

**CATHOLIC SECONDARY SCHOOL
PRINCIPALS AS FAITH LEADERS: A
STUDY OF THE DIOCESE OF LISMORE**

Submitted by

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STATEMENT OF AUTHORSHIP AND SOURCES

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All research procedures reported in the thesis received the approval of the Australian Catholic University Human Research Ethics Committee.

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ABSTRACT

Faith leadership as a critical dimension of the role of the Catholic secondary school principal within the Diocese of Lismore is the focus of this study. Set in the context of constant change; ecclesial, social, cultural and educational, this research seeks a more informed and sophisticated understanding of the phenomenon of faith leadership. This topic is problematic within the Diocese of Lismore, with the perception that there is little support for principals in policy or professional development. At the same time there are clear indications of a gap in the research regarding faith leadership especially from the perspective of principals.

A comprehensive analysis of key literature in organisational leadership, faith in organisations, values in Christian based organisations and Catholic school leadership, reveals a number of key insights that inform this study. Here faith leadership is shown to be loosely defined with a clear distinction emerging between notions of spirituality and religion. The literature also points to the development of a values-centred congruence between organisational leadership theory and trends in the expression and management of faith and spirituality in the workplace. Thus the literature review establishes faith leadership as the personal and intrinsic motivation behind human action, expressed in human interaction and centred on core values. This finding raises questions regarding the exact nature of the values underpinning faith leadership and their source and expression in contemporary Catholic secondary schools.

Based on these insights three research questions are used in this study:

How do principals understand the challenge of faith leadership in Catholic secondary schools in the Diocese of Lismore?

How do principals conceptualise faith leadership in Catholic secondary schools in the Diocese of Lismore?

How do principals enact the faith leadership role in secondary schools in the Diocese of Lismore?

This research study is informed by the theoretical framework of symbolic interactionism. As both a perspective and a method, symbolic interactionism is situated within a pragmatic constructivist paradigm of research. This study employed qualitative research methods, including focus group interviews, record analysis, two individual interviews and a research journal.

The findings of this research study suggest that Catholic secondary school principals cannot articulate a common understanding of faith leadership and that they also make a clear distinction between personal spirituality and formal religious adherence in their conceptualisation of this facet of their leadership role. Principals also indicate that faith leadership is rendered more challenging by the reality of tensions surrounding the leadership models operating in Catholic secondary schools and differing perceptions of the role and purpose of these schools from the perspective of principals and the clergy. The data also suggest that little effort had been put into the development of a lay spirituality of faith leadership or into the professional support of principals.

It is also apparent through this research study that Catholic secondary school principals, despite an absence of a clear policy or institutional definition of faith leadership, have conceptualised this dimension of their leadership role as gospel based meaning making involving an interrelated construct of 'having' (skills and knowledge) 'doing' (practical leadership action) and being (personal intrinsic motivation sourced in spiritual values). The utilisation of a discourse of personal spirituality and values, alongside a wider rejection of narrow understandings of Catholicity and Catholic school purpose, suggest that the principals involved in this study have redefined or reimagined (Mellor, 2005) what faith leadership means in contemporary Catholic schools. In addition, the absence of a definitive theological basis for this redefinition and calls for a specific understanding of faith leadership from a lay perspective, suggest that this process is ongoing and unfinished.

Despite indications in the research data of tension in the leadership models evident in Catholic secondary schools and the impact of significant external and internal challenges to faith leadership and faith expression within the Diocese of Lismore, this research found principals were positive about this aspect of their role and determined to help the students, parents and staff in their school communities connect with the message of Jesus and the richness of the Catholic faith tradition.

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CHAPTER 1

LEADERSHIP AND FAITH: SITUATING THE RESEARCH PROBLEM

1.1 Introduction

This study, situated within the Diocese of Lismore, focuses on faith leadership as a dimension of the role of the Catholic school principal. In particular, the study investigates the challenge of faith leadership, as well as the ways in which the principals involved in the research conceptualise and enact their faith leadership role.

Faith leadership in Catholic schools had been problematic in the Diocese of Lismore for some time. Research within the diocese during the 1990s (Bezzina, 1996; Tinsey, 1998), established that there is significant tension within parish-school relationships that contributes to the problematic nature of the principal's faith leadership role. In addition, studies on leadership succession in New South Wales Catholic schools, including schools in the Diocese of Lismore, found that aspiring principals consider faith leadership to be a significant deterrent to taking up the principal position (d'Arbon, Duignan, Duncan & Goodwin, 2001).

The impetus for this particular study however, is more personal and pragmatic. Thirty years of experience in Catholic education has alerted me to the growing pressure on principals to explicitly demonstrate faith leadership in Catholic schools. I became acutely aware of this pressure when I was seconded to the Lismore Catholic Education Office in 2004, to work on a faith leadership project that aimed to identify the challenge of faith leadership in diocesan Catholic schools. This project highlighted the lack of practical guidelines and policies for faith leadership in Catholic schools within the Diocese of Lismore. Moreover, this project allowed principals to voice specific concerns and questions regarding faith leadership: What exactly is faith leadership? How is it realised within schools? What are the factors impacting

upon the ability and preparedness of principals to take on this role? How does an effective faith leader act? How do principals negotiate the reality of changing social and cultural attitudes to religion and its expression? These questions suggested that the principals did not have a clear understanding of the nature, purpose or practice of their faith leadership role. I therefore concluded that the principals were operating from intuitive and reactive approaches to faith leadership, rather than from well-developed and professionally supported policies and frameworks.

The secondment to the Catholic Education Office and the faith leadership project finished in December 2004, and I was disappointed that the project had not resulted in new policy and practice to address the challenge of faith leadership. However I remained intrigued by this challenge, and subsequently commenced this doctoral research with the intention of examining the faith leadership role of the secondary principal with the hope of discovering a way forward.

1.2 The Research Site

This study was situated within the Australian Diocese of Lismore. The Diocese, which lies in northern New South Wales, extends from Tweed Heads in the north, to Laurieton in the south, and comprises 28 parishes. Catholic education in the Diocese of Lismore incorporates 34 primary schools with approximately 9050 students and 12 systemic secondary schools with over 7500 students. One non-systemic secondary school has a further enrolment of around 1250 students. In total there are over 16500 students and 1180 teachers in Lismore Diocesan Catholic schools (Catholic Education Office, Lismore records, accessed, July 2009).

From the establishment of the first school in what is now the Diocese of Lismore, in South Grafton in 1860, the development of the Catholic school system in this area has mirrored the early history of Catholic education in the wider Australian context (Ryan & Sungaila, 1995) with priests and religious communities accepting responsibility for schools in each parish. The

pioneering first Bishop of Lismore, Joseph Jeremiah Doyle, coordinated the arrival in the Diocese of Lismore of the Brown Josephite Sisters in 1883, the Sisters of Mercy in 1884 and the Presentation Sisters in 1886 (Catholic Education Office, Lismore, 2005a) thereby founding a strong Catholic education system in the area. Other religious orders to arrive in the Diocese of Lismore were the Ursulines, the Daughters of Charity, the Sisters of Our Lady of the Sacred Heart, the Good Samaritans, the Lochinvar Josephites, the Christian Brothers, the Marist Brothers and the Marist Fathers (Catholic Education Office, Lismore, 2005a). Religious Orders, operating at a parish level in all parts of the Lismore Diocese, were critical to the foundation and success of the Catholic Education system for over one hundred years.

Despite this stable beginning, the 1950s and 1960s saw Catholic schools across Australia come under pressure from an escalation in the “costs of operating schools”, the arrival of “large numbers of immigrant children”, the impact of a “post-war baby boom”, a marked decline in membership of religious orders and little government assistance (Ryan & Sungaila, 1995, p.158). Confronted by these challenges, Catholic communities began to campaign for government assistance during the period 1964-1973. The result of this campaign was the establishment of the Schools Commission in 1973 (Catholic Education Office, Lismore, 2005a) and the provision of funding to Catholic schools across the country. As a consequence of this financial assistance however, governments refused to negotiate with separate schools and looked to the various diocesan authorities, including the Diocese of Lismore, to coordinate the distribution and accountability for its allocated funds, as well as the implementation of mandatory programs. Thus, the onset of government funding hastened “the development of centralised bureaucracies” which, in many dioceses, changed Catholic schools from a “relatively autonomous, self-supporting loose network under the control of parish priests and religious congregations, into a system of schools with a professional educational outlook” (Ryan & Sungaila, 1995, p.160).

Unlike other dioceses however, Catholic education in the Diocese of Lismore retained some decentralisation in its system of schools. In 1984, Bishop John

Satterthwaite undertook an examination of diocesan needs in education and established a Diocesan Education Board, with an executive arm, the Catholic Education Office, to carry out the decisions of the Board and to centralise some of the educational resources of the Diocese (Catholic Education Office, Lismore, 2005a). The Catholic Education Office, under the leadership of the Director of Catholic Schools, was mandated as a service body, and individual parishes through their parish priest, principal and parent bodies were given a significant degree of local responsibility.

As a result of these developments, the Catholic school system in the Diocese of Lismore is a semi-decentralised system with considerable local parish autonomy in the administration of schools, employment of staff, building and capital programs, financial issues and policy formation. The Catholic Education Office on the other hand, has a support, coordination and resource role, accepting responsibility from the parishes for employment contracts and industrial relations, curriculum development, government funding and legal and health and safety issues. The specific ramifications of this governance system for diocesan principals are discussed more fully in Chapter 2. Nevertheless, it must be clearly established that within such a decentralised system, the Catholic secondary school leadership role has wide-ranging accountability to the parish, the local community and the Catholic Education Office. Recognising the extent of this accountability, I was encouraged to further investigate the nature and parameters of the faith leadership role of principals in this relatively unique educational context.

1.3 Prior Research

As a preliminary step in the clarification of the research problem, I turned to prior research in respect to faith leadership and its manifestation in Catholic school settings. Here it was found that the study of faith leadership in relation to Catholic education, and specifically to Catholic school principals, is not clearly evident within the literature until the 1990s. This initial research on faith leadership in Catholic schools was undertaken in the United States by

Ciriello (1993), and this study confirmed that Catholic school principals were seeking guidance on the faith leadership dimension of their role.

Unfortunately, limited empirical research followed this initial study by Ciriello¹. There were, however, a few exceptions. In the United States, research by Wallace (1995), Hines (1999) and O'Hara (2000) signalled an interest in faith leadership. Typical of the findings of these research studies, Wallace (1995) found that lay principals in Catholic schools reported "serious discomfort" with themselves in the role of faith leader (p. 122) due to a lack of "intentional preparation" (p. 124) for this role, and that there is a "call for a greater clarity regarding what is being asked of principals, both personally and spiritually, as faith leaders" (p. 104). In the United Kingdom, Grace's (2002) comprehensive research on Catholic school principals also identifies the challenge of faith leadership in the contemporary school context, and concludes by recommending the "transmission of a lay charisma" (p. 228) as

there is evidence that many candidates for the headship of Catholic schools in England can now talk confidently about achievements in test scores and examinations, business planning and budgets, marketing and public relations, but are relatively inarticulate about the spiritual purposes of Catholic schooling. (p. 237)

In Australia, the challenge of faith leadership has been further investigated by Slattery (1998) and Mellor (2005), as part of their broader studies into the role of the principal in Catholic schools. Similarly, the Queensland Catholic Education Commission (QCEC) conducted its own research in respect to faith leadership in Catholic schools. The report on this project (QCEC, 2004) clarifies, amongst other things, the dimension of faith leadership and identifies

¹ A search undertaken across five major electronic databases found that the topic of faith leadership remains significantly under-explored in the literature. The EBSCOhost Online Research database, Proquest Digital Dissertations, Australasian Digital Theses (ADT) Program, the Australian Research Index and the Australian Council for Educational Research (ACER) database evidenced little research into faith leadership in the context of the Catholic school.

the capabilities that support leadership in this area. In particular, this project finds that:

Faith leadership focuses on sharing the Catholic faith with the intention of influencing and enriching the lives of students, staff and other members of the school community. This dimension of leadership provides educational opportunities for members of the school community to encounter the Catholic faith, to experience its gift and to enhance life decisions in response to it. Guided by faith, hope and love, faith leaders support a community of life and worship through which to recognise, to accept and to cooperate with the mysterious action of God in our lives. (p. 23)

This report also concludes that these are “early days” (p. 33) in respect to developing an informed and sophisticated understanding of faith leadership and recommends further research, grounded in practice, in this area.

More recently, Davison (2006) and McEvoy (2006) have directly focused on the principals’ faith or spiritual leadership role in the Catholic school. Davison (2006) describes the purpose of his research as “giving a voice” to principals who rarely “express or articulate their thoughts and reflections in a way that is accessible to others” (p. 13). At the same time, McEvoy (2006) examines the role of the Catholic secondary school principal in order to

gather the views of some of the key stakeholders in the field, exploring their understandings of the concept of religious leadership, the attributes they would expect of a person taking on this responsibility, and the ways in which potential candidates for leadership might best be prepared for the role. (2006, p. 6)

Both McEvoy (2006) and Davison (2006) situate their studies in the reality of changing social and ecclesial contexts, and recommend the re-examination and redefinition of Catholic school leadership for the future:

A new paradigm is now almost fully in place: that of leadership of the Catholic Secondary Schools by lay persons. These new leaders are charged with maintaining the charisms and nurturing the essential Catholic nature and purposes of the school in the midst of a complex, ever-changing secular and often antagonistic culture. (McEvoy, 2006, p. 268)

Given the uneven and partial development of a clear theology of ministry in the Catholic educational context, it seems appropriate to explore the understanding and experience practising principals have of their role ... and by so doing, add to the collective understanding of the role as it currently is, and as it might become, in the future. (Davison, 2006, p. 36)

In this way researchers continue to point to the challenge of faith leadership in Catholic schools and recommend further research in this area. This current study responds to these recommendations.

1.4 The Research Problem and Purpose

From the outset of this study, it was apparent that that the challenge of faith leadership was due to a number of interrelated factors that defy precise description. Following the recommendation of systems analyst Patching (1990), this study seeks to clarify the research problem and purpose by developing a 'rich picture' of the context of the faith leadership role of secondary school principals in the Diocese of Lismore. Here it is assumed that human activity, such as Catholic education, occurs within a number of interrelated contexts (Bronfenbrenner, 1979).

Within this study, this contextual understanding situates Catholic secondary school principals within the specific context of the Diocese of Lismore and Catholic education in Australia, as well as the broader context of socio-cultural change. An analysis of these interrelated contexts (see Chapter 2), found that although Catholic Education Office documents identify faith leadership as a

significant area of responsibility for secondary principals, there is little support in policy or practical guidelines for this responsibility. At the same time, secondary principals in the Diocese of Lismore find themselves in a context of extensive social, cultural and ecclesial change that, in turn, impacts upon their capacity to undertake the faith leadership role. Thus, within this study, the research problem was clarified in terms of the practical issues surrounding the principal's faith leadership role in the context of change.

Given this research problem, the purpose of this study is to investigate the faith leadership role of Catholic secondary school principals in the Diocese of Lismore in order to develop a more informed and sophisticated understanding of this dimension of the leadership role. It is expected that such an understanding would not only point to new directions for policy and practice in the Diocese of Lismore, but also contribute to wider theoretical developments in this field. With this understanding of the research problem and research purpose in mind, this study turns its attention to the identification of the research questions.

1.5 The Research Questions

Within this study, the research questions emerged following a comprehensive review of the literature on faith in organisations, organisational leadership theory and leadership in Christian organisations including Catholic schools (see Chapter 3). The review of the literature begins with an examination of the scholarship in respect to the phenomenon of faith in an organisational context, as well as leadership in the organisation. The focus then shifts to the values that underpin faith leadership within Christian organisations such as the Catholic school. Here the link between personal spirituality, intrinsic motivation and values is clearly established with personal spirituality providing the intrinsic motivation for individuals to act toward work and work colleagues out of a values base that is ultimately relational. Delving deeper, this review looks specifically at Catholic school leadership to ascertain the leadership trends and issues specific to Catholic education.

In summary the review of the literature found that faith leadership as a concept is in a state of flux and conceptual tension, with no commonly expressed understanding of its nature or practice. Yet there also seems to be a new values-centred congruence between organisational leadership theory and trends in the expression and management of faith and spirituality in the workplace, suggesting an examination of leadership models focusing on values. Finally, the review established faith leadership as a social construct, which is best understood within the experience and practical understanding of those who are undertaking the role. In light of these conclusions three research questions were identified for this study:

RESEARCH QUESTION 1: How do principals understand the challenge of faith leadership in Catholic secondary schools in the Diocese of Lismore?

This research question recognises the challenge of faith leadership in the Catholic school. Within this study, the contextual analysis (see Chapter 2) frames the challenge of faith leadership in terms of a number of factors including socio-cultural change, demographic changes in Catholic school populations and tensions in the relationship between Catholic schools and the clergy. This first question probes principals' perspectives on the challenge of faith leadership within their role. Have these principals experienced tensions around the purpose of the Catholic school as well as their position as lay leaders in the Catholic Church? Are they aware of the complexity of faith leadership in the Catholic school and, are they receiving adequate support in regard to principal formation? How has socio-cultural change challenged or complicated their faith leadership role? Answers to these questions are of interest, as it is anticipated that they will suggest a way forward for the support of faith leadership in the diocese.

RESEARCH QUESTION 2: How do principals conceptualise faith leadership in Catholic secondary schools in the Diocese of Lismore?

The second question invites principals to conceptualise faith leadership, drawing on their understanding of leadership theory and the function and expression of faith. Here, I was keen to discover whether the principals identify with any of the conceptual developments that are prominent in the literature review. How do the principals personally define faith leadership? What leadership model do they regard as most applicable to principalship in a Catholic school? What do they regard as the core purpose of a Catholic school? Do they ever experience tension between their personal convictions and the teachings or expectations of the Catholic Church? The way in which principals respond to these questions will indicate the extent to which they have ascribed meaning to their experience in the role. Given the changing context of faith leadership, it was important that this study identify and detail how principals understand faith leadership, as this conceptualisation will direct action, indicate areas of commonality and allow the development of professional support programs in the future.

RESEARCH QUESTION 3: How do principals enact the faith leadership role in Catholic secondary schools in the Diocese of Lismore?

The third research question is designed to allow this study to probe more deeply into the 'how' of faith leadership: the actions, directions, attitudes and daily interaction that make up the picture of faith leadership in each principal's school. This question addresses a significant lacuna in Australian research regarding the exact nature of faith leadership action from the perspective of those undertaking the role. In particular, this research question probes whether principals see faith leadership as having, doing or being? How significant are their personal values in the enacting of their faith leadership role? Do principals experience any tension in operating from a faith perspective at a time when religion has become culturally and socially marginalised? What skills do they regard as critical for faith leadership in Catholic secondary schools? The third research question allows a critical emphasis on integrating the general and the specific, the theory and the practice, of faith leadership.

1.6 The Theoretical Framework

Following the identification of the research questions, this study was situated within the theoretical framework of symbolic interactionism. Symbolic interactionism has a number of advantages for social research in areas such as this study of faith leadership. As a theoretical framework, symbolic interactionism liberates social research from deterministic parameters and scientific conceptualisation of human action, facilitating “new assumptions” (Charon, 2004, p. 227) and crucial depth in understanding of human behaviour. It recognises the importance of perspective in focusing “what we see, what we notice and how we interpret” in any given situation (Stryker, 2002, p. 53). Symbolic interactionism also values symbolic communication, and reminds us that “human beings respond not to a naïve world, but to the world as categorized or classified ... a symbolic environment” (Stryker, 2002, p. 56). In acknowledging the social nature of reality, this theoretical perspective permits the examination of “collective consciousness” (Charon, 2004, p. 228) in dealing effectively with such subjective issues as religious perspective and worldview, which are critical factors in this study. Finally, symbolic interactionism encourages researchers “to take the role of the other” in order to “become familiar with [the other’ s] world” (Blumer, 1969, p. 51).

Hence the decision to situate this research study within the theoretical framework of symbolic interactionism, enables a greater understanding of the process of meaning-making in respect to faith leadership in Catholic schools. Appreciating the nature of self and the relationship between the self and society, symbolic interactionism offers a “role making process” (Stryker, 2002, p. 80) to strengthen role identity and address issues of role conflict.

1.7 The Design of the Study

Consistent with the theoretical framework of symbolic interactionism, the design of this study reflects the research paradigm of constructivism. This research paradigm is based on the epistemological assumption that the most effective way to understand a phenomenon is to view it in its context and “from the standpoint of the individual actors” (Candy, 1989, p. 3).

Constructivism works from a transactional and subjectivist understanding of knowledge which is created through the interaction of those involved, and can be observed and understood through the process of “researcher and respondent relationship” (Guba & Lincoln in Denzin & Lincoln, 1994, p. 111). In addition, constructivism takes into account the fact that individual constructions of meaning are not unique, but filtered through and moulded by social realities such as common language, meanings, symbolism and interaction (Gall, Gall, & Borg, 2007, p. 26). Finally, constructivism encourages multiple intangible meanings to emerge rather than a single objective truth to be discovered (Crotty, 1998; Denzin & Lincoln, 2005).

Maintaining consistency with the theoretical framework of symbolic interactionism, this study relies on multiple research methods including focus group interviews, individual interviews, record analysis and a research journal. This study also involves two stages of data collection, analysis and interpretation: “exploration” and “inspection” (Charon, 2004, p. 208). The exploration stage involves record analysis and two focus group interviews with four principals in each group. The second, “inspection” (p.208) stage, comprises two individual interviews with each of the ten principals in the study. During both the exploration and inspection stages of the study, a reflective journal is kept to record both field note data and personal insights.

Finally, data analysis and interpretation within this study follows Neuman’s (2006) “three-step iterative process” (p.160). The first step in this process of interpretation involves learning about the research problem from the meaning ascribed by the participants. The second step includes looking for internal meaning and coherence, expressed through categorisation, codification and the identification of themes. The third step requires reflection upon, and analysis of, the theoretical significance of the research findings.

1.8 The Significance of the Study

This research contributes to the existing body of knowledge regarding leadership in Catholic schools, focusing on the critical area of faith leadership.

As discussed in Section 1.3, a review of prior research has found that there is limited empirical research in respect to faith leadership in Catholic schools. While contemporary researchers such as McEvoy (2006), Davison (2006), and the QCEC (2004) have pointed to the challenge of faith leadership in Catholic schools, there continues to be a call for further research in respect to the nature and purpose of faith leadership in a changing social, cultural and ecclesial context.

This study of faith leadership in Catholic secondary schools in the Diocese of Lismore is also significant because it focuses on principals and their individual perceptions of themselves as faith leaders. As such, the study facilitates practical identification of areas of challenge and points the way to the future. Through its concentration on professional practice, the study examines the dichotomy between what is claimed about faith leadership in schools and what is actually being done. In particular, this research focuses a lens into an area of critical importance for Catholic education – lay faith leaders and the actualising of their role.

In addition, this study highlights the importance of the re-examination, in a specific context, of the foundations of Catholic education and its identity, mission and purpose. This research comes at a stage in history when secularism and marginalisation of religious belief are seriously impacting on the institutional Catholic Church, and the criticism of Catholic schools regarding their Catholic identity. Hence the faith leadership role of the principals of these schools has become more critical and more closely scrutinised in response to these changing ecclesial and social pressures. This study focuses attention on the purpose of Catholic schools, and identifies areas of tension and lack of congruence that need to be addressed.

The findings of this study will have immediate practical application for the improvement of professional practice within the Diocese of Lismore. The study could inform processes for the selection and formation of school principals and executive staff, direct professional development planning and identify leadership issues that need attention. Through its focus on the lived

reality of the principals in the study, it is significant for its capacity to give immediate feedback regarding the challenges and difficulties facing faith leaders in diocesan secondary schools. This is critical information in an area that has received sparse attention in previous research in Australia, namely, the lay perspective of faith leadership in Catholic secondary schools.

1.9 The Structure of the Thesis

A brief outline of the structure of this thesis, *Catholic Secondary School Principals as Faith Leaders: A Study of the Diocese of Lismore*, is given here. Apart from this chapter that introduces the research and situates the research problem, the thesis has eight other chapters.

Chapter 2: A Contextual Analysis: Clarifying the Research Problem

The key contextual issues that impact upon the faith leadership role of the Catholic secondary school principal are explored in Chapter 2. Utilising Bronfenbrenner's Social Ecological Model (Oetzel, Ting-Toomey, & Rinderle, 2006), this chapter examines the context of the Catholic school principal under three headings: the microsystem of the Catholic secondary school in Lismore, focusing on the role of the principal within that school and the specific contextual issues impacting upon that role; the exosystem of Catholic education, informed by its mission as part of the Catholic Church, and changes to school governance and enrolment patterns; and the macrosystem of sweeping social and cultural change. This chapter uncovers the complex interplay of systems that impact on Catholic secondary school principals and their faith leadership role and so gives shape to the research study. In so doing this chapter serves to clarify the research problem and purpose.

Chapter 3: A Review of the Literature: Identifying the Research Questions

In the third chapter literature regarding faith in organisations, organisational leadership, Christian-based organisations and leadership of the Catholic school is reviewed in order to develop a comprehensive understanding of the conceptual factors impacting on the faith leadership role of Catholic

secondary school principals and to generate the core research questions of this study. This review of the literature provides a basis for identifying the research questions. This literature review also guides the various methodological decisions in this study and provides an analytical framework for the discussion of the findings.

Chapter 4: The Theoretical Framework: Symbolic Interactionism

Symbolic interactionism as an interpretative lens and theoretical foundation within this study is examined in detail in Chapter 4. Also detailed in this chapter are the evolution of symbolic interactionism and its key characteristics, both as a sociological perspective and as a social research method.

Chapter 5: Design of the Study

A rationale for situating this study within the research paradigm of constructivism is established in Chapter 5. This chapter also describes the multiple research methods chosen for the study, and justifies how and why these are deemed most appropriate in seeking to understand and reconstruct principals' perspectives of their faith leadership role. Furthermore, this chapter outlines the two research stages, "exploration and inspection" (Charon, 2004, p. 208) as appropriate for research informed by the theoretical perspective of symbolic interactionism. Finally, the chapter details the analytical procedures for the research, the role of the researcher, the selection of participants and ethical and verification issues.

Chapter 6: Display and Discussion of Findings: The Challenge of Faith Leadership

In Chapter 6 the findings from both the "exploration" and "inspection" (Charon, 2004, p. 208) stages of the study, in response to the first research question on the challenge of faith leadership, are displayed and discussed. In addition the chapter reflects the "three step iterative process" (Neuman, 2006, p. 160) of data analysis and interpretation that moves from the initial categorisation of the data, to the development of themes in respect to emergent findings and finally to the discussion of the theoretical significance of these findings.

Chapter 7: Display and Discussion of Findings: Conceptualising Faith Leadership

In the seventh chapter the findings of the second research question, which focuses on the principals' conceptualisation of faith leadership, are examined and analysed. Like Chapter 6, this chapter displays the data gathered during the "exploration" and "inspection" (Charon, 2004, p. 208) stages of the study and utilising a "three step iterative process" (Neuman, 2006, p. 160) of data analysis, moves from the initial categorisation of the data to the development of themes, and finally to the discussion of the theoretical significance of these findings.

Chapter 8: Display and Discussion of Findings: Enacting Faith Leadership

In Chapter 8 the findings in relation to the third research question on the enactment of faith leadership are outlined and discussed. This chapter follows the same structure as Chapters 6 and 7, with a display of the data gathered during both stages of the study as well as analysis and interpretation, categorisation of the data, the development of themes, and the discussion of the theoretical significance of these findings, to offer theoretical propositions in regard to the enactment of faith leadership in the practical reality of Catholic school leadership.

Chapter 9: Review and Conclusions

An overview of this research study, discussing the findings of the study in respect to the three research questions is provided in Chapter 9. Utilising these findings, this chapter provides an opportunity to advance a model of faith leadership appropriate to principals in Catholic secondary schools in the Diocese of Lismore, as well as offering recommendations for the future. The chapter also details the limitations of the study. Finally, recommendations are advanced with regard to areas for further research beyond this study.

CHAPTER 2

A CONTEXTUAL ANALYSIS: CLARIFYING THE RESEARCH PROBLEM

2.1 Introduction

This research study focuses on the faith leadership role of the principal within secondary schools in the Diocese of Lismore. In Chapter 1, faith leadership is identified as a significant dimension of the role of the principal in Catholic schools, and an initial investigation highlights a number of interrelated contextual elements of this type of leadership that defy precise conceptualisation. Thus, in engaging this complexity, this chapter seeks to further clarify the research problem by developing a rich picture of the context of faith leadership in Catholic schools in accordance with the recommendation of system's analyst Patching (1990). Bronfenbrenner's Social Ecological Model (Oetzel, Ting-Toomey, & Runderle, 2000) proposes three such contexts that could be utilised as a framework for this contextual analysis. The Social Ecological Model proposes that in any human activity, the first context is the microsystem or the immediate environment in which the person is situated; next, the exosystem that describes the institutional boundaries that support and curtail the specific activity being examined, and finally the macrosystem which incorporates the wider social and cultural context.

When applied specifically to this research study, the Social Ecological Model, shown in Figure 1, situates the Catholic secondary school principal within the microsystem of secondary schooling in the Diocese of Lismore, the exosystem of Catholic education in Australia and the macrosystem of social and cultural change. In adopting this framework, this research aims to clearly describe the contextual parameters of Catholic school principalship, and to provide a broad and comprehensive analysis of the various impulses that contribute to the complex nature of faith leadership in contemporary Catholic secondary schools.

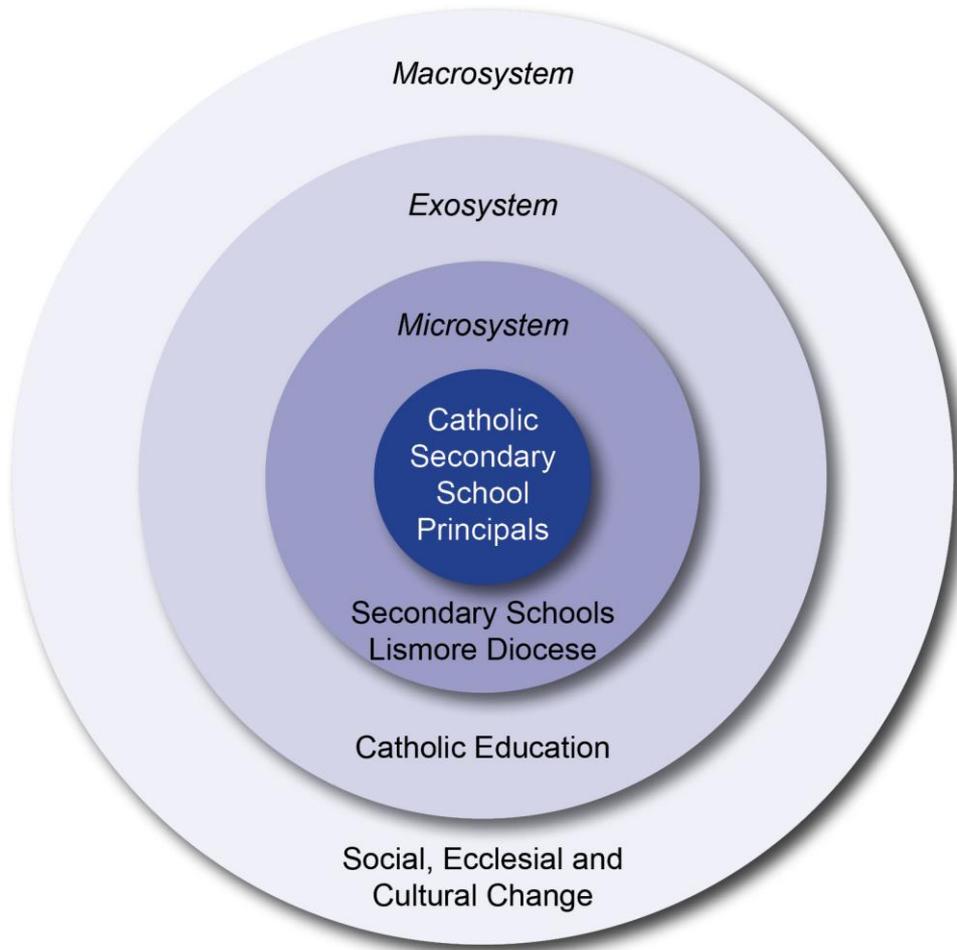


Figure 1 The context of the Catholic secondary school principal as a faith leader.

Source: The Social Ecological Model (Oetzel, Ting-Toomey, & Runderle, 2000).

As a consequence of the utilisation of this contextual framework, this chapter is divided into four sections. The first will examine the role of the principal in diocesan schools, detail the structure of the Catholic education system in the Diocese of Lismore and describe specific issues of significance for this study. The second section will outline the contribution of the Catholic Church to Australian education, and the changes that have occurred in the understanding and practice of Catholic education. The third section of this chapter will outline the nature of the social and cultural change that has impacted critically on leadership roles, religious adherence, the relationship

between Catholic schools, and the Church and Catholic education generally within Australia. Finally, the fourth section will conclude this contextual analysis by placing the Catholic secondary school principal within this rich contextual picture, and drawing out key contextual elements that will help clarify and develop the understanding of the research problem.

2.2 Microsystem: Secondary Schooling in the Diocese of Lismore

To facilitate an understanding of the specific nature of secondary schooling in the Diocese of Lismore, this section utilises current role statements and leadership documents to examine the role of the secondary principal within the diocese. Thereafter, the specific nature of the diocesan Catholic secondary school will be studied before a brief overview of significant issues impacting on the leadership of diocesan schools. This overview will explore tension within the parish– school relationship; the growing significance of the Catholic school as church; the transition from religious to lay leadership and a perceived vacuum in parish leadership. These issues provide a current focus for this contextual review, and allow a rich picture to emerge of the parameters of faith leadership and the challenges inherent in this role in the secondary schools of the diocese.

2.2.1 *The Catholic Secondary School Principal in the Diocese of Lismore*

The role of the Catholic secondary school principal in the Diocese of Lismore is defined in a number of key diocesan policies and documents. These documents frame principalship and determine the conceptual premises that are foundational to the understanding of leadership and its faith component. These documents include:

Handbook for Parish Schools (Catholic Education Office, Lismore, 2005a);

Role Description - The Catholic School Principal (Catholic Education Office, Lismore, 2005b);

Framework for Co-responsible Faith Leadership for Parish Schools of the Lismore Diocese (Catholic Education Office, Lismore, 2004);

The Foundational Beliefs and Practices of Catholic Education In the Diocese of Lismore, The Essential Framework (Catholic Education Office, Lismore, 2007);

Draft Principal Leadership Framework (Catholic Education Office, Lismore, 2009a);

Draft Religious and Spiritual Formation Policy Framework (Catholic Education Office, Lismore, 2009b).

The document, *Role Description - The Catholic School Principal* (Catholic Education Office, Lismore, 2005b), presents a formal role statement for principals within the diocese underpinned by seven core beliefs. Five of these belief statements are pertinent to this research study:

- The Principal is the designated leader of a faith community which is the school;
- The Catholic school Principal is a reflective leader constantly evaluating the effectiveness of leadership and its impact on the people of the school community;
- The parish school is an integral part of the local Church so the principal will be actively involved in the life of the parish;
- The religious element will be integrated into all aspects of school life;
- The work of education is a shared ministry which manifests itself through collaborative decision-making and involvement at all levels. (p. 1)

Thus within this document, the role of the principal is contextualised in a number of key areas. It is clearly linked to the parish with an expectation of active involvement in parish life. In addition, the principal is situated as the leader of a faith community. In positioning Catholic education as ministry, there is also a call to reflective and evaluative leadership. The document then provides key behaviours and indicators of success in the four main areas of the leadership role: cultural, instructional, interpersonal and administrative. An explicit discourse of faith occurs only in the cultural leadership section. Here key behaviours include developing rituals, providing suitable liturgies and prayers, encouraging staff and parent faith development, aligning school processes with the Gospel, maintaining a Catholic orientation in newsletters and ensuring a comprehensive Religious Education program (Catholic Education Office, Lismore, 2005b, p. 3). Finally this document establishes that the principal has multi-level accountability:

The Principal is appointed to the leadership position in the school and is accountable to the Trustees of the Diocese, the Parish Priest, the Catholic community and the parents and students of the school. Within the school community the Principal has the responsibility to exercise a leadership which derives from the mission of the Church. (Catholic Education Office, Lismore, 2005b, p. 2)

The second source document for an analysis of the role of Catholic secondary school principals in the Diocese of Lismore is the *Handbook for Parish Schools* (Catholic Education Office, Lismore, 2005a), which adds to the role description in a number of ways. In this document the principal role is “effected through service” (p. 18), and includes “adhering to Catholic principles and observing Catholic moral standards” (p. 18). In addition the family, school and parish partnership is emphasised:

In keeping with the Vatican II directive that Church governance involves the governed, in fulfilling its educational role the school has a special duty to facilitate the creation of an effective partnership with the faith community and in particular with parents. (p. 69)

Thus, “the Catholic school serves the Church” in a common purpose and pastoral endeavour (Catholic Education Office, Lismore, 2005a, p. 45).

The Catholic Education Office, Lismore, in 2004, developed a draft document entitled *A Framework for Co-responsible Faith Leadership for Parish Schools of the Lismore Diocese*. The document was produced as the result of a faith leadership project that aimed to “seek through consultation some agreement about the nature of faith leadership within parish schools”, and to “develop a set of faith leadership capabilities for leadership positions in parish schools of the diocese” (Catholic Education Office, Lismore, 2004, p.1). These aims are indicative of both the lack of a commonly agreed definition of faith leadership operating within diocesan schools, and the perceived need to describe capabilities pertinent to faith leadership at the executive, middle management and general teacher level of Catholic primary and secondary schools. Despite extensive consultation, this document has not yet been ratified for use in diocesan Catholic schools or principal development programs.

The Foundational Beliefs and Practices of Catholic Education in the Diocese of Lismore: The Essential Framework document (Catholic Education Office, Lismore, 2007) outlines a new theological and ecclesial framework for Catholic schooling in the Diocese of Lismore, detailing five practical areas of mission for schools: community, evangelisation, witness, service and worship. This framework is intended to inform all diocesan initiatives, to underpin all role descriptions and to form the basis of principal development, appraisal and school review documentation: “The following five foundational practices are traditional Catholic categories used by the Church to render our faith into action. They are used in this document to set out the principles upon which Catholic education in the Diocese of Lismore is built” (Catholic Education Office, Lismore, 2007, p. 3). The document places heavy emphasis on the

Catholic school as a parish entity: “Each school, first of all, participates in the liturgical worship offered in its parish church. The authentic identity of the school is most fully shown when it celebrates the Eucharist gathered around the altar of its parish church” (p. 3). In addition this document situates Catholic school leadership as service, “Leadership and authority exercised in the parish school are derived from the mission to serve” (p. 3), and mandates the teaching of Catholic doctrine and morality:

In the day to day life of the parish school these same characteristics should be evident: witnessing to the faith through the teaching of Catholic doctrine and morality, and equally revealing the face of Christ in respect for the dignity of each person and particular care for those who are disadvantaged and marginalised. (Catholic Education Office, Lismore, 2007, p. 3)

Based on this document highlighting foundational beliefs, Lismore Catholic Education Office has more recently published two further documents, which seek to clarify the spiritual foundations and parameters of the principal role. The first is the *Religious and Spiritual Formation Draft Policy Framework* (Catholic Education Office, Lismore, 2009b). Here the Catholic Education Office calls for a renewal of Catholic education by ensuring that its schools are “Catholic in identity and life, centres of new evangelisation, enabling of students to reach high levels of Catholic religious literacy, and staffed by people who will contribute to these goals” (p. 5). Through the spiritual formation process, principals are required to lead the “religious and spiritual formation of self and others”, and to “provide religious and spiritual formation in the parish school” (p. 13). The chosen process for this spiritual formation is the Spiritual Exercises of St Ignatius, for which the Diocese has outlined a five-year plan.

The second document is *The Draft Principal Leadership Framework* (Catholic Education Office, Lismore, 2009a). This document takes the five foundations of faith, evangelisation, witness, worship, service and community, and uses them as a framework for the three principal leadership domains: faith

leadership, educational leadership and stewardship. The faith leadership domain lists a number of core requirements of the Catholic school principal:

Proclaims the mission of Catholic education ... ensures the integration of faith and life ... ensures that Christ is at the centre of all parish school endeavours ... creates and leads a culture of Christian care and love (and) ... builds Catholic community. (p. 1)

Significantly, these more recent diocesan documents situate faith leadership within the emergent foundational frameworks for Catholic schools, recognising the importance of spiritual formation for principals and teachers. Hence, these publications suggest that conceptualising and articulating what faith leadership actually involves, is gaining prominence in the Diocese of Lismore.

2.2.2 *The Lismore Diocesan Catholic Secondary School*

Within this research study, the Catholic secondary schools within the Diocese of Lismore represent the microsystem or the immediate environment in which the principal exercises responsibility for faith leadership. The Diocese of Lismore has twelve systemic secondary schools with an enrolment of approximately 7500 students, and one non-systemic secondary school with approximately 1250 students. (Catholic Education Office, Lismore, records accessed, July 2009).

As outlined in Section 1.2, in 1984, the then Bishop of Lismore, John Satterthwaite, gave individual parishes and parish priests significant autonomy in the organisation and functioning of Catholic schools within the Diocese. As a consequence, these systemic secondary schools operate under a decentralised governance and administrative model. As parish schools², the parish priest has a significant role in school administration, especially in the areas of employment of staff, finance, enrolment policy,

² The exception is the one independent secondary school governed by a civil corporation. Representatives of the founding religious orders and the local parish are included on the Board of Directors with the principal as chief executive officer.

religious education and school direction. Parish canonical governance³ is delegated to parish priests of the Diocese of Lismore by the Diocesan Bishop who, “On his Ordinary authority, [has] jurisdiction [that] extends to the supervision of all aspects of school curriculum, including policy writing, administration, staffing and maintenance” (Catholic Education Office, Lismore, 2005a, p. 8). The philosophical basis underpinning the administration and stewardship of the diocese is, therefore, one that emphasises this local autonomy – priest and principal as co-responsible entities within the school system.

This close connection between parish and school in systemic secondary schools in the Diocese of Lismore is a critical contextual factor in this study. This school-parish connection is markedly different from that which exists in other dioceses in New South Wales. *The Diocesan Teachers Award, Annexure C* (2006) states that “the Lismore Diocesan school system is unique in New South Wales and probably throughout Australia, in its emphasis on the principle of subsidiarity and the decentralisation of decision making” (Catholic Commission for Employment Relations, p. 1). The structures and regulations concerning this local parish level administration are detailed in the *Handbook for Parish Schools* (2005a) and mandate a close relationship between principal and parish priest.

Beyond this local jurisdiction, the schools of the Diocese of Lismore are part of the wider Catholic education system, supported by the Catholic Education Office, located in the regional centre of Lismore. The Catholic Education Office has an administrative and service function in respect to staffing allocation, performance review, consultancy and advisory services, in-service, industrial negotiations and management of government funded programs (Catholic Education Office, 2005a, p. 12).

³ The Code of Canon Law (1983) states that “A Catholic school is understood as one in which a competent ecclesial authority or a public ecclesiastical juridic person directs or which ecclesiastical authority recognizes as such through a written document” (803) and furthermore “The local ordinary is to be concerned that those who are designated teachers of religious instruction in schools...are outstanding in correct doctrine, the witness of a Christian life and teaching skill.” (804)

2.2.3 Tension within the Parish–School Relationship

Consequently, it is an expectation of the administrative connection between school and parish in the Diocese of Lismore, that Catholic secondary school principals work closely with their Parish Priest:

The Parish Priest is responsible to the Bishop of the Diocese for the Religious education and spiritual formation of the children of the parish. He bears an essential responsibility for implementing Diocesan educational policy in his parish, and for school maintenance and finance. The Principal works in partnership with the Parish Priest in all these areas and takes responsibility for them, as well as all matters pertaining to school curriculum and pedagogy. (Catholic Education Office, Lismore, 2005a, p. 10)

Previous research within the Diocese of Lismore, however, has established that there exists tension within this parish-school relationship that makes working in partnership challenging. This tension is evidenced particularly in the way that diocesan clergy perceive secondary schools, as Bezzina's (1996) research established, "Clergy expressed significant concerns about the faith commitment among teachers, and in particular secondary teachers. They saw this reflected in the lack of participation in school prayer and parish life" (p. 4). Subsequent research by Tinsey (1998) found indications that Catholic secondary schools in the Diocese of Lismore were not viewed by clergy as being in "partnership with the local parish" (p. 159). Tinsey's research also determined that the relationship between clergy and secondary school teachers and principals in the diocese is significantly strained, with the following tension indicators:

- Secondary schools are perceived by clergy in the Diocese of Lismore as being less effective than primary schools (p. 159);
- Secondary school teachers do not have adequate religious motivation for their work in Catholic schools (p. 144);

- Poor communication exists between clergy and secondary school teachers (p. 158);
- There are unfair expectations on Catholic school teachers from the clergy (p. 149);
- There exist different beliefs between secondary school teachers and clergy regarding the nature and purpose of Catholic schools (p. 137);
- Many secondary teachers believe that there is a misuse of authority by clergy and a perceived lack of accountability regarding clergy actions (pp. 152-153);
- One quarter of the teachers interviewed believe that teachers and the clergy have different philosophies regarding Catholic education (p. 139).

