

TEACHERS, CLERGY AND CATHOLIC SCHOOLS

**A STUDY OF PERCEPTIONS OF THE RELIGIOUS DIMENSION OF THE
MISSION OF CATHOLIC SCHOOLS AND RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN
TEACHERS AND CLERGY IN THE LISMORE DIOCESE**

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A dissertation submitted in partial
fulfilment of the requirements for the
degree of

Doctor of Education

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February, 1998

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I wish to express my appreciation to my supervisors Assoc. Prof. Graham Rossiter and Dr. Marcellin Flynn fms for their unlimited patience and invaluable assistance in the preparation and completion of this dissertation. I consider myself extremely privileged to have worked with these two wonderful educators and terrific human beings.

I would like to thank Bishop Satterthwaite, the priests and the teachers of the Lismore Diocese for their gracious assistance and participation in this project. This study would not have been possible without their cooperation. I also wish to thank my colleagues at the Catholic Education Office for their support and patience. In particular, I would like to acknowledge the interest, encouragement and advice that I received from Mr. John Kelly the recently retired Director of Catholic Education in the Lismore Diocese.

Several other people have contributed significantly to this study. I would like to thank Dr. Berenice Kerr rsm, Fr. Chris Toms, Sr. Anne Henson pbvm and Mr. Neville Jennings who read drafts of this dissertation and provided valuable feedback. I am also grateful to Mr. Richard Thomas for his assistance in statistical analysis.

Finally, I would like to thank my wife Lita, mother-in-law Mora and sons Danny and Carlos for their patience, consolation and love during the period of my study. Their understanding of the demands on my time and energy was extraordinary. Thanks.

Wayne Tinsey

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ABSTRACT

The Catholic Diocese of Lismore is situated in the north-east coastal area of New South Wales, Australia. Catholic education in this diocese is based on the premise that school and parish work together in partnership for the personal and spiritual development of students. This premise relies on the assumption that teachers and clergy share a common view of the mission of Catholic schools. However, some recent studies highlight a lack of shared vision and indicate that teachers and clergy frequently have different expectations of what Catholic schools should be.

This study examines similarities and differences in perceptions of the religious dimension of the mission of Catholic schools among the teachers and clergy in the Lismore Diocese. It identifies areas in which there is a significant lack of congruence. The study also explores the relationships and the quality of partnerships between teachers and clergy and identifies issues that are potential sources of tension. Furthermore, it considers implications for change.

Self-completion questionnaires were given to the target population which consisted of all the full time teachers in Catholic schools and all the clergy on active duties in the Lismore Diocese at the beginning of 1997. Subsequent semi-structured interviews were conducted with all the clergy in the group and with thirty two teachers chosen through random sampling.

Data yielded little evidence of sustained dialogue between teachers and clergy on issues related to the religious orientation of Catholic schools. Although there were some similarities in the teachers' and priests' perceptions of the religious dimension of the mission of Catholic schools, there was a considerable variation in their perceptions of priorities for these schools. Some of these differences could be linked to teachers' individual

relationships with the institutional Catholic Church. Teachers and priests were found to differ significantly in their understanding of the effectiveness of Catholic secondary schools. The study also found that ecclesiastical language used to describe the mission of Catholic schools is not always understood by teachers who work principally out of an educational context.

Moreover, the study found that relationships between teachers and clergy were often hindered by poor communication, lack of clarity with regard to roles and expectations and very different perceptions of the structures and practice of authority. Many teachers believed that clergy were 'out of touch' and unrealistic in their expectations of schools and teachers. Many priests, on the other hand, considered that teachers had generally lost a sense of 'vocation' and religious motivation for their involvement in Catholic schools. Priests were generally more interested in forming partnerships with schools than were teachers in forming partnerships with parish communities. The perception that secondary school communities did not relate to parishes as well as their primary counterparts was widespread among clergy.

This study makes several recommendations for the improvement of communication and dialogue between teachers and priests. It also recommends that similar research be carried out in dioceses where the parish-school authority structure differs. As part of this study the initial findings were presented to a significant gathering of clergy and school principals. The resulting discussion led to the proposal of strategies for improvement in communication and partnership. In this way the applied research in the study became an agency of change itself, working in the direction of a better culture of communication and collaboration regarding the religious mission of Catholic schools.

Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY

All who are interested in Catholic schools should take part in the formulation of the schools' goals... Since the dominant vision more accurately and comprehensively defines the school than anything else does, it must arise out of the school community itself. Its formulation must include faculty, students, staff, family, and all other constituents of the school. Then it will be lived, and will unite the school community.

(Buetow, 1988:75, in reference to Catholic schooling in the United States)

Dialogue and good communication are essential for the development of collaboration, partnership and the unity of vision for Catholic school education that are referred to by Buetow. A collective view of the mission of Catholic schools also needs contributions from parish clergy, particularly where partnership between parish and school is a key principle for Catholic school education, as is the case in the Diocese of Lismore. This study examines the perceptions of the religious dimension of the mission of Catholic schools held by clergy and teachers in the Lismore Diocese. It also explores the relationships between clergy and teachers which inevitably have a bearing on their view of partnerships between Catholic schools and parishes.

The first chapter of the dissertation:

- identifies the central concerns and context of the study;
- states the questions to be explored and aims of the research;
- discusses the significance of the study;
- defines key terms that are used; and,
- presents an outline of the structure of the dissertation.

1.1 CENTRAL CONCERNS OF THE STUDY

Religious socialisation, the experience of Christian community, religious education, catechesis and evangelisation are integral elements in the mission of all Catholic schools. In this study these concepts will be collectively referred to as the religious dimension of the mission of Catholic schools. This study examines similarities and differences in perceptions of this dimension among the teachers and clergy in the Lismore diocese, and identifies areas in which there is a significant lack of congruence in these perceptions.

The Catholic education system in the Lismore diocese stresses the importance of the school and the parish working together in partnership. The *Diocesan Handbook for Parish Schools*, for example, states that 'schools, parishes and families are meant to work together in partnership for youth to gain the best religious and educational outcomes'. (1995:69) The mission statement of the Catholic Education Office invites leaders in education in the diocese to join in this spirit of partnership. It states:

...As leaders in schools you are invited into this partnership of service with us in the Diocese of Lismore and commissioned to live in the spirit of service as Jesus did. We are in partnership, and if we work together the spirit of service soars.

This study explores the relationships and the quality of partnerships between teachers and clergy in the Lismore diocese and identifies issues that are potential sources of tension in these relationships.

1.2 CONTEXT OF THE STUDY

1.2.1 Catholic Education in the Lismore Diocese

The *Macquarie Dictionary* (1982) defines a diocese as a 'district, with its population, that comes under the care of a bishop.' The Catholic Diocese of Lismore is situated in the north-east coastal area of New South Wales. It covers the area from Tweed Heads in the north to Laurieton in the south and extends inland as far as Kyogle in the west. (A map of the diocese is included as Appendix 1.) In July 1997 the diocese consisted of 25 parishes staffed by 39 active members of the clergy. At the same point in time the diocesan Catholic education system consisted of 36 primary schools (400 full time teachers) and 10 secondary schools (320 full time teachers). As well as these, there were two private Catholic secondary schools that were not included in the study as they operated independently of the diocesan education system.

The school-parish relationship in the Lismore Diocese is significantly different from relationships which exist between the two bodies in all other dioceses in the state of New South Wales. Even though all of the schools that are the focus of this study form part of the diocesan education system, they are first and foremost parish schools. The *Diocesan Teachers' Award* states that 'diocesan policy encourages parish ownership of and responsibility for pastoral endeavours. This especially applies to the schools of the Diocese.' (p.1) The same document highlights the uniqueness of this structure by stating that:

The Lismore Diocesan school system is unique in New South Wales and probably throughout Australia in its emphasis on the principle of subsidiarity and the decentralisation of decision making. (p.1)

Parish Priests in the Lismore Diocese are representatives of the *Trustees of the Roman Catholic Church* and are in effect the employers of teachers in Catholic schools. These priests are in strong positions of authority in the school communities and teachers cannot be appointed or given promotions without their consent. Bishop Satterthwaite, the Bishop of Lismore, in a letter to the secretary of the Diocesan Education Board stated that:

In general, the employing authority is the Corporate Trustees of the Roman Catholic Church for the Diocese of Lismore; Parish Priests/Administrators ex officio employ on behalf of the Trustees of the Diocese. (11.9.84)

In the same letter, the bishop wrote of the role of the school principal in the employment of teachers:

...Principals are hereby authorised to sign teacher employment contracts for and on behalf of the Trustees of the Diocese...Principals may not sign such contracts unless they have first consulted and obtained the consent of the Parish Priest/Administrator, such consent to be given in writing to the Principal... (11.9.84)

In other dioceses where administration of schools is more centralised in nature, the authority of clergy in Catholic education is more limited. In these cases the Catholic Education Offices assume more authority and control over schools and the Diocesan Director of Catholic Education is normally nominated as the employer of teachers. The extent to which the authority structure in Catholic education in the Lismore Diocese influences perceptions

of the mission of Catholic schools and relationships among teachers and clergy is an important consideration in this study.

1.2.2 Emerging Difficulties in School-Parish Relationships

Hoekstra, in Raduntz, *et al.* (1995:13), when writing about the relationships between Catholic schools and parish communities, stated that:

To be effective this relationship must depend on mutual respect; clearly defined and complementary roles and areas of responsibility for all involved; open and honest two-way communication; and a willingness to work through difficulties that will invariably arise.

These qualities are hallmarks of genuine partnership between schools and parishes. Graham (1994:5) suggested that 'partnership requires a collaborative culture where growth is encouraged, power shared and trusting support is offered'. Previous studies, however, (eg. Harney, 1994) have indicated that a culture of collaboration and good communication is not always present in relationships between schools and parishes and that frequently teachers and clergy have different expectations of what Catholic schools should be and should aim to achieve.

The Episcopal Vicar for Education in the Lismore diocese, Fr. Leo Donnelly (1996:6), wrote in a paper presented to the National Catholic Education Commission, of an emerging feeling of 'disconnection' in relationships between parishes and Catholic schools. He stated that:

It is my firm belief that in many instances, at both independent and systemic levels, Catholic education has become disconnected from the grass roots of the local Church, and that unless it somehow reconnects, it will become like Shakespeare's 'goodly apple, rotten at the heart'.

1.3 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The study explores the following questions:

- The perceptions of the religious dimension of the mission of Catholic schools on the part of clergy and teachers;

Is there a significant lack of congruence in these perceptions?

If so, what are the implications for parish-school partnership in Catholic education?

- Relationships between clergy and teachers;

What are the dominant issues in these relationships?

What implications do they present for parish-school partnership in Catholic education?

These questions were developed in the light of a review of literature and research, the findings of a pilot study which preceded and informed this study and the researcher's own experience of Catholic education over a period of twenty years.

1.4 AIMS OF THE STUDY

In the light of these questions this study aims to:

- examine perceptions of the religious dimension of the mission of Catholic schools that are held by teachers and clergy in the Lismore diocese;
- identify areas where there is a significant lack of congruence in these perceptions;
- explore relationships between teachers and clergy in the Lismore Diocese in the context of Catholic schools;
- identify issues that are potential sources of tension in these relationships; and,
- propose implications of this research for parish-school partnership in Catholic education in the Lismore diocese.

1.5 SIGNIFICANCE AND CONTRIBUTION OF THE STUDY

This study makes a significant contribution to the existing body of knowledge in the field of Catholic education. It is possibly the first formal investigation into perceptions of the religious dimension of the mission of Catholic schools and relationships between teachers and clergy in Australia. As these issues are important for all Catholic education systems and little, if any, formal investigation has previously been attempted in this field, the findings of this study are relevant beyond the Lismore Diocese.

In addition, the study comes at a time when many of the school communities are re-examining their focus and direction through the development of formal mission statements. This study explores areas relevant to this endeavour. It could also facilitate dialogue on the aims of Catholic schools between clergy and teachers in the Lismore diocese. This dialogue could increase the

possibility of good communication and genuine partnership between the two parties.

The study is also of considerable personal and professional significance to the researcher. In his role as Coordinator of Religious Education for the Diocese of Lismore, the researcher has responsibility for the promotion of dialogue and liaison between schools and parishes on many of the issues that are explored in the study.

1.6 DEFINITION OF TERMS

The following are offered as initial operating definitions for several of the terms used in the study. There is debate about the meaning that these terms have for different audiences. Where this debate has particular implications for this study and where it is possible that different interpretations of these concepts influence communication, a more detailed analysis of the terms will be taken up.

Catechesis

Catechesis refers to a dialogue between believers where an initial commitment to the Gospel is presumed. Catechesis intends to make the '...first commitment of faith become evermore living, conscious and active through the light of instruction.' (General Catechetical Directory, No. 17) Catechesis is essentially an activity of believers and assumes that participants have chosen to be part of the process (Treston, 1990: 28).

Culture

Wise (In Trainor, 1991:20) describes culture as '...the characteristics of a group or society-the customs, ideas, behaviour, and values that form its way

of life-characteristics that are transmitted by learning processes rather than by genetics.' Flynn (1993:8) refers to culture in the context of Catholic schools as '...the core beliefs, values, traditions, symbols and patterns of behaviour which provide meaning to the school community and which help shape the lives of students, teachers and parents.'

Curriculum

Marsh and Stafford define school curriculum as being '...an interrelated set of plans and experiences which a student completes under the guidance of the school.' (1984:3) Elliot Eisner (in Flynn, 1993:189) describes curriculum as:

...those activities that occur in the classroom, taking into consideration the materials, contents and events in which the students are engaged. We refer to this curriculum as the operational curriculum.

However, students may learn things in the school about social roles, attitudes and values which are not included in the formal curriculum plan. These are passed on unintentionally during the presentation of the planned curriculum. This learning process is referred to in this study as the informal or implicit curriculum. Eisner (in Flynn, 1993:190) described this notion:

The implicit curriculum of the school is what it teaches because of the place that it is. And the school is that kind of place through the ancillary consequences of various approaches to teaching, by the kind of reward system it uses, by the organisational structure it employs to sustain its existence, by the physical characteristics of the school plant.....Although these features are seldom publicly announced, they are intuitively recognised by parents, students and teachers. And because they are salient and pervasive features of schooling, what they teach may be the most important lessons a child learns.

Enculturation

Arbuckle (1983:17) defines enculturation as 'the process of learning, from childhood onwards, that enables an individual to become an integrated part of his or her culture.'

Evangelisation

Malone and Ryan indicate that the term *evangelisation*, used in the context of Catholic schools, refers to the proclamation of the Gospel so that '...students may be led to believe it as the Word of God and accept it in their lives.' (1996:10) This proclamation of the Gospel is achieved by word and witness.

Evangelisation is also the means of bringing the Gospel to bear on culture (Donovan 1989:127). While concerned with individual salvation, evangelisation is community oriented (Arbuckle, 1990). As part of their mission, Catholic schools evangelise by giving public witness to the Gospel in all that the school is and does.

Evangelisation is closely linked with *inculturation* which stresses the ongoing and reciprocal nature of evangelisation and conversion, and strongly implies a tolerance towards, and indeed an encouragement of individuality of response to the Gospel. Arbuckle states that inculturation is the '...dynamic relationship between the Christian message and culture or cultures; an insertion of the Christian life into a culture; an ongoing process of reciprocal and critical interaction and assimilation between them' (1983: 17).

Faith

James Fowler (1981) maintains that faith has much to do with the relationship between an individual or community and an ultimate environment. For Fowler, this faith may not necessarily be religious in the sense that it is informed by a particular religious tradition, and should not be limited to the notion of participating in a tradition.

According to Marcellin Flynn, Christian faith 'is a response to God who has intervened in human history by becoming one of us in Jesus.' (1993:326) A traditional facet of the mission of Catholic schools has been to help students develop and maintain a personal relationship with God. This activity is commonly referred to as *faith development*.

Formal Church Documents and Statements

Formal Church documents and statements, as the term is used in this study, refer to documentation and teachings from the hierarchy of the Catholic Church or any body that comes under the authority of the hierarchy.

Gospel

The term *Gospel* in this context, refers to the essential message of Jesus Christ, his words, actions, work and life, which transcends any particular cultural setting. Vincent Donovan defines *Gospel-oriented community* in terms of '...a community of public witness to evangelical values, formed by the Gospel, dedicated to the Gospel, understanding of the gospel and reflecting the Gospel.' (1978:194)

Ministry

The term *ministry* refers to the exercise of Christian vocation through service to others. Ministry is related to the mission of the Church and is rooted in baptism and the discipleship which it implies (National Catholic Education Commission, 1984:11, in Mellor, 1989).

Mission of Catholic Schools

The school's mission directs what it endeavours to be and what it endeavours to do. It is centred on promotion of the 'Christian vision' emanating from the teachings of the Christian Gospel. It is intricately linked to the mission of the wider Catholic Church, which expresses the relationship between God and the world through God's self-communication in Jesus Christ (Lopez, 1994-109).

Parish

The Catholic *Code of Canon Law* (in Hornsby-Smith, 1989:7) describes the parish as:

...a certain community of Christ's faithful stably established within a particular Church, whose pastoral care, under the authority of the diocesan Bishop, is entrusted to a parish priest as its proper pastor. (Can. 515 s.1)

Religious Education

Religious education is concerned with knowledge and skills which allow participants to grow in the ability to know and experience the world of religion (Treston, 1990:28). It is essentially aimed at the promotion of religious literacy in participants. Religious education is concerned with the

task of giving a particular theological and conceptual form and framework in which religious faith can be expressed.

Religious education in a Catholic school is concerned with handing on the faith tradition to its pupils and with promoting the development of a personal religious faith in the context of the faith tradition. Also, religious education addresses the reality of all students in the classrooms of Catholic schools, regardless of level of faith practice or denominational affiliation. It is primarily concerned with the recognition and appreciation of the religious and spiritual dimensions of life, as well as allowing space for searching and questioning (Gallagher, 1988: 15). Religious education deals with education and religion from a variety of perspectives.

Socialisation

Socialisation is concerned with the transmission of culture from one generation to another (Sargent, 1983:75). It is through this process that individuals learn to be part of the culture of their society. It normally happens through a form of 'osmosis', where people absorb attitudes, values, beliefs and patterns of behaviour in the context of their personal and social environment (Crawford and Rossiter, 1994:2). Westerhoff (In Flynn, 1979:105) describes religious socialisation as:

...a process consisting of lifelong formal and informal mechanisms, through which persons sustain and transmit their faith (world view, value system) and lifestyle. This is accomplished through participation in the life of a tradition-bearing community with its rites, rituals, myths, symbols, expressions of beliefs, attitudes and values, organisational patterns and activities.

In the process of religious socialisation a religious identity is conferred long before it is internalised as personal faith (Flynn, 1979:106).

The assumption has traditionally been that there exists and should continue to exist a uniform, identifiable 'Catholic culture'. In a changing social context this is a questionable assumption to make. Similarly, the criteria for success in the religious socialisation process, have been linked with visible membership of the Church; that is, attendance at the Mass and sacraments and conformity with a uniform way of 'being Catholic'. As more and more people are choosing not to be regular participants in formal worshipping communities, these criteria for success in the process of religious socialisation are becoming inadequate and problematic.

Teaching and Vocation

Lortie, Hargreaves and Levin and Young (in Riordan, 1996) described teaching variously as a profession, semi-profession, craft or career. Hargreaves (1994) stated that the popular view of teaching is of work performed with children in classrooms. Riordan (1996:13), citing a study by Lortie (1975), suggested that 'teachers receive their psychic rewards, i.e. significant and fundamental satisfaction, from these classroom interactions.' Riordan also acknowledges that teachers' job requirements extend beyond the classroom.

The term vocation, used in the educational context, normally implies that teaching is a calling, a commitment and 'more than a job'. Used in the context of Catholic education, as well as referring to teachers' calling and commitment to education, the term *vocation* has the further connotation of teaching as ministry in the Church. Gibson (1997:51) stated:

Certainly the meaning of 'work' in Catholic teaching is broader than just 'employment for remuneration' in that it refers to a contribution to the good of individuals, societies and creation.

1.7 ORGANISATION OF THE DISSERTATION

This dissertation is divided into six chapters:

Chapter 2 Review of Literature and Relevant Research

This chapter examines literature that is related to this study. The first section considers recent Australian research on perceptions of aspects of Catholic education and relationships between teachers and priests. The second section discusses factors which are potential influences on these perceptions and relationships. The chapter concludes with a statement of principles important in a reconceptualisation of the religious dimension of the mission of Catholic schools.

Chapter 3 Research Design and Methodology

This chapter provides a description of the research methodology that was employed in the study. Strategies that were used in the process of data gathering and analysis are outlined and a justification for the adoption of this particular research method is presented. The chapter also includes a description of the pilot study that preceded and informed this study.

Chapter 4 Perceptions of the Religious Dimension of the Mission of Catholic Schools : Data from the Lismore Diocese

This chapter presents data collected in this research which relates to perceptions of this dimension of the schools' mission held by teachers and priests in the Lismore Diocese.

Chapter 5 School-Parish Partnership and Relationships between Teachers and Clergy in the Lismore Diocese

This chapter outlines the findings of this study on issues pertaining to relationships and partnerships between teachers and clergy in the Lismore Diocese. Data collected from a Focus Group of priests and principals who discussed the findings are also presented.

Chapter 6 Discussion of the Research Findings and Consideration of Implications for Catholic School Education in the Lismore Diocese

This chapter discusses the research findings in the light of the research questions. The implications of this research for teacher-clergy partnership in the Lismore Diocese are also identified. The chapter concludes with a statement of recommendations for future research and practice.

The dissertation concludes with appendices and a bibliography.

Chapter 2

REVIEW OF LITERATURE AND RELEVANT RESEARCH

The review of literature that is presented in this chapter has been divided into two sections. The first section examines previous Australian research that is relevant to the concerns of this study. The second section examines factors which are potential influences on the way that the religious dimension of the mission of Catholic schools is perceived by teachers and clergy. In this section, specific attention is given to language and terminology commonly used to describe the mission of Catholic schools in official Church statements and current theory of Catholic education. The chapter concludes with a statement of principles which, in the light of the review of literature, are important in a reconceptualisation of the religious dimension of the mission of Catholic schools.

2.1 RECENT AUSTRALIAN RESEARCH RELEVANT TO THIS STUDY

2.1.1 The Harney Report (1994)

In 1994, at the request of the local bishop, Bruce Callaghan and Associates, through researcher Paul Harney, carried out research aimed at identifying perceptions of aspects of Catholic Education held by the clergy of the Diocese of Parramatta. In this study 72 members of the clergy were sent questionnaires. Responses were received from 53. In addition, follow-up interviews were held with 33 members of the sample.

The research began with the brief to report on the clergy's perceptions of:

- their role in pastoral leadership in the school community;

- the strengths and weaknesses of Catholic schools;
- the content of religious education in schools;
- financial management issues between parishes and schools; and,
- the extent of parish responsibility for Catholic schools.

The researcher was also asked to indicate possible future relationships between schools and parishes in the Parramatta diocese.

Those aspects of Harney's research which have implications for this study can be examined under three headings:

The Quality of School-Parish Relationships

Less than 40% of the clergy believed that Catholic education was making a real contribution to the development of the parish community. Half of the respondents believed that the parish was playing a proper role in the management of primary schools. However, only one in five priests believed that this was true of the role played by the parish in secondary schools. There was the perception that secondary schools formed their own communities and often did not want to have anything to do with parishes. Some 75% of the clergy believed that the primary school supported them personally in their pastoral role, whereas only 39.6% said that this was true of secondary schools.

Harney's research indicated that the quality of school-parish partnership in the Parramatta diocese was poor. Partnership necessitates a genuine attempt to isolate common goals, to develop commonality of purpose and a collaborative culture. According to Harney's report there was little evidence of this culture being widely operative in the Catholic school communities of the Parramatta diocese.

The Quality of Religious Education

The majority of the respondents were satisfied with the quality of religious education programs, sacramental programs and liturgical practice in primary schools. However, only one in three believed that secondary schools were offering quality religious education programs. Some 40% of the sample indicated that they did not know about the quality of the secondary programs. More than half of the respondents believed that the quality of liturgical practice in secondary schools was poor.

More than half of the clergy believed that students emerged from primary schools with a sound religious formation. However, less than one in ten suggested that this was true of students emerging from secondary schools. Some 60.8% believed that religious formation and knowledge at this level were poor. A major concern of the clergy was the fact that there were no outcomes in religious formation that were commonly agreed to by clergy and schools.

The majority of the priests indicated a lack of trust and confidence in secondary schools. The fact that almost half of those surveyed stated that they did not know about the quality of secondary religious education programs raises questions about the level of communication between parishes and the education system.

The Quality of Staff

Fewer than half of the clergy were satisfied with the staff in secondary schools of the diocese, whereas more than 70% were satisfied with the primary school staff. The main causes of dissatisfaction were the beliefs that many of the teachers were 'unchurched', ignorant of Catholic theology and not experienced in the local parish community. Perceptions of the quality of

teachers appeared to a large extent to be based on the level of Catholic practice. There was no evidence of dissatisfaction on the grounds of poor teaching or a perceived lack of professionalism.

The Harney Report indicates that the clergy in the Parramatta diocese were very critical of Catholic secondary schools and their staffs. Much of their lack of trust and confidence stemmed from the perception that secondary schools endeavour to set themselves up as communities which are separate from parish structures. This criticism of secondary schools was made on religious, rather than professional or educational grounds.

Evidence of Similar Perceptions in the Lismore Diocese

In 1996 Dr. Michael Bezzina from the Catholic Education Office in the Diocese of Parramatta conducted a review of support for religious education in the Lismore Diocese. This report was commissioned by the Director of Education in the Diocese of Lismore 'as a means of gauging the impact of current support for religious education in the diocese, and indicating possible future directions for the provision of this support.' (1996:1)

During this review Dr. Bezzina interviewed 16 priests, including the Bishop, and 30 Religious Education Coordinators from the diocese. Feedback to the diocese was reported under the following headings:

- the structure of the diocesan religious education support team;
- forms of curriculum support;
- comments of existing diocesan religious education guidelines;
- professional development for teachers provided by the diocese; and,
- a section for other comments.

Of most relevance to this discussion were the comments of diocesan clergy concerning Catholic secondary schools. After interviews and discussions

with several of the Lismore clergy, Bezzina reported that some priests indicated lack of trust and confidence in secondary schools similar to that described above by Harney. Bezzina (1996:4) reported:

Clergy expressed significant concerns about the faith commitment among teachers, and in particular secondary teachers. They saw this reflected in the lack of participation in school prayer and parish life.

2.1.2 'The Culture Of Catholic Schools'- Marcellin Flynn (1993)

The Culture of Catholic Schools (1990-1993) constituted the third phase of research which began in 1972 by Br. Flynn who is currently lecturing at the Australian Catholic University in Sydney. In this project, data were collected from senior students, teachers and parents of students in 50 Catholic secondary schools in the State of NSW and the Australian Capital Territory. Of most significance for this study, are the findings of Flynn's research on the attitudes of teachers towards various issues in Catholic schooling. Flynn surveyed 728 secondary teachers who worked in the 50 schools. It should be noted that Flynn's sample did not include primary school teachers. Their perceptions on the issues which follow could vary significantly from those of secondary school teachers.

Teachers' Expectations of Catholic Schools

The teachers indicated that their highest expectations of Catholic schools were related to the personal development of students. From a choice of 40 possible expectations, the teachers nominated 6 personal development expectations in the first 10. The teachers placed much less importance on expectations to do with the students' vocational, academic and religious

development. Five of the religious development expectations were ranked in the lowest 10.

Those who were surveyed did not appear to place great importance on religious education in the mission of Catholic schools. From a list of 10 possible issues that were causing them concern and anxiety in Catholic schools, religious factors, such as the relevance of the Church and the decline in religious practice, were ranked only 4th by the teachers. Considerable contrast can be noted between perceptions of the teachers on these issues, and the perceptions and priorities of the clergy who were surveyed in the *Harney Report*.

Some 83% of the sample believed that Catholic schools placed importance on their religious mission. However, only 64% considered that they provided an experience of life based on the values of the Christian Gospel. The teachers indicated that the provision of an experience of Christian community, where people showed concern for one another, was a priority for Catholic schools. Flynn states that 'overall, teachers valued the strongly relational environment of Catholic schools and the experience of community that they encountered there (1993:119).' The sample of clergy in the *Harney Report* emphasised the importance of a parish focus in attempts to establish community. According to the data in Flynn's research, the parish did not appear to be central to the lives of the secondary teachers.

Teachers' Choice of Catholic Schools

Over half of the teachers stated that the religious nature of the schools was a big factor in their decision to work in Catholic schools. Flynn cites similar findings in the research of Ciriello (1988) in the United States, who also found that over 50% of teachers chose to teach in Catholic schools for religious reasons. The *Harney Report* showed that the sample of clergy did

not display any significant trust in the religious commitment of secondary school teachers or in their motivation for teaching in Catholic schools.

Although the study found that Catholic schools continued to have a positive effect on the religious development of students, according to Flynn, the influence of teachers in this area declined in the period from 1972-1993 (Flynn referred to data from his previous studies). Only 44% of the sample believed that Catholic school teachers give example of Catholic practice for students. On this issue the teachers' perceptions were similar to those held by the clergy cited in the *Harney Report*.

Flynn's research indicated that teachers in Catholic secondary schools cited religious motivation and the experience of Christian community as factors in their choice to teach in these schools. However, it is important to note that the clergy in Harney's sample were critical of secondary teachers for their perceived lack of religiosity and poor participation in the Catholic community. There appear to be significant differences in the ways that community, religion and what it means to be religious are understood by teachers and clergy. These differences have considerable implications for the way that the mission of Catholic schools is perceived.

2.1.3 Catholic Schools and Change- Tinsey (1996)

In February and March of 1996, the author of this study was involved in inservice work with 430 teachers from 28 primary and secondary schools in the Lismore Diocese. As part of the inservice, the teachers were asked to propose implications for Catholic schools of certain changes in the place of religion in Australian society and changes in the way that the concept of *parish* is understood in this context. The teachers were given a short reading on each of the issues. They then moved into discussion groups for 25 minutes. Group sizes varied from 6 to 10 people. Groups were asked to use

an overhead transparency to summarise their discussion of the issue. What follows is a synthesis of comments from the groups on each of the issues.

The Changing Place of Religion in Australian Society

All of the groups agreed that the place of religion in Australian society was changing, and that religion had become a private affair for many people. The teachers proposed the following reasons for this trend:

- there was an evident lack of leadership in the churches;
- the laity were more able to articulate what they wanted and needed from religion;
- the social function of churches was in decline;
- there was a reaction to perceived repression in society and religion; and,
- denominational religion in Australian society had lost its direction.

The teachers, however, insisted that the trend away from formal church attendance did not necessarily mean that religious faith in Australia was on the decline.

Several implications for Catholic schools were proposed. The teachers suggested that the schools needed to face this reality and be prepared to dialogue with the dominant Australian culture, rather than adopting a 'fortress' approach. It was stated that, in order to cater to the changing needs of people, flexibility and tolerance were needed. The teachers added that more pressure was being put on the schools to witness to the Christian values that often conflict with societal trends. The challenges of teaching religious education in this social context were also widely acknowledged.

Change and the Notion of Parish

The teachers indicated that changes in understandings of and attitudes towards 'parish' had implications for Catholic schools. It was stated that the parish was no longer the hub of people's lives, and that, as a vehicle for religious socialisation, the parish had lost effectiveness. The fact that liturgy could often be alienating was cited as a difficulty in this area. A question was raised, however, as to whether attendance at Mass should be used as a yardstick when evaluating the quality of parish life.

It was suggested by some groups that the Catholic school was replacing the parish as the central experience of religious community for many Catholics. It is important to note that this notion was criticised and rejected by the clergy from the Parramatta Diocese who were surveyed in Harney's research. Communication between school and parish was considered by all of the groups to be generally poor. When referring to an increasing gap between school and parish, several groups mentioned that the Parish Priest should have a pivotal role in making parish life more relevant for young Catholics.

Authority as an Issue in School-Parish Relationships

Fr. Leo Donnelly (1996), in his paper to the National Catholic Education Commission which has already been cited, expressed concern at the trend towards 'disconnection' between the Catholic school and the local parish. Donnelly (1996:7) stated:

There is no doubt that in many parish communities there is a sense of loss of ownership of the Catholic school. ...And yet the end purpose of the Catholic school is to give strength to the mission of proclamation that the community must engage in, with regard to its young. Or is this still the end purpose in the collective mind of the Catholic Education establishment?...In very many instances I think it would be true to say that the teaching staff of schools would see

themselves answerable to the Catholic Education Office not any faith community.

In the paper, Fr. Donnelly proposed that the issue of authority is important in this discussion. He acknowledged that many priests have difficulty with the exercise of authority in a collegial fashion and that some are:

...greatly disturbed by what they see as a diminution of their former authority... While many priests have gone through the motions of involving the laity in the governance of the parish, they often fail to realise that such involvement requires that they must share their authority and use it to enable and to empower their very willing lay assistants. (1996:8)

The relationship between the Catholic school and the parish is critical in this study. Harney's research showed that the clergy in the Parramatta Diocese spoke more positively of the relationships between parishes and primary schools than they did of parishes and secondary schools. This may be because they experienced a greater degree of control over primary schools. If, as alluded to by Fr. Donnelly in the previous paragraph, authority is a significant issue for clergy, animosity towards secondary schools and their teachers may be linked to a perceived non-acceptance of their authority in these schools.

