

**A CASE STUDY OF ONE STAFF'S RESPONSE
TO CATHOLIC SCHOOL ADMINISTRATION**

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ABSTRACT

This thesis is centred upon the administrative structure of Catholic primary schools and how they can become more fundamentally Catholic. The problem required an examination of leadership and management and how these applied to Catholic schooling.

Having initiated a structure (School Support Team) that set out to respond to Catholic school administration, a focus school was studied in relation to the theoretical principles which emerged from the literature. The study was conducted through an interpretive paradigm using ethnographic and case study research. The following principles of administrative structures in Catholic schools emerged:

1. Community
2. Empowerment
3. Revelation
4. Responsiveness
5. Effectiveness

The research concluded that in this experience staff members were enlivened by the challenges that the new structure brought and that it promoted an understanding of leadership and management that was conducive to Catholic schooling. However, the success was strongly linked to the needs of the school setting stressing that similar initiatives should respond to the local situation. The study also warns against concentrating too heavily on collaborative practices with the risk of diminishing the importance of individuality in schools being identified as a major concern.

The study concludes that a review of the administrative structure in Catholic primary schools is merited. Models such as the School Support Team are appropriate responses to the administrative needs of these schools and should be encouraged extensively.

DECLARATION

"I certify that this does not incorporate without acknowledgments any material submitted for a degree at any University; and that to the best of my knowledge and belief it does not contain any material previously published or written by another person except where due reference is made in the text".

J. G. Carroll

ACNOWLEDGMENTS

As a student in the Master of Education (Catholic Schooling) programme I have been challenged to develop renewed perceptions about Catholic Schooling and to relate these perceptions to my own practice. This thesis is the product of that journey and while I recognise that the journey is far from over, I acknowledge that I am the richer for the experience.

Firstly, I wish to thank those colleagues that have contributed their own reflections to this study. They have given this work life and substance and I am extremely grateful.

I would especially like to thank my dear wife and three beautiful children who have always supported me and allowed me the selfishness that such a task demands.

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CHAPTER ONE

THE RESEARCH DEFINED

1.1 BACKGROUND TO STUDY

This study was conducted in a Catholic primary school which is part of the system of the Archdiocese of Brisbane. Generally, the school is well resourced, has access to central services and offers students an extensive curriculum comparable to neighbouring schools. A review of the school's mission statement reveals that this school is "...committed to providing a balanced education which promotes Christian values in the Catholic tradition". This statement, like others, indicates that the school is 'ideally' focussed on Catholic schooling and implies a commitment to the broader term of Catholic ethos. Throughout this study, this cornerstone of Catholic education will be translated into practice by examining the response from one group within the school community, namely the staff. Essentially, this study is centred upon the link between the fundamental concept of Catholic ethos and a school staff's efforts to fulfil its public mission as outlined in the mission statement. As an introduction, the study is now placed in its historical context.

The staff has a history of being innovative and open to curriculum change but in its twenty year history has faced little challenge by way of the administrative structure of the school. As is the case of other systemic schools, structure has been dictated by external central office policies rather than by reforms instigated at the local level in response to local issues. It is this history of external control that has led the school community to an initiative that is the subject of this study .

Prior to 1990, the school had a large student population averaging at over 600 and peaking at 630. With such numbers came a generous staffing schedule that included two full time Assistant Principals, a full time Teacher Librarian and Learning Support Teacher, 21 classroom teachers along with an allocation of

ancillary staff. Areas of responsibility became compartmentalised with clear allocation of duties among staff. The school operated in a predominantly regulated manner up until the 'status quo' was changed during 1991 and 1992. While the school may have been over run by bureaucracy, roles were clear and the majority of participants worked together to produce quality results.

During this period, the school population declined along with a proportionate reduction in the staffing schedule. With a smaller number of classroom teachers and a reduction in specialist time, the administration team was reduced to a Principal who was assisted by one part time deputy. Consequently, much of the responsibilities within the school were either lost in the rearranging or, by default, became the responsibility of the Principal. Key areas such as curriculum development were neglected while others fell to individual teachers who were already carrying their fair share of the work load within the school.

Amidst all of this, the person of Principal changed, with the new leader exhibiting a style that was very different to his predecessor. He seemed uncomfortable with the hierarchical model that the school had previously worked under and recognised that the organisation would have to change if the school was to remain effective.

To this end, the Principal explored structures that could be incorporated into this particular school that would benefit the community and give a better response to the place of ethos as expressed in the mission statement. There would need to be changes in the way the staff perceived leadership and the ownership that the staff placed on the effective operation of the school. It was a challenge that was innovative in that the impetus for change would have to come from within the school community. From the outset, it was imagined that this change would be substantial and that it would involve a detailed process resulting in a proposed model.

The proposed model recognised the role of the Principal and Assistant Principal in forming the Leadership Team of the school yet involved the

inclusion of staff members into areas of leadership. It proposed the formation of an influential group that combined the Leadership Team with elected staff members to coordinate key aspects of school life. Those key aspects were identified as:

- * Community/Pastoral Care/ Spirituality
- * Organisation and Administration
- * Curriculum

Each key area was to have a staff member, elected by his/her peers responsible for its leadership, policy development, planning and advocacy. For purposes of clarity, this influential group was later labelled as the School Support Team (SST). Additional to this, each staff member was asked to consider one of the three areas in which he/she might take a particular interest in the coming year. These groups would then form a type of reference or 'wisdom' group for the selected leader. It was generally perceived by those involved that this structure had the potential to promote their shared beliefs about Catholic schooling.

1.2 PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The situation outlined above describes how one school set about the process of restructuring in response to its Catholic identity. There is a question, however, as to whether this connection is valid or is it simply one school's response to the situation that it finds itself in? Therefore, the purpose of this study is to examine the question of whether the administrative structure of this Catholic school is fundamentally Catholic. While the question is case specific it is anticipated that a closer examination of the situation will provide insights into the administrative structure of Catholic primary schools, generally.

1.3 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

Catholic primary schools, such as this one, are continually challenged to be creative in the way they respond to the demands placed upon them without

losing sight of their Catholic ethos. For Catholic school authorities these responses address the needs of primary schools without having to lose sight of their fiscal responsibility. A reevaluation in the way Catholic schools are organised could alleviate the pressures on both parties and assist school communities to be more conducive to the ethos they promote. For school authorities and those interested in Catholic school organisation this study will demonstrate how creative thinking can bring about these results and how, with minimal assistance, the potential that already exists in our schools can be realised.

1.4 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

It is accepted by the researcher that this study is limited by the narrow focus of one isolated case. The researcher also acknowledges that as a novice to the field of educational research, the study is limited by inexperience.

1.5 OUTLINE OF THESIS

The following chapters will unfold the story of the School support team model as a response to Catholic school administrative structure. Firstly, the literature will be reviewed in Chapter Two in order to focus the research in a scholarly context. This review will show that there are common themes that exist derived from understandings about leadership, management, theology, canon law and scripture. These common themes will be described as guiding principles and will form the perspective for the evaluation mentioned earlier.

The design of the research undertaken will be explored in detail in Chapter Three providing a justification for the adopted methodology and outlining the context of the study and the instruments used. Attention will also be given to exploring the reliability and validity of the study.

Chapter Four analyses the data generated by the research. From this analysis key issues are identified that respond to the research question. Chapter Five presents the conclusions of the study.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

As stated earlier, this study is directly concerned with the question of whether the administrative structure of the school is characteristically Catholic. It attempts to identify those characteristics that are theoretically supportive in the literature and further explore their relevance to a particular school setting based on the perceptions of staff and other associated evidence. This section attends to the first of these tasks by a three fold study of the literature in relation to leadership, management and -relevant theological, canonical and scriptural references. However, in order to gain a common understanding of the argument key terms invite definition.

2.1 DEFINITION OF TERMS

The terms management, leadership and administration are sometimes used interchangeably as they hold different meaning for different purposes. In schools, individuals are appointed as leaders with the expectation that into their role they will effectively manage and lead their area of responsibility. Conversely, managers may be expected to administer particular duties while doing so in a style that exhibits leadership. For the purpose of this research the former is accepted where the concept of administrator is the umbrella role and that a person in this position is challenged to function as manager and as leader.

Ristau (1991, p. 7) reverts to the root derivation in understanding the terms. 'Manage' comes from the Latin word for hand (manus) meaning that managers "handle things" where leader comes from the root word "to go" indicating that there is a directional dimension to be considered. The distinction can also be made by listing the activities that are usually attracted by the two. Managers plan and budget, organise and staff, control and solve problems. Management may be defined as "the process of achieving the goals of an

organisation through the work of its managers and personnel" (Laws, Smith & Sinclair, 1992, p. 45) involving the marshalling of financial and other resources, planning and implementation of administrative structures (Sergiovanni, 1987). Where as leaders establish direction, align people, motivate and inspire (Ristau, 1991, p.7). Leadership may also be understood as an influence relationship among leaders and followers who intend real change that reflect their mutual purposes (Rost, 1991). Louis and Miles (1990) distinguish management and leadership with leadership relating to mission, direction and inspiration and management relating to designing and carrying out plans, getting things done and working effectively with people.