Tinsey's (1998) study of the relationships between teachers and clergy in the Diocese of Lismore questions the foundational notion of a common understanding between the two groups of the mission and purpose of Catholic education. Tinsey called for a renewed understanding of the mission of Catholic schools in the Diocese as a result of his research (p. 190). These findings underscore a critical disjunction within the local church; a tension which impacts significantly on the ability of the principal and parish priest to work within the partnership paradigm foundational to the diocesan role descriptions discussed in Section 2.2.1. These findings are supported by more recent research in New South Wales (Belmonte, Cranston, & Limerick, 2006), which found that there is "general confusion as to the precise nature of the relationship between the lay principal and the local Church, suggesting that there is little evidence of a functioning relationship among Principals and priests" (p. 10). These tensions foreshadow the possibility of differing perceptions of the faith leadership role under examination in this research project.

2.2.4 The Growing Significance of the Catholic School as Church

There is evidence in recent research that Catholic school students and their families across Australia regard the Catholic school as taking the place of the parish as an ecclesial entity in its own right (Griffiths, 1998; Hansen, 1999; Quillinan, 2002). This is in stark contrast to most of the history of Catholic education in Australia, where there has been a close correlation between enrolment at the local Catholic school and a family commitment to the local parish community. In recent times, however, the Catholic Church has witnessed declining mass attendance and parish affiliation (Bentley & Hughes, 2005; Dixon, 2003). Consequently, it has been observed that the Catholic school is the only contact that the majority of its parents and students have with the Catholic Church (Griffiths, 1998; Hansen, 1999), and the most significant expression of Catholicism in Australian society (Belmonte, Cranston, & Limerick, 2006; Mellor, 2005). It has also been asserted that the school has, in effect, become “the normative faith community” (Watkins, 1997, p. 79) as the local parish community has lost its relevance for the majority of Catholic school parents and students.

Within this changing context, it is the Catholic school, and not the local parish, that plays a significant role in adolescent faith development. This role is noted in research conducted within secondary schools within the Diocese of Lismore (Spry, 2002). Here the students surveyed exemplify a clear contrast between belief in a transcendental being and “Church teachings and liturgical practices perceived to be out of touch with the times. [*For these students*] the local church communities were too exclusive, with undemocratic structures, autocratic leadership and boring liturgies” (p. 11). Despite their lack of commitment to organised religion and the local parish, the students who participated in this research project were spiritually aware, and valued the curricula and extra-curricula opportunities provided by the Lismore Catholic secondary schools for spiritual development: the religious education program, school liturgies, retreats and reflection days. Students also valued opportunities to reflect critically on local and global issues in the light of the Gospel message and to involve themselves in community service and practical expressions of Christianity (p. 12).

These findings signify important changes in attitude towards Catholic education, and combined with a break in the “nexus” (Griffiths, 1998, p. 201) between Catholic schooling and active Catholic religious adherence (Weiss, 2007), they indicate that the faith leadership role of the Catholic school principal is an increasingly complex undertaking. This complexity is exacerbated by the fact that previous research within the Diocese of Lismore found that most principals felt comfortable in the role of “expert educator”, and less comfortable in the role of “leader of a Christian community” (Tinsey, 1998, p. 50). For the principals in Belmonte, Cranston, and Limerick’s (2006) research, this anxiety is linked to a lack of professional support for principals:

For the principals in this study, there was a significant dearth of adequate support for them especially in the religious matters of their responsibilities. Indeed, this lack of formation continued after their appointment, with many in this study identifying this failure to assist their on-going religious growth as a major challenge for them, and a source of some anxiety. (p. 11)

2.2.5 A Vacuum in Parish Leadership

The vocations crisis within the Catholic Church (Arbuckle, 1993; Grace, 2002; Mellor, 2005), and the consequence of significantly reduced clergy numbers available for parish work in Australia, are additional contextual factors which add pressure to the current relationship between the Catholic school and the parish. Within the Diocese of Lismore, the number of priests in parish ministry has shrunk from 68 in 1975 to 29 in 2009. This decline in the number of active priests becomes even more critical when the numbers of curates (1 in 2009) and seminarians (13 in 2009) are juxtaposed against an ageing priesthood; the average age of priests in the Diocese in 2009 was 60.7 (Chancery Lismore records, accessed January 2009). These trends suggest a crisis in clergy numbers and consequently, in parish ecclesial leadership. As a response to this crisis, eight of the seminarians currently in training for the Diocese of Lismore have been recruited from overseas (Chancery Lismore records accessed January 2009). These figures also suggest that it

will become increasingly difficult for priests to provide leadership across parishes, and to be as actively involved in individual school affairs as the parish canonical governance model demands.

There are indications in research that Catholic school principals are already filling an educational leadership vacuum within the Church (Belmonte et al, 2006; Hanson, 2000; Slattery, 1998). A study conducted in 2005 by the Australian Catholic Primary Principals Association (ACPPA), found that primary principals⁴ across Australia engaged in a variety of parish activities in four broad categories: liturgical activities, community life activities, housekeeping activities and activities directly associated with the pastoral care of the parish. Here principals identified the positive aspects of parish activities in terms of various social and emotional benefits of developing strong interpersonal relationships with parish priests and other Church workers and parishioners. The negative aspects were mostly described in terms of the demands on the principals' time and expertise that threaten the educational mission of the Catholic school by taking principals away from the "core business" of the school. There were also concerns regarding personal spirituality as well as the impact of parish activities on family life. Hansen's (1999) research, also in Catholic primary schools, found that there were unrealistic expectations of lay principals in parish leadership, especially from parish priests used to having religious principals accessible and at the service of the parish. The legacy of religious orders, both in the parish and the Catholic school, will be examined in the next section of this contextual analysis.

2.2.6 *The Transition from Religious to Lay Leadership in Catholic Schools*

Catholic schools within the Diocese of Lismore were initially founded by religious orders of sisters, brothers and priests, as the *Handbook for Parish Schools* (2005a) notes:

⁴ Given the decentralised nature of systemic schooling within the Diocese of Lismore and the parishes' role in the governance of the local Catholic schools, this study on the role of the primary principal would seem equally applicable to secondary school principalship within the Diocese of Lismore.

From the time of the Public Instruction Act, Catholic Bishops worked to set up an independent system of education staffed by volunteers from religious orders ... for almost the next 100 years religious orders carried the sole responsibility for establishing and maintaining Catholic schools in the parishes of the Lismore Diocese. (pp. 2-3)

The decades since the 1970s, however, have seen the disappearance of religious orders from Catholic schools. There is a religious order presence in only two of the secondary schools of the Diocese of Lismore in 2010. In particular, the statistics regarding religious principalship in the diocese show a marked change in the past twenty years, with eight religious principals in 1989 down to only one in 2009. Figures on teaching staff in the diocese show only four religious teachers out of a total teaching force of approximately 1180, less than .04% (Catholic Education Office, Lismore, records accessed January 2010).

The impact of lay personnel on a school system that was originally led, developed and sustained by religious orders is a significant issue for schools within the Diocese of Lismore, and an important contextual issue in this research. Religious orders operated from a charism and philosophy of Catholic education on which the management, leadership and identity of their schools were based and nurtured. In contrast, the lay principals who replaced them did not have access to the same community life and ethos, nor had they been trained specifically in the skills needed to exercise religious leadership. Tinsey (1998) outlines a number of other areas where the effects of the transition from religious to lay leadership has impacted upon Catholic schools in the Diocese of Lismore:

- The perception that schools and their teachers have lost the spirit of vocation and dedication in their mission;
- The need for renewal of vision and mission statements in the light of lay ministry;

- The transference of assumptions regarding the involvement of religious in the parish to lay leaders and teachers. (p. 31)

Moreover, Tinsey (1998) notes the added pressure placed on lay leadership in Lismore diocesan schools as a result of the withdrawal of religious orders:

It is debatable whether a person can effectively take on the role of cultural leader in a Christian community with little or no specific formation for the task. Traditionally the Catholic community has hoped that this formation would happen through an osmosis effectThis is becoming an increasingly difficult task, as support from other sectors of the Catholic community is not always forthcoming and with the decline in numbers of members of religious congregations in schools, the charism of religious orders is having less influence in the articulation of a school identity and culture. (p. 50)

Any investigation of the faith leadership role of Catholic school principals in the Diocese of Lismore is embedded in this rapid organisational loss of religious order-inspired educational vision and “spiritual capital” (Grace, 2002, p. 65). The change to lay leadership has been an important development for Catholic schools across Australia, yet the questions of where Catholic school principals source and situate their faith leadership, and what faith leadership means from a lay perspective, is empirically underexplored. This loss will be intensified in coming years as the last of the religious and ex-religious who still minister in Catholic schools reach retirement age. Belmonte et al (2006) warn that

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

This analysis of the microsystem of Catholic secondary school principalship within the Diocese of Lismore has established the requirement for faith leadership prescribed within the principals' role description and other diocesan documents, and has identified critical perspectives surrounding Catholic secondary schools and parish-school relationships. In addition, this overview has discussed important contextual factors including tension within the parish-school relationship, the growing significance of the Catholic school as a Church entity, the vacuum in parish leadership and the transition from religious to lay leadership in Catholic schools. To further explore these issues, it is necessary to move beyond the microsystem and into the exosystem of the Catholic Church and education.

2.3 Exosystem: The Catholic Church and Education

Catholic schooling in the Diocese of Lismore is situated within the wider parameters of Catholic education in Australia. The Catholic Church has, throughout Australia's history, demonstrated a strong commitment to Catholic schools. From 1788-1870, Catholic schools were established in partnership with colonial authorities (Hutton, 2002; Ryan & Sungaila, 1995). The period 1870-1940, however, saw a break in this partnership as various Education Acts established free, secular public education throughout the Australian colonies. During this period, Catholic schools in Australia were primarily concerned with re-affirming the right of the Catholic Church to provide education for its members as an alternative to free and secular public education. Here the mission of the Catholic school was construed largely in pastoral terms with the intention of socialising students into Catholic beliefs and practices. Leadership for this educational and pastoral endeavour came from Australia's Catholic Bishops. By the turn of the twentieth century however, religious congregations were invited to establish schools in conjunction with local parish communities. Although poorly resourced, these schools enjoyed great autonomy and freedom, as resources did not permit the development of a centralised bureaucracy (Ryan & Sungaila, 1995).

In the 1960s, the government-church partnership was re-established as the challenges of the 'baby boom' and post-war migration confronted Australian schools in the 1950s and 1960s. Appreciating that the very survival of Catholic schools was at stake, Catholic communities campaigned for state funding of Catholic schools, and from 1973 this was achieved (Ryan & Sungaila, 1995, p. 158). Over time, the number and variety of Catholic schools has expanded and state funding has acted as a catalyst to the establishment of centralised bureaucracies, the Catholic Education Offices, which "aimed to put Catholic schools on an efficient and strong footing" (p.160). This funding also allows Catholic Education Offices to employ lay teachers to fill the void left by declining numbers in religious orders since the mid-1960s.

While state funding has ensured the survival of Catholic schooling in Australia, it is inevitable that issues of Catholic school identity and mission will come to the forefront. D'Orsa (in Duncan & Riley, 2002) notes, "as Australian society and culture evolve... groups find themselves having to reconceptualise and restate their mission within some overarching appreciation of their place in the Church" (p. 24). Hence there are calls for Catholic school communities to adopt an

intentional approach that focuses on Catholic school identity, mission and community Identity relates to beliefs, vision, values and purposes. It tells us who we are. Mission encompasses goals and strategies. It is what we do because of who we are. The third partner is...community. Community is understood as local, national and global. (Hutton, 2002, p. 54)

Such an intentional approach is deemed to be the work of school and system leadership. Typically, schools have used whole school development programs and school renewal as a vehicle for this intentional activity. At the same time, at a system level, there have been a number of 'conversations' about Catholic school identity and mission. *The Queensland Bishops' Project -Catholic schools for the 21st Century* (QCEC, 2001) and the joint *Enhancing*

Catholic Identity in Catholic schools Project between the Victorian Catholic Education Commission and the Leuven Catholic University in Belgium, are two recent examples of such conversations. Hence, evidence suggests that identity projects continue to be of interest within Catholic education systems and Catholic schools as “deeper questions of identity remain to be clarified and illuminated” (Parramatta Diocesan Catholic Schools Council, 2005, p. .1).

To support conversations about the identity and mission of its schools, the Catholic Church has published a series of educational documents:

Declaration on Christian Education (1965), *The Catholic School* (1977), *Lay Catholics in Schools: Witnesses to Faith* (1982), *The Religious Dimension of Education in a Catholic School* (1988) and *The Catholic School on the Threshold of the Third Millennium* (1998). These documents highlight as foundational, the link between the Catholic school and the wider mission of the Catholic Church. Here, “the Catholic school forms part of the saving mission of the Church, especially in the education in the faith” (Congregation for Catholic Education, 1977, 9). Expectations of both teachers and leaders in Catholic schools have also been clearly articulated:

If all those who are responsible for the Catholic school would never lose sight of their mission and the apostolic value of their teaching, the school would enjoy better conditions in which to function in the present and would faithfully hand on its mission to future generations. (1977, 87)

When lay people do establish schools, they should be especially concerned with the creation of a community climate permeated by the gospel spirit of freedom and love, and they should witness to this in their own lives. (Congregation for Catholic Education, 1988, 38)

In these educational documents of the Catholic Church, the hallmarks of faith leadership are expressed in terms of active practice of the Catholic faith, active participation in parish community, and unwavering loyalty to the Catholic Church and its teaching:

The identity and success of Catholic education is linked inseparably to the witness of life given by the teaching staff. Therefore, the Bishops recommended that those responsible for hiring teachers and administrators in our Catholic schools take into account the faith-life of those they are hiring. School staff who truly live their faith will be agents of a new evangelization in creating a positive climate for the Christian faith to grow and in spiritually nourishing the students entrusted to their care. (Pope John Paul II, 2001, 33)

Catholic school principals are contextually situated within this relationship between Catholic education and the Catholic Church and subject to formal expectations as a consequence of their role, first as teacher and then as leader. As a consequence, any discussion of Catholic education in Australia must acknowledge that this educational system acts as an agent of the Catholic Church and its evangelising mission. In short, the Catholic school has a theological purpose and it is expected that school leadership will be motivated by this purpose.

In contemporary Catholic schools, however, concern regarding Catholic identity and mission remain, as old assumptions about people, religious practice and Catholic education are being questioned, and the challenge of providing Catholic education becomes more complex. Thus:

All of this can lead to ambiguities and tensions when the nature and purpose of Catholic schools, in the context of their parishes, are being considered. Some observers are alarmed at what they see as a drift towards elitism in Catholic schooling. They point to the fifty per cent of baptised Catholic children currently enrolled in government schools, and they ask if there are structural and cultural realities that are sending unwelcoming signals to the very poor, the marginalised and the unchurched....The Catholic school is caught up in this dynamic context. Simply coping with its complexity can drain energy, dampen enthusiasm and dull the imagination. Those committed to Catholic schooling – especially teachers – need meaningful

inspiration and a new clarity of vision. (Parramatta Diocesan Catholic Schools Council, 2005, p. 2)

At the same time, principals also lead schools where parent and student expectations have changed markedly (Flynn & Mok, 2002; Griffiths, 1998), and where religious teaching and explicit Catholic ethos have become less important to many parents than tradition, academic standards and strong discipline. Griffith's (1998) study of parent expectations of a Catholic secondary school in suburban Adelaide found,

that parents judged the school primarily as a school, and not as a Catholic institution...The Catholic nature of the school is also appreciated, but perhaps more because it is a guarantee of perceived quality, embodying continuity with a proven tradition of secondary education, and with a clearer stance on personal morality issues, not because it derives its authority as part of the mission of the Catholic Church. (p. 198)

Flynn and Mok's (2002) longitudinal analysis (1972–1998) of Year 12 students and their attitudes toward Catholic schools, which includes data from the Diocese of Lismore, indicates similar trends, with students valuing academic and vocational development, pastoral care and concern highly. In contrast, this analysis found that “while Catholic schools continue to have a religious influence on students which is independent of the home, there has been a marked decline in the level of students' religious beliefs, values and practice over the past two decades” (p. 321).

This change in attitude toward Catholic education must be viewed, therefore, in the context of the marginalisation of religious belief in the face of rapid and all encompassing secularisation of Australian society and culture. The changing demographics of Catholic school enrolments (Rossiter, 2003), the declining importance attributed to religion in contemporary society, and the changing relationship between active Catholic parish allegiance and choice

for Catholic schooling, combine to make the contemporary exercise of faith leadership a challenging undertaking. As Belmonte et al, (2006) observe:

when faced with the reality of contemporary Australian society, characterised by a plurality of beliefs and experiences, it cannot be presumed that all students, families and teachers are fully committed to the Catholic tradition or involved with local parish activities and worship. Given the diversity of faith standpoints, a non-critical awareness of the Catholic school as a faith community may hide a less than ideal reality. (p. 8)

A Pastoral Letter of the Bishops of NSW and the ACT (2007) sums up the current situation facing Catholic schools:

Culture and society affect our schools in more ways than just enrolment patterns. Within the Catholic community fewer people attend Mass; and fewer priests and religious are in service than was previously the case. Recent studies suggest that fewer young people now identify themselves with churches or religions. Society wide trends such as secularisation, consumerism, family dysfunction and values disorientation also impact upon young people. The schools often have to pick up the pieces in the face of competing pressures from many directions. (p. 8)

This overview of the exosystem of Catholic Church and education in Australia, situates the requirement for faith leadership within the broader issue of engaging intentional leadership focusing on Catholic school identity, mission and community. To further explore the challenge of faith leadership it is necessary to move beyond the exosystem of the Catholic Church and education and situate this research within the broader macrosystem of social and cultural change.

2.4 Macrosystem: Social and Cultural Change

The most recent Church document on education, *The Catholic School on the Threshold of the Third Millennium* (1998) situates Catholic education within the broader context of societal and cultural change. Here it is argued that

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, in highly developed societies in particular, assumes the form, often exalted by the media, 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. (Congregation for Catholic Education, 1998, 1)

The present age of rapid transformation with massive and all pervasive change, has left no institutions untouched (Mackay, 2007). Postmodernity is currently sweeping aside the cultural assumptions of modernity, bringing in its wake threat, confusion, conflict and chaos (Thornhill, 2000). This cultural shift has also brought a dramatic change in attitude toward religious belief, completing the modern project to dispense with God. The balance between sacred culture and profane culture has swung sharply toward the profane, with rampant secularisation of society ensuring that religion is increasingly marginalised. The postmodern approach to religion has been described as the enshrining of “unbelief as a cultural product” (Gallagher, 1998, p. 112), the hallmarks of which include “religious anaemia, secular marginalisation, anchorless spirituality and cultural desolation” (p. 113). Here, “God is missing but not missed” (p.112), as postmodern culture has moved beyond denial of God to an institutionalised apathy. Giddens (1990) suggests that modernity and religion are essentially incompatible, because there are few connections between tradition (which is backward looking) and modernity (which is forward

focused). Consequently religion has become, for many, “irrelevant to contemporary life” (p. 38).

This dramatic change in attitude toward, and cultural denial of, religious belief has at its core two other equally significant elements. The first is the subjectivity and interiority (Gallagher, 1998, p. 85) which epitomises modernity, and which has resulted in a change in cultural norms from the Christian concept of free will to an autonomous and individual will, where individuals are answerable only to themselves in the light of an “ideology which cannot appeal to any measure beyond itself” (Thornhill, 2000, p. 70). In the absence of the meta-narratives which give social and cultural cohesion (T. D’Orsa, & J. D’Orsa, in Benjamin & Riley, 2008), human beings have become victims of mass culture, consumerism, popular fiction, the cult of personality and “excessive individualism” (Arbuckle, 2004, p. 24).

The second element lies in the fact that modernity has also radically altered the epistemological understanding of truth. “The fundamental challenge faced by Western thought today is the reconciling of a recognition of objective truth with a full acknowledgement of the vast range of subjective factors which condition our access to that truth” (Thornhill, 2000. p. 127). This liberated ontological paradigm is based on the assumption that there are many equally valid ways of knowing, none of which has precedence over any other. Knowledge is individually and socially constructed and the story of each person contributes to the sum of human knowledge. Notions of universal and absolute truth are rejected and the “living continuity of wisdom” (p. 97) is highlighted. Catholic schools as institutions have the function of mediating between the individual and the world, and they are, as a consequence, caught in a paradox between the absolutist philosophy of the Catholic Church and the socially constructed reality of a postmodern worldview. For the Catholic school principal there is an enormous challenge in the tension between the two.

Intensifying the impact of the cultural challenge of post-modernity on Catholic schools, is the all pervasive influence of the economic rationalist western

market economic system. The elevation of profit over people, the emphasis on consumers and markets, and the mechanistic view of human output in terms of control and efficiency are regarded as central tenets of Western economics (Grace, 2000; Treston, 2000). From a Catholic perspective, “‘economic rationalism’ has won victories at the expense of ‘social capital’, as community owned and run enterprises have been sold off, and community responsibilities out-sourced” (NCEC, 2006, p. 4). Grace (2000) describes “ethical dilemmas related to people, resource and power decisions where marketing or managerial interests appeared to be in conflict with humane, educative or moral principles” (p. 232). Economic rationalism challenges the notion of the common good which lies at the heart of Catholic social teaching: “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). How schools can “find a workable synthesis between the demands of market survival (and even of market success), and the preservation of the integrity of the distinctive principles of Catholic schooling” (Grace, 2002, p. 181) is a significant question for Catholic principals.

Within this dramatic and constantly changing cultural reality, it is claimed that Catholicism has entered a period of chaos characterised by “anger, denial, scapegoating, ...feuding, marginalization of innovators, nostalgia for the past (and) weariness and cynicism” (Arbuckle, 2000, pp. 131-132). The Catholic Church itself acknowledged this breakdown of religious culture in Australia in its post synodal document *Ecclesia in Oceania* (2001), which highlighted the following as indicative of a lessening of religious influence in Australia: the moving of religion to the margin of society, the tendency to regard religion as a private issue, the diminished voice of the Church in public life and a decline in Catholic moral life and conscience. The solutions presented by *Ecclesia in Oceania* were sweeping and included: calls for the re-evangelisation of Australian culture and the enculturation of the gospel message, special attention to youth involvement in the Church, the embracing of ecumenism, social justice, interreligious dialogue, the environment, human rights, indigenous issues, social services and a strengthening of the liturgical and

sacramental life of the Church. In addition to these broader solutions, *Ecclesia in Oceania* (2001) also addressed Catholic education, making particular recommendations for the hiring of teachers and school leaders:

The great challenge for Catholic schools in an increasingly secularised society is to present the Christian message in a convincing and systematic way. Yet catechesis runs the risk of becoming barren, if no community of faith and Christian life welcomes those being formed...Young people need to be genuinely integrated into the community's life and activity....The identity and success of Catholic education is linked inseparably to the witness of life given by the teaching staff....School staff, who truly live their faith will be agents of a new evangelization in creating a positive climate for the Christian faith to grow and in spiritually nourishing the students entrusted to their care. They will be especially effective when they are active practising Catholics, committed to their parish community and loyal to the Church and her teaching. (Pope John Paul II, 2001, 115-117)

Beyond this official Church teaching, researchers (Dixon, 2003; *National Church Life Survey*, 2001; Rymarz, 2004) have also noted a breakdown of strong Catholic faith communities and a critical change in the way in which younger Catholics view the world and practise their faith. This research suggests a declining religious culture in Australia, with less frequent attendance at Mass, lower levels of involvement in parish activities, lower levels of acceptance of Catholic beliefs, and “an identity that is far more responsive to the needs of the individual as opposed to a collective or communal meaning” (Dixon, 2003, p. 147). Rymarz (2004) notes that “the whole notion of a *Catholic Weltanschauung* (worldview) was challenged. What Catholics believe in a remarkably short space of time became a contentious issue” (p. 147). Current research clearly indicates that Catholic identity is in a process of redefinition (Benjamin & Riley, 2008).

Explaining this development, Thornhill (1991) has described the cultural shift away from religion and religious practice as a movement from “sacralization” to “secularization”⁵(p.10). The rapid growth of secularisation, in the postmodern context, has intensified the process of desacralisation begun in the sixteenth century. This has resulted in calls for a reinterpretation of faith through the discovery of “new symbols and ways of access” (p. 23) to the transcendent. Such a process recognises that faith leadership in the twenty first century is grounded in a new reality, a postmodern world in which faith and religion are marginal concepts, and where a theocentric view of the world has largely disappeared. At the same time, individuals with a faith commitment often develop split personalities (Alford & Naughton, 2001) as the secular world forces individuals to separate life and work from religious belief.

Rapid social and cultural changes in Australian society have also impacted significantly on Catholic parish life and on Catholic schools. There have been dramatic changes in family life, moral thinking, social values, work trends and the position of women. The transforming revolution in technology and communication has affected every facet of life. Traditional Catholic communities once handed on the faith by building strong faith communities (Rymarz, 2004), but this is no longer the case in contemporary Australia. The breakdown of traditional family structures has also impacted heavily upon Catholic schools that articulate family values as one of their foundational principles. As schools come to terms with variety in family make-up, the perception of the critical role of the family in faith development and nurturance is being revised. There are significant implications for Catholic schools and Catholic school leaders of this breakdown of the traditional congruence between family, Church and school (Weiss, 2007).

This changing socio-cultural context demands a reconstruction of the way in which all levels of Church leadership are understood and interpreted. Such a

⁵ In Thornhill (1991) “sacralization” refers to the particular way of seeing the relationship between God and humanity that dominated premodernity and contributed to a strong theistic culture and the synthesis of the sacred and the profane. “Secularization” refers to the separation of the sacred and the profane that occurred in modernity as Science showed it did not need a God.

reconstruction, however, will be complex, the process made more difficult by the reaction of the institutional Church to these challenges which beset the Catholic faith in the third millennium. Faced with a paradigm shift in attitudes to religion, the reaction of the Catholic Church has been described as “restorationism” (Arbuckle, 1996, p. 64) and “papalism” (Collins, 2000, p. 3).⁶. Indicative of this institutional response to the perceived secularisation of Australian society, Pope John Paul II issued a *Statement of Conclusions* (1998) that urged Australia’s Catholic Bishops to shut down debate and enforce inflexible rules. For McGillion (2003) this political reaction represented an attempt to strengthen Church authority as a response to a decline in Catholic practice, a strong secular culture, moral relativism and weakening parish community life. While for Collins (2000) such pronouncements support a sectarian approach that is

...incompatible with genuine catholicity. It is the antithesis of the kind of openness to the world, tolerant acceptance of others and a sense of religious pluralism that most thinking Catholics have been formed in and have embraced over the last three or four decades. Thus many Catholics find themselves involved in a corrosive disjunction between what they believe and have experienced, and the views expressed at the highest levels of the church. The reason is because those who claim to articulate Catholic belief seem to be abandoning their *catholic* spirit. As a result there is a turning away from the other Christian churches, and a rejection of the search for common ground with the other great religious traditions. Thus more and more thinking Catholics who have been educated and live in pluralist, democratic and tolerant societies, find themselves in conflict with church hierarchs who seem to be moving in an ever-more sectarian direction. (p. 3)

⁶ Restorationism (Arbuckle, 1996) “refers to the crusade to take the Church *uncritically* back to values and structures of the pre-Vatican 11 era” (p. 64). Papalism, is defined by Collins as “the constant movement toward centralisation, bureaucratic control, and a narrow orthodoxy that has characterised the activities of the papacy and the Roman Curia over the last two centuries” (2000, p. 3).

This study of the macrosystem situates faith leadership in the Catholic school within the wider cultural shift from modernity to postmodernity, and more recently digimodernity⁷ (Kirby, 2009), and the consequent movement away from religion and religious practice (Collins, 2008). Here Catholic school leadership can be regarded as a change management project that demands both interiority and new ways of thinking, dialogue and learning (Sergiovanni, 1996) and a broader focus (Fullan, 2008) that seeks to build capacity across systems. Such as reconstruction of the way in which Church leadership is understood and interpreted (Ranson, 2006) will be challenging, given the sectarian reaction of the institutional Church to the challenges posed by secularisation and the marginalisation of religious belief. If principals in Catholic schools are counted amongst Collin's "thinking Catholics who have been educated and live in pluralist, democratic and tolerant societies, (and who) find themselves in conflict with church hierarchs who seem to be moving in an ever-more sectarian direction" (2002, p. 3), then the exercise of faith leadership becomes even more challenging. Belmonte et al, (2006) sum up the problematic nature of Catholic school leadership in the contemporary context:

Today Catholic schools must prove their validity as viable educational institutions, as well as satisfying the requirements of the Church, simultaneously conforming to government accountability and to Church expectations. Their identity as Catholic schools is fundamental to their existence, and when they cease to be Catholic, for all purposes, they cease to exist. As a result, as positional leaders contemporary lay principals are forced to make regular appraisals of their Catholic school leadership. For lay Catholic school principals answerable to the multiple legitimacies of government accountability, the school community, parish priests, Catholic Education Offices and Bishops, the task of developing a genuine Catholic school identity may be problematic. (pp. 3-4)

⁷ Digimodernism is defined by Kirby (2009) as the twenty-first century's new cultural paradigm. Based on the computerisation of text, it is characterised by haphazardness, evanescence, and anonymous, social and multiple authorship.

2.5 Conclusion

This research study is focused on the faith leadership role of the Catholic secondary school principal: a broad topic with a number of interrelated contextual elements that made any precise conceptualisation difficult. Consequently, in order to clarify the research problem, this chapter has situated Catholic secondary school principalship within the various contexts that impact on the principals' capacity to undertake faith leadership within their school communities. These interrelated contexts include the microsystem or the principals' immediate environment of Catholic secondary schools, the exosystem or institutional context of the Catholic school and the macrosystem of socio-cultural change.

This exploration of the multiple contexts of principalship in the Diocese of Lismore has highlighted the significance of faith leadership as an area of responsibility within the role of Catholic secondary school principals. At the same time, this contextual analysis situates the requirement for faith leadership within the broader issue of engaging intentional leadership focusing on Catholic school identity, mission and community. In addition, it raises questions in respect to how principals engage in faith leadership in the face of the growing secularisation of Australian society and sectarian responses from the Church hierarchy.

In this way, the research problem is clarified in terms of the practical issues surrounding the principals' faith leadership role in the context of change. Although Catholic Education Office documents identify faith leadership as a significant area of responsibility for secondary principals, there is little support in policy or practical guidelines for this dimension of the role. At the same time, secondary principals in the Diocese of Lismore find themselves in a context of extensive social, cultural and ecclesial change that, in turn, impacts upon their capacity to be effective faith leaders. In this way, this contextual analysis confirms that the principal's faith leadership role, in the context of Catholic secondary schools in the Diocese of Lismore, is worthy of study.

Accepting the problematic nature of faith leadership in Catholic secondary schools, the purpose of this study is the investigation of the faith leadership role of Catholic secondary school principals in the Diocese of Lismore, in order to develop a more informed and sophisticated understanding of this dimension of their role. This study could then inform those concerned with Catholic education, and allow the generation of an understanding of faith leadership that could assist principal development programs and aid principals in their exercise of this facet of their role. The aim of this research therefore, is the “*understanding and reconstruction* of the constructions that people (including the inquirer) initially hold, aiming towards consensus, but still open to new interpretations as information and sophistication improve” (Guba & Lincoln in Denzin & Lincoln, 1994, p. 112). It was expected that such an understanding would not only point to new directions for policy and practice in the Diocese of Lismore, but also contribute to wider theoretical developments in this field.

With the research problem and purpose in mind, this study turns to the task of identifying the research questions that will guide the various moments of data collection, analysis and interpretation within this study. To this end, a review of the literature follows which addresses the major themes emerging in the areas of faith and organisational leadership.

CHAPTER 3

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE: IDENTIFICATION OF THE RESEARCH QUESTIONS

3.1 Introduction

In Chapter 2, the research problem was clarified in terms of the practical issues surrounding the faith leadership role of the principal, in the context of Catholic secondary schools in the Diocese of Lismore. Although faith leadership has been identified as a significant area of responsibility for secondary principals in the diocese, there is little in the way of policy or practical guidelines to support this aspect of their role. Moreover, secondary principals in the diocese, like other Catholic school leaders, find themselves in a context of extensive social, cultural and ecclesial change that, in turn, impacts upon their capacity to undertake the faith leadership role. Together, these contextual issues indicate that the principals' faith leadership role, in the context of Catholic secondary schools in the Diocese of Lismore, is problematic and in need of further investigation.

With this research problem in mind, the review of the literature serves a number of purposes within in this study. The review seeks to clarify the concept of faith leadership by examining its nature and its roots in contemporary organisational and leadership theory. In synthesising relevant scholarship, the review of the literature enables the confirmation of the research problem, as well as the generation of the research questions that will guide the various moments of data collection, analysis and interpretation within this research study. In addition, the review provides a conceptual framework for the analysis of the research data, and the development of key assertions regarding the nature of faith leadership as a dimension of the role of the Catholic secondary school principal in the Diocese of Lismore.

The literature related to this research is diverse and multifaceted. This review is, as a consequence, divided into five sections. Table 1 provides an

overview of the areas within the literature that will be critically examined in this chapter.

Table 1 The literature review concepts in order of discussion

Section	Literature Review Sections
3.2	Faith in the organisation
3.3	Leadership in the organisation
3.4	Towards a theory of faith leadership
3.5	Christian values and leadership
3.6	Leading the Catholic school

Prior research, previously reviewed in Chapter 1, identifies very few empirical studies focused specifically on the faith leadership role of the Catholic secondary school principal. Aware of this limitation, the review of the literature initially focuses on scholarship in respect to the phenomenon of faith in the organisation (Section 3.2) as well as leadership in the organisation (Section 3.3). Here the review highlights the movement towards a theory of faith leadership that effectively makes the link between spirituality and leadership in the workplace (Section 3.4). The focus of the review then moves to the values that underpin faith leadership within Christian organisations such as the Catholic school (Section 3.5). In this section the link between personal spirituality, intrinsic motivation and values is clearly established. Finally the review looks specifically at Catholic school leadership to ascertain the leadership trends and developments specific to the Catholic education system (Section 3.6).

3.2 Faith in the Organisation

Traditionally, theorists have understood the term 'faith' in reference to belief in a transcendent or supreme being. However, by the middle of the twentieth century there was a rigorous debate in the literature over the nature of faith and its relationship to religious belief. As Tillich (1957) notes "there is hardly a word in the religious language, both theological and popular, which is subject to more misunderstanding, distortions and questionable definitions than the

word ‘faith’” (p. ix). Given this debate, contemporary scholarship favours broad definitions of faith that reflect the complexity of this phenomenon. For example, Borg (2003) advances four meanings of faith: “assensus” (faith as a mental assent to belief); “fidelitas” (faith as faithfulness to God); “fiducia” (faith as trust in God) and “visio” (faith as a way of seeing the whole) (p. 34-38). For Borg, “assensus” is a traditional paradigm of faith with its roots in the Reformation and the critical need for denominational differentiation on the basis of belief (p. 38). The three remaining approaches to faith are “relational” (p. 60) and emphasise a response to God that is not bound by the rigidity of credal statements, but is “transformational” (p. 60) and evolving. Borg asserts that these “emergent paradigms” (p. 60) of religious faith are a reaction to increasingly difficult times as Christianity faces tension within and the wider impact of secularisation and the marginalisation of religious belief.

In addition the growing secularism within western society in the second half of the twentieth century has also resulted in a “degree of ambivalence and neglect” (King & Crowther, 2004, p. 83) in respect to the place and function of religious faith in research on organisational culture and management (Grace, 2003; Lips-Wiersma & Mills, 2002). As outlined in Chapter 2 (section 2.4) there has been a “denial of the sacred” (Kolakowski, 1997, p. 68) that has resulted in a widespread questioning and often rejection of a religious worldview, and the resultant establishment of “unbelief as a cultural product” (Gallagher, 1998, p.112). As a consequence, religion has been relegated to the “privatized sphere” (Herbert, 2003, p. 52) and is now widely considered, in the western context, to be less than relevant to social and cultural life (Grace, 2002). It is hardly surprising therefore, given this secular milieu, that there seems to be an ambivalence toward, and neglect of, religion within organisational and leadership research.

3.2.1 *Secularism and Cultural Change*

Secularism is defined as the “indifference to or rejection or exclusion of religion and religious considerations” (Merriam-Webster, 2009). With its roots in the Enlightenment, the term secularism was first coined by Holyoake in 1846 (Larsen, 2006). The concept has since been widely used to describe

any philosophy that promotes human progress without reference to religious belief or dogma (Grace, 2002). In this context, religion and culture have become increasingly estranged due to the cultural upheavals of modernity and postmodernity. As Dupre (1993) observes “modernity is an event that has transformed the relationship between the cosmos, its transcendent source and its human interpreter” (p. 249). Despite calls for openness “to the possibility of religion adapting in a range of ways to modernization and post modernization processes” (Herbert, 2003, p. 51), a consequence of the estrangement of religion and culture has been a widespread “secular marginalization” (Gallagher, 1998, p.113) of religion in the western world.

It follows that in this age of secularism, there are reservations in respect to the expression of religious beliefs in the workplace (Armstrong & Crowther, 2002; Dent, Higgins, & Wharff, 2005). However, interestingly, there is also an emergent appreciation of the phenomenon of spirituality (Schneiders, 2000). This development is regarded as a reaction to increasing alienation in society and the pressures of constant change: “IT developments and globalization, including the pressures of population, environment and food demands” (Korac-Kakabadse, Kouzmin & Kakabadse, 2002, p.165). Thus, the literature clearly distinguishes between religion and spirituality, and appears to give a greater credence to the place of spirituality in the contemporary workplace.

3.2.2 *Spirituality in the Organisation*

Explaining the place of spirituality in the organisation, the literature points to the juxtapositioning of the desire for connectivity in the context of socio-cultural change, and the impersonal nature of many workplaces. This is examined by Dent et al. (2005), who describe the contemporary workplace as

...a tense environment with demoralized workers due to downsizing, reengineering, restructuring, outsourcing, and layoffs, as well as a growing inequity in wages.... Also, the workplace has become for many a substitute for extended families, churches, neighborhoods, and civic groups that previously had been the source for the essential human feelings of connectedness and contribution. (p. 630)

Thus there is an increasing interest in spirituality in the workplace with the emergence of concerns for personal fulfillment, connection to something beyond the self, development of community and opportunities for service (Fry, 2003; Lips-Wiersma, 2004; Nash & McLennan, 2001). In addition, it is argued in the literature that spirituality in the organisation contributes to productivity by meeting “the fundamental needs of both leader and follower for spiritual survival so they become more organizationally committed and productive” (Fry, 2003, p. 694). In other words, “the more engaged and motivated the employee, the higher the service quality they provide to consumers and customers” (Sims & Quatro, 2005, p.289). Here, work is meaningful when “employees are esteemed by others for passionately employing their giftedness in serving the greater organizational good so that they approach self-actualization (thereby demonstrating heart engagement)”(p.289).

3.2.3 Conceptualising Religion and Spirituality

The growing appreciation of spirituality in the contemporary organisation has revealed a definitional and conceptual distinction between spirituality and religion in contemporary literature (Daniels, Franz & Wong, 2000; King & Crowther, 2004; Krishnakumar & Neck, 2002). In seeking a definition of these critical terms, Koenig, McCullough and Larson (2001) offer:

Religion is an organized system of beliefs, practices, rituals and symbols designed to (a) facilitate closeness to the transcendent (God, higher power, or ultimately truth or reality), and (b) to foster an understanding of one’s relationship and responsibility to others in living together in a community.... Spirituality is the personal quest for understanding answers to ultimate questions about life, about meaning, and about relationship to the sacred or transcendent, which may (or may not) lead to or arise from the development of religious rituals and the formulation of community. (p.18)

This distinction is increasingly evident when “religion as a powerful influence in individual or societal life seems to be in serious trouble,” whilst “spirituality has rarely enjoyed such a high profile, positive evaluation, and even economic

success” (Schneiders, 2000, p.1). Moreover, it seems that while definitions of spirituality have traditionally been linked to the practice of religion, contemporary management and leadership literature is now more likely to refer to spirituality alone, without reference to religion. This is not an oversight. Mitroff and Denton (1999), in researching organisational spirituality, found a more positive view of spirituality than religion. Here religion was viewed as inherently negative and described in terms such as “narrow... prescriptive... dogmatic... restrictive...(and) exclusive” (p. 40). At the same time, spirituality was considered to be “the essence of life, spirit, soul expression... meaning... connection... interconnectedness... creation (and) cosmic oneness” (pp. 40-41). This definitional and conceptual distinction between religion and spirituality is reinforced with evidence that religious beliefs at work are regarded as the “extreme” and even the “dark side” (p. 58) of the phenomenon of workplace spirituality. Nash and McLennan (2001) express a number of pragmatic reservations about religious belief in the workplace, including problems with language, competing religious approaches and affiliations, and the potential of compromising beliefs and values as business activity can force “capitalism and Christianity into an either/or proposition” (p. 66). Thus, the literature clearly distinguishes between religion and spirituality, indicating that increasingly, greater credence is being given to the place of spirituality in the workplace (Armstrong & Crowther, 2002; Dent et al. 2005).

There are, however, a few voices raised in support of religion in the organisation. Discussing the tension between religion and spirituality, Schneiders (2000) posits that religion and spirituality could be regarded as “strangers, rivals and partners” (p. 1). While she acknowledges that it is possible to proceed as if there is no real connection between religion and spirituality, Schneiders strongly argues for a partnership understanding based on religion and spirituality representing “two dimensions of a single enterprise” (p. 3). Previously, Gallagher (1998) had warned of an “anchorless spirituality” where people who are “sated but unsatisfied by the old materialism, as well as bored or untouched by their experience of Church, can enter a new search without anchors” (p. 114). In a similar vein, Schneiders (2000) argues that

“religion that is uninformed by a lived spirituality is dead and often deadly, (while) spirituality that lacks the structural and functional resources of institutionalized religious tradition is rootless and often fruitless for both the individual and society” (p.19).

Despite this support for a partnership between spirituality and religion, there continue to be strong concerns regarding the place of religion in the workplace. Fry, Giacalone, and Jurkiewicz (2005) as one example, warn leaders of the dangers inherent in viewing “workplace spirituality through the lens of religious traditions and practice” (p. 520). These dangers include the assertion that denominational religious belief can be exclusive, divisive and prone to notions of moral superiority. In addition, there can be legal issues when religious belief clashes with business activities. “Imbuing religion into workplace spirituality can foster zealotry at the expense of organizational goals, offend constituents and customers, and decrease morale and employee well-being” (p. 521). In this way, ongoing concerns regarding religion in the workplace are underpinned by the assumption that spirituality can be defined separately from religion. “People can participate in activities of a religious institution without having a spiritual experience, and ... it is possible to have a spiritual experience outside an environment of religion” (Dent et al. 2005, p. 634).

3.2.4 Motivation in the Workplace

This discussion of religion and spirituality in the organisation has been further enhanced by new appreciations of motivation in the workplace. Fry (2003) describes workplace motivation as

the forces, either external or internal to a person, that arouse enthusiasm and persistence to pursue a certain course of action. Motivation is primarily concerned with what energizes human behavior, what directs or channels such behavior, and how this behavior is maintained or sustained. (p. 698)

Using this definition, the distinction can also be made between intrinsic and

extrinsic motivation in respect to one's approach to religious practice. King and Crowther (2004) explore these categorizations, suggesting that intrinsic motivation "is to be a true believer in religious practice for its own sake. To be high extrinsic is to view religious practice as an avenue to a social or personal end" (p. 86). Thus intrinsic motivation in religious practice can involve bringing to the organisation and to work, personal beliefs and moral and social principles that stem from religious conviction. On the other hand, an extrinsic motivation could involve mere role-playing that relies on the scripts provided by religious traditions.

Extending this thought, theorists alert us to the importance of intrinsic motivation in the workplace and clearly link intrinsic motivation to spirituality (not necessarily religious practice) in the organisation. For Marques (2006) intrinsic motivation is perceived as "the higher awareness that drives human beings to do well" (p. 884), which occurs in the context of organisational spirituality. Moreover, Fry et al. (2005) in discussing organisational spirituality, refer to motivation in the workplace in similar intrinsic terms, citing a deeper understanding of the connectivity between the self, others and the wider world. Here it is argued that connection and meaning will follow the development of spirituality and intrinsic motivation in organisations. This claim requires our attention given the growing concern in contemporary society for meaning at work and connectivity in the workplace (Dent et al. 2005; Fry, 2003).

Further developing this understanding of motivation in the workplace, Fairholm (1997) links the expression of core values, intrinsic motivation and spirituality in the organisation:

Spirituality is what motivates an individual. Spirituality lies at the core of our values, ethics, and beliefs. It is at the epicenter of our self. It drives us and defines us. We and our core values are one and the same. Our spiritual values act as a guideline for doing the right thing. It is *the* underlying element in decision making. In a word, spirit is the conscious motivating force in people. (p. 53, italics in original)

In this way, Fairholm (1997) recommends a nexus between personal spirituality and values-based workplaces and organisations. Intrinsic motivation is supported and developed by a confluence of values between the individual and the community. All effective communities, including workplaces, are “bound together by common values” (p. 89), and these values can renew and enrich the spirituality of individuals. The consequences of a lack of confluence are disconnection, self-interest, “practices that dehumanize the workplace” and the prioritising of “organizational profit above humanness” (p. 77). At the same time, if the work situation has a strong impact on personal self-worth, spiritual health and motivation, then a lack of commonly held values is likely to undermine the organisation, its success and the behaviour and actions of its individual workers. This understanding of the link between spirituality, intrinsic motivation and core values suggests the importance of a value-based spiritual leadership. As Fry (2003) explains, “the purpose of spiritual leadership is to create vision and value congruence across the strategic, empowered team, and individual levels and, ultimately, to foster higher levels of organizational commitment and productivity” (p. 693). Thus, in a short period of time, organisational theory has recognised the role of spirituality (and to a lesser extent, religion) in the workplace. There has also been a growing appreciation of the importance of spirituality in organisations for both the well being of the worker, and the development of positive organisational culture and consequent enhanced productivity. The role of leaders working towards a congruence of vision and values is also noted (Hodgkinson, 1996). This theoretical development is depicted in Figure 2.

