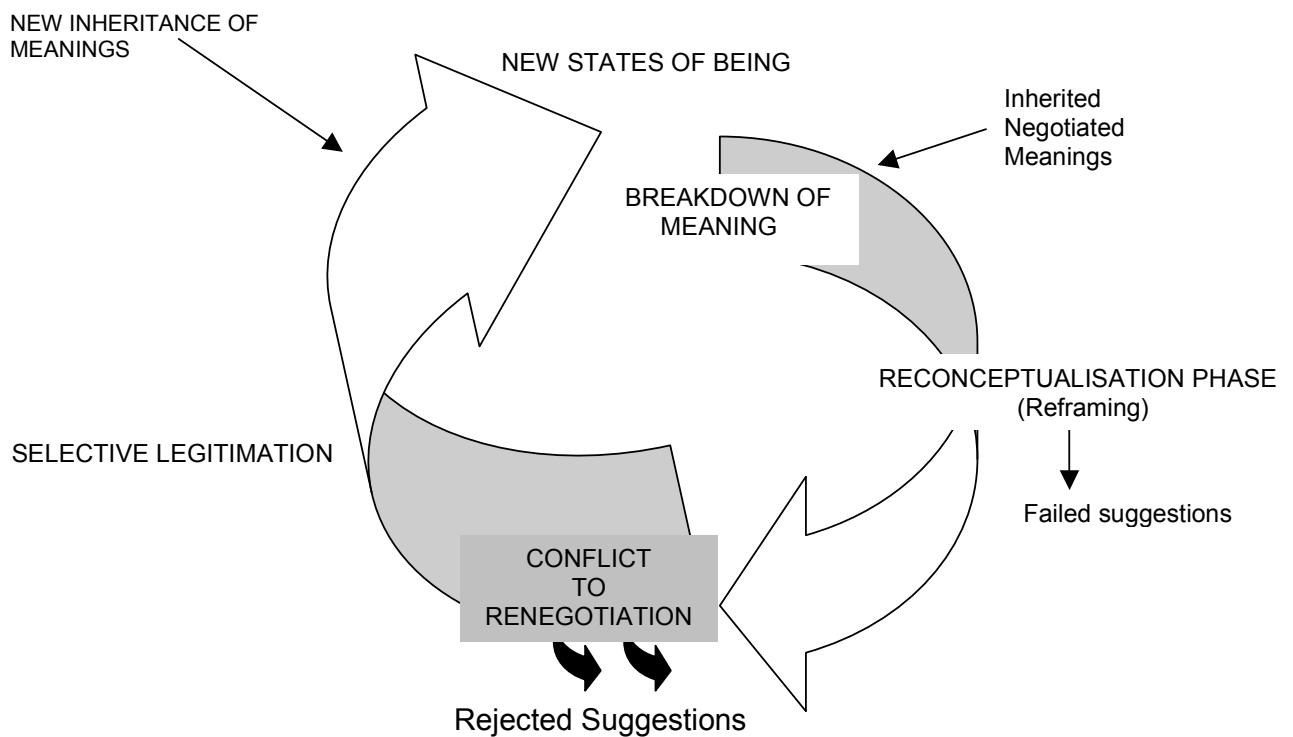
Figure 2.11

The Adapted Transformation Cycle

(based on Beare & Slaughter, 1993)

The cycle becomes operative at the time of the "breakdown of inherited meanings" (Beare & Slaughter, 1993, p.135) through challenges and altered contexts such as those surveyed above. Given the acknowledgement of that breakdown and the state of chaos which accompanies it, the way is made

145

clear for the development of "new choices and possibilities" (Beare & Slaughter 1993, p.135). This, in turn, leads to the second major stage of the process - reconceptualisations or the "evolving" (of) proposals, suggestions or practices which explicitly address the breakdown" (Beare & Slaughter, p.136).

The Transformation Cycle and Reframing

In this step of reconceptualisation, the transformation cycle resembles the creative exercise of "reframing" (Bolman & Deal, 1991). This latter concept involves the study of organizational issues and problems through the utilization of a set of new perspectives or frames. Such a change in perspective has the capacity to open new ways of perceiving and dealing with problems in organisations. Reframing offers the chance to discover radical ways of understanding organisational issues and hence, of finding solutions to problems or areas of failure within the organisation. Of the several "windows" or "frames" available, the symbolic is most helpful for present purposes and relates most closely to the paschal paradigm which lies at the heart of the transformation cycle. "The symbolic frame assumes that organisations are full of questions that cannot be answered, problems that cannot be solved and events that cannot be understood or managed" (Bolman & Deal, 1991, p.253). In that assumption lies the impetus to reconceptualisation given the acknowledgement that previous strategies or existing structures have manifestly failed to support or sustain inherited meaning.

In the process of reconceptualisation, some suggested solutions or proposed new structures will be rejected (Beare & Slaughter, 1993) for a variety of reasons. Yet, there typically remains a pool of alternative proposals which

146

need to be reviewed. "Since far more proposals are fielded than can ever be taken up, some kind of winnowing process is needed" (Beare & Slaughter, 1993, p.137). However this filtering or sorting does not proceed in an ideological or philosophical vacuum but in a field of reality:

> The sifting can of course be skewed by power politics, by lack of knowledge or by lack of appropriate forums in which they can be discussed. Conflicts occur because "the new" impacts upon "the old" … The crucial capacity here is to be able to move from a position of open conflict to one of negotiation, and that shift involves organization, support, commitment, a suitable arena and the equalisation of power relations (if only for the purposes of allowing discussion to proceed). To the extent that this occurs, there is a chance for innovations to be taken up and legitimated, the final stage of the cycle. (Beare & Slaughter, 1993, p.137).

It is the hypothesis of this study that the process of the transformation and reimagination of the Australian Catholic school in the practice of principals, precipitated by the breakdown of inherited meaning and by the external forces for change documented above, has reached the crucial phase of the re-negotiation of purpose, meaning and structure. The transformation cycle and its adaptations provide an initial conceptual structure through which to begin to examine this process. It is this phase of recognition (or reimagination), which, if properly undertaken, allows for new, viable and authentic forms of the Catholic school to emerge and to blossom to new states of being (see Figure 2.12). Selective legitimation (phase four) implies the application of intelligent, reflective and imaginative processes to the mandating and realizing of those reimagined forms which, from the field of possibilities, best express and exemplify the re-negotiated set of authentic and authenticated principles, characteristics and meanings for the contemporary Catholic school.

Imagination in the Transformation Cycle

In this way, the challenge to those who have the capacity and the responsibility to take part in the critical activity of reimagination of the Catholic school is brought into focus: "The key point is that those people who know that they stand at the centre of their own history as agents rather than as spectators are well placed to conceive of and imagine futures worth living in." (Beare & Slaughter, 1993, p.138)

The imaginative facility is crucial to the fruitful completion of the transformation cycle. Figure 2.12 depicts the key points at which the ability to reimagine the Catholic school plays a crucial role in the modified transformation cycle as described above.
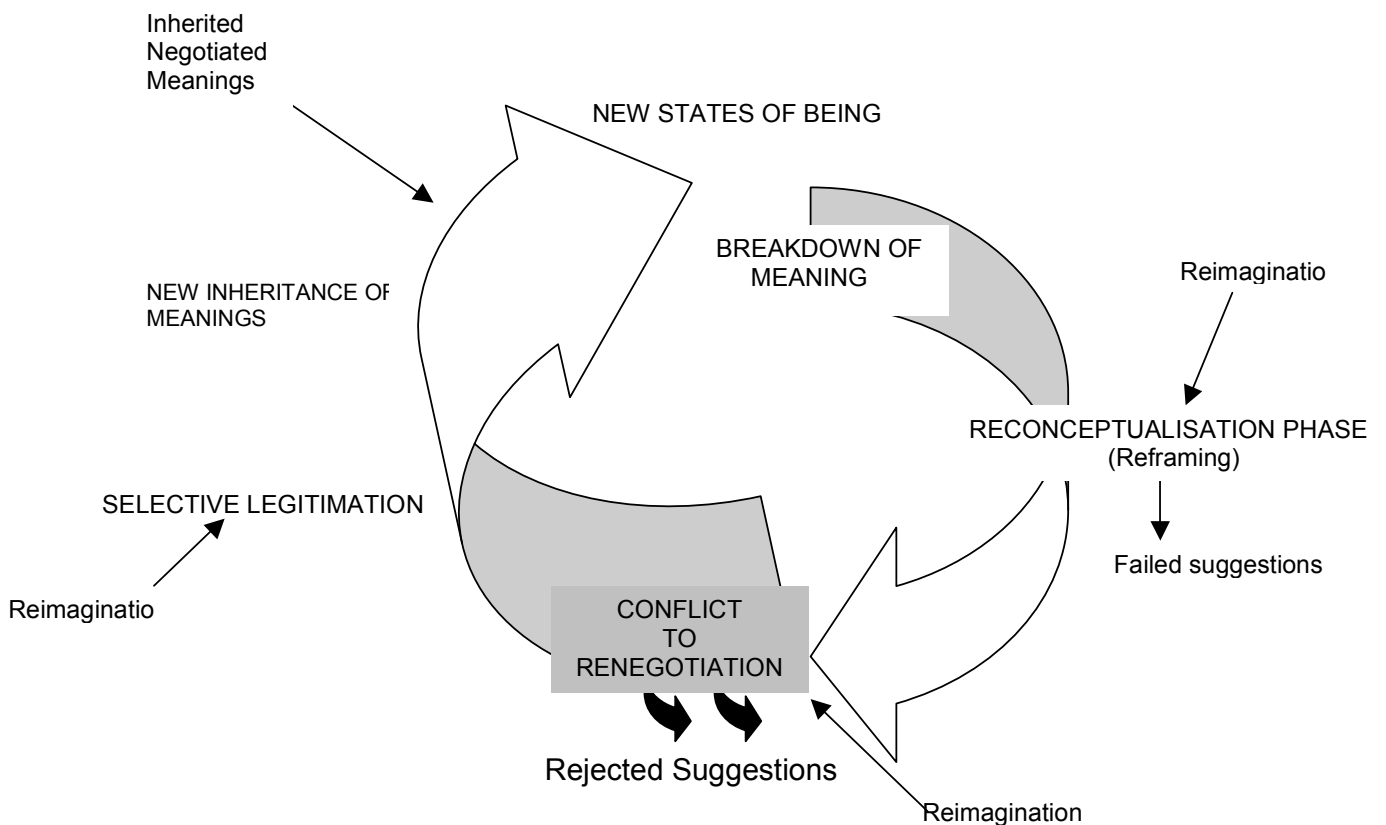
Figure 2.12

Imagination in the Transformation Cycle
(based on Beare & Slaughter, 1993)

148

The capacity to reimagine is engaged at several key points. At the phase of **reconceptualisation**, it is the imagination which allows the reframing process to take place so that a range of radically new proposals may be evolved to address the void created by the breakdown of inherited meaning. Thus the problem is "reframed". At the phase of **renegotiation**, imagination allows for those possible futures which have not been rejected earlier in the cycle to be debated or discussed with a view to the selection of those which might be taken further. The ability to imagine the consequences and benefits of proposed futures is critical to this renegotiation because it is at this point that the "old" is confronted by the "new" and it is here that the decision is made either to move further through the transformation cycle towards a viable, radically new imagined future or to return to the security of the past.

Selected legitimation is also critical to the successful completion of the transformation cycle. It is at this point that decisions are made concerning the future(s) to be implemented. Crucial to this process is the ability to imagine in some practical detail, the shape of those future forms which have been accepted as possible. Judgements are made at this point as to which of those new imagined futures are to be legitimated or indeed as to which one single future direction will be pursued. The implications of courses of action need to be imagined realistically and in some detail for these pivotal decisions to be made with the best possible hope of success and of authenticity. It is from these decisions that **new inheritance meanings** are formed. Thus, the principles, ideals, aspirations and symbols of the next generation of the organization are given birth in **new states of being** which, at some time in the future, will be, or may be, themselves the subject of a new cycle of radical

149

renewal. It is not suggested that principals, in the process of reimagining their Catholic schools, employ the Transformation Cycle as a kind of map or lock-step guide. The cycle rather provides a template over the praxis of radically reviewing the set of meanings that shape the perceived goals and purposes out of which principals act. It describes the general direction of, rather than directing the process of, reimagination.

It can be seen that, throughout the transformation cycle, but especially at the phase of selectively legitimising those forms which will constitute the future, foundational criteria will be needed to guide the creative exercise of the imagination to ensure authenticity. The ability to construct a future in the imagination is thus exercised in the light of those essential criteria or principles. The source of those indispensable principles is to be found in the concept of the Kingdom of God as "it is the concept of Kingdom that gives a clue to what transformation is about" (McLaughlin, 1997, p.16). Hence, this study will now proceed to a further examination of that foundational entity of the Kingdom of God.

2.9   THE CONCEPT OF THE KINGDOM OF GOD IN THE TRANSFORMATION CYCLE

Having surveyed the role of the imagination in the prosecution of the transformation cycle, it is necessary to comment upon the integral role of the concept of the Kingdom (or Reign) of God in giving direction to the exercise of the power of the human imagination within that cycle (Lee, 1995). For the Catholic school, transformation wrought by the capacity of the creative imagination is inseparable from the ground of the Kingdom of God:

150

> The Kingdom that Jesus proclaimed is essentially about *transformation*: a new world order characterised by creative relationships of justice, love and peace…God in Jesus has irrevocably entered our history, turned its power structures upside down by declaring the powerless and marginalised blessed, and by dissolving himself into human and earthly history particularly in his death and resurrection. The challenge for us is to accept full responsibility for the process of transformation, initiated in and through Jesus, and commit ourselves to its unfolding by building up a world order marked by right relationships of justice, love and peace. (O'Murchu, 1992, p.118).

The Kingdom of God and the Reimagining of the Catholic School

The advancement of the Kingdom of God is inseparable from the work of the Catholic school. Indeed, the two are inextricably linked. Given that "Christ is the foundation of the whole educational enterprise in a Catholic school" (*The Catholic School*, 1977, no.34) and that "the reign or Kingdom of God is the concept that is central to the mission of Jesus" (Australian Catholic Bishops' Conference, 1992, p.7) the Catholic school seeking to act with authenticity has no choice but to direct all its actions, decisions, planning, all its imagining of the future, to the further unfolding of the Kingdom of God in its midst. Moreover, the reimagining of the Catholic school in the light of the Kingdom is concerned with fundamental, radical renewal:

> The call of God's reign is an invitation to radical conversion so that, imitating the love and justice of God, our attitude to God and to power, prestige and possessions is changed, and Jesus' promise to bring the fullness of life is fulfilled (Jn. 10:10) (Australian Catholic Bishops' Conference, 1992, p.7).

Hence, the reimagining of the Catholic school as it undertakes the arduous journey of radical transformation is given form and direction by the imperatives of the essential mission of Jesus which was the realisation of the Reign of God (Boucher, 1981; Lee, 1995; Lonsdale, 1992). This has found typical

151

expression in the statement of the mission of Catholic schools in one diocese in Australia:

> The mission of the Catholic School in the Diocese of Parramatta is to be a centre of learning and a centre of evangelization. In seeking to carry out this mission, the Catholic School builds a community which is evidence of the Kingdom of God in our world. (Diocese of Parramatta, 1996, p.3).

The Kingdom as a Counter-Cultural Sign

This missionary statement captures the communal reality of the Kingdom which is at once present but also, yet to be realized. The Kingdom of God does have an eschatological dimension (McBrien, 1981). Belief in the future coming to be of the Kingdom (the *malkuth Yahweh* of 1 Chron. 28:5) included the hope of the universal reign of God for the Hebrew people (Perrin & Duling, 1982). Nevertheless, this terminal reality is anticipated in the "breaking in" of the Kingdom in the present (Edwards, 1987, p.71). Thus is introduced the idea of the Catholic school as a vital, effective sign or sacrament of the Kingdom in the present day.

Like the Church which sponsors it, the Catholic school is called "to be a positive, contemporary sign of Kingdom values and a counter-sign to materialism and injustice in Australian politics and culture" (Edwards, 1987, p.55). This is because "God's Reign is an alternative dimension to life, or an alternative to the mundane, status quo, obsessive-compulsive, non-reflective culture that we move through daily" (Brennan, 1995, p.7). Further, the Catholic school's ministry in "put(ing) intelligence and care into the service of divine love, and into the remaking of this world, are elements in the building up of God's Kingdom" (Lawler, Wuerl & Lawler (Eds), 1976, p.235). However,

the counter-cultural or prophetic ministry of the Catholic school towards the remaking of this world and the furthering of the Reign of God is as much a challenge to those who would proclaim as it is to those to whom it is proclaimed for:

> The Kingdom of the beatitudes is grounded in poverty, sorrow, misunderstandings, and loneliness from fighting for justice issues, and disarming simplicity or transparency called purity of heart. The happiness or blessedness of the Kingdom people is immersed in the human struggle. (Geaney, 1983, p.18).

Reimagination within the Paschal Paradigm of Death to Life

For an organization or for an individual to begin the passage of reimagination is to undergo a transformation akin to death which is experienced through chaos, through loss of the familiar, through a sense of darkness and uncertainty and a loss of identity which generates a fear of the unknown future because "the basic story at the center *[sic]* of Christianity is not about symmetries, but about mistaken identities, betrayal, reversal, and a resurrection that is not restoration but that takes the crucified Jesus to a new place". (Schreiter, 1997, p.93).

Reimagination is the paschal experience of losing what one values, or in a sense, of losing one's life. The enigma of the gospel call is that it is those who relinquish life who gain it (cf Mt. 10:39):

> To lose one's life is to let go of it, to be detached from it and therefore to be willing to die. The paradox is that the man (sic) (or organization) who fears death is already dead, whereas the man (or organization) who has ceased to fear death has at that moment begun to live. A life that is genuine and worthwhile is only possible once one is willing to die. (Nolan, 1976, p.113).

153

It is on the arduous path of reimagining and enacting the fruits of that reimagining that the service of the Kingdom of God is found. It is this service which is the defining mission of the Catholic school just as it is the defining mission of the Catholic Church (O'Murchu, 1997a) since "the church is not an end unto itself. The church is a servant to a reality greater than itself - God's Kingdom, God's Reign" (Brennan, 1995, p.6). The centrality of the Kingdom in the mission of the Church is a direct parallel of the centrality of the Kingdom in the mission and ministry of Jesus:

> The mission of Jesus was to announce and to demonstrate God's Reign. That mission now has a church as its deacon, as its servant. We always need to keep in mind the instrumentality of the church. (Brennan, 1995, p.9).

Hence, it is vital not to succumb to "the temptation to equate the church with the Kingdom" (O'Sullivan, 1997, p.34). It follows that the mission and ministry of the Catholic school too, is grounded in the Kingdom of God. It is this concept which gives shape and direction to the reimagining of the Catholic school and which keeps that reimagining faithful to the spirit of the gospel. The indispensability of the idea of the Kingdom of God to the transformation of the Catholic school wrought by reimagining, is underlined by the fact that unless the Kingdom's message is proclaimed and its values implemented, however imperfectly, "both within its mission and within its own structures, Catholic education has little purpose" (Cappo, 1996, p.13).

2.10   SUMMARY

The literature reviewed in this research project can be synthesised under the broad structure outlined in Figure 2.1 (p20). In the foregoing it has been seen that Catholic schools entered the transformative decade of the 1960s with a set of well established goals and purposes based upon a structure of inherited

154

meanings. It has been seen further that ecclesial, social and educational forces and stresses acted to break down those inherited meanings, thus precipitating a cycle of transformation which offers the possibility of the creation of new meaning structures based upon the new contexts of the Catholic school. Principals are critical to that process.

Ecclesial Factors

The altered contexts have been brought about by circumstances within the Church as well as without it. Internally, proactive theological exploration largely galvanised by the Second Vatican Council has opened up new avenues of self-expression and understanding for the Church or has renewed ancient ones. Further, the awakened sense of the role of the laity within the Church and its particular expression in Catholic education, has brought fundamental changes to the meaning structure of the Catholic school. Moreover, the reality of diminishing numbers of clergy, in whom almost exclusive authority had been vested, has witnessed devolution in management and leadership roles to lay people, especially in the case of systemic schooling. A decline in the expressed affiliation of Catholic families with local parishes and, hence, in many cases, of allegiance to parish clerical authorities, has further altered the meaning structure of the Catholic school. Principals who provide the leadership of the school have become more significant for its population than parochial authorities in some cases.

Social and Educational Factors

The changing social context of the Catholic school brings stresses to bear on the inherited meanings of the Catholic school too, exposing it to shifting global

155

as well as local cultural forces. Merging with this is the changing educational environment of the Catholic school bringing with it an exposure to market forces in a consumerist milieu, questioning inherited meanings as they are expressed in enrolment practices and policies for the school.

All of the circumstances outlined above illustrate the process of the breakdown of inherited meanings for the Catholic school as shown in Figure 2.1 and point to the cycle of transformation which is thereby initiated. It is in this cycle that the imaginative capacity is crucial to the future of Catholic schooling. Further, it is in the light of the central idea of the Kingdom of God that the imagination can effectively bring authentic transformation. This project now moves to consideration of its research elements. Chapter Three will consider the methodology and design of that research.

CHAPTER THREE

DESIGN OF THE RESEARCH

3.1   INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this chapter is to outline and justify the research design which
guides this research project. The theoretical orientation as well as the
technical process of data gathering and analysis will be canvassed. Details of
data gathering instruments will be included as well as an overview of the
research project and its execution.

The purpose of this research project is to study evolving understandings,
particularly those of serving Catholic school principals, of the purpose and
goals of the contemporary Catholic school. Two key research questions focus
the research. They are:

- How do practising principals currently perceive the purpose of
  Catholic schools?

- How do they perceive Catholic schools changing?

Whilst it remains true that:

> selection of any one paradigm must be based on its 'goodness of fit' or
> appropriateness to the subject of the inquiry…the question: 'Which
> problems is it more significant to have solved?' must act as a guide to
> the choice of research approach.
> (Candy, 1989, p.10).

In summary, in acceptance of the immediate limitations (as well as
advantages) inherent in the adoption of any research approach, it is
understood that "no one methodology can answer all questions and provide
insights on all issues" (Rist, 1977, p.42). It is helpful to recall that "research is
a creative activity and every inquiry has its own unique character; it is also a

systematic activity and so the idea that it goes through stages… is important". (Bassey, 1999, p.65)

Even given the generic choice of an interpretive approach to research, caution is to be exercised lest the researcher feel compelled to "incorporate all the features of qualitative research in any one research project" (Jacob, 1988, p.23) or to deny the contributory value of positivist procedures to the project (Parlett & Hamilton, 1976). Indeed "one consistent theme (in) research methodology literature is that neither qualitative research nor quantitative research is clearly better than the other; … they are complimentary " (Parry, 1996, p.10). Hence the adoption of an interpretive orientation in this research project is founded on the belief that in such an approach to comprehending human phenomena, a cycle emerges which is:

> a very general mode of the development of all human knowledge, namely…development through dialectic procedures (so that) the knowledge of the whole is continuously corrected and deepened by the increase in our knowledge of the components. (Kocklemans, 1975, p.85).

It is also predicated upon the premise that in the complex world of social human interaction, comprehensive understanding of a phenomenon is possible only by taking into account multiple possibilities of meaning and by acknowledging the complexity of the interactions therein (Zohar & Marshall, 1994). The research at hand is, furthermore, "concerned with some fundamental questions about the nature of human beings, the nature of the environment, and the interaction between the two" (Munhall, 1989, p.21). Consequently, it is concerned with the nature of the knowledge or understanding individuals and groups construct from that interaction (Crotty,

1998). The research, then, is predicated upon a constructionist epistemology with its own theoretical and practical consequences. These are outlined in Table 3.1 below along with an index to the sections of this chapter in which they will be discussed.

Table 3.1

Research Framework

3.2	Epistemology	Constructionism
3.3	Theoretical Perspective	Interpretivism • Symbolislic Interactionism
3.4	Research Methodology	Case Study
3.5	Data Collection Methods	Questionnaires Semi-structured Interviews Focus Groups Participant Observation

3.2   EPISTEMOLOGY: CONSTRUCTIONISM

The adoption of a particular epistemology by a researcher is related to that researcher's view on what constitutes valuable knowledge and, indeed, on the very nature of reality (Glesne, 1999). Epistemology provides a basis for decisions about "how" and "what" the researcher can know and is closely linked to the researcher's own worldview since "… people tend to adhere to the methodology that is most consonant with their socialised worldview … we are attracted to and shape research problems that match our personal view of seeing and understanding the world." (Glesne, 1999, p.8)

159

The epistemological stance adopted in this research project is referred to variously as constructionism or constructivism (Crotty, 1998). The foundational premise of constructionism is the belief that human beings construct meaning and knowledge as they engage with the world which they are interpreting (Crotty, 1998; Peters, 2000).   The adoption of an epistemology of constructionism enables understanding of the participants' reality as it is experienced, socially constructed and interpreted by them (Sarantakos, 1998) Therefore, constructionist research seeks to understand those meanings or constructions of reality (Holloway, 1999) held severally and collectively by the participants whilst allowing for the emergence of new or more sophisticated meanings or understandings in time (Guba & Lincoln, 1994). Constructionism, therefore, also allows for the co-existence of multiple meanings (Crotty, 1998). That multiplicity of meaning became evident in the course of this research. It is further acknowledged that engagement with the research project over time may itself exert an influence on the participants' constructions of meaning. From an ontological perspective, constructionism's "relativism … assumes multiple, apprehendable, and somewhat conflicting social realities that are the products of human intellects, but that may change as their constructors become more informed and sophisticated" (Guba & Lincoln, 1994, p.111).

Given that the core focus of this study is the process of meaning reconstruction by principals of Catholic schools, the epistemological premise of constructionism is appropriate. This is especially so, given the view that:

> Our knowledge is both socially and personally constructed; our representations inevitably incomplete; … (that) research has the power to stimulate thinking as much as express conclusions; and … (that) research … can provoke us to think differently. (Simons, 1996, p.232)

160

A study focused on the reconstruction of meaning amongst practising principals is generally and comfortably suited to such a constructionist view of the nature of the reality that is thus known (ontology). Constructionism holds that

> Social life is based on social interactions and socially constructed meaning systems. People possess an internally experienced sense of reality. This subjective sense of reality is crucial to grasp human social life … Ordinary people are engaged in a process of creating flexible systems of meaning … they then use such meanings to interpret their lives … The patterns (of human behaviour) are created out of evolving meaning systems … that people generate as they socially interact.
>
> (Neuman, 2000, p.72)

It is the evolving and reimagined meaning systems that principals have been instrumental in developing within the social systems of Catholic schools that are the subject of this study. Constructionism then, constitutes an appropriate epistemological foundation for this research.

3.3 THEORETICAL PRESPECTIVE: INTERPRETIVISM

A theoretical perspective "provides a logical basis for the processes involved with the research; it structures the research design; it gives direction to the data to be collected; and it provides a basis on which analysis of the data findings can proceed" (Beattie, 2000, p.75). For the purposes of this research, interpretivism is chosen as the theoretical perspective. The interpretative approach (Sarantakos, 1998) seeks to uncover and elucidate the meanings of social phenomena particularly as those meanings are held by those "inside" the experience of those phenomena:

In human science…the interpretative approach places a priority on searching for, uncovering, interpreting and illuminating the meanings of what is happening, being done, being understood or being interpreted by the participants in the…activities under scrutiny. (Harney, 1997, p.168)

Therefore, interpretative social research sets out to:

1. identify subjective meaning (definitions, interpretations, judgements);

2. provide descriptions and analyses of these with a view to providing explanations of them; and

3. make these intelligible and accessible through interpretative accounts. (Leininger, 1985)

The interpretivist approach to research accepts that people may act on beliefs that can be incorrect, irrational or only partly articulated (Tusen, 1988). Such an acceptance substantiates the need to consider the subjectivity of participants' held meanings and understandings (Sarantakos, 1998; Harney, 1997) whilst acknowledging the power of those "flawed" understandings in directing action and shaping motivation (Charon, 1998). Hence, "the key philosophical assumption upon which all types of qualitative research are based is the view that reality is constructed by individuals interacting with their social worlds" (Merriam, 1998, p.6) or by a "conceptual framework which emphasises that perspectives are really interrelated sets of words used to order physical reality…Human beings always see reality through perspectives" (Charon, 1998, p.3).

In summary, the fundamental point at issue in consideration of the selection of a research pathway is the researcher's definition of "reality". The following comment on the use of interpretivist methodologies is relevant:

162

Traditional research is based on the assumption that there is a single, objective reality - the world out there - that we can observe, know and measure…From a research perspective, this worldview holds the nature of reality to be constant. Confirmation of what is out there is desired; research is focused on outcomes; reliability of measurement is stressed. In contrast, qualitative research assumes that there are multiple realities - that the world is not an objective thing out there but a function of personal interaction and perception. It is a highly subjective phenomenon in need of interpreting rather than measuring. (Merriam, 1988, p.17)

Closely linked to the definition of "reality" is the layer of meaning that is placed over that perceived reality. Of particular pertinence to this study of the process of meaning reconstruction in contemporary Catholic schools is the interpretivist view that:

(human) actions cannot be observed in the same way as natural objects. They can only be interpreted by reference to the actor's motives, intentions or purposes in performing the action. To identify these motives and intentions correctly is to grasp the "subjective meaning" the action has to the actor. (Carr & Kemmis, 1983, p.88)

Hence, the interpretivist approach to research would assume *inter alia* firstly, that in the study of any human phenomenon, the consideration of multiple, interactive factors, events and processes is vital (Glesne, 1999) and secondly, that the propensity of human participants to "construe, or make sense of, events based on their individual systems of meaning" (Candy, 1989, p.4) influences the kinds of findings for which the researcher may search. Amongst Catholic school principals engaged severally and collectively in the reconstruction of institutional meaning, the issue of the construction, interpretation and implementation of "systems of meaning" is of the essence (Munhall & Oiler, 1986).

At the heart of the interpretivist perspective is an understanding of the importance of the interaction not only between actors within a social context but also between those actors, as individuals and as community, with that context itself (Burgess, 1985). "Qualitative researchers are interested in understanding the meaning people have constructed, that is, how they make sense of their world and the experiences they have in the world" (Merriam, 1998, p6). Therefore, interpretivist research "implies a direct concern with experience as it is 'lived' or 'felt' or 'undergone'" (Sherman & Webb, 1988, p.7). Human meaning construction which is the central concern in this research is, in other words, inextricably bound up with context and with the environment in which it is lived (Smith & Heshusius, 1986). Hence, an interpretivist research approach looks beyond and through the perceptions which individuals have of a certain context to an understanding and acknowledgment of that context. It is appropriate, therefore, for this research to proceed in an interpretivist mode since the research questions outlined above are directly and necessarily concerned with meaning which principals ascribe to their experience of leading contemporary Catholic schools in the light of that experience as it is "lived, felt or undergone".

Culture as the Context for Interpretations

Hence, the concept of "culture" as context for interpretation becomes significant. "While *culture* has been variously defined, it essentially refers to the beliefs, values, and attitudes that structure the behaviour patterns of a specific group of people" (Merriam, 1998, p.13).

The context of the reconstruction of meaning for the principal of a Catholic school is its culture. Hence, the reimagining of the Catholic school is, perforce, a cultural undertaking:

> To say something is cultural is - at a minimum - to say that it is shared by a significant number of members of a social group; shared in the sense of being behaviorally enacted, physically possessed or internally thought. Further, this something must be recognised in some special way and at least some others are expected to know about it; that is it must be intersubjectively shared. Finally for something to be cultural it must have the potential of being passed on to new group members, to exist with some permanency through time and across space.
>
> (D'Andrede, 1992, p.230).

This is not to claim that the individual is a passive object, shaped involuntarily by cultural or environmental factors. Rather, it is to acknowledge that the formation of contextual meaning is an interactive process because "human interaction is not a neutral mechanism that operates at the instigation of external forces but rather, a formative one in its own right" (Woods, 1992, p.342). These considerations are vital for this present research project given that the principal of the contemporary Catholic school functions within a contextual network of ecclesial, social and educational factors and that it is firmly and clearly within that network that the task of reimagination is undertaken. It is a core tenet of the interpretivist (in common with the critical) approach that such a reimaginative task "may be frustrated by social rules, by constitutive meanings of the social order and by 'the habitual sediment of the past', and (that) the core project of uncovering such constraints through research is one of human liberation and emancipation" (Candy, 1989, p.7). Much of this study focuses on the crucial role of contextual factors in the reconstruction of meaning amidst socio-cultural mores, various layers of

165

constitutive meanings and residual meanings and expectations built more or less validly out of the remembered experience of the past (Crotty, 1998, p.67).

In summary, interpretivism is concerned with understandings of multiple and complex meanings of social phenomena (or *verstehen*, after Weber, 1864-1920). It may be described as:

> the systematic analysis of socially meaningful action through the direct observation of people in natural settings in order to arrive at understandings and interpretations of how people create and maintain their social worlds. (Neuman, 2000, p.66)

Given this description, interpretivism constitutes a suitable theoretical perspective for this study. It is possible now to consider the methodological paradigm to be employed within this research.

Symbolic Interactionism

The research orientation that frames the research design is symbolic interactionism:

> For qualitative research, symbolic interactionism is a diversified and enriching matrix. Several streams have flowed from its headwaters… Whatever the stream, the theoretical perspective of symbolic interactionism has clearly proved useful in identifying research questions and framing research processes for several generations of researchers. (Crotty, 1998, p.78)

As its nomenclature implies, it is symbolic in the value it places upon linguistic and other instrumental symbols in communication and interactionist because of the complex network of relationships within which that communication takes place. This network includes the role of the researcher (Crotty, 1998). In the precise context of this study of the role of the principal in the process of

166

change as defined above, it is a helpful methodology given that "patterns which exhibited the interaction between the creativity of the principals as agents and the structure within which they operated could, if they existed, be identified. (Dimmock & O'Donaghue, 1997, p.46)

As a research orientation, symbolic interactionism places stress upon an understanding of social interaction as an "exchange of gestures" which involves the use of symbols (Mead, 1962; Taylor & Bogdan, 1998; Schwandt, 1994) and can generally be described as the study of the self-society relationship conceived as a process of symbolic communication between social actors (Patton, 1990; Sarantakos, 1998). Further, in the employment of such a perspective, "one of the first requirements…is to understand the symbolic meanings that emerge in interactions and are attributed to situations over time. This means learning the language of the participants, with all its nuances and perhaps special vocabulary" (Woods, 1992, p.355). This is based upon the premise that "symbolic interactionists assume that meanings arise through social interaction" (Jacob, 1988, p.19; Chalmers, 1998). The researcher's experience of Catholic school leadership and collegiality with the participants in the research will attend to this requirement of familiarity. Furthermore, it is understood that the researcher is part of the casual network of human interaction (Mollison, 1990) which leads to sometimes unpredictable outcomes in the research undertaking (Neale & Liebert, 1986).