It should be clearly understood that these two functions are perceived as describing the complementary nature of the one position and not separate ones. In other words the administrator is perceived to operate as both manager and leader. The individual responds to the demands of their position and utilises the skills of either dimension as necessary. Furthermore, it is noted that leadership is not a trait appropriate only to those in designated positions of authority. Anyone in an organisation who engages in a process of influencing the activities of a group towards goal setting and goal accomplishment is exercising leadership (McGuinness, 1992). In the main, this shared understanding of leadership and management will be developed in the relevant sections.

Finally, as it is essential to explore the fundamental concepts of leadership and management it is equally appropriate that a study of Catholic Schools include a review of the theological, canonical and scriptural references. Such an exercise lends validity to this study in a Catholic School context and provides another perspective to analyse the data.

2.2 LEADERSHIP

In studying effective school organisations, the Australian Effective Schools Project (McGraw, 1992 p. 79) identified that, among other things, "staff who are

encouraged by the administration to take up different roles from year to year thus leading to professional growth" was a key characteristic. The historical issues raised earlier and the aspirations, hopes dreams for the future imply a move of the initiation of change from a hierarchical style of school organisation to a more shared version. In the vision statement of the Archdiocese of Brisbane (1993) "educating for Christian Leadership that is participative and collaborative" is applauded.

Handy (1984) and Handy and Aitken (1985) attribute the need for such a shift to the unique nature of schools as an organisation. They list the minimal time allocation for management duties; the existence in schools of too many purposes; the necessity for interchange in roles by teachers and administrators; and the very presence of the children and the resulting complexity and variability they bring. In lieu of these factors they recommend that schools be more flexible and engage in restructuring. For this to occur schools require leadership that enables restructuring to the possibilities that such a perspective promotes.

In terms of Leadership styles this situation requires leadership that emphasises being transforming rather than being transactional. This distinction was made by James McGregor Burns (1978) in his study of leadership and followership. Transactional leadership refers to the majority of instances where it is an exchange of one thing for another eg: satisfactory standard of work for fair wages. Transformational leadership draws people together around a common vision and invites them to achieve the goals of the school by working co-operatively (Treston, 1994). It is this understanding of leadership that will now be explored.

2.2.1 Transformational Leadership

There is much discussion in the literature as to where this style of leadership generates from and the ramifications that it holds for any organisation. Its basis lies in an attempt to distinguish the more visionary aspects of leadership from those that relate to the day to day activities that may best be

termed as management.

The task of defining this term succinctly in the literature draws mainly on the work of a core group of authors. Such leadership is described as “when one or more persons engage with others in such a way that leaders and followers raise one another to higher levels of motivation and morality” (Burns, 1989 p. 20). Similarly Bennis and Nanus (1985, p. 217) suggest transformational leadership as:

collective, there is a symbolic relationship between leaders and followers and what makes it collective is the subtle interplay between the follower's needs and the leader's capacity to understand...these collective aspirations.

These authors view leaders as transformative when they are able to “shape and elevate the goals of followers”. Both definitions highlight the relationship between leader and follower as crucial. They recognise that the context of transformational leadership is in giving attention to the growth and development of the individuals involved. It is concerned with responding to the human needs rather than bureaucratic or efficiency needs. Elaboration is invited.

In a school community that is hindered by inefficient structures and ‘bogged down’ in paperwork, the problem may superficially be thought to impinge on the inability of the school to do ‘things’. Through a transformational perspective the problem detracts from the ability of individuals to function and so prevents them from making a reasonable and worthwhile contribution to the school.

This reassessment is important as it challenges traditional views that leadership is about improving the organisation or about making the organisation more effective (McGraw, 1992). In fact, transformational leadership is about people and *responding to those humanist needs* that add meaning to the exercise.

As transformational leadership is about the achievement of needs it is also a *collaborative process* that has its basis in morality (Carey, 1991, p. 31; Burns, 1989, p. 20). The participants engage in a relationship that raises the level of

human conduct and is supported by their values and ideals displayed in an ethical manner. These belief systems determine what those involved look for, what they recognise and how they interpret what they recognise. There is an empathy that exists motivating both leader and follower and allows them to strive for goals that are true and ones which they hold in common. This is supported by leaders having a deep understanding of the morality of the concepts of equity, power, freedom, and the dynamics of decision making.

The definitions also allude to the drift to something different that is the driving force of transformational leadership. By other terms this drift is referring to the role of *vision*.. Bennis and Nanus (1985) perceive the need for vision as the key element of leadership. In formulating a vision the leader is compelled to scrutinise his/her own beliefs and ensure that the dreams held are not solely formulated by these. Transformational leaders are not dictated by self-interest but by being able to draw on the collective wisdom of the organisation and create a vision that is appropriate to the organisation (Avolio & Bass, 1988, p. 33). By employing a vision the leader attempts to raise the consciousness of others by making them aware of their present reality and so gain the confidence to transform the present reality into the desirable future (MacDonald, 1993). When communicated effectively and strongly the vision can become the vision of others thereby giving the organisation its culture and identity (McGuinness, 1992, p. 8). This process then aids the culture of the organisation to be conducive to transformational leadership. Many terms are used to describe this communication or excitement that is necessary for the vision to be shared (Avolio & Bass, 1988, p. 37). For followers to be moved by the vision it must display a degree of quality and relevance to their situation. If inspired by the leader they will be more likely to consider what is being presented to them and exhibit a preparedness to change. For followers, and perhaps why they are followers and not leaders, there may be a reluctance to own something over which they have no control. By being empowered by the transformational leader the limits are broadened and the level of ownership and foreseeable opportunity

on the part of the follower is increased.

Another mode of understanding transformational leadership is by exploring the activities that are characteristic of the style. In a study of school communities engaged in reform Leithwood (1992, p. 9) identified transformational leaders as being in pursuit of three fundamental goals: "1) helping staff members develop and maintain a collaborative, professional school culture; 2) fostering teacher development and 3) helping them solve problems together more effectively". While this list may assist administrators in evaluating their leadership style it does reinforce a tendency by the authors to restrict transformational leadership to administrators. On the other hand all members of an organisation have the potential to be transformative (McGuinness, 1992, p. 7). The process is made clear by Pejza (1994, p. 9) in stating that any school leader analyses a situation; formulates a vision for improvement; commits his/herself to that vision; and then inspires followers to work to reach it. A more workable list of traits is suggested by Kouzes and Posner (1988):

- 1) Challenging the process
- 2) Inspiring a shared vision
- 3) Enabling others to act
- 4) Modelling the way
- 5) Encouraging the heart

Other activities include debate, communication, possession of personal security, hold a high level of tolerance, engage in managerial tasks, involve parents and the community and a flexibility to adjust leadership styles to suit situations (McGuinness, 1992, pp. 8-10). By understanding transformational leadership in these terms it holds ramifications for non-admin members of a school community.

Research into the work relationship of administrators and teachers has found that generally their interactions are brief, informal and fragmented

focussing on managerial tasks rather than on issues relating to the vision of the school (Smylie & Brownlee-Conyers, 1992, p. 152). For teachers to feel empowered to act as transformational leaders this relationship requires change. By incorporating teachers into decision making and operational facets of the school, teachers move on from the distant relationship into one that facilitates change. Smylie and Brownlee-Conyers advocate Teacher Leadership as a means of bridging the gap. They call for substantial different working relationships between teachers and administrators by placing teachers along with administrators at the centre of decision making. By including Teacher Leaders into the school structure the community is being responsive to its vision to allowing all members of the organisation to be transformative. Transformational leadership, therefore, is *shared*. This point is supported by Sergiovanni (1987) by the term 'leadership density'. Through the greater involvement of numerous members of the school staff in leadership roles, the greater the likelihood of the school providing an effective educational programme. While it is believed that school effectiveness is not the sole aim of leadership, the point contributes to the case for shared leadership. The next section addresses the other dimension of the administration dynamic - management.

2.3 MANAGEMENT

In some schools of thought, particularly those pertinent to the corporate sector, management incorporates much of the principles outlined in the previous section (Appleby, 1991). For schools, however, it specifically deals with the day to day operation of the educational institution. This distinction was detailed in the opening paragraphs and the purpose of including here is to alleviate the risk of confusion. With this point clarified it is valuable to describe what the literature outlines as to the specific nature of this form of management.

While in recent years there has been much speculation as to the relevance of the effective schools movement its place with management, as defined, is plausible. As management involves the specific activities that make a school

function it is acceptable to expect that this function should occur effectively (Laws, Smith & Sinclair, 1992, p. 47). All organisations require the structures in place to effectively serve its purposes otherwise the structures and management practices are ineffective and irrelevant to the organisation. This 'effectiveness' refers to the bringing about or accomplishing (Spry & Sultmann, 1994, p. 64). As this activity implies that there is something that requires bringing about or accomplishing, it is suggested that good management is directed by a purpose and one that is attained effectively (Laws, Smith & Sinclair, 1992, p. 59). Management, therefore, which entails the supervision and direction of human, natural and material resources is about efficiency and *effectiveness* (Beare, 1989).

