

Voices of Catholic School Lay Principals: Promoting a Catholic Character and Culture In Schools in an Era of Change

Abstract

This paper reports a qualitative study of the practice of leadership in Catholic schools to ascertain the perceptions of lay principals, who as positional leaders play a critical role in embracing and creatively rebuilding the Catholic vision of life within the reality that the Catholic school principalship is now a ministry of the laity. The methodology included semi-structured interviews, field notes, reflexive journals, direct observation, and document analysis. The study examined both individual human behaviour and the structure of the social order in Catholic schools.

The findings point towards successful leadership in Catholic schools being highly influenced by the cultural and spiritual capital that a principal brings to a school signifying a fundamental importance of appointing principals who are not only professionally competent but spiritually as well. In an era of unprecedented social, educational and ecclesial change, and with an ever widening role description, lay principals are challenged to redefine and re-articulate their Catholic character and identity, and will need to look for new ways to make this explicit. Embracing a new leadership paradigm of shared leadership, the preparation and on-going formation of lay principals were identified as critical for the continuance of the Catholic school's distinctive mission in the future.

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Introduction

For the Catholic school community, values and ideals have been intrinsically bound over the centuries by the religious traditions of the Catholic Church. As an inherited ideology, it has served as a firm framework for the building of an authentic educational and faith community. At the time of the Second Vatican Council (1963-1965) the Catholic school was clearly seen as an extension of the home and the parish. It was a milieu that supported the religious faith and practices of the Catholic family that also belonged to and actively participated in, a local parish under the leadership of the clergy and the authority of the local bishop. Such an environment provided a strong sense of identity and purpose for members of the Church and school. The school was the cultural agent of the Church, entrusted with the task of handing on the Catholic faith, its beliefs, traditions and practices to the next generation.

Within the changing context of Church, society and school in Australia, the transmission of a special character-culture must now make explicit what once was known implicitly. As a result, if Catholic schools are to carry out the work for which they were established, the processes through which their distinctive ethos or spirit are transmitted to each generation need to be better understood. This research reported here is part of a larger study that explored the nature and purpose of Catholic schools, which unlike their secular counterparts, aim to mould a culture that is permeated by Gospel values and Catholic traditions. Specifically, it endeavoured to probe the religious dimension of leadership in Catholic schools and the critical role principals, as positional leaders, play in embracing and creatively rebuilding the Catholic vision of life within the reality that the Catholic school principalship is now a ministry of the laity. Some of the key findings from the larger study are reported in this paper.

Catholic schools in a context of change

While the nature and purpose of Catholic schools have not changed fundamentally since their foundation, cultural, theological and ecclesial movements over time have had significant influences on how they are organised and how they function (McLaughlin, 2000). At present, Catholic schools are especially challenged to maintain their overall character and ethos and at the same time be integrated into a new context that is more appropriate to the multicultural and pluralistic dimensions of modern Australian society.

With the Church in the new millennium, it often appears less united and John XXIII's vision of a new Pentecost seems far away (Treston, 2000). The Roman Curia and papacy appear once again to approach the modern world from a stance of suspicion (Duncan, 2003; Collins, 2004; Greeley, 2004), whilst in recent years a hesitant Church has been forced to account for the sexual abuse by clergy and religious (Australian Catholic Bishops Conference, 2000,). The accompanying denial, hypocrisy and self protective actions have further alienated its constituents (Cozzens, 2002; The Age, 18 June 2002). Issues such as divorce and remarriage, birth control and sexuality, the ordination of women and married clergy, are still matters of contention and anguish for many Catholics (The Bulletin, 19 April, 2005). These and other issues compel Treston (2000) to conclude the Church in the new millennium is in transition and as a result faces uncertainty, division and confusion.

Against this background of change in the Church, Australian Catholic schools have continued to be a major expression of the Church's presence in society. Following Vatican II, emphasis on religious freedom, ecumenism and openness to the world, Catholic schools have also undergone significant changes in terms of demography and functioning (Flynn & Mok, 2002). Along with freedom came plurality, and issues such as secularism, diversity in beliefs, student enrolment and staff have challenged the traditional assumption of what the role of schools is in the Church for the communities they serve.