2.2 FACTORS WHICH INFLUENCE PERCEPTIONS OF MISSION

In this section of the review, factors which have the potential to influence perceptions of the mission of Catholic schools and the relationships between teachers and priests are explored. These factors include:

- The changing socio-religious and educational contexts in which Australian Catholic schools find themselves;

- Official Church statements on the mission of Catholic schools; and
- Current theory related to the mission of Catholic schools.

2.2.1 The Changing Context of Catholic Education in Australia

Profound and powerful forces are re-making our world, and the urgent question of our time is whether we can make change our friend and not our enemy.

(President Clinton in his Presidential Inaugural Address, 1993)

The changing context in which Catholic schools find themselves in contemporary Australia and possible implications for this study are now considered.

Schools and Society

Schools are 'embedded in society' and analysis of any facet of schooling needs to incorporate an analysis of the social context in which it is situated (Maxwell, 1985:47). The societal and religious contexts in which Catholic schools in Australia operate are changing and this change must be considered as a factor which influences perceptions of the mission of the schools. This point is argued by Harold Buetow (1988:16) when he warned that:

If, in one's conception of the nature of the Catholic school, one does not take the possibility of change into consideration, one may find oneself teaching the kind of religion which pupils will be likely to reject as being among other childish things to be abandoned on leaving school.

However, as Lennan (1995) indicated, the promotion of truths and structures that transcend time is historically a more dominant emphasis in the Catholic Church than is sympathy towards the need for change and renewal. Different opinions on the extent to which Catholic school communities should take account of social and religious change when they state their mission and future direction are potential sources of conflict between teachers and clergy.

There are also differing perceptions of what change in its many forms means for the future of the Church. There are those who maintain that because it appears that traditional certainties and authorities are being challenged, change must be resisted if the Church is to survive. On the other hand, there are those who see changed circumstances in society and the Church as being led by the Holy Spirit, and therefore necessary and even prophetic. Both of these points of view would have representation in any sample of teachers and clergy.

Change and Religion in Australian Society

In the latter part of this century Australian society has undergone a strong shift towards secularisation and religious pluralism. Privatisation of beliefs, together with an increased emphasis on freedom and individualism in all areas of Australian life, have led to less importance being placed on communal expressions of religion. Luckmann (1967) used the term 'invisible religion' to describe this condition where meaning is increasingly found in the individual, personal and private spheres of life. Religious emphasis in Australian society seems to be on personal spirituality, that is, the way in which the individual relates to a personal God.

Research by Philip Hughes (1993, 1995) indicates that it is becoming less important to speak of religious identity in Australian society in terms of institutional religion or a particular denomination. Fewer people are visibly

aligning themselves with institutional religion. In the past 30 years there has been a dramatic drop in regular church attendance and in Commonwealth census returns, an increasing number of people are indicating that they have 'no religion'.

As a result of these trends, religious consciousness, activities and institutions have less social significance in Australia and have become marginal in the broader social system. It appears that reason, not religion, now tells people what is right. Mainstream Christian churches are no longer so dominant in their influence on the religious and moral fabric of the nation. In fact, for many Australians, many of the belief systems that have been inherited are now considered as being irrelevant in the light of crucial social issues (Trainor, 1990).

These societal trends in religion have implications for Catholic schools. Much of the stated mission in these schools assumes an adherence to a communitarian philosophy which directly challenges the social trend towards individualism. Percentages of non-Catholic and non-practising Catholic pupils in the schools are growing. Principals are reporting that an increasing number of parents hoping to enrol their children in Catholic schools are stating that they are Christian, rather than Catholics or members of any other denomination. It has been suggested that many parents want 'the fruits but not the roots' of Catholic education. One of the key challenges that Catholic schools face at this point in history, is that of trying to serve the needs of the Gospel and at the same time serve the needs of clients, many of whom do not particularly want or see the need for the Gospel (Leavey, 1984).

Change, the Parish and Catholic Schools

Perceptions of the mission of Catholic schools are also influenced by understandings of the notion of 'parish' and its relationship to the Catholic school. The communitarian dimension of Catholic schools has traditionally

been linked to the parish, the local Catholic worshipping community. This is certainly the case in the Lismore Diocese where all schools are referred to as 'parish schools'.

In this world of greater mobility and freedom of association, however, people no longer seem willing to accept the geographically designated parish as their fundamental unit of association with, or means of finding identity within the Church. Hughes (1995) links this to a general decline in local community life in Australia. He maintains that the car, the telephone and the television have re-drawn the boundaries of the communities in which people live.

It appears that younger people in contemporary Australia have little sense of duty when it comes to church attendance. They attend to the extent that they find it enjoyable, personally satisfying and meaningful. Young people '...seek worship which is not so structured so as to be conceptually correct, but worship which enhances their sense of God's presence' (Hughes, 1995:8).

These challenges to traditional understandings of 'parish' have significant implications for Catholic school communities. If people do not think in terms of parish or geographically bounded areas in any other facet of their lives, it is unrealistic to expect them to do so solely in religion or education. The Catholic school system in Australia has traditionally had the task of assisting in the religious socialisation of the children of church-attending Catholics. Many people are choosing not to associate formally with parishes, and yet they are still sending their children to Catholic schools.

The Changing Face of Catholic Education in Australia

Perhaps the most dramatic change in Catholic education in Australia in recent decades, has been the decline in the numbers of religious sisters and brothers in the teaching force. In 1950 as few as 5% of teachers in Catholic

schools in New South Wales were lay teachers. This was completely reversed by 1992 when only 4.8% of the teachers in these schools were religious sisters or brothers.

The shift to what is now fundamentally a lay teaching force has brought further changes to Catholic education. Catholic Education Offices were formed and given the mandate to become involved in the administration of parish schools within dioceses. The independence of schools and parishes in the arena of education has in many cases been replaced by a systemic approach. Some may see this as a challenge to the traditional idea of a 'parish school'.

A further result of the increased lay involvement in Catholic schools in recent decades has been the development of a structure of promotions positions and career paths within the education system. Industrial representation is now available to teachers through membership of a trade union. The decisions to strike taken by teachers in Catholic schools in recent years have caused much pain and division in the system. They have been seen by some to be the end of an era for Catholic education in Australia. This movement by Catholic education in Australia into the industrial arena has alienated many Catholics who have formed the perception that the schools and their teachers have lost the spirit of vocation and dedication in their mission.

During the era when teachers in Catholic schools were basically members of religious congregations, the mission of a school was generally expressed in terms of the vision of the founder of a particular religious order. Today it is more difficult for lay principals and teachers to speak of a founder's vision, since in many cases they do not have a deep level of knowledge or involvement with particular religious congregations. Thus, as the numbers of religious sisters and brothers have decreased, staff development days and inservices which focus on the development of vision and mission statements

for particular school communities have become an important part of the culture of Catholic schools.

Since the members of religious congregations lived in the parishes, close to the school and church, and as they did not have families and the associated responsibilities, the assumption was that they were available to work on an almost full time basis in the wider parish as well as in the schools. Many lay teachers complain that similar assumptions are still being made concerning the extent to which they should become involved in parish activities.

The Shift from Modernity to Postmodernity

Hargreaves (1994) argued that many of society's most important and influential institutions, including education, have structures firmly rooted in the social condition which is often labelled *modernity*, while the world itself is a *postmodern* world. He suggested that the result can be confusion.

Savage and Warde (1993) maintained that the postmodern condition is characterised by a sense of scepticism about the role of scientific knowledge, emphasis on aesthetics rather than morality, rampant consumerism and more reflexivity on the part of individuals about their identity and conduct. Hand in hand with the move to a postmodern social condition, comes a collapse of certainties in many facets of individual and societal life, while tradition and obligation are no longer guarantees for the security and continuance of relationships. Postmodernity brings with it a more localised recognition of ethnic, religious and linguistic identities, and this can cause confusion and debate on the question of national identity.

In the context of education, Hargreaves (1994) indicated that this social condition of modernity is manifested through centralised bureaucracies, standardised curriculum, a lack of flexibility and a factory approach to

learning. He further suggested that these structures have outlived their usefulness and are no longer appropriate or relevant.

Postmodern thought in the context of education is manifested through collaborative decision making and problem solving, cooperative classrooms and self-managing schools. The 'moving mosaic' of networks of collaborative responsiveness is an image used by Hargreaves to describe the structure of organisational thought in postmodernity. This can be contrasted with the rigid compartmentalism that he sees as being typical of modern organisations.

In considering the implications for education of the struggle between these two social forces, Hargreaves argued that school systems and organisational structures which have their roots in modernity are anachronistic and out of step with the post-industrial, postmodern world with its demands and complexities.

The role of teachers in this context is also changing. Hargreaves (1994) used the terms *professionalisation* and *intensification* to describe aspects of the increasingly demanding and pressurised role of the teacher in contemporary society. Professionalisation refers to the changes in and extensions to the traditional role of teacher. Collegiality, collaboration and the pressure to be multi-skilled are now expectations of the role. Olembo (1991) added to the growing list of expectations of the teacher's role, increased accountability to students, parents and society at all levels. The term intensification, as used by Hargreaves and also Fullan (1991), refers to the pressure on teachers to keep up with change and innovation. Increased demands reduce the time that teachers have for study, preparation and pastoral care of students. The advent of curricula which use new language and new approaches to planning, assessment and reporting, is leading to overload and in some cases to teacher burnout.

2.2.2 Official Church Statements on the Mission of Catholic Schools

Official Church statements have traditionally been important influences in the way that the mission of Catholic schools has been perceived and implemented. Formal statements that refer to the mission of Catholic schools are now considered in this review. The extent to which these statements influence the perceptions of teachers and clergy is important to this research.

It is also important to state at this point that many of the terms and concepts that will be discussed in the remainder of this review best describe ideal situations and can be problematic when used in the context of real Catholic schools. These schools are pluralist by nature and within their communities there are varying understandings of what these concepts mean and the implications that they have for the schools.

Catholic Schools and the Mission of the Church

Many formal statements and documents from the Church hierarchy link the mission of Catholic schools to the mission of the wider church. The Roman document *The Catholic School* (1977) stated that Catholic schools have a unique role in the saving mission of the Church (Nos. 8,9). The Church sees its involvement in education as a right and a duty, something that is fundamental to its structure (Mellor, 1989:4). Not only is the Catholic school seen as being essential to the mission of the Church, but 'the absence of the Catholic school would be a great loss for civilisation and for the natural and supernatural destiny of man (*The Catholic School*, 1977:No. 15)'

The Teacher in a Catholic School

Formal Church statements stress that teachers in Catholic schools have a ministry and vocation in the broader mission of the church. The document *Lay Catholics in Schools: Witnesses to Faith* (1982:44-45) stated that:

The life of the Catholic teacher must be marked by the exercise of a personal vocation in the Church, and not simply by the exercise of a profession. It is therefore very desirable that every Catholic educator become fully aware of the importance, the richness and the responsibility of this vocation. (n.37)

Pope John Paul II, when speaking of teaching as a 'Christian calling', told teachers that 'Your profession as teachers involves tasks that are linked to your Baptism and to your own commitment in faith (1986:124, in Mellor, 1989). Similarly, the Catholic Bishops of the United States (1979), (in Mellor, 1989:154) indicated that:

Like other pastoral activities, catechetical ministry must be understood in relation to Jesus' threefold mission. It is a form of ministry of the word, which proclaims and teaches. It leads to and flows from the ministry of worship, which sanctifies through prayer and sacrament. It supports the ministry of service, which is linked to efforts to achieve social justice and has traditionally been expressed in spiritual and corporal works of mercy.

Church statements also emphasised that the lives of teachers who work in Catholic schools should be authentically Christian and that they should provide witness and example for students to follow. *Lay Catholics in Schools: Witnesses to Faith* (1982) stated that '...students should see in their teachers the Christian attitude and behaviour that is often

conspicuously absent from the secular atmosphere in which they live' (n. 32). In a similar vein, Bishop Satterthwaite (in Mellor, 1989:196), the current Bishop of Lismore, wrote that:

...teachers influence children not merely by what they impart in the classroom; they do by the whole witness of their lives...no one can honestly accept employment in a Catholic school who does not acknowledge (its) open commitments (to Gospel, creed, Catholic tradition and devotional life) and whose publicly stated attitudes do not promote them; or even contradict them.

These statements present difficulties and challenges for Catholic school communities. Not all teachers who work in Catholic schools feel that they have a special vocation and ministry in the church. There are many people working in Catholic schools who are not Catholic or who see the nature of their vocation as educational rather than religious.

Being employed by a church that has expectations of teachers in terms of lifestyle and religious practice, is a concern for many teachers. Canadian author Andrew Hargreaves (1994:151) considered that:

In Catholic school districts, where the boundaries between church, state and family are often exceedingly blurred because of the Church's assumption of the moral authority to regulate family life, the fear of personal disclosure and its implications for professional performance can become especially acute. Teachers can become trapped in abusive and unsupportive domestic relationships because separation or divorce might count against them professionally, particularly in terms of promotion.

There are few other occupations where lifestyle and work are so closely linked and where lifestyle options can so strongly affect career possibilities.

Religious Socialisation and Faith Formation in Catholic Schools

The Sacred Congregation for Catholic Education (1977:25), in *The Catholic School*, indicated that the school's general goal is to be:

...a place of integral formation by means of a systematic and critical assimilation of culture. A school is, therefore, a privileged place in which, through a living encounter with a cultural inheritance, integral formation occurs. (n.26)

The difficulty with this statement lies in the underlying assumption that there exists and should continue to exist a uniform, identifiable Catholic culture. This is a unwarranted assumption to make, particularly in the context of change which has previously been examined. Similarly, the criteria for success in the religious socialisation process have been identified with visible membership of the Church through attendance at the Mass and sacraments, and conformity with a set way of being Catholic. As more and more people in Australian society are choosing not to be regular participants in formal worshipping communities, these criteria for success in the process of religious socialisation are becoming inadequate.

The Catholic Bishops of England (in Mellor, 1989:196), referring to the role of Catholic schools in religious education and faith formation, warned that:

We must recognise the limitations of the school. Expectations of the religious education that may be given, and of the growth in faith of its pupils, must be realistic. The school cannot be expected to do what of its very nature it cannot do alone- produce the fully committed member of the Church.

Nevertheless, pressure on Catholic parents to send their children to Catholic schools has historically been very strong in Australia. The Bishops of New South Wales in the last century stated that 'all Christian Fathers and Mothers are required by the natural and divine law to give their children a Christian education (in Mellor, 1989:83).' Behind this pressure lay two assumptions. Firstly, there was the assumption that the Catholic school was not only important to, but vital in the religious socialisation process. Secondly, for many, Catholic education was indeed synonymous with Catholic schools. One of the results of the latter assumption is that little energy in the Australian Catholic community has been directed towards post-school and adult religious education. It is notable that many of the clergy in the Parramatta Diocese who were surveyed in the Harney Report, indicated that these were areas in which Catholic education should become more involved in the future.

The Catholic School Curriculum

The documents of the Catholic Church assert that the curriculum in Catholic schools, as well as being concerned with intellectual values, must be specifically Catholic. The Sacred Congregation for Catholic Schools (1977:29), in the document *The Catholic School* stated:

A school is not only a place where one is given a choice of intellectual values but a place where one is presented with an array of values which are lived. (n.32)

The same document stressed the centrality of religion to the curriculum of Catholic schools:

Complete education includes a religious dimension. Religion is an effective contribution to the development of other aspects of a personality in the measure in which it is integrated into general education. (n.19)

Arthur (1992) added that according to this view, religion cannot be separated from the rest of the curriculum as this would conflict with the basic premise of unity between revelation and other sources of knowledge. He considered that '...simply teaching religious education does not qualify a school as Catholic.' (1992:157)

The Queensland Catholic Education Commission (1983) stated that the curriculum of a Catholic school should enable the learner to 'integrate aspects of culture and life in the light of faith; and, contribute to the Australian and world society in a way enlightened by the Gospel values of freedom, justice and peace.' (in Mellor, 1989:122) Church documents assert that the integration of learning and living in the light of Christian faith should be a distinguishing feature of the curriculum in Catholic schools. Pope John Paul II (in Arthur, 1992) has called religious education the 'core of the core curriculum in Catholic schools.' The British Cardinal Hume (in Arthur, 1992:164) elaborated on this by stating that:

Religious Education has to be part of the core curriculum for a Catholic school, because it is committed to the aims, values and teachings of the Catholic Faith that influences the whole of the curriculum, shapes the daily pattern of school life and is the reason for the separate existence and identity of Catholic schools.

The Congregation for Catholic Education (1988:46) in the document *The Religious Dimension of Education in a Catholic School* stated that:

Intellectual development and growth as a Christian go forward hand in hand. As students move up from one class into the next, it becomes increasingly imperative that a Catholic school help them become aware that a relationship exists between faith and human culture....The world of human culture and the world of religion are not like two parallel lines that never meet; points of contact are

established within the human person. For the believer is both human and a person of faith, the protagonist of culture and the subject of religion. (n.51)

The document *The Catholic School* (1977) alluded to the types of questions that teachers in all subject areas in Catholic schools should ask about the content of their subject. These questions in essence deal with the subjects' stance on issues such as; service to others, social responsibility, the need for freedom from social conditioning, the values which underlie curriculum content and processes, and the need for students to contribute actively to the culture of their society.

Despite these and other exhortations from the Church hierarchy, Arthur (1992) speaking from a British context, reported that there is much confusion and apathy surrounding the search for a Catholic inspired curriculum within the Catholic community. He cited a school survey in 1990 that found that only 41% of Catholic schools had a mission statement whilst 82% had a Curriculum Policy Statement. Yet, he maintained, it is from the mission statement that the school's curriculum should be derived. The survey also found that many schools had used none of their allocated inservice days for discussion of their Catholic ethos and identity. Many teachers reported that this lack of attention to the 'big picture' among teachers, has its roots in the fact that schools have become so busy and the curriculum so demanding, that teachers must put all of their energies and resources into day to day survival in the classroom.

Community and the Catholic School

The Roman document *The Religious Dimension of Education in a Catholic School* (1990:35) held that the overall climate of a Catholic school should be one that enables students to have an experience of Christian community. It stated that '...they [Catholic schools] should be especially concerned with

the creation of a community climate permeated by the Gospel spirit of freedom and love, and they should witness to this in their lives.' (n.38) The Bishops of the United States agreed when they concluded in the document *To Teach as Jesus Did* that 'Community is at the heart of Christian education not simply as a concept to be taught, but as a reality to be lived (1973:7).'

Change in its varying forms, a shift in clientele and pluralism in Australian culture are just some of the factors that are affecting Catholic schools' capacity to provide experiences of Christian community. Malone and Ryan question the validity of calling the Catholic school a faith community and state that 'the school can be described as a faith community to the extent that it can demonstrate the witness of committed believers who are part of the religious tradition (1994:4).'

There is a danger of losing the essential meaning of community in the Christian sense of the word if the label is used indiscriminately to denote any group in the Church. Catholic schools are faith communities, but it cannot be expected that they would function as or fit the criteria used to describe adult communities where membership and participation are freely chosen.

The Catholic School and Evangelisation

Evangelisation is central to the mission of any community which has its roots in the Christian Gospel. Pope Paul VI, in the document *Evangelii Nuntiandi* (1975:25) stated that; 'What matters is to evangelise human culture and cultures, not in a purely decorative way...but in a vital way, in depth and right to their roots (n. 20).'

The same document referred to the mission of any Christian community by saying that:

The Christian community is never closed in upon itself. The infinite life of the community...only acquires its full meaning when it becomes a witness, when it invokes admiration and conversion, and when it becomes the preaching and proclamation of the Good News. (n.15)

At their National Pastoral Congress in 1980, however, the Catholic Bishops of England and Wales (in Hill, 1992:20) concluded that evangelisation was a concept poorly understood by many Catholics, and that it was frequently seen solely as the task of extending the Church. Certainly, prior to the Second Vatican Council, conversion to the Christian/Catholic faith was the explicit purpose of evangelisation. This is an inadequate understanding of evangelisation as it pertains to the mission of Catholic schools in contemporary Australia.

Pope Paul VI (1976:67), in *Evangelii Nuntiandi*, stated that evangelisation loses much of its effectiveness if it does not consider the reality of the people to whom it is addressed '...if it does not use their language, their signs and symbols, if it does not answer the questions they ask, and if it does not have an impact on their concrete lives.' (n.63) In previous generations it was widely presumed that 'Catholic culture' was a feature of the home life of the majority of students in Catholic schools, and that the language, signs and symbols of Catholicism were familiar to all. This is certainly no longer the reality. For many families of children who attend Catholic schools, the only point of contact with the official Church is through the school. Teachers feel more comfortable with this than do most clergy.

General Comment on the Use of Church Documents in Catholic Schools

Extracts and statements from official Church documentation are used extensively in the formulation of mission statements and curriculum documents in Catholic education. It is possible, however, that teachers and clergy would associate different meanings with many of the terms that are used in these statements. How a teacher understands the terms evangelisation, religious socialisation or faith community, could vary significantly from the ways the terms are understood by clergy who presumably are more immersed in official Church language and culture. If this

is the case, and communication between the two groups is poor, conflicts in priorities and areas of focus will eventuate.

2.2.3 Current Theory on the Mission of Catholic Schools

Perceptions of the mission of Catholic schools are also influenced by current theory and professional writing on the topic. In this section of the review, many of the terms that have already been defined or considered in the context of official Catholic Church documents, are revisited in the light of current theory and debate as to their meaning and implications for Catholic schools.

Catholic Schools and Religious Socialisation

People are socialised, often unconsciously, by such institutions as family, work, education, religion and class. Schools, together with family and church, have always had an important role in the passing on of established mores, values and processes of society. In his critique of the work of Parsons from the 1950s, Haralambos stated that; "Parsons argues that after primary socialisation within the family, the school takes over as the 'focal socialising agency'" (1985: 175).

Donald Kraybill considered that solidarity, belonging and a sense of identity that come from having roots in a particular religious tradition, are for the individual, possible positive gains that result from the process of denominational religious socialisation. However, he stated; 'this religious ethnicity, as sociologists call it, also creates problems. It can become idolatrous, demanding more respect than the Scriptures themselves. It then clouds the centrality of Jesus Christ.' (1978: 228) Kraybill saw this mistaken emphasis, as well as the possibility of denominational antagonism, as being potential negative results of denominational religious socialisation.

Warren (1989) highlighted what he sees as an error in the Church's attempts to influence the faith of rising generations by what he refers to as an over-emphasis on the role of the parish primary school in this endeavour. As a consequence of the weakening effectiveness of the home and the parish as vehicles for the transmission of Catholic culture, the pressure on Catholic schools to be successful agents of religious socialisation has increased. It seems to many that the school represents the last hope in this endeavour.

Often teachers in Catholic schools are blamed directly or indirectly for the decline in the formal practice of the faith of their students. Much of this allocation of blame comes out of a sense of frustration that parents and clergy can feel in their seeming inability to be able to influence the religious development of young people in a recognisable way, that is, they do not see them in church. Halley (1990) maintains that Catholic schools have a limited role in the enculturation of youth into the faith community, with the family and parish remaining the prime vehicles of enculturation, if it is to happen at all.

Religious Education and Religious Socialisation

In their book *Sound the Trumpet*, Malone and Ryan (1994) maintained that there are two dimensions to the religious education offered by Catholic schools: the religion program and the community of the school. The former refers to classroom teaching and learning where teachers use methods and strategies similar to those used in other curriculum areas. The latter dimension, that which is concerned with the school as community, also educates people. It is often stated that the informal religious education curriculum, which manifests itself in the atmosphere of the school community, is as educative as the formal religion lessons that are taught in the schools.

Tension exists between the role of Catholic schools in religious socialisation, and their role in religious education. Crawford and Rossiter (1994:2) stated that:

Socialisation is different from education. It refers to the way in which people absorb attitudes, values, beliefs, patterns of behaviour ...Socialisation is not primarily formal instruction, but learning by 'osmosis' from the personal and social environment.

These authors linked some of the confusion in recent decades between religious education and religious socialisation in Australian Catholic schools, to attempts to incorporate the proposals of Westerhoff and others who maintained that community experience, especially liturgy, is more influential in the development of personal faith than religious instruction. They maintain that the resulting lack of differentiation between the two processes in question has been detrimental to the quality of religious socialisation and religious education that has been offered in Australian Catholic schools.

This does not mean that the processes of religious education and religious socialisation are mutually exclusive. The religious education program exposes children to the story of how faith has been lived and is being lived, and gives opportunities for the children to develop skills which enable them to be part of the life and work of a church community. 'To this extent, the religion program socialises children into a way of life, yet does so in a way which respects their rights to freedom.' (Malone and Ryan, in *Sound the Trumpet*, 1994:132)

So much, of course, depends on one's definition of religious education. Fahy would seem to be implying that religious education and religious socialisation are essentially the same process when he stated that:

It will be appropriate to use the shorthand term 'Religious Education' to mean those deliberate activities which initiate young believers into the Catholic tradition of the Christian Church, and which involve an integration of cognitive understandings and a growth in a living faith relationship with Jesus. (1992:20)

In many contemporary Australian Catholic secondary schools, the current tendency is towards more academically oriented religious education. Many teachers are in favour of this approach as it is commonly believed that students are more motivated in the subject if it is academically rigorous and subject to examination. This is a move away from a religious socialisation model in secondary education. Debate in this area to some extent has polarised the Catholic educational community. There is much potential for difference in viewpoint on this issue between clergy and teachers.

Community in Catholic Schools

Duignan (1997), in discussing the plurality of meanings that may be given to the term 'Catholic community', contrasted a view of Catholic community which he refers to as being 'idealised, stereotyped, even nostalgic' (1997:3), with a view that is based on current reality. He used the following table to highlight these contrasts:

TABLE 1 : SHIFTING PARADIGM FOR COMMUNITY (DUIGNAN, 1997)

Idealised View	Current Reality
Clear Boundaries	Fuzzy Boundaries
Fixed Membership	Fluid Membership
Calibrated Relationships	Shifting Relationships
Ordered Structures & Processes	Messy Structures & Processes
Balance and Stability	Dynamic Balance
Stable/Shared Values & Perspectives	Multiple/Shifting Perspectives & Beliefs
Loyal to Institutions	Divided Loyalties
Harmony is Desired	Discord Accepted
'Collective Commitment'	Individual Self Interest
Orthodoxy	Independent-Minded
Rules Imposed by 'Others'	Rules 'Grown' by Group
Physical Contiguity Necessary	Physical Association not Necessary
Extended Family	Nuclear 'Household'

Duignan suggested that different individuals or groups will have different understandings of what the term 'Catholic Community' means. He reported that from his experience talking to groups of 'younger' and 'older' Catholics, there seems to be little evidence of agreement and much confusion concerning what the term *community* means. It is likely that there would also be considerable disagreement and confusion among teachers and clergy as to what constitutes 'Catholic Community'.

In his discussion of community within the context of Catholic schools, Anthony Bryk described some of the elements which combine to generate community both within and beyond the school itself:

A number of structural features contribute to the formation of positive normative environments in Catholic schools. A relatively small school size, curricula that encourage academic pursuits for all, and extensive student engagement in volunteer service and retreat programs provide concrete experiences of community for both students and faculty. The policies governing assignment of teacher and students to classrooms convey a message that all students are valued. Consistent reinforcement of discipline not only maintains social order, but also provides opportunities to articulate personal and social ideals. The result is a predictable and nurturant environment for both students and adults who form the school community. (in Guerra et al., 1990:10)

Byrk suggested that fundamental beliefs about the worth and dignity of each person and a vision of a just social world are essential if such a community is to exist. He also mentioned school size. The notion of size becomes an important issue for all communities in the Church. Demo concluded that a large organisation can be renewed by a community, but it cannot be transformed into a community (in Boff, 1986:6). Large numbers and financial viability have traditionally been two criteria for evaluating the success of schools and parishes. This study questions the importance of both of these criteria in the consideration of authentic Christian community.

Tonnies (in Boff, 1986:5) indicated that reciprocity and belonging are essential to any social formation claiming to be a community, whereas anonymity and indirect relationships are alien to community. Leonardo Boff suggested that communities need '... ever to be re-created and renewed by overcoming routine and refusing to yield to the spirit of institutionalisation and *rut*'. (1986:5-6) These ideas have important implications for any group which strives to achieve *community* in the Christian sense of the term. They present lofty ideals for any group to achieve, and perhaps they present an almost impossible challenge for schools, which are simultaneously social and church institutions, and which exist primarily for education.

The expectation that schools should be faith communities is contentious given the pluralist nature of Catholic schools as both social and church institutions. Coleman and Hoffer (in Guerra et al., 1990:10) spoke of community in terms of people who share a world-view and seek to pass this world-view on to the next generation. Not all of the people involved in Catholic schools share the same world-view. Demo (1975) writes that '...after all, not all the members of society at large have the personal detachment required for shared intimacy- for a mutual experience of the reciprocal gift of self, for the acceptance of one's colleagues without selfish restraint.' (Original article in Portuguese, in Boff, 1986:6) As these values are essential to *being* Christian community, this study proposes that *Gospel-oriented community* is a more realistic goal towards which Catholic schools in Australia can strive.

There is a subtle yet important distinction between a *Gospel community* and a *Gospel-oriented community*. The latter refers to a group of people who are striving to reach an ideal, while the former suggests completion. Given the socio-cultural and religious contexts in which Catholic schools find themselves in Australia today, this study argues that *Gospel-oriented community* is a more appropriate term to use when endeavouring to articulate the mission of Catholic schools.

Leadership in School Communities

Another key concept in the consideration of Christian community in the context of Catholic schools is that of leadership. Flynn (1993), Lancaster (1992), Starratt (1993) and Kavanagh (1993) all stress the importance of the school principal in the roles of cultural leader, definer and interpreter. The principal '...emphasises the enduring values, beliefs and practices which give the school community its unique meaning and identity.' (Flynn, 1993:52) If this view is to be accepted, the question of personal and

professional development of principals of Catholic schools must be addressed.

It is debatable whether a person can effectively take on the role of cultural leader in a Christian community with little or no specific formation for the task. Traditionally the Catholic community has hoped that this formation would happen through an osmosis effect. Leavey (1984:19) considered that principals of Catholic schools '...now carry the burden of having to determine identity, articulate theory, define goals as well as administer the schools.' This is becoming an increasingly difficult task, as support from other sectors of the Catholic community is not always forthcoming and with the decline in numbers of members of religious congregations in schools, the charism of religious orders is having less influence in the articulation of a school identity and culture. Most principals feel reasonably comfortable in the role of expert educator, while a significant number would feel less comfortable in the role of leader of a Christian community.

Catechesis and Faith Education in Catholic Schools

Catechesis, as defined in Chapter 1, is more appropriately used in the context of an adult faith-sharing group and may not be an accurate description of what happens in Catholic schools that have a broad educational focus and are at least partially government-funded. The term has traditionally figured prominently in expressions of the mission of Catholic schools. However, declining rates of formal practice among Catholic families and the increasing number of non-Catholic enrolments in many Catholic schools, are providing a challenge to the way that Catholic schools approach this *dialogue in faith* that is so essential to the catechetical process.

Hughes (1995) concluded that accompanying a movement in society towards increased individualism, comes an individualistic notion of faith. In this context faith becomes a personal relationship that does not require the

mediation of a community. Community becomes a means of strengthening individual faith rather than its source. There are many who see no need for the Church within their understanding of faith. The British *National Society for Promoting Religious Education*, citing James Fowler as a major source, was specific when speaking of the role of the Christian community in the faith journey of the individual. This body proposed that individuals can offer themselves as sponsors for the faith of others '...walking part of the way with them, sharing the same view of the road and the same map and compass'. (1991:60) The emphasis here seems to be on limited sponsorship and nurture that leaves freedom for a variety of responses and faith journeys.

Gallagher, (1988: 13) indicated that introduction of students to the Catholic faith only, or little or no teaching on other faith traditions, would add to the number of uninformed, prejudiced citizens who find it difficult to respect and live with people who are different. To treat all students as if they were or should be committed Catholics is a failure to identify and meet their religious needs. Hill (1991) considered that teaching which ignores the existence of alternative views and discourages critical evaluation, can be rightly labelled indoctrination. The issue of the freedom of the individual student is thus raised, and the possibility of showing respect for these basic freedoms through an emphasis on the intellectual study of religion in schools, is proposed. Malone and Ryan (1994) concluded that although a catechetical approach (based on catechesis) is not appropriate for the formal religion program, there is potential for schools to catechise those who are ready and willing in the daily routines which constitute much of the informal curriculum of schools.

Rossiter (1997) acknowledged that the development of pupils' religious faith is a legitimate fundamental aim of religious education in Catholic schools. However, he argued that interpretations of what this means in practice can be problematic. According to Rossiter, some of the difficulties in this area can be linked to ways in which the term 'development' is understood and he

suggests that this 'will colour the aims and objectives of religious education' (1997:1). He questioned the appropriateness of using the term *faith development* in statements of aims for religious education in schools, due to the lack of clarity in meaning, emotional connotations attached to the term and difficulty in measurement of outcomes. Rossiter proposed that *faith development* in the context of Catholic schools 'is more a hope than an aim for religious education' (1997:2).