However, it is also appreciated that "the researcher must try to maintain a delicate balance between achieving as complete an understanding of insiders' perspectives as possible and sociological distance, thus permitting rigorous

analysis of them" (Woods, 1992, p.355). "Further, in the midst of multiple emerging and crystallising perceptions, the need arises for the researcher to check his or her understanding with those of the participants" (Minichiello, Aroni, Timewell & Alexander, 1990, p.124).

Three chief principles of symbolic interaction have been identified and can largely be attributed to the work of Henry Blumer (Crotty, 1998, p.72). These principles follow:

1. Human beings do not simply respond to stimuli or act out cultural scripts. Rather, they act towards things on the basis of the meanings that things have for them… Thus people are…volitional, not mere responding organisms but rather acting organisms who have to cope with and handle factors, and in so doing have to forge and direct their line of action; meanings determine action. (Dimmock & O'Donoghue, 1997, p.25)

This principle applies directly to the core undertaking of this research which seeks to plumb the action-directing meanings which principals bring to their leadership of Catholic schools. It is also predicated upon the belief that principals are indeed "volitional" in that their leadership is actively, rather than passively, responsive to the stimuli of dramatically changing contexts.

2. …for the symbolic interactionist, the meaning each thing, whether it is abstract or concrete, has…is not fixed. Rather, it is constantly adjusted by new information of all kinds. This new meaning has its effect on human acts. Thus, meaning is acquired from one's experience of the world and because one is in constant engagement with the world that meaning may constantly be modified, if not completely changed. (Dimmock & O'Donoghue, 1997, p26).

The evolving contexts of the Catholic school and hence of its leadership, concern the very process of the reformulation of meaning through continuous engagement with the world. The perspective of symbolic interactionism would appear to be well suited therefore, to the current research which seeks to understand the reconstruction of meaning for the Catholic school in the cycle of change.

3.	The interpretative process of meaning construction is twofold. First, one points out to oneself the things that have meaning. Interpretation then becomes a matter of handling meanings. One selects, checks, suspends, regroups and transforms the meaning in the light of the situation in which one is placed. (Dimmock & O'Donoghue, 1997, p.26)

The current research seeks to explore the process by which Catholic school principals select, check and transform meaning in their leadership situations as "a moving process" (Jacob, 1988, p19) yet one which is deliberative and conscious: "…if human behaviour is to be effectively understood, it must be recognised as intentional and is actually what the people believe themselves to be doing." (Harney, 1997, p.167)

Thus, one of the theoretical assumptions the research makes is that "life is regarded as an ever-changing relativistic perspective. In other words, human beings experience the world through their definitions of it" (Dimmock & O'Donoghue, 1997, p.29). In summary, the present research assumes that knowledge is socially constructed and that the meaning derived from that knowledge may be subjective, situational, multiple, diverse and not universal.

The involvement of a number of principals in the sample for the study underlines the social nature of the formation of meaning. It is accepted that through the process of social refinement of understanding (symbolic interaction), "the individual learns an enormous number of meanings and values and, thus, actions through the communication of symbols with others" (Woods, 1992, p.346). Further, the process of the present research chiefly through questionnaire, semi-structured interviews and focus groups, encourages the personal reflective journey that is necessary to the transition from the "I" of individual, creative, expressive initiative to the "me" of the deliberative, authentic, socially valued action (Woods, 1992).

169

Within the methodological family of symbolic interactionism, the research approach of case study will be utilised in this project. This approach will now be explored.

3.4 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY: CASE STUDY

A number of methodological approaches sit within the interpretivist perspective. Case study is one research approach which arises from the holistic interpretivist tradition of research (Beattie, 2001).   Case study has been described as being particularly appropriate for an individual researcher on the grounds that it allows a focused approach to an issue within a condensed time frame with limited resources (Neale & Liebert, 1986). In this situation, a case study may be described as an inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real life context, especially where the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not always evident (Yin, 1989). It utilises qualitative research methods and techniques to gain a "rich" descriptive account of meanings and experiences of people in their social setting (Harney, 1997) and offers a "way of organising social data for the purpose of viewing social reality" (Best & Kahn, 1989, p.92). In this instance, the case being studied is the changing perceptions of purpose and nature of the contemporary Catholic school held by a sample of principals in the Archdiocese of Brisbane. Therefore:

> A case study design is employed to gain an in-depth understanding of the situation and meaning for those involved. The interest is in process rather than outcomes, in context rather than a specific variable, in discovery rather than confirmation.
> (Mirriam, 1998, p.19)

A case study research methodology is appropriate within this project because it has the potential to:

(a) explore significant features of the case;
(b) create plausible interpretations of what is found;
(c) test the trustworthiness of these interpretations;
(d) construct a worthwhile argument or story;
(e) relate the argument or story to any relevant research in the literature;
(f) convey convincingly to an audience this argument or story;
(g) provide an audit trail by which other researchers may validate or challenge the findings, or construct alternative arguments.

(Bassey, 1999, p.65)

Increasingly, the focus of case study has emphasised the boundaries defining the "case" under review. Some importance has been placed upon the case as a bounded system (Adelmans, Jenkins & Kemmis, 1976). In other words, "the case may be seen as an integrated system" (Stake, 1995, p.2) or "a phenomenon of some sort occurring in a bounded context" (Miles & Huberman, 1994, p.25). Further:

> the single most defining characteristic of case study research lies in delimiting the object of study, the case…allow(ing) me to see the case as a thing, a single entity, a unit around which there are boundaries. I can "fence in" what I am going to study. (Merriam, 1998, p.27)

Thus, notwithstanding the issues of generalisation (Gomm, Hammersley & Foster, 2000), research defined as relating to current and future goals of Catholic schools as perceived by a number of practising principals may be justified as case study. The fact that numbers of participants in each stage of the research were limited further qualifies the research as case study, because "if there is no end, actually or theoretically to the number of people who could be interviewed or to observations that could be conducted, then the

171

phenomenon is not bounded enough to qualify as a case" (Merriam, 1998, p.28).

Case study accepts as the foundation for understanding and knowledge, the various interpretations and explanations offered by participants even given that those interpretations and explanations may be constantly developing (Mollison, 1990). Whilst this stance may be seen as epistemologically untenable by some (Lakomski, 1987), the criticism is valid only from an epistemological perspective that is positivistic and reductionist. The case study approach, which is most suitable for this study, is predicated on the notion that knowledge does not rest on immutable foundations but rather is gathered from continuous inquiry and investigation. In this way, the emergence of knowledge is the result of the dialectic between different and sometimes competing theories about, or explanations of, a social phenomenon (Lakomski, 1987; Walker & Evers, 1982). Case study is, therefore, a "process that attempts to describe and analyse some entity in qualitative, complex and comprehensive terms as it unfolds over time" (Harney, 1997, p.179) or simply as a "snapshot of reality" (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p.214). "It is based on complexity and holism rather than simple parts and reductionism" (Harney, 1997, p.181).

By way of summation, four salient characteristics of case study may be delineated. These features, which support the proposition that qualitative case study is an apt orientation for the present research, are that it is particularistic, descriptive, heuristic and inductive (Merriam, 1988; Wilson, 1985):

- Its *particularistic* nature means that "case studies focus on a particular situation, event…or phenomenon. The case itself is important for what it reveals about the phenomenon and for what it might represent" (Merriam, 1988, p.11). The particular phenomenon which is the subject of this case study is the changing perceptions of principals of goals and purpose given the evolving nature of the Catholic school in the Archdiocese of Brisbane.

- Its *descriptive* focus "means that the end product of a case study is a rich 'thick' description of the phenomenon under study" (Merriam, 1988, p.11). In reporting findings, "case studies use prose and literary techniques to describe, elicit images, and analyse situations… They present documentation of events, quotes, samples and artefacts" (Wilson, 1979, p.448). In reporting the findings of this research, every attempt has been made to make a "thick" description of the ways in which the participants perceived the changing goals and nature of the Catholic school.

- Their *heuristic* character means that "case studies illuminate the reader's understanding of the phenomenon under study. They can bring about the discovery of new meaning, extend the reader's experience, or confirm what is known" (Merriam, 1988, p.13). New meanings and understandings emerged

173

from this case study of the perceptions of a number of practising principals.

- The *inductive* thrust of case studies means that customarily, conclusions are based upon inductive reasoning: "Discovery of new relationships, concepts, and understanding, rather than verification of predetermined hypotheses, characterises qualitative case studies" (Merriam, 1988, p.13). Along with the heuristic potential of the case study, its inductive nature allows for the development of new understandings of, and new meanings for, the Catholic school through the perceptions of practising principals in dramatically altered contexts apart from any "predetermined hypotheses".

In several aspects, the research for this thesis honoured the guidelines for the conduct of case study proposed by Macdonald and Walker (1975, p10):

- Case studies should respond actively to participant definitions and understandings of situations, conceptual structure and language, thus facilitating the gaining of insights into the participants' existing realities.

> *This guideline was attended to through the researcher's own general familiarity with participants' definitions and understandings as colleague and through the researcher's structuring and conduct of research instruments in ways that were calculated to elicit reflective, comprehensive and frank responses.*

- The reliability of the study is significantly enhanced by the researcher's taking into account the expressed reactions of participants to the final report.

    This guideline was attended to through the employment of focus groups and independent reviewers who responded to the draft report.

- Confidentiality is accorded to all participants who shared in the data collection and validation.

    This guideline was attended to under the conditions outlined to participants prior to their commitment to take part which formed part of the conditions for ethics clearance for the research

Having explored the applicability of a case study approach to the present research, it is appropriate to turn to a consideration of its operational instruments.

Within this study which concerns itself with the reconstruction of meaning for the contemporary Catholic school amongst its principals, a qualitative orientation is clearly appropriate. The foundations of the research, the methodological approach and theoretical perspective, will be found within the interpretive school, sharing the principles which that orientation would hold and adopting the appropriate strategies as outlined below.

3.5 DATA GATHERING STRATEGIES

Given the adoption of a predominantly interpretivist approach to the research as outlined, its objectives may be summarised under three main purposes. These were to:

- gather data concerning principals' perceptions of the present and future goals of their Catholic schools especially in relation to existing and/or future Church structures;

- clarify principals' perceptions as to strengths and challenges in Catholic schools and how these affect future directions;

- add to an understanding of the process of the reconstruction of meaning for the Catholic school against the background of the deconstruction of their inherited meanings in recent decades.

Given the research methodology of case study within the project, the chief elements incorporated into the research were:

- Personal journal
- Survey of participants: Open ended Questionnaires One and Two
- In-depth, semi-structured interviews
- Critical review interviews
- Focus groups
- Independent review

A brief description of these research elements follows.

Personal Journal

The researcher kept a journal noting the contents of conversations with his peers and his own reflections as the research questions emerged at the outset of the project. In this way, the journal performed the function of what might be called "personal notes".

> A researcher keeps a section of notes that is like a personal diary. He or she records personal life events and feelings in it … (personal notes) to give him or her a way to evaluate direct observation …(Neuman, 2000, p.365)

The journal allowed for reflection upon a myriad of conversations and exchanges, both formal and informal in order to discern, from the almost limitless possible avenues of inquiry, which questions it was most important to pursue in the research (Candy, 1989).

176

Survey Participants: Open-Ended Questionnaires

Two questionnaires were administered in the course of this study. Both were *open-ended* in type, developed as "invitations to respondents to give their ideas in response to general questions…(a technique) used when the work is exploring a situation in order to expand a range of possible interpretations" (Burns, 1997, p.21). This is by way of contrast to *closed* format surveys which require the participant to tick one of a number of predetermined responses or to arrange them in rank order (Burns, 1997).

In choosing to use a survey instrument, the researcher makes one critical assumption:

> …that the characteristic(s) or belief(s) (being researched) can be described or measured accurately through self-report. In using questionnaires, researchers rely totally on the honesty and accuracy of participants' responses…there are still many occasions when surveying the group under study can be useful. (Marshall & Rossman, 1994, p.96)

The *caveat* implicit in this observation was addressed in this study through:

- the strict measures of confidentiality guaranteed to participants which encouraged frank and comprehensive responses;

- the testing of the questionnaires to ensure their design appropriateness to draw out accurate responses from respondents;

- the design of the second questionnaire from the results of the first, thus supporting validity of responses;

- the consistency of responses to the questionnaires with informal knowledge of participants' beliefs and attitudes known to the researcher as colleague and as *observer-as-participant* in the research.

Survey research, including open-ended questionnaires, may be situated amongst the more structured techniques of data gathering (Louis, 1982) and its strengths include "accuracy, generalizability and convenience" (Marshall & Rossman, 1994, p.97). It may be seen as the "appropriate mode of enquiry for making inferences about a large group of people from data drawn on a relatively small number of individuals from that group" (Marshall & Rossman, 1994, p.97).

The participants were all practising principals of Catholic schools, known to a greater or lesser degree to the researcher as colleagues.

The initial contact made with participants was through the first written questionnaire. Questionnaire One consists of nine items as outlined below in Table 3.2

Table 3.2

Overview of Questionnaire One

Question No.	Question Text	Purpose of Item(s)
1 and 2	What do you see as the main purpose of the Catholic school of which you are principal? Why did you identify the above as the main purpose of your school?	Items 1 and 2 are designed to explore principals' sense of direction and purpose for the schools which they lead and their rationale for formulating that purpose.
3 and 4	What do you believe to be the current strengths of your school? Why did you identify the above strengths?	Items 3 and 4 are designed to explore what principals value in practice in their schools and why this is so. This is predicated upon the belief that what is perceived as strength is valued.
5 and 6	What challenges / problems do you believe your school currently faces? Why did you nominate the above?	Items 5 and 6 are designed to allow respondents to identify issues which need addressing and/or rectification in their schools. This may discover those practices/ customs/phenomena which principals identify as inimical to the goals/purposes outlined in items 1 and 2.
7	What do you think will be the main purpose of your school in 2010? (Please provide reasons for your judgement.)	This item seeks to discover principals' projections of purpose in the medium term. It therefore seeks to gauge what principals see as enduring goals of the Catholic school.
8	*(A diagrammatic representation of the relationship between the parish and its satellite activities/initiatives/ projects, including the school, is given. Respondents are then asked to do the following.)* Please draw a diagram to depict the relationship of your school to the parish.	Items 8 and 9 ask respondents to depict the relationship of school to parish as it presently is seen to be and secondly, how respondents would wish it to be in the future. It is hoped to gather data about this critical relationship in its current status and how it might evolve in the medium term.
9	Ideally, how would you like to see the parish/school relationship in your context develop in the next ten years?	This item explores perceptions of future developments in parish/school relationships.

The results of this initial questionnaire were analysed and salient themes identified. These themes were used to construct a more detailed instrument (Questionnaire Two) to be administered to a larger sample (n=47) of Catholic school principals with the results validated through semi-structured interviews, focus groups and critical review referred to below. This second questionnaire was trialed with two colleagues and final adjustments made. The six themes identified from Questionnaire One were:

- the centrality of a sense of community in the life of the Catholic school;

- the significance of a sense of "gospel values" in formulating the goals of the Catholic school;

- the prevalence of a desire to achieve "holistic" educational practices for children;

- an awareness of the importance of offering children the opportunity for spiritual growth within the school context;

- the increasingly complex relationship between school and parish given changing patterns of church affiliation and

- the related theme of the mission of the Catholic school within the broader ministry of the Church.

A seventh theme was added to Questionnaire Two to allow the exploration of the issues of staff spirituality which had received only passing reference in Questionnaire One but which the researcher wished to explore with principals given its significance within the context of a changing pastoral role for school leaders and staff and for the whole Catholic school community within the broader Church.

These themes were used as the basis for Questionnaire Two which is outlined in Table 3.3. The full text appears in Appendix 1.

Table 3.3

Overview of Questionnaire Two

Item Focus	Item Text	Purpose of Item
1 Community and the Catholic school	1.1 In the Catholic school that you lead, what are the distinguishing features of such a community? 1.2 On what criteria do you base your perception of a "healthy" community spirit? 1.3 How do you build and nurture this spirit of community in your school?	This item seeks to draw out from administrators a clear understanding of how they perceive the nature of true community which the first survey revealed was held to be a salient feature of the contemporary Catholic School.
2 Gospel values and the Catholic school	2.1 What do you understand by the term "Gospel values" for a Catholic school? 2.2 Which gospel values do you find particularly important in the Catholic school you lead? 2.3 How are these gospel values expressed daily in the Catholic school you lead?	This item seeks to gain a clear perception of administrators' understanding of the term "Gospel values", a term used frequently in discussion of Catholic schools' goals and vision as borne out by the results of the first survey.
3 Holistic education in the Catholic school.	3.1 What do you understand by the term "holistic" education? 3.2 How do you achieve holistic educational practices in the school you lead?	Holistic educational goals were frequently mentioned in the initial survey. This item sets out to obtain a clear statement of what administrators mean by that term and how, in practical terms, leaders attempt to achieve these goals.
4 Spirituality and the Catholic school.	4.1 How do you work towards the goal (of nurturing children's spirituality)? 4.2 What barriers do you encounter?	The value of nurturing children's spirituality cannot be gainsaid. This item seeks to examine practical endeavours and the difficulties administrators encounter this area.

Item Focus	Item Text	Purpose of Item
5 Relationship of the Catholic school to the parish.	5.1 If (this) theme (of the Catholic school as the chief point of contact with the Church for increasing numbers of families) resonates with you, how do you sense a changing role for you as a principal given the changing patterns of practice and affiliation of families with the broader Church? 5.2 What are the challenges for you in these developments? 5.3 What do you see as the causes of these changes in practice and church affiliation? 5.4 What support would you look for in fulfilling your changing role as a principal?	Anecdotal and survey data suggest a changing role for the Catholic school principal as parents of students increasingly find their point of contact with the Church through and in the school. This phenomenon is examined to discover principals' attitudes and responses towards this trend.
6 The Catholic school and the Catholic tradition.	6.1 How do you understand your role as principal in a school conducted by the Catholic Church? 6.2 How does the Catholic school you lead encourage a stronger link with the parish amongst students and their families? 6.3 How effective is your encouragement of this link between school and parish?	This item develops the theme of item 5 and looks to explore the resultant and related theme of the principal's vision of his/her relationship as leader to the broader Church.
7 Staff spiritual-ity in the Catholic school.	7.1 How is the spirituality and personal growth of staff nurtured in the Catholic school you lead? 7.2 What key experiences have you seen to be helpful in this regard? 7.3 What barriers have you encountered in this area?	The priority given to this issue in Church documents warrants its examination even given its low ranking in the initial survey.

182

Interviews: The Semi-Structured Interview

The interview is commonly used in interpretivist research (Merriam, 1998, p.71). Its appropriateness is supported by the fact that "it is prepared and executed in a systematic way, it is controlled by the researcher to avoid bias and distortion and is related to a specific research question and a specific purpose" (Sarantakos, 1993, p.177). As a research instrument the interview may be defined as "a purposeful conversation, usually between two people … that is directed by one in order to get information from the other" (Bogdan & Biklen, 1992, p.96) or to gain an understanding of the other person's perspective (Patton, 1990).

Like all other research tools, the interview has its limitations but, as an instrument, it has a valuable contribution to make to the network of processes that constitute research:

> At the very least (interviews) can inform us of what the person interviewed is prepared to say about a topic in the social context, time and place of that particular interview. We need to recognise that what is said will be co-constructed in that interview, and will be limited by perception, memory, evasions, self-deception and more on the part of both the interviewer and the interviewee, but that it still can be of value.
> (Walford, 2001, p.95)

There are several types of interviews (Sarantakos, 1993) which range from highly structured or standardised to the unstructured or informal (Merriam, 1998) with the former type being used more in quantitative research (Sarantakos, 1993). In a structured interview the answers to a pre-determined order of questions tend to provide "reactions to the investigator's preconceived notions of the world" (Merriam, 1998, p.74) as responses are recorded rather than discussed or analysed (Burgess, 1985). In the unstructured interview,

conversely, "there are no restrictions in the wording of the questions, the order of questions or the interview schedule. The interviewer acts freely in this context … formulating questions as and when required and employing neutral probing" (Sarantakos, 1993, p.247).

This research employed a semi-structured interview technique (Taylor & Bogdan, 1998) in which the topic is explored using questions with fixed and unfixed wording to elicit information (Minichiello, Aroni, Timewill & Alexander, 1990). Open ended questions were utilised with the common starting point for each interview being a statement of findings from the questionnaire instruments. The five participants were given the opportunity to peruse the findings and were then asked for their responses both confirmatory and critical. The researcher used this common starting point for all interviews but then allowed the discussion to flow as the interviewees responded throughout the conversation (Cohen & Mannion, 1994). The findings provided a kind of general interview guide (Patton, 1990) to give a consistent ground to the interviews.

The interviews were audio-taped with interviewees' permission. This allowed for both close analysis of the discussion at a later time (Patton, 1990) as well as freeing the researcher to focus on the direction of the conversation and the consequent choice of questions to guide the conversation.

Critical Review Interviews

In order to strengthen the validity of the findings of the research, a number of the participants who had been interviewed in the semi-structured interview process described above, were approached for critical review interviews. Three of the original participants were chosen for these interviews.

Each participant was shown a draft copy of the discussion of the research findings (Chapter 5) and given sufficient time to study it (approximately one week). Each participant was then engaged in an interview which sought to gain a critical response to the draft, taking each of the major findings in turn for consideration. The principles outlined above for the original interviews were observed in these second tier interviews. The results of the critical review interviews were integrated into the final draft of Chapter Five.

Focus Groups

Focus groups were used in this study both to elucidate and validate the data generated by the surveys and by participant observation. A focus group:

> ….is a group comprised of individuals with certain characteristics who focus discussions on a given issue or topic…It not only discloses what is important to individual respondents, but it attempts to provide a situation where the synergy of the group adds to the depth and insight. Thus, the group strives to provide in-depth qualitative data which could not be obtained as efficiently any other way. (Anderson, 1990, p.241).

Focus groups usually have a set of common characteristics which include:

- group size (4-12 people)

- meeting time (1-2 hours)

- focus on selected, specific topic(s)

- the exploration of participants' perceptions, attitudes, feelings and ideas

- the utilisation of group interaction

- meeting in a comfortable, non-threatening environment
                                                    (Wilson, 1997, p.211)

They are to be differentiated from group interviews through these criteria (Lewis, 1992; Powney & Watts, 1987) but chiefly because "group interviews are of little use in bringing intensely personal issues to the surface…the dynamics of the group denies access to this sort of data" (Watts & Ebbutt, 1987, p.33).

The use of focus groups nevertheless, shares with other investigative techniques, the need for specificity of objectives, structures and process (Wilson, 1997). Moreover:

> Forethought must be given to developing questions for a focus group. Questions are the heart of the focus group interview. They may appear to be spontaneous, but they have been carefully selected and phrased in advance to elicit the maximum amount of information. (Krueger, 1994b, p.53)

The questions planned for the focus groups are listed in Table 3.4 and generally reflect a progression from "general to specific – that is, beginning with general overview questions that funnel into more specific questions of critical interest" (Krueger, 1994b, p.67; Anderson, 1990).

Table 3.4

Questions for Focus Group Discussion

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1. The research showed a priority placed by principals upon the sustenance of a spirit of community. Is this in accord with your perspective as a leader of a Catholic school?

2. Principals consistently described the school community in sociological rather than expressly theological items. How would you describe the qualities of your school community?

3. Are the principals' perceptions of changing or changed patterns of affiliation with the institutional Church true to your experience?

4. If so, what reasons do you see for these emerging or current patterns?

5. How do these changing/changed patterns affect you as a leader of a Catholic school community?

6. In your experience, has the educational focus of Catholic schools shifted to a more holistic focus?

7. If so, how do you implement that focus of your school?

8. How do you approach the issue of the development of spirituality in your students?

9. What barriers or challenges do you encounter?

10. How do you encourage spiritual growth in your staff members?

The focus groups utilised in this study satisfied the criteria set out above. They were comprised of small numbers (four or five people); they were convened for 60 to 90 minutes in comfortable, familiar environments; they focused on specific topics and used group interaction to explore participants' perceptions, attitudes, feelings and ideas. In this study two focus groups were convened. Each group consisted of six participants.

Independent Review

Independent review of the penultimate draft of the discussion of the findings of the research (Chapter 5) provides another source of scrutiny of the outcomes. The independent reviewers act as fresh commentators on the findings and offer observations as to their responses to them. The independent reviewers hold positions comparable to those of the original participants but stand outside the original research process. The independent reviewers were asked to outline points within the draft chapter with which they agreed or from which they differed. Administrators were chosen because their professional experience over much of the time frame of this study allowed personal, critical insight into the issues outlined. Reviewers were also encouraged to add further original comment concerning the content of the chapter.

This project used four independent reviewers. They were two principals and two deputy/assistant principals. Each reviewer had over twenty-five years' experience in Catholic schooling. One principal and one deputy came from a primary school context and the other from a secondary school background. Their comments are incorporated into the final draft of Chapter Five.

Table 3.5 summarises the number of participants engaged in each data gathering strategy within the research project.

Table 3.5

Participants in Each Data Gathering Strategy

Strategy	Participants
Questionnaire One	21
Questionnaire Two	47
Semi-structured Interviews	5
Critical Review Interviews	3
Focus Groups	(2x6)12
Independent Review	4

3.5.1 Conceptualisation of the Research Design:

Having canvassed the theoretical foundations of the research and discussed the research instruments, a summary of the research design is presented in Figure 3.1.
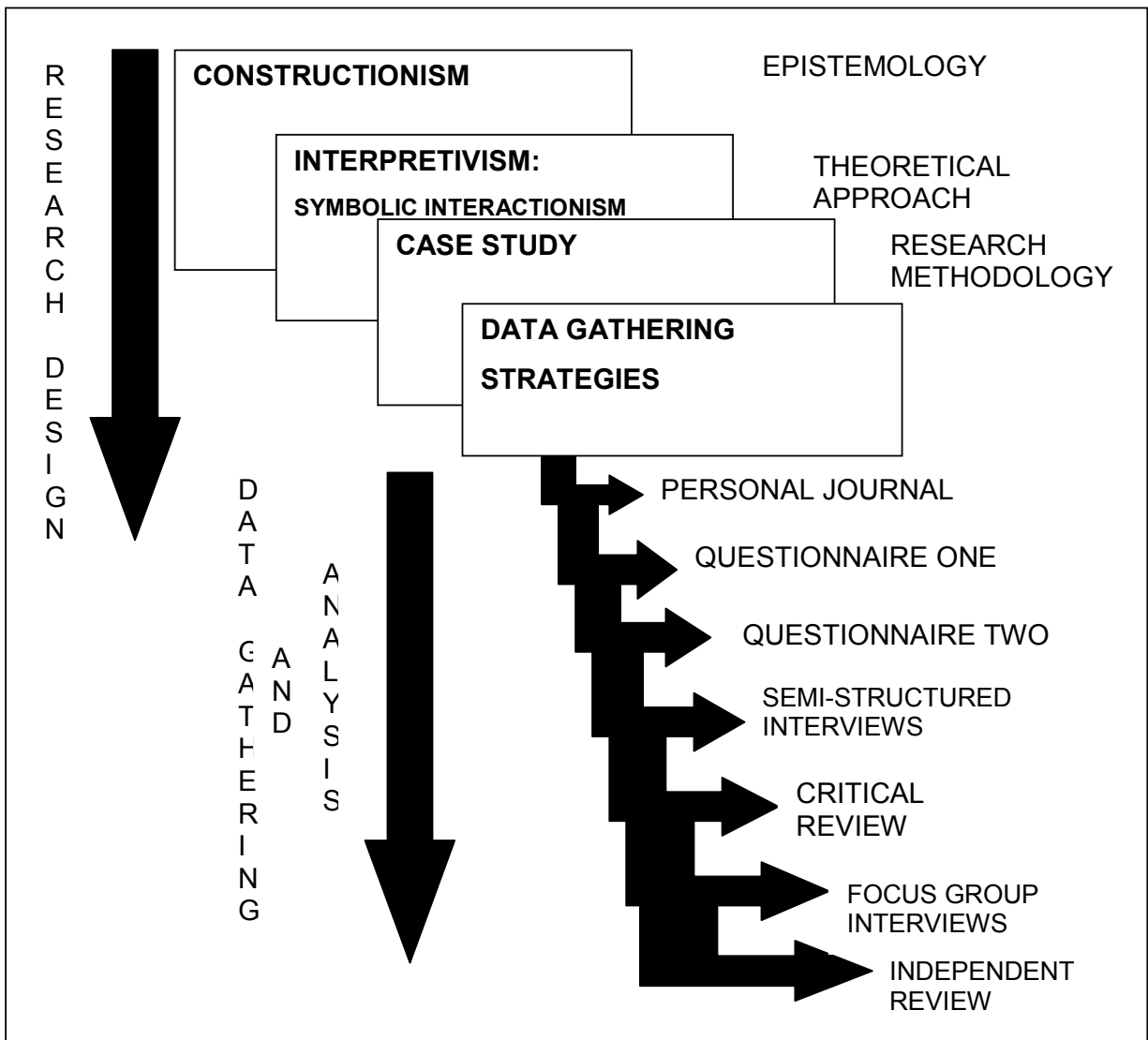
Figure 3.1

Conceptualisation of the Research Design

3.5.2 Sequence of the Research:

The sequence of the research project is summarised in Table 3.6

Table 3.6

Research Sequence

1	Preliminary in-depth semi-structured interviews	In-depth informal interviews were held with ● a parish priest ● an academic whose specialisation is Catholic school leadership ● a representative of Brisbane Catholic Education ● three (3) practising principals of Catholic schools These interviews helped the researcher to clarify the research questions and to identify key issues for the contemporary Catholic school. These interviews assisted particularly in the shaping of Questionnaire One.
2	Personal Journal Notes	The journal notes, recording reflections on a number of conversations with Catholic school personnel, further assisted in the process of clarification of research questions and specific avenues of exploration.
3	Literature Review	The completion of the review of literature allowed the researcher to gain further insight into the critical issues which warranted examination in the research project.
4	Questionnaire One (21 participants)	Questionnaire One was trialled before distribution. This was achieved by distribution of the draft questionnaire to selected colleagues for comment. Responses were instrumental in the formulation of the final version of the questionnaire. The criteria for the selection of the sample are set out below (see 3.7).
5	Questionnaire Two (47 participants)	The responses to Questionnaire One allowed for an analysis of major themes. As outlined above (see 3.6) the salient themes formed the foundation of Questionnaire Two. This instrument, also, was trialled via distribution to colleagues for review. After the amendment of the questionnaire, it was distributed to the participants for completion.
6	Semi-structured in-depth interviews (5 participants)	Semi-structured interviews were conducted with five (5) practising principals who had been respondents to Questionnaire Two. The principals chosen for these interviews were ones who had made comprehensive and helpful responses to the questionnaire. The interviewees were shown drafts of the major findings of the research and were asked for comment as described above.
7	Critical Review Interviews (3 participants)	The participants who had taken part in the semi-structured interviews were shown drafts of the discussion of the findings of the research project and asked for critical comment on each major finding. These observations were formative of the final draft of the discussion (Chapter 5).
8	Focus Groups (2 x 6 = 12 participants)	Two focus groups were convened as part of the research. These groups discussed the conclusions of the project. The groups complied with the guidelines for the conduct of focus groups as outlined above (see 3.5). The results of both the summative interviews and the focus groups were incorporated into Chapter Five.
9	Independent Review Chapter 5 (4 participants)	The penultimate draft of Chapter Five was given to four practising administrators for response. Their comments were taken into account in the final editing of Chapter Five.

3.6   RESEARCH PARTICIPANTS

The research was conducted amongst practising principals in the Archdiocese of Brisbane. Both primary and secondary principals were included in the initial sample because, despite the accidental differences in the shaping of the role, the essential characteristics remain the same and the challenges, whilst administratively somewhat distinct, bear a significant, common core.

To preclude inessential (and not necessarily helpful) variables from the initial elements of the study, the samples of principals for the two questionnaires and semi-structured interviews were taken entirely from the Archdiocese of Brisbane.

Principals were chosen as the sample for the study because of the significant role which they play (Hallinger & Heck, 1998) not only in the learning experiences of students (Maxcy, 2001) but in the shaping and directing of the total school community (Fullan, 1990). In fact, it may be argued that the principal is pivotal to the maintenance and development of the culture of the school community: "The role is not as straightforward as we are led to believe in statements constantly referring to principals as the key to change. But the principal is central, especially to changes in the culture of the school" (Fullan, 1990, p.146).

On a broader canvas, it is possible to view the work of the school principal within the framework of the (re)construction of meaning (Dimmock & O'Donoghue, 1997) which is the quintessential concern of this study. In one sense, it may be argued, the work of the school principal is to do with "the

192

administration of meaning" (Starratt, 1996, p.23). It is appropriate, therefore, to focus upon the vision and work of the principal in a study of the reconstruction of meaning for the Catholic school:

> Educational administrators, working in tandem with their teachers, need to explore what meanings the school promotes, what meanings the school inhibits or censures, and what meanings are simply not considered. This task is…an enormously challenging one, but one which cannot be set aside by administrators. It is fundamental to their work as educators. (Starratt, 1996, p23)

The distribution and return rates for Questionnaire One are set out in Table 3.7 below:

Table 3.7

Distribution and Return Rates: Questionnaire One

	Female	Male	Within Greater Brisbane Area	Outside Greater Brisbane Area	TOTAL
Distribution of Questionnaire	14	26	25	15	40
Return of Questionnaire	6 (42.8%)	15 (57.6%)	14 (56%)	7 (46.6%)	21 (52.5%)

The distribution of Questionnaire Two was done at naturally occurring groupings at meetings of principals. All respondents completed the questionnaire voluntarily. The return rate was 100%. Four respondents did not indicate gender or site in their responses. This has been noted.