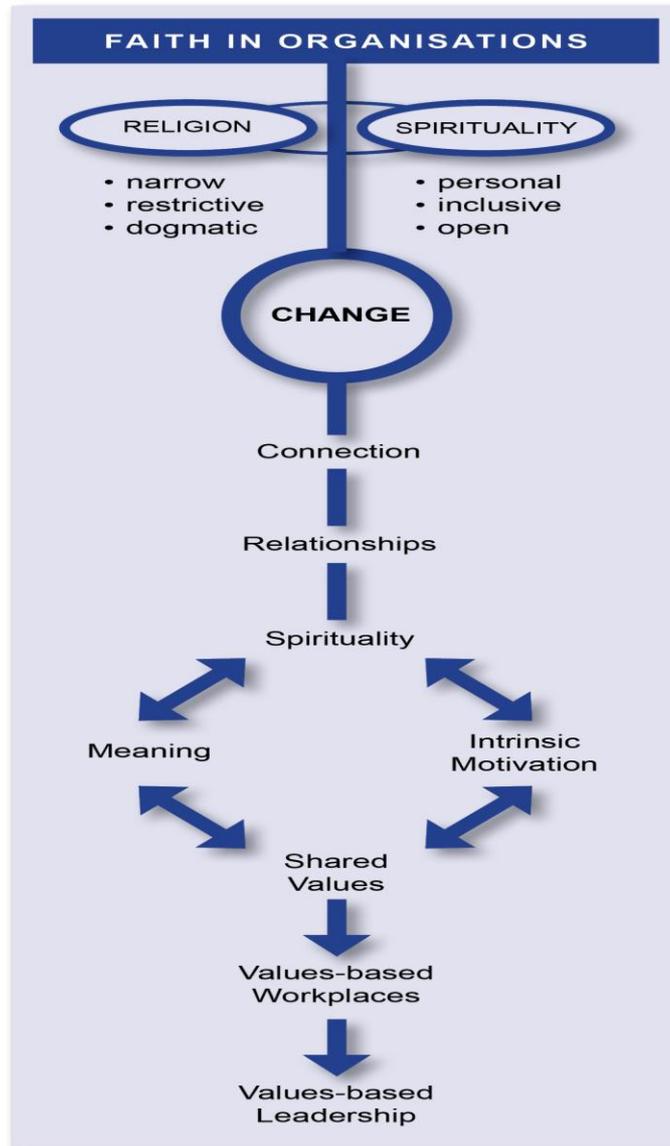


Figure 2 Developments in faith and the organisation

Mindful of the leadership challenges identified in this examination of the place of faith in organisations, this study takes the advice of Dent et al. (2005) and includes an overview of research and scholarship in the area of leadership. Within this study, it is useful to look to organisational leadership theory to discover ways that leaders can best nurture personal spirituality, to develop intrinsic motivation and commitment toward work, to achieve organisational goals and to develop and enhance corporate values.

3.3. Leadership in the Organisation

For much of the twentieth century, there has been a dominance of classical management and leadership theories that assumed an industrial paradigm of leadership (Harmes, 1994; Hock, 1999; Shriberg, Shriberg, & Lloyd, 2002) focusing on the formal distribution of power within the organisation. In short, this paradigm “saw leadership as the property of the individual, considered leadership primarily in the context of the formal group and organization, and, equated concepts of management and leadership” (p. 203). In this classical understanding, leaders exercise “power and influence through controlling the rewards in an organization, rewards they can offer or withhold from the workforce” (Bottery, 2004, p.16).

Developing this classical understanding of organisational management, theorists in the second half of the twentieth century became interested in successful leadership traits and behaviours (Robbins, 1998), and the focus was placed squarely on the leader. Consequently, researchers such as Jackson (2003), focus attention on the traits and behaviours of successful leaders with the intention of developing training programs for management. “This was a significant move away from the view that leadership is inborn, towards the idea that leadership can be taught.” (p. 201)

However, criticism of trait and behavioural leadership models centres on the fact that they do not take into consideration the context and environment in which leadership takes place. Consequently, the focus has shifted from the leader to the context, and various approaches to situational or contingency leadership were advanced in the literature. For example, Fiedler, Chemers, and Ayman (1995) identify seven situational characteristics that are said to impact upon leadership activity: “leader’s motivation and orientation ... situational control - group control ... task structure ... authority ... effectiveness satisfaction ... performance and stress” (p.152).

In spite of their focus on the human factor in organisations, these situational leadership theories have nevertheless been criticised for their focus on

management controls at the expense of individual freedom (Fairholm, 1998). In addition, critics point to perceptions of operational inflexibility with the possibility of an overreaction to some contingencies at the expense of others, as well as the limited response options when there is a leader–situation mismatch (Silverthorne, 2005). Yet again, for others, situational leadership theories represent yet another form of

transactional leadership [that] involves *contingent reinforcement*. Followers are motivated by the leader’s promises, praise, and rewards, or they are corrected by negative feedback, reproof, threats, or disciplinary actions. The leaders react to whether the followers carry out what the leaders and followers have “transacted” to do. In *contingent rewarding* behavior, leaders either make assignments or they may consult with followers about what is to be done in exchange for implicit or explicit rewards, and the desired allocation of resources. When leaders engage in *active management-by-exception*, they monitor follower performance and correct followers' mistakes. When leaders engage in *passive management-by-exception*, they wait passively for followers' mistakes to be called to their attention before taking corrective action with negative feedback or reprimands. *Laissez-faire* leaders avoid leading. (Bass & Steidmeier, 1999, p.181, italics in original)

In response to this understanding of the shortcomings of behavioural leadership models, theorists have advanced authentic transformational leadership as the way forward in effective organisational leadership.

3.3.1 Transformational Leadership Theories

The distinction between transactional and transformational leadership was first made by Downton (as cited in Barnett, McCormick, & Conners, 2001), but the idea gained little currency until J. M. Burns’ work (1978) on political leaders was published. J. M. Burns distinguished between ordinary (*transactional*) leaders, who exchanged tangible rewards for the work and

loyalty of followers, and extraordinary (*transformational*) leaders who engaged with followers, focused on higher order intrinsic needs, and raised consciousness about the significance of specific outcomes and new ways in which those outcomes might be achieved (Barnett et al. 2001; Dillard, 1995; Gellis, 2001; Judge & Piccolo, 2004). The concept of transformational leadership was further developed by Bass (1999), who disputed Burns' (1978) conception of transactional and transformational leadership as opposites on a continuum. He suggested instead that they are separate concepts, and that good leaders demonstrate characteristics of both.

In explaining transformational leadership, theorists tend to focus on its outcomes. Within the literature, there are claims that transformational leadership fosters capacity development, and brings higher levels of personal commitment to organisational objectives amongst followers (Barbuto, 2005; Spreitzer, Perttula, & Xin, 2005). Transformational leadership also enables followers to satisfy their individual human needs as well as achieve a collective purpose (Feinberg, Ostroff, & Burke, 2005). Transformational leaders are said to engender "trust, admiration, loyalty and respect amongst their followers" (Barbuto, 2005, p. 28). Finally, transformational leadership supports values clarification, and is said to involve leaders and followers raising one another's achievements, morality and motivations to levels that might otherwise have been impossible (Barnett, 2003; Crawford, Gould, & Scott, 2003). Thus the outcomes of transformational leadership are described in terms of a "high level of follower motivation and commitment and well-above-average organizational performance, especially under conditions of crisis or uncertainty" (Bryant, 2003, p. 36).

Although an understanding of the outcomes of transformational leadership appears to have been achieved, Leithwood and Jantzi (2000) observe that despite over four decades of theoretical development, the literature offers no single conceptualisation of the processes that constitute transformational leadership. Nevertheless, it is clear that transformational leadership is usually associated with processes such as visioning and goal setting, learning, concern for the individual, professionalism, high performance expectations

and participative decision-making (Leithwood & Jantzi, 2000). In summary, the transformational leader,

articulates the vision in a clear and appealing manner, explains how to attain the vision, acts confidently and optimistically, expresses confidence in the followers, emphasizes values with symbolic actions, leads by example, and empowers followers to achieve the vision. (Stone, Russell, & Patterson, 2003, p. 4)

That transformational leadership is successful has been demonstrated by studies in a diverse range of professional and cultural settings, including the military, schools and corporations (Bryant, 2003, p. 36). At the same time, critics of transformational leadership suggest that this model of leadership with its heavy focus on the leader, has potential for the abuse of power (Hall, Johnson, Wysocki, & Kepner, 2002). It is possible for charismatic transformational leaders to make strong emotional appeals regardless of the ultimate effects on followers. As Stone, Russell, and Patterson (2003, p. 4) observe, transformational leaders can exert a very powerful influence over followers, who offer them trust and respect. Some leaders may have narcissistic tendencies, thriving on power and manipulation. Critics of transformational leadership also argue that the model can be used for immoral ends and that “if the vision is flawed or the leader neglects to stress principled behavior towards the vision, then the results can be tragic” (Rasmussen, 1995, p. 297). These criticisms concerning the morality of transformational leadership have been addressed by the argument that to be truly transformational, leadership must have moral foundations. Therefore “to bring about change, authentic transformational leadership fosters the moral values of honesty, loyalty, and fairness, as well as the end values of justice, equality, and human rights” (Griffin, 2002, p. 8).

3.3.2 *Servant Leadership*

Parallel to the development of transformational leadership theory, theorists also advanced servant leadership as a person-centred approach to organisational leadership. In the late 1970s, Greenleaf (1977), in presenting

an argument against the abuse of power and authority in the modern organisation, made the link between service and leadership. Servant leadership emphasises elements including “increased service to others, a holistic approach to work promoting a sense of community, and the sharing of power in decision-making” (p. 337). Servant leaders are those who can “transcend personal self-interest and aspire to fulfill the physical, spiritual and emotional needs of others” (Birkenmeier, Carson, & Carson, 2003, p. 375). At the same time, servant leadership requires self-leadership:

Becoming servant leaders engages us in personal, internal self-change and changes our outward behavior. Servant leadership models self-leadership. It encourages self-set goals. It asks leaders to create positive thought patterns, develop self-leadership through appropriate rewards and reprimand systems, and promote self-leadership through teamwork. And finally, self-leadership asks leaders to create and promote a self-leadership culture. (Fairholm, 1997, p. 149)

Thus described, servant leaders are perceived as “those leaders who work to make real their personal inner standards and not simply to please managers” (Fairholm, 1997, p. 78), and their personal inner standards are said to reflect “a high moral standard of conduct in their relationships” (p. 79). To this end, servant leadership is associated with the deliberate intention of lifting selves in accord with higher levels of morality and standards of conduct. This ‘ideal’ of servant leadership gained general support within the literature (see Spears, 1998; Spear & Lawrence, 2002). However, there were criticisms around the gap between the ‘ideal’ and the ‘reality’ of servant leadership. In particular, it was noted that there has been scant empirical research on the effectiveness of servant leadership, suggesting that the theoretical development of this approach was underdeveloped and attracting criticism for its perceived passivity, naivety and openness to manipulation (Bowie, 2000; Johnson, 2001).

3.3.3 Future Directions

This examination of developments in leadership theory has established that by the end of the twentieth century, a plethora of leadership models and approaches were operating in the organisational sphere. Over time, trait and behavioural leadership theories were supplemented by a new interest in the impact of the situation on leadership behaviour. In addition, idealised versions of leadership such as transformational and servant leadership were advanced as researchers attempted to close the gap between an abstract theoretical 'ideal' and the 'reality' of leadership in organisations. Later developments in post-industrial leadership models (Capra, 2002; Lambert, 2005) focus more specifically on relationships, networks and the potential of leadership models to develop community and enhance human development in the workplace. As a consequence of these developments there has been a growing support for values-based leadership or more authentic forms of transformational leadership.

3.3.4 Values-based Leadership

Values-based leadership is premised on the assumption that values are socially constructed: "people create value systems for themselves" (Fairholm, 1997, p. 56), and these personal values "control their behavior"(p. 57). However, organisations also play a part in values clarification as organisations "present members with a value structure to which they must conform or else feel discomfort" (pp. 56-57). Finally, above all else, values-based leadership theory focuses on relationships within the organisation: "Today's work asks its chief people to understand the relationships more than just the actions of its team members. For in truth, relationships constitute the very essence of organisations" (p. 57).

In proposing a values-based leadership approach, Fairholm (1997) uses the analogy of the heart to explain his spiritual leadership framework.

A leader's philosophy about life and leadership are given substance and meaning by the internal system of spiritual values focused on. These values become a vitalizing vision of the possible. The heart is

what the leader believes and values. This spiritual heartvision, in turn, drives the mind and shapes the behavioral (managerial) tools we use in a given situation. Our behaviors, in turn, reflect and reshape the heart and the mind in interactive, continuous, developmental dynamic. (p. 28)

Thus, Fairholm (1997) makes a strong connection between leaders, their core spiritual values, and the workers, in his five level model of spiritual leadership: “for spiritual leaders ... success comes from the change, constant progress and transformation of people” (1997, p. 208). In addition, he places spiritual leadership into a strong contextual framework, with his leader situated along an evolving life continuum from “managerial control to spiritual holism” (1998, p. xix). Fairholm also recognises the importance of human stages of development on spiritual leadership capacity. Not only do spiritual leaders seek to change or transform others, these leaders also undergo change with experience, and those who are led also view the leader differently depending on their own changing perspectives and experience:

Our cultural environment is often more important in defining truth for us than objective reality. Our personal perception of what leaders do is given meaning in the context of our cultural experiences as both leader and follower of another's leadership. (Fairholm, 1998, p.188)

On a practical note, Fairholm (1998) describes spiritual leadership in terms of “integrat[ing] behavior with values” (p. 57) and identifies six principles that underpin this new leadership theory. These principles identify the importance of “stakeholder development”; creating “a vision”; establishing a “culture supportive of core values”; nurturing individual “one-on-one relationships with followers”; “teaching” and having the “dual goal of producing high-performance and self-led followers” (pp. 62-65). Together these principles constitute the philosophical base for values-based leadership:

The leader’s role is to teach core values to followers who use them in their work. Followers, in turn, can internalize these values in their

independent actions. The result is to have independent followers capable of, and desiring to, apply commonly held values in all their work relationships. As followers internalize principles of leadership, they develop a loyalty towards the corporation that cannot come in any other way. (p. 65)

In a similar vein, Fry (2003) supports values-based leadership by presenting his intrinsic motivation model which makes a critical connection between core values, spirituality and effective organisational leadership, suggesting that “the purpose of spiritual leadership is to create vision and value congruence across the strategic, empowered team and individual levels and, ultimately to foster higher levels of organizational commitment and productivity” (p. 693). Thus Fry’s intrinsic motivation leadership model involves

creating a vision wherein organization members experience a sense of calling in that their life has meaning and makes a difference; (and) establishing a social/organizational culture based on altruistic love whereby leaders and followers have genuine care, concern, and appreciation for both self and others, thereby producing a sense of membership and being understood and appreciated. (p. 711)

In addition, for Fry (2003), this values-based leadership “reflects high ideals”, altruistic love, “forgiveness, kindness, integrity, empathy, honesty, patience” and faith, “endurance, perseverance” (p.695).

Elsewhere, this understanding of values-based leadership is also described in terms of “ethics, character and authentic transformational leadership” (Bass & Steidlmeier, 1999, p. 181). Moreover, the distinction is made between leaders who are “authentically transformational” and inauthentic “pseudo-transformational leaders” (p. 186):

Leaders are authentically transformational when they increase awareness of what is right, good, important, and beautiful, when they help to elevate followers' needs for achievement and self-

actualization, when they foster in followers higher moral maturity, and when they move followers to go beyond their self-interests for the good of their group, organization, or society. Pseudo-transformational leaders may also motivate and transform their followers, but, in doing so, they arouse support for special interests at the expense of others rather than what's good for the collectivity. They will foster psychodynamic identification, projection, fantasy, and rationalization as substitutes for achievement and actualization. They will encourage 'we-they' competitiveness and the pursuit of the leaders' own self-interests instead of the common good. They are more likely to foment envy, greed, hate, and conflict rather than altruism, harmony, and cooperation. (Bass & Steidlmeier, 1999, p. 171)

This distinction between authentic and inauthentic pseudo transformational leadership, however, has itself been open to criticism by those who worry that “authentic transformational leaders are set apart normatively from their followers” (Price, 2003, p. 79). When authenticity is linked to character, it is a logical next step to describe the authentic leader as a “sage or superior person [who] lives under the restraint of virtue and aims to transform society accordingly” (Bass & Steidlmeier, 1999, p.195). Moreover, this description supports the assertion that “authentic transformational leaders may have to be manipulative at times for what they view to be the common good” (p.186). To offset both these concerns regarding the moral agenda of authentic transformational leadership, Price (2003) recommends that values-based or authentic transformational leaders, as moral agents, situate their leadership within “a larger social and moral framework that binds the behavior of all actors” (p. 80). From this point of view, finding this large social and moral framework represents the challenge of those seeking to engage values-based or authentic transformational leadership.

Whetstone (2002) takes up this challenge by advancing an approach to leadership that is informed by the philosophy of personalism⁸. In personalism the yardstick of value and fundamental reality is the human person and Whetstone (2002) asserts that personalism places “the person and personal relationships at the centre of [leadership] theory and practice” (p. 137). Developing this thought, he examines the plethora of existing leadership models to “identify a leadership approach that best fits with the moral philosophy of personalism” (p. 385). In preparation for this task Whetstone identifies the key themes of personalism in terms of: “the centrality of persons”; “subjectivity and solidarity”; “human dignity”; “the person within community” and, “participation and solidarity” (p. 386). Whetstone (2002) then uses these themes of personalism to compare three models of leadership, including transformational and servant leadership.

Following this critique, Whetstone (2002) argues that “In theory, a transformational leader has the goal of raising the level of morality of her followers and the organization, creating a more moral climate, fostering independent action, and serving the common good” (p. 387). However, he also alerts us to possible weaknesses in this model of leadership in terms of ensuring human dignity, participation and solidarity. For Whetstone, “transformational leadership can lead to a reality, or at least the suspicion of manipulation, of the leader using his followers for his own purposes rather than respecting them as worthy ends” (p. 387). At the same time, Whetstone concludes that servant leadership “fits with personalism more satisfactorily even if imperfectly, than do the paradigms of transformational and postindustrial leadership” (p. 385). Here Whetstone (2002) advances servant leadership as a practical philosophy for leaders who choose to serve first, and then lead as a way of expanding service to individuals and institutions. This

⁸ Personalism is a philosophy or ontological construct that regards “persons and personal relationships as the starting point of social theory and practice” (Whetstone, 2002, p.385). As a perspective on leadership, personalism has a number of core values underpinning its worldview including; respect for every person, subjectivity and autonomy, human dignity, community solidarity and “a mutual commitment to participation” (p. 391). Personalism affirms the absolute value of the human person in all situations and has been described as a “radical reassertion of hope” (Chazarreta, Rourke, R., & Rourke, T. 2006, p.186) in the face of the dehumanising forces of much of modern culture.

model of servant leadership, with its clear and precise focus on the person – personal growth, autonomy and freedom - is clearly aligned to the personalist approach:

Genuine servant leadership is consistent with the five themes of the philosophy of personalism. The servant leader focuses on himself (*sic*) as a person and how he can beneficially serve others, whom he values for their dignity as persons, helping them to exercise freely their personal subjectivity and autonomy in a morally responsible manner. He seeks to build true community, one involving full participation and solidarity. (p. 390)

However, in making this judgment, Whetstone (2002) is mindful there are critics of servant leadership who suggest that the servant leadership model is unrealistic, as servant leaders are “susceptible to manipulation by less naive followers” (p. 391). Consequently, he recommends adopting aspects of transformational leadership to strengthen the servant leader. According to Whetstone (2002)

a theoretically superior approach is a combination in which a morally tough servant leader adopts certain behaviors of the altruistic transformational leader. To inspire followers with the strength and sensitivity of a transforming vision, the servant leader would use proven transforming techniques such as developing a vision, enlisting others, planning small wins, linking rewards to performance, and celebrating accomplishments. (p. 391)

Thus Whetstone (2002) concludes by advancing a synthesis of “morally tough servant leadership” and “altruistic transformational leadership” (p. 391). Servant leadership and transformational leadership on their own are both deemed “susceptible to manipulation” (p. 391) and vulnerable to human failings.

Also recognising the challenge of situating leadership within a social and moral framework, Sachs (2003a) recommends activist professionalism as the way forward in educational contexts. Here Sachs (1999) argues that teacher professional “identity cannot be seen to be a fixed ‘thing’” in a time of rapid change. Consequently

a revised professional identity requires a new form of professionalism and engagement ...[This] involves two main elements; the effort to shed the shackles of the past, thereby permitting a transformative attitude towards the future; and second, the aim of overcoming the illegitimate domination of some individuals or groups over others.
(p. 1)

To achieve authentic transformational outcomes, Sachs (2003a) advances the twin concepts of “active trust” and “generative politics” (pp. 140-146). In short, active trust calls for “new kinds of social and professional relationships where different parts of the broader educational enterprise work together in strategic ways” (p. 140). Generative politics “involves creating situations in which active trust can be built and sustained” (p. 144). These situations offer “spaces for new kinds of conversations to emerge” (2003b, p. 91) as these dialogical spaces are “inclusive rather than exclusive,” and there is evidence of: “collective and collaborative action”, “effective communication”, “recognition of the expertise of all parties”, an “environment of trust and mutual respect”, “ethical practice”, “being responsive and responsible, “acting with passion” as well as “experiencing pleasure and fun” (Sachs, 2003a, pp. 147-149). Underpinning this transformational approach is the moral purpose around student learning, and a values platform of “learning”, “participation”, collaboration”, “cooperation” and “activism” (pp. 31-35).

Thus the development of leadership theory from the classical industrial paradigms that emphasise hierarchical power, as well as traits and behaviours, to a values-based approach to leadership that focuses on the human factor, emphasises contextual transformation within a social and moral framework. This theoretical development is illustrated in Figure 3.

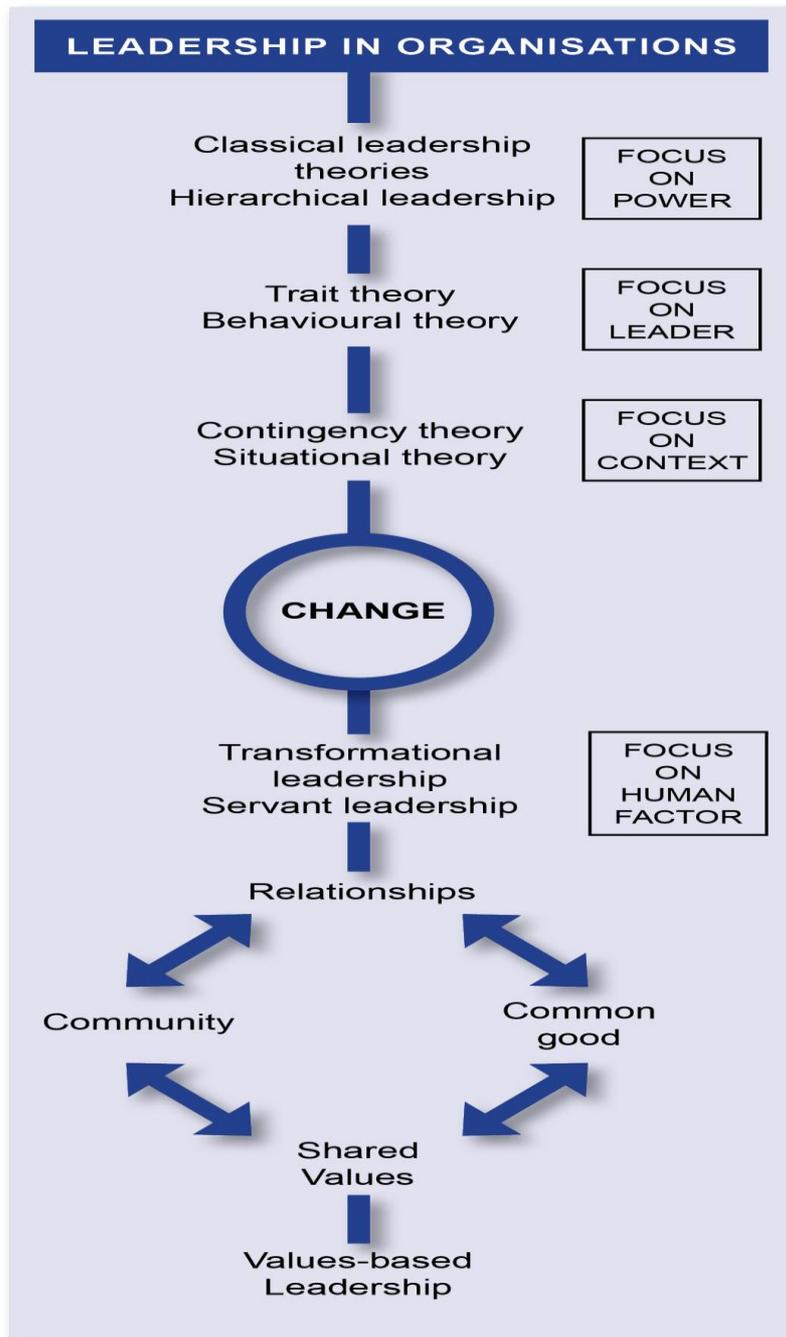


Figure 3 Development of a values-based focus in leadership theory

3.4 Towards a Theory of Faith Leadership

This review of the literature around the place of faith in the organisation (Section 3.2) and in leadership theory (Section 3.3), highlights the importance of values in the search for a theory of faith leadership. Figure 4 shows this parallel development and confluence between organisational leadership theory and the emerging literature on faith in organisations.

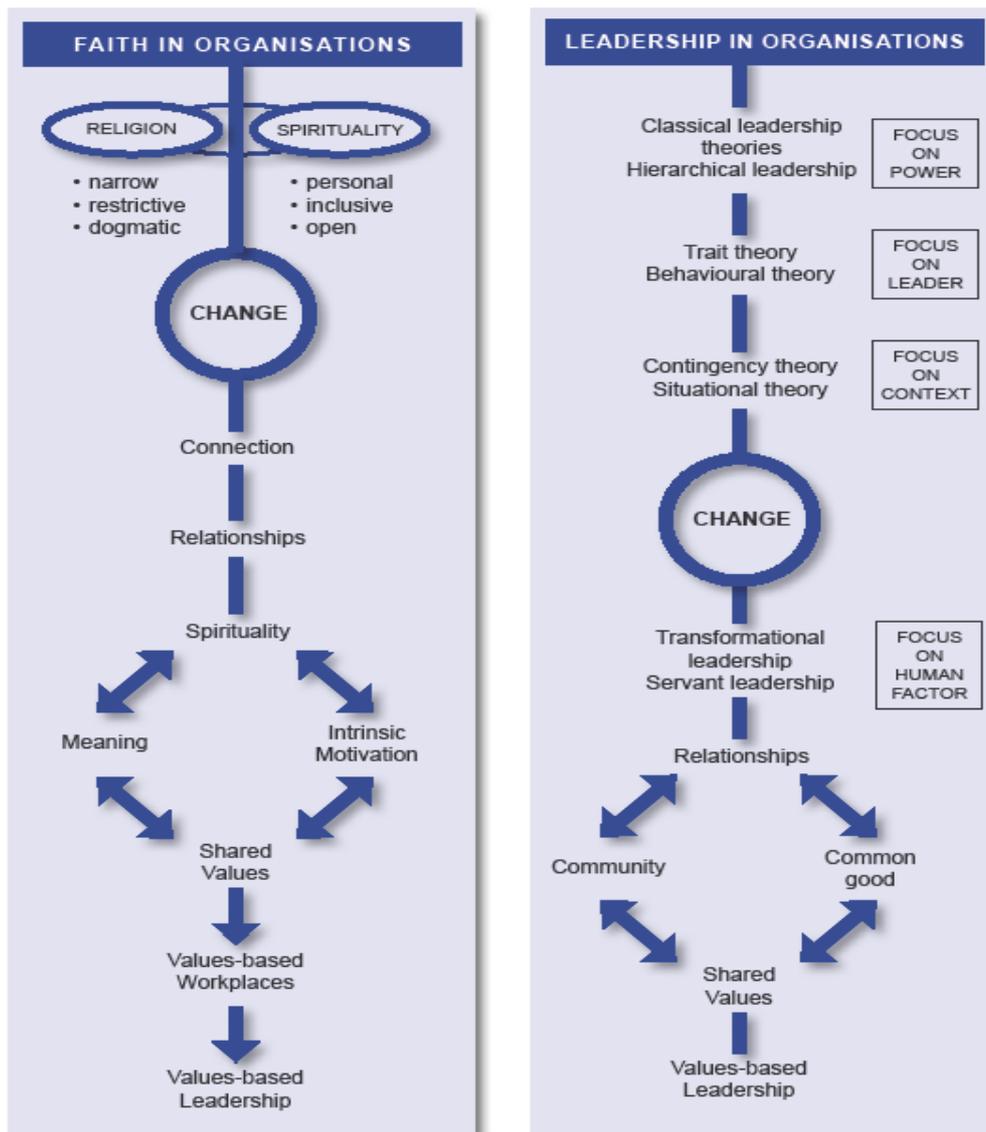


Figure 4 The parallel development and confluence between leadership theory and the understanding of faith in organisations

This parallel development and confluence between leadership theory and the understanding of faith in organisations is reflected in the work of two scholars Kriger and Seng (2005), who focus on the issue of faith leadership in organisations by offering a model of leadership with inner meaning. Like others writing in the area of spiritual leadership (e.g. Fairholm, 1998; Fry, 2003, Whetstone, 2002) these authors offer a values-based understanding of leadership. However, unlike Fairholm, Fry and Whetstone, Kriger and Seng (2005) clearly situate spiritual leadership within a religious social and moral framework.

3.4.1 Leadership with Inner Meaning

It is clear from the examination of the spiritual leadership theories of Fairholm (1997, 1998), Fry (2003) and Whetstone (2002), that the personal nature of both spirituality and ethical behaviour and the values that underpin them, make the development of a theory of spiritual leadership a complex, conceptual process. This body of work raises significant conceptual parameters for any theoretical development of faith leadership by highlighting the critical relationship between leader behaviour, employee motivation and connectedness for the organisation. However, the source and nature of the values at the heart of spiritual leadership remain vague and, subsequently, Fry (2003) recommends further research in this area.

Responding to this call, Kriger and Seng (2005) advance an understanding of leadership that firmly situates the source of these personal values and attitudes within the philosophical teachings of the five major religious traditions (Judaism, Christianity, Islam, Hinduism and Buddhism). They assert that these traditions all share a common ethic; “love for the other as oneself” (p. 804), as well as all teaching values such as “forgiveness, kindness, integrity, compassion, empathy, honesty, patience, courage, inner strength, trust, humility, loving kindness, peacefulness, thankfulness, service to others, guidance, joy, equanimity and stillness or inner peace” (p. 792). For Kriger and Seng, these religious traditions constitute “the most integrated levels of inner meaning and realization which are possible, not just for leaders but also for all people, regardless of their role or status” (p. 800). In other

words spiritual leadership inspired by one of the five major religious traditions enables leaders to address the enacting of leadership with deep inner meaning for both themselves and others.

Thus Kriger and Seng (2005) argue that the teachings of major religious traditions encourage us to broadly define leadership in terms of “doing”, “having” and “being” (p. 788). Leadership as “having” refers to “having the right competencies, resources or personality traits appropriate to the task.” Leadership as doing involves “doing (behaving or expressing) activities at an appropriate time for the situation” (p. 788). Although leadership as “being” is harder to explain, the major religious traditions remind us that:

Leadership is not primarily a question of having the right traits, competencies and behaviors for the situation, but a question of acting out of, and being in touch with, the source of meaning that the leadership is drawing its inspiration from, and directing individuals in the community towards. (p. 788)

For Kriger and Seng (2005) the major religious traditions provide an appropriate “source of meaning” for leadership. They argue:

The fact that approximately 82% of the people in the world espouse and hold spiritual or religious worldviews, clearly does not allow one to conclude that this worldview is the veridical one. However, one can argue from this evidence that it is highly likely that those who exercise leadership roles in organizations, and who believe in spiritual or religious belief systems, will have their leadership behavior shaped by the underlying values and attitudes of those worldviews. (p. 801)

In short, Fairholm (1998), Whetstone (2002), and Fry (2003) establish the socio-psychological link between leader behaviour, employee motivation and workplace commitment and productivity. The correlation between these emergent models of spiritual leadership is shown in Figure 5. Here it can be seen that all models link leadership behaviour to internal motivators that stem

from values. Developing this concept, Kriger & Seng (2005) look to the five major religious traditions as appropriate sources for meaning in leadership.

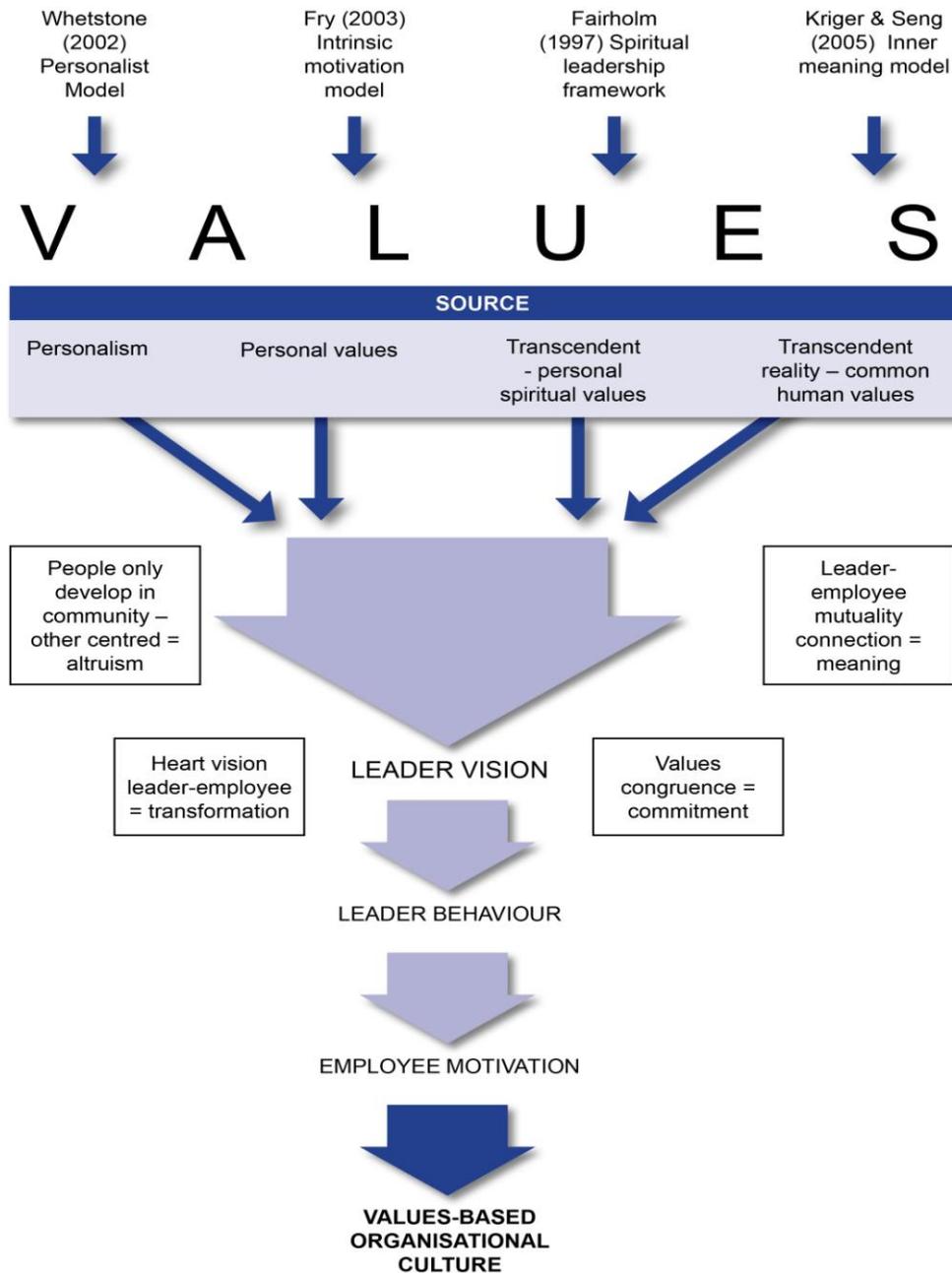


Figure 5 Conceptual connection between spiritual leadership models and values-based leadership.

3.5 Christian Values and Leadership

Taking the advice of Kriger and Seng (2005), and with the aim of seeking a clearer understanding of faith leadership, this review now turns to the values underpinning leadership in one specific religious tradition, Christianity.

For Borg (2003), the foundational tenet at the heart of Christianity is God: “Without a robust affirmation of the reality of God, Christianity makes no sense. And just as important, how we “see” God – how we think of God, God’s relationship to the world, and God’s character – matters greatly” (p. 61). Here the “unifying transcendent thread” (Alford & Naughton, 2001, p. 208) and source of meaning, purpose, worldview and values is God, who is defined in relationship with human beings, as both creator of the world and final destiny for all believers. This understanding of God and humanity in relationship is foundational to a Christian spirituality that “encompasses an understanding of God, self, other people and the world. It includes the way actions and relationships develop because of these understandings, and involves a search for authenticity between this understanding, and the way life is lived” (Tuohy, 2005, p. 21).

Thus Christianity stresses the reciprocity between the human search for meaning and human action at both a personal and communal level. For the human person created in the image of God, the Christian life is about a personal relationship with God, revealed in Jesus Christ. It is a response in faith to the call to Christian discipleship articulated in the Gospels. For the Christian community, the God who is love enables Christians to love others and to share in the life of Christ. This life is one of justice and compassion and it is “outward looking and other-regarding ... motivated and inspired by community life” (Alford & Naughton, 2001, p. 232). Hence, for Christians the human person “is one who is the autonomous center of responsible activity, yet is relational to his [*sic*] very core, oriented to the most profound solidarity with others” (Chazarreta et al. 2006, p. 6). This understanding of a personal and communal spirituality in Christianity is articulated in a theology of the human person, a theology of work, and in the core values that underpin both. These areas are significant for any development toward a theory of faith

leadership in Christian organisations.

3.5.1 A Christian Understanding of the Human Person

A Christian understanding of the human person rests on a number of core principles. Foundational to these principles is the premise that every human person is created in the image and likeness of God and has, as a consequence, God-given dignity, freedom and purpose. This “ontological status as God-imager” (Whetstone, 2002, p. 386) has foundations in the Christian scriptures (Genesis 1:26) and theological discourse:

The dignity of the human person is manifested in all its radiance when the person’s origin and destiny are considered: created by God in his (*sic*) image and likeness as well as redeemed by the most precious blood of Christ, the person is called to be “child in the Son’ and living temple of the Spirit, destined for eternal life of blessed communion with God. (Pope John Paul II, 1988, 37)

Here, the teleological nature of human beings is stressed, with their origin (in God) and destiny (with God) defining human life as a continuous journey toward wholeness, “reconnection” (Alford & Naughton, 2001, p. 215) and co-creation with God. Hence the link between the God-given nature of the human person and human activity is clearly made. As Alford and Naughton assert, “the nature of God we carry in our intellect, heart and will can be developed through our activity. God calls us to sharpen His (*sic*) image in us by freely cooperating with His (*sic*) creative activity” (p. 216). Human activity, therefore, is imbued with a divine nature and purpose which is reinforced in the incarnation; Jesus Christ who proclaimed and gave witness to the human and divine natures combined (Chazaretta et al. 2006).

This Christian understanding of the human person made in the image and likeness of God is central to a Christian anthropology and impacts strongly on Christian social teaching. Alford and Naughton (2001) describe the importance of viewing human beings as “spiritually hardwired” (p. 210) in the way in which

we seek to integrate our working with the deepest dimensions of our self-understanding; that is, we seek to integrate our working with our conviction that we are “on our way”, and that we are “not yet”... we need ever closer integration between what we believe and what we do, otherwise , we push a wedge ever deeper between work and life; we betray our search for integrity. (pp. 210-211)

As well as its impact on the human capacity to live an integrated life, the understanding of human beings created in God’s own image also influences the Christian understanding of how human beings should be treated. “The dignity of the human person cannot be reduced to a calculus of utility and disutility, nor can society be reduced to the mere sum total of individuals” (Clark in Cortright & Naughton, 2002, p. 93). From this perspective a Christian theology of the human person stresses that every social action, decision or institution should be judged on the basis of how it protects, exploits or undermines the dignity of every human person. This belief that human persons cannot be reduced to the status of objects is reinforced in Catholic social teaching, with Pope John Paul II warning that in organisational life, human labour should not be regarded merely as a means to an end or another factor in a production line. In all things, “ the human being is always a value as an individual, and as such demands to be considered and treated as a person and never as an object to be used, or as a means, or as a thing” (1988, 37.5).

Hence, a Christian anthropology of the human person requires “love of neighbour and a striving to bring good to the lives of others” (Whetstone, 2002, p. 386), and this other-centredness underlines the critical importance of community in a Christian worldview. Kennedy (in Cortright & Naughton, 2002), using Catholic social teaching as an exemplar, suggests that communities are “integral to and inseparable from human fulfillment. Indeed, social collaboration (one of whose highest forms is friendship) is a basic human good” (p. 53). Moreover, Alford and Naughton (2001) argue that community, as well as being a basic good in its own right, also acts as a

catalyst for the development of values which emerge from social and communal interaction. “We cannot separate our identity from our relationships with others ...virtues are formed in community through a constant dynamic process” (p. 86).

These core principles of a Christian understanding of the human person provide, therefore, a conceptual platform for this examination of Christian faith in the organisation and point toward the possibility of commonly accepted values in the workplace. The human person, created in the image of God, and nurtured in communion with others, finds inner meaning, moral direction for life and personal values from this spiritual interaction and interrelationship. The core Christian belief in the dignity of the human person is also the basis of a Christian theology of work, the subject of the next section of this review of the literature on Christian faith and organisational life.

3.5.2 A Christian Understanding of Work

Clark (in Cortright & Naughton, 2002) contrasts the Christian approach to organisational theory and economic processes with “neoclassical economic theory” (p. 81). For Clark, the difference lies in “a radically different conception of human nature and an equally different view of the nature of society” (p. 93) that emerge from the core Christian principles of God-given human dignity, the spiritual nature of the human person, the importance of community and love of neighbour. For Christians therefore, “a *spirituality of work* contributes to integrity of life. Christian spirituality of work is the divinely inspired, human capacity to pattern the work we do upon the truths to which we hold” (Alford & Naughton, 2001, p. 209, italics in original).

More specifically, a Christian understanding of work is situated in the understanding of work as more than just an exchange of labour for remuneration. In this theological paradigm, work has a subjective spiritual aspect. Alford and Naughton (2001) assert that “when people work they leave an unrepeatably imprint on the world, through their products and services, and through virtue of who they become – that is, a unique, unrepeatably image of the creative activity of God in them” (p. 128). Moreover, for

Christians, work is a spiritual activity undertaken in community and characterised by equity, justice, subsidiarity, the primacy of labour over capital, co-responsibility, relationship and solidarity (Alford & Naughton, 2001; Clark in Cortright & Naughton, 2002; Calvez & Naughton in Cortright & Naughton, 2002). Each of these facets of a Christian theology of work is person-centred, as Alford and Naughton (2001) maintain: “Work must be an activity in which the person is the subject, that is, the active agent who both accomplishes an external task through working on objects, and accomplishes her own internal development by deploying and developing her own human powers” (2001, p.102).

In addition, Clark (in Cortright & Naughton, 2002) describes these characteristics of a Christian understanding of work as “pillars upon which all social formations and analysis need to be built” (p. 93). In Catholic social teaching, these elements form the basis of the theological premise of the common good (Alford & Naughton, 2001; Cortright & Naughton, 2002) which is “the basic reference point for any human society, and for business as well” (Mele in Cortright & Naughton, 2002, p. 194). Mele describes the elements of the common good perspective as:

1. Respect for people and their inalienable, fundamental rights so that all persons can realize their vocation;
 2. Social well-being and group development;
 3. Stability and security within a just order: that is, social peace.
- (p. 195)

Alford and Naughton, (in Cortright & Naughton, 2002), suggest that the common good model explains the core difference between a Christian understanding of work and general economic principles, and it hinges on “a distinction between two kinds of goods, “foundational” or instrumental goods (e.g. profits) and “excellent” or inherent goods (e.g. human development and community” (p. 35). Pope John Paul II (1988) reinforced this point stating that

indeed, a business firm is not merely an instrument at the service of the well being of its management; rather, it is itself a common good of both management and labor, at the service of the common good of society. (cited in Calvez & Naughton, 2002, p. 10)

This distinction in perspective between profit and person, and the focus on the common good in economic life, distinguishes a Christian theology of work. For Kennedy (in Cortright & Naughton, 2002), this Christian approach is ultimately about “being a certain sort of person and in being capable of acting in certain ways” (p. 53). Personal beliefs and convictions underpin intrinsic motivation that in turn determines action in the workplace. For Christians “this desire to bring our whole selves to work, is the source of what we call a spirituality of work. In its initial expression, a spirituality of work is an attitude of the mind and a condition of the soul” (Alford & Naughton, 2001, p. 211).