Crawford and Rossiter (1994) concluded that an important issue concerning faith education in Catholic schools, is the compulsory attendance at most faith-sponsoring activities. If, as was mentioned earlier, a prerequisite for catechesis is deliberate or at least willing presence, obvious difficulties arise when a large proportion of students are from religious traditions other than Catholic and many of the students, Catholic included, are not formally practising their religion.

Hofinger (1976) considered that any catechesis which supposes an initial commitment of faith before those to be catechised have in fact committed themselves, will end in failure. The first commitment of faith cannot be taken for granted. There is danger in assuming that because a young person has been baptised or has been brought by his or her parents to be enrolled in a Catholic school, he or she has a readiness to dialogue in faith. Yet this is a common presumption surrounding catechesis in Catholic schools. Hofinger stated that even the best efforts at catechesis will fail if there is not readiness on the part of students to be part of the dialogue. Teachers in Catholic schools are often frustrated in their endeavour to link the demands of a catechetical religious education program with levels of readiness for catechesis among their students which can vary dramatically.

Opportunities for sustained catechesis in Australian Catholic schools are decreasing. However, most Catholic dioceses are insisting that teachers work from guidelines and curricula that are in the main catechetical and

presume an existing readiness in faith. Teachers and system administrators are inherently aware of this but little seems to be done at an official level to address this problem. Arthur (1994) cited a study of Catholic schools in England by Leslie Francis which claimed that the needs of non-Catholics are not being reflected in many of the policies being adopted by schools. Francis found no change in liturgical, doctrinal and catechetical assumptions in schools with high numbers of non-Catholics and proposed that these should change if non-Catholics are to be admitted. This would lead to an alternative position which may possibly embrace a wider Christian perspective and foster a greater ecumenical dimension to the provision of Christian schools. (Francis, in Arthur, 1994:40)

Evangelisation in Catholic Schools

In discussions on the mission of Catholic schools, the term evangelisation is used to describe at least three areas of focus. There is firstly the outreach to students which comes as part of the formal and informal curricula of the schools. In this process the students are introduced to the Christian message in the hope that they might respond and undergo some level of conversion to a life based on the core values of the Christian Gospel. Secondly, the Catholic school is challenged to evangelise its own structures and curriculum. Thirdly, through corporate witness to the Christian Gospel, the Catholic school is challenged to evangelise the wider dominant culture.

Evangelisation and the Individual

There is tension in some Catholic schools when it comes to the discernment of what will be given priority: 'evangelisation of the many or catechesis of the few'. This expression alludes to the fact that the number of students in Catholic schools who come from an experience of 'church' and a readiness to *dialogue in faith* is decreasing.

When the Catholic schools system began in Australia, its major focus was the catechesis of the children of the people who belonged to local parish communities, people who identified with the local community primarily through their attendance at Mass on Sundays. This form of identification is no longer the reality in the majority of cases. As fewer people are visibly associating with local parish communities, Catholic schools are being called to focus outwards as well as inwards. In this context, evangelisation takes on new importance.

Gallagher (1988) proposed that there are two models that can be used to highlight pastoral priorities and roles for Catholic schools which relate to evangelisation: firstly, there is the *nurturing* model in which the school is viewed as a Catholic community of faith whose main task is to help Catholic children understand the tradition and participate more fully in the life of the Church. Secondly, there is the *serving* model which stresses the Catholic school as a community that meets human and religious needs of pupils and looks beyond its frontiers to challenge and to serve a society which is religiously, racially and culturally diverse. The latter model is the one that most aptly addresses the reality that exists in Catholic schools today.

Evangelisation and the Curriculum of Catholic Schools

Dwyer (1993: 26) stated that the culture of Catholic schools should be reflective, generative, communal and prophetic. These categories reinforce the view that Catholic school culture needs to be both inward-looking and outward-looking. According to Dwyer, a community becomes generative, communal and prophetic, after first becoming reflective. The pressures that are being brought to bear by the world of today, are forcing Catholic schools to become more reflective in terms of their mission and future. However, the pressures of keeping up with changes and innovations in curriculum, as well as other system demands, are making it increasingly difficult for schools to

become reflective. Many teachers and principals are reporting that they are just too busy.

The reflective Catholic school would aim at the evangelisation of its own structures and curriculum. Paulo Freire (1972) considered that liberation springs from reflection. According to Dwyer, the curriculum in Catholic schools must not be workplace or university oriented, it must be life oriented. It should equip young people to critique the dominant culture. He proposed that there needs to be an identification of the day to day happenings in schools that either reflect or do not reflect their mission in terms of the values of the Gospel.

Both Di Giacomo (1994) and Dwyer (1993) suggested that any attempts at evangelisation undertaken by Catholic schools, must begin with a commitment to evangelise the overt and covert curriculums of the schools themselves. Leavey (1984) suggested that for a school to be called *evangelised*, the structures, values, procedures and practices of the school must be permeable to the Gospel, and school members must be enabled to hear the Word and respond to Christ in freedom. The most positive way to take a counter-cultural stance on certain issues such as unchecked consumerism, is to give authentic witness to the power of the Christian Gospel to transform individuals and communities. In many Catholic schools, translating this into practice could mean a re-organisation of structures, curriculum and priorities.

If this facet of evangelisation is to take place, the people responsible for the curriculum in Catholic schools need to be aware of the impact of the informal as well as the formal curriculum on the fabric of the school community. Not only must mission statements, policies and formal utterances be directed by a Gospel perspective but so also those 'hidden' elements that are part of the shadow of organisational life (Dwyer, 1993).

Evangelisation and the Dominant Culture

Both Church documents and current literature propose that Catholic schools also consider what evangelisation means in the context of the wider dominant culture. It is through this process that the essential message of the Gospel, which often presents a position that runs counter to the dominant culture, can be more authentically embodied in Catholic education. Catholic schools are called to evangelise the Australian culture, and in the words of Dwyer '...to identify and celebrate the humanising and ennobling elements within it, and to offer the Gospel's alternatives to those definitions of reality that oppress and enslave the human spirit.' (1993: 18) Similarly, Boff stated that:

It is not enough to be merely 'there': sheer presence in the culture. One must share that culture, discover life meanings in it, love it; and finally, be in solidarity with it. This is possible only through a process of identification with its advances and retreats, its potential and its limitations. (1992: 23-24)

Hand in hand with this understanding of evangelisation, comes a new appreciation of conversion. Conversion leads to an on going and ever deepening re-orientation of both individual and community, to *Gospel-centeredness*. In the context of Catholic schools, the importance of this personal conversion in the lives of educators should be emphasised. The Gospel, proclaimed primarily through witness, cannot be liberative unless the evangeliser is a living example of its power to transform. This is an area of concern in Catholic schools. It cannot be assumed that all who work in the schools share a common commitment to Gospel-centredness in mission. For example, schools can work exhaustively in their discernment of what an 'option for the poor' should signify to them, but unless there is some

commonality of vision among staff and students when it comes to the poor and the school's mission in this area, efforts will be at best fragmented. The struggle to live up to a vision based on the demands of the Christian Gospel, and in doing so to offer Australian society an alternative model of education, is one of the biggest challenges facing Catholic schools today. As Bauch (1986:76) stated:

As our society becomes more diverse in its value orientations, it is the primary function of the Catholic school to make visible an otherwise invisible group of people who share similar goals and preferences-the counter-cultural function. A Catholic school is both a symbolic and an actual representation of a valued moral and intellectual commitment on the part of a community that strives to communicate its message to others.

2.3 THE NEED FOR A RECONCEPTUALISATION OF THE RELIGIOUS DIMENSION OF THE MISSION OF CATHOLIC SCHOOLS

The survey of literature in this chapter shows that there have been problems with the interpretation of the religious dimension of the mission of Catholic schools. This is in part due to changes in culture, religion, education and the structure of Catholic school systems. While Catholic diocesan curriculum statements and guidelines propose religious aims for the schools, these documents do not specifically address the ambiguities in interpretation of the school's mission that arise in the area of relationships between teachers and clergy.

To provide a framework for analysing and interpreting the perceptions of clergy and teachers, the researcher will develop here, in the light of the literature review, a perspective on the religious dimension of the mission of Catholic schools. This framework will identify key issues where there are likely to be polarities in interpretation of the relationships between school and

parish, and the relationships between teachers and parish clergy. The framework will concentrate on the role of the Catholic school. It will not address the religious role of the parish, which is a significant area of study in itself and which is outside the scope of this research project. The framework should also provide a schema which will be useful for guiding discussion of the results of the study by the relevant stakeholders in Catholic school education in the Lismore Diocese.

The framework will be presented under the following headings:

- the Catholic school as a Church institution and a civic (secular) institution;
- the religious and educational aims of Catholic schools;
- the aims of Catholic school religious education;
- the ministry and vocation of teachers in Catholic schools;
- the professional and personal commitments of teachers and how these relate to the mission of Catholic schools;
- authority structures (religious and educational) and the accountability of Catholic schools;
- the possibilities and limitations of the Catholic school's contribution to the life of the parish; and,
- ideals for teacher/clergy relationships with reference to the religious mission of Catholic schools.

2.3.1 The Catholic School as a Church Institution and a Civic Institution

The Changing Situation

The traditional view of Catholic schools dating from the nineteenth and the first half of the twentieth centuries, was that they were primarily ecclesiastical institutions concerned with the handing on of the Catholic

faith. For Catholics they were the preferred option over state schools which were believed to be an unsatisfactory environment for the religious development of Catholic children. The schools were the mission (or apostolate) of the members of religious orders who staffed them. Costs were met by school fees and parish contributions. Parish Priests held canonical authority in the schools.

With the advent of state funding for independent schools (and also in the light of cultural and educational changes), the structure of Church schools changed, even though the traditional religious view of the schools' role remained influential. The schools from then on were both state (civic) structures as well as church sponsored institutions, with accountability to state educational authorities. Costs were met by government grants, school fees and in some cases, parish contributions. (Such contributions were in the main for primary schools and not secondary schools; and were for capital improvement and not teachers' salaries or general running costs).

These changes call for a restating of the religious role of the schools that will help foster partnership between schools and parish.

Proposed Statement of Responsibilities

Catholic schools are a joint educational venture involving the state and the Catholic Church, giving rise to a state funded system of education that complements government schools and provides choice for parents. Responsibilities for Catholic school education are shared. The Church has responsibility for oversight of the religious aspects of the Catholic school's life and curriculum. The appropriate diocesan education authorities, school principals and teachers are responsible for the development and implementation of the religious dimension of mission. Parents have an advisory role. Responsibility for general educational practice flows from state authorities to the Catholic diocesan system, to principals and teachers.

The responsibilities of parish clergy need to be articulated in the light of the above principles. Parish clergy oversee the religious mission of Catholic schools as part of shared responsibilities with appropriate educational authorities. For clergy to have power of employment with the decisive voice in appointments could be regarded as being beyond their legitimate authority in the joint venture of Catholic schools. Such a situation could be used by opponents of state funding to religious schools on the grounds that such an absolute parish authority contravenes the principle of the separation of Church and State (this is the argument used against state aid in the court case mounted in 1979 by the Defence of Government Schools group).

2.3.2 The Religious and Educational Aims of Catholic Schools

The religious aims of Catholic Schools propose that an education in the Catholic faith tradition and a school life that includes Catholic religious practices and a Catholic ethos are integral to the education provided in these institutions.

The educational aims for Catholic Schools will need to be comparable with the best aims for education as prescribed by the relevant government and state education authorities.

There needs to be a natural harmony between the educational and religious aims of the schools.

2.3.3 The Aims of Catholic School Religious Education

Catholic school religious education aims at giving students access to the Catholic faith tradition. This includes a classroom religion curriculum together with the experience of religious practices such as prayer, liturgies, sacraments, religious retreats, etc. Christian principles and values should inspire the social and organisational life of the school.

Crawford and Rossiter (1985:42) stated the following specific aims for classroom religious education in Catholic schools. According to these authors, religious education:

- aims at deepening young people's knowledge, understanding and affective appreciation of the Catholic faith tradition, of other religions and of contemporary religious issues;
- is thus specifically concerned with informing young people about religion so that they will be in a better position to assess what religion and personal faith might contribute to their lives;
- aims at developing in young people skills for an objective, sympathetic and critical study of religion. They can be helped to gain confidence in their own ability to inquire into religion and religious issues so that in turn they can be more confident in being able to make decisions about faith, values and lifestyle.

2.3.4 The Ministry and Vocation of Teachers in Catholic Schools

From the perspective of the Church's ministry, all teachers in Catholic Schools share in that ministry through their professional activities. This is primarily through care for pupils and just provision of educational services.

The proportion of specifically religious elements in this ministry will vary from individual to individual depending on their responsibilities and the level of their involvement in the school's religious mission. Teachers will vary in the extent to which they will consciously use the language of Church ministry to describe their endeavours in the school. The ministry of teachers can be described in non-religious terms. (eg. professional responsibilities, care, personal interest in pupils, etc.)

Formulating a language for the mission of the Catholic School and its specifically religious mission needs to be done carefully to take into account the situation where the staff are no longer members of religious orders. Mission and religious mission can be articulated in language that wins the moral support of all staff no matter what their religious affiliation or religious practice.

In a similar way all teachers have a vocation in the Catholic School which revolves around their vocation as teachers. The articulation of this vocation needs to give due reference to the religious mission of the school while recognising the lay status of teachers.

The language of mission, ministry and vocation in Catholic Schools needs to be developed in a way that is inclusive of the varied religious affiliation and practice of school staff. All staff have a professional responsibility to uphold the Catholic aims and ethos of the school.

2.3.5 The Professional and Personal Commitments of Teachers and the ways in which these relate to the Mission of Catholic Schools

There needs to be an appropriate distinction between the professional and personal commitments of teachers with respect of the Catholic school's religious mission.

All Catholic school staff have a professional responsibility to affirm and promote the religious mission of the school. This responsibility should be clarified at the time of appointment of staff. These responsibilities need to be worked on so that school staff can help advance the school's mission.

While maintaining the appropriate professional commitments in their work and life in the Catholic school, teachers have a right and a duty to maintain their personal views and commitments with respect for their privacy and freedom. While professional values and commitments will often overlap with personal values and commitments, where there is the possibility of public conflict, teachers need to honour their professional commitments and keep their own commitments/values private. This refers to functional public values espoused by the school. It does not mean that injustices have to be ignored, neither does it mean that there can be no criticisms of practice.

2.3.6 Authority Structures (Religious and Educational) and the Accountability of Catholic Schools

The roles of authorities (parish priests, Catholic Education Office authorities, principals and teachers) need to be spelled out in the light of the above principles. Because responsibilities are shared, dialogue will be needed, particularly where there is disputed authority.

The Catholic Education Office should be the ultimate point of decision-making where there is dispute about educational questions.

The Bishop (in consultation with priests) has ultimate authority regarding religious matters.

In the light of the principles discussed here, it is proposed that the Catholic Education Office, rather than the parish priests (as trustees of the Roman Catholic Church) be the official employer of teachers.

A system for handling disputes between teachers and clergy should be put in place by the employing authority and awareness of the steps/procedures involved in this system promoted.

2.3.7 The Possibilities and Limitations of the Catholic School's Contribution to the Life of the Parish

In the articulation of an ideal partnership between school and parish, the first principle to be proposed is that the two institutions need to be regarded as independent, in the sense that each has its own rationale and function and is not totally dependent on the other. The role of the school in the spiritual development of students must be clarified (aims for schools in this area have been mentioned previously), as must the role of the parish, an area beyond the scope of this dissertation. Neither school nor parish should be expected to do the job of the other institution. In this way the school's role in education in general and religious education in particular, should not be defined exclusively in terms of its contribution to parish life and worship, even though it can make a valuable contribution.

Beginning with the basic position of relative independence, a partnership can be better worked out in terms of the distinctive contributions that each institution can make to the spiritual development and experience of children and young people. As noted above, this study is concerned specifically with the role of the Catholic school.

The Catholic school's particular contribution to the spiritual and personal development of pupils is an educational one. The Catholic school provides a

religious education that hopefully will enhance pupils' spiritual development and provide them with an experience of Catholicism in practice and in formal study in classroom religious education. Whether or not the young people will become practising members of a local community of faith is not dependent solely on their schools' religious education and practice. It will be influenced by a number of non-school factors including the perceived relevance of the local parish itself. However, a sound Catholic school religious education would be a valuable experience for acquainting children and young people with the Church, which would enhance their potential participation in the life or worship of a parish.

While the Catholic school is not a community of faith in the same sense as a parish, it is still a type of community of faith. By contributing to the religious education and religious experience of pupils, the Catholic school performs a religious function that complements (and overlaps to some extent with) the religious education and religious experience provided in parishes. The Catholic school's religion program should be designed to enhance pupils' knowledge and experience of parishes and their contribution to Catholic life. For pupils who are not Mass-going, or who are from homes where the family does not participate in parish life, the Catholic school may serve as the first (and only) point of contact with the Church and with formal religious practice. Thus, Catholic schooling can promote eventual Church practice by both pupils and their parents. There is much anecdotal evidence that non-practising Catholic families have begun to attend Church again as a result of their children's attendance at Catholic primary schools. This happens partly through participation in sacramental programs that involve pupils and their families.

Nevertheless, while Catholic schools' religion programs can enhance participation in parish life and worship by pupils and their parents, this is not an automatic result of Catholic schooling and therefore, Mass attendance should not be used as a valid measure of the religious effectiveness of

Catholic schools. The religious effectiveness of Catholic schools should be measured in terms of the adequacy of their religion programs and practices. This requires an educational evaluation. So many factors influence the formal religious practice of adults and young people that it is not valid to try to ascribe a predetermining influence to Catholic schooling. Catholic schooling provides potential for enhanced participation in the worship and life of a parish. One of the criteria for evaluating the religious dimension of the Catholic school's mission would therefore be a judgement of the adequacy of its religion program in preparing pupils for potential participation in parish life and worship. Other evaluation criteria which are more independent of preparation for parish life are also needed. (eg. helping pupils to analyse and evaluate religious and moral issues; some knowledge of other religions and other Christian denominations which are present in Australia.)

The view of the religious dimension of the mission of Catholic schools proposed above is directed specifically towards the problem of conflict in expectations on the part of teachers and clergy. Relevant to this discussion are particular elements in the literature of religious education which are concerned with clarifying the expectations of religious education and Catholic schooling for bringing about religious change in pupils. (For example; Crawford and Rossiter 1985, 1988; Malone and Ryan 1994.)

2.3.8 Ideals for Teacher-Clergy Relationships with reference to the Religious Mission of Catholic Schools

Harmonious teacher-clergy relationships related to the religious dimension of the mission of Catholic schools would firstly require that this mission be clarified (as above) and expressed in language that is accessible to both teachers and priests. Specific attention should be given to careful articulation of the roles of both parties in this area.

Secondly, arrangements should be proposed to promote adequate contact and communication between teachers and priests, with the possibility of joint reflection and discussion of the schools' religious role.

Thirdly, an awareness of the possible difficulties in relationships such as those that have been explored in the theory should be developed. These difficulties may arise from different understandings of issues such as; personal and professional commitments, vocation and ministry.

2.4 CONCLUSION

This review of literature has established that:

- the quality of partnership between teachers and clergy in Catholic education can in some instances be poor;
- on some issues relating to the religious dimension of the mission of Catholic schools, the perceptions of clergy and teachers can vary significantly;
- there is debate in Catholic education concerning the ways in which terms and concepts used to describe the religious dimension of the mission of Catholic schools are understood;
- official Church documents and the work of contemporary theorists can differ significantly in the vision and priorities that they espouse for Catholic schools;
- socio-cultural and religious change, and the resulting implications for Catholic school communities, can be embraced in different ways and to varying degrees by teachers and clergy; and,
- in the light of these factors, there is a need for a reconceptualisation of the religious dimension of the mission of Catholic schools.

This review of literature provides further justification for exploration at a deeper level in the Lismore Diocese issues raised in the research questions in Chapter 1. Most of the literature accessible at the time of this study dealt with school-parish, rather than teacher-clergy relationships. The former was certainly the dominant focus of official Church statements. This absence of literature on relationships between teachers and clergy is significant and this study will make a contribution in this area.

3.1.2 Scope of the Research and the Method Employed

Some 100 self-completion questionnaires (Appendix 2) were distributed in the pilot study. The targeted population consisted of 30 clergy in the Diocese of Toowoomba and the Archdiocese of Melbourne (15 replies were received), 20 primary teachers in the Archdiocese of Sydney (14 replies were received) and 20 secondary teachers in the Archdiocese of Sydney (5 replies were received). As only 5 replies were received from secondary teachers, responses from both primary and secondary teachers were grouped together for the purposes of analysis. Frequency distributions, means and standard deviations were computed for each of the items on the questionnaire.

3.1.3 Findings of the Pilot Research

The findings of the pilot study are reported under the categories used to cluster groups of questions on the questionnaire.

Cluster 1: Catholic Schools and the Religious Education of Students

Areas of agreement between teachers and clergy

The majority of teachers and priests indicated that they had much less confidence in the teaching of Catholic faith and doctrine in secondary schools than in primary schools. Both groups also expressed ambivalence towards teaching about other Christian and non-Christian religions in Catholic schools.

The teachers and priests were divided in their opinions on whether parents send children to Catholic schools because of their ability to foster the religious development of students but rejected the suggestion that some school sacramental celebrations should be made optional for students. They

agreed that too much is expected of Catholic schools in the overall religious development of young people and attributed no blame to Catholic schools for the drop off in Mass attendance among Catholics.

Areas of disagreement between the clergy and the teachers

The clergy indicated that the presence of religious sisters and brothers in schools enhanced the religious development of students but the teachers generally did not agree. Over half of the clergy stated that young people these days were less religious than the youth of previous generations. Very few teachers agreed with this suggestion.

Cluster 2: Catholic Schools and the Local Church

Areas of agreement between teachers and clergy

Both teachers and clergy stated that primary schools worked well in partnership with parishes and that secondary schools generally did not. One third of both groups stated that it was not good to call secondary schools 'parish schools'. Doubt that secondary schools introduced students to good liturgical practice was expressed by both groups. Over 80% of teachers and clergy stated that the presence of a primary school made the parish stronger. Only 50% of clergy and 43% of primary teachers said the same of the presence of a secondary school. The teachers and clergy both agreed that authority was often a problem in relationships between schools and parishes.

Areas of disagreement between teachers and clergy

All of the teachers believed that the parish was still as influential in the spiritual development of young people as it was in the past but few priests were convinced of this. While over 70% of the teachers suggested that priests were out of touch with the needs of young people these days, few

clergy agreed. Almost half of the clergy thought that priests and teachers did not share similar goals for Catholic schools. Only 20% of teachers agreed with this.

Cluster 3: Teaching in a Catholic School

Teachers and clergy did not agree on any of the issues treated in this cluster.

Areas of disagreement between teachers and clergy

Almost half of the clergy stated that there was a lack of consensus among teachers about the religious aims of Catholic schools but few teachers agreed. While the majority of clergy thought that it was preferable to have a committed teacher from another religious denomination working in a Catholic school than a non-practising Catholic, a significant percentage of teachers disagreed. All clergy stated that teachers needed formal qualifications in religious education while 28% of teachers disagreed with this.

Cluster 4: Catholic Schools and the Australian Society

Teachers and clergy did not agree on any of the issues treated in this cluster.

Areas of disagreement between teachers and clergy

Half of the teachers thought that Catholic schools were becoming elitist but only 13% of clergy agreed. The majority of clergy suggested that fewer non-Catholics should be enrolled in Catholic schools. There was little agreement on this among the teachers.

Written Comments from Respondents

In the spaces on the questionnaire that were provided for further comment on the relationship between schools and parishes, many teachers spoke of difficulties in communication with clergy. The main reason given for this was that priests were 'out of touch' with the needs of young people. The Church in general, it was stated, was not meeting the real needs of youth. Therefore students did not 'connect' school and parish. Teachers also raised the issue of varying levels of religious commitment and practice among the staffs of Catholic schools. Many also spoke of the widening gap between secondary schools and parishes in terms of vision and priorities. Several priests indicated that the growing separation and conflict between schools and parishes was a key issue. Some spoke of the schools as being 'divisive', a 'burden to carry' and a 'drain on funds'. It was also suggested that in some cases schools were responsible for a fragmentation of the community and for 'taking over from Sundays'. Some priests stated that they did not feel welcome in Catholic schools.

3.1.4 Conclusions

The low number of responses from secondary teachers possibly influenced several of the findings of the pilot study. Increased secondary input may have seen more openness towards teaching about other religions in Catholic schools and more support for the making of some school sacramental celebrations optional for students. A higher number of secondary responses may also have indicated more support for the secondary teachers' ability to teach Catholic doctrine and influence faith development and provided more positive comments about secondary schools' relationships with parishes. The data highlighted difficulties that can occur in relationships between teachers and priests. It appeared that both priests and teachers lacked confidence and trust in one another's ability and motives. This was particularly evident in data relating to secondary schools.

3.1.5 Implications for the Orientation of the Main Study

The questionnaire used in the major study was significantly shorter than the one that was used in this pilot research. The decision to limit the number of items was based on the quality of data received from the pilot questionnaire. It was also hoped that a shorter questionnaire would improve the response rate. New items that were included in the major questionnaire were selected on the basis of findings in the pilot research. The most significant inclusions had to do with relationships between teachers and clergy and the need to separate perceptions of primary schools and secondary schools in many issues. This pilot study also led to new directions being taken in the review of literature for this research. It became apparent that, as well as addressing the perceptions that teachers and clergy have of what Catholic schools are doing, the study would have to examine how both parties perceive each other's role in this context.

3.2 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY AND DESIGN OF THIS STUDY

3.2.1 Theoretical Perspectives

This project is essentially a case study of the Lismore Diocese, in which a survey research methodology was employed. Data were collected through the use of self-completion questionnaires and a subsequent series of semi-structured interviews. (Copies of the questionnaire and the *Record of Interview Schedule* are presented in Appendices 3 and 4 respectively.)

Borg and Gall stated that 'survey research is a distinctive research methodology that owes much of its recent development to development in the field of sociology.' (1989:416) It is a form of descriptive research that aims to examine events or phenomena and characterise them as they are.

Borg (1981) indicated that it is quite common for survey research to employ a combination of questionnaires and interviews.

The methodology employed in this study incorporates elements of both quantitative and qualitative approaches to research. Kidder and Fine (in Merriam, 1988) noted that there is nothing mysterious about combining measures from both of these research approaches. Merriam (1988) stated that this is, in fact, a form of triangulation which can enhance the validity and the reliability of a given study.

3.2.2 Appropriateness of this Methodology for the Study

Gay describes survey research as 'an attempt to collect data from members of a population in order to determine the current status of that population with respect to one or more variables.' (1987:191) The research methodology used in this project ensured that data were obtained from as many respondents as possible. In this study, questionnaires were sent to the entire population of teachers in Catholic schools and clergy in the Diocese of Lismore (a census survey). Interviews were held with the entire population of priests and a representative sample of teachers.

In terms of the overall objectives of this study, the questionnaires provided data on the broad range of issues related to teacher-clergy partnership and the religious dimension of the mission of Catholic schools from a potentially high percentage of the population of clergy and teachers. The use of a questionnaire enabled the researcher not only to describe but also to compare and '...to relate one characteristic to another and to demonstrate that certain features exist in certain categories.' (Bell, 1987:9)

Gay (1987:203) stated that:

The interview is most appropriate for asking questions which cannot be put effectively into a multiple-choice format, such as questions of a personal nature...Another advantage of the interview is that the interviewer can follow up on incomplete or unclear responses by asking additional probing questions. Reasons for particular responses can also be determined.

In this study, the semi-structured interviews complemented the questionnaires and produced in-depth data not possible using only a questionnaire.

3.2.3 The Population

The target population in this research project consisted of all of the full time teachers in Catholic schools and all of the clergy on active duties in the Lismore Diocese at the beginning of 1997. At the time when the questionnaires were sent out in this research project, there were 672 full time teachers (372 primary and 300 secondary) employed in the system. At the same time, there were in the Lismore Diocese, 26 parishes with Catholic schools. These parishes were staffed by 39 priests. Responses were received from 66% of the clergy and 48% of the teachers who were initially sent questionnaires.

3.2.4 Sampling Procedures

The self-completion questionnaires were sent to the entire population of full time teachers and active clergy in the Lismore diocese, therefore making this survey a census. (Precise numbers and names were obtained from the Diocesan Chancery and the Catholic Education Office) The subsequent semi-

structured interviews were held with all of the clergy in the population (39 priests in total) and 32 teachers from diocesan schools.

Some 32 of the 46 schools were randomly selected to be part of the teacher interview process. School staff lists for these 32 schools were obtained from the Catholic Education Office and every full time teacher at a given school was assigned a number. The numbers were then put into a large envelope and one number was drawn. This number identified the teacher at each school who was approached for interview. The process was then repeated for each of the 32 schools. All of the teachers who were approached for interview accepted the invitation.

3.2.5 Instruments used in this Research

The Questionnaire (See Appendix 3)

The questionnaire used in this research project consisted of 64 questions and was divided into 8 sections. The clusters of questions in sections 2-6 examined teacher and clergy perceptions of:

- a. Catholic Schools and the Religious Education of Students;
- b. Catholic Schools and the Parish;
- c. Teaching in a Catholic School;
- d. Catholic Schools and Australian Society; and,
- e. Current Experience of Catholic Education.

Respondents were asked to answer the questions in the first 6 sections by indicating choices on a Likert Scale. Responses were marked on a standard computerised answering sheet. The final section of the questionnaire included 2 longer response questions which referred explicitly to parish-school partnership in Catholic Education.

The Semi-structured Interviews (See Appendix 4)

The semi-structured interview... has the advantage of being reasonably objective while still permitting a more thorough understanding of the respondent's opinions and reasons behind them...a desirable combination of objectivity and depth and often permits gathering valuable data that could not be successfully obtained from any other approach. (Borg and Gall, 1989:452)

The interviews were conducted after the initial analysis of the data received from responses to the questionnaire. The interviews explored issues which surfaced in the data analysis and which appeared vital in terms of the overall aims of this research.

3.2.6 Administration Procedures

The Questionnaire

The questionnaire, with an accompanying letter containing background and instructional information to the project (Appendix 5), as well as a pre-paid return envelope, was sent to the population previously described at the end of January 1997. In order to maximise the response rate, a follow-up reminder letter was sent to all potential respondents approximately 3 weeks after the initial questionnaire was dispatched.

The Interviews

As part of this study, all clergy in the Lismore Diocese who were at that time working in a parish with a Catholic school were offered an interview. Interviews with the clergy were conducted by the researcher on a person to person basis in the diocesan presbyteries. These interviews were not tape

recorded but responses were noted by the researcher on the *Record of Interview Schedule* and reflections on the interview were tape recorded by the researcher immediately afterwards.

As mentioned previously, the interviewees among the teachers of the diocese were selected by a process of random sampling within selected schools. When contacted and informed as to the progress of the research project, teachers were asked if they would be prepared to be interviewed and whether they had a preference for being interviewed by telephone or for a personal meeting with the researcher.

This choice was given for two main reasons. Firstly, many of the teachers had very little free time during the school day and finding a time and a place at school where they could talk confidentially and without interruption for 30-40 minutes was often difficult. The second reason has to do with the geography of the Lismore Diocese in terms of the physical distances between schools and the time frame for this research. Having some telephone interviews enabled the researcher to complete this section of the project in 4 months. The task of coordinating teacher release time with researcher visits to the school would have taken much longer.

Some 30% of the teachers who were approached opted for a person to person interview, while the other 70% chose to be interviewed by telephone. The relative advantages and disadvantages of both interview types have been noted. Borg and Gall (1989:457) state that 'although it would seem easier to establish rapport in a face-to-face interview, the physical presence of the interviewer may stimulate response distortion.' Gay also identified some disadvantages of direct interviewer-interviewee contact. These included; the possibility that responses may be biased or affected by positive or negative reactions to the interviewer and disadvantages relating to time consumption and expense. (1987:203) Most of the telephone interviews

took place after school hours with the researcher calling the interviewees at home.

3.2.7 Management and Storage of Data

The management and storage of the large database that is collected in this type of study is very important. The following steps were taken by the researcher:

- a. At least 3 copies of the data were maintained in 2 different locations. All relevant documents were stored in a directory of the researcher's computer with back-up copies being made and stored on floppy discs. A hard copy of all documents was maintained at all times.
- b. A fieldbook/diary of research was maintained by the researcher at all times. Records and dates of contact with respondents, observations and other information pertaining to the research process were recorded.
- c. Returned questionnaires and audio-tapes containing reflections on interviews were analysed immediately and stored under lock and key.

3.2.8 Data Analysis Techniques

A variety of techniques was used to analyse clergy responses, primary teacher responses, secondary teacher responses and combined data. These techniques, described below, were appropriate to the two paradigms employed.