Table 3.8 sets out the distribution of Questionnaire Two.

Table 3.8

Distribution of Questionnaire Two

	Female	Male	Brisbane	Outside Brisbane	No Indication	TOTAL
Distribution of Questionnaire	19	24	31	12	4	47 (100%)

3.7   TRUSTWORTHINESS

Trustworthiness is related to the concepts of reliability and validity within the research. Reliability is concerned with the replicability of research findings (Le Compte & Goetz, 1982; Merriam, 1988). The concept, however, needs to be qualified in the context of qualitative research. Since reliability is inextricably linked to the notion of reality, that notion, as discussed above, will influence ideas and ideals of reliability. Since:

> qualitative research…is not seeking to isolate laws of human nature (but) rather…to describe and explain the world as those in the world interpret it (and) since there are many interpretations of what is happening, there is no landmark by which one can take repeated measures and establish reliability in the traditional sense (Merriam, 1988, p.170).

Such considerations lead at this point also to a discussion of the concept of validity which may be seen as a measure of how well the findings of research match an objective reality. Prior to investigating this idea further, it is to be noted that "in fact, quite different notions of what constitutes validity have enjoyed the status of dominant paradigm at different times, in different historical contexts, and under different prevailing modes of thought and epistemology" (Ratcliffe, 1983, p.158).

194

A further investigation of the nature of "reality" confirms the variable definability of validity when research seeks to uncover the "reality" of a given phenomenon. This is especially so given that:

> one of the assumptions underlying qualitative research is that reality is holistic, multidimensional, and ever-changing; it is not a single, fixed, objective phenomenon waiting to be discovered, observed, measured. Assessing the isomorphism between data collected and the 'reality' from which they were derived is thus an inappropriate determinant of validity" (Merriam, 1988, p.167).

If in case study (interpretivist) research, what is being studied is the way in which people construct (reimagine) the world, then what is of significance for the researcher is, in fact, the constructed (imagined) world of the participants in the study (Walker, 1980). Since reality may be defined as "a multiple set of mental constructions…made by humans" (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p.295), the judgement of trustworthiness or accuracy of a study depends upon the researcher's capacity to show that "he or she has represented (the) multiple constructions (of reality) adequately, that is, that the reconstructions…that have been arrived at via the inquiry are credible to the constructors of the original multiple realities" (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p.296). Thus, the task for the researcher in terms of validity is to offer "a more or less honest rendering of how informants actually view themselves and their experiences" (Taylor & Bogdan, 1998, p.98).

Therefore, issues of trustworthiness are inextricably linked to issues of integrity and authenticity in the processes, instruments and techniques employed in the research:

> It is difficult to talk about the validity or reliability of an experiment as a whole, but one can talk about the validity and reliability of the instrumentation, the appropriateness of the data analysis techniques, the degree of relationship between the conclusions drawn and the data upon which they presumably rest, and so on. In just this way one can discuss the processes and procedures that undergird the case study - were the interviews reliably and validly constructed; was the content of the documents properly analysed; do the conclusions of the case study rest upon data? The case study is, in regard to demonstrating rigor, not a whit different from any other technique.   (Guba & Lincoln, 1981, p.378)

Thus, it may be concluded that "validity and reliability are concerns that can be approached through careful attention to a study's conceptualization and the way in which the data were collected, analysed and interpreted" (Merriam, 1988, p.165).

Triangulation

Triangulation, or qualitative cross-validation of data through a range of measures is, therefore, of some importance. This was achieved in this study through the techniques of person triangulation and inter-methodological triangulation. The former involves having more than one participant in the research responding to precisely the same instrument to detect patterns of corroborative response. The conduct of exploratory and confirmatory interviews with participants allowed inter-methodological triangulation as well, so that data gathered from the first instrument, the survey, could be elucidated and its validity checked through the second.

The position of the researcher as colleague of the principals involved in the study allowed for unobtrusive observation to become part of the validation network and permitted the researcher to adopt the position of "insider" within the study, beginning from a point of familiarity with the terms, challenges and complexities of the context of the Catholic school which was the ground of the study. There are identifiable advantages to this for the researcher:

> In a sense, each location has its own culture: the conventions by which it works. It also has its own values and 'language' – ways of judging and thinking and talking about the experience. It takes time to penetrate living that. The value of being a participant observer … is that you are more likely to get to the informal reality. Outsiders … may never get there. (Gillham, 2000, p.28)

Validity was enhanced through the terms of the research clearance granted by the Archdiocesan authority whose approval was gained to survey and interview principals. Under these terms, a copy of the completed project was submitted. In that way, the validity-through-accountability of the study was enhanced.

In summary, the main challenge to validity for the researcher, given his collegial relationship to the participants and his own professional immersion in the very work being studied, was the maintenance of "the delicate balance between distance and relation" (Candy, 1989, p.9):

> What must be involved in interpretive explanation is a dialectic of distance and relation with the phenomena studied. When the dialectic is collapsed on the side of distance (that is, expert viewpoint), there is the possibility of a total alienation from what is studied. At the other extreme, when the dialectic collapses on the side of relation, there is such a total immersion…that the interpreting observer has difficulty in separating the forest from the trees. (Sullivan, 1984, p.114)

197

The accountability and reporting measures outlined above were calculated to minimise any detrimental effects upon its trustworthiness caused by the researcher's immersion in the study.

3.8   DATA ANALYSIS

Data analysis in a qualitative research is a dynamic process through which the researcher seeks to gain deeper understanding of the subject under investigation (Taylor & Bogdan, 1998). The researcher constantly monitors, reviews, interprets and tests data in order to draw conclusions (Taylor & Bogdan, 1998). The essentially cyclic process of data analysis is represented in Figure 3.2.
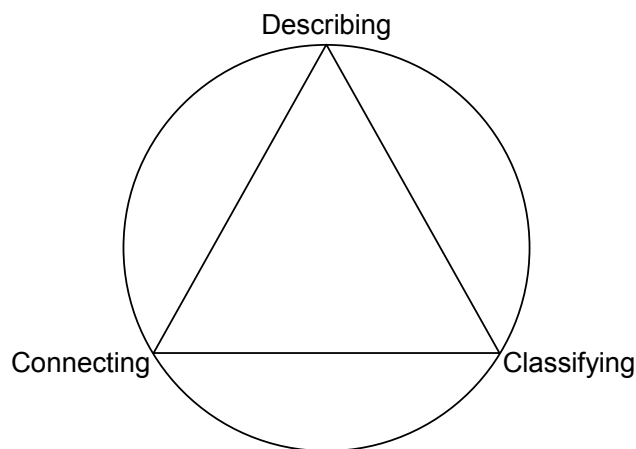
Figure 3.2

Qualitative Data Analysis as a Cyclic Process

(based on Day, 1996)

Data analysis in this study can be described, therefore as "a complex process that involves moving back and forth between concrete bits of data and abstract concepts, between inductive and deductive reasoning, between description and interpretation" (Merriam, 1998, p.178).

In this way, data analysis may be seen as a process which includes "both simultaneous and iterative phases" (Creswell, 2002, p.257). This process is represented in Figure 3.3 (Creswell, 2002, p.257).
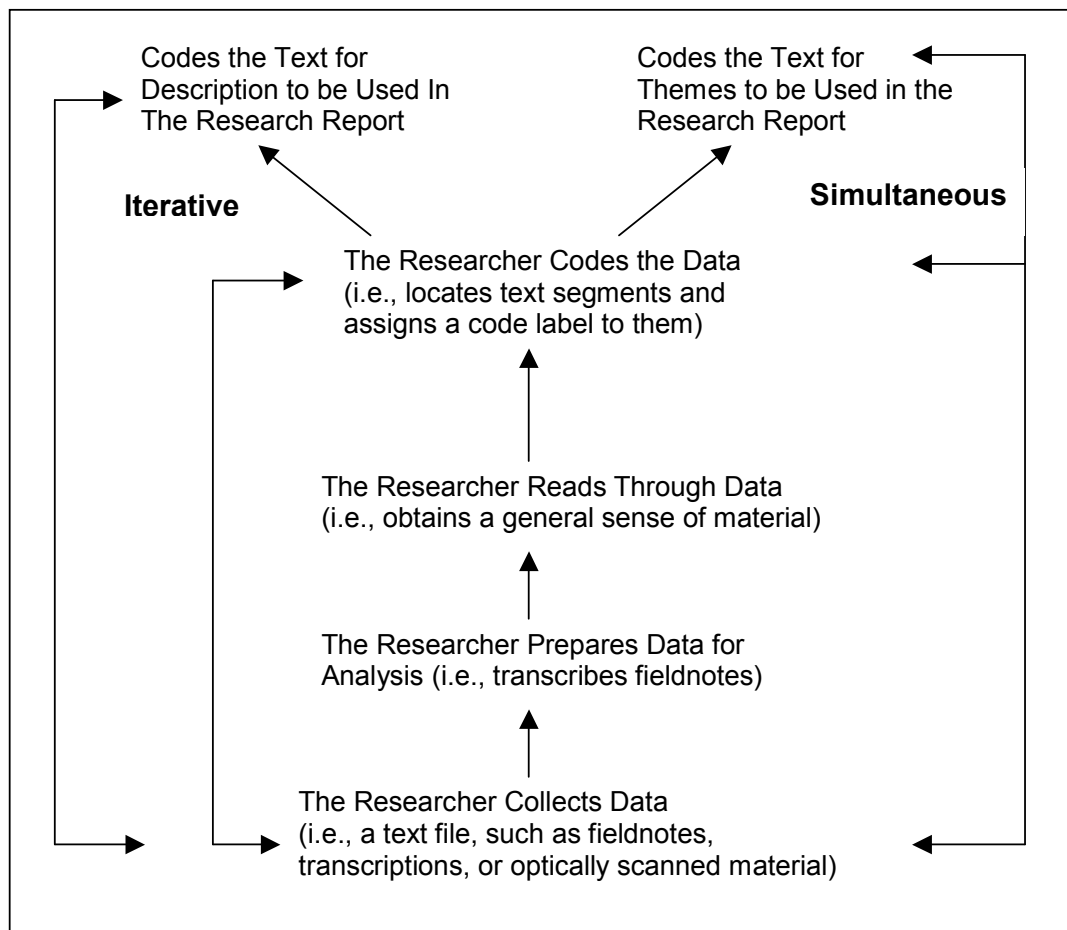
Figure 3.3

The Process of Data Analysis

The Constant Comparative Method of Data Analysis

Analysis of data brings order, structure and meaning to the raw data collected (Marshall & Rossman, 1989). There is constant interplay between the act of research and the researcher him/herself. Data collection, analysis and interpretation occur simultaneously and iteratively in order to make sense of the corpus of information gathered in the course of the project (Creswell, 2002; Tesh, 1990). This dynamic is termed the constant comparative method of data analysis. This process allows the researcher constantly and simultaneously to question the evidence and his/her own interpretation of the evidence (Strauss & Corbin, 1994).

The constant comparative method of analysing qualitative data:

> …combines inductive category coding with simultaneous comparison of all units of meaning obtained … As each new unit of meaning is selected for analysis, it is compared to all other units of meaning and subsequently grouped (categorized and coded) with similar units of meaning… In the process there is room for continuous refinement; initial categories are changed, merged, or omitted; new categories are generated; and new relationships can be discovered…
>
> (Maykut & Morehouse, 1994, p.86)

The constant comparative method is represented in Figure 3.4.

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┌─────────────────────────────────────────────────────────┐
│   ┌─────────────────────────────────────────────────┐   │
│   │   Inductive category coding and simultaneous     │   │
│   │     comparing of units of meaning across         │   │
│   │                 categories                       │   │
│   └─────────────────────────────────────────────────┘   │
│                          │                               │
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│          ┌──────────────────────────────┐               │
│          │    Refinement of categories   │               │
│          └──────────────────────────────┘               │
│                          │                               │
│                          ▼                               │
│      ┌──────────────────────────────────────────┐       │
│      │   Exploration of relationships and        │       │
│      │       patterns across categories          │       │
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│                          │                               │
│                          ▼                               │
│   ┌─────────────────────────────────────────────────┐   │
│   │   Integration of data yielding an understanding  │   │
│   │      of people and settings being studied        │   │
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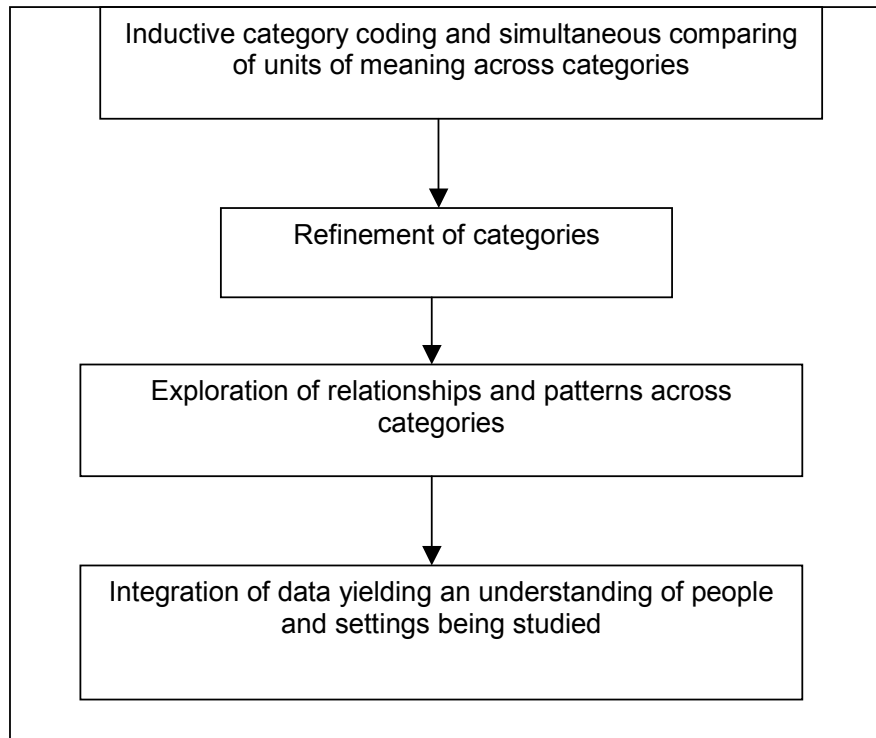
Figure 3.4

Constant Comparative Method of Data Analysis

The constant comparative method allows for the reduction of a wide range of initial responses down to core or essential themes. This process is integral to both the continuing process of data analysis through refinement of large bodies of data into manageable and meaningful elements for further research as well as to the discovery of eventual outcomes and conclusions. The use of the constant comparative method is illustrated clearly in Chapter Four where it is demonstrated how data gathered from Questionnaire One was reduced to essential themes in the formulation of Questionnaire Two and how the data gathered were further directed towards the resolution of Research Questions One and Two. Figure 3.5 shows how the constant comparative method allowed the researcher to reduce multiple responses from questionnaire items down to essential themes which provided for more focused research in addressing the key research questions.

201

Whilst a full account of the accumulated research data is given in Chapter 4, the researcher is here able to foreshadow some of that data by way of illustrating the outcomes of the use of constant comparative method in data analysis and in managing large bodies of data. Figure 3.5 traces the extraction of six major themes from Questionnaire One (with the addition of a seventh theme as explained below). By way of illustration, the first of these is highlighted. Figure 3.5 traces the implementation of the constant comparative method from the refinement of raw data (which included a multiplicity of responses), through its reduction to major thematic clusters. These clusters were further refined through participant interviews, focus groups, critical review interviews and independent review so that elements of the resolution of the key research question(s) could be generated. In the research project, this process was repeated for each question until the two key research questions had been addressed. The course of this process is shown in red in Figure 3.5. the initial theme of "community" from Questionnaire One is incorporated into Questionnaire Two in Questions 1.1, 1.2 and 1.3. Clusters of responses are derived from initial analysis of the data. The use of participant interviews, focus groups, critical review interviews, and independent review allow the data to be constantly refined in order to contribute to the resolution of the first research question.
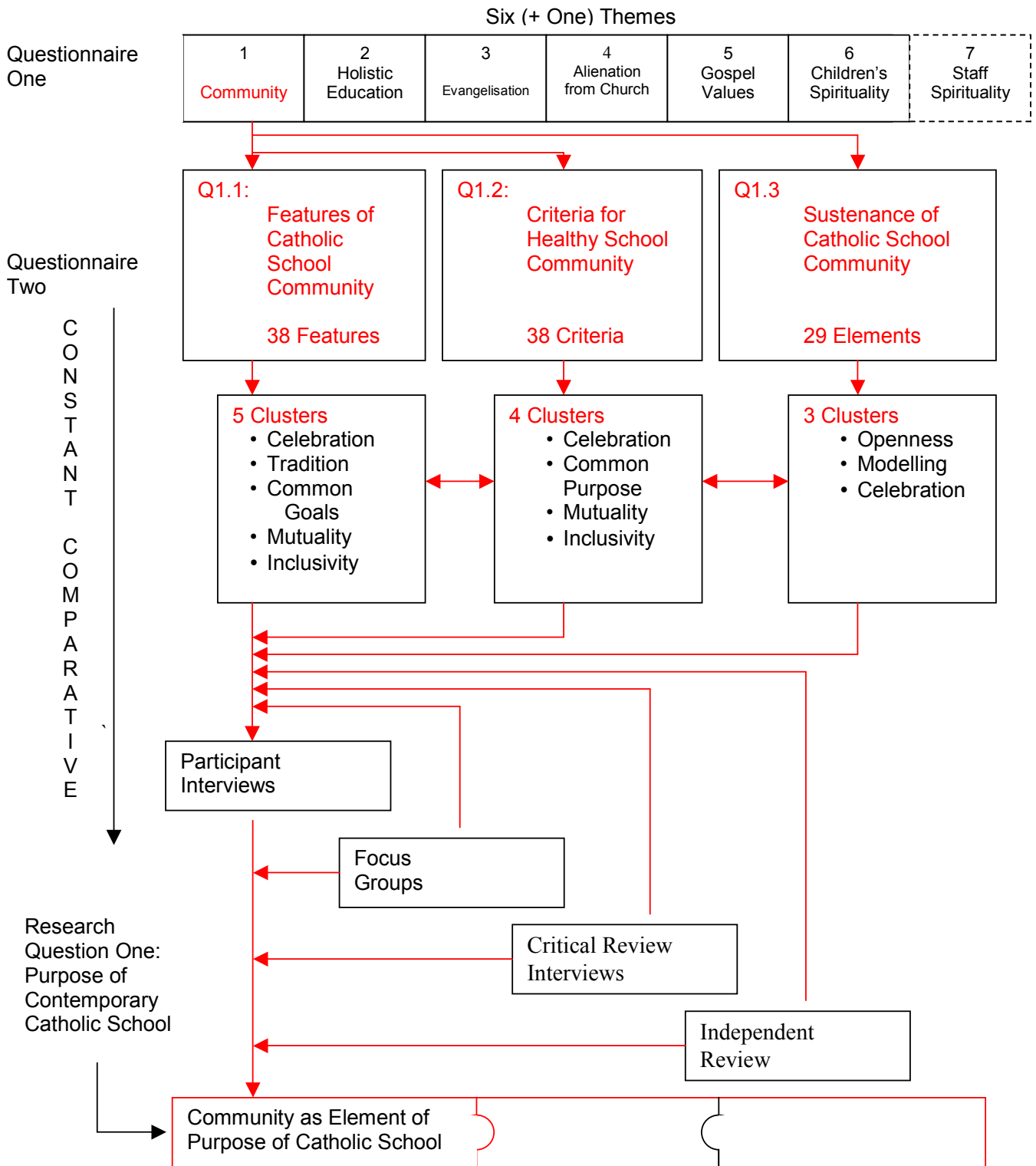
Figure 3.5

**Sample of the Development of Constant Comparative
Method of Data Analysis**

Collaizzi's (1978) data analysis framework provides a detailed guide for the process of the analysis of the data. This framework is consistent with the symbolic interactionist perspective which the researcher brought to the research project. This perspective that "all participants contribute a unique interpretation of the phenomena to (the) study" (Beattie, 2001, p.95) whilst allowing for stringent examination and evaluation of the data by the researcher (Strauss & Corbin, 1994). Table 3.9 provides a summary of the procedural principles of Collaizzi's data analysis framework. Such a framework allows for the reduction of many initial themes into specific main themes in a manner that is faithful to the corpus of the data.

Table 3.9

Phenomenological Data Analysis Framework

1. **Protocols:** All of the participants' descriptions, responses or protocols are read in order to gain a sense of the study.

2. **Extraction of Significant Statements:** Significant statements and phrases that relate to the topic are extracted from each transcript or response

3. **Formulation of Meanings:** The meaning of each significant statement is expressed. Care is taken to ensure that the derived meanings are faithful to the original protocols.

4. **Clustering of Meanings:** This process is repeated for each protocol and the aggregated formulated meanings are then organized into clusters of themes that recur in the protocols. The clusters of themes are referred to the original protocols in order to validate them.

5. **Exhaustive Description:** An exhaustive description of the topic is formulated from the analysis of all data thus far.

6. **Formulation of a Description of the Phenomenon into a Statement of Identification:** An attempt is made to formulate an exhaustive description of the researched phenomenon in as clear and unequivocal a statement of identification of its fundamental structure as possible.

7. **Final Validation:** The researcher returns to participants and checks truthfulness of the findings of the analysis. New data are integrated into final analysis of the corpus of data.

Source : Based on Colaizzi, P. (1978) in Valle & King (Eds.)

204

Table 3.10 offers an example of how the researcher coded the responses gathered during the semi-structured interviews in order to structure the body of discursive data. This allowed the researcher to both illuminate themes which had emerged previously in the project so as to direct the next stage of the redrafting of the discussion of those findings (Chapter 5) and also to bring into clearer focus the execution of the next stage of research activity.

Table 3.10

Sample of Coding of Interview Transcript

Question: Why do you think most parents seek enrolment in your school?

Answer: It's hard to know exactly why people enrol their kids at a Catholic school. I know, because I generally worship here, at this parish I mean, that most of the parents never go near the Church. They've 'had their kids done' in sacramental programs because that's how they can be fairly sure of getting into the school but if you scratch the surface, they have no great affection for the Catholic Church … most of them have no real reason to dislike it – they just couldn't care less about religion. It's irrelevant to their lives and our parish structures just don't reach them or touch them.

- Level of uncertainty

- Lack of parish practice
- Lack of religious background

- Sacramental initiation as 'necessary process' for enrolment
- Lack of affiliation with Church amongst families
- Not antipathy rather apathy towards religion
- Apathy/irrelevance of Church
- Lack of contact between families and Church

Question: Do you see the fact that they want to come to a Catholic school as a negative thing?

Answer: No, not at all. I think it says that we offer something the parents are wanting for their children. We are seen as offering not only a good education – that's a real priority obviously – but also an experience of care and a morality (if that's not too grand a word) that stresses how important it is that we treat each other with kindness and fairness. We usually call those gospel values because they reflect how Jesus operated but they're good, basic qualities of decent human beings. The gospel is where we most commonly find them and something of Jesus filters through to the kids … far more by the way, in how we act than in what we say or preach.

- Parents see value in Catholic Schooling
- Good education a priority

- Care of students
- Morality – values operative

- Kindness, fairness
- "gospel values"
- equated with how Jesus operated
- congruent with basic 'decent' values
- importance of role models

Question: Do you think the parents look for something for themselves?

Answer: I'm not sure how much they look for it but they value when they find it – that's a sense of community. They feel at home here, the feel welcome and they know we share the same goals for their kids – that carries a lot of weight, too.

- Parents value a sense of community in Catholic schools
- feel 'at home'
- welcome
- sense of shared goals for children

Finally, in light of all the above, Figure 3.6 provides an overview of the implementation of the research project.
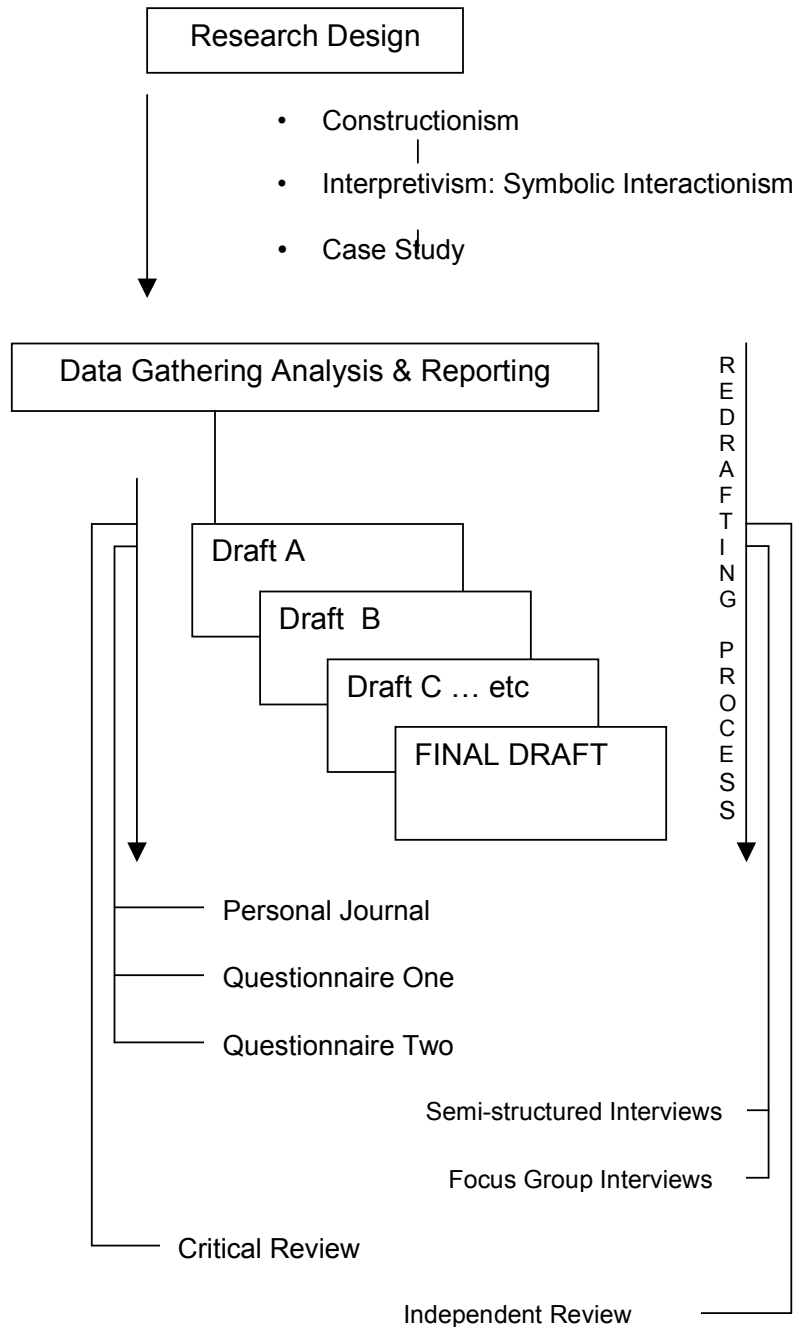
Figure 3.6

Overview of the Research Project

3.9 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Attention to the ethical conduct of research is important to its trustworthiness (Guba & Lincoln, 1989). However, of at least equal importance is the enhancement of trust in the participants and confidence in the audience of a research project when ethical procedures have been upheld (Hopkins, Bollington & Hewett, 1989). Issues of confidentiality and anonymity in published reports are also of the utmost importance to the integrity of the project and measures such as the use of pseudonyms and other methods of disguise are appropriate to protect confidentiality.

An undertaking of participant freedom and protection of confidentiality was given as a part of the negotiation process which formed the foundation of the research project with respondents (Appendix 2). Ethics clearance was gained from the Australian Catholic University as was approval to survey and interview principals from Brisbane Catholic Education (see Appendix 3). Procedures to advise participants of both their initial and continuing voluntary participation were adhered to. Letters of consent were signed by respondents to Questionnaire One and all participants in Questionnaire Two were fully apprised of their rights of participation. All responses in the second questionnaire were returned voluntarily. All research data were stored securely in the researcher's home office. Assurances of confidentiality were both given and observed throughout the project.

Whilst measures are put in place to ensure validity of a project through careful construction of instrumentation and attention to ethical procedures, any claim that research involving a measure of human judgement, as did this process,

208

will be "immune to prejudice, experimenter bias and human error" may be viewed with suspicion (Partlett & Hamilton, 1977). This is particularly so when the researcher functions from the position of insider. These issues are acknowledged by the researcher and vigilance has been exercised in addressing them.

Finally, it is acknowledged that the research, as outlined, focused upon the role of the principal as leader. This was a deliberate choice and one justifiable in the light of the singularly significant role of the principal in the school's development as outlined above. However, it is further acknowledged that the role of the principal is one element in the whole complex of leadership within the social entity that is a school. The focus on the principal, therefore, is an attempt to clarify the meaning - reconstructive dimension of that role rather than a dismissal of the value of other roles. The interplay of the principal's work with that of others in the reconstruction of meaning is clearly worthy of study in its own right. It is also acknowledged that respondents to Questionnaire One may, to a greater or lesser extent, have expressed the common view of their school's co-leaders in responding to the instrument.

This study now turns to a presentation of the data as gathered through the processes and procedures outlined above.

CHAPTER FOUR

PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS OF DATA

4.1   INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this chapter is to present the findings generated from research exploring the changing nature of the contemporary Catholic school.   In particular, the research examines ways in which practising Catholic school principals currently see the goals, purposes and meaning structure of the schools they lead in the context of changing ecclesial, social and educational environments.   The research project is focused by two key research questions:

How do principals currently perceive the purpose of Catholic schools?

How do they perceive Catholic schools changing?

These research questions are posed within the framework of the demise of inherited meanings and the reconstruction of new meanings for the contemporary Catholic school.   The data were collected using two open ended questionnaire instruments, semi-structured interviews, critical review of interviews, and focus group research and independent review.

The theoretical perspective of the project is symbolic interactionism, an investigative perspective which allows a qualitative study of "the symbolic meanings that emerge in interactions and are attributed to situations over time" (Woods, 1992, p.355). For the focus of this study, namely the process of

the reconstruction of meaning amongst and by practising Catholic school principals, the symbolic interactionist paradigm allows for an exploration of held meanings amongst those involved in the dynamic process of meaning reconstruction. Thus, the perspective of symbolic interactionism allows for the distinct possibility, even probability, that meanings, understandings and perceptions, will change over time. This research project set out to provide "snapshots" of principals' beliefs at a given point in time. In this is both strength, namely the strength of detailed, exploratory analysis, and also limitation in that the development of attitude, meaning and sense of purpose amongst the subjects of the study is not traced beyond the specific time of the "snapshot".   In balance, however, it clearly takes into account the development of the subjects' meaning structure and acquired insight in the period of professional practice prior to this study.

The data were analysed using the constant comparative method. This allows for the structured and progressive reading and interpretation from questionnaire one and questionnaire two, as well as from the interviews and the researcher's own observations, honouring the framework for data analysis set out by Colaizzi (1978) and producing sufficiently detailed and mutually exclusive categories so as to permit further categorising as analysis progressed (Harney, 1997). This resulted in the formulation of categories and sub-categories of data and the eventual exploration of the interrelationships between and amongst the (sub) categories.

4.2   STRUCTURE OF THE PRESENTATION OF FINDINGS

Analysis of the first questionnaire generated six themes which formed the basis of the questions of the second participant questionnaire. The outcomes of the focus group discussions and interviews as well as the independent review are integrated as appropriate in both the presentation and discussion of findings, the latter following in Chapter Five. An overview of the presentation and analysis of findings of the research project within this chapter is given in Table 4.1.

Question 8 asked participants to sketch a diagrammatic representation of the way in which they perceived the relationship of their schools to their other parish structures and groups. This question was designed to assist participants to answer Question 9. The results of Question 9, therefore, subsume the responses to Question 8 are not given separately.

Table 4.1

Overview of Presentation and Analysis of Findings of the Research

4.1	Introduction
4.2	Structure of the Presentation of Findings
4.3	Findings from Questionnaire One: Q 1-4

    4.3.1   Quality of Community Spirit
    4.3.2   Holistic Educational Perspective

4.4	Findings from Questionnaire One: Q 5 & 6

    4.4.1   Community Spirit
    4.4.2   Concern for Quality of Educational Provision

4.5	Findings from Questionnaire One: Q 7

    4.5.1   Concern for Community and Quality of Educational Provision
    4.5.2   Catholic Schools and Evangelisation within the Context of a Decline of Participation in the Institutional Church

4.6	Findings from Questionnaire One: Q 9

    4.6.1   Complementality of School and Parish
    4.6.2   Separation of School and Parish

4.7	Further Findings from Questionnaire One: Gospel Values and Student Spirituality.
4.8	Summary
4.9	Findings from Questionnaire Two

Item One
    4.9.1   Analysis of Question 1.1
    4.9.2   Analysis of Question 1.2
    4.9.3   Analysis of Question 1.3

Item Two
    4.9.4   Analysis of Question 2.1
    4.9.5   Analysis of Question 2.2
    4.9.6   Analysis of Question 2.3

Item Three
    4.9.7   Analysis of Question 3.1
    4.9.8   Analysis of Question 3.2

Item Four
    4.9.9   Analysis of Question 4.1
    4.9.10 Analysis of Question 4.2

Item Five
    4.9.11 Analysis of Question 5.1
    4.9.12 Analysis of Question 5.2
    4.9.13 Analysis of Question 5.3
    4.9.14 Analysis of Question 5.4

Item Six
    4.9.15 Analysis of Question 6.1
    4.9.16 Analysis of Question 6.2
    4.9.17 7Analysis of Question 6.3

Item Seven
    4.9.18 Analysis of Question 7.1
    4.9.19 Analysis of Question 7.2
    4.9.20 Analysis of Question 7.3

4.3 FINDINGS FROM QUESTIONNAIRE ONE: Questions 1 to 4

In Questionnaire One, the first set of open–ended questions related to perceived purposes and strengths of the particular Catholic school of which the respondent was principal. These questions were:

> **Q1** What do you see as the main purpose of the Catholic school of which you are principal?
>
> **Q2** Why did you identify the above as the main purpose of your school?
>
> **Q3** What do you believe to be the current strengths of your school?
>
> **Q4** Why did you identify the above strengths?
>
> (The full text of Questionnaire One is found in the previous Chapter.)

