

**THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE CATHOLIC
SCHOOL AND THE PARISH IN THE DIOCESE OF
ROCKHAMPTON: A CASE STUDY**

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ABSTRACT

The research project sought to gain initial information about the perceived purpose of Catholic schools from the perspectives of the administration teams in the diocese of Rockhampton.

Catholic schools were first established over one hundred years ago; society, Catholicism and parental expectations have changed over time. This study aims to inform future planning by the major stakeholders in Catholic education in the diocese of Rockhampton, to attempt to provide the most suitable educational structures to meet the demands of contemporary society. "It seems reasonable to suggest that the resolutions to some of these third millennium challenges confronting those with the responsibility of leading Catholic schools is unlikely to be found within a nineteenth century paradigm" (Leavey, 1993, p. 9).

As the study is concerned with the perceptions of Catholic school administration teams, case study was selected. The research questions focussed on three areas:

1. The perceived purposes of the Catholic school.
2. The changing role of the Catholic school today and it's relationship to the parish.
3. The changing roles of the parish and school.

The study concluded that families are not as closely associated with parish structures as they were in the past, and that many families are becoming more involved in school activities and rejecting those offered by parishes.

Staffs of schools are increasingly being expected to perform in roles for which they are not trained - counselling is the most predominant activity. The only experience of church for a large percentage of school families is the school.

DECLARATION

I certify that this thesis does not contain without acknowledgement any material previously submitted for a degree or diploma at any university, nor being currently submitted for any other degree. To the best of my knowledge and belief, information derived from the published or unpublished work of others has been acknowledged in the text and a list of references is given.

Simon A.C. Watkins

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Chapter One

The Research Defined

1.1 Background to the Study

When the Catholic education system was established in the 1890s it was on the premise that the schools would possess “a religious and educational influence on the students over and above that of their families” (Flynn, 1993, p. XI) and the schools would be places where “Christianity would permeate all education, where every kind of instruction was to be interpenetrated by Catholic doctrine, by Catholic feeling and practice” (Fogarty, 1957, p. 188). The schools were established by the Bishop’s as a condemnation of the “rampant and aggressive secularism” (Collins, 1991, p. 107) of the public schools.

For the next sixty or so years the Catholic education system grew across the nation. Catholics in general were able to relate to, and identify with, a Catholic culture which had its roots in Ireland and which was, in the main, headed by Irishmen. During this time the parish, often with the parish school at its centre, was the centre of social activity for many Catholics. Catholic parents were expected to enrol their children at Catholic schools, they were expected to practice their faith at home and to attend Sunday mass. Indeed, “a Catholic world was created for the children to grow up in” (Purnell, 1985, p. 120).

“After World War II Australia underwent profound changes ... it became a multicultural society. As the church of all nations, Catholicism played an important part in this development” (Campion, 1987, p. 176). This wave of multiculturalism also changed the face of Catholicism as the many European Catholics, especially the Italians, had a very different version of Catholicism to the Irish way. Some nationalities grouped in ethnic communities, others simply could not understand the mass and therefore stopped attending.

The Second Vatican Council came to view the role of the school in a new light; its role as a major resource in the evangelising mission of the church was confirmed (Declaration on Christian Education, 1965, par. 8 ; The Religious Dimension of Education in a Catholic School, 1988, par. 101). However, whereas in the past it had been considered as a means of “enabling persons to achieve the power of mind and will necessary to achieve necessary eternal salvation” (Elias, 1988, p. 17), its purpose was given a wider focus as it was recognised that although the Christian message needs an authentic culture in which to incarnate

itself, it cannot be dependent on any one culture (Buetow, 1988, p. 15). The “sacred-fortress mentality” (Treston, 1997, p. 16, cf Divini Illius Magistri, 1929, par. 299) was removed.

1.2 Context of the Study

The focus of the study is the relationship between the school and the parish in the diocese of Rockhampton.

1.21 The Schools

In 1997 there are 28 primary schools and 10 secondary colleges in the diocese. Most of the primary schools cater for children from Preschool to Year 7; the others for Year 1 to Year 7 children. Primary schools range in size from a 3 teacher school with an enrolment of 26 children to a 25 teacher school with an enrolment of 591 children. The primary schools are located throughout the diocese in the following towns - Bundaberg, Gladstone, Biloela, Monto, Mt Morgan, Rockhampton, Sarina, Mackay, Clermont, Emerald, Springsure, Barcaldine, Blackall and Longreach.

The Rockhampton Catholic Education Office employs 287 full time teachers and 81 part time teachers to educate 5905 primary and 770 preschool children (Annual Report 1996 QCEC, 1997, p. 29: 30, Catholic Diocese of Rockhampton - 1997 Census).

Of the 10 secondary colleges, 6 cater for children from Year 8 to Year 12; 2 cater for Year 8 to Year 10; 1 caters for Year 8 and Year 9 and the other is a Senior (Year 11 and 12) college. Of the 10, 1 is a Boys boarding and day college, another is a girls boarding and day college and yet another is a co-educational college with boarding facilities for girls only. The Year 8 and 9 college is in a large country town; two of the boarding colleges are located in the coastal town of Yeppoon; the other colleges are in the provincial cities of the diocese, namely Bundaberg, Gladstone, Rockhampton and Mackay.

Secondary colleges range in size from 173 students to 939 students. The Rockhampton Catholic Education Office and the 2 order owned schools employ 331 full time and 32 part time teachers to educate 5433 students (Annual Report 1996 QCEC, 1997, p. 29: 30, Catholic Diocese of Rockhampton - 1997 Census).

1.22 The Parishes

Because the number of active priests is declining, parishes are amalgamating. This in turn has led to fewer masses and therefore a change in the structure of many parishes. Some parishes celebrate mass infrequently and rely on the laity to lead liturgies including funerals. These factors, combined with the changing role of the parish and a more pluralistic society, have influenced the percentage of Catholics who practice their religion in terms of attendance at mass.

1.3 Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the study is to gather initial information about the purpose of Catholic schools from the perspectives of Catholic school administration teams in the Rockhampton Diocese. Depending on the size of the school, the administration team comprises Principals and Assistants to the Principal (Religious Education) or Religious Education Coordinators and Assistants to the Principal (Administration). As the study is concerned with gathering information from administrators about their own particular school, the case study was selected as an appropriate methodology.

The research instrument selected for use was a survey questionnaire entitled *An Initial Exploration of the Perceptions of some of the Purposes of the Catholic School by Catholic School Administration Teams*.

The research questions focussed on three key areas:

1. The perceived purposes of the Catholic school.
2. The changing role of the Catholic school today and it's relationship to the parish.
3. The changing roles of the parish and school.

1.4 Significance of the Study

This study is significant as it seeks to gather the perceptions of those who are currently leading Catholic schools in the Diocese of Rockhampton on the nature and purpose of Catholic schools in 1997. The results of the study will inform future planning by the major stakeholders in Catholic education in the Diocese of Rockhampton, to attempt to provide the most suitable educational structures to meet the demands of contemporary society.

1.5 Limitations of the Study

It is acknowledged that the study has limitations and does not necessarily reflect the views of all administration teams in the Rockhampton Diocese. Questionnaires were sent to all of the schools and colleges in the diocese, accompanied by letters of explanation. The letters were preceded by a presentation at the Rockhampton Diocesan Principals Conference, and followed by a number of reminder faxes. Of the 28 primary administration teams, 18 responded. Of the 10 secondary administration teams, 6 responded.

The researcher also acknowledges that as a novice to the field of educational research, the study is limited by inexperience.

1.6 Outline of the Thesis

In the following chapter there is a twofold review of the literature relating to the purpose and the nature of Catholic schools. In relation to the purpose of Catholic schools the areas of *Vatican II and Beyond* and *The Primary Purpose of Catholic Schools* are explored. In the second part of the review *The Distinctive Nature of Catholic Schools* is explored. The purpose of the review is to focus the research in a scholarly context, thus enabling the researcher to gain an appreciation of contemporary literature in the area of research and its relation to the context of schools in the Rockhampton diocese.

Chapter Three will outline the design of the research undertaken and will provide a rationale and justification for the adopted methodology, outlining the context of the study and the research instrument used.

Chapter Four presents and analyses the data generated by the research project focussing on the three key areas of:

1. The perceived purposes of the Catholic school.
2. The changing role of the Catholic school today and it's relationship to the parish.
3. The changing roles of the parish and school.

The final chapter discusses the findings and conclusions of the project and addresses implications for future research.

Chapter Two

Literature Review:

The Purpose and Nature of Catholic Schools

2.1 Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the study is to gather initial information about the purpose of Catholic schools from the perspectives of Catholic school administration teams in the Rockhampton Diocese. Depending on the size of the school, the administration team comprises Principal and Assistant to the Principal (Religious Education), or Religious Education Coordinator, and Assistant to the Principal (Administration). In secondary schools the administration team may also include Deputy Principals.

2.11 Gathering Perceptions from Administration Teams

Because the aim of the study is to gather information from administration teams about their own particular school, the case study was selected as the orchestrating research approach. A questionnaire was developed in association with Dr Denis McLaughlin and Dr Gayle Spry from the Australian Catholic University (McAuley Campus). The questionnaire was handed to school principals at the 1997 Rockhampton Diocesan Principals Conference; another copy was also mailed to each principal following the conference. An accompanying letter stated that I was seeking opinions from the teams, and that the information gained from the questionnaire will be presented to the Bishop of Rockhampton and the Catholic Education Office. Two follow-up facsimiles were sent to each school further inviting them to respond. Eighteen of the twenty-eight primary school teams and six of the ten secondary school teams responded.

2.12 The Questionnaire

The research instrument used was a survey questionnaire entitled *An Initial Exploration of the Perceptions of Some of the Purposes of the Catholic School by Catholic School Administration Teams*.

The research sought information in three key areas:

1. The perceived purposes of the Catholic school.
2. The changing role of the Catholic school today and its relationship to the parish.
3. The changing roles of the parish and school.

2.2 Introduction

During the early days of Catholic education in Australia it would have been far easier to define the purpose of a Catholic school than it is in 1997. When the system was established in the 1870s it was on the premise that the schools would possess “a religious and educational influence on the students over and above that of their families” (Flynn, 1993, p. XI). They were to be places where “Christianity would permeate all education, where every kind of instruction was to be interpenetrated by Catholic doctrine, by Catholic feeling and practice” (Fogarty, 1957, p.188). The system was established to provide the children with a Catholic world in which to grow up (Purnell, 1985, p. 120), away from the oppression and hostility of the Protestant majority (Crawford and Rossiter, 1986, p. 6), where Catholics could attain upward social mobility and “make their way on earth by loving God and neighbour and thus work out their eternal salvation by striving for the glory of God both on earth and the hereafter in heaven” (Elias, 1988, p.17).

However, in the pluralistic society of the 1990s it is no longer possible to give a generic description of a Catholic school (Treston, 1997, p. 17). Indeed, Treston has identified at least five models of a Catholic school:-

Model 1: Traditional Catholic School

Concentrates on rituals, sacraments and catholic doctrine. Religious education is catechises. Staff and students expected to participate in worship and religious culture of the school.