Analysis of Items 1-61 on the Questionnaire

Responses to items 1-61 on the questionnaire, were recorded on a standard computerised answer sheet and scanned using the National Computer Systems *Microtest Score 2 Plus* software package. These initial results showing the frequency of responses were subsequently analysed more thoroughly using the *SPSS for Windows* software package. This analysis provided the frequency of responses expressed in percentages for the items of the questionnaire, as well as the mean score, standard deviation and number of valid cases for each item. (Frequency of responses for each item, expressed in percentages, is presented in table form in later chapters.)

Analysis of Items 62-64 on the Questionnaire

(These items dealt with perceptions of school-parish partnership)

In response to these 3 items on the questionnaire, a total of 1237 written comments was received from the teachers and 89 from the clergy. For the purpose of analysis, responses to item 64 (general comments) were considered with those to items 62 and 63. The comments were clustered together on the basis of the issues being raised by the respondents. Tables were produced based on the frequency that comments were received on certain issues. These issues were ranked according to the number of comments attracted and the percentage of respondents who raised the issues. (These tables are presented in later chapters.) This process enabled the researcher to isolate the issues which each of the respondent groups considered to be of most significance. Many of the comments that were received from the respondents were transcribed and classified according to the issues that they address. These comments have been inserted where appropriate in later chapters where the findings of the study are presented and discussed.

Analysis of Data from the Interviews

The *Record of Interview Schedules* and the tape recordings of the researcher's reflections on the interviews were transcribed and the data synthesised and categorised according to the issues that were addressed. (This data is presented in table form in Chapter 5.) Tables were produced based on the frequency that comments and statements were made during the interviews.

3.2.9 A Focus Group of School Principals and Clergy

After initial analysis, the research findings were presented to a Focus Group of principals and clergy from the diocese. (This process is described in detail in Chapter 5.) This presentation was given in order to:

- obtain feedback on the implications of the study for the diocese;
- strengthen the validity of the study; and,
- stimulate and begin the process of dialogue on the implications of the study between important stakeholders in Catholic education in the diocese.

3.2.10 The Possibility of Bias

Due to the fact that '...interviewers are human beings and not machines' (Selltíz et al., in Bell, 1987:73), there is always the possibility of researcher bias in this type of research. This possibility of bias is acknowledged by the researcher. As the researcher holds strong views on many of the issues treated in this study, constant awareness of the possibility of bias was a priority at all times, especially during the interviews and analysis of anecdotal data.

The researcher also acknowledges the possibility of the findings being biased by the 'response effect'. Borg (in Bell, 1987:73) described this phenomenon as:

Eagerness of the respondent to please the interviewer, a vague antagonism that sometimes arises between interviewer and respondent, or the tendency of the interviewer to seek out the answers that support his preconceived notions....

3.2.11 Ethical Considerations

Steps were taken by the researcher to ensure that the ethical standards of the Australian Catholic University were satisfied and maintained. A submission was made and ethical clearance was obtained from the appropriate authorities at the university. The approval and support of the Bishop of Lismore and the Diocesan Education Board were obtained before contact was made with the priests and teachers of the diocese.

Several steps were taken to ensure the total anonymity of respondents to the questionnaire. Respondents were asked to send completed answer sheets to the researcher's secretary. It was explained in the letter of introduction to the questionnaires that this step was taken to ensure that the researcher did not know from which town the response came. Envelopes were removed and the answer sheets, which were not pre-coded, were then passed on to the researcher.

The people who were interviewed in this study participated by response to an invitation and were guaranteed complete confidentiality both informally at the point of initial telephone contact to arrange the interview and formally through a letter of consent (Appendix 6) signed by both the researcher and participant at the interview. This letter outlined the aims and proposed

structure of the interviews, as well as guaranteeing the participant anonymity and the right to withdraw participation at any time.

3.2.12 The Limitations of this Research

The wider application of the findings of this study could be limited by the fact that the Lismore Diocese is unique in the model of school-parish relationship that is fostered in Catholic education. There is the possibility that in another context, where school-parish relationships follow another model, a replication of this study would produce findings that would vary from those presented here.

3.2.13 The Validity of this Study

The validity of the research ‘...refers to the extent to which its observations and results are authentic representations of the reality being studied and are capable of being translated to and compared with other settings.’ (Johnston and Chesterton, 1994:12) Drawing on the procedures used by Johnston and Chesterton, (1994:13), the steps taken to increase the validity of the findings of this research included:

- a. the use of different techniques in the gathering of data (questionnaires and follow-up interviews);
- b. assurances of confidentiality and anonymity made to respondents;
- c. allowing the major themes, categories and perspectives to emerge from participant generated data; and
- d. the use of a Focus Group of clergy and teachers to discuss the researcher’s understanding of the data and as a way of monitoring researcher perceptions.

3.2.14 The Reliability of this Study

The reliability of the research ‘...refers to the extent to which other researchers would generate the same findings as those produced in the project or in a project conducted in a similar setting.’ (Johnston and Chesterton, 1994:12) Drawing on the procedures used by Johnston and Chesterton (1994:13), the steps taken to increase the reliability of the findings of this research included:

- a. the preservation of raw data in the form of completed questionnaires and interview schedules;
- b. description of the context in which the data was collected;
- c. description of the population from which data was obtained and the way in which this population was chosen; and
- d. specification of the methods of data collection.

3.3 THE TIME FRAME OF THE STUDY

This study was conducted over a period of two and a half years. The following is an outline of the main stages of the project:

Semester 2, 1995

During this period the focus and aims of the study were identified and the support of the Lismore Diocesan Education Board was obtained. The review of relevant literature commenced.

Semesters 1 and 2, 1996

During this period the literature review for the study continued and the pilot study was designed and completed. The questionnaire to be used in research

in the Lismore Diocese was designed and submitted for approval by the Ethics Committee of the Australian Catholic University. Initial drafts of the first three chapters of this dissertation were completed.

Semester 1, 1997

During this semester the questionnaire used in the study was distributed, returned and analysed. Interviews with the clergy were also completed.

Semester 2, 1997

Interviews with the targeted sample of teachers were completed and the data from all sources were further analysed and collated. The dissertation was written for presentation in February 1998.

Chapter 4

PERCEPTIONS OF THE RELIGIOUS DIMENSION OF THE MISSION OF CATHOLIC SCHOOLS : DATA FROM THE LISMORE DIOCESE

Children want direction and doctrine, not discussions on sex, drugs etc. Humanism is pervading society and schools need to put God back. Loving, caring and sharing is also part of the pagan culture and teachers need to realise the specific difference between Catholicism and other sects and introduce God more in prayer rather than praying we be friends, happy and helpful. The pagans do as much, superimposing Christ. Teachers do not understand this.

(Statement from a priest of the Lismore Diocese)

Teachers and clergy come at R.E. in schools from two different mindsets. Like say Greenies and Forestworkers or republicans and monarchists!

(Statement from a teacher of the Lismore Diocese)

The authors of the above statements appear convinced that teachers and clergy differ significantly in their perceptions of the religious dimension of the mission of Catholic schools. In cases such as these, where there are such fundamental differences of opinion, it is almost impossible to imagine that a spirit of partnership would exist. The extent to which teachers and clergy in the Lismore Diocese vary in their perceptions of the religious dimension of the mission of Catholic schools is the focus of this chapter. Data from the administration of the questionnaire and from written comments and interviews are reported. These findings will be discussed in Chapter 6.

This chapter will present perceptions of:

- the aims and direction of Catholic schools;
- the religious education of students in Catholic schools;
- the religious practice of students in Catholic schools;
- the religious socialisation of students in Catholic schools; and,
- the role of Catholic schools in wider Australian society.

The chapter concludes with the isolation of issues which evoked the strongest consensus of opinion among respondents.

4.1 THE AIMS AND DIRECTION OF CATHOLIC SCHOOLS

Item 42 on the questionnaire asked if Catholic schools were an essential part of the Church's mission in Australia. Opinions are reported in Table 2.

TABLE 2 : CATHOLIC SCHOOLS AND THE MISSION OF THE CHURCH IN AUSTRALIA

<i>Opinion</i>	<i>Clergy</i>	<i>Primary Teachers</i>	<i>Secondary Teachers</i>
Strongly Agree	31%	56%	43%
Agree	54%	36%	48%
Uncertain	8%	5%	6%
Disagree	8%	1%	1%
Strongly Disagree	0%	0%	2%

Item 43 asked if Catholic schools were struggling for direction in contemporary Australian society. Opinions are reported in Table 3.

TABLE 3 : STRUGGLE FOR DIRECTION IN THE MISSION OF CATHOLIC SCHOOLS

<i>Opinion</i>	<i>Clergy</i>	<i>Primary Teachers</i>	<i>Secondary Teachers</i>
Strongly Agree	12%	10%	6%
Agree	50%	30%	28%
Uncertain	19%	17%	13%
Disagree	15%	37%	43%
Strongly Disagree	4%	4%	9%

Table 2 shows that most of the respondents held the opinion that Catholic schools were an essential part of the mission of the Church in contemporary Australia. However, as indicated in Table 3, 37% of the teachers and 62% of the priests thought that the schools were struggling for direction in this mission.

4.1.1 Official Church Documents as Guides for Catholic Schools

Item 11 asked if official Church documents gave a useful guide for the direction of Catholic schools. Opinions are reported in Table 4.

TABLE 4 : OFFICIAL CHURCH DOCUMENTS AS GUIDES FOR THE DIRECTION OF CATHOLIC SCHOOLS

<i>Opinion</i>	<i>Clergy</i>	<i>Primary Teachers</i>	<i>Secondary Teachers</i>
Strongly Agree	19%	2%	2%
Agree	46%	26%	22%
Uncertain	31%	44%	48%
Disagree	4%	19%	20%
Strongly Disagree	0%	8%	9%

Table 4 indicates that two thirds of the clergy acknowledged the usefulness of guidance from official Church documents and statements in the discernment of the schools' religious orientation. Less than one third of the teachers shared this view. Over half of the teachers indicated that they were uncertain on this issue.

Data from the interviews indicate that there were some teachers (10%) who perceived a link between a struggle for direction in Catholic education and similar struggles at a broader Church level. These teachers considered that the Church's search for direction and relevance in contemporary society had necessary implications for all of its agencies, including Catholic schools. This was suggested as a possible reason why teachers generally lacked confidence in the Church's official statements and guidelines as tools for setting the direction of Catholic education. Many of the teachers who responded to the questionnaire voiced anger and frustration over their relationships with the clergy, and in some cases, with the Church in general. One teacher's frustration with the Church could be noted in the following written comment:

The Catholic Church is so behind the times that, for most, it means nothing in their lives. It must move away from its silly traditions (which we made up), and get on with Christ's message of reaching out to all through prayer and reading the scriptures.

Anger such as this provides a possible explanation for some teachers' expressed lack of confidence in formal Church documents as guides for the religious orientation of Catholic schools. If a teacher is in this situation in his/her personal life and position within the Church, it is reasonable to expect that this person would also have difficulties in accepting Church language and statements in the realm of professional life. Other teachers who were

interviewed (7%) referred to difficulties with Church documents in terms of problems with the language used. It was proposed that many of the terms that are used to describe the mission of Catholic schools are frequently understood in different ways by different people and the result can be confusion.

4.1.2 Consensus among Clergy about the Religious Aims

Item 27 asked if there was consensus among clergy about the religious aims of Catholic schools. Opinions are reported in Table 5.

TABLE 5 : CONSENSUS AMONG CLERGY ABOUT THE RELIGIOUS AIMS OF CATHOLIC SCHOOLS

<i>Opinion</i>	<i>Clergy</i>	<i>Primary Teachers</i>	<i>Secondary Teachers</i>
Strongly Agree	0%	3%	2%
Agree	15%	10%	7%
Uncertain	62%	47%	57%
Disagree	19%	24%	25%
Strongly Disagree	0%	15%	11%

Table 5 indicates that most of the priests (62%) were uncertain whether there was consensus of opinion within their ranks as to the religious aims of Catholic schools. The same table shows that few teachers (less than 15%) thought that there was consensus on these aims among the clergy. Half of the teachers indicated that they were uncertain on this issue.

During the interviews, one teacher stated that the perception that there is little consensus among clergy was due to the fact that teachers often have to adapt to the radically different ways in which clergy who come and go in their parishes relate to Catholic schools. Another teacher, in responding to

the questionnaire, stated that:

I often think that it is sad that when we get a new Parish Priest we have to find out what he likes- whether he is flexible; can we do this or can we do that? He determines the creativity of our liturgies etc. Our Mass/liturgy formats are based on his whims and desires.

4.1.3 Consensus among Teachers about the Religious Aims

Item 28 asked if there was consensus among teachers about the religious aims of Catholic schools. Opinions are reported in Table 6.

TABLE 6 : CONSENSUS AMONG TEACHERS ABOUT THE RELIGIOUS AIMS OF CATHOLIC SCHOOLS

<i>Opinion</i>	<i>Clergy</i>	<i>Primary Teachers</i>	<i>Secondary Teachers</i>
Strongly Agree	0%	9%	4%
Agree	15%	53%	34%
Uncertain	46%	17%	16%
Disagree	23%	17%	39%
Strongly Disagree	15%	2%	7%

On the issue of consensus of opinion among teachers about the religious aims of Catholic schools, there were notable differences in the responses of primary and secondary teachers. As shown in Table 6, the primary teachers (62%) were more certain that there was consensus within their ranks than were the secondary teachers (38%). Almost half of the clergy indicated that they were uncertain whether there was consensus among teachers on this issue and the majority of the rest (38%) disagreed with the suggestion.

In an interview one of the teachers suggested that the reasons why there was more consensus on this issue in primary schools than in secondary schools, had to do with the quality of communication in the schools. This person suggested that because primary schools are generally smaller than secondary schools, and all teachers in primary schools are involved in the religious education program, communication at the primary level on issues to do with the religious dimension of mission is more frequent and of a better quality.

4.2 THE RELIGIOUS EDUCATION OF STUDENTS

Item 51 asked respondents to rate the knowledge of the Catholic faith among students in their school/schools. Opinions are reported in Table 7.

TABLE 7 : PERCEPTIONS OF KNOWLEDGE OF CATHOLIC FAITH IN SCHOOLS

<i>Opinion</i>	<i>Clergy</i>	<i>Primary Teachers</i>	<i>Secondary Teachers</i>
Very Poor	12%	2%	6%
Poor	8%	14%	13%
Satisfactory	58%	34%	43%
Good	19%	42%	32%
Very Good	4%	7%	5%

Item 48 asked respondents to rate the religious education curriculum in their school/schools. Opinions are reported in Table 8.

TABLE 8 : PERCEPTIONS OF THE RELIGIOUS EDUCATION CURRICULUM

<i>Opinion</i>	<i>Clergy</i>	<i>Primary Teachers</i>	<i>Secondary Teachers</i>
Very Poor	0%	1%	5%
Poor	8%	5%	9%
Satisfactory	23%	20%	25%
Good	62%	46%	45%
Very Good	8%	27%	16%

Table 7 shows that over 80% of both the teachers and the clergy thought that the level of knowledge of the Catholic faith among students in their school/schools was satisfactory or good. Evidence presented in Table 8 indicates that the formal religious education curriculum which is used in the schools of the Lismore Diocese enjoyed a high level of acceptance among both clergy (92%) and teachers (almost 90%). Few respondents perceived the curriculum to be less than satisfactory.

4.2.1 The Role of Teachers in Religious Education

Item 30 asked whether all teachers in Catholic schools have a role in the religious education of students. Opinions are reported in Table 9.

TABLE 9 : THE ROLE OF TEACHERS IN RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

<i>Opinion</i>	<i>Clergy</i>	<i>Primary Teachers</i>	<i>Secondary Teachers</i>
Strongly Agree	35%	57%	46%
Agree	50%	39%	43%
Uncertain	4%	1%	4%
Disagree	8%	1%	6%
Strongly Disagree	4%	0%	1%

Item 31 asked respondents if they considered that there were aspects of this role which remained unclear. Opinions are reported in Table 10.

TABLE 10 : CLARITY OF THE ROLE OF TEACHERS IN RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

<i>Opinion</i>	<i>Clergy</i>	<i>Primary Teachers</i>	<i>Secondary Teachers</i>
Strongly Agree	8%	6%	11%
Agree	38%	32%	39%
Uncertain	19%	23%	12%
Disagree	35%	39%	34%
Strongly Disagree	0%	7%	3%

Table 9 shows that the majority of both clergy (85%) and teachers (over 90%) agreed that all teachers in Catholic schools had a role to play in the religious education of students. However, as indicated in Table 10, there was uncertainty and division of opinion among all groups as to whether this role was clear or not.

4.2.2 Teachers and the Spiritual Needs of Young People

Item 29 asked if teachers were in touch with the spiritual needs of the young people of today. Opinions are reported in Table 11.

TABLE 11 : TEACHERS AND THE SPIRITUAL NEEDS OF YOUNG PEOPLE

<i>Opinion</i>	<i>Clergy</i>	<i>Primary Teachers</i>	<i>Secondary Teachers</i>
Strongly Agree	0%	5%	2%
Agree	12%	51%	48%
Uncertain	62%	32%	29%
Disagree	27%	11%	19%
Strongly Disagree	0%	0%	2%

Table 11 indicates that 62% of clergy were uncertain whether teachers were in touch with the spiritual needs of today's young people. The majority of the rest of the priests (27%) disagreed with this suggestion. Over half of the teachers thought that they were in touch with young peoples' needs in this area.

4.2.3 Clergy and Teachers: Different Approaches to Religious Education

In their responses to the questionnaire, several of the teachers mentioned that teachers and priests often approached religious education in Catholic schools from very different perspectives. One teacher commented that:

Unfortunately many, but not all, of our priests are operating out of an older style of RE. They expect teachers to drill religious facts and dates that are really not relevant to the lives of the children we teach. They equate the recall of religious knowledge with being 'religious'. Most teachers have a differing view and are more in touch with the needs of students.

However, another teacher offered some support for the clergy and the stance that they often take on religious education by stating that the clergy need also to be aware of the expectations of the wider parish community. Thus the comment from a teacher in response to the questionnaire:

Clergy are likely to be under pressure from more traditional elements in the parish. The call for the 'good old days' can be compelling.

4.2.4 Non-Catholics and Religious Education

Item 40 asked if a lower proportion of non-Catholics should be enrolled in Catholic schools. Opinions are reported in Table 12.

TABLE 12 : NON-CATHOLIC ENROLMENT IN CATHOLIC SCHOOLS

<i>Opinion</i>	<i>Clergy</i>	<i>Primary Teachers</i>	<i>Secondary Teachers</i>
Strongly Agree	12%	9%	3%
Agree	27%	21%	16%
Uncertain	46%	24%	28%
Disagree	15%	36%	45%
Strongly Disagree	0%	10%	7%

Table 12 indicates that 85% of the clergy either thought that a lower proportion of non-Catholics should be enrolled in Catholic schools or stated that they were uncertain on this issue. In contrast, less than one quarter of the teachers agreed with this opinion.

Item 9 asked if religious education courses in Catholic schools should take some account of situations where there is high non-Catholic enrolment. Opinions are reported in Table 13.

TABLE 13 : NON-CATHOLICS AND RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

<i>Opinion</i>	<i>Clergy</i>	<i>Primary Teachers</i>	<i>Secondary Teachers</i>
Strongly Agree	8%	6%	8%
Agree	35%	33%	44%
Uncertain	4%	13%	8%
Disagree	23%	33%	29%
Strongly Disagree	31%	13%	11%

As is shown in Table 13, almost half of the clergy did not think that religious education courses in Catholic schools should take any account of situations where there is a high non-Catholic enrolment. The teachers were divided in their opinions, with more secondary teachers (52%) than primary teachers (39%) agreeing that some account should be taken.

4.2.5 Curriculum Content In Religious Education

Item 14 asked respondents to rate the importance of the teaching of Catholic doctrine in Catholic schools. Opinions are reported in Table 14.

TABLE 14 : IMPORTANCE OF TEACHING CATHOLIC DOCTRINE

<i>Opinion</i>	<i>Clergy</i>	<i>Primary Teachers</i>	<i>Secondary Teachers</i>
Most Important	35%	34%	21%
Very Important	46%	51%	48%
Of Some Importance	19%	14%	25%
Of Little Importance	0%	0%	5%
Not Important	0%	0%	0%

Table 14 indicates that 98% of the respondents considered the teaching of Catholic doctrine in schools to be important. The same table shows that the primary teachers and the clergy assigned the teaching of doctrine a higher priority or degree of importance than did the secondary teachers.

Items 15, 16 and 17 asked respondents to rate the importance of teaching in certain curriculum areas relating to religious education. Opinions are reported in Table 15.

TABLE 15 : THE IMPORTANCE OF TEACHING IN CERTAIN CURRICULUM AREAS

The teaching of general Christian principles of morality (Item 15)

<i>Opinion</i>	<i>Clergy</i>	<i>Primary Teachers</i>	<i>Secondary Teachers</i>
Most Important	54%	64%	70%
Very Important	35%	29%	29%
Of Some Importance	12%	4%	1%
Of Little Importance	0%	0%	0%
Not Important	0%	0%	0%

Teaching on contemporary moral and spiritual issues (Item 17)

<i>Opinion</i>	<i>Clergy</i>	<i>Primary Teachers</i>	<i>Secondary Teachers</i>
Most Important	27%	42%	61%
Very Important	50%	38%	36%
Of Some Importance	15%	18%	3%
Of Little Importance	8%	0%	0%
Not Important	0%	0%	0%

Teaching on other world religions (Item 16)

<i>Opinion</i>	<i>Clergy</i>	<i>Primary Teachers</i>	<i>Secondary Teachers</i>
Most Important	4%	9%	16%
Very Important	23%	34%	43%
Of Some Importance	46%	45%	34%
Of Little Importance	15%	9%	5%
Not Important	8%	1%	2%

As indicated in Table 15, the teaching of general Christian principles which address contemporary moral and spiritual issues was considered important by most of the respondents. This issue was considered to be particularly important by secondary teachers. The same table shows that the clergy were divided in their opinions of the importance of teaching about other world religions in Catholic schools. They assigned this area lower priority than did the teachers. One quarter of the priests considered this area as having little or no importance. Although most of the teachers considered

teaching in this area to be important, it was a much higher priority among the secondary teachers than among primary teachers.

4.3 THE RELIGIOUS PRACTICE OF STUDENTS

Item 7 asked if providing opportunities for attendance at Mass and the Sacraments was an essential part of the mission of Catholic schools. Item 8 asked if attendance at some school sacramental celebrations should be made optional for students. Opinions are reported in Table 16.

TABLE 16 : ATTENDANCE AT MASS AND SACRAMENTAL CELEBRATIONS IN CATHOLIC SCHOOLS

Providing opportunities for attendance at Mass and the Sacraments is an essential part of the mission of Catholic schools

<i>Opinion</i>	<i>Clergy</i>	<i>Primary Teachers</i>	<i>Secondary Teachers</i>
Strongly Agree	42%	47%	51%
Agree	46%	45%	46%
Uncertain	0%	2%	2%
Disagree	12%	4%	1%
Strongly Disagree	0%	1%	0%

Attendance at some school Sacramental celebrations should be made optional for students

<i>Opinion</i>	<i>Clergy</i>	<i>Primary Teachers</i>	<i>Secondary Teachers</i>
Strongly Agree	4%	3%	2%
Agree	8%	17%	12%
Uncertain	23%	8%	12%
Disagree	42%	41%	39%
Strongly Disagree	23%	28%	35%

Table 16 indicates that over 90% of the respondents agreed that an emphasis on Catholic practice, which would include the provision of opportunities for students to attend Mass and the Sacraments, was an essential part of the mission of Catholic schools. The same table shows that there was little support for the suggestion that attendance at some school sacramental celebrations should be made optional for students. It can be noted that there was more uncertainty among the clergy (23%) than the teachers (10%) on this question.

Item 6 asked if the decline in religious practice among young people in Australia indicated that Catholic schools were failing in an important part of their mission. Opinions are reported in Table 17.

TABLE 17 : DECLINE IN CATHOLIC PRACTICE AND THE MISSION OF CATHOLIC SCHOOLS

<i>Opinion</i>	<i>Clergy</i>	<i>Primary Teachers</i>	<i>Secondary Teachers</i>
Strongly Agree	8%	5%	3%
Agree	42%	10%	8%
Uncertain	19%	11%	18%
Disagree	23%	43%	46%
Strongly Disagree	8%	30%	24%

Half of the clergy agreed that the decline in religious practice among young Catholics in Australia indicated that Catholic schools were failing in an important part of their mission. (Table 17) Very few of the teachers (13%) shared this opinion.

The tension that exists between some teachers and clergy over this issue of religious practice is evident in the following written statement from one teacher:

Clergy blame teachers for the decline in weekend Mass attendance and expect us to fix this by organising Family Masses on the weekends to lure the people back to the church. We are unable as a school to provide meaningful and creative experiences of the Mass because of the dictatorial way we are ruled by the Parish Priest.

Items 22 and 23 asked if Catholic primary and secondary schools introduced students to sound liturgical practice. Opinions are reported in Table 18.

TABLE 18 : RELIGIOUS PRACTICE IN CATHOLIC PRIMARY AND SECONDARY SCHOOLS

Catholic primary schools introduce students to sound liturgical practice (Item 22)

<i>Opinion</i>	<i>Clergy</i>	<i>Primary Teachers</i>	<i>Secondary Teachers</i>
Strongly Agree	8%	28%	10%
Agree	54%	61%	44%
Uncertain	27%	6%	39%
Disagree	12%	4%	5%
Strongly Disagree	0%	0%	2%

Catholic secondary schools introduce students to sound liturgical practice (Item 23)

<i>Opinion</i>	<i>Clergy</i>	<i>Primary Teachers</i>	<i>Secondary Teachers</i>
Strongly Agree	4%	6%	9%
Agree	15%	23%	57%
Uncertain	46%	59%	21%
Disagree	35%	8%	11%
Strongly Disagree	0%	1%	2%

As can be seen in Table 18, most of the clergy (62%) thought that Catholic primary schools introduced students to sound liturgical practice. However, less than 20% thought that Catholic secondary schools did the same. The same table shows that almost half of the clergy indicated that they were uncertain of how successful secondary schools were in this endeavour. Although most of the primary and secondary teachers thought that their respective school levels did introduce students to sound liturgical practice, the degree of uncertainty about one another's success in this endeavour was significant. (Table 18)

4.4 THE RELIGIOUS SOCIALISATION OF STUDENTS

4.4.1 Integration of Students into the Catholic Community

Item 13 asked respondents to rate the importance of integration of students into the Catholic community in the mission of Catholic schools. Opinions are reported in Table 19.

TABLE 19 : THE ROLE OF SCHOOLS IN THE INTEGRATION OF STUDENTS INTO THE CATHOLIC COMMUNITY

<i>Opinion</i>	<i>Clergy</i>	<i>Primary Teachers</i>	<i>Secondary Teachers</i>
Most Important	31%	30%	11%
Very Important	62%	47%	42%
Of Some Importance	8%	20%	36%
Of Little Importance	0%	1%	10%
Not Important	0%	1%	1%

Table 19 indicates that the role of Catholic schools in the integration of students into the Catholic community was considered to be very important by all three groups, especially the clergy (93%). The table also indicates that

this facet of the schools' mission was a lower priority among secondary teachers than among primary teachers.

4.4.2 The Formation of Christian Community

Items 32 and 33 asked if teachers in Catholic primary and secondary schools give special attention to the formation of Christian community in the schools. Opinions are reported in Table 20.

TABLE 20 : ATTENTION GIVEN TO FORMATION OF CHRISTIAN COMMUNITY BY TEACHERS

Teachers in Catholic primary schools give special attention to the formation of Christian community in the schools.

<i>Opinion</i>	<i>Clergy</i>	<i>Primary Teachers</i>	<i>Secondary Teachers</i>
Strongly Agree	8%	34%	10%
Agree	62%	59%	33%
Uncertain	23%	4%	57%
Disagree	4%	2%	1%
Strongly Disagree	4%	0%	0%

Teachers in Catholic secondary schools give special attention to the formation of Christian community in the schools

<i>Opinion</i>	<i>Clergy</i>	<i>Primary Teachers</i>	<i>Secondary Teachers</i>
Strongly Agree	0%	7%	12%
Agree	19%	27%	63%
Uncertain	58%	56%	19%
Disagree	19%	7%	5%
Strongly Disagree	4%	1%	1%

As evidenced in Table 20, most of the clergy (70%) agreed that teachers in primary schools give special attention to the formation of Christian community in the schools. However, some 58% stated that they were uncertain whether secondary teachers give special attention in this area, with the majority of the rest disagreeing with the suggestion. Table 20 also indicates that most teachers agreed that colleagues who worked at their level of Catholic education gave special attention to the formation of Christian community. However, over half of the teachers expressed uncertainty about the attention that is given to this area by colleagues at the other level of education.

4.4.3 The Fostering of Religious Commitment and Spiritual Development

Items 12 and 60 asked respondents to rate the importance of fostering religious commitment and spiritual development in Catholic schools. Opinions are reported in Table 21.

TABLE 21: IMPORTANCE OF FOSTERING RELIGIOUS COMMITMENT AND SPIRITUAL DEVELOPMENT

Fostering of religious commitment in Catholic schools

<i>Opinion</i>	<i>Clergy</i>	<i>Primary Teachers</i>	<i>Secondary Teachers</i>
Most Important	50%	26%	16%
Very Important	35%	50%	44%
Of Some Importance	15%	21%	36%
Of Little Importance	0%	1%	10%
Not Important	0%	1%	1%

Table 21 : Continued

The fostering of spiritual development of students

<i>Opinion</i>	<i>Clergy</i>	<i>Primary Teachers</i>	<i>Secondary Teachers</i>
Most Important	62%	55%	47%
Very Important	35%	38%	40%
Of Some Importance	0%	3%	8%
Of Little Importance	0%	0%	2%
Not Important	0%	0%	1%

Item 10 asked whether parents chose Catholic schools because of their ability to foster the religious development of their children. Opinions are reported in Table 22.

TABLE 22 : RELIGIOUS DEVELOPMENT AND THE CHOICE OF CATHOLIC SCHOOLS

<i>Opinion</i>	<i>Clergy</i>	<i>Primary Teachers</i>	<i>Secondary Teachers</i>
Strongly Agree	4%	6%	3%
Agree	23%	42%	31%
Uncertain	31%	24%	29%
Disagree	42%	22%	30%
Strongly Disagree	0%	6%	7%

The fostering of religious commitment and spiritual development among students were considered by most respondents to be an important part of the mission of Catholic schools. (Table 21) However, as shown in Table 22, there was considerable uncertainty and division of opinion among both clergy and teachers as to whether parents choose Catholic schools because of their

ability to foster the religious development of their children. Fewer clergy (27%) than teachers (41%) agreed with the suggestion. One teacher who responded to the questionnaire stated that:

The Catholic school is seen in society as a private school and generally this has expectations attached to it ie. elitist, posh etc. Parents don't send their children to us because of religion but we are seen to discipline their children or children come to us because we care which is great, we're being pastoral-but at what cost? It is very hard to teach religious education to adolescents who challenge everything, especially if parents give little emphasis to the subject. ...As a committed Catholic in a Catholic school teaching R.E., it certainly challenges your faith.

4.5 CATHOLIC SCHOOLS IN WIDER AUSTRALIAN SOCIETY

Item 38 asked if Catholic schools challenge many of the values and the norms of society that are contrary to Christian values. Opinions are reported in Table 23.

TABLE 23 : CATHOLIC SCHOOLS AND THE VALUES AND NORMS OF SOCIETY THAT ARE CONTRARY TO CHRISTIAN VALUES

<i>Opinion</i>	<i>Clergy</i>	<i>Primary Teachers</i>	<i>Secondary Teachers</i>
Strongly Agree	4%	11%	9%
Agree	46%	45%	61%
Uncertain	27%	18%	16%
Disagree	23%	22%	11%
Strongly Disagree	0%	3%	3%

Table 23 indicates that half of the clergy agreed that Catholic schools challenged many of the values and norms of society that are contrary to

Christian values, however, there was considerable uncertainty (27%). The responses of the primary teachers on this issue were very similar to those of the clergy. Some 70% of the secondary teachers agreed with the suggestion. (Table 23)

Item 39 asked if Catholic schools were becoming elitist. Opinions are reported in Table 24.

TABLE 24 : THE PERCEPTION THAT CATHOLIC SCHOOLS ARE BECOMING ELITIST

<i>Opinion</i>	<i>Clergy</i>	<i>Primary Teachers</i>	<i>Secondary Teachers</i>
Strongly Agree	4%	6%	0%
Agree	19%	20%	15%
Uncertain	27%	20%	10%
Disagree	35%	45%	61%
Strongly Disagree	15%	9%	15%

Items 54 and 41 asked respondents to rate the importance and success of Catholic schools' outreach to the poor and marginalised. Opinions are reported in Table 25.