The literature asserts that in the everyday reality of organizational life, this ideal synthesis between faith and work is not easy to achieve. In responding to the question How do we make decisions that promote the common good and the growth of virtue in our corporations? Alford and Naughton (2001) present three possible models for Christian-based organisational management. The first is termed the “natural law approach” (p. 22). This model “excludes explicitly religious language” (p. 22), relying instead on the assumption that Christian principles are universal in their application, and that a Christian employer or employee can operate in a secular environment without overt Christian structures or values in place. The natural law approach has the advantage of not being threatening to those of other faiths or no faith, although Alford and Naughton (2001) do suggest that the model presents a risk that Christians will lose their faith or at least come to believe that their faith is not valid in their everyday work life.

The second model presented by Alford and Naughton is labelled “the faith engagement approach” (p. 26). In this approach, the explicit Christian base of the organisation is celebrated in language, mission statements and company policies and practices. “Where it is practiced, it represents a form of

engagement that can bring the riches of the Christian faith to bear directly on daily working practice, creating the maximum possibility of developing a virtuous workplace” (p. 28). A third model, “a prophetic model of engagement” (p. 29), calls for more radical action within and beyond the organisation. This approach suggests that employers, employees and the organisation itself must work for justice and the overthrow of structures which deny human freedom: “the prophetic voice of the Church today still aims to call people to just dealing, to living in love, and ultimately, to a right relationship with God” (p. 30). This model invites tension and is difficult to apply both on a personal and an organisational level. However, Alford and Naughton (2001) assert that “there are important circumstances where the prophetic stance is necessary” (p. 30).

Thus, in an increasingly secular society, the search for a balanced and sustainable approach to Christian faith in the organisation is presented in the literature as critical. The three models discussed by Alford and Naughton (2001) outline three possible approaches to reaching such a balance. The conceptual dichotomy between formal, institutional religious faith and personal spirituality discussed in Section 3.2.3, however, is a stumbling block in this search. “One of the most difficult challenges that those who found religiously guided organizations face is to express their faith in the workplace in a way that is both forthright and specific without being rigid or exclusive” (p. 27). This review of the literature will now turn to an examination of Catholic school leadership, to ascertain the challenge of faith leadership in an educational context.

3.6 Leading the Catholic School

There is a growing body of literature that directly focuses on leadership in Catholic schools. This body of work identifies the challenge of faith leadership in Catholic schools in terms of tension around the purpose of Catholic education, the question of lay leadership in the Church and school, the complexity of faith leadership in Catholic schools, as well as the dearth of adequate support for the faith leadership role.

3.6.1 *Tensions in Understanding of the Purpose of Catholic Schools*

The Second Vatican Council (1962-1965) has been identified as a pivotal event in the history of the Catholic Church, heralding unprecedented change in the way the Church understands its mission and its relationship with the world (Ludwig, 1996), and conferring lasting repercussions on both the Catholic Church and the Catholic school. As a consequence, the literature (e.g. Grace, 2002; McLaughlin, 2000; Tinsey, 1998) notes the growing tension between conservative and progressive elements within the Catholic Church and a critical lack of agreement on the purpose of the Catholic school.

Without a shared understanding of the purpose of the Catholic school, there emerges an obvious clash of leadership models, as conservative and progressive forces within the Catholic Church attempt to take Catholic schools in different directions. For example, conservative forces advocate a “maintenance model” (McLaughlin, 2000, p. 77), where the Catholic schools’ purpose is concerned with maintaining traditions and ensuring the preservation of the doctrines and practices of the Catholic Church. At the same time, progressive forces support a “missio” (Mellor, 2005, p. 79) model, where the Catholic school looks outward to dialogue with culture and the building of inclusive communities. Grace (2002) describes this clash of leadership models within contemporary Catholic education:

Much less progress has been made in establishing practices of dialogue and collegiality in Catholic institutions than had been hoped for. This has been partly accounted for by the sheer durability of a long historical tradition of hierarchical leadership and partly by a revisionist reaction against some of the more liberal principles commended by the [Second Vatican] Council. In short, a tradition of strong hierarchical leadership does not give way easily to new forms of shared, consultative and collegial leadership. (p. 147)

Hence, the literature indicates that leadership of Catholic schools is affected by significant cultural change and the ecclesial ramifications of the Second Vatican Council, resulting in growing tension between conservative and

progressive interpretations of the nature and purpose of the Catholic school.

Explaining this development, Arbuckle (2000) situates the tension regarding the purpose of the Catholic school as symptomatic of the process of paradigmatic cultural change, which is characterised by, at best “unease” (2000, p. 131) and at worst, “anger, denial, scapegoating...nostalgia for the past, bullying, breakdown of trust (and) weariness or cynicism” (pp. 131-132). In addition Arbuckle (2004) observes that human beings are apt to say that they are “open to change, but in practice there are powerful inner forces that move (them) to resist it” (p. 19). In presenting a model of “culture as a process”, Arbuckle (2000, p. 132) suggests that individuals and organisations have a “choice in the chaos of the liminal stage” to either “retreat nostalgically to past securities; to stand still, paralyzed by the chaos; or to move with risk and hope into an uncertain future” (p. 133). Asserting that all change is dynamic and cyclical, he recommends that individuals or organisations struggling with the ramifications of change should get in touch with their “personal or cultural founding myths” (p. 132), as these can connect vision and current experience. Arbuckle’s model describes a “re-entry or aggregation stage” where individuals or organisations move out of chaos toward “personal or organizational cultural integration” (p. 133).

Within this context of cultural and philosophical confusion and the need for ‘cultural integration’, Catholic school principals find themselves balancing the demands of school leadership within the bounds of a Church and school “in a phase of profound ambiguity” (Arbuckle, 2000, p.131) characterised by “human cultural pain” (p. 133). Research (Flynn, 1993; Tinsey, 1998) has found many of the key indicators of dysfunction outlined in Arbuckle’s model – including a loss of confidence in, and open criticism of, the Catholicity of Catholic schools by Church leaders, issues of power and control between clerical and educational authorities and a breakdown of trust. Moreover, there appears to be a weakening of the influence of the parish priest upon the school community and a general confusion regarding the precise relationship between the principal and the clergy “due to the shift of schools away from their parish base” (Slattery, 1998, p. 169). Yet again, there are, due to a clash

of leadership styles, principals reporting that many priests are “authoritarian” and who perceive “the diversity of personalities of priests” as inhibitors in “developing a positive working relationship” (Belmonte et al. 2006, p.10).

3.6.2 Lay Leadership in the Catholic Church and School

As discussed in Section 2.2.6, the period after the Second Vatican Council was marked by an exodus of religious orders from Catholic education and the subsequent employment of lay teachers and school administrators. This historical trend has served to challenge the ecclesial understanding of the responsibilities, function and place of the laity within Catholic schools and also within the wider Catholic Church. There has been a foundational shift from the exclusive and hierarchical approach of the pre-Vatican Church, where Pius X was able to note 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, 8, cited in Morwood, 1992, p. 41). The Decree on the Apostolate of the Laity (1965) situated the lay Catholic actively within the mission of the Church:

Bishops, pastors of parishes and other priests of both branches of the clergy should keep in mind that the right and duty to exercise this apostolate is common to all the faithful, both clergy and laity, and that the laity also have their own roles in building up the Church. For this reason they should work fraternally with the laity in and for the Church and take special care of the lay persons in these apostolic works.

(25)

However, the precise role of the laity in respect to the mission of the Church remains a point of contention (McLaughlin, 2000). On the one hand, the document *Lay Catholics in Schools* states that it is the “laity who will substantially determine whether or not a school realizes its aims and accomplishes its objectives” (Congregation for Catholic Education, 1982, 1). This focus on the role of the laity builds on strong indicators of ministerial equality evident in some Vatican documents. “The common priesthood of the faithful and the ministerial or hierarchical priesthood are nonetheless

interrelated: each of them in its own special way is a participation in the one priesthood of Christ” (Pope Paul VI, 1964). On the other hand, Vatican documents can be interpreted as inferring that, “the ministerial priesthood is essentially different from the priesthood of all believers, and that it is not merely a difference in degree” (Collins, 1997, p.120).

In an attempt to clarify the debate over the nature of lay ministry within the Catholic school, McLaughlin (2000) argues that the Catholic school is, in fact, an ecclesial entity in its own right as defined in the latest Vatican document on Catholic education, *The Catholic School on the Threshold of the Third Millennium*:

It must be strongly emphasised that this ecclesial dimension is not a mere adjunct, but is a proper and specific attribute, a distinctive characteristic, which penetrates and informs every moment of its educational activity, a fundamental part of its very identity and the focus of its mission. (Congregation for Catholic Education, 1998, 11)

For McLaughlin (2000), this ecclesial status indicates that those who work within the Catholic school should have a recognised ministry role. The reality, however, is that “there currently appears to be a reluctance by the entire Curia bureaucracy to predicate the word ‘ministry’ with lay persons” (p. 104). Furthermore, there is evidence that some priests have not changed their expectations of principals from the era when principals were predominately a member of a religious congregation living and working in the parish. This ‘quasi monastic’ legacy described by Hansen (2000), means that parish priests may hold unrealistic expectations of lay principals who are often married with a family, rather than being religious sisters or brothers and priests. This situation has led many researchers to question whether new models of faith leadership need to be developed to facilitate lay involvement in Church organisations, especially schools (Grace, 2002; O’Hara, 2000).

There are clear indications in the literature of a lack of understanding of the nature of lay leadership, a situation which becomes more urgent as the crisis

in clergy numbers deepens, and lay leaders are called upon to take up greater responsibility for parish ministry and organisation. The question of lay leadership, the nature of ministry in Catholic education, and the “transmission of a *lay charism* to a new generation of educators” (Grace, 2002, p. 238, italics in original) are at the heart of the relationship between the Catholic Church and the Catholic school and of this research project.

3.6.3 The Complexity of Faith Leadership in Catholic Schools

In the absence of a commonly accepted understanding of Catholic school leadership as a ministry within the Catholic Church, this review looks to the articulated expectations of lay Catholic educators that emerge from the Church’s educational documents. Here faith leadership is linked to: the ability to integrate religious truth and values with life (Congregation for Catholic Education, 1977, 27); the capacity to promote spiritual and religious formation of students (Congregation for Catholic Education, 1982, 60); the modeling of Christian values (Congregation for Catholic Education, 1988, 96); possessing the skills to build Christian community (Congregation for Catholic Education, 1982, 60); the ability to collaborate with parents, colleagues and the community outside of the school (Congregation for Catholic Education, 1977, 48); the desire for personal formation (Congregation for Catholic Education, 1982, 62), and the understanding of the importance of Catholic education to the Church and greater society (Congregation for Catholic Education, 1977, 15).

In addition, role descriptions for leadership in Catholic schools are frequently based on the conceptual premise that principalship is more than a set of performance descriptors - it is a vocation or personal commitment. In short, this is a “commitment to Catholic education, commitment to teaching and learning and commitment to the mission of the Church” (Fraser & Brock, 2006, p. 1). By accepting a position as a Catholic school principal, teachers are, by the expectation of Catholic Education Office statements and Church documents, agreeing to be “living models of faith in the midst of the world and its activities” (Slattery, 1998, p. 28).

However, in response to this expectation of principalship in Catholic schools, by the late 1990s, the literature (Ryan, 1997; Wallace, 1995) was warning that without specific focus on the 'how' of faith leadership and its development in principals, Catholic schools would run the risk of becoming good private schools with a reputation for academic excellence and a traditional religious memory. Thus, building on Ciriello's (1988) research in the United States, a few Australian researchers including Belmonte et al. (2006) Davison (2006), McEvoy (2006) and Spry (2004) paid attention to the practice of faith leadership in Australian Catholic schools. The findings of these studies are of interest as they suggest a broad understanding of the principal's faith leadership role. For example, Davison (2006) found that principals saw their faith leadership role

as one of leading an educational community, not just in terms of Religious Education and Catechesis, but also in a whole range of pastoral and faith development activities directed towards staff, students and families. In a real sense they saw themselves as representatives of the Church in the way that they participated in the celebration of the sacraments, proclaiming the Word of God at assemblies and other gatherings, led prayer at staff and student gatherings, administered pastoral and welfare policy, conducted enrolments according to school and diocesan policy, attended to the faith development of their colleagues and exercised pastoral hospitality especially to those who were in some way in deep need.
(p. 93)

Thus the principals in this and other studies (e.g. Spry, 2004) were able to identify and describe a series of practical activities associated with faith leadership. However, in naming faith leadership in this way, they also made the point that faith leadership is a complex undertaking which continues to be challenging due to tensions associated with working within the contemporary Catholic Church. One example of this tension is the question: "How is it possible for a principal to remain faithful to the Gospel and to their ministerial role as principal, while at the same time holding a position, in good

conscience, which may be at odds with the Church's public teaching?" (2004, p. 169). This tension between primacy of conscience and the public role of the principal, speaks to the complexity of the faith leadership role in the contemporary context. Obviously faith leadership is more than a set of performance descriptors.

3.6.4 A Dearth of Adequate Support

In recent times, researchers have identified a significant lack of support for the principal as a major challenge to the successful enactment of faith leadership in the Catholic school. As Davison (2006) explains:

Preparing for the principalship of Catholic schools today is challenging. For the principals in this study, there was a significant dearth of adequate support for them especially in the religious matters of their responsibilities. Indeed, this lack of formation continued after their appointment, with many in this study identifying this failure to assist their on-going religious growth as a major challenge for them, and a source of some anxiety. (p. 169)

This finding is understandable in the light of other research which identifies the loss of religious personnel from Catholic schools and the consequent erosion of "spiritual capital" (Grace, 2002, p. 236) and religious educational vision, as increasing the pressure to develop models of lay leadership. Moreover, beyond the issue of faith leadership, the imperative for the professional support of principals is also reflected in the literature, with Duignan (2006) arguing for an approach to principal formation that takes into consideration both the impact of socio-cultural change and the fact that "authentic educational leaders have the awesome responsibility of influencing the young people in their care to become significant and worthwhile human beings (p. 147). Thus, the literature recommends programs of formation and professional support, as such programs

help [principals] to open their eyes to the possibilities in themselves and in others, and the development of their capability to frame new

paradigms of leadership, based on new orientations to relationships and presence, in order to respond to ...challenges and tensions. (Duignan, 2006; p. 147)

In a similar vein, Ranson (2006), exploring the issue of forming a new generation of leaders in Catholic schools in Australia, calls for the three strategies of “identification, education and formation” (p. 421). Here he argues that:

Administrative skills in the educational enterprise will not be sufficient to invite persons to imagine themselves with wider possibilities in leadership. If school leadership is going to assume wider religious leadership then persons need to be identified who, as well as possessing administrative capacity, are also grounded in faith, possessing spiritual maturity, a vocational sensibility and the awareness of ecclesial responsibility. Such persons obviously don't come ready packaged! Such persons identified as having this potential require sustained formation and requisite education. Both focused theological and spiritual formation are required. (p. 421)

Interestingly, this dearth of formal programs of support and professional development, has led researchers to identify a new interest in the charism of religious orders as spiritual guides for effective lay faith leadership (Davison, 2006; Watson, 2007).⁹ The role of charism in Catholic schools and its significance for school leadership, are discussed by O'Donnell (2001):

The school founded by a religious institute is influenced by yet another religious cultural dimension. A subculture within the international Roman Catholic macroculture, each order contributes its own distinctive cultural features to the school including beliefs, missions, norms, philosophy, purpose, stories, symbols, traditions and

⁹ Within the literature, charism is variously described as a gift (Brien & Hack, 2005), a way of living (Green, 2000) and a way of building community (Marachel, 2000).

values, developed from its historical religious vision of Christian Catholic life. (p. 173)

O'Donnell (2001) describes the practical significance of charisms as: determinants of purpose, sources of values, shapers of roles and responsibilities, cultural frameworks providing customs, events, exemplars, myths, rituals and stories (pp. 186-189). Furthermore, she asserts that “such a cultural framework implicitly and explicitly provides core points of reference for the school’s activity, organisation and decision making: touchstones for self critique and external evaluation” (p. 190) and indicators of integrity. Brien and Hack (2005) concur, noting that charisms provide a conceptual framework through which the Gospel can be lived, functioning as a lens into a way of Christian discipleship. For the Catholic school principal seeking a model for spiritual or cultural leadership,

the charisms of the Church thus provide both a graced and an effective means for doing so. Charisms are gifts of the Spirit for the Church and for the mission of the Church. They represent the charismatic dimension of the Church, given ... to bring vitality and vibrancy to its institutional life. (Green, 2000, p.12)

The efficacy of charism as a framework and guide for Catholic school leadership has been clearly accepted in the literature (Brien & Hack, 2005; Davison, 2006; Green, 2000; McEvoy, 2006; Watson, 2007). In particular, this literature argues that charism is especially helpful in cases where schools have maintained strong traditions from their founding religious orders. However, there are also calls for caution as,

the place where the laity live out their vocation is the world... A charism having a long consecrated tradition cannot be straightforwardly applied to the life of the laity ... This requires a refoundation... the laity must rethink it for themselves, in order to identify the “secular form” that they alone can find and savour. (Sicari, 2002, p. 307)

This final section of the literature review has specifically examined the challenge of faith leadership as a dimension of Catholic school leadership in the contemporary context. Starting with the reality of the Catholic school, existing as part of the much broader Australian Catholic Church, the review has examined the challenges and consequences of this ecclesial context. The educational documents of the Catholic Church provide a starting point for the description of faith leadership, yet a lack of adequate formation of principals, a lack of a common understanding of the language of Church ministry, and tensions over the exact nature of Catholic school leadership as ministry have presented a less than clear picture of faith leadership. The key conceptual disjuncture however, lies in a divergent understanding of the nature, purpose and contextual reality of Catholic education from the perspective of the Catholic Church and the schools themselves. This lack of core agreement, and the evidence of increasing tension and lack of effective communication between the Catholic Church and its educational arm, results in contradictory perspectives on the exact nature of faith leadership.

3.7 Conclusion and Research Questions

This review of the literature has established a solid basis of scholarship and empirical evidence upon which to proceed with the current study. In particular, this review determined that there is a growing interest in the place of faith in contemporary organisations, with a clear link made between personal spirituality, intrinsic motivation and values. This review then explored the values specific to a Christian worldview, which highlighted the principles of other-centredness, altruism, community and solidarity. This was followed by an exploration of Catholic school leadership with specific reference to the purpose of Catholic education, the nature of lay leadership, and a dearth of professional support and development in respect to faith leadership.

This review of the literature has facilitated the establishment of three research questions:

Research Question 1: How do principals understand the challenge of faith leadership in Catholic secondary schools in the Diocese of Lismore?

The first question addresses the challenges impacting the principals' faith leadership role in the Catholic school. Following the contextual analysis of Chapter 2 and the review of the literature, this study is interested in whether the challenges identified in these chapters are also causing difficulties for the principals in this study. Have these principals experienced tensions around the purpose of the Catholic school as well as their positions as lay leaders in the Catholic Church? Are they aware of the complexity of faith leadership in the Catholic school and, are they receiving adequate support in regard to principal formation? How have socio-cultural changes challenged or complicated their faith leadership role? Answers to these questions are of interest, as it is anticipated that these answers would suggest a way forward for faith leadership in the diocese.

Research Question 2: How do principals conceptualise faith leadership in Catholic secondary schools in the Diocese of Lismore?

The second question invites principals to conceptualise faith leadership. This question seeks to discover whether the principals identify with any of the conceptual elements that emerge from the literature review. How do they personally define faith leadership? What leadership model do they regard as most applicable to principalship in a Catholic school? What do they understand as the core purpose of a Catholic school? Do they ever experience tension between their personal convictions and the teachings or expectations of the Catholic Church? The way in which principals respond to these questions will indicate the extent to which they have ascribed meaning to their experience in the role. It is critical in respect to the changing parameters of faith leadership that the researcher is able to identify and detail what faith leadership is actualised from the perspective of the principals' lived experience.

Research Question 3: How do principals enact the faith leadership role in Catholic secondary schools in the Diocese of Lismore?

The third research question allows the study to probe more deeply into the 'how' of faith leadership: the actions, directions, attitudes and daily interaction that make up the picture of faith leadership in each principal's school. This question addresses a lacuna in Australian research into the exact nature of faith leadership action from the perspective of those undertaking the role. In particular, do the principals see faith leadership as having, doing or being? How significant are their personal values in their enacting of their faith leadership role? Do they experience any tension in operating from a faith perspective at a time when religion has become culturally and socially marginalised? The third research question also asks whether these principals are able to integrate the general and the specific, the theory and the practice of faith leadership.

With these research questions in mind, this study turned to the task of situating the research study within an appropriate theoretical framework and making methodological choices in respect to the design of the research study. These approaches are outlined in Chapters 4 and 5 respectively.

CHAPTER 4

THE THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK: SYMBOLIC INTERACTIONISM

4.1 Introduction

The purpose of this study is to gain a more informed and sophisticated understanding of the faith leadership role of Catholic secondary school principals in the Diocese of Lismore. As a consequence of the examination of the context of faith leadership (Chapter 2), and the review of the literature pertinent to faith in organisations, organisational leadership theory, the values underpinning leadership of Christian organisations and Catholic school leadership, three research questions were generated which will inform the various moments of data collection, analysis and interpretation during this study:

Research Question 1: How do principals understand the challenge of faith leadership in Catholic secondary schools in the Diocese of Lismore?

Research Question 2: How do principals conceptualise faith leadership in Catholic secondary schools in the Diocese of Lismore?

Research Question 3: How do principals enact the faith leadership role in Catholic secondary schools in the Diocese of Lismore?

In light of these specific research questions, and the commitment to understanding faith leadership from the perspectives of the principals themselves, this study will be situated within the theoretical framework of symbolic interactionism. Symbolic interactionism is premised on the understanding that “human beings find meaning in social interaction and

that, as a consequence, understanding of both society and human persons is derived from this dynamic, intersubjective, emergent” (Charon, 2004, p. 34) interplay between people. In particular, this chapter will examine the evolution of symbolic interactionism, its key elements as both a sociological perspective and a method within social research and, the advantages and possible limitations inherent in situating this particular study within this theoretical framework.

4.2 The Evolution of Symbolic Interactionism

The genesis of symbolic interactionism as a named sociological and theoretical framework developed from the work of the social psychologist Blumer in 1937. However, conceptually, the teachings of Mead (1863-1931), and the more diverse influences of Scottish moralism (Charon, 2004, p. 16), pragmatism, Darwinism and functional psychology (Reynolds, 1993), have all contributed to the development of symbolic interactionism as a perspective which has challenged the existing understanding of how human persons make sense of the world and interpret reality in their everyday lives.

Blumer (1969) identified three foundational premises in respect to symbolic interactionism. The first premise is that human beings act toward people, events and objects

on the basis of the meanings that these things have for them ... the second is that the meaning of such things is derived from, or arises out of, the social interaction that one has with one’s fellows ... the third premise is that these meanings are handled in, and modified through, an interpretive process used by the person in dealing with the things he [sic] encounters. (p. 2)

The further development of symbolic interactionism remains true to these foundational premises, while ongoing adjustments and conceptual challenges ensured that this theoretical framework continues to be relevant to the changing world of the late twentieth and early twenty-first century.

The result is a variety of positions within the symbolic interactionist fold. Reynolds (1993) has categorised these different approaches into four dominant “schools” of symbolic interactionist thought: the Chicago School, the Iowa School, the dramaturgical genre, and ethnomethodology. There are many contemporary sociological theories to which the label symbolic interactionism has been applied, but as Stryker points out, “there is a core of ideas which unites different versions whatever their variation on other accounts” (2002, p. 2). This core is their shared conviction that

both society and person are abstractions from ongoing social interaction, that “selves” and “society” have no reality apart from one another or from the interpersonal interactions from which they derive, and that both self and society are essential to an understanding of social interaction. (2002, p. 2)

Contemporary theorists (Charon, 2004; Stryker 2002) have explored and presented a more complex appraisal of the key principles of symbolic interactionism including: the nature and complexity of symbolic communication (Charon, 2004); the importance of perspective in focusing “what we see, what we notice and how we interpret” in any situation (p. 53); the nature of self and the relationship between self and society (Charon, 2004; Stryker 2002); parameters of social interaction; the function of the human mind (Charon, 2004) and role theory, role conflict and role strain (Stryker, 2002).

4.3 Symbolic Interaction as a Theoretical Perspective

In the next section of this chapter, symbolic interactionism will be closely examined in its function as a theoretical perspective. Specifically this section will address symbolic interactionism under the following headings: the complexity of human activity; the importance of symbols; and issues of role identity.

4.3.1 The Complexity of Human Activity

Of significance to this study, symbolic interactionism highlights the complexity of human activity by suggesting that “human beings engage in a continuous stream of action, overt and covert, influenced by ongoing decisions along the stream” (Charon, 2004, p. 137). To understand this “stream of action”, humans “will normally separate [the stream] into separate “acts” (Charon, p. 137). Moreover, they understand that these acts “have beginnings and endings”, and that human activity begins with an impulse and then human beings respond to this impulse by adjusting their behaviour to the environment. Here it is understood that the environment is made up of a series of “social objects” (Charon, 2004, pp. 45-47), including natural and manufactured objects, as well as other people and even the self. Symbols, ideas, perspectives and emotions are also deemed to be influential social objects in the environment.

Thus, the direction of the “stream of action” is determined by decisions the person makes along the way and these decisions are “influenced in turn by definition, social interaction, and interaction with self” (Charon, 2004, p.137). If human action starts with an “impulse”, it proceeds rapidly through the stages of “perception and manipulation” towards a final stage of “consummation” (Hewitt, 2003a, p. 51). In short, an impulse represents a vague “disposition to act” in a time of “disequilibrium” (Charon, 2004, p.122), and at this point, humans do not have a clear direction or goal in mind. However, during the perception stage, humans perceive or “define” (p.122) the social objects in the environment and goals become clearer. In the manipulation stage, humans influenced by their definition of the environment, will act in it, using social objects to achieve their goals. Finally, when the consummation stage is reached, “the goal is achieved and equilibrium is restored” (p. 123).

In this way, symbolic interactionism alerts us to the importance of personal agency, the ability of individuals to set their own goals and manipulate their environment accordingly. Recognising the prior existence of ‘society’ and ‘culture’, there is also a sense that “we do not have to reproduce the society

and culture we inherit and sometimes we do not” (Hewitt, 2003, p. 31). Indeed, “interactionists recognize that much of the world is not of the individual’s making, such as [institutional] systems of patriarchy, power and class, and can only be understood in the light of the circumstances in which these social realities can be expressed” (Sandstrom & Fine, 2003, p. 1044). Consequently, there is an interest in how people as agents “confront, utilize, manipulate, and remake structures” (p. 1044) and, in doing so, create society.

Developing this thought, symbolic interactionists argue that most human acts are not individual acts but rather “social acts requiring the coordinated efforts of several individuals” (Hewitt, 2003a, p. 30). In other words, in social action “we consider others. Our acts are guided by others and their acts. Others make a difference to what we do in situations” (Charon, 2004, p. 139). As a consequence, symbolic interactionists recognise that although individual capabilities will affect the outcomes of social action, the performance of such action “is sustained not just by individual skills, but also by their maintenance in a social setting” (Hewitt, 2003a, p. 30). In other words, the success or otherwise of social action depends on the participation and cooperation of the actor and the observers of this action.

From a symbolic interactionist perspective it is also understood that social action involves “continuously taking the role of the other” (Charon, 2004, p. 141) in the context of social interaction. Thus we come “to learn from the other and expect things from the other; the other, in turn, comes to know us, what we are doing, and what to expect from us” (p. 143). Understanding the other in this way allows us to take the role of others or take “the standpoint of others” (Stryker, 2002, p. 37) and adjust social acts accordingly. Moreover, “part of role taking is emotional, [as] we not only understand the other but also attempt to feel like the other”. Thus role taking involves “anticipating other’s responses on the basis of common participation in a communication process” (pp. 47-38). In other words, “Taking the role of the other means we develop expectations, sometimes accurate, sometimes off

the mark, sometimes simply wrong. However, if we are going to continue interaction, accurate role taking and understanding are necessary”(p. 143).

The ideal is mutual social or group action, or the “fitting together of individual lines of action, each person aligning his or her action to that of others through taking the role of the others” (Stryker, 2002, p. 90). This perception of human society held together through social agreement and cooperation, presupposes the development of a “generalized body of rules” (Charon, 2004, p. 218) created through interaction and vital for the continuance of that society. As a consequence, it is possible for societies and the roles within them to change, to be altered radically, or to disappear altogether if the commitment to the rules changes or interaction creates a new understanding or new social groupings.

4.3.2 *The Importance of Symbols*

As discussed above, symbolic interactionism assumes that human persons operate in an environment that is made up of social objects. Building on this conceptual premise, symbolic interactionists claim that these social objects represent a socially defined reality that is dynamic and constantly changing as human persons interact with their environment (Charon, 2004). In addition, they assert that “all that humans are can be traced to their symbolic nature. Our world is a symbolic one: we see, we think, we hear, we share, we act symbolically” (p. 60). Hence, “human beings respond not to a naïve world, but to the world as categorized or classified...a symbolic environment” (Stryker, 2002, p. 56).

In this understanding, a symbol is deemed to be “a social object used for communication to self, or for communication to others and to self. It is an object used to represent something else” (Charon, 2004, p. 49). Thus the human person exists, interacts, acts and interprets within a world of social objects. Without symbols, society as we know it would be unsustainable.

Symbols create and maintain the societies in which we exist.

They are used to socialize us; they make our culture possible; they

are the basis for ongoing communication and cooperation; and they make possible our ability to pass down knowledge from one generation to the next. (p. 62)

It is through interacting symbolically with others that human beings “give the world meaning and develop the reality toward which we act” (Charon, 2004, p. 61). Hence the “human environment is a symbolic environment, constructed on the basis of on-going activity” (Stryker, 2002, p. 90). Symbols are important in social interaction because they are socially created, socially understood and socially exclusive.

People make them and people agree on what they stand for ... the person who uses symbols does so for the purpose of giving a meaning that he or she believes will make sense to the other”. In short: “symbols focus attention upon salient elements in an interactive situation and permit preliminary organization of behaviour appropriate to it. (Stryker, 2002, p. 56)

Thus people share meaning socially through symbols that include language, gestures, perspectives and social acts used intentionally to represent a wider reality. “Words are the most important symbols, making human thinking possible” (Charon, 2004, p. 59). Words, or the structured system of words which comprise language, allow people to define reality. They can “name, remember, categorize, perceive, think, deliberate, problem solve, transcend space and time, transcend themselves, create abstractions, create new ideas and direct themselves” (p. 69), all through language. Symbols, therefore, play a crucial and foundational role in the way in which people define, interpret and find meaning in the world. Here, reality is the ultimate interpretation: “we act not toward a world out there, but rather toward a world defined by others through symbolic communication” (p. 60).

Of interest to this study, symbolic interactionists note that in problematic situations “one must find some way to symbolically represent the situation if one’s behavior is not to be essentially random or completely arbitrary”

(Stryker, 2002, p. 56). Symbols therefore, serve to highlight key elements in a specific situation, and enable the organisation of behaviour appropriate to this situation. In the majority of cases, human behaviour will be based on habit and/or tradition. This situation is not problematic, as “such behaviour does not call for an active effort to symbolically represent the environment” (p. 56). Nevertheless, in problematic situations, there is an absence of shared symbols that individuals and groups can access to define and manipulate the situation to achieve personal and communal goals.

4.3.3. *The Issue of Role Identity*

As discussed above, a commitment to role taking and shared symbols lies at the heart of the symbolic interactionist’ understanding of social interaction in society, and these factors are also critical in forming role identity.

We label others in interaction; we attempt to shape the identities of others in social interaction; we tell others who we think we are in social interaction. Through it all we come to think of our self as something; and role identity is formed. And our action in the world is now influenced by who we think we are. (Charon, 2004, p. 156)

Developing this thought, symbolic interactionists offer a unique understanding of the concept of role. In particular, symbolic interactionism uses the term ‘role’ or position to refer to

any socially recognised category of actors. In this usage, positions are symbols for the kinds of persons it is possible to be in society... Like other symbolic categories, positions serve to cue behaviour and so act as predictors of the behaviour of the persons who are placed into a category ... Attaching a positional label to a person leads to expected behaviours from ... and towards that person premised on expectations. The term “role” is used for these expectations which are attached to positions. (p. 57)

In other words, “roles provide us with an organizing framework that we can use to make a performance that will meet the needs of a particular situation” (Hewitt, 2003a, p. 69).

Traditionally, roles are deemed to be “a set of expectations – or a script – that tells the individual what to do” (Charon, 2004, p. 168). However, symbolic interactionists offer an alternative role theory. As Charon (2004) explains:

The fact is that roles are fluid, vague and contradictory. They should be seen as a general outline. Actors shape their own roles to an extent, to meet their own goals. Roles are thus social objects that we learn in interaction and alter according to our definition of the situation. (p. 168)

This understanding of role introduces the concept of “role commitment” (Stryker, 2002, p. 60-62). Role commitment refers to the degree of congruence between an individual’s perspective of their role identity and the role expectations of others, along with the importance of the individual’s relationship with those others (Weigert & Gecas, 2003).

In addition, symbolic interactionism presents a particular view of “role conflict” (Stryker, 2002, p. 73) and “role strain” (p. 76). Individuals, as members of society, generally occupy many roles and are confronted by multiple role expectations that will inevitably conflict with those held by others. “A social structure that consists of partially independent, partially overlapping networks of interaction is fertile soil for the production of role conflict ... Role conflict exists where there are contradictory expectations that attach to some positions in a social relationship” (p. 73). Role conflict experienced by an individual becomes role strain in the larger social structure surrounding the individual. Within society, role strain occurs because “there is a continual problem of maintaining the continuity of social roles that underlies the stability of social structure, [since] not all persons accept the norms embodied in roles” (p. 76).

Thus a role is said to be “a set of rules...governed by negotiation” (Charon, 2004, p. 168), and symbolic interactionists advance a role making process that highlights this negotiation:

Symbolic interactionists speak of role making, rather than role playing or role enactment, in order to stress two important aspects of the [role making] process. First, behavior ‘in role’ is not a matter of routine enactment of lines of a script, where each action is well known in advance and where there is little latitude in what we can say or do... Second, role making is a self-conscious activity. In order to make an adequate performance – one that others can interpret as appropriate that will be acceptable to the one making it – there must be a consciousness of self. The person must be aware of his or her role performance in the making so that it can be adjusted to suit personal goals, the demands of the situation, and the expectations of others. (Hewitt, 2003a, p. 69)

Within this view, the role making process involves a reciprocal relationship between society, self and interaction as illustrated in Figure 6.

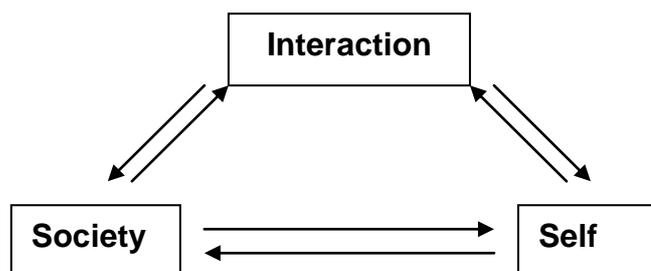


Figure 6: Contemporary Symbolic Interactionist relationship between self and society (Source: Stryker, 2002, p. 80).

Here, role identity is constructed using a cognitive process within the context of social interaction. This role making process involves the self ‘in society’ being self-reflective and interactive with others. Moreover, in the course of this reflection/interaction, the self will engage role making and role taking processes. As Hewitt (2003a) explains:

Role making is the process wherein the person constructs activity in a situation so that it fits the definition of the situation, is consonant with the person's own role and meshes with the activity of others...Role taking is the process wherein the person imaginatively occupies the role of another and looks at self and the situation from that vantage point in order to engage in role making. (p. 68)

The recognition of the importance of reflection and interaction in the processes of role making and role taking, raises questions in respect to the social structures that enable or inhibit such reflection/interaction. In this instance, social structure refers to the "patterned regularities that characterize most human interaction" (Stryker, 2002, p. 65). Thus,

if the social person is shaped by interaction, it is social structure that shapes the possibilities for interaction and so, ultimately, the person. Conversely, if the social person creatively alters patterns of interaction, those altered patterns can ultimately change social structure. (p. 66)

Given this argument, symbolic interactionists, in role conflict situations, focus on the social structures that enable or inhibit social interaction and the role making process. The presence of role conflict and role strain suggests the need to situate the role making process within the larger context of social structures that serve to shape meanings in everyday life.

In summary, symbolic interactionism offers a perspective on human action, social interaction and role identity. In doing so, this perspective reminds us that although contextual factors will constrain what we do and we are limited by our symbols as well as the possibilities for social interaction, there is also freedom as "human beings do not respond to situations but are actively involved in both definition [of the situation] and self-direction in these situations" (Charon, 2004, p. 192). Complementing this perspective on human agency, symbolic interactionism offers a research 'method' based on

the assumption that researchers come to know a situation by observing people talking and acting in daily life.

4.4. Symbolic Interactionism as Method

Symbolic interactionism is a unique socio-psychological perspective, which differs from the methods of traditional Sociology, Psychology and Science in its focus on continuous and fluid interaction rather than “on personality, society, or the influence of others” (Charon, 2004, p. 39). This theoretical lens is not radical, in that it tackles the same issues and problems of human beings and society, but it is profound in its transcendence of conventional understanding of physical and social reality and its epistemological assurance that “truth is expected to come out of interaction and to reflect “what works best”, as defined by the emerging consensus of participants in an interaction situation” (Stryker, 2002, p. 76).

In particular, symbolic interactionism as method rejects positivist approaches which assume an objective reality which can be measured. Blumer (1969) argues that

the four customary means [of the natural sciences] adhering to scientific protocol, engaging in replication, testing hypotheses, and using operational procedure – do not provide the empirical validation that genuine social science requires. They give no assurance that premises, problems, data, relations, concepts, and interpretations are empirically valid. Very simply put, the only way to get this assurance is to go directly to the empirical social world – to see through meticulous examination of it whether one’s premise or root images of it, one’s questions and problems posed for it, the data one chooses out of it, the concepts through which one sees and analyzes it are valid, and the interpretations one applies are actually borne out. (p. 32)

Symbolic interactionism, as an alternative method in research, can therefore be identified by a number of key principles (Denzin, 1989; Patton, 2002; Stryker, 2002): the centrality of meaning which is not inherent in reality but formed through interaction; the understanding of reality as constructed and reconstructed in dynamic social interaction and the critical importance of interpretive subjectivity in accessing meaning in social situations from the viewpoint of the individuals involved.

In addition to, and building upon, these foundational principles, Blumer (1969) advanced a number of methodological premises for researchers utilising symbolic interactionism as method. Firstly, he notes the imperative of “observing social action as a process” and seeing “the social action from the position of whoever is forming the action” (p. 56). Secondly, he stresses the need to “take the role of the other” (p. 51) in order to “become familiar with [the other’s] world” (p. 51). Blumer also warns of the need to collect “descriptive accounts from the actors of how they see objects in a variety of different situations and how they refer to the objects in conversations with members of their own group” (pp. 51-52), to avoid “the premise that group life is but the result of determining factors working through the interaction of people” (p. 53) and “compression” (p. 53) or any form of reductionism that denies complexity in social situations.

Contemporary symbolic interactionism has clearly moved in the direction of the constructivist research paradigms that have a distinct epistemological outlook. Constructivism works from a transactional and subjectivist understanding of knowledge which is created through the interaction of those involved, and can be observed and understood through the process of a researcher and respondent relationship (Guba & Lincoln in Denzin & Lincoln, 1994, p. 111). Like symbolic interactionism, constructivism views social reality as an evolving phenomenon. Conversely, however, constructivism pinpoints social reality as a product of human intellect and consequently subject to the vagaries of changing perceptions and the impact of varying contexts. Consequently, constructivism has been subject to much criticism as an epistemology especially in its rejection of a reality

“outside of human experience” (Guba & Lincoln in Denzin & Lincoln, 2005, p. 203). Schwandt (in Denzin & Lincoln, 2005) has isolated three critical areas of anti-constructivist thinking: the absence of quality criteria, objectivity and the issue of authority. These criticisms centre on the clear epistemological concern of how reality and knowledge are determined – through external, measurable and fixed physical and social realities or via human action (Bredo, 2000).

In addition to strong anti-constructivist criticism, there are also differing positions within pro-constructivist camps (Phillips, 2000). This philosophical interchange again centres on the understanding of knowledge and reality creation. Bredo (2000) identifies four such pro-constructivist schools: individual idealist constructivism, individual realist constructivism, social idealist constructivism and social realist constructivism. Phillips (2000) on the other hand, names three positions: “exogenous, endogenous and dialectical” (p. 279).

In the light of this ongoing conceptual dispute some scholars have advanced the idea of situating the debate in the area of pragmatism¹⁰.

To be sure, the future of interpretivist and constructivist persuasions rests on the acceptance of the implications of dissolving long-standing dichotomies such as subject/object, knower/known, fact/value. It rests with individuals being comfortable with blurring the lines between the science and the art of interpretation, the social scientific and literary account....We can reject dichotomous thinking on pragmatic grounds: Such distinctions are simply not very useful anymore. (Schwandt, 2005, p. 132)

A pragmatic approach would remove the discussion from ontological and epistemological imperatives toward questions of ‘doing’ as opposed to ‘knowing’ in social research (Burbules & Philips, 2000). Moreover, Burbules

¹⁰ Pragmatism was coined as a philosophical term by Peirce (1878).

and Philips advocate the necessity of social interaction, social relationships and social rules and agreements to facilitate an individual construction of reality, which is more informed and has greater social acceptance and validity. This pragmatic view also champions the practical significance of divergent views which can assist depth of questioning, a problem-based approach which can clarify how social reality is created and how contextual factors affect the authenticity of results. This pragmatic solution is theoretically convergent with both traditional and contemporary perspectives on symbolic interactionism. Indeed, contemporary thinkers continue to describe a pragmatic approach to symbolic interactionism.

Pragmatism is very important to symbolic interactionism primarily in its approach to how humans relate to their environment. It teaches that we always intervene in what we accept is real, that knowledge is believed and remembered because it is useful to us, and that humans must be understood primarily by what they do in their situations. (Charon, 2004, p. 40)

Hence, contemporary symbolic interactionism as method offers much to the social researcher. Grounded in pragmatic constructivism, symbolic interactionism can provide a dynamic and rational perspective to the exploration and conceptualisation of how people, in the case of this research, Catholic secondary school principals, make sense of their world and their role within it. This exploration and understanding has its foundation in the practical reality of everyday human action; what people do “in relation to the other and in relation to ourselves” (Charon, 2004, p. 206).

Charon (2004) suggests a number of principles of investigation which should direct symbolic interaction as research method:

- one can understand what is happening if one understands what the actors themselves believe about the world;
- it is important to gather data through observation of real people in real situations;

- empirical techniques must be used which take into account the central qualities of human behaviour;
- careful observation of action and careful description of human interaction are key elements in social enquiry and research;
- the use of models of causation which emphasise process and developing factors rather than mechanical models. (pp. 208-209)

4.5 The Advantages and Limitations of Symbolic Interactionism

Symbolic interactionism has a number of advantages for social research and analysis. First and foremost, challenging traditional methods of research in social science, symbolic interactionism draws emphasis to the complexity of the human person (Charon, 2004, p. 227). Symbolic interactionism as a theoretical perspective also liberates research from deterministic parameters and scientific conceptualisation of human action, facilitating “new assumptions” (p. 227) and crucial depth in understanding all aspects of human behaviour. For Charon (2004),

a symbolic interactionist perspective is important to students of human action, interested in understanding the nature of human life, society, truth, and freedom....This perspective contributes to a liberal arts education: It deals intelligently and systematically with some of the important questions concerning human life. (p. 216)

Symbolic interactionism is founded on the critical importance of interaction; the human person and human society as “two sides of the one coin” (Stryker, 2002, p. 79). In focusing social research on human interaction, symbolic interactionism can delve into aspects of human activity which are not necessarily apprehendable through traditional methodology: the impact and effect of role perception, the dialectic conception of mind, the power of self talk and introspection, the critical importance of perspective, the link between meaning-making and human action and the extent to which “group life...creates our definition of reality” (Charon, 2004, p. 228). Through this

intense concentration on everyday human action, “by regarding the human as so thoroughly social and symbolic, and by describing the complex ways in which this is so, symbolic interactionism makes a major contribution to the sociological perspective” (p. 228).

Symbolic interactionism, through its ability to probe and describe the social nature of reality, also permits researchers to examine “collective consciousness” (p. 228) and to deal effectively with such subjective issues as religious perspective and worldview, which are very important factors in this research project. Indeed, symbolic interactionism has been used “to deal with a wide variety of substantive topics, from individual behaviour and social interaction in particular contexts such as the family, to deviance and collective behaviour and beyond” (Stryker, 2002, p. 4).

Symbolic interactionism, therefore, has a broad spectrum application and can be used effectively in any study involving human experience. Charon (2004) notes the use of a symbolic interactionist approach in studies involving pregnant drug users, identity formation in a maximum-security prison and the impact of pain and injury on quality of life. Within education, recent Australian studies have used a symbolic interactionist approach to study gender regimes in one Catholic school (White, 2004) and values-led principalship (Branson, 2004). These empirical studies are good examples of research using symbolic interactionism. All attempt to focus on interaction, definition, decision-making and the development of both societies and identities. All are examples of observation/interviewing, often asking people to tell their stories or show how their perspective is created, altered or lost. All are interested in identity, how people define themselves and others, and how people’s identity influences how they act in situations (Charon, 2004, p. 205).