The responses to these first four questions concerning goals and strengths of Catholic schools are presented together as there is overlap in the responses across the four questions. This is not unexpected as perceptions of goals and of strengths may tend to coincide, especially in organisations which are generally perceived to be successful. Two salient themes emerged in this first segment of the questionnaire. They are:

- The quality of community spirit;

- Holistic educational perspective in the Catholic school.

The first of these will now be presented.

4.3.1 Quality of Community Spirit:

The most frequently occurring theme in the responses to the first four questions related to the development and nurture of a sense of community within the Catholic school. This theme was mentioned in statements both of goals and of strengths. The quality of the community spirit in the school expressed in the nurturing of "right relationships" (#6/1) (where # indicates respondent number and/1, the first questionnaire) was typically seen as a focal point for the school. Representative responses are tabulated in Table 4.2.

Table 4.2

Questions 1-4

Theme: Examples of Responses Indicating Quality of Community Spirit

---

Questions 1 & 2:
Respondents indicated what they saw as the purpose of their schools:

- *"The facilitation of a real sense of community is … a vital role of the school"* (#1)
- *"I believe that community is the essence of schooling and a faith community the centrality of Catholic schools"* (#3)
- (The Catholic school is) "a living example of a faith community" (#6)
- *"The essential Christian message (is) Right Relationships"* (#6)
- (We strive to) "enable the students to create Christian community in their daily lives … the mission of Jesus was fundamentally to create community" (#10)
- "The great challenge I have in life is not to pursue comfort or privilege but (to) confront myself with community" (#17)

Questions 3 & 4:
Respondents indicated what they saw as the strengths of their schools:

- *"Well established lines of communication and good relationships within the community"* (#1)
- *"A strong sense of community spirit (and) good partnership(s) between home and school …The involvement of parents is evident across a range of areas – fundraising, committees, classroom learning etc … (there is) a good feeling about the place that we are moving forward, looking ahead and striving to achieve our goals"* (#4)
- *"Our supportive and involved parents; the celebrating community; the collaborative culture of our school community"* (#2)
- *"The openness and closeness of the community"* (#3)
- *"The collaborative approach to decision making"* (#6)
- *"Its smallness allows for the creation of community where individuals are known, valued and loved"* (#10)
- *"The fact that teachers show love and respect for children and children do the same in return"* (#14)
- *"Schools are about people and the people in this school community seem committed to it"* (#16)
- *"We are living a story of participation for all in the community"* (#17)

4.3.2 Holistic Educational Perspective:

Another strong theme within the responses to these four questions was that, both in terms of goals and strengths, education which was of a high standard and adopted a holistic perspective was valued highly by the responding leaders.

Representative responses are tabulated in Table 4.3.

Table 4.3

Questions 1-4
Theme: Holistic Educational Perspective

Questions 1 & 2:

Respondents indicated what they saw as the main purpose of their schools:

- "to provide children with a quality holistic education … schools exist to provide a good learning program (which) should be holistic – covering all areas of growth and development" (#4)

- *"to provide children with an holistic education (#5)*

- *"to educate, support and encourage students as they grow in development of holistic learning, (a) sense of purpose and positive self image" (#7)*

- *"to provide an education which allows students to develop in all aspects of what it means to be human" (#10)*

- *"to provide an education for our children that is both holistic and child centred" (#11)*

- *"to provide quality teaching and learning" (#15)*

- *"to offer a quality education in a catholic environment" (#16)*

Questions 3 & 4:
Respondents indicated what they saw as the strengths of their schools:

- "extensive curriculum offered" (#1)

- *"strong teaching and curriculum" (#8)*

- *"a holistic approach to the development of each student (and) the provision of a quality learning environment" (#9)*

- *"encouraging each child to develop their (sic) talents" (#12)*

4.4 FINDINGS FROM QUESTIONNAIRE ONE: QUESTIONS 5 AND 6

In Questionnaire One, the second cluster of questions (Q 5 and Q6) related to perceived challenges and problems facing the school and the reasons for nominating these issues.

> **Q5** What challenges / problems do you believe your school currently faces?

> **Q6** Why did you nominate the above?

4.4.1 Community Spirit:

Two main themes emerged from the responses which were consistent with those generated in the earlier questions. These were:

- the quality of Community Spirit

- a concern for Holistic Education

As in the case of the first four questions, the theme of community was taken up by a number of respondents. Representative responses are listed in Table 4.4.

Table 4.4

Questions 5 - 6
Theme: Quality of Community Spirit

Questions 5 & 6:
Respondents indicated what they saw as the challenges / problems facing their schools:
• *"Our school is growing at a rapid rate (increase of 100 for '99). Will we lose the beautiful community we have?"*
• *The school is 10 years old next year. It opened with 89 students and the community was REAL then because it had to do <u>everything</u>. We have to work on this community given the large growth and do so with a plethora of parent problems" (#2)*
• *"(A challenge is) trying to keep the focus on what's important and working together – communicating with each other in a more effective way … I need to improve my communication skills – staff and parents need to be more open and genuine in their relationships" (#4)*
• *"(A problem is) clamping down on possible rogue parent groups within the school setting" (#8)*
• *"Are we restricting certain sections of our society from this community? If so, our story is limited" (#17)*

4.4.2   Concern for Holistic Educational Provision:

A second theme which emerged consistently in questions 5 and 6 was that of a concern for the quality of holistic educational provision within the school, particularly in times of rapid change. Typical statements are set out in Table 4.5.

Table 4.5

Questions 5 - 6
Theme: Quality of Educational Provision

Questions 5 & 6:

Respondents indicated what they saw as the challenges / problems facing their schools:

- *"keeping abreast of curriculum development; maintaining a high level of all round (holistic) academic, social, physical, emotional, spiritual educational experiences for the students; keeping abreast of technological developments and using them as an appropriate classroom resource" (#1)*

- *"curriculum change and professional development; addressing literacy and numeracy deficits within staffing and financial resources constraints" (#7)*

- *"keeping pace with curriculum developments while building up a new school" (#8)*

- *"the move(ment) from a teacher being the source of all knowledge to a teacher being the facilitator of knowledge" (#14)*

4.5   FINDINGS FROM QUESTIONNAIRE ONE: Question 7

In Questionnaire One, the third category of responses was to Question 7:

> **Q7**   What do you think will be the main purpose of your school in 2010?

This question was designed to invite leaders to reflect on the imagined future of their Catholic schools, thus eliciting statements indicating what those principals envisaged as enduring or emerging meanings and purposes. Two previously common themes were evident in the responses. These were:

- a concern for Community

- a priority for Holistic Education

These will now be presented.

4.5.1 Community and Quality to Question 7: Educational Provision

Some responses to question 7 reiterated previously mentioned themes of community and quality of educational provision when speaking of the projected future purpose of the Catholic school. Responses incorporating these themes are given in Table 4.6.

Table 4.6

Question 7
Themes: Community and Quality of Educational Provision

Question 7:

Respondents were asked to indicate what they saw as the projected future purpose of their school:

- "Quality education in a catholic context which enhances community is a fundamental role of the Catholic school in any era" (#1)

- "I believe the classroom as we know it now is in its last throes (given advances in) technology (and the) move to home schooling" (#3)

- "… to provide a safe haven for children and their families, a place of security and belonging" (#4)

- "… the academic standards will need to be very high. Parents are more assertive!" (#12)

- "… to equip the children for the societal needs of an ever changing curriculum
    - education for leisure
        - huge emphasis on technology, social skills, parenting skills" (#13)

- "It will be necessary for children to become people with a well developed mind, a passion to learn and the ability to put knowledge to work" (#14)

- "… to have children value community to the point where they become children of promise rather than risk" (#17)

Summary

In summary, principals' responses to questions 1 - 7 generated two consistent themes in response to items which explored perceived purposes, strengths, challenges, problems and the projected future of Catholic schools. These themes were:

- The importance of community spirit;
- The priority of quality educational provision which was holistic in perspective.

The generation of these themes thus far is diagrammatically represented in Figure 4.1.
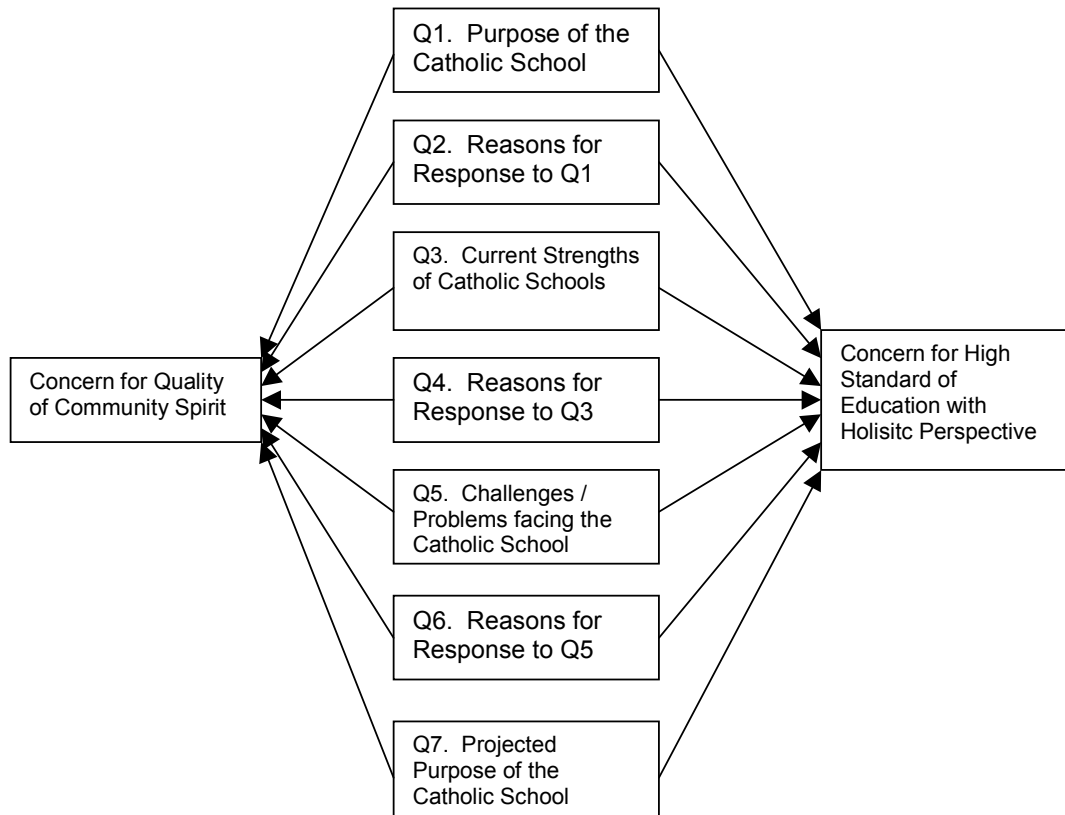
Figure 4.1

**Generation of Themes
Questions 1-7**

Further themes evident in responses to Question 7 are now presented.

4.5.2   Catholic Schools and Evangelisation within the Context of a Decline in Participation in the Institutional Church:

Two further interrelated themes emerged strongly in responses to Question 7. As school leaders reflected upon the future shape and purpose of their Catholic schools, several chose to do so in terms of (a) the relationship between the Catholic school of the future and the evangelising mission of the Church and (b) the Catholic school and its place in a changing ecclesial

landscape marked by the trend of decline of participation in the institutional church.

Some representative responses for Question 7 which addressed these themes are given below in Table 4.7.

Table 4.7

**Two Themes emerging from responses to Q7 :
Catholic schools and evangelisation
and Catholic schools in the context of declining
participation in the institutional Church**

Question 7:

- *"I think that given the declining practice of our faith, the school will be the major focus of the worshipping community of a parish, rather than the institutional church. Parents find comfort in our school community and many prefer our liturgical celebrations to that of the church. I think 'many' will change to 'most' by 2010" (#2)*

- *"(In 2010 the school will have) a large part to play in the Church's mission. (It) will be the point of Church contact for most families" (#4)*

- *"(The main purpose of the school in 2010 will be) education in the faith – evangelisation and catechising. (The) reason – we will have a continuously thinner quality of participants in regular liturgy and associated activities as society, time and work dissolves the family value system and we are seemingly the most viable centre of faith development" (#8)*

- *"If the trend of decline of participation in the institutionalised church continues until 2010, the Catholic school is going to be the dominant way in which the Church expresses community. Therefore, the main purpose of the catholic school in 2010 will be as one manifestation of Church" (#10)*

- *"With the decrease in Mass numbers, parishes are experiencing financial losses. Consequently, parishes are closing or amalgamating. More onus is being placed on Catholic schools to be the carriers of the Catholic faith. The 'parish' of 2010 will, I believe, be the School. Priests **must** start being a part of the School Community.*

- *"I believe that this Catholic school will be the main centre of Catholicity in this area because of the dwindling interest in the life of the parish and the unwillingness of the clergy to change their approach. Folk see more Christianity at work in the school than in the traditional parish setting. They are also losing faith in their priests and refuse to be dictated to as in the past. The laity are becoming more assertive!! In addition, more non Catholics will be choosing our schools for their children (this is already happening in this school)" (#12)*

- *"The school (in 2010) may well be seen as the real alternative to 'church' and this worries me as I am unsure of the ramifications of Catholic schools without commitment to parish" (#16)*

These same themes, revolving around the issue of the relationship between school and parish, were expanded upon in response to Question 9.

4.6   FINDINGS FROM QUESTIONNAIRE ONE: QUESTION NINE

Question 8 had asked participants to represent in diagrammatic form the perceived relationship of their schools to other parish structures. Question 9 asked participants to expand upon this perception.

Because it dealt with the ideal, the question allowed respondents to outline their aspirations for the parish school relationship:

> **Q9**   Ideally, how would you like to see the parish / school relationship in your context develop in the next ten years?

Two principal sets of responses emerged which outlined two distinct relational positions:

- a complementary relationship between school and parish;
- a separation of school and parish with the school being an evangelising agent either by choice or circumstance.

The first of these will now be presented.

4.6.1   Complementarity of School and Parish:

Responses to Question 9 which emphasised complementary of parish and school included in Table 4.8.

Table 4.8

Theme: Projected Complementary Relationship of School and Parish

---

Question 9:

- *"The parish and school will function as autonomous, yet complementary bodies which are the focus of the community. The parish and school will maintain the close relationship that currently exists and will share common core values and some goals … a common attitude of support for one another's individual goals will prevail" (#1)*

- *"(I would like to see the parish / school relationship) continue along the current lines of mutual respect, openness and ability to let each do what each does best … to continue to see Parish and school as one, each serving the other in faith and continually recognising that people will 'find' faith moments in both" (#3)*

- *"The relationship in this Parish is excellent. I see no areas in which the relationship needs to be improved. However, the wild card is the people in the positions (P.P., Principal, etc.). If these change, the relationship could also change" (#6)*

- *"(Ideally I would like to see the school and parish) continue a symbiotic relationship of co-existence that will develop a stronger inter-relational interdependence" (#8)*

- *"The school will always remain integral to the mission of the parish.*

- *There (will) continue to be a close link with the Parish Priest and Pastoral Associate in the life of the school" (#9)*

- *"(I would like to see the parish / school relationship develop) based on a mutually beneficial arrangement whereby working together and acknowledging the changed role of Catholic schooling the task of creating Christian community can be undertaken and community can take on different forms of expression" (#10)*

- *"I would like to see a common vision that looks forward not backward. At present we receive too much criticism from the old guard. In addition, we need to have come real sharing of ideas re finances … Actually, if we would take the finances out of the equation, the relationship would prosper" (#12)*

- *"My situation has evolved recently to the stage of financial independence (with) no parish financial support. The school and parish meet regularly and try to work together. We will continue to strive for stronger links and better understanding of each other. In ten years time I hope that the principal is not seen as the religious leader due to lack of priests and the lack of interest in 'church'" (#16)*

The contrasting view expressed, i.e. an expectation of separation between school and parish held by some participants, will now be presented.

4.6.2 Separation of School and Parish:

Some respondents saw parish and school as having increasingly discrete roles with, in some cases, the school becoming the chief evangelising agent of the local church rather than the parish. Earlier, in response to Question 2 which was related to the perceived purpose of the Catholic school, one respondent had foreshadowed this theme when he/she stated that:

> *Very few families have any connection with the parish. Perhaps 20% attend Sunday Masses. The only connection that these families have with their God and their faith is through the school. (#11/1)*

Some responses within this theme indicated that this separation of roles, whilst a reality, was not the ideal state of affairs and that the singular evangelising role of the school was one which had evolved not always by choice but by circumstance and should be undertaken with caution.

Four indicative responses to Question 9 are listed in Table 4.9.

Table 4.9

Theme: Projected discrete roles of school and parish

> **Question 9:**
>
> - *"Schools will become the 'face of Church' for many people – we may need to provide parents with spiritual experiences – liturgies, prayer groups, adult learning courses etc through the life of the school. This dimension of being increasingly more involved in this area will place additional pressure on Principals, A.P.R.Es and teachers as they still attempt to fulfil their teaching role as well as all the other demands placed on their time. Schools will need to be vigilant about not being the parish – doing all parish task / fulfilling parish roles – they are an absolute (sic) integral part but if they take on the role of parish in addition to the role of school (learning place) then people will become overloaded and burn out" (#4)*
> - *"I would hope … that the school (would) continue its evangelising of those who have fallen by the wayside in their faith practices or who are developing interest in being part of the Catholic community" (#5)*
> - *"I believe that the parish is in decline whilst the school is growing. Those going to Mass at (name of parish) are ageing. With the advent of 'Shaping and Staffing[2] of parishes, I hope the laity will become more involved in the running of the Catholic Parish" (#13)*
> - *"(I would hope to see) the priest … recognise that the school is a vital evangelising arm of the Church and to move theology, philosophy and other areas of thinking forward with the school to the 21st century" (#14)*

Further findings from Questionnaire One now follow.

Two other themes emerged from analysis of responses to Questionnaire One. They were evident in responses across a range of questions. These themes were:

    (a)   the significance of the context of values for the Catholic school

    (b)   the development of students' spirituality.

These interrelated themes will now be presented.

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[2] "Shaping and Staffing" is a review exercise undertaken in the Archdiocese of Brisbane to study administrative and pastoral structures into the future as population increases coincide with a decrease in clerical numbers.

4.7   GOSPEL VALUES AND STUDENTS' SPIRITUALITY

A theme evident in responses across a range of questions in the first questionnaire was that of the importance to leaders of the **context of values, often expressed as "Gospel values",** in which Catholic education takes place.   Responses incorporating this theme were found in most sections of Questionnaire One.   Indicative of several responses was the assertion that "what sets this school apart must be the Catholic ideals and values which form the basis of all that is done here" (#1).

Closely allied with this theme is that of the importance to leaders of the **development of the students' relationship with God** or spirituality.   One leader stressed the importance of "maintaining a high level of spiritual … experiences for the students" (#1) whilst another proposed the purpose of the Catholic school as providing "quality education in a faith context … it's the context in which it occurs which is critical" (#3).

Further representative responses which incorporated one or both of these interrelated themes across the first questionnaire are included in Table 4.10.

Table 4.10

All questions
Themes: Gospel values and students' spirituality

Respondents across the questionnaire spoke of the goals of their schools:

- *to provide "quality education in a faith context" (#3)*

- *"to provide children with a quality education … that is based on Gospel teachings and values … the dimension of faith should permeate all we do" (#4)*

- *"to provide children with an … education based on Gospel values (so that they) continue to reflect the joy and hope of faith filled individuals as they live out their lives in an effort to bring about the Kingdom of God here and now" (#5)*

- *"to educate, support and encourage students ... in the spirit of Gospel values - love, peace, justice" (#7)*

- *"to support and build upon the Catholic values of the parents" (#11)*

- *"to invite children … to develop a lasting relationship with their God" (#14)*

- *"to provide … an environment in which Gospel Values are explicitly taught and are implicit in all that takes place … I believe that it is adherence to Gospel Vales that makes the integration of special needs students such a positive feature of this school" (#15)*

- *"to offer a quality education in a Catholic environment that gives witness to Christian values" (#16)*

- *"to pursue what it means to be a community committed to Gospel values" (#17)*

Thus, across the questionnaire respondents reiterated the theme of the importance of the context of (gospel) values in the essential work of the Catholic school and the priority of the development of children's spirituality. These consistently presented themes warranted further exploration in Questionnaire Two.

4.8   Summary:

Analysis of the data from Questionnaire One generated six salient and consistent themes. These are listed in Figure 4.2
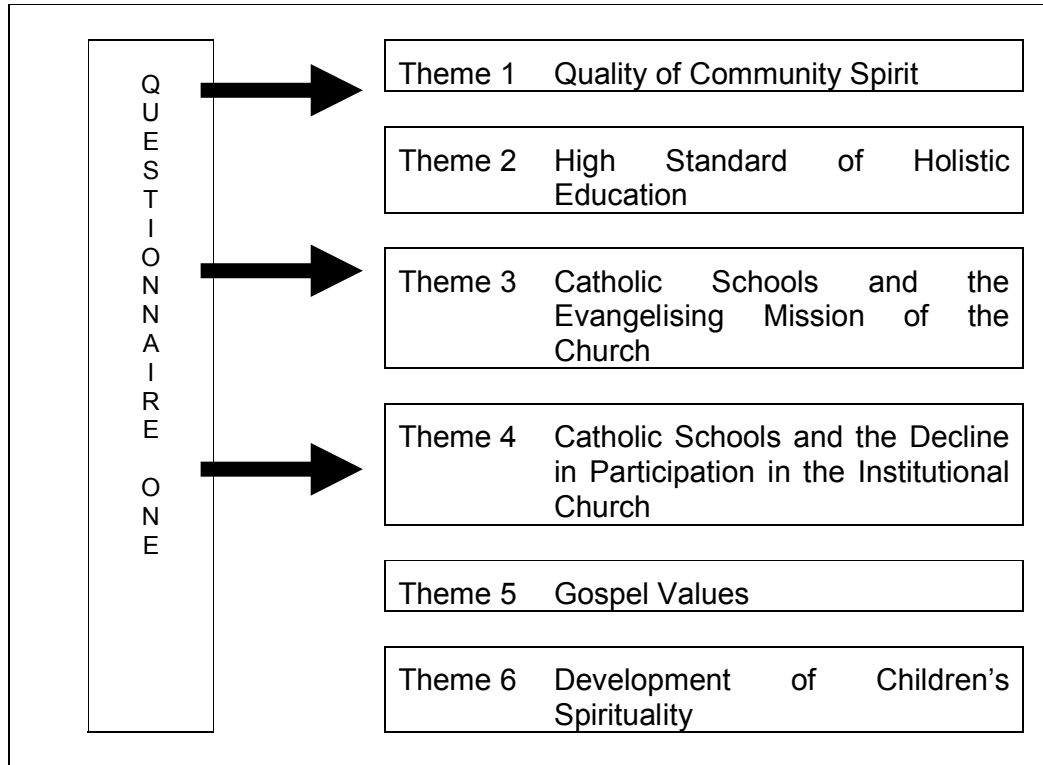
Figure 4.2

Generation of Themes: Questionnaire One

The frequency of response for each of these six themes across the questionnaire is given in Table 4.11.

Table 4.11

Questionnaire One: Summary of Response Themes and Frequency

Theme	Frequency
Quality of Community Spirit	39
High Standard of Holistic Education	31
Relationship Between the Catholic School and the Evangelising Mission of the Church	22
The Catholic School in the Context of Decline of Participation in Institutional Church	22
The Importance of Gospel Values	12
Development of Children's Relationship with God / Spirituality	6

These six themes were the basis for the development of Questionnaire Two. As outlined above in Chapter Three (3.5), a seventh theme, i.e. the development of staff spirituality, was added because the researcher wished to explore with principals an issue which is of significance within the context of a changing pastoral role for school leaders and staff. The thematic and conceptual development of Questionnaire Two is traced in Figure 4.3.
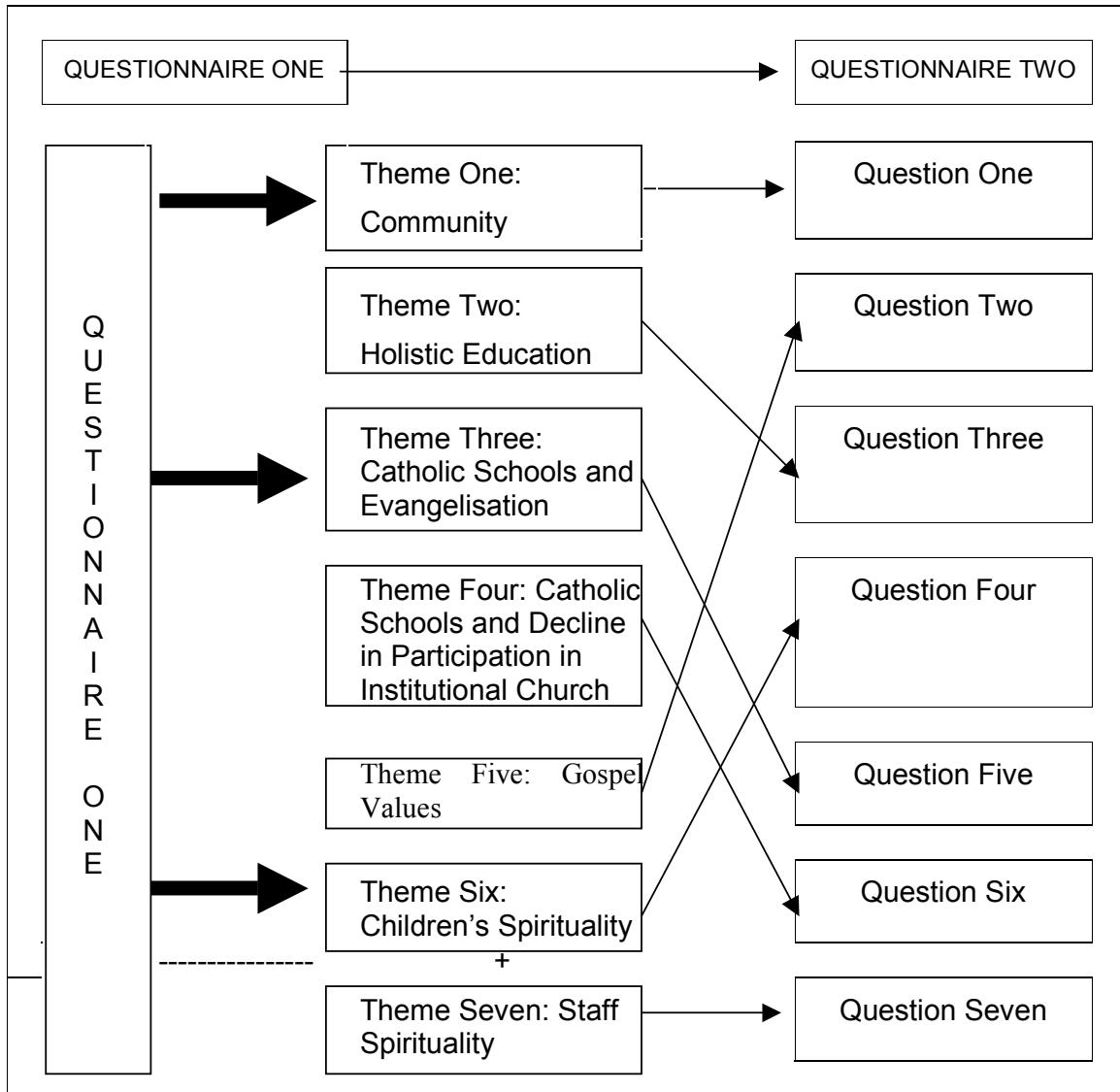
Figure 4.3

Thematic and Conceptual Development of Questionnaire Two

The questions in Questionnaire Two were arranged by the researcher into the final order in which they appeared as a result of the trialing of the instrument as described in section 3.6 and suggestions from those involved in the trial as to the most helpful ordering of the items in the questionnaire.

The full text of Questionnaire Two is found in Appendix One.

The presentation of findings from Questionnaire Two now follows.

4.9   FINDINGS FROM QUESTIONNAIRE TWO - QUESTION ONE

4.9.1   Analysis of Question 1.1:

The first item in Questionnaire Two contained three questions, about the features and characteristics of the **community of the Catholic school.**

The first question (1.1) related to the distinguishing features of the Catholic school community and asked:

> *What are the distinguishing features of a Catholic school*
>
> *as a community?*

Respondents nominated a total of thirty-eight (38) features. These are tabulated below in Table 4.12 in descending order of frequency.

Table 4.12

Responses to Question 1.1

Frequency	Response
15	Openness / Welcoming Attitude
15	Support: Being Present for Each Other
10	Care for Students and Parents
7	Support from Parents and Pastor
7	Partnerships with Parents
5	Friendliness
5	Spirit of Fun
5	Participation and Sense of Shared Ownership
5	Common goals and Common values
4	Compassion, Care and Concern
4	Collaborative Processes
3	Trust / Honesty
2	Spans Generations
2	Small Community Within Larger Parish
2	Parents / Children Approach Staff Over Issues
2	Community Gathers
2	Dedication of Staff
2	Awareness of Tradition
2	Work for Common Good
2	Security of Environment
2	Celebrate Together
2	Students Support and Respect Each Other
2	Diversity Fosters Unity
2	Respect for Others
1	Subsidiarity
1	Catholicity
1	Centred on "Gospel Values"
1	Small Rural Group
1	Absence of Demeaning Talk
1	Good Relationships with Parish
1	Smallness Promotes Familiarity
1	Desire for Excellence
1	Parents Comfortable in Discussions of Personal Issues
1	Prayer
1	Changing Vision and Language to Express It.
1	Challenging Parents to Discuss Church Issues
1	Listening
1	Working Together on Major Events

A further analysis of this data allows for the clustering of the responses into cognate groupings of perceived community characteristics. These are set out in Figure 4.4.
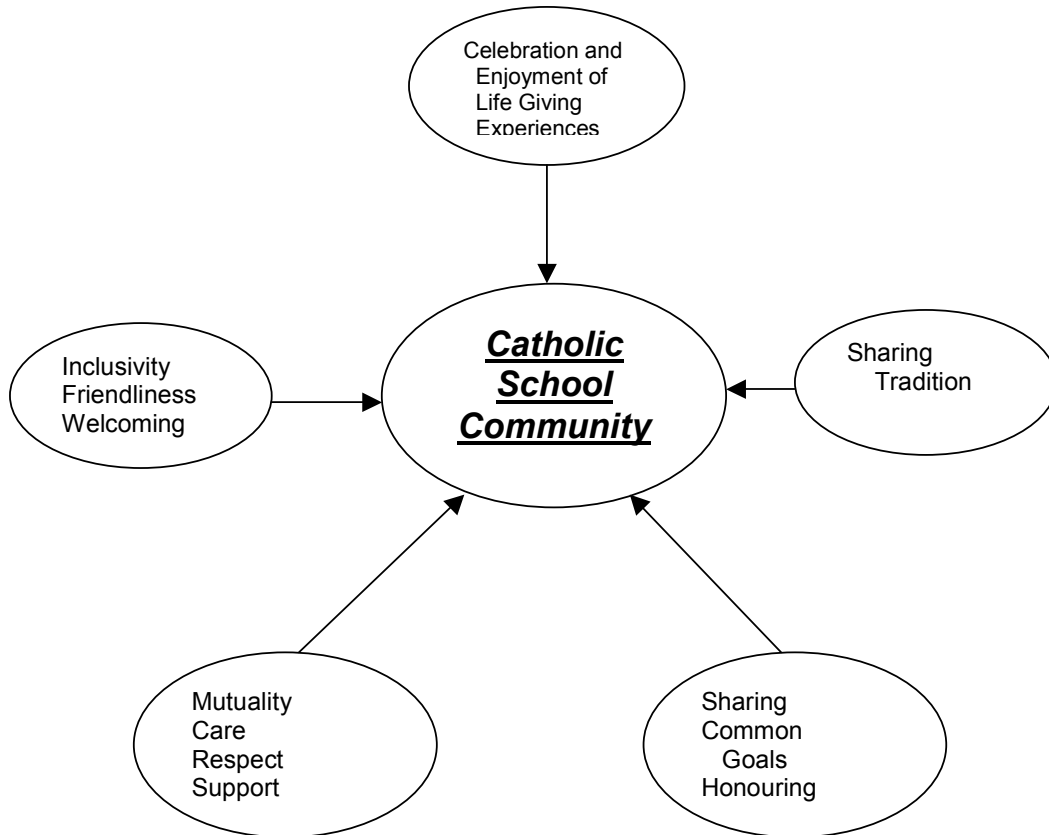
Figure 4.4

Clustering of Responses to Question 1.1

Summary:

In summary, question 1.1 had asked principals to nominate the distinctive features of Catholic school community. Analysis of the data shows that responses indicated the most commonly proposed characteristics may be expressed as:

- Inclusivity
- Mutuality
- Sharing of Common Goals and Aspirations
- Celebration of a Sense of Commonality
- Sense of Enjoyment of Life Giving Experiences

4.9.2 Analysis of Question 1.2

The second question (1.2) related to the criteria respondents used to judge the "health" of the spirit of their school communities and asked:

> *"On what criteria do you base your perception of a 'healthy' community spirit?"*

Respondents nominated a total of thirty-eight (38) criteria. These are tabulated below in Table 4.13 in descending order of frequency.