TABLE 25 : CATHOLIC SCHOOLS AND OUTREACH TO THE POOR

Outreach to the poor

<i>Opinion</i>	<i>Clergy</i>	<i>Primary Teachers</i>	<i>Secondary Teachers</i>
Most Important	31%	25%	23%
Very Important	65%	45%	38%
Of Some Importance	0%	26%	33%
Of Little Importance	0%	2%	6%
Not Important	0%	0%	0%

Catholic schools cater to the needs of the poor and marginalised (Item 41)

<i>Opinion</i>	<i>Clergy</i>	<i>Primary Teachers</i>	<i>Secondary Teachers</i>
Strongly Agree	4%	5%	9%
Agree	19%	32%	43%
Uncertain	42%	23%	28%
Disagree	31%	33%	16%
Strongly Disagree	4%	5%	3%

Few respondents agreed with the suggestion that Catholic schools are becoming elitist. (Table 24) The strongest disagreement with this suggestion came from the secondary teachers (76%). Outreach to the poor was considered to be a very important part of the mission of Catholic schools by almost everyone. (Table 25) However, as evidenced in Table 25, the clergy were divided in their opinions as to whether Catholic schools cater for the needs of the poor and marginalised. Some 42% of the priests stated that they were uncertain on this issue. Although there was also division of opinion and uncertainty among the teachers, over half of the secondary teachers thought that Catholic schools do cater for these needs. One

teacher, in responding to the questionnaire, alluded to the difficulty that some Catholic schools face in this area by stating that:

I wonder if a middle class education and the Church's mission (to reach out to the poor and oppressed in our community) are compatible. Greater independence of parish and school might allow both to do what they are best at, or at least develop a vision which is more realistic, achievable, closer to Christ.

4.5.1 Church Resources and Catholic Schools

Items 44 and 45 asked if the Church should be putting fewer resources into Catholic primary and secondary schools and more resources into other parish or educational endeavours. Opinions are reported in Table 26.

TABLE 26 : CHURCH RESOURCES AND CATHOLIC SCHOOLS

The Church should be putting fewer resources into Catholic primary schools and more resources into other parish or educational endeavours

<i>Opinion</i>	<i>Clergy</i>	<i>Primary Teachers</i>	<i>Secondary Teachers</i>
Strongly Agree	4%	2%	1%
Agree	15%	4%	2%
Uncertain	27%	11%	22%
Disagree	54%	31%	44%
Strongly Disagree	0%	50%	30%

Table 26 : Continued

The Church should be putting fewer resources into Catholic secondary schools and more resources into other parish or educational endeavours

<i>Opinion</i>	<i>Clergy</i>	<i>Primary Teachers</i>	<i>Secondary Teachers</i>
Strongly Agree	19%	3%	2%
Agree	12%	5%	4%
Uncertain	23%	18%	15%
Disagree	46%	29%	42%
Strongly Disagree	0%	43%	38%

Although 27% of the priests were uncertain on the issue, few of the clergy (19%) agreed with the suggestion that the Church should be putting fewer resources into Catholic primary schools and more resources into other endeavours. (Table 26) Some 40% of the teachers strongly disagreed with the suggestion. On the same issue as it relates to Catholic secondary schools, the clergy were divided. Almost one third of the priests agreed with the suggestion that the Church should be putting fewer resources into Catholic secondary schools. Very few teachers (7%) agreed with the suggestion. (Table 26)

4.6 STRENGTH OF OPINION, CONSENSUS AND DIVERSITY WITHIN THE POPULATION

4.6.1 The Use of Measures of Central Tendency

Gay (1987), in reference to the use of these measures in data analysis, stated that for the majority of sets of data, the mean is the appropriate measure of central tendency and that the standard deviation is the most

stable measure of variability since both of these measures take into account each and every score.

The statements listed in Tables 27a and 27b, have been formulated from issues dealt with in the questionnaire. Given the 5 point Likert Scales used in the questionnaire, a low or high mean score (range 1-2 or 5-6) on an item indicates that opinion on this item was strong. A low standard deviation for an item indicates consensus of opinion on this item among the population, while a standard deviation greater than 1 is an indicator of diverse opinions among the population on this item.

4.6.2 Issues which attracted Strong Opinions among the Population

Issues dealt with in the questionnaire which evoked strong opinions within the groups of respondents (primary teachers, secondary teachers and clergy) are listed in Table 27a. Identification of these issues provides an indication of priorities and strength of opinion and allows comparison across the groups. The statements are listed in rank order for each group of respondents, beginning with the issue on which opinion was strongest.

TABLE 27A : STATEMENTS WHICH ATTRACTED STRONG OPINION AMONG RESPONDENTS

Rank	Statement	Mean	SD
Strong Opinion Among Primary Teachers			
1	That the teaching of general Christian principles of morality in Catholic schools is very important.	1.39	.59
2	That all teachers in Catholic schools have a role in the religious education of students.	1.44	.57
3	That the spiritual development of students is a very important part of the mission of Catholic schools.	1.48	.62
4	That Catholic schools are an essential part of the Church's mission in Australia.	1.51	.66
5	That the provision of opportunities for attendance at Mass and the Sacraments is an essential part of the mission of Catholic schools.	1.65	.79

Rank	Statement	Mean	SD
Strong Opinion Among Secondary Teachers			
1	That the teaching of general Christian principles of morality in Catholic schools is very important.	1.31	.48
2	That teaching on contemporary moral and spiritual issues in Catholic schools is very important.	1.43	.56
3	That the provision of opportunities for attendance at Mass and the Sacraments is an essential part of the mission of Catholic schools.	1.53	.59
4	That the spiritual development of students is a very important part of the mission of Catholic schools.	1.66	.77
5	That Catholic schools are an essential part of the Church's mission in Australia.	1.69	.76

Table 27A : Continued

	Strong Opinion Among Clergy	Mean	SD
1	That the spiritual development of students is a very important part of the mission of Catholic schools.	1.36	.49
2	<i>That the involvement of Catholic school teachers in the local parish is very important.</i>	1.44	.65
3	<i>That formal links with parish are vital for the success of Catholic schools.</i>	1.46	.76
4	<i>That teacher-clergy partnership in Catholic education is very important.</i>	1.50	.59
5	That the teaching of general Christian principles of morality in Catholic schools is very important.	1.58	.70

Considerable commonality can be noted in the data from the primary and secondary teachers. Four statements are in the top five for both groups. In these statements the teachers emphasise the importance of religious education and practice in the mission of Catholic schools. However, a significant difference in emphasis can be observed in the data from the clergy. In the statements ranked 2, 3 and 4 in the clergy data (printed in italics), emphasis on the relationship between Catholic schools and parishes can be noted. Similar emphasis on this relationship is not shown to be among the strongest concerns of the teachers.

4.6.3 Diversity of Opinion within the Population

The statements in Table 27b have been formulated from issues dealt with in the questionnaire. They indicate 5 issues which evoked strong diversity of opinion among the priests, primary teachers and secondary teachers. The statements are listed in rank order for each group of respondents, beginning with the issue on which opinion was most diverse.

TABLE 27B : STATEMENTS WHICH EVOKED STRONG DIVERSITY OF OPINION AMONG RESPONDENTS

Rank	Statement	SD	Mean
Diversity Of Opinion Among Primary Teachers			
1	The degree of satisfaction with the level of clergy involvement in Catholic schools.	1.28	2.87
2	The degree of satisfaction with communication between school and parish.	1.23	3.05
3	That teaching in a Catholic school can place unfair demands on one's personal life.	1.22	2.39
4	That religious education courses in Catholic schools should take some account of situations where there is a high non-Catholic enrolment.	1.21	3.13
5	That young people these days are less religious than the youth of previous generations.	1.20	2.90

	Diversity of Opinion Among Secondary Teachers	SD	Mean
1	That teaching in a Catholic school can place unfair demands on one's personal life.	1.30	2.59
2	That young people these days are less religious than the youth of previous generations.	1.28	2.84
3	That religious education courses in Catholic schools should take some account of situations where there is a high non-Catholic enrolment.	1.22	2.89
4	That teaching in a Catholic school is a vocation in the Church.	1.17	2.34
5	That the role of all teachers in Catholic schools in the religious education of students is clear.	1.14	2.80

Table 27B : Continued

Rank	Diversity of Opinion Among Clergy	SD	Mean
1	That religious education courses in Catholic schools should take some account of situations where there is a high non-Catholic enrolment.	1.44	3.35
2	That teaching in a Catholic school can place unfair demands on one's personal life.	1.21	3.50
3	That the Church should be putting fewer resources into Catholic secondary schools and more resources into other parish or educational endeavours.	1.18	2.96
4	That young people these days are less religious than the youth of previous generations.	1.13	2.81
5	That evidence that the percentage of young Catholics in Australia who attend Mass and the Sacraments is dropping, indicates that Catholic schools are failing in an important part of their mission.	1.13	2.81

	Diversity Among Overall Population (Combined Data)	SD	Mean
1	That teaching in a Catholic school can place unfair demands on one's personal life.	1.27	2.54
2	That religious education courses in Catholic schools should take some account of situations where there is a high non-Catholic enrolment.	1.23	3.07
3	That young people these days are less religious than the youth of previous generations.	1.22	2.87
4	<i>The degree of satisfaction with clergy involvement in Catholic schools.</i>	1.19	3.02
5	<i>The degree of satisfaction with communication between school and parish.</i>	1.17	3.07

There is considerable commonality across all three groups in the issues which evoked the strong diversity of opinion. The primary teachers displayed strong diversity of opinion over issues to do with the relationship between schools and parishes. These issues also figure prominently in the statements that evoked strong diversity in the combined data. The particular issues are marked in italics.

As with the primary teachers, the relationship between teaching in a Catholic schools and one's personal life and the issue of religious education and non-Catholics evoked strong differences of opinion among secondary teachers. These teachers also expressed considerable diversity of opinion on the issue of whether today's young people are as religious as the youth from previous generations.

Most notable in the data from the clergy is the diversity of opinion over whether fewer resources should be put into Catholic secondary schools. The priests also held diverse opinions on links between dwindling religious practice and the success or failure of Catholic schools.

Chapter 5

SCHOOL-PARISH PARTNERSHIP AND RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN TEACHERS AND CLERGY IN THE LISMORE DIOCESE

I am not sure that any one group or one issue is to blame. I think that the relationship between school and parish has rested on a lot of presumptions from the past which are no longer sustainable. Where to from here? I don't know. But we have come too far to simply throw in the towel.

(Statement on school-parish partnership by a priest of the Lismore Diocese)

The author of the above statement is convinced of the importance of school-parish partnership in Catholic education, despite the fact that there are issues in the relationship that must be addressed. This chapter, through the presentation of data related to school-parish partnership and teacher-clergy relationships, identifies many of these issues. The chapter reports perceptions of:

- school-parish partnership in Catholic education;
- proposed reasons for the differing expectations of Catholic schools among teachers and clergy;
- teachers and teaching in Catholic schools;
- issues surrounding authority in relationships between teachers and clergy; and,
- issues in clergy relationships with Catholic schools.

In addition, the chapter reports on feedback from a Focus Group of school principals and clergy who discussed the preliminary findings of this study. Discussion of the data presented in this chapter and identification of the subsequent implications follows in Chapter 6

5.1 DATA FROM THE SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEWS

The primary purpose of the interviews was to aid interpretation of data from the questionnaire by providing insights into why the teachers and priests responded as they did. As this chapter will consistently refer to issues discussed in the interviews, the data needed to be synthesised and quantified. This has been done in Table 28 which shows the opinions of interviewees on issues concerning teacher-clergy relationships and indicates reasons that were given to support these opinions.

TABLE 28 : INTERVIEW DATA ON RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN TEACHERS AND CLERGY

Questions Discussed in the Interviews		Stated by Interviewees	
		Teachers (n = 32)	Clergy (n = 39)
Q.1	To what extent is 'authority' an issue in relationships between teachers and priests in the Lismore Diocese? Do some clergy 'abuse' power?		
	It is an Issue	83%	72%
	Some clergy 'abuse' power	86%	62%
<i>Reason</i>			
	Problems in area of authority are related to clergy training and formation	56%	39%
Q.2	Does working in a Catholic school put excessive demands on the personal lives of teachers?		
	Yes it does	63%	27%
Q.3	Do some clergy have 'unreal' expectations of teachers?		
	Yes they do	74%	23%
<i>Reasons</i>			
	The expectation of involvement in the Parish beyond Mass attendance is unfair	31%	0%
	Expectations conflict with family responsibilities of teachers	60%	0%
	This is mainly an issue for executive staff	28%	0%
	The expectation of financial contributions is unfair	16%	0%
	Expectations of teachers living within the parish are unfair	12%	0%

Table 28 : Continued

Questions Discussed in the Interviews		Teachers	Clergy
Q.4	Are some clergy 'out of touch' in some ways?		
	Yes they are	87%	55%
	<i>Reasons</i>		
	Clergy are 'protected' and do not understand financial difficulties	32%	11%
	Clergy do not understand strains on families and marriages	22%	8%
	Clergy are theologically/spiritually 'out of touch'	34%	0%
	Clergy have difficulties in relating to lay people	21%	0%
	Clergy do not understand education. Their role is pastoral not administrative	43%	0%
Q.5	Do teachers and clergy have different aims and vision for Catholic schools?		
	Yes they are different	56%	37%
	<i>Reasons</i>		
	They measure the success of schools differently	18%	0%
	Clergy have religious focus while teachers have an education focus	31%	22%
	Priests have different training and background	28%	20%
	Aims are similar but priorities are different	28%	14%
Q.6	Have teachers in Catholic schools lost the sense that their work is a 'vocation'?		
	Yes they have	18%	78%
	<i>Reasons</i>		
	The witness of teachers in the parish is important	72%	89%
	'Industrial' model has influenced teachers	12%	16%
	Teachers see their vocation in education rather than in religion	31%	0%
	Older teachers have a stronger sense of vocation than younger teachers	19%	14%
	For some teachers it is 'just a job'	18%	32%
	Teachers should contribute financially to parishes	0%	61%

Table 28 : Continued

Questions Discussed in the Interviews		Teachers	Clergy
Q.7 How would you describe communication between teachers and clergy in the Lismore Diocese?			
Generally good		13%	40%
Generally poor		87%	60%
<i>Reasons</i>			
Communication is mainly one way. School to parish		46%	0%
Communication is dependent on principal's relationship with the Parish Priest		26%	30%
Clergy are not in schools enough		62%	0%
Relationships are superficial		68%	28%
Priests have difficulties in relating/personality difficulties		24%	0%
There is little time, things are frantic		18%	29%
Communication is poor among the clergy		12%	24%
Communication is poor among teachers		18%	12%
Q.8 Why do some clergy relate differently to Catholic secondary schools from the way they do to Catholic primary schools?			
<i>Reasons</i>			
Secondary schools are important in reaching teenagers and families		0%	15%
Secondary schools are burdens on the parish with little return		0%	46%
Low level of practice among students and teachers		40%	56%
The agenda of secondary schools has little to do with parishes		28%	42%
The clergy have less 'control' over secondary schools		30%	12%
Primary schools are more in tune with the parish/better partnership		46%	60%

5.2 PERCEPTIONS OF SCHOOL-PARISH PARTNERSHIP

5.2.1 The Importance of School-Parish Partnership

Items 61 and 52 asked respondents to rate the importance of teacher-clergy partnership and their current experience of this partnership in their school/schools. Opinions are reported in Table 29.

TABLE 29 : TEACHER-CLERGY PARTNERSHIP

The importance of teacher-clergy partnership

<i>Opinion</i>	<i>Clergy</i>	<i>Primary Teachers</i>	<i>Secondary Teachers</i>
Most Important	50%	27%	13%
Very Important	38%	42%	38%
Of Some Importance	4%	13%	25%
Of Little Importance	0%	0%	6%
Not Important	0%	0%	0%

Current experience of teacher-clergy partnership in your school/schools

<i>Opinion</i>	<i>Clergy</i>	<i>Primary Teachers</i>	<i>Secondary Teachers</i>
Very Poor	4%	12%	7%
Poor	8%	29%	23%
Satisfactory	35%	23%	34%
Good	38%	25%	25%
Very Good	15%	10%	11%

Table 29 indicates that partnership between clergy and teachers in Catholic education was considered important by almost all of the respondents. However, the secondary teachers in particular did not assign this partnership as much importance as did the clergy. Almost all of the priests (88%) were satisfied with the quality of this partnership in their schools, but over one third of the teachers rated their existing experience of partnership as being poor.

5.2.2 Perceptions of how Catholic Schools relate to Parishes

Items 18 and 19 asked if Catholic primary and secondary schools worked well in partnership with parishes. Opinions are reported in Table 30.

TABLE 30: QUALITY OF SCHOOL-PARISH PARTNERSHIP

Catholic primary schools work well in partnership with parishes

<i>Opinion</i>	<i>Clergy</i>	<i>Primary Teachers</i>	<i>Secondary Teachers</i>
Strongly Agree	15%	14%	12%
Agree	73%	45%	35%
Uncertain	8%	22%	48%
Disagree	4%	15%	5%
Strongly Disagree	0%	3%	0%

Catholic secondary schools work well in partnership with parishes

<i>Opinion</i>	<i>Clergy</i>	<i>Primary Teachers</i>	<i>Secondary Teachers</i>
Strongly Agree	8%	4%	2%
Agree	12%	14%	51%
Uncertain	46%	60%	25%
Disagree	27%	17%	21%
Strongly Disagree	8%	2%	2%

Items 25 and 26 asked if the presence of Catholic primary and secondary schools made parishes stronger. Opinions are reported in Table 31.

TABLE 31 : CONTRIBUTION OF SCHOOLS TO PARISHES

The presence of a Catholic primary school makes the parish stronger

<i>Opinion</i>	<i>Clergy</i>	<i>Primary Teachers</i>	<i>Secondary Teachers</i>
Strongly Agree	31%	47%	31%
Agree	50%	42%	48%
Uncertain	19%	8%	16%
Disagree	0%	2%	3%
Strongly Disagree	0%	0%	2%

The presence of a Catholic secondary school makes the parish stronger

<i>Opinion</i>	<i>Clergy</i>	<i>Primary Teachers</i>	<i>Secondary Teachers</i>
Strongly Agree	15%	28%	28%
Agree	27%	40%	50%
Uncertain	35%	24%	16%
Disagree	19%	6%	4%
Strongly Disagree	0%	1%	2%

As indicated in Table 30, 88% of clergy thought that Catholic primary schools worked well in partnership with parishes, and that the presence of these schools made the parish stronger. However, only 20% of the clergy thought that secondary schools worked well in partnership with parishes and Table 31 indicates that less than half of the priests thought that the presence of a secondary school made a parish stronger.

There were varied opinions among the primary teachers over whether secondary schools worked well in partnership with parishes. (Table 30) Some 60% stated that they were uncertain. However, most primary teachers (68%) agreed that the presence of a secondary school made the parish stronger. (Table 31) Most of the secondary teachers (79%) agreed that the presence of a primary school made the parish stronger but almost half were uncertain if these schools worked well in partnership with parishes. Although most secondary teachers were positive about the relationship between their schools and parishes, there was considerable uncertainty and some disagreement on the issue. (Tables 30 and 31) Most secondary teachers thought that the presence of a secondary school made a parish stronger (78%).

There was evidence to suggest that some secondary teachers were aware of the fact that some clergy questioned the effectiveness of secondary schools in relating to parishes. One secondary teacher in response to the questionnaire stated that:

*Teachers seem to feel the school is the center of the parish
while priests see it as a bothersome appendage.*

5.2.3 The Accountability of Catholic Schools

Item 21 asked if formal links with parishes were vital for the success of Catholic schools. Opinions are reported in Table 32.

TABLE 32 : LINKS WITH PARISHES AND THE SUCCESS OF CATHOLIC SCHOOLS

<i>Opinion</i>	<i>Clergy</i>	<i>Primary Teachers</i>	<i>Secondary Teachers</i>
Strongly Agree	65%	36%	25%
Agree	27%	52%	52%
Uncertain	4%	8%	11%
Disagree	4%	2%	10%
Strongly Disagree	0%	0%	1%

Items 58 and 59 asked respondents to rate the importance of accountability of schools to parishes and to the Catholic Education Office. Opinions are reported in Table 33.

TABLE 33 : ACCOUNTABILITY OF CATHOLIC SCHOOLS

Accountability of the school to the local parish

<i>Opinion</i>	<i>Clergy</i>	<i>Primary Teachers</i>	<i>Secondary Teachers</i>
Most Important	27%	11%	5%
Very Important	50%	36%	25%
Of Some Importance	19%	40%	48%
Of Little Importance	0%	9%	16%
Not Important	0%	2%	2%

Accountability to the Catholic Education Office

<i>Opinion</i>	<i>Clergy</i>	<i>Primary Teachers</i>	<i>Secondary Teachers</i>
Most Important	15%	20%	18%
Very Important	50%	52%	42%
Of Some Importance	31%	23%	28%
Of Little Importance	0%	3%	11%
Not Important	0%	0%	0%

Table 32 shows that over 85% of the respondents agreed that formal links to parishes are vital for the success of Catholic schools. All of the clergy thought that accountability of the schools to parishes is important. (Table 33) Most teachers also considered this to be important, but to a lesser extent. Secondary teachers allocated this accountability much less importance than did primary teachers. The majority (over 95%) of respondents in the three groups considered accountability of schools to the Catholic Education Office to be very important also. (Table 33)

5.2.4 Perceived Barriers to School-Parish Partnership

In question 62 of the questionnaire, participants were asked to nominate issues that they considered were barriers to partnership between Catholic schools and parishes. Opinions are reported in Tables 34 and 35.

Perceived Barriers to Partnership : Clergy Perceptions

TABLE 34 : BARRIERS TO SCHOOL-PARISH PARTNERSHIP (CLERGY RESPONSES IN RANK ORDER)

Rank	Issue Nominated	Percentage of respondents who nominated this issue
1	Lack of faith practice by teachers	81%
2	The way that teachers/schools relate to parishes	48%
3	Clergy and teachers have different aims and expectations	43%
4	Poverty of communication	43%
5	Relationships between clergy and principals	43%
6	Personality clashes between teachers and clergy	24%
7	Issues to do with the Catholic Education Office	24%
8	Failure of the parish to value the school	19%
9	Lack of trust between teachers and clergy	19%
10	Lack of support from parents	19%

Total population: 40

Responses to this question: 21

Table 34 shows that over 80% of the clergy indicated their belief that lack of faith practice by teachers was the biggest single barrier to school-parish partnership. During an interview one of the priests followed up this argument by stating that it was impossible to have a genuine partnership with something that you hardly know or consider to be important. However, another priest indicated that teachers could argue that many of the clergy are also remiss in forging relationships with schools. He stated that it was as important for priests to be in schools as it was for teachers to be involved in parishes.

Table 34 also indicates that the issue of priest-principal relationships in the context of Catholic education was an important one for the clergy. (43% nominated this issue) During the interviews, 30% of the priests remarked that they felt that the principal set the tone for the way that the rest of the teachers and the school community at large related to parish. (Table 28) One priest commented that in cases of extreme difficulty in relationships between schools and parishes, school principals could be seen by their staffs as 'martyrs for the cause'. Almost all of the priests agreed that breakdown in communication between clergy and principals invariably caused division among teachers and had implications for the way that they related to the parish.

In responding to the questionnaire and in interviews, some priests allocated blame for possible breakdown in school-parish partnership to teachers and the Catholic Education Office. (Table 34) For a perceived lack of leadership on this issue, the Bishop also received criticism from some priests. One priest wrote that:

There is still no sign of readiness in this diocese to orchestrate a working consultative group of selected clergy and teachers to meet regularly to find ways of bridging the credibility gap between what the Church teaches in documents from Rome and what people generally go along with from their culture. We talk about teamwork between the teachers and the clergy but the leadership does not want to see them straddling the parallel rails on which they run- too hard, too risky-better to just let things be-for good men to do nothing. SORRY- but we have a MASSIVE credibility problem with the people about most of the critical issues of morality and religious experience.

Some priests placed blame within their own ranks. Table 28 indicates that 62% of the clergy agreed that some priests 'abused power' in relationships with teachers. One assistant priest expressed his concern for the future of

Catholic education by stating that many parish pastors were angry and power-driven, while at the same time many school leaders had no or little apparent relationship with the Church.

Perceived Barriers to Partnership : Teacher Responses

TABLE 35 : BARRIERS TO SCHOOL-PARISH PARTNERSHIP (TEACHER RESPONSES IN RANK ORDER)

Rank	Issue nominated	Percentage of respondents who nominated this issue
1	The clergy are 'out of touch'	55%
2	Poverty of communication	38%
3	Lack of time	28%
4	The clergy 'abuse power'	26%
5	Teacher-clergy relationship difficulties	21%
6	Issues in the broader parish	21%
7	Lack of common goals	21%
8	The clergy have unrealistic expectations	19%
9	The clergy do not understand education	17%
10	Lack of clergy presence in schools	17%
11	Clergy personality issues	12%
12	Teacher issues	11%
13	Poor relationship between the Parish Priest and the Principal	10%

Total population: 672

Responses to this question: 270

Some 55% of the teachers who answered this question indicated that the clergy being 'out of touch' was a major barrier to partnership between schools and parishes. (Table 35) Even though many of the teachers who

were interviewed qualified this perception by stating that it mainly referred to certain individuals among the clergy, the overall perception was widespread. Table 28 shows that 87% of the teachers who were interviewed concurred that some clergy were 'out of touch' in some way and that this affected relationships with teachers.

That the clergy have little appreciation of the financial strains on individuals and families in contemporary society was mentioned by 32% of teachers in the interviews as an area in which many priests are 'out of touch'. (Table 28) A common perception among teachers was that the clergy were comfortable and protected financially and hence had little appreciation of the struggle experienced by many families who seek Catholic education for their children. The fact that some priests have regular overseas holidays while many families in parish schools struggle to meet fee increases was mentioned as a factor which led to this perception. One teacher commented as follows:

Teachers live in the 20th Century. Teachers are more attuned to family life. Most teachers have outgrown Catholic guilt. Teachers live in a world of fixed incomes, budgets, mortgage rates, successive years of stay at home holidays.....Clergy tend to be idealistic whereas teachers are more realistic.Many young clergy are under authoritarian Parish Priests and have little opportunity to make their own decisions- kids and many teachers reject this.

Another respondent wrote:

Clergy need to be more flexible. Some for example, will not have their day off 'disturbed' no matter what. From where the laity stands the priest is just one of us, no better, no less in terms of importance and status. Until the clergy come to terms with the fact that for many of us the church in its present model in lots of cases is irrelevant to our daily lives, the gap between us will continue to widen. Part of the reason for this growing irrelevance is the recurrent abuse of

power and authority of some clergy and Catholic authorities....The model of clergy needs to change radically to once again serve, not for their 'clientele' to fit in with their schedules and wants.

Aloofness, inability to relate at a deep level and similar comments, were mentioned by 21% of the teachers who were interviewed (Table 28) as hallmarks of being 'out of touch'. One teacher related that his Parish Priest voiced publicly that he made aloofness his policy in relationships because he did not want to be accused of 'playing favourites'. Another teacher mentioned that in his experience clergy were more 'in touch' when they related to teachers on a one to one basis. However, others reported that their experience of relationships with clergy on this basis was very limited. It was hypothesised by one teacher that avoidance of deep relationships by some clergy was a result of the fact that they may feel afraid and threatened by increasingly well educated teachers, in particular women, while they themselves have not updated professionally. The following written comments from other teachers reflected similar opinions:

- One barrier to partnership is the patriarchal attitude of many parish priests who treat women as subordinates and servants.
- The majority of primary teachers are women and it is interesting to observe in group situations how clergy 'put down' the women and speak only to the male counterpart! What is often judged as a 'put down' could also be fear but it is off-putting.
- Many of the clergy have not done any recent reading/study or spiritual courses and they are therefore out of date. Also many do not have their finger on the pulse of where people are at or how to reach them, largely because they are out of touch with reality themselves. A lot of clergy are not spiritual or prayerful people themselves therefore are inadequate in reaching

others or helping others in this day and age.

Item 20 asked if priests were in touch with the spiritual needs of the young people of today. Opinions are reported in Table 36.

TABLE 36: PRIESTS AND THE SPIRITUAL NEEDS OF YOUNG PEOPLE

<i>Opinion</i>	<i>Clergy</i>	<i>Primary Teachers</i>	<i>Secondary Teachers</i>
Strongly Agree	0%	0%	1%
Agree	23%	18%	20%
Uncertain	50%	25%	39%
Disagree	27%	43%	27%
Strongly Disagree	0%	13%	11%

The perception that clergy were 'out of touch' on matters which relate to spirituality was evident among some teachers. (Table 28 attributes this perception to 34% of interviewees) On the question of whether priests are in touch with the spiritual needs of the young people of today (Table 36), the clergy themselves were divided in their opinions. Half stated that they were uncertain. Only 20% of the teachers thought that the clergy were in touch in this area and about one third were uncertain. Most of the feeling that the clergy were out of touch came from the primary teachers.

A lack of flexibility and homilies that failed to touch adults and children 'where they are at', were cited in written responses and interviews as factors which led to this perception. One teacher stated that in his experience, teachers perceived not only the clergy but the institutional Church as being out of touch on this level. Similarly, in this written statement, another teacher opined that:

The Catholic church is so behind the times that for most it means nothing in their lives. It must move away from its silly traditions (which we made up), and get on with Christ's message of reaching out to all, prayer and reading the Scriptures.

There was evidence to suggest that some priests held similar opinions. In Chapter 1, Fr. Donnelly, the Diocesan Vicar for Education, was quoted as having suggested that, in some instances, Catholic education had lost its connection with the grassroots of the local parish. One of the priests who responded to the questionnaire put the separation at a parish level rather than the school. He stated that:

Perhaps the Catholic Church has become disconnected from the grassroots of people's lives and is increasingly doing so. Who should point the finger at whom?

5.3 PERCEIVED REASONS WHY TEACHERS AND CLERGY DIFFER IN THEIR EXPECTATIONS OF CATHOLIC SCHOOLS

Different starting points. Teachers seem to be concerned with their level of professionalism in regard to how they educate in their chosen fields. RE quite often seems to be viewed as an interruption. Priests often enter a school in a defensive mode, sometimes convinced that many teachers have no idea of the Catholic faith or at least, little allegiance to it. Teachers seem to dismiss priests because they are not trained educators. Priests dismiss teachers because they are trained educators and not much else. Different starting points would also suggest different end goals.

(Questionnaire response from a priest)

In question 63 of the questionnaire, participants were asked why teachers and clergy may differ in their expectations of Catholic schools. Opinions are reported in Tables 37 and 38.

5.3.1 Clergy Perceptions of why there are Differences in Expectations

The following table lists in rank order the 6 reasons most commonly put forward by the clergy who answered this question:

TABLE 37 : REASONS WHY TEACHERS AND CLERGY MIGHT HAVE DIFFERING EXPECTATIONS OF CATHOLIC SCHOOLS (CLERGY RESPONSES IN RANK ORDER)

Rank	Issues nominated	Percentage of respondents who nominated this issue
1	Clergy and teachers have different visions of Catholic education	52%
2	The clergy are not educators	33%
3	Teachers are not religiously motivated	24%
4	Clergy and teachers have different backgrounds in training and education	19%
5	Clergy have a broader vision of church	10%
6	Poverty of communication	5%

Total population: 40

Responses to this question: 21

Table 37 indicates that over half of the priests (52%) believed that teachers and clergy differed in their vision of Catholic education. Data from the interviews (Table 28) indicate that 20% of the priests linked this to a fundamental difference in focus which could be the result of different training and background in general. It was proposed that clergy saw schools as they related to parishes and this, according to some priests, brought with it an emphasis on the religious dimension. There was a feeling among the priests that teachers in the main did not share this religious focus, as education is their profession. (Table 34. This was also mentioned by 22% of the clergy in interviews.) The following written statements, taken from clergy responses to question 63 relating to expectations of Catholic schools, are typical of this pattern of opinion:

Older priests are inclined to want the schools to form good parishioners-maybe along the lines of how boot camp trains marines in the USA. Their seminary experience did produce perceptible results. They see the school as a resource of the parish for the parish. Teachers are much more widely focused. They are on about nourishing the humanity of their pupils, and they are not sure how the Catholic faith integrates with the struggle to sieve out humanity from humanism.

And similarly:

Because of our varying backgrounds and training. As a priest I can sometimes fail to see the wider picture and need the correction of good teachers/lay people to provide that. Teachers suffer the same, as often their only focus (and rightly so) is the children in their schools. They need to be broadened by the parish experience and training of the Church. Hence differing expectations arise.

5.3.2 Teacher Perceptions of why there are Differences in Expectations

The following table lists in rank order the 9 reasons for differences in expectations most commonly put forward by the teachers who answered question 63.