Problems with symbolic interactionism have also been well-documented in the literature. Stryker (2002) lists a number of basic criticisms of symbolic interactionism which can restrict its efficacy, including: the imprecise nature of concepts such as self, the rejection of “scientific explanations in favour of

intuitive insight”, the failure to take into account the “importance of emotions and of the unconscious in human behaviour”, a restrictive, localised focus which “is incapable of dealing with large scale organizational features of societies or of the relations between societies”, and a tendency to ideological bias and support of the “status quo” in society (2002, pp. 145-146). In addition, some theorists have suggested that a fluid, socially constructed reality such as that proposed by symbolic interactionists, renders symbolic interactionism itself as a “contested domain” (Plummer, 1996, p. 225) with no fixed meaning and open to change, criticism and continual renegotiation.

As a response to this criticism of symbolic interactionism, Charon (2004) argues that it is clearly “erroneous” (p. 190) to expect symbolic interactionism to explain everything. Symbolic interactionism does offer a perspective that deliberately focuses on some things at the expense of others. As a Consequence, “personality predispositions and social structures fail to be examined in depth [and] unconscious reactions are de-emphasized” (p. 189). Stryker (2002) also recognises the limits of symbolic interactionism, but argues that criticisms are “not damning” (p. 154). Stryker does, however, warn that no criticism should be dismissed as unimportant; those who situate their research within a symbolic interactionist theoretical framework “need to continuously strive for greater precision of concepts and more reasonable research procedures”, and to also seek to provide a “better logic between social structures and individual behaviour, between macro - and micro-processes” (p. 155).

4.6 Conclusion

This research on faith leadership as a facet of the role of the Catholic secondary school principal, will be situated within the theoretical framework of symbolic interactionism as discussed in this chapter. Contemporary symbolic interactionism, with its focus on meaning as variable and emergent within the dynamic process of human interaction, provides a lens for analysing and understanding the process of meaning-making in respect to

faith leadership that occurs as principals and others interact within the social reality that is the Catholic school.

Symbolic interactionism is an appropriate and valid theoretical framework for this study which will explore: personal issues of religious faith, interactive and definitional issues surrounding role behaviour and role maintenance, and the processes involved in collectively maintaining and protecting a particular social and cultural worldview. Symbolic interactionism is an “increasingly influential perspective” (Charon, 2004, p. 229), which is pertinent to sociological studies involving the influence of social interaction and definitive social structures on individual self identity (Gall et al. 2007).

This research study seeks to attain a depth of understanding of faith leadership which can only be accessed through a research perspective which examines both individual meaning making and the critical importance of the social context. Symbolic interactionism

tells the sociologist that the world as experienced by those persons is of critical importance; it suggests that if sociology is to make headway in understanding social order and social change, the sociologist must comprehend the meaning of facts of the environment, of social relationships, and of intra-psychic “forces” as these are provided meaning by the participants in interaction. (Stryker, 2002, p. 9)

The review of the literature (Chapter 3) recognised the limited theoretical understanding of faith leadership, the challenge posed to religious leadership generally in the socio-cultural context of a postmodern world, and the difficulties inherent in defining purpose within Catholic schooling in Australia. Such a research context demands a “general framework for the analysis of society, and a relatively specialized psychological theory addressed primarily to problems of socialization” (Stryker, 2002, p. 1). Symbolic interactionism is such a theory.

The researcher makes this theoretical choice well aware of the possibilities and limitations of symbolic interactionism, and accepts the premise advanced by Charon (2004) that “expecting symbolic interactionism to explain everything is erroneous but ... it is correct to say that symbolic interactionism is an exciting and useful perspective for understanding human life” (p. 190). Moreover, this researcher makes a commitment within the design of this research study “to continuously strive for greater precision of concepts” and to seek to provide logical connections between “social structures and individual behaviour, between macro- and micro-processes” (Stryker, 2002, p. 155).

Chapter 5 will outline in more depth the research design and data collection methods to be utilised in this study of faith leadership in Catholic secondary schools in the Diocese of Lismore.

CHAPTER 5

DESIGN OF THE STUDY

5.1 Introduction

The focus of this study is faith leadership as a dimension of the role of Catholic secondary school principals in the Diocese of Lismore. Specifically the research purpose is to gain a more informed and sophisticated understanding of this dimension of the leadership role. To this end, this research study utilises three research questions:

Research Question 1: How do principals understand the challenge of faith leadership in Catholic secondary schools in the Diocese of Lismore?

Research Question 2: How do principals conceptualise faith leadership in Catholic secondary schools in the Diocese of Lismore?

Research Question 3: How do principals enact the faith leadership role in Catholic secondary schools in the Diocese of Lismore?

Chapter 4 situates this study within the theoretical framework of symbolic interactionism. Symbolic interactionism facilitates the examination of “how individuals engage in social transactions, and how these transactions contribute to the creation and maintenance of social structures and the individual’s self-identity (Gall et al. 2007, p. 500). Moreover, symbolic interactionism, as a research method, allows the researcher to develop a critical perspective on how “humans think, solve problems, role take, apply their past, and look to the future in situations” (Charon, 2004, p. 208). Symbolic interaction is therefore considered appropriate to this study, given its focus on understanding how principals think and act in respect to faith leadership in their schools.

In line with the theoretical framework of symbolic interactionism, the design of this study is informed by the research paradigm of pragmatic constructivism and relies on various types of qualitative data collection methods. Table 2 provides an overview of the key elements of the research design framework.

Table 2 Research design framework

Research Element	Method
Theoretical framework	Symbolic Interactionism
Research paradigm	Constructivism
Data Collection methods	Qualitative research methods <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Focus groups - Individual interviews - Document analysis - Research journal

This chapter will outline these methodological choices through a discussion of the epistemological, methodological and ontological implications of choosing pragmatic constructivism as the orchestrating framework for the various data collection methods. In addition, this chapter will detail the procedures undertaken in relation to the selection of participants, the role of the researcher, rigour and ethical considerations.

5.2 Constructivism

The foundational assumption of constructivism is that “social reality is constructed by the individuals who participate in it” (Gall et al. 2007, p. 21), unlike the positivist view that authentic knowledge must be able to be seen and measured. As a research paradigm, constructivism is primarily concerned with understanding the interpretations or meanings that participants ascribe to specific social environments. In short, “features of the social environment are not considered to have an existence apart from the meanings that individuals construct for them” (p. 21).

Hence, from an ontological outlook, constructivism is associated with a relativist understanding of the social environment and assumes multiple realities that are mental constructions and subject to change as individuals and groups become more informed or sophisticated in their understanding. These realities are socially and experientially based, local and specific in nature and dependent in their form and content on the individual persons or groups holding the constructions. These constructions are not more or less true, in any absolute sense, but simply more or less informed and sophisticated. Constructions are alterable, as are their associated realities. (Guba & Lincoln in Denzin & Lincoln, 1994, pp. 110-111)

As a research paradigm, constructivism is therefore based on the epistemological assumption that the most effective way to understand a phenomenon is to view it within its context and “from the standpoint of the individual actors” (Candy, 1989, p. 3). Constructivism emerges from a transactional and subjectivist understanding of knowledge which is created through interaction, and understood through the process, of a “researcher and respondent relationship” (Guba & Lincoln in Denzin & Lincoln, 1994, p.111). In addition, constructivism takes into account the fact that individual constructions of meaning are not unique, but filtered through and moulded by social realities such as common language, meanings, symbolism and interaction (Gall et al. 2007, p. 26). Finally, constructivism encourages multiple, intangible meanings to emerge rather than a single objective truth to be discovered (Crotty, 1998; Denzin & Lincoln, 2003). Recognising these features Gall et al. (2007) define constructivism as:

The epistemological doctrine that social reality is constructed, that it is constructed differently by different individuals, and that these constructions are transmitted to members of a society by various social agencies and processes. (p. 22)

Extending this concept, Gall et al. (2007) argue that there are “several methodological consequences of the constructivist assumption that

individuals construct their selves and the features of their social environment” (p. 23). Firstly, researchers must find ways to get individuals to reveal their ‘constructions’ of social reality. Secondly, the researcher must be diligent in recording what they have heard with the awareness that in reporting on the research, “the report itself is a construction by the researcher...It represents what the researcher chooses to report and how he (*sic*) chooses to report it” (p. 23). Finally, the report itself is open to further interpretation, as “the reader will construct her own interpretation of what the findings meant” (p. 23).

Recognising the methodological implications of constructivism, the literature recommends the use of hermeneutical and dialectical approaches to research:

The variable and personal (instrumental) nature of social constructions suggests that individual constructions can be elicited and refined only through interaction *between* and *among* investigator and respondents. These varying constructions are interpreted using conventional hermeneutical techniques, and are compared and contrasted through a dialectical interchange. The final aim is to distill a consensus construction that is more informed and sophisticated than any of the predecessor constructions (including, of course, the etic construction of the investigator). (Guba & Lincoln in Denzin & Lincoln, 1994, p. 111, italics in original)

Finally, researchers who subscribe to this constructivist epistemology believe that “the study of an individual’s interpretation of social reality must occur at the local, immediate level” (Gall et al. 2007, p. 24). Consequently, constructivist researchers need to study the meanings that particular (local) individuals and groups give to social reality, rather than the perspectives of people in general. Also the researcher needs to identify a particular timeframe for the study, on the understanding that the construction of meaning changes over time and the researcher is interested in immediate, rather than past and future constructions. “The epistemological

assumptions about the local, immediate character of meanings implies, then, that the researcher must study particular cases, that is, particular instances of the phenomenon that interest him” (Gall et al. 2007, p. 25).

Thus, the research paradigm of constructivism offers this study a distinct methodological outlook (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005). Accepting the well-documented limitations of a constructivist epistemology, this study has been designed around a variety of qualitative methods that allowed for the required hermeneutical and dialectical approaches to data collection, analysis and interpretation.

5.3 Data Collection Methods

In line with the theoretical framework of symbolic interactionism, this study adopts a two-stage approach to data collection in which an initial phase of “exploration” was followed by a second phase of “inspection” (Charon, 2004, p. 208). The exploration stage seeks an array of data to gain an initial understanding of the phenomenon being studied and a detailed description of the research site. The exploration stage also facilitates the identification of key issues for a more comprehensive investigation undertaken in the inspection stage. The inspection stage subsequently allows the identification of key coded elements and themes around the issues identified, and the ultimate development of key findings. For Charon this two-stage approach presents the researcher with a much more focused perspective of the views of the participants involved, and enables the researcher to isolate important elements within the research situation and to probe in depth to facilitate meaning and understanding.

This study specifically employs multiple research methods: record analysis, focus group interviews, individual interviews and a research journal. This use of multiple methods permits a varied exploration of the research site leading to a more holistic appreciation of the phenomenon of faith leadership, as well as a close inspection of isolated elements within Catholic secondary schools and the Diocese of Lismore. The following sections of

this chapter contain a detailed discussion of these research methods and their use within this study.

5.3.1 Stage One – Exploration

The exploration stage of this study comprises record analysis and two focus group interviews involving eight principals from Catholic secondary schools in the Diocese of Lismore.

Record Analysis

The examination of documents and records that provide an understanding of the phenomenon of faith leadership in Lismore diocesan Catholic secondary schools provided a starting point for the exploration stage. Here the research recognises that “qualitative researchers often study written communications found in natural settings” (Gall et al. 2007, p. 291). Such written communications could include “documents” or “written communications prepared for personal rather than official reasons”, and “records” or “written communications that have an official purpose” (p. 291). However, due to the sensitivity of the issue of faith leadership in the Diocese of Lismore, this study avoids the collection of personal documents such as personal letters and diaries, examining instead records that focus on the official position regarding faith leadership in the Diocese. These documents developed by the Catholic Education Office in Lismore include:

- *Role Description - The Catholic School Principal* (2005b);
- *Handbook for Parish Schools* (2005a);
- *The Foundational Beliefs and Practices of Catholic Education In the Diocese of Lismore, The Essential Framework* (2007);
- *Framework for Co-responsible Faith Leadership for Parish Schools of the Lismore Diocese* (2004);
- *Draft Religious and Spiritual Formation Policy Framework* (2009b);
- *Draft Principal Leadership Framework* (2009a).

In order to more fully understand these records, this study accepts that document and record analysis “should involve the study of the context in which [the document or record] is produced” (Gall et al. 2007, p. 292). Consequently, the documents were examined in terms of the purpose for writing the record, the conditions at the time of publication, and the intended audience. Content analysis follows this contextual review, investigating emergent themes within the records, coherence with the other data sources, as well as theoretical significance (Hodder in Denzin & Lincoln, 2005; Merriam, 1998).

Focus Group Interviews

The exploration stage comprised two focus group interviews involving a total of eight principals from Catholic secondary schools in the Diocese of Lismore. A focus group interview “represents a group interview [and] involves addressing questions to a group of individuals who have assembled for a specific purpose” (Gall et al. 2007, p. 244). The aim of focus groups is to gather initial data on the participants’ perceptions, attitudes and feelings toward the topic of faith leadership in Catholic secondary schools. The focus groups utilises sequenced, open-ended questions that are intended to add depth and insight to the research questions (Anderson, 1990). Conversation between participants generates rich data, which allows the initial categorisation of research findings to be followed up more specifically in the inspection stage.

In recent years qualitative researchers have become interested in the use of focus groups to collect data (Krueger & Casey, 2000). Hence the focus group interview is considered to be an important qualitative research method that facilitates the “multivocality of participants’ attitudes, experiences, and beliefs” (Madriz, 2003, p. 364), and is suited to “uncovering the complexity of layers that shape ... life experiences” (p. 383). As Krueger and Casey (2000) explain, the focus group

is a carefully planned discussion designed to obtain perceptions on a defined area of interest in a permissible, non-threatening

environment...The discussion is relaxed, comfortable, and often enjoyable for participants as they share ideas and perceptions. Group members influence each other by responding to ideas and comments in the discussion. (p. 18)

Researchers appreciate that focus group interactions stimulate conversations focusing on feelings, perceptions and beliefs that may not be expressed in individual interviews. Ideally, the focus group avoids putting the researcher in a directive role. Instead, the researcher, “ask[s] questions to initiate the discussion, but then allows participants to take major responsibility for stating their views and drawing out the views of others in the group” (Gall et al. 2007, p. 245). Thus the use of focus groups seeks to balance the roles of directive interviewer and discussion moderator (Fontana & Frey, 2003; Marshall & Rossman, 1999).

However, despite these advantages, it is important to acknowledge the disadvantages of this method of data collection. These disadvantages include the difficulty of comparing data across focus groups, the potentially artificial nature of the discussion, and the greater pressure on the interviewer to keep the interview on track and to ensure an equal voice for all participants (Patton, 2002; Kreuger & Casey, 2000). To mitigate these concerns, it is recommended that researchers consider using “semi-structured interviews” that involve asking a series of structured questions and then probing more deeply with open-form questions, to obtain additional information” (Gall et al. p. 246). Moreover, it is also suggested that in order to enable the researcher to effectively conduct this dual role of directive interviewer and discussion moderator, the focus group interviews should be audio-or video-recorded to provide an accurate record of the conversation and reduce the presence of the researcher. This tape recording can be later transcribed for data analysis.

Within this study, the two focus group interviews involved eight principals. The participants included two principals who were not part of the subsequent individual interviews. To address ethical concerns, the

participants in the focus groups were selected from volunteers (Guba & Lincoln in Denzin & Lincoln, 2005). Although it is recognised that it is appropriate and important to ensure extensive variation in the focus group, the limited nature of the sample pool is a restricting factor in this study. There are only ten secondary schools in the Diocese of Lismore, one of which is multi-campus with a principal and three campus principals. Hence the potential sample pool for this research is restricted to thirteen. Another critical factor concerning involvement in this study, related to the willingness of principals to be involved at both a personal and practical level. Brief details of the focus group participants are displayed in Table 3.

Table 3 Participant details - focus group interviews

Coding	Age	School Size	Gender
A	50	710	Male
B	51	790	Male
C	60	1640	Male
D	58	420	Male
E	52	370	Male
F	51	560	Male
G	52	1020	Male
H	62	550	Male

Each focus group session was one hour in duration with conversation centred around four structured questions which initially probed the participants' understanding of the nature of faith leadership, the knowledge and skills needed for faith leadership, the challenges which face principals in contemporary schools and related issues including co-responsible faith leadership, training and professional development and lay spirituality. To obtain more depth of information, these structured questions were followed by a series of open-form questions. A list of the focus group questions is provided in Appendix 1. The two focus group interviews were audio recorded and the proceedings transcribed.

5.3.2 Stage Two – Inspection

The inspection stage comprised individual interviews which allowed a deeper appreciation of the issues identified during the exploration stage, the focus group interviews. Typically, qualitative researchers rely on interviews to collect their data and the advantages of this research method are well known. Within the literature, it is argued that the interview has a wide application, is more appropriate than other research methods when dealing with complex situations, enables questions to be explained, is useful for collecting in-depth information, and the data gained can be supplemented with observation of non-verbal reactions (Kumar, 1996). For Merriam (1998) interviews are a particularly valuable data-gathering method when the researcher is endeavouring to understand implicit factors such as the participants' beliefs, feelings and interpretations of the world around them.

Ten principals participated in the inspection stage of this research. Letters were sent to all principals and campus principals of secondary schools within the Diocese of Lismore, inviting them to participate in the individual interviews (a copy of this letter is included in Appendix 2). Ten positive responses were received and the decision was made to include all respondents in the research process thereby avoiding any perception of bias in a selection criteria. An opportunity was provided for the principals contemplating involvement to ask questions and seek clarification regarding the nature and purpose of the research before they committed themselves to the project by signing the consent form (see Appendix 3). Interview times were then negotiated individually with the principals who had indicated their willingness to participate in the research process. Details of each individual participant, including age, school enrolment and gender, are displayed in Table 4.

Table 4 Participant details - individual Interviews

Coding	Age	School Size	Gender
A	50	710	Male
B	51	790	Male
C	60	1640	Male
D	58	420	Male
E	52	370	Male
F	51	560	Male
I	52	540	Male
J	55	560	Male
K	60	760	Male
L	49	450	Male

Unfortunately, this sample of participants does not reflect a gender balance. This feature of the study was unavoidable as there was an all-male cohort of secondary principals within the Diocese of Lismore at the time of this research.

During the inspection stage, each participant was interviewed twice in order to achieve an appropriate degree of depth, to clarify emerging trends and to build a relationship over time. The first interview allowed initial exploration of ideas and issues arising from the record analysis and focus group data and the second facilitated a more in-depth concentration on emerging themes and concerns. This interview schedule addresses the need in constructivist research for multiple sources of information to provide a comprehensive perspective (Merriam 1998), while at the same time permitting the required specificity. To this end, the interview structure allowed participants to propose their “own insights into certain occurrences” which could be used as “the basis for further inquiry” (Yin, 2003, p. 84).

In order to ensure a consistency of data within flexible parameters, this study adopted a semi-structured interview format (Gall et al. 2007, p. 246), and made use of “guiding open-ended questions” (Kumar, 1996, p. 116)

informed by the review of the literature (see Appendix 4). At the same time, the unstructured dimension of the individual interviews allowed the rich and unique perspectives of the principals to be given voice. Hence, once the interview was underway, the questioning style moved towards what Minichiello, Aroni, Timewell, and Alexander (1990) describe as 'probing' questioning:

It is an indicator that the researcher is aware that he or she cannot take for granted the common sense understanding that people share because these may be differently interpreted by informant and interviewer. (p. 123)

The individual interviews were approximately one hour in length, although the time varied according to participant responses. The interviews were carried out in each principal's own office. The individual interviews were audio recorded and later transcribed for data analysis. This process enabled the interviewer to concentrate fully on the interview process, allowing a more relaxed conversation to occur between the principal and researcher, without the distraction of note taking (Hook, 1990). This process also allows for the interviews to be replayed, as required, to authenticate the data and clarify key points during analysis (Fontana & Frey, 2003; Merriam, 1998). Each principal was later provided with a transcript of their interviews and invited to provide further feedback (Kelchtermans, 1993). This process reassured both participants and researcher that the interview record was correct and valid.

5.3.3 *The Research Journal*

During both the exploration and inspection stages of the study, a research journal was kept with the intention of recording both field notes and personal insights in order to fulfil a commitment to reflexivity within this study. Field note data includes records of conversations, details of setting and observations (Burns, 1997) of non-verbal elements within the interview

situation, all of which become part of the raw data from which the study's findings emerge (Merriam, 1998). Holly (1989) asserts that

a journal is not merely a flow of impressions, it is impressions plus descriptions of circumstances, others, the self, motives, thoughts, and feelings. Taken further, it can be used as a tool for analysis and introspection. It is a chronicle of events as they happen, a dialogue with the facts (objective) and interpretations (subjective), and perhaps most important, it is an awareness of the difference between facts and interpretations. A journal becomes a dialogue with oneself over time. (p. 3)

In accordance with this understanding of the significance of the research journal, this study followed Neuman's (2006) advice, that journal writing occur "immediately" after each interview as this would provide "insightful reflection" (p. 399). The detail in the research journal focused specifically on the research site, impressions of the interview, observations of the interactions that took place and non-verbal indicators such as tone, gestures and facial expression. Such observations offered an opportunity for the study to document ideas and collect data using both analytic and interpretive notes (Neuman, 2006). Moreover, the research journal allowed the researcher to reflect upon how "research methods influence the phenomenon being studied" (Gall et al. 2007, p. 518) and to describe how the researcher makes sense of the data. In other words, the research journal allows researchers to write themselves into the research report.

5.4 Data Collection, Analysis and Interpretation

The data collected through record analysis, focus groups interviews, individual interviews and the research journal were analysed simultaneously and iteratively (Merriam 1998). It is important for research using the interpretive, constructivist paradigm, not to make a false dichotomy between data collection and data interpretation. Ideally this process involves a state

of creative and generative flux, in which data is collected, reviewed and partially analysed before further data collection, informed by the partial analysis. In this way, the researcher is able to focus and shape the study as it proceeds (Dey, 1993) and remain open to new understandings and directions. With the purpose of data analysis being to extract meaning, such a systematic process of collating and recording of information becomes a priority. Coding, categorising and notating are procedures by which data is “broken down, conceptualized and put back together in new ways” (Flick, 2009. p. 307). This process of decontextualisation and recontextualisation enables the classification of data into issues, topics, concepts and eventually themes and overarching concepts. An overview of the elements of the data collection and analysis process is provided in Table 5.

Table 5 Overview of data collection and analysis methods

Research Stage	Research Step	Research Method	Outline
Exploration	Step 1	Record Analysis	Analysis of key faith leadership documents
	Step 2	Focus Group Interviews	8 principals participate in two focus groups.
	Step 3	Data analysis	Transcription of interview data, categorisation of data and identification of key areas (1st order interpretation)
Inspection	Step 4	Interview 1 Research Journal	10 principals interviewed on the their faith leadership role.
	Step 5	Data analysis	Transcription of interviews, coding of data, identification of themes. (2nd order interpretation)
	Step 5	Interview 2 Research Journal	10 principals interviewed on emerging themes and trends.
	Step 6	Data Analysis	Transcription of interviews, coding of data, cross analysis of key themes and ideas (2nd order interpretation)
	Step 7	Data interpretation	Assigning of general theoretical significance to findings (3rd order interpretation)

To facilitate this process of data collection and analysis, the study adopted a “three-step iterative approach to interpretation” (Neuman, 2006, p. 160). The first step, a first-order interpretation, involves defining the research site and illuminating the research problem based on the principals’ responses to broad questions sourced through the review of the literature. This process leads to a categorisation of the initial data found in the responses to the focus group interviews and in the data gleaned from the record analysis. The second-order interpretation focuses attention on the underlying coherence or sense of meaning in the individual interview and focus group interview data. This is expressed in codification of the data. The researcher ensures that categories are aligned closely with the research purpose of the study and steps are taken to ensure that these categories are clear, easily defined, exclusive and conceptually congruent (Merriam, 1998). The third step, a third order interpretation, highlights the overall theoretical significance of the research findings and expresses this in a series of assertions.

This process ensures that “concepts are developed inductively from the data and raised to a higher level of abstraction, and their interrelationships are then traced out” (Punch, 2005, p. 196). The importance of clarifying this process of collection, analysis and interpretation is heightened for this thesis due to the amount of data generated by the individual interviews, record analysis and focus groups. Figure 7 displays this iterative process of data collection, analysis and interpretation.

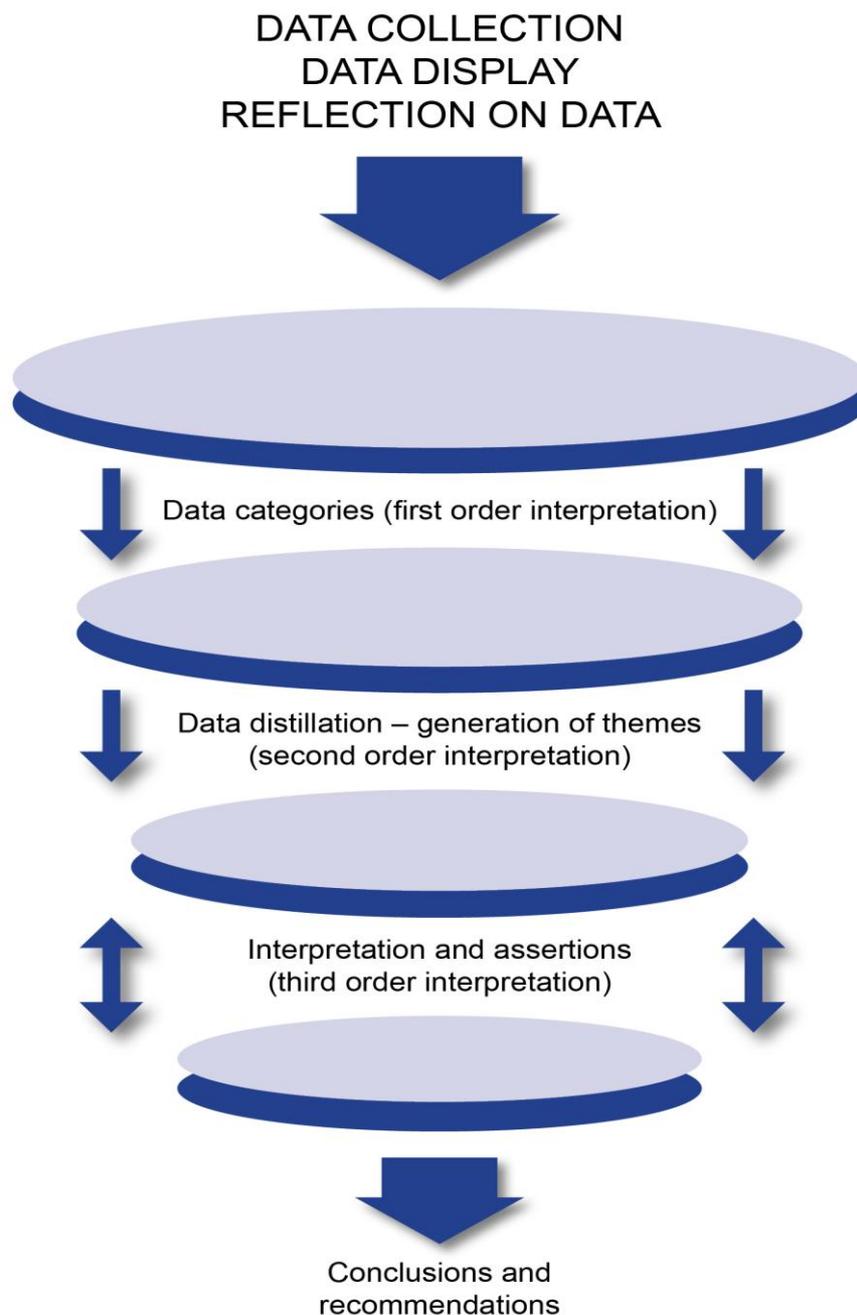


Figure 7 The process of data collection, analysis, interpretation and conclusions

This process of data analysis undertaken simultaneously with data collection (Glesne & Peshkin, 1992) supports the development of initial themes and concepts that shape the study, contributing to focus and direction, as shown in Table 6. This process involves display of the data, question by question, in a manner designed to aid the recognition of common or divergent trends,

reflection on these emergent ideas and then the coding of these responses. Moreover, this process has been undertaken with the acknowledgement that classification and categorisation of data is fluid and constant, and that the necessary redefining of established categories, as research continues, ensures more rigorous and accurate conceptualisation (Day, 1993).

Table 6 Sample of Coding Process – Exploration Stage

Text and code	Analytic memo	Emerging themes
<p>“most of the Catholics in our schools are not churched. In terms of traditional practice anyway, I think that practice has declined remarkably” (Code: <i>F4 Nature of Catholic faith in schools. F3 Decline of religious practice</i>)</p>	<p>Changing socio-cultural context affects faith leadership– no common language, values, or worldview impact strongly on principals’ role.</p>	<p>Leadership in times of cultural change – faith leadership as cultural agency</p>
<p>“We’re approaching it the wrong way. Faith has to touch peoples’ reality; it has to have meaning. We should be looking at where people get that sense of meaning...” (Code: <i>NP1 Traditional approaches; NP2 Meaning</i>)</p>	<p>Questioning of traditional approach of shared organisational meaning characterised by common values and beliefs – what are the mutual purposes in play?</p>	<p>Role strain – norms embodied in the role under question</p>

Coding and categorisation are part of a complex and progressive process that is crucial for trustworthy and legitimate results. Without categorisation, meaningful comparisons are difficult to sustain, conceptualisation lacks rigour and variations, and exceptions and other data irregularities cannot be adequately addressed. By analysing each of the focus groups and coding the varied responses, the study has been able to apply a first order interpretation to the focus group data that facilitates identification of the key categories emerging from the principals’ understanding of faith leadership.

Utilising this process, the responses to the second research question: How do principals conceptualise faith leadership in Catholic secondary schools in the diocese of Lismore? were initially categorised as definitional, personal, theological or institutional and communal or sociological.

This process of channelling data into relevant categories for analysis assists with the management of the data collected and collated in the exploration stage. A sample of the process of categorisation of the focus group data is shown in Table 7.

Table 7 First order interpretation of focus group interviews - key categories.

Research Questions	Definitional	Personal	Theological Institutional	Communal Sociological
How do principals conceptualise faith leadership in Catholic secondary schools?	Faith leadership variously defined. What is faith? What is leadership?	Authenticity Integrity Discernment Role modeling spirituality	Parish Gospel based actions priest and laity perspectives	Inclusivity building community Nurturing relationships
Is faith leadership	The beliefs underpinning faith leadership? →	The importance of the personal. Who you are? (being)	The contextual impact on faith leadership? Experience? (knowing)	Faith leadership - communal What you do? (doing)

In the inspection stage of this research, which involved dual individual interviews, a similar process was undertaken with the data collected. Upon completion of each round of individual interviews the audio files were

transcribed. Then each transcript was displayed and categorisation and coding of responses undertaken on each individual principal's interview transcript. Table 8 shows one section of the analysis of the interview data from one principal respondent, incorporating the codes developed in the exploration stage. The use of the analytic memo forged "a link between the concrete data or raw evidence and more abstract, theoretical thinking" (Neuman, 2006, p. 464).

Table 8 Sample of coding process - inspection stage.

Interview Text (focus group codes)	Analytic Memo	Emerging Themes Further Questions
1. The emphasis was on up front leadership in terms of presence at Mass, teaching RE. (Code: P2, P4, P6)	<i>Faith leadership judged on external action...evidenced as earliest understanding of what faith leadership entailed...</i>	Faith leadership seen as Mass attendance and teaching religion...extrinsic elements
2. I had a very sound intuitive understanding of what a principal in a Catholic school should be seen to do (Code P19)	<i>Where did this understanding come from? Suggestion that this is something to do with personality and family background</i>	Catholic family background – calling to religious life – how common are these factors among Catholic school principals?

This research involved multiple participants and for this reason data was analysed both individually (for each principal) and collectively (on a diocesan wide level). This use of 'within case' and 'cross case' analysis (Merriam, 1998) strengthened the identification of significant issues for individual principals, and allowed a more accurate recognition of common issues in faith leadership from a diocesan perspective. Cross case analysis also ensured specific focus on the research questions and facilitated the

development of key assertions from the research in the third order interpretative process. Table 9 shows an example of cross case analysis:

Table 9 Cross case analysis – inspection stage.

Key Research Questions	Themes
<p>How do principals understand the challenge of faith leadership</p> <p>Living the Gospel, being active, supporting people in preserving the teaching of Christ (F)</p> <p>Preserving the spirituality of the school and preserving Gospel teachings and trying to get others to do the same (G)</p> <p>Leading a community through witness: what you do, what you say (I)</p> <p>To provide opportunities for those in the school community – parents, students, teachers - to identify their encounters and experiences with God, that God is part of it all (D)</p> <p>Actively espousing what we would consider to be our foundational beliefs and practices, both seen and unseen, locally and in the community and outside the parish and local community (E)</p>	<p>Faith leadership is difficult to define, simplistic notions, different perspectives, lack of effort put into articulating it (Principals: F, I, J, C, B, E)</p> <p>There is no depth to faith leadership in schools (Principal B)</p> <p>Faith Leadership is difficult to define because:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - it goes to the heart of many non-tangibles (B) - it is arranged in many different ways according to personality (L) - no base understanding of language (K) <p>Faith Leadership defined in terms of</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Theological parameters Communal parameters Witness and action Making meaning Role modeling Articulating and Transforming <p>Preliminary Assertion:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Imprecise role definition Absence of a shared understanding

Following a first-order interpretation of the data collected in the exploration stage, the study identified a number of interwoven perspectives on faith leadership. A second-order interpretation of the interview data, collected during the inspection stage, enabled the study to move from codification to the identification of key themes. Finally, in order to gain a deeper appreciation of the perspectives of faith leadership as a dimension of the role of the principal in Catholic secondary schools in the Diocese of Lismore, this study involved a third-order interpretation assigning theoretical significance to the research findings. This third-order interpretation was informed by theoretical developments in respect to faith in organisations, organisational leadership theory, Christian values and leadership and Catholic school leadership, as well as utilising the theoretical perspective of symbolic interactionism.

5.5 Verification

Research is fundamentally concerned with “producing valid and reliable knowledge in an ethical manner” (Merriam, 1998, p 198). There exists extensive and ongoing debate within the literature regarding the meaning of validity, but foundationally it is a question of “what constitutes rigorous research” (p. 178). In qualitative research, rigour is concerned with ensuring that results adequately reflect or capture the reality being investigated and that findings have integrity for the voice of the participant, the purposes of the researcher and the wider readership. To ensure this integrity between the research methods and the interpretative processes (Guba & Lincoln in Denzin & Lincoln, 2005), the following areas must be clearly defined: the role of the researcher, the selection of participants, the analytic constructs that guided the study and the data collection and analysis methods which were used.

5.5.1 *The Role of the Researcher*

Within this study, questions of objectivity and researcher neutrality are addressed through a commitment to critical subjectivity. In interpretative, constructivist research the researcher is the principal research instrument

(Patton, 2002), and as a consequence issues of bias, preconception, competence, subjectivity and contamination are frequently raised in an “extended controversy about validity” (Lincoln & Guba in Denzin & Lincoln, 2005, p. 205). Since the researcher cannot be isolated from the data gathering process, the researcher must reveal his or her background, ideas and bias and then position himself / herself legitimately in the text. This process of reflection on the researcher’s own role is described by Gall et al. (2007) as reflexivity and it involves consistent monitoring of the researcher-researched relationship and how this impacts on data analysis.

A commitment to reflexivity is also critical because the influence of the researcher can impact significantly on the interpretation of the data (Creswell, 1998) and the integrity of the research findings. Here the researcher performs a range of diverse subjective tasks “ranging from interviewing to intensive self-reflection and introspection” (Denzin & Lincoln, 2003, p. 9). Hence any interpretive study is influenced by the values of the researcher and the participants. The researcher’s “personal history, biography, gender, social class...and ethnicity” (p. 9) become critical elements of the data interpretation. Since the researcher brings to the research process a series of attributes that create a unique perception of the data, any background information concerning the researcher that might influence the research and its findings must be made explicit (Merriam, 1998).

As outlined in Chapter 1, I have been working in the Diocese of Lismore in a variety of executive roles, including principalship, since 1988. This experience, in four of the secondary schools and in the Catholic Education Office within the Diocese of Lismore, enabled me to develop knowledge of leadership issues and the particular challenge of faith leadership. In addition, considerable time within the diocese means that I was known to all participants through professional contact, and this familiarity facilitated acceptance and trust within the researcher-participant relationship.

5.5.2 *The Selection of Participants*

As mentioned in Chapter 2, the Diocese of Lismore has ten systemic secondary schools (one a multi-campus school) and one non-systemic secondary school. As a consequence, the selection pool for this research is limited to thirteen (including three campus principals) and the majority of these principals were involved in both the exploration and inspection stage. Letters were sent to all of the Catholic secondary school principals within the Diocese (see Appendix 2), inviting them to be part of the research process, both in the exploration and inspection stages. Twelve principals responded positively to the invitations and through a process determined largely by availability on key dates, eight of these principals were involved in the focus group interviews and ten in the inspection stage interviews. No selection criteria were therefore necessary and no sampling process undertaken. The decision was made early in the research process to use all of the principals who had expressed an interest in being involved. This decision allows for a comprehensive variety of perspectives to emerge in the data, with scope being provided for the emergence of differences.

5.5.3 *Data Collection and Analysis*

The validity and trustworthiness of research can also be assured by the specific data collection and data analysis processes utilised. In this study, both data collection and data analysis were informed by the theoretical framework of symbolic interactionism. Critical to a symbolic interactionist approach is the understanding that people are constructors of their own actions and meanings. Hence the findings of this study have validity as the individually constructed meanings ascribed to faith leadership by the participants. Moreover, this study makes no attempt to claim any universal generalisation from the research data. In light of the paucity of research on faith leadership, this study seeks to gather rich data that may indicate areas for future research or redress within the context of Catholic education, rather than generate concrete solutions.

The data collection processes used in this research, however, do in themselves present specific issues of validity. Interviews are inherently

subjective and as such are prone to the vagaries of personality, gender, relationship and contextual pressures (Walford, 2001). The potential exists for interview data to be affected by impression management, where the respondent reveals what they think the interviewer wants to hear. In other cases, a lack of common understanding of the research purpose can generate irrelevant or misleading data (Walford, 2001). Patton (2002) warns that the conversational skills of the researcher can be a factor in the effectiveness or otherwise of open-ended, informal interviews and the subsequent quality of the data they generate.

As a consequence of these concerns, every effort has been made in this research to ensure that the principals understand that there are no generically correct answers, but rather it is their perspectives on the questions that are crucial. The participating principals were also assured that no comparisons would be made between them and that confidentiality would be maintained at all times.

Furthermore, in addressing the concerns expressed in the literature, regarding validity and trustworthiness in research processes, the following authenticity safeguards were established to guide and underpin this research project:

- Triangulation is the use of “multiple investigators, multiple sources of data, or multiple methods to confirm emerging findings (Merriam, 1998, p. 204). In this study, triangulation was achieved through the variety of participants and multiple data sources (focus group interviews, record analysis, dual interviews with each participant and a research journal).
- Simultaneous data analysis allows data from one interview to be verified in the next interview and facts to be checked and sourced. This technique of member checking (Merriam, 1998)

permits the participants to monitor the validity of the data collected.

- The establishment of a strong chain of evidence that links the research questions, data analysis, assertions and conclusions drawn from the research. The strength of this connection added legitimacy to the research findings.
- The maintenance of a data trail ensured that all data was collected, collated and stored for further attention. Facts could be checked, re-analysed and re-examined for validity and reliability. Research conclusions could also be confirmed with data labeled, stored and easily accessible.
- Prolonged engagement between researcher and researched adds to the validity of the data gathering and data analysis process. Within this study, I spent considerable time in the field and established close connections with the principal participants. The double interview process assisted in the development of this relationship and encouraged a greater depth of discussion and revelation.

Although there is no claim to generalisability (the application of research findings to other situations) in this research, Merriam (1998) suggests that reader or user generalisability and case to case transfer (Finestone, 1993) can have application in this type of research project. Here, the readers' perceptions of how the findings of the study resonate with their lived experience, is important for validity. Thus, consensual validation (Eisner, 1991) or verisimilitude (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005) are validating criteria which suggest that the transfer of observations from the researched situation, to the reader's own, is a strong indicator that the research findings are valid and credible in specific settings.

Ultimately, validity, trustworthiness, authenticity and rigour are concerned with whether or not the findings of this research are faithful to the research data, so that, in this case, the principals or Catholic Education Office personnel of the Diocese of Lismore can reliably act upon them. Hence establishment of clarity in respect to my background as researcher and my relationship to participants, the participant selection procedures and data collection and analysis processes was a priority in this study to ensure that all voices in this data were represented and treated with “fairness” and “balance” (Guba & Lincoln in Denzin & Lincoln, 2005, p. 205).

At all times, as researcher, I was committed to acting with social responsibility, cognizant with the ethics of enquiry (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005), and was vigorously self-aware and vigilant about the consequences of involvement in research of this nature.

5.6 Ethical issues

Bassey (1999) cites respect for democracy, respect for truth and respect for persons as the fundamental tenets of ethical research. Since interpretative research is based on the interaction and relationship between researcher and researched, questions of ethical validity and integrity are focused on questions of respect, privacy, confidentiality, power and harm minimisation.

This study addresses these concerns regarding privacy, confidentiality, protection from harm, informed consent, ownership of data and the publication of findings through the utilisation of the following guidelines:

- Participation in the study was voluntary and protocols were established to ensure participants could step out of involvement if they so chose. A letter of consent outlined the conditions and parameters of the research and the presumed benefits of participation.

- A respectful, dialogic relationship between the researcher and participants was established and maintained throughout the research process (Guba & Lincoln in Denzin & Lincoln, 2005).
- Privacy was respected at all times. Anonymity through non-use of names or other identifying data was standard practice in this study, and the content of what was heard or revealed in interviews was treated in strictest confidence.
- Streamlining of interviews and informal follow up ensured that this research did not adversely impact upon the already busy and complex role of the secondary school principal. As researcher I honoured time commitments and was respectful of the needs of participants. Permission was sought to enter schools and research was unobtrusive and respectful of local conditions.
- Personal relationship issues were carefully monitored to ensure that a respectful balance between the right of researcher and researched was maintained. As researcher, I avoided imposing beliefs or prejudices upon the research process, and ensured that the voice of the participants was paramount. The time and contribution of participants will be acknowledged and hopefully involvement in the research will bring benefits to those involved: positive feedback or affirmation, professional learning or new insights into the complex issue of faith leadership.
- In recognising that publication of data, especially negative findings, might be sourced back to individual participants, especially in a small diocese like Lismore, it is important to ensure there is negligible opportunity for “risk exposure and embarrassment, as well as loss of standing, employment, and self esteem” (Stake, 2005, p. 447). To this end raw and coded data will be kept in a secure location where they cannot be accessed. Additionally a

commitment has been made by the researcher to consult with the participants before publishing material from this study.

This study was conducted according to the requirements of the Australian Catholic University Research Projects Ethics Committee which granted the required ethics approval (see Appendix 5). Clearance and approval was then sought from the Director of Catholic Schools in the Diocese of Lismore. (see Appendix 6). Every safeguard was thus adopted to ensure the integrity and trustworthiness of this research study.

5.7 Conclusion

The purpose of this study is to investigate the faith leadership role of Catholic secondary school principals in the Diocese of Lismore in order to gain a more informed and sophisticated understanding of this dimension of their role. This chapter on the design of this study provides a description of the methodological choices that have complemented this research purpose: the choice of constructivism as the research paradigm, the two-stage research design of exploration and inspection that involved multiple qualitative research methods, the process for selecting participants, the role of the researcher and the collection and organisation of the data. In addition, this chapter details the three-step iterative approach to interpretation that moves from the meaning ascribed by participants in the research study, through codification and identification of themes to the assignment of theoretical significance to the research findings. Finally, this chapter addresses the important issues of trustworthiness and ethics, with the steps taken to ensure their realisation in the research study. The following chapters display and discuss the data gathered through this research design.

CHAPTER 6

DISPLAY AND DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS: THE CHALLENGE OF FAITH LEADERSHIP

6.1 Introduction

The purpose of this study is to gain a more informed and sophisticated understanding of the faith leadership role of Catholic secondary school principals in the Diocese of Lismore. Consequently, three research questions inform the various moments of data collection, analysis and interpretation during this study:

Research Question 1: How do principals understand the challenge of faith leadership in Catholic secondary schools in the Diocese of Lismore?

Research Question 2: How do principals conceptualise faith leadership in Catholic secondary schools in the Diocese of Lismore?

Research Question 3: How do principals enact the faith leadership role in Catholic secondary schools in the Diocese of Lismore?

This chapter focuses on the display and discussion of findings in response to the first of these research questions. Research questions two and three will be addressed in Chapters 7 and 8 respectively.

As outlined in Chapter 5 of this thesis, this chapter displays the data gathered during the “exploration” and “inspection” (Charon, 2004, p. 208) stages of the study (Section 6.2). The chapter also reflects a “three-step iterative process” (Neuman, 2006, p.160) of data analysis and interpretation that moves from the initial categorisation of the data, to the development of

themes in respect to emergent findings and finally to the discussion of the theoretical significance of these findings (Section 6.3). The examination of the theoretical significance of the findings of this study is informed by the literature reviewed in Chapters 3 and 4.

The display and discussion of the findings related to the first research question explain the challenge of faith leadership in terms of its complexity. Here a number of interrelated contextual factors contribute to this complexity: the impact of socio-cultural change, a negative principal-clergy relationship in the Diocese of Lismore and the absence of professional support for principals in respect to their faith leadership role. Literature, in respect to the impact of socio-cultural change (see Section 2.4) and contemporary leadership theory (see Section 3.3), as well as the theoretical perspective of symbolic interactionism (see Chapter 4), helps to make sense of this complexity and facilitates the discussion of the wider theoretical implications and significance of this study. This chapter concludes by offering a theoretical proposition in respect to the challenge of faith leadership in Catholic secondary schools in the Diocese of Lismore.