Model 2: Evangelising Catholic School

Essentially Catholic but recognises pluralism of members of the school community. Evangelisation and ‘the Church’ for students and families who have little affiliation with the institutional church.

Model 3: Secular Catholic School

Espouses Catholic rhetoric, but is thoroughly secular and consumer driven. The school is a business venture in reality.

Model 4: Ecumenical Catholic School

Christian in nature and therefore does not have a Catholic culture; no Catholic doctrine, rituals or sacraments.

Model 5: Public Sector Catholic School

Fully integrated into the national system of education. The essential Catholic character of the school is endorsed by government regulations.

The Purpose of Catholic Schools

2.3 Vatican II and Beyond

As part of its wide sweeping attitudinal changes, the Second Vatican Council came to view the role of the Catholic school in a new light. This was incorporated in the “massive paradigm shift in Catholicism ... moving the tradition into a global and contemporary context” (Ludwig, 1995, p. 35). Previously, “the Roman Catholic church had adopted an inward looking, hostile to the world, sacred-fortress mentality” (Treston, 1997, p.16, cf Divini Illius Magistri, 1929, par. 299). In order to rectify the situation “Pope John XXIII initiated a revolution against ecclesiastical institutionalism to return the church to the dynamic virtues of Christ-centred love, justice and service to a changing world” (Arbuckle, 1993, p. 91) to share the “joy and hope, the grief and anguish of the people of our time, especially those who are poor or afflicted in any way” (Church in the Modern World, 1965, par. 1).

This was indeed a paradigm shift of great significance, as the church had attested to accept and respect “ the religious freedom and personal conscience of individual students and their families” (The Religious Dimension of Education in a Catholic School, 1988, par. 108) and therefore, by definition, welcomed people of all religious denominations or none whatsoever. The Council rejected any form of indoctrination and repudiated the assumption that any one culture is a “natural” conduit for faith (Paul VI, 1975, par. 20).

2.31 The Catholic School

The role of the Catholic school as a major resource in the evangelising mission of the church was confirmed by the Second Vatican Council (Declaration on Christian Education, 1965, par. 8 ; The Religious Dimension of Education in a Catholic School, 1988, par. 101). However, whereas in the past it had been considered as a means of “enabling persons to achieve the power of mind and will necessary to achieve necessary eternal salvation” (Elias, 1988, p. 17), its purpose was given a wider focus as it was recognised that although the Christian message needs an authentic culture in which to incarnate itself, it cannot be dependent on any one culture (Buetow, 1988, p. 15). The “sacred-fortress mentality” (Treston, 1997, p. 16, cf Divini Illius Magistri, 1929, par. 299) was removed.

This is not to say that Catholic schools are no longer truly Christian : “The special function of the Catholic school is to develop in the school community an atmosphere animated by a spirit of liberty and charity based on the Gospel” (Declaration on Christian Education, 1965, par. 8) and “must reflect in themselves and form in their students a coherent understanding of the nature of human existence as they espouse the values that underpin that understanding” (Collins, 1986, p. 217). However, a problem has emerged. The new paradigm out of which Catholic schools are operating has facilitated the emergence of a developing school culture “growing out of our story and traditions but involving a deep reconceptualising of the purpose and nature of catholic schooling” (Dwyer, 1993, p. 17). It is no longer as cut and dry as in the past; the paradigm and the reality are moving further apart.

“The basic problem of the Catholic school is that of being what it ought to be ... not only a school of high quality, but a Catholic school in the full meaning of the term” (Baum, 1993, p. 392). The church still holds the view that religious faith must permeate everything that happens in the Catholic school ; this has been documented many times since the Second Vatican Council. Of particular relevance to Catholic schools are the following documents:

- The Declaration on Christian Education (1965)
- The Catholic School (1977)
- Lay Catholics in Schools : Witnesses to faith (1982)
- The Religious Dimension of Education in a Catholic School (1988)

2.32 Theological and Canonical Perspectives

The Second Vatican Council emphasised that Catholic schools are an important vehicle for evangelisation. *The Catholic School* states that “Evangelisation is therefore the mission of the church ... the Catholic school forms part of that saving mission of the church” (The Catholic School, 1977, par. 7; 9). The same sentiment was repeated eleven years later in *The Religious Dimension of Education in a Catholic School* ; “The activity of a Catholic school is, above all else, an activity that shares in the evangelising mission of the church” (The Religious Dimension of Education in a Catholic School, 1988, par. 34). This document states that “what makes the Catholic school distinctive is it’s religious dimension and that this is to be found in :

- “a) the educational climate
- b) the personal development of each student
- c) the relationship established between culture and the Gospel
- d) the illumination of all knowledge with the light of the faith”

(The Religious Dimension of Education in a Catholic School, 1988, par. 1)

It is therefore evident that Catholic schools are legitimate organisations as they are an expression of what the Catholic church believes its mission to be (cf, Dogmatic Constitution on the Church, 1964, par. 48). Catholic schools must endeavour to ensure that everyone associated with them is “aware of the living presence of Jesus the ‘Master’ who, today as always, is with us in our journey through life as the one genuine ‘Teacher’, the perfect Man in whom all human values find their fullest perfection” (The Religious Dimension of Education in a Catholic School, 1988, par. 25).

Being ever mindful that the Church has a duty to “proclaim the way of salvation to all” (Declaration on Christian Education, par. 3), and that the mission of the Catholic school reflects that of the Church, “the identification with the church’s mission is the *raison d’être* for Catholic schools” (Laghi, 1996, p. 65).

Because “Kingdom is the central concept of Jesus’ mission” (Australian Catholic Bishop’s Conference, 1992, p. 7), it is necessary that the kingdom be the focus of the Catholic school and its activities. Diarmud O’Murchu reminds us that “Jesus did not proclaim himself - he proclaimed the Kingdom” (O’Murchu, 1992, p. 119), and that “The Kingdom Jesus proclaimed is essentially about transformation; a new world order characterised by creative relationships of justice, love and peace” (O’Murchu, 1992, p. 118). Unless this message is the focus “both within its mission and within its structures, Catholic education has little purpose” (Cappo, 1996, p. 13).

The church of the Post Vatican II era recognises that the Catholic church exists as part of a pluralistic society, and accepts “the religious freedom and personal conscience of individual students and their families” (The Religious Dimension of Education in a Catholic School, 1988, par. 108). And while it is true that “the goals, purposes, values and ideals of a Catholic school are all predetermined by the Catholic philosophy of life” (Arthur, 1994, p. 69), *The Catholic School* document “emphasises the need for educational processes to be morally responsible and adapted to the needs of youth, with concern for personal freedom and to proceed by way of illumination rather than indoctrination” (Leavey, 1993, p. 8).

The Declaration on Christian Education was published as a result of the Second Vatican Council’s exploration of the purpose of Catholic education. It states that the purpose of the Catholic school is “directed towards the formation of the human person in view of his (sic) final end and the good of that society to which he (sic) belongs and in the duties of which he (sic) will, as an adult, have a share” (Declaration on Christian Education, 1965, par. 1). This

was followed by “To Teach as Jesus did”, a pastoral message on Catholic education issued by The National Conference of (American) Bishops in 1972. This document listed the purpose under three headings:-

- “1) the delivery of Jesus’ message
- 2) the formation of Christian community
- 3) the performance of service in Jesus’ name”

(To Teach as Jesus did, 1972, p. 5 - 9)

In 1990 The National Conference of (American) Bishops updated the document and added a further purpose - “the centrality of worship” (p. 401).

At the (Australian) National Catholic Education Conference in 1996 Cardinal Laghi listed the same three initial purposes of Catholic education, stating that “Catholic education must maintain fidelity to the good news proclaimed by the church” (Laghi, 1996, p. ?).

Therefore, according to *The Declaration on Christian Education*, The National Conference of (American) Bishops and Cardinal Laghi (Prefect of the Congregation for Seminaries and other Institutes of Study), the purpose of Catholic education is either threefold or fourfold, incorporating:-

- Message
- Community
- Service
- Worship

McCarroll mirrors the first three purposes when he lists the purposes as:

- “1) to hand on the message of our heritage
- 2) to form a Gospel community where a child will learn the ‘good news’ of Jesus in daily living
- 3) to help children become builders of a just and wholesome world”

(McCarroll, 1986, p. 15)

A recurring theme of a number of authors is that Catholic education is not about indoctrination. In 1981 David Konstant wrote “preceding by way of illumination rather than indoctrination” (Konstant, 1981, p. 143). Hulmes wrote that “Christian education ... enables individuals to decide for themselves whether they will believe or not, by exercising their

capacity for reason as well as for faith” (Hulme, 1989, p. 86). More recently Australian Kevin Treston stated that “A religious school is not about indoctrination” (Treston, 1997, p. 14).

2.4 The Primary Purpose of a Catholic School

“Catholic education, as understood from official church documents, continues to make a distinction between primary and secondary aims” (Arthur, 1994, p.70). In an attempt to synthesise the *Theological and Canonical Perspectives* literature to date, I shall endeavour to propose a definition of the primary purpose of a Catholic school:

to attempt to provide an educational community for all; steeped in Catholic tradition while being cognisant of the rights of students to make their own choices. Gospel values expressed through the message of Jesus Christ permeate the activities of the school, prompting students to achieve academically while endeavouring to create a new world order characterised by service, justice and love. Students are prepared to live by Christian standards in a pluralistic society.

2.41 Achieving the Primary Purpose

Having proposed a primary purpose of Catholic schooling based on the various theological and canonical perspectives, it is necessary to review some of the literature in areas which can lead to the achievement of this primary purpose.

2.42 An Holistic Approach

“The goals, purposes, values and ideals of the Catholic school are all predetermined by the Catholic philosophy of life” (Arthur, 1994, p.69); if this were not there would be no justification for the existence of Catholic schools. That is why the Church “establishes her own schools ... as a privileged means of promoting the whole man (sic), since the school is a centre in which a specific concept of the world, of man (sic), and of history is purveyed” (The Catholic School, 1977, par. 8). Catholic schools aim to educate holistically, integrating all aspects of humanity, recognising the assumption that to be human is to be spiritual (Church in the Modern World, 1955, par. 14). Dwyer states that “The great contribution Catholic educators can make to the national conversation on schooling is to seek to balance the growing utilitarian emphasis with constant reminders of the potential of schooling to enhance the growth of the individual, to ennoble the human spirit, to build a compassionate community

and to revitalise the culture” (Dwyer, 1993b, p. 6). This is not possible within the framework of an education system which is secular and therefore does not have a spiritual and holistic dimension.

Conversely “the Catholic school is committed thus to the development of the whole man (sic), since in Christ the perfect man, all human values find their fulfilment and unity. Herein lies the specifically Catholic character of the school ... a synthesis of culture and faith, a synthesis of faith and life: the first is reached by integrating all the aspects of human knowledge through the subjects taught in the light of the gospel; the second in the growth of virtues characteristic of the Christian” (The Catholic School, 1977, par 35 : 37).