Table 4.13

Responses to Question 1.2

Frequency	Responses
17	Openness / Friendliness / Acceptance
11	Spirit of Joy: Feeling of "Well-Being"
6	Unity of Purpose and Commitment
5	Opportunities and Willingness for Involvement
5	Support from Staff for One Another
4	Challenging / Critiquing Values
4	Cohesiveness of Staff
4	Positive Feedback
3	Respect for Individual
3	Evangelisation Extends Beyond Formal Curriculum
3	Acceptance of Diversity and Difference
3	Empowering Climate
3	Maturity in Relationships
2	Authenticity and Honesty
2	Absence of Demeaning Tasks
2	Enlivening Atmosphere
2	Processes of Collaboration / Consensus
2	Shared Celebrations
2	Parents Relate Well to Staff
2	Low Absenteeism
2	Intangible Quality
2	Commitment to Task of Education
2	All Share Positive Values
1	Gather in Christ's Name
1	Care for Welfare of Others
1	Welcoming Physical Environment
1	Increasing Enrolment
1	Climate of Meetings eg. Board
1	School is Place of Learning
1	Trust in Professional Judgement of Educators
1	Respect
1	People Know Each Other
1	Results of Formal Review Process
1	Listening to Parents, Staff, Students
1	Prayer as Basis of Daily Routine
1	Success of Community Ventures
1	Preparedness to Evaluate and Asses Success / Effectiveness
1	Perception / Sense of Strength

A further analysis of this data allows the responses to be grouped into four (4) clusters. These are set out below in Figure 4.5.
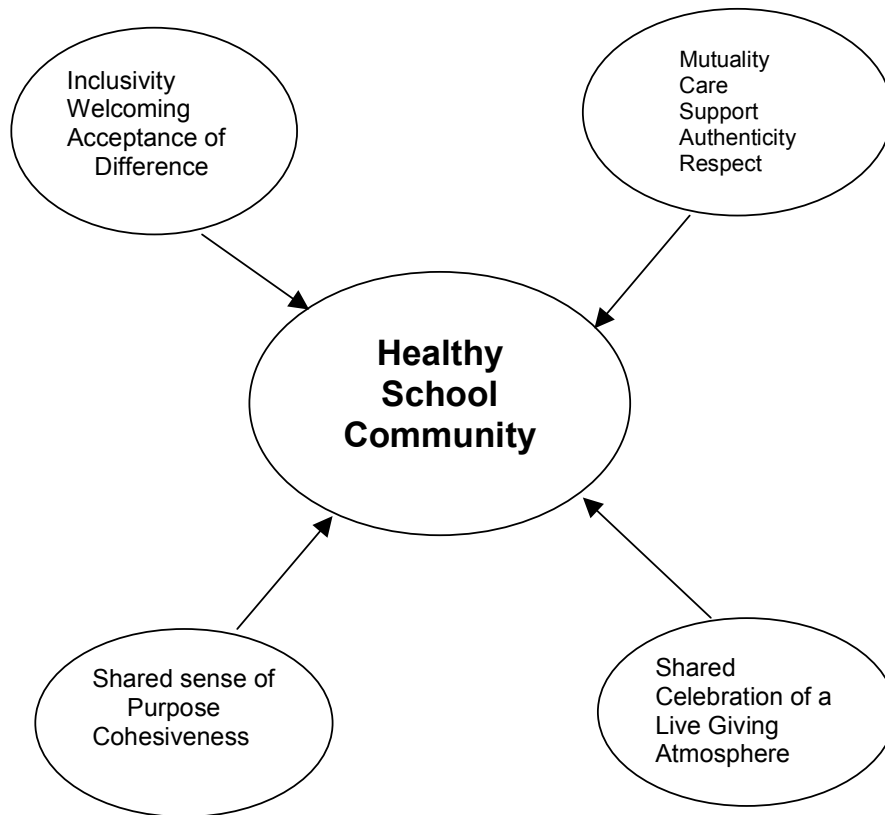
Figure 4.5

Clusters of Responses to Question 1.2

Summary:

In summary, by taking these grouped responses from questions 1.1 and 1.2, a combined table may be drawn up. Thus, by considering together, responses to questions 1.1 and 1.2 concerning features of a Catholic school community and the criteria for assessing its strengths, thematic alignments in responses may be discerned. These are indicated in Table 4.14.

Table 4.14

Thematic alignment of responses to Questions 1.1 and 1.2

Theme of Response	Combined Frequency
Responses Which Emphasised: • Mutual Support • Friendliness • Being Present for Each Other • Openness / Welcoming • Cohesiveness	53
Responses Which Emphasised: • Partnerships • Collaboration • Unity of Purpose / Shared Goals • Involvement / Commitment	32
Responses Which Emphasised: • Spirit of Fun / Enjoyment • Joyfulness	16
Responses Which Emphasised: • Care and Concern for Students and Parents • Sense of Compassion	14

Thus, it can be seen that the respondents offered a consistent perspective concerning both the distinctive characteristics of a strong Catholic school community and the criteria for measuring its 'health' or strength. Responses focused on the themes of inclusivity and mutuality, a shared sense of purpose and collaborative endeavour, a spirit of enjoyment and the praxis of personal care and respect.

4.9.3 Analysis of Question 1.3

The third question (1.3) related to the sustenance of the community spirit of

the Catholic school and asked:

How do you build and nurture this spirit of community in your school?

Twenty-nine (29) different responses were received. These are shown in

Table 4.15 below

Table 4.15

Responses to Question 1.3

Frequency	Response
10	By listening
8	By modelling community
7	By celebrating together
7	By informing / communicating
6	By sharing "power with" rather than having "power over"
6	By having an "open door" policy in the office
5	Through openness and inclusivity
4	By being available
4	By developing right relationships
4	By encouraging every staff member
3	Through links with the wider community
3	By sharing responsibility
3	Through social activities
3	Through authenticity
3	By just and challenging leadership
3	By celebrating achievements
3	By positive leadership
2	By challenging destructive forces
2	By attending functions / being "visible"
2	Through managing challenges of a wide / diverse catchment area
2	By attention to fundamentals
1	Through openness to ideas
1	Through a reflective ability
1	By modelling servant leadership
1	By promoting central / core values
1	By the staff being known individually to parents
1	By creating a happy environment
1	By approaching individuals to be involved
1	By keeping a sense of "life beyond school" - not sole focus

Further analysis of these twenty-nine (29) responses allows for the emergence of three clusters of responses. These clusters include responses which emphasise :

- ❖ **Openness**
  - Listening
  - Communicating
  - Availability

- ❖ **Modeling of Communitarian Behaviours**
  - Right relationships
  - Power sharing
  - Authenticity

- ❖ **Celebration of shared experience**

Summary:

In summary, question 1.3 had asked school leaders how they nurture the spirit of community in the schools they lead. The responses from the participants indicated that leaders placed priority in this regard upon a spirit of openness, the modelling of communitarian behaviours and a practice of shared celebration of achievement and success.

4.9.4   Analysis of Question 2.1

The second item in Questionnaire Two addressed the matter of **Gospel values** which had emerged as a salient theme in Questionnaire One. Item Two contained three questions. The first of these asked :

> *What do you understand by the term "Gospel values" for a Catholic school?*

Respondents offered twelve (12) different responses. The most frequent response (f = 19) related to defining the term "Gospel values" in terms of foundational values as expressed in the life of Jesus. Typically, respondents stated that: "We try to act out the example given by Jesus in serving one another in truth, justice and love" (#2) or that: "(We) use the Christian ideals to measure ourselves against in a positive way" (#5). Others defined the term: "Gospel values are the means by which we show 'love for one another'. They encompass all of what Jesus taught" (#8) or as:... "the values espoused by Jesus and clarified in Paul's letters" (#14) or as… "the basic values espoused by Christ and related in the Gospels" (#17) or yet further:… "the values which were evident in the public ministry of Jesus as detailed in the Gospels" (#22);… "the underlying and basic values that Christ demonstrated, taught and lived - reflected through the Gospel writers" (#38).

Two (2) respondents expressed reservations about the term, one describing it as "an overused term that is not specific enough to Catholic schools" (#12) whilst another asserted that it is "a generic term which is used broadly and in

the end means little or has such diverse understandings (held) by the people who use it that it becomes meaningless" (#28).

The remaining responses all had a frequency of one (1) and generally asserted the foundational nature of "Gospel values" for the Catholic school e.g. (Gospel values are)…" the basic foundation stones which underlie everything that goes on in the school" (#41); or for the home e.g. (Gospel values are) "those values you would hope were in each family home - love, understanding, forgiveness, respect for others and self" (#34); or aligned the term with the central Christian principle of love e.g. "All values that lead to living the 'great commandment' of love are considered gospel values" (#44).

In summary, question 2.1 had asked leaders to give their understanding of the term 'Gospel Values'. It may be seen that, notwithstanding the cautions of two respondents, most responses expressed an understanding of "Gospel values" as being founded upon the life and example of Jesus Christ as recorded by the evangelists. Responses also expressed an appreciation of the foundational nature of those values for the life of the Catholic school.

4.9.5   Analysis of Question 2.2

Question 2.2 asked respondents to nominate those Gospel values which they felt were pertinent to the Catholic school:

> *Which Gospel values do you find particularly important in the Catholic school you lead?*

The responses offered a list of forty-four (44) virtues or qualities in this item. The five most frequent are listed in table 4.16 below.

Table 4.16

Responses to Question 2.2

Frequency	Response
21	Love
16	Equity / justice
13	Respect for the individual
5	Truth / Integrity
4	Kindness

It can be seen that the responses assert the primary place of the virtues of love, equity, justice and respect as Christian or Gospel Values. This response is in accord with the responses to Question One which addressed the distinctive features of the Catholic school community and its development as seen above.

4.9.6   Analysis of Question 2.3

The third question in item two sought to discover how Catholic school leaders saw the nominated values being lived in the general life of the school: How are these Gospel values expressed daily in the Catholic school you lead?

Respondents offered thirty-six (36) different responses. Two themes were prominent in the range. The first concerned the quality of relationships in the school (f = 18) and the second focused on the role of prayer and liturgy in fostering Gospel values (f = 5). All other responses had a frequency of either two or one. Representative responses related to the first major theme are found in Table 4.17.

Table 4.17

Representative Responses to Question 2.3

Respondents were asked to nominate ways in which Gospel values were expressed in their schools: • *"in the way we talk to, listen to and treat one another - even in times of conflict" (#29)*   • *"through the way we relate at a personal, social and systems level" (#26)*   • *Student - student, student - staff and staff – staff interactions should all bespeak these values" (#24)*   • *"by how we speak to and react with others in the playground, in the classroom, in the staffroom" (#8)*   • *"by the way we treat other people and the environment … build community and solve problems" (#21)*

The second dominant theme, the role of prayer and liturgy in the expression of Gospel values, found expression in responses which stated that Gospel values were expressed "through prayer for all to begin the day" (#34); through "prayer and liturgy" (#29); "through our prayer life" (#9) or through "liturgies open to others" (#2).

QUESTION THREE

4.9.7   Analysis of Question 3.1

Item 3 addressed the area of **holistic education**, further exploring one of the salient themes from Questionnaire One. There were two (2) questions in this item. The first asked administrators to express their understanding of the term "holistic education" seeking a clarity as to how the term is used in expressions of the goals of Catholic schooling:

What do you understand by the term "holistic education"?

Respondents offered a total of nineteen (19) responses. Two responses scored above a frequency of two. These described "holistic education" in terms of

- the development of the child in all areas to the best of his/her ability (f = 13);

- or in terms of the provision of opportunities for success for students (f = 5).

These two will now be presented.

The Global Development of the Child

Within the first category, responses described the term "holistic education" as "the development of the child in all areas to the best of their *[sic]* ability, cognitive, emotional, spiritual, physical" (#1) or as "physical, emotional, social and spiritual education" (#2); "(the) development of the whole person, physical, emotional, intellectual, spiritual and social" (#4); "it means addressing all aspects of a child's life - not just academics and sport but also health, spirituality, human relationships, self-esteem, etc" (#9); "attending to or nurturing all the dimensions of a person through quality teaching, spiritual, affective, physical, cognitive (and) emotional" (#40). These samples typified the 13 responses in this category.

Provision of Opportunities for Success for Children

The second group (f = 5) aligned "holistic education" with the provision of opportunities for success for children. These responses included the following:

> *"Everyone has strengths and weaknesses - education should ensure that each child gets the opportunity to experience success in their area of strength" (#17);*
>
> *"(Holistic education involves) providing a 'balance' so everyone can achieve at least somewhere" (#34); or*
>
> *"(Holistic education acknowledges) the ability of every child to succeed and be a successful student by giving the student a sense of ownership, a sense of belonging, a sense of commitment" (#35)*

4.9.8   Analysis of Question 3.2

The second question in item 3 related to discovering or naming those processes which assisted in the achievement of holistic educational practices in Catholic schools:

> *How do you achieve holistic educational practices in the school you lead?*

Thirty-five (35) different responses were recorded.   The most frequent response (f = 20) held that holistic educational practices were linked to addressing the spectrum of areas of students' development consciously and deliberately in structured programs, for instance "by developing appropriate work programs that enshrine this goal and then fostering their use in all classes" (#24) or through "a conscious check on curricular / co-curricular aspects of school life to ensure holistic education" (#33).   One response spoke of the need for a definite rationale for holistic education (#46) within the curriculum whilst another proposed the importance of "explicitly naming and highlighting what used to be called the 'hidden curriculum'" (#22).

Other responses included the following:

> *"(We) try to address (holistic educational aims) through curriculum development, (the) school pastoral worker, learning support, initiatives such as athletics skills development for all" (#32)*

> (or through)

> *"vertical curriculum to cater for all areas of development and extra-curricular activities - sport, discos, music, drama" (#29)*

In the second most common theme (f = 8), respondents highlighted the importance of positive relationships with students in the achievement of holistic educational goals.   Representative responses are given in Table 4.18.

Table 4.18

Question 3.2
Responses emphasising positive relationships with students

- *"Relationships with students reflect our belief that each person is multifaceted and should be acknowledged as such" (#17)*

- *"(We) encourage teachers to develop appropriate relationships with students so they can see them as 'whole' people not just students" (#22)*

Holistic educational goals were seen as being achieved by:

- *"valuing students individually (and) working with all to reach their own potential, rather than putting them into some competitive environment" (#24)*

- *"by looking at each child as an individual and dealing with his / her strengths and weaknesses" (#13)*

- *"by knowing the child … so that their (sic) needs are met" (#37)*

Summary:

In summary, two sets of responses were given to question 3.2 concerning the means of achieving holistic educational practices. These related firstly to the importance of deliberately structured programs which addressed the spectrum of children's developmental areas and secondly, to the significance of positive relationships with students in their holistic growth.

4.9.9   Analysis of Question 4.1

The fourth item in Questionnaire Two addressed the area of children's relationships with God, or spirituality, thus developing a major theme from Questionnaire One. This item contained two questions. The first explored how leaders fostered the achievement of the goal of developing children's relationship with God:

How do you work towards this goal?

Responses proposed three main avenues for the achievement of this goal. These were:

- Prayer and spiritual experiences   (f = 28)
- Modelling of personal authenticity   (f = 22)
- The school's Religious Education program   (f = 11)

The first of these will now be presented.

Prayer and Spiritual Experiences

The most common cluster of responses (f = 28) proposed prayer and spiritual experiences as the most effective way of fostering children's spirituality. A typical response promoted the effectiveness of "encouraging quality liturgical celebrations, prayer and ritual on a whole school or small group basis" (#21) whilst another emphasised the importance of "encouraging staff to have daily prayer times with students" (#23). One response nominated "prayer as a central part of school life" (#29) whilst

another underlined the importance of "praying openly as a school community" (27) and another emphasised the importance of "nurtur(ing) a personal sense of spirituality by having frequent times to experience and reflect" (#17). One principal pointed to the importance of "visit(ing) classes for morning prayer and pray(ing) with them" (#44).

Modeling of Personal Authenticity

This final reference leads to mention of the second most frequent response to item 4.1 (f = 22). This cluster of responses spoke of the significance of modelling of personal authenticity on the part of leaders and staff in developing children's spirituality. One principal observed: "I share my spirituality and understandings with them and they accept them well" (#2). Another stressed the importance for children's spirituality of the leader / teacher having a "strong personal relationship (with God) first so that the children can 'see' the base of our reasoning (and of) teachers living the Gospel values and enforcing them" (#8). Another principal highlighted the importance of "trying to model a personal relationship with God for staff and children" (#16) whilst another spoke of "modelling a sense of respect for the sacred" (#18). Authenticity of action was seen as critical in developing children's spirituality, with one principal observing that leaders authenticate their words "through our 'being', hopefully in all we do and say" (#33) whilst another wrote of the importance of "working hard at making our practice match our rhetoric" (#38).

Religious Education Program

The third most frequent cluster of responses (f = 11) proposed the importance of the school's Religious Education program in supporting the child's spirituality. One respondent proposed the importance of "thoughtful research and presentation of Religious Education to the children" (#8) whilst another reported that "a lot of time and effort is put into teaching, planning and resourcing of Religious Education" (#9). The Religious Education syllabus documentation for the Archdiocese of Brisbane was acknowledged by one respondent:

> *Religious Education Guidelines are excellent in promoting a sense of children understanding faith practices (#19)*

The school's own Religious Education Program (developed from these Guidelines) was referred to by another:

> *Emphasis on the school Religious Education program (stresses that it is) not only an academic pursuit but also a way of life (#21)*

This cluster of responses generally agreed on the importance of "keeping Religious Education as a focal Key Learning Area (K.L.A.)" (#27) in the development of children's spirituality.

Thus, in summary, three sets of responses were received to question 4.1 which asked how leaders fostered the development of children's relationship with God. These proposed firstly, the significance of prayer and spiritual experiences in this regard; secondly, the importance of the example of personal authenticity in teachers and in others and thirdly, the role of the school's Religious Education program in this regard.

4.9.10 Analysis of Question 4.2

The second part of Question 4 (4.2) sought data concerning difficulties in or challenges to the fostering of children's spirituality.

A total of 25 clusters of responses were offered. The most frequently given were :

- Lack of home support   (f = 24)
- Lack of staff support   (f = 10)
- Impact of the secular environment   (f = 10)
- Students opposition to spirituality   (f = 8)
- Pressure of time   (f = 8)

The first of these will now be presented.

Lack of Home Support

The most frequent response (f = 24) nominated a lack of home support or even antipathy as the main barrier to the nurturing of children's spirituality. Some representative responses are given in Table 4.19

Table 4.19

Question 4.2
Barriers to Children's Spirituality : Lack of Home Support

- *"Some parents do not see the value of Religious Education. Values which are cherished and pushed at school are not supported at home" (#46)*

- *"Parents are not prepared to pray with their children" (#44)*

- *"(Barriers include) the cynical view of many parents towards religion" (#43)*

- *"Families … do not practise their faith outside of school life" (#42)*

- *"The 'me' generation which many homes seem to be breeding makes it difficult at times to get the message … across" (#41)*

- *"Some parents see school as being solely about academic development - That prayer stuff's O.K. but it's not the most important thing" (#38)*

- *"For some children school is the only place they encounter God - how do we make the impact strongly enough for that to be life long without the support of family?" (#37)*

- *"Parents commenting on a 'poor' result on a report re religion have been known to utter:*
  'Don't worry about that God stuff; it won't get you a job' (#25)

- *"(Barriers include) parents' lack of understanding of what is being done / taught. Some have not had a 'good Church experience' themselves though they do not want their (children) at a State school" (#8)*

Lack of Staff Support

The second most frequent response (f = 10) named a lack of staff support as a barrier to children's spiritual growth. Respondents spoke of an "ambivalence of some staff towards this emphasis (on spiritual growth)" (#4) and a "cynicism in some quarters, sometimes in key staff members, that undermines positive attitudes (to spirituality)" (#11). One respondent referred to "poor role models in teachers" (#21) whilst another questioned the "commitment of some staff" (#29) and another cited the "lack of faith of teachers" (#31) as an obstacle to the development of children's spirituality.

Impact of the Secular Environment

A third set of responses to this question (f = 10) related to the impact of the secular environment on the growth of children's spirituality. One respondent referred to "society's growing apathy and even antagonism towards religion in general (and) Catholicism in particular" (#14) whilst another spoke of the "modern day 'god' of science where everything has to be seen and known to be believed" (#21) or of the "faith in scientific explanation of all parts of daily life" (#22). In this connection, the impact of the media was noted by several respondents. It was claimed that because of "media factors, children are losing their childhood too soon. They are being exposed to information they are not ready for emotionally" (#19) whilst another claimed that "media and societal pressures on kids and their families militate against (the development of spirituality)" (#24). One respondent named "values bombarding children and staff from society, especially the media" as inimical to the growth of spirituality (#29) whilst another saw the same effect from "lower moral standards of television etc" (#42).

Students' Opposition to Spirituality

The next ranked response (f = 8) concerned the opposition of the students themselves to spirituality. Respondents typically spoke of "the age of the students … and their attitudes to Church and all things associated with Church and belief" (#4) and "rejection by children of parental values" (#27) or of "children who are very vocally opposed to anything religious" (#40).

Pressure of Time

Another set of responses (f = 8) related to the pressure of time which minimised the "space and time (available) for reflection and connecting" (#7). It was suggested by one respondent that this was because "schools tend to be action rather than reflection orientated" (#20) and by another, that the barriers lay in the "increasingly complex curriculum – the already crowded curriculum" (#35). For one respondent, the problem of time was mixed with a sense of professional inadequacy: "the pressure of work and your own human failure" (#36).

4.9.11   Analysis of Question 5.1

The fifth item in Questionnaire Two related to the relationship of school and parish and sought to explore this significant issue raised in Questionnaire One. Beginning with a statement that principals had spoken of their "sense of the school as the chief, if not only, point of contact for most families with the Church," the item went on to pose four questions. The first of these focused on the changing role of the school leader in this context:

> *Question 5.1*   *If the above theme resonates with you, how do you sense a changing role for you as a principal given the changing patterns of practice and affiliation of families with the broader Church*?

Twenty-two (22) different themes emerged in the responses. Three were prominent :

- The principal's assumption of formerly clerical roles (f = 20);
- The school as a place of invitation to ecclesial experience (f = 12);
- Necessity of closer links between school and parish (f = 6).

These will now be presented.

The Principal's Assumption of Formerly Clerical Roles

The most frequent response (f = 20) centred on the trend for the principal to assume leadership roles which had previously been seen as the province of the priest / pastor with attendant implications for the Catholic school with one respondent noting that he/she had a "sense (of being) Community leader at times" whilst "families look to the school for guidance, a listening ear,

someone they can trust with their individual stories" (#23).   One typical response summarised the theme:

> *The principal and school (have) become the source of knowledge and practice in things Catholic. Where formerly the priest provided opportunities in the parish and the religious assisted him, the school now is provider. (#24)*

One principal viewed the role as "very much a community-of-faith leader" (#26) whilst another proposed that the changing ecclesial context "reaffirms the central role of Principal as a 'faith leader'. Principals are (along with the other lay ministers) the new co-teachers" (#43).   One principal remarked that:

> *I am … the only contact many have with "Church".*
> *I now lead the most significant Catholic community in the eyes and lives of many of our families.   (#44)*

This view was supported by another respondent who observed that: "Priests are no longer present in the parish. Schools are the visible Church" (#35). Another respondent, whilst expressing the changing situation in structural terms, noted that, "as the numbers of men and women (priests and nuns) at the 'top' of the Church's hierarchy dwindle, I sense that principals are sometimes forced to rise toward the top of the hierarchical tree" (#21).

One respondent summarised his / her perspective in relational terms:

> *Many parents establish a relationship of respect and trust with the Principal and see him / her as a faith leadership figure. Sometimes they have not established a similar relationship with the Pastor whom many only see as a celebrant of liturgy. (#38)*

The relational theme was reiterated by another respondent:

> *The principal's role is and has been in a process of change over the past ten years. The acceptance of the laity's role in the Church has meant that the principal is now seen as a point of contact regarding faith and matters of morals and as such is a voice with strength in the sense of a broader Church. (#8)*

In general, respondents believed that the principal has come to be seen as the "community leader" (#23) or "a liaison person now but this could become the only contact for some families with Church" (#34) since "schools are the visible Church" (#35).

The School as a Place of Invitation to Ecclesial Experience

A second cluster of responses (f = 12) focused upon the theme of the school's being a place of evangelisation or invitation, offering a positive experience of Church, with implications for the role of the principal.

One respondent remarked:

> *If one believes that the community is relating to school as the main Church contact then the principal's role is very serious and requires the principal to take the opportunity to evangelise where he / she can. (#36)*

Another spoke of the "greater responsibility for ensuring the community experience of Church is positive" (#4) whilst another emphasised the importance for "parent contact to be of high priority" (#10). One response saw it as the school's responsibility to "give children the opportunity to experience 'Church' in a way that is relevant yet not losing sight of the traditions of the Catholic faith" (#13) and another spoke of "presenting the Church and its role and mission in a positive way and trying to make this 'positive' contagious" (#16) while another advocated the "need to resonate a

257

hopeful vision of the Catholic Church" (#39) because, in the words of another respondent, "school is community, where for many, parish is not. This means school needs to teach caring for others, specialness of belonging, responsibility to others. For many, parish no longer exemplifies this" (#41). The same response asserted:

> *School has to promote 'modern' Church - some parishes*
> *(are) still catering for 50s Church. This is not of value to*
> *the younger Catholics of today. (#41*

Necessity of Closer Links between School and Parish

A final cluster of responses (f = 6) centred on the theme of the necessity to build closer links between school and parish in the light of changing roles and patterns of Church affiliation. "As many (children)", one respondent remarked, "are from non-practising families, the support of the school is essential in bringing these families into closer parish contact" (#2). Another response stated that the principal saw his / her role "as encouraging the parish to use the school as a means for providing parish activities eg. family groups, prayer groups" (#6). One respondent grounded the relationship missiologically by stating that "the school is a part of the Mission of the Church" (#17) whilst another regarded the attachment of some families to school rather than parish and asked: "Is it only a stepping stone to true membership of the Church and so with God?" (#32)

Question 5.1 had asked Principals to describe their perception of their changing role as Catholic school principals in the context of changing patterns of affiliation with the Church. In summary, three (3) themes were present in the responses. These were:

258

- The principal's assumption of formerly clerical roles;

- The school as a place of invitation to ecclesial experience;

- Necessity of closer links between school and parish.

An explanation of these three themes has been given above.

4.9.12 Analysis of Question 5.2

Question 5.2 related to principals' perceptions of difficulties intrinsic to the changing patterns of Church affiliation:

What are the challenges for you in these developments?

This question evoked the most disparate set of responses for the whole questionnaire with a total of 38 different responses being offered from the 47 participants with no discernible pattern of significant clustering.

Four responses nominated it as a challenge "to accept that these changes are occurring in the Church" (#30) and that it "involves a mindshift from 'me' as principal / teacher / educator to 'me' as principal / educator / minister" (#32).

Four responses also nominated the challenge of finding time to embrace an expanding role in an already demanding job. No other clear pattern or direction emerged.

4.9.13 Analysis of Question 5.3

Question 5.3 sought participants' views on reasons for changing patterns of religious practice:

> *What do you see as the causes of these changes in practice and church affiliation?*

Two chief clusters of responses emerged. These were:

- A perception of the irrelevance of the Church (f = 21);
- Social pressures militating against religious practice (f = 16).

These will now be presented.

A Perception of the Irrelevance of the Institutional Church

The first cluster of responses (f = 21) highlighted a sense amongst respondents of a parental perception of the Church as irrelevant. One participant observed that "the Church is out of touch with modern society and doesn't fulfil people's needs" (#9) whilst another saw the problem in "the lack of Church keeping up with society's changes" (#10). Other typical responses alleged that "the Church has been slow to pick up on … social needs and practices" (#12) or claimed a "lack of relevance to the life of most (people)" (#15) or an "irrelevance of clergy and liturgical celebrations" (#19). Continuing the theme of the perception of the Church's lack of alignment with current issues, another respondent remarked that, "the response of the hierarchical Church to contemporary issues appears to many to be out of

touch - irrelevant and paternalistic" (#20) perhaps because, in another participant's view, "traditional Church holds little attraction for our 'post-modern' citizens" (#22). One participant suggested that the Church's, "rituals, language and symbols do not resonate with people's experiences" (#26) whilst another proposed that the "Church needs to ask itself: 'Where did we lose the plot?'" (#33). Moreover, whilst one respondent asserted that, "the educated Catholic community will no longer accept myth and folklore" (#44) another saw the central identifying celebration of the community, the Eucharist, as "boring, irrelevant and repetitive" (#46).

A parallel theme was taken up by two respondents who referred to the "perception (that) you don't need to go to 'church' to be a good Catholic … that living Christian ideals and values does not need regular Church attendance" (#37) or that, "while belief in God may still be strong, people feel able to worship God or acknowledge their beliefs in less traditional ways" (#40).

Social Pressures Militating Against Religious Practice

The second most popular cluster of responses centred on the syndrome of social pressures which deter people from regular practice of their faith. Sixteen (16) respondents named factors ranging from affluence, to work pressures, to a social preeminence of individualism over community (#14), to a generic sense of "a change of social practices" (#18) as causes of a change in practice and Church affiliation.

Subsidiary Factors

Six (6) participants nominated each of three other factors effecting changing patterns of Church affiliation. These were:

- A perceived ecclesial model of 'power over' people (f = 6);

- The decline in the numbers of clergy (f = 6);

- The demise of the parish as a social centre for many people (f = 6).

The first cluster of responses referred to "the Church maintaining 'power over' when most people now recognise 'power with' as the more acceptable approach" (#1) or saw Catholic schools as "teaching 'power with' (whilst) the Church still (practised) 'power over'" (#10). One participant offered an historical perspective:

> *People of today do not see Church as it was in 1950s/60s. However, many Church leaders (Parish Priests, Parish Pastoral Councils) are still operating from that model. Church in the 50s saw people as serving the Church. I feel the major change now is that people want the Church to serve the people. There lies the problem. (#41)*

The second cluster of responses named "the practical cause of (a) shortage of priests" (#8) as related to changing patterns of Church affiliation. In short, these respondents saw that "practice has been forced to change by ever declining clergy numbers" (#24).

The third group of responses relating to the shift away from the parish as a stable social centre for families is typified by the observation that:

> *Families are "shopping around to find a Church" experience that suits them. There is no longer any affiliation with the local Church - no loyalty. (#35)*

Another respondent noted that, "for many, the Church or parish structure is no longer a priority in their life and relationships" (#36) while another saw that "the Church no longer plays a central role in many families' lives" (#40). One participant drew an association between familial mobility and the demise of parochial bonds:

> *The widespread availability of cars has dramatically impacted on the old parish concept. Once people gained mobility from cars, they were free to "shop around" for their place of worship. The old close bonds to a parish began to disappear. (#24)*

In a summative statement one respondent observed that "social life is not based around a parish anymore; 'community' looks very different" (#13).

It is worthy of note that, in reprise of responses particularly to item 1 and item 5.1 above, two participants recorded their observation that, in relation to the issue of causes of changes in patterns of Church affiliation, "the school gives people a sense of community and belonging that the parish lacks" (#30) and that the "sense of belonging … comes more readily in the school setting because of all the other activities and connections involved than it does in the broader parish setting" (#38).

Question 5.3 had asked participants to identify reasons for changing patterns of religious practice amongst families of the school community. In summary, five main reasons were advanced. These were, as outlined above :

- A perception of the institutional Church as irrelevant to the lives of people;
- A network of social pressures which militate against regular practice;
- The Church's perceived *modus operandi* of 'power over' rather than 'power with';
- Decline in the numbers of ordained clergy;
- Demise of the parish a social centre for families.

4.9.14 Analysis of Question 5.4

The fourth question in Item 5 posed the issue of support structures for school leaders in a time of foundational and relational change and asked:

What support would you look for in fulfilling your changing role as a principal?

Nineteen clusters of answers were returned. Two major themes emerged. The first of these (f = 9) related to the need for appropriate professional development for the principal in changing leadership circumstances. One typical comment stated that, "it is important that the changing role is not just 'assumed' but one a person is prepared for" (#8) whilst another stressed the need for "excellent inservice to keep abreast of what needs to be known and done in the situation" (#24). One respondent called for "the clearer acknowledgment of this shift and ongoing professional development to maximise this outstanding, challenging position (ie. leadership)"(#36).

A second major theme (f = 10) clustered around the need for greater administrative time for the leader in the present situation. A typical comment will suffice for present purposes:

> *If the principal's role was to take on more of the Church's work then we would need help with some of our administrative duties - someone to do budgets, lots of the paperwork, etc, so we could devote more time to being pastoral - who will care for the carer? (#30)*

4.9.15 Analysis of Question 6.1

The sixth item in Questionnaire Two focused on the relationship of the Catholic school to the Church and its ministry, especially in its development amongst families of a stronger sense of membership of the Church.

Three questions were included. The first of these asked the principal to reflect upon his / her role as it pertained to the relationship of school to Church:

> *How do you understand your role as principal in a school conducted by the Catholic Church?*

Twenty-four different strands emerged in the responses. Three main themes may be distinguished. There were:

- The Principal within the ministry of the Paris (f = 10);
- The Principal as a role model (f = 10);
- The Principal as advocate of Gospel Values (f = 4).

These will now be presented.

The Principal within the Ministry of the Parish

The most frequent response (f = 10) posited the principal within the ministry of the parish, or "as sharing in the mission of the Church at this location, at this point of time, with these people" (#22) in "a most definite ministry" (#33), "by virtue of baptism" (#28). One respondent saw him / herself as co-worker with the priest in certain areas (#34) whilst another saw the role as being "an active partner (ship) in the evangelisation of the younger members of the

parish" (#35), and another as "to work in conjunction with other parish ministries" (#43).

The Principal as Role Model

An equally popular cluster of responses (f = 10) took up the theme of the principal's work as a role model, within the context of the ministry of the Church. Respondents saw the need to "set … a spiritual example by talking to staff, students and parents on religious themes (and) by practising (the faith)" (#42) and that it was "important that (the) Principal set an example within the parish" (#46) as he / she was a "leader in faith, example and direction with the school" (#38), a "model for staff, students and parents" (#34). One respondent saw it as important that there be the "perception by the community of the Principal (be) as a person of faith and prayer" (#31) whilst another held as important the "obvious living of the 'gospel' message in daily dealings with people" (#10). In a summative comment, another participant saw it as important "to be perceived as a 'Jesus' person to all comers – i.e. open, communicative, just, fair and understanding" (#1).

The Principal as Advocate of Gospel Values

Allied to this thrust was a secondary cluster (f = 4) of responses which proposed the role of the principal to be one of proponent of Gospel or Kingdom of God values. One response saw the role as "being true to the essence of Jesus' message" (#11) or as being "an advocate of Gospel values and the mission of Jesus" (#39). In personal terms, one respondent remarked: "I work for (the) bringing about of (the) Kingdom of God" (#7).

4.9.16   Analysis of Question 6.2

The second question in item six sought to examine the ways in which leaders encouraged parochial links amongst families:

> *How does the Catholic school which you lead encourage a stronger link with the parish amongst students and their families*?

A total of 18 clusters of responses were received. Two were prominent. These concerned the importance of shared celebrations and the use of shared communications to build links between school and parish.