The religious character and mission of Catholic schools are the unique characters that distinguish them both as educational institutions and as agencies that help to hand on Catholic religious traditions. However, in an era when change is evident in the theory and practice of education, in its funding and accountability to governments, even in the composition of school personnel, the Catholic educational ethos is no longer an unquestioned element of school culture. It is now contested from within the Church by shifts in the spirituality of its members and especially by the tendency of modern youth to reject formal expressions of religion (McCann, 2003).

Catholic schools have been a major component of Australian education for over 185 years. During that time they have adapted to changing circumstances and changing times; but at a time of profound change in society and the Church, Hutton (2002) observes that the essential role of Australian Catholic schools is "an intentional approach that focuses on identity, mission and community" (p.54).

Typically, today's Australian Catholic systemic school is characterised by:

- being staffed predominantly by lay teachers, and is administered by a lay Principal.
- high levels of parent support and participation.
- having an increasing percentage of non-Catholic, or non-practising Catholic teachers and pupils.
- being often the only contact with the Church for many of the families it serves; a result of the decline of participation in worshipping communities of parishes and the rejection of formal religion by youth.
- seeking to espouse the teachings of a Church with a changing ecclesiology.
- attending to a multi-ethnic clientele of European, middle-Eastern and Asian descent with the evaporation of an Irish-Catholic, socio-political identity.
- functioning under the auspices of a Diocesan Catholic Education Office, the Parish Priest, and ultimately, the Bishop.
- being dependent on government funding to the extent that it could not exist without it.

(McLaughlin, 1998, p. 24; Canavan, 1999, pp 19-24; McLaughlin, 2000, pp. 31-115; Rossiter, 2003).

All of this means that Catholic schools are now challenged to maintain their overall character and ethos in a changing religious and social reality. Today Catholic schools must prove their validity as viable educational institutions, as well as satisfying the requirements of the Church, simultaneously conforming to government accountability and to Church expectations. Their identity as Catholic schools is fundamental to their

existence, and when they cease to be Catholic, for all purposes, they cease to exist. As a result as positional leaders, contemporary lay principals are forced to make regular appraisals of their Catholic school leadership. For lay Catholic school principals answerable to the multiple legitimacies of government accountability, the school community, parish priests, Catholic Education Offices and Bishops, the task of developing a genuine Catholic school identity may be problematic.

How then do lay principals in Catholic schools, in this complex and changing context, perceive their role in promoting a Catholic culture and character? While researchers suggest that principals do influence and shape culture within schools in ways that no other individual or external organisation can (Deal & Peterson, 2003; Grint, 2003; Lingard, Hayes, Mills, Christie & Wilson, 2003), researchers are not always unanimous in their views about the conditions that make it so (Foster, 1986; Fullan, 2001, 2002). Despite this, it is widely accepted that principals have an important role in articulating the school's fundamental purpose to a variety of constituents (Fullan & Fink 2003; Sergiovanni, 2003). Within the dynamic of a Catholic school, such articulation becomes more problematic under the changing contexts as noted above. The roles, actions and "lives" of principals are of high interest in such a milieu – understanding these better is the focus of this research.