The implication is that a Catholic school is not simply a secular school with a religious dimension. On the contrary, the religious permeates the whole of the school’s curriculum and is integrated with everything that happens in the school. “The special character of the Catholic school ... is precisely the quality of the religious instruction integrated into the curriculum” (John Paul II, 1979, par. 69). Clearly “the curriculum in Catholic schools should ideally reflect a proper synthesis of religion and culture with faith and life” (The Catholic School, 1977, par. 49). The religious curriculum and the secular curriculum cannot be separated in a Catholic school because “in reality the curriculum as a whole, and every part of it, is religious, since there is nothing which does not ultimately relate to God” (The Catholic School, 1977, par. 33).

However, academic disciplines need to be taught with “scientific objectivity” (Religious Dimension of Education in a Catholic School, 1988, par. 51) and therefore “giving order to human culture in the light of the message of salvation cannot mean a lack of respect for the autonomy of the different academic disciplines” (Religious Dimension of Education in a Catholic School, 1988, par. 53). There needs to be a balance between the integration and the independence of subject areas.

2.43 Teaching Staff

“The lay Catholic educator is a person who exercises a specific mission within the church by living a faith, a secular vocation in the communitarian structure of the school: with the best possible professional qualifications, with an apostolic intention inspired by faith, for the integral formation of the human person, in an exercise of that pedagogy which will give emphasis to direct and personal contact with students ... Lay teachers must be profoundly convinced that they share in the sanctifying, and therefore educational mission of the church;

they cannot regard themselves as cut off from the ecclesiastical complex” (Lay Catholics in Schools: Witnesses to faith, 1982, par. 24). The same document later expands this concept: “The life of a Catholic teacher must be marked by the existence of a personal vocation in the life of the church, and not simply by the exercise of a profession” (Lay Catholics in Schools: Witnesses to Faith, 1982, par. 37).

It is not enough for a teacher in a Catholic school to have teaching qualifications; nor is it enough for a teacher in a Catholic school to be a good practitioner; “It is essential ... that each member in the school community, albeit with differing degrees of awareness, adopts a common vision, a common outlook on life, based on adherence to a scale of values in which he (sic) believes” (The Catholic School, 1977, par 29).

As teachers are undoubtedly significant role models to the students with whom they come into contact on a regular basis, it is important that teachers in a Catholic school “are practising their faith (and) also willing to give an appropriate form of witness to it as part of their professionalism” (McLaughlin, 1996, p. 150). At a system level there needs to be appropriate opportunities for professional, personal and spiritual development “to ensure their continuing formation” (The Catholic School, 1977, par, 78).

2.44 Clientele

In 1965, the Second Vatican Council stated that “The church should offer it’s educational service first to the poor or those deprived of family help or affliction or those who are far from the faith” (Declaration on Christian Education, 1965, par. 9). Twelve years later these sentiments were reiterated and expanded: “In the certainty that the spirit is at work in every person, the Catholic school offers itself to all, non-Christian included, with all it’s distinctive aims and means, acknowledging, preserving and promoting the spiritual and moral qualities, the social and cultural values, which characterise different civilisations” (The Catholic School, 1977 par. 65).

If Catholic schools are genuine about sharing the evangelising mission of the church, they need “To take up the cause of the poor and oppressed” (Barr, 1989. p. 2) and “In the spirit of freedom and respect ... accept students of other faiths or none” (Buetow, 1988, p. 282). “Catholic schools were opened for the poor. We cannot afford a terrible slur against us if ... they see us as a private school and thus costly” (Johnston & Chesterton, 1994, p. 54: 39). “Why should we limit enrolment to ‘good’ Catholic families? By recycling these good

Catholics are we fulfilling our responsibility to evangelise? We are certainly making the good ones safe, but what of outreach?" (Sippel, 1989, p. 288).

Of course, students rarely choose which schools they will attend; this is usually the domain of parents who "must be recognised as being primarily and principally responsible for their (children's) education" (Declaration on Christian Education, 1965, par. 3).

The church has definite views regarding the commitment that parents should have towards availing themselves of the Catholic education opportunities provided by the church. "Catholic parents are reminded of their duty to send their children to Catholic schools wherever this is possible" (Flannery, 1988, p. 734). Flannery reminds us that "All Christians have a right to a Christian education" (Flannery, 1988, p. 727) and that because "Education is, in a very special way, the concern of the church ... The church as a mother is under an obligation therefore, to provide for it's children an education" (Flannery, 1988, p. 729).

The church also has strong views pertaining to the role that parents should play in their children's education. Chronologically these views are:

1. "Parents must therefore be recognised as being primarily and principally responsible for their education" (Declaration on Education, 1965, par. 3).
2. "Everything that the Catholic educator does in a school takes place within the structure of an educational community, made up of the contacts and collaboration of the various groups - students, parents, teachers, directors, non-teaching staff - that together are responsible for making the school an instrument for integral formation" (Lay Catholics in Schools: Witness to faith, 1982, par. 22).
3. "The primary right of parents to educate their children must be upheld in all forms of collaboration between parents, teachers and school authorities, and particularly in forms of participation designed to give citizens a voice in the function of schools and in the formulation and implementation of school policy" (Charter of the Rights of the Family, 1983, par. 5e)
4. "There must be the closest co-operation between the parents and the teachers to whom they entrust their children to be educated. In fulfilling their task, teachers are to collaborate with the parents and willingly listen to them" (The Code of Canon Law, 1985, No. 796)
5. "the first and primary educators of children are their parents" (The Religious Dimension of Education in a Catholic School, 1988, par. 43)

2.45 The School as Faith Community

At present “there is little hard data to tell us what parents want from our Catholic schools” (Dwyer, 1993a, p.63). We can however draw on the research findings of Flynn (1993), Canavan (1994), Johnston and Chesterton (1994), McLaughlin (1997) and Quillinan (1997) to draw some conclusions.

Both Flynn and Canavan found that religious reasons are not the main motivation behind parents sending their children to Catholic schools. Indeed “ten religious goals were ranked amongst their lowest expectations” (Flynn, 1993, p.172) whereas “discipline and quality teachers” (Canavan, 1994, p. 180) are the main two reasons.

There is however a growing body of evidence to suggest that for most families who are members of a Catholic school community, the school is the only experience of church that they have. (McLaughlin, 1997; Quillinan, 1997). That is, ‘church’ for some eighty percent of Catholics is the ‘school’; only twenty percent of Catholics are involved in parish sacramental life (Cappo, 1996, p. 15). According to these figures, “the Catholic school is becoming an alternative and viable faith community - as distinct from the parish faith community” (Foley, 1996, p.79).

As parish structures become less significant in the lives of many Catholics “Building and living community must be prime, explicit goals of the contemporary Catholic school. Community is an especially critical need today largely because natural communities of the past have been weakened by many influences ... Consideration should also be given to the relationship of parish and school where circumstances suggest that the traditional parish may no longer form the best framework for formal schooling” (To Teach as Jesus Taught, 1972, par. 108).

Coriden suggests that “the parish is no longer able to provide a community for them” (1997, p. 5) as the vast majority of Catholics do not attend mass (Turner, 1992, Vol. 2 p. 240). Thus, “the role of the Catholic school becomes even more important than in former times” (Treston, 1997, p. 11). With this realisation comes the reality that if Catholic schools have become the face of the Catholic church for the majority of Catholics, they “must have a very strong Catholic ethos and a staff substantially at home in the Catholic tradition and in the challenges presented by it’s contemporary expression” (D’Orsa & D’Orsa, 1997, p. 77).

The reality of the contemporary Catholic church in Australia is that fewer families are involved in the parish, but an ever increasing number of families are enrolling at Catholic schools. This has led to the situation where families are experiencing a sense of faith community at the school level but not at a parish level. "The school community, as part of the total faith community, has a role to play in strengthening the often tenuous links with those on the margins of the church so that new possibilities can be explored" (D'Orsa & D'Orsa, 1997, p. 77): Perhaps the time is right to discard our traditional model of the church and develop a new model which places the parish school at the centre (where there is a parish school), with the traditional parish groups as subsets.

The Nature of Catholic Schools

2.5 The Distinctive Nature of Catholic Schools

Having proposed a primary purpose for Catholic schools and the possible means of achieving it, I shall attempt to identify the elements of the distinctive nature of Catholic schools. Again, the documents of particular relevance to this discussion are:

- The Declaration on Christian Education (1965)
- The Catholic School (1977)
- Lay Catholics in Schools : Witnesses to faith (1982)
- The Religious Dimension of Education in a Catholic School (1988)

The latter provides a summary of the Second Vatican Council's teachings on the distinctive characteristics of a Catholic school. These are:

- "a) the educational climate
- b) the personal development of each student
- c) the relationship established between culture and the Gospel
- d) the illumination of all knowledge with the light of the faith"

(The Religious Dimension of Education in a Catholic School, 1988, par. 1)

This document reiterates and expands on the teachings of the three previous documents pertaining to the community aspect of Catholic schools when it states that "it is inappropriate to continue to consider the Catholic school simply as an institution. It too must primarily be a community" (Religious Dimension of Education in a Catholic School, 1988, par. 31). If the school truly shares the evangelising mission with the church, it follows that "it is dependent

upon the nature of the beliefs about the church and the church is fundamentally the model for the community that the school should be" (Arthur, 1995, p. 139). An outcome of the Second Vatican Council was an attempt by the church to return to a new community orientated model of church, akin to Dulles "community of disciples model" (Dulles, 1987, p. 206). "This community dimension is perhaps one result of the new awareness of the church's nature as developed by the Council" (Religious Dimension of Education in a Catholic School, 1988, par. 31). "What makes the Catholic school distinctive is its attempt to generate a community climate in the school that is permeated by the Gospel spirit of freedom and love" (Declaration on Christian Education, 1965, par. 8). Again, this has been reiterated and expanded on in the subsequent Vatican documents.

When we refer to community in a Catholic school setting, it is important to consider what constitutes 'community'. Certainly it refers to more than merely a group of people being in the same place. It includes "the honouring of axiomatic Christian principles, which include solidarity with the oppressed, distributive love, preferential option for the poor, democracy, power sharing and basic human rights" (Justice in the World, 1971). If we accept that community involves these principles, we must also accept the need for "a redistribution of material resources ... measures to reconnect the excluded, the poor, the unemployed; to provide them with opportunities for social interaction; to give priority to the most vulnerable; to bring them out of dependence and isolation into interdependence and aloneness and with other groups in the community. What is crucial to community is the community seeking of inclusion, reparation or redress" (Cappo, 1996).

"Dwyer suggests that from their beginnings our schools have had a close affinity with the poor" (Quillinan and Ryan, 1994, p. 91) as indeed they should have had as they were established to cater for a people who were not only poor, but marginalised and oppressed. At the end of the second millennium, Catholics as a group are no longer oppressed, but the question can still be asked "for whom do our Catholic schools exist in the Australia of the 1990s?" (Quillinan and Ryan, 1994, p. 90). Is it the nature of our Catholic schools that they are still available to the oppressed and the poor? Do we still "reach out to the whole parish, the whole church"? (Ford, 1987, p. 53).