6.2 The Complexity of Faith Leadership

An initial analysis of the data collected in response to the first research question, highlights and details the complexity of the enactment of faith leadership in the day-to-day life of Catholic secondary school principals. This complexity is initially noted in the exploration stage of the study where focus group interviews surfaced issues in respect to the changing demographics of Catholic schools, the principals' relationship with their parish priests, the emergence of lay leadership in the Church, divergent opinions regarding the purpose of Catholic schools and the on-going formation and support of principals.

A selection of the principal responses and an initial categorisation of the research data from the exploration stage are shown in Table 10.

Table 10 Challenges to faith leadership arising during the exploration stage focus groups

Challenges to faith leadership	Areas identified
The challenge I see for us as faith leaders is that we work for the Church with an unchurched community (Principal F).	Sociological factors – place of religion in society
For me faith leadership is a huge challenge and there is no professional support for the enormity of the task. There was no induction either just, here's the school, keep it Catholic (Principal G)	Professional development and support of principals
Some parishes have got priests with very traditional values who just see going to Mass as a duty, that's hard to balance with today's young people... sometimes I feel that I'm talking a different language (Principal C).	Definitional and ecclesial factors – traditional views in a postmodern context
The emergence of laity in leadership positions is having a more Christ - centred influence but this is not recognised as such (Principal J).	Ecclesial and cultural factors – the place of lay leadership in the Church
There is a dichotomy in [the principal] serving the Church as well as students and parents (Principal B).	Theological and cultural factors
The CEO is struggling a bit organisation-wise and with the competence and initiative to run formation and support programs. (Principal E)	Institutional factors

There are strong indicators, in the principals' responses displayed in Table 10, of the contextual complexity that surrounds both the conceptualisation and enactment of faith leadership in Catholic secondary schools. The exploration stage data indicate this complexity emanates from a number of areas – social, cultural, theological, ecclesial, professional and institutional. Subsequently, as the study moved into the inspection stage, there was interest in gaining a more detailed account of these contextual factors and their specific impact on the faith leadership role.

In the inspection stage of this study the responses of the principal participants focus more specifically on the impact of contextual factors on their faith leadership role. In categorising this data, the contextual areas emerging as most significant include the impact of socio-cultural change, the negative principal-clergy relationship in the diocese of Lismore and the absence of professional support for principals in faith leadership.

6.2.1 *The Impact of Socio-Cultural Change*

All principals involved in this study initially situated the contextual challenges to faith leadership in socio-cultural change. Here Principal C explains the significance of change:

We have to remember that we lead schools in a society undergoing constant change – you just have to look at the impact of technology on classroom teaching, the changes to family make-up and attitudes to morality to just name a few – it was a different world when I first became a principal and you have to change your approach, constantly, to remain relevant and effective.

These observations are not unexpected as the analysis of the context of this research project (Chapter 2) and the review of the literature (Chapter 3) both highlight the importance of change in understanding the nature of faith leadership in contemporary Catholic schools. Principal J's assertion that "social change has completely altered the relationship between the Church and the world", is echoed frequently in the literature (D'Orsa & D'Orsa in Benjamin & Riley, 2008; Duignan, 2006; Reich). Thornhill (2000) describes the socio-cultural change of postmodernity as having overturned the balance between sacred and profane culture, swinging sharply toward the profane. For Thornhill, the resultant imbalance has brought threat, confusion, conflict and chaos and he calls for "new symbols and ways of access" (p. 23) to the transcendent to be discovered and a reinterpretation of faith to be undertaken. For the principal participants in this study, these 'new ways of access' brought by socio-cultural change require foundational changes to the nature of principalship, especially in the in area of faith,

intensified contextually by related changes in school demographics, the traditional relationship between the Catholic Church and school and a “crisis of meaning” (Principal K). In response to the nature of these changes in contemporary society, Ranson (2006) suggests “a radical change in the way that the leadership of our schools has been imagined” (p. 418).

These specific challenges of socio-cultural change to faith leadership arose during the inspection stage interviews: the marginalisation of religious belief: “It’s just a reality for many of our students and parents, and staff as well, that religion is not that important in their everyday lives, no matter how much you want it to be” (Principal F); loss of traditional values: “once you could rely on parents to support you especially when dealing with sensitive issues such as bullying, but now you can’t assume common values or understanding” (Principal B); family breakdown: “We have lots of kids from single parent families and increasing numbers of senior students who live alone” (Principal D); the technological and communication revolution (Principal I) and moral relativism: “I don’t feel obliged to implement all of the Magisterium ... all of the teaching of the Church ... only those parts that are pertinent and relative to me” (Principal B).

These findings have been replicated in research in other diocese across Australia (McEvoy, 2006; Mellor, 2005; Watson, 2007), with Belmonte et al. (2006), observing that “at present, Catholic schools are especially challenged to maintain their overall character and ethos, and at the same time be integrated into a new context that is more appropriate to the multicultural and pluralistic dimensions of modern Australian society” (p. 2). Ranson (2006) notes that the “possibilities of leadership of Catholic schools must be characterised with similar deference to the lived situation of our context” (p. 415). There is abundant evidence in the responses to the first research question to indicate that the principal respondents are critically aware of this call for new leadership paradigms in the light of social-cultural change:

I don't think you can separate the sociology from the ecclesiology, because one is influencing the other fairly dramatically, and it is how we respond as authentic leaders to that, and keep the heart of the message, that's one of the main quandaries I have. (Principal K)

The reality of socio-cultural change is evident in the frequent reference, by the principals, to the influence of changing demographics on their schools, and the effect of this on the faith expression of their school communities and their own capacity for faith leadership. As Principal B observes:

There is a change in the Catholic Church and its schools. You can't isolate the Catholic school from changes in society in general, and the whole fact that extended families are not the norm, the fact that people have more mobility, the fact that parishes are more loosely tied organisations now tend to be reflected in the Catholic school and the Catholic schools relationship to its parish.

These changing demographic factors are also frequently referenced in the literature on Catholic school leadership which cites a range of influencing factors: a predominantly lay staff, lay principalship, significant non-Catholic enrolments, a high percentage of non-practising Catholic students, non-Catholic and non-practising Catholic staff, extensive government funding, multi ethnic school populations and increasing market mentality (Grace, 2002; McLaughlin, 1998; Quillinan, 2002; Rossiter, 2003). Principals particularly acknowledged the added pressure placed on faith leadership as Catholic parents, students and staff disengage from their local church community and non-Catholic enrolments increase. For Principal L:

I guess we see now, and this is no surprise to anyone, the failure of the Church to reach a whole generation of parents because it is not the kids who are disaffected - it is the parents - and they are not there for all sorts of reasons.

These changes in the way faith is expressed, call for a response from the principals in terms of making the mission- and faith-base of the school explicit through close attention to the message they present and the language that is used. Principals K and J sum up the pressure on Catholic school leaders to address issues of faith differently:

I think the principal has to be mindful of the fact that there are quite a number of families these days who are not practising, that have no concept really of the Catholic school, even though they send their kids there for a number of reasons; and I think the onus is on the principal through what he or she says and does, and the rest of the staff, to make sure that what the Catholic school is on about becomes obvious. (J)

You can never assume too much in terms of a base understanding or language. I often feel if I am on a podium, and I'm speaking about Catholic issues and Jesus talk, that I could be seen as being fundamental. So I am very careful to be Australian in the way I actually talk about faith, and then bring in Jesus gently, so that the message is more palatable and more likely to be received. (K)

These observations are not unique to the Diocese of Lismore with research in another New South Wales rural diocese finding that

faced with the reality of contemporary Australian society, characterised by a plurality of beliefs and experiences, it cannot be presumed that all students, families and teachers are fully committed to the Catholic tradition or involved with local parish activities and worship. Given the diversity of faith standpoints, a non-critical awareness of the Catholic school as a faith community may hide a less than ideal reality. (Belmonte et al. 2006, p. 7)

Principals also noted that, increasingly in their school communities, teachers are not involved with the parish or in regular attendance at parish masses,

as Principal C observes: “Where once all of our teachers who are Catholic would have been practicing, or at least involved somewhere ... that does not seem to be happening at the moment”.

Hence, the research data shows evidence of principals experiencing multiple challenges to faith leadership from the differing contexts and expectations of parents, students, and staff. Principal J observes: “I find connecting with parents on a faith basis very difficult”; and for Principal A, a major challenge lies with the staff: “You feel that you are on your own in faith leadership when you look at the staff and their beliefs and practices; you really wonder whether you’re achieving anything”. From another perspective, Principal B observed that faith leaders are also dealing with a more sophisticated community who can be critical: “We don’t live in a non-critical age, people will critique what you are doing and they will run it across a template of their own beliefs”. In a secular society, it is unlikely that these personal beliefs will fit neatly with Catholic teachings and practices.

6.2.2 A Negative Principal-Clergy relationship

The significant changes occurring in the way in which parents, students and staff engage, or fail to engage, in the life of the parish are one expression of a wider cultural-ecclesial development in parish-school relationships. As Weiss (2007) observes: “the traditional parish plant - church, rectory, convent, and school - all conveniently located next to each other on a parcel of land, is a fast vanishing model” (p. 7). Moreover, as Principal C notes: “the traditional paradigm, always hierarchical, of priest in charge and the principal jumping to keep him happy is no longer tenable, but nothing has emerged in the way of a new model to take its place.”

The evidence in the research data of tension between the principal respondents and their parish priests, must firstly be viewed in relation to the Church-school governance model, outlined in Chapter 2, where Lismore diocesan schools operate under a decentralised governance and administrative model with individual parishes and parish priests accorded significant autonomy in their responsibility for Catholic schools.

Consequently, the parish priest in the Diocese of Lismore has a direct role in school administration, especially in the areas of employment of staff, finance, enrolment policy, religious education and school direction. The contextual significance of the parish priest, firstly as employer and secondly as partner, in “all matters pertaining to school curriculum and pedagogy” (Catholic Education Office, Lismore, 2005a, p. 10), in conjunction with the description by principal respondents of strained, often “volatile and hostile” (Principal J) relationships between priest and principal, make this a critical contextual factor in this research study.

When asked for detail, the principals cited a number of factors as significant in this situation. Principal A noted the lack of contact with the Parish Priest and the absence of the priest in the Catholic school:

You know he's not here amongst the staff, amongst the kids. I could count on one hand the number of times he has visited the school while I've been here; no more than five, he comes at night when the when the place is empty.

In some cases the tension between the principals and the priests rests on more specific instances where fidelity to the Church is tested:

Almost everyone saw me as doing the right thing, and the person who was being unchristian in this situation was the priest, or more broadly, the establishment, the bearers of canonical justice, which is interesting because I sense that the model that the priests and the Bishop would like is one where they speak and there would be compliance. (Principal L)

Principal J suggested that the problems in the relationship between principals and parish priests lies in a devaluing of, and a lack of trust in, the work of secondary school principals by the priests of the Diocese. Principal C agreed: “I think there is in the priests’ minds not a huge appreciation of the significance of the principal, particularly in the secondary school.”

Criticism of the schools by the clergy is a frequently cited indicator of tension between priests and principals, as Principal J observes:

The Bishop has been a shocker, he's criticised schools since he first set foot in the Diocese – He's mellowed a bit now but he's still very critical of schools ... He doesn't trust principals or any religious leaders in the school ... so he imposes an RE curriculum on all the schools so he can be sure that the faith is alive, but it doesn't necessarily work that way.

Many principals expressed frustration that their parish priest's understanding of faith leadership, and the success of the Catholic secondary schools, lies in one clinical measurement – attendance at Mass on Sundays, as Principal D explains: "There has got to be a willingness to look at why families are not going to Mass, and hiding behind the argument that its the fault of the schools just doesn't help the situation at all. It allows the priests to sit back and assume that it has nothing at all to do with them." Another principal used the term "canyon" (Principal K) to describe the gap between principals and priests in their understanding of the mission and purpose of schools suggesting, "For the most part they are talking a completely different language" (Principal D). This data from the inspection stage of the research, support findings of previous research in the Diocese of Lismore (Bezzina, 1996; Tinsey, 1998), and suggest that there has been no discernable progress on the development of more positive priest-principal relationships in the Diocese in the past decade.

A facet of the relationship between priest and principal cited in Tinsey's research (1998) is that of fear. "Some teachers expressed the fear that disagreements or arguments with their Parish Priests could have implications for the future of their careers" (p. 179). The fear factor is also frequently cited by principals in this study. As Principal K observes:

Leadership meetings are political gatherings where what is not said is probably more important than what is ... Conversations are run

privately and you have to be very, very careful not to offend members of the clerical club...Political acumen would be one of the most important leadership qualities needed for survival in the Lismore Diocese.

The acceptance by all of the principal participants that “fear is frighteningly assumed and very real” (Principal J), is a major challenge to both the principal-clergy relationship in the diocese, and the practical undertaking of the faith leadership role. These indicators of critical tension within clergy-principal relationships in the Diocese of Lismore also agree with research undertaken on a wider Australian context. Here, Belmonte et al. (2006), found that “there was general confusion as to the precise nature of relationship between the lay principal and the local Church, suggesting that there was little evidence of a functioning relationship among Principals and priests” (p. 10).

The strained clergy-principal relationship in the Diocese can also be situated within the wider issue of lay spiritual leadership within the Church. As Principal L notes,

It is very difficult to exercise faith leadership when you know that your parish priest not only distrusts your ability to lead in areas of faith, but also dismisses outright that faith leadership is part of your role. More than once he has told me that priests are faith leaders not principals.

In addition, the principals are aware of the reluctance in the Diocese of Lismore to assign the term ‘ministry’ to Catholic school leadership (see section 3.7.2), despite evidence that the Catholic school is the only contact that the majority of parents and students have with the Catholic Church (Hanson, 1999; Ranson, 2006). For the principals, this lack of interest by the institutional Church in describing lay faith leadership as ministry, is a major inhibiting factor in respect to the enactment of their role. For Principal K: “In this diocese, faith leadership is overwhelmingly regarded as a clerical

responsibility and the Church has not looked at the value of a lay spirituality and the contribution that it might make”.

Thus inspection stage data indicate damaged relationships and lack of trust that has significantly affected the principals’ perception of themselves as faith leaders, hampered the development of effective faith leadership models, and frustrated a clearer understanding of the practical reality of the faith leadership phenomenon in the Diocese. However, for the principals in this study, there are deeper issues at stake in respect to staying true to personal values and meeting the needs of local school communities. Recognising the changing demographics of his school community, Principal E claims that he was “intentional in adapting the message to a media savvy, somewhat cynical audience who are alert to any attempt to impose faith matters”. However, Principal K was aware of

what some church authorities are saying in terms of interpreting the message and what you deeply feel. It's how much you feel comfortable being upfront outlining your personal beliefs, and to what degree do they contradict other church statements. Now I do think an informed understanding of church writings is important, but what we are getting a lot these days is very narrow interpretations of that to suit a certain philosophy of Church, in fact almost a feudal church.

The principals assert that the task of developing a leadership model which balances fidelity to the teachings of the Church, a Gospel-centred focus, the desire to make a difference for students, parents and staff, and an authentic response to social and cultural change, is complex and personally challenging, as Principal K states:

all you can do in this day and age is to be authentic, to promote the fact that there is something there and its special and its available ...Faith leadership is a juggling act, part political, part inspirational,

always counter-cultural, and flexible enough to meet students in the here and now.

Moreover:

In an ideal world the parish would be alive and vibrant and welcoming and open, and we would be all working together.... We are a Catholic school and parishes are what Catholic schools are about It's the structure of the Church, you have got to stay faithful to the tradition but you have got to work with the local environment. (Principal B)

6.2.3 *The Absence of Professional Support for Principals*

Despite the issues identified above, there are few indications in this study that principals are reluctant to express faith leadership in its fullest sense. At the same time, there are concerns expressed in respect to speaking with authority regarding faith leadership. As Principal E laments, “There are lots of times when I say gee I’m not equipped for this, [*and*] I feel quite daunted and overwhelmed in my faith leadership role.” In addition, these principals recognise that there are few opportunities for professional development in this area. Thus the availability of opportunities for principal formation is also a contextual challenge to effective faith leadership in the Diocese. The principals in this study indicate that “expectations [regarding faith leadership] were never clearly spelt out (Principal K), and it had “always been assumed that you’d just pick up the gauntlet of faith leadership” (Principal L). The experience of Principal K sums up the lack of induction for Catholic school principals. Here is he referring to his first appointment as a Diocesan Catholic school principal:

We are talking about a master in charge of Economics and Commerce from an Anglican school where religious education wasn't even on the curriculum. I then applied for the principalship of a Catholic primary school with no, and I stress no, background in

terms of religious education other than my own secondary education.

Although these principals are able to give examples of relevant professional development, such as the Master of Educational Leadership courses, they did not believe that there is an overall systemic plan for professional development in this area. In short, professional development in faith leadership is considered to be a 'hit and miss' affair, as Principals C and I explain:

I have been talking to the CEO for years about the need for formation in faith leadership in Catholic schools – I want something tailored to Catholic schools, that looks at scripture, Church writings and the underlying philosophy of Catholic education, the purpose of our schools and Catholic leadership, but I might as well have been talking to myself. (C)

At the priests and principals conference - what's really on the agenda with the CEO, are the things that are driving the schools in the secular world rather than the religious dimension. The RE Consultant rarely gets up there and gives us anything. There is precious little offered in faith leadership. (I)

In the absence of formal professional development opportunities, a number of principals list other key contributors in their preparation for faith leadership. Principals who had spent time in religious orders or the seminary (six of the twelve principals interviewed), note the benefit of this experience in preparation for and enactment of faith leadership:

I had five years theology and philosophy in the seminary.... You mightn't articulate it well, but it is part of who you are - but having had five years in the seminary you are probably better educated in those areas [*faith leadership*] than most lay principals in Catholic schools. (Principal C)

Collegiality is also rated as an excellent way to learn about faith leadership - attendance at Principals' meetings, conferences and other avenues where principals can get together and discuss issues of relevance and importance to their role. At the same time, the direction and support provided by personnel of the Catholic Education Office is not rated highly by any of the principals. As Principal B notes:

I don't have a lot of confidence in their [CEO personnel] ability to meet my needs in this area, and as I said, a lot of this is to do with a personal relationship thing.... Some of these faith issues that you need to explore, I don't really think that somebody who has been appointed to the CEO on the basis of their capacity to give support for curriculum is the best person for it.

In a similar vein, for Principal J:

The RE Team ... I get the impression they are trying to superimpose something all the time - let's have Ignatian Spirituality this week; let's have foundational beliefs and practices next week.... The need is being perceived by someone else...and it's not meeting the needs of those in the job, let alone those principals of the future.

Other principals suggest that significant role models help them to understand faith leadership. In this respect, family upbringing is deemed to be important as is the example of peers. Principal I is typical in citing the impact of a strong Catholic upbringing: "I grew up in a very sheltered Catholic life...very strong ... my mother had a huge impact on my faith." The same principal also notes the value of peer example: "He was a Patrician Brother and you could just see it, he was not apologetic about being Catholic, he led the community in faith...he was a great witness."

In addition, it is also possible to link the increasing focus on charism as a facet of faith leadership in action, to this need for guidance on how to translate personal beliefs and values into ways to effectively lead Catholic

schools in an increasingly secular age:

I had a number of years as a member of a religious order, and that helped me a lot in my understanding of what it meant to be a teacher teaching in a Catholic school, and the expectations that are on an individual who chooses to take on a principal's position. Being in a religious order gave me a depth of theological understanding and a lens for seeing the Gospel in action. (Principal J)

To supplement these informal opportunities for professional learning, the principals call for more formal, professional development opportunities. In particular, they recommend the provision of opportunities to “look at scripture...the underlying philosophy of Catholic leadership and the purpose of Catholic schools” (Principal C), as well as “understanding of Church writings” (Principal K). In addition, they suggest that the content for this professional development include skill areas such as communication, negotiation and team building skills. If principals have to be “very careful to be Australian in the way [they] actually talk about faith ... so that the message is more palatable and more likely to be received” (Principal K), they will need higher-order communication and interpersonal skills.

In recommending this curriculum, some principals did not stop with the conventional acquisition of knowledge and skills. Instead they extended the parameters by recommending ongoing formation programs:

I honestly think that they need to devise a program where they take people away for an extended period of time, or they take them away in small blocks, but they have got to make that sacrifice in terms of resources. It's a bit like the spiritual formation given to the nuns and brothers, spiritual formation is the key. (Principal I)

Principal K concurs, calling for

A serious examination of the need for intensive and ongoing programs to support faith leadership - You can't wave a magic wand, produce a few seminars and expect effective faith leadership. There has got to be a formation plan, resources made available, and the encouragement for current principals and those interested in Catholic school leadership to devote the time not just to the 'how' and the 'why' of faith leadership but also the "who" - to personal spiritual formation and time for reflection and dialogue. Only with this level of professional development will leaders gain the wisdom and the courage to be truly visionary.

Finally, in discussing the need for organised programs of principal formation, the principals are mindful of the professional development needs of the next generation of leaders. Here there is support for Grace's (2002) claim that whilst experienced principals draw on "their resources of spiritual capital in discerning the way forward and in giving leadership on educational policies and practices of their schools", this spiritual capital is also a "declining asset" (p. 237) as principals increasingly come from backgrounds where strong faith leadership is not guaranteed. Thus, formal formation programs for emergent schools leaders is a matter of urgency, as there is the potential for "secularising" (Principal J) or "watering down" (Principal D) the Christian message at the heart of faith leadership.

In summary, this study explains the challenge of faith leadership in terms of its complexity. A number of contextual factors have been identified, including the impact of socio-cultural change, negative principal-clergy relationships and the absence of professional support for principals. Whilst these factors have been displayed separately in this section, it should be noted that these contextual factors represent interrelated issues that are difficult to isolate and explain. As a consequence, this study now turns to the literature to make sense of the complex challenges to faith leadership and to apply theoretical significance of these findings.

6.3 Making Sense of Complexity

Within this study, literature on socio-cultural change (see Section 2.4) and contemporary leadership theory (see Section 3.3), as well as, the theoretical perspective of symbolic interactionism (see Chapter 4), help make sense of the complexity of faith leadership and facilitates a discussion of the theoretical significance of this study.

We should not be surprised that this study highlights the impact of socio-cultural change in Catholic schools. Church documents (Congregation for Catholic Education, 1998) note that, “on the threshold of the third millennium, education faces new challenges which are the result of a new socio-political and cultural context”. Here there is a “crisis of values” as well as “extreme pluralism” that pervade contemporary society and “lead to behaviour patterns which are at times so opposed to one another as to undermine any idea of community identity” (1). Such claims are also supported by social commentators (Mackay, 2007; Thornhill, 2000), who posit that the present age of rapid transformation, with massive and all pervasive change, has left no institutions untouched. Post modernity has subverted the cultural assumptions of modernity, bringing widespread confusion and chaos.

This understanding of socio-cultural change and chaos is reflected in the literature (Collins, 2008; Gallagher, 1998) where it is argued that socio-cultural change has resulted in a dramatic shift in attitude toward religious belief and practice. Explaining this development, commentators describe the cultural shift away from religion and religious practice as a movement from “sacralization” to “secularization” (Thornhill, 2000, p. 123). This movement, in turn, means that faith leadership in the twenty-first century is grounded in a new reality in which faith and religion are marginal concepts, and where a religious view of the world has largely disappeared.

Australian research (Dixon, 2003; *National Church Life Survey*, 2001; Rymarz, 2004) describes this new secular reality in terms of a breakdown of

Catholic faith communities such as the parish as well as a critical change in the way in which younger Catholics view the world and practise their faith. Less frequent attendance at Mass, lower levels of involvement in parish activities, lower levels of acceptance of Catholic beliefs and “an identity that is far more responsive to the needs of the individual as opposed to a collective or communal meaning” (Dixon, 2003, p. 147) are part of the picture of declining religious culture in Australia, to emerge from the current research. Moreover, “the whole notion of a *Catholic Weltanschauung* (worldview) was challenged. What Catholics believe, in a remarkably short space of time, became a contentious issue” (Rymarz, 2004, p. 147). Such research reminds us that the challenge of faith leadership is not just an issue for the principals in Catholic schools in the Diocese of Lismore. The breadth and depth of this challenge is great:

The great challenge for Catholic schools in an increasingly secularised society, is to present the Christian message in a convincing and systematic way. Yet catechesis runs the risk of becoming barren, if no community of faith and Christian life welcomes those being formed.... Young people need to be genuinely integrated into the community's life and activity....The identity and success of Catholic education is linked inseparably to the witness of life given by the teaching staff....School staff, who truly live their faith will be agents of a new evangelization in creating a positive climate for the Christian faith to grow and in spiritually nourishing the students entrusted to their care. They will be especially effective when they are active practising Catholics, committed to their parish community and loyal to the Church and her teaching. (Pope John Paul II, 2001,115-117)

Compounding this challenge to faith leadership, this study has revealed a negative relationship between the principals and the clergy of the diocese. Arbuckle's (2000) “model of culture as a process “(p. 132) can help to explain this relationship. Arbuckle asserts that when facing significant cultural or personal change, there are three cyclically repeated stages that

individuals, organisations or whole cultures go through: the separation stage, the chaos-evoking stage and the re-entry stage. The second stage can reveal “many kinds of behavior...anger, scapegoating ... nostalgia for the past, bullying...” (p. 131). Thornhill (2000) makes the contextual link between the chaos of change, and the loss by the Church of its hegemony over conceptual certainty and moral and theological conviction. In the face of such paradigmatic change, Arbuckle’s model presents a clear choice - to “retreat nostalgically to past securities” or to “move forward into the unknown” (p. 133). The response of the Church has been to turn inward (Collins, 2000), retreating “to past securities” (Arbuckle, 2000, p. 133) and displaying an ambiguous relationship with modern culture.

In contrast, the principals participating in this study recognise the need to work with the prevailing culture to ensure that the Gospel message is heard and enacted in a way that is relevant and culturally appropriate. This forward focus is seen in their call for a “reimagining” (Mellor, 2005) or reinterpretation of the Catholic faith; a “prophetic dialogue” (Hall, 2007, p. 1) about religious matters that is “respectful of a human, cultural and religious encounter” (p. 1). At the same time, these principals believe that the local clergy see the challenge of faith leadership differently, favouring a more rigid institutional model. As Arthur (1995) explains, the situation is not unique to the Diocese of Lismore:

Church officials have a strong tendency to prefer the institutional model. This places officials, normally clerical, into positions which are almost invulnerable to criticism and pressure from below. These clerics prescribe the limits of tolerable dissent and represent the community in an official way...Conflict arises, but is quickly ended, for the institutional model can be repressive and encourage a form of juridicism. (p.139)

Thus different perspectives on the nature and purpose of faith leadership in the church and the Catholic school, and the most appropriate way to engage with cultural change and diversity, lie at the heart of the negative

relationship between the principals and clergy in the diocese of Lismore. For Principal J this position represents an “impasse of entrenched views and ecclesial certainty”. Elsewhere such conflicting interpretations have been described in terms of a distinction between “*traditio*” (Mellor, 2005, p. 78) and “*missio*” (p. 79) approaches and they encapsulate the contrast between the schools’ concern for a prophetic dialogue (*missio*) and the institutional Church’s mission to ensure the preservation of the doctrines and practices of the Catholic Church (*traditio*). Yet again, Gallagher (1998) describes this situation as “an obvious battleground [which] involves the relation between the official faith version of the school and the unofficial cultural agenda lived in the daily praxis of both school and society” (p. 28).

This tension between conservative and radical interpretations within the Catholic Church and within Catholic education (Grace, 2002; Mellor, 2005; Ranson, 2006) has led to conflicting views of what it means to be a Catholic in the twenty-first century as well as a loss of confidence in, and open criticism of Catholic schools on the basis of their Catholicity and their role in the Church. For Hall (2006): “a period of confusion as former ideas and practices are critiqued and replaced by newer models of thinking and action” calls for “the overturn[ing] of past rivalries and work[ing] together in common witness to the Gospel” (p. 7). Unfortunately, this “working together” is yet to happen and, it is possible to view the responses to Research Question 1 as indicative of a Church in “a liminal stage of change [involving] chaos, anger, denial ... and nostalgia for past order” (Arbuckle, 2000, p. 132), with Catholic schools “experiencing the corrosive results of [this] disjunction” (Collins, 1997, p. 99).

Lastly, this study identifies the absence of professional support for principals in respect to their faith leadership role. Whilst these principals are committed to the enactment of this aspect of their role, they are also aware that they are not “equipped for this” and often feel “overwhelmed” (Principal E). Here they are mindful of the “possibility of death by slogan” (Alford & Naughton, 2001, p. 27) - the danger that religious views in the workplace could be viewed as inherently negative and described in terms such as

“narrow, prescriptive, dogmatic and exclusive”(Mitroff & Denton, 1999, p. 40). Moreover, the principals share reservations about religious belief in the workplace, including “problems with language, competing religious approaches and affiliations, and the potential of compromising beliefs and values as business activity can force “capitalism and Christianity into an either/or proposition” (Nash & McLennan, 2001, p. 66).

The imperative for the professional support of principals as they face the challenge of developing models of effective faith leadership and engagement, is reflected in the literature with Duignan (2006) arguing for an approach to principal formation that takes into consideration both the impact of socio-cultural change and the fact that “authentic educational leaders have the awesome responsibility of influencing the young people in their care to become significant and worthwhile human beings (p. 147). For this reason he states that leadership formation programs should

help them to open their eyes to the possibilities in themselves and in others, and the development of their capability to frame new paradigms of leadership, based on new orientations to relationships and presence, in order to respond to ...challenges and tensions. (p.147)

In a similar vein, Ranson (2006), writing on the issue of forming a new generation of leaders in Catholic schools in Australia, calls for the three strategies of “identification, education and formation” (p. 421). Here he argues that:

Administrative skills in the educational enterprise will not be sufficient to invite persons to imagining themselves with wider possibilities in leadership. If school leadership is going to assume wider religious leadership then persons need to be identified who, as well as possessing administrative capacity, are also grounded in faith, possessing spiritual maturity, a vocational sensibility and the awareness of ecclesial responsibility. Such persons obviously don't

come ready packaged! Such persons identified as having this potential require sustained formation and requisite education. Both focused theological and spiritual formation are required. (p. 421)

This study identifies the challenge of faith leadership in terms of a complex mix of three contextual factors - the impact of socio-cultural change, a negative principal-clergy relationship and the absence of professional support for principals. This understanding of the challenge of faith leadership is also reflected in the literature regarding faith leadership in organisations including Catholic schools. Thus the question of faith leadership in Catholic secondary schools is not unique to the Diocese of Lismore. To further appreciate the challenge of faith leadership, it is instructive to situate this phenomenon within the theoretical framework of symbolic interactionism.

6.3.1 *From a symbolic interactionist perspective*

Symbolic interactionism further clarifies the challenge of faith leadership by providing a deeper appreciation of the complexity of human action in general. As discussed in Section 4.3.1, symbolic interactionists remind researchers that “human beings engage in a continuous stream of action, overt and covert, influenced by ongoing decisions along the stream” (Charon, 2004, p. 137). To understand this “stream of action” humans “will normally separate [the stream] into separate “acts” (p. 137), understanding that these acts “have beginnings and endings” and that a human action starts with an “impulse” and proceeds through stages of “perception and manipulation” (Hewitt, 2003a, p. 51). Furthermore, the direction of the “stream of action” is determined by decisions the person makes along the way, and these decisions are “influenced in turn by definition, social interaction, and interaction with self” (Charon, 2004, p. 137). In short, symbolic interactionism sees people as actors as well as reactors within a specific social situation.

Consequently, symbolic interactionism alerts researchers to the importance of personal agency or the ability of individuals to set their own direction and

to influence a social situation. In recognising the prior existence of 'society' and 'culture', there is also an understanding that "we do not have to reproduce the society and culture we inherit and sometimes we do not" (Hewitt, 2003, p. 31). Indeed, "Interactionists recognize that much of the world is not of the individual's making, such as [institutional] systems of patriarchy, power and class, and can only be understood in the light of the circumstances in which these social realities can be expressed" (Sandstrom & Fine, 2003, p. 1044). Consequently, there is an interest in how people as agents cooperate to "confront, utilize, manipulate, and remake structures" (p.1044) and, in doing so, create society. Here society is not "a set of institutions, stratification systems and cultural patterns into which individuals are born and socialized, playing roles according to scripts laid down by others" (Charon, 2004, p.157). Rather, society is conceptualised in "a dynamic sense: as individuals in interaction with another, defining and altering the direction of one another's acts" (p.158) in order to create and re-create society.

Extending this concept, symbolic interactionists argue that most human acts are not individual acts but rather "social acts requiring the coordinated efforts of several individuals" (Hewitt, 2003b, p. 30). Social action means that what the actor does involves another person or persons. In other words, "we consider others. Our acts are guided by others and their acts. Others make a difference to what we do in situations" (Charon, 2004, p. 139). In this way it is understood that social action is "symbolic" (p. 141) in that the acts of each actor have a meaning for the actor doing them, as well as communicating a meaning to the observers of this action. Social interaction also involves "continuously taking the role of the other" (p. 141). Role taking in the context of social interaction requires the actor to understand the action from the perspective of the other, feel like the other and adjust the act accordingly. For Charon (2004) this ability to take the role of the other, together with social interaction being symbolic, means that social interaction "is very complex and not predictable" (p. 143).

However, despite these issues, social interaction is deemed to be important for a number of reasons. Firstly, it is claimed that “social interaction shapes our identities” through a “negotiation process that arises in social interaction” (Charon, 2004, p. 156). Secondly, social interaction also creates society as “it is through it that society is formed, reaffirmed, and altered, and it is through the absence of continuous interaction that society ceases to exist” (p. 156). For these reasons problematic situations demand a more self-conscious approach “to taking the role of the other, thinking about one’s own communication, interpreting the acts of others and considering both the expectations and the directions of others” (p. 143). In addition, we should look to the “social structure that shapes the possibility for interaction, and so, ultimately, the person” (Stryker, 2002, p. 66), and it is assumed that “if the social person creatively alters patterns of interaction, those altered patterns can ultimately change social structure” (p. 66).

So what does symbolic interactionism tell us about the challenge of faith leadership in Catholic secondary schools in the Diocese of Lismore? Firstly, this perspective reminds us that we should not expect faith leadership, as a human action in a social situation, to be anything but complex. Secondly, symbolic interactionism offers the possibility that the principals in this study could engage personal agency to influence the social situation in which they work. Thirdly, symbolic interactionism reminds principals that faith leadership is not individual action, but rather social action, requiring the cooperation of others including teachers, parents and the clergy. Fourthly, this perspective calls for social interaction in support of faith leadership, and alerts those who wish to develop the faith leadership role of the principal that they will have to take the symbolic nature of social interaction seriously, and make a commitment to taking the role of the other. Finally, this perspective explains the negative relationship between the principals and the clergy in terms of the meanings that both the principals and the clergy ascribe to faith leadership, as well as the failure of both parties to understand faith leadership action from the perspective of the other, in order empathise with the other and adjust their actions accordingly.

It is not clear from the research data, whether the principals in this study are capable of creatively altering patterns of social interaction in order to address the challenge of faith leadership and to right the negative relationship between themselves and the clergy of the diocese. To further explore this proposition, it is pertinent to consider the application of symbolic interactionist concepts to the overall challenge of educational leadership. For example, Sachs (1999), in support of a new professional identity for the education profession, argues that “identity cannot be seen to be a fixed ‘thing’ in a time of rapid change” (p. 1). Consequently,

...a revised professional identity requires a new form of professionalism and engagement ...[this] involves two main elements; the effort to shed the shackles of the past, thereby permitting a transformative attitude towards the future; and second, the aim of overcoming the illegitimate domination of some individuals or groups over others. (Sachs, 1999, p. 1)

To achieve transformational outcomes, Sachs (2003a) advances the twin concepts of “active trust” and “generative politics” (pp. 140-146). Active trust calls for “new kinds of social and professional relationships where different parts of the broader educational enterprise work together in strategic ways” (p. 140). Generative politics involves “creating situations in which active trust can be built and sustained” (p. 144). These situations consequently offer “spaces for new kinds of conversations to emerge” (Sachs, 2003a, p. 91) or, in symbolic interactionist terms, there are “new patterns of social interaction” (Stryker, 2002, p. 66). These situations must be “inclusive rather than exclusive”, with evidence of “collective and collaborative action”, “effective communication”, “recognition of the expertise of all parties”, an “environment of trust and mutual respect”, “ethical practice”, “being responsive and responsible, “acting with passion” as well as “experiencing pleasure and fun” (Sachs, 2003a, pp. 147-149). Hence trust, participation, reciprocity, critical reflection, collaboration, openness to new ideas, solidarity and collective capacity (Sachs, 1999) are at the heart of any process of dialogue, since the desired aim is for “new forms of

collective identity, which not only transform people's self understandings, but create cultural codes that contest the legitimacy of the dominant discourses" (Sachs, 2003b, p. 13).

Thus in applying the notion of activist professionalism to the findings of this study, it appears that a transformative focus on the future is echoed in many of the principals' responses. For example, Principal L acknowledges that "one of the primary functions of leadership is to transform individuals and communities", and Principal K suggests that "we have the people who are going to be able to bring the disparate elements of Church and school together and to inspire people authentically toward the future." There are also clear indications in the research data that the principals would be open to developing more positive relationships with the clergy. Principal J suggests opportunities for dialogue: "If we can start to articulate those things that are important for our joint future, and have avenues where we can share ideas in a forum, then we can make future planning a reality." This call for dialogue is also developing strength within the literature, with Weiss (2007) noting that:

If the pastor and the principal are not working as a collaborative team, their leadership is ineffective. A tension may be created which does not serve to advance the teaching mission of the Church. The Church's ability to bring meaning out of chaos, clarity out of confusion, and predictability amidst complexity, may be temporarily halted. The pastor-principal relationship is critical to the furtherance of the Church's mission. Blaming each other in times of tension will only result in suboptimization, or an emphasis on achieving individual goals rather than overall mission. (p. 8)

However, the principals in this study are also aware that utilising generative politics in support of faith leadership in the diocese would require the Catholic Education Office to create "situations in which active trust can be built and sustained" (Sachs, 2003a, p. 144). Principal B called for "a serious effort on the part of the Catholic Education Office to address the serious

tension between Catholic school and parishes”, adding that “without a safe forum where views can be aired with respect and without fear, then school and Church will continue to drift apart”. To this end, the findings of this study suggest that the Catholic Education Office could facilitate principal-clergy dialogue, collaboration and opportunities for harnessing collective capacity (Sachs, 1999) in respect of the purpose of Catholic schools and lay faith leadership, as well as offering formation programs for induction and professional support of principals. This focus on the system as a whole rather than individual schools and parishes, will develop “a critical mass of organizational colleagues who, ... through wider engagement inside and outside the organization, ... have a broader system perspective and are more likely to act with the larger context in mind” (Fullan, 2008, pp 110-111).

6.4 Conclusion

This chapter represents the first of three chapters that display and discuss the findings of this study. This chapter has specifically displayed and discussed the findings of this study in response to the first research question: **How do principals understand the challenge of faith leadership in Catholic secondary schools in the Diocese of Lismore?**

As discussed above, the findings of this study explain the challenge of faith leadership in terms of a range of contextual factors: the impact of socio-cultural change, a negative principal-clergy relationship in the Diocese of Lismore and the absence of professional support for principals. Literature reviewed in Chapters 2, 3 and 4 helps to make sense of this complexity, and allows a discussion of the theoretical significance of these findings. As a consequence of this interpretive process the following theoretical proposition is advanced:

Theoretical proposition one: Faith leadership in Catholic schools is a complex phenomenon as a result of three contextual factors. These factors are: the impact of the socio-cultural context, negative principal-clergy relationships and the absence of professional support for principals as faith leaders. As a way forward, principals need to assume the role of the activist

professional in order to develop new patterns of social interaction, particularly with the clergy. There is also a need for system support for the principals' faith leadership role , through the provision of opportunities for dialogue, collaboration and critical reflection as well as formal formation programs.

The findings in response to the second research question will now be displayed and discussed in Chapter 7.

CHAPTER 7

DISPLAY AND DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS: CONCEPTUALISING FAITH LEADERSHIP

7.1 Introduction

This chapter addresses the second research question that investigates the ways in which Catholic secondary school principals conceptualise faith leadership as part of their leadership role. This question plays a key role in realising the purpose of this research, which is to investigate the faith leadership role of the Catholic secondary school principal in the Diocese of Lismore in order to develop a more informed and sophisticated understanding and reconstruction of the phenomenon.

Research Question 2: How do principals conceptualise faith leadership in Catholic secondary schools in the Diocese of Lismore?

In line with the theoretical framework of symbolic interactionism, this chapter displays the data gathered during the exploration and inspection stages of the study (see Section 7.2). In addition, the chapter reflects a three step iterative process of data analysis and interpretation that moves from the initial categorisation of the data, to the development of themes in respect to emergent findings and the discussion of the theoretical significance to the findings (see Section 7.3). Informed by this research design, Chapter 7 will utilise the symbolic interactionist lens to indicate emergent findings and discuss the theoretical significance of these findings (see Section 7.4).

7.2 Conceptual Confusion

This study initially identified conceptual confusion as the principal participants offered a broad conceptualisation of faith leadership that encompassed personal, communal and theological perspectives. As the study progressed however, it seemed that the principals were moving

towards an understanding of faith leadership as a Gospel-based meaning-making. Following the review of the literature, a level of conceptual confusion regarding faith leadership was not unexpected. The literature clearly identifies the problematic nature of describing what is, in the case of faith leadership, intuitive rather than scientific knowledge (Fry, 2003). Consequently, it was not surprising that this study finds conceptual confusion in respect to faith leadership, and that principals note definitional challenges in the understanding of both the faith and the leadership components of this dimension of their role. More surprising is the identification of the absence of a shared understanding of the purpose of the Catholic school as a major challenge in respect to the conceptualisation of the principals' faith leadership role.

During the exploration stage focus groups, the principal participants began to clarify the initial conceptual confusion regarding faith leadership offering a variety of perspectives, which could be broadly categorised as personal, communal and theological understandings of the parameters of the role. A selection of these responses is displayed and extrapolated in Table 11.

Table 11 Conceptualising faith leadership during the exploration stage focus groups

What is faith leadership?	Areas identified
Your own integrity, your personal formation, your own spirituality (Principal A)	Personal faith perspective
Sometimes how we see ourselves as faith leaders comes more from our personal faith than from traditional Catholic faith (Principal B)	Personal faith perspective
We talk about a faith community when I'm not too sure that anyone really knows what it means (Principal G)	Communal understanding
My faith leadership is reaching out to people who for whatever reason are not quite in tune. (Principal B). The way we treat each other. (Principal C) ...nurturing relationships. (Principal H)	Communal understanding

The way we nurture the living Jesus in our schools (Principal C)	Theological perspective
We talk about a faith community in terms of living out the Gospels ... now living out the Gospels doesn't necessarily mean we're living out the teachings of the Catholic Church (Principal G)	Theological perspective

These personal, communal and theological perspectives on faith leadership were further investigated during the inspection stage of the research, and it is again apparent that principals struggled to provide an adequate conceptualisation of their faith leadership role. In their individual interviews, principals consistently highlighted the intangible nature of faith leadership, as Principal B states:

It [*faith leadership*] goes to the heart of many non-tangibles ... your faith ... my faith ... somebody else's faith, ... it is not something that you can put a key performance indicator on, so it is difficult to define because it is part of you: it is part of the way you live.

Moreover, these principals tended to identify personality factors as contributing significantly to any conceptualisation of faith leadership. Principal J's response was typical of this personal perspective:

It [*faith leadership*] is bound up with personality...because everyone has their own personal faith response to beliefs and values ... you can respond to the theological principles and so on, that's easy, in fact that's probably the easiest part of the lot, but how that gets translated when you walk outside the door with your own beliefs and practices is a different ball game altogether.

This focus on the personal aspects of faith leadership led some principals to suggest that "faith leadership is innate, what the leader 'isn't' they will never

pick up” (Principal I), and that “it’s who you are that makes you a good faith leader” (Principal F).

Hence, faith leadership is linked to the personal attributes of the principal. However, beyond this view, the principals also offer communal and theological perspectives on faith leadership. Within this study, there is a volume of data describing faith leadership in terms of “connecting with people” (Principal I), “connecting to a community” (Principal K) and “developing relationships within a supportive community” (Principal A), indicating that the communal discourse is significant in how faith leadership is conceptualised. In addition, principals express theological perspectives on faith leadership, which range from “living the Gospel” (Principal F), “leading the community through witness” (Principal I) to “espousing foundational beliefs and practices” (Principal J). A number of principals (K, B & J) further developed this understanding, describing their capacity to lead or influence others and suggesting that the faith leadership role is ultimately transformational: “taking students and families into their spiritual dimension” (Principal B).

Here there seems to be a conceptual alignment in the principals’ responses between communal and theological perspectives on faith leadership. Thus “it is in the community reality of compassion, hospitality, inclusivity and unconditional love that young people and their families don’t just hear about Christ, they meet him face to face” (Principal K). Principal L also intertwines the communal and theological conceptualisations of faith leadership:

If you take the building of community as a basis, and mesh that with the notion of leading in faith, it sits quite nicely with a Christ-centred model because that was basically what he was about – for me relationships are at the heart of the Christian message.

In attempting to fully conceptualise faith leadership, the responses of the principals are often an amalgam of the three perspectives – personal, communal and theological, as Principal C states:

Faith leadership to me is a very personal notion which comes from my faith and belief in God. How I act that out comes from my understanding of the Christian story, especially the belief that God entered a relationship of love with human beings. Therefore I must treat others with love. So personal relationships are the basis of my faith leadership.

7.2.1 'Faith' in Faith Leadership.