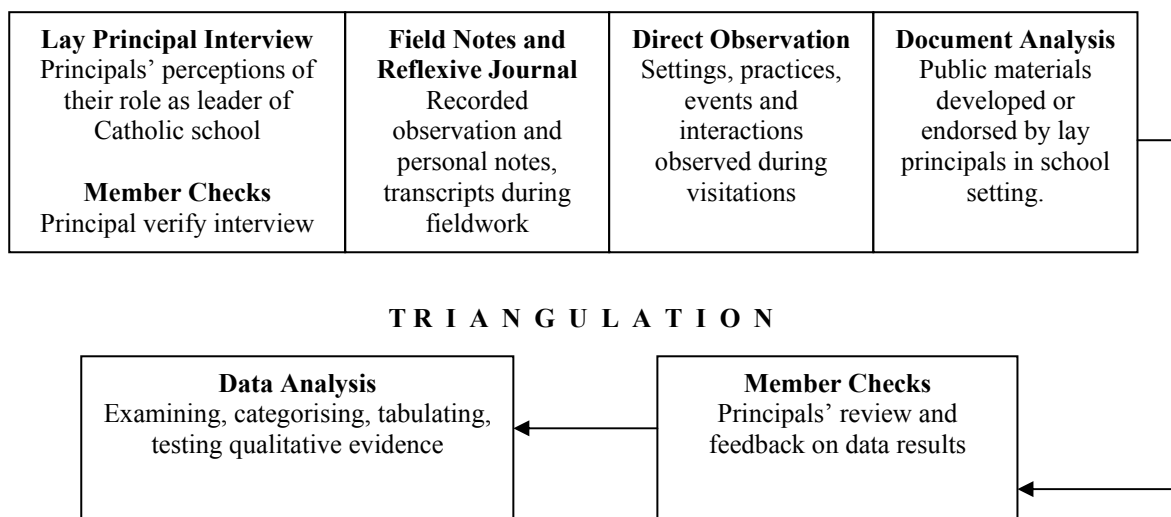
Research methodology: overview

Within the interpretivist framework (Lincoln & Guba, 2003a), a multiple case study approach was employed for the research (Burgess-Limerick & Burgess-Limerick, 1998). As Merriam (2002, p.5) suggests, the product of qualitative case study stems from the fact that it is richly descriptive: "words and pictures, rather than numbers are used to convey what the researcher has learned about a phenomenon. They are likely to be descriptions of the context, the participants involved, the activities of interest". Yin (2003) adds, 'you would use the case study method because you deliberately want to cover contextual conditions – believing that they might be highly pertinent to your phenomenon of study' (p. 13). Specifically, the research sought to provide thick, rich descriptions (Merriam, 1998) of how lay leadership is enacted in the Catholic school, examining both individual human behaviour of principals and the structure of the social order in Catholic schools. Sergiovanni (1992) asserts that in the study of school leadership generally 'little is written...about moral authority, mindscapes, sacred values, cultural norms, the power of language in shaping reality and theories of practice' (p.304).

The following **questions** provided the focus for the research:

1. How do lay principals perceive their role in carrying out the mission of Catholic schools?
2. In a rapidly changing educational milieu, how do lay principals actively promote and make explicit their school's Catholic character and culture to others?
3. How do lay principals perceive the appropriateness of their preparation for leadership of Catholic schools, and what professional needs are still to be met?
4. What tensions do lay principals experience in promoting a Catholic character and culture?

Data were collected in the form of interviews, field notes, reflexive journals, direct observation, and document analysis. Patton (2002) reasoned that ‘multiple sources of information are sought and used because no single source of information can be trusted to provide a comprehensive perspective....By using a combination of observations, interviewing and document analysis, the fieldworker is able to use different data sources to validate cross-check findings’ (p. 244). The figure below summarises the data collection process.



The research was undertaken with principals in a rural diocese of New South Wales, all of who are charged with responsibilities to lead their schools beyond the academic field into the religious dimension in order to transmit Catholic culture to future generations. The principals volunteered to participate in the research project are being briefed about it, and the implications of involvement, at a diocesan principals’ meeting. The following table provides a summary of the participants and their schools.

Summary of Participants Included in the Study

Lay Principal and School Name	Total Years as Principal	Years as Principal in Catholic Schools	School Type	N° of Students
Ron Hancock <i>St Joseph’s Primary School</i>	8	8	Small Primary (K-6)	45
Alison Lacey <i>St Mary’s Primary School</i>	31	31	Small Primary (K-6)	47
Gerry Mackay <i>St Agatha’s Primary School</i>	7	7	Large Primary (K-6)	320
Sharon Kearney <i>Corpus Christi</i>	14	14	Large Primary (K-6)	203
George Musgrave <i>Casmir College</i>	12	12	Secondary Girls School (Yrs 7-12)	685
Pamela Stewart <i>Maranatha Catholic College</i>	8	8	Secondary Co-Educational (Yrs 7-12)	903

Note: Pseudonyms are used for both Principal and school

Interviews with lay principals were formally conducted over an eight-month period. Following an initial interview of approximately an hour and a half duration, a follow-up interview with each Principal was conducted a week or so after the initial interview. The follow-up interview also provided further opportunities for clarification of responses from the initial interview and ideas developed during visitation and observation of the school site.