TABLE 38 : REASONS WHY TEACHERS AND CLERGY MIGHT HAVE DIFFERING EXPECTATIONS OF CATHOLIC SCHOOLS (TEACHER RESPONSES IN RANK ORDER)

Rank	Issues nominated	Percentage of respondents who nominated this issue
1	The clergy have little knowledge of education	34%
2	Clergy and teachers have different visions of Catholic education	24%
3	The clergy are unrealistic in their expectations	22%
4	Clergy and teachers have different aims and priorities	16%
5	The clergy are 'out of date' in matters of religion	13%
6	Clergy and teachers come from different backgrounds and worldviews	12%
7	Teachers are 'in touch' with life	11%
8	Age differences	10%
9	Clergy and teachers have different spiritualities	4%

Total population: 672

Responses to this question: 263

Table 38 shows that almost one quarter of the teachers suggested that they and the clergy could differ in their aims for and expectations of Catholic schools because of differing philosophies of Catholic education. Interview data highlighted a perception among teachers (31%) that clergy approached Catholic education more often than not from a religious or spiritual angle, whereas they thought that teachers tended to have a broader vision. (Table 28) Some teachers attributed this to fundamental differences in background and formation, often using the comment that 'the clergy just do not understand education and the demands of curriculum'. Evidence in Table 38 supports this observation. The following statements are taken from teacher responses to question 63 on the questionnaire which relates to expectations of Catholic schools:

Teachers and clergy have differing expectations of Catholic schools because each 'party' is working from a different set of experiences. The clergy's job is wholly and solely the Catholic, religious, spiritual end of things. Today a teacher deals with children, in fact families who may not only be 'unchurched' but indeed could be lacking in social skills, the family unit, emotional problems, financial problems. Catholic schools have to concentrate on the whole person, so if children come to school happy and wanting to learn because the environment is safe and encouraging more-so than belting out the 10 commandments, well so be it. The clergy live in an unreal world.

And similarly:

Schools operate for the good of the children. The clergy operate for the good of the institution of the Church which is not always in touch with the real needs of the people.

During the interviews, some teachers (18%) mentioned that fundamental differences in vision for Catholic education were noticeable in the criteria

that teachers and clergy used to rate the success of Catholic schools. (Table 28) These teachers perceived that some clergy measured success by the numbers of students and parents who attended Mass on Sundays, whereas teachers had very different criteria. Some teachers referred to the fact that they felt 'caught' between social expectations, government policy and the demands of the Church. However, other teachers questioned whether clergy and teachers really did have vastly different aims for Catholic schools. They proposed that often the aims are similar but, so poor is the communication between the two groups, the teachers and priests did not know it. Others (28%) mentioned that the aims were similar, only the ordering of priorities was different. (Table 28)

5.4 PERCEPTIONS OF TEACHERS AND TEACHING IN CATHOLIC SCHOOLS

5.4.1 The Motivation and Commitment of Teachers

Item 35 asked if teaching in a Catholic school was a vocation in the Church. Opinions are reported in Table 39.

TABLE 39 : TEACHING AS A VOCATION IN THE CHURCH

<i>Opinion</i>	<i>Clergy</i>	<i>Primary Teachers</i>	<i>Secondary Teachers</i>
Strongly Agree	31%	42%	26%
Agree	54%	37%	39%
Uncertain	12%	10%	16%
Disagree	0%	9%	13%
Strongly Disagree	4%	1%	6%

Table 39 indicates that there was strong agreement among both teachers and clergy that teaching in a Catholic school was a vocation in the Church. The only significant uncertainty or disagreement came from some secondary teachers.

Item 36 asked if teachers choose to work in Catholic schools for religious reasons. Opinions are reported in Table 40.

TABLE 40 : RELIGION AND TEACHERS' CHOICES OF CATHOLIC SCHOOLS

<i>Opinion</i>	<i>Clergy</i>	<i>Primary Teachers</i>	<i>Secondary Teachers</i>
Strongly Agree	0%	1%	3%
Agree	0%	20%	14%
Uncertain	54%	35%	24%
Disagree	35%	38%	47%
Strongly Disagree	12%	5%	12%

Even though half of the clergy indicated that they were uncertain, none agreed with the idea that teachers choose to work in Catholic schools for religious reasons. (Table 40) Less than 25% of teachers agreed, with almost one third indicating uncertainty. The strongest disagreement was registered among the secondary teachers (50%).

Item 49 asked respondents to rate the religious commitment of teachers in their school/schools. Opinions are reported in Table 41.

TABLE 41 : THE RELIGIOUS COMMITMENT OF TEACHERS

<i>Opinion</i>	<i>Clergy</i>	<i>Primary Teachers</i>	<i>Secondary Teachers</i>
Very Poor	8%	1%	0%
Poor	19%	5%	11%
Satisfactory	38%	16%	32%
Good	27%	45%	46%
Very Good	8%	31%	10%

Table 41 indicates that there was division in the ranks of the clergy in their perceptions of the religious commitment of teachers in Catholic schools. Although two thirds indicated satisfaction on this issue, over one quarter thought the degree of commitment to be poor. Over 80% of teachers were satisfied with the degree of commitment.

Item 34 asked if teaching in a Catholic school fostered the spiritual development of teachers. Opinions are reported in Table 42.

TABLE 42 : CATHOLIC SCHOOLS AND THE SPIRITUAL DEVELOPMENT OF TEACHERS

<i>Opinion</i>	<i>Clergy</i>	<i>Primary Teachers</i>	<i>Secondary Teachers</i>
Strongly Agree	4%	26%	16%
Agree	38%	53%	48%
Uncertain	42%	12%	13%
Disagree	12%	7%	18%
Strongly Disagree	4%	0%	4%

There was uncertainty among the clergy (42%) as to whether teaching in a Catholic school fostered the spiritual development of teachers. (Table 42) Most of the teachers agreed, with the only significant disagreement coming from secondary teachers (22%).

Evidence from responses to the questionnaire indicates that some teachers felt that being part of the Catholic education system could actually hamper the religious development and commitment of teachers. This point of view can be noted in the following comments:

Teaching in a Catholic school can hinder the spiritual development of teachers or make them more cynical as to the hypocrisy of some of our so called 'leaders' (upper management, CEO, clergy)...

And similarly:

Teaching in a Catholic school detracts from spiritual development and engenders cynicism. Dishonesty and hypocrisy are often rewarded.

Clergy Opinion on what motivates Teachers to work in Catholic Schools

(Data from the Interviews)

Opinion among the clergy on what factors motivated teachers to work in Catholic schools was divided. Some 16% of the priests spoke of an 'industrial model' of teaching and education that is prevalent in contemporary Catholic schools. (Table 28) One priest said that he saw this model as having all but replaced the 'vocational model' that was a hallmark of teachers' work in Catholic schools in previous generations where the majority were members of religious orders. Several priests (32%) accused some teachers of being 'in

it for the money' indicating that for these individuals, the sense of teaching in a Catholic school as a vocation in the Church was not there. This comment was mainly leveled at teachers in Catholic secondary schools. One priest stated:

I've been on selection panels for about 18 years and I've interviewed hundreds of teachers. They say that they want to be involved in parish liturgy etc. in almost all interviews. However, once secure in the teaching position this involvement ceases and I find this most disappointing. Job security would be enhanced by obvious faith practice and belonging. I am not impressed by the 'once on the staff it doesn't matter.' However the teachers who are committed are 100% effective in parish and school. They are in very low percentage in the parishes I've served in the Diocese of Lismore.

Another priest commented:

No parish-no school! Parish is not just a milking cow for finances. Until teachers are involved and committed, Catholic schools will go nowhere.

However, the majority of priests were full of praise for teachers in their schools and the level of commitment to parish and Church that they demonstrate. Several of the clergy acknowledged that some teachers in the diocese live out this commitment in difficult circumstances with pastors who could be difficult to work with and sometimes unsupportive.

Some of the priests proposed reasons for divided opinion on this issue. One priest suggested that in order to know fully what motivates individuals and understand where they are at in their faith, one must be able to relate to an individual at a human, personal level. Many of his confreres, according to this priest, did not relate to teachers in this way and in some cases may be

incapable of relating at this level. A rigid and academic seminary training that put little emphasis on the skills of inter-personal relationship, was mentioned as a factor which could lead to this inadequacy.

Teacher Opinion on what motivates Staff to work in Catholic Schools

(Data from the Interviews)

During the interviews with teachers considerable differences in opinion were voiced on the issue of what motivated teachers to work in Catholic schools. Most teachers (82%) thought that the commitment of teachers to a sense of vocation in their work in Catholic education was present in the majority of cases. Some stated that it would be impossible to survive in the Catholic education system without this sense of commitment and vocation. Others (31%) qualified this opinion by noting that for many it is a vocation to education rather than a vocation in the Church. (Table 28)

Some interviewees (19% of teachers and 14% of clergy) proposed that the older teachers in the system were those who had the strongest sense of religious vocation in their work. (Table 28) They stated that this was due to the fact that many of them had worked in Catholic education when salaries and conditions were below what they could have received in the state teaching system. It was also suggested by some primary teachers that they generally had a stronger sense of vocation than secondary teachers because they all taught religion and tended to be more closely involved with parishes.

Table 28 indicates that some of the teachers (18%) who were interviewed thought that there were teachers in the Catholic system for whom teaching was 'just a job', and for whom the notion of working for the Church was not a priority. The influence of an 'industrial' model on young teachers was mentioned (12%). It was also suggested that many teachers only 'get religion' when a job is in the offering. As one teacher commented in responding to the questionnaire:

It is impossible to kindle any type of faith development amongst students if there is not an obvious and active commitment from all staff members in any Catholic school. It is also extremely difficult for school administrations to facilitate this type of staff example if many staff members are non-practising religious individuals. One cannot criticise multi-denominational education but one can say that staff of any school should be willing to practice openly what they preach within the Catholic school environment.

5.4.2 The Expectations of Teachers in Catholic Education

Item 37 asked if teaching in a Catholic school could place unfair demands on one's personal life. Opinions are reported in Table 43.

TABLE 43 : TEACHING AND THE DEMANDS ON PERSONAL LIFE

<i>Opinion</i>	<i>Clergy</i>	<i>Primary Teachers</i>	<i>Secondary Teachers</i>
Strongly Agree	4%	29%	25%
Agree	23%	33%	29%
Uncertain	15%	9%	13%
Disagree	35%	25%	25%
Strongly Disagree	23%	2%	7%

Item 53 asked respondents to rate the importance of teachers' involvement in local parishes. Opinions are reported in Table 44.

TABLE 44 : INVOLVEMENT OF TEACHERS IN THE LOCAL PARISH

<i>Opinion</i>	<i>Clergy</i>	<i>Primary Teachers</i>	<i>Secondary Teachers</i>
Most Important	62%	16%	7%
Very Important	27%	43%	32%
Of Some Importance	8%	33%	46%
Of Little Importance	0%	5%	8%
Not Important	0%	1%	7%

Over half of the clergy disagreed with the suggestion that teaching in a Catholic school could place unfair demands on one's personal life. (Table 43) However, the majority of teachers (58%) agreed with the suggestion. All three groups rated involvement of teachers in the local parish as being important. (Table 44) For teachers this issue was not as much a priority as it was for clergy.

Clergy Expectations of Teachers

Data from the interviews identified three main areas in which clergy had expectations of teachers in their parish schools:

a. Visibility in the Parish Community

There was a general expectation among the priests that teachers be present and visible in the parish community. (In Table 28, 89% spoke of the importance of teachers' 'witness' in the parish.) Members of the clergy believed that teaching was a public ministry which negated the possibility of religion being practised as a 'private affair'. Some clergy maintained that it was not enough for teachers simply to be present in the local worshipping community, but that they should contribute in an 'upfront' way. There was

the strong suggestion that teachers, especially the school Principal and Religious Education Coordinator, should be leaders in the parish in liturgy and other pastoral initiatives. For some priests this level of involvement could almost be considered as part of the role description for a teacher in a parish school.

The perception that teachers are paid from Church funds, and the fact that many teachers had knowledge and skills in liturgy and other parish activities, were proposed by clergy as reasons for the validity of expectations that teachers become involved in the parish. (As stated previously teachers are not paid from parish funds. Teachers in the Lismore Diocesan system are paid from government grants.) Some of the priests expressed frustration that there are teachers who, after having indicated at interview that they were keen to become involved in the parish, did not become involved once their job was secure.

One Parish Priest indicated that the reason why his peers expected so much from the teachers in their parishes, was that many of the clergy were still to come to terms with the fact that there were no longer large numbers of religious brothers and sisters in the schools. The expectation was that the religious would always be present and visible in the parish, as well as the school. According to this priest, such an expectation of lay teachers is unrealistic.

b. Financial Commitment to the Parish

Some 61% of the priests stated that it was reasonable to expect that teachers would contribute financially to the parish, although the extent to which this level of participation was a priority did vary among clergy. (Table 28) The rationale put forward for this expectation was that if one draws a wage from the Church, one should give money to the parish Planned Giving Program in return. Five of the priests indicated that they had personally

approached or challenged members of their school staffs on the matter of contributions.

It was also revealed by 3 priests that there were pastors who kept a record of teachers' involvement in Planned Giving and who had, in certain instances, denied promotions positions to teachers who did not contribute. In one case, a principal who lived in another parish and contributed financially to that parish was asked by the Parish Priest in her school's parish to contribute to his Planned Giving Program as well.

c. Residing within the Parish Boundaries

The extent to which teachers' place of residence was an issue among clergy varied significantly. In certain parishes there was the expectation that teachers, especially the Principal and the Religious Education Coordinator, would live within the parish boundaries. For most pastors, however, while this was not a strict policy, it was certainly looked upon as desirable. Some 35% of clergy mentioned that where the teacher intended to live and the extent to which he or she would become involved in the parish were regularly raised at interview by pastors.

Expectations of Teachers in Catholic Schools - Teacher Opinion

Table 28 indicates that some 63% of teachers who were interviewed thought that expectations on teachers in Catholic schools could be unfair, and 74% thought that often these unfair expectations came from the clergy. There was the feeling that these expectations that were labelled 'unreal' by many teachers, could seriously impact on the quality of family life of teachers. In responding to the questionnaire, one principal commented that:

Teachers have families. They have other responsibilities besides school. I work over 50 hours per week and my family ask 'Who are you married to?' To have the same expectations you have to have the same background. Our priest would be lucky to work 15 hours per week.

Only 6% of teachers thought that the expectation that they attend Mass regularly was in any way unfair. What some did consider unfair was the expectation that they be involved in parish life to a greater extent than other parishioners who did not work in the parish school (31%). There was a feeling that career possibilities in Catholic education were strongly linked to involvement in parish and that this was at times exploited by the clergy. One principal reported that he felt that teachers often lived their lives 'in a fishbowl', lives that were transparent and often scrutinised. Another teacher felt that being judged on external behaviours often leads teachers to pretend.

It must also be stated that the perception that teaching in a Catholic school could put 'unreal' expectations on teachers was questioned by several teachers (26%). It was proposed that teachers often put these expectations on themselves and that guilt resulting from lack of involvement could also be a factor. One respondent mentioned that some teachers were more sensitive to these expectations than others and that they could always learn to say no.

5.5 THE ROLE OF AUTHORITY IN RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN TEACHERS AND CLERGY

Item 24 asked if authority was often a problem in the relationship between school communities and parishes. Opinions are reported in Table 45.

TABLE 45: AUTHORITY IN RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN TEACHERS AND CLERGY

<i>Opinion</i>	<i>Clergy</i>	<i>Primary Teachers</i>	<i>Secondary Teachers</i>
Strongly Agree	8%	35%	28%
Agree	50%	31%	26%
Uncertain	31%	22%	39%
Disagree	12%	9%	6%
Strongly Disagree	0%	1%	1%

Table 45 indicates that most respondents agreed that issues to do with authority can be problematic in the relationships between teachers and clergy. Agreement was stronger among the primary teachers (66%) than the secondary teachers (54%).

5.5.1 Clergy Opinion on the Issue of Authority

Some of the clergy who were interviewed (28%) were surprised to hear that issues surrounding authority were among the concerns of teachers in their relationships with the priests. However, several were unaware of the depth of teacher concern with this issue. During their interviews, most of the clergy (62%) recognised that there were priests who 'abused power', to use the term commonly chosen by the teachers, with many adding that they hoped that they themselves were not among this number.

Some priests (39%) put the perception that clergy 'abuse power' down to the fact that many of the clergy had little idea of a consensus style of leadership, as this was not part of the model of priesthood for which they were trained. However, others insisted that there were some priests who enjoyed and thrived on the feeling of power and control that they could derive from their office.

One explanation that was offered by priests for why some clergy have difficulties in exercising authority was that they were formed by Parish Priests who were very authoritarian and 'ruled with an iron fist'. Four of the assistant priests who agreed with the idea that authority is abused by many clergy, indicated that they also were victims of this 'abuse'. One of these priests expressed pity for the teachers who were victims of this abuse, admitting that teachers in the main were powerless to do much about it.

5.5.2 Teacher Opinion on the Issue of Authority

Some 26% of teachers who responded to the questionnaire used the term 'abuse of power' when referring to the way in which some clergy exercise authority in school-parish relationships. (Table 35) This was the issue that received the highest number of written comments from the teachers who responded to the questionnaire. Hypocrisy, lack of trust and poor communication were reported as hallmarks of this perceived 'abuse' in written responses. The issues mentioned as areas in which this abuse can occur ranged from disagreements over class and school liturgies, to serious allegations of financial misappropriation and manipulation of peoples' lives by some priests. The following comments on issues related to power and authority were received from teachers who responded to the questionnaire:

- The selfish search for personal power by the priests especially but also principals has unfortunately left an unpleasant taste in my mouth and left me wondering about our foundations of love, peace and justice for all.
- The teacher's contribution to liturgy etc. is often seen as not good enough or you should have done it this way. Often comments just prior to or after the liturgy place heaps of stress on the teacher. Priests don't relate to teachers as people. Sometimes the teacher is left wondering if the priest is living in the real world. If a teacher has this image, what is portrayed to students?

- Priests very rarely in my experience consult, they order and often their expectations in terms of liturgy, behaviour in the church etc. is daunting to teachers and off-putting to students. The opportunities for meaningful spiritual times for students who have little or no experience of sacred times and places can be lost if the priest insists on total adherence to ritual, readings of the day etc.
- I have found a negative partnership between the Parish Priest and all school staff. This has affected my own personal faith and the spiritual life of the school. To have such a power-head in leadership in the Catholic Church and feel so helpless and useless in his domination over lives in general, to this point has been extremely frustrating. Thankyou for your research and realise the depth of sadness that comes from my answers. Life is difficult enough without having wrong people in leadership positions in matters of faith.

5.5.3 Accountability of the Clergy

A perceived lack of accountability of the clergy was an issue for some teachers. The fact that priests did not appear to be accountable to anyone for their actions and behaviour was regularly referred to in written and oral responses. The following written comments from teachers highlight their concern in this area:

- Many priests are still to come to terms with the changes in society since the 1960s. The priest no longer holds the inviolable position of pre-1960, yet some priests still wear their priesthood as a badge, or a shield, or a baton to beat you with. It reveals itself in the expectations they place on laity and schools while failing in any way to be self critical.
- The lack of accountability of priests to a higher body. No one seems to care nor be able to chastise the Parish Priest! He seems to be able to lead an un-Christian life

and be answerable to no one. He pushes around the staff at the school with his power plays and holds unfair methods of dealing with money, property, time and people. Many people I know have left our parish because of him and have negative words to speak of him.

- ...priests can make life very difficult for teachers and principals without answering to anyone for their un-Christian behaviour. They can behave childishly and the school cannot say anything without having life made more difficult....I have not (as yet) incurred this wrath but have observed it numerous times and been glad its not me at the point of considering resignation as the pretence is unbearable. I believe, however, that I do have value as a parish member and pray for the priests understanding of the teachers needs as I hear so many teachers making excuses for the priests' rude, intolerant behaviour. Perhaps priests could consider making an excuse for a poor stressed out teacher on occasions.
- More and more I come back to the point that as teachers we are bound by guidelines, curriculum, the CEO. Who guides, directs etc. the clergy? Each parish is run differently (eg. Sacramental times) and yet the school has to fit in with this. Who ultimately will take responsibility for the clergy- their variant ideas, their say in schools? I wouldn't presume to tell a parish priest how to say Mass, who to pick for various ministries etc. yet they have an inordinate say in staff employment etc. Is this the Bishop's responsibility? Who knows?

Some of the teachers stated that they often perceived attempts at shared decision making in relationships between schools and parishes as being token gestures, where teachers could input but ultimately the clergy had the final say. One teacher commented:

While Catholic Education has the ultimate power of control of the school based in the Parish Priest's control and the Catholic Education Office being a 'toothless tiger' with all power but virtually no say in many school matters that priests have voiced an opinion in, you will always have

problems of regulation and control. The above fact is openly discussed by all teachers in Catholic Education and is greeted by stunned silence by teachers in the Department of School Education....When the Diocesan Board sends a 'congratulations on your appointment' letter, everyone knows they only rubber stamped what was organised between the Parish Priest and principal depending on who was flavour of the month. The most effective and common sense situation would be half way between the two systems where Parish Priests would provide spiritual guidance and the Catholic Education Offices provide leadership and employment structure.

A principal spoke of his frustration in this area when he stated:

Priest/Principal Conferences were set up in the Lismore Diocese to help bring priests and principals together to work as a team. I suggest that they have been a farcical waste of time. Therein, I believe, lies the deep rooted problem of the Lismore Diocese. Poor diocesan leadership and an unbending support for clergy (as opposed to colleagues) by the Catholic Education Office add to problems of developing enthusiasm and vision amongst teachers in the Lismore Diocese.

Some teachers, in written responses and during interviews, mentioned their fear that confrontation with clergy, in particular their Parish priest, could have serious implications for future career prospects in Catholic education. The following comments echo this fear:

My principal is scared of losing her job so she never tells the Parish Priest how difficult and unreasonable he is and how much he abuses power. The relationship is subservient not open and honest- it is based on fear. She wants her contract renewed. Most Parish Priests are power hungry; most un-Christ like.

And similarly:

Possible barriers are when the school becomes a pawn in the operations of the parish community. When there is a parish priest who tries to project an image of love and sharing to all and then deceitfully misappropriates money, the school becomes a sick side show and covertly aids the wrong doings of the parish priest. Additionally this places the teaching and ancillary staff in a difficult situation. If one speaks out one would be forced to resign possibly with a 'cloud' over their record. Where is the justice in this?

Some of the teachers proposed reasons why many of the clergy had difficulty in exercising authority. The fact that many of the priests were not trained in a consensus model of decision-making was mentioned, as was the possibility that many of the older clergy were used to dealing with religious sisters and brothers, many of whom were submissive to the will of the priest.

It was also suggested that some priests were afraid and 'out of their depth' and hence hid behind their authority. One teacher hypothesised that many of the clergy, if they were not working for the Church, would not be called upon to exercise leadership and authority as they are not naturally gifted in this area. She added that if a person is put in a leadership position and does not feel comfortable in this role, there can be the tendency to make decisions according to the letter of the law and rely on rules put in place by 'higher authorities'. Authority exercised in this way can seem cold, legalistic and inflexible. According to teachers' responses in this study, these were hallmarks of the way that they experienced authority as it was exercised by many of the clergy.

5.6 CLERGY RELATIONSHIPS WITH CATHOLIC SCHOOLS

5.6.1 Clergy Presence in Schools

Items 57 and 50 asked respondents to rate the importance of clergy presence in schools on a regular basis and their current experience of clergy involvement in schools. Opinions are reported in Table 46.

TABLE 46: CLERGY PRESENCE IN CATHOLIC SCHOOLS

The presence of clergy in schools on a regular basis

<i>Opinion</i>	<i>Clergy</i>	<i>Primary Teachers</i>	<i>Secondary Teachers</i>
Most Important	27%	42%	25%
Very Important	54%	41%	52%
Of Some Importance	15%	13%	20%
Of Little Importance	0%	1%	2%
Not Important	0%	1%	0%

Clergy involvement in your school/schools

<i>Opinion</i>	<i>Clergy</i>	<i>Primary Teachers</i>	<i>Secondary Teachers</i>
Very Poor	0%	16%	5%
Poor	12%	27%	24%
Satisfactory	50%	23%	28%
Good	31%	20%	33%
Very Good	8%	13%	11%

The presence of the clergy in Catholic schools on a regular basis was considered to be very important by all three groups. (Table 46) The majority of the priests were satisfied with the level of clergy involvement in schools.

However, over one third of the teachers indicated dissatisfaction on this issue. Some 17% of teachers nominated lack of clergy presence in schools as a barrier to school-parish partnership in Catholic education. (Table 35) Some 62% of the teachers who were interviewed indicated that lack of clergy presence in schools led to problems in communication between teachers and priests.(Table 28) One teacher wrote:

Our children need to see our priests. They need to see them in liturgies but they also need to see them as people; human as Christ was. The clergy have so much to offer both staff, parents and students. Where are they? They are always welcomed and made feel comfortable. Has the fast life caught up with them as well?

Three teachers mentioned that they felt ignored by the clergy, as most of the communication with the school takes place through the principal. One principal, however, was quick to defend clergy on this issue by stating that in some cases principals did little to help the communication process because they were slow or reluctant to relay relevant information to staff.

5.6.2 Clergy Understanding of Education

In contrast to complaints from many teachers that clergy were not present in schools on a regular basis, there was some concern expressed that clergy were over-involved in the administration of schools. Some 43% of teachers who were interviewed stated that, since priests were not educators and did not understand many of the issues in contemporary education, the priests' role in schools should be pastoral not administrative. (Table 28) There was little doubt about who, according to teachers' perceptions, was in ultimate control of the schools. It was stated that clergy 'had the final say' and 'controlled the purse strings'. Several teachers complained that non-educators [the clergy] were making educational decisions. Some 17% of teachers nominated lack of understanding of educational matters as a barrier

to school-parish partnership in Catholic education. (Table 35) As one teacher commented:

Perhaps some clergy are unfamiliar with the changing nature of school clientele, especially with high retention rates these days. We are not just keeping more of the same kids at school- we are catering for a whole different spectrum of needs and expectations.

5.6.3 Clergy Relationships with Catholic Secondary Schools

Clergy opinion varied significantly on several of the issues relating to Catholic secondary schools. Some 15% of the clergy stated that they saw the importance of the secondary schools as forums for the Church's proclamation of its message to youth and their families. These priests were not so concerned with immediate and measurable results in this endeavour. One parish priest commented during an interview:

If we give up secondary schools we are giving up our only forum through which we can touch young people and their families these days. Where else am I to get access to 500 teenagers and their parents and have the opportunity to plant the seed of the Gospel?

However, several priests stated that they saw little value in the building and maintenance of Catholic secondary schools. The schools were seen by 46% of the priests as burdens on parish resources with little return for the local community. 'A low level of religious practice among students, parents and teachers' (56%) and the perception that 'the overall agenda of the schools has little to do with partnership with the local parish' (42%) were some of the reasons offered by members of the clergy for their negative attitudes towards Catholic secondary schools. Extreme negativity on the part of some was epitomised by one Parish Priest's admission that he actively encouraged

parents of students in his primary school to send their children to state high schools instead of readily available Catholic alternatives.

The assistant priests were generally far more positive on the contribution made to the Church by Catholic secondary schools. They appeared to be less threatened by the more diverse culture in these schools and able to relate to the adolescent culture more readily. Several of the clergy considered that they and their peers related more readily to younger children in primary schools than they did with teenagers in pastorally and administratively diverse secondary schools. This could be because the curriculum appears to be frantic and in many cases governed by 'the god of the Higher School Certificate.' As there are only 7 parish secondary schools in the Lismore Diocese, many of the clergy have had little or no experience of Catholic secondary education in their priestly ministry.

5.6.4 Clergy Relationships with Catholic Primary Schools

Most clergy were more positive in their attitudes towards Catholic primary schools than they were towards secondary schools. None of them intimated that primary schools were drains on parish resources. Some 60% suggested that primary schools were more in tune with the parish and that they provided better 'value for money' in terms of visible returns for the parish. (Table 28) Contact with teachers, parents and students through sacramental programs, geographical proximity of school to parish and a higher level of practice and involvement from teachers in primary schools, were common reasons stated by clergy for this better working relationship. The clergy generally saw the teachers in primary schools as having a stronger sense of religious motivation for wanting to work in a Catholic school than their colleagues in secondary schools. However, it must be said that several of the clergy, in particular the assistant priests, did not make this strong differentiation.

5.6.5 Patterns of Clergy Relationship with Catholic Schools

In this study three distinct patterns or styles of clergy relationship with Catholic schools were identified:

Pattern 1: Total Support for Catholic Schools

Clergy who related to Catholic schools at this level were optimistic and enthusiastic about the schools and their contribution to the Church. This group consisted of both Assistant Priests and Parish Priests but it included very few of the priests who were 60 years old and over. The group held much respect for the motivation and ministry of teachers and wanted to become involved in the schools as much as possible. They generally did not measure the success of the schools by the numbers of students or teachers who attend Mass on Sundays and did not place total importance on immediate, visible results. They defended the future of Catholic schools with statements such as this made to the writer by a Parish Priest:

...they (Catholic schools) may not be perfect but they are the best forum that the Church has in its ministry with youth. Throw away our schools and what forum do we have to relate to young people in Australia today.

Pattern 2: A Negative Attitude towards Catholic Schools

Clergy who related to Catholic schools at this level tended to see the schools as financial burdens to be carried by the parishes and were negative towards the way that Catholic Education seems to be heading. These priests tended to be suspicious of the motivation of teachers and would relate to teachers from a distance with an 'us against them' attitude. They tended to have a 'value for money' attitude to the worth of the schools with success being

measured in terms of immediate and visible results, such as attendance at Mass on Sundays. All of the clergy who related to schools at this level were currently or had been Parish Priests who have had responsibility for schools.

Pattern 3: A Negative Attitude towards Catholic Secondary Schools

Clergy who related to Catholic schools at this level were basically positive towards primary schools and the contribution that they made to the parish and the Church, but held many negative attitudes, such as those mentioned in Pattern 2, towards Catholic secondary schools and their teachers. They were convinced that primary schools related better to parishes and provided better 'value for money' in terms of parish resources. All of the clergy who related to schools at this level were currently or had been Parish Priests who have had responsibility for schools.

5.7 RESULTS OF DISCUSSION OF THE FINDINGS FROM A FOCUS GROUP OF TEACHERS AND CLERGY

In September 1997, the preliminary findings of this research were presented to delegates at the annual *Lismore Diocesan Conference of Priests and Principals*. At the conference there were 30 priests, 45 school principals and 15 representatives of the Catholic Education Office. All of the priests and principals who were present were part of the population from whom the research data was collected.

Care was taken by the researcher to present the data solely in the form of tables and written statements of findings. No interpretation of the data was offered. After these preliminary findings were presented by the researcher, delegates formed discussion groups of 8-10 people. Parish clergy and the parish school principal/s were in the same groups for this discussion and care was taken to include representatives from primary and secondary schools in

each group. Each group was given one hour to discuss the findings and to propose implications of the study for school-parish partnership in the diocese. Feedback from the groups was collated and is discussed in the following paragraphs.

5.7.1 General Reaction to the Findings

All of the groups acknowledged the importance of this study for the future of Catholic education in the Lismore Diocese and expressed the desire that the findings and implications of this research be acted upon. There were no instances of challenge to the validity of the findings and there was no reluctance to discuss the issues. The following comments from the discussion groups were representative of this opinion.

- If these are discussed by those involved in Catholic education as 'the negative comments of a few' or as too difficult to handle, then we will probably see little actually change. There does need to be an appreciation that there are two sides to these findings - and both teachers and clergy see their views are credible.
- As in any organisation which is dealing with fundamental issues of philosophy and practice the leaders of the organisation need to be involved in managing the change taking place. The Bishop, leaders of the priests, the Director and significant school leaders need to say whether these research findings are valid and the implications need addressing. If, for whatever reasons, the findings are only dealt with at a local level in a way with which people are comfortable, then I believe little will be achieved.
- There is an opportunity here to take a planned and managed approach to these tensions to guarantee our future in Catholic education.

5.7.2 Strategies that were proposed by the Focus Group

Most of the feedback that was received from the discussion groups (57%) took the form of strategies that could be employed in order to improve parish-school partnership in the diocese. The majority of these strategies (76%) were concerned with the improvement of communication among and between teachers and clergy. Table 47 divides these strategies into categories and indicates what percentage of the total number of suggestions for improvement of communication that each category received.

TABLE 47 : STRATEGIES FOR IMPROVEMENT OF COMMUNICATION SUGGESTED BY THE FOCUS GROUP

Type Of Strategy Suggested	Percentage Of Total
Setting, clarification and discussion of goals and priorities for Catholic education	18%
Setting up of dialogue that is more structured	18%
Formation of a diocesan forum/'think tank' to consider the implications	14%
Development and clarification of role descriptions for teachers and clergy in school-parish relationships	12%
Promotion of more informal social gatherings at the local school/parish level	8%

The feedback contained a mixture of strategies proposed for implementation at the local school/parish level, as well as steps that need to be taken a diocesan level if partnership between teachers and clergy is to improve. The strategies that were suggested also included a blend of formal and informal measures. A preamble to the discussion of strategies in all groups was an

emphasis on the importance of 'owning the current situation' and careful discernment of levels of response.

Chapter 6

DISCUSSION OF THE RESEARCH FINDINGS AND CONSIDERATION OF IMPLICATIONS FOR CATHOLIC SCHOOL EDUCATION IN THE LISMORE DIOCESE

There are serious implications in these findings because of the fundamental differences in perceptions when the responses of teachers and priests are compared. The difference of views on vital matters needs to be discussed in an open and honest forum aimed at resolving the obvious tensions and planning strategies to address the concerns. The anger and resentment so obvious in teachers about the clergy can only damage the fabric of our schools when they are so closely linked to parish.