The most frequent response (f = 25) related to the theme of shared celebrations between school and parish as building the desired links. These included "liturgies, class Masses, sacramental occasions" (#25) and were fostered by "parish invitations to school celebrations" (#39) and "interaction between (the) parish sacramental (team) and (the) school" (#41). One respondent remarked that "classes have shared liturgies (and) parishioners join in with these and are invited to workshops held by staff in areas of general interest" (#17). The importance of mutuality was typified by one respondent who stressed school "participation in parish activities / liturgies (is balanced by the) parish (being) welcomed to school activities / liturgies" (#18). One response mentioned the specific initiative of "family masses (each) month organised by school staff and led by the children" (#19) whilst another recorded that "children are asked to take on roles in Sunday masses" (#40). Two other responses (#26, #35) also recorded the importance of regular family Masses in fostering parish links amongst families of school children.

In the next most frequent response (f = 8) participants noted the importance of strengthening links with the parish by inclusions of school news in parish newsletters (#41) and of "shared information in both Parish and School Newsletters" (#34). Typical of this theme was the response which suggested the significance of "reference to parish celebrations in school newsletters and accompanying encouragement of family involvement" (#38).

4.9.17 Analysis of Question 6.3

The third question asked respondents to assess the effectiveness of the measures outlined in 6.2:

> *How effective is your encouragement of this link between school and parish?*

Responses were grouped under the three categories of positive, negative and undecided. Table 4.20 sets out these responses.

Table 4.20
Effectiveness of Encouragement of Parish / School Links

	Positive Responses	
f	Theme	#
2	Effectiveness improving with time	43, 35
8	Good or very good effect	5, 8, 34, 40, 7, 9, 22, 26
1	Satisfactory effect	14
	Negative Responses	
f	Theme	#
2	Not effective: parish undergoing amalgamation	38, 47
3	Only one way effort: parish not reciprocal	45, 41, 25
5	Not effective because of the history of parish – school education	2, 4, 6, 11, 13
3	Effectiveness is hampered because school serves more than one parish.	1, 3, 24
4	Not effective as the parish has no communal life to attract people.	1, 10, 19, 23
	Undecided Responses	
f	Theme	#
9	Effectiveness too difficult to assess	5, 12, 15, 16, 27, 28, 33, 39, 42

Table 4.20 shows a total of eleven positive responses, seventeen negative and nine undecided responses to this question. The dominant perception demonstrated amongst principals is that the attempts to build links between parish and school are unsuccessful or, at least, not evidently successful.

4.9.18 Analysis of Question 7.1

The final item in Questionnaire Two related to the fostering of staff members'
spirituality. There were three questions. The first of these, (Question 7.1)
asked leaders for a description of ways in which staff members' spirituality
was fostered:

> *How is the spirituality and personal growth of staff nurtured in the*
> *Catholic school you lead?*

In response, 13 themes emerged, the most frequently given of which (f = 32)
held that staff prayer and retreat experiences were the most positive ways to
foster staff spirituality. All 32 responses simply nominated these activities as
being effective without additional comment.

Likewise, the second most frequent response (f = 18) registered the
importance of opportunities for staff inservice in building staff spirituality.

Of significance, in the light of earlier statements concerning the importance
of community in the life of the Catholic school, a third theme (f = 11)
emerged in the responses. This reported the importance of building trust
and a spirit of mutual support in the development of staff spirituality.
Leaders spoke of "creating a school climate that is flexible / adaptable and
supportive of teachers' needs" (#4) and of the importance of establishing
"affirming interaction(s) between the principal and staff" (#4) in this
connection. Another response spoke of "working together - not power over -

we are in this together - support and encouragement" (sic) (#10) and another of "open door policies" between staff and principal (#18). One respondent spoke of the "cultivation of morale amongst (staff) so that they relate well to each other and (to) their students" (#24) as being significant in the fostering of staff spirituality whilst another registered the importance of "a sense of care for each other, laughing together (and) thanking each other" (#17) and another saw the importance of socialising ("the pub on a Friday") as significant in this connection (#45).

Question 7.1 had explored the area of the fostering of staff spirituality in Catholic schools. Responses recorded three (3) main themes. These were in summary:

- Prayer and retreat experiences;

- Staff Inservice;

- A spirit of trust and mutual support amongst school staff.

The foregoing discussed these responses in some detail.

4.9.19 Analysis of Question 7.2

The second question asked leaders to nominate the experiences which they saw as being effective in the development of staff spirituality:

> *What key experiences have you seen to be helpful in this*
> *regard?*

The responses to this question echoed those of its predecessor. Respondents most frequently (f = 10) nominated staff inservice as helpful in the development of staff spirituality. The second most frequent response

(f = 9) nominated prayer celebrations and staff retreats as being most effective in this regard.

Two respondents related the importance of social experiences in the observed building of staff spirituality.

Four participants recorded the helpfulness of "open communication with conflict" (#1) or "open and honest communication at all times – conflict included" (#10) in building staff spirituality.

Three responses mentioned the importance of "close relationships developed in times of need" (#4) or of "bonding through … times (of crisis)" (#40) as playing a part in the development of staff spirituality.

4.9.20 Analysis of Question 7.3

The third question in item seven asked participants to nominate barriers which, in their experience, had militated against staff spiritual growth.

Nine clusters of responses were recorded. The most frequent response (f = 27)) related to a lack of interest or even negativity on the part of staff as hindering spiritual growth. One respondent wrote that in his / her view there existed a…

> *deep cynicism of key staff, something akin to non-violent non-cooperation that would seem to have its roots in personal hurts re Church and in personal confusion about Church affiliations. For example, only some are regular Mass-goers or involved in parishes. (#11)*

One respondent commented that "people don't want to let go of previous baggage" (#13) and another spoke of "staff who don't want to be empowered" (#19). One participant remarked that "some efforts to nurture spirituality are perceived (by staff) as being manipulative" (#20). However, a consistent theme within this same cluster was the acknowledgement of the reality of the range of openness to, or readiness for, spiritual growth amongst staff. One participant remarked: "spirituality seems to be put on the 'long finger' for the majority" (#15), whilst another acknowledged the "different stages of faith and spirituality development of staff members" (#23) and another, the "wide gulf between those who have and those who haven't done anything about their own spiritual development" (#32). "A lack of commitment to spiritual development … in a few cases" was noted (#33) as was the reality of "staff who do not wish to participate on a regular basis" (#40).

After recognition by respondents that "each person is different (and) people relate to their spirituality in their own ways" (#45) and that "differing personalities can sometimes create difficulties" (#41), a summative comment was offered by one participant:

> *The very different personalities and styles challenge leaders in schools to provide meaningful, relevant and yet challenging experiences which encourage a deepening of staff spirituality. (#16)*

A distinct cluster of responses (f = 13) named a lack of time or the pressure of the school timetable and its busyness as a barrier to staff spiritual growth. Typically, responses simply nominated "the busyness of other aspects of our life (and) the lives of others" (#33) or "time constraints because of other

outside commitments" (#14) as barriers. One respondent, in addition to "the pressure of work, program writing", identified the time pressure of working "with difficult students whose number is becoming more in our schools" (#24) as an inhibitor of staff spiritual growth.

All other responses scored a frequency of one or two.

In summary, respondents noted three (3) main sets of barriers to staff spiritual growth. These include a lack of interest or negativity on the part of staff, a range of openness to spirituality on their part and the lack of time for spiritual development as inhibiting spiritual development in staff.

This question concluded Questionnaire Two. A discussion of these findings will now follow in Chapter Five.

CHAPTER FIVE

DISCUSSION OF THE FINDINGS OF THE RESEARCH

5.1   INTRODUCTION

This study sought to explore principals' perceptions and reimagining of the current purposes of Catholic schools and to investigate their understandings of how they see Catholic schools changing in response to contemporary ecclesial, social and educational contexts.

From an analysis of the data presented in the previous chapter, a number of themes have been generated.   The identification and discussion of these themes will be conducted through the exploration of the two major research questions which focused the research design.

5.2   THE PURPOSE OF THE CONTEMPORARY CATHOLIC SCHOOL

The first major research question concerned principals' perceptions of the purposes of the contemporary Catholic school.

The findings outlined in the previous chapter indicated that the major perceived purposes of the Catholic school are:

1. to provide an educational environment which nurtures holistic growth;

2. to be an evangelising influence in the lives of the families of the school community;

3. to promote gospel values within the context of a community.

The critical review interviews in all cases confirmed this set of perceptions.

One of the interviewees stated:

> "when I ask enrolling parents, "why choose us?" they almost always offer reasons very much in accord with these three. I think most of my colleagues, as well as myself, would see these as valid purposes, not only from a market point of view but from our own sense of what we are setting out to do. (C.R.I. #3)

Each of these purposes will now be discussed.

5.2.1 Catholic Schools and Holistic Growth:

Chapter Four, in presenting the results of the research, outlined the importance respondents placed upon the provision of an educational environment which nurtured holistic growth of the individual student. There was a clear expression of priority given to providing an educational experience which nurtured in students growth towards wholeness of being. That priority was expressly stated by respondents who upheld the necessity of a holistic approach to the reimagined process of education as a prerequisite to any successful learning. The belief that " unless you deal with the whole person, the academic doesn't happen" (#3) summarises this stance. The priority given to "teaching the child not the curriculum" (#7) underlies the assertion that "it is no use if we teach kids to read, write, do Maths and run but teach them nothing about themselves or their worth as a person." (#9)

The foundational theme of the focus on personhood is clearly expressed in the educational philosophy that holds that:

> In many ways now it is more important that students reach "emotional maturity and intelligence" over intellectual achievement so that each child is better able to cope with the many challenges, changes, expectations, loss and gains etc that life will present them. (#30)

Implicit in the focus on personhood in the educational process is a concomitant emphasis on the dignity and sense of personal value of each child:

> We look (to) … build a sound base on which to base teaching and learning so that a person feels that they belong and have worth with and for others. (#47)

The goals and purposes of holistic education outlined in the research consistently included this recognition of the importance of the development of self worth so that in defining a meaning of the term "holistic education", one respondent could say:

> It means addressing all the aspects of a child's life – not just academics and sport but also health, spirituality, human relationships, self-esteem etc (#9)

This focus on the development of the self was not seen as isolationist. A clear communitarian sense was clear in the view that:

> "Holistic education" reminds us that we are educating children to fit into a society. Hence we do not talk about one aspect of learning but integrate as much as is necessary to enable children to be worthwhile, fulfilled and fulfilling people. (#8)

This communitarian sense is epitomised in the holistic insight into the importance of "having a vision of the school as a redemptive society where we are helping each other to become whole again" (#6). These words are redolent of the aphorism of St Irenaeus (c 140 – 202 AD) that, "the glory of God is man *[sic]* fully alive," a theme found consistently within the research. One respondent, in fact, chose to define holistic education thus: "holistic education is a constant striving to live life to the full" (#36), a theme echoed by another's summative view that: "the school is life and what we are doing at our school is living" (#41).

Importance of Success and Achievement

One common theme throughout the responses to the questionnaire was the emphasis placed on the importance of success and achievement for children with a typical response stating, "education should ensure that each child gets the opportunity to experience success in their [*sic]* area of strength" (#17). The essence of holistic education was seen by one respondent as "providing a 'balance' so that everyone can achieve at least somewhere!" (#34) and by another as related to "the ability of every child to succeed and be a successful student" (#35).

These perspectives denote a movement in the nature of Catholic education over time. It is of relevance to this research project that a major study into the academic effectiveness of Catholic schools in the USA (Bryk et al., 1993) investigated what may be termed the "Catholic matrix for achievement" (Grace, 2002, p.155). What that research project discovered was that the context of human relationships in the classroom more than outstanding pedagogy, along with "a sense of shared purpose and of community which characterised most of the schools" (Grace, 2002, p.155) were the key predictors of academic success for the students. This focus is captured in the words of one principal:

> When I began to teach (1959) I would have been wholly concerned with my students' academic progress. Now I believe that a child must be happy, healthy and secure before quality learning can occur… I would be encouraging staff to look at all aspects of a child's growth. (#21)

This response and those it represents, address a fundamental premise of the contemporary perception of the "matrix for achievement" of the Catholic

school.   This premise upholds the intrinsic value of knowledge as it contributes to the growth of the whole person over against the utilitarian view of the "market commodification of knowledge and pedagogy" (Grace, 2002, p.45).   Holistic conceptions of education stand in clear contrast to the marketisation of schooling:

> Knowledge, after nearly a thousand years, is divorced from inwardness and literally dehumanised. Once knowledge is separated from inwardness, from commitments, from personal dedication, from the deep structure of the self, then people may be moved about, substituted for each other and excluded from the market.   (Bernstein, 1996, p.87)

This observation is related to another response from the questionnaire which addresses the term "holistic education", again, not from the perspective of future considerations related to positioning within the marketplace but with a concentration on an immediacy of educational and formative goals. It defined holistic education as that "which values the 'now' in students' lives rather than focusing narrowly on possible future careers etc" (#24).

Key Shifts in Educational Understanding

What is of interest to the researcher here are the three key shifts in the understanding and application of educational principles amongst Catholic school leaders. These are:

- the movement to a concentration on immediate and personalised outcomes for the educational process;
- the emphasis on the rounded development of a range of skills and talents in students;
- the marked movement away from any clear or consistent reference to the eternal or teleological perspective characteristic of pre Vatican II Catholic rhetoric.

In a reference to this latter point, one critical review interviewee remarked:

> "Heaven and hell just aren't a priority for our parents. Their concerns are much more about here and now." (C.R.I. #2)

These shifts represent a clear movement away from the anthropological premises which informed earlier more bifurcated and teleological conceptions of the goals of the Catholic school outlined above and indicate a refocus on what has been termed "invisible pedagogy":

> *Invisible pedagogy refers to a holistic process of educational socialisation designed to promote changes in the dispositions, attitudes and behaviours of a child as a result of involvement in a particular educational environment. The pedagogy is invisible in the sense that both its procedures and its outcomes are more diffuse and intangible than those which characterize visible pedagogy. At the most general level, invisible pedagogy is designed to be person forming whereas visible pedagogy is designed to be product forming.*
> (Grace, 2002, p.49)

The fact that a diverse range of expression was used by principals to posit a commonly held view of the nature of holistic education suggests that no clear articulation or universally accepted terminology in this area may yet have emerged. Further, this diversity may indicate that principals, and by extension, others involved in Catholic schooling, are still coming to an understanding of the complexities and subtleties of a holistic educational philosophy and taxonomy of educational goals. The prevalence amongst principals of the use of lists of aspects of the human person (e.g. social, emotional, physical, spiritual) to attempt to describe the scope of a holistic educational philosophy underscores this evolving comprehension which is, as yet, eclectic in nature.

The Emergence of a New Understanding of Catholic Schooling

What is critical for present purposes is that it is evident that an attempt is being made by Catholic school principals to articulate a new understanding of the essential nature and goals of Catholic schooling. Any uncertainty or any lack of precision or concision in expression of this emergent educational understanding is consonant with anthropological understandings which are themselves, still coming to greater clarification. The holistic apprehension of human life, stimulated by advances in the human sciences, is still reaching full understanding. A theological perspective which is predicated upon that developing holistic anthropological understanding will, naturally, still be coming to clarification, too. Catholic school principals involved in this research appear to be part of that clarifying and distilling process as they express the goals of the schools they lead in terms of holistic education, however eclectically that may currently be done. The issue is further highlighted by what may be described by one commentator as "the relative underdevelopment of a Catholic philosophy of education in a secular age" (Grace, 2002, p16).

The Choice of Holistic Praxis

That the shift towards holistic educational practices in Catholic schools however, is not a random or accidental initiative, is clear from the observations of respondents to the questionnaire. One respondent's citing of a "conscious check of curricular/co-curricular aspects of school life to ensure holistic education" (#33) is typical of a group of responses (*cf* section 4.9.8) which stressed the need for a systematic approach to the development of a "definite rationale for holistic education" (#46). Other responses, as outlined above (*cf*

section 4.9.8) named specific approaches to holistic goals as being a part of a conscious, deliberate attempt to achieve holistic educational praxis. Further, this broad revision of the purposes of Catholic education is not only born of a revised anthropology but also sits within the context of a broader, secular educational movement which is itself moving towards the promotion of holistic educational goals.

What the researcher may deduce is that what may be seen by principals as one of the essential features of the contemporary Catholic school, is not necessarily unique to Catholic schooling. The questions arise as to how, or whether, a holistic conception of education gives the Catholic school a singular place in the total educational endeavour; how or whether what principals see as a vital purpose is also a unique purpose. This issue is further vexed by the fact that very little if any reference was made by respondents to any specifically spiritual or religious purpose to holistic education. Holistic goals are not overtly seen as a religious or primarily spiritual undertaking in the sense in which these terms have been previously used in Catholic teaching. What the principals of Catholic schools saw as holistic educational goals are not perceptibly different from what leaders of other, secular institutions may be expected to express.

Parity and Disparity Between Ecclesial Teaching and Catholic School Praxis

This is of special interest to the researcher. The articulation of holistic goals, on the one hand, is certainly in accord with some aspects of the currently expressed ecclesial perception of the nature of the formation of human beings and the purposes of Catholic schools. Representative of this view is the belief

that one of the essential distinguishing features of Catholicism is its positive anthropology (Groome, 1996) and that its pervading commitment to people's personhood is to be viewed holistically and not in the bifurcated terms of a pre-Vatican II anthropology. Rather, the whole person is ideally seen to be of value and the totality of personhood subject of the redemptive work of the Catholic school (Congregation for Catholic Education, 1977, para. 35). Thus, it is the officially expressed hope that leaders of Catholic schools are reimagining their schools as "places(s) of integral formation" (Congregation for Catholic Education, 1977, para. 26) in the light of the gospel and in the light of a new set of meanings for human existence (John Paul II, 1992).

This issue of foundational anthropology is critical here because "the question of what . . . we mean by human nature is . . . ultimately the basis of every system of education" (Beck, 1964, p.109; McLaughlin, 1997). Within a construct which equates the vocation of being human with exclusively soteriological concerns, education would be directed solely or, at least, predominantly, to that end. This was the clear view of pre-Vatican II ecclesial teaching as expressed, for instance, in "The Christian Education of Youth" (Pius X1, 1929, passim). However, contemporary official ecclesiastical teaching, "consistently upholds the present life as of inestimable value and a divine gift" (*Catechism of the Catholic Church,* 1994, Nos. 1700, 1701, 1704). Indeed, as the review of literature (Chapter 2) was able to conclude, "there is found in Catholic doctrine a unitive view that holds that this present existence has intrinsic value and purpose as it leads to and works towards the eternal existence to which all are ultimately called" (2.4.14).

Therefore, given the etiological link between anthropology and education, (Arthur, 1995; Beck, 1964; Flynn, 1993; McLaughlin, 1996; McLaughlin, 1997; Pring, 1996), the contemporary, official ecclesiastical understanding of human existence which embraces its temporal as well as eternal value would reinforce the desirability of a holistic Catholic educational philosophy that promotes the development of the whole person, body, mind, spirit and psyche. The respondents' stress on the importance of holistic education is, in some senses, in accord with this understanding.

However, the respondents' expression of holistic goals is at odds with any ecclesiastical presumption of a religiously spiritual essence to holistic education. The absence of an overtly religious dimension in the respondents' description of the goals and purposes of their schools as set out in Chapter 4 is clearly not indicative of a close alignment between official ecclesial understanding and principals' perspectives. One response is characteristic of this disjunction. In diagrammatic form, in answer to the open question: "What do you understand by the term 'holistic' education?" it shows the perceived end of education as directed to work and career goals with no reference to any overtly spiritual or religious outcome. The respondent's diagram is reproduced here in Figure 5.1.
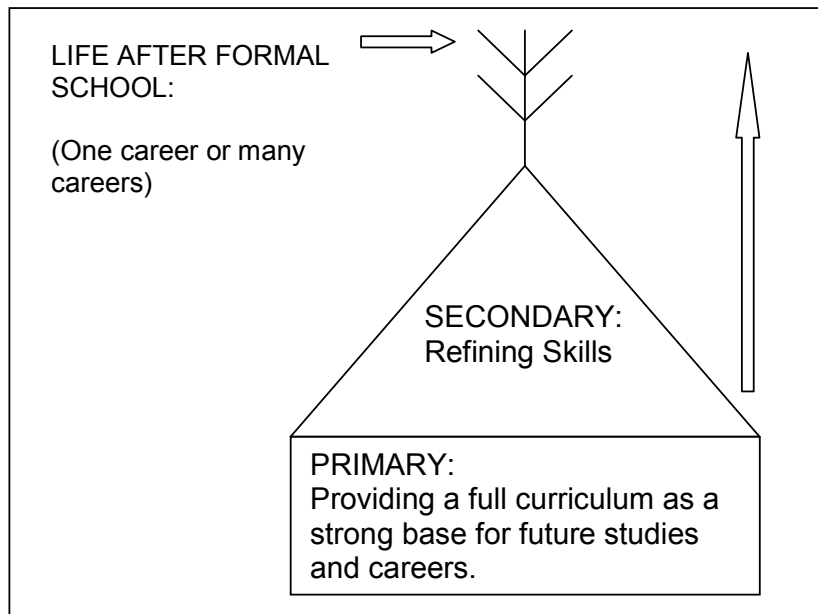
Figure 5.1

One Respondent's View of the Goals of Holistic Education (#42)

This general absence of reference to soteriological ends may be interpreted as a demonstration of a predominance of a liberal, secular humanist philosophy amongst Catholic school leaders. What emerged in the course of the research was that it was clear that the participants held a different view of the meaning of human existence from that expressed in official ecclesiastical teaching, a conclusion supported by the independent reviewers (I.R. 2 and 4). This was also supported by the critical review interviewees, one of whom stated that, "…it is overwhelmingly the case that my fellow principals, I believe, do not see education in the same way as our ecclesiastical leaders do" (C.R.I. #4). This may be best seen from exploration of foundational anthropology.

Foundational Anthropologies

Ecclesial teaching consistently takes as its fundamental standpoint on the matter of human existence, the fallen nature of humankind and the redemptive action of Christ over against that fallen state. The "total formation of the individual (has as its basis, the fact that) man has been redeemed by Christ" (Congregation of Catholic Education, 1977, No. 36). In fact, the Catholic school finds its purpose in cooperating in the salvific mission of the Church "which Jesus Christ has given her" (Congregation of Catholic Education, 1977, No. 8). In this conception, the realisation of the redemption of humankind achieved in Christ is the essential work of the Church mandated in the Catholic school: "The Church, through which the Redemption of Christ is revealed and made operative, is where the Catholic school receives its spirit" (Congregation of Catholic Education, 1977, No. 44). The redemptive mission in which the Catholic school, as an educative institution participates, is essentially teleological "… because every branch of learning and training, like every human action, is necessarily dependent upon man's last end and therefore … subject to the commandments of God's law of which the Church is the infallible guardian, interpreter and teacher." (Pius XI, 1929, No. 20).

This latter reference introduces the concomitant theme to redemption, namely, the exclusive role of the Catholic Church in the dispensation of salvation. This is predicated upon the Augustinian view of humankind, subject to the effects of original sin, "weakened in its powers, … fallen into slavery to sin but … set free by Christ" (Catechism of the Catholic Church, 1994, Nos 410 – 421). This redemptive action is held to be mediated uniquely and exclusively by the Church: "All salvation comes from Christ the Head through the Church"

(Catechism of the Catholic Church, 1994, No. 846). Even in its efforts to encourage dialogue with the wider world, Conciliar teaching defaults to an exclusivist view of the role of the Church in the story of humankind: "Basing itself on Scripture and Tradition, the Council teaches that the Church, a pilgrim now on earth, is necessary for salvation" (Lumen Gentium, No. 14).

The Changing Interplay Between Theology and Anthropology

At the heart of this perspective is a very specific view of human nature. The anthropology which is central to this view is theologically derived. Human nature is understood primarily in theological terms. On the other hand, the holistic perspective of Catholic educators as attested in this study, may well describe a theology derived instead, from a foundation of anthropology. This is discussed here in some detail because it constitutes a major theoretical outcome from this study in terms of the ways in which Catholic schooling is being reimagined in the contemporary context.

It may well be that the respondents in this research project are not articulating what might be termed a secular humanist view of human nature. Rather, in however nascent a form, they may be speaking from a theological perspective which is firstly founded upon an anthropological understanding. This anthropology, whilst it may be at odds with some aspects of the official teaching of the Church, is representative of a growing body of scholarly contemporary theology which is beginning to be expressed not only in theological reflections but in the official statements of the Church. This distinction is represented in the following diagram.
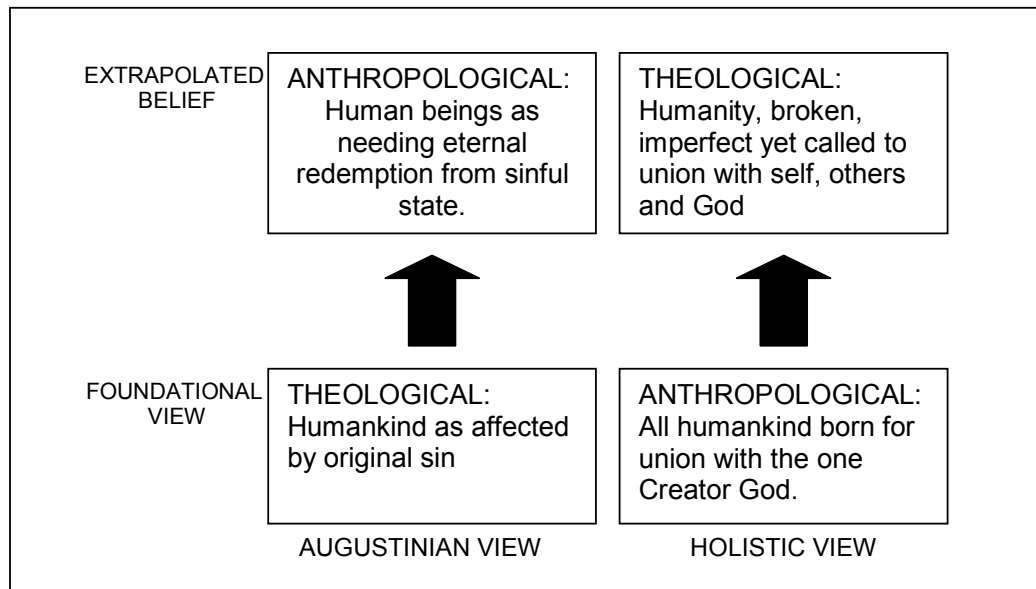
```
                          ┌─────────────────┐   ┌─────────────────┐
EXTRAPOLATED              │ ANTHROPOLOGICAL:│   │ THEOLOGICAL:    │
BELIEF                    │   Human beings as│   │ Humanity, broken,│
                         │   needing eternal│   │ imperfect yet called to│
                         │ redemption from sinful│ union with self, others│
                         │      state.     │   │ and God         │
                          └─────────────────┘   └─────────────────┘
                                  ▲                     ▲
                                  │                     │
                          ┌─────────────────┐   ┌─────────────────┐
FOUNDATIONAL             │ THEOLOGICAL:    │   │ ANTHROPOLOGICAL:│
VIEW                     │ Humankind as affected│ All humankind born for│
                         │ by original sin │   │ union with the one│
                         │                 │   │ Creator God.    │
                          └─────────────────┘   └─────────────────┘
                             AUGUSTINIAN VIEW        HOLISTIC VIEW
```

Figure 5.2

Contrasting Views of Humanity

This characteristically postmodern theology does not commence from a dualistic perspective which begins from the premise of the separability of body and soul (O'Murchu, 1997) a premise which allows for the ultimate redemption of the latter from its sinful state. It upholds, rather, the foundational anthropological belief that there is "no such thing as an ungraced human nature in lived existence, no sacred realm apart from the space-time continuum we call secular" (Ludwig, 1996, p.95). From this holistic anthropological premise there may be developed a resultant theology which explores human existence in terms other than those of the fall/redemption theological conceit cited above. This theological understanding is predicated instead upon a primary, holistic anthropological construct from which a theological explanation and understanding of human existence is developed (McBrien, 1994). The contrast is clearly captured in the proposition that:

> … the story is not a "fall" from a perfect state of consciousness and developed conscience; rather, it is the story of the slow emergence within human beings of the realisation that the sacred is deep within each of us … the issue for spirituality is whether we see ourselves as "poor, banished children of Eve" or as the dwelling places of the sacred. (Morwood, 1997, pp.99 – 101)

The theological work of deLubac in France prior to the Second Vatican Council and the later explorations of Rahner laid "the foundations for a new Christian humanism by arguing that, by virtue of creation – that is, simply on the basis of our being human – the human person is effectively called to community with God" (Ludwig, 1995, p.95). Recently, official Church teaching has also began to reflect this view. The Congregation for Catholic Education (2002) has stated: "The foundation of human ethos is in being the image and likeness of God, the Trinity of persons in communion. The existence of a person appears therefore as a call to the duty to exist for one another." (para. 35)

Such statements do not seek to deny the clear reality of the imperfections inherent in the human state: " To confirm the greatness of the human creature does not mean to ignore his fragility: the image of God … is in fact deformed by sin" (Congregation of Catholic Education, 2002, para. 37). However, this acknowledgement does not detract from the importance of the critical theological understanding of the nature of the human person. In contrast to a bifurcated paradigm of human condition, the Congregation described "… a vision of plenary humanism, open to God, who loves everyone and invites them to become increasingly more "conformed to the image of his Son" (*cf* Rom. 8:29). This divine plan is the heart of Christian humanism" (2002, para.37)

Further to any such consideration of the issue of a "Christian humanism", the clear emphasis placed by respondents in this research project upon wholeness and upon the related priority of community as a foundational ethic as outlined in Chapter Four, finds expression in the theological premise that:

> Before we can become one with others and with God, there needs to be at least in process a quest for wholeness within one's self. Wholeness is a convergence of realities. Wholeness is happening when a person is working on one's physical, emotional, spiritual well-being. With such a quest in process, one begins to intuit the incompleteness of the self, the need for connections with other humans and the need also for connectedness with an ultimate ground of being, God … our existential Trinitarian experience is that individuals in the process of wholeness are called, indeed gravitate toward, further unity with others and god. (Brennan, 1995, p.39)

In this way, the concept of redemption, when reimagined, implies that "the redemption that Christ brings heals human freedom and draws humanity into … deeper communion" (Ludwig, 1995, p. 198). In this way, one principal's express goal of "having a vision of the school as a redemptive society where we are helping each other to become whole again" (#6) is, far from articulating a secular view, expressive of a deeply theological perspective, a perspective that acknowledges that "becoming person is a lifelong journey (and that)humanizing education offers provisions for the pilgrim way and the educator's vision influences both the traveling and the destiny." (Groome, 1998, p.73).

Summary

In discussing the respondents' expression of perceived purposes for holistic education, it is possible to discern a strong sense of concern for the development of the totality of the human being. This is a consistent theme.

There is also a clear focus on the development of positive relationships with students as a foundation for holistic formation. In this regard, these aspirations are in accord with the tenor of contemporary Church teaching which shows not only an appreciation of the challenges and difficulties inherent in such a task (Congregation for Catholic Education, 1997, para. 6) but also acknowledges the critical importance of positive relationships in the evangelising work of the educator in "an environment for living in which … values are mediated by authentic interpersonal relations" (Congregation for Catholic Education, 2002, para. 41).

However, the pronounced lack in the research data of a focus on articulated soteriological concerns and the absence of a preoccupation with specifically religious outcomes (as traditionally stated in official teaching) is in sharp contrast to the tradition of ecclesiastical understanding of the nature of holistic Catholic education based on a classical fall/redemption paradigm of human existence. However, as shown above, contemporary theological reflection as well as recent ecclesial statements would tend to show a much closer alignment than may be initially apparent. This partial dichotomy between ecclesial understanding and current praxis will be explored further in the discussion of the next major goal.

5.2.2 Catholic Schools as Communities of Evangelisation

The second major perceived purpose of the Catholic school which emerged from the research concerned the role of the school in the work of evangelisation. This purpose is expressed above in this chapter as the aspiration:

> … to be an evangelizing influence in the lives of the families of the school community. (*cf* section 5.1)

This goal became evident in the analysis of questions five (5) and six (6) in Questionnaire Two which had, in turn, again come from the responses to Questionnaire One. This goal is also closely aligned with issues related to the second of the two research questions concerning the changing nature of the contemporary Catholic school. More will be pursued in this connection in the discussion of this second research question below.

For present consideration of this second perceived purpose, several points are clear from analysis of the research. Firstly, principals of Catholic schools hold a strong sense of the need to evangelise amongst the families with whom they work even though that term is not itself often used. This is clear from their responses. Secondly, there is also a strong sense amongst principals that the Catholic school may be the only evangelising influence in the lives of those families. The third point to emerge is that the Catholic school may be the single, evangelising influence for families, not because families have not yet developed an affiliation with the institutional Church, but because many have come to find the institution either irrelevant or unattractive. This final point indicates a clear disjunction between, on the one hand, the official Church understanding of the goal of evangelisation within the school as leading to immersion in the life of the institutional Church and, on the other, the practical understanding of principals that the Catholic school is the prime locus of evangelisation for families. In this latter connection, the perceived outcome is typically, the growth of an affiliation amongst families with the community of the school rather than with the Church or the local parish.

The sense of the Catholic school as a chief evanglising agent is captured in the belief that: "Schools are the visible Church" (#35). This belief was reiterated by one of the independent reviewers who noted:

> I agree that our contemporary school is the new hub of evangelisation. It is obvious from my experience in Catholic schools that the first contact with evangelisation is at… the early Information Evenings (for parents). That sense of belonging to the faith begins when the child starts school. (I.R. #2

In some cases this assertion is inextricably linked to a belief in the inadequacy of the contemporary institution of Church to evanglise effectively. One respondent noted:

> School "leads" in illustrating what a Christian community means. School is community - where for many, parish is not. This means school needs to teach caring for others, specialness of belonging, responsibility to others. For many, parish no longer exemplifies this.(#41)

Understandably, many of the participants saw the evangelizing work of the school through the perspective of the leadership of the principal. One respondent remarked:

> If one believes that the community is relating to school as the main Church contact then the principal's role is very serious and requires the principal to take the opportunity to evangelise where he/she can. (#36)

The goal of this evangelising effort was seen by one respondent expressly in terms of the Catholic faith. He/ she described the aim of evangelisation as being "to bring the Catholic faith alive – reignite what faith they have (and) to give a purpose for people to have an active faith." (#95) This specific reference to the Catholic tenor of evangelisation leads to a discussion of the degree of alignment that exists between contemporary nuances of Church

teaching on the complexities of evangelisation and principals' understanding, in practice, of those nuances.