If we consider the historical context of Catholic schools as well as Vatican documents since the Second Vatican Council, it is clear that the nature of Catholic schools should include special provisions for the marginalised people; "To take up the cause of the poor and

oppressed is to take up the cause of Christ himself" (Barr, 1989, p. 2). I feel however that such factors as the following can make our Catholic schools exclusive:

- Enrolment Policies
- Payment of School Fees
- Payment of levies
- Compulsory purchase of books and equipment
- Wearing of school uniforms.

2.6 Conclusion

The review of the literature has revealed that one of the motivating forces when Catholic schools were first established was to protect Catholic children from the oppression and hostility of the Protestant majority (Crawford and Rossiter, 1986, p.6) while providing them with a Catholic world in which to grow up (Purnell, 1985, p. 120). There was however a massive paradigm shift after Vatican II which saw the church disregard much of its "inward looking, hostile to the world, sacred fortress mentality" (Treston, 1997, p.16) and accept "the religious freedom and personal conscience of individual students and their families" (Religious Dimension of Education in a Catholic School, 1988, par. 108). This provided Catholic educators with a focus for Catholic schooling which has welcomed students from different or no faith backgrounds and taken on a major role as partner with the church in its evangelising role (The Catholic School, 1977, par. 7: 9 : (Religious Dimension of Education in a Catholic School, 1988, Par. 34). The relevant documents are:

- The Declaration on Christian Education (1965)
- The Catholic School (1977)
- Lay Catholics in Schools : Witnesses to faith (1982)
- The Religious Dimension of Education in a Catholic School (1988)

A synthesis of the literature has led me to propose the following definition of the primary purpose of a Catholic school:

to attempt to provide an educational community for all; steeped in Catholic tradition while being cognisant of the rights of students to make their own choices. Gospel values expressed through the message of Jesus Christ permeate the activities of the school, prompting students to achieve academically while endeavouring to create a

new world order characterised by service, justice and love. Students are prepared to live by Christian standards in a pluralistic society.

In order to achieve the primary purpose of Catholic schooling, secondary aims are employed (Arthur, 1994, p. 70). This involves the recognition and acceptance that to be human is to be spiritual (Church in the Modern World, 1955, par. 14) and thus “the Catholic school is committed to the development of the whole man (sic)” (The Catholic School, 1977, par. 35). Therefore “The special character of the Catholic school .. is precisely the quality of the religious instruction integrated into the curriculum” (John Paul II, 1979, par. 69); “the curriculum in Catholic schools should ideally reflect a proper synthesis of religion and culture with faith and life” (The Catholic School, 1977, par. 49).

The literature makes the point on a number of occasions that teaching in a Catholic school is not simply a profession, but should be regarded as a vocation, with teachers sharing and promoting a common vision while being witness to the faith (Lay Catholics in Schools: Witnesses to Faith, 1982, par. 24: 37 : The Catholic School, 1977, par. 29; 78 : McLaughlin, 1996, p. 150).

The literature makes it clear that the church considers parents to be the primary educators of their children; they should work in community with the church and teachers to educate the children (Declaration on Education, 1965, par. 3: Lay Catholics in Schools: Witness to faith, 1982, par. 22: Charter of the Rights of the Family, 1983, par. 5e: Code of Canon Law, 1985, No. 796: The Religious Dimension of Education in a Catholic School, 1988, par. 43).

The research available appears to suggest that there is a discrepancy between the church’s primary purpose of Catholic schools and the reality for parents. Religious goals ranked low (Flynn, 1993, p.172) whereas “discipline and quality teachers” (Canavan, 1994, p. 180) rated highly.

Research also indicates that the majority of Catholics are not involved in parish life (Cappo, 1996, p. 15) and the only experience of church for many families associated with Catholic schools is the school (McLaughlin, 1997: Quillinan, 1997). D’Orsa and D’Orsa suggest that “The school community, as part of the total faith community, has a role to play in strengthening the often tenuous links with those on the margins of the church” (D’Orsa & D’Orsa, 1997, p. 77) as “the parish is no longer able to provide a community” (Coriden, 1997, p. 5) for most Catholics.

The distinctive nature of the Catholic school is that it is communitarian: This is stated in the four Vatican documents:

The Declaration on Christian Education (1965, par. 8)

The Catholic School (1977, pars. 53 - 57)

Lay Catholics in Schools : Witnesses to Faith (1982, par. 22)

The Religious Dimension of Education in a Catholic School (1988, pars. 22; 31)

As a partner in the evangelising mission of the church it follows that “it is dependent upon the nature of the beliefs about the church and the church is fundamentally the model for the community that the school should be” (Arthur, 1995, p. 139). The particular model of community includes “solidarity with the oppressed, distributive love, preferential option for the poor, democracy, power sharing and basic human rights” (Justice in the World, 1971).

The review of the literature invites further research as there appears to be a discrepancy between what the church regards the purpose of the Catholic school to be and the reasons why parents actually send their children to Catholic schools. I also suggest that the evangelising role of the school may now encompass the parents and families of students and not just the students. If it is true that Catholic schools are the only experience of church for many students and their families, and that the parish structure is no longer a viable option, we may need to review both the parish and school as church and possibly adopt new models for the future.

Chapter Three

Design of the Study or Methodology

3.1 Introduction

The purpose of the study is to gather initial information about the purpose of Catholic schools from the perspectives of Catholic school administration teams in the Rockhampton Diocese. The research is very much concerned with the perceptions of particular people in a particular time and place.

If new models of Catholic school and church are to be developed, then the task in changing any organisation, depends upon the varieties of reality which individuals see in existing organisations, and upon their acceptance of new ideas which can or should be achieved through social action (Greenfield, 1975, p. 19).

3.2 The Research Approach

Investigating the perceptions of major stakeholders in any organisation is important. Those perceptions take on greater significance if we accept Greenfield's definition of organisations; the perceived reality within which people make decisions and take actions which seem right and proper to them. Those people are always learning, always interpreting and inventing "the reality" around them. Organisations are not structures subject to universal laws, rather they are "cultural artefacts dependent upon the specific meaning and intention of the people within them" (Greenfield, 1975, p. 74).

Case study approach appeared to be the most appropriate structure for the research and design.

3.21 The Case Study

Case study is defined by Wilson as "a process of research which tries to describe and analyse some entity in qualitative, complex and comprehensive terms not infrequently as it unfolds over a period of time" (Wilson, 1979, p. 448). Case study involves the collection of data to produce some understanding of the entity being studied; it is the "preferred strategy when 'how', 'why', or 'what' questions are being asked ... or when the focus is on a contemporary

phenomenon within a real life context” (Burns, 1994 p. 313). Case study has the added advantage of coming close to investigating the way people know and understand in everyday life.

The data gathered will be “glossed” with the meanings and purposes of those people and places, (Greenfield, 1975, p. 17) and the interpretive techniques employed seek to “describe, decode, translate, and otherwise come to terms with the meaning, not the frequency, of certain more or less naturally occurring phenomena in the social world” (Van Maanen, 1979, p. 520). This approach seeks to produce data “in vivo”, as it were. The researcher must be part of the research and must operate as closely as possible to the workplace as this type of methodology “is concerned with the rational, the serendipitous, the intuitive, the researcher’s experience, contextual understandings and empathetic objectives” (Cook, 1986, p.2).

3.22 Appropriateness of the Case Study Approach

Case studies have certain basic generic qualities which add to the appropriateness of this approach for this particular study:

1. Case studies are particularistic as they portray events in one particular situation/phenomenon as it exists in reality
2. Case studies are holistic as they endeavour to capture as many variables as possible
3. They are longitudinal as they have a dynamic quality and tell a story which covers a period of time
4. They are qualitative as they usually use prose and literary techniques to describe, elicit images, and analyse situations rather than to summarise quantitative data.
5. They present documentation of events, quotes, samples of artefacts and so on. (Wilson, 1979, p. 448).
6. The goal of case study research is to increase understanding of the variables, parameters and dynamics of the case under study. By its very nature a case study provides information on the actions and perspectives of a variety of groups (Wilson, 1979).

The study may serve to gather some data about issues currently influencing Catholic schools in the Rockhampton Diocese. The data gained from this research may also represent a valuable contribution to theory building in that it may serve to confirm, challenge or extend a theory by refuting a universal generalisation (Burns, 1994, p. 314). It may assist in refocussing the direction of future investigations in the area by showing that things are so or that such an

interpretation is plausible in a particular case and therefore might be so in other cases (Burns, 1994, p. 313).

3.3 Limitations of the Study

The intention of the study is to explore the perceptions of the leaders of Catholic schools in the Rockhampton Diocese. It is acknowledged that the study has limitations and does not necessarily reflect the views of all administration teams in the Diocese. Burns suggests that the definition of the group as a unit which separates it in some way from the general population is crucial to any successful case study. Not only must the researcher make sure that “they are not just people of the same age, sex or other attribute, but that they actually identify with each other, share expectations and interact in a close way” (Burns, 1994, p. 315).

In addition, any attempt to try to seek responses from everyone involved in Catholic education in the Diocese would be an impossible task and beyond the scope of this study. In addition, for a case study, the focus of attention is in the case in its “idiosyncratic complexity, not on the whole population of cases. It is not something to be represented by an array of scores. We want to find out what goes on within that complex bounded system” (Burns, 1994, p. 313).

School leaders were deemed to include the Principal, Assistant to the Principal (Religious Education) or the Religious Education Coordinator, and the Assistant to the Principal (Administration), and in some secondary schools, Deputy Principals.

As the study was seeking perceptions rather than endeavouring to prove or disprove a hypothesis, the notion in case-study research that there is no one true definition of the situation was an advantage. In social situations, truth is multiple (MacDonald and Walker, 1983, p. 7). Coming to *understand* an individual in relation to his (sic) environment is regarded by some as the greatest advantage of this methodology (Verma & Beard, 1981, p. 62).

3.4 Ethical Considerations

3.41 Approval for the Research

Approval for the research was gained through the university Ethics Committee. Ethical considerations are “inseparable from your everyday interactions with others and with your data” (Glesne & Peshkin, 1992, p. 109). McDonald and Walker suggest that case study

research in education takes the researcher into a complex set of politically sensitive relationships. They suggest that the following critical issues need to be addressed:

- to whose needs and interests does the research respond?
- who owns the data?
- who has access to the data?
- what is the status of the researcher's interpretations of events, vis a vis the interpretations made by others?
- what obligations does the researcher owe to his (sic) subjects, his (sic) sponsors, his (sic) fellow professionals, others?
- who is the research for? (McDonald & Walker, 1975, p. 4)

The ethical principles adopted by the Council of American Anthropological Association address issues that potentially face qualitative researchers. In part these include:

1. Where research involves the acquisition of material and information transferred on the assumption of trust between persons, it is axiomatic that the rights, interests and sensitivities of those studied must be safeguarded.
2. The aims of the investigation should be communicated as well as possible to the informant.
3. Informants have a right to remain anonymous.
4. There is an obligation to reflect on the foreseeable repercussions of research and publication on the general population being studied. (Glesne & Peshkin, 1992, p. 111)

3.42 Informed Consent

To address these ethical considerations the informed consent of those participating in the study was considered to be of paramount importance. Through informed consent participants are made aware:

- that participation is voluntary
- of any aspects of the research that might affect their well being
- that they can freely choose to stop participation at any point in the study (Deiner and Crandall, 1978).

The following process outlines how the researcher offered confidentiality to informants and offered them control over the use of the information. Periodic negotiation with the sponsors of the study and program participants was undertaken to ensure that the key concepts of confidentiality, negotiation and accessibility were preserved (McDonald & Walker, 1983, p. 7).

Permission to undertake the study was obtained from the Director of the Rockhampton Catholic Education Office.

At a Diocesan Principals Conference in March 1997, questionnaires (Appendix 1) were handed to the principals of each of the Catholic schools in the Diocese. Principals were addressed by the researcher who outlined the purpose of the study. It was stressed that schools were free to respond and that the information received would be treated confidentially. Individual schools would not be identified.

3.5 Collecting the Research Data

According to Greenfield, organisations do not exist in any real or ultimate sense, they are not 'out there' but rather they are inside people, and it is only through people doing things and acting out their own values that we make something real that we call organisation. Organisations are built upon purpose and upon value; but that value is "incorporated in what people are doing, so that in the way we exist, in the way we are, the very kind of people we are, we make our organisations" (Greenfield, 1975, p. 6).

In the sampling of people, the researcher works from a "sociologically axiomatic base": In any human organisation, people stand in different relationships to the whole of that organisation, in some important respects probably viewing it and using it differently; these differences can be gleaned from what people say and how they act (Schatzman & Strauss, 1973, p. 41).

If people do stand in such a relationship to an organisation, then the case study format is the most effective way of conducting the research.

3.51 Research Data from Schools:

Data was gathered from administration teams of primary and secondary schools in the diocese by way of written responses on current perceptions of the role of the Catholic school. The

instrument used was a survey entitled *An Initial Exploration of Current Perceptions of Some of the Roles of the Catholic School by Catholic School Administration teams* (Appendix 1). The questionnaire was developed in association with Dr Denis McLaughlin and Dr Gayle Spry from the Australian Catholic University and was trialled on over sixty teachers and administrators from each of the five Queensland Diocese.

Table 1.1

Profile of Schools in the Rockhampton Diocese

Schools		Number of Pupils
Secondary	10	5 433
Primary	28	6 675

Table 1.2

Return rate of questionnaire from Catholic Schools in the Rockhampton Diocese

Primary Schools	65%
Secondary Schools	60%

3.6 Timeline for the Research

February 1997	Permission sought to undertake the research study from the Diocesan Director of Catholic Education
March 1997	Questionnaires sent to schools
April 1997	Data Collection
May - September 1997	Reporting and Reflection Phase Reflection on the data

Reflection on the possible consequences of the research data

November 1997

Information presented to:
Director of Catholic Education
Bishop of Rockhampton

3.7 Reliability and Validity

The aim of the case study researcher is to increase understanding of the variables, parameters and dynamics of the case under study, rather than seeking one true definition of the situation, for in social situations, truth is multiple (McDonald and Walker 1983, p. 7). This approach to research can depend on a variety of methods for gathering data and a variety of sources; this particular case study included questionnaires being completed by administration teams in primary and secondary schools in the Rockhampton Diocese. “Triangulation”, or using multiple data sources and methods is considered critical in establishing data trustworthiness (Burns, 1994, p. 321). Triangulation was achieved by the use of regular feedback to participants to test the researcher’s observations, interpretations and tentative conclusions. This allowed for “face validity” which occurs when data, emerging analysis and conclusions are fed back to participants (Spry, 1989, p. 101). This also addresses one of the essential aims of action research; improving and involving (Spry, 1989, p. 103), enabling participants to be reorientated, focussed and energised thus enabling them to know reality in order to transform it (Lather, 1986, p. 271).

To promote further trustworthiness of the data, Lincoln and Guba (1985) suggest a procedure for enlisting an outsider to ‘audit’ fieldwork notes and subsequent analysis and interpretations. A peer principal was enlisted as a ‘critical friend’ and was involved at various stages of data collecting and analysis. The design of the study included not only a variety of data sources and methods of collection, but data was fed back to participants at regular intervals to ensure a sense of ownership and collaboration, as well as accuracy of interpretation (Kemmis & McTaggart, 1982, p. 5).

3.8 Overview of the Research Design

Organisations can be regarded not as structures subject to universal laws, but as “cultural artefacts dependent on the specific meaning and intention of the people within them” (Greenfield, 1975, p. 74). The purpose of this research was to gather perceptions of leaders

in Catholic schools in the Rockhampton Diocese, to discover stresses and disjunctures that threaten these definitions, and thirdly to develop the commitment of people to new social goals and the means they consider effective in achieving them (Greenfield, 1973, p. 568).

As the research is very much concerned with the direct experience of school leaders, a case study format was selected as the most effective means of achieving the end.

In order to ensure trustworthiness and accuracy, the data and tentative conclusions were fed back to the participants and were subjected to scrutiny by a critical friend. Joint ownership of the data and the project itself were considered to be important, as was a sense of collaboration with participants.

Chapter Four

Presentation and Analysis of Findings

4.1 Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the study is to gather initial information about the purpose of Catholic schools from the perspectives of Catholic school administration teams in the Rockhampton Diocese. Depending on the size of the school, the administration team comprises Principal and Assistant to the Principal (Religious Education), or Religious Education Coordinator, and Assistant to the Principal (Administration). In secondary schools the administration team may also include Deputy Principals.

4.11 Gathering Perceptions from Administration Teams

Because the aim of the study is to gather information from administration teams about their own particular school, case study was selected as the orchestrating research approach. A questionnaire was developed in association with Dr Denis McLaughlin and Dr Gayle Spry from the Australian Catholic University (McAuley Campus). The questionnaire was handed to school principals at the 1997 Rockhampton Diocesan Principals Conference; another copy was also mailed to each principal following the conference. An accompanying letter stated that I was seeking opinions from the teams, and that the information gained from the questionnaire would be presented to the Bishop of Rockhampton and the Catholic Education Office. Two follow-up facsimiles were sent to each school further inviting them to respond. Eighteen of the twenty-eight primary school teams and six of the ten secondary school teams responded.

4.12 The Questionnaire

The research instrument used was a survey questionnaire entitled *An Initial Exploration of the Perceptions of Some of the Purposes of the Catholic School by Catholic School Administration Teams*.

The research sought information in three key areas:

1. The perceived purposes of the Catholic school.
2. The changing role of the Catholic school today and it's relationship to the parish.
3. The changing roles of the parish and school.

4.2 Section One: The Perceived Purposes of the Catholic School

4.21 Question 1: What does the administration team think is the specific mission of your school in this local area?

Primary

The most common response was the need for quality education and academic excellence. This was closely followed by the view that schools should espouse and promote gospel values. Other popular responses included providing a holistic education; being an experience of church; and witness to Christ/ faith.

Secondary

The secondary school teams gave quality education the highest priority. "Valuing Jesus" was another response that was stated by half of the respondents. Other responses, all of which were listed only once, were for students to reach their full potential; to teach Religious Education; to offer an experience of church; to promote gospel values; and to evangelise.

4.22 Question 2 What important differences do you perceive between your school and government and other non-government schools in your area?

Primary

Administration team's responses to this question seem to be connected to some degree to their perceptions of the "specific mission of their schools". The most favoured response was the emphasis given to gospel values-based education within a "community". Other listed differences were:

- The teaching of Religious Education
- The collaborative nature of decision making

- Pastoral care
- More caring staff
- Catering for the needs of the 'whole child'

Secondary

Secondary responses differed from those given by their primary colleagues. The most favoured response was that the school caters for the 'whole child'. Other responses included:

- The teaching of Religious Education
- Behaviour Management based on forgiveness
- Pastoral Care
- The spiritual dimension of the school

4.23 Question 3: What are the most important reasons parents give for sending their children to your school?

Primary

Four reasons were common to most of the responses:

- The emphasis given by the school to the promotion of Christian values
- Discipline
- Caring staff
- Concern for all students.

Other specific reasons given were the sense of community; proven academic outcomes; pastoral care and; the specific teaching of Religious Education.

Secondary

All of the respondents stated pastoral care as a reason why parents chose their school. The other common reason was discipline.

Other reasons given included the promotion of Christian values and the faith dimension of the school; caring staff and the smaller size of the school (presumably compared to larger government schools).

4.3 Section Two: The changing role of the Catholic school today and it's relationship to parish

4.31 Question 4: Estimate what percentage of your parents would attend Saturday night / Sunday worship weekly if such is available.

Primary and secondary results were similar, with primary administration teams estimating that 29% of parents attended weekend mass, and secondary teams estimating 25%.

4.32 Question 5: If the opportunity is available estimate the percentage of your parents who would regularly attend / class organised worship or liturgy.

Primary school administration teams estimated that 37% of parents attend school / class organised worship or liturgy. The secondary response was 19%.

The primary responses suggested that the percentage is higher for lower school liturgies. Secondary responses indicated that attendance was greater on "major occasions" such as Opening and End of Year masses.

4.33 Question 6: If there is a discrepancy between the results for questions 4 and 5 please comment.

Primary

The discrepancies were in the area of (a) attend school worship and not weekend worship and (b) attend weekend worship and not school worship.

(a) The most common response was that non Catholic or non practising Catholics feel welcomed and therefore comfortable at school celebrations. Other comments were that the school celebrations are shorter and therefore more meaningful than weekend masses, and that some parents see attendance at school celebrations as a social occasion. A common thread from a number of responses was that the school celebration is seen as a special "event" as parents see their children "perform".

An interesting comment was “They seek family based participation / involvement rather than focus on either adult or child”.

(b) A small number of respondents commented that parents who attend weekend mass but do not attend school celebrations, do so because of weekday work commitments or living a distance from the school.

Secondary

(a) Only one secondary response commented on the parents who attend school celebrations but not weekend mass: “They see the college as a real community. Many see parish-based organised religion as irrelevant to their lives and they don’t feel any loyalty to that community like they do to the college”.

(b) In the main the comments pertaining to parents who do not attend school celebrations were related to parents of boarding students; these parents are obviously unable to attend school liturgies regularly. The other comment related to the inability of working parents to attend such occasions.

4.34 Question 7: What areas of advice / care do you provide to students other than curriculum, career and classroom behaviour?

Primary

There was an overwhelming response identifying counselling as the main area of advice / care provided to primary school students. Counselling is provided relating to grief, family (separation and divorce), trauma, change, relationships and self esteem. Other support includes promoting good sportsmanship, time management, personal health and hygiene and public behaviour.

An underlying theme to the responses was that school is often the only “constant” in some children’s lives, and staff therefore need to be reassuring and affirming of the children’s actions.

Secondary

The secondary responses were less definitive, possibly because most secondary schools employ professional counsellors. However, it is evident that staff do provide counselling in

the same areas as the primary staffs as well as the added areas of eating disorders and homesickness (Boarding facilities).

4.35 Question 8: Do you perceive students using school personnel for this purpose as well as other church people? Please elaborate.

Primary

The majority of responses suggested that students use only school personnel and do not use any other church people. Reasons were fairly generic - children feel distanced from the church; community aspect of the school; teachers are willing to listen. Two teams responded that the children at the school will also use the Parish priest if they have personal contact with him. Another response was “There is no deliberate emphasis on an either/or approach. School and church roles are seen as one and the same”.

Secondary

Secondary teams also indicated that students do not use church people, but rather tend to utilise the services of the school-employed counsellors. One school team stated that that “Students use school personnel .. and also priests.”

4.36 Question 9: What areas of advice / care do you provide to parents?

Primary Administration teams gave lengthy responses to this question. The secondary responses were in no way as lengthy; however, the content was almost identical.

As was the case with the children, the main area of advice/care given to parents is counselling. The areas common to most schools are:

- Financial advice
- Personal relationships
- Child behaviour management
- Marital advice
- Dealing with domestic violence
- Coping with separation and divorce
- Referrals to Centacare

Other common responses included helping with home based sacramental programs, adult faith development, parent information sessions (curriculum), fee concessions and emergency housing (secondary).

4.37 Question 10: Do you perceive parents using the school personnel for this purpose as well as other church related people? Please elaborate.

Primary

The majority of responses state that the parents use the school personnel instead of other church people. Typical of the reasons given are that school personnel are known by the parents whereas the parish priest is not; the school is used as a starting point; another is that school personnel are “on the spot”. In a small number of responses other church related people are not available as there is no resident priest.

Four administration teams responded that parents do not use the school personnel for this purpose: No reasons are given.

Secondary

Secondary administration teams perceive that parents use the school instead of church people. Typical of the responses is “The school provides much more support than the parish due to the knowledge staff have of the children. The parish offers it but the uptake rate does not compare”. The professional counsellors are the main point of contact in secondary schools.

4.4 Section Three: The evangelising roles of parish and school are changing

4.41 Question 11: Does your school provide assistance to needy students with such items as uniform, text books, breakfast? Others - please describe.

Primary

Two respondents stated “No”. All others indicated they provided uniforms, books, lunches and an ever increasing amount of fee concessions. Other financial assistance is given in terms of waving or reducing costs of excursions, Arts Councils and other extra curricula activities.

Secondary

Secondary responses were similar to those of the primary teams, with the added areas of boarding scholarships and emergency accommodation.

4.42 Question 12: Is your school used for local community activities?

Primary

Four responses indicated that the school is not used for local activities. All of the other schools are used extensively by the local communities generally, as well as the parish.

Activities listed include:

- All parish activities
- Sporting clubs
- Festival groups
- Social events
- Community meetings and gatherings
- Craft classes
- Elections
- Bingo
- Yoga
- Adult education
- Neighbourhood Watch

Secondary

Half of the secondary teams indicated that their schools are not used for local community activities. Three of the schools indicated the schools are used in the same ways as listed for primary schools. Another is used by the parish.

4.43 Question 13: What other experiences of church do you think the majority of your students have?

Primary

Of the eighteen respondents, eleven stated that the majority of their students have no other experience of church. A small number of respondents believe that children experience Church

within their families and through home based sacramental preparation. Occasional church visits for baptisms, marriages and major church calendar events such as Christmas and Easter are also mentioned.

Secondary

Secondary responses were similar to those given by the primary teams. One school team stated “Negative ones in which they are not involved or included”.

It is evident that all school administration teams believe that the main experience of church for all students is through the school.

4.44 Question 14: In your opinion is the school the main experience of church for the majority of your parents?

The response to this question was almost a unanimous “Yes” for both primary and secondary administration teams. The only exceptions to this were from two of the secondary schools, one of whom stated that it is “Difficult to answer this as we cover a range of parishes”. The other wrote that “Our school is less important in the lives of parents than the primary school”, but conceded that “50% of our parents have no other contact with church”.

4.45 Question 15: Does your school provide education programs for parents?

Primary

The primary administration teams indicated that their schools offer an extensive range of education programs for parents. The vast majority stated that they regularly provide Parent Information Sessions on curriculum. A large number also indicated that they offer education programs concerning Personal Development Education (The diocese is currently developing guidelines for PDE, therefore it has a high profile). Sacramental programs are a common feature of education programs for parents (The diocese is currently in the midst of shifting the emphasis from school-based to home-based programs). Parenting programs, Parents and Friends initiated presentations and programs aimed at helping parents to assist their children with reading and writing were listed by a third of the respondents.

Three of the eighteen teams indicated that the school provided Religious Education programs for parents. Some schools may, however, consider PDE and Sacramental programs to include RE.

Secondary

The majority of respondents indicated that they do provide education programs for parents. The main focus appears to be on parenting programs. One each of the schools listed Personal Development Education, Overall Performance (OP) Workshops, theology courses and drug education.

Both primary and secondary respondents considered regular newsletter articles on faith to be parent education.

4.46 Question 16: Please draw a diagram to illustrate the school/parish and local community relationship at your school.

Primary

Eighteen primary administration teams responded to this question. The results can be categorised into four groups.

Model One

Fifty percent of respondents drew illustrations which indicated that parish and school are intertwined with other activities being related to both. This model indicates a very real relationship/partnership between parish and school.

Model Two

Six of the respondents drew the parish/church at the centre of the diagram with the school being one of the many ministries, along with State School catechesis, aged care etc..

Model Three

Two of the respondents drew the parish and the school in separate domains, indicating that the two worked independently of each other with the only uniting factors being the staff of the school and the home-based sacramental programs.

Model Four

One respondent drew “Faith Community” at the centre of the diagram with other groups, including school, parish and families of other faiths, contributing to it. The respondent explains “Once it could be said that the parish and the community were one and the same. This is changing, so that now the parish related activities and personnel have a diminishing input into the faith community along with many other groups and influences”.

Secondary

Model Five

Five secondary administration teams responded to the question. Four drew the school at the centre with parishes, primary schools and other secondary schools around it. The other had the same model except that the parish was at the centre providing for chaplaincy for the school. It too had other schools, but also included parish ministries.

It was interesting to note that none of the primary schools included secondary schools in their models; nor did any of the eighteen place the school at the centre. All of the secondary schools included primary schools.

Chapter Five

Review and Synthesis

5.1 Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the study is to gather initial information about the purpose of Catholic schools from the perspectives of Catholic school administration teams in the Rockhampton Diocese. Depending on the size of the school, the administration team comprises Principal and Assistant to the Principal (Religious Education), or Religious Education Coordinator, and Assistants to the Principal (Administration). In secondary schools the administration team may also include Deputy Principals.

5.11 Gathering Perceptions from Administration Teams

Because the aim of the study is to gather information from administration teams about their own particular school, case study was selected as the orchestrating research approach. A questionnaire was developed in association with Dr Denis McLaughlin and Dr Gayle Spry from the Australian Catholic University (McAuley Campus). The questionnaire was handed to school principals at the 1997 Rockhampton Diocesan Principals Conference; another copy was also mailed to each principal following the conference. An accompanying letter stated that I was seeking opinions from the teams, and that the information gained from the questionnaire would be presented to the Bishop of Rockhampton and the Catholic Education Office. Two follow-up facsimiles were sent to each school further inviting them to respond. Eighteen of the twenty-eight primary school teams and six of the ten secondary school teams responded.

5.12 The Questionnaire

The research instrument used was a survey questionnaire entitled *An Initial Exploration of the Perceptions of Some of the Purposes of the Catholic School by Catholic School Administration Teams*.

The research sought information in three key areas:

1. The perceived purposes of the Catholic school.

2. The changing role of the Catholic school today and it's relationship to the parish.
3. The changing roles of the parish and school.

5.2 Section 1: The Perceived Purposes of the Catholic School

The majority of respondents indicated that quality education and therefore academic success is the primary purpose of the Catholic school. This was followed by espousing and promoting Gospel values.

Administration teams reported that parents list pastoral care and discipline as the main reasons that they send their children to Catholic schools.

A review of the literature has led me to propose the following definition of the primary purpose of a Catholic school:

to attempt to provide an educational community for all; steeped in Catholic tradition while being cognisant of the rights of students to make their own choices. Gospel values expressed through the message of Jesus Christ permeate the activities of the school, prompting students to achieve academically while endeavouring to create a new world order characterised by service, justice and love. Students are prepared to live by Christian standards in a pluralistic society.

In order to achieve the primary purpose of Catholic schooling, secondary aims are employed (Arthur, 1994, p. 70). This involves the recognition and acceptance that to be human is to be spiritual (Church in the Modern World, 1955, par. 14) and thus “the Catholic school is committed to the development of the whole man (sic)” (The Catholic School, 1977, par. 35). Therefore “The special character of the Catholic school .. is precisely the quality of the religious instruction integrated into the curriculum” (John Paul II, 1979, par. 69); “the curriculum in Catholic schools should ideally reflect a proper synthesis of religion and culture with faith and life” (The Catholic School, 1977, par. 49).

While the respondents did not specifically address the issues in my definition, I believe that if quality education, resulting in academic success, is taking place, along with an emphasis on Gospel values, pastoral care and discipline, our schools are operating within the framework of what the review of the literature would indicate is the purpose of Catholic schools.

5.3 The Changing Role of the Catholic School Today and its Relationship with the Parish

Whereas in days gone by mass was a feature of the majority of Catholic families' weekends, it appears that this is no longer the case. The research indicates that administration teams estimate that between twenty-five and twenty-nine percent of parents attend weekend mass. However thirty-seven percent of primary school parents are estimated to attend class organised liturgies, and nineteen percent of secondary parents. It is however evident that the *class organised* figures are not valid as there are many factors to be considered; working parents, non-Catholics, parents attending in order to watch their children 'perform', parents of boarders who do not live in the area and so on.

The administration teams perceive that school staffs provide a great deal of counselling to both students and parents in many areas. Neither students or parents are perceived to use church personnel for this purpose as they are more comfortable with staff.

5.4 The Evangelising Roles of the Parish are Changing

Most administration teams stated that the school does provide assistance to needy students in many ways. However, this may not indicate that roles are changing; as one of the secondary principals wrote:

"We give concessions, find books, clothes etc if needed, help in emergencies or with counselling . Schools have done this for the past thirty-five years of my teaching"

The implication of this particular comment is that this is an area where Catholic schools have traditionally helped their students and families.

This section also dealt with the area of the school being used for local community activities. Consensus was that primary schools are used extensively and secondary schools to a lesser degree. Due to their very nature, primary schools are parish based, and therefore are naturally a part of a community. A natural consequence of this may be the use of the school by the community.

The administration teams of both the primary and secondary schools believe that the main experience of church for children and parents is indeed the school.

5.5 The School/Parish and Local Community Relationship

While the diagrams indicated a diversity of perceptions, there was a noticeable and marked difference between the perceptions of the primary and secondary administration teams. Again, this was not unexpected, as primary schools are usually closely associated with a parish community, whereas secondary schools are not. The primary administration teams generally saw a close connection between the parish and the school with either the parish or the parish/school at the centre. The secondary administration teams tended to place the school at the centre, surrounding it with the other groups.

5.6 Conclusions of the Research

Results of the research indicate that the families of children attending Catholic schools in the Rockhampton Diocese are not as closely associated with parish structures as they were in years gone by. Due to the greater mobility of families, and the fact that the parish is now only one of many communities available to, and accessible by, them, fewer families would claim to be aligned to a particular parish. Meanwhile, more families are enrolling their children at Catholic schools.

As a consequence of families being involved in school communities, but rejecting parish communities, the following factors have emerged:

1. An increasing number of students and families are availing themselves of services provided by the schools. In a number of instances this includes counselling - an activity for which most members of a school's staff are not trained.
2. In the great majority of cases, students and families do not use parish personnel (if they are available) for the above purposes. This is because, due to the involvement with the school and the lack of involvement with the parish, people feel more comfortable at the school than the parish.
3. The only experience of church for many families is the experience they have as a consequence of their involvement with the school.

Based on these findings, it is necessary for school authorities to address the issues of:-

- Providing adequate training for school staff members who are increasingly being called upon to act in counselling roles and other roles for which they are not trained.

- Developing a model of “church” which serves the needs of students and parents associated with the school.

5.7 Recommendations for Future Research

The research has raised a number of questions regarding the nature and purpose of Catholic schools and the changing roles of the school and the parish as perceived by Catholic school administration teams. If we are to truly serve the needs of students and parents involved with Catholic schools, it is necessary for us to gather information from this group to ascertain their perceptions. Therefore I recommend that further research needs to be undertaken in the form of *An Initial Exploration of the Perceptions of Some of the Purposes of the Catholic School by Parents of Students Attending Catholic Schools*. The research findings of this project could be used to respond to the question posed in 1994 by Quillinan and Ryan “For whom do our Catholic schools exist?”

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APPENDIX 1

Copy of the questionnaire:

An initial exploration of the current perceptions of some of the purposes of the Catholic school by Catholic school administration teams

March 6, 1997

Dear Principal,

re : Perceptions of Catholic Schooling

Many of us now believe that the Catholic School is the main experience of church for many, if not most of our students. But what does this mean?

Research into other areas of Catholic Schooling indicate some tentative conclusions:

- 1) Regular attendance at Sunday Eucharist has fallen;
- 2) Many parents see the school as providing services which were seen perhaps as the domain of the parish;
- 3) Schools are responding to the needs of students and families in new ways;
- 4) Many parents and students see the school community as more responsive to their needs than the parish community.

My request is that your Administration Team explore these questions together. The questions accompanying this letter are seeking your opinion only - but your opinion is important. What is the reality for your school - is your school the main experience of church? and if so what are the practical experiences of that?

The information gained from this questionnaire will be collated and presented to the Catholic Education Office and to Bishop Brian Heenan. The report will be in general terms and no school response will be identified.

Also, I am undertaking research as part of my M. Ed. Leadership at the Australian Catholic University. This questionnaire has been developed with Dr Denis McLaughlin and Dr Gayle Spry. The purpose of the questionnaire as far as my study is concerned is to gather initial information about the purposes of the Catholic school from the perspective of the Administration Team. It should only take about 15 minutes to complete. Results will be treated confidentially. Your school will not be identified. Results will be destroyed on completion of the study.

I thank you sincerely for your contribution and look forward to collating the responses.

Yours faithfully,

(Simon A.C. Watkins)

N.B. 2 copies have been enclosed - only 1 needs to be returned.

Rationale

The information received will be treated confidentially and individual schools will not be identified.

Is your school: P- 7 _____ 8 - 10 _____ 8 - 12 _____
 P - 12 _____ Boys _____ Girls _____
 Co - Ed _____

No. of families _____ No. of students _____ No. of full-time teachers _____

Please return to:

Simon Watkins
P.O. Box 9522
PARK AVENUE, 4701

by Friday April 11, 1997

Question 1 to 3 ask you to explore the perceived purposes of the Catholic School.

1. What does the Admin Team think is the specific mission of your school in this local area?

2. What important differences do you perceive between your school and government and other nongovernment schools in your area?

3. What are the most important reasons parents give for sending their children to your school?

Questions 4 and 5 ask you to make estimations only. The difficulty involved is readily acknowledged.

4. Estimate what percentage of your parents would attend Saturday night /Sunday worship weekly if such is available.

5. If the opportunity is available estimate the percentage of your parents who would regularly attend school / class organised worship or liturgy.

6. If there is a discrepancy between the results for questions 4 & 5 please comment:

The staff in Catholic schools (including yourselves) are often called upon to provide pastoral services in addition to teaching and administration. Questions 7 to 10 seek to explore this aspect of school life.

7. What areas of advice/care do you provide to **STUDENTS** other than curriculum, career and classroom behaviour?

8. Do you perceive **STUDENTS** using school personnel for this purpose as well as other church people? Please elaborate.

9. What areas of advice / care do you provide to **PARENTS**?

10. Do you perceive **PARENTS** using the school personnel for this purpose as well as other church people? Please elaborate.

The evangelising roles of parish and school are changing. Questions 11 - 16 explore this issue.

11. Does your school provide assistance to needy students with such items as uniform, text books, breakfast? Others - please describe.

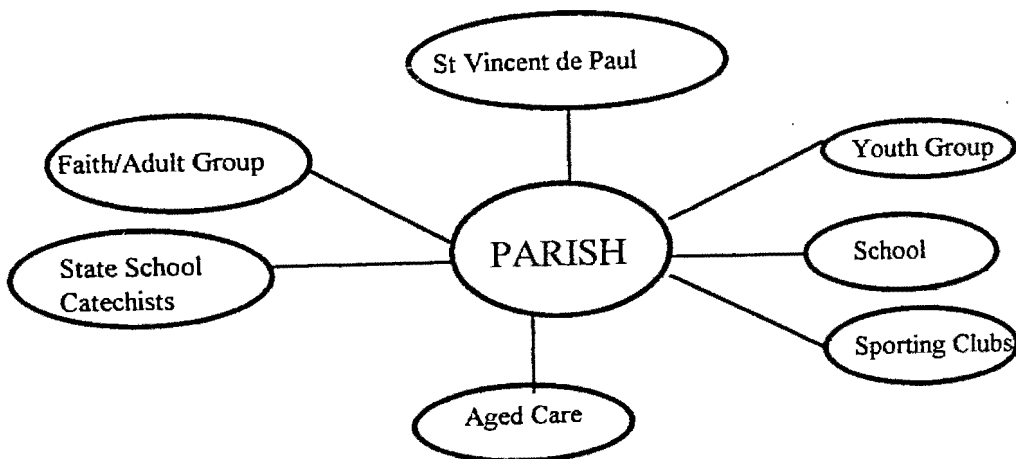
12. Is your school used for local community activities (e.g. social, sport, culture, adult education, etc.)? Please elaborate.

13. What other experiences of church do you think the majority of your **STUDENTS** have?

14. In your opinion is the school the main experience of church for the majority of your **PARENTS?** Please explain:

15. Does your school provide education programs for **PARENTS?** Please elaborate:-

16. A model of school / parish relationship is the diagram below.

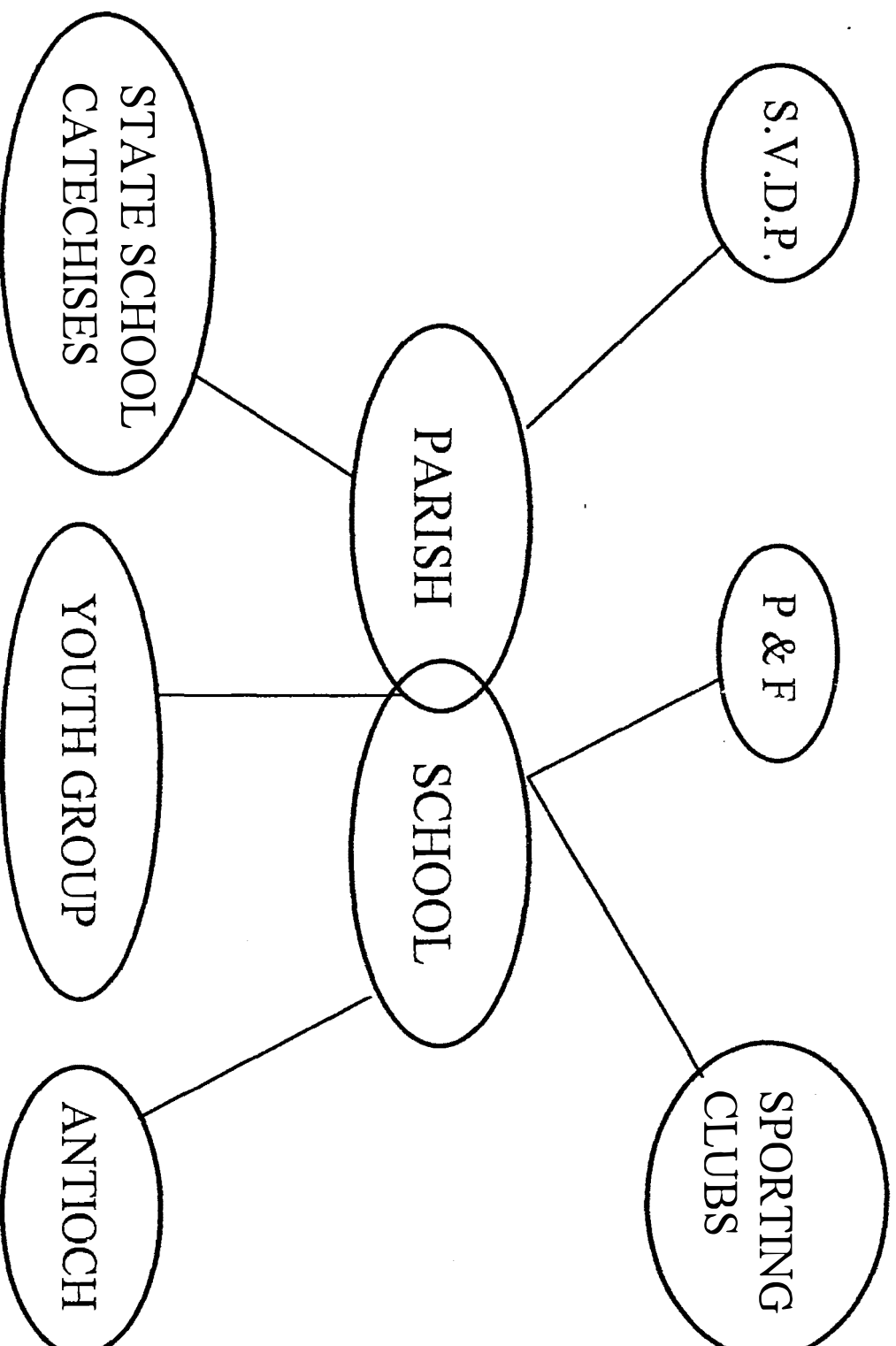


Please draw a diagram to illustrate the school/parish and local community relationship for your school.

APPENDIX 2

Model One

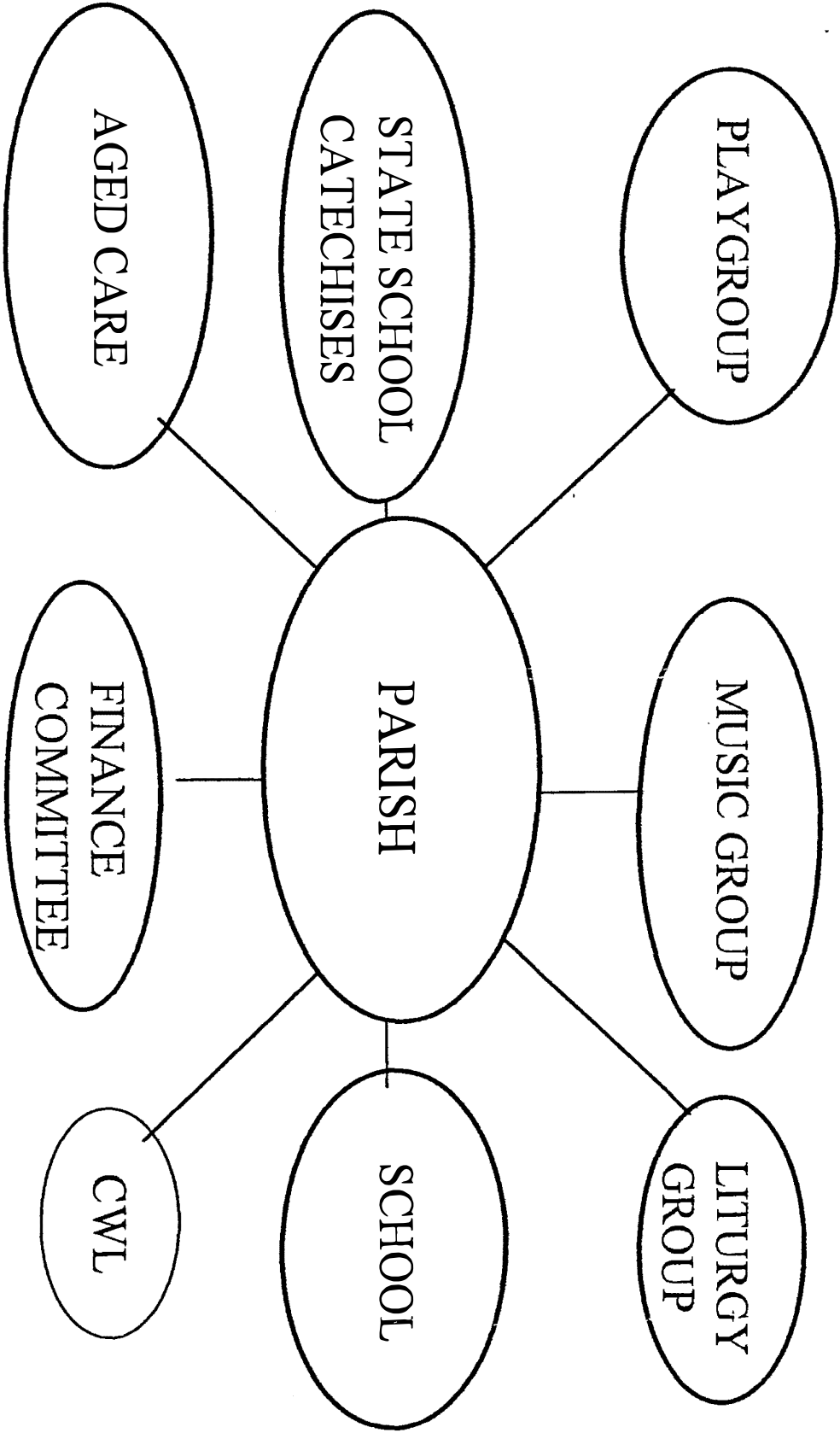
Model One



APPENDIX 3

Model Two

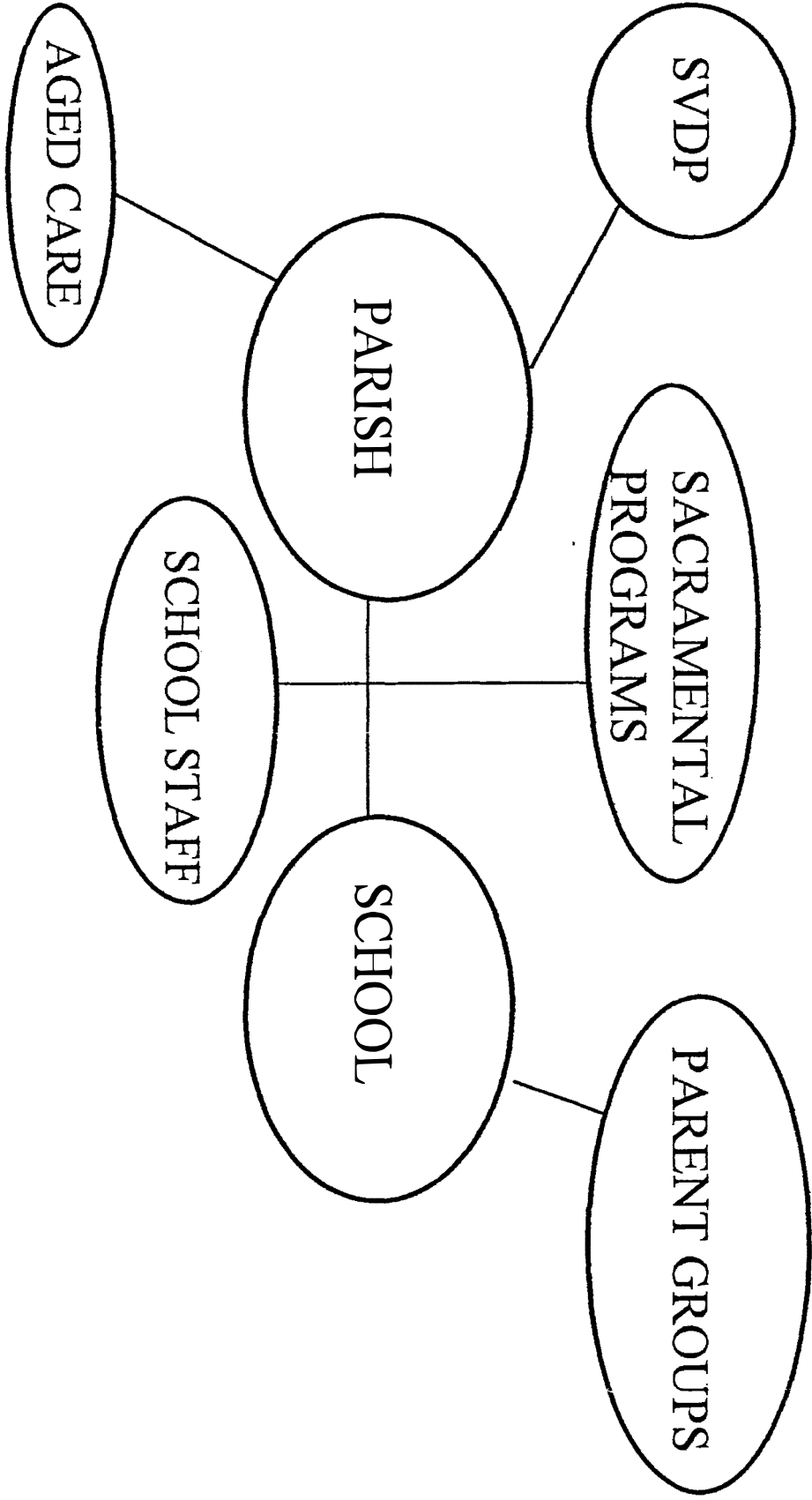
Model Two



APPENDIX 4

Model Three

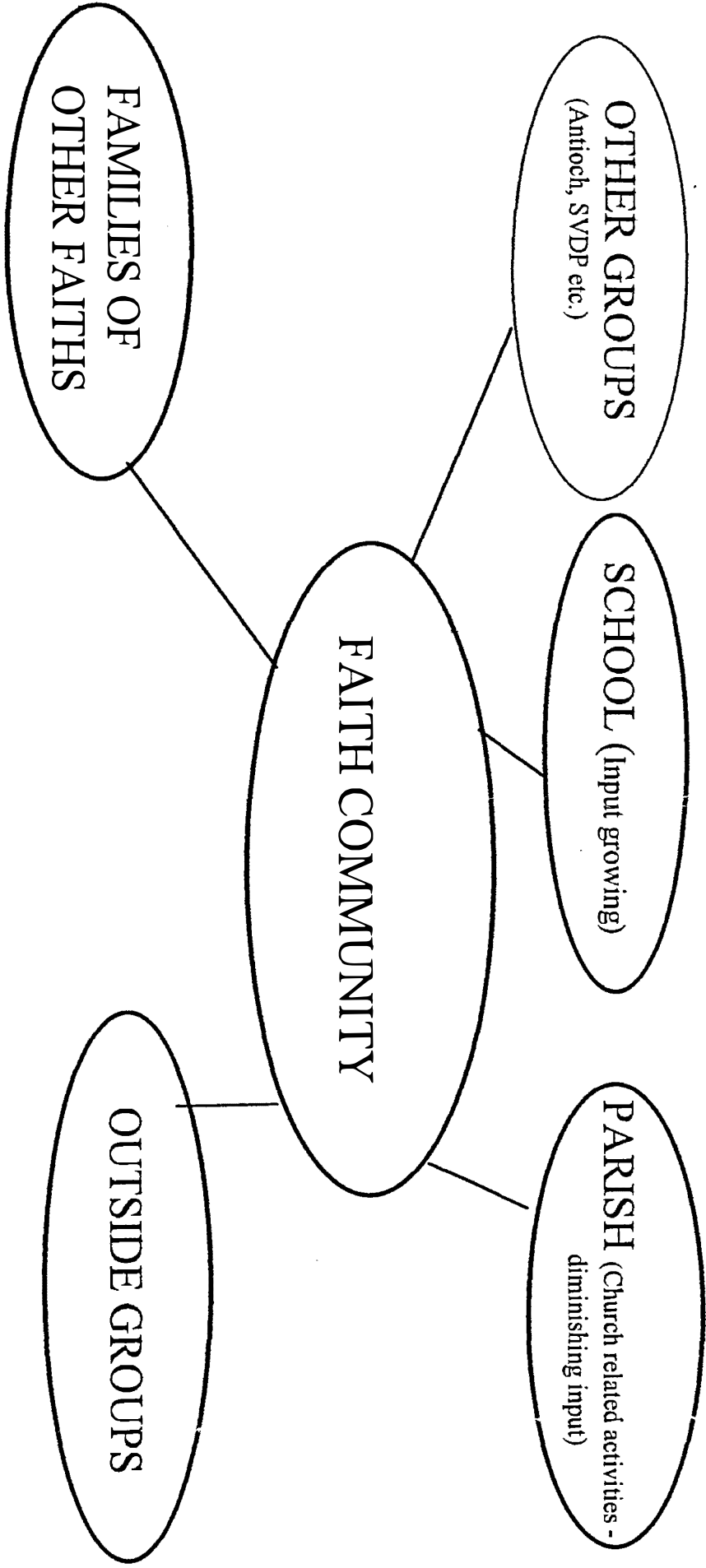
Model Three



APPENDIX 5

Model Four

Model Four



APPENDIX 6

Model Five

Model Five