(Comment from the Focus Group who discussed the preliminary findings of this study)

This final chapter presents a discussion of the main findings of the study. It can be considered as the first stage in the discussion process referred to above. The implications of these findings for Catholic Education in the Lismore Diocese are considered and recommendations for further practice and research are proposed.

6.1 SUMMARY OF FINDINGS THAT INDICATE DIFFERENCES IN PERCEPTIONS OR POTENTIAL SOURCES OF TENSION IN RELATIONSHIPS

The following is a summary of key findings of the study which indicate differences in perceptions of the religious dimension of the mission of Catholic schools or potential sources of tension in relationships between teachers and clergy:

- Clergy indicated more confidence in Church documents as guides for the discernment of the mission of Catholic schools than did the teachers.
- There were uncertainty and divided opinions among respondents concerning the role of teachers in the religious education of students and whether teachers and priests were in touch with the spiritual needs of young people.
- Several clergy had reservations concerning Catholic secondary schools relating to:
 - a) knowledge of the Catholic faith;
 - b) introduction of students to religious practice;
 - c) the formation of Christian community by teachers; and,
 - d) quality of relationships with parishes.
- Several clergy linked lack of religious practice among young people to perceived failure by Catholic schools in an important aspect of their mission.
- One third of teachers rated their current experience of parish-school partnership as poor.
- The teachers generally placed less emphasis on Catholic schools' accountability to parishes than did clergy.
- The clergy nominated lack of faith practice among teachers as being the biggest barrier to school-parish partnership.

- Few respondents believed that teachers choose to work in Catholic schools for religious reasons.
- Many teachers considered that expectations on teachers in Catholic schools can be unfair, and that often these expectations come from the clergy.
- Most respondents considered that issues related to authority were sources of tension in relationships between teachers and clergy.
- Teachers indicated that the clergy being 'out of touch' in areas such as; finance, spirituality and family life, was the biggest barrier to school-parish partnership.

Most of the discussion in this chapter will focus on these findings and their implications for Catholic education.

6.2 PERCEPTIONS OF THE RELIGIOUS DIMENSION OF THE MISSION OF CATHOLIC SCHOOLS

The findings indicate that on several important issues there were differences in the teachers' and priests' perceptions of the mission of Catholic schools. In this section issues which attracted differences in perceptions will be discussed. These issues include:

- the use of official Church documents in statements of mission in Catholic schools;
- understandings of the mission of Catholic schools and personal religious change; and,
- clergy perceptions of the effectiveness of secondary schools.

6.2.1 The Use of Official Church Documents in Statements of Mission in Catholic Schools

The teachers and clergy differed significantly in their perceptions of the usefulness of Church documents as guides for the direction of Catholic schools. Extracts and statements from official Church literature are used extensively in the formulation of mission statements and curriculum documents in Catholic education. Some difficulties with Church documents can be attributed to the specialised nature of their language.

Several authors have considered that the use of ecclesiastical language in Catholic schools can be problematic for some teachers. Crawford and Rossiter (1985:33) suggested that:

When already self-conscious about their poor theological background, religion teachers can feel even more inadequate when the theory of religious education is made to appear complex, esoteric and impenetrable...The theory of religious education in Catholic schools is dominated by ecclesiastical terms, for example: catechesis, evangelisation, inculturation, mission, witness etc. Language that is concerned with the Church's comprehensive ministry to Catholics of all ages, from all nations, in different situations, through a wide variety of agencies...

Malone (1992:4) stated that:

Many teachers have not read the various documents that have been published by the local and the universal Church, but these documents have influenced the language of diocesan guidelines, textbooks and the range of courses and inservice that have been provided in the past two decades in Australia.

In her reference to the use of the Church document *Renewal of the Education of Faith* by teachers in Catholic schools, Malone (1992:6) indicated that:

The inability of the majority of teachers to speak the 'church language' which dominates much of the language in the REF (Renewal of the Education of Faith) sometimes prevents their recognising the value of the document.

There is a danger that difficulties with the language that is used in official Church documents can inhibit the way in which some teachers understand and communicate the religious mission of Catholic schools. This may apply particularly to non-Catholic teachers and to the significant percentage of teachers in Catholic secondary schools who do not teach in the area of religious education. To enhance the possibility of good communication and dialogue between all stakeholders in Catholic education; teachers, clergy and parents, efforts should be made to overcome any barriers presented by excessive use of both ecclesiastical language or educational jargon in descriptions of the mission of schools.

A further possible result of the use of Church language in descriptions of the mission of Catholic schools is related to the fact that these schools are simultaneously secular and religious entities. As terms that refer to the religious dimension of the mission of Catholic schools are frequently used in statements of priorities for the schools, it is possible that the fact that these schools are primarily educational communities could be forgotten. This can lead to inflated expectations of what Catholic education can achieve in terms of the broader ministry of the Church.

6.2.2 Understandings of the Mission of Catholic Schools and Personal Religious Change

Another factor which affects perceptions of the religious mission is expectations concerning the ability of Catholic schools to bring about personal religious change in students. This is related to the use of Church language which ties the mission of Catholic schools to the broader ministry of the Church. This becomes problematic if expectations of what the schools can realistically achieve in religious education in Catholic schools become excessive. Crawford and Rossiter (1985:33) stated:

If the language to be used for talking about religious education is so heavily oriented towards the ministry of the Church, there is a danger of overestimating what religious education can achieve.

Warren (in Castles and Rossiter, 1983:39) highlights the need for recognition that Catholic schools are social, secular entities at the same time that they are Church entities. The expectation that Catholic schools can bring about personal religious change in students in the same way as they can develop knowledge and skills in the broader educational focus is unrealistic. The two processes cannot be easily compared as religious development is a much more complex process. It implies free choice and the traditional Christian interpretation of increase in faith implies the involvement of the Holy Spirit. The same causal relationship that exists between teaching and the development of knowledge and skills does not exist between religious education and spiritual development since many other non-school factors intervene. Clarification of what are realistic expectations of Catholic schools in the area of personal faith development is an important task for school communities. This study found that differences in expectations in this area are potential sources of conflict between clergy and educators.

6.2.3 Clergy Perceptions of the Effectiveness of Secondary Schools

It was evident that the clergy perceived primary schools as being more effective than secondary schools in many ways. This attitude was noticeable in the examination of the priests' perceptions of the schools' success in all facets of the religious dimension of the mission of Catholic schools and particularly in the perception that secondary school communities did not relate to parishes as well as their primary counterparts. Some of the clergy questioned the future and the viability of Catholic secondary schools in the overall mission of the Church.

For a variety of reasons, Catholic primary schools relate to parishes with greater ease than secondary schools. There are links between the two through joint sacramental programs etc., and in most cases, the primary schools were founded at the same time as the parishes and historical links between the two are strong. To a certain extent it is understandable that these and other factors that are mentioned in this chapter, may lead clergy to relate differently to primary schools and secondary schools. However, the depth of negative feelings towards secondary schools and their teachers expressed by some of the clergy in this study (also by priests interviewed by Harney 1994, Bezzina 1996 and those who took part in the pilot study), imply that the problem is serious, widespread and potentially crippling to partnership.

Criticism of the Religious Motivation of Teachers

Many of the priests generally lacked confidence in the religious direction of secondary schools and considered that secondary teachers did not have adequate religious motivation for their work in Catholic schools. (The clergy in Harney's and Bezzina's samples were also critical of secondary teachers for their perceived lack of religious faith and poor participation in the Catholic

community.) However, data in this study indicate that this perception may not be entirely accurate, and that on many issues, large numbers of secondary teachers stressed the importance of those aspects of the religious dimension of the mission of Catholic schools that were also deemed important by the clergy such as; emphasis on the teaching of Catholic doctrine, attendance at sacramental celebrations and formation of Christian community. A large percentage of secondary teachers also emphasised the importance of Catholic schools having formal links with the wider Catholic community (Table 19). For a perceived lack of emphasis in this area, the secondary teachers received criticism from clergy.

Research by Flynn (1993) and Ciriello (1988), previously cited in Chapter 2, reported that teachers in Catholic secondary schools nominated religious motivation and the experience of Christian community as factors in their choice to teach in these schools. However, none of the priests and only 19% of the teachers who were part of this study agreed that religious reasons influence teachers' choices to work in Catholic schools. It is clear that clergy placed much importance on teaching as 'ministry' and 'vocation' in the Church. This is also reflected in local, diocesan and wider Church statements concerning the direction of Catholic education. The fact that there are teachers in the schools who do not share this position is a source of considerable concern for the priests.

Emphasis of Secondary Teachers on the 'Informal' Religious Curriculum

Data from this study indicate that secondary teachers emphasised what could be called the 'informal' religious curriculum of schools. This included emphasis on providing students with an atmosphere of Christian community, where values that are integral to Christianity were stressed. (Flynn, 1993 found similar emphasis among secondary teachers on the 'relational environment' in Catholic schools.) This could point to the roots of some of the relationship difficulties between clergy and secondary teachers. There

was a difference in emphases and priorities for Catholic education and, since communication between the two groups was poor, there was little opportunity for examination and clarification of these priorities. The clergy were primarily interested in those aspects of the religious dimension of the schools' mission that related to parishes. (As stated previously, these are generally more visible in relationships between primary schools and parishes.) The data indicated that these areas were also priorities for large numbers of secondary teachers. However, as some of these aspects did not appear to be the *primary focus* in secondary schools, it is possible that disconnection between school and parish was perceived.

Additional Factors which may cause Clergy to relate differently to Primary and Secondary Schools

The Catholic secondary schools were generally larger than the primary schools and tended to have more diversity with regard to background and degree of commitment of teaching staff. There were many teachers in these schools who were committed Catholics and there were others who appeared to have no religious motivation for working in Catholic schools. By basing their perceptions of the worth of secondary schools on the attitudes and actions of this latter group, some clergy may have devalued the efforts of the committed teachers who strive for the same ideals in Catholic education as they do.

The physical location of the schools may also be a factor in why clergy have different relationships with and opinions of primary and secondary schools. In the Lismore Diocese most secondary schools are located some distance from the parish churches and presbyteries, whereas the primary schools are normally very close and mostly on the same property. Clergy visited the primary schools regularly and were more familiar with the teachers because they came into regular contact with them. In order to visit secondary schools, clergy had to drive some distance and, as a result, informal contact

was more difficult. This was compounded by the fact that the frequency of formal contacts between clergy and teachers appeared to depend on the individual personalities of the priests. In some cases any type of contact was rare. In these cases there was more likely to be evidence of suspicion, alienation and the development of an 'us against them' attitude.

How the worth of Catholic schools is evaluated is important to this discussion. The clergy who were able to look beyond immediate, visible results usually measured by the degree of participation in local parishes, were generally more positive towards Catholic secondary schools and their place in the Church. However, those who looked for immediate results tended to allocate blame when these results were not forthcoming. As Mass attendance rates among students and staff in Catholic secondary schools were perceived by clergy to be low, secondary teachers were recipients of this blame.

Conclusion

There is considerable similarity in most of the aims that teachers and clergy have for the religious orientation of Catholic schools. Tension between the two does not result from dissimilar aims but from a different ordering of priorities. Where perceptions of these priorities for the schools lead teachers into an area where they do not put the primary focus on links with parishes in their mission, tension with clergy often results.

An example is the question of formation of Christian community in Catholic schools. While both teachers and clergy in this study stressed the importance of this endeavour in the schools' religious orientation, some teachers (secondary mainly), did not stress the integral place of the parish in their vision for Christian community in the context of Catholic schools. Some teachers have lost faith in parishes' ability to provide experiences of community and as a result, they emphasise the schools' role in this area.

Some clergy see Catholic schools as rivals to parishes in terms of providing students and their families with experiences of Christian community. As evidenced in the findings of this study (also in Harney 1994 and the pilot study), this whole area is a major source of concern for many clergy.

6.3 RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN TEACHERS AND PRIESTS

The findings indicate that there were several areas of difficulty in relationships between clergy and teachers. Inadequate communication, conflicting views of the effectiveness of secondary schools and tension over accountability, expectations, authority and teacher commitment, have all been identified as factors which contribute to differences in perceptions of mission and difficulties in relationships between teachers and priests. In this section these issues are discussed and some implications for teacher-clergy partnership in the Lismore Diocese are identified.

6.2.1 Issues related to Communication

The findings of this study indicated that communication between teachers and clergy in the Lismore Diocese was generally poor. There was little evidence of sustained dialogue between the two groups on issues related to the religious orientation of Catholic schools. This resulted in a noticeable lack of awareness of one another's perceptions of and priorities for Catholic education. It was also evident that on several issues, the clergy and the teachers were unsure if there was consensus in their own ranks about important aspects of the schools' mission. This is indicative of poor communication.

Communication among Priests

On many issues there were differences of opinion among the clergy and during the interviews several expressed surprise at the opinions of other

priests. This was indicative of poor communication between members of the clergy on issues to do with Catholic education. In response to this suggestion, some priests proposed that for the majority of clergy, Catholic education is just one of the many things that they have to be concerned with in their general parish duties, whereas they considered that for many teachers, education represented the entirety of their involvement in parish life.

What appears to be inadequate communication among the clergy on issues relating to Catholic education has several implications for school-parish partnership. In Chapter 4 reference was made to some teachers' concerns about having to adapt to different priests' expectations of them and the schools. This implies that there is a lack of common vision for Catholic education among the clergy. Inadequate communication can seriously inhibit the development of a diocesan approach to Catholic education since the development of agreed outcomes and expectations for the schools is made more difficult.

Communication between Primary and Secondary Teachers

The findings of this research indicate that communication between primary and secondary teachers was also poor. Even though they both work towards the same ideals and used similar statements to describe their mission, dialogue between primary and secondary schools appeared to be rare. Perhaps the teachers perceived little need to keep abreast with what was happening at the other level of education. This differentiation is quite a normal phenomenon in education in Australia but, in the Lismore Diocese where both primary and secondary schools are integral parts of the same parishes, lack of contact at least on an occasional basis could detract from school-parish partnership and result in fragmentation in Catholic education in the diocese.

6.2.2 Further Issues in Relationships between Teachers and Clergy

There was little evidence of relationships which went beyond that of the role of the priest relating to the role of the teacher in many instances. At best professional relationships between the two groups appeared to be cordial and superficial while at worst, they appeared to be based on fear and mistrust. The lack of informal relationships between teachers and priests was a cause of many of the symptoms of poor quality school-parish partnerships that are referred to in this research. If the quality of partnership is going to improve, more friendships and informal relationships between teachers and clergy need to be encouraged.

Clergy references to difficulties in relating to teachers at a personal level were limited to allegations that a significant number of teachers had lost a sense of religious motivation and vocation in their work. However, in written comments and interview data, the teachers cited difficulties in relating to priests on several levels. Few positive comments were received from the teachers and it was apparent that for many, the anonymous questionnaire provided a unique forum for frank and honest expression. Several teachers expressed the fear that the findings of this research might be 'swept under the carpet' and not used to facilitate dialogue between teachers and clergy.

Confusion over Roles and Expectations

Many teachers, as well as having distant relationships with priests, were not familiar with what is required of them as lay teachers in the Church in terms of relationships with parishes. Among teachers, particularly the younger ones, a lack of knowledge of the clerical lifestyle and of Church teachings on the relationships between schools and parishes was notable. The teachers

have inherited expectations of their role from times when Catholic schools were staffed mainly by religious sisters and brothers and links between schools and parishes were more visible and presumed. Many of them did not know where they stood in terms of these relationships and expectations, and it is possible that their commitment to parish was being measured in terms of what was expected practice in another era. If this is coupled with the fact that some teachers are not only having difficulties with the parish and the priests, but feel ambivalent towards the Church in general, feelings of disconnection and alienation are inevitable.

Fear

Fear is an additional issue that can influence relationships between teachers and priests. Some teachers expressed the fear that disagreements or arguments with their Parish Priests could have implications for the future of their careers or for their future status in Catholic schools. It would follow that, in cases where teachers felt that there is the possibility for conflict with their Parish Priest, these teachers would avoid contact in the hope that difficulties would not arise. This scenario may apply in cases where teachers feel that members of the clergy had problems with aspects of their lifestyles in terms of potential conflicts with Catholic values and expectations.

Perceptions among Teachers that Priests are 'Out of Touch'

Over half of the teachers who took part in this study thought that members of the clergy were 'out of touch' in areas such as finance, family life, relationships and spirituality. Several of the teachers argued that this was one cause of unrealistic expectations being put on teachers in Catholic schools. The implications of these perceptions are considerable. These issues relate to both personal and professional aspects of teachers' lives. If teachers feel that the clergy are 'out of touch' in such important areas, they can negate any possibility of establishment of working relationships, let

alone productive partnerships. Relationships cannot be formed if individuals do not perceive some 'common ground' of mutual experience and understanding.

Clergy Presence in Schools

A pre-requisite for partnership between teachers and priests is contact on a regular basis. The clergy, most of whom strongly emphasised the importance of partnership between schools and parishes, must be regularly present in schools. It is not enough for the priests to request that the schools and teachers come to them and their parishes, they also must take the initiative and regularly contact and be present in schools. As indicated in Table 36, 17% of the teachers nominated lack of clergy presence in schools as a barrier to partnership. Statements from priests that the busy nature of their jobs kept them from visiting schools on a regular basis were refuted by many teachers and some other priests. The correlation between time spent in an area of ministry and the extent to which that area is considered a priority by the minister was cited in this discussion.

Conclusion

It appears that some teachers in the Lismore Diocese do not see that there are foundations on which relationships with clergy can be formed at either personal or professional levels. Lack of familiarity once again must be considered as a cause of these perceptions. With more contact at both formal and informal levels, increased familiarity and understanding could bring about a change in these perceptions. This opinion was shared by the Focus Group who considered the research findings.

6.2.3 A Difference of Focus among Teachers and Clergy

The clergy generally responded to questions from the perspective of school-parish relationships, while many of the teachers answered from the perspective of how they relate to priests at an individual, personal level. In some cases, particularly in the data from written comments and interviews, teachers' responses and perceptions were shaped by the type of relationship that they had with their particular Parish Priest. Many teachers' estimation of the quality of school-parish partnership was dependent to a large extent on the quality of this relationship. In cases where personal relationships were based on friendships, which enabled people to feel comfortable in sharing their views on Catholic education, the perceptions of partnership were generally positive. However, where the personal relationships were distant or strained, the perceptions of partnership were described in similar terms.

Some 12% of the teachers nominated issues to do with the personalities of clergy as barriers to partnership. An even higher percentage mentioned these issues in written statements and interviews. Forster and Sweetser (1993) proposed that the extent to which individuals participate in the Church can be dependent on how they relate to the personality of the pastor of their parish. They stated:

...the parish reflects the personality of the pastor. This is most apparent when there is a change in leadership. Those who fit in with the style and direction of the outgoing pastor wait to see if they can relate to the new one. If not, they will pull back and wait him out or take out membership of another parish. While this is going on, other parishioners will come forward. These are people who like the new pastor's emphases and choices. (p.50)

Different Understandings of 'Vocation'

During the interviews, several teachers made the distinction between 'vocation' in the Church and 'vocation' in their chosen profession of teaching. These teachers stated that most of their colleagues were fully committed to the latter, even if they did not exhibit the same enthusiasm for or commitment to involvement in the Church. This is indicative of a blurring of boundaries between teachers' personal and professional commitments. Some teachers could have limited commitment to parish life and yet be exemplary in their commitments to the parish schools.

The fundamental theological basis of Catholic education presumes that all teachers who work in Catholic schools see their work as ministry in the Church. This assumption is problematic, since there are many teachers in the system who are committed professionals but are either not Catholics or do not accept the broader implications of Catholic theology for their work. Significant numbers of both clergy and teachers questioned whether these teachers have a place in Catholic education. Gibson (1997:51) suggested that the pluralist nature of contemporary Catholic schools has implications for the way 'vocation' is understood:

But one also needs to realise that a 'sense of vocation' is not the sole factor for teachers finding employment in today's schools. The vocation model for being a teacher was possibly more prominent in pre-1970 days before the composition of Catholic school staffs experienced a dramatic change. Now we exist in times when a wide plurality of beliefs and perspectives on the Christian faith exists, both among staff, children and parents.

Conclusion

A possible explanation for this difference in focus between teachers and priests is that in most cases in the Lismore Diocese, there is only one priest in each parish and at the same time, there are many teachers in parish schools. In these situations, the teachers relate to one person while the priests relate to whole school staffs. The data in this study did not indicate that size of school staffs, in itself, was a significant influence on school-parish relationships. Good and poor relationships were reported in schools of varying sizes.

Lack of emphasis on school-parish relationships among teachers, may also be due to the fact that some of them as individuals did not perceive relationships with a parish as being important in their own personal faith journeys. If these teachers were personally convinced of the necessity of formal association with parishes, they may have been more disposed to formation of partnership at a school, professional level.

Most of the official statements concerning Catholic education that are made in the Lismore Diocese focus on school-parish, rather than teacher-clergy relationships. The effectiveness of these statements in the development of partnership could be undermined by this difference in focus and priorities. What is interpreted by priests as lack of interest and apathy towards aspects of Catholic education on the part of some teachers, could be more accurately described as alienation, fear and frustration caused by inability to forge constructive personal relationships with the clergy and in some cases, by extension, with the Church in general. It is also possible that lay teachers are unwilling to let their personal lives be taken over

Conclusion

A possible explanation for this difference in focus between teachers and priests is that in most cases in the Lismore Diocese, there is only one priest in each parish and at the same time, there are many teachers in parish schools. In these situations, the teachers relate to one person while the priests relate to whole school staffs. The data in this study did not indicate that size of school staffs, in itself, was a significant influence on school-parish relationships. Good and poor relationships were reported in schools of varying sizes.

Lack of emphasis on school-parish relationships among teachers, may also be due to the fact that some of them as individuals did not perceive relationships with a parish as being important in their own personal faith journeys. If these teachers were personally convinced of the necessity of formal association with parishes, they may have been more disposed to formation of partnership at a school, professional level.

Most of the official statements concerning Catholic education that are made in the Lismore Diocese focus on school-parish, rather than teacher-clergy relationships. The effectiveness of these statements in the development of partnership could be undermined by this difference in focus and priorities. What is interpreted by priests as lack of interest and apathy towards aspects of Catholic education on the part of some teachers, could be more accurately described as alienation, fear and frustration caused by inability to forge constructive personal relationships with the clergy and in some cases, by extension, with the Church in general. It is also possible that lay teachers are unwilling to let their personal lives be taken over by parish involvement as they give priority to family commitments.

6.2.4 Issues related to Power and Authority

Authority in the Church is a very important subject. I would suggest that, as it is understood and practised, it is defective...In my years in the Church, I have never seen authority carried out properly, not in the way Jesus said it should be carried out.

(Donovan, in Forster and Sweetser, 1993:141)

Authority and the dynamics of decision-making were very prominent issues for teachers. If partnership between teachers and clergy is to improve, these issues need to be addressed. Hornsby-Smith (1989:143) stated that 'The point has been made and must be stressed again that lay compliance to clerical authority cannot be interpreted to mean normative consensus or affirmation.' As long as the teachers do not feel that their input in decision making in Catholic education is valued, there is little possibility of authentic partnership as the issues of power and authority will continue to dominate and colour teachers' perceptions.

Priestly Identity and Authority

During the interviews several of the priests referred to an overall crisis within the priesthood at this point in history, a crisis which is reflected in confusion over roles, identity and models of ministry. These priests remarked that the Second Vatican Council did much to define the identity of bishops and laity in the mission of the Church, but did little in this regard for the priesthood. This was regarded by some as being a possible reason why some clergy found it difficult to relate to the changes that are happening in society and the resulting implications for their ministry.

This issue of priestly identity is discussed by Hill (1997) in an article to which two of the clergy referred in their interviews. He proposed that in some ways, teaching on the priesthood from the Second Vatican Council has contributed to what he refers to as 'current malaise' in the area (p.164). He maintained that, in the light of this situation, 'both theory and practice demand a reappraisal of the roles of pope, bishops, priests, religious and laity' (p.164). Hill cited an address by Pope John Paul II which touched on this theme priestly identity. The Pope (in Hill, 1997) stated:

The theme of priestly identity is always timely, because it is a question of our 'being ourselves.' During the Second Vatican Council and immediately afterwards, much was said about this. The problem probably originated in a certain pastoral crisis, in the face of secularisation and the abandonment of religious practices. Priests began to wonder: are we still necessary? And many priests displayed symptoms of a certain loss of their own identity.

Greeley (in Hornsby-Smith, 1989:119) also referred to the difficulties currently being faced by clergy and the complex nature of priesthood when he states that:

...we have discovered no evidence that the Catholic priesthood is in a state of collapse...There are many strong and positive forces at work in the priesthood...On the other hand, the priesthood has certain very serious problems, most of them centering around the highly volatile subjects of power and sex which indicate trouble and conflict in the years ahead...the priesthood has both more assets and more problems than most other professions.

Crosby (1991) proposed that for some priests their personal identity is closely linked to the status and authority that ordination has conferred on them. He made the point that 'fear of losing this status and the authority that goes with it undermines their personal identity itself, because they do

not have an identity apart from that status. (p.93)' Crosby further suggested that certain abuses in authority have their root in fear. He stated:

Increasing participation by lay people in the Church's life often seems like a creeping encroachment on authority that threatens to swell into a flood. The fear of loss of status and even identity that this provokes inspires in some people a sharp reaction which sometimes takes the form of increasing assertions of authority, dictatorial behaviour and repression of others' initiatives.

Consideration of this argument in the light of the findings of this study is important. Crosby proposed a link between loss of authority and loss of identity among priests. If this argument is accepted, perceptions among the clergy that their authority in schools is being challenged by teachers or by the Catholic Education Office could evoke strong reactions because some priests would see this as a challenge to their whole identity as priests. It is also possible that what teachers perceive as 'abuse of power' or authoritarian behaviour in some clergy may be related to a wider search for identity within priesthood.

It was observable that, on several issues, the opinions of the younger priests varied greatly from those of their older confreres. Some of the younger priests disagreed with the way that many of their fellow priests related to people and exercised authority. It was evident that some priests saw these differences as barriers to effective ministry and unhelpful in relationships with Catholic schools. As one priest commented:

From my point of view the model of Church and priesthood that most clergy have is now obsolete. As someone said to me recently 'It is now dead. We just haven't buried it yet'.

Authority in School-Parish Relationships

In Chapter 1 the authority structure of Catholic education in the Lismore Diocese was outlined in detail (1.2). The decentralised nature of this structure was highlighted. Parish Priests are in effect the employers of teachers in Catholic schools in the Lismore Diocese and are in strong positions of authority in the school communities. The extent to which the authority structure of Catholic education in the Lismore Diocese influences perceptions of the mission of Catholic schools and relationships among teachers and clergy is an important consideration in this study. A replication of this research in other dioceses which have a more centralised administration structure in Catholic education, may indicate a link between the degree of decentralisation in the administration of diocesan education systems and relationships between teachers and clergy.

Many new teachers in the Lismore Diocese come from Catholic education systems where the authority structure is different. For some new teachers, the fact that their job security is linked to a considerable extent to relationships with parish authorities is a new and possibly a daunting prospect. For the new teachers to the diocese that come from the state education department, this issue of Church authority over education can be a totally new experience.

Differences in Perceptions of Accountability

Although both teachers and clergy acknowledged the importance of formal links between Catholic schools and parishes, the data indicated that this partnership was more of a priority for the clergy. The teachers considered that accountability to the Catholic Education Office was a more important priority for them than was accountability to local parishes. Different opinions on accountability could increase the possibility of conflict between the two groups. In cases where clergy stressed the primacy of accountability of

schools to parishes and teachers did not, sometimes advocating increased centralisation in the system, it could be expected that there would be significant differences of opinion over the direction of Catholic education.

In interviews and written comments, some priests indicated that the independence of school-parish relationships was being affected by 'centralisation' and 'interference' (two words used commonly by clergy) from the Catholic Education Office. This perception has implications for the whole Catholic Education system in the Lismore Diocese. Animosity towards the Catholic Education Office from clergy could weaken 'partnership' in the system and affect the quality of services that the Catholic Education Office can provide to schools. Unchecked growth of an 'us against them' attitude could also cause confusion and cynicism among staff and lead to the feeling of 'disconnection' that Fr. Donnelly described in Chapter 1.

A basic issue in this discussion of relationships, is the tension between parishes and 'the system' over who is in control of the schools. Since the advent of government funding to Catholic schools in Australia, diocesan education systems which have their own authority structures, have become involved in administering schools that were previously controlled by parishes. This has effectively superimposed a secular structure of finance and accountability over the parish/ecclesial authority structure. Michael Warren (in Castles and Rossiter, 1983) refers to the tension that can result from this change in structure in Catholic education. He states that the Catholic school:

...functions much more as a societal institution under state control and as a business operation, involved in fiscal questions of cash flow, salary increases, increased sources of funding, than as a sign of the community of those following Jesus' way. (p.39)

Even though Catholic theology of parish and Canon law state clearly that schools are responsible to parishes, as a result of these changes, clergy are

no longer in control of many aspects of school life. The possibility that teachers and priests work out of differing theological paradigms as regards relationships between Catholic schools and parishes is a source of considerable concern for some priests.

Education is not the only area in which the clergy are experiencing challenges to their positions of authority in parishes. In recent years Church regulations have required that they form finance councils to oversee the parish financial matters. Pastoral councils are now in place to advise on the direction of ministries within parishes. The authority of clergy in their parishes has not only been challenged through the secular authority structure which governs schools, but also by measures of accountability from within the broader ecclesial structure.

Different Understandings of 'Autonomy'

There is ambivalence about the way in which the term 'autonomy' is interpreted in the context of school-parish relationships. Autonomy from whom becomes a central question in the discussion. Clergy may perceive that autonomy would free them from centralisation by the Catholic Education Office and leave them in the positions of authority over Catholic schools prescribed in Canon Law. Under this interpretation, schools and parishes remain autonomous from the Catholic Education Office.

However, in situations where relationships between teachers and priests are poor, reaction against the authority of priests could increase a desire that some teachers have for the Catholic Education Office to assume more authority. Autonomy, as it is interpreted by teachers in Catholic schools, could mean that the schools become more aligned with the Catholic Education Office than with parishes. Interpreted in this way, autonomy for schools becomes a check on the authority of clergy.

6.3 THE NEED FOR RENEWED UNDERSTANDINGS OF THE MISSION OF CATHOLIC SCHOOLS

In Chapter 2, in the light of a review of literature, the need for a reconceptualisation of the religious dimension of the mission of Catholic schools was stated and several principles that could be important in this process were suggested. The findings of this study also indicate the need for renewed understandings of the mission of Catholic schools which pay particular attention to issues highlighted as being problematic such as;

- clarification of roles and expectations in teacher-clergy relationships;
- possibilities and limitations of the Catholic school's contribution to the life of the parish;
- authority structures and the accountability of Catholic schools;
- the professional and personal commitments of teachers and how these relate to the mission of Catholic schools; and,
- the aims of Catholic school religious education.

The principles stated in Chapter 2 as being important in this reconceptualisation are also important as a basis for dialogue which aims to promote better partnerships and relationships between teachers and clergy.

6.4 RECOMMENDATIONS OF THIS STUDY

6.4.1 Recommendations for Practice

1. *Local and Diocesan Forums for more frequent Dialogue between Teachers and Priests*

The annual Lismore Diocesan *Priests and Principals Conference* has provided opportunities in recent years for clergy and principals to come together and consider aspects of the mission of Catholic schools. However, there has been no forum in which teachers and clergy can consider these issues. Until there are such forums at both Diocesan and local levels, many of the issues that have been discussed in this study will not be addressed and as a consequence, there will be little possibility of improvement in relationships. This study could give some definite direction and agenda to these forums.

2. *Production of a Document which discusses Issues highlighted by this Study as being Important*

This study could also give impetus to the production of a diocesan discussion paper on the roles of Catholic schools that is careful to avoid ecclesiastical language where possible, and which specifically addresses the vocation of lay teachers. This document would address the specific issues that have been identified by this research. These issues would include; the religious orientation of Catholic schools, communication, authority, centralisation, vocation and commitment of teachers, differences in priorities for schools, expectations and roles. The document that is produced could be used as a tool in the promotion of dialogue between teachers and clergy and for the orientation of new teachers and priests in the diocese.

3. *Development of a K-12 (Combined Primary and Secondary) Approach to Religious Education Curriculum*

At the time of this study, the Lismore Diocese had separate primary and secondary religious education guidelines. The development of a combined approach would increase the teachers' knowledge of the aims and content of religious education at the other level of education. In order to facilitate the development of this combined approach and promote better communication, primary and secondary teachers need combined inservice on aspects of the religious dimension of the mission of Catholic schools.

4. *That Clergy be Involved in the Processes of Induction of New Teachers in the Diocese*

At the time of this study, formal induction of new teachers in the diocese was the responsibility of the Catholic Education Office. Some input from parish clergy would help clarify roles and expectations at a local, as well as diocesan level. This induction process could also give teachers and clergy valuable opportunities to establish relationships.

5. *That one Staff Development Day be taken by each School in the Diocese to consider the Findings of this Study*

Both teachers and clergy have expressed desire to address the issues raised in this study. Much could be gained through a process of systematic consideration of the research findings by school staffs with their parish clergy. The guidance of a facilitator could aid this process. In cases where there is only one priest in the parish, it could be advisable that two or three school staffs and their clergy form clusters to participate in this process. It would be important for primary schools and secondary schools that belong to common parishes to participate together.