Parity and Disparity Between Ecclesiastical Teaching and Principals' Approaches to Evangelisation

The theme of disparity between the official Church position regarding the nature of evangelisation in the Catholic school and current praxis was evident in the research. In an analysis of the situation, one principal perceived the "tension between traditional Church expectations of my role and the current reality" (#22). However, the same respondent placed a positive construct upon the changing climate, asserting that "instead of copping the blame I think we are now seen as the last hope to turn things around" (#22).

It is important here for the researcher to draw a distinction between the current nuances of official Church teaching on Catholic schools and evangelisation on the one hand and what principals perceive that teaching to be on the other. An independent review comment underlines this:

> *Do most principals really understand "traditional Church expectation" and do they often throw out baby with bathwater? (I.R. #4)*

In fact, ecclesiastical documents on Catholic schooling recognize the intrinsic difficulties and complex realities that surround the endeavour of evangelisation today:

> Identity crisis, loss of trust in social structures, the resulting insecurity and loss of any personal convictions, the contagion of a progressive secularization of society, loss of the proper concept of authority and lack of a proper use of freedom – these are only a few of the multitude of difficulties which … the adolescents and young people of today bring to the Catholic educator. Moreover, the lay state in which the teacher lives is itself seriously threatened.
> (Congregation for Catholic Education, 1982, No. 26)

The Congregation almost two decades later acknowledged the complex issues that surrounded Catholic schooling at "this restless end of the millennium" by concluding that "the atmosphere we have described produces a certain degree of pedagogical tiredness which intensifies the ever increasing difficulty of conciliating the role of the teacher with that of the educator" (Congregation for Catholic Education, 1998, No. 6). There is also an acknowledgement that the difficulties are faced not only in Catholic schools, but by the whole Church: "The particular challenges of evangelisation in the new millennium are in fact a challenge for the universal Church" (Committee for Mission, Archdiocese of Melbourne, 2004, p.2).

The challenge faced by the Church, and by its schools is well understood:

> Against the spirit of the world, the Church takes up each day a struggle that is none other than the struggle for the world's soul. If, in fact, on the one hand, the Gospel and evangelisation are present in this world, on the other there is also present a powerful anti-evangelisation which is well organised and has the means to vigorously oppose the Gospel and evangelisation. The struggle for the soul of the contemporary world is at its height where the spirit of the world seems strongest.
> (John Paul II, 1994)

The empathetic perspective of official Church statements, as seen above, is offset by a persistent optimism which leads to the conclusion that, even in the face of challenges, both internal and external, "the Church is absolutely convinced that the educational aims of the Catholic school in the world of today perform an essential and unique service for the Church herself" (Congregation for Catholic Education, 1997, no. 15). In this light, it is possible to conclude that the apprehension of tensions between ecclesial expectations and daily reality are localised (yet nonetheless real) difficulties rather than

global issues, precipitated by a range of influences such as expectations of the local clergy and/or a growing clerical frustration at the seeming failure of the Church to affect the lives of those to whom they seek to minister.

This sense of tension amongst Catholic school leaders can also be exacerbated by the demands of the educational context itself when it imposes demands that have the potential to impinge upon the Catholic school's structures and processes in a way that limits its capacity to evangelise. The possibility of the imposition of a strictly outcomes-based approach to education, for instance, arguably would impose challenges in this regard:

> A related tension centres on a recognition that the outcomes-based approach is not always appropriate for some aspects of what are seen as core activities within a Catholic school. Indeed, one gets a sense that if legislation were to be passed requiring that Catholic schools adopt a very rigid outcomes-approach for the implementation of the (mandated) Curriculum Framework, this would lead to major confrontation. (O' Donoghue & Vidovich, 2004, p.14)

Catholic School Leadership in the Context of the Role of the Laity

A number of responses placed the evangelising role of the principal within the context of the evolving role of the laity. One typical comment observed:

> The principal's role is and has been in a process of change over the past ten years. The acceptance of the laity's role in the Church has meant that the principal is now seen as a point of contact regarding faith and matters of morals and as such is a voice with strength in the sense of a broader church. (#8)

Another asked, "Will the church remain 'large' enough to encompass a lay led Church?" (#14) whilst another respondent asserted that the changing evanglising climate "reaffirms the central role of principal as a 'faith leader'. Principals are (among the other lay ministers) the new co-leaders" (#43). This

theme was taken up by another respondent who asserted: "I now lead the most significant Catholic community in the eyes and lives of many of our families." (#44)

A summative comment offered by one principal foreshadowed the very direct observations of many respondents concerning familial perception of the role of the principal over against their perception of the leadership of the institutional Church:

> Fewer families are attending Church regularly so they don't naturally turn to clergy or agencies of the Church when their families are in crisis. Because many of them have close ties with the school through participation in educative, supportive and social activities, they feel that a relationship of trust already exists. It seems natural for them to turn to the principal . . . for guidance and support. (#40)

Responses made a critical distinction between, at one level, the nature of the pastoral work of evangelisation for a Catholic school and its principal and, at another, an ecclesiastical hierarchical, leadership role. Whilst one respondent who spoke of the evangelising and pastoral elements of the principal's role as "giv(ing) purpose to my life (and the) satisfaction of being able to assist" (#34) represented the views of most, there was a clear, general apprehension that, if the leadership role of the principal were to attract more of the structural characteristics of ecclesiastical leadership, a new set of problems would arise to take the place of those that currently exist. One principal observed:

> I don't see the principal as "the chief" point of contact. From conversations I have had with some principals I think this perception is often not accurate – even sometimes I feel that these comments are to set up (even unconsciously) a new hierarchy not unlike the one I hear being criticized. (#28)

Another comment is helpful for the purposes of clarity:

> As the numbers of men and women (priests and nuns) at the "top" of the Church's hierarchy dwindle, I sense that the principals of Catholic schools are sometimes forced to rise towards the top of the hierarchical tree. It is something that I do not want to see happening. I am willing to help to lead – but not as an authority figure as in the past – but in collaboration with other members of the laity. I am not trained for this role. I can only rely on experience and intuition. (#21)

What is clear to the researcher is that an ambivalence exists amongst leaders of Catholic schools concerning the expectations upon them (whether self-imposed or externally generated) with regard to their pastoral/evangelising role.   There is a professed desire to engage in the pastoral work of evangelisation on the part of many.   However, there is also a reluctance on the part of other leaders to undertake a specific evangelising role for which they feel ill-equipped or unprepared or which falls outside the scope of their professional role as they see it.   There is general agreement however, that the Catholic school offers a level of pastoral engagement which families may not find in the specific body of the institution of the Church or local parish.   There is also general agreement that one of the main factors in this situation is the negative perception of the institutional Church.

Perceived Irrelevance of the Institutional Church

This study has posed two research questions. The first of these, the one under current consideration, concerns the perceived purposes of Catholic schools as seen by those who lead them.   As a part of the exploration of the second major perceived purpose, namely evangelisation of families within the school community, a significant sense of the irrelevance of the institutional Church to many of those families became evident.   This point is clearly

pertinent also to the second of the research questions which concerns the changing nature of the contemporary Catholic school. This second research question will be discussed fully later in this chapter. However, because both of these major research questions were placed within the landscape of changing educational, social and ecclesial contexts from the outset, some discussion of the perception of irrelevance of the Church is necessary here as well as later in regard to the second research question.

Twenty-eight respondents noted to one degree or another, that the work of evangelisation within the Catholic school was affected by the perception of the irrelevance of the institutional Church to the lives of most families. One principal observed:

> Institutional Church is in many ways still pre-Vatican II. People of today do not see Church as it was in 1950's/60's. However, many Church leaders . . . are still operating from that model. Church in 50's saw people as serving the Church. I feel that a major change now is that people want Church to serve the people. There lies the problem. (#41)

Another observed:

> Church (is) hierarchical, out of touch. Mass (is) boring, irrelevant, repetitive. We (the Church) claim to be community, but rarely have I seen a Christian attitude prevail in the communities I have worshipped. *[sic]* (#46)

Continuing this latter theme, one principal remarked that, " … the school gives people a sense of community and belonging that the parish lacks" (#30). Other observations, explaining the rift between Church and families, included a comment that the "traditional Church, holds little attraction for our 'post modern' citizens" (#22) and that its "rituals, language and symbols do not resonate with people's experiences." (#26)

300

Furthermore, there was a strand of comments which touched upon the matter of a loss of confidence in the Church hierarchy. Indicative was the observation that " …   many people have lost faith in priests in light of their bad press and some of their actions. (#9) This critical note was found in many responses one of which cited the "absence of good Church role models" (#23) whilst another spoke of the "disenchantment with clergy generally" (#25).

One principal remarked that people "no longer wish to be led by people who have proven themselves to be ineffectual, irrelevant and hypocritical" (#43) whilst this was echoed by another who asserted that:

> Many people have been hurt by the Church - especially in the area of divorce, remarriage (and) contraception. Church hierarchy has lost a lot of credibility. (#29)

These comments echo the findings of empirical research. The Australian Community Survey (1998) revealed a clearly marked decline in confidence and trust in the members of the churches surveyed. These results, outlined in Chapter Two, pertained especially to the effects of clerical sexual abuse and whilst the lowest loss of confidence was shown to exist amongst those currently attending church, the overall loss of confidence was clear. It is of particular relevance to this latter participant's comment (#29) above, that in an analysis of the data according to personal situation, the most marked decline in confidence in the Church was amongst the separated and remarried respondents.

Summary

In summary, the research reveals several major points concerning the second perceived goal of the contemporary Catholic school which relates to its evangelising mission. The first is that Catholic school leaders see a major role for themselves in evangelising the communities which they lead, even when that task is not expressed so much in terms of evangelisation as in the promotion of "gospel values", a term which will be examined below. Secondly, they see themselves, in many cases, as the most significant evangelising influence in the lives of families, not because they have actively sought this pre-eminence but because, for a range of reasons, they see that the Church at large has lost effective contact with those families.

This raises a vital question which the principals themselves identified. If the school is the place of evangelisation, and if the affiliation of families reposes in the school community because they find that more attractive and relevant than the parish setting, what happens to those families when their association with the school ceases? If people are not being led to the Church in the broader ecclesial sense, where are their associations with the Catholic school leading them in the longer term? The dilemma is summed up in one respondent's question: "If we are leading, where are we leading to? Especially in terms of institutional Church!" (#33). The perplexity of one respondent was obvious: "Good question!! Don't know the answer - wish I did!!! How to keep families involved in parish at the end of their time at parish school?" (#37)

An independent reviewer, commenting in the transition from primary to secondary school observed that this is a "big issue – many families leave the Church after Grade 6 with a place secured in a Catholic secondary school" (I.R. #3).

One principal made the cautionary observation that, "(the) principal … can't allow affiliation with (the) school to be (an) acceptable substitute for a relationship with God (not just Church) (#32).

Incongruence Between Church Teaching and Principals' Vision

The understanding of the importance of an evangelising role of the Catholic school is certainly in accordance with official Church teaching which holds that "the Catholic school forms part of the saving mission of the Church" (Congregation for Catholic Education, 1977, No. 9). Further, official statements hold that the Catholic school is a "true and proper ecclesial entity (because it) . . . participates in the evangelising mission of the Church" (Congregation for Catholic Education, No. 11)

However, the research would suggest that there is a clear divergence between principals' understandings of the nature and purpose of evangelisation and that of official Church teaching. According to the latter, the end of evangelisation is specifically ecclesial and sacramental: "She (the Church) exists in order to evangelise; that is to say, in order to preach and teach, to be the channel of the gift of grace, to reconcile sinners with God and to perpetuate Christ's sacrifice in the Mass". (Evangelii Nuntiandi, No. 14)

The Congregation for Catholic Education (1998) extols the Catholic school because: "… through it, the local Church evangelises, educates and contributes to the formation of a healthy and morally sound lifestyle among its members". (No. 34)

However, earlier, the Congregation (1997) had emphasized the institutional and sacramental nature of this evangelisation when it asserted that through the Catholic school "… the Church fulfils her obligation to foster in her children a full awareness of their rebirth to new life". (No. 9)

Later, in consideration of the essential relationship between the Catholic school and its ecclesial context, the Congregation (1998) was quite insistent that "… it should not be forgotten that the school fulfils its vocation to be a genuine experience of Church only if it takes its stand within the organic pastoral work of the Christian community". (No. 12)

In another place, the Congregation (1988) had been even more specific about the ideal relationship between the Catholic school and the institutional Church:

> (The Catholic school) recognizes the Holy Father as the center
> and the measure of unity in the entire Christian community. Love
> for and fidelity to the Church is the organizing principle and the
> source of strength of a Catholic school. (No. 44)

When coupled with the findings of this research project concerning the expressed goals of holistic education discussed above, an examination of the contemporary praxis of evangelisation in Catholic schools would suggest that a far less explicitly ecclesio-centric perception of the purposes of Catholic schools is held by school principals. Some reasons for this have been set out

in this discussion. Catholic school principals appear to hold a far less specific vision of the goals of evangelisation than the ecclesiastical statements would present. It is less sacramentally and ritually orientated. It is, further, a vision less attuned to expectations of regular Mass attendance, for instance, than that of most clergy. The research clearly illustrates that the issue of the goal of evangelical activity is less than clearly defined in the minds of principals, many of whom, at this time, have to satisfy themselves with voicing the resultant questions rather than articulating answers. This confusion expressly allows for a loss of attachment to the institutional Church on the part of many families for reasons ranging from indifference to disillusionment. Further, the nature of evangelizing activity on the part of the Catholic school is couched less in customarily ecclesiastical language than in terms related to the promotion of "gospel values". It is these terms which form the basis for a discussion of the third perceived goal of the contemporary Catholic school.

5.2.3 Catholic Schools and the Promotion of Gospel Values

The third major perceived goal of the contemporary Catholic school to emerge from this study may be expressed as the aim:

to promote gospel values within the context of a community.

The term "gospel values" was explored in question two of the second questionnaire. This question had been included because the term had been used so frequently in responses to Questionnaire One.

In the responses to question two concerning gospel values, two respondents expressed a concern that the term was so broadly used that "in the end (it) means little or has such diverse understandings by the people who use it that it becomes meaningless" (#28). This reservation was echoed by one independent reviewer who commented: "   I agree – "gospel values" (e.g. justice) can be used to mean or justify anything that suits". (I.R. #1)

However, the responses to the question generally acted to clarify and to bring some specificity to the term. Responses were helpful in three aspects. Firstly, they offered a consistent and clear appreciation of the meaning of the term. Secondly, they set out a broad catalogue of values and attitudes which might come under the broad compass of gospel values and thirdly, and most significantly for any study of the issue of evangelisation, they articulated the ways in which gospel values might be lived within the school community. These three aspects will now be discussed.

The Understood Meaning of the Term "Gospel Values"

The meaning of the term "gospel values" was seen by most respondents as, in one way or another, rooted in the person of Jesus Christ as presented in the gospel portraits. Typical was the observation that:

> From the gospels we have gleaned certain attitudes and values exhibited by Jesus. The gospel writers used these as the corner-stone of a Christian life.   All values that lead to living the "Great Commandment" of love are considered gospel values.   (#44)

One respondent posited an understanding of gospel value within the defining concept of the Kingdom of God:

> … the purpose of a Catholic school is to help bring about the Kingdom of God i.e. it can follow the example of Jesus found in (scripture) to make a real difference in the world. We need to continually refer to (scripture) to keep us on track. (#29)

Most responses held up the scriptural portrait of Jesus as the epitome of the gospel values after which we are called to strive. This was indicated in the typical aspiration that "… we try to act out the example of Jesus in serving one another in truth, justice and love" (#2).

When asked to enumerate what might be understood as examples of gospel values, respondents generated a substantial list which showed a breadth of understanding of the practical dimensions of living the values of the gospel. These have been set out in detail in 4.9.5.

Gospel Values in the Life of the School

Question two which sought information concerning how principals saw gospel values expressed in their school communities. The major emphasis in this connection was on relationships and communication. This is of special interest retrospectively as an elucidation of the issue of the means of evangelisation as discussed above. It also is of interest prospectively with regard to the matter of the formation and sustenance of the Catholic school as a community. Responses included reference to the importance of "authentic relationships (and) ethical behaviour" (#19) and the way school communities "treat each other and the environment (and) solve problems" (#21). One response saw the expression of gospel values as realized "by doing the everyday things well and always considering the needs of others … trying to

create a good place for all" (#23) whilst another identified the importance of "the way we relate at a personal, social and systems level" (#26).

These responses typified the trend to nominate communitarian, co-operative behaviours as the key to the realisation of gospel values in the school. This is in complete accord with the data gathered concerning the development and sustenance of the communitarian nature of the Catholic school as one of its defining features as will be seen below. It also specifies the understanding of the nature of the work of evangelisation as discussed earlier. Principals saw these communitarian and interpersonal behaviours as the articulation of gospel values which they, in turn, clearly identified with the essence of the person of Jesus Christ, whose proclamation is at the core of evangelisation. One of the independent reviewers drew the connection between community and gospel values: "The school community is fast becoming the centre of evangelisation as it immerses the curriculum into the values of the Gospels and the life of Jesus" (I.R.#1).

A synchronous pattern emerges from the research. In its changing social, educational and ecclesial contexts, the Catholic school is seen both to sustain, and be sustained by, a sense of community which is marked by a sense of openness and inclusion and is maintained by relational behaviours which, in turn, are seen as reflecting the person of Jesus Christ. Both the expression and the essence of the Catholic school are perceived to be communitarian. As this discussion now moves to a consideration of the second research question concerning the changing nature of the Catholic school, this communitarian essence is of central importance.

5.3 THE CHANGING NATURE OF THE CATHOLIC SCHOOL

The second research question sought to explore the issue of the changing nature of the Catholic school. Specifically, it asked how respondents saw the Catholic school changing in the contemporary context. As indicated above, much that is relevant here has been canvassed in a consideration of the first research question relating to perceived purposes of the Catholic school. Previous discussion has seen that the goal of holistic education is one element of the contemporary Catholic school that has changed in recent years and relates not only to a sense of purpose but is indicative of wider change. Further, it was seen that the increasing involvement of the laity in leadership in the Church accompanied by changing patterns of affiliation with the institutional Church, not only affects a sense of their purpose but also is indicative of the evolving nature of those schools. This is also the case with the school's evanglising mission, perceived as a goal by principals.

However, two key issues present themselves from the research in a consideration of the changing character of the contemporary Catholic school. These are:

- the foundational issue of community
- the context of an increasingly secular environment for the school.

These will now be considered.

5.3.1 The Foundational Issue of Community for the Catholic School:

Chapter Four outlined the predominance of the theme of community in the responses to both questionnaires one and two. There, the analysis of the data showed a clear emphasis on the significance of an emerging awareness of community as both the means and essential characteristic of effective Catholic education. In this way, community is aptly described as the "root metaphor" (Holland, 1983, p. 170) for the Catholic school upon which it is founded and through which its ministry may be actualised, interpreted and evaluated. This communitarian awareness is seen as indicative of the changing nature of the Catholic school. This is not to deny the intrinsic difficulty in the development of a communitarian life. As one interviewee remarked: "Maintaining relationships in the school requires more energy than anything else I think". (I.5)

Nor is this to claim that Catholic schools have not previously been supported by a strong communitarian spirit, especially in the difficult establishing phase in Australia, with all its attendant struggles. However, what is indicative of the changing context of the Catholic school is that the current sense of community is marked by an acknowledgement that the Catholic school community is only tenuously connected with the broader Church and that many who discover a communitarian spirit within the Catholic school are, in fact, disaffected with the institutional Church. This is characteristic of the changing nature of the Catholic school, the issue addressed by the second research question. The changing nature of the community of the Catholic school is clearly characterised by a sense of the need for evangelisation of that community in a

context marked by disaffection with the institutional Church and by its secular context.

Community as the Foundation of the Changing Catholic School

Some respondents to Questionnaire One had stated their foundational belief in the communitarian nature of the Catholic school as one of its constitutive elements. One principal remarked: "I believe that community is the essence of schooling and a faith community the centrality of Catholic schools. (#2/1) [3] Another principal, taking an equally broad brush proposed: "Education in itself is not specifically Christian or necessarily life giving – it's the context in which it occurs which is critical. (The) essential Christian message (is) right relationships". (#3/1)

Typifying this central belief in communitarian values, one respondent to Questionnaire One had written expansively on the theme of community when addressing the matter of the purpose of the Catholic school. This purpose he/she saw as "… to pursue what it means to be a community committed to gospel values; to challenge the belief that leadership is restricted to the few". (#21/1)

When offering a reason for nominating the above as a salient purpose, the same respondent added, foreshadowing the later comments of others concerning holistic education:

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[3] #n/1 indicates a response to Questionnaire One

> …the belief that relationships are integral to learning and that learning is lifelong. The great challenge I have in life is not to pursue comfort or privilege but confront myself with community.
>
> (#21/1)

This comment affirms the belief in the centrality of relationships in the process of learning which was to be emphasized in Questionnaire Two, especially when addressing the matter of holistic learning.

In Questionnaire Two, which sought further to explicate the topic of community, the changing nature of the Catholic school was emphasised in the link between community and evangelisation. One respondent specified the implicit link between community and evangelisation offering the idea that the health or vigour of community life in a school was evinced by "evangelisation that meets the needs of the community (beyond) the realm of formal curriculum" (#3). This reference to community in the context of evangelisation also highlights the interrelation in practice, of the major themes of this research project. Whilst they may be conceptually distinguished, they are, in the praxis of the Catholic school, inseparable.

A small number of respondents made explicit mention of the concept of the common good in describing their communities with one observing that, "we are a small community. Everyone knows each other and is encouraged to work for the common good" (#17).

Chapter Four (section 4.9) has set out the attributes and indicators of community which the body of respondents perceived as being important for

the Catholic school. The responses as recorded indicate the attempts by principals to articulate the constitutive elements of community. One respondent (#37) indicated that, even after all the characteristics had been enumerated and the qualities calibrated, there remained the elusive and spiritual essence of the idea of community. The respondent identified that there still was "…something unquantifiable i.e. the feel (ethos) of the place that is tangible to those entering" (#37).

For all this, the overwhelming conviction that community was the essential *modus vivendi* of the Catholic school was clear in the research as was the concomitant and no less pronounced sense that the school's very effectiveness was inextricably linked to the communal ideal. This belief is well captured in the observation that:

> … it is more likely and more appropriate that Christ may be experienced through the "sacrament" of relationship - evangelisation of witness (Luke 10:33-37) than primarily through evangelisation of the word or the sacrament of Eucharist. (McLaughlin, 2000b, p. 8)

Reimagining the Changing Catholic School in Terms of Community

The second research question sought to examine how principals saw Catholic schools as changing. It is evident that the emphasis on communitarian life is one of the salient ways in which Catholic schools are experiencing a pronounced shift in focus. The research question was posed within the three major contexts of the Catholic school viz. social, educational and ecclesial. The shift in focus to a greater emphasis on the communitarian character of the Catholic school is one of the reimaginings which has taken place in recent decades within, and because of, changes in those contexts. The general educational context in which the Catholic school functions not only has moved

313

to embrace a holistic paradigm as seen above but has also moved focus to include an appreciation of the communitarian and global nature of learning. Secondly, the social context has influenced this community oriented reimagining too, as the scriptural premise that: "It is not good for the man to be alone" (Gen 2:18) finds common expression in the urge to develop better and more effective means of social communication in the contemporary world. Furthermore, our awareness of shared environmental responsibility, for instance, continues to increase paradoxically in the face of an increasing societal sense of alienation and the growth of a culture of individualism. Thirdly, the ecclesial context also influences this refocus on community, as the pre-Vatican soteriological concentration on the eternal salvation of the individual soul shifts, through a reawakening to the communitarian nature of the Church, to a realisation of the communitarian, as well as individual nature of both sin and salvation. These three shifting contexts have been the impetus for a reimagining of the Catholic school in communitarian terms.

Community as a Sociological / Theological Entity

Some consideration should be given to the fact that many of the characteristics of community described by the respondents reflect what might be termed sociological features rather than theological categories. However, such a distinction itself is internally inconsistent with a holistic and integrated understanding of the nature of the human being. The responses to the questionnaires reflect the holistic, unitary view of the human person proposed by the current literature rather than a bifurcated perspective which would separate the human person into temporal and spiritual entities and consequently propose discrete sets of earthly and heavenly virtues. In fact,

the described characteristics of community faithfully express the scriptural perspective which posits humble acts of service (Jn. 13) and patience, kindness, courtesy, good humour, truthfulness and endurance (1 Cor. 13) as hallmarks of Christian community and the presence of peace, patience, kindness and generosity as criteria for assessing the authenticity of the Christian community life (Gal. 5:2 ff). The five interviewees confirmed this view. One interviewee stated in reference to the above catalogue of communitarian characteristics: "Whenever I describe the community of my school, I think of it in terms like those". (I.2)

A holistic understanding of the human person and hence, of human community, allows for the importance of such virtues and attitudes and integrates them into the complex network of relationships that constitutes the Catholic school. In so doing, the leader acknowledges that in the school community "as in the rest of life, many of the greatest joys and intense sorrows, the highest peaks and deepest valleys, occur in relationships with others" (Bolman & Deal, 1991, p. 134).

Community as an Imperfect Reality

Finally, it is clear that the concept of community as it is outlined in the review of literature and as it is described by the respondents to the questionnaires, is not one which idealises community. Rather, paradoxically, it is one which openly acknowledges the reality of tension, conflict and diversity (McLaughlin, 2000, p. 102) in "an environment that is noisy, conflicted, filled with ambiguity, muddied by the traditional vices of anger, lust, envy, contentiousness and greed, and yet an environment that encourages trust, openness, loyalty,

integrity, generosity, courage and love" (Starratt, 1996, p. 96). It is recognized, in other words, that there will "always (be) a gap between that which is present that which is re-presented . . . between the sign and the signified" (Kneipp, 1994, p. 80) and that community is a reality that holds a plurality of meanings (Duignan & Bhindi, 1998).

This discussion has considered the issue of awareness of community as the first major way in which Catholic school administrators see their schools as changing within the contemporary social, ecclesial and educational contexts. This discussion now turns to a consideration of the second major way in which leaders perceive their schools as changing. This is the reimagining of the meaning of the Catholic school in a secular environment. This environment includes both internal and external factors. The discussion now turns to this issue.

5.3.2 The Catholic School in a Secular Environment

The research revealed that administrators saw their schools as changing to accommodate what they perceived as a predominantly secular cultural environment. This became evident in responses to questions 4 and 7 in Questionnaire Two concerning student and staff spirituality. In essence, the perception of an increasingly secular environment has precipitated a reimagining by administrators of the nature of the Catholic school because of both internal and external factors. The internal factors include the negative or ambivalent attitudes of staff and students to the spiritual and/or religious character of the Catholic school whilst the attitude of elements of the parent body which reflects the secularity of the broader social milieu beyond the

school is indicative of the external. A further factor in this connection is the prevalence of the attitude, perceived to exist in the school community by some respondents, that it is not necessary to find one's spiritual life within, or to define it by, participation in the life of the institutional Church. This attitude, whilst not indicative of secularism, is certainly suggestive of an anti-ecclesial or extra-ecclesial mindset and is worthy of note in this present discussion.

Reimagining Meaning in a Secular Context

The outcome of the trends noted here is the demise of the inherited meanings for the Catholic school which were predicated upon the strong (if less than accurate) presumption of a society which was (at least nominally) Christian and of a Catholic body within that society which faithfully held to the tenets of Catholic belief and expressed that belief in regular attendance at Mass and other ritual occasions. The assumption was clear that the Catholic school, nestled within the bosom of the Church, prepared young Catholics to enter a world which, if at times was seen as anti-Catholic was at least not generally anti-Christian or anti-religious. The rise of secularism has seen the breaking down of these assumptions and the inherited meanings to which they gave birth. The research gives some insight into the process of reimagining which is part of the development of new meanings for the Catholic school, a process necessitated partly by what one respondent described as "society's growing apathy and even antagonism towards religion in general (and) Catholicism in particular" (#14).

Whilst one respondent related the issue of secularisation to "the modern day 'God' of science where everything has to be seen and proven to be believed"

(#21) and another to "faith in scientific explanation of all parts of daily life" (#22) most were satisfied to describe the secular context of the students' world in general terms, a context which formed in them a "career focus which says things like – let's get at what will get us ahead – not the fringe stuff" (#29). The reality of this secular context means that "many children attending Catholic schools have no connection at all with God" (#25) resulting in a "lack of importance (of faith) in their life" (#23).

Some respondents named the issue of a lack of familial support for the spiritual values of the school: "For some children, school is the only place they encounter God - how do we make the impact strongly enough for that to be life-long without support of family/community?" (#37).

The Interrelation of Issues in the Study

This note of concern for evangelisation leads the discussion back to this issue which was treated earlier and highlights again the confluence of interrelated ideas and issues in this study. The changing contexts of the Catholic school give rise to a network of influences which erode the school's inherited meanings and which are interwoven in the fabric of the school's life. The increasingly secular environment is linked, in part, to the decline in traditional affiliation patterns with the institutional Church, a decline which is, in turn, related to the loss of faith in, and esteem for, the institutional Church. This, consequently, gives rise to a sense of urgency to evangelise the increasingly alienated and disassociated body of students and their families. In turn, school principals intuitively have seen the offering of an experience of community and the living of gospel values as the most effective means of

evangelising in an indifferent or apathetic environment, one which has largely

ceased to believe that the institutional Church is the singular pathway to

spirituality. This network of interrelated concepts is represented in Figure 5.3
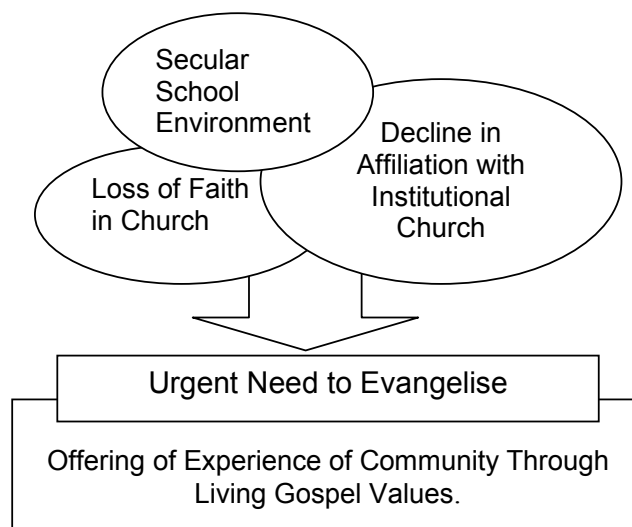
below.

Figure 5.3

The Network of Interrelated Concepts Affecting the Catholic School

Evangelisation and the School's Secular Context

The matter of evangelisation, within that complex of interconnected issues,

was emphasized by respondents. This discussion now returns to this issue as

it relates to the matter in hand of the secular environment in which the

contemporary Catholic school operates.   In the first questionnaire, one

respondent had foreshadowed:

> We will have a continuously thinning quality of participants in regular
> liturgy and associated activities as society, time and work dissolves the
> family value system and we are seemingly the most viable center of
> faith development. (#20/1)

In the second questionnaire, the role of evangelisation within an increasingly secular context was again mentioned vis-à-vis the mission of incorporating students into the active life of the Church:

> We often are dealing with developing "spirituality" and prayerfulness in our role of evangelisation rather than specifically 'churching' our children. (#17)

The intrinsic difficulties in this evangelising role in the face of a secular milieu amongst the students were noted by some respondents. Beyond the "profound apathy where ethical and religious formation is concerned" (Congregation for Catholic Education, 1998, No. 6) which is acknowledged in official Church documentation, some principals noted the presence in their schools of "children who are very vocally opposed to anything religious" (#40) and the existence of an attitude beyond "indifference from families and therefore students (to a) rejection by children of parental values" (#27).

This secularistic repudiation of a traditional value system is partly ascribed by one respondent to:

> … the materialistic approach many take to life and the "me first" approach that seems to be becoming more prevalent . . . because this selfishness filters through the school and can be very destructive. (#16/1)

This was supported by another respondent who saw barriers to spiritual growth in ". . . the "me" generation which many homes seem to be breeding (which) makes it difficult at times to get the message from above across". (#41)

The issue of antipathy to the religious and spiritual core message of the Catholic school is exacerbated, according to some principals, by staff attitudes. These can include, "cynicism in various quarters, sometimes in key staff members which undermines positive attitudes" (#11).

For the most part, staff resistance was seen as less aggressive and was described more passively as "indifference (and) resistance" (#32) or a "lack of commitment to spiritual development" (#33) or a "lack of motivation" (#35) or "not wish(ing) to participate on a regular basis" (#40) rather than as deliberate and active antipathy.

The Search for Spirituality Beyond the Catholic Church

These issues of student and staff indifference, resistance or opposition to spiritual development form part of the secular context which Catholic schools have had to accommodate in their reimagining of purpose and meaning. One other factor warrants brief mention here and has already been discussed above. This is the perceived tendency amongst the members of the school community to take a broader view of spirituality which leads them beyond the Catholic or ecclesiastical parameter to other sources of spiritual nourishment or simply inclines them to adopt the view that spirituality does not equate with formal (Catholic) religion or religious practice. Whilst this does not sit strictly within the secularizing sphere, it is a shift which challenges the presumed inherited meaning structure of the Catholic school. Therefore, it will be mentioned briefly here.

In responding to Questionnaire Two, principals had referred to a disposition amongst families within the school community to find a relationship with the sacred beyond the institution of Church. In turn, this was indicatively related to a loss of connection with the Church typified by the observation that, "many parents have an unchurched perception of spirituality" (#3). Another respondent explained: "The Church no longer plays a central role in many families' lives. While belief in God may still be strong, people feel able to worship God or acknowledge their beliefs in less traditional way" (#40).

This movement away from an ecclesiocentric view of spirituality is perceived as being epitomized by attitudes to regular attendance at Mass which would be seen, especially by many pastors, as a key indicator of spirituality. This perception was described by one principal as, "… the call of the parish to the school - you must make the children come to Mass on the weekend" (#15).