Underpinning effective management is the process that is characteristic of each activity. Whether at a micro or macro level the manager/s engage in a process of decision making that influences the operational direction of the school. This specific function of management is to develop and regulate decision making processes in the most effective manner possible to achieve organisational goals and objectives (Laws, Smith & Sinclair, 1992, p. 65). With this as the lense to which we view management all other functions can be interpreted in terms of the decision making process (Armstrong, 1983). Consequently the effective management of schools depends very heavily upon the decision making of its managers (Laws, Smith & Sinclair, 1992, p. 65). It can be seen that a firm link exists between the mode of management of an individual and their style of leadership. A leader who operates out of an autocratic style would design management techniques that restricted the decision making process. Similarly, a transformational leader would design techniques that encouraged a facilitative approach to decision making.

There is an inherent danger in the way in which we perceive management and decision making. By the nature of the task managers are often viewed as highly institutional with decisions enacted from objective judgments rather than an equal consideration of the the individual's belief systems. However, generic to any decision making process is an expression of the values

of the individual (Laws, Smith & Sinclair, 1992, p. 66). From the filtration of the endless mail that enters a school to decisions about which accounts are urgent and which not so, the manager utilises his/her values as an influence on the final decision. Therefore, in marrying individuals to particular areas of management consideration must be given to the willingness of the individual to utilise personal values appropriately.

Other writers identify the lense to management as being concerned with *problem solving* (Chapman, 1994). The benefit of this further understanding is the acknowledgement of the vitality that is effective management. Problem solving implies a reliance on values, resources and other personnel in addressing management issues. While it is not intended that all of these would be a part of every management activity there is an allowance for their involvement as necessary. The problem for managers is to manage the flexibility associated with differing degrees of problem solving. Turney (1992) identifies this dynamic as necessitating control.

The position of *control* in management generates negative connotations of fear and threats to individual freedom. In this context of management, control is viewed as a positive force whereby the manager is able to set limits to assist the problem solving process to 'bring about or accomplish' goals. Control in management is distanced from more traditional experiences where over control in organisations has been harmful and restrictive. What is recommended is a more open interpretation where management structures recognise the need for a degree of accountability and review to maintain adherence to the purpose of problem solving. Newman (1975) advocates four aspects of constructive control:

1. Controlling is a normal and positive force.
2. Effective controlling by managers guides rather than inhibits productive behaviour.
3. Controlling performs an important problem solving function.

4. Controlling can allow the organisation to cope better with uncertainty by anticipating changes and problems and by locating them when they occur.

Control, used correctly, acts to support managerial structures in providing members with clearly defined objectives and standards in regard to performance (Lawler, 1976, in Turney, Hatton, Laws, Sinclair & Smith, 1992). Without some control individuals involved in problem solving can become frustrated and uncertain about expectations and goals. The literature provides considerable evidence to suggest that the provision of control and effective management are related.

The final point to discuss relating to management is how does a manager decide on what practices are pertinent to their organisation. The link has already been established between the leadership style and the management techniques that the individual will create. However, in terms of the broader organisation there should be equal consideration given to the organisation's culture. Educational scholars term this domain as the 'hidden curriculum' (Illich, 1971) and to ignore its existence would be detrimental to effective management. Both terms are used to describe the unofficial, suppressed reality of a school community. They highlight the role of such things as group dynamics, professionalism of staff, school history, time commitments, industrial awards and other priorities. At the risk of drawing on the work of a management puritan the model depicted by French Industrialist, Henri Fayol (1990), has relevance to the problem of organisational culture. Managers, as described by Fayol, engage in four distinct activities 1) Planning, 2) Organising, 3) Leading and 4) Controlling.

Planning involves goal setting and establishing a strategy to achieve such goals. The determination of what tasks need to be done and who should carry out these tasks including allowances for reporting as known as organising. Leading is narrowly defined as the motivation and direction given to others.

This term specifically refers to leading as an activity of management and not to the more comprehensive definition of leadership. The benefits of *control* have already been explored as it works to monitor the organisation's performance in a constructive manner.

The challenge for the manager in executing these activities effectively is to consider what strategies would be appropriate to the organisation's culture. Different organisations, including schools, require differing levels of planning, models of organisation, styles of leading and degrees of control. Effective managers should work to find the right mix to facilitate the problem solving process and so assist the 'bringing about or accomplishment' of goals within their school.

The final aspect of the literature to be examined in this section is that which relates specifically to the Catholic School.

2.4 THEOLOGICAL, CANONICAL & SCRIPTURAL PERSPECTIVES

The purpose of this section is to explore the administrative issues that have been raised earlier and relate them to the Catholic school context. This will be done by examining scholarship on the administrative structure of the Catholic School, a critique of the individuals that are part of the Catholic school and then the nature of their existence that identifies them with their institution.

Generally, the administrative structure of the Catholic School is described as being guided by the three principles of subsidiarity, pluriformity and complementarity (Beare, 1995, p. 147). Subsidiarity refers to the allocation of functions of the school to the most subsidiary level that can effectively carry out the functions. It points out the unacceptability of reserving functions and responsibilities by higher levels without equal consideration given to subordinates (McBrien, 1980, p. 1044). The second principle, pluriformity, reinforces the diverse nature of the Catholic School and the value of respecting and honouring the specific character of each person. Complementarity simply refers to the communal aspect of the Catholic School where members are seen to

complement one another. It implies a cooperation that causes the school to work in *communio* towards a common good.

Since Vatican II the community dimension of Catholic schools has been emphasised strongly (McLaughlin, 1995). "What makes the Catholic school distinctive is its attempt to generate a community climate in the school that is permeated by the Gospel spirit of freedom and love" (Declaration on Christian Education, 1965, par. 8). The justification for its inclusion as a characteristic is that the community dimension is founded on Gospel values and draws its charter from the scriptures with further affirmations and challenges emanating from the Church. For as we learn from Corinthians "there are many different gifts, but it is always the same spirit...the parts are many but the body is one" (1 Cor 12:4). It is through this understanding of "community" that a Christian response to the broader term collaboration is developed.

Jesus was conscious of the need for extensive change and to bring a sense of conversion to the world (Spry & Sultmann, 1994). As noted by Nolan (1977, p. 21) he was occupied by a future state when "the poor would no longer be poor, the hungry would be satisfied and the oppressed no longer miserable". The Second Vatican Council, arguably the most significant reform undertaking of our time, endeavoured to help the Church renew and face the challenges of the twentieth century (Marinelli, 1992). In opening the Council, John XXIII challenged the bishops to communicate the teachings of the Church so that they are helpful for real people living in the real world. In short, he was calling the Church to renewal. Renewal is a specific term that is used to describe the systemic approach used by school communities for the purpose of managing educational change (O'Rourke, 1994).

In the 70's and 80's, major renewal programmes were initiated in the Church. But the purpose of renewal of the Catholic School structure is not based upon a futile principle of self-preservation. Renewal of administrative structure, explain the authors, is based on more noble principles of revelation and empowerment (Edwards, 1981; Arbuckle, 1993).

The basic axiom of Christianity is that everything comes from God. The presence of the Spirit can be found in all things and the person of Jesus is the incarnation of God and so the incarnation of all things. While this very simplistic interpretation of the Trinity has its faults it points to the reality of the revelation of God and how the Catholic School can work towards being a part of the revelation. By following the path of Jesus and being open to the Spirit, the Catholic School will be a place of witness to the glory of God and to the mystery of God's love.

By aligning itself with the person of Jesus, the Catholic School also becomes compelled to be an agency of empowerment and particularly one to the outcast and marginalised. Christ gave particular attention to the marginalised in his society through his sense of justice (Nolan, 1977). He appreciated that within society particular groups become dominant and receive the benefits while others remain oppressed and without dignity. Christ asserted that his efforts were needed to be dispersed equitably rather than equally to liberate all peoples. Understandably, this perspective was endorsed by the Synod of Bishops in 1971 when they depicted the Church's mission, in turn the Catholic School's, as the "redemption of the human race and the liberation from every oppressive situation" (Bokenkotter, 1992, p. 353). In short, the Christian response to oppression is action. When confronted by despair and frustration the Christian is compelled to work towards a resolution, to heal the blind, to feed the hungry and to free the captives. Our option for the poor takes us to the cause to bring about change, change that is just (Bokenkotter, 1992).

To consistently work towards the kingdom as an advocate of change requires inner strength and energy. For the Catholic school the source of these is our compassion as taught to us by Jesus. A Christian response to this call for compassion is by empowering those members of the school community who might normally be left out. It is to reach out to those on the fringe and to draw them into the centre. However, empowerment is not coercive nor is it mandatory. Jesus displayed respect for the freedom of the individual and

avoided imposing his own power on others. To the man at the pool of Bethesda he still asked 'Do you want to be well again?' (Jn 5:6). When Jesus knocks at the door it is up to us to open it and let him in (Rev 3:20). This is the empowerment that should be found in the administrative structure of Catholic Schools and with it the justification for the worthy inclusion of all members. It calls for a revolution that "is envisaged as one that is one that radically transforms, or turns around, human patterns of relationships towards that harmony which is the result of God's reigning in human affairs" (Hellwig, 1992, p. 96). The literature then provides argument as to why those in Catholic schools should bring about the revolution.