Findings & discussion

This section presents the research findings and discussion in four sub-sections to parallel the four questions that guided the research.

(a) Leading the mission of the Church: promoting a faith community

The research confirmed that lay principals, as positional leaders, play a critical role in embracing and creatively building a Catholic character and culture in their schools. Moreover, the findings highlighted that Catholic lay principals continue to be community gatekeepers, assuming responsibility for fostering the faith development of the school community, promoting the moral and ethical development of the school community, building Christian community and developing and implementing the school's philosophy (Cook, 2001a, 2004b; Flynn & Mok, 2002; Grace, 2003). Though acting as gatekeeper, issues such as the influence of the media, the pressure for academic success, peoples' disengagement from the Church, the general secular culture of Australian society and other external variables may in fact be weakening the Catholic habitus in schools, thereby making the task of preserving the Catholic character of the school problematic and highly challenging for principals.

Principals' quest for community, created a sense of belonging as well as cultivating trust and inclusiveness, a finding consistent with the literature (Stolp & Smith, 2001; Sergiovanni, 2001; 2003, 2005; Schaps, 2003; Stoll, 2003). These Principals recognised the importance of the promotion of interpersonal relationships in the school as central to creating an ethos and culture that supported the Catholic view of life. They were able to articulate that a family-like character was sought for their school habitus. All Principals viewed an ideal, as one where the school operated as an extension of the family where, through the network of relationships, they were able to forge the generation of social capital so advocated by Church authorities (Congregation for Catholic Education, 1988, n. 40). Central to creating a culture of community, Principals identified their schools as exhibiting ideals such as providing a safe and secure environment, together with a sense of welcome, celebration and hospitality. Individual care and concern, particularly for those who are struggling to cope with communal expectations were ideals also identified by Principals.

All Principals desired to create a family atmosphere and the generation of social capital. This research however, showed that the habitus of small schools appeared most conducive in achieving this compared to larger schools. The research of Lashway (2002) supports this, highlighting that the habitus of small schools is better situated to nurture a sense of belonging and, therefore, community. Given such findings, the question arises as to what extent larger schools, with large numbers of students, can genuinely engage individual involvement through a positive and caring atmosphere and therefore build an authentic network of relationships.

As architects of Catholic school culture and identity, Principals identified their prime roles as determining the quality of religious and academic purposes of their schools and building faith communities among members of their schools. The Church and relevant research (Sacred Congregation for Catholic Education, 1977, 1981; Congregation for Catholic Education, 1988, 1998, 2002; Bryk, Lee & Holland, 1993; Flynn & Mok, 2002; Wallace, 1998, 2000; Nuzzi, 2000, 2002), indicate that principals in Catholic schools are charged with creating school cultures that embrace the teachings and traditions of the Catholic Church, central to which is community. In maintaining this special character of Catholic schools, writers such as O'Donnell (2001), Cook (2001a, 2004a, 2004b), Grace (2003), Spry and Duignan (2004) and Spry (2004) propose that it is essential that the building of community be fully integrated into the daily life and activity of the school. The connectedness with parish communities and ministering in the school community in caring and collaborative ways were viewed by all Principals as essential to their exercising Catholic leadership. However, when faced with the reality of contemporary Australian society, characterised by a plurality of beliefs and experiences, it cannot be presumed that all students, families and teachers are fully committed to the Catholic tradition or involved with local parish activities and worship. Given the diversity of faith standpoints, a non-critical awareness of the Catholic school as a faith community may hide a less than ideal reality.