However, one principal raised a contrary observation and a question, relating the matter of spirituality to secularism:

> *Life is moving at a different pace and the "going to Mass every Sunday" doesn't really touch you in any way. Values in secular society oppose some values of the Church and if you are living a good life and you pray, why should Mass attendance count? (#30)*

The growing sense of the prevalence of a more expansive view of spirituality as people eschew the boundaries of formal religious practice in search of spiritual experience is noted in the observation that:

There is extensive evidence that religious practice is in decline, and amid growing "secularisation" religion is battling to hold its place in our rapidly changing world . . . while formal religion seems to be losing its dominant role, there appears to be a growing interest in the things that pertain to religion: hence, the paramount importance of the distinction between religion and spirituality. (O'Murchu, 1997, p. 1)

The resultant question which distills from this phenomenon was captured succinctly by one principal: "Is attendance at Sunday Parish Mass the only measure of what being a 'good Catholic' means?" (#41). In conclusion, one independent reviewer offered a cautionary comment on this connection:

This really needs to be fully thought through by any leader of a Catholic school. Too easy to hide behind cliches, rationalization etc. Rejection of Sunday Mass often means a "void" rather than some other commitment – not always so. (I.R. #3)

5.4   SUMMARY

This chapter has attempted to discuss the findings of the research within this project. It has been noted that the two research questions, posited within the perspective of the three changing contexts of the Catholic school raised several major issues.

In terms of perceived purposes of the contemporary Catholic school, explored by the first research question, the major purposes proposed included the offering to students of a holistic education, the evangelisation of families in the light of a declining affiliation with the institutional Church and the related issue of the living and modelling of gospel values.

Respondents, in addressing the second major research question concerning the changing nature of the Catholic school, discerned two chief movements. These were the pronounced increase in emphasis on the communitarian

nature of the Catholic school and the increased awareness of the realities of the school's secular environment and its effects upon the nature and the functioning of the school. Both of these latter issues are related to a loss of the credibility of, or satisfaction with, the institutional Church.

Having discussed these findings, this study will now proceed to draw some conclusions from this project.

CHAPTER SIX

REVIEW AND CONCLUSIONS

6.1   INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this chapter is to review and provide conclusions related to research into the changing nature of contemporary Catholic schools and the perceptions of practising principals regarding those changes. Social, ecclesial and educational factors have exerted an influence upon the Catholic school in significant ways, especially in the decades since the Second Vatican Council (1962–1965) which initiated marked ecclesial shifts.   These have been accompanied by foundational social and educational movements which have combined to bring about fundamental changes in the contexts within which the Catholic school operates (Ludwig, 1996; Lennan, 1995).

Within the sphere of ecclesial change, some impetus has come from within. The nature and extent of movements inside the Church initiated by the Second Vatican Council were profound (Arbuckle, 1996). The *aggiornamento* instigated by Pope John XXIII and confirmed by Pope Paul VI transformed the Catholic Church and its relationship with the wider world (Murphy, 1997). Other changes have grown out of a renewed awareness of the role of the laity and this, coupled with the decline in the numbers of religious and clergy since 1970, has meant a wave of change in ecclesial leadership patterns in areas such as Catholic schooling.

Educational change, influenced by technological developments, globalisation of work and economic patterns, participation rates and other factors has also

meant significant change in the educational context of Catholic schools. The field of educational change is interrelated with that of social change. At the very time the Catholic Church sought to establish a new openness to, and dialogue with, the wider world, that world underwent foundational social change (Norris, 1995; Tarnas, 1991). The growth of a post-modern perspective challenged foundational socio-cultural premises and initiated social shifts especially in the Western world, at the very time the Church sought to initiate dialogue with her social context (Arbuckle, 1996).

This study has sought to explore how principals in Catholic schools have led their communities in a period of such significant and dynamic contextual development. It has been directed by two key research questions. These were:

- How do practising principals currently perceive the purpose of Catholic schools?

- How do they perceive Catholic schools changing?

6.2   THE DESIGN OF THE RESEARCH

The research study is set principally within the Archdiocese of Brisbane, Queensland, and involves principals of primary and secondary Catholic schools in the Archdiocese. Since the study is exploring the perceptions of leaders concerning their schools in times of extensive and foundational contextual change, it involves an interpretive research design which offers opportunities for the researcher to share in the participants' professional lives in order to observe, listen, question, hear and interpret the significance they give to their experiences (Beattie, 2001).

An epistemological stance of constructionism is adopted because it takes into account the impact which engagement with the research exerts on participants' construction of meaning (Crotty, 1988). An interpretivist theoretical perspective serves to structure the research in a manner that is congruent with the philosophical foundations of the research questions (Beattie, 2001). The employment of the research orientation of symbolic interactionism is appropriate as a guide for the research because it is based upon the principle that meaning and interpretation of phenomena must be understood by listening to the voices and perspectives of the participants (Strauss & Corbin, 1994). Symbolic interactionism also acknowledges that meanings which participants ascribe to experiences are shaped by their context (Crotty, 1998). A case study approach is adopted in this study in order to orchestrate 'the collection and presentation of detailed, relatively unstructured information from a range of sources about a particular group" (Hammersley as cited in Hitchcock & Hughes, 1995, p.318). A case study approach offers flexibility and scope to explore the phenomenon of leadership of the Catholic school in changing contexts whilst respecting the contextual specificity of constructed meaning. The research design allows for systematic yet flexible and continuing data collection, partial analysis and participant feedback.

Data were collected through the utilization of personal journal, open-ended questionnaires, in-depth, semi structured interviews, critical review interviews, focus group and independent review. Data were analysed into themes using constant comparative analysis and the themes used as the basis for further data gathering and analysis throughout the project. The procedure for data

collection is situated within the need to engage the participants in a process of interpretation and reinterpretation of data as it is collected in accord with the principles and orientation of symbolic interactionism.

6.3   RESEARCH QUESTIONS ADDRESSED

The two research questions which emerged which focused the conduct of this study. They took an evolving form and were shaped in the early stages of the research as data were collected, instruments were refined and the results analysed. These were further formed by the experience of the researcher, the continuing interaction with relevant literature and dialogue with participants. The research questions are:

Research Question One:
How do practising principals currently perceive the purpose of Catholic Schools?

Research Question Two:
How do they perceive Catholic schools changing?

These questions provide a helpful framework to present the findings. However, it is evident that there is a close relationship between these two questions and they are not to be seen in isolation. This is clear in the conclusions that follow just as it was in the extensive discussion of the findings in Chapter Five. However, these conclusions offer a comprehensive account of the insights, judgements and reflective perceptions of a number of practising principals of Catholic schools.

6.3.1 The First Research Question:

The first research question is:

> How do practising principals perceive the purpose of Catholic schools?

Analysis of the data revealed three main purposes perceived by the participants. These are:

- to provide an educational environment which nurtures holistic growth;
- to be an evangelizing influence in the lives of the families of the school community;
- to promote gospel values within the context of a community.

Practising principals place a high degree of importance on the processes of holistic education aspiring to offer to students a formative experience which allows for their growth in a wide spectrum of areas. The affective domain is clearly regarded as of equal importance to the cognitive which may have been regarded as the principal priority of earlier forms of schooling, both Catholic and secular.

It is of some interest that the participants do not ascribe any discernable significance to soteriological concerns. Little emphasis, if any, is placed on the eternal, salvific dimension of Catholic schooling which had enjoyed a pronounced primacy in earlier understandings. In its place is a strong stress on the immediate and medium-term effects of holistic education. The "personalization" of the educational experience within the communitarian context of the Catholic school is placed in sharp contrast to the depersonalisation of education in the market context which, by definition, looks to its longer term, tangible and material benefits. The absence of

emphasis on the soteriological dimension of Catholic schooling may be attributable to the changing understanding amongst principals of the nature of the human condition. This post modern anthropology which begins from the premise of wholeness of humanity rather than its brokenness and sinfulness and embraces what may be termed a "Christian humanism" is finding its way into, not only theological speculation but also official Church pronouncements. In this way, the instinctive understanding of principals arising from the praxis of Catholic schooling concerning the intrinsically holistic nature of the human being may foreshadow a developing and emergent understanding of the teaching Church.

The aspiration to be an evangelizing influence in the lives of the families of the school community is closely associated with an awareness amongst principals that the Catholic school may be the single, or certainly most prominent, evangelising influence in the lives of the families whom they serve. This, in turn, is accompanied by a perception that that role, whether sought or not, is at least partly attributable to the declining sense of affiliation amongst families of the school community with the institutional Church. This latter point, especially, highlights a disjunction between the institutional Church's view of the goals of evangelisation and that of the principals involved in the study. Whilst the official statements of the Church are increasingly sympathetic to the difficulties of proclaiming the Gospel in the contemporary world, the ecclesiastical premise remains that evangelisation should always be directed towards participation in the institutional life of the Church. With varying degrees of reluctance or acquiescence, the participants generally hold the view that the evangelizing work of the Catholic school, expressed consistently

as the promotion of "gospel values", results, whether by design or default, in a closer affiliation with the school community rather than the ecclesial community. This, in turn, raises questions in the minds of the principals concerning the long-term viability of such vicarious relationships with the Catholic community in any form.

The third and related major goal of the contemporary Catholic school to emerge from this study may be expressed as the aim to promote gospel values within the context of a community. The prevalence of the term "gospel values" in the professional parlance of Catholic school principals invites exploration of its held understandings. Whilst some minor reservation is articulated concerning a perceive lack of definition and focus to the use of the term, an analysis of responses reveals a consistent appreciation of the term amongst principals. The research also shows an understanding of the relationship between the living of "gospel values" in the school context and the process of evangelisation which, as outlined above, is seen as another of the major goals of the contemporary Catholic school.

A clear pattern which emerges from the study is that principals consistently place a priority on communitarian behaviours when speaking of the importance of "gospel values" in their schools. It is of particular interest to this research into Catholic schools that communitarian patterns of relationship and behaviour are referenced to the person of Jesus Christ as portrayed in the Gospels.

6.3.2 The Second Research Question:

The second research question is:

> How do practising principals perceive Catholic schools changing?

In addition to the elements of change implicit in the discussion of the first research question, two further major issues emerge from the research as indicative of the changing nature of the Catholic school in its contemporary contexts. These are:

- the foundational issue of community
- the increasingly secular environment of the school.

Throughout the research, the discussion of the importance of the foundational issue of community for the changing Catholic school is pronounced. Principals are able to articulate, not only the priority that they place upon the development and maintenance of a strong communitarian spirit but are also able to identity the desired characteristics of their communities with some degree of specificity and consistency.

An analysis of the data reveals that each of the nominated contexts of the contemporary Catholic school, ie. educational, social and ecclesial, urges some concentration on the development and maintenance of communitarian values. Along with the movement to a more holistic perspective, the general educational context in which the Catholic school operates has come also to an appreciation of the communitarian and global nature of knowledge and learning even in the face of an increased emphasis on competition and marketisation of skills. The social context, too, builds an awareness of the broader human community through technology and communications which contract some of the impediments of distance and time, sometimes

paradoxically over against the increasing sense of personal alienation and individualism prevalent in contemporary Western society. The ecclesial reawakening to its essentially communitarian nature as one of its constitutive elements has also provided the contemporary Catholic school with an ecclesio-theological context for its emphasis on communitarian values.

The fact that the principals within the research project describe the changing nature of the Catholic school community in apparently sociological rather than theological terms is of some interest. An examination of the scriptural descriptors of Christian community reveals that the very characteristics upheld by the contemporary Catholic school echo faithfully the qualities of community living espoused throughout the New Testament, qualities described consistently by principals as "gospel values". This reconciliation of a seeming contradiction between the sacred and secular in its value system, echoes the resolution of the apparent paradox of humanism and gospel in the discussion of the Catholic school's approach to holistic education above.

Finally, the research reveals an understanding amongst principals of the human reality of community, a reality which acknowledges conflict, tension and diversity. This perspective accepts the presence of multiplicity, plurality and division yet upholds the centrality of the ideal, flawed as it may be, in building the core of the community of the contemporary Catholic school.

Within the second research question concerning the changing nature of the Catholic school, some attention was paid to the secular social context in which it operates. This secular environment is seen in both its internal and external

dimensions. Internally, the attitudes of both some staff and students are seen as reflective of a largely secular and/or religiously apathetic context in which the contemporary Catholic school functions. Some principals perceive their parent population as being affected by this pervasive secularism, related, in their view, to an ascendant materialism. Clearly, principals see a close relationship between this issue and that of evangelisation which is also canvassed in this study.

Further, the issue is exacerbated or accentuated by a marked decline in confidence in clerical leadership accompanied by a perception of the irrelevance of the Church in matters of personal significance. This is further underlined by an increasing movement to find spiritual meaning beyond the parameters of the Catholic Church. This can be expressed negatively by the belief that active membership of the Church is not necessary in order to live an authentic and spiritual life or more positively in the assertion that spiritual fulfilment can be found, sometimes more richly in the judgement of some, beyond the confines of the Catholic Church. Whilst this is not directly appended to the issue of secularization, it is seen by principals as symptomatic of a popular sense of disillusionment with established religion. The search for spiritual nourishment beyond the Church is seen as the alternative reaction to abandonment of the religious search altogether in favour of a secular position.

6.4   CONCLUSIONS FROM THE RESEARCH

The following conclusions represent an understanding of the perceptions of practising Catholic school principals concerning the purposes of the schools they lead and of the ways in which those schools are changing. It is emphasised that any tentative conclusions drawn from this research are made in the acknowledgement that perceptions and understandings are formative and may in fact change over time given that each participant involved in the study is, in fact, "a self in transition" (Carson, 1995, p.161).

The research set out to study the perceived purposes of contemporary Catholic schools given the dynamic and changing nature of the three major contexts in which they function i.e. ecclesial, social and educational. It further set out to examine how principals understand the Catholic school to be changing. The hypothesis used in the study is that the meaning structure which had been formative of the Catholic school prior to the time of the Second Vatican Council (1962-1965) and known herein as its "inherited meanings", broke down in the aftermath of that Council and its concurrent social and educational transitions. The research questions were posed against that background in an attempt to examine how purposes for Catholic schools are being "reimagined" in altered contexts and how those altered contexts are, in turn, affecting the contemporary Catholic school.

It is evident from the research that principals share an understanding of the contemporary Catholic school as placing a high priority upon holistic education. This is understood as the offering to young people of formative

experiences across a broad spectrum, catering to academic, social, spiritual, physical, aesthetic and cultural needs. What appears to be the common intuitive understanding amongst principals is that education is authentic when it addresses the totality of the young person rather than focusing only on selected elements.

The "inherited meanings" informing the Catholic school prior to the 1960s characteristically placed priority upon the salvation of the individual soul whose ultimate destiny was eternal beatitude after judgement as well as upon academic formation and success. The research indicates that a new meaning structure is being shaped by principals in practice as part of the process of the reimagining of the Catholic school. A postmodern anthropology, to which the majority of participants appear to subscribe, does not accommodate the bi-partite division of the human being into body and soul, a division which is a constitutive element of a fall/redemption theological paradigm out of which the Catholic school generally operated up until the time of the Vatican Council. The emphasis upon academic success in Catholic schools has moved to embrace a broader understanding of desirable outcomes based upon a holistic apprehension of the human person. Along with the movements within the wider educational world, the contemporary Catholic school acknowledges the spectrum of achievement for individual students and the diversity of educational pathways to those achievements. The holistic reimagination of the Catholic school, it may be concluded, has led its leaders to reassess the models of education and formation which it had previously incorporated in favour of a more diverse, individuated, flexible and comprehensive paradigm. Analysis of the data gathered during this project would also lead to the

conclusion that principals, in reimagining their Catholic schools, pay a great deal of attention to developing schools which place a priority upon immediate and medium term goals for students' lives to a greater extent than upon long-term vocational and then, ultimate theological goals of former models. This may be because long-term vocational goals for graduating students may be more flexible and unclear than in former times given the changing nature of the workplace. It may also be because the ascendant post modern anthropological-theological construct places less dominant emphasis on the supremacy of eternal, post-mortem concerns, an emphasis which can result in the neglect of more immediate considerations.

A further conclusion which may be drawn from the research is that principals are reimagining the Catholic school in terms of its evangelizing role. The concatenation of a number of circumstances including the decline in the numbers of available clergy, the widespread loss of a sense of affiliation with the institutional Church amongst families, decline in regard for clerical leadership and a pervasive secularism, has changed the context in which the contemporary Catholic school functions. Principals have been forced to reimagine the circumstances in which the evangelical proclamation which sits at the heart of the school, is carried out. They have also, consequentially, been led to reimagine the goals of such an endeavour. Previous, generally valid assumptions concerning the religious practice of families in schools and their religious socialisation are being found by principals to be no longer sustained. It may be concluded from this study that Catholic school principals have been required to reimagine the religious intentions and goals of their schools in terms of being a primary evangelising agent in the lives of families.

This has taken place in the face of the demise of those previously valued assumptions about familial religious practice and background which informed Catholic schools in earlier generations. It seems to be the case that principals now perceive their work of religious leadership as shaped by a predominantly secular context in which little can be assumed about the receptivity of the school community to ecclesial proclamation. It can be concluded, further, that principals perceive the kernel of the evangelical message to be carried most effectively by the exemplary living of what are commonly termed "gospel values". These values are those which are seen to embody the central tenets of the life of Jesus Christ as described in the gospels and include the foundational qualities of love, self-giving, kindness, integrity, justice and forgiveness. Furthermore, it may be concluded from the research that principals judge these virtues to be most effectively promoted in the context of the development of community upon which they place high priority.

It is evident from the research that there exists a logical and consistent line which connects the foundational holistic anthropology of the contemporary Catholic school with its communitarian and humanitarian priorities. The school itself is reimagined as a redemptive community rather than as a locus of individuated salvation. Emphasis is therefore placed upon the sustenance of community as the foundational paradigm of the school and those "gospel values" which promote community integrity are highly prized. It may be tentatively concluded that principals who may personally and privately hold reservations about aspects of the institutional Church, find significance and meaning in the development and leadership of educational and formative communities which uphold the foundational values of the gospels. Further,

whilst these values may be initially gauged to be more humanistic than evangelical, a critique of the New Testament reveals them to be entirely faithful to the earliest traditions of the Church. In this connection, it may be concluded that the espousing, however intuitively, by principals of a post-modern anthropology which eschews the conceptual distinction between body and soul, is not symptomatic of an increasing tendency to what might be seen as secular humanism. Rather, it may be understood as foreshadowing a holistic revision of anthropology which is beginning to become more manifest in official ecclesial documentation.

In summary, it may be concluded from this study that the Catholic school has, in fact, been reimagined by its leaders in recent decades in response to changing contexts. That reimagination continues in the light of extensive change in the Catholic Church, in the broad field of education and in its social context.

What may be concluded further is that the reimaginging of the Catholic school is, at its best, a reimagining of the human person and human destiny. That involves perceiving the human person as an essentially communitarian being; as a creature authentically appreciated only as a whole being, as an integrated entity yet, in balance, a being in need of healing, redemptive relationships and personal meaning. The Catholic school community in its reimagining is attempting to respond to those foundational understandings.

Therefore, it may be further concluded that this reimagining of the Catholic school involves a reconstruction of its mission. This reconstruction is helpfully understood as a reimagination of its ministry in terms of the living of the

foundational communitarian values of the gospel and in terms of offering a corrective, prophetic voice in a predominantly secular milieu. These conclusions lead to some reflections on their implications for professional educators involved in Catholic school leadership.

6.5 IMPLICATIONS FOR THE PROFESSION

The research would seem to indicate the importance of priority at systemic and administrative levels being given to the selection and formation of school leaders possessed of personal qualities attuned to the reflection of gospel values, the maintenance of communitarian priorities and to the development of an educational philosophy based upon a holistic apprehension of the human person. This would imply the provision of consciously structured and deliberately conceived opportunities for both aspiring and incumbent leaders in the academic, pastoral and spiritual dimensions of Catholic school leadership in the contemporary context. This study further indicates the importance of formation in the demands of pastoral leadership given the common perception of the role of principals in relation to the contemporary Catholic school as the main point of contact for many families with the larger Church.

Further, the research indicates the desirability of the development of a clear statement, perhaps at national level, of the philosophy of leadership in the contemporary Catholic school which acknowledges the complexities of the role and which pays due regard to the realities of the contexts in which it is carried out and which, therefore by definition, embodies the views of practitioners. It is to be acknowledged that official Church documents

increasingly recognise the challenges implicit in the contemporary context of Catholic education. However, because those same documents typically maintain a presumption of the ultimate goal of active Church membership amongst the families in the school, they can fail to reflect the actual professional experience of leaders in Catholic schools.

Any philosophical document developed may help to initiate a forthright dialogue about the goals of the contemporary Catholic school between practitioners and ecclesiastical authorities. In this connection, it is a significant implication of this study that care be exercised lest there be allowed to develop a disparity of understanding of the praxis of contemporary Catholic schooling between school leaders and systemic administrators. It is possible, given the political structures of Catholic school administration, that systemic administrators may tend to hold a view of the goals and purposes of the contemporary Catholic school which reflects more closely that of the ecclesiastical leadership rather than that of those whose understanding is forged in praxis of school leadership. The dialogue implicit in the development of an authentic statement of common understanding of the philosophy of leadership of the contemporary Catholic school may assist to minimise any inconsistencies in understanding of school leadership between practitioners and systemic administrators.

It is clear that some current leaders entertain an ambivalence towards the growing pastoral demands of their work because of a sense of the inadequacy of their formation in this regard or because of a fear of the unknown dimensions of this area of their leadership in a Catholic school. Formation

and support for principals at systemic or organizational level would present itself as an area of priority from this study.

A further implication for the profession is suggested in the issues raised in the study concerning the development or maintenance of links between the school and parish. The negative views expressed by school leaders in this connection suggest that it might be an issue of priority for local or diocesan authorities. Given also that school leaders expressed both a sense of irrelevance of the parish structure to most families as well as a ambivalence about the consequent increasing onus of pastoral leadership upon them, this issue carries significant implications for the profession and suggests itself as a matter for further study below.

6.6   AREAS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

Some areas for further research are suggested by this study. These include the following:

- The research project would suggest the value of further study of pathways by which families of Catholic school communities may be led to affiliation with, or attachment to, the wider Church. This may, or may not , initially involve landmark behaviours such as regular eucharistic participation but could utilise other avenues of ecclesial participation less structured and formal in style.

- The project would also present the need for further study of a range of possible models of the contemporary systemic Catholic school, some of which may exercise a certain degree of independence from the parish-school nexus generally operative. Whilst some steps have been taken in this direction especially in the secondary sphere, in some dioceses, it would appear that research into both the philosophical and practical dimensions and consequences of these

initiatives is warranted. Issues such as enrolment policies, religious outcomes, goals of evangelisation and catechesis and models of sacramental life are immediately apparent as deserving of attention.

- Given the changing contexts described above, the nature of Religious Education in a reimagined Catholic school is worthy of some examination. In an environment where little can be assumed in terms of religious literacy or practice or experience in pupils, adjustments are clearly warranted in the expressed goals, forms and expected outcomes of religious and moral education. Some research into these areas would benefit the practitioner in a contemporary Catholic school.

- Further, given the changing demands of leadership in the Catholic school, especially in its pastoral dimensions, some exploration of leadership models may be valuable. Team leadership, shared responsibility and specialization in a "flatter" leadership structure may assist in the practical negotiation of the complex reality of Catholic school leadership.

- In this regard, it is also possible that a beneficial area for further study might be the range of potential structures for a program of formation and support for leaders of Catholic schools. Elements of academic, spiritual and pastoral formation warrant examination so that the optimal model(s) may be proposed and implemented. Again, this kind of formation and support is suggested by the research within this study.

6.7   CONCLUDING COMMENT

This study began by focusing on the changing contexts and character of the contemporary Catholic school. It did so through the frame of the reimagining of goals, nature and purpose of Catholic schools by its principals. The results of this study show that principals have, indeed, reimagined the schools they

lead in the contemporary environment. However, what the study has highlighted is that the reimagination of the school has been predicated, however intuitively, upon a reimagination of the human person who sits at the core of the educational enterprise. This anthropological revision comprehends the person as essentially communitarian and as a whole being, yet one who stands constantly in need of healing and redemptive relationships.

The reimagining of the Catholic school, from this anthropological and theological foundation, then, allows for a reassessment of its sense of mission and purpose. This, in turn, has highlighted the essential elements of the Catholic school in the contemporary context and has reasserted the priority of the foundational perspective of the values of the gospel of Jesus Christ, of a communitarian focus and of the intrinsic importance of our earthly human existence.

This reimagining has been largely the result of reflective praxis by leaders and practitioners. It will therefore continue as long as the exploration and examination of the Catholic school's nature and mission continues.

APPENDIX 1

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Questionnaire Two

BACKGROUND

An initial survey was conducted amongst a sample of principals concerning goals of Catholic Schooling and challenges to be faced in the contemporary Catholic school.

The responses identified six (6) issues. Those issues have been developed into the discussion guide which follows. It is hoped that our conversation will further clarify the issues and highlight key elements within each.

Thank you.

1.   COMMUNITY /RELATIONSHIPS:

Many of your colleagues stated that one of the best features of their schools was the sense of community that pervaded them and the quality of the relationships that sustained them. These questions explore that perception.

1.1   What are the distinguishing features of a Catholic school as a community?

1.2   On what do you base your perception of a "healthy" community spirit?

1.3   How do you build and nurture this spirit of community in your school?

2. GOSPOEL VALUES:

The term "gospel values" has gained currency in discussions about Catholic schooling and Catholic school leadership. A degree of clarity and precision in the use of the term is therefore very important. Respondents to the preliminary survey frequently spoke of gospel values as the necessary context for authentic Catholic schooling, the foundation on which the enterprise is built.

2.1   Which particular values of the gospel do you see as vital to a Catholic school?

2.2   How do you find these values are expressed in the everyday operation of your school?

2.3   How do you foster the significance of gospel values in your school?

3. HOLISTIC EDUCATION:

"Holistic" educational objectives are upheld as being of prime importance and are supported by language of the "whole person", "rounded development" and "attainment of potential".

3.1   What understanding of the human person is implicit in speaking of "holistic" education?

3.2   How does this accord with scriptural and doctrinal understandings?

3.3   How do you achieve holistic educational practices in your school?

4.   RELATIONSHIP WITH GOD/SPIRITUALITY:

Some principals spoke of the importance of developing a strong relationship with God or a growing spirituality in children in a Catholic school.

4.1   How central is that goal in your view?

4.2   How do you work towards the goal?

4.3   What barriers do you encounter?

5. RELATIONSHIP OF SCHOOL AND PARISH:

Principals spoke often of their increasing sense of the school as the chief, if not only, point of contact of families with the Church. There is a sense that the changing ecclesiastical landscape is altering the role of the school.

5.1 Do you sense a changing role for you as a principal given the changing patterns of practice and affiliation of families with the broader Church?

5.2 What are the greatest challenges for you in these developments?

5.3 What do you see as the causes of these changes?

5.4 What support would you look for in fulfilling your changing role as a principal?

6. CATHOLIC CHURCH/THE CATHOLIC FAITH:

Several responses reiterated the basic premise that Catholic schooling is conducted within the context of the ministry of the Catholic church and is directed towards forming a stronger sense of membership of the Church.

6.1　How effective is your Catholic school in encouraging a stronger affiliation with the Church amongst students and their families?

6.2　How do you maintain consciousness of the church amongst staff and families?

6.3　What are the key features of the Church that influence your principalship?

APPENDIX 2

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Undertakings to Research Participants

Research Project: Reimagining the Catholic School - An Approach to the
Reconstruction of Meaning

Researcher: Graeme Mellor

Dear   ,

     I write to request your consideration of participation in the above research project which forms part of my doctoral study. The objective of this part of the study is to clarify principals' perceptions of the future directions and sense of purpose of catholic schooling from a practitioners viewpoint. It will assist towards a better understanding of the process whereby meaning for the Catholic school is currently being reconstructed through practice and the application by those involved in the field.

     Your participation would involve the completion of the attached questionnaire with the possibility of your being invited to take part in a brief follow up interview if matters raised need clarification or expansion.

     The survey should take approximately thirty (30) minutes to complete. Any subsequent interview would take about the same time.

     Participants are free to withdraw at any time from the process or to discontinue participation even after initial acceptance.

     Any questions regarding this project can be directed to me (ph: 33453433) and/or Dr Dennis Mclaughlin (ph: 38557154) at A.C.U. , McAuley Campus, Prospect Rd. , Mitchelton 4053 .

     This study has been approved by the University Research Projects Ethics Committee at the Australian Catholic University and by Brisbane Catholic Education.

     In the event that you have any complaint about the way this research has been conducted or a question that the Researcher or the Supervisor has not been able to satisfy, you may address your concerns to the nearest branch of the office of Research as below:

     Chair,
     University Research projects Ethics Committee
     Australian Catholic University
     P.O. Box 247
     Everton Park
     Qld 4053

Any complaint made will be treated in confidence, investigated fully and the participant informed of the outcome.

Thank you for considering this request. If you agree to participate in this project, you should sign both copies of the Informed Consent Form, retain one copy for your records and return the other copy to me at :

Our Lady Of Lourdes School
140 Mains Rd
Sunnybank
Qld 4109

Once again, thank you in anticipation for your kind consideration of this request. I look forward to your response.

It would be most appreciated if the survey could be returned to me by Friday, June 12th.

Thank you.

Yours sincerely,

Graeme Mellor.

Title of Research Project: Reimagining the Catholic School
               - An Approach to the Reconstruction of Meaning

Name of Researcher: Graeme Mellor

I _____ (the participant) have read and understood the information provided in the Letter to the Participants and any questions I have asked have been answered to my satisfaction. I agree to participate in the activity, realising that I can withdraw at any time.

I agree that research data collected for the study may be published or provided to other researchers in a form that does not identify me in any way.

Name of Participant:_____ (block letters)

Signature:_____   Date: _____

Researcher (if student):   Graeme Mellor

Signature:_____ Date: _____

APPENDIX 3

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Ethics Approval – A.C.U.

Approval to Conduct Research, B.C.E.C.

AUSTRALIAN CATHOLIC UNIVERSITY
Office of Research

University Research Projects Ethics Committee
Ethics Clearance for a Research Project - Approval Form

Supervisor(s)	1) Dr Denis McLaughlin	**Campus:** McAuley
Researcher(s) (if student/s)	1) Mr Graeme Mellor	**Campus:** McAuley

Ethics clearance has been provisionally approved for the following project:

Reimagining the Catholic School: An approach to the reconstruction of meaning

for the period: 1/5/98 to 1/5/99

University Research Ethics Committee Register Number: Q98-5

subject to the following conditions as stipulated in the National Health and Medical Research Council (NHMRC) Statement on Human Experimentation and Supplementary Notes 1992:

(i)   that principal investigators provide reports annually on the form supplied by the Institutional Ethics Committee, on matters including:
- security of records;
- compliance with approved consent procedures and documentation;
- compliance with special conditions, and

(ii)   as a condition of approval of the research protocol, require that investigators report immediately anything which might affect ethical acceptance of the protocol, including:
- adverse effects on participants;
- proposed changes in the protocol, and/or
- unforeseen events that might affect continued ethical acceptability of the project.

and subject to clarification of the following to the University Research Projects Ethics Committee:

A Final Report Form will need to be completed and submitted to the URPEC within one month of completion of the project
OR
An Annual Progress Report Form will need to be completed and submitted to the URPEC within one month of the anniversary date of approval.

Please sign, date and return this form (with any additional information or material, if requested by the Committee) to the Administrative Officer (Research) to whom you submitted your application, for approval to be confirmed.

Signed: ....   Date: ....11...May...1998....
          Administrative Officer (Research)

(To be completed by the Principal Investigator, or Student and Supervisor, as appropriate.)

The date when I/we expect to commence contact with human participants or access their records is: ...MAY...98...

I/We hereby declare that I/We am/are aware of the conditions governing research involving human participants as set out in the Research Projects Ethics Committee's *Guidelines and Instructions for Researchers/Students* and agree to the conditions stated above.

Signed: .... Date: ....
(Principal Investigator (if staff) or Supervisor, as appropriate)

Signed: .... Date: 15.5.98...
(Researcher (if student))

OR/E30/974

Our Lady of Lourdes School

Ph (07) 3345 3433

Fax (07) 33442447

140 Mains Rd

P.O. Box 439

Sunnybank   QLD 4109

The Office of the Principal
MacKillop House

2 April 1998

Mr Jeff Kemp
Brisbane Catholic Education Centre
GPO Box 1201
Brisbane Q 4001

Dear Mr Kemp

I write to seek approval to conduct a research project amongst principals of systemic schools in the Archdiocese.

Details of this application are supplied below:

. The research is part of my doctoral program being undertaken through   the Australian Catholic University;

. It is intended to survey approximately twenty (20) principals;

. All data will be treated confidentially and all the requirements of ethics clearance of A.C.U. will be followed;

. Initial contact will be through the survey attached. Some follow-up interviews may be sought.

I thank you for your assistance in this matter and look forward to your reply.

Yours sincerely

GREAME MELLOR
(PRINCIPAL)

Catholic Education Centre
243 Gladstone Rd
DUTTON PARK 4102
AUSTRALIA
GPO BOX 1201
BRISBANE 4001
AUSTRALIA

Ph (07)3840 0400 *Fax (07)3844* 5101 *Email* director@bne.catholic.edu.au

Archdiocese of Brisbane
CATHOLIC EDUCATION

27 April 1998

Mr G Mellor
Our Lady of Lourdes School
140 Mains Road
SUNNYBANK QLD 4109

Dear Graeme

      Re: Research Application: An Initial Exploration of the Current Perceptions of the Purposes of the Catholic School by Catholic School Principals

On behalf of the Research Review Committee of Brisbane Catholic Education I am pleased to approve your research application subject to your acceptance of the following conditions:

1.

It is clearly understood that this approval is to approach school principals in regard to the research and that the principal of any school approached has the right of final approval.

2.

Confidentiality of teachers, students and the schools involved is of paramount importance.

The Research Review Committee wishes you well with your research and looks forward to learning of the outcome.

Yours sincerely

J S Kemp
Chair
Research Review Committee

BIBLIOGRAPHY

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