6. *That Clergy and Teachers meet regularly in Informal Social Settings*

In order to establish and maintain friendships between teachers and clergy, informal contact outside of school hours is recommended. This study found a correlation between the degree of informality in personal relationships and the quality of professional relationships.

7. *That Catholic Teacher Training Institutions address Issues in School-Parish Relationships at the Undergraduate and Postgraduate Levels*

To complement parish and diocesan induction processes for new teachers, issues in school-parish relationships could also be addressed during teacher training. Many graduates, even those who have taken several religious education courses, have little knowledge of roles and expectations in their relationships with parishes and Church structures generally.

6.4.2 Recommendations for Further Research

It has been acknowledged that the wider application of the findings of this study could be limited by the fact that the school-parish relationship in the Lismore Diocese is unique in Australia. Replication of this study in other Australian dioceses and comparison of results with those from this study, could give insights into the degree of influence that a decentralised structure has on relationships between teachers and clergy and their perceptions of aspects of the mission of Catholic schools.

This study has indicated that differing shades of meaning that are attached to many of the terms used to describe the religious dimension of the mission of Catholic schools can be ambivalent and confusing for some people. Investigation into whether differing understandings of religious concepts contribute to different perspectives and views on the mission of Catholic

schools would be helpful. The extent to which change in the religious faith of students can be promoted by educational treatments is also in need of further research.

6.5 CONCLUSION

Priests need to know that they are an important and valued part of a school...Teachers also need to know that they are valued in the Church...So much can be achieved by open mindedness and a willingness to make our schools and parishes warm, loving Christian places.

(Written comment received from a priest of the Lismore Diocese)

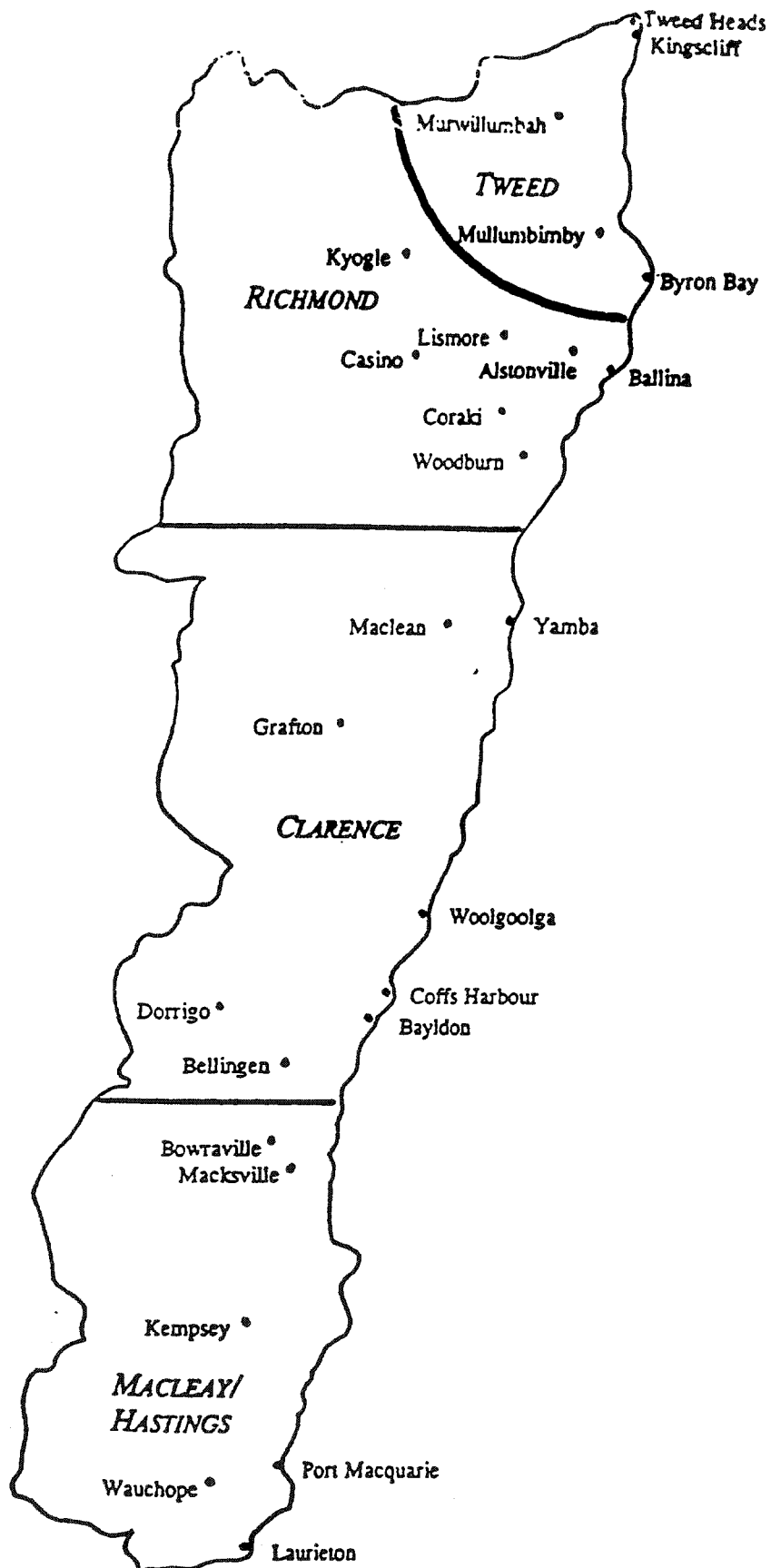
This study has addressed issues that are important for the future of Catholic education in the Lismore Diocese and throughout Australia. Its importance was recognised by diocesan authorities who gave approval, encouragement and partial funding for the project. The research process provided an impartial and objective way for participants to have their say and clarify their thinking on important issues. The volume of written comments received from the teachers in particular, indicates that they saw this research project as an important and unique opportunity to speak openly, honestly and freely. The responses received give a clearer articulation of pertinent issues which will eventually be placed in the public domain for further reflection and debate.

Partnership in education implies working towards common goals which are shared and discerned in a spirit of openness, honesty and freedom. Changes are necessary if authentic partnership between teachers and priests is to become the rule rather than the exception. Indeed, inadequate communication and tension over authority, roles and expectations are at present serious barriers to partnership. However, throughout the process of

this study the researcher found in the participants a readiness and willingness to address many of these issues. This was exemplified by the generous way in which respondents gave their time to complete the questionnaires and participate in interviews. The same willingness was also noticeable among those who participated in the focus group process. Perhaps this is indicative of the seriousness of many of the issues that have been highlighted in this study and a sense that they must be aired and overcome if Catholic education is to thrive.

The Doctor of Education program at the Australian Catholic University places considerable emphasis on research which, as well as being theoretically sound, leads candidates to apply research and professional skills to the field in which they work. (A.C.U. Handbook, 1995) Already, throughout the Lismore Diocese, strategies which address issues raised in this study in a proactive way are being proposed at all levels. This study began with the aim of being a catalyst for change and that process has already begun.

APPENDIX 1 : MAP OF THE LISMORE DIOCESE



APPENDIX 2 : QUESTIONNAIRE USED IN THE PILOT STUDY

The Religious Dimension of the Mission of Catholic Schools

Pilot Questionnaire

PLEASE ANSWER ALL QUESTIONS IN SECTIONS 1-5 ON THE SEPARATE ANSWER SHEET PROVIDED. THERE ARE SPACES PROVIDED ON THIS QUESTIONNAIRE FOR YOU TO ANSWER THE QUESTIONS IN SECTION 6.

Section 1 - Background

1. Please indicate whether you are:

- A. A lay teacher in a Catholic primary school
- B. A lay teacher in a Catholic secondary school
- C. A religious brother or sister who is teaching in a Catholic primary school
- D. A religious brother, sister or priest who is teaching in a Catholic secondary school
- E. A priest of the Lismore Diocese

(If you answered E in this question, please move to question 5)

2. Position in school :

- A. Teacher or Subject Co-ordinator (any subject except religious education)
- B. Religious Education Co-ordinator
- C. Assistant Principal
- D. Principal

3. Religious Affiliation:

- A. Catholic who attends Mass most Sundays
- B. Catholic who attends Mass occasionally
- C. From a religious tradition other than Catholic
- D. No religion

4. Teacher training:

- A. Initial teacher training at a Catholic college, university or training institution
- B. Initial teacher training at another college, university or training institution

5. Years teaching in a Catholic school or if a priest, years since ordination:

- A. 15 years or less
- B. 16 to 25 years
- C. 26 years or more

Members of the clergy can now move to Section 2 which begins with question 8

6. Teaching of Religious Education:

- A. Currently teaching Religious Education
- B. Have previously taught Religious Education
- C. Never taught Religious Education

7. Formal qualifications in religious education or theology:

- A. No formal background of study in religious education or theology
- B. Have studied religious education or theology but not in the past 10 years
- C. Have formally studied religious education or theology in the last 10 years

Section 2 - Catholic Schools and Religious Education of Students

THIS SECTION RELATES TO THE ROLE OF CATHOLIC SCHOOLS IN THE FAITH DEVELOPMENT OF STUDENTS

How important do you consider the following in the overall mission of Catholic schools?

Please record the degree of importance which you consider should be given to each as follows:

- A. No importance**
- B. Little importance**
- C. Some importance**
- D. Very important**
- E. Most important**

- 8. The preparation of students for the reception of sacraments
- 9. The teaching of Catholic Church history
- 10. The celebration of Feast Days and other events which make up the Catholic liturgical calendar
- 11. The teaching of Catholic doctrine
- 12. Teaching about other Christian religious traditions
- 13. Teaching about non-Christian religious traditions
- 14. Providing the opportunity for students to receive the sacrament of Reconciliation
- 15. Providing the opportunity for students to attend Mass
- 16. Helping students to discover and fulfil themselves as persons
- 17. The teaching of Religious Education at a level comparable to that of other subjects
- 18. Helping the students come to know Jesus Christ
- 19. The integration of Religious Education with other subjects where possible

20. Providing an environment in which students' faith in God can develop

How true are the following statements?

Consider each carefully and then respond as follows:

A. Certainly False

B. Probably false

C. Uncertain

D. Probably true

E. Certainly true

21. Knowledge of Catholic faith is well taught in Catholic primary schools that I know
22. Knowledge of Catholic faith is well taught in Catholic secondary schools that I know
23. The presence of religious sisters or brothers in a school enhances the spiritual development of pupils
24. The Catholic school has an influence on the faith of students even if faith is not supported in the home
25. The fact that the percentage of young Catholics in Australia attending Mass regularly is dropping, indicates that Catholic schools are failing in an important part of their mission
26. One can have religious faith and not belong to any particular religious denomination
27. Attendance at some school sacramental celebrations should be made optional for students
28. Religious education is just another subject in the school curriculum
29. The fact that Catholic schools can foster the religious development of young people is the main reason why parents choose Catholic schools
30. Too much is expected of Catholic schools in the overall religious development of young Catholics

31. Young people these days are less religious than the youth of previous generations

Section 3 - Catholic Schools and the Local Church

THIS SECTION RELATES TO THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN CATHOLIC SCHOOLS AND THE LOCAL CATHOLIC COMMUNITY

How true are the following statements?

Consider each carefully and then respond as follows:

- A. Certainly False**
- B. Probably false**
- C. Uncertain**
- D. Probably true**
- E. Certainly true**

32. Parishes today are not as influential in the spiritual development of young people as in earlier times
33. Secondary schools work well in partnership with the parish
34. Primary schools work well in partnership with the parish
35. It is important for schools and parishes to have a harmonious working relationship
36. Priests are in touch with the needs of young people in Australian society today
37. It is good to call Catholic primary schools 'parish schools'
38. It is good to call Catholic secondary schools 'parish schools'
39. Catholic primary schools are introducing students to good liturgical practice
40. Catholic secondary schools are introducing students to good liturgical practice

41. Teachers and clergy share similar goals for Catholic schools
42. Authority is often a problem in the relationship between schools and parishes
43. Teachers in Catholic schools should take on more parish responsibilities than other parishioners
44. The Pastor should have a leadership role in the school community
45. Teachers in Catholic schools should live within the boundaries of the local parish
46. Teachers in Catholic schools should worship in the parish where the school is located
47. Participation in parish life is a priority for families of students in Catholic schools
48. The Church is a problem for me today
49. Going to Mass on Sundays is important to me
50. I feel at home with the Church
51. The presence of a Catholic Primary school makes the parish stronger
52. The presence of a Catholic Secondary school makes the parish stronger
53. List the three most positive contributions of the current Catholic Education system to parish life.

Primary level: 1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

Secondary level: 1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

54. List the three most negative impacts of the current Catholic education system on parish life.

Primary level: 1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

Secondary level: 1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

Section 4 - Teaching in a Catholic School

THE FOLLOWING STATEMENTS REFER TO YOUR EXPERIENCE OF TEACHERS AND
TEACHING IN CATHOLIC SCHOOLS

How true are the following statements?

Consider each carefully and then respond as follows:

- A. Certainly False**
- B. Probably false**
- C. Uncertain**
- D. Probably true**
- E. Certainly true**

- 55. There is consensus among teachers about the religious aims of Catholic schools
- 56. Teachers in Catholic schools should be examples of dedicated Christian life
- 57. Religious Education classes do not arouse much interest in students

- 58. All teachers in Catholic schools have a role to play in the overall religious education of students
- 59. It is preferable to have a committed Christian teacher from another denomination teaching in a Catholic school rather than a non-practising Catholic
- 60. Teaching in a Catholic school nourishes the faith of teachers
- 61. Principals of Catholic schools strongly influence the religious culture of the schools
- 62. All teachers in Catholic schools share in the mission of the Church
- 63. Teachers of Religious education need formal qualifications in this area

Section 5 - Catholic Schools and the Australian Culture

THE FOLLOWING STATEMENTS REFER TO THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN CATHOLIC SCHOOLS AND THE WIDER AUSTRALIAN CULTURE

How true are the following statements?

Consider each carefully and then respond as follows:

- A. Certainly False**
- B. Probably false**
- C. Uncertain**
- D. Probably true**
- E. Certainly true**

- 64. Catholic schools are called to be visible examples of Christian communities
- 65. Catholic schools are communities which witness to Gospel values
- 66. Catholic schools challenge many of the values and norms of society that are contrary to Christian values

- 67. Catholic schools cater to the needs of the poor and marginalised
- 68. Catholic schools are becoming elitist
- 69. Fewer non-Catholics should be enrolled in Catholic schools
- 70. Catholic schools should cater not just for students who are practising Catholics

Section 6 - General Comments

Please write in the spaces provided:

- 71. Describe what you consider to be the mission of Catholic schools in Australia at this point in time:
- 72. What are the key issues that Catholic schools must address in their attempts to succeed in this mission?

Many thanks for your kind cooperation,

Wayne Tinsey

APPENDIX 3 : QUESTIONNAIRE USED IN THE STUDY

Teachers, Clergy and Catholic Schools

Questionnaire for Teachers and Clergy in the Lismore Diocese

There are 8 sections to this questionnaire. Please answer all questions in Sections 1-7 on the computerised answer sheet. There is a separate page provided for the answers to questions in Section 8.

Section 1 Background

1. Please indicate whether you are:

- A. A teacher in a Catholic primary school
- B. A teacher in a Catholic secondary school
- C. A priest of the Lismore diocese

(If you answered C in this question, please move to question 4.)

2. Teaching of Religious Education:

- A. Currently teaching or have taught Religious Education
- B. Have never taught Religious Education

3. Religious Affiliation:

- A. Catholic
- B. From a religious tradition other than Catholic
- C. No religion
- D. I choose not to answer this question

Section 2 Catholic Schools and the Religious Education of Students

To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements?

Consider each statement carefully and then respond as follows:

- A. Strongly Agree**
- B. Agree**
- C. Uncertain**
- D. Disagree**
- E. Strongly Disagree**

4. Knowledge of the Catholic faith is well taught in Catholic primary schools
5. Knowledge of the Catholic faith is well taught in Catholic secondary schools
6. Evidence that the percentage of young Catholics in Australia who attend Mass and the Sacraments regularly is dropping, indicates that Catholic schools are failing in an important part of their mission
7. Providing opportunities for attendance at Mass and the Sacraments is an essential part of the mission of Catholic schools
8. Attendance at some school Sacramental celebrations should be made optional for students
9. Religious Education courses in Catholic schools should take some account of situations where there is a high non-Catholic enrolment
10. Parents choose Catholic schools because of their ability to foster the religious development of their children
11. Official Church documents give a useful guide for the direction of Catholic schools

Section 2 (Continued)

In terms of Religious Education offered in Catholic schools, what degree of importance do you assign to the following?

Consider each statement carefully and then respond as follows:

- A. Most Important
- B. Very Important
- C. Of Some Importance
- D. Of Little Importance
- E. Not Important

- 12. The fostering of religious commitment
- 13. The integration of students into the Catholic community
- 14. The teaching of Catholic doctrine
- 15. The teaching of general Christian principles of morality
- 16. Teaching on other world religions
- 17. Teaching on contemporary moral and spiritual issues

Section 3 Catholic Schools and the Parish

To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements?

Consider each statement carefully and then respond as follows:

- A. Strongly Agree
- B. Agree
- C. Uncertain
- D. Disagree
- E. Strongly Disagree

- 18. Catholic primary schools work well in partnership with parishes
- 19. Catholic secondary schools work well in partnership with parishes

20. Priests are in touch with the spiritual needs of the young people of today
21. Formal links with parishes are vital for the success of Catholic schools
22. Catholic primary schools introduce students to sound liturgical practice
23. Catholic secondary schools introduce students to sound liturgical practice
24. Authority is often a problem in the relationship between schools and parishes
25. The presence of a Catholic primary school makes the parish stronger
26. The presence of a Catholic secondary school makes the parish stronger
27. There is consensus among clergy about the religious aims of Catholic schools

Section 4 Teaching in a Catholic School

To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements?

Consider each statement carefully and then respond as follows:

- A. Strongly Agree**
- B. Agree**
- C. Uncertain**
- D. Disagree**
- E. Strongly Disagree**

28. There is consensus among teachers about the religious aims of Catholic schools
29. Teachers are in touch with the spiritual needs of the young people of today
30. All teachers in Catholic schools have a role in the religious education of students

31. How all teachers are to have this role in Religious Education remains unclear
32. Teachers in Catholic primary schools give special attention to the formation of Christian community in the schools
33. Teachers in Catholic secondary schools give special attention to the formation of Christian community in the schools
34. Teaching in a Catholic school fosters the spiritual development of teachers
35. Teaching in a Catholic school is a vocation in the Church
36. Teachers choose to work in Catholic schools for religious reasons
37. Teaching in a Catholic school can place unfair demands on one's personal life

Section 5 Catholic Schools and the Australian Society

To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements?

Consider each statement carefully and then respond as follows:

- A. Strongly Agree**
- B. Agree**
- C. Uncertain**
- D. Disagree**
- E. Strongly Disagree**

38. Catholic schools challenge many of the values and the norms of society that are contrary to Christian values
39. Catholic schools are becoming elitist
40. A lower proportion of non-Catholics should be enrolled in Catholic schools
41. Catholic schools cater to the needs of the poor and marginalised
42. Catholic schools are an essential part of the Church's mission in Australia

43. Catholic schools are struggling for direction in contemporary Australian society
44. The Church should be putting fewer resources into Catholic primary schools and more resources into other parish or educational endeavours
45. The Church should be putting fewer resources into Catholic secondary schools and more resources into other parish or educational endeavours
46. Young people these days are less religious than the youth of previous generations

Section 6 Current Experience

How would you rate your current experience of the following areas related to Catholic Schools?

Consider each statement carefully and then respond as follows:

- | | |
|----|--------------|
| A. | Very Poor |
| B. | Poor |
| C. | Satisfactory |
| D. | Good |
| E. | Very Good |

47. Communication between school and parish
48. The Religious Education Curriculum in your school/schools
49. The religious commitment of teachers in your school/schools
50. Clergy involvement in your school/schools
51. Knowledge of the Catholic faith in your school/schools
52. Teacher-clergy partnership in your school/schools

Section 7 Personal Vision

In terms of your personal vision for Catholic schools, what degree of importance do you assign to the following?

Consider each statement carefully and then respond as follows:

- A. Most Important
- B. Very Important
- C. Of Some Importance
- D. Of Little Importance
- E. Not Important

- 53. The involvement of teachers in the local parish
- 54. Outreach to the poor
- 55. The formal Religious Education curriculum
- 56. An emphasis on Catholic practice
- 57. The presence of clergy in schools on a regular basis
- 58. Accountability of the school to the local parish
- 59. Accountability to the Catholic Education Office
- 60. The spiritual development of students
- 61. Teacher-clergy partnership

Section 8 Longer Responses

(Please write your responses on the separate sheet provided)

- 62. What are some possible barriers to parish-school partnership in Catholic education?
- 63. Why might teachers and clergy have differing expectations of Catholic schools?
- 64. Any General Comments:

Many thanks.

APPENDIX 4 : RECORD OF INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

Record of Interview

Name:

School/Parish:

- Q.1 To what extent is 'authority' an issue in relationships between teachers and priests in the Lismore Diocese? Do clergy 'abuse power'?
- Q.2 Does working in a Catholic school put excessive demands on the personal lives of teachers?
- Q.3 Do clergy have 'unrealistic' expectations of teachers
- Q.4 Are some members of the clergy 'out of touch' in some ways?
- Q.5 Do teachers and clergy have different aims and vision for Catholic schools?
- Q.6 Have teachers in Catholic schools lost the sense that their work is a 'vocation'?
- Q.7 How would you describe communication between teachers and clergy in the Lismore Diocese?
- Q.8 Why do some clergy relate differently to Catholic secondary schools than they do to Catholic primary schools?

APPENDIX 5 : LETTER ACCOMPANYING THE QUESTIONNAIRES

(Catholic Education Office Letterhead)

Memo

To: All Clergy and Teachers in the Lismore Diocese

From: Wayne Tinsey

Concerning: *Teachers, Clergy and Catholic Schools* - Research Project and Questionnaire

Date: 10.2.97 **Ref:**2/97/352

Warm greetings in the hope that you are well.

I am currently conducting research into relationships between clergy and teachers in this diocese, and the perceptions that they have of certain facets of the mission of Catholic schools. The study aims to:

- Explore relationships between teachers and clergy in the Lismore Diocese in so much as they relate to the mission of Catholic schools;
- Examine perceptions of the religious dimension of the mission of Catholic schools that are held by teachers and clergy in the Lismore diocese;
- Identify areas where there is a significant lack of congruence in these perceptions;
- Suggest possible reasons for any significant lack of congruence; and,
- Propose implications of this research for parish-school partnership in Catholic education in the Lismore diocese.

This research has been approved by the Bishop and has the backing of the Diocesan Education Board. It has also been approved by the Ethics Committee of the Australian Catholic University. It is hoped that results of this research will be published in early 1998. Initial findings will be presented at the Priests/Principals Conference this year.

As part of the research process, the attached questionnaire has been sent to all active clergy and all full-time teachers in the Catholic schools of the diocese. The success or failure of the project depends to a large extent on the number of responses that I receive. *I am depending on your response to the questionnaire.*

It should take you only 20-30 minutes to complete the questionnaire. Mark your answers A-E on the computerised answer sheet for Sections 1-7. The longer answers to the questions in Section 8 can be written on the separate page that

is provided. When you have completed the questionnaire, please put *only the 2 answer sheets* in the return envelope provided. Postage is pre-paid. Returns would be very much appreciated by *Friday March 7*.

Significant steps have been taken to ensure total anonymity of response. After receiving your response, Christine McGrath will remove the envelope and only pass the answer sheets to me. If you have any questions concerning the questionnaire or the research in general, please feel free to contact either myself at the CEO or my university supervisor Dr. Graham Rossiter (Ph. 02 7392239).

Let me take this opportunity to thank you in anticipation for your time in helping me with this research. I really appreciate your efforts.

Warm regards

Wayne

APPENDIX 6 : LETTER OF CONSENT FOR INTERVIEWS

(University Letterhead)

Clergy and Teacher Relationships and Perceptions of Catholic Schools

Investigator: Wayne Tinsey

Participant's Name: -----

In recent months you may have responded to a questionnaire which was sent to all clergy and teachers in the Lismore Diocese as part of this study. This interview is an opportunity for further exploration of issues arising from the responses that were received. It is also an opportunity for you to comment in more detail on any issue arising from the content of the questionnaire.

This study will provide data that will be important in the promotion of dialogue on the aims of Catholic schools between clergy and teachers in the Lismore Diocese. This dialogue will increase the possibility of good communication and genuine partnership between the two parties.

It is anticipated that this interview will last no longer than 25 minutes. As with responses to the questionnaire, every step will be taken to ensure the complete confidentiality of anything said in the interview. Your participation in this study is freely chosen and at any stage you are free to discontinue participation.

Any further questions that you may have concerning this study can be directed to either myself at the Catholic Education Office or my Supervisor at the University:

Assoc. Prof. Graham Rossiter
Australian Catholic University
179 Albert Road
Strathfield NSW 2135

Confirmation that this research project has been approved by the Australian Catholic University (N.S.W.Division), can be obtain by contacting:

The Chair
Research Projects Ethics Committee
c/- Divisional Research Office
Australian Catholic University
170 Albert Road
Strathfield NSW 2135

Any inquiry or complain made to this body will be investigated fully and treated with complete confidentiality.

I _____ have read and understood the information above and any questions I have asked have been answered to my satisfaction. I agree to participate in this activity, realising that I can withdraw at any time.

I agree that the research data collected for the study may be published or provided to other researchers in a form that does not identify me in any way.

Name of Participant: _____

Signature: _____ Date: _____

Name of Investigator: Wayne Tinsey

Signature: _____ Date: _____

**APPENDIX 7 : TABLE OF MEAN SCORES AND STANDARD
DEVIATIONS**

Mean Scores and Standard Deviations for Questionnaire Items 4-61

Item	Primary Teachers		Secondary Teachers		Clergy	
	Mean	S D	Mean	S D	Mean	S D
4. Knowledge of the Catholic faith is well taught in Catholic primary schools	2.09	.80	2.59	.80	2.50	.81
5. Knowledge of the Catholic faith is well taught in Catholic secondary schools	2.96	.67	2.28	.88	3.12	.91
6. Evidence that the percentage of young Catholics in Australia who attend Mass and the Sacraments regularly is dropping, indicates that Catholic schools are failing in an important part of their mission	3.82	1.14	3.79	1.01	2.81	1.13
7. Providing opportunities for attendance at Mass and the Sacraments is an essential part of the mission of Catholic schools	1.65	.79	1.53	.59	1.81	.94
8. Attendance at some school Sacramental celebrations should be made optional for students	3.74	1.15	3.93	1.06	3.73	1.04
9. Religious Education courses in Catholic schools should take some account of situations where there is a high non-Catholic enrolment	3.13	1.21	2.89	1.22	3.35	1.44
10. Parents choose Catholic schools because of their ability to foster the religious development of their children	2.79	1.05	3.06	1.01	3.12	.91
11. Official Church documents give a useful guide for the direction of Catholic schools	3.04	.93	3.12	.91	2.19	.80
12. The fostering of religious commitment	1.99	.78	2.30	.82	1.65	.75

Item	Primary Teachers		Secondary Teachers		Clergy	
	Mean	S D	Mean	S D	Mean	S D
13. The integration of students into the Catholic community	1.95	.81	2.48	.85	1.77	.59
14. The teaching of Catholic doctrine	1.81	.68	2.13	.81	1.85	.73
15. The teaching of general Christian principles of morality	1.39	.59	1.31	.48	1.58	.70
16. Teaching on other world religions	2.57	.82	2.32	.86	3.00	.96
17. Teaching on contemporary moral and spiritual issues	1.76	.75	1.43	.56	2.04	.87
18. Catholic primary schools work well in partnership with parishes	2.47	1.01	2.45	.77	2.00	.63
19. Catholic secondary schools work well in partnership with parishes	3.00	.77	2.70	.88	3.15	1.01
20. Priests are in touch with the spiritual needs of the young people of today	3.50	.94	3.28	.95	3.04	.72
21. Formal links with parishes are vital for the success of Catholic schools	1.78	.73	2.08	.91	1.46	.76
22. Catholic primary schools introduce students to sound liturgical practice	1.87	.70	2.46	.83	2.42	.81

Item	Primary Teachers		Secondary Teachers		Clergy	
	Mean	S D	Mean	S D	Mean	S D
23. Catholic secondary schools introduce students to sound liturgical practice	2.75	.74	2.39	.86	3.12	.82
24. Authority is often a problem in the relationship between schools and parishes	2.09	1.02	2.25	.96	2.46	.81
25. The presence of a Catholic primary school makes the parish stronger	1.66	.73	1.96	.87	1.88	.71
26. The presence of a Catholic secondary school makes the parish stronger	2.13	.93	2.01	.87	2.60	1.00
27. There is consensus among clergy about the religious aims of Catholic schools	3.37	.96	3.36	.82	3.12	.71
28. There is consensus among teachers about the religious aims of Catholic schools	2.50	.96	3.10	1.08	3.38	.94
29. Teachers are in touch with the spiritual needs of the young people of today	2.49	.76	2.70	.85	3.15	.61
30. All teachers in Catholic schools have a role in the religious education of students	1.44	.57	1.72	.86	1.96	1.04
31. How all teachers are to have this role in Religious Education remains unclear	2.99	1.08	2.80	1.14	2.81	1.02
32. Teachers in Catholic primary schools give special attention to the formation of Christian community in the schools	1.74	.63	2.48	.68	2.35	.85

Item	Primary Teachers		Secondary Teachers		Clergy	
	Mean	S D	Mean	S D	Mean	S D
33. Teachers in Catholic secondary schools give special attention to the formation of Christian community in the schools	2.66	.76	2.19	.74	3.08	.74
34. Teaching in a Catholic school fosters the spiritual development of teachers	2.03	.85	2.46	1.09	2.73	.87
35. Teaching in a Catholic school is a vocation in the Church	1.91	1.01	2.34	1.17	1.92	.89
36. Teachers choose to work in Catholic schools for religious reasons	3.26	.89	3.51	.99	3.58	.70
37. Teaching in a Catholic school can place unfair demands on one's personal life	2.39	1.22	2.59	1.30	3.50	1.21
38. Catholic schools challenge many of the values and the norms of society that are contrary to Christian values	2.61	1.05	2.39	.92	2.69	.88
39. Catholic schools are becoming elitist	3.32	1.08	3.75	.88	3.38	1.10
40. A lower proportion of non-Catholics should be enrolled in Catholic schools	3.18	1.15	3.37	.96	2.65	.89
41. Catholic schools cater to the needs of the poor and marginalised	3.02	1.04	2.60	.97	3.12	.91
42. Catholic schools are an essential part of the Church's mission in Australia	1.51	.66	1.69	.76	1.92	.84

Item	Primary Teachers		Secondary Teachers		Clergy	
	Mean	S D	Mean	S D	Mean	S D
43. Catholic schools are struggling for direction in contemporary Australian society	2.96	1.13	3.22	1.13	2.50	1.03
44. The Church should be putting fewer resources into Catholic primary schools and more resources into other parish or educational endeavours	4.22	.99	4.00	.84	3.31	.88
45. The Church should be putting fewer resources into Catholic secondary schools and more resources into other parish or educational endeavours	4.05	1.06	4.10	.91	2.96	1.18
46. Young people these days are less religious than the youth of previous generations	2.90	1.20	2.84	1.28	2.81	1.13
47. Communication between school and parish	3.05	1.23	3.00	1.08	3.52	1.12
48. The Religious Education Curriculum in your school/schools	3.93	.88	3.57	1.02	3.69	.74
49. The religious commitment of teachers in your school/schools	4.01	.90	3.56	.82	3.08	1.06
50. Clergy involvement in your school/schools	2.87	1.28	3.20	1.08	3.35	.80
51. Knowledge of the Catholic faith in your school/schools	3.38	.91	3.17	.93	2.96	.96
52. Teacher-clergy partnership in your school/schools	2.93	1.20	3.12	1.10	3.54	.99
53. The involvement of teachers in the local parish	2.30	.84	2.76	.94	1.44	.65

Item	Primary Teachers		Secondary Teachers		Clergy	
	Mean	S D	Mean	S D	Mean	S D
54. Outreach to the poor	2.07	.80	2.21	.87	1.68	.48
55. The formal Religious Education curriculum	1.87	.64	2.09	.74	2.00	.82
56. An emphasis on Catholic practice	2.05	.78	2.27	.85	2.00	.76
57. The presence of clergy in schools on a regular basis	1.76	.81	2.00	.74	1.88	.67
58. Accountability of the school to the local parish	2.54	.88	2.86	.85	1.92	.70
59. Accountability to the Catholic Education Office	2.10	.76	2.33	.91	2.16	.69
60. The spiritual development of students	1.48	.62	1.66	.77	1.36	.49
61. Teacher-clergy partnership	1.84	.70	2.28	.82	1.50	.59

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