This study has identified the existence of differing understandings of the phenomenon of 'faith' as a contributor to the conceptual confusion surrounding faith leadership. According to Principal J "there exist different understandings of what faith is and what leadership is, making any definition of faith leadership problematic". This comment was intriguing, and further questioning revealed that principals often made a clear distinction between a personal faith understanding and formal religious adherence when discussing faith leadership. Principals E and F describe this distinction:

There's a bit of a tug of war between my personal faith and the so-called Catholic faith...(Principal E)

In terms of personal faith and Catholic faith there's a challenge for us to be visible witnesses to both, which is often a tension...(Principal F).

For Principal E this "tug of war" raises the deeper question of what constitutes Catholicity:

I think on one level they [the priests] think the rituals, the liturgies, the symbology – that's an indication of Catholicity, but I would like to think that it's probably the relationships and the way that people are treated that make it [the school] truly Catholic – that the principal Catholic beliefs are embedded in the way that people relate to one another.

This indication of a dichotomy between personal faith, expressed in relationship, and formal religious adherence, suggests that faith leadership involves personal faith impacting upon everything that is done in a leadership role (implicit faith leadership) rather than leadership of a 'faith', in this case the Catholic 'faith,' expressed by the institutional Church (explicit faith leadership). Principal K evidences this understanding by making the distinction between being "faithful" (explicit faith leadership) and being "faith filled" (implicit faith leadership).

I draw a distinction between being faithful [religious adherence] and being faith filled [personal spirituality]. I believe I'm faithful to a tradition because I have a role, and I try to fulfil that role with integrity – the role of Catholic school principal requires a specific response in relation to affiliation, transferring something of a tradition in terms of practice. At the same time I'm trying hard to be faith filled. I hope that with an understanding of the Gospel message, that the inherent richness of the Gospel, the values underpinning the Gospel will find their way into the way I do things.

For this principal, faith leadership involves both "faithful" and "faith-filled" expressions of faith leadership. Here there is the intention to bring the religious tradition of Catholicism and personal and communal spirituality together in practice.

To further appreciate this intention, it is useful to review the literature on the issue of faith within the organisation, where there are clear indications that questions about the place of faith in organisations have been of interest to researchers for some time, and where notions of spirituality and religion are deemed increasingly important in organisational theory (Daniel, Franz, & Wong, 2000; King & Crowther, 2004; Krishnakumar & Neck, 2001). Koenig, McCullough and Larson (2001) give a clear definition of religion and spirituality:

Religion is an organized system of beliefs, practices, rituals and symbols designed to (a) facilitate closeness to the transcendent (God, higher power, or ultimately truth or reality), and (b) to foster an understanding of one's relation and responsibility to others in living together in a community. Spirituality is the personal quest for understanding answers to ultimate questions about life, about meaning, and about relationship to the sacred or transcendent, which may (or may not) lead to or arise from the development of religious rituals and the formulation of community. (p.18)

While definitions of spirituality have traditionally been linked to the practice of religion, contemporary management and leadership literature is now more likely to refer to spirituality alone, without reference to religion.

Consequently, there is now a new appreciation of spirituality in the workplace as human beings respond to the pressures of increasing alienation and constant change in a secular world (Schneiders, 2000). The literature also suggests that spirituality is increasingly privileged over religion, with religion generally construed as "narrow, prescriptive, dogmatic and restrictive" (Mitroff & Denton, 1999, p. 40), and spirituality regarded as relational and connective and an appropriate reaction to narrow religious worldviews (Schneiders, 2000). In short, there are concerns in the literature regarding the inherent dangers of viewing "workplace spirituality through the lens of religious traditions and practice" (Fry, Giacalone, & Jurkiewicz, 2005, p. 520), which create exclusivity, divisiveness and notions of moral superiority (Nash & McLennan, 2001).

At the same time, there are warnings in the literature against taking sides in the religion-spirituality debate. Discussing this tension between religion and spirituality, Gallagher (1998) argues against an "anchorless spirituality" where people who are, "sated but unsatisfied by the old materialism, as well as bored or untouched by their experience of Church, can enter a new search without anchors" (p. 114). In a similar vein, Schneiders (2000) argues that "religion that is uninformed by a lived spirituality is dead and often deadly; spirituality that lacks the structural and functional resources of

institutionalised religious tradition is rootless and often fruitless for both the individual and society” (p.19). Thus Schneiders (2000) posits that: “religion and spirituality may be strangers, rivals (*or*) partners” (p.1). While she acknowledges that it is possible to proceed as if there is no real connection between religion and spirituality, she strongly argues for a partnership understanding based on religion and spirituality representing “two dimensions of a single enterprise” (p.3).

In light of these trends within the literature, the research findings indicate that the principals are well aware of the distinction between spirituality and religion in the leadership of Catholic schools. Moreover, in seeking to conceptualise faith leadership, these principals have offered both personal and communal expressions of spirituality as well as religious or theological perspectives. In addition, by proposing the bringing together of “faithful” and “faith-filled” expressions of faith leadership, they are open to the possibility of developing a partnership between religion and spirituality within their role. Consequently, Principal B could suggest that

faith leadership is dealing with the dimensions of life that makes a Catholic school unique - trying to chart the course of taking students and families into their spiritual dimension and a better understanding of the Catholic faith. (Principal B)

This amalgam of religious faith and spiritual expression, and the principals’ clearly articulated desire to further develop the connection between these two elements, is a critical feature of the responses to the first research question.

7.2.3 ‘Leadership’ in Faith Leadership

In addition to highlighting different understandings of the ‘faith’ component of faith leadership, this study also identifies different understandings of its ‘leadership’ component. These different understandings emerged as the principals spoke about what they perceived to be differences of opinion between the clergy and the principals regarding the nature of leadership.

The research findings suggest that the leadership model enacted by parish priests is seen by many of the principals interviewed as “narrow” (Principal K), “regressive” (Principal F) and “unnecessarily prescriptive” (Principal I). Principal J described this leadership perspective.

I can understand the priestly model of faith leadership – which is fine - in terms of what priestly leadership is all about ... the model that we are currently seeing is way back in the past. I see the Church trying to reinvent a model that was in vogue fifty years ago.

Later Principal K made a clear comparison between the leadership model operating at a formal Church level and different leadership models, based on co-responsibility and community building, more prevalent in schools:

If you look at Vatican documents you see very little that would support the powerful position that clerics hold in this diocese – almost everyone talks about co-responsibility and that’s not well understood here at all ... But I have worked with some very good parish priests ... I can see where their [leadership] model can work when they interpret it as co-responsible and they also have a clear understanding of where their authority starts and ends, and that they can respect other people with gifts, as St Paul said, in the community.

These responses from the principals indicate that they regard themselves as operating from alternative leadership models which advocate a forward-focused approach that responds to the need of students, staff and parents:

A model of someone who wants to be of service to others ... who doesn’t do things for any accolades, but is happy to just get in and be of service to other people and basically lives by ‘do unto others as you would have them do unto you. (Principal A)

Hence there emerges in the research data a clear distinction between the hierarchical models of leadership evident within the institutional Church, and models of leadership based on Gospel values, such as servant leadership and authentic leadership, which are operating at the school level. This trend in the research data finds resonance with the broader developments evident in organisational leadership theory outlined in the review of the literature. Here the connection was made between social, economic and cultural change, and the collapse of rigid corporate structures and hierarchical leadership models focused on power and control (Harmes, 1994; Hock, 1999). The emergence of leadership theories that highlight the leader-follower relationship, such as behavioural and situational models (Robbins, 2003), is indicative of what Shriberg, Shriberg, & Lloyd refer to as “transition theories of leadership” (2002, p. 204), which herald the movement toward more relational and collaborative paradigms of management and leadership. Here Principal K describes the generative effect of Catholic schools on students as nurturing

people who have been exposed to the rich story of Jesus and have had that interpreted and explained and have the opportunity to live it; and having known something of what a good community could be - take that out into the broader community post-school. [It] is a wonderful gift and a wonderful opportunity for them to see if they can translate the quality of those relationships, sense of security, that sense of seeking something beyond themselves – that will be with them the whole of their life

In this response Principal K echoes Bass’ (1998) description of what authentic transformational leaders can achieve. “They foster in followers higher moral maturity, and they move followers to go beyond their self interests for the good of their group, organization or society” (p. 171).

There are clear indications in the research data that, as the literature suggests, principal respondents have developed their perspectives on leadership in response to the changing social and spiritual landscape.

As Principal D observes, “The way I lead has changed as the school communities have changed – to me static leadership serves no good purpose and you have got to work with the local environment”. These changes have made building relationships and creating community critical elements of Catholic school leadership, with the principals frequently describing their leadership in terms of the showing of compassion and support in times of personal crisis (Principals L, C & A), as well as welcoming, inclusivity, personal kindness and responsiveness (Principals I, J, K & C). This trend fits with the emergence of post-industrial leadership models which focus on networks of smaller units working collaboratively (Capra, 2002; Lambert, 2005; Shriberg et al. 2002) and which theorists claim can be more readily learnt and adapted to rapidly changing social, political and economic environments.

In contrast, this study suggests that the clergy is operating out of the closed, power-focused and hierarchical models of the past. Principal B summed up the dichotomy between priests and principals. “The priests are operating out of a transactional or ‘bums on seats’ view of leadership, while the principals are engaged in the transformational or meaning-making model.” The critical difference between the two models lies in the anthropological perspective. Transformational leadership models view the human person as the motivation for, and recipient of, leadership action. This juxtaposition of leadership paradigms within Catholic education has been discussed in the literature for some time. Grace (2002) sums up this clash of leadership models:

Much less progress has been made in establishing practices of dialogue and collegiality in Catholic institutions than had been hoped for. This has been partly accounted for by the sheer durability of a long historical tradition of hierarchical leadership, and partly by a revisionist reaction against some of the more liberal principles commended by the Council. In short, a tradition of strong hierarchical leadership does not give way easily to new forms of shared, consultative and collegial leadership. (p. 147)

Compounding this leadership tension, there are clear indications in the data of an abuse of power stemming from clerical leadership, “If you work in Catholic education you have to be very, very careful about how you relate to members of the clerical club ... they determine the extent to which you have a career” (Principal K). This suggestion of a climate of fear is typical of classical leadership models where the human person is the subject not the object of leadership action; with leaders exercising “power and influence through controlling the rewards in an organization, rewards they can offer or withhold from the workforce” (Bottery, 2004, p. 16). The reality of fear in the relationship between priests and principals, has also been also noted in research in the Diocese of Lismore by Tinsey (1998). “At best professional relationships between the two groups [teachers and clergy] appeared to be cordial and superficial, while at worst, they appeared to be based on fear and mistrust” (p. 178). The evident divergence of understanding regarding the nature of leadership most applicable to Catholic organisations (Collins, 1997; Ludwig, 1995; McLaughlin, 2000), is shown in both the research data and the literature on Catholic school leadership as having severely impacted on the conceptualisation of lay faith leadership and the capacity for the development of common approaches. In addition the principals strongly suggest that the will to develop a common understanding of lay faith leadership, through collaboration and collegial effort, is lacking.

The Church has not looked at the value of a lay spirituality and the contribution that might make. When they have that conversation where lay spiritual leaders can stand beside clerical spiritual leaders and offer something of substance to bring the Church forward, then I will be willing to play a role.

Here Principal K seeks the interconnectedness, networking, participation and shared moral purpose at the heart of new organisational paradigms (Capra, 2002; Lambert, 2005; Shriberg et al. 2002). The principals also indicate in their responses that they are open to new ways of exercising leadership. They prefer collaborative approaches to faith leadership that

emphasise the inter-personal, the development of relationships and community building.

7.2.4 The Purpose of Catholic Schools

In this study, the principals identify the absence of a shared understanding of the purpose of Catholic schools as a major challenge in respect to their faith leadership role, and the way in which it is conceptualised. As Principal D states: “I still don’t think we’ve identified exactly what the purpose of a Catholic school is.” Principal F agrees, observing that, “Unless you know what you are meant to be achieving, the big picture purpose, then it’s hard to get a handle on how to approach faith leadership.” Likewise, for Principal B, “We won’t understand faith leadership until we can come to some agreement on what we are supposed to be doing in terms of mission and purpose”; and Principal E, “No-one [*has*] put enough effort into articulating what leadership of faith means.” These responses suggest that for these principals, the starting point for this ‘effort’ would involve clarifying the purpose of the Catholic school in the context of contemporary society.

More than a decade ago, Tinsey’s (1998) research within the diocese of Lismore found that “differing shades of meaning ... attached to many of the terms used to describe the religious dimension of the mission of Catholic schools can be ambivalent and confusing for some people” (p. 193). Whilst the principals in this study broadly describe the purpose of Catholic schools in terms of human development in the context of community, and consequently focus on human potential to transform the world, they believe that the clergy primarily subscribe to a narrower purpose in terms of formal religious adherence (eg. mass attendance and strong parish involvement). As Principal D explains:

I believe that there is a chasm in understanding of what the Catholic school is about. For Father X, he looks at who is there on a Sunday and that is his measure of our effectiveness, whereas I see the community we have developed, people being prepared the go out of

their way to help, and that is success for me: that our beliefs underpin what we do.

As a consequence of these differing perspectives, the principals have found themselves frequently challenged about their school's performance. As Principal A notes: "He [parish priest] sat here one day and said that this school should never have been built because the kids didn't practice the faith". Yet again, Principal I described a parish priest who "used to send me literature on topics like, what's the use of Catholic schools, when they don't practice their faith". Moreover, this questioning and evidence of a lack of value attached to the Catholic schools has contributed to the tension between the principal and the clergy outlined in Section 6.2.4. Poor relationships between principals and the clergy have been evident in the Diocese of Lismore for some time. Prior research (Bezzina, 1996; Tinsey, 1998) in the Diocese found that the clergy were critical of the performance of the Catholic secondary schools, and this study has found that, at least from the principals' perspective, this criticism has not dissipated.

Thus without a shared understanding of the purpose of Catholic schools, the principal is caught between competing demands, and the faith leadership role remains conceptually problematic. As Mellor (2005) suggests,

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.... 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.
(p. 337 & 341)

This reimagining, necessitated by the impact of socio-cultural change (outlined in Section 6.2.2), invites the evolution of new purposes for Catholic

schools to meet the needs of rapidly changing contexts. The literature also calls for a “reformulation of mission in Catholic communities” in response to widespread “changes occurring globally” (D’Orsa & D’Orsa, in Benjamin & Riley, 2008, p. 43). In other words, socio-cultural change necessitates “continually reinventing” (Degenhardt, 2006, p. 277) the Catholic school and undertaking “meaning reconstruction” (Mellor, 2005, p. 2). School mission and purpose need reevaluation.

The changing situation and changing Catholic consciousness force us to consider evangelisation in the broad sense, encompassing all its elements – proclamation, inter-faith dialogue, pastoral ministry, human development and liberation, and inculturation – when we are considering the mission of the Catholic school. (D’Orsa in Duncan & Riley, 2002, p. 34).

Hence, the challenge of faith leadership and its conceptualisation should be situated within the wider context of “Catholic identity in a process of redefinition” (Benjamin & Riley, 2008, p. 8), with the imperative to rearticulate Catholic school purpose in response to changing contexts.

In summary, this study identifies the challenge of faith leadership in terms of a conceptual confusion around this phenomenon, as well as definitional issues in respect to the ‘faith’ and ‘leadership’ components of faith leadership. In addition, this research has focused attention on the necessity to be “continually reinventing” (Degenhart, 2006, p. 277) the Catholic school in response to the changing socio-cultural context. Within the Diocese of Lismore however, these internal and external pressures on Catholic school identity and mission have not led to a “dialogue about the goals of the contemporary Catholic school between practitioners and ecclesiastical authorities” (Mellor, 2005, p. 341). Instead the research data reveal widespread evidence of the clergy questioning and criticising school performance, leading to a further weakening of the relationship between the principals and the clergy. As the Diocese of Lismore operates under a decentralised governance and administrative model (outlined in Chapter 2),

in which the clergy plays a significant role in administration of the Catholic school, this finding is significant.

7.3 Conceptualising Faith Leadership

As noted earlier in this chapter, there initially existed a marked conceptual confusion regarding faith leadership, as the principals in this study offered a broad conceptualisation of the parameters of their role. As the study progressed, this broad conceptualisation of faith leadership has been further refined until the principals began to describe faith leadership as a form of Gospel-based meaning-making. However, in advancing this conceptualisation they remained pessimistic in respect to the possibility of their vision becoming a reality.

7.3.1 Towards Faith Leadership as Gospel-based Meaning-making

As discussed in Section 7.2.2, the principals in this study appear to be open to a partnership of spirituality and religion in the context of faith leadership within the Catholic school. Whilst principals can see the possibility of being “faithful” and “faith-filled” within their role, what this means in practical leadership terms remains a challenge. For Principal J, the most critical challenge centres on the appropriate amalgam of this faith component with the leadership component.

Just how the faith bit and the leadership bit come together is the big issue. I think that leadership is a derivative of belief ... belief in Catholic education itself, belief in the authenticity of what you are doing - You've got to be authentic, to be true to yourself and if you know your faith is not terribly strong, you shouldn't be in a leadership position ... because you can go and get a job in a high school because you don't need that element.... You need moral leadership and all the other stuff, but you don't need the faith [religious] element.

For the principals this religious element comprises both intrinsic and extrinsic components. Intrinsically principals made reference to “inner faith” (Principal D), “having a commitment to people” (Principal B), “deep conviction” (Principal A) and “espousing deeply held Christian values” (Principal D). Extrinsic components of faith leadership described by the principal participants include “being visible in the parish” (Principal F), “playing a role in liturgy” (Principal D), developing external symbolism (Principal C) and “modeling faith through action” (Principal E). In seeking a connection between these intrinsic and extrinsic expressions of faith and leadership, the spiritual leadership models of Fairholm (1998), Fry (2003), Kriger and Seng (2005) and Whetstone (2002) give some important directions. Here “those who believe in a spiritual or religious belief system will have their leadership behaviour shaped by the underlying values and attitudes of those worldviews” (Kriger & Seng, 2005, p. 801). Thus leader behaviour (extrinsic) is linked to internal motivators that stem from values (intrinsic). As Fairholm (1997) states: “a leader’s philosophy about life and leadership are given substance and meaning by the internal system of spiritual values focused on. These values become a vitalizing vision of the possible” (p. 28).

It is not surprising, therefore, that in seeking to conceptualise the complex interrelationship between faith (intrinsic and extrinsic) and leadership, a process Fairholm (1997) describes as an “interactive, continuous, developmental dynamic” (p. 28), the principals, in the course of the interviews, began to describe their faith leadership role in terms of Gospel-based values and meaning-making. For Principal K, meaning-making is at the heart of his conceptualisation of faith leadership:

Faith leadership is encouraging staff, students and family to connect with the intent of a rich tradition. It is a deeply personal thing, it is meaning making – connecting the gospel message with lived experience.

Principal B asserts that “when people become disillusioned, one of the most difficult things is to be able to break that down to make meaning.” For both Principals K and B, meaning-making is seen as a function of the interplay between faith and culture, with faith emerging as a personal response to the complexity of life and experience. In other words these principals frame their role as faith leaders as meaning-making in terms of “reinventing” (Principal J), “reinterpreting” (Principal K) and “rediscovering” (Principal I) the Catholic faith in their Catholic school communities. In describing faith leadership in this way, the principals are very aware of the alienation of religion in the secular world, and have made a commitment to reinterpreting the teachings of the Catholic religion and providing an experience of a Christian way of life that is relevant to contemporary culture. Thus for these principals, life experience has resulted in the emergence of an alternative paradigm on faith, one grounded in meaning-making and one which views externals like mass attendance as less important than living out Gospel values. “ I certainly don’t get up at assemblies and tell kids that they have to go to Church ... I tell them the importance of treating all people respectfully and with love” (Principal A).

The existence of alternative faith paradigms is not a new concept in the literature. For example, Borg (2003) describes divergent views of faith within Christianity as dividing those who embrace faith as a set of beliefs or dogma to be adhered to rigidly, and those who regard faith as the province of the heart, where the heart “is a metaphor for a deep level of the self, a level below our thinking, feeling and willing, or intellect, emotions, and volition” (p. 26). Here again, the dichotomy between the high intrinsic (King & Crowther, 2004) nature of personal spiritual motivation, and the extrinsic meeting of religious requirements is highlighted.

To constructively deal with confusion and misconception arising from the tensions between personal convictions and formal Church teachings or practices, the principals in this study focus on Gospel values. For Principal K this approach is appropriate.

We have taught people to think, we have encouraged them to make meaning in their lives.... We've put more emphasis on meaning-making through our life experiences, a personal interpretation of scripture and a little bit of a mistrust of the Magisterium and deservedly so.

In short, this approach to meaning-making represents a disenchantment with, and a rejection of, narrow and institutional interpretations of the faith. As Principal A explains,

My biggest issue is that some people lose sight of the message ... the Gospel message of being of service to others, that's how you do faith leadership. Don't sit in the front row, be of service to other people ... I get frustrated when I see our Church leaders stand up and read that message and then ignore it.

And in a similar vein, Principal K predicates,

I suspect that we are going to move a little bit away from religious affiliation and nomination, but I think that the values underpinning what's going to emerge are going to be very authentic, very Jesus-like, and that Jesus would smile on this interpretation of his message.

The literature indicates that these research insights regarding divergent interpretations of faith in leadership can be more fully understood through the lens of change management (Fullan, 2008; Arbuckle, 2004). Arbuckle describes the Catholic Church in a state of "cultural breakdown and transformation" (1993, p. 44), and suggests that chaos will give way to new cultural consensus and integration. For the principal respondents, already embracing this new consensus, change is a process of continual learning. Sergiovanni's assertion that "conflict and agreement are not only inevitable but fundamental to successful change", and that "change is a process of

development in use” (1996, p. 170), places the conceptual challenge of faith leadership in the realm of ongoing change management.

In the face of the most significant changes in the understanding of mission “to occur in the ideational understanding of Catholicism worldwide in recent centuries” (D’Orsa & D’Orsa in Benjamin & Riley, 2008, p. 36), and the reshaping of the relationship between the Catholic school and Church, it is not surprising that principals sought inspiration and foundational principles from the Gospels as a way to navigate this continual change process. Not only do these Gospel values transcend cultural and social paradigms, but they also allow the facilitation of a connection between faith, life and culture in a way that develops meaning and relevance. Hence in the course of this study, Catholic secondary school principals came to conceptualise faith leadership as Gospel-based meaning-making, as Principal J states:

You have got to have a commitment to the things that are essential about faith, so it’s a commitment to practice ... social justice ... ethical behaviour ... the values that Jesus taught. There has got to be an unshakeable belief that Christ is at the core of everything, and that this gives meaning to what you do in the daily realities of school life and it also influences others to do the same.

Here there is a definite spiritual/religious aspect to their work as school leaders. As Alford and Naughton (2001) explain, “When people work they leave an unrepeatable imprint on the world, through their products and services, and through virtue of who they become – that is, a unique, unrepeatable image of the creative activity of God in them” (p. 128). Moreover, the principals accept that, for Christians, work is a spiritual activity undertaken in community and characterised by equity, justice, subsidiarity, the primacy of labour over capital, co-responsibility, relationship and solidarity (Alford & Naughton, 2001; Calvez & Naughton in Cortright & Naughton, 2002).

7.3.2 Future Possibilities

Within this study, as the principals look to the future, there is a sense of urgency, given the challenge of making a religious message meaningful for the members their school communities. They understand that Catholic schools face a “difficult role in mediating between the institutional Catholic Church with its clear prescriptions for moral behaviour, and a generalised youth culture and mass media culture which [is] questioning and relativistic about many moral issues” (Grace, 2002, p. 225). At the same time, a number of the principals in this study, realising the value of their religious formation in Catholic families, raised concerns about the next generation of faith leaders (Principals A, E, J & D). They agree with Grace (2002) that spiritual/religious leadership is a “declining asset” (p. 237), as principals increasingly come from backgrounds where strong faith leadership or faith formation are not guaranteed. This concern is justified in the light of the research by Kriger and Seng (2005) which links faith leadership values to “role models, ethical examples of sacred writings of one’s religion, plus ongoing, dynamically created feelings and inner leadings that arise through contemplative prayer” (p. 793). In this study, it was noted that there are few opportunities for the next generation to be formed in this way.

At the same time, the principals are pessimistic in respect to furthering faith leadership as Gospel-based meaning-making within the Diocese of Lismore. They are well aware that this version of faith leadership does not ‘fit’ with traditional church policy and practice. Church documents offer a narrow perspective on faith leadership by focusing on explicit indicators of faith for all teachers involved in Catholic education.

Staff, who truly live their faith will be agents of a new evangelization in creating a positive climate for the Christian faith to grow and in spiritually nourishing the students entrusted to their care. They will be especially effective when they are active practising Catholics, committed to their parish community and loyal to the Church and her teaching. (Pope John Paul II, 2001, 115-117)

Likewise these principals understand that the Lismore Catholic Education Office links faith leadership with the responsibility of ensuring that schools are “centres of new evangelisation, enabling of students to reach high levels of Catholic religious literacy and staffed by people who will contribute to these goals” (Catholic Education Office, Lismore, 2009b, p. 5).

Thus faith leadership in schools is officially associated with institutional concerns for active practice of the Catholic faith, participation in parish community and loyalty to the teachings of the Catholic Church. However, this narrow perspective is disappointing for the principals as they look to combine their personal spirituality, Christian values and the Catholic tradition in ways that are meaningful to their school communities as well as the wider community. Given the history of poor relationships between principals and the clergy (Bezzina, 1996; Tinsey, 1998), as well as the reality of on-going criticism by the clergy in regard to school performance, the principals are not optimistic that they will be able to gain the support of the clergy for conceptualising faith leadership as Gospel-based meaning-making.

As noted above, the challenge of faith leadership is always in mind as the principals in this study struggle to conceptualise their faith leadership role. Even as the principals settled on their understating of faith leadership as Gospel-based meaning-making, they believed that trying to gain the support of the clergy presents an impossible goal. To further appreciate this situation, it is interesting to explore the challenge of conceptualising faith leadership in secondary schools in the Diocese of Lismore from a symbolic interactionist perspective.

7.4 From a Symbolic Interactionist Perspective

Symbolic interactionists hold that “our world is a symbolic one: we see, we think, we hear, we share, we act symbolically” (Charon, 2004, p. 60). Here symbols act as “a social object used for communication to self or for communication to others and to self. It is an object used to represent

something else. It is intentionally used” (p. 49). Hence the people exist, interact, act and interpret within a world of symbols and without symbols, society as we know it would be unsustainable.

Symbols create and maintain the societies in which we exist. They are used to socialize us; they make our culture possible; they are the basis for ongoing communication and cooperation; and they make possible our ability to pass down knowledge from one generation to the next. (p. 62)

In this perspective, Charon (2004) maintains that people share meaning socially through symbols that include language, gestures, perspectives and social acts used intentionally to represent a wider reality. From this perspective, “Words are the most important symbols, making human thinking possible” (p. 59). Words, or the structured system of words which comprise language, allow people to define reality; they can “name, remember, categorize, perceive, think, deliberate, problem solve, transcend space and time, transcend themselves, create abstractions, create new ideas and direct themselves” (p. 69), all through language. Symbols, therefore, play a crucial and foundational role in the way in which people define, interpret and find meaning in the world.

However, the development of a symbolic language is not just a private matter, as symbols are socially created, socially understood and socially exclusive.

People make them and people agree on what they stand for ... the person who uses symbols does so for the purpose of giving a meaning that he or she believes will make sense to the other. In short: symbols focus attention upon salient elements in an interactive situation, and permit preliminary organization of behaviour appropriate to it. (Stryker, 2002, p. 56)

Thus, it is through interacting with others that people develop a symbolic language that “gives the world meaning and develops the reality toward which we act” (Charon, 2004, p. 61).

Consequently, when Principal K observes that a “base language” is missing from whole faith leadership debate, he is referring to the absence of a shared symbolic language in respect to faith leadership. This lack of a shared symbolic language explains the conceptual confusion around this phenomenon, the definitional issues in respect to the ‘faith’ and ‘leadership’ components of faith leadership, as well as different opinions about the purpose of Catholic school. In particular, the lack of a shared symbolic language has resulted in criticism by the clergy in respect to school performance and the breakdown of relationships between the principals and the clergy. Since symbols are social objects that are socially created, socially understood and socially exclusive, until the principals and the clergy are prepared to come to together to “make” symbols or social objects about faith leadership and “agree on what [these symbols] stand for” (Stryker, 2002, p. 56) the challenge of faith leadership in Catholic secondary schools in the Diocese of Lismore will remain.

7.5 Conclusion

This chapter displays and discusses the participants’ responses to the first research question: **How do principals conceptualise faith leadership in Catholic secondary schools in the Diocese of Lismore?**

In response to this question this study finds conceptual confusion in respect to the phenomenon of faith leadership, as well as definitional issues in respect to the ‘faith’ and ‘leadership’ components of faith leadership. In addition, there are tensions around the faith leadership role of the principal due to the absence of a shared understanding of the purpose of Catholic secondary schools in the Diocese of Lismore. Here the clergy are critical of school performance, leading to a breakdown of relationships between school and parish.

Despite these challenges, the principals in this study conceptualise faith leadership as Gospel-based meaning-making. This understanding of faith leadership correlates with developments in both the understanding of faith in organisations and the importance of values as the intrinsic motivation for leadership action and behaviour (Fry, 2003; Kriger & Seng, 2005), and post-industrial leadership theory which highlights the importance of person-centred structures which encourage interaction, relationships and the building of community. This conceptualisation also takes into account claims in the literature that the changing socio-cultural context necessitates “meaning reconstruction“ (Mellor, 2005, p. 2) and an ongoing reinvention (Degenhardt, 2006) of the Catholic school.

At the same time, a symbolic interactionist perspective alerts us to the need for a shared symbolic language in respect to human activities such as faith leadership (Charon, 2004, Stryker, 2002). However, since a shared symbolic language is socially created, socially understood and socially exclusive, the development of this language will depend on the willingness of key stakeholders to ‘make’ and ‘use’ new symbols. Given the breakdown in relationships between the principals and the clergy, the principals are rightly pessimistic in respect to gaining the support of the clergy for a new conceptualisation of faith leadership that is relevant to the changing socio-cultural context. With this interpretation in mind, this study offers the following theoretical proposition:

Theoretical Proposition Two:

Faith leadership conceptualised as Gospel-based meaning-making, offers possibilities for the future of principalship in Catholic schools. This conceptualisation not only meets the experience of principals, but also reflects recommendations in the literature regarding the development of a partnership between spirituality and religion in the context of the Catholic school as organisation, as well as emergent theories of leadership. However, a new conceptualisation of faith leadership will depend upon the social creation of a shared symbolic language by key stakeholders.

CHAPTER 8

DISPLAY AND DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS: ENACTING FAITH LEADERSHIP

8.1 Introduction

Given the research purpose of this study, which is to gain a more informed and sophisticated understanding of the faith leadership role of secondary principals in the Diocese of Lismore, research question three specifically examines the practical action principals take in their leadership role which they label as faith leadership. This chapter mirrors Chapters 6 and 7 and specifically addresses the principals' responses to the third research question:

Research Question 3: How do principals enact the faith leadership role in Catholic secondary schools in the Diocese of Lismore?

This research question accepts Fullan's (1991 & 2008) observations that "one of the most promising features of this new knowledge about change is that successful innovations are based on what might be accurately labelled "organized common sense" (1991, pp. xi-xii), and that dealing with continuous change starts with "using what we already know" (2008, p. 76). Hence, in accepting faith leadership as an exercise in change management, the third research question emphasises the integration of the general and the specific, the theory and the practice of faith leadership.

This chapter displays and discusses the data gathered in response to the third research question, during both the exploration and inspection stages of the study (see Section 8.2). Following a three step iterative process of data analysis and interpretation, it makes a number of key observations regarding the enactment of faith leadership in Catholic secondary schools in the Diocese of Lismore (see Section 8.3), before using a symbolic

interactionist lens to facilitate the advancement of theoretical propositions with regard to the practical nature faith leadership (see Section 8.4).

8.2 Enacting Faith Leadership

Mindful of the significant contextual factors impacting upon the enactment of faith leadership in Lismore Diocesan Catholic schools (see Chapter 6), the principals listed a range of leadership activities that they associated with the enactment of faith leadership during the exploration stage of this study. These leadership activities describe not only leadership behaviours, but also suggest the role of personal values and motivations in respect to the practical aspects of faith leadership. A selection of the principal responses and an initial categorisation of the research data are shown in Table 12.

Table 12 Ways of enacting faith leadership raised during the exploration stage focus groups

Enacting faith leadership	Areas identified
The way I deal with people, building relationships and showing compassion. (Principal I)	Relational Community
Taking a lead role, preparing prayer, being involved in liturgies, supporting the REC, your own commitment in terms of parish. (Principal C)	Role modeling Catholic practices
You've got to be known as a person who is fair dinkum about being a Catholic. Unless you do it yourself, you can't be out there saying, this is what you must do, it's your formation, integrity and discernment that motivates you. (Principal D)	Personal values
Living out your Christian values, ethos and your faith in the wider community. (Principal H)	Values enactment
Making meaning; touching people's reality. (Principal B)	Meaning making
Maintaining a strong Catholic focus through symbols, policies and promoting links with the parish. (Principal F)	Symbolic

These responses indicate that for the principals in this study, faith leadership involves more than a set of leadership behaviours. There are also suggestions that faith leadership represents an expression of personal motivations and values. As the study moved into the inspection stage, there developed an interest in clarifying the key leadership behaviours labelled as faith leadership and investigating the role and function of personal motivation and values in respect to faith leadership in Catholic secondary schools. In addition, the issue of leadership capabilities also became an area for further investigation.

8.2.1 Leadership Behaviours

The research data from the inspection stage of the study suggest that the leadership behaviours associated with faith leadership are clustered around four interrelated themes: teaching the Catholic faith, active participation in prayer and liturgy, the promotion of Catholic identity and community building. First and foremost, the principals describe the enactment of faith leadership in terms of teaching the Catholic faith. Principal F is typical in his response. “Faith leadership involves living the gospel ... presenting the teachings of Christ”. On a practical note, the principals’ responses cite the elements of an articulation of faith in a school setting as writing on spiritual matters in school newsletters, speaking about faith matters at assemblies, staff meetings and community events, running programs for staff and parents, teaching religious education and leading retreats and spirituality days. As Principal J explains,

I think people would understand and see me as a faith leader in that respect, that I'm willing to take the lead and willing to say this is what we're really on about ... You do it as an example, and it doesn't worry me when people think this is corny, because I think it's really important.

Secondly, the principals describe their faith leadership role in terms of active participation in the prayer and liturgy. As Principal C observes, “It has now become a custom that I would have some sort of a role in the [school] liturgy

and it's important that I do." However, the principals also understand that their faith leadership role extends beyond the prayer and liturgical life of the school to the parish. Principal L sees his "visibility in the parish community" as another avenue for the enactment of faith leadership. Reading at school and parish masses, other involvement in parish liturgy, membership of the Parish Council, involvement in parish programs are also mentioned. Here Principal K explains his commitment to parish involvement.

I have a strong connection with Church ... the notion of presence, the notion of taking responsibility, reading and playing a role in the liturgy are very much part of that connection.

Thirdly, the principals detail their faith leadership in terms of the promotion of the Catholic identity of their schools. Here external symbolism is deemed to be important, as Principal E states:

You demonstrate your faith leadership to others not only in terms of your basic behaviour and relationships with people but through the external signs of a Catholic school and the external signs of your faith leadership as well.

The importance of external symbolism is clearly articulated by Principal K who describes writing a letter to the Bishop after a principals' meeting where the schools were criticised as not being Catholic enough.

I wrote a series of points that I presented to the Bishop about how X is a Catholic school - you know, from the moment you drive through the gates, past the statues of Mary, when you walk up the stairs you can see a cross, a portrait of the Pope, a picture of the Bishop in the foyer - this is clearly a Catholic place. We have a chapel, we have a vibrant RE program and an REC who is passionate about the role and making religion an integral part of what X is. We have staff masses where we have up to 12 staff on a voluntary basis on a Wednesday.

Finally, all principals also spoke of building community as an important practical aspect of their faith leadership role. Principal K suggests that faith is realised in community.

It doesn't matter if someone from a doctrinal point of view says this is what the faith says. Unless it actually connects with your lived experience and has a sense of truth in it, then it's not going to be a part of who you are ... I believe that if you do the doctrinal thing you don't make an impact. I want to touch the students and the staff by doing it, by building community, by encouraging students and staff to feel connected.

To this end, the principals in this study clearly emphasise the important role of pastoral care in community building. The way that Catholic schools deal with people – staff, parents, students and community members – is highlighted in areas such as decision making (Principal J), solving conflict (Principal B), showing compassion and support in times of personal crisis (Principals L, C & A), rituals and celebrations (Principal D) and hospitality and inclusivity (Principal I). Thus attendance at funerals, (especially those of staff relatives and the parents of students), is listed by all principals as an indicator of 'doing' faith leadership through community building. The importance of presence and attendance at key events, are extended by Principals C, K and L, to the notion of presence in the pastoral sense, of being with people, of making time for others. Principal J describes his presence in the playground as 'doing' faith leadership:

Some of the best faith leadership work that a principal does is walking around the oval at lunchtime, and just saying hello and listening to kids worries and things like that. Ensuring that the pastoral aspects of school are very much in place, and I think that's perhaps one area that's not acknowledged.

8.2.2 Personal Motivations and Values

In line with their conceptualisation of faith leadership as Gospel-based meaning-making, principals link their community building to the enactment of core Christian values. Explaining this point, Principal K argues the case for the development of community, not from a secular perspective but grounded in the Christian story and the sharing of faith.

Students, parents and staff in our schools have experienced community: rich relationships, support, connection and compassion. They know that this building of genuine community comes from our Catholic faith. These are our values and our mission. They hear the Gospel stories, they have heard the words of Jesus about love, justice and treatment of others constantly reinforced. It is my hope that each and every one of our students takes that message out into the wider community, and works for right relationships in everything that they do.

In similar vein, Principal A explains.

I constantly tell them at assembly that we are a community, we are more than a school, we are a group of people who care for one another and that is what our purpose is, so I've been, I suppose, chipping away at that approach over the last four and a half years.

For the principals, much of their identity as faith leaders lies in the conceptual alignment between their action and motivation for action, and the teachings of Jesus contained in the Gospel narratives. There are frequent references to the foundational importance of Gospel values in the way in which principals describe their faith leadership activities.

Thus the principals in this study appreciate the role played by personal values in the enactment of their faith leadership. For Principal J the enactment of faith leadership “is not just a doing position ... it's a being position”. Moreover, the principals clearly identify the Christian tradition as

the source of their core values. Principal D encapsulates this understanding:

Faith leadership involves providing opportunities for those in the school community, parents, students and teachers, to identify their encounters and experiences with God and to lead them to the understanding that God is part of it all.

Here personal values and the values espoused within the Christian tradition are regarded as one and the same. As Principal D observes,

Leadership is actively espousing deeply held values. These values are like a wellspring – they nourish, support and flow through your leadership action. Values come from within and they colour everything that you do. I believe that my values come from my parents and my faith, a combination of both really.

The prominence of a discourse of values in response to the third research question, indicates that for these principals Gospel values provide the ethical, social and psychological underpinnings of leadership. This motivation is described by Principal K: “I hope that with an understanding of the Gospel message, the inherent richness of the Gospel, the values underpinning the Gospel, will find their way into the way that I do things.”

In linking faith leadership with the enactment of personal values and motivations, these principals note the importance of authentic leadership. As Principal J explains, “You can’t do something unless you’re committed and unless you live what you want to do, so I think you’ve got that obligation to ensure that you’re an authentic human being.” Principal B warns of reverse scenarios, “I think the danger is that you are going to get people who do courses to get the job without their heart ever being in it.”

Here principals also make a practical distinction between good leadership and the faith dimension, indicating that the principal of a Catholic school

must have both. “I can think of examples of people that I’ve known who have been really good faith-filled people, but couldn’t run a school to save themselves” (Principal B). Consequently, principals were clear that they valued opportunities for professional support and development to enable them to be effective faith leaders in their practical day-to-day enactment of the role (see Section 6.2.5).

In this way, the principals in this study highlight the complexity of enacting faith leadership. For them, faith leadership involves certain leadership behaviours including teaching the Catholic faith, active participation in prayer and liturgy, the promotion of Catholic identity and community building. At the same time, the principals regard the enactment of faith leadership as the expression of personal motivations and values. Here, personal values and Gospel values are one and the same, and the principal respondents once again describe authentic faith leadership as Gospel-based meaning-making. For these principals their commitment is such that they continue to look for opportunities to develop their leadership capabilities in respect to their faith leadership role.

8.3 Making Sense of Complexity

To make sense of this complexity surrounding the practical expression of faith leadership in Catholic secondary schools, a third-order interpretation of the research data highlights the theoretical significance of the findings. Kriger and Seng’s (2005) understanding of three “ontological types” (p. 788) or manifestations of spiritual leadership offered a starting point for this moment of interpretation. In addition, this study once again relies on the interpretive lens of symbolic interactionism to gain a deeper appreciation of the challenge of faith leadership in secondary schools in the Diocese of Lismore (see Section 8.4).

8.3.1 Three Manifestations of Faith Leadership

As discussed in Section 3.5.4, Kriger and Seng (2005), in presenting a model for spiritual leadership, rely on three “ontological types” or

manifestations of spiritual leadership: namely “doing”, “having” and “being” (p. 788). For these authors, faith leadership as ‘doing’ focuses on leadership behaviours, and hence, describing faith leadership in this way is a relatively easy task, because these actions are “familiar experientially to people in organizational settings” (p. 790) and are readily observable. Developing this thought, Kriger and Seng note a second manifestation of ‘having’. Accepting that there are observable leadership behaviours which can be described as spiritual leadership, it is consequently desirable for spiritual leaders to have “the right skills, competencies, resources and personality traits appropriate to the task” (Kriger & Seng, 2005, p. 790). Finally, Kriger and Seng (2005) highlight the manifestation of ‘being’: the “inner meaning, leader values, vision and moral examples at multiple levels of being” (p. 771). They posit that, the values and attitudes of the leader that stem from their core ‘being’ will, in turn, impact on a leader’s vision for the organisation (p. 795). Moreover, they argue that religious belief systems provide an appropriate source of the values and attitudes to underpin leadership action. Hence faith leadership as “being” is rooted in personal faith and a “spiritual worldview” (p. 791) developed through “the individual’s early childhood development, ... moral role models and ethical examples from the sacred writings, ... and inner leadings that arise through contemplative prayer and meditation” (p. 793).

The three manifestations of spiritual leadership proposed by Kriger and Seng (2005), “doing”, “having” and “being”, are clearly evident in the emergent theories around faith and leadership in organisations and schools. Here the distinction is made between ‘management’ and ‘leadership’. As Fairholm (1998) explains,

leadership is not management. In short, management deals with such things as performance, productivity and systems. The manager’s job is to make every person, system, activity, program and policy countable, measurable, predictable, and therefore, controllable. Leadership partakes of a different reality.

Leaders...infuse the group with values. They think differently, value things differently, relate to others differently. (p. 54)

Appreciating the need for leadership rather than management, Fry (2003) describes his model of spiritual leadership as an “intrinsic motivation model” (p. 693) which involves the leader modeling personal values, attitudes and behaviours to meet the needs of employees for meaning, connection and appreciation. In a similar vein, Fairholm (2001) asserts that spiritual leadership is fundamentally an internal and personal process: “Inner leaders make primary use of leadership theory and technologies, based on values... on the emotional, implicit, non-countable, personal side of human relationships” (preface, xx). Yet again Duignan (2006) maintains that for “educational leaders to be credible, [they] have to be capable human beings as well as capable professional educators” (p. 116), and he cites Flintham’s research connecting leadership capability and authentic leadership as “a growth in ‘being’ rather than ‘doing’” (2006, p. 154).

The three manifestations of spiritual leadership proposed by Kriger and Seng (2005), ‘doing’, ‘having’ and ‘being’, are clearly evident in the research data from this study. The recognition of personal motivation and the need for an authentic alignment between leadership action, leadership context and personal and communal relationships, are also evident in the literature on organisational leadership and more particularly educational leadership (Bass & Steidlmeier, 1999; Whetstone, 2002).

In line with this claim, the principals in this study had no difficulty describing a variety of faith leadership behaviours that ranged from teaching Religious Education and reading at parish masses to “walking around the playground at lunchtime” (Principal J). For the principals, it was also important to have knowledge of scripture and Catholic philosophy, as well as leadership skills for community building and communication. Appreciating the significance of ‘being’, the principals in this study identified the “innate” (Principal I) and “intensely personal” (Principal E) nature of faith leadership, suggesting a strong link between leadership action, intrinsic motivation and personal

beliefs and values. Again, echoing Kriger and Seng (2005), they saw no problem with having religion as a source of personal values and motivations. As Principal C describes, “I make no distinction between leadership and faith leadership, it is all about who I am and my sense of being comes from my faith, my beliefs in Jesus Christ and his mission.”

Here, in recognising that faith leadership is more than ‘doing’ and ‘having’ and appreciating the influence of ‘being’ on leadership behaviours, Principal J observed, “It [faith leadership] is not just a doing position ... it’s a being position”. Moreover, for this same principal, “You can’t do something unless you’re committed, and unless you live what you want to do, so I think you’ve got that obligation to ensure that you’re an authentic human being.” Hence this research finds the principals fully appreciative of the role played by personal motivation and values in the enactment of their leadership roles and, consequently, alert to the possibility of inauthentic versions of faith leadership, as Principal D explains:

It is important that faith leadership is not just seen as a list of jobs to be crossed off or boxes to tick; for me there is a much deeper, intrinsic level where your actions and your values and beliefs are in alignment, it is only then that you can call yourself an authentic faith leader – anyone can tick the boxes.