(b) Leading and building of Catholic character and culture

The research affirms the principal is the key leader of the Catholic school. School principals hold the unique responsibility as guardians of a Catholic heritage and play a vital role in determining the quality and the future of Catholic schools. Drawing from their resources of cultural and spiritual capital, Principals through their daily actions are attending to and safeguarding the Catholic identity of their schools in their leadership role. The Principals described experiences associated with encouragement, role modelling, upholding values and articulation of the Catholic faith. In short, they were the symbolic and cultural leaders of their schools. Principals believed they formally modelled their religious leadership to others in a planned and organised way that was integrated into the organisational life of the school. Informally, their personality and disposition transmitted the values, attitudes, philosophy and norms of the school (McGilp, 2000; Lingard, Hayes, Mills & Christie, 2003; Barth 2004).

It was apparent that there was a clear sense of the nature of the religious leadership role of the lay principal in Catholic schools. All Principals also recognised their unique responsibility for Catholic schools where the school was an agent of the Church (Congregation for Catholic Education, 1988, n.34; Congregation for Catholic Education, 1998, n.11), witness that Christ is present and that his teaching is relevant in contemporary society. In their day-to-day operation in schools, lay Principals indicated that while their expectations and responsibilities were similar to those of their colleagues in public schools, they perceived the extra responsibility in understanding and articulating the place of the school in the Church's educational mission. Such findings were also noted by Spry (2004) in the Catholic school leadership framework developed for Queensland schools, where she suggested leadership in Catholic schools called for many of the capabilities and competencies that are required of a principal in a State school, with the added dimension of faith leadership.

Principals believed their most significant formation (Gronn 1999, 2002b) for leadership in Catholic school began in childhood where they were imbued with the Catholic faith and traditions. Principals brought with them much of the cultural and spiritual capital valued in Catholic schools and were familiarised to the social environment of these schools. Within the habitus of their family and their own educational experiences in Catholic schools, the Principals have embodied the Catholic faith along with its traditions and practices and have therefore developed empathy to their cultural environment (Bourdieu, 1977, 2000; Gronn, 1999, 2002b; Lingard, Hayes, Mills & Christie, 2003). The findings here concur with Grace's (2003) notion that success in Catholic school leadership appears to be highly influenced by the cultural and spiritual capital that a principal brings to a school, emphasising the fundamental importance of appointing suitably qualified and skilled principals.

(c) Preparing for the principalship

Despite the critical role they play in their school context, Principals in this study indicated that they lacked preparation for the position. Principals of small schools in particular found that a lack of formal training and experience in managerial and administrative aspects of their role made their transition into formal leadership positions difficult. Further, all Principals were frustrated that their ongoing formation was not being attended to. In particular, Principals acknowledged that they had personal needs for their own development in faith, requiring continuing growth in faith and vision. Principals noted that Religious Education Coordinators (RECs) were well prepared for religious leadership in the school, possibly more so than Principals themselves.

These findings are consistent with the research conducted by Duignan, Burford, d'Arbon, Ikin and Walsh (2003) and Duignan (2004), that suggest leaders in contemporary organisations are seen to be ill prepared for the demands of leadership. The findings of the study are also in accord with the research findings of small school principals in Queensland by Clarke (2003, p. 9) who concluded that beginning principals in small schools were usually "thrown in at the deep end".

In contrast to small school Principals, the large schools Principals here found that prior experience in managerial positions in schools did assist them in the transition to the principalship. Such findings however, revealed an incongruity with recent research into the preparation of aspiring school executives for the principalship. Studies conducted by Ribbins (1997), d'Arbon (2003), Draper and McMichael (2003) and Harris, Muijs and Crawford (2003) for example, found that the experience of being assistant principals was not always helpful in preparation for the principalship because of the lack of direct leadership experience some assistant principals encountered in this role. Ribbin's (1997) study in particular noted how many assistant principals were required to undertake the routine administrative tasks not wanted by the principal that left them not only frustrated in their role but unprepared for a principalship role.