The challenges outlined above are consequential to Catholic Schools but in relation to such consequence it is fair to wonder why Catholic Schools are compelled to empower or to be places of revelation. The answer is that Catholic School personnel are 'called' to this and that their involvement is tied to their vocation (McMahon, Neidhart, Chapman & Angus, 1990). Prior to Vatican II there was a belief that vocation only applied to ordained ministries and those who chose to enter religious life. The council endeavoured to demystify the notion of vocation in its documents by acknowledging the vocation of the laity (Hellwig, 1992, p. 88). This reference to vocation goes beyond the traditional view and expands the definition to one that describes a Christian way of life. Yet even this new definition requires clarification. Vocation has wide usage within our church and usually refers to the special commitment that one has to a particular field of work. However, such commitment is not just peculiar to Catholic Schools (Collins, 1991). Teaching, both secular and religious, is a service profession that requires commitment to others that cannot be fully determined by industrial demands. To be successful those in Catholic schools must project something more than a preparedness to fulfil basic work requirements. One does not have to be Catholic to be dedicated. Treston (Collins, 1991) writes about a Christian vocation but as discussed by Collins, a Christian vocation could also be termed as Ministry. Ministry makes a distinction from the broader term

Vocation in that it implies a reliance on theological and spiritual principles. It depicts more than would regularly be required of non-Catholic schools. Catholic schools base their practice on the person of Jesus with an openness to the values that he adopted. For these reasons ministry is duly bound to be sympathetic to the needs of everyone. It is in the stories of Jesus' ministry that the Catholic teacher looks for example and strength.

A search for leadership in the early church finds it to be controversial and radical. The Greek word *Diakonia* was most uncommon and translated has a meaning : To wait on tables. Luke's Gospel reminds us of the servant leadership of Jesus when at the Last Supper he "came not to be served but to serve and to give his life as a ransom for many" (Lk 22: 24-27) This servant understanding of leadership fostered a theology of service and likened the act of serving to ministering (Edwards, 1981, p. 96). While it is not intended for ministry and leadership to be synonymous the connection is interesting.

Leadership is something that is shared by all members of the Catholic school. Through the principle of collegiality, emphasised by Vatican 11, the Catholic school is about sharing leadership and responsibility for its own destiny (Arbuckle, 1993, p.39). Leadership that is collaborative or shared is bonded to Christian leadership and in the spirit of Jesus. After the disciples had spent some time in his company, he sent them out with authority to heal and preach the good news of the kingdom (Mk 6: 7-13). A similar style can be found in the Epistles. Edwards (1981, p. 102) explains that "Paul's letters testify to his attempt to convince communities, and offer leadership rather than dominating them". Finally from 1 Cor 3: 5-9 Paul writes that "we are in a collaborative mission because we are God's co-workers, and we are equal as collaborators though our roles may differ" (Edwards, 1981, p. 104).

Much of what has already been written relates to the way in which management is undertaken in a Catholic School. While it is often neglected in the make-up of what makes a school Catholic, management can be a deeply Christian process, closely related to a personal faith and integral to a much wider

theological understanding (Allsop, 1993). This faith includes values where, within the Catholic school context, the manager employs Gospel values to achieve organisational goals and objectives. Justice, freedom, compassion, peace, humility, service and a love for others are values espoused by Jesus and are applicable to Catholic school management. Of course the extent to which managers choose to employ such values is an ethical issue and one which should be portrayed and observed. It is suggested that not only should managers act according to Gospel values but it should be evident to other members that they do so. Such openness assists the school community in aligning itself with its vision which must be a continued practice in Catholic schools.

From an examination of these three topics relevant to the administrative structure of a Catholic school a number of themes emerge (Figure 1). Scrutiny reveals the commonalities that exist and allows the themes to be grouped under individual descriptors. For the purpose of clarity the descriptors will be termed as principles (Figure 2) and will later act as the touchstones for analysing the research.

2.4 PRINCIPLES DEFINED

The principle of *community*, in this context, encompasses the collegial and shared nature of the organisation. It identifies the importance of sharing the management and leadership responsibilities and emphasises the spiritual value of the collective wisdom that can be found within the Christian community. By *empowering* members, the Catholic school recognises the need of members to be welcomed into the process facilitated by a culture that is affirming yet challenging. This spirit is fundamental to the Catholic school's philosophy as is its obligation to be a witness to the *revelation* of God. It should be a radical place inspired by Gospel values, continually revealing God's glory to each other and to the broader community. The Catholic school should not stagnate but listen to the needs of its members and *respond* in a way that respects the integrity of each

person and is dictated by the school's mission. Finally, the Catholic school should strive to embody these principles *effectively* guided by a central vision and selective of the mechanisms and structures that are typical of most organisations.

At this point, the design of the research undertaken in this study will be explained serving as a valid investigation into the existence of the principles just explored.

FIGURE 1.

EMERGING THEMES

*Transformational Leadership
Leadership in a
Catholic School:*

responds to humanist needs.
is collaborative.
displays a vision.
recognises the power of all members
to be transformative.
is shared.

*Management Practices
in a Catholic school:*

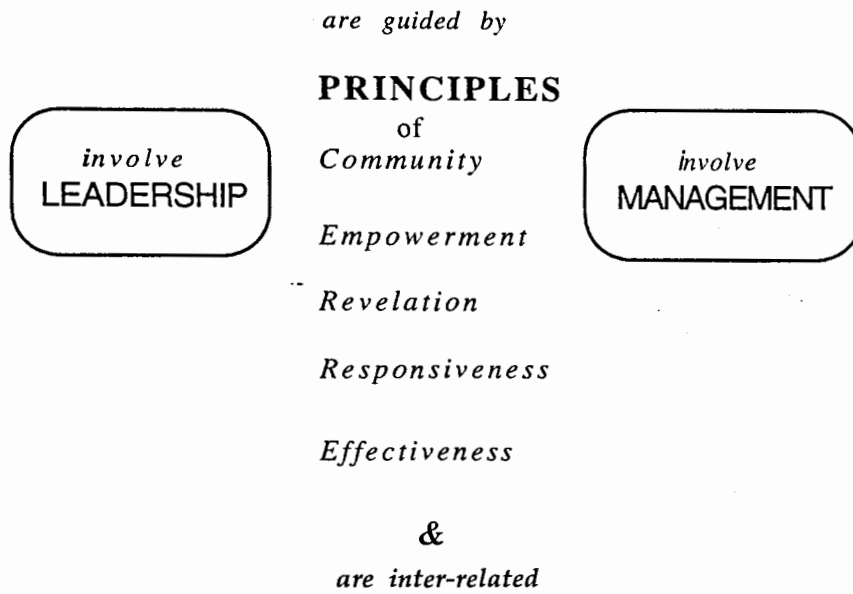
strive to be effective.
involve problem solving.
require appropriate control.
respond to the school's culture.

*Theological/Canonical
perspectives influence the
Catholic school in that it:*

is characterised by subsidiarity,
pluriformity & complementarity.
acts to aid the revelation of God.
empowers members.
encourages collegiality.
bases values in the Gospels
fosters a community dimension.

FIGURE 2.
GUIDING PRINCIPLES

ADMINISTRATIVE STRUCTURES OF CATHOLIC SCHOOLS



CHAPTER THREE

DESIGN OF THE STUDY

3.1 INTRODUCTION

Examining the question of whether the School Support Team structure of is characteristically Catholic requires an investigation into the human reality of the situation. This invites the investigator to enter into the situation being studied as fully and naturally as possible (Edgerton, 1984). The task accounts for the behaviours/reflections of participants, both individually and as a group, as well as collating the data to establish a broad understanding of the situation. To do this accurately is to recognise that the research is open ended and characterised by indiscriminate sources. These sources include behaviours and beliefs which are inherently influenced by the culture of the situation.

Culture is that collection of behaviour patterns and beliefs that constitute standards for deciding what is, standards for deciding what can be, standards for deciding how one feels about it, and standards for deciding what to do about it, and standards for deciding how to go about doing it (Patton, 1990: 68).

Therefore, the research undertaken in this study acts to interpret the subjectivity of the situation (Candy, 1989, p. 2). This chapter justifies the 'interpretive' paradigm under which the study was undertaken as well as making a case for the adopted methodology. Further, issues are investigated that pertain to the methodology providing a sound framework for the research design.