8.3.2 *The Primacy of Personal Values*

In presenting faith leadership as an amalgam of ‘doing’, ‘having’ and ‘being’, the principals’ highlight the critical function of values. This understanding of the importance of values in leadership arises frequently in the literature. Kriger and Seng (2005) note the primacy of personal values and argue that “an organizational leader’s values and attitudes will moderate the effect of leader vision and leader behavior” (p. 795). In a similar vein, Fairholm (1998) points to “personal values controlling behavior” (p. 57) and makes a strong case for the link between personal spirituality and authentic expression of values in his framework for spiritual leadership.

A leader's philosophy about life and leadership are given substance and meaning by the internal system of spiritual values focused on. These values become a vitalizing vision of the possible. The heart is what the leader believes and values. This spiritual heart vision, in turn, drives the mind and shapes the behavioral (managerial) tools we use in a given situation. (p. 28)

The principals in this study understand that personal values are foundational to their enactment of faith leadership. As Principal A explains,

It's difficult to describe the importance of authenticity for faith leadership. I know I have used that term a lot, but for me it is critical that what you do is reflective of who you are, and that's best seen in the values you live by – honesty, tolerance, respect, compassion.

Similarly, Principal E observes:

My values are at the heart of everything that I do, and I hope that these are apparent to the students, staff and parents, especially when difficult decisions have to be made. A core belief in the dignity of every human person as God's creation underpins the way I treat people, and the importance I accord to this.

Significantly, the literature argues that leadership behaviour and personal values are not fixed and always remain open to a "dynamic interpretation and meaning internal to the leader" (Kriger & Seng, 2005, p. 805).

Explaining this internal process of interpretation and meaning, Hodgkinson (1996) posits that personal values and behaviour are not isolated phenomena, but are two components of a single entity, the Self. The Self, in turn, is constituted from the integration of one's self-concept, self-esteem, motives, values, beliefs, and behaviours, and the integration of all of these components of the Self, influences the manner in which the individual thinks about, perceives, and responds to his or her world. Consequently, behaviour is influenced by trans-rational personal values that represent a

commitment to deeply held moral and ethical codes and religious worldviews, as well as by external value systems such as peer group values, organisational values and cultural values. Thus personal preference, group norms and cultural consensus all play a part in the development of personal values and ultimately influence behaviour.

Appreciating the primacy of personal values in determining faith leadership, Fry (2003) recommends that leaders “get in touch with their core values and communicate them to followers” (p. 696) in order to build collaborative cultures in which all stakeholders feel part of “a clearly articulated organizational vision” (p. 694). Moreover, Weeks (2003) recognises the importance of leaders having a clear set of values grounded in a strong ethical framework, and the “moral courage” to face the “mental challenges that are deeply connected to our core moral value - to be ethical in the face of a conscious awareness of the risks” (p. 38). In the light of these calls, Duignan (2006) suggests a more structured approach to the formation of educational leaders. “Formation programs for educational leaders should help them open their eyes to the possibilities in themselves and in others, and to the development of their capability to frame new paradigms of leadership” (p. 147).

Unfortunately, for the principals in this study, there are few opportunities for this style of formation in the Diocese of Lismore (see Section 6.2.5). At best the principals have to rely on principals’ meetings, conferences and other avenues where they can get together and discuss issues of relevance and importance to their role. Consequently, they recognise the need for a structured approach to the formation of educational leaders. Moreover, in describing a formation and support program, these principals did not stop with the conventional acquisition of knowledge and skills.

I would like to see a program of professional support, induction and development that doesn’t just look at what you need to know, but how you need to be. The sorts of issues we meet on a day-to-day basis require all sorts of skills from mediation and active listening to

crisis management. In addition, if we are going to be truly Catholic in the way in which we undertake our roles, there has to be time, extensive time, set aside for the spiritual – time to work out how to lead with authenticity and where personal faith and values fit.

(Principal F)

This recommendation is further appreciated if we consider the enactment of faith leadership from the perspective of symbolic interactionism.

8.4 From a Symbolic Interactionist Perspective

Symbolic interactionism offers a useful theoretical perspective on the problem of enacting faith leadership by accepting that roles or behavioural expectations are not a fixed commodity, but are socially created, fluid and dynamic. Thus, roles or behavioural expectations are framed as “a set of rules” that is governed by negotiation (Charon, 2004, p. 168). The principal as faith leader has a personal understanding of his or her own role. Others act towards the principal in a certain way according to their understanding of their own roles, as well as their behavioural expectations of the principal. Subsequent interaction may alter their perception of that role, or the principal may alternatively react to the expectations of others and their perception of their own role changes. Hence roles are subject to the vagaries of human social interaction, and can be “fluid, vague and contradictory” (Stryker, 2002, p. 79).

Within this study, the data indicate that each of the principals came to principalship with some understanding of their faith leadership role. Family background, significant others in the workplace, and formal training prepared them for this new role. Once in the role, interaction with students, parents, staff and clergy helped them to further refine their conceptualisation of faith leadership, and assisted them to develop practical capabilities in respect to the enactment of this role. Despite difficulties and fractured relationships with parish priests, principals are committed to living a life of faith in the Catholic tradition, as Principal K outlines:

I am a committed Catholic and this is the basis of my leadership action. Now, I often feel that I am not on the same page as the official Church, but I do know that I am sharing the message of Christ; I know that I am building community; I know that my values are understood and appreciated by those I work with, and I hope that our students will go out into the world understanding what the Gospel message means for their lives and their actions. I feel comfortable in my faith leadership, even though I recognise that it is an understanding that I have come to through personal experience, not through anything I have been given by the Catholic Education Office.

Symbolic interactionists explain findings such as this by advancing a “role making “ (Hewitt, 2003b, p. 68; Stryker, 2002, p. 80) process that highlights the interactive, dynamic relationship between self and society, and recognises complexities in both society and self. Here “role making [and role taking] is a self-conscious activity” (p. 69) that requires the Self to be an “active human being” (Charon, 2004, p. 41) in the environment. In symbolic interactionism, an understanding of the nature of self is therefore critical to any appreciation of the relationship between human persons, society and the environment. Here the Self is perceived not as ‘identity’ or ‘core being’, but as “an object of the actor’s own actions” (Charon, 2004, p. 72). Human persons act, then through “mind action” (p. 104) they analyse and interpret this action upon their self, as well as on others and on their environment.

Because of mind action, we tell ourselves how to act toward the environment around us. We are able to apply what we know to the situation, to make plans of what to do, and to alter our plans and definitions as we and others act in the situation. (p. 100)

Thus the role making process involves a reciprocal relationship between “society”, “Self” and “interaction” (Stryker, 2002, p. 80) as illustrated in Figure 7. Here, role identity is constructed using a cognitive process within

the context of interaction. This role making process involves the Self 'in society' being self-reflective and interactive with both significant others, as well as the society's norms or the "generalized other" (Charon, 2004, p. 76). In the course of this reflection or interaction, the Self will engage in role making and role taking processes. As Hewitt (2003b) explains,

Role making is the process wherein the person constructs activity in a situation so that it fits the definition of the situation, is consonant with the person's own role and meshes with the activity of others. Role taking is the process wherein the person imaginatively occupies the role of another and looks at self and the situation from that vantage point in order to engage in role making. (p. 68)

The recognition of the importance of reflection and interaction in the processes of role making and role taking, raises questions in respect to the social structures that enable or inhibit such reflection/interaction. In this instance, social structure refers to the "patterned regularities that characterize most human interaction" (Stryker, 2002, p. 65). Thus

if the social person is shaped by interaction, it is social structure that shapes the possibilities for interaction and so, ultimately, the person. Conversely, if the social person creatively alters patterns of interaction, those altered patterns can ultimately change social structure. (p .66)

Given this argument, symbolic interactionists, in role-conflict situations, focus on the social structures that enable or inhibit social interaction and the role making process. This thought is consistent with literature focusing on the development of faith leadership capabilities. As Fairholm (1997) writes:

Different communities are important at different stages in life. Early on, parents, teachers, and peers provide much of the basis for our personal values and beliefs. Later, individuals, professional colleagues, and religious principles may be paramount. And for

some, literature, life experiences, and (for good or bad) the media and television shape our spiritual values. (p. 88)

In the past, the principals in this study had experienced different communities that had helped them to form personal values and beliefs and prepared them for faith leadership. Principal C appreciated opportunities for faith development within the family. “My upbringing was very Catholic and I learnt my faith and my values from my parents and extended family.” In addition, the principal respondents often cited significant role models.

His non-judgmental way of going about things, his great belief in his faith and his belief in the good of people and what people have to offer, these things have made a lasting impression on me. He was a religious, but he was the most balanced person I’ve ever met.
(Principal A)

However, as discussed in Chapter 6, contextual factors such as the impact of the secular society on religious belief and practice within the school community and the negative clergy-principal relationship, as well as limited professional support from the Catholic Education Office, has meant that there are now fewer “communities” or opportunities for social interaction to support principals seeking to clarify personal values and take up the challenge of faith leadership.

From a symbolic interactionist perspective, it is therefore not surprising that this study finds evidence of “role conflict” (Stryker, 2002, p. 73) and “role strain” (p. 76), and this theoretical perspective directs our attention to the social structures that enable or inhibit social interaction and the role making process. In particular, symbolic interactionism alerts us to the damage that has been caused by the breakdown in relationships between the principals and the clergy within the Diocese of Lismore. Here there are few opportunities for the sharing of perspectives, cooperation, mutuality or reciprocity vital for future development. Consequently, this finding points to the need for more role making opportunities.

8.5 Conclusion

This chapter specifically addresses the third research question: **How do principals enact the faith leadership role in Catholic secondary schools in the Diocese of Lismore?**

In seeking to learn more about the practical action principals take in faith leadership, this research question examines the everyday actions that Catholic secondary school principals describe as faith leadership and the practical challenges they face in effectively enacting this facet of their leadership role. To this end, this chapter displays the data gathered in response to the third research question during both the exploration and inspection stages of the study, and discusses the theoretical significance of these findings in terms of the literature. Here, principals describe faith leadership as an amalgam of ‘doing’ (leadership action), ‘having’ (leadership skills and competencies) and ‘being’ (inner meaning sourced in personal values). Thus, in describing personal values as pivotal to faith leadership in action, there is a critical correlation between the way in which principals conceptualise faith leadership (Gospel-based meaning-making) and the way in which it is realised at a school level.

As in Chapters 6 and 7, this chapter concludes by advancing a theoretical proposition to guide policy and practice in respect to faith leadership in the future.

Theoretical Proposition Three:

The enactment of faith leadership can be conceptualised as an amalgam of ‘doing’ (faith leadership behaviours), ‘having’ (faith leadership capabilities) and ‘being’ (personal motivations and values). Given the role of personal values in directing leadership behaviour, it is important that faith leaders get in touch with their core values and communicate these to others.

Consequently, there is a need for structured formation programs in the Diocese of Lismore that emphasise role-making and role taking processes.

CHAPTER 9

REVIEW AND SYNTHESIS

9.1 The Research Problem and Purpose

This study focuses on faith leadership as a dimension of the role of the Catholic secondary school principal. This study is situated within Catholic secondary schools in the Diocese of Lismore and highlights the perspectives of the participating principals in these schools. In particular, this study investigates the challenge of faith leadership, as well as the ways in which the principals conceptualise and enact faith leadership in their schools.

Research during the 1990s, by Bezzina (1996) and Tinsey (1998), established the problematic nature of faith leadership in Catholic schools in the Diocese of Lismore. However, the impetus for this current study was a personal and pragmatic concern for the faith leadership role of the principal (see Section 1.1). Thirty years experience in Catholic education has alerted me to the growing pressure on principals in Catholic schools to demonstrate faith leadership. I am also aware of the growing criticism levelled at principals by local clergy for the perceived loss of Catholicity and Catholic practice within the Catholic school and local parish. It also seemed that the principals themselves did not have a clear understanding of what faith leadership entailed, or how they should actualise this role in their own schools. Moreover, a review of prior research revealed limited empirical research into faith leadership from the perspective of Catholic school principals, with scant empirical interest in this topic since Ciriello's (1993) groundbreaking work in the United States. Australian researchers (e.g. Davison, 2006; McEvoy, 2006; Mellor, 2005) have only recently shown an interest in the faith leadership role of Catholic school principals.

From the outset of this study, it appeared that the challenge of faith leadership was due to a number of interrelated factors that defy precise description. Consequently in seeking to clarify the research problem and

purpose, this study began with a close analysis of the context of the faith leadership role of the secondary school principal in the Diocese of Lismore. Here it is assumed that human activity, such as Catholic education, occurs within a number of interrelated contexts (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). Thus within this study, the Catholic secondary school principal is situated within the specific context of the Diocese of Lismore and Catholic education in Australia, as well as the wider perspective of socio-cultural change. The contextual analysis that followed clarifies the research problem by highlighting the practical issues surrounding the principals' faith leadership role in a context of extensive social, cultural and ecclesial change – changes which significantly impact their capacity to undertake the faith leadership role. Moreover, although Catholic Education Office documents identify faith leadership as a significant area of responsibility for secondary principals, there is little support in policy or practical guidelines for this responsibility. In this way, the contextual analysis confirms that the principals' faith leadership role, in the context of Catholic secondary schools in the Diocese of Lismore, is worthy of study.

Given this research problem, the purpose of this study is clarified in terms of investigating the faith leadership role of Catholic secondary school principals in the Diocese of Lismore in order to develop a more informed and sophisticated understanding of this dimension of the principals' leadership role. It is expected that such an understanding will not only point to new directions for policy and practice in the Diocese of Lismore, but also contribute to wider theoretical developments in this field. With this understanding of the research problem and research purpose in mind, the research questions were identified.

9.2 The Research Questions

The research questions for this study were identified following a comprehensive review of the literature (Chapter 3). This review explores issues surrounding faith and leadership in organisations and theories of faith leadership and leadership values in Christian organisations including the

Catholic school. In brief, this review of the literature highlights a growing interest in the issue of faith in organisational life and leadership, and advances various faith leadership models that link faith, spirituality and leadership (Fairholm, 1997; Fry, 2003; Kriger & Seng, 2005; Whetstone, 2002). This literature review also recommends values as an orchestrating framework in the examination of models of organisational faith leadership. The conceptual themes and developments emerging from the review of the literature led to the establishment of the following research questions for this study:

Research Question 1: How do principals understand the challenge of faith leadership in Catholic secondary schools in the Diocese of Lismore?

Research Question 2: How do principals conceptualise faith leadership in Catholic secondary schools in the Diocese of Lismore?

Research Question 3: How do principals enact the faith leadership role in Catholic secondary schools in the Diocese of Lismore?

9.3 Research Paradigm and Design

In line with these research questions, this study is situated within the theoretical framework of symbolic interactionism. Symbolic interactionism is an appropriate choice for this research as it focuses on “how individuals engage in social transactions and how these transactions contribute to the creation and maintenance of social structures and the individual’s self-identity” (Gall et al. 2007, p. 500). At the same time, symbolic interactionism facilitates the emergence of “new assumptions” (Charon, 2004, p. 227) regarding the complexity of human behaviour, as it appreciates that “human beings engage in a continuous stream of action, overt and covert, influenced by ongoing decisions along the stream” (Charon, 2004, p. 137). Symbolic

interactionism also highlights the importance of symbolic communication reminding researchers that “human beings respond not to a naïve world, but to the world as categorized or classified ... a symbolic environment” (Stryker, 2002, p. 56). In appreciating the nature of self and the relationship between self and society, symbolic interactionism explains role conflict and role strain as well as offering a “role-making process” (Stryker, 2002, p. 80) to strengthen role identity, a concept at the heart of this research problem. In this way, symbolic interactionism creates a critical link between the theoretical and the practical dimensions of faith leadership in Catholic schools and the sociological and subjectivist nature of the research questions, while at the same time providing a concrete lens for the interpretation of the research data.

Complementing the choice of symbolic interactionism as the theoretical framework, this study relies on constructivism as the research paradigm. Constructivism allows the researcher to probe the interpretations or meanings that participants ascribe to specific social environments. This research paradigm is based on the assumption that the most effective way to understand a phenomenon is to view it in its context and “from the standpoint of the individual actors” (Candy, 1989, p. 3). Accepting that meaning is filtered through and moulded by social realities such as common language, meanings, symbolism and interaction (Gall et al. 2007, p. 26), constructivism focuses on the “researcher and respondent relationship” (Guba & Lincoln in Denzin & Lincoln, 1994, p. 111) and encourages multiple intangible meanings to emerge rather than a single objective truth to be discovered (Denzin & Lincoln, 2003).

In keeping with the symbolic interactionist theoretical perspective, this study engages these multiple research methods in two stages: “exploration” and “inspection” (Charon, 2004, p. 208). The exploration stage allowed eight principals in the Diocese of Lismore to express their understanding of faith leadership in focus groups, thereby facilitating a “multivocality of participants’ attitudes, experiences, and beliefs” (Madriz, 2003, p. 364). Record analysis enabled the researcher to gain an initial understanding of

the view of faith leadership inherent in the documentation issued by the Catholic Education Office. Documents such as role and value statements and leadership statements gave the research a number of areas of institutional prominence in the area of faith leadership. The inspection stage comprised two individual interviews with each of the ten principal participants in the study. During both the exploration and inspection stage the researcher kept a reflective journal to record both field note data and personal insights.

Within this study, data analysis and interpretation followed Neuman's (2006) "three-step iterative process" (p. 160). The first step in this process of interpretation involves learning about the research problem from the meaning ascribed by the participants. The second step includes looking for internal meaning and coherence, expressed through categorisation, codification and the identification of themes. In the third step, interpretation, the researcher reflects upon and analyses the theoretical significance of the research findings. The research findings and the theoretical propositions that follow emerge from this three-step iterative process of data collection, analysis and interpretation.

9.4 Research Questions Answered

The utilisation of multiple research methods and the three-step iterative process of data interpretation within this research study results in a "rich picture" of the principals' perspectives on the faith leadership dimension of their role as Catholic secondary school leaders. Following this first and second order interpretation of the data the following findings were identified:

1. Socio-cultural change has led to calls for new leadership paradigms in Catholic secondary schools;
2. There is significant tension between the clergy and secondary school principals in the Diocese of Lismore which impacts significantly on faith leadership in both its conceptualisation and its enactment;

3. There has been a lack of professional support for principals in their faith leadership role;
4. There is conceptual confusion in regard to faith leadership in the Diocese of Lismore with principals utilising personal, communal and theological descriptors of the phenomenon;
5. Principals make the distinction between personal faith and formal religious adherence when conceptualising faith leadership;
6. Principals also make a clear distinction between Church models of leadership and models more applicable to Catholic school communities;
7. There is an absence of a shared understanding of the purpose of Catholic schools which impacts on the conceptualisation and enactment of the faith leadership role;
8. The principals conceptualise faith leadership as gospel-based meaning making;
9. Principals describe the enactment of faith leadership in terms of an amalgam of 'doing', 'having' and 'being';
10. Principals highlight personal values as foundational to the conceptualisation and enactment of faith leadership.

Undertaking a third-order interpretation of these findings enabled the researcher to apply theoretical significance to the research data and to advance a number of theoretical propositions (see Chapters 6, 7 and 8).

Theoretical proposition 1: Faith leadership in Catholic schools is a complex phenomenon as a result of three contextual factors: the impact of the socio-cultural context, negative principal-clergy relationships and the absence of professional support for principals as faith leaders. As a way forward, principals need to assume the role of the activist professional in order to develop new patterns of social interaction, particularly with clergy. There is also a need for system support for the principals' faith leadership role through the provision of opportunities for participation, dialogue and collaboration as well as formal formation programs.

This proposition accepts Sachs' (1999) argument that "identity cannot be seen as a 'fixed thing'" (p. 2) in a time of rapid change. In applying the theory of active professionalism to the findings from the first research question, the researcher was able to assert that "active trust" and "generative politics" (Sachs, 2003a, pp. 140-146), are central to the search for a new professional identity for the education profession generally and Catholic school faith leaders specifically. These strategies promote collaboration, dialogue, collective capacity and critical reflection which are critical in rebuilding relationships between principals, parish priests and diocesan authorities and for the process of working toward meaningful agreements on core issues such as the purpose of Catholic education. This study found that principals, despite significant contextual challenges, are open to the development of new leadership paradigms that highlight the transformation of individuals and communities. They are also earnest in their desire for more productive and generative relationships with clergy.

Theoretical proposition 2: Faith leadership conceptualised as Gospel-based meaning making, offers possibilities for the future of principalship in Catholic schools. This conceptualisation not only meets the experience of principals but also reflects recommendations in the literature around developing a partnership between spirituality and religion in the context of the Catholic school as organisation, as well as emergent theories of leadership. However, a new conceptualisation of faith leadership will depend upon the social creation of a shared symbolic language by key stakeholders.

Current research suggests that ongoing socio-cultural change has also necessitated "meaning reconstruction" (Mellor, 2005, p. 2) and an ongoing reinvention (Degenhardt, 2006) of the Catholic school. At the same time, symbolic interactionism asserts the need for a shared symbolic language in respect to human activities, particularly when there is conflict between various stakeholders and a lack of agreement on core purpose within organisations (Charon, 2004, Stryker, 2002). Moreover, since a shared

symbolic language is socially created, socially understood and socially exclusive, the development of this language will depend on the willingness of key stakeholders to 'make' and 'use' new symbols. In conceptualising faith leadership, the principal respondents in this study initially displayed conceptual confusion around the phenomenon of faith leadership, the definitional issues in respect to the 'faith' and 'leadership' components of faith leadership as well as different opinions about the purpose of Catholic schools. This conceptual confusion was underpinned by the lack of a shared symbolic language. With the emergence, from the perspectives of the principal respondents, of gospel-based meaning making as an approach to the reconceptualisation of faith leadership, it is imperative that a shared symbolic language also be developed to support this understanding.

Theoretical proposition 3: The enactment of faith leadership can be conceptualised as an amalgam of: 'doing' (faith leadership behaviours); 'having' (faith leadership capabilities); and 'being' (personal motivations and values). Given the role of personal values in directing leadership behavior, it is important that faith leaders get in touch with their core values and communicate them to others. Consequently, there is a need for structured formation programs in the Diocese of Lismore that emphasise role-making and role taking processes.

Accepting the critical importance of shared symbolic language for the development of new models for faith leadership, symbolic interactionism also assists with the problem of enacting faith leadership by proposing that roles are socially created, fluid and dynamic. Thus, roles or behavioural expectations are framed as "a set of rules" that is governed by negotiation (Charon, 2004, p. 168). As a consequence, role interaction with students, parents, staff and clergy will help principals to refine their conceptualisation of faith leadership and to develop practical capabilities in respect to the enactment of this role. In the light of calls for "reimagining" (Mellor, 2005) Catholic school leadership, this understanding of "role making" (Hewitt, 2003b, p. 68; Stryker, 2002, p. 80) is critical for and collaborative redevelopment of the faith leadership role. Given

the principals' observations that faith leadership is an amalgam of 'doing' (practical actions), 'having' (knowledge and skills) and 'being' (intrinsic motivation stemming from personal values), the professional support of principals in these areas is vital.

9.5 Towards a Model of Faith Leadership in the Catholic Secondary School

As the purpose of this research study is the investigation of the faith leadership role of Catholic secondary school principals in the Diocese of Lismore in order to develop a more informed and sophisticated understanding and reconstruction of the phenomenon, it was anticipated that the data analysis would not only indicate new directions for policy and practice in the Diocese of Lismore but also offer suggestions regarding the critical elements of any future models of faith leadership. To this end, this study offers a new model (Figure 7) of faith leadership that reflects the theoretical propositions which have arisen from the research data.

In this model, gospel-based meaning making lies at the core of faith leadership. This core conceptual understanding is supported by three constructs that forge a link between the intrinsic and extrinsic elements of the principals' role: faith leadership as 'doing', 'being' and 'having'. The interrelationship between personal values (being), professional knowledge and skills (having) and practical actions (doing) is generative with changes in approach emerging from interaction with students, parents, staff and clergy. This process of role-making in response to changing socio-cultural, ecclesial and educational contexts demands correlated changes in policy formation in respect to leadership and the provision of appropriate professional support and training for principals. Sachs (1999) observes that: "Identity must be forever re-established and negotiated" and this model situates this interactive paradigm within the wider context of Sachs' activist professionalist approach, which advocates dialogue, collaboration, participation, reciprocity, trust and openness to new ideas (1999; 2003a). For faith leadership to be responsive to both the needs of the school

community and the wider parish, this dialogue and collaborative interaction is critical. Finally this model situates this dynamic interactive process within the context of Catholic education in the twenty-first century and the need for foundational agreement on the mission and purpose of Catholic schooling. This model, therefore, recognises both the personal nature of faith leadership, the importance of responsiveness to context and the need for principals to actively develop professional identity through collaboration with all stakeholders in Catholic education.

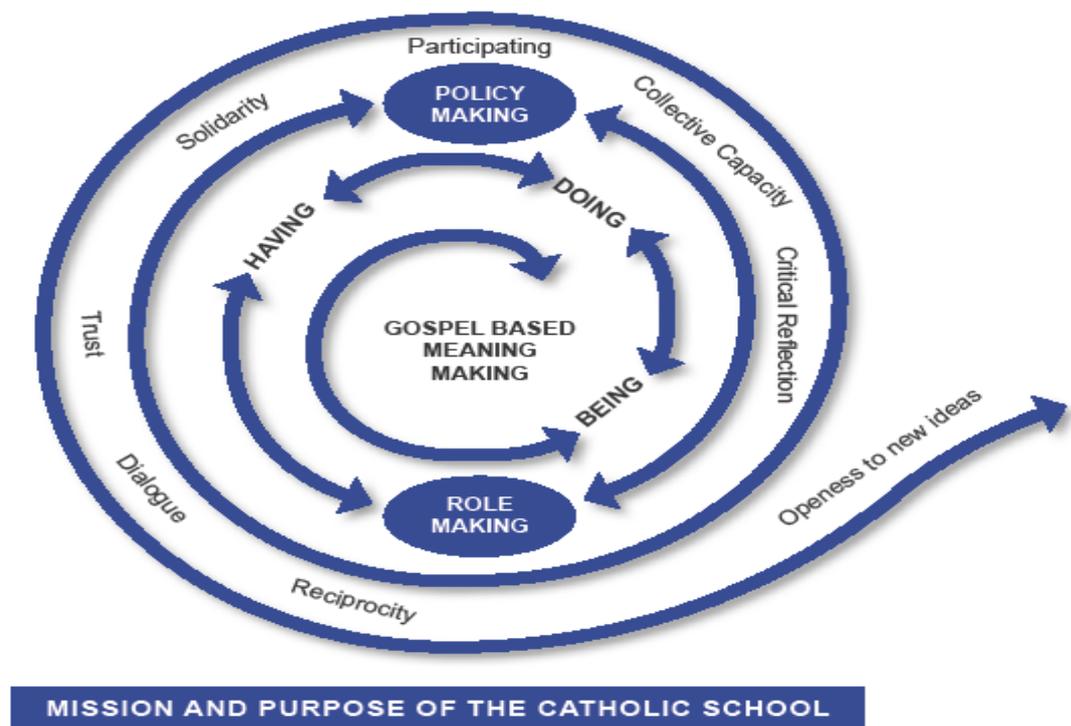


Figure 8: A model of faith leadership for Catholic school principals.

9.6 Recommendations

In this exploration of the way in which faith leadership is understood by principals in Catholic secondary schools in the Diocese of Lismore, there is no intention of developing a definitive theory of faith leadership. Instead as Figure 8 shows, the research has facilitated the establishment of a framework within which the faith leadership aspect of the role of the principal can be better understood. To this end, this research may contribute toward both the ongoing reconstruction of the concept of faith leadership and its future development. In addition, the study has enabled the perspectives of the principal participants to be heard in an area that has not been subject to intensive empirical scrutiny. From this instrumental perspective, the findings of this research study have led to the following recommendations being advanced:

- 1. That dialogue occur at a systems level regarding the purpose of Catholic education in the context of widespread socio-cultural change. This dialogue should involve principals, Catholic Education Office personnel and the clergy of the Diocese of Lismore.**

This recommendation responds to the findings of this study in respect to the challenge of socio-cultural change, the conceptual confusion regarding faith leadership, the absence of a shared language regarding the mission and purpose of Catholic schools and, evidence of a dysfunctional principal-clergy relationship. Here system level dialogue involving key stakeholders is recommended as the way forward in response to escalating tension between schools, parishes and the Catholic Education Office as well as a process for ongoing negotiation of purpose and mission in response to the reality of continuous change. This recommendation recognises the importance of shared symbolic language (Charon, 2004) as well as the generative power of “new kinds of social and professional relationships where different parts of the broader educational enterprise work together in strategic ways” (Sachs, 2003a, p.140). Finally, this focus on the system as

a whole rather than individual schools and parishes will develop “a critical mass of organizational colleagues who ... through wider engagement inside and outside the organization ... have a broader system perspective and are more likely to act with the larger context in mind” (Fullan, 2008, pp 110 - 111).

2. That principals in the Diocese of Lismore clarify and refine their shared understanding of faith leadership as gospel-based meaning making.

This recommendation recognises the perspective and experience of the principal participants who have described their faith leadership role in terms of gospel values and transformational leadership models. Duignan (2006) asserts that this level of authenticity in leadership will allow leaders to: “take action to bring about transformational change ... raise themselves and others to higher levels of motivation and morality and ... infuse their leadership practices with higher purpose and meaning” (p.148). However, Duignan also cautions against “empty jargon or an empty ideology” (p. 148) warning that any conceptualisation of faith leadership must be sustained by collaborative professional relationships, professional support and networking. In recommending that principals clarify and refine their understanding of faith leadership as gospel based-meaning making, I hope that this critical perspective, which emerges from the lived experience of the participants, can provide a sustainable model of faith leadership for the future.

3. That principals should become activist professionals advocating for a policy on faith leadership in Catholic secondary schools in the Diocese of Lismore which recognises gospel-based meaning making as the current reality, develops a shared symbolic language and is supported professionally by system authorities.

To achieve transformational outcomes, Sachs (2003a) advances the twin concepts of “active trust” and “generative politics” (pp. 140-146).

In recommending that Catholic secondary school principals in the Diocese of Lismore be activist professionals in advocating for a policy on faith leadership, I recognise the importance of professional relationships in a climate of trust and reciprocity. The research data suggest that this level of professional and systemic interaction is not currently a reality in the Diocese of Lismore. Without initiatives from the principals to create “situations in which active trust can be built and sustained” (Sachs, 2003a, p. 144), through “new patterns of social interaction” (Stryker, 2002, p. 66), then policy formation is unlikely to bring about change in the way that faith leadership is understood, enacted or supported in Catholic schools.

9.7 The Limitations of this Study

Despite the significance of this research study, it is acknowledged that the study is limited in scope, focusing, as it does, only on principals in secondary schools within the Diocese of Lismore. This choice of research site involves a limited number of schools and the research sample is consequently small. Hence, the findings of this study will be specific to the schools of the Diocese of Lismore and cannot claim external application to other Catholic schools or principals. As a consequence, the validity of this research is dependent upon its “reader user generalisability” (Merriam, 1998, p. 211) through “case to case transfer” (Firestone, 1993, p. 16).

The other limitations inherent in this research relate specifically to the choice of research methodology and the role of the researcher. Researcher bias, competence and subjectivity are critical factors in any research process. Questions of validity will arise in respect to issues such as the subjective interpretation of data, the researcher’s preset expectations, and the researcher’s presence in interview situations that has the potential to impact upon the responses of participants (Merriam, 1998). It is not possible or feasible in qualitative research to isolate the researcher from either the data collection or the data interpretation, thus truthful acknowledgement of the potential of bias is critical to the authenticity of this research process.

This research also acknowledges the limitations of the selected methodologies; both the constructivist research paradigm and the theoretical framework of symbolic interactionism. In seeking to understand principals' perspectives on faith leadership and how it is enacted in Catholic secondary schools, the study makes no claims to objective knowledge, verified hypotheses or established facts. The focus is, at all times, on the principals' perspectives, which speak for themselves.

In acknowledging that this research does have limitations, it will nonetheless make an important contribution to the existing knowledge base on organisational leadership, given its emphasis on the participating principals' perspectives of their faith leadership role. In making this assertion, however, I acknowledge that an examination of the perspectives of principals in regard to faith leadership represents only one piece of the puzzle that is Catholic school leadership today. The perceptions of other key stakeholders, such as the clergy of the Lismore Diocese and Catholic Education Office personnel, are important. Meeting the challenges of faith leadership as integral to the role of the Catholic school principal will require creativity from all stakeholders and a commitment to locating all the pieces of the puzzle and fitting these together.

Consequently at the end of this project, there will be no claim in respect to presenting the 'whole picture' of faith leadership. It is hoped, however, that this research will contribute to the development of a more informed and sophisticated understanding of faith leadership as a significant dimension of the role of the secondary principal and also encourage further research into perceptions of faith leadership on the part of the other stakeholders in Catholic Education in the Diocese of Lismore.

9.8 Recommendations for Future Research

It was clear from the review of the literature that the conceptualisation of faith leadership is an area of emergent empirical interest. At the same time, an examination of research databases revealed that there has been only

limited research undertaken into faith leadership and its contemporary expression in Australian Catholic secondary schools. Consequently this study could function as a catalyst for further examination of the parameters of faith leadership as it pertains to Catholic school and other Catholic leadership situations.

To this end the researcher makes the following recommendations regarding issues identified in this research that could be the subject of further investigation:

- a) **That this study of faith leadership be replicated in other research sites**

This research study was specific to the bounded context of Catholic secondary schools in the Diocese of Lismore. Consequently, it may be valuable for a more comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon of faith leadership, to replicate the study in primary schools, other diocesan school systems – rural and city based, other faith based school systems, the independent school system or in other Catholic organisations.

- b) **That the link between religion, spirituality and leadership be further examined in other faith-based organisational settings**

It became clear in this research study that principals made a clear distinction between personal spirituality and formal religious adherence in their conceptualisation and enactment of faith leadership. This distinction also arises in the literature on faith in organisations (Fairholm, 1998; Fry, 2005). Hence, the question of the relationship between spirituality, religion and leadership warrants further close examination through research.

- c) **That the perception of faith leadership held by other Catholic school leaders be a subject of future research.**

This study has focused on the role of the principal as faith leader in Catholic secondary schools. Others in school leadership positions, however, would have equally valid perspectives on the question of faith leadership. Hence it is recommended that the views of assistant principals and religious education coordinators be the subject of further research.

- d) That the function of charism in Catholic schools, as well as its impact on faith leadership, be examined in further research.**

In this research study principals identified the charism of religious orders, or the specific impact of heroic religious faith leaders in their formative years, as key influencers on their enactment of faith leadership. Sicari (2002) calls for greater scrutiny of this lay transmission of charism. This area of Catholic school leadership also invites further research.

9.9 Conclusion

The findings of this research study suggest that Catholic secondary school principals, despite an absence of a clear policy or institutional definition of faith leadership, have conceptualised this dimension of their leadership role as gospel based meaning making involving an interrelated construct of 'having' (skills and knowledge) 'doing' (practical leadership action) and being (personal intrinsic motivation sources in spiritual values). The utilisation of a discourse of personal spirituality and values, alongside a wider rejection of narrow understandings of Catholicity and Catholic school purpose, suggest that the principals involved in the study have redefined or reimagined (Mellor, 2005) what faith leadership means in contemporary Catholic schools. Moreover, the absence of a definitive theological basis for this redefinition and calls for a specific understanding of faith leadership from a lay perspective, suggest that this process is ongoing and unfinished.

Despite indications in the research data of tension in the leadership models evident in Catholic secondary schools and the impact of significant external

and internal challenges to faith leadership and faith expression within the Diocese of Lismore, this research found principals were positive about this aspect of their role and determined to help the students, parents and staff in their school communities connect with the message of Jesus and the richness of the Catholic faith tradition.

Finally, this research study concludes with some important aspects of the research questions satisfactorily addressed. This research study does provide a more informed and sophisticated understanding of the phenomenon of faith leadership in Catholic schools. Furthermore, it charts a way forward in respect to the ongoing reconstruction of this phenomenon that involves activist professionalism and collaborative development of policy, creation of shared symbolic language, agreement on the purposes of Catholic schooling and commitment to professional development, support and formation.

APPENDICES

Appendix 1 Focus group guiding questions

1. What is Faith leadership in terms of your role in the school?
2. What are the issues concerning Faith Leadership in schools?
3. Is shared faith leadership a reality in schools?
4. What knowledge and skills are needed for effective faith leadership in Catholic secondary schools?
5. If you had a wish list regarding Faith Leadership in schools, what would you like to do?

Appendix 2 Letter of invitation to principals

Australian Catholic University
Brisbane Sydney Canberra Ballarat Melbourne



Australian Catholic University Limited
ABN 15 050 192 660
Banyo Campus (McAuley)
1100 Nudgee Road Banyo
Qld 4014 Australia
PO Box 456 Virginia
Queensland 4014 Australia
Telephone 07 3623 7301
Facsimile 07 3623 7247
www.acu.edu.au

TITLE OF PROJECT:

Catholic secondary school principals as faith leaders. A study of the Diocese of Lismore.

NAME OF PRINCIPAL SUPERVISOR:

Dr Gayle Spry

NAME OF STUDENT RESEARCHER:

Caroline Thompson

PROGRAMME:

Australian Catholic University - Doctor of Education

Dear.....

This letter invites you to participate in a research study, which is part of my doctoral work for the Australian Catholic University. The research will focus on faith leadership as part of the leadership role of the principal in the Diocese of Lismore. The Human Research Ethics Committee of the Australian Catholic University has approved this research study.

The purpose of the study is to investigate the faith leadership role of the Catholic secondary school principal in the Diocese of Lismore in order to develop a more informed and sophisticated understanding of the dimensions of the role. In-depth interviews will provide the main source of data for this research. Each participant will be interviewed twice. Participants may also be invited to participate in a focus group discussion that will be used to establish the parameters for the interview stage of the research.

The structure of this research study will ensure that there are minimal risks – either personal or professional – from participation. Interview times will be negotiated with participants to guarantee minimal disruption to school schedules or other professional commitments. Each interview will be of one-hour duration and will be conducted in the participants' own school, hence no travel will be required for participation in the project. The focus group discussion will be scheduled to coincide with an existing meeting time for principals in the diocese.

This study will involve participants in a very significant piece of local research that will be of great benefit to the future development of the role of the Catholic secondary school

principal. Participants will gain both personally and professionally from the opportunity to discuss the complex issue of faith leadership in contemporary school situations and to reflect on their own interpretation and actualisation of the role. It is envisaged that the results of this research will have practical application for the enrichment of professional practice within the Diocese of Lismore, informing processes for the selection and formation of principals, directing professional development planning and identifying leadership issues which demand attention.

This letter is an invitation to participation in this significant piece of research, but it must be understood that participants are free to refuse consent altogether without having to justify that decision, or to withdraw consent and discontinue participation in the study at any time without giving a reason.

Confidentiality will be ensured during the conduct of the research and in any report or publication arising from it. The research will involve audiotaping of focus groups and interviews and these will be transcribed as soon as practicable after the interviews and the tapes stored in a secure location at the Australian Catholic University. The data transcripts will be coded and no names will be recorded on any sections of the research data. Extreme care will be undertaken during the reporting of research results to ensure that no participants can be identified by deduction. The results of this research may be summarised and appear in publications or be provided to other researchers in a form that does not identify participants in any way.

Any questions regarding this project should be directed to the Student Researcher: Caroline Thompson – at Australian Catholic University-McAuley Campus, PO Box 456, Virginia, Queensland, 4014.

The researcher will be happy to provide appropriate feedback to participants on the results of the project upon completion. The Human Research Ethics Committee of the Australian Catholic University has approved this study.

In the event that you may have any complaint or concern about the way you have been treated during the study, or if you have any query that the Student Researcher has not been able to satisfy, you may write to the Chair of the Human Research Ethics Committee:

QLD: Chair, HREC	
C/o Research Services	Tel: 07 3623 7429
Australian Catholic University	Fax: 07 3623 7328
Brisbane Campus	
PO Box 456	
Virginia QLD 4014	

Any complaint or concern will be treated in confidence and fully investigated. The participant will be informed of the outcome.

If you agree to participate in this project, you should sign both copies of the Consent Form, retain one copy for your records and return the other copy to the Student Researcher.

Thank you for your consideration of this request for involvement in this research project.

.....
Caroline Thompson – Student Researcher

.....
Dr Gayle Spry - Supervisor

Appendix 3

Consent form

Australian Catholic University
Brisbane Sydney Canberra Ballarat Melbourne



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CONSENT FORM

TITLE OF PROJECT:

CATHOLIC SECONDARY SCHOOL PRINCIPALS AS FAITH LEADERS. A STUDY OF THE DIOCESE OF LISMORE

NAME OF PRINCIPAL SUPERVISOR: DR GAYLE SPRY

NAME OF STUDENT RESEARCHER: CAROLINE THOMPSON

I have read and understood the information provided in the Letter to Participants. Any questions I have asked have been answered to my satisfaction. I agree to participate in this research on Faith leadership in the Diocese of Lismore, realising that I can withdraw at any time without consequences.

I understand that the research will involve participation in two in-depth interviews of approximately one hour's duration. I understand also that I may be invited to participate in a focus group discussion of faith leadership as part of the role of the principal in Catholic secondary schools. I am aware that both the focus group discussion and the structured interviews will be audiotaped for accuracy of data gathering.

I understand that results of this research may be summarised and appear in publications or be provided to other researchers in a form that does not identify participants in any way.

NAME OF PARTICIPANT:

SIGNATURE

DATE:

SIGNATURE OF STUDENT RESEARCHER:

SIGNATURE.....

DATE:

Appendix 4 Individual interview questions

Research Question 1: How do principals understand the challenge of faith leadership in Catholic secondary schools in the Diocese of Lismore?

How has socio-cultural change challenged or complicated your faith leadership role?

Have you ever experienced tension around the purpose of the Catholic school as well as with your position as lay leaders in the Catholic Church?

Do you receive adequate support in regard to your faith leadership role formation?

Are there expectations on you as a principal to be a faith leader?
If so, what are they and from where do they come?

Can you describe how change in society generally has affected the faith leadership role of the principal?

What are the most challenging aspects of your faith leadership role?

How does your faith journey and life experience affect your perception of faith leadership? Are you a different faith leader today than five years ago?
How?

Research Question 2: How do principals conceptualise faith leadership in Catholic secondary schools in the Diocese of Lismore?

How would you define faith leadership in Catholic schools?

What guides your beliefs about what faith leadership entails?

Is there a lay spirituality of faith leadership? If so, on what is it based?

What future planning is needed for the development of effective faith leaders?

What leadership model do you regard as most applicable to principalship in a Catholic school?

What do you regard as the core purpose of a Catholic school?

Do you ever experience tension between your personal convictions and the teachings or expectations of the Catholic Church?

Research Question 3: How do principals enact the faith leadership role in secondary schools in the Diocese of Lismore?

How would you describe your role in building the faith life of your school?

Can you share with me times when you saw yourself as effectively enacting your faith leadership role?

Are there any particular strategies that you have used to enact your faith leadership role? What have you learned from implementing them?

How would a teacher / parent / student describe you as a faith leader?

Who have you turned to for guidance in the area of faith leadership?

What formation and professional development activities were most effective in helping you with your faith leadership role?

Is there a principal you believe is a good faith leader? Why?

Australian Catholic University
Brisbane Sydney Canberra Ballarat Melbourne



Human Research Ethics Committee

Committee Approval Form

Principal Investigator/Supervisor: Dr Gayle Spry Brisbane Campus

Co-Investigators:

Student Researcher: Ms Caroline Thompson Brisbane Campus

Ethics approval has been granted for the following project:

Catholic Secondary School Principals as Faith Leaders. A case study of the Diocese of Lismore.

for the period: 7 July 2006 to 30 April 2007

Human Research Ethics Committee (HREC) Register Number: N200506 57

The following standard conditions as stipulated in the *National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Research Involving Humans (1999)* apply:

- (i) that Principal Investigators / Supervisors provide, on the form supplied by the Human Research Ethics Committee, annual reports on matters such as:
 - security of records
 - compliance with approved consent procedures and documentation
 - compliance with special conditions, and
- (ii) that researchers report to the HREC immediately any matter that might affect the ethical acceptability of the protocol, such as:
 - proposed changes to the protocol
 - unforeseen circumstances or events
 - adverse effects on participants

The HREC will conduct an audit each year of all projects deemed to be of more than minimum risk. There will also be random audits of a sample of projects considered to be of minimum risk on all campuses each year.

Within one month of the conclusion of the project, researchers are required to complete a *Final Report Form* and submit it to the local Research Services Officer.

If the project continues for more than one year, researchers are required to complete an *Annual Progress Report Form* and submit it to the local Research Services Officer within one month of the anniversary date of the ethics approval.

Signed:

(Research Services Officer, McAuley Campus)

Date: 7 July 2006

Appendix 6 Letter of permission from the Director of the Catholic Education Office, Lismore.

**DIOCESE OF LISMORE
CATHOLIC EDUCATION OFFICE**



AWmo'g 27.9

19 June 2006

*Mrs Caroline Thompson
116 Rosebank Road
ROSEBANK NSW 2480*

Dear Caroline,

Thank you for your application to conduct research in secondary schools in this Diocese as part of your research project, *Catholic Secondary School Principals as Faith Leaders*.

As the information contained in your application appears to have covered all the criteria required by this Office, I am happy to formally give approval for your research as detailed and I look forward to hearing the outcomes of this work.

With my best wishes for the success of your study.

Yours sincerely,



Dr Anne Wenham
Assistant Director, Education Services

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