Both large primary and secondary school Principals recognised that their previous experience as REC or assistant principal had offered some insight into the world of leadership in Catholic schools and therefore was viewed as a significant stage in their development as a potential principal. In particular, for the Catholic school context, a

key finding is that Principals who had fulfilled the role of REC, acknowledged a comfortable transition to the religious leader of the school. The very nature and expectations of the position, had led them to greater religious and theological literacy.

As well as a lack of preparation for leadership, this research revealed that the religious formation of principals was being neglected. It has demonstrated that current principals drew on experiences gained from members of religious congregations, but it appears that, as a new generation of teachers and leaders who have had no affiliation with living out the norms of religious orders, are unlikely to benefit from the “matrix of sources for spiritual capital” (Grace, 2003, p. 237). This is a major conclusion to be drawn from this research. In examining the current realities and the contribution of diocesan authorities, all Principals indicated that Catholic Education Offices were not proactive in either the leadership of Principals or of their faith development. All Principals noted that they had had only a minor exposure to formal development programs and training, even though Principals themselves viewed it as a priority for the promotion and maintenance of a Catholic identity in their schools. There is a major conflict in a system of schooling that exists to nurture the faith of young people, yet it fails to realise and address the fact that the traditional spiritual capital of Catholic school leadership is likely to decline. The renewal of spiritual capital therefore becomes a critical question for the continuance of the distinctive purpose of Catholic schools in the future.

(d) The anxieties and challenges of leading in a Catholic school

Consistent with the literature, this research revealed that all Principals, irrespective of context, were in a constant struggle to refocus the energies of the school community on a set of values consistent with the mission of Catholic schools and therefore, the promotion of its special character. Principals reported the religious dimension of Catholic schools was being marginalised by pressure for academic success (Flynn, 1993, Flynn & Mok, 2002), the influence of the media on young minds, by peoples’ disengagement from the Church (Rymarz, 2004; Rymarz & Graham, 2005), the general secular culture of Australian society (Treston, 2001; Congregation for Catholic Education, 1998, n.1; McLaughlin, 2000, 2002; Flynn & Mok, 2002) and by other external variables that affect how their schools are constituted and conducted.

In addition, the increasing pluralism of beliefs and values in Australian Catholic schools, reflected in the significant number of non-Catholic students who normally have little or nothing to do with the teachings of the Catholic Church outside the school, nor hold a desire to embrace the Catholic way of life, impacted on the capacity of Principals to promote a Catholic ethos in their school. This reality emerges as an important issue because Catholic schools in Australia are experiencing an increase in non-Catholic enrolments. In light of this reality, these Principals, particularly those in secondary schools, suggested they found it easier to promote a Catholic ethos in their schools where there were higher percentages of Catholic students. Such a situation is in accord with Ryan and Malone’s (2003) view that ongoing increases in the number of non-Catholic students in Catholic schools impact on the delivery of the Religious Education curriculum and the liturgical life of the school and so places the Catholic identity of schools at risk. Such a phenomenon also concurs with what is known about school culture (see Schein, 1997; Deal & Peterson, 2003; Stoll, 2003). That is, where school culture illuminates the character of a school

and bridges the identity of the individual with the identity of the group. Consistent with the literature (Congregation for Catholic Education, 1988, n.33, 34; 1998, n.11; Heft, 1991; Reck, 1991), the Catholic school was seen to be a genuine teaching instrument of the Church. The local parish in particular, was called to provide ongoing support and solidarity for schools (Congregation for Catholic Education, 1988, n.44) and priests were summoned to support Catholic schools by their words, presence and actions (see Canon 519, 805, 806; Flannery, 1996b, n.35, n. 52; Codd, 2003, p.132; Ryan & Malone, 2003, pp.164-165). Here it was found, however, that there was general confusion as to the precise nature of relationship between the lay principal and the local Church, suggesting that there was little evidence of a functioning relationship among Principals and priests. Principals reported many priests were authoritarian and perceived the diversity of personalities of priests as pervasive in developing a positive working relationship.