3.2 RESEARCH ORIENTATION

This study was concerned with interpreting data from a variety of sources in relation to the exploration of school restructuring in response to its Catholic identity. The issues generated by the problem became fixed on leadership and management and the generated principles provided a framework for evaluation. Therefore, the requirements of the methodology were to relate the

cultural dimension of the study to the evaluation of the School Support Team in terms of the guiding principles. Consequently, a review of the types of research methodology revealed that such an exercise invited ethnographic research (Patton, 1990, p. 68). Ethnography is concerned with making empirical descriptions of theory development and theory testing. It focuses on how things are and how they got that way (Wiersma, 1991, p. 243). Fundamental to such research is the focus on analysing the culture of a bounded group (Jacob, 1988, p. 18). In these terms, ethnography is applicable in that this study is concerned with interpreting the culture of a group using the guiding principles alongside the School Support Team structure.

Basic tenets of ethnography involve fieldwork, documented points of view and data collection through a wide range of methods (Jacob, 1988, p. 18). In this situation the methods employed reflect that of a case study and will now be elaborated upon.

A case study is a process of research which tries to describe and analyse some entity in qualitative, complex, and comprehensive terms and not infrequently as it unfolds over a period of time (Wilson, 1979, p. 448).

A case study is an umbrella term for a range of perspectives "having in common the decision to focus on enquiry around an instance in order to capture those elements of a situation which give it meaning (Aderman, Jenkins and Kemmis, 1976). These definitions justify the choice in that this study was concerned mainly with the analysis of practice rather than policy leading to instrumental conclusions (Burns, 1994). This practice involves areas such as staff perception and understanding, realities of day to day activities and promotion of Catholic school ethos. Therefore, to make valid conclusions there needs to exist an appropriate methodology that investigated all of the elements as well as being inclusive of all participants.

Drawing from the work of McAllister (1994) numerous advantages of

case study are identified. Case studies tend to:

1. be strong in reality and thus provide a natural basis for generalisation. They are down-to-earth and readers can respond using ordinary processes of judgment.
2. allow generalisations because of their attention to the subtlety and complexity of the case.
3. recognise the complexity of social truths and therefore can represent the discrepancies between viewpoints of participants.
4. produce data which may form an archive of material for subsequent reinterpretation.
5. be a step to action.- They begin in a world of action and contribute to it. Case studies may revitalise educational practice.
6. produce data which are more publicly accessible. The language is less esoteric, less dependent on specialised interpretation and capable of serving multiple audiences.
7. be more holistic. Case study endeavours to understand the whole person in relation to their environment.

3.3 CONTEXT OF THE STUDY

3.3.1 Setting

The case study focussed upon a systemic Catholic Primary School in the Archdiocese of Brisbane. The context for the research was the administrative structure adopted by the school staff termed School Support Team (SST). As the SST related specifically to staff, research was, therefore, limited to staff.

3.3.2 Participants

The participants in this research were the staff of the focus school including administration (2), teaching (19) and ancillary staff (5). As important to the study as involving a cross section of the staff body was the involvement of a

cross section of experience of the SST. Participants ranged from those with an extensive understanding to those who recently joined the staff and so had a limited understanding. Also, within the staff were individuals who had supported the concept during its formation, some who had opposed it and some that expressed little interest.

3.3.3 The Researcher

It should be noted that the researcher had the benefit of acting as an insider rather than an outsider in the study (Elliot, 1988, p. 155). At the time of the study, the researcher had been a classroom teacher at the school for approximately six years. During the two years of operation of the SST the researcher had been an active advocate and played a key role in its formation. Further, the researcher was an elected member of the inaugural SST and served in that capacity for a period of fifteen months. The researcher is aware that this profile raises the question of subjective bias and was deliberate in not allowing this to impede the integrity of the study. For this reason, and the purpose of gaining perspective, the researcher retired from the position at the time of commencing this study enabling him to develop a clearer understanding of the SST's influence on staff. Throughout the study the relationship that existed between the participants and researcher was positive and co-operative based on collegial respect and a mutual appreciation of the value of the task (Bruyn, 1966).

3.3.4 Conduct/Time line

The study was carried out over a period of five months. Formal contact with participants was conducted either with in the context of a a staff meeting or through an arranged time outside of school hours. Informal contact with staff was conducted in the context of the day to day operation of the school ie: lunch time conversation, anecdotes, messages, observations.

3.4 INSTRUMENTS

3.4.1 Questionnaire

Initially, a draft questionnaire was distributed to teachers at a neighbouring school to provide feedback as to the reliability of the tool in the way questions were interpreted. This led to several drafts resulting in the end product that proved to be clear and succinct (Appendix). All staff members were then issued with the final questionnaire which asked them to identify examples in the school that they recognised as promoting a Catholic ethos. This elusive concept was elaborated by the terms of community and Gospel values (Lane, 1991; Declaration on Christian Education, 1984). The instrument was open ended in order to ascertain the true consciousness of participants in relating the SST to Catholic ethos. Issuing of the questionnaire was preceded by a briefing session by the researcher outlining the purpose of the task in the context of the overall study. Questions asked in the questionnaire were:

1. Identify the practices you perceive to support your experience of community.
2. Identify the practices that, in your opinion, inhibit your experience of community.
3. What practices, involving you as a member of staff, demonstrate Gospel Values.
4. Is there evidence, in your school, of practices which conflict with Gospel values for you as a member of staff?
5. Identify other aspects that characterise your school as Catholic.

3.4.2 Interviews

A group of participants were identified from the questionnaire for follow up discussion to corroborate their responses. Identification was based upon gaining a broad range of perspectives in relation to the SST and Catholic ethos. The nature of the interviews was deliberately free to enable participants the

opportunity to articulate their own perspective rather than one sought by the researcher (Burns, 1994). Interviews lasted, on average, for forty-five minutes with the data being tape recorded and documented in field notes.

3.4.3 Field notes

Field notes were taken to record the ongoing operation of the SST. These proved useful in validating data provided by other instruments by observing their existence. Field notes also assisted in facilitating the identification of relevant issues that were not revealed elsewhere. Once identified the researcher was able to seek further clarification. This strategy is commonly termed as snowballing and was beneficial in refocussing the direction of the study. Snow ball sampling involves "recording a particular incident and then looking for another, then another and so on" (Cohen & Manion, 1994).

3.4.4 Participant Observation

The researcher was a member of staff and so acted in the capacity of Participant Observer. This is the primary method adopted by ethnographers involving intensive field work in which the researcher is immersed in the situation (Patton, 1990, p. 57). The participant observer considers "the interpretations of the subjects to have first importance...By taking the role of the subjects, recreating in his (sic) own imagination and experience the thoughts and feelings which are in the minds of those being studied" (Bruyn, 1966, p. 12). Some advantages of participant-observation, as outlined by Bailey (1978) include:

1. it produces more data on non-verbal behaviour
2. it is better able to discern and note ongoing behaviour as it occurs
3. it can develop a more intimate and informal relationship with those being observed
4. it is less reactive to events

In a critical sense, however, participant observation is also described as “subjective, biased, impressionistic, idiosyncratic and lacking in the precise quantifiable measures that are the hallmark of survey research and experimentation” (Cohen & Manion, 1994, p. 110).

3.4.5 Documents

All school policy documents, inservice handouts, agendas, minutes of meetings, produced materials relating to the SST were obtained as sources of data. While the researcher was aware that such documents are generated with a specific audience and purpose they were important as a means of corroborating other evidence. Figures 3 and 4 illustrate the correlation between the questions, the context and the instruments.

FIGURE 3.
DATA COLLECTION (A)

Research question 1: <i>What are the perceptions of staff in comparing the SST to Catholic Ethos ?</i>			
Information Required	Sources of Information	Obtaining Information	
		How	When
Support community	twenty six Staff members of one Catholic primary school	questionnaire	May 1996
Inhibit community			
Support Gospel values			
Inhibit Gospel values			
Other			

FIGURE 4.
DATA COLLECTION (B)

Research question 2: <i>In what way does the SST compare with community, empowerment, revelation, responsiveness, effectiveness?</i>			
Information Required	Sources of Information	Obtaining Information	
		How	When (1996)
Evidence of: community empowerment revelation responsiveness effectiveness	General staff group including five members identified through question 1.	interviews audiotaping participant observation pattern matching Segmenting Field notes Snowballing Documents	July-Aug July-Aug May-Sept July-Sept July-Sept May-Sept July-Sept July- Aug

3.5 ETHICS

Approval for this research was submitted to ethics committee of the University and approval was given. Participants were informed of the purpose of the study as well as the methodology being employed at a briefing session held prior to research commencing. Following a meeting with the Principal designed to negotiate a suitable way to conduct the research, permission was obtained. At all times, the researcher was vigorous in maintaining confidentiality, sympathy towards the demands on colleagues, accountability, mutual respect and academic rigour.

3.6 RELIABILITY & VALIDITY

The choice of qualitative research challenged the researcher to ensure the trustworthiness of the study. Case studies are open to criticism on the grounds of the lack of verifiability of the data with which it works and the methodic incapacity to accumulate relevant predictable generalisations (Shaw, 1978, p. 11-17). Criticisms, such as this, directed the researcher to ensure that mechanisms were implemented to address reliability and validity. Reliability refers to the replicability of procedures and findings and validity is concerned with interpretation and generalisation of results (Wiersma, 1991, p. 239).

In this situation, the expectation that information gathered through the case study research would be replicated in other situations is tenuous. The nature of a case study approach is to promote understanding not universal meaning (McAllister, 1994). Here, the researcher is concerned with interpreting a particular situation driven by the principles of ethnography. These principles are heavily contextual and so data may, or may not, relate to other situations. For this reason, the researcher has adopted methodology that is explicit and clearly documented. Readers are then able to grasp some appreciation of the context by understanding the processes and then relating data to similar contexts. The researcher has tried to facilitate the reader's own analysis more than make statements of generalisation (Burns, 1994, p. 327). In addition, study methods were carried out under the direction of a university supervisor to monitor the adherence to correct research procedures.

On the question of validity the researcher employed the use of triangulation. Triangulation assess the sufficiency of data according to the convergence of multiple sources or multiple procedures (Wiermas, 1991, p. 233).

It is basically a comparison to see if there is corroboration (Wiermas, 1991, p. 232). This occurred through three forms of triangulation: data, researcher and methodological (Denzin, 1978).

Firstly, data triangulation involves multiple data sources. For this purpose, the study included a variety of participants in both formal and informal

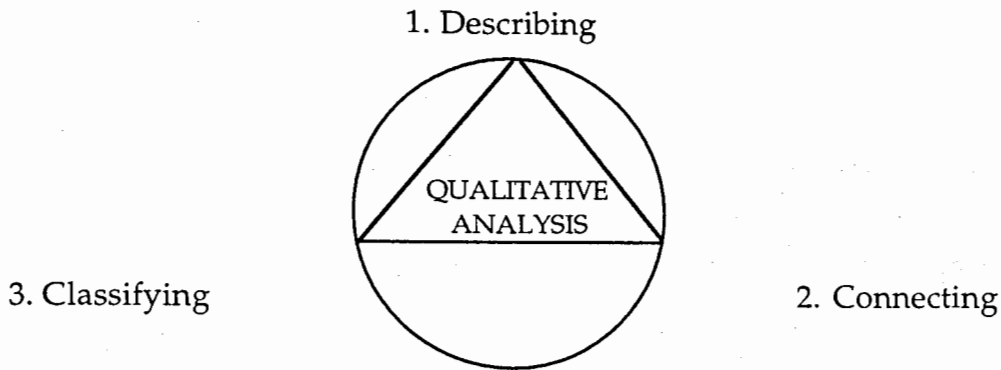
settings. Information was gathered from documents that were prepared by a range of authors. Secondly, researcher triangulation involves more than one researcher comparing responses and interpretations. This form was utilised during the organisation of data into selected categories with the help of a colleague and assisted to protect against subjective bias (Burns, 1994, p. 325). Thirdly, methodological triangulation involves the use of multiple data collecting procedures. These included the use of questionnaires, structures and unstructured interviews, audiotaping, reflective and descriptive field notes, review of documentary evidence and participant observation. Further, the rapport that the researcher held with the participants aided him to gain a depth of understanding of the data raised from their (Stainback & Stainback, 1984, p. 298). Consistent with the question of validity is whether these same perceptions were, however, contrived by the close association. The questionnaire and interview instruments were designed, therefore, to promote genuine responses to the questions. By the use of these strategies, the researcher was able to identify themes that emerged through the triangulation process and assess their validity.

3.7 ANALYSIS

As stated earlier, this study attempts to analyse the links, or lack of, between the SST model and the principles of community; empowerment; revelation; responsiveness and effectiveness. These principles were identified by the literature review (Chapter Two) as touchstones for the administrative structure of Catholic Schools. They are the theoretical propositions that led to the case study design and were adopted as the focus for data analysis.

The terminology that describes qualitative data analysis tends to be daunting in that its description of logical processes is quite cumbersome. However, the following comments, drawn mainly from the cyclic model of Dey, (1993, p. 31) (Figure 5) will endeavour to demystify the means of analysis adopted in this study.

FIGURE 5.
DEY'S ANALYSIS CYCLE



The first stage in this qualitative analysis was to clearly describe the context of the staff, the intentions of its members and the processes involved (Dey, 1993, p. 31). In this way, the parameters of the study were extended to include those variables that significantly influenced other research. In order to make accurate assumptions, data needed to be interpreted within the context of the historical and cultural aspects of the SST. Attention to description occurred through the researcher pursuing these aspects and using the collected information to inform later analysis.

The classifying stage of analysis involved arranging the data into smaller segments. A segment is a unit that is "comprehensible by itself and contains one idea" (Tesch, 1990, p. 115). As this occurred connections were made with the guiding principles. This form of organisation can be referred to as pattern matching. That is, a strategy comparing the obtained pattern to a predicted one (Burns, 1994, p. 324). The predicted pattern being the set of guiding principles and the obtained pattern being the data.

This chapter has outlined the approach to research that has been adopted in this study. It has attempted to establish credible links between the methodology and the previous chapter which outlined theoretical propositions that have been identified. The next section draws on these links telling the story that was revealed leading the researcher to a more informed understanding of Catholic School administration and staff.

CHAPTER FOUR

PRESENTATION OF RESULTS

4.1 INTRODUCTION

In keeping with the aim of the study, this chapter translates the perceptions of individuals, the relevant documentary evidence along with countless hours of observation into a meaningful account of the situation. Specifically, the interpretation is guided by focusing on the actual data collected in response to the general question of whether the School Support Team model is characteristically Catholic. However, inherent to this question is the relevance of the data to the general issue of the administrative structure of a Catholic school. That is, while it is accepted that the study dealt directly with the School Support Team model it is plausible to expect that results will promote a wider significance. Evidence of this wider significance would include perceptions about decision making, beliefs about Catholic school administration and the sense of value placed by the staff on this type of initiative. With such a focus, it should be understood that it is not the direction of this study to conclude with a yes/no answer to the question. More importantly, the direction is open ended rather than closed. The purpose is to analyse the situation and the evidence, establishing generative conclusions that can be useful in both this situation and in others.

Therefore, the purpose, here, is to present the results of the case study in the following light. Firstly, this chapter enables the reader to gain a clearer understanding of the operation of the SST, by briefly outlining the specific activities with comments also directed at the processes involved in undertaking those activities. Secondly, it reacts to the information in the context of the research paradigm as outlined in Chapter Three using the cycle of description, classifying and connecting. Thirdly, it applies this cycle, and the other research design components, to all of the information guided by the five principles of administrative structure of a Catholic school as revealed through the literature

in chapter two. Using these principles of community, empowerment, revelation, responsiveness and effectiveness, the Catholic characteristics of the School Support Team model are analysed in relation to both supporting and conflicting data.

4.2 REFLECTION ON THE OPERATION OF THE SST

4.2.1 School Support Team

During this five month period, the team met on six occasions for a set hour. Meetings commenced with a prayer which was led by team members on a rotational basis with the understanding that its preparation was not to be an onerous task. The agenda was mainly prepared by the Principal with other members having the opportunity to provide input. Implementing of the agenda was flexible with urgent items receiving priority with the assurance that everything would be attended to in a suitable manner. Team members, other than the Principal and Assistant Principal, usually derived their input from matters raised with their reference groups or matters that they intended to raise and were seeking advice before doing so. Each group leader always provided the team with a report of its progress and other members exercised their right to question and offer opinion. The Principal and Assistant Principal provided input on matters pertaining to school management as well as using the meeting as a forum to discuss leadership issues. One major issue has been the revising of the school mission statement which at the end of the period was nearing completion.

It is not the nature of the School Support Team to make decisions, this rests with the Principal, however recommendations are made where necessary and in the majority of cases during the period, these recommendations were concurrent with final decisions.

Characteristic of the School Support Team is that it is an open structure and its commitment to good communication. Following each meeting, team

members discussed topics raised with other staff members with minutes of the meeting posted in the daily notices.

4.2.2 Reference Groups

During this period these groups met fortnightly. Generally, they were productive achieving shared goals incorporating group members in the process. Leadership in the group is by the School Support Team member with, in their absence, other members taking on that role. In one group this change in leadership occurred for a significant period. The experience was successful with the new leader responding to the needs of the situation and carrying on with the support of the group. Direction for each group was established by its members with leaders advising the School Support Team of activities and seeking endorsement when needed. The activities of the individual groups will now be outlined.

Administration & Organisation

This group concentrated on one major project, during the period, with a number of other projects being undertaken as well. The group was sought to undertake the annual operations audit as required by the Archdiocesan authority. This was completed in draft form for subsequent review and submission by the Principal. Further, in the previous year, the school community engaged in a revision of its mission statement which caused staff to identify inadequacies in certain areas of the school. There was, therefore, a necessity to clarify the specific needs of the school and the nature of the response that would best suit those needs. At the conclusion of the study, the administration group was preparing a proposal to be submitted to the wider staff for review.

Other management duties carried out by the group included the supervision roster, the dissemination of mail that related to each group, lost property and the organisation of staff to run the daily parade.

Curriculum

The coordination of curriculum development within a school is difficult in that it deals with long term goals rather than concise management issues. Inheriting a prescribed order of priorities, this group has been involved in the provision of in service sessions by visiting specialists and with the creation of a school based programme for English. It has also reacted to outside directives on particular issues by implementing the First Steps Developmental Continua as well as preparing the school for the implementation of Student Performance Standards. Key teachers have been appointed for each learning area as well as other areas pertinent to curriculum. The group undertook a review of the school's reporting system and has put forward new resources as a practical means of supporting teachers in the subjects of mathematics and English.

Pastoral Care

The activities of this group are not easily defined in that its scope is across all areas of the school. On a constant basis pastoral care was cultivated through celebrating birthdays, expressing condolences in times of sadness, recognising individual achievements, providing opportunities for the staff to socialise, conducting the weekly assembly and fostering the prayer life of the staff.

On a major scale the group has been involved in organising a week of celebration, for the entire community, intended to promote the life of the school and give others the opportunity to learn from it. The activity involves the suspension of classes for a week with the school population taking part in a series of sessions that relate to a central theme.

4.3 DATA ANALYSIS

From the research undertaken a cross section of information was collected that both supported and conflicted with the guiding principles. Those data are now analysed in detail influenced by the researcher's perceptions as participant observer. A sample is provided (Figure 6) illustrating the nature of the data.

FIGURE 6.

DATA SAMPLES

Source	Data
Interviews/ Questionnaires	<p> individuals feel inferior to others voluntary sharing of workloads wide consultation discernment in decision making openness and acceptance staff support each other shared decision making air of trust recognise the worth in individuals not hierarchical collaborative group structure fosters interaction agenda can be dominated by a minority staff members are well informed high level of consultation staff are respected acceptance of individual's strengths and weaknesses opinions are valued structure aids communication reference groups promote dialogue leaders encourage load sharing consultation is wide spread model is proactive of Gospel values freedom of individuals is valued fosters growth personally & professionally support/remuneration is a justice issue empowers staff individuals feel inhibited by bureaucracy generally valued by staff can inhibit interaction by segmenting staff has the potential to be elitist increases the workload on some individuals leads to a slowing down of </p>
Documents/ Field Notes	<p> communication is in need of attention significant amount of time allocated for meetings SST is solidly based in renewal goals are established collectively assists leadership team to carry out duties tends to be task driven assists leadership team clear goals are needed challenges individual expression of ministry ministry becomes natural, not contrived </p>

4.3.1 ANALYSIS OF SUPPORTING DATA

Community

The School Support Team structure has been collaborative in that it facilitated the involvement of the wider staff in the leadership and management of the school. It has been the stimulus for greater consultation and has provided an avenue for issues to be approached in a variety of contexts. The inclusion of non-administrative staff members in the SST aided the degree of consultation between the general staff and the school's administration. While the level of consultation and communication was criticised, during the study, as being insufficient it was acknowledged that this process saw an improvement in these areas over previous structures.

Through the activities of the reference groups, the impetus for, and implementation of, initiatives have been mainly derived from the collective wisdom of the group with individuals receiving greater opportunity to work with peers on matters dealing with their profession and related practices. This collaboration also provided a process of discernment whereby individuals shared beliefs about particular issues and so were able to formulate shared goals to guide their activity.

Empowerment

Clearly there are two distinct levels to this form of administrative structure. The School Support Team as a central group and the reference groups that stem from it. On the first level, there is evidence of a high degree of empowerment with the responsibility for key management and leadership areas being entrusted to elected staff members. While the ultimate responsibility rested with the Principal, it is apparent that these individuals enjoyed the confidence of the school administration and were allowed to 'run with' key areas in partnership with individual groups. This situation required a considerable amount of risk taking by the administration that perceivably was sustained by a

confidence in the members of the SST and the potential of the structure.

On a broader level, all staff members were exposed to issues that required a proactive response and were challenged to consider their own involvement in such responses. Consequently, initiatives occurred that were a result of staff members being empowered to exercise leadership in the school. This leadership was valued by the majority of staff and was evidently conducive to the school being immersed in renewal directed by a commitment to shared leadership.

Revelation

Undoubtedly, discussing whether the revelation of God has been influenced by an administrative structure is a difficult task. Therefore the emphasis is placed on what efforts were made that are appropriate to this principle.

By recognising the innate worth of each individual and empowering them to lead, the SST espouses Christian values. Similarly, by fostering the prayer life of the community it shows its commitment to the place of Jesus in the overall fabric of the school. The compassion that is associated with caring for members in times of sadness and pain as well as the thanksgiving celebrated in times of joy has also heightened the visible presence of the Christian spirit of the school.

Responsiveness

With comment already made regarding the existence of initiatives that were directly related to the operation of the SST there is a plausible link between these initiatives and their origins. Guided by shared goals, individuals, and groups, were encouraged to identify set needs pertaining to their respective areas and formulate action plans that responded to those needs.

The range of needs identified was extensive as was the range of responses. Within the range, needs related to both system world needs (curriculum, procedures, rosters etc) and life world needs (pastoral care, satisfaction, personal growth, prayer etc) (Habermas, 1984). Generally, the responses were effective

resulting in positive outcomes. With a structure in place, proposed initiatives were able to be pursued collectively and individually rather than being hindered by a symptomatic lack of support. Consequently, the SST facilitated an improved environment for needs identification and response.

Effectiveness

From the outset, this experience was effective in that it encouraged an increased intensity of renewal activity within the school. Issues were addressed that were previously neglected or ignored and the school administration acquainted this activity with the sharing of leadership and management that was originally sought.

Reflection on the activities of the SST and reference groups reveals that effectiveness was best realised when there were clear terms of reference in place. When individuals were aware of their brief and the limits employed to attend to that brief, they operated effectively. By working in manageable areas, individuals were able to utilise skills effectively and develop precise goals for the leadership and management of their respective areas. Therefore, by providing a workable structure, effectiveness was enriched and initiatives gained an improved chance of being successful.

4.3.2 ANALYSIS OF CONFLICTING DATA

With this alignment of the experience of the School Support Team and the principles of administrative structure there is an acceptance that an element of non-alignment also existed. The researcher observed that the impact of these instances were more controversial than would normally be expected. Further investigation revealed that when the reality of the school was inconsistent with the ideology of the SST, those involved expressed feelings of hurt and confusion.

Community

While the structure was primarily enabling it was also, to a degree, inhibiting. By designating individuals to specific areas there was a consequential hindrance on their involvement in leadership and management on a broader scale. Some individuals expressed a concern that the structure encouraged staff members to be narrow in their professional development. Further, the structure was criticised for diminishing the rights of staff members from acting as individuals. Many perceived the structure to be bureaucratic in nature and an obstacle to freedom of speech. It was perceived by these that in order to put forward a point of view there were correct processes that needed to be adhered to and, for some, this was discouraging.

Empowerment

There was the appearance of confusion as to the connotations of empowerment. While minimal, the existence caused suspicion as to its meaning and how empowerment related to power and authority. Similarly, the status of elected leaders as a group was cautioned by some as potentially elitist and contrary to the overall philosophy of the model.

Revelation

In seeking descriptors to the relevance of gospel values in a Catholic school, a strong emphasis on justice prevailed. However, many believed that the voluntary nature of the SST was in direct conflict with the presumption of justice in a Catholic school. There was a genuine apprehension about individuals being asked to carry out duties in addition to their normal teaching load with little or no support. Concerns included the taking on of greater responsibility, an increase in work time and a higher level of stress.

Responsiveness

The quantity of activity was perceived, by some, to be a liability that

contributed to higher level of stress on individuals resulting in an imbalance between renewal and the execution of normal duties. The study revealed that the activities of the SST and reference groups were more directed at new endeavours rather than at the maintenance of the status quo. Some displayed feelings of anxiety and frustration as well as elements of cynicism about new initiatives.

Effectiveness

The extent of collaboration resulted in a slowing down of certain activities that were previously carried out through a 'top down' yet expeditious process. In some instances, individuals reported a frustration with this change and expressed a desire to revert. Matters relating to time management and group dynamic skills were flagged as issues requiring attention to improve effectiveness.

4.4 ISSUES ARISING FROM ANALYSIS

From detailed analysis of the data several issues are identified. They are intended to promote clarity and to draw the research together in recognition of the key issues. A definite pattern emerged through the research that affirmed the model as being conducive to the principles of community, empowerment, revelation responsiveness and effectiveness.

The most distinctive issue arising from the study is the amount of activity that is generated by the SST and reference groups. While the researcher accepts that quantity does not necessarily translate into quality, the substantial range of initiatives that the staff of the school were able to undertake during the course of the study indicates that this is a worthwhile example of how schools can address the huge demands that are placed upon them today.

Another key issue which became clear to the researcher was the bringing together of administration, teaching and ancillary staff as equals striving towards common goals. The divisions between these groups is sometimes obvious on

school staffs and to witness shared leadership being enacted across all levels was encouraging.

Throughout the study, a positive attitude towards the model was displayed by the majority of participants. There was a clear belief that the fundamental philosophy of the model was sound with concerns directed mainly at what people were doing rather than at why they were doing it. It was also clear that there was a high degree of acceptance by the majority of staff with shared ownership clearly displayed. Consequently, staff showed a preparedness to become involved in areas of responsibility approaching tasks with enthusiasm and commitment. In this way, individuals were exposed to aspects of the school for the first time. Through this exposure, the SST encouraged growth in individuals and provided the opportunity for skills to be attained and developed. This growth has advantages for the individual as well as for the school authority as budding administrators gain valuable experience preparing them for future advancement.

The final affirming issue raised through the analysis is that which relates to ministry. It is worthwhile noting that a core characteristic of the activities of the SST is that they emanate from the people. Consequently, the community creates its own unwritten charism that is a true indication of the reality as individuals live out their own personal understanding of ministry. This challenge to ministry is a key positive feature of this type of structure. By facilitating individuals to work together more and by allowing them direct their own agenda, barriers are removed that regularly cause people in work places to coldly undertake tasks that are allotted to them. As these barriers to ministry are removed, individuals are enabled to care, understand, empathise, affirm and love one another in a manner that is natural and not contrived.

Supporting Features

The SST model is generally valued by the staff (community).

The structure empowers both teaching and ancillary staff through a sharing of responsibilities and decision making (empowerment).

The SST model assists the Leadership Team to effectively carry out responsibilities. (effectiveness).

Direction is mainly devised by stake holders through a process of discernment (responsiveness).

The SST model is supportive of Ministry (revelation).

During the study, four core issues were repeatedly evident as criticisms and subsequent areas for improvement. They inform the reader that this model is not without fault and that these issues need to be addressed to sustain its future.

It became apparent from the data that there is a danger in that the biggest advantage of the SST model may also be its biggest weakness. By placing such an emphasis on collaboration, shared leadership and discernment there is a risk of devaluing the role of the individual. Through group practices, individuals may feel intimidated by others or even discharged of the right to speak on their own behalf. Similarly, the segregating of staff into areas of responsibility does preclude individuals from having a major input into areas to which they are not aligned. These issues relating to individuality are of major importance to the outcomes of this study. They serve to warn against an over emphasis on collaboration and the importance of maintaining a culture where individuality is respected and cultivated.

While the support for the SST is noted the researcher perceives that this support is dependent on an improvement in the area of communication and a concerted effort by the SST to be an open body. Evidence of scepticism and suspicion about the activities of the central group as well as fears of elitism are

potentially destructive and must not be ignored. These issues warn that outsiders tend to surmise their own images which invites confusion and inaccuracy.

There is a characteristic of the adopted model that while radiating a sense of goodness it also holds potential for failure in terms of justice. Unlike other leadership and management roles within the profession, participants in this model do so on a voluntary basis and receive no extrinsic reward for their efforts. That is, they It is reasonable, therefore, to expect that in an institution asserting to be just that these school leaders should be properly compensated. Such compensation could easily be aligned with positions of added responsibility or co-ordinators allowances as provided for in industrial awards.

Further, this voluntary arrangement brings a series of problems to the implementation and action of the School Support Team such as the expectation of performance and productivity. When an individual is receiving some extrinsic reward in a position it is reasonable for the authority providing that reward to expect a certain degree of performance. With no reward, individuals could tend to function unmonitored and it would be unreasonable to expect them to be overly accountable for their actions.

The last of the issues is mentioned as a point of caution and is accepted as one that is difficult to translate into a direct change in practice. With the creation of a culture based on empowerment and discernment there are definite standards of accountability that are incumbent upon all those involved. After a period, individuals rightly come to expect that this leadership style will be reflected in day to day practice and when the day to day practice is inconsistent with the style, they react strongly. The lesson for individuals in such instances is to complement inconsistencies, where possible, with good communication. That is assuming that the inconsistency is deliberate. In the event that it is not then the only lesson to be learned is that humans, by nature, are prone to error.

Areas for improvement

The value of individuals is put at risk by an emphasis on collaborative practices.

Open, appropriate and ongoing means of communication is stressed as essential for staff support.

Those involved in key roles require recognition through either release time or a paid allowance.

The model promotes a standard of operation that impacts adversely on individuals when that standard is breached.

As previously noted, by the nature of the adopted methodology, these issues relate specifically to the context in question. The final chapter describes these issues in the light of this context as well as describing valid conclusions to the research question.

CHAPTER FIVE

REVIEW AND SYNTHESIS

5.1 PURPOSE AND DESIGN REVISITED

This paper has explored the response of one school to leadership and management and how they should be appropriately defined in a Catholic school setting. By examination of a specific school administrative structure, the ability of a community to recognise its own needs and then address those needs accordingly, in the light of the concepts defined, was demonstrated. A close review of the literature proposed a set of principles that acted as the touchstones for the case study and enabled the reader to develop a lucid understanding of the situation. The analysis that followed revealed key issues that both supported and conflicted with the connection of the School Support Team model to Catholic schooling.

5.2 RESEARCH QUESTION ANSWERED

In the experience of the School Support Team, members of the community were enlivened by the challenges that it brought and the consequential benefits that were attained. Further, it is clear that its apparent success is strongly based in its relevance to the school setting. This structure, therefore, emerged out of a renewal process of one community illustrating the importance for administrative structures of this kind to be consistent with the needs of the school rather than an imposed model with limited relevance. The reality that was examined in this case study supports the connection between the School Support Team and the guiding principles. Issues akin to *community, empowerment, revelation, responsiveness and effectiveness* endorse that the SST supports the understanding of leadership and management that was developed and is, consequently, conducive to Catholic schooling

5.3 CONCLUSIONS

For the researcher the most profound issue which arose from the study was that which related to individuality. When embarking on initiatives such as this it is sometimes easier to deal with the collective wisdom rather than acknowledging the innate worth of each individual. Even as the SST model is seemingly committed to a respect for individuals the structures that were developed appeared to diminish this important side of those who minister in our schools. This reflection is not intended to dissuade others from undertaking similar ventures. It is stressed as a point of caution and one that needs to be considered in any rethink of Catholic school organisation.

It is evident from this study that a review of the administrative structure in Catholic primary schools is merited. Catholic schools, to be true to their mission, have an obligation to be open to the richness that can be achieved by sharing the load of responsibility. By understanding that leadership and management hold pertinence and meaning for each individual they will exist more as temples of the people and less as kingdoms of the chosen. It is, therefore, evident from this study that models such as the School Support Team are appropriate responses to the administrative needs of Catholic Primary Schools and should be encouraged extensively.

Prayer of Serenity

*Lord, grant me the serenity to accept
the things I cannot change.
The courage to change the things I can
and the wisdom to know the difference.*

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APPENDIX

AUSTRALIAN CATHOLIC UNIVERSITY

MASTER OF EDUCATION

RESEARCH PROJECT

PERCEPTIONS AND PRACTICES OF STAFF IN
RESPONSE TO CATHOLIC SCHOOLING.

QUESTIONNAIRE

The purpose of this questionnaire is to gather information about what characterises your school as Catholic. It is acknowledged that the questions seek opinions. Further research to ascertain the factual bases of the opinions offered, will follow.

The research paper that will emanate from this study will be submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Education from the Australian Catholic University. It is possible that the findings of this paper may appear in a publication. Participation in this research is voluntary and participants are entitled to withdraw at any time.

ALL INFORMATION WILL BE CONFIDENTIAL

PARTICIPATION IN THIS RESEARCH IS VOLUNTARY

RESPONDENT DETAILS

NAME (to facilitate further research in this study only): _____

IN WHAT CAPACITY ARE YOU EMPLOYED?

(please circle)

Classroom Teacher

Specialist Teacher

School Officer

Administration

As a Community

Questions 1 to 2 asks you to reflect on how your school fosters community for you as a member of staff.

A review of Church teaching indicates that the community is the distinguishing factor for Catholic Schools.

“Catholic Schools should provide a community climate that is permeated by the Gospel spirit of freedom and love” (Declaration on Christian Education, 1965, Par. 8).

1. Identify the practices you perceive to support your experience of community.
[practices = programs, procedures, policies, processes, structures etc¹]

2. Identify the practices that, in your opinion, inhibit your experience of community.
[practices = programs, procedures, policies, processes, structures etc¹]

Centred on Gospel values

Questions 3 to 4 asks you to comment on examples of how Gospel Values are evident to you as a member of staff.

The Catholic School is characterised by a “strong sense of justice both in the school community and towards those outside the school” (Lane, 1991) and “an atmosphere animated by a spirit of liberty and charity based on the Gospel” (Declaration on Christian Education, 1965, Par. 8).

3. What practices, involving you as a member of staff, demonstrate Gospel Values.
[practices = programs, procedures, policies, processes, structures etc¹]

4. Is there evidence, in your school, of practices which conflict with Gospel Values for you as a member of staff? If so please elaborate.

[practices = programs, procedures, policies, processes, structures etc¹]

Other Characteristics

Question 5 asks you, as a member of staff, to identify other aspects that characterise your school as Catholic.

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