The research revealed that some priests might not have changed their expectations of principals from an era where principals were predominately a member of a religious congregation living and working in the parish. The 'quasi monastic' legacy described by Hansen (2000) was identified by lay Principals in this study, where priests still held unrealistic expectations of lay Principals who were usually married and with a family. As such they could not be expected to be as accessible or visible as their religious counterparts might once have been.

In addition, lay Principals identified gender issues as impacting on their roles indicating that it was their perception that priests viewed women in a traditional sense as mothers and carers (see Power, 2002; d'Arbon, 2003; Neidhart & Carlin, 2003) and thus had little or no regard for women in leadership positions. At the least, they seemed sceptical of the capacities of female principals.

Also consistent with the literature, this research demonstrated that principals were being overwhelmed with an ever-expanding list of duties and expectations (d'Arbon, Duignan, & Duncan, 2002; Carlin, d'Arbon, Dorman, Duignan, & Neidhart, 2003; Collard, 2003; Scott, 2003; Department of Education and Training, 2004; Duignan, 2004). The intrusion into family time and the lack of quality of life relating to the principalship were key issues identified by all Principals irrespective of their school context. There were growing expectations placed on Principals and these were found to be reaching crisis point where it was placing undue stress on personal relationships, and in some cases impacting on the health and well-being of Principals.

In small schools, the increased complexity of their teaching role caused teaching principals to feel guilty and frustrated as they endeavoured to cope with the dual roles of teaching and administration. Small school Principals more fervently portrayed the overwhelming list of duties and expectations. Where large schools tended to rely significantly on members of the executive team to share responsibilities and the workload, in smaller schools the possibilities for sharing of responsibility was not available such that the burden appeared greater for Principals in these contexts. This led small school Principals to exhibit the 'slipstream syndrome' described by Dunning (1993), Clarke (2002) and Murdoch (2002), where such schools were forced to adapt to changes imposed with larger school contexts in mind.

Concluding comments

What is clearly apparent from this research, is that context matters for school leaders, especially for those in Catholic schools as they struggle to lead those schools in times of change and challenge. By examining different school contexts, it was possible to describe similarities and differences, and understandings in the various school habitus, suggesting leadership is strongly influenced by the context in which it is exercised. Understanding the school, and the forces at work in and around it, and appreciating the dynamics of the school as a social community, would therefore, be important skills for all lay principals wanting to develop a distinctive Catholic character in their schools.

This research has demonstrated that lay principals play a prime role in determining the quality and the future of Catholic schools. In an era of unprecedented social, economic and ecclesial change, their greatest challenge is preserving and enhancing the school's Catholic character and culture for future generations. It is clear, that as architects and caretakers of Catholic schools, preserving the Catholic character of a school is not something that will happen automatically. A deliberate and conscious approach to integrate the religious and academic purposes in every dimension of the school is what will be required.

This research, drawn from a larger study identifies many challenges for those leading Catholic schools in the early years of this new millennium. Equally, it offers many challenges for those charged with recruiting and selecting lay principals for Catholic schools and for those who ought hold a continuing responsibility for their on-going professional development.

Preparing for the principalship of Catholic schools today is challenging. For the principals in this study, there was a significant dearth of adequate support for them especially in the religious matters of their responsibilities. Indeed, this lack of formation continued after their appointment, with many in this study identifying this failure to assist their on-going religious growth as a major challenge for them, and a source of some anxiety. As noted by one lay principal, to replicate the formation of the religious within the current context of lay principals is impractical, but nonetheless should be a high priority for Catholic school leadership:

For a start the religious were single. Having a family with five young children, and being a principal means my time is limited to when I can pray and reflect. Because of my family, I can't go away on retreat during holidays or weekends. Faith formation for me as a principal is very important. I mean our role more than ever is involved with the developing of faith in staff and kids so we continually need to be 'topped up'. Faith can't remain stagnate you know. Like a plant, it needs nourishing and the occasional pruning (Gerry, Interview Text, p.